

Minutes of Ashwell Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 7th October 2026 at 7pm in the Parish Room

Present: Cllrs Graham Lee (Chair), Norton Mahy (Vice Chair), Curtis Farrington and Max Patterson

Also in attendance: Sally Roberts (Clerk), Nicky Forrester (Deputy Clerk), Cllrs Tom Tyson & Steve Jarvis and 12 members of the public.

Please click on links for papers issued with agenda and referred to in the minutes. [Meetings Minutes and Agendas.](#)

82 **Apologies for absence.** To receive and accept apologies for absence. Apologies were received from Cllrs Joan Yates, Anna Genda, Chris Button and Ian Duffy.

83 **Interests** (a) To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda, (b) To receive written requests for dispensations for declarable interests, and (c) To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate. Where any declaration of interest involved the Chair, the meeting to agree an alternative individual to take the Chair for that item(s).

84 **Minutes Proposal** to approve draft minutes of the Parish Council meeting on [2nd September 2026](#). It was proposed that the Minutes were passed as a true account of proceedings and resolved that the proposal be accepted. Proposed by Cllr Patterson seconded by Cllr Mahy.

85 **Parish Issues and Public Participation:** [Protocols for Public Participation in Council Meetings](#)

86 To hear any new matters raised (members of the public and councillors can raise any Parish related matters).

Standing Orders to be suspended

86.1 **Kiddies fun fair** – This will take place in November. See item 95.3.2

86.2 **[Councillor Task List](#)** – To remove Cllr Patterson from ZCA and add to Yearbook, add Cllr Farrington to Yearbook.
Action: Clerk

86.3 **[SID \(Speed Indicator Device\) in Lucas Lane](#)** – To note and discuss the [current siting of the SID](#). It was confirmed that the sign has been positioned by Highways in the intended location, although an overhanging tree may require trimming. Alternative locations are unsuitable due to footpath width, kerb distance requirements and proximity to properties.

Cllr Jarvis to investigate whether an alternative location is possible or whether the sign could be rotated to face towards the High Street. Speed data for Lucas Lane may be available electronically. Cllr Jarvis to advise.
Action: Cllr Jarvis

86.4 To note the HCC Specialist and Safeguarding Children's Services contact email for parishioner queries regarding the proposed children's residential home in Station Road:

cyp.cla@hertfordshire.gov.uk. An HCC email address will be published for parishioners to contact, should they have any queries or questions. Cllr Jarvis has also provided answers to questions posed by parishioners, these will be published by the Clerk. **Action: Clerk**

86.5 To receive reports from representatives from outside bodies, local authorities and agencies.

86.5.1 **Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)** – To receive a report from the HCC Leader, Cllr Steve Jarvis.

White lining on the A505 is in process.

The Local Government Reorganisation has been paused for the foreseeable future.

Double yellow lines painting to be undertaken shortly in the 3 areas of the village highlighted by Highways for safety reasons.

86.5.2 **District Council** – To receive a report from District Councillor Tom Tyson.

Cllr Tyson thanked those Ashwell Parish Councillors who attended the Strategic Planning Session arranged by NHC.

The National Scheme of Delegation comes into force at the end of the month with planning officers expected to determine smaller planning applications rather than these being decided by planning committee. The Parish Council will continue to be consultees in the process.

Growing Baldock outline application is due to be considered by the Planning Committee on 22 October and the Bygrave Solar Farm on 5 November. Work has commenced on Bygrave Road to widen the A507 junction for articulated lorries.

The Local Plan consultation on submitted sites after NHC Call for Sites is due to open shortly. It was noted that the process and timetable for the Local Plan Call for Sites is aligned with matters governed by the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Open session / public participation

The proposed Claybush Road development and Call for Sites under the Local Plan was discussed during the open session.

Cllrs Lee and Mahy attended a meeting with NHC last week. The new Local Plan is expected to run from 2029–2040, with NHC required to plan for 11,500 homes across the district. NHC currently has sites in the pipeline (including the Baldock expansion) but requires an extra approximately 3,500 homes which includes a 20% buffer across the whole of North Herts.

The sites offered by landowners under the Call for Sites include Dixies Meadow, ID Products (a brownfield site with potential for approximately nine homes), land off Hinxworth Road behind Colbron Close (potentially 34 homes). Particular concern was raised regarding four fields south of Ashwell Street, from Partridge Hill to Station Road, including the Hill Residential site and Senuna Park Phase 2, which is currently at appeal with the Planning Inspector.

It was noted that the consultation provides an opportunity for residents and the Parish Council to suggest alternative sites if considered suitable.

NHC will hold a consultation drop-in session at Ashwell Village Hall on 26 October, 3.30pm–6.30pm. APC to publicise the consultation. **Action: Clerk**

Following the close of the consultation on 24 November, NHC will consider all comments and undertake specialist site assessments between January and July 2027. Site selections for inclusion in the Local Plan are expected to be made by autumn 2027.

It was suggested that a proposed leaflet that APC intend to produce should explain that responses should focus on valid planning considerations under the NPPF and Local Plan. APC has been offered free specialist advice on preparing consultation responses, which will be shared with the community.

It was suggested that a public meeting should be held to help residents understand the consultation and how to respond before the 24 November deadline. APC will consider organising a meeting alongside producing the leaflet to encourage wider participation of parishioners to respond.

It was noted that whilst 8 sites have been put forward under “call for sites” it does not mean that they will be deemed suitable and subsequently developed. This decision lies with NHC, but the village has a chance to influence what may be decided by NHC.

The Parish Council will consider how best to communicate information to residents. The Parish Council is aware of its responsibility to keep the village informed throughout the process. NHC will consider all submitted sites through the Local Plan process, which includes community consultation.

A parishioner noted that sites are put forward by landowners and that a key factor on whether a site is developed is if it is within the village settlement boundary. It was noted that the settlement boundary will be determined by NHC who will assess suitability of sites put forward. Concerns regarding the potential impact to Arbury Banks and the proposed building heights in relation to sky line and affect on views entering Ashwell were also raised.

It was noted that there is considerable professional expertise within the village which could assist the Parish Council in understanding the issues and identifying potential solutions. It was suggested that local residents with relevant professional experience might be brought together to provide input and a working group was discussed.

Councillors agreed that the initial priority is to engage and inform the wider community, to galvanise the village and to provide information to parishioners.

Given the scale of the potential development, it was suggested that APC use the HUB, newsletter and a door-to-door leaflet drop to ensure residents who do not use online or social media are fully informed and where further information may be found, ensuring parishioners are fully briefed on how to act.

Cllr Patterson suggested that a draft template response be prepared to assist residents in making their representations.

Standing Orders to be reinstated

- 87 **Reports from Working Groups.** To receive oral updates from relevant leaders/members and agree any actions that require Parish Council input/approval.

- 87.1 **Planning Advisory Working Group.** It was agreed that a Local Plan Working Group comprising of a group of Parish Councillors and possible other experts on planning be formed to monitor and progress Ashwell Parish Council responses to NHC’s Local Plan development.

87.2 **Zero Carbon Ashwell (ZCA) Group.** (Cllrs Lee & Duffy). The public meeting was well attended, with over 50 residents, approximately three times the turnout anticipated by the consultants. The meeting was considered a positive response to the work undertaken. A follow-up working group meeting will take place in approximately 10 days.

88 **Planning matters: to include new and existing applications.** To see full details of applications on the [NHC website](#) enter the reference number into the planning search box.

88.1 **To note Hill Residential public presentation re Claybush Road.** – See item 86.5.2 Open Session/Public Participation.

New Planning Applications:

88.2 **26/01503/FPH:** 17 Hodwell, Amended planning application. Two storey side/rear extension and single storey side extension following demolition of existing garage/workshop and removal of chimney. Covered front porch and alterations to fenestration. Installation of vehicular and pedestrian gates, brick piers, brick boundary walls and timber fencing. Erection of detached shed, external rendering and cladding. Soft and hard landscaping works.

Revisions to the application were noted, including retaining the chimney, more appropriate roof tiles, revised fenestration and a reduced ridge height following comments from NHC's Conservation Officer. Cllrs acknowledged the improvements but remain concerned about the increased footprint and massing of the proposed dwelling, particularly given its prominent corner location within the Conservation Area and proximity to the church.

Cllr Mahy considered that the revisions did not go far enough to address these concerns and proposed that the application not be supported unless there was a significant reduction in massing and impact on the corner site. Cllrs resolved to object to the application.

88.3 **26/02101/FPH:** Chantry House, 31 West End, Erection of detached three- bay oak-framed ancillary outbuilding.

A member of the public has submitted comments to NHC raising concerns about the proposal's impact on the Conservation Area. Concerns included the roof height, which is approximately 6m above road level, and its proximity to a listed building. Cllrs did not support the application. It was considered that a lower roof would be more appropriate. Cllrs resolved to object to the application.

26/02263/FPH: 15 Swan Street, installation of front boundary fence with vehicular and pedestrian entrance gates following removal of existing fence and gate. No issues were identified. Cllrs resolved to have no objection.

Existing Planning Applications:

89 **[Planning Summary](#)** – Noted

90 **[Local Plan Timetable](#)** – Cllr Tyson provided a link to [Local Plan updates](#) and notification of a series of informal drop-in sessions, to support public consultation, those closest to Ashwell are:

- Royston Town Hall, 20 October, 3.30pm - 6.30pm
- Ashwell Village Hall, 26 October, 3.30pm - 6.30pm
- Baldock Community Centre, 2 November, 3.30pm - 6.30pm
- Mrs Howard Memorial Hall, Letchworth, 10 November, 2.30pm - 5.30pm

91 **Tree consultations** (Conservation Area and TPO) received from NHC. To agree responses to any received.

91.1.1 **26/02207/TCA:** 5 The Dovecote, T1: Silver Birch - Crown reduce by up to 1.5m in height and approx 1m in lateral spread to create a balanced crown. Prune branches back to suitable secondary growth points and avoid leaving stubs or making indiscriminate cuts through the main stems. Approx finished dimensions: 6m high by 3.5m wide. T2: Cherry Plum - Crown reduce by up to 1.5m. Councillors resolved to have no objection to the application.

91.1.2 **26/02303/TCA:** 3 Green Lane, T1: Ash : Crown clean & selectively reduce lower limbs. Councillors resolved to have no objection to the application.

92 **Tree Planning Summary** – Noted

93 **Footpath at Townsend Meadow** – No updates

94 **Reports from Committees**

94.1 **HR Committee.** No updates

95 **Reports from parish councillors on premises and other responsibilities. To receive oral reports and agree any actions needed.**

95.1 **The Springs.**

95.1.1 **Questions to be sent to external bodies** – To consider and agree questions to be submitted to relevant external bodies. Cllrs agreed to submit questions to relevant external bodies to form an updated Management plan for the Springs. It was noted that the plan produced by Natural England was in 2004. Given changes in abstraction and persistently low water flows, it was agreed that the questions should seek current information on the impact on wildlife, monitoring arrangements, controls and abstraction locations.

Action: Clerk

Historical photographs from the Museum were noted as showing significantly less foliage, and the potential benefits of allowing more light into the Springs were discussed, subject to ecological advice. Cllrs agreed the importance of the Parish Council's responsibility for protecting the SSSI and its wildlife.

95.1.2 **Quotes for Tree work** – work based on Tree Safety and Condition report, **Quote One** and **Quote Two** The Tree Safety Condition survey was initially undertaken when the trees were not in leaf, and the inspection of the Springs was deferred due to ash dieback. The subsequent summer report identified a number of high-priority works, mostly recommended within six months. None of the identified works are over paths or near roads. Both contractors have been used previously and are considered reliable. It was agreed to defer consideration to the next meeting and potentially obtain a third quotation.

Action: Deputy Clerk

95.2 **St Mary's Churchyard Grounds Maintenance** - No updates

95.3 **Recreation Ground including the **Playground****, pavilion and public toilets.

95.3.1 To receive any updates from **Pavilion Working Group**, no further updates, awaiting Ashwell school to format the questionnaire that they can work with online.

95.3.2 Recreation policy and fee structure, including Kiddies Funfair.

The funfair is proposed to operate for three evenings, with an additional day for setting up equipment on the Recreation Ground. As Eat Feast is charged £100 for one evening, it was decided that a charge of £450 discounted down to £400, based on £150 per evening should be set, proposed by Cllr Farrington and seconded by Cllr Patterson. All in favour.

Action: Deputy Clerk

95.4 **Small Gains and Track** – The ACCIES agreed they will sign the document and we should receive it back shortly with fees agreed.

95.5 **Cemetery** – To note any updates from Cllr Mahy. Cllr Mahy and the Deputy Clerk identified the work for the Cemetery Working Group. General maintenance is progressing well, with mainly shaping and trimming required. The ivy covering a shed requires removal, a standpipe would be ideal as there is currently no water supply. An area near the field is being used by animals as a latrine; advice is being sought on the likely species and how this might be discouraged.

The spoil heap has been removed, and grave diggers will be asked to place future spoil in the field rather than the cemetery.

Action: Deputy Clerk

The Working Group will also inspect the stump near the bus shelter. **Action: Cllr Mahy**

95.6 **ACCIES** - To receive a verbal update on proposed licence agreement. See item 95.4

96 **Finance and Governance**

96.1.1 **Allotment for Exercise & Recreation** – To consider and approve a £10 payment from the Parish Council to the Allotment for Exercise & Recreation bank account (Charity No. 245521). Cllrs resolved to approve the payment. **Action: Clerk**

96.1.2 **Post Office** – To consider and approve continued support for the Post Office for the financial year 2026/2027. The Parish Council will continue its support for the Post Office, which operates from St Mary's premises as a community benefit. APC previously provided a £700 grant from S137 funds and proposed increasing this by 3.5% to £725. Cllrs resolved to approve. **Action: Clerk**

96.1.3 **Parish Council Insurance** – To consider the Parish Council's insurance renewal quotations. The insurance renewal is due. Despite repeated requests, only one quotation has been received from the existing provider, offering a three-year contract with annual inflation-linked increases. The premium has increased by 7%, partly reflecting increased cover for the War Memorial and a claim on the Pavilion.

It was proposed to ask the existing provider whether, given the delays in obtaining the quotation, they would agree to a one-year contract at the quoted rate. If not, the quotation will be accepted. Cllrs resolved to approve. **Action: Clerk**

96.1.4 **Santander Bank Account – Signatories** – To consider and approve the addition of the Clerk, Mrs Sally Roberts, and Deputy Clerk, Mrs Nicola Forrester, as signatories to the Santander bank account. Cllrs resolved to approve, proposed by Cllr Farrington, seconded by Cllr Patterson. **Action: Clerk**

96.1.5 **Icknield Way Path** – To consider whether Ashwell Parish Council should seek membership of the Icknield Way Path. Cllrs resolved to approve membership. Clerk to action. **Action: Clerk**

96.1.6 To consider setting aside a budget of up to £10,000 for a planning advisor to assist the Parish Council on matters pertaining to the Local Plan as well as ad hoc large scale planning applications prior to the Local Plan adoption. It was agreed to set aside £5,000 from balances for planning advice, should this become necessary. This is not a commitment to spend the funds. Cllr Farrington proposed a £5,000 supplementary budget, seconded by Cllr Mahy. All in favour.

96.1.7 **S137 expenditure** - Parish Room Hire for an AVT meeting. Two councillors are Trustees of AVT and are required to declare an interest, the vote would therefore not be quorate and the item has been deferred to the November meeting.

96.2 **Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts and bank reconciliation.** To note the information up to month-end to be circulated to parish councillors after the end of the month. Proposal that the summary of receipts and payments be issued with the draft minutes and the two nominated parish councillors sign off the accounts in accordance with internal control procedures. To note any variances of actual expenditure compared to budget.

96.3 **Annual Audit 2023/24** – to note any updates

96.4 **Annual Audit 2024/25** – to note any update

96.5 **Annual Audit 2025/26** - To note that the external audit has not yet been completed due to objections raised by a parishioner. PKF Littlejohn LLP has issued an interim report confirming that further review work is required. The Annual Governance & Accountability Return is available to view on the [website](#).

Date of next Parish Council meeting: Wednesday 4th November 2026 at 7pm in the Parish Room.

Meeting closed at 21.24hrs