

HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 4 June 2025, 7:00pm.

Present: Cllr P Boothman - Chair
Cllr Gilmour
Cllr D Keane
Cllr J Rodgers
Cllr R Southworth
Cllr Baxendale
Cllr R Guinea
Cllr A Skinner
Cllr N Rowe

There were three members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Keane declared a declaration of interest in item 7.3 based on his role as Conservative Councillor.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Cllr Ross Martin of Huntingdonshire District Council voiced concerns over the content of an article published in the village magazine (No 179 June 2025, 4-5). The article was based on information shared at a meeting at Westminster between Parish Councillors from across the area, MP Ben Obese-Jecty and Cllr Martin. Cllr Martin suggests that some of this information, which related to the Local Plan 'assessment of sites', was confidential and not to be shared outside the meeting.

Cllr Martin confirmed that there are no minutes from the meeting at Westminster to demonstrate that the information shared was explicitly identified as confidential. Cllr Boothman who attended the meeting also felt that this was not made clear and stated that the facts quoted in the article were already in the public domain.

Cllr Martin expressed concerns that his title as District Councillor rather than Parliamentary Representative was used in the article which he had not had the opportunity to view prior to publication. Cllr Boothman apologised on behalf of the Parish Council.

It was explained to Cllr Martin that the Parish Council is keen to take action on the potential over-development of this area ahead of the Local Plan Preferred Options report, and feels that one way of doing this through our elected representatives district councillors and the MP. Cllr Boothman emphasised the fact that all district councillors are therefore very welcome and encouraged to attend Parish Council meetings and thanked Cllr Martin for attending in person.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of 7 May 2025 were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Cllr Baxendale; Seconded: Cllr Southworth. All in favour

RESOLVED: The minutes of 23 May 2025 were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Cllr Guinea; Seconded: Rodgers. All in favour

5. MATTERS ARISING

A new temporary Transport Officer has been appointed at HDC. There is currently a list of open jobs to be completed. When jobs are logged the job code should be noted so that progress can be tracked. Cross-hatching at the end of Mill Street will be added to the jobs list, and the jobs list will be circulated. **ACTION: Cllr Keane**

6. DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

- The Local Plan consultation closes on 4 June.
- There will be an update on the Local Government Reorganisation following a meeting next Tuesday.
- Residential food waste collection by HDC will be in place from April 2026. Food caddies will be provided to all households. There will be no charge for the service.
- Support is available for Community Infrastructure Levy applications. Contacts will be provided so advice can be sought. **ACTION: Cllr Keane**
- The Town and Parish Newsletter is circulated to all towns and parishes in the district. It has now been in circulation for 18 months and HDC are requesting feedback on its effectiveness.
- The Annual Town and Parish Forum takes place on Thursday 19th June, 9am – 4pm at the Burgess Hall. All are welcome. Representative(s) of the Parish Council will attend.
- Civil Parking Enforcement by HDC will come into place in August.

7. PLANNING MATTERS

7.1. Houghton Grange phase 1 – S106 agreement, facilities and infrastructure
The Parish Council should receive the S106 funding for Houghton Grange Phase 1 when 12 additional open market properties are occupied. Concern was expressed that at the current rate of occupation this could be next financial year. Updates on when these funds will be released are crucial for cash flow planning.

7.2. Houghton Grange Phase 2 – DMC meeting 17th June, S106 agreement

- A response was received from the Strategic Sports Development Officer, who confirmed that the funds will be used to support formal sports within Houghton and Wyton. No responses have been received thus far from the Sports Clubs on how they feel the funding should be allocated.
It is felt that the funds would be best used to increase capacity for sports and recreation in the Parish. For example, a reduction in the number of houses within the footprint of Houghton Grange Phase 2 would allow for this.
This comment has already been made as part of the Parish Council's response to consultations, but it was felt that this should be formally expressed through a request for S106 funding. **ACTION: Clerk, Cllrs Boothman and Baxendale**
- Houghton Grange Phase 2 is not on the agenda for the Development Management Committee Meeting on 16th June as hoped. There have now been 8 amendments to the planning application, 3 separate consultations and 2 mediation sessions. A letter will be written to the Chief Executive Officer at HDC to express concerns over the process. **Action: Clerk**

7.3. Local Plan – Call for Sites consultation.

RESOLVED: A response to the additional call for sites (see below) was shared with the council and will be submitted to HDC.

Houghton and Wyton 6: Ruddles Lane, Wyton - 28.03ha solar farm.

We support benefits from solar farms increasing energy security and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However we believe there needs to be a more transparent criteria to help determine which sites are the most appropriate for solar farms.

We would also like the assessment criteria to consider the potential each site has to deliver local community heat and power schemes – scoring more highly for community-based schemes.

We feel strongly that where an infrastructure proposal removes good quality land, it needs to be assessed against alternative strategic choices for the area/region.

For example we have already submitted comments to the earlier review of the Local Plan call for sites consultation, stating there is an obvious better alternative for a solar farm on land close by - notably MOD at Wyton on the Hill.

The expansive and elevated site at Wyton on the Hill, which includes previously developed land would have minimal visual impact on surrounding settlements. The site has the capacity to meet a far higher power output enabling smaller sites (such as Houghton) to remain in agricultural production. Moreover it could add further value to the expanding MOD facilities here by providing power resilience. For this vital national defence function.

In the case of the Ruddles Lane site we can only make the following observations:

The site is a Greenfield location situated in the countryside within Wyton on the Hill Parish. It would not contribute to reuse of previously developed land or regeneration. It would result in the loss of prime agricultural land.

For sustainability assessment purposes, Natural England defines Best and Most Versatile land as grades 1 – 3a. This is picked up and made legal policy in the current LP10. Hence just as the policy and guidance state, we should only be considering land for development which is below grade 3a and not capable of achieving any higher.

Huntingdonshire benefits from the fact of having some of the very best quality and most precious agricultural land in the UK, which NPPF and current LP10 crucially looks to protect. All of the Ruddles Lane site is good quality with approximately half classified as grade 2 agricultural land and the other half being grade 3.

The majority of the site is within 400m of a WRA which places limits on development so close. Roughly a third of the site is also in flood zones 2 and 3a and therefore at risk of flooding.

The solar panels would be erected on land which rises 25m from top to bottom. Part of the boundary is exposed with views into the site visible particularly from the south and eastern side facing the village. It also overlooks the Ouse Valley landscape and therefore may result in substantial harm to the character of the landscape.

Houghton and Wyton 7: Land between Garden Centre and Splash Lane, Wyton - Up to 450 homes

This is a wholly greenfield site comprising high grade agricultural land mostly grade 2 with just the northern edge being grade 3.

The proposal is for a residential led mixed use development and yet the site wholly located within flood zone 3a with a very high risk of flooding.

The site is located within the Great Ouse Valley Green Infrastructure Priority Area with open views into the site from the Huntingdon road.

Development at this location would create a continuous ribbon development effectively removing any gap between Wyton and the built-up outer reaches of Hartford.

Taken together we agree with the conclusions of the Landscape Assessment and feel that this site is inappropriate for development.

Huntingdon 5: Land at the former WATA Site, Hartford Circa 46 homes including 18 affordable homes.

The site is wholly located within flood zone 2 with surface water flood risk across half of the site. There are many alternative sites offered for development which do not carry the same risk as this site and therefore it should be dismissed.

When assessing the suitability of this land for residential development we question the gap between potential new housing and the capacity of the existing sewage infrastructure. The issue of waste water treatment was flagged up at the Development Management Committee in January 2025 when discussing the field next door to the site under application 22/01460/OUT (25 - 30 dwellings on Land Northeast Of 2 Old Houghton Road And Southeast Of Main Street, Hartford). Anglian Water reported that their treatment works was already at capacity and they had no plans to upgrade the treatment works in the immediate future.

Hence assessing this site as suitable for development and allowing it to proceed would be negligent, because it would be a decision carried out in the knowledge that without a plan or policy to upgrade the water treatment infrastructure, it would result in either the houses

remaining unoccupied under Grampian Conditions, or sewage having to be released into the river Great Ouse. Sewage pollution is listed by the Environment Agency as one of the reasons the Great Ouse is failing to achieve "good ecological status".

This issue is being faced by other councils along the Great Ouse and currently the subject of a judicial review at the High Court, challenging Buckinghamshire Council's decision to grant planning permission for the Maids Moreton development.

Given this is a consultation exercise to determine the availability and suitability of land to be put forward for development in the Local Plan, it also has implications in terms of the councils ability to meet its housing targets within the Local Plan. The proposer is putting forward availability of the site between 2024 – 2028 which given the lack of water treatment capacity situation must be in question.

More likely we believe that without a firm plan and timetable for water treatment capacity to be improved sufficiently to meet the demand, the Local Plan Inspector may rule this housing as being unsound for delivering the housing target.

For all the reasons above, we believe that the land should be assessed as currently unsuitable.

Proposed: Cllr Guinea; Seconded: Rodgers. All in favour

7.4. Potential developments surrounding the Parish – Bellway proposal, RAF Wyton etc

There have been no updates on the developments. A meeting with St Ives Town Council will be requested. **ACTION: Cllr Boothman**

8. REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Traffic and highway issues

8.1.1 20mph - Monitoring effectiveness and feedback to Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC).

Views of residents will be sought at the Annual Parish Meeting on Saturday 14 June in order to feedback to the County Council. The possibility of a 'Speed watch' campaign to monitor the 20mph and 40mph speed limits was discussed.

8.1.2 Local Highways Initiative 2025/26 – presentation day 4 July 2025

The feasibility study for the new bus stop at Hartford Marina has not yet been received from CCC. An update will be sought. **ACTION: Cllr Keane**

8.2 Playing Field and Sports Clubs

8.2.1. Broken tiles on Pavilion roof – discuss culpability and prevention

There have been three separate incidents of broken tiles over the past year due to cricket balls, with a cost of over £500. A member of the cricket club suggested that this could be due to batting equipment becoming larger and stronger. It was agreed that it would not be appropriate to place netting in front of the pavilion. The Cricket Club agreed that the tile could be fixed by the club without any recourse to an insurance claim. The frequency of incidents will be closely monitored over the next year. The cricket club holds public liability insurance which could be used to cover any more costly repairs. **ACTION: Asst. Clerk**

8.2.2. CCTV over compound and playing field

Three quotes will be obtained. **ACTION: Clerk**

8.2.3 Use of School Playing Field for Junior Football

The school headteacher is keen to attend a meeting. A response from the manager of the St Ives junior team is awaited. Cllrs Boothman and Guinea are also keen to attend.

Action: Asst. Clerk

8.2.4 Playing field surface improvement and maintenance – update

Maintenance work has been delayed due to dry weather. Vertidrain and weeding work will be scheduled following sufficient rain. Seeding will now take place in September.

The Tennis Club have requested support with cutting back trees adjacent to the court fence as they are beginning to grow over the courts. HDC have quoted £300 to carry out the work. Following this the Tennis Club will be asked to monitor and maintain any regrowth.

RESOLVED: Quote for £300 approved under Responsible Financial Officer's delegated power.

9. PROJECTS

9.1 St Mary's Centre improvements – CIL Application

The closing date for applications is 15 August. A meeting will be requested with the PCC to discuss the CIL application and investigations into the internal structure of the pillars in the main hall. Cllr Guinea will provide contact details for support with the application. **ACTION: Cllr Baxendale / Cllr Guinea**

9.2 Clocktower Phase 2

There are no updates regarding the Temporary Traffic Regulation Order

9.3 Cemetery Extension – update on ground preparation

A hosepipe has been installed within the hedge at the cemetery, to allow watering of the saplings. Mulch will be placed around the saplings to improve growth.

10. CLERK, ASSISTANT CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

10.1 To authorise payments due and paid and note financial reports and bank balances.

Thanks were expressed to Steve Davis who has carried out voluntary work to restore the church kissing gates. It was agreed that if requested, the Parish Council would consider paying for this work.

Payee	Description	Amount (inc vat)
Netwise UK	Website / Email hosting	£417.60
Great Ouse Valley Trust	Annual subscription	£40
Huntingdonshire District Council	Cemetery Extension	£1,058

The monthly budget forecast for 2025-26 will be reviewed and approved at the meeting on 2 July. **ACTION: Clerk**

10.2 Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2024-25

10.2.1 Approval of the Annual Governance Statement 2024-25

RESOLVED: The 2024-25 Annual Governance Statement was approved. Special thanks were given to the Clerk and Cllr Southworth for their work on this.

Proposed: Cllr Rowe; Seconded: Cllr Guinea. All in favour

All comments from last year's Annual Governance Statement have been addressed.

10.2.2 Approval of the Accounting Statements 2024-25

RESOLVED: The 2024-25 Accounting Statements were approved.

Proposed: Cllr Rowe; Seconded: Cllr Guinea. All in favour

10.3 Re-investment of matured 1 year savings bond

Options for re-investment were discussed. The interest rate for the 6 -month bond is 4.6%.

Resolved: £45,000 will be re-invested into the 6-month bond. Investment of additional sums will be considered following the review of the cash flow forecast.

Proposed: Cllr Southworth; Seconded: Cllr Baxendale. All in favour

10.4 Parish Council Policies, Guidelines and Procedures.

10.4.1 Draft Standing Orders

A draft was prepared based on the National Association of Local Councils' Model Standing Orders 2025.

A working group (Cllrs Boothman, Guinea, Skinner and Southworth) will be formed to review the draft and produce a final draft for approval at the meeting on 2 July.

10.4.2 Parish Council Asset Register

The Clocktower and Pavilion will be re-valued to ensure that insurance covers these assets. This will be added to the budget for 2025-26.

The Cricket Club hold insurance for their shed in the compound. Football Club and Feast Week will be contacted to confirm whether their sheds are also insured. **ACTION:**

Asst Clerk

Cllr Southworth will write a draft Parish Asset Register Policy for approval at the meeting on 2 July. **ACTION: Cllr Southworth**

10.4.3 Advertising Guidelines

RESOLVED: The guidelines were approved and will be adopted.

Proposed: Cllr Skinner; Seconded: Cllr Guinea. All in favour.

10.4.4 Communication Strategy

A draft Communication Strategy was shared. It was suggested that guidelines for the use of WhatsApp should be added. The draft will be reviewed and comments brought to the meeting on 2 July. A working group will then be formed.

10.5 Annual Parish Meeting – 14 June

A meeting will be arranged to discuss the Parish Council stand at the event. **ACTION:**

Asst Clerk

11. CORRESPONDENCE

- Double yellow lines on St Ives Road

The new double yellow lines are making a positive improvement to traffic movements through that part of the village. However, it has not resolved the risk of damage to the wall by Manor Farm which has been hit twice this year by vehicles reversing from the blind bend. As reported last month, a review will take place in the autumn as to whether these lines should be extended.

12. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT FUTURE MEETINGS, DELEGATED ACTIONS OR FOR INFORMATION ONLY

- Details of Unity Trust bank will be shared for consideration as an alternative to the account with Santander.

13. DATE OF NEXT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The next Parish Council meeting will be **Wednesday 2 July 2025 at 7pm.**

Signature Date.....