

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 2026, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor S Watson (Chair)
Councillors R Buckmaster, V Burt, M Adams,
I Devonshire, J Dunlop, Y Estop, T Stowe
and J Thomas

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, B Deering, V Glover-
Ward and D Hollebon

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Neil Button	- Interim Team Leader (Strategic Applications Team)
Daniel Clark	- Planning Officer
Rachael Collard	- Team Leader (Development Management)
Peter Mannings	- Committee Support Officer
Martin Plummer	- Assistant Director (Place Delivery)
Joanna Russell	- Principal Planning Officer
Stephanie Tarrant	- Assistant Director for Democracy, Elections and Information Governance

386 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors S
Copley, S Marlow and T Smith. It was noted that

Councillor M Adams was substituting for Councillor S Copley.

387 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the Officers. He reminded Members and Officers to use their microphones as the meeting was being webcast.

The full webcast of the meeting can be viewed here: Development Management Committee – [11 March 2026](#).

388 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

389 MINUTES - 11 FEBRUARY 2026

Councillor Devonshire proposed, and Councillor R Buckmaster seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2026, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

390 3/25/0950/FUL - INSTALLATION OF 480 PHOTOVOLTAIC SOLAR PANELS, WITH AN OUTPUT OF CIRCA 240,000KWH OF ENERGY, WITH SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND LANDSCAPING WORKS AT LAND AT ASTON END, STEVENAGE, HERTFORDSHIRE

The Director for Place recommended that in respect of application 3/25/0950/FUL, planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out at the end of the report.

The Principal Planning Officer referred to the late representations summary and set out the late representation from the lead local flood authority. She said that condition 10 had been revised following that late representation.

Members were advised that condition 11 had been removed, and subsequent conditions had been renumbered. They were all advised that a number of documents had been added to the approved documents section of the report.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the site was part of a wider agricultural holding, and she highlighted the area that was earmarked for the PV panels. She summarised the convoluted access arrangements to the site for the purposes of construction, which made use of the existing agricultural tracks which were already being used.

Members were advised that the PV panels would be connected directly into the national grid via the overhead power lines that ran through the site. The electricity could also be generated by the applicant for the land use activities on the site, and to offset the carbon emissions from the use on the site. It was proposed that the use of the site for solar panels would cease after 30 years.

The Principal Planning Officer summarised in detail the location of the proposed development. She set out the delivery point adjoining Brookfield Lane in what was a highly rural location with a lot of established field boundaries. Members were advised that there were no other designations on the site beyond the green belt.

The Principal Planning Officer set out the context of the site in relation to public rights, the extensive field boundaries and the heritage assets including the Grade 2 listed Lords Farmhouse. She said that there were a number of modern buildings around that listed building

and there was no heritage impact from the proposed development.

The Principal Planning Officer set out the detail of the proposed solar panels and summarised the modest dimensions of the PV Panels and the details of the inverters. She set out some imagery of the panels and summarised the proposed landscape plan, as well as details of native hedgerows and details of the 55.49% biodiversity net gain.

Members were advised that the construction and traffic management plan had been agreed with Hertfordshire County Council. A condition had been requested to be imposed to require a plan with some more details.

The Principal Planning Officer set out details of the planned maximum journeys for the delivery of the PV panels. She said that unloading would happen on some hardstanding, and that no HGVs would be used in the delivery of the panels. Members were advised that these details would be secured in the construction management plan, subject to a condition requiring a plan with more details included.

The Principal Planning Officer presented a series of plans showing the views around the site and the site boundaries, proposed additional planting and the existing tree coverage. She set out the views from the existing rights of way, and the landscape officers were content with the findings of the landscape and visual impact assessment.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the recommendation was that planning permission is granted subject to conditions. Members were advised that there was a case for very special circumstances including the significant weight in the NPPF relating to renewables that outweighed any harm regarding inappropriateness and any other harm which had not been found.

Mr Dale Radford addressed the committee in support of the application. He and Mr Mark Shaffer were asked questions by the Development Management Committee.

Members debated the matter of NPPF policy in the context of renewable energy projects carrying extra weight. A concern was expressed about whether there was a sound policy and guidance framework for all of the new renewable energy infrastructure.

The committee also debated the matter of green belt policy as the application was in contravention of that policy and was inappropriate. Members also considered the very special circumstances and whether these outweighed the serious green belt policy contradiction.

Members considered in particular policies DPS2, DPS4 and GBR1 and they also considered the detailed policy context in respect of the application. Concerns were expressed by Members that some of the special circumstances listed by the applicant were not realistic. A particular concern was expressed that energy security for local business could not be guaranteed as the energy was going into the grid and was not specifically for local businesses.

The Principal Planning Officer said that officers agreed with the very special circumstances that had been set out in the case that had been made by the applicant. Members were advised that officers had assessed and given weight to those circumstances whilst giving due regard to the NPPF.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the NPPF does require officers to give significant weight to the provision of renewables and the NPPF referred to the fact that although renewables will often be inappropriate in the green belt, there may very well be very special circumstances.

Members were advised that local policy CC3 gave officers

some criteria to assess the appropriateness of renewable energy. The Principal Planning Officer said that this assessment criteria had been applied along with the impact on the greenbelt, and these issues had been weighed up alongside the very special circumstances. Officers had concluded that they were in favour of the application due to the lack of harm and the very special circumstances.

Officers answered a number of questions from Members regarding the public rights of way, the construction routes and the draft construction management plan. Members were advised that banks people would be in place when vehicles were moving along those tracks at the points where there was potential conflict with horses or people.

Members were advised that concerns regarding the loss of agricultural land were sometimes covered by the submission of agricultural land surveys that established the grade of agricultural land. The Principal Planning Officer referred to established appeal case law on sites greater than 20 hectares. This site was much smaller at 0.21 hectares, and this was not therefore a close assessment in that regard.

Members made a number of critical remarks regarding the unconsidered and linear nature of the proposed landscaping. The Principal Planning Officer said that views of the site were minimal from outside the locality and the Landscape Officer considered that the linear planting across the site was more in keeping with the pattern of field boundaries in the locality.

Members expressed some concern regarding the route to be taken by vehicles from the site to the main road. The Principal Planning Officer set out the details of the draft construction and traffic management which was on the council's website as a published document and Hertfordshire Highways were content. This document was conditioned and was subject to agreement.

Councillor Thomas proposed and Councillor Burt seconded, a motion that application 3/25/0950/FUL be granted planning permission subject to the conditions set out at the end of the report. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that application 3/25/0950/FUL be granted planning permission subject to the conditions set out at the end of the report.

391 3/25/0763/FUL - CHANGE OF USE OF LAND FROM BLOCKED PAVED PEDESTRIAN AREA TO PROVIDE 2 POLICE VEHICLE CAR PARKING SPACES, MARKED WITH STUDS AND A SIGN (BY WAY OF HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER) AT BLOCK PAVED AREA OF TUDOR SQUARE, WARE, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG12 9XF

The Director for Place recommended that in respect of application 3/25/0763/FUL, planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out at the end of the report.

The Planning Officer said that a late representation had been received from Ware Town Council who had resolved to support the application subject to consideration of concerns regarding pedestrian safety, the availability of space for events and the potential of the proposals to encourage additional parking in the square.

The Planning Officer summarised in detail the proposed development and set out the location of the site in the town centre of Ware. He set out of the access to the site and detailed the location of the existing police station. Members were advised that the site was located in the Ware conservation area and within the plan area of the adopted Ware Neighbourhood Plan.

The Planning Officer presented a series of plans and photos that were pertinent to the application and the proposed application. Following a query from a Member,

the Planning Officer referred back to the late representations and said that all of the issues raised by Ware Town Council had been addressed by the report.

Members commented on the TRO and the police parking in Tudor Square. The Planning Officer confirmed that a permanent traffic regulation order (TRO) was being revised by Hertfordshire County Council, and this was proposed to include the two parking spaces within the TRO. He confirmed to the committee that the TRO would permit the police to park regardless of what events were taking place.

The Planning Officer set out the design had been amended to metal studs as a more low-level addition and a design that was more in keeping with the circular square and this would not impact on the relatively new paving in Tudor Square. Members were advised that there would be some loss of space in the square for the market and officers considered this to be acceptable in the context of the function of the market.

The Planning Officer confirmed that the applicant had agreed to a condition to limit the times the spaces could be used outside of market hours. Officers had considered that the condition was not appropriate as the police were able to park in Tudor Square without permission.

Councillor Watson proposed and Councillor Thomas seconded, a motion that Councillor Andrews be permitted to briefly address the committee to add some context to the consideration of the application and the historic use of Tudor Square and the wider Ware town centre by the police and other vehicles.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Councillor David Andrews be permitted to briefly address the committee to add some context to the consideration of the

application and the historic use of Tudor Square and the wider Ware town centre by the police and other vehicles.

Councillor Devonshire proposed and Councillor R Buckmaster seconded, a motion that application 3/25/0763/FUL be granted planning permission subject to the conditions set out at the end of the report.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that application 3/25/0763/FUL be granted planning permission subject to the conditions set out at the end of the report.

392 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

393 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (IF REQUIRED)

There was no urgent part two business.

The meeting closed at 8.02 pm

Chairman
Date