



Minutes of the Highclere Parish Council Meeting

Westridge Studio

Tuesday 23 September at 7.30pm

Members Present: Cllr Easton (chair), Cllr Bartholomew, Cllr Falconer

Via Teams: Cllr McIver, Cllr York

Clerk: Amy White

In attendance: Colin Wall (NPSG), five parishioners, Cllr John Izett (via Teams)

1. 40/25 Apologies for Absence

Cllr York, Cllr McIver

2. 41/25 Declarations of Interest

None.

3. 42/25 To agree Minutes of Meeting held on 08 July 2025

The Minutes of 08 July 2025 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman, Cllr Easton. The Minutes of 10 June were also signed by Cllr Easton.

4. 43/25 Matters arising from Meeting held on 08 July 2025

Number	Action	Person
34/25	Cllr York to liaise with Cllr Izett as he investigates possible sources of funding and options to maintain or replace a transport service- Actioned but this has been superseded as the impact of the loss of the bus service has become clearer. At the moment there are no other funding options available.	Cllr York
35/25	Neighbourhood Plan: Consult with Planet, Jessica Wells, and Donnington Homes to establish feasibility of our proposal and to come back to the Parish Council with a 'suggested position' for our September meeting. Actioned but again superseded with the Local Plan update- please see item 7.	Colin Wall
37/25	Arrange a meeting in October for National Landscapes, Highclere and East Woodhay Parish Councils- Actioned , meeting arranged for 14 October 2025.	Clerk

5. 44/25 Co-option of Councillor

David Morrey was co-opted to the parish council.

Action: Clerk to set up Cllr Morrey on email, send register of interests to BDBC etc.

6. 45/25 Public participation

Five parishioners observed the meeting.

7. 46/25 Reports from County and Borough Councillors

Cllr Izett reported via Teams:

Oakley Farm 500 house development- Background

- BDBC Draft Local Plan proposes 500 homes on Oakley Farm (Highclere).
- Came as a shock – “bolt from the blue.”
- Originally only 96 homes (36 + 60) suggested; now escalated to 500.
- Triggered by increased housing targets: +40% for Basingstoke (≈6,000 homes).
- Oakley Farm only put forward at end of last year.

Resident Concerns

- Many residents unaware; limited contact so far.
- Area is a small lane; community feels blindsided.
- Concerns:
 - Hundreds of houses would border their homes.
 - Heritage context (farm history, listed buildings).
 - Infrastructure (schools, doctors, buses) already under strain.
 - Feels like a “forgotten corner” of Basingstoke/West Berks.

Developer/Promoter

- Promoter approached farm owners; contract signed to push development.
- Parish unsure which promoter but likely a known local one.

Planning & Political Context

- Previous local plan rejected by government.
- New “spatial strategy” drafted: most sites examined before, but Oakley Farm is new.
- Goes to Basingstoke Cabinet in November, then public consultation (Nov–Dec).
- Timeline driven by need to submit plan to inspector before 2027 rule changes.

Parish Response

- Must act quickly (before November cabinet).
- Opposition must focus on planning arguments, not just protests.
- Suggested: hire planning consultant/expert to strengthen case.
- Look for “showstoppers”: e.g., listed buildings, inspector’s past rejection of Oakley Farm/Falkland Farm.

Cross-Border Issues

- Development positioned as “suburb of Newbury.”
- Would rely on West Berks for infrastructure (schools, GP, buses).
- Opportunity: partner with West Berks councillors, who are also opposed.

Other Parish Considerations

- Publicity: residents not well-informed.
 - Suggest newsletter, Facebook, Highclere Society updates.
 - Possible public meeting at the Woodpecker pub.
- Enborne PC not yet fully aware.
- Invite Joanne Brombley (planning officer) to parish for consultation.

Additional Updates

- Highgates: ongoing illegal builds, enforcement still delayed.
- Bus services: 7A/7 routes cut (Sept). Parish lobbying Basingstoke for funding, tied to Oakley Farm argument.
- Local Government Reorganisation:
 - 12 councils propose 4 unitaries (+Isle of Wight as 5th).
 - Hampshire/East Hants propose 3 unitaries.
 - To be decided by Secretary of State (2026 target).

Key recommendations

1. Contact planning consultant quickly to investigate planning/legal grounds for rejection (heritage, inspector history, infrastructure shortfall).
2. Raise objections before November cabinet meeting.
3. Coordinate with West Berks councillors.
4. Inform parish residents

Action: Clerk to contact Steve Lees, planning consultant.

Action: Colin Wall to feedback Oakley Farm issue to Highclere Society

7 47/25 Neighbourhood Plan update

Colin Wall reported on a discussion with Planet: It is more than likely that the NP will have to update its housing figures from 10 to 20- the new recommendation in the draft Local Plan. A new environmental assessment may be required- this could take another four to five months. Overall much of the NP is on hold until the Local Plan is approved.

8 48/25 Planning

Watermill Bridge: Cllr Falconer gave a brief update after an earlier meeting with Emily Woods, Bewley Homes on 23 September 2025:

Reserved matters will be submitted in October, with the build commencing in approx. one year's time. The whole build is likely to take 7-8 years to complete. Concerns were raised about Thames Water, and the fact that the parish is actually under Berkshire NHS Trust, even though the money will be given to Hampshire, as well as concerns over money given for schools etc. Emily will provide a Q&A document to the Clerk from this meeting which the Clerk will disseminate.

For full responses, please visit the Basingstoke and Deane planning page.

- 25/01749/RET Highclere Stud Lane To Highclere Stud- no objection
- 25/01814/LBC Messenger Cottage Highclere Street- no comment
- 25/01797/HSE 15 Penwood Heights Penwood Highclere- no objection
- 25/01966/FUL Staddlestones Penwood Drove Penwood- no objection

- 25/02074/HSE 2 Flexford Cottages Westridge- no objection
- 25/01804/FUL Land North West Of The Orchard Andover Road – no objection

Recent Appeals (pls note Appeal responses are not published on the BDBC website):

- 25/00109/PIP, Appeal Ref: 25/00041/REF (Land at Westridge Highclere)
- 24/01914/FUL, Appeal Ref: 25/00056/REF (Land adjacent to Brackendale, Church Lane)

9 49/25 HPC Action Plan

National Landscapes: The Clerk has had a conversation with Henry Oliver, Chair of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. He has agreed to come to the next meeting (14 October) to deliver a presentation on: Designation of the NWDNL, Partnership working, What activities they do, what the parish council can do to support/ get involved.

The Clerk will also invite East Woodhay Parish Council and Ashmansworth Parish Council.

Action: Clerk to confirm all requirements for Henry Oliver from NWDNL to attend parish council meeting on 14 October 2025.

The Glebe: Cllr Morrey will chase Savills on the Glebe rental.

10 50/25 Financial Matters

a. Accounts for payment

The Clerk presented accounts for payment (see end of Minutes).

Bank reconciliation as at 31 August 2025:

Unity Bank Current Account: £6738.60

Unity Bank Savings Account: £45774.32

Total: £: **52512.92**

The Clerk's NALC incremental payscale has been agreed and backpaid to April 2025.

6-month financial update:

Currently approx. £2k under spend, mainly due to Glebe rental delay.

Reminder: £3k in budget for planning consultant.

11 51/25 Items to take forward to subsequent meeting

Policies and procedures for updating.

Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 14 October 2025

Actions from 23 September 2025 Meeting

Number	Action	Person
44/25	Clerk to set up Cllr Morrey on email, send register of interests to BDBC etc.	Clerk
46/25	Clerk to contact Steve Lees	Clerk
49/25	Clerk to confirm all requirements for Henry Oliver from NWDNL to attend parish council meeting on 14 October 2025. The Glebe: Cllr Morrey will chase Savills on the Glebe rental.	Clerk Cllr Morrey