

WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIR: Cllr IVOR FRENCH

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Chair: Cllr Dick Jenkinson



MINUTES of the meeting of Wickham Market Parish Council Planning Committee held on Tuesday 12th August 2025 at 1900 at the Resource Centre

PL25:29 Present from the Council: Cllr. D Jenkinson (Chair), Cllr. Sue French, Cllr. Ivor French, Cllr. John Day, Cllr. Gloria Creasey, Leanne Castle (Deputy Clerk)

PL25: 30 Present from the Public: Trevor Gill, Anne Westover

PL25: 31 Open Public Forum session (3 minutes per person):

Trevor Gill spoke regarding DC/25/2733/FUL. Anne Westover spoke regarding DC/25/2861/TCA and DC/25/2733/FUL

PL25: 32 Apologies for Absence: None

PL25: 33 Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda: None

PL25: 34 Proposal to approve the draft minutes of the Wickham Market Parish Council Planning Committee of 28 July 2025 – Accepted, proposed by Cllr. John Day and seconded by Cllr. Sue French, and signed by Cllr D. Jenkinson

PL25: 35 Review and agree on comments for DC/25/2862/TCA 1no. Poplar (T1 on plan) – Pollard at 5 metres above ground level. Site address:143 High Street, Wickham Market, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP13 0RD. Consultation expiry dates: 15 August 2025

There was discussion about the height of the crown reduction proposed. The Tree Wardens report was taken into account. It was decided that WMPC would object to the application for the crown to be pollarded at 5 meters above ground level and recommend negotiation with the applicant for a 50% crown reduction. The wording is as follows.

Objection. The tree in question is a large hybrid black poplar located on the Conservation Area boundary. It has been managed by high pollarding in the past and forms a magnificent specimen, widely visible. It forms a great habitat for both insects and birds and has hosted a rookery in past years. We are concerned that the current proposal to pollard at five metres above GL appears to be excessive and would involve cutting right back into the main trunk/s of the tree and removing all the visible crown and canopy cover. We wouldn't want to support work that would be detrimental to the longer-term visual effect of the tree. We would support a higher crown pollarding and crown reduction; there are several longer extended boughs which could be cut back.

PL25: 35 Cont'd: Review and agree comments for DC/25/2733/FUL

A 50% (approx.) crown reduction would seem to be appropriate and should result in a more manageable tree, less overwhelming but still creating visual amenity and habitat. We would urge the East Suffolk Council tree officers to negotiate an amended specification for the work proposed.

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 the north west of Easton and southwest of Letheringham, Suffolk. Consultation expiry date: Originally 15 August 2025, moved to 5 September 2025.

The application was discussed in detail, matters of concern were the traffic management and volume of traffic to and from the site during construction, potential flooding, and the negative impact of these issues on Wickham Market. Also of concern were the landscape characteristics regarding how the Deben valley should be managed and heritage concerns regarding both listed buildings and ancient monuments. The proposed site plans were perused along with maps showing road access, high and low ground, and the risk of greater flooding was discussed in detail. What was also a concern to the planning committee was the traffic management details supplied with the planning application. These don't show the direction of traffic, the road to the site is single lane, and it was a concern that heavy goods vehicles and the cars of those labourers working on the proposed site would be additional traffic passing through Wickham Market. It had been estimated in the planning application that there would be 14 heavy goods vehicles a day, but numbers regarding vehicles for those working on the site aren't mentioned. The planning committee discussed that with a large increase in traffic due to the Sizewell project being forecast and Wickham Market expecting 26 traffic calming measures planned, the effect of additional vehicles for the proposed solar site could cause significant congestion for the village. A question was raised about the solar panels' green credentials as it is unlikely they will be produced in the UK, and at the end of their useful life that they can't be recycled but will go to landfill. Comments were made regarding the disruption to residents of Wickham Market, with little benefit for the local community. The negative impact on the landscape, environment, listed buildings, and ancient monuments, plus the risk of additional flooding and traffic, were all detrimental to the village and the local area. All councillors present were not in favour of the planning application; they all objected to the application, and there were no abstentions.

**Wickham Market Parish Council object to the planning application
DC/25/2733/FUL on the following grounds.**

- 1. Flooding Concerns.** The Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy – Part 1 states in Para 4.13 that during Storm Babet, runoff from the site caused flooding problems in Letheringham and Easton, but did not mention Wickham Market, which is just downstream and was also very badly affected. Current guidance is that the runoff coefficients for agricultural land are not increased much by the addition of solar panels as long as there remains a significant amount of vegetation beneath the panels. At para 5.3 it states “infiltration is the preferred method for the sustainable management of post-development surface water, however, as set out in earlier sections, this is not viable due to the soils being predominantly clay. Therefore, the next best option is to discharge runoff into the existing field ditches”- this seems to directly conflict the guidance! I gather that grass is to be planted under the solar panels, but it is expected that most of the runoff will take place in the gap in between the rows of panels. As the gap between the panels is the service access route to the panels it is unlikely that any grass will thrive. Our concern is that, as the runoff coefficient is very likely to be increased significantly, any future extreme rainfall event will also increase runoff into the River Deben and consequently raises the likelihood of another flooding event in Wickham Market. In addition, the stated plan is to collect the runoff in drainage ditches and for it to exit the site into riparian drainage, thus if the riparian drainage fails it is not their fault!
- 2. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Statement.** The report shows a Biodiversity Net Gain for the project. The lengthy report does not explain how the habitat units are increased after construction thus delivering the Biodiversity Net Gain. As very few mitigation measures are proposed this habitat unit increase needs more explanation. In addition, this report does not consider the Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment (2018) which is a key document supporting the current Local Plan. This document shows how important the Suffolk River valleys are.
- 3. Traffic Disruption.** Whilst Parishes are guided that “Disturbance during building works” is a non-material consideration the publication of a “Construction Traffic Management Plan” would indicate that issues are predicted and hence our comment on this issue. The Plan shows the B1078, which passes through Wickham Market, being used as a main route to the construction site. This is of particular concern as this is also a main route to the Sizewell C, Southern Park and Ride, for all vehicles except HGVs. Consequently, many traffic calming measures will be constructed on this stretch of road making it unsuitable for a

primary construction route. In addition, the main cable route is along the main roads through Easton and Hacheston. The installation of this cable will cause untold disruption to these busy country roads.

4. **Loss of productive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.** The land on the sites are grades 2 and 3a. Calculations show that both sites are over 90% BMV land. The NPPF states that sites for Solar Farms over 50MW should not be on BMV land. This Solar Farm's size is 49.9MW. As this solar farm is one of at least four planned in the area is this somewhat cynical!
5. **Cumulative Impact.** There are at least 18 other energy projects currently underway. The current infrastructure cannot currently cope with further energy projects.
6. **Heritage Assets.** The Heritage Statement & Archaeological Desk-based Assessments Parts 1 and 2 are lengthy documents containing a total of 172 pages and contain much information. Despite the fact that within 1km of the boundary there are four scheduled monuments, two grade 1 listed buildings, about 15 grade 2 and 2* listed buildings, only some were selected for consideration. The selection was done by "The Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility Modelling, supported by observation made during the site visit." Of the selected assets three were assessed that the development would do "Less than Substantial Harm" and the other 4 were assessed that the development would do "No Harm". It is our view that this development will cause more than Substantial Harm to Heritage Assets within the vicinity.

PL25: 36 Date of next meeting: To be arranged as required
Meeting closed at 8.20pm.