

Ospringe Parish Council

The Extraordinary Parish Council meeting was held on Wednesday 18th of February 2026 in the church room, of St Peter and St Paul's church. Regarding COVID 19 precautions, face coverings were not worn at the meeting. A Risk Assessment had been carried out previously. The official meeting commenced at 7.30 pm

Present:

A Keel – Chairman
C James
B Flynn

K Lockwood – Clerk

Apologies:

A Bowles-Illness. Approved.
C Elworthy-Abroad. Approved.
R Simmons-Other commitments. Approved.

Cllr Rich Lehmann

034/26 Dispensations

R Simmons, C Elworthy, B Flynn, C James and the Chairman A Keel have been granted dispensations to deal with matters relating to the setting of the precept.

035/26 Public Participation

There was 1 member of the public in attendance.

036/26 Swale Borough Council's Local Plan Review and consultation

It was agreed to send a response making points relating to the parish rather than answering the survey questions as many of the questions didn't relate to the parish directly. The PC expressed the following views:

1. The single most important issue is that Swale Borough Council should meet its target to have a 5-year land housing supply for homes, as required by Government and embodied in the NPPF. The presumption in favour of development where the five-year supply cannot be shown – as is the case at present with a 3.97-year supply – undermines the point of having a Local Plan and the ability of Swale to determine policy for its borough. We would expect Swale Borough Council to take urgent steps within the draft Local Plan to achieve this required housing supply.
2. The proposed allocation of housing should be more evenly spread across the Borough instead of the current slew heavily centred on Faversham and the surrounding area. A disproportionate amount of proposed housing falls on Faversham as opposed to other parts of the Borough (disregarding the Highsted housing proposals which also skews the figures and distribution). Development sites should be balanced across the Borough rather than concentrated on the Faversham area.
3. We would expect the supply of housing prescribed (or guided) by the Local Plan to include a mix: private ownership and affordable housing of various types to best suit the affordability requirements of different households; different house types and sizes; housing spread across the Borough and located to reflect need or sustainability; and to endorse high quality design both aesthetic and otherwise.
4. We would expect Swale Borough Council in the Local Plan to be ambitious in prescribing the number of affordable homes to be built in the Borough and aggressive in ensuring it achieves it. Developers should

be held to the number and type of affordable homes they commit to at the time of applying for planning permission, with guarantees being sought to ensure their delivery. Any allocation for self-build homes should be in appropriate locations, and of suitable type to meet actual demand and need. The annual self-build list required to be held by local authorities should require interested parties to state their local connections and the area where they would be prepared to self-build, to avoid this scheme being exploited.

5. Housing should be planned to be in the most suitable areas, generally speaking in or adjacent to existing urban centres. We would expect to see a concentration of development on brownfield sites, and then on land with least environmental or amenity value. The use of good quality agricultural land for housing or other forms of development should be avoided wherever possible – the draft Local Plan recognises the “the plains around the Roman road A2 are some of the best graded soils in the country” and should therefore be protected. Such a policy would add weight to the argument to reduce the housing proposals for around the Faversham area.
6. Prioritising housing development in and adjacent to existing towns (see above) would mean that development would be closest to the available infrastructure - highways, jobs, schools, health facilities etc all being close at hand. That said, we would still want to see sufficient new social, green and physical infrastructure mandated for any developments for which Swale Borough Council might grant permission, with enforceable conditions imposed to ensure that this infrastructure was made available at the same time as the development was implemented, to avoid lag or shortage. The policies in the Local Plan should be both designed and implemented so as to deliver the infrastructure required to support modest growth and the creation of quality places.
7. Allocation of employment land should also be appropriate in scale and location and type, and with due regard to the location and community it would serve or affect.
8. The rural integrity and natural beauty of the Borough should be strongly protected. The draft Local Plan does recognise the attractiveness of much of the Borough – it refers to the richness of the Borough, its relatively low population density; and its rich rural and landscape heritage - and so the policies which protect and enhance the attractive elements of the Borough should be strengthened, whilst other policies which might have an adverse impact on those areas should be tempered. The rural areas and ‘green corridors’ of the Borough should be preserved and enhanced. This is particularly the case for the Kent Downs National Landscape (in which half of Ospringe parish is situated) as well as the Local Landscape Areas of the Syndale Valley and the North Street Dip Slope. These areas should be afforded the highest of protections with strong obligations for any development or permitted activity to enhance.
9. Another policy which should be strengthened to afford extra protection is that for rural lanes, both in Ospringe Parish and in other rural areas in the Borough. We would also support a policy in the Local Plan for “quiet lanes” rather than the vague reference at present.
10. The Local Plan should include policies that actively support and promote town centres. The Local Plan should also support appropriate economic activity suitable for the rural environment. However, in this case great care would need to be taken to ensure that a balancing exercise is undertaken to support suitable rural activities or enterprise whilst at the same time recognising what is valued in the countryside and rural areas, and not allowing these elements to be adversely affected. One example where great care is required is the type and amount of traffic which would be generated by development or change of use. Within the Kent Downs National Landscape the protection should be even greater – eg a strengthening of Policy E2.
11. Proper consideration should be given to looking after biodiversity and “habitat protection”. Not preserving “green corridors” goes against the Government’s 25-year Environment Plan. The 2020 Swale Borough Council Biodiversity Baseline Report quotes the national plan and the protection of ‘corridors’ so species do not become “banded in”. There is a responsibility to ensure that national policies are given importance when making planning decisions.
12. Open spaces are an important feature, and we support the identification and protection of local green spaces. We also regard the preservation of green undeveloped space between settlements to be important, and maintaining existing settlement boundaries as far as possible should be a policy-led aim.
13. As stated above, we are of the view that development should be concentrated in and adjacent to the existing urban settlements. This should relieve the need to develop and expand rural settlements or allow sporadic development in rural areas, where sustainable development is much more difficult and local amenities much more limited. Greater protection should be given to Kent Downs National Landscape and the benchmark against development should be more exacting than that “significant harm” would be caused. We suggest the threshold for presumption against development should simply

be that it would cause "harm", placing the onus on the applicant to demonstrate that the benefit of development would outweigh this.

14. Greater prominence and importance should be given to 'Air Quality' in the Local Plan documentation, and when permission for development is being sought. One prime example is Ospringe Street where air quality is poor, and bad during certain times of the day caused by high volumes of slow-moving or stationary traffic. Development which increases traffic along this road should not be permitted until level of pollution have been reduced to much safer levels.
15. Another area of great concern for us in the draft Local Plan is its policies on gypsy and travellers. The 2023 survey undertaken for Swale sets out pitch/site numbers which assume "regularisation of sites which are not permanently authorised" – in other words, granting permanent consent for sites currently tolerated or which have been granted a temporary permission (both undesirable steps given that consent has hitherto not been given because of shortcomings in the sites). Even so, the 2023 report concludes that there is still a shortfall both in the near- and long-term. The policy should not include the regularisation of currently unauthorised sites as firstly those sites are currently illegal and not approved for good reason and secondly regularisation would tend to encourage others to set up illegal sites in the hope of subsequently becoming authorised.
16. When setting its policies on gypsy and travellers, Swale must ensure there is an adequate supply of suitable G and T sites/pitches throughout the period of the Plan. This is both to avoid or minimise the establishment of illegal sites in inappropriate areas, as well as to avoid the imposition on the council of permission being granted either at first instance or on appeal for unsuitable sites in inappropriate locations because of inadequate provision elsewhere.
17. Swale's gypsy and traveller policies must also strongly protect the Kent Downs National Landscape and the Local Landscape Areas referred to above from encampments – the wording of the current draft policies and preamble should be strengthened to reflect the upholding of these sensitive areas in Planning Inspectors' decisions.
18. Finally, in the same way as Swale Borough Council has committed to creating a Local Plan, we would expect to see an increase in commitment and resources to planning enforcement, both of which are currently lacking. Without prompt and concerted enforcement of planning laws the Local Plan lacks credibility and integrity.

037/26 Planning

26/500347/LAWPRO Scotts Oast Hansletts Lane Ospringe Kent ME13 ORW Lawful Development Certificate Proposed for installation of solar panels on the roof of the existing detached garage. No objections.

038/26 Finance

OPC General Account

Payments

Chq no 1726 To Ospringe Church for rent of the Church room for extraordinary meeting £20.00

039/26 Any other business

There was none.

Meeting ended at 9.30 pm.

Next meeting: 4th of March 2026.