

Aldington and Mersham Support Group (AMSG) Report

Parish Council Meeting 04.12.23

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1. Our new Group introduced itself at the community meeting held on 09.11.23 which was very well attended, and Jonathan Tennant made a short presentation about the group and its plans following the decision of Colleen and Sara of SSSS to step aside from the work they have been doing (which they confirmed at this meeting).
2. We explained our intention of supporting both parish communities in the challenges presented by the EPL001 solar scheme emphasising that at least 20% of the land area of the scheme lay within the parish of Mersham.
3. We explained the importance we attach to continuing to pursue the question of whether the applicant had or had not adequately consulted with the community in the way required under the Act.
4. We confirmed that the group had carried out a great deal of research in this area and were in the process of finalising a paper to go to Counsel - highly experienced in this area of work- in order to obtain guidance on strategy. Counsel is considering what we have provided, and a fee quote is awaited.
5. We emphasised that the group would not be able to do all the work that would be necessary in the weeks and months ahead to effectively oppose the scheme (as is the ambition of the Parish Council and the mandate from those that attended the parish council meeting on 14th November 2022) without being able to engage expertise in various fields as part of an overarching strategic plan.
6. The need for volunteers from within the community was also highlighted and it was gratifying to note the number of people coming up after the meeting and introducing themselves and saying that they would be available to assist in this new endeavour – some with very relevant expertise.
7. Mr Tennant commended the idea of the village speaking as “one voice” - which has proved something of a challenge to date. He indicated that the group intended to act as a support for the Parish Council in much the same way as had been successfully achieved on various difficult infrastructure applications in Church Lane. Here there had been constructive dialogue between the Church Lane Group and the Council and he hoped this would prove a good template.
8. We expect to provide update reports for the Parish Council ahead of their monthly meetings so that members are kept abreast of progress and so that where necessary the group can seek support.
9. We expect to convene community meetings periodically at which, those like us who are concerned about many aspects relating to this scheme, can not only learn about progress being made by our group but also be kept up-to-date with the stage reached in the process and of course ask questions and make suggestions.

AMSG 27.11.2023