

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

Minutes of meeting held on 8th January 2025 at 2.30pm at The Firs, Fairby Lane, Hartley

1. PRESENT

Chris Alford (Chairman) Gary Andrews, Jim Colwell, David Conroy, Stephanie Cassidy, Gerald Cramp, Mark Heeley, Tracy Longley and Ian Ross (Vice Chairman)

Peter Tasker attended to provide information on the New Ash Green Solar Opposition.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Stephen Goss and Glenn Back

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations.

4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7th November 2024

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting be approved and adopted.

5. NEW ASH GREEN SOLAR OPPOSITION

Peter Tasker attended the meeting at the request of the Chairman to provide information on the opposition to the proposed solar farm between New Ash Green and Ridley. The key points were:

- 69% of New Ash Green residents are opposed to the Solar Farm with 2,077 people having signed a petition. The local MP Tom Tugendhat has stated his opposition.
- The planning application for the Solar Farm has not yet been entered on the SDC planning portal but it is expected any day.
- A group "No New Ash Green Solar" has been established and solicitors, Buxtons, appointed to assist with opposing the planning application. Buxtons have significant experience of this work and will engage appropriate experts.
- Hartley should oppose the planning application as, although the land involved is not within Hartley Parish, it will impact on the village and particularly on the Hartley Bottom area.
- Peter was provided with copies of relevant pages from Hartley's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) relating to the Hartley Bottom area. Chris will provide Peter with contact details of the consultant who produced the LCA. Peter advised that they have reviewed the Landscape sensitivity assessment produced for Sevenoaks District.
- The land is currently a tenant dairy farm and the land owner is a family named Grubb based in Hampshire/Devon who have little interest in the farm. Evolution Power is the company which is applying for planning permission and they have a record of obtaining planning permissions and then selling the land. They have made it clear that they will appeal if permission is refused.
- SDC have stated that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.
- More suitable sites are available for this type of development. The proposed site is situated in the wrong position to make best use of the sun. Batteries will be scattered throughout fields and connection to the grid would be via the pylon situated at Eaglesfield. Installation works will be disruptive with local roads being

dug up and a large sub-station built. Evolution Power have stated that it will take approx one year to complete but other similar sites have taken two years.

- All SDC councillors on the planning committee have been contacted.
- Ash cum Ridley have produced a draft Neighbourhood Plan and Peter will ask the Parish Council for an update.
- Chris advised that the Steering Group has been successful in obtaining funding from Locality for consultants, Intelligent Plans & Examinations Limited, to assist with drafting the Hartley Neighbourhood Plan. Peter was provided with contact details of this company.
- For anyone who wishes to be included on the distribution list for the opposition group, they should email Peter@Petertasker.co.uk

6. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT PLAN BY PLANNING CONSULTANTS

Chris advised that Locality have agreed to fund 20 days of employment of a consultant to assist with completion of the Neighbourhood Plan. The company undertaking this work will be Intelligent Plans & Examinations Limited and the consultant nominated is Derek Stebbing. Chris will make contact with Derek to discuss processes and arrange a meeting which Chris, Glenn, David, Gary and Mark will attend.

It was agreed that the Group needs to concentrate on production of the evidence sheets.

Mark agreed to review Fawkhams Basic Condition Statement and amend it for Hartley.

Jim has undertaken further work on Local Green Spaces and reduced the number to 11. Each site requires an audit including size, how maintained, ownership, use, quality and condition. There was some discussion on sites which had been removed and it was agreed to reinstate Northfields but to obtain advice from the consultant before reinstating any other sites.

Heritage assets – Gerald has produced a paper detailing the 18 listed buildings and will review with Chris.

Protection of Community Assets – it was agreed to retain all assets in the policy. Each asset will need to be plotted on a plan and a photograph provided.

It was agreed to provide an update in the next Parish newsletter in March.

Chris will send the consultant the latest version of the Plan together with the Health Check document.

It was AGREED that the Chairman would arrange a meeting with the consultant Derek Stebbing which Chris, Glenn, David, Gary and Mark would attend.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chris advised that the Parish Council had objected to the development of two houses at the top of Castle Hill. A decision from Sevenoaks planning committee is awaited.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date will be arranged after the meeting with the Intelligent Plans & Examinations Limited consultant has taken place.

The meeting ended at 4pm.