

# Public Document Pack

## North Yorkshire Council

### Strategic Planning Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 10 February 2026 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Andy Paraskos in the Chair and Councillors Bob Packham, Chris Aldred (as a substitute for Councillor Andrew Timothy), Andy Brown, Nick Brown (as a substitute for Councillor Yvonne Peacock), John Cattnach, Hannah Gostlow, David Hugill, Tom Jones, Andrew Lee, John McCartney, Neil Swannick, Roberta Swiers and Robert Windass.

Officers present: Cameron Clarke Alonso (Planning Officer), Linda Drake (Principal Planning Officer), St John Harris (Principal Democratic Services Officer), Amy Taylor (Principal Planning Officer), David Walker (Development Service Manager), and Laura Zielinski (Solicitor Lawyer Planning and Environment)

Apologies: Councillors John Mann, Yvonne Peacock and Andrew Timothy.

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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#### **133 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Mann, Yvonne Peacock (substituted by Councillor Nick Brown) and Andrew Timothy (substituted by Councillor Chris Aldred).

#### **134 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2025 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

#### **135 Declarations of interest**

Councillor Nick Brown declared an interest in Minute Item 138 since he knew the applicant.

Councillor John Cattnach declared an interest in Minute Item 136 since he had been contacted by his constituents about this application.

#### **136 Light Valley Solar - Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project**

*(Councillor Andrew Lee joined the meeting at this point)*

Authorisation was sought from the committee to delegate authority to the Head of Development Management to approve and submit the Local Impact Report, enter into and finalise Statement(s) of Common Ground, agree the content of the draft Development Consent Order (DCO), and make all further necessary representations on behalf of North Yorkshire Council in respect of the Light Valley Solar Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) planning application.

Members were advised that for NSIPs applicants applied directly to the Planning

Inspectorate (PINS) for a DCO rather than to the local planning authority and the application was determined by the Secretary of State on the recommendation of PINS. Local planning authorities were statutory consultees and the relevant planning authority for the discharge of the planning requirements within the DCO.

The planning officer then outlined the application process and further details of this 500MW solar scheme. After acceptance of the application which was expected imminently, PINS had up to six months to undertake the examination. During the Examination stage, the local planning authority had to prepare and submit a Local Impact Report, participate in preparing a Statement of Common Ground and provide written representations if requested on particular topics. Discussions continued between the council and applicant during Examination and council officers would attend any hearings. The council's planning officers and technical specialists had been involved in the project since the inception meeting with the applicant. The council's submission of information was required in accordance with deadlines set by the PINS which resulted in tight timescales for officers to review information and prepare responses.

During their consideration of the officer report and presentation, members' discussion centred on the following matters:

- The use of multiple sites linked only by a cable corridor. Members queried the rules around packaging several sites together when each individually fell below the threshold for decision by the Secretary of State. Officers confirmed this was a matter for the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). The developer had assured officers that the cable infrastructure was specific to this project and could not be used by others.
- Relationship with other approved schemes. Members noted that another solar farm at Hillam had been refused locally but approved on appeal. Officers confirmed that this was entirely separate and would require its own grid connection.
- Site maintenance strategy. Concern was expressed regarding long-term land management, including whether land would be sprayed with herbicide or grazed. Officers advised that the strategy had not yet been provided and undertook to seek clarification from the developer, noting that grazing was commonly used elsewhere.
- Extent of solar panel coverage and size of battery storage. Members sought clarity on the proportion of land to be covered by panels versus battery storage. Officers explained that final layouts were not yet confirmed and that landscape and ecological mitigation might reduce panel coverage. Battery storage would be limited to one site (site 2). Technological changes could reduce its size over time.
- Rationale for the inclusion of the Escrick site. Members queried the logic of including a site located some distance from the others. Officers advised that the developer had secured that land and chosen to include it but had not provided a definitive justification. The entire scheme connected only to the National Grid substation at Monk Fryston. Members asked whether concerns about this selection could be raised; officers confirmed that the council could do so within its submission.
- Influence of the committee on decision-making. Members expressed frustration at the limited role of the local authority in the Development Consent Order (DCO) process. Officers confirmed that if delegated authority were not granted, the Council risked missing statutory deadlines and losing the opportunity to comment.
- Site selection methodology. Members queried whether site selection was driven purely by willing landowners. Officers noted that land availability was one factor but others included proximity to substations and discounting of alternative locations.

- Residential amenity impacts. Significant concern was raised regarding homes that would be almost entirely surrounded by solar panels, and the effect on local residents' living conditions. Members stressed that this issue was particularly important and asked that it be strongly emphasised in the Council's submission. Officers agreed to raise this with both landscape and public health officers and to seek reductions in impact wherever possible.
- Location of examination hearings. Members asked whether PINS intended to hold examination events locally. Officers advised that this had previously been the case but that no decision had been made. Members stressed the need for accessibility for local residents.
- Cumulative impacts. Members discussed cumulative effects on landscape character, health, stress levels, recreation, and highway use, noting that multiple solar farms and battery storage schemes had already been approved in the area. Officers confirmed that cumulative impact on human health and local character was a central issue and would form part of the Local Impact Report.
- Public participation and representations. Officers confirmed that residents could submit representations directly to PINS and that any correspondence received by the council would be forwarded. A representation received about discrepancies in Light Valley Solar's documentation—especially regarding highways, access, sensitive receptors, and impacts on Hambleton Hough—would be investigated and forwarded.
- Loss of agricultural land. Members expressed concern about using productive farmland for solar development, arguing that this undermined food security and local farming.
- Balance of benefits and harms. Members acknowledged the potential energy generation benefits but expressed concern about agricultural land loss, landscape change, and limited community benefit.
- Grazing under solar panels. Members emphasised the importance of grazing rather than chemical spraying, both to preserve agricultural use and avoid long-term herbicide impacts.
- Geographical spread of energy infrastructure. Concerns were raised that renewable energy infrastructure was disproportionately concentrated in the former Selby district, which had historically hosted major power stations.

Members welcomed the clarification given by officers at the meeting but remained concerned about residential amenity, cumulative impacts, inclusion of the Escrick site, loss of agricultural land, and long-term land management. Officers agreed to incorporate these points into the Council's response and seek further clarification where required.

### **Resolved**

That the committee delegate authority to the Head of Development Management to approve and submit the Local Impact Report, enter into and finalise Statement(s) of Common Ground, agree the content of the draft Development Consent Order (DCO), and make all further necessary representations on behalf of North Yorkshire Council in respect of the Light Valley Solar Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) planning application.

Voting record:

A vote was taken and the motion was declared carried with 13 for and 1 abstention.

**137 Planning application for extraction of sand and gravel from a new quarry and restoration of the site to agriculture and nature conservation using imported infill materials, together with the construction of a new site access road, site offices and weighbridge on land at Broach Road, Hensall, DN14 0BU**

The Head of Development Management – Community Development Services sought determination of a planning application for extraction of sand and gravel from a new quarry and restoration of the site to agriculture and nature conservation using imported infill materials, together with the construction of a new site access road, site offices and weighbridge on land at Broach Road, Hensall, DN14 0BU on behalf of Darrington Quarries Ltd.

Members were reminded that this application had been initially reported to the committee for determination on 9 December 2025; however, the decision had been made to defer the application on the grounds of public amenity, specifically in relation to the soil bunds located adjacent to the nearest residential property, One Acre.

Members were advised that since the committee meeting on 9 December 2025, the applicant had reviewed the scheme and amended the position of the proposed subsoil bund south of One Acre. Two separate mounds were proposed in this area: a topsoil mound up to 3m high and a subsoil mound up to 5m high. The peak of the subsoil mound has been moved about 20m further into the site, away from One Acre, and its north-eastern slope has been substantially reduced to lessen visual impact. A technical note from the original noise assessor confirmed that the revised design still met the required noise attenuation and complied with the previously set noise conditions. The resident of One Acre had confirmed in writing on 14 January 2026 that they remained unsatisfied with the proposed amendment and their objection still stood. They stated that they had expected the bund to be moved back into the site 30-40m, not the 20m as proposed. It was also confirmed that the possible installation of a dropped kerb to the north of the property onto Broach Road raised at the meeting on 9 December was not a material planning consideration and should not be given weight when determining the application.

Richard Kendall and Amy Kendall then both spoke objecting to the application, sharing the allotted five minutes.

The applicant's agent, Sam Thistlethwaite, spoke in support of the application.

During their consideration of the officer report and presentation, members' discussion centred on the following matters:

- Noise screening methodology. Members sought clarification on how the applicant determined the revised position of the bund and whether alternative distances (e.g., 30–35m) had been modelled. The applicant explained that noise protection was only effective when placed either at the source or the receptor, and that the revised design represented the farthest distance possible while still providing adequate mitigation.
- Objector concerns regarding slope stability and flooding. Members noted the objector's concerns about the redesigned bund, particularly potential slope instability and flood risk. Officers advised that the bund would be seeded and planted to stabilise the slope and confirmed that the site was not within a flood zone.
- Mitigation for the most affected property. Members reiterated that the property nearest the site would experience the greatest impact and that mitigation remained important. Officers confirmed that the redesigned bund represented the most appropriate balance achievable.

- Highway access and dropped kerb. Members recalled that the applicant previously indicated willingness to contribute towards a new access arrangement for the affected resident. Officers confirmed discussions had taken place between the applicant and the resident. The applicant confirmed willingness to contribute if the separate highways approval process were successfully completed – this matter fell outside the planning process.
- Overall balance and recommendation. Members recognised that the applicant had responded to earlier concerns and made reasonable adjustments. While acknowledging the objector's dissatisfaction, Members considered that the revised proposal provided suitable mitigation and that further adjustments may not be practical.

Decision:

That planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions listed in the report and completion of a Deed of Unilateral Undertaking with terms as detailed in the report.

Voting record:

A vote was taken and the motion was declared carried with 13 for and 1 against.

**138 NY/2025/0048/ENV Proposed anaerobic digestion facility associated access, infrastructure, landscaping and engineering works at former Skipton on Swale Airfield, Sandhutton, Thirsk, YO7 4EG on behalf of Advanced Fuel Partners**

The Head of Development Management – Community Development Services sought determination of a planning application for an anaerobic digestion facility associated access, infrastructure, landscaping and engineering works at former Skipton on Swale Airfield, Sandhutton, Thirsk, YO7 4EG on behalf of Advanced Fuel Partners.

By way of an update, the planning officer advised that since publication of the report, a further 14 local objections and a follow up email from Sandhutton Parish Council had been received, none of which raised any issues not already addressed in the report. In terms of potential planning policy conflicts, the planning officer reiterated that the absence of a second sequential flood risk test was given limited weight due to the limited extent and nature of development within higher flood risk areas. The loss of 11.5Ha of best and most versatile agricultural land was also afforded limited weight because the proposed accompanying Soil Management Plan (SMP) to be secured under condition, would set out detailed measures for soil stripping, bunding and reinstatement, ensuring that soil resources were protected in accordance with Natural England's guidance.

Bryony Cameron then addressed the committee objecting to the application.

Both Sebastian Speight (agent) and Robin Bosomworth (landowner) then spoke in support of the application, sharing the allotted five minutes.

During their consideration of the officer report and presentation, members' discussion centred on the following matters:

- Visual impact and height of Anaerobic Digestion tanks. Members queried why the AD tanks, stated as 16.5m high, appeared lower in presentation images when compared with the 18.5m exhaust stack. It was clarified that the exhaust stack shown was correctly depicted at full height and that colour treatment and landscaping would reduce visual prominence.
- Combined Heat and Power (CHP) unit. Members sought clarity on the gas-fired

CHP system, its purpose, and whether it used on-site biogas. The applicant explained that CHP would serve on-site heat and electricity demand, powered by gas, with biogas upgraded and injected into the national high-pressure pipeline via compressors.

- Transport arrangements and access routes. Members examined the movement of HGVs via Access Route 1 (avoiding the village) and Access Route 2 (through the village). Officers confirmed that maximum daily movements would be 88 (44 in/44 out), rising to 118 for up to 60 seasonal peak days per year. Routine routes would avoid the village, with other access points used only for National Grid maintenance.
- Pipeline pressure and connection. Members queried whether biomethane could be injected into a high-pressure 70-bar pipeline. The applicant confirmed National Gas Transmission had issued a connection offer, and appropriate compression and gas quality systems would be installed.
- Impact on Skipton-on-Swale bridge. Members raised concern about HGV volumes using an ageing bridge. Officers advised no specific objection had been raised by Highways but acknowledged that the matter had not been queried in detail. Officers would seek this assurance from Highways.
- Necessity of the facility and agricultural waste. Members noted the significant volume of manure generated locally by poultry and cattle farms and discussed environmental problems arising from spreading. Members considered anaerobic digestion a necessary and sustainable waste-management solution.
- Operating hours for vehicle movements. Members debated whether proposed hours (07:00–19:00) should be reduced. Some Members supported restricting movements to 07:00–18:00; another Member requested more evidence before altering hours due to potential impacts on school traffic.

Members acknowledged that the proposed facility addressed a significant agricultural waste issue and that the applicant had provided credible information regarding pipeline connection, transport routing, and CHP demand. Concerns remained regarding traffic impacts and bridge capacity (which officers would check with Highways), with differing views on appropriate vehicle movement hours.

It was then moved and seconded to approve the recommendations in the officer report with an amendment to Condition 3 in respect of transport operational hours that Monday to Fridays the operation of delivery and mobile plant transport shall only take place between 07:00 – 18:00 hours.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

The decision:

That planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions listed in the report (with the amendment to Condition 3 as detailed above) and subject to completion of a Unilateral Undertaking with terms detailed in Table 1 of the report.

Voting record:

Seven in favour, four against and one abstention.

*(In accordance with his declaration at Minute 135, Councillor Nick Brown left the room following his declaration of interest during the debate and determination of this item.)*

There were no urgent items of business.

**140 Date of next meeting**

Tuesday, 10 March 2026 – County Hall, Northallerton

The meeting concluded at 12.18 pm.

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