

Letheringham Parish Council

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting held on Monday August 11th 2025, 7.00pm
in Easton & Letheringham Village Hall

Members of the Council present:

Paul Clarke (PC) (Chair & RFO)
Trevor Gill (TG) (Vice Chair & Clerk)
Jan McNeill (JM)
Malcolm Ross (MR)

District or County Councillors present:

Elaine Bryce, SCC (EB)

12 Members of the Public were present

This EGM was called to consider planning application DC/25/2733/FUL:

Site Address: Parcels to the Northwest of Easton and Southwest of Letheringham Suffolk

Proposal: Full planning application for the construction and operation of a Solar Farm (49.9MW) and Battery Energy Storage Scheme (50MW) with all associated works, equipment, enclosures, access and biodiversity net gains.

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.00 pm and invited Suffolk County Councillor Elaine Bryce (EB) speak first in the public forum as she had other meetings to attend.

2025.27 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

EB said her role with respect to the planning application, DC/25/2733/FUL, would be limited as the application sits with ESC, not SCC. However, EB said she was 100% committed to supporting LPC and the residents of Letheringham in their reasons for concern. EB mentioned how concerned she is about the potential impact on Highways – “It seems ridiculous with the regular flooding, islanding of the area, and the narrowness of the roads being suitable for construction traffic”. EB will ensure constituents’ voices are heard.

PC mentioned that Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and flooding are key also in this application and SCC is the lead authority on these.

JM thanked EB and it was echoed in the room.

PC mentioned the traffic survey currently underway in Letheringham and thanked EB for funding it.

PC said the points raised at the Parish meeting of 4th August would inform the parish council’s response to ESC. It was proposed to submit an initial response as a summary of the most salient issues and then follow up with more detailed comments.

A resident asked about ESC consultation deadline dates and letters sent out by ESC showing the original consultation deadline, now extended. PC stated that site notices are due to go up this week and that meant the deadline will then extend to 21 days from then - which is September 5th. The ESC website will give the up-to-date expiry deadline. PC mentioned that we could ask Quintas to come back and present their proposals to us and/or provide hard copies of documents and better information.

A resident voiced surprise that ESC had accepted this application at all on the basis that the submission has not met their requirements for information on heritage, archaeology etc. PC informed that ESC had stated that, once the information came in, they would then proceed from there and extend the deadline to enable all to consider it and respond.

Concern was raised that people would not be notified of extensions to the deadline and that they would have to keep an eye on the portal.

There was concern around the electrical cable connecting the proposed sites to the grid and the lack of information on where it would go.

Owners of one property in the village currently on the market had had interest from prospective buyers until the issue of the solar proposal surfaced when interest cooled. This was categorised as 'property blight' by the person relaying this.

Another resident said that a larger site would enable the density of panels to be reduced for the same power output. This would reduce the impact on residents and the landscape. There should be more room for mitigation and better design. This was simply the wrong location.

Another mentioned the fact that the landowner had included other land in the application site but took it out as it impacted on their wedding venue business. This was denied by the landowner who was present.

It was mentioned that II* listed Letheringham Lodge had been missed off the heritage asset lists.

2025.28 APOLOGIES AND APPROVAL OF ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Andrew Maskery who was attending an extraordinary meeting of Charsfield Parish Council convened to discuss this application. He was attending to explain this application and the issues that residents of Letheringham have highlighted to parish councillors.

PC proposed approval of the absence and MR seconded. Unanimously approved.

Apologies were also received from ESC Councillor Vince Langdon Morris

2025.29 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

At the meeting on May 12th 2025, all councillors had declared DPI's, ORI's and potential Non-Registerable Interests (NRI's) in the solar array & BESS application to be discussed

here in item 2025.31. These interests continue to apply. All councillors had applied for and been granted dispensations for four years on the grounds of:

- a) The number of persons prohibited from participating in the business is so great a proportion of the Council as to impede the transaction of the business; &
- b) Granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area.

PC explained to the public attending this meeting that the intention of councillors was to ensure that they acted transparently. Hence declaring interests as such a large proposal would affect all councillors and granting dispensations to enable proper representation of the community.

2025.30 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on May 12th 2025.
Approved unanimously.

2025.31 PLANNING AND LICENSING APPLICATIONS

Planning Application: **DC/25/2733/FUL**

Site Address: Parcels to the Northwest of Easton and Southwest of Letheringham.

Proposal: Full planning application for the construction and operation of a Solar Farm (49.9MW) and Battery Energy Storage Scheme (50MW) with all associated works, equipment, enclosures, access and biodiversity net gains.

PC said that the view of residents at the previous week's parish meeting was clear and unanimous in objecting to the proposal. He asked councillors if they had received any positive views or support. None had. There had been only generic information available and no consultation prior to the publication of the application on the 25th July which was the first opportunity we as residents had had to see this. PC therefore proposed submitting a top line response at this stage and then further information once we have had a chance to fully review all the application documents.

PC reported that he had received a phone message from the landowner following the parish meeting on August 4th. The message said he had spoken with the applicant who was happy for the response deadline to be extended and to meet with parish councillors to discuss the application. The applicant had suggested to the landowner that this could take place after the ESC response deadline. PC had spoken individually with councillors ahead of this meeting to inform them. The consensus was that the applicant had ignored or refused repeated requests from councillors and residents for meetings/consultations since April 22nd and had now chosen to submit the application. There was no reason to think that any meaningful engagement would happen now.
Councillors agreed that this remained their view and all dealings now would be through the ESC planning process unless the applicant withdrew the application in which case direct discussions could take place.

PC asked councillors how they would like to respond. JM requested a 2-month extension and highlighted issues with access to the ESC planning portal. She noted

missing information and inaccurate information within the application etc. An extended deadline and notices of updates to deadlines would be helpful. JM was clear that we should push for an extension as the landowner and the developer have had. There is no fair say for the community currently. PC said he had received verbal assurances from the case officer and an email from the Director of Planning that they would be happy to receive responses well beyond the current deadline to ensure that the views of the community could be considered fully for such a significant proposal. TG agreed portal issues should also be mentioned when asking for a formal extension. PC wanted to stress the absence of meaningful consultation. JM is concerned about the results of the applicant's traffic survey. PC said that SCC Archaeology had requested surveys, and no determination could be made without those surveys being carried out.

It was noted that other residents had voiced concerns over the following points which should be represented to ESC in LPC's responses:

Loss of BMV agricultural land.

Impact on the character of the landscape.

Noise – cooling fans on inverters.

Design – impact on neighbours. Highest element is 6m at the highest elevation.

Planting – issue of getting them to establish and provide adequate screening.

Tourism – the proposal acts against the Suffolk Tourism Strategy. Landscape a major selling point here.

Fire Risk – Fire Officer has submitted a detailed comment

Lack of a reinstatement plan

Logistics – no one has thought through this, the site, the massing, the cumulative impact of logistics on roads, sub-contractors and neighbouring villages.

The Forestry Commission had highlighted the displacement of deer.

PROW

The cable route and viability

Cumulative & interactive effects – traffic and construction. This has not been considered in the application.

Proposal: LPC objects to planning application DC/25/2733/FUL and seeks an extension of the response deadline to October 10th. PC proposed and MR seconded. Agreed unanimously.

Action: PC to draft an initial response, raising the above issues, and circulate to other councillors for agreement and then submit to ESC by August 15th.

Action: PC to contact ESC separately to request an extension of the deadline to October 10th.

2025.33 DATES OF SCHEDULED MEETINGS IN 2025:
September 8th, December 8th

The meeting closed at 8pm.

Signed *Paul Clarke*

Date: *08.09.2025*