



North Weald Bassett
PARISH COUNCIL

PRIOR TO THE MEETING COUNCILLORS RECEIVED A BRIEFING ON
THE PROPOSED SOLAR FARM AT FOSTER STREET, HASTINGWOOD

MINUTES

Meeting: PLANNING

18th August 2025

Time: 7pm

Venue: PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

PRESENT

Councillors: (5) B Clegg (Chairman), T Blanks, S Jackman MBE, R Spearman, A Tyler

Officers in Attendance (2)

Susan De Luca – Clerk to the Council

Adriana Jones – Principal Finance Officer

Members of the Public (3)

Members of the Press (1)

P25.012 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (7)

Councillors N Bedford, A Buckley, S Hawkins, P Etherington, P Lambert, D Wood, and A Irvine.

P25.013 OTHER ABSENCES (3)

Councillors M Stroud, C Kinnear, N Born

P25.014 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in any matters relating to the applications being discussed.

P25.015 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the previous Planning Committee meeting held on 16th July 2025 were **AGREED** and signed as a true record.

P25.016 REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no representation from the public.

P25.017 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The following comments on Planning Applications were **AGREED** and **NOTED**:

No	Application Number	Location	Proposal
1	EPF/1428/25 Muhammad Rahman (Major FPP) <i>Noted this application was for Epping Upland Parish, however it borders North Weald Bassett Parish</i>	Land at Upland Road, Upland Road, Epping	The construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic ('PV') farm (up to 49.9 MW) and associated infrastructure, including inverters, DNO Substation, Customer Switchgear, cable connection, security cameras, fencing, access tracks and landscaping
The Parish Council OBJECTS to this application for the following reasons:			

The applicant states that the land subject to this application has been classified as Grade 3a (77%) and Grade 3b (23%). The most recent formal guidance and assessment framework for agricultural land in England is based on the Agricultural Land Classification system (ALC) which was last formally revised in 1988 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. This system remains the official method for grading agricultural land quality in England. The UK Government updated its guidance in February 2021 for assessing development proposals on agricultural land. This includes policies to protect the best and most versatile (BMV) land (Grades 1, 2, and 3a). According to the ALC system, this entire site is actually grade 2 agricultural land, not grade 3. It's very easy for reports to be created which suggest a different position to the formal countryside recognised position. Regardless of this fact, if we take on face value the land classification report submitted with the application, over 75% of the land is classed as the best and most versatile agricultural land and should be protected. The Natural England Land Take Review of 2023 (along with other related reports) highlighted several key concerns and findings regarding the impact of solar farms on agricultural land, particularly best and most versatile soils, which even the applicant confirms this is. Of most concern is soil compaction, with the construction and operation of solar farms often leading to deep soil compaction which can reduce the versatility of BMV land and may be irreversible. This will have a long term impact on the ability of the site to be returned to agricultural use. In addition, rainwater runoff from solar panels can create rivulets, increasing the risk of soil erosion. As this site lies within an agricultural area, it is likely that the solar panels will need to be cleaned on a monthly basis due to dust, etc, from neighbouring farming activities. The applicant has not detailed how the panels will be maintained, especially in terms of the frequency of cleaning, what chemicals will be used, and the impact of these chemicals on local drainage and ecology. This needs to be clarified.

It goes without saying that as the proposed site is classed as the best and most versatile agricultural land, it undoubtedly plays a vital role in local food production and rural economy. The conversion of this land to industrial use undermines national and local policies aimed at protecting agricultural resources, especially in light of increasing food security concerns.

The construction phase of the solar farm will involve significant heavy vehicle movements, including delivery of panels, machinery, and materials. This will increase noise, dust, and disruption for residents. Of most concern is the proposal to route to the point of connection (POC) by laying cables along Upland Road and the B1393 – a distance of 2km. This will cause significant disruption to road users for a prolonged period of time. It is unclear why the applicant is not proposing to link to the POC 'as the crow flies' which is a distance of around 1.1km – half the distance – and will not cause significant public disruption.

Also of great concern is the potential cumulative environmental consequences of clustering multiple solar farms in Essex. The proposed development is part of a growing concentration of solar installations in the region – some already approved, some under consideration, and some on the horizon - which raises serious concerns about the Photovoltaic Heat Island (PVHI) effect. Recent scientific studies (e.g., Barron-Gafford *Nature Scientific Reports*) have shown that solar farms can increase local nighttime temperatures by 3–4°C compared to surrounding natural land (the warming being caused by reduced albedo, vegetation removal, and heat retention by solar panels). In addition, when multiple solar farms are located close together, the heat island effect compounds, potentially altering local microclimates, soil health, and biodiversity. In Essex, where several solar farms are on the horizon, the cumulative thermal impact has the potential to disrupt local weather patterns and water cycles, stress native wildlife and agricultural ecosystems, and create a perception of industrialisation of the countryside, undermining the rural character and community wellbeing.

It is also understood that the Government is currently looking a number of alternative energy supply options – some of which result in a higher and more stable energy output without the need to use so much of our best and most versatile agricultural land.

It should also be noted that within the applicants planning statement under paragraph 2.5 they set out that part of the application boundary extends through Hayleys Manor Business Park, and that this land *falls outside the Green Belt* and is associated with Employment Designation RUR.E5 'Land at Hayleys Manor'. This is incorrect – the entire site, including Hayleys Manor Business Parks is within the Green Belt.

In summary, the Parish Council **OBJECTS** to this application for the following reasons:

- Landscape and Visual Impact on the Green belt, contrary to EFDC Local Plan Policies Policy DM2 Green Belt, DM4 – Landscape Character, Ancient Landscapes and Geodiversity, and Policy DM5 – Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Loss of Best and most versatile Agricultural Land, given rising concerns about food security and the need to preserve productive farmland, which is contrary to EFDC Local Plan Policy DM2 Green Belt, and DM22 – Air Quality and Land Contamination
- Cumulative Environmental Impacts, contrary to EFDC Local Plan Policy DM20 – Low Carbon and Renewable Energy (Photovoltaic Heat Island (PVHI) effect) and policy DM21 – Local Environmental Impacts, Pollution and Land Contamination due to possible land degradation.
- Traffic and Infrastructure Impact, relating to both the construction period and the link to the POC, which would be contrary to Policy T1 Sustainable Transport Choices, which requires the applicant to assess and mitigate transport impacts, including those arising during construction

The Parish Council is prepared to attend and speak at any EFDC Planning Committee meeting regarding this application.

2	EPF/1331/25 <i>Loredana Ciavucco</i> (Other HPP)	75, Weald Bridge Road, North Weald Bassett, Epping, CM16 6ES	Removal of existing front and rear dormers, roof extension converting hip ends to gable ends, and new front and rear dormers.
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Councillors **NOTED** that although the Parish Council had formally requested an extension for the consideration of this application, it had not been granted, and the application had already been refused by EFDC.

3	EPF/1401/25 <i>Yee Cheung</i>	The Poplars, Epping Road, North Weald Bassett, Epping, CM16 6LA	Temporary storage for business premises. To be removed on completion of site development.
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The Parish Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this application, subject to it being for a fixed temporary period of no more than 3 years, after which the unit must be removed.

4	EPF/1417/25 <i>Muhammad Rahman</i>	Land Adjacent Horse Shoe Farm, London Road, North Weald, Harlow, CM17 9LH	Change of use of an existing agricultural building (Unit 41) to a flexible commercial use under Class R of Part 3, Schedule 2 of the GPDO 2015 (as amended). The proposed use is Class B8 (Storage and Distribution). No operational development is proposed as part of this application.
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The Parish Council assessed this application against the requirements of the relevant section of the GPDO, and whilst the Council believes the change of use of the proposed Unit 41 would be lawful, there has been significant engineering works to install an extremely large access point to this, and the adjacent unit, directly off the B1393. Section R3 (b) requires the applicant to apply to the local authority for determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority would be required as to the Transport and Highway impacts of the Development. The Parish Council believes that access to Unit 41 would be from this main access of the B1393 which is at present a 60mph road, and not via the current access point. The applicant states that there will be no 'operational development' as part of the proposal, however the Parish Council believes the creation of this extremely large and hard surfaced access point would be classed as operational development. Therefore, the Parish Council asks the Local Planning Authority consider this particular element of the works as part of this application. Should permission be granted, the Parish Council asks that a condition be attached to the permission which limits the use to B8 only, to restrict the 'flexible use' covered under Class R, and that clarification should be obtained as to exactly which access point vehicles would be permitted to use.

5	EPF/1485/25 <i>Klajdi Koci</i>	31, Upland Road, Epping Upland, Epping, CM16 6NJ	"Replacement front entrance porch. Proposed two storey side / rear extension. Proposed first floor rear extension over existing ground floor."
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The Parish Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this application

6	EPF/1488/25 <i>Loredana Ciavucco</i>	1 Kerrs Bungalows, High Road, North Weald Bassett, Epping, CM16 6BA	Prior Approval for additional storey to existing dwelling.
The Parish Council has NO CONCERNS regarding this application			
7	EPF/1489/25 <i>Loredana Ciavucco</i>	2 Kerrs Bungalows, High Road, North Weald Bassett, Epping, CM16 6BA	Prior Approval for additional storey to existing dwelling.
The Parish Council has NO CONCERNS regarding this application			
8	EPF/1566/25 <i>Mohinder Bagry</i>	21, School Green Lane, North Weald Bassett, Epping, CM16 6EH	Single storey and two storey rear extension inc. hip to gable loft conversion with rear facing dormer window and two front elevation roof light windows.
The Parish Council has NO OBJECTION to this application			

Applications that were NOTED:

No	Application Number	Location	Proposal
1	EPF/1440/25 <i>Muhammad Rahman</i>	Land at North Weald Aerodrome, North Weald, Essex	Application for approval of details reserved by condition 13 (Bat Lighting) & Condition 19 (Secured by Design) on planning permission EPF/2478/23 (Construction and Operation of an Operations Hub comprising commercial vehicle fleet parking (including offices, storage, and vehicle maintenance hangers) and associated infrastructure including fuel island, vehicular access, internal roads and paths, parking, cycle/bin store, security fencing/gates/barriers, lighting, and landscaping).
NOTED			
2	EPF/1494/25 <i>Loredana Ciavucco</i>	31, Queens Road, North Weald Bassett, Epping, CM16 6JE	Certificate of Lawful Development for proposed loft conversion with rear dormer and front roof lights.
NOTED			
3	EPF/1571/25 <i>Sukhvinder Dhadwar</i>	Avenue House, London Road, Hastingwood, Harlow, CM17 9NJ	Approval of Details Reserved by Conditions 4, 5, 6 and 10 of EPF/0648/24 (The erection of 6 dwellings with access, parking and associated works).
NOTED			
4	EPF/1585/25 <i>Loredana Ciavucco</i>	26 Brookfield, Weald Hall Lane, Thornwood, Epping, CM16 6NG	Certificate of Lawful Development for a proposed loft conversion, including rear facing roof dormer.
NOTED			
5	EPF/1645/25 <i>Muhammad Rahman</i>	North Weald Airfield, Merlin Way, North Weald Bassett, CM16 6HR	Application for approval of details reserved by condition 6 (Contamination) on EPF/2478/23 (Construction and Operation of an Operations Hub comprising commercial vehicle fleet parking (including offices, storage, and vehicle maintenance hangers) and associated infrastructure including fuel island, vehicular access, internal roads and paths, parking, cycle/bin store, security fencing/gates/barriers, lighting, and landscaping)
NOTED			

P25.018 DECISIONS BY EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL – None received

P25.019 EFDC LICENCES

a) Applications – none received.

b) Consultations – none received.

P25.020 PLANNING CORRESPONDENCE

Draft Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule Consultation

Councillors noted that EFDC is currently consulting on a draft charging schedule for a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to be set for the Epping Forest District. The CIL is a locally set charge (referred to as a levy) on new development which the Council can choose to introduce. The levy is based on the size and type of development and once set is mandatory to pay and non-negotiable. The funds raised would be distributed by the District Council to provide infrastructure which is required to support new development within the local area. This infrastructure could include roads, transport facilities, flood defences, education facilities, medical facilities, sporting and recreation facilities, and open spaces. Currently when new development proposals are approved by the Council, it is common for an agreement to be made (known as a planning obligation, section 106 agreement or developer contribution) for developers to either provide new or improved infrastructure, or financial contributions towards the provision of new or improved infrastructure in the area. This could include highways improvements, new or improved parks and play facilities, and services and facilities such as new or improved schools and health facilities. The CIL will not replace the Council's current methods of obtaining infrastructure and funding through planning obligations.

The CIL provides an additional mechanism to obtain financial contributions towards new and improved infrastructure. The levy may be payable on development which creates a new or additional internal area, where the gross internal area of new build is 100 square metres or more. Development which is less than 100 square metres, but which involves the creation of a new house or flat, may also be liable to pay the levy. Some developments may be eligible for discretionary relief or exemption from the levy. This includes residential annexes and extensions, social housing, charitable development, and houses and flats which are built by 'self-builders'. Councillors recalled that this was one of the factors that led this Council to reinvigorate its neighbourhood plan. For Parish Councils without a Neighbourhood Plan, the local community typically receives **15%** of CIL revenues from development in their area. For Councils with a Neighbourhood Plan, this share increases to **25%**, and it is paid directly to the parish or town council to spend on infrastructure or anything else that supports development of the area.

The Clerk and PFO provided a full update on the proposal, including the proposed charging schedule. It was noted that the proposed charge for the strategic site of North Weald Bassett commanded a much lower figure than the strategic sites for Epping and Waltham Abbey, and that this was due to the ability of the developer to command higher prices for houses in these areas. It was also noted that the sites around Latton Priory had a proposed NIL figure, and that this was possibly due the infrastructure requirements already expected as part of the proposals, or as a way to entice development to these areas. It was also noted that there was a full viability document included as part of the consultation which set out the rationale for the figures states, and Councillors noted that the price proposed for the North Weald strategic site had already been reduced as a result of consultation with developers. Cllr Tyler expressed concern that there was a charge being imposed on specialist housing which included sheltered housing and extra care housing.

Overall, Councillors felt that the introduction of the CIL was a good idea, and confirmed that the Clerk should draft a response to the consultation to be approved at the September Parish Council meeting. The deadline for responding to the consultation is 5pm on Tuesday 9th September 2025.

P25.021 ANY OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO PLANNING

Nil.

Meeting Closed 20.25

Signed Date