

Hatley Parish Council

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Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Hatley Parish Council held in Hatley Village Hall on Tuesday 10th June 2025

PRESENT: Cllr Samantha Abbasi (acting Chair), Cllr Harold Nickerson, Cllr Peter Hayward, Cllr Charmian Flowerday, Clerk to the Council Kim Wilde, District Cllr Heather Williams (arriving late) and eight members of the public (one arriving late).

ACTION BY

1. WELCOME AND STATEMENT OF MEETING PROTOCOL
Welcome by the Cllr Abbasi and the meeting protocol was read aloud.
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Cllr Micky Astor.
3. COUNCILLOR UPDATE
The Clerk formally confirmed the signing of the Acceptance of Office by Cllr Flowerday following the meeting in May.
4. INTERESTS
 - i. Declarations of interest: None received.
 - ii. Dispensation applications for items on this agenda: None received.The eighth member of the public arrived.
5. OPEN MEETING FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS QUESTIONS TO THE PARISH COUNCIL
Cllr Abbasi invited any questions that were not relating to the planning application that was due to be considered next on the agenda. There were none. A member of the public asked what would happen if everyone wanted to speak, as this would exceed the designated 10 minute period of 3 minutes public member. Cllr Abbasi explained this timing can be adjusted if required and that 2 minutes per person would better on this occasion, if more than 3 people wish to be heard.
6. PLANNING
 - i. The Parish Council considered planning application reference **25/02051/OUT**, being an outline application with some matters reserved except for access for the erection of 1 No. self build dwelling at land lying to the north east of 15 East Hatley. Cllr Abbasi invited questions from the public.
Public member (1) expressed concerns about:
 - a. the proposed self build site being located outside of the village framework.
 - b. further developments may follow on various other sites in the hamlet if this one is approved.
 - c. the village character will change significantly if houses are built on land outside of the planning line.

- d. there are no local services available to support the potential future growth that may be caused by a free for all approach to self-build applications.
- e. the planning framework has been provided for a reason and should be adhered to whilst it remains valid.
- f. the character of both villages being protected and urged the Parish Council to ensure they remain protected.

Cllr Abbasi expressed support for the comments raised and was also concerned that if this application is approved it could set a precedent.

Public member (2) was in agreement with the points raised by public member (1), adding that:

- a. much hard work would have gone into the forming of the village framework and if broken it would be 'at our peril'.
- b. the village is not suitable for development as there are no services.
- c. it might set a precedent for further planning outside of the village framework.

Public member (3) pointed out that at this time there are questions over whether the village framework even exists. It was requested that in its response the Parish Council should insist to SCDC that if permission is granted, the access driveway is to remain in the same location, and cannot be amended at a later stage, as moving the driveway could create an opportunity for a second house on that land.

District Cllr Heather Williams arrived.

Cllr Abbasi invited Cllr Williams to explain some of the technicalities relating to responding to an 'outline' planning application and asked about SCDC's approach to self build applications and the impact on a village framework.

District Cllr Williams confirmed there is currently no land supply for self-builds and therefore there is a presumption to favour such developments. Any Parish Councils wishing to challenge an application should focus on whether there is any harm arising from the self-build, for example harm to the environment or risk of flooding. Concerns relating to the village framework or setting a precedent would not be considered by SCDC as reasons for refusal at this time.

Cllr Nickerson advised that an area of land in East Hatley, which includes the proposed site, gets flooded in the winter months due to the heavy clay soil, and therefore there is no scope to rely on a soakaway as stated in the application. It was noted that historical evidence can be relied upon and photos of the area when flooded would be useful in the Parish Council's response.

Public Member (1) asked for information about the next steps for a self build if the site gets approval. The various outcomes were explained by District Cllr Williams.

The Clerk asked whether issues such as sustainability, environmental impact and affordability are also now not applicable to a self build application, and it was confirmed they do still hold some weight, but much less than usual due to the 'tilted balance' approach.

Cllr Abbasi questioned whether concerns over access for the construction of the house should be raised now or await the next

phase of approval under 'reserved matters'. It was confirmed this issue could be raised now but it might need to be raised at the next phase too.

District Cllr Williams clarified that the Parish Council is only being asked to consider through the outline application whether the proposed design fits on that land, is a suitable site, and if the proposed access is safe and suitable.

Public member (4) expressed concerns that self builds are usually of a modern design and found in clusters, and therefore a standalone self build property would not be in keeping with the rural character that is enjoyed at the junction in East Hatley.

District Cllr Williams reminded all that this point is not relevant to the outline planning application, and the materials shown in the application are only indicative, with such details being formally proposed in a 'reserved matters' application by whoever takes on the self-build work. Scale, landscaping, appearance and materials have no bearing at this time.

Public member (5) asked if the applicant was to build on the land all the way up to the junction, would it restrict the view of the highway at what is already a dangerous junction. It was noted there is a house and drive opposite the proposed access, so it would be difficult to consider this to be a point of harm.

Public member (4) expressed concerns about:

- a. a new development at the entrance of the village which would detract from the rural character, irrespective of it being a self build.
- b. the site was cleared in February, removing lots of vegetation, with hedges lowered and the cutting of trees that had grown at the back of the verge.
- c. the village being a special location but houses do not sell quickly as a small village without services does not suit many people, especially families that may have to taxi their children to places. Of the three houses recently for sale, only one has sold and others have been on and off the market.
- d. the lack of facilities means people must drive to Royston or St Neots for some services that are not offered in neighbouring villages such as Gamlingay.
- e. the bus service referred to in the application only runs once a week and takes 1 hour 17 minutes to reach St Neots.

Cllr Abbasi acknowledged that some of the points in the application do not present a realistic picture of the limitations of services in and around East Hatley, including the buses and opportunities for work and shopping. It was noted that sustainability is relevant to the application but matters relating to house prices or speed of sale are commercial only and not of relevance.

Cllr Flowerday suggested there is an argument for environmental harm as the rural location will create many more car journeys that could be avoided in a better suited location.

The Clerk expressed frustration that the planning portal was unavailable in the hours ahead of the meeting, which has big implications when paper copies the application documents and plans are no longer provided by the District Council. District Cllr Williams agreed to look into this issue.

Public member (4) reported that the planning notice had only been placed in the proposed planning area today, and therefore there must now be a later deadline for responses, possibly 30th June or 1st July.

Cllr Abbasi expressed concerns that the application stated there was not a watercourse close by, however there is a moat bordering the site and the land is known to be heavy clay that has flooded.

Public member (3) advised there is a high water table in the area and the land is prone to flooding.

Public member (2) asked if the parish council can ascertain whether there is capacity for extra sewage. District Cllr Williams confirmed that Anglia Water has a statutory duty to provide the service whether there is currently capacity or not, and this is actioned through the usual building process.

District Cllr Williams, having checked her emails online, confirmed the published deadline for responses is now 25th June.

Public member (4) shared information relating to a full application for a bungalow in the neighbouring village of Croydon which was refused on grounds of drainage, flooding and surface water issues. District Cllr Williams advised that drainage is not for consideration until the next phase under 'reserved matters'. At this stage flood risk and sewerage are relevant.

Public member (3) reported that the sewers were installed 40 years ago to meet the capacity for all houses and he would be surprised if this would be a problem.

Cllr Flowerday advised that the ecology report had noted no presence of Great Crested Newts but it had also acknowledged the location would have been suitable for the newts prior to the area being cleared by the landowner.

Cllr Abbasi stated her position on the application, respecting the views expressed this evening by East Hatley residents, and feeling strongly about not setting a precedent. She noted the village framework has protected the villages for many years but also understands it no longer has the same strength as it used to is therefore concerned that more houses will impact the character of the village. Cllr Abbasi was also concerned how the agent has listed approved planning applications for to justify this proposal and that, if approved, this proposal adds further weight to the justification for more houses.

Public member (1) asked if this plot has applied for planning before and public member (2) confirmed it had and was refused, though it had included the whole plot last time.

Cllr Abbasi shared comments she had received from Cllr Astor ahead of the meeting, which included concerns about development outside of the village framework and the clay soil causing localised flooding.

Cllr Nickerson stated that historically this land sits with water which does rise to the boundary of 15 East Hatley and the proposed site. Public member (2) explained that he had to build up his garden over the years to address this problem. Cllr Nickerson also referred to some subsidence issues but acknowledged this was addressed by the removal of some mature trees.

Cllr Hayward felt the issue of water levels and flooding were the strongest concerns to be raised.

Cllr Flowerday explained her recommendation will be representative of the people who have spoken at the meeting. She acknowledged the proposal would improve the look of the area, currently being scrub land, but this could pose harm to the biodiversity of the area, especially the great crested newts. Points relating to sustainability in the application are misleading and there is a known flood risk to the neighbour. She concluded that the negative aspects outweigh the positives.

Clerk

The Parish Council resolved to recommend the refusal of the application for the reasons outlined above.

- ii. Planning application reference **25/01044/LBC** for masonry repairs to the East window surround and reinstatement of new stained-glass window at St Denis' Church, East Hatley has been approved by SCDC.

7. TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING
7.00pm on Tuesday 15th July 2025

8. PUBLIC EXCLUSION FROM THE MEETING
The **Parish Council resolved upon the temporary exclusion** of the press and public from meeting proceedings, under Section 1 of the *Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960*, as the business due to be transacted was considered to be prejudicial to the public interest. The press and public were instructed to withdraw from the meeting room whilst matters pertaining to items 9. and 10. were discussed. All members of the public and District Cllr Williams left the meeting room.

9. QUOTATIONS FOR NEW PLAY EQUIPMENT
The Parish Council discussed details of 3 new quotations have been received and considered how the designs met the needs of their target age group of 5 to 12 years. Cllr Flowerday's offer to consult with the parish children on those 3 designs was accepted with thanks.

Cllr
Flowerday

10. WEBSITE – PIXSY
The Parish Council discussed the new proposal by Pixsy and agreed on a final response.

Clerk

11. MEETING CLOSURE
The meeting was closed at 8.46pm.