ASH-CUM-RIDLEY PARISH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS WORKING GROUP

Notes of the meeting of the Planning Applications Working Group held on 30th April 2026 at Ash Village Hall, The Street, Ash, TN15 7HB, commencing at 7.45pm

Present:	Cllr C Clark (Chairman) Cllr J Clucas Cllr S Hobbs Cllr P Kirtley
In attendance:	Alison De Jager – Clerk Megan Hodges – Assistant Clerk Laura Horner – Planning Consultant 8 Members of the Public

1. **Apologies for absence**
   Apologies were received from Cllrs M Manley, V Ngwenya, C Gorton, M Aspinall, S Fishenden, F Cottee, I Macleod, J Scott and A Jauch.

2. **Declarations of Interest**
   None.

3. **Notes**
   The notes of the meeting held on 7th April 2026 were AGREED.

4. **Applications**

26/00670/OUT: Land North West Of Junction Of Manor Road And Chapel Wood Road And Land North Of Butchers Lane And West Of Chapel Wood Road, Ash, Kent - Outline planning application with some matters reserved, except means of access, for a phased development of up to 300 dwellings, the formation of a new means of access onto Chapel Wood Road, new footpaths and cycle routes, the creation of new surface water drainage, open space provision, new landscaping and habitat creation, ground works and other infrastructure. Cllr C Clark PROPOSED the parish council object this application on the following grounds:

Green Belt / Grey Belt
The application relies heavily on the classification of the site as “grey belt.” However, there is a lack of a clearly defined and permanent boundary to the west of both sites and to the north of the northern parcel. As set out in National Planning Policy Framework, Green Belt boundaries should be defined using permanent and recognisable physical features such as roads, rivers, or woodland edges. The proposed boundaries in relation to Butchers Lane and the edge of New Ash Green create a blurred edge, which risks setting a precedent for incremental encroachment into the Green Belt. This directly conflicts with the aim of preventing urban sprawl. Chapel Wood Road is a bypass for New Ash Green, with no neighbourhood entrance/exit onto this road, therefore this is a natural boundary for New Ash Green. Government guidance (2025) makes clear that grey belt land is not automatically suitable for development. It must still meet sustainability criteria and demonstrate that the release from the Green Belt is justified. This site fails that test.

Unsustainable Location
The site is fundamentally unsustainable in transport terms, contrary to national policy requirements.

- There are no bus services on Chapel Wood Road.

- Existing bus services are infrequent and unreliable, making them unsuitable for commuters, students, or access to further education.
- There is no bus service to West Kingsdown or the A20.
- Narrow rural lanes prevent safe walking or cycling to A20.
- Claims regarding rail accessibility are inaccurate:
    - Longfield Station is over 2 miles away from the proposed development.
    - There are no direct services to Dartford.
    - No international services operate from Ebbsfleet.

The applicant's assertion that the site is sustainably located is therefore incorrect and should be robustly challenged.

Electric Vehicles Do Not Address Transport Impacts

While EV charging points are proposed for each dwelling, this does not overcome the site's unsustainable nature.

- The local highway network is already at or near capacity.
- The development will generate significant additional traffic.
- Many vehicles will remain petrol/diesel, meaning emissions will not be materially reduced.

Reliance on EV infrastructure alone does not meet the requirement for a genuine range of sustainable transport options.

Highways and Road Safety

There are serious concerns regarding highway safety:

- The bend on Chapel Wood Road does not allow for safe visibility splays.
- It appears that incorrect or inappropriate highway guidance has been applied for visibility. The DMRB (Design Manual for Roads and Bridges) should be used instead of the Manual for Streets as this is a 40mph road.
- Surrounding roads, including the main C road through Hartley, and the narrow country lanes towards the A20, are already operating near capacity and are heavily congested when road maintenance is carried out or obstructions occur.

This raises significant concerns regarding safety and traffic impact.

Water Supply Concerns

Serious concerns have been raised by South East Water regarding capacity in the water supply network. Sevenoaks District lies within a severely water stressed area.

- There is insufficient provision to meet demand.
- There is a real risk of water shortages and outages affecting existing residents.

This is a critical infrastructure constraint that has not been adequately resolved.

Education Capacity

Local education provision is already under pressure:

- Insufficient primary school places are available.
- There is no local secondary school provision.
- Milestone School is a SEND facility and cannot meet mainstream demand.
- Existing issues, such as staff parking along Chapel Wood Road and in neighbouring residential areas, highlight current capacity pressures.

Healthcare Capacity

Healthcare infrastructure is also under significant strain:

- Local GP services are under significant capacity pressure.
- Darent Valley Hospital is under increasing pressure due to surrounding development and is no longer operating within comfortable capacity.

The application fails to adequately address how these impacts will be mitigated.

Lack of Robust Section 106 Proposals
There is insufficient detail regarding a Section 106 agreement, particularly in relation to transport improvements.
Given the acknowledged deficiencies in public transport, any development would require:

- Substantial investment in bus service improvements,
- Upgrades to walking and cycling infrastructure,
- Clear, deliverable commitments.

At present, this information is lacking and is required before any determination.

If the Application is Approved
Should the application be granted, the Parish Council requests that robust conditions and obligations are secured through a detailed Section 106 agreement. In particular, the proposed 50% affordable housing provision should prioritise local residents and those with a strong local connection, before allocation via the wider housing register. It should include a genuine mix of affordable housing tenures (including social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership) to meet a range of local needs.
In addition, the development must deliver improvements to local bus services, including increased frequency and extended routes and to local education facilities, to address the site's current unsustainable transport position.
There must also be clear, evidence-based commitments to sewerage infrastructure upgrades, given existing capacity concerns and the current objection from Thames Water. The Parish Council requests a condition that no development will commence until the sewerage connection has been agreed and completed.

A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment must be undertaken and fully address known surface water issues, particularly along Butchers Lane and Chapel Wood Road, which already experiences flooding.
Finally, the design of the development should include sensitive and carefully controlled lighting, with a requirement for downward-facing, low-spill lighting schemes to protect the rural character of the area and minimise impacts on biodiversity, particularly in proximity to ancient woodland and existing ecological corridors.

The Parish Council requests an agreement is entered into with the developers, through a S106 agreement to formally integrate into the existing governance and management structure of the New Ash Green Village Association. This would ensure that future residents are included within the village's legal structure and contribute towards the maintenance and upkeep of community facilities, open spaces, and the shared infrastructure that they will utilise.

Conclusion
While the application includes some positive design elements, these do not outweigh the fundamental and overriding concerns:

- Failure to properly justify release of Green Belt / grey belt land,
- Lack of clearly defined boundaries,
- Unsustainable location with inadequate transport infrastructure,
- Highway safety concerns,
- Insufficient supporting infrastructure (water, education, healthcare).

In light of the above, the Parish Council strongly recommends that the application be refused.
SECONDED: Cllr J Clucas and AGREED.

5. **Decisions**
   The decisions as set out on the Agenda were RECEIVED and NOTED.

6. **For information only.**
   The Information set out on the Agenda were RECEIVED and NOTED

7. **Other Matters for Discussion**

The meeting closed at 9.13pm