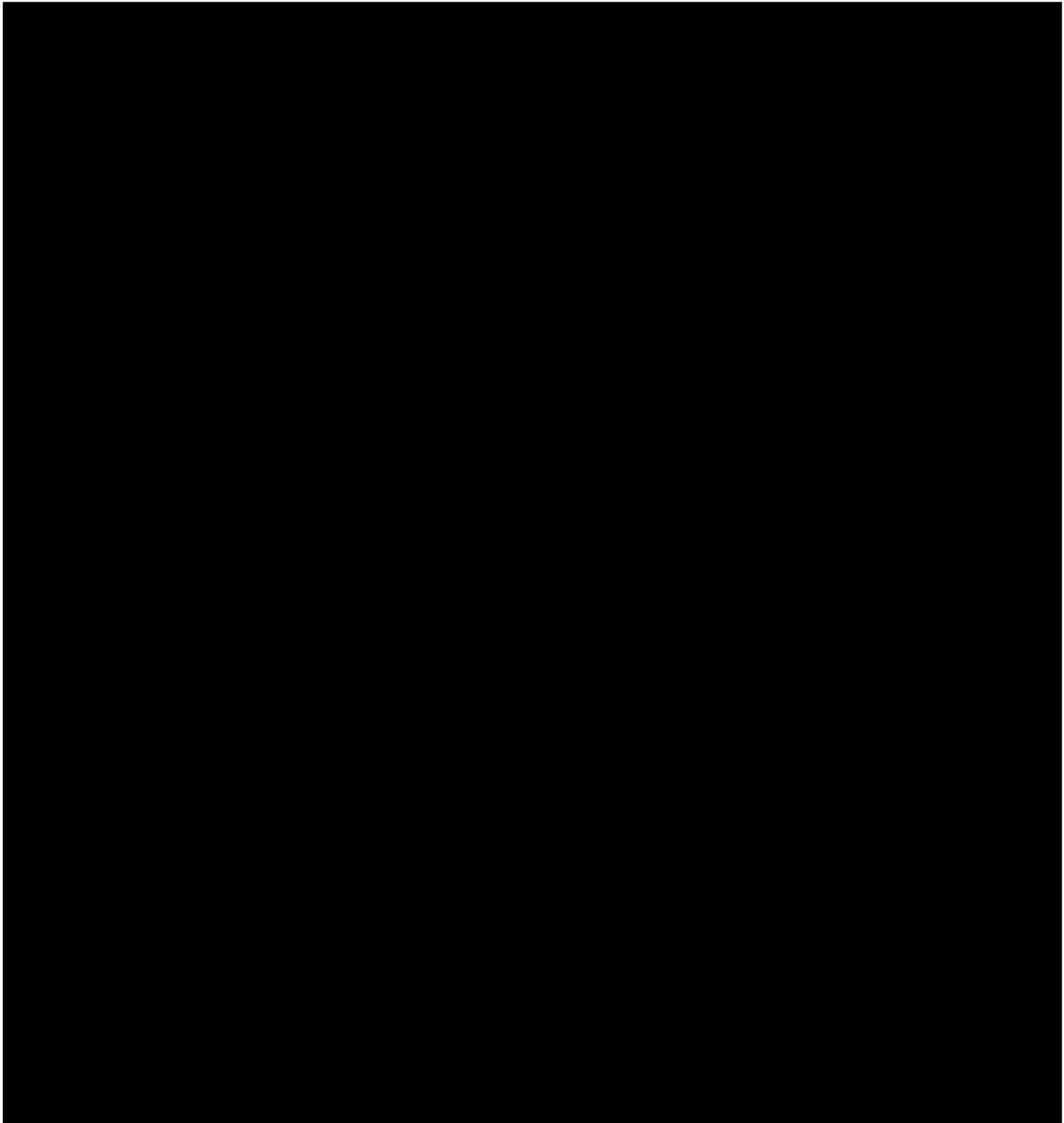
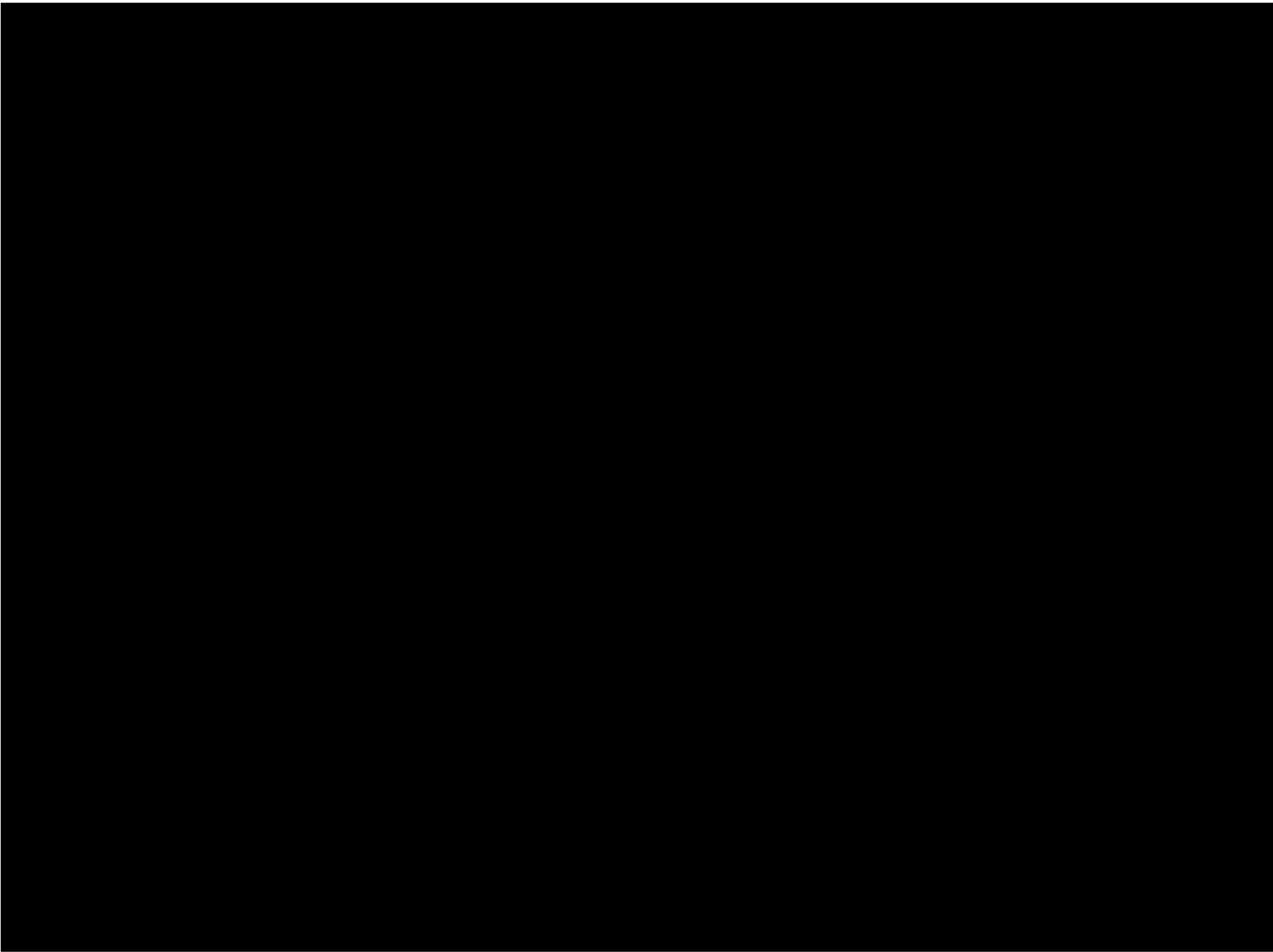


Bygrave Parish Council Response to PACE's Proposals of 30 April 2026

Introduction

On 16 April 2026, a constructive meeting took place between representatives of Bygrave Parish Council, representatives of PACE and our local constituency MP, [REDACTED], at which various issues concerning the development of Tophams Solar Plant were discussed, including community benefits, construction deliveries/timelines and fire safety. PACE undertook to set out its proposals with regard to these matters and did so via email dated 30 April 2026. These proposals were discussed by Bygrave Parish Council at our meeting on 5 May 2026 and our agreed response to PACE is set out below.





Construction Deliveries (PACE request)

PACE's planning permission restricts the number of articulated vehicle deliveries to 2 per day during the construction period. PACE has now stated that if it is to complete construction within 30-35 weeks, as it has consistently stated would be the case, it would require a temporary increase to the articulated vehicle limit from 2 to 8 vehicles for a period of 4 weeks to facilitate deliveries during early construction. To minimise disruption and protect the free flow of traffic through Bygrave, PACE has proposed the following mitigation measures:

- A dedicated Traffic Marshal stationed in the village throughout the increased delivery window(s).
- Flexibility on scheduling, allowing the community to split the 4-week delivery period into two separate 2-week windows. By way of example, PACE would indicate a broader delivery window (such as August to September 2026), and the community would determine how that period is structured. For instance, as an indicative example, 2 weeks in mid-August followed by 2 weeks in early September.
- Regular advance notice of planned deliveries, supported by a WhatsApp group connecting key PACE contacts with community leaders for real-time updates.
- Road condition surveys conducted before construction commences and upon energisation, along with a commitment to remediate any damage in line with the Schedule of Condition.

Before commenting on the request by PACE, we would like to express our dismay that this situation has arisen. PACE was asked on numerous occasions (including by two Councillors at the Planning Control Committee meeting) how long construction was expected to take and whether this factored in the 2-articulated vehicle daily limit. On each occasion, the response was that construction would take 30-35 weeks and yes, the 2-articulated vehicle daily limit had been factored in. To now inform us that if the 2-articulated vehicle daily limit set out as a planning condition is to be complied with, this would result in a construction period of 49 weeks, implies that the answers to the Councillor's questions were wrong. This would be a 50% increase in the construction time, in spite of a reduction in the proposed number of articulated vehicles from 336 to 226. Presumably if 336 articulated vehicles had been required, the construction timeframe would have been more than double the 30-35 weeks initially claimed. We have received no explanation as to how PACE got this so badly wrong.

We understand PACE's desire to deliver the project within the promised timeframe of 30-35 weeks and that an extension of 14 weeks would be costly, especially if this then means that peak solar energy generation months are missed. However, before considering PACE's request for a change to the planning condition limiting articulated vehicle deliveries, we believe it is essential to look at why it was introduced. This was at the request of HCC Highways (██████████) who stated in correspondence with ██████████ and ██████████ (acting on behalf of PACE) on 18 April 2023:

- The overriding point is that Ashwell Road / Bygrave Road is not designed for routine articulated lorry movements. The fact that its access with North Road needs widening to accommodate them testifies to this. However, with the various mitigations and measures you propose, along with the additional points we raise below, we are willing to accept an absolute maximum of 2 articulated lorry visits per day (i.e. a total of 4 two-way movements per day). I believe this level is what was presented early on, and a "slightly higher demand of 3-4" is a newer proposal which in our view tips this over the edge to a more routine daily use – along a stretch of highway which is not designed for this, and where many of its users will not be expecting vehicles of this size to approach.

The proposal for a dedicated Traffic Marshal stationed in the village throughout the increased delivery window(s) whilst helpful would appear to us to fall short of addressing safety issues along the whole route. However, this is really an area for HCC Highways to consider; any changes to the limit on articulated vehicles (and associated mitigations) must be confirmed by HCC Highways as not creating risk for others using the road.

Assuming that safety issues can be fully addressed, we then need to consider the impact on other road users of a significantly higher number of articulated vehicles using the road. With the restrictions in place regarding the permitted hours for deliveries generally, 8 articulated vehicle deliveries per day would mean one every 37.5 minutes on average; so every 18-19 minutes an articulated vehicle would travel along the road and through the village. This is on top of the non-articulated HGVs (110 in total throughout) and other delivery vehicles (272 in total throughout), most of which we assume would be required during the early construction period. These high volumes of large vehicles will undoubtedly cause significant congestion along Bygrave Road/Ashwell Road, as there are few places along the route that would enable even small cars to pass HGVs and delivery vehicles without one vehicle pulling off the road on to the grass verge.

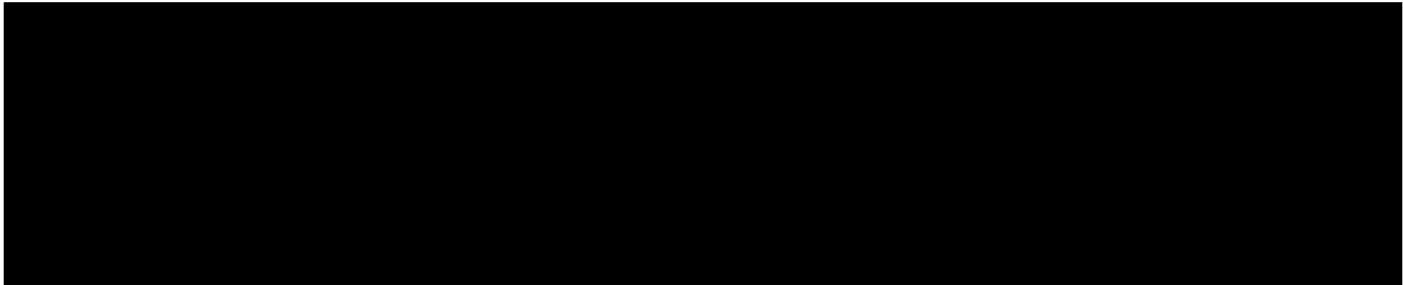
PACE's proposals for flexibility on scheduling, allowing the community to split the 4-week delivery period into two separate 2-week windows and for regular advance notice of planned deliveries, supported by a WhatsApp group connecting key PACE contacts with community leaders for real-time updates, are helpful. However, the impact of construction traffic and, especially a high number of articulated vehicles, on road users and people living along the construction route must not be underestimated; and villagers have no choice but to use the road, as there is no alternative route if they wish to travel to Baldock. This will cause a huge level of stress and inconvenience to many people.

We would like to reiterate comments made previously that this problem would be significantly reduced were the owner of the Tophams site to agree to some of the construction traffic going through their property.

As regards, the final mitigation measure proposed by PACE, namely road condition surveys and remediation of any damage, we note that this is already required under planning conditions.

Fire Risk Statement

We will revert separately on this.



Bygrave Parish Council
6 May 2026