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## Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 9th January 2025 at 7.00pm in Chilham Village Hall.

**Councillors Present:** G. Schofield (Chair), S. Barrett (Deputy Chair), K. Uncle, A. Watkins, V. Hutchinson, G. Taylor, & K. Jeffries.

**Also Present:** P. Coles (PC) (Clerk to the Council) plus three members of the public

**Councillor Apologies:** G. Meaden

**Councillor Absentee:** N/A

### Item

**2025/001 Apologies for Absence**  
Councillor G. Meaden, meeting at Ashford Borough Council

**2025/002 Declarations of Interests And / Or Lobbying**  
Councillors S. Barrett, A. Watkins and K. Jeffries

**2025/003 Chairs opening remarks.**  
Good evening and welcome to tonight's Chilham Parish Council meeting

Tonight, we will be discussing the appeal by GSI Northcourt Limited on Ashford Borough Council decision to object to a Solar Farm in Old Wives Lees. I will be suspending the meeting when the Councillors have discussed agenda item 2025/007 to allow questions from residents. Please do not raise any questions or make any points or the application until then. Questions to Councillors under 2025/005 will only be on other items.

CPC has a role to represent the interests of residents whatever the decision. Our Borough Councillor, Geoff Meaden, has investigated whether a S106 has been submitted with the appeal. It would seem that there will be an opportunity to discuss this with the developers if the appeal is upheld.

I am pleased to say that the work has already commenced on replacing the Children's Play Equipment at Old Wives Lees.

**2025/004 Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council**  
2025/004.1 To receive and approve the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 5th December 2024.  
**Decision:** Approved  
2025/004.2 To receive an update on any matters arising not included in the agenda.  
None

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**Signed:**..... Chairman

**Date:** 6/02/2025

**2025/005 Questions from Residents**

None

**2025/006 Borough Councillors, Policing:**

None

**2025/007 Appeal under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990: PA/2022/2415-North Court Farm Solar farm.**

CPC support their previous comments but note

CPC acknowledge the hard work of members of SOWLIS and, in particular, Penny Rickards, for representing the views of those in the village who are opposed to the scheme. We thank penny for putting together an extremely well-researched and presented letter to the Planning Inspectorate and the care that has been taken in summarising the position of SOWLIS and the residents it represents. The village is lucky to have dedicated representatives.

CPC also acknowledge the cooperation of Mr Balicki throughout the process and thank him for his care and open communication over the years during which this application has been open.

CPC request that the Planning Inspector take into account the effect on the community of this scheme, both during the construction phase and the operational phase. A very large development within a village will affect residents and their mental health and this needs to be taken into account.

There are a number of points that SOWLIS have put together for consideration of the Planning Inspector, which I will not spend time going over in detail here, but that we would be grateful if they were taken into consideration as suggested in SOWLIS’s letter. In summary, these are:

- a. That the ecological baseline of the area be re-assessed in the light of the land lying fallow for the past two years, in order to get an accurate up to date picture of Biodiversity Net Gain for the scheme.
- b. That the timescale and arrangements for grid connection be clarified.
- c. That Ashford Borough Council (ABC) has started the process of developing a new Local Plan, counter to comments in the Statement of Case.

CPC believes that from January 2024 the regulations changes such that all solar farm projects are considered to be of Critical National priority, even those below 50MW. This is a point that will need clarification, and is in flux as many things are at the moment, particularly to do with planning.

CPC are representatives of the residents of the Parish, and, as such, we are keen to make sure that should the solar farm go ahead, inconvenience and negative effects on the community are minimised. A number of recommendations were made in our previous statement a year ago, but in summary these are:

With regards the CEMP:

- The time window within which HGVs are allowed to operate to be reduced from 10-4 to 10-3, in order to take account of school traffic between the times of 3 and 4
- Consider swapping larger vehicles for smaller ones outside of the village for actual movement of materials around at busy times

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**Date: 6/02/2025**

- Put into place a scheme whereby residents are alerted to particularly heavy traffic or other large construction events that will disrupt traffic
- That an officer or independent auditor is appointed to ensure that all the stated mitigation in the construction phase, particularly that which relates to wildlife, trees, hedges and biodiversity, are adhered to throughout, and that the CEMP is adhered to at all times and any changes are agreed by ABC before they are made. If ABC does not have the resources for this monitoring, then they could require that the applicant pay for an independent environmental auditor to oversee this
- That the advice of the Tree Warden, and others who have commented on impacts to trees and hedges be adhered to in the naming and protection of specific trees that must not be affected by the construction, and that advice from Peter Vogel and the Tree Warden for ABC be followed.

With regard preservation of wildlife and natural environment:

- Consider having the community orchards open to the public during daylight hours (or between certain times) every day so they may be enjoyed regularly by residents. We do not see how an 'appointment only' system would work and it would be a shame to have community facilities which are unavailable to residents
  - That the creation and completion of the two areas of community orchards as outlined on the master plan map, be a pre-construction condition
  - We are glad that the Statement of Case specifically mentions widening the footpath and making it more accessible, and this is something we requested in our last representation. That the applicant oversee the conversion of the footpath that connects Latin Fields with Lower Ensden Road to a bridleway, suitable for horses and bicycles, as well as walkers. This might form part of an Old Wives Lees community walk/cycle, that connects the Village Green and existing Playpark to Latin Fields, and thence to the community orchard. This will encourage cycling in the village, which is difficult at the moment because of the steep hills and dangerously narrow lanes.
  - That more biodiversity enhancement features be included where possible, such as wildlife ponds in scrubland or community areas
  - That the applicant contribute towards other community projects throughout the life of the scheme in a Section 106 agreement (please see Chilham Parish Council letter from December 2022)
  - That as many of the planned mitigation and enhancement features of the scheme be completed before construction as possible
  - That all of the biodiversity and community mitigation and enhancement features of the scheme as it is described in the Wardell Armstrong documents be implemented (i.e., benches in the community orchards, bird boxes, bat boxes, areas for turtle doves, etc.). This should be overseen by an ABC officer or by an independent auditor on an ongoing basis for at least 5 years, paid for by the applicant if ABC does not have the resources. Any additional enhancements be considered by the applicant if they are identified as construction happens.
- Conclusion and context

Debates around solar parks in general in the UK are current, relevant, and important. It is particularly important that the impacts of solar parks continue to be discussed and circulated, impacts to do with ecology, land use, landscape, visual, noise, what happens when a solar park is decommissioned, and many other technical issues that are only just being understood since solar parks in this country are relatively new. No solar parks have been decommissioned as yet, and so there is no hard and fast information about how this process works in reality.

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The effect of solar arrays on soil (e.g., contamination and compaction) is as yet unknown and, as such, it is also unknown whether a solar farm can actually be returned to agricultural use after decommissioning. It is therefore a shame that large solar parks on agricultural land are proposed in great numbers, rather than large solar schemes on brownfield land, above car parks, on factory roofs and the roofs of public buildings, where the energy generated can be used much closer, therefore reducing waste from line loss.

In the same spirit, we request that the priority use of the generated electricity by local people be considered, and that a scheme whereby the people of the village of Old Wives Lees may get to benefit from reduced electricity bills.

Chilham Parish Council's conclusions are based not only on the files provided by the applicant and subsequent reviews by various parties, but also on what we see as the duty of the Parish Council to reflect and respect the views of the residents of the Parish. The overwhelming response by commenters on the Planning Portal objecting to the Scheme (140 individuals) is not something that we can ignore. However, we also need to take into account the views of those people who commented in support of the scheme (4 individuals), and the views of the landowner who is also a resident of the Parish. With this in mind, the decisions made here and the process by which we made them were not taken lightly, and the Parish Council remain dedicated to representing all of the different views of the people in the Parish.

Chair suspended the meeting to allow questions from residents

The appeal decision will be decided on whether the weighting of the comments on the original application was correct. SOWLIS do not believe the recent changes to planning regulations around Solar farms does mean this application should be considered as a National Infrastructure Project.

**Decision** Councillors support their previous comments on the applicant but wish the points raised if the application was successful are also considered and should be submitted. Councillor V. Hutchinson, to draft Councillors response.

**2025/008 Highways Improvement Plan**

Following accidents involving vehicles exiting Bowerland lane onto the A28.

Councillors noted:

- The issue of making Bowerland lane one way was seen as an issue for the farmer as Pilgrims lane is too narrow for their vehicles.
  - It was also thought that putting a pedestrian crossing on the A28 would slow down vehicles.
- Councillors considered
- Making the stretch from Mulberry Hill A252, Mill lane A28 until Bowerland Lane 30 MPH-due to the number of accidents and the number of houses that now are exiting their properties onto the A28 from Shamsford street until Mill lane
  - Make exiting out of Bowerland lane left hand turn only so that traffic does not try and cross the A28.
  - Sighting pedestrian crossings on the A28 so that traffic is brought to a halt and therefore slows down or sighting speed cameras/speed sign on the A28.

**Decision:** Agreed to add the suggested changes to the A28 and Bowerland lane to the HIP as priority 1

**2025/009 Chilham Square Barrels**

**Decision:** Agreed to seek volunteers to maintain the Barrels in Chilham Square

**2025/010 Parish Council Committee's proposal**

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**Decision:** Councillors accepted the Clerks recommendation that the following Committees are required

- 2025/010.1 Finance, members to be Councillors G. Schofield, S. Barrett, K. Uncle, A. Watkins & G. Taylor
- 2025/010.2 Staffing members to be G. Schofield & S. Barrett  
Clerk to produce draft Terms of Reference for both.

**2025/011 Working Groups**

- 2025/011.1 To receive updates.

**2025/011.2 Finance & General Purposes:**

- 2025/011.2.1 Financial Transactions for Approval-Appendix 1 refers.  
Councillors noted

**2025/011.3 Planning**

**2025/011.3.1 Planning Applications**

**Case Reference: PA/2024/2232**

**Location: The Small Holding, Longhill, Chilham, Kent. CT4 8BN**

**Proposal: Proposed single storey rear extension**

**Decision: No objection**

**2025/011.3.2 Tree Orders**

None

**2025/011.3.3 Planning Decisions**

None

**2025/011.3.4 Planning Appeals**

**APP/E2205/W/24/3340179: The Silvers, Selling Road, Chilham CT4 8BH**

**Decision on the appeal: Dismissed**

**Application for an award of costs: Refused**

**2025/011.4 Chilham Parish Youth Club**

- 2025/011.4.1 To receive a report from the Working Group  
COSY to move to Old Wives Lees Village Hall for six weeks from the 21<sup>st</sup> of January  
Looking for more volunteers due to the success  
Councillors S. Barrett, A. Watkins and K. Jeffries left the meeting  
Request from COSY for a grant of £100 for an Easter Egg Hunt in April  
**Decision: Approved**  
Councillors S. Barrett, A. Watkins and K. Jeffries returned

**2025/012 Correspondence**

List of items received during the period 1<sup>st</sup> December 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, (Appendix 2)

**2025/013 Matters for Further Discussion**

Report of a car being damaged by the Christmas tree falling on New Years Eve in Chilham Square. The owners have been asked to contact the clerk.

**2025/014 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

To confirm the next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 7.00 pm in Old Wives Lees Village Hall

**Appendix 1 Financial Transactions**

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Signed:..... Chairman

Date: 6/02/2025

Date	Transaction Description	Debit	Credit	Reason
24/12/2024	NEST IT000005516060	74.5		Clerk Pension
20/12/2024	P E COLES	735.4		Clerk Salary
20/12/2024	HMRC	1208.36		Tax and NI
18/12/2024	SURREY HILLS SOLIC		2000	Payment from SGN
18/12/2024	KCC PAYMENT ACCOUN		1262.43	Grant
17/12/2024	CASTLE WATER LTD	35.31		THT water
16/12/2024	ICO	35		ICO Registration
16/12/2024	OLD WIVES LEES VH	110		CPC meetings
16/12/2024	OFFCUMDUNS	50		Village Fete
16/12/2024	NETWISE TRAINING	72		Councillors' emails
16/12/2024	P E COLES	360		CPC Xmas Meal
13/12/2024	B.ONLINE	19.8		Phone
09/12/2024	CHILHAM PARISH REC	67.5		COSY
09/12/2024	BILTING FARM SELF	46		Storage
09/12/2024	OLD WIVES LEES VIL	200		Grant
09/12/2024	P E COLES	35.32		Expenses
02/12/2024	NEST IT000005516060	102.83		Clerk pension
02/12/2024	BOURNE TO GARDEN	390		Grounds Maintenance
02/12/2024	P E COLES	1010.76		Salary
02/12/2024	ATS SERVICES	85		Payroll

## Appendix 2-Correspondence

Item	Date
CSU Monthly Newsletter	01/12/2024
KALC Ashford Area Committee Meeting 27 November 2024 minutes	03/12/2024
Chief Executive Briefing - International House move December update	05/12/2024
CEO Briefing - support for rough sleepers	06/12/2024
Active Kent & Medway - Consultation on proposals for the Postural Stability Service in Kent	06/12/2024
Appeal Written Representation for PA/2022/2415	10/12/2024
Community warden-Charing Council	11/12/2024
Refuse collection dates	11/12/2024
Exciting Updates to Our Ashford Volunteer Centre Transport Service	11/12/2024
Minutes for Planning Committee, Wednesday, 4th December 2024, 7.00 pm	12/12/2024
Chief Executive Briefing - Freedom Leisure awarded Tenterden Leisure Centre contract	13/12/2024
Chief Executive Briefing - Ashford sees tourism visitor numbers and economic impact bounce back	16/12/2024
CEO Briefing Lifeline Anytime service to cease	20/12/2024
RE: Chilham Parish Council-confirming CPC can co-opt new councillor	31/12/2024

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