



ALDHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of Aldham Annual Parish Assembly meeting held on Tuesday 1st. April 2025 at 7pm in the Village Hall at Aldham

Present: Cllrs Mike Lambert (Chair), Brenda Brown, Andrew D'Angibau, Tony Gearey, Jean Jennings, Roger Walker, CCC Sara Naylor and Kevin B. Money (Parish Clerk).
There were also present 6 members of the public.

1. **Welcome by Chairman** Cllr Mike Lambert
2. **Apologies for absence** were received from Cllr A. Scott
3. **Minutes of last year's Annual Parish Meeting held on 27th. April 2024 All Agreed**
4. **Chairman's Report**

Welcome to this year's Annual Parish Meeting, which is an opportunity for you to question us on the work and finances of Aldham Parish Council. Last year this meeting coincided with a major consultation exercise by National Grid on their proposals for the grid upgrade to link Norwich and Tilbury. This prompted us to hold the Annual Meeting on a Saturday morning largely to focus on this single issue. Pylons have continued to be an ongoing issue throughout the last year but, as we will be reporting, sadly so far with no major change to the plans for Aldham. However, I would like to thank the Vice Chair Adam Scott for his efforts in keeping tabs on the mountains of documentation and putting together excellent responses on our behalf. And also, thanks to Penny Lang who works tirelessly behind the scenes to maintain the communication and information flow from the principal campaigners to the village through her updates in Grapevine Magazine and FB page.

This year we did consider holding another Saturday morning event in expectation of the City Council publishing their Local Plan Review for public consultation. However, as you will hear shortly, this decision was postponed until later in the year, at which point we will review the need for a one-off village meeting to discuss the implications for the village.

Aside from National Grid proposals and the emerging Local Plan Review the other major issue for the Parish has been roads and traffic. During the first half of the year, we were actively involved in dialogue with National Highways Agency over the works to the A12 between J25 and J26. Thanks to interventions from our MP, Bernard Jenkin, and our County Councillor, Lewis Barber, we were able to establish a line of communication with the Agency to express concerns about traffic management and its impact on the surrounding villages during the extended work programme. With support from all our local councillors we had some success in improving signage and advance notice of closures but there is still room for improvement before they start work on the major A12 improvement between Marks Tey and Boreham – assuming it does go ahead of course.

Thanks to the persistence of Councillor Lewis, who continues to lobby ECC Highways on our behalf, there has been some repairs to Brook Road, albeit further potholes have now appeared, and we are promised repairs to the appalling state of Tey Road in the next few months. However, we all recognise this is simply treating the symptoms not the cause. The A12 works have clearly influenced driving habits and there is anecdotal evidence that rat running through the village is increasing to avoid holdups on the main road network, and particularly the A120, with more traffic trying to travel faster on unsuitable rural roads.

We were finally able to get a chance to erect the shared speed sign in Brook Road, the second of two agreed locations, at the end of last year, which we hope is helping to discourage speeding through the village. However, in response to increasing concerns we established a small task group to look at this in more detail with the help of local residents Alan Knott and Hugh Randall. The outcome of this group was a recommendation to purchase our own speed signage for permanent use in the village. This recommendation was accepted by the Parish Council and an order has been

placed. This sign will also allow us to record data on traffic speeds that we can use as evidence to Essex Police and ECC Highways to carry out Speed Traps and influence Speed Limits. Half the funding for this has been provided by Lewis and our other two City Councillors, Sara Naylor and Dennis Willetts, from their discretionary budgets, for which we thank them. In addition, we have prepared a Note to the Local Highway Panel, a joint City and County group, seeking support for a number of measures to be implemented across the Parish to improve highway safety. This has yet to be considered by the Panel but can be found on the Parish web site if you are interested.

We are also participating in a joint Group established with Fordham and Wormingford about traffic, and in particular HGV movements associated with CSH and Fairfield Farm.

On a more practical note, thanks to Andrew d'Angibau who has been instrumental in helping to resolve flooding problems in Tey Road with direct action and liaison with landowners, County Broadband and ECC Highways.

At the Annual Meeting last year, we used the opportunity of a wider gathering to take a sounding on other issues where the Parish Council could be involved. One of these was Gallows Green, which as a Registered Village Green is owned and maintained by the Parish Council. Maintenance in the past few years has been limited to removing dead or dangerous trees and priority has been to keep it as a natural habitat rather than a formal open space. However, it was becoming clear that some action would be needed to prevent brambles and undergrowth choking out plant life and that the build-up of silt, reeds and trees around the pond was restricting its value as a natural resource. Following discussions with both EWT and RSPB, Brenda Brown, Jean Jennings and I, with the help of EWT and some volunteers, did some initial clearance work at the end of last year to cut down the knapweed and reduce the brambles. We hope to continue with a programme of work to restore and improve Gallow Green for nature conservation and currently are looking at the potential for a grant from Enover Community Trust.

One of the key objectives for the Parish Council over the last year has been to improve our communication with the village and its residents. To this end my thanks to Tony Gearey and Roger Walker for their help in setting up a new web site with up-to-date information, not only our agendas and minutes, but other matters of local interest. We are fortunate to have the link to the Grapevine Magazine and FB page through Tony and our thanks to him and Claire for the invaluable resource they provide. We have moved into the 21st century with a FB page in order we can use Grapevine FB page to provide updates between meetings and respond to issues as they emerge. You are of course always welcome at our monthly meetings and we are grateful to a small but loyal group who turnout regularly to keep a watch over us and raise matters of concern.

Finally, my thanks also to our Clerk Kevin Money who has helped steer us through the last twelve months and provided excellent support to me personally.

5. Update on National Grid's Proposals – Cllr A. Scott

This response is submitted by Aldham Parish Council as the democratically elected representative body for the residents of Aldham to protect their village from the harmful effects of National Grid's ("NG's") The Great Grid Upgrade project, in response to NG's targeted public consultation. That consultation spans the period of 25 February 2025 to 27 March 2025.

2. We recognise the current consultation is targeted to 4 sites in Norfolk 6 in Suffolk, 13 sites across Essex and two in Thurrock. Aldham is not subjected to any changes that require consultation and we are aware you wish to focus on points of detail not principles. However, by excluding Aldham this means that National Grid have not acted on the concerns we have raised in the last consultation. We attached a copy of our response at that time as this details the concerns the village has on your proposals

3. Aldham Parish Council object strongly to the Norwich to Tilbury pylons project as set out our consultation response of July 2024. We commented that, if it is proved that the power needs to be moved through our area, it should not be done by pylons, but by one of the following methods, in order of preference:

1. Upgrade existing lines with new technology
2. HVDC Offshore Grid
3. HVDC Undergrounding

4. AC Undergrounding

We are disappointed that none of the above options have been fully explored or progressed and that the current targeted consultation is just a continuation of the original proposals with no change in overall approach

6. Aldham Parish Council also provided comments on 7 mitigating measures should pylons be taken through our village. These included

- Pylon design
- Pylon positions.
- Screening and landscaping
- HVDC undergrounding
- Existing network.
- Community benefits:
- Compensation:

As T pylons have now been discontinued by National Grid and that the pylons positions, HVDC undergrounding and upgrades to the existing network have all been ignored there appear to be very few meaningful mitigation measures on offer. Screening and landscaping in our open landscape on a ridge between two river valleys will be difficult to achieve in any acceptable way. The draft Planning and Infrastructure bill launched on 11 March 2025 still provides no clear detail on what is on offer regarding community benefits and compensation with the actual details to come later in secondary legislation. The lack of detail and the reluctance of National Grid to consider our previous consultation comments leaves us short of confidence that any future discussions will be meaningful.

7. Aldham Parish Council is gravely concerned that NG are using the scale of the project (the largest in a lifetime), the ongoing energy crisis and geopolitical instability, and the complexity of the DCO process to steamroller this Project through. The Winsor Report Page 3 of 4 rightly highlights a woeful lack of strategic planning and due process over recent decades that has led to the current pressure on communities like Aldham. Our village should not be irreversibly damaged due to past inaction. The lack of decisions then should not lead to wrong decisions now. If we are serious about green energy, then we must deliver it with green infrastructure and that means including a fully costed integrated offshore grid option in the consultation.

7. We conclude by saying again that the Project is destructive and unnecessary, and its prosecution by NG is irrational and thereby unreasonable. Aldham Parish Council, for and on behalf of all of the residents of the village of Aldham in Colchester in Essex, want and demand an integrated offshore grid in the North Sea, because it has been shown by National Grid ESO that this approach saves £2bn of taxpayer's money and reduces the overall infrastructure need by 50%.

Submitted this **27 day of March 2025** by the **ALDHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

for and on behalf of all of the residents of the village of Aldham.

6. Colchester Local Plan Review Preferred Options

Consulting on a preferred plan has been delayed by 9 months. In 6 Parishes the housing will double the number of houses in existence now. A development of 250 houses in Aldham is being proposed and some residents may receive a formal letter from the developer shortly.

7. Open Forum discussion (matters raised by residents)

A tremendous amount of water is running down Brook Road. The gullies could be blocked. Cllr R. Waker thinks it could be a spring or burst water main.

Tey Road was resurfaced in the 1970's so are these local roads being ignored from being repaired. More HGVs are coming through the village.

The Essex Way footpath is becoming unpassable and potentially dangerous along river behind Mill Race Nursery. Councillor Jennings to log with ECC Rights of Way Officer

The Chair then closed the meeting at 7.30pm and thanked everyone for attending.

Signed

Mike Lambert – Chair

1st. April 2025

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