

Notes from Horseheath Parish Council, Open Meeting to discuss the Glebelands Planning Application 23/0393/FUL. Wednesday 2nd September 2026, Horseheath Village Hall.

Present: Cllr John Howard, Cllr Harper Brown, Cllr Nichola Murray, Cllr Terry Mundy, Cllr Paul Hunt, Jess Ashbridge (Clerk), and 20 Parishioners.

A Parishioner had made a complaint about process. They felt that there had not been enough information provided to Parishioners prior to the meeting and had requested a deferment. The PC had felt that the information provided over the years had been adequate and was in the public domain.

Cllr Howard summarised the activities that had taken place from 2021.

- October 2021- Early Horseheath Parish Council (HPC) Neighbourhood Plan discussions had raised the lack of dedicated green space for the village as a major concern. The Ely Diocesan Board of Finance (EDBF) had offered the Glebelands in the call for sites of the last 3 local plans – HPC approached them about leasing the area. EDBF suggested that instead they would offer to sell HPC 3.2 acres including new allotment land as a protected green space; they would seek to develop the current church allotments.
- Parish Meeting 2022 – Agreed the HPC should explore options. HPC had made it very clear that it was not a developer.
- October 2022 -Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) put into place between EDBF and HPC – in public domain.
- HPC had made contact with charities, e.g. Woodland Trust, Forestry England and also the Devana Centre for Environmental Recovery operated by Ground Control PLC for information about assistance and maintenance of such a project. Devana had agreed that the costs for maintenance would be approximately £5k for the five years. This has been before the s106 discussions.
- HPC had no involvement in the s106 process to ensure that they did not have legal obligations arising from the development of housing; this would allow assistance from charities with development and management of the area.
- Friday 7th August 2026 decision notice, s106 agreement finally agreed.

S106 document and stated that:

- Biodiversity net gain (BNG) 30 year commitment – owner (EDBF) responsible, with ecological surveys at 1-5/10/15/20/25/30 years required, unless HPC accepted transfer of the area, after which as owners HPC would be responsible.
- Maintenance cost –£5,000 for the first 5 years grass cutting of the meadow and pathways.

- Creation of 4 parking spaces for the new allotments, new driveway, path through the Glebelands, and a new footway along West Wickham road.
- If HPC did not take on the land, EDBF would be liable for the upkeep of the area.

HPC had a discussion with EDBF on 25th August 2026. EDBF had spent a considerable amount of money to achieve the planning permission, and it was estimated a further £100k would be required to create the new parking spaces, driveway and circular path. EDBF sought a sale price of £70k for the land to be offered to HPC. HPC expressed concerns about the number of parking spaces for the newly created allotments, driveway length, the path through the Glebelands, and the footway along West Wickham Road. HPC considered the project costs could potentially be reduced in these areas. Additionally, the BNG requirement had altered the scope of the original ideas and the long term costs of the scheme. EDBF had indicated that if their sale price for the proposed 3.2 acres including the new allotment areas was not agreed they would pull out of developing the approved planning application.

The meeting was opened to Parishioner comments and questions:

- A Parishioner was concerned that if HPC did not agree to the sale and transfer of the land the MoU between EDBF and HPC could result in legal challenge. It was advised that the MOU was not legally binding.
- A Parishioner asked if the EDBF would just step away without developing the allotments. That had been indicated by EDBF if the Parish did not purchase the land for the anticipated price.
- A Parishioner felt that there was an understanding that HPC would be purchasing the land between £35-£70k, and that it seemed that at the Planning Committee Meeting it was advised that the land was going to be given to HPC from EDBF. Cllr Howard did not recall specifically saying this but apologised publicly if he had contributed to a misunderstanding in the planning committee with regard to the land being given to HPC for the village. He stated that if questions were raised about his conduct, then they should be directed to the Monitoring Officer at SCDC. Cllr Hunt advised that costs were not considered a material consideration during Planning Committee Meetings. Cllr Hunt advised that the balance between use by the Parish, and any damage by building next to the Church/changing the allotment area would have been taken into account.
- There was a question over whether EDBF would sell the land with planning permission. This was possible but it was noted the conditions/s106 required significant additional financial input for any developer.

A vote was held as to whether the Parish should agree to a purchase price of £70,000 for the 2.2 acres and 1 acre of new allotments. 18 parishioners voted

against this proposal, 5 Counsellors supported the motion not to proceed with the EDBF offer as it stands; 2 Parishioners abstained.

Concerns were raised that HPC could vote against the decisions made this evening when the decision was formally voted on at the full Council meeting on 14th September. The Clerk advised that the 5 Cllrs present had all voted in support of the Parishioners.

If EDBF returned with a much lower offer for the land, HPC would consult the Parish again, however the ongoing maintenance costs of the BNG requirement would still apply.

Some Parishioners felt that EDBF would wish to go ahead with the development given the amount spent so far and the potential profit that could be achieved from the sale of the two houses.

Cllr Howard thanked everyone for attending, and closed the meeting at 8.40pm.