

CHARSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting Held on Monday, 11th August 2025, 7:30pm in Charsfield Village Hall.

Present: Councillors Rixon (Chair), Crone, Moor (Vice Chair), Laird and Viviane Ward (Parish Clerk)

Suffolk County Council, County Councillor: Elaine Bryce

Members of the Public: 30

- 1. Apologies and Approval for absence:** Councillor Haird and Youngman approved. Ed Youngman and Sally Haird
- 2. Declaration of members' interest:** to receive declarations of registrable interests, other and non- registrable interests as detailed in Appendix B of the [LGA Model Code of Conduct 2020](#) - no declarations of interest or requests for dispensation.
- 3. Planning consultation**

Application no.: DC/25/2733/FUL

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

Site address: Parcels To Northwest Of Easton And South West Of Letheringham, Suffolk,

Consultation letter expiry date: was 15th August 2025, now 5th September 2025

Link: [Public Access](#)

3.1 Meeting opening

Councillor Rixon (Chair) opened the meeting. He summarised some key numbers and illustrated that the height of fencing almost reached the ceiling.

Deben Solar Farm project in Letheringham

- 49.9Mw battery & solar panel facility, est. 125,000 to 145,000 panels on c.200 acres
- Power for a claimed 15,500 homes
- 40year lifetime, then decommissioning
- Sites surrounded by security/deer fencing 2.48m high. Panels 3m high (top edge)
- Latest planning application was submitted to ESC by Quintas Cleantech in August 2025
- Construction over 12 months starts 2029, up to 80 workers on site (at peak)
- Sites: two parcels of open land. Northern is north of Kettleborough Road, west of Framlingham Road, Easton; Southern is west of Park Road, Letheringham.
- Site access: Northern via Framlingham Road; Southern via B1078 Charsfield (i) Park Road or and (ii) Church Road/Sandy Lane.

- Approx. 860 HGV trips: 160 HGVs month 1 max. tailing to less than half that month 4 on. Ave: 14 return movements per day month1 (busiest). Assumes 6 day working.
- Plus vehicles for skips, waste, workers, etc.

Land

- Landowner: Alistair Kerr (Easton Park Farm); Developer: Quintas Cleantech
- Currently the land is used partly for agricultural production:
 - Some Grade 2 (Very good quality agricultural land); Some Grade 3 (Good to moderate)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): declared not required by ESC (50Mw threshold for EIA, 49.9Mw plan submitted)

Useful links for information

ESC Planning Portal link: <https://publicaccess.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=SZ6W0UQXKGU00>
riverdebensolar.co.uk
stopdebensolar.co.uk
grupotec-anconasolarfarm.co.uk

3.2 Planning process

Councillor Moor (Vice Chair) summarised the planning process. Here is a brief over view of the planning process so you can be more aware of how you can engage with it.

The Parish Council first became aware of the possibility of a solar farm across two sites in Letheringham and Easton in February this year. East Suffolk Council had to decide whether an Environmental Impact Assessment was necessary, and strictly in accordance with the relevant regulations they decided it was not. They did have the option to decide otherwise. However, this decision in no way predetermines the outcome of a full planning application.

That is the stage we are at now. A Full Planning Application for the Solar Farm was submitted on 10th July 2025. We are therefore in the consultation period. The Local Authority has to consult with certain bodies as part of this process and in this instance Charsfield PC is a consultee so we will be making our comments following a vote of all Councillors present later this evening. The Local Authority also advises neighbours of a planning application.

Sometimes people are affected who aren't neighbours but however you find out about a planning application, however much you are affected and whether you want to support or object there is a process to follow.

You can view an application and make your comments on East Suffolk Councils Planning Portal. I have written some simple brief notes for those who might not be au fait with the system and how to use it. (at the end of this document). The easiest way to find the specific application is via the 'Public Access' box, which will take you to a page with 2 fields, a status field and below that an empty field. In the empty field type in Letheringham then press search. This application is the very top one.

Clicking on 'Documents' will show all the documents that form the application and the comments that have already been made. Before making a comment it is usually

recommended you view all plans and documentation for the application, a significant undertaking in this case.

Clicking on 'Comments' will reveal a list of objectors and supporters and gives the option to 'make a comment'. If you have not already registered you will have to do so first.

All comments submitted on planning applications are a matter of public record. You must make your comments before the expiry date, which is 5th September, and your comments must be relevant.

There is guidance on what should be included in comments on applications. This is available in the link 'comment on a planning application'. One of the three boxes on the first page.

This is a major application, but the process is not modified to reflect that. Usually, the Planning Case Officer will make a 'minded to' decision which is then reviewed by another planning officer. However, this is not always the case. If the case officer decision is contrary to a consultee opinion or that of a ward member then the matter goes before a referral panel. The referral panel decide whether to delegate the determination of the application to planning officers or refer it to the Planning Committee. I have been told by the Chair of Letheringham PC that he has been advised by East Suffolk Council that due to the significant public interest this application will be dealt with at Planning Committee.

The Planning Committee meeting is an open meeting in a reasonably formal setting. Not everyone can speak though. Speakers have to pre-register and are limited in number. Generally, one per Parish Council, one on behalf of the objectors and one on behalf of the applicant. Speakers have a maximum of 3 minutes to get their point across and if there is more than one from each group that 3 minutes is split.

It is important that if you feel strongly about this application, either way, you make your comments as already detailed. I will stay behind at the end of the meeting to go through the process again with anyone who wants further guidance on it.

Step by step guide for viewing and commenting on a planning application

Using your web browser (eg google/safari) go to **East Suffolk Planning**

Click on **View and comment on a planning application**

There are 3 boxes on the first page. Select the '**public access**' box

This will take you to a page with 2 fields, a status field and below that an empty field. In the empty field **type in Letheringham then press search.**

The next page shows a list of planning applications in Letheringham. This application is the very top one. **Click on the blue heading** to open it up.

Click on 'Documents' in blue. This will be at the top or bottom of the page depending on your device. You can see all the comments that have already been submitted and all the documents that form the application. Any that you want to read, press the little icon to the right of the page under the view column. You can select an overview of just a specific section of the documents by using the drop down arrows.

To make a comment: **click on 'comments'** in blue either at the top or bottom of the page depending on your device. Here you will also find a list of objectors and supporters. Choose the option **'make a comment'**. You will either have to log in or register to make a comment.

There is guidance on what should be included in comments on applications. This is available in the link **'comment on a planning application'**. One of the three boxes on the first page.

3.3 Time to View Plans and Documents

Plans and documents were made available and attendees were given opportunity and time to review prior to feedback being invited.

3.4 Elaine Bryce (Suffolk County Council, County Councillor)

This may be first of many more applications. We need to consider the wider development and cumulative impact. The planning and infrastructure bill is not considering the impact on rural land. This planning application should not be forced through.

It is critical to protect food security and not use premium farmland.

Concerned about Highways, adding to Sizewell traffic, plus use of unsuitable roads for access to the site. Suffolk County Council need to consider impact on roads and safety of schools.

Elaine will be pressing the issues with Suffolk Highways.

Flooding may be aggravated by compacting of soil from high site traffic and stopping the land absorbing the water.

Personally opposed to this planning application. Applauds benefits of solar energy, but this solar farm is in the wrong place. More safeguards are needed.

Suffolk County Council need to walk around the sites and see roads proposed to be used for access.

Consideration is required on what will happen to the site when no longer used.

Need to look at accumulative traffic – Highways and County Council issue. Look at impact on the whole of Suffolk in conjunction with other big projects e.g. Sizewell.

Elaine will be pursuing the cumulative impact of the various East Suffolk solar developments and applications, regarding fire risk, highways, loss of high quality agricultural land, tourism, etc."

3.5 Feedback from Audience

3.5.1 Impact of Increased Traffic

- Park and Ride in Wickham Market will become a traffic pinch point already with Sizewell traffic. This planning application will aggravate this. Wickham Market meeting on this planning application on the 12th August 2025. Councillor Rixon (Chair) will also raise at the Community Partnership meeting we have we have been invited to with Framlingham and Wickham Market.

- Needs to be looked at accumulatively/holistically with other big infrastructure projects e.g. Sizewell
- Access roads not suitable for HGV traffic – sharp bends, narrow tracks with no passing points
- School safety needs to be a priority, as current HGV path passes by Charsfield school and will impact pick up/route for rural secondary schools.
- What safeguarding/enforcement will be implemented to ensure any agreed access route is adhered to? It will be a condition of any planning application, but is typically not enforced/ controlled.

3.5.2 Effect on wildlife

- Biodiversity net gain claim is high; however, this is disputed by Suffolk Wildlife.
- The land is a deer park, with ancient woodland, and much wildlife such as bats - important wildlife habitat.
- Linking up with RSPB to show wildlife – send your pictures of the area to 'I record' app. Register what wildlife you see.
- The security /deer fencing will stop the movement of deer and other wildlife.
- What safeguarding will be implemented to ensure any wildlife protection in the planning application will be adhered to?

3.5.3 The first of many solar farms

Once the infrastructure is in place this will open the possibility of many more solar farms being established.

3.5.4 Tourism

Many tourists visit this area, as it is a beautiful area to visit. There are many holiday cottages and camp sites. Seven Spar farm caravan park will be severely impacted.

3.5.5 Light and Noise Pollution

There will be motion sensitive light which will cause light pollution. There may be the requirements for acoustic fencing and triple glazing for the noisier parts of the solar farm.

3.5.6 Fire safety and access to batteries – Suffolk do not have experience of fire safety of solar farm batteries – hydrogen fluoride. Need to understand how the sites will be accessed if there is a fire – the site fire access defined is not particularly close to the batteries.

3.5.7 Food Security/ Use of good Farmland

The farmland being used is high grade farmland required to produce food for the country and minimise imports.

Unable to return to farmland once the solar farm no longer in use. Classed as brown fill.

3.5.8 What happens once the solar farm has reached end of life?

There is no information on how the solar farm will be decommissioned. The land will be classed as brown fill and could be used for further construction projects.

Question - what do other landowners think?

Opportunity to contact other landowners and get feedback.

Comments on planning application

Anyone can add a comment on the planning application, as described by Councillor Moor (see 3.2).

Everyone in a household can leave a comment on the planning application. Responses are required by 5th September 2025.

3.6 Public Show of hands

Comment from the public that they were supportive of solar farms, but the size and way the application was being implemented was a concern, plus targeting, East Anglia for many solar farm applications.

Nearly all of attendees raised their hand to indicate they object.

3.7 Councillors Vote and Next Steps

Councillor Rixon (Chair) put forward a proposal **to object to the planning application**. Councillor Moor seconded. **The council voted to object to the planning application.**

Councillors will get together to formulate response

They have until 5th September to submit their response.

The response will reflect a joint response with Letheringham. Use Letheringham's greater knowledge on the topic.

Councillor Crone stressed that Charsfield Parish must focus on the planning aspects that most impact Charsfield. For example the construction management plan e.g. no HGV using the street, timings to avoid school pick up and drop off.

4. Dates of next meetings:

Monday 29th September 2025 (moved from 21st September)

Monday 17th November 2025

Monday 19th January 2026

Monday 16th March 2026

Monday 11th May 2026

Monday 13th July 2026

Monday 28th September 2026

Monday 16th November 2026

5. Close of Meeting

Signed: V Ward 12th August 2025
Clerk to Charsfield Village Parish Council

Charsfield Parish Council
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Email: charsfieldparishcouncil@gmail.com

Ended 21:30