

# Minutes of Letheringham Parish Meeting

## Easton & Letheringham Village Hall Monday August 4<sup>th</sup> 2025, 7pm

### **Members of Letheringham Parish Council present:**

Paul Clarke (PC)  
Trevor Gill (TG)  
Jan McNeill (JM)  
Malcolm Ross (MR)

### **Members of the District Council present:**

Vince Langdon Morris

### **19 Members of the public were present, including four members of Charsfield Parish Council and three members of Cretingham Monewden & Hoo Parish Council**

The Chairman PC welcomed all to the meeting which commenced at 7pm, to consider the planning application DC/25/2733/FUL for a Solar Array and Battery Energy Storage System on land in Letheringham & Easton.

#### **2025.06 Apologies for absence**

The Chairman gave names of six residents of Letheringham who had sent apologies that they were unable to attend due to being away. All had stated their opposition to the proposal.

#### **2025.07 To consider approval of the minutes of the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting held on May 12th, 2025.**

The minutes were considered an accurate reflection of the meeting and approved unanimously and signed by PC.

#### **2025.08 To consider planning application DC/25/2733/FUL for a Solar Array and Battery Energy Storage System on land in Letheringham & Easton.**

The Chairman pointed out that printed copies of some of the plans submitted by the developer were available for all to view on tables in the hall and adjourned the meeting for ten minutes to give people a chance to view them.

Once reconvened, the Chairman highlighted that this was a parish meeting putting all on an equal footing to speak. He pointed out the three other members of the parish council present and said the views expressed at this meeting would inform the parish council meeting on August 11<sup>th</sup> when a response to the application would be agreed for submission to East Suffolk Council. It was important that any views, both in support of and objecting to, the application were expressed here so that the parish council could form a representative view.

The Chairman was aware many were concerned about the ESC response deadline stated as August 15<sup>th</sup> on consultee letters. He said he had been reassured by the case officer that responses would be considered well beyond this date, particularly as the case officer is well aware it is a large and complex application arriving during peak holiday season. It is highly likely that further information will need to be submitted by the applicant as the application

progresses and there will be subsequent consultation on that too. PC also read out a paragraph from an email received from Head of Planning at ESC, Ben Woolnough, as follows:

*As a Major application it will be subject to a 13-week determination period. This is not usually an adequate period of time to conclude decision making on a solar farm so it is likely we will seek an Extension of Time from the applicant. All adjacent neighbours will be consulted along with the relevant hosting and adjacent Parish Councils this usually amounts to a period of 4-5 weeks to make comment once all consultation periods have expired. A wide range of statutory and non-statutory consultees on technical matters will also be consulted. If the Parish need an extended period please let us know as soon as possible. We always give full regard to all responses received.*

The Chairman said that thus far all responses have opposed the proposals. It is important we also hear from those who are in favour and hear how it will benefit this community.

### **Summary of issues raised:**

- 2025.8.1 The emotional stress on all residents directly affected by the scale of these proposals.
- 2025.8.2 The short timeline to fully consider and respond to the application, given the time the landowner, developer and ESC have had vs the 3 weeks offered to the public. The application deadline falls within school holidays and should be extended to the end of September at least.
- 2025.8.3 Some addresses have not yet had a letter from ESC informing them about the proposal even though they will see it from their property. PC said that only neighbouring properties were expected to receive a letter.
- 2025.8.4 The direct consultation from ESC should cover all addresses in the host parishes as the scale of the proposals is so significant that all will be impacted during construction and by the change to the character of the area in which they live.
- 2025.8.5 The application consultation process did not seem adequate for the scale of the proposal

### **Action: LPC to write to ESC asking for a suitable extension**

- 2025.8.6 A resident said they had health issues resurfacing due to the anxiety caused by the sheer scale, size, proximity to their home, and height of the panels.
- 2025.8.7 PC noted the insufficient consultation & communication from the developer, with nothing substantive since May. A resident reiterated that communication had been very poor when they tried to engage. PC said that, following the very poor engagement event on April 22<sup>nd</sup> questions raised had not been answered. Then at around 4 pm today 4<sup>th</sup> August Quintas' Head of UK Development had emailed members of Letheringham Parish Council. PC read out the email as follows:

Dear all

*I understand you have a parish meeting this evening, and I thought it might be useful to provide some information for circulation to the residents regarding the Community Benefit Fund that would be put in place as part of the River Deben Solar proposal, hopefully this would provide additional information to enable wider discussions regarding the wider benefit to the local community? Please find this information below.*

*Best wishes  
Shirine*

### **Community Benefit Fund**

*The project would make an annual contribution to the community through a community benefit fund of £450 a year per MWac, index linked, for the lifetime of the solar farm, i.e. 40 years. For the 49.9MW scheme this represents £22,455 per year rising with inflation, which is the equivalent to £898,200 in total. Examples of initiatives that such a fund could focus on include creating or maintaining footpaths, assistance with households in fuel poverty, installation of solar panels on community businesses alongside multiple initiatives in the biodiversity realm including river restoration.*

*Decisions on how the fund should be spent will be made by local stakeholders, including the parish council and motivated local individuals who could play a central role in administering the fund (and with whom the project would enter into a contractual arrangement, under which these payments would be guaranteed), thereby making the fund as locally centered and impactful as possible.*

- 2025.8.8 The amount available to the community was deemed by one attendee as an insult in comparison with the returns on offer to the landowner and the developer.
- 2025.8.9 PC asked if we should ask for the developer to come and present again? There were mixed views with some concern that this would be a waste of time as the developer had clearly chosen to play hard ball and we should not waste time now that the application now lies with ESC. Another stated that only changes agreed through the planning process could be enforced. PC noted that the applicant had closed the public consultation in May and had chosen to submit the application now rather than engage further.
- 2025.8.10 Concerns were raised about perceived Lack of Accountability: Who will hold the developer to agreed conditions and whether any mitigation measures that might be conditioned would be sufficient or enforceable. It will take many years to get a hedge established sufficiently to provide effective screening if it is carefully nurtured. In conditions that are unlikely to be favourable and where plants are not properly looked after, planting might never establish properly. There was also a question of this being outsourced, with the developer assigning away their risk.
- 2025.8.11 The landowner was directly asked by another resident why he did not consult the community before doing this deal with the developer. The landowner stated that he was attending the meeting to listen and not to speak. When pressed by the resident, he went on to discuss his desires to use his land in a more environmentally sensitive way, following government policy generating renewable energy, saving far more carbon than he could by growing wheat

and reducing use of chemicals. He then stated he intends to live in the village for his lifetime and wanted to ensure that the scheme is developed properly for him and his children and their children.

- 2025.8.12 A neighbour to the development and the landowner questioned the landowner directly about why he had chosen to impact so many people purely for profit. There was an applause for a heartfelt and calm delivery of concerns about the long-term impact to such a beautiful part of the countryside, unnecessarily.
- 2025.8.13 There was recognition that all those in attendance were green by the very nature of where and how they lived and that any views expressed were not NIMBY'ism, but real concerns about destroying the countryside of which they are the current stewards.
- 2025.8.14 TG asked the landowner if he was happy to hear the entirety of resident views as what was being discussed was only the tip of the iceberg in terms of real concerns, including deliverability of the proposal. The landowner said he would be happy to sit down and discuss how things can be improved.
- 2025.8.15 The issue of using land as the cheap way to install solar vs putting it on rooftops emerged many times throughout the meeting.
- 2025.8.16 Traffic, Safety & Access arose multiple times and was discussed at length: Significant worry was expressed about lorry movements on narrow roads, including concerns for schoolchildren, property foundations, and access routes through Charsfield and surrounding villages.
- 2025.8.17 Concerns were voiced about the cumulative effect of all the various proposed developments including Sizewell C on traffic, including displacement effects. Most were aghast about how this site was even been considered given the poor access points—the B1078 being so busy already and the access onto it very narrow.
- 2025.8.18 One attendee spoke from direct knowledge of the impact from onsite sub-contractors for a small site with only 18 homes being built, with damage being done and the impact on the school.
- 2025.8.19 Environmental and Visual Impact: Concerns about the scheme's size, visual dominance, effects on wildlife (e.g. badger habitats), and risk of flooding and fire were voiced.
- 2025.8.20 Although the scheme is presented as a temporary development for forty years, there appears to be no document covering the reinstatement of the site which the EIA application had stated would return to agriculture in better condition for the lack of cultivation.
- 2025.8.21 Process Transparency: Attendees noted that the developer submitted the application without adequately incorporating community views. Comparisons were drawn with other projects (e.g., Hacheston) where processes were perceived as more inclusive and the developer had engaged directly with residents directly affected.

- 2025.8.22 VLM recognised all the issues that were discussed and mentioned how Letheringham was cut off during normal flood events which occur more regularly given the change in weather patterns. VLM Informed attendees that they must put comments onto the portal not via email. Policy at a national level is a major problem as it's hard to be strategic. What he would like to see from the developer is evidence to support how mitigation plans particularly for flooding will work. VLM also voiced a concern about potential pollution is a major issue also.
- 2025.8.23 PROW's were then discussed with many voicing concerns over the danger during the construction phase where PROW's crossed access points.
- 2025.8.24 Wildlife was a major point of concern. Coordinates have now been registered for 2 badger sets and therefore they are now protected.
- 2025.8.25 MR spoke about how appalling the developer had been with regards to communication, their lack of professionalism, report writing, the greed from the scale, size, the way they have handled the process has just been insulting to residents and incensed everyone.
- 2025.8.26 The Cable route was brought up and there was a question about why this site was being considered when the conventional wisdom suggests a cable should be no more than a 2km distance from any substation, but this one is over 6km. Is there another substation planned?
- 2025.8.27 PC mentioned that he understood from other operators that there was no further available capacity to connect to the proposed grid substation. A question was raised about where this site could be connected to the grid
- 2025.8.28 JM brought up Fire Risk and potential for pollution from run off in the event of a BESS fire, poor accessibility for even 1 engine on these single-track lanes let alone the number that would be needed in a BESS fire.
- 2025.8.29 Residents spoke about how windy the site in Letheringham is, yet the developer suggested there would be no wind noise expected. This seemed ridiculous that they could make such uninformed statements.
- 2025.8.30 TG raised the delivery aspect and confidence in the developer to deliver for the long term and in the short term and asked if the landowner had any influence to improve both design and delivery it would be appreciated.
- 2025.8.31 Flooding off site from run off was a major point of concern. The site already sheds a lot of run-off in heavy rainfall events and the adequacy of proposed mitigation was doubted.

PC strongly encouraged all residents — whether for or against — to submit their individual comments via the ESC planning portal before the published deadline. PC closed the meeting at 8:50pm by saying *"We remain committed to ensuring your voices are heard."*

Signed *Paul Clarke*

Date: *11.08.2025*