



Alkham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 13th April 2026 at 7.30pm in Alkham Village Hall

Present: Alkham Parish Councillors: D.Barnard (Chair), S. Edwards, T.Johns, G. Kaile, M Libaert, P Tapsell, C.Webber,

In attendance : DDC Cllr Hibbert. Parish Clerk and members of the public.

The Chair advised members of the recent passing of Mrs Sue Lees, who served as Parish Clerk to this Council for many years. Members paid tribute to the considerable dedication and commitment she gave to the parish during her time in post, and to the invaluable contribution she made to the life of the local community. The meeting observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

1. Apologies and Declarations.

- 1.1 Apologies for absence received and confirmed by the Council Members who cannot attend a meeting shall tender their apologies to the Parish Clerk prior to the meetings, under Section 75(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the members present must decide whether the reason(s) for a member's absence shall be accepted. There were none.
- 1.2 Declaration of Changes to the Register of Interests.
Councillors are responsible for ensuring that their Register of Interests is up to date (within 28 days of any changes). There were none.
- 1.3 To receive Declarations of Interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda. In accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of members and in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 respectively for officers.
Reminder to Members to disclose either a Pecuniary Interest or Other Interest in any item on the agenda. The clerk cannot advise members on this, and members are personally responsible for declaring an interest There were none.
- 1.4 Requests for Dispensations. There were none.
- 1.5 Declarations of Lobbying. There were no declarations.

2. Public comments and observations. (Maximum 15 minutes)

The meeting will be adjourned to allow members of the public to speak. Individuals may speak for up to three minutes, at the discretion of the Chairman, on agenda items only. The minute book will be closed.

3. Reports from external parties (if present).

DDC Councillor Hibbert gave his report.

4. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 2nd March 2026 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Planning:

- 5.1 **To table planning applications received for consideration:**
There were none. The Clerk would contact DDC Planning Department regarding missing comments re Great Cauldron Farm.
- 5.2 **To Table and Validate Planning Applications, which have been dealt with since the last meeting:**
There were none.
- 5.3 **To table decisions by Dover District Council (DDC) since the last meeting.** There were none.
- 5.4 **To table late planning matters.** There were none.

6. Finance:

- 6.1 To receive and authorise payments listed on the schedule (to be provided at the meeting)

RESOLVED: That the payments on the schedule be approved.

Payee	Description	£
Irene Bowie	Clark Salary March 2025	Confidential
Irene Bowie	Clark Salary April 2026	Confidential
HMRC	HMRC Feb 2025	Confidential
HMRC	HMRC March 2025	Confidential
HMRC	HMRC April 2026	Confidential
Ionos	Emails April	48.60
Harmer	Playground Inspection and mowing March 2026	162.00
Hugo Fox	Website Hosting	287.86
Alkham Village Hall	March Payment Room Hire	140.00
KALC	Training	132.00

- 6.2 Late Payment Request/s to be discussed for approval and payment. There were none.
- 6.3 To note receipts of Income. It was noted that the precept for 2026/27 had been received.
- 6.4 To receive the bank reconciliation. The bank reconciliation was noted as at the 31st of March as £ 42,643.37. The bank statements were signed by the Chairman.
- 6.5 To receive actual vs budget - to be provided at the May meeting.
- 6.6 To receive any late financial matters. There were none.

7. To consider and review the AGAR Assertion 10 requirements.

- 7.1 IT Policy **RESOLVED:** To accept the policy as amended.
- 7.2 Domain & Email Security. The current provider meets the AGAR Assertion 10 requirements
- 7.3 To consider and resolve to purchase Parish Council-owned tablets for Councillors to use for official email and council business, to support compliance with Data Protection requirements. **AGREED: Councillors would continue to use their own devices.**

8. To receive Reports and agree on actions if appropriate.

- 8.1 Chairman's Report. The Chairman reported that there was still one place left on the defibrillator training course.

AGREED:

- 1. The Clerk would contact the resident who was collecting funds for a table tennis table on the Village Green**
- 2. The parish council would consider match funding to purchase a better table.**

- 8.2 KALC Area Meeting Alkham Parish Council Representative. No recent meeting.
- 8.3 Clerks Report (on matters not included in other agenda items). No matters to report.
- 8.4 Councillors Reports (on matters not included in other agenda items) No matters to report.
- 8.6 Flood and Drainage Warden Report. Councillor Libaert gave her report.
- 8.7 Footpath Warden Councillor Tapsell report that he was awaiting a response from the Kent PROW.
- 8.8 Village Organisations. It was reported that the next Village Fete would be in 2027.

9. To receive reports and consider recommendations from the working groups.

- 9.1 Highways Working Group. **RESOLVED: To support the work and proposals at appendix 1 for submission to KCC. The Council thanked Councilor Johns for his outstanding commitment and dedication to finding a solution to the current Highways Improvement Plan Impasse.**
- 9.2 Communications and Community Involvement Working Group.
- 9.3 Parish Plan Evolution and Delivery Working Group. The current plan would be reviewed and progress against objectives would be identified.
- 9.4 Green Spaces and Environment Working Group

10. To receive the Playground Inspection Reports. The report was received and noted.

11. Correspondence:

12. Agenda Items for the next meeting:

13. Consideration of items to be taken in private (Exclusion of Public and Press):

There are only a few reasons as to why, legally, the public and press can be excluded from a meeting. The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Sec 1 (2) states "A body may, by resolution, exclude the public from a meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings) whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings; and where such a resolution is passed, this Act shall not require the meeting to be open to the public during proceedings to which the resolution applies." It is generally considered acceptable to exclude the press and public if the agenda item relates to the consideration of tenders, leases, purchases of assets, for matters relating to staffing covered by the Data Protection Act and to consider complaints against the council or a code of conduct complaint.

13.1 To consider quotations for Village Management and Playground Inspections.

RESOLVED: That the Village Management and Playground Inspections contract for 2026/27 be awarded to Cherished Services Ltd..

14. Meeting Dates 2026.

11th May, 1st June, 6th July, 7th September, 5th October, 2nd November

Appendix 1.

9.1 Highways Working Group

Rebuttal to Applicant Statement

Application Ref: 25/01246 – Great Cauldham Farm Anaerobic Digestion Facility

Alkham Parish Council acknowledges the applicant's response. However, we do not accept that the matters raised in our objection have been satisfactorily addressed.

Our concerns are evidence-based and relate to route suitability, cumulative impact, and policy compliance — not merely traffic volume.

1. Highway Safety – Route Suitability vs Junction Modelling

The applicant relies heavily on the existence of a Transport Statement and consultation with Kent County Council as Local Highway Authority.

However, the key issue is not whether junction capacity modelling shows “severe” impact at the A20. The issue is whether the intervening route — **Alkham Valley Road** — is physically and environmentally suitable for routine HGV use.

The 1-Mile Characterisation Is Misleading

Describing the route as “an approximate one-mile stretch” materially understates the issue. The Alkham Valley includes:

- A historic conservation pinch-point between the Marquis of Granby and Forstall Cottage (operational width approx. 5.6m).
- A section where standard two-way HGV passing width (6.8–7.3m) cannot be achieved.
- Regular centre-line overruns recorded in safety audits.
- No continuous protected footway.
- Public Rights of Way and bridleway crossings.
- Direct residential frontage.

The question is not distance — it is geometric compatibility and risk exposure.

2. “Agricultural Vehicles Already Use the Road”

This comparison is not technically sound.

While agricultural vehicles operate locally:

- They are typically seasonal.
- They are directly associated with the land they serve.
- They are not operating on commercial timetables with repeated daily movements.
- They are not concentrated through a constrained conservation bottleneck as part of an industrial process.

An Anaerobic Digestion facility generates structured, programmed, repetitive HGV movements. That is categorically different in intensity and operational profile from dispersed farm activity.

The proposal anticipates up to:

- 2–12 two-way HGV movements per hour at peak,
- Approximately 2,400 two-way HGV trips annually.

This is routine commercial freight generation, not incidental agricultural circulation.

3. Cumulative Impact Has Not Been Properly Assessed

The applicant's response does not address cumulative traffic pressures, including:

- Traffic displacement linked to the Whitfield Urban Expansion (5,750+ homes approved).
- Construction-related HGV flows already recorded on Alkham Valley Road.
- The use of the route as a relief corridor when congestion occurs on higher-order routes.
- Recorded speeds exceeding 30mph at village gateways.

The planning test is not simply whether this proposal alone causes "severe" impact. It is whether additional routine HGV generation is appropriate on a route already operating beyond its intended rural function.

No clear cumulative freight assessment has been provided.

4. Reliance on Highway Authority Consultation Is Not Determinative

While Kent County Council has been consulted, this does not conclude the matter.

The Parish Council has formally requested disclosure of:

- Technical assessments underpinning route suitability.
- Safety appraisals specific to the conservation pinch-point.
- Consideration of pedestrian and equestrian risk.
- Cumulative HGV modelling assumptions.

Until those documents are examined, it cannot be asserted that impacts have been fully assessed.

Consultation is a procedural step — not proof of adequacy.

5. Vulnerable Road Users & Equality Considerations

The applicant's statement does not address:

- Pedestrian exposure through the narrow section.
- Wheelchair and pushchair users entering the live carriageway.
- Equestrian crossings associated with bridleways.
- Cyclists using a narrow, unlit rural corridor with HGV conflict.

These are not peripheral concerns. They engage public safety and equality of access duties.

6. National Landscape Context

The site and route lie within the [Kent Downs National Landscape](#).

Under Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, public authorities must "seek to further the purposes" of conserving and enhancing the designated landscape.

The applicant's response does not demonstrate how introducing additional routine HGV traffic through a conservation village:

- Conserves tranquillity,
- Protects dark skies,
- Preserves historic built fabric,
- Or enhances public enjoyment of the landscape.

7. Seasonal Fluctuation Does Not Remove Impact

The assertion that vehicle movements will fluctuate with harvest patterns does not negate peak intensity.

Peak-period clustering of HGVs through a 5.6m constrained section increases risk concentration, not reduces it.

Seasonality does not equate to acceptability.

8. Absence of Enforceable Routing Controls

The applicant's Transport Statement indicates that HGV traffic would not pass through local villages. However:

- No Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) has been proposed.
- No enforceable HGV routing agreement has been secured.
- No planning condition requiring monitored routing compliance has been identified.
- No Section 106 obligation appears to govern route adherence.

In the absence of a legally enforceable routing mechanism, any statement regarding intended routing remains aspirational rather than binding.

Furthermore:

Kent County Council, as Highway Authority, has not proposed a routing order.

- There is no mandatory weight restriction currently in place on Alkham Valley Road.
- Advisory "Unsuitable for HGVs" signage has already proven ineffective.

Without formal restriction or enforceable routing control, HGVs travelling east or west from the site would lawfully be able to use Alkham Valley Road.

Accordingly, the assertion that HGVs "will not" pass through local villages is not secured by mechanism and cannot be relied upon as a material mitigation.

Planning decisions must be based on enforceable outcomes, not indicative routing intentions.

Conclusion

The Parish Council's objection is not based on speculation or opposition in principle. It is grounded in:

- Physical road geometry,
- Documented HGV passing constraints,
- Vulnerable road user exposure,
- Cumulative growth pressures,
- National Landscape statutory duty,
- And precautionary safety principles.

The issue is not whether vehicles can technically pass along the route.

The issue is whether routine commercial HGV generation through a constrained conservation corridor is appropriate, sustainable, and policy-compliant.

Until route suitability and cumulative impact are transparently and robustly assessed, the Parish Council maintains its objection.

Highways Update:

Parish Council Requests Strategic Review of Alkham Valley Road

The Parish Council has reached a critical turning point in our efforts to address the increasing traffic pressures on the Alkham Valley Road. After exhausting the standard Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) process without achieving meaningful safety interventions, we have formally requested a Strategic Review from Kent County Council (KCC).

Why a Strategic Review?

Our road is currently facing a "perfect storm" of pressures. While officially an unclassified rural road, it is increasingly being used as a relief route for traffic and HGVs linked to the Whitfield expansion and wider East Kent growth. Our village was never designed for this volume or scale of vehicles.

Key concerns identified in our formal report include:

- * The increasing use of Alkham Valley Road as a high-speed "rat-run" for traffic seeking to bypass congestion on the A2 and A20.
- * The narrow section near the Marquis of Granby is structurally unsuitable for modern, large HGVs to pass safely.
- * The lack of continuous footways and the danger to those crossing our bridleways and Public Rights of Way are unacceptable.
- * As part of the Kent Downs National Landscape, we have a right to protected "Dark Skies" and tranquillity
—values currently threatened by traffic noise and the threat of unnecessary street lighting.

Challenging the "Design Impasse"

For too long, safety measures like road narrowing or calming have been blocked by claims that they "legally require" street lighting or must meet rigid length criteria. Our research shows this is not the case; national regulations allow for flexible, sensitive designs in rural areas. We are calling on KCC to move past these procedural hurdles and focus on actual safety outcomes.

To ensure full transparency, the Parish Council has submitted formal Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests. We are seeking the data KCC uses for traffic modelling, HGV assessments, and the evidence used to reject our previous safety proposals.

All correspondence and copies of these requests are available for public viewing on the Parish Council website.

Next Steps

Our MP has been formally briefed. If a transparent, evidence-based review is not forthcoming, the Parish Council will escalate the matter through formal challenges to the Council's statutory duties and increased public scrutiny. We believe the current approach fails to meet legal obligations regarding the National Landscape, equality of access, and road safety.

We are committed to ensuring that Alkham Valley Road is managed in a way that protects our residents, our heritage, and our environment.

We will update you as soon as we receive a formal response.

HIGHWAYS BRIEFING

Alkham Valley Road: Safety, HGV Impact & Policy Alignment Review

Purpose: To detail the technical and policy grounds for a Strategic Review of the Alkham Valley Road, following the exhaustion of standard Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) processes.

1. Road Calming Build-Outs – Design Choice, Not Law

Kent Highways has stated that physical build-outs would require the installation of a full street-lighting system (three columns within 183m), rendering such schemes unfeasible on technical and environmental grounds.

Under the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 (TSRGD 2016), there is no automatic statutory requirement for powered illumination. The 2016 Regulations provide specific flexibility for rural or environmentally sensitive locations. Night-time visibility and safety may be lawfully achieved through:

- * High-performance retroreflective materials and reflectorised bollards.
- * Passive priority working layouts.
- * Rural gateway treatments designed for unlit environments.

Lighting is therefore a discretionary design decision, not a legal inevitability. In Alkham, the assumption that lighting is mandatory creates a design impasse that effectively prevents safety intervention, despite the availability of lawful, unlit alternatives.

2. Speed Limit Flexibility – Guidance, Not Law

The 600-metre length threshold referenced in DfT Circular 01/2013 is advisory guidance, not a rigid legal limit. Flexibility to reduce this to 300–400 metres is explicitly recognised where a defined village core exists with clear frontage density.

Alkham Context: The village core (~250m) demonstrates clear frontage density. However, the approaches comprise ribbon development with gateway speeds exceeding 30mph. Currently, the core is considered too short for a 20mph limit, while the higher-speed approaches are used to resist extension. This produces a regulatory stalemate rather than a safety outcome. Where physical measures create a 20mph Zone, compliance is engineered rather than assumed, reducing the reliance on arbitrary length thresholds.

3. Traffic Volumes & Growth-Related Displacement

Alkham Valley Road is unclassified and is not part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN). However, it is increasingly performing a function influenced by growth and congestion on higher-order corridors serving Dover.

- * Current Pressures: Peak flows approach 1,000 vehicles/hour with significant construction HGV presence linked to the Whitfield Urban Expansion.
- * Growth Impact: With only ~14% of the 5,750+ Whitfield homes completed, peak flows have already exceeded 866 vehicles/hour.
- * Oversight: The road is absorbing growth-related traffic without a published assessment of its long-term cumulative suitability.

4. HGV Suitability & The "Conservation Pinch-Point"

Modern HGV standards (up to 44 tonnes and 16.5m length) are incompatible with the historic geometry of the valley.

- * The Bottleneck: Between the Marquis of Granby (est. 1810) and Forstall Cottage, the operational width is approximately 5.6m.
- * Requirement: Standard two-way HGV passing requires 6.8m–7.3m.
- * Geometric Constraint: Regular centre-line overruns are documented in safety audits. This is a structural constraint, not a driver-behavioural one. Routine HGV use through this section is structurally unsustainable.

5. Vulnerable Road Users & Accessibility

The "Highways" function of the route has prioritized motor vehicle flow over the rights of vulnerable users, creating an environment that is effectively hostile to non-motorized travel.

* **Pedestrian Exposure:** The absence of a continuous protected footway through the pinch-point forces wheelchair users, parents with pushchairs, and the elderly into the live carriageway. This represents a ...
... Current speeds and HGV intensity create a "severance effect," where equestrians and walkers are deterred from crossing the road, diminishing the public's ability to safely enjoy the National Landscape.

6. Environmental & Structural Impact

Heavy axle loading generates vibration stress on historic flint and brick structures. Advisory "Unsuitable for HGVs" signage has failed; the Parish Council maintains that a mandatory 7.5-tonne environmental weight limit is now required to protect heritage assets and residential amenity.

7. Planning Escalation: Great Cauldham Farm AD Proposal

The proposed anaerobic digestion facility anticipates ~2,400 two-way HGV trips annually.

* **Critique:** Kent Highways' conclusion that impact is "not severe" relies on junction modelling but fails to address route suitability through the constrained geometry and the cumulative impact on the protected landscape.

8. Vision Zero & Preventative Duty

Vision Zero requires proactive risk reduction. A reliance on three-year collision data is a reactive rather than preventative approach. It fails to account for documented speeding and the inherent risks of the narrow geometry.

9. Statutory Duty: The National Landscape (Kent Downs)

Under Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, Kent County Council has a strengthened statutory duty to "seek to further the purposes" of conserving and enhancing the National Landscape.

Current highways policy in Alkham conflicts with this duty in three key areas:

* **Dark Skies & Light Pollution:** The insistence that physical calming must be accompanied by street lighting threatens the "Dark Skies" initiative of the Kent Downs. By refusing to use the flexible lighting ...
... improving the public's ability to understand and enjoy the landscape. A road that is unsafe for walkers, cyclists, and equestrians represents a failure to protect the accessibility of this national asset.

Conclusion: The Core Issue

Alkham Valley Road is an unclassified rural road performing a function for which it was never designed. The Parish Council maintains that continued reliance on junction modelling and historic collision data is insufficient to manage the cumulative risks to safety, heritage, and the environment.

A Strategic Review is required to align highways management with the Council's statutory duty to protect the National Landscape and ensure the safety of all residents. If such a review is not forthcoming, the Parish Council will escalate the matter by formally challenging the Council's compliance with its statutory duties—including those under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the Equality Act 2010, and Vision Zero—alongside rigorous public scrutiny.

Full copies of FOI/EIR requests and related correspondence are available on the Parish Council website.