

FALFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 19th August 2014 at 7.30 pm at Falfield Village Hall

Present

Parish Councillors: Mrs J. Hathway (Chairperson), Miss E. Jarvis, Mrs M. O'Connor & Mr K. Fryer.

Public: Ward Cllr John O'Neill and 4 Parishioners.

00472/14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllr C. Murton and Mrs D Bramley.

00473/14 To Receive Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda

None

00474/14 Public Forum

00474.1/14 Presentation by Adam Banting from AEE Renewables

The Chair introduced Adam Banting and Adam Withers from AEE Renewables, who made a presentation to the parish about their planning application PT14/2810/F to construct a solar farm on land at Cuttsheath Lane. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is available at www.towerhillfarm.com

There has been confusion over whether the northern part of the site lies within the parish boundary of Tytherington, Falfield and Thornbury. The upper field is within Thornbury North Parish, not Falfield Parish as previously advised. Traffic accessing the site may pass through the parish.

Items of interest from the presentation:

Most of the main construction vehicle operations will occur over a 3 month period with the construction phase anticipated to start in January 2015. Access will be via the A38 and through Milbury Heath via Cuttsheath Road. There will be traffic light controls on part of Cuttsheath Road due to the restricted width of the lane. It is estimated that a total of 290 deliveries will be required with a maximum of 30 vehicles per week at the peak of construction operations. Workers will be transported via minibus from local Bed and Breakfast accommodation. There will be a tall perimeter fence constructed around the site for security, this will be set back from the site edge by a minimum 5 metre strip of wildflower meadow and obscured from view by landscaping including hedges and trees.

00474.2/14 Questions raised about the Solar Farm Proposal and Answered by AEE Renewables

Q1: How much maintenance will be required once the solar farm is operational?

The site will be monitored remotely, the number of ongoing maintenance visits is low and equates to one person in a van per week.

Q2: Where will the construction lorries visiting the site wait?

There is parking space for 3no. HGV lorries on the site. Lorries will wait in the lay-bys on the A38.

Q3: The lay bys in Whitfield are small and well used. Where will the lorries wait if they are full?

AEE will consider lay-by's which are further afield if the nearest ones are full; motorway service station parking is another option. What works best will become apparent during the first week of construction works.

Q4: How will the sale of the project to investors work?

AEE Renewables will be talking to pension funds re potential investors in this multi million pound venture once a planning approval is granted. AEE Renewables will probably be retained to handle the ongoing maintenance contract.

Q5: Will the land be leased or sold?

The site will be leased for 25 years.

Q6: What will happen to the site after 25 years?

This is designed to be a temporary project & there will be a fund in place for decommissioning the site back to a field as at present. These sites often encourage more ecological interest e.g. plants & wildlife habitats. There is no precedent for such sites to be developed at the end of the time frame to more intensive uses such as housing.

Q7: Have you considered ground movement issues?

A Geo Phys survey has been carried out. An Archaeologist has asked for trial trenches over 1% of the site. These investigations will happen during early September 2014. Significant finds could adversely affect the project.

Q8: At the presentation to Tytherington Parish Council the issue of Agricultural land classification was raised, please can you clarify the status.

Grade 3 Agricultural land can be in category 3A or 3B, where 3A is better quality and less desirable for development. This site is classified as 3B. The land beneath and between the panels will still be used for grazing approximately 130 sheep.

Q9: Will hedges be allowed to grow upwards?

Residents adjacent to the site had concerns over the new planting proposed blocking their sunlight. The landscape scheme has been adjusted and includes a hay meadow which these residents can overlook.

Q10: Is there a contingency for extra planting once the scheme has been installed should unexpected views of the panels arise?

No, but robust plans subject to scrutiny by the Council's landscape officers are in place. They will be holding a site meeting to discuss affected viewpoints over the site shortly.

00475/14 Planning Matters

00475.1/14 To Discuss the Following Applications

PT14/2833/F - Land Off Cutts Lane, Buckover - Erection of agricultural building for the housing of livestock and machinery. **Council Response: No Comment**

PT14/2810/F - Land At Cuttsheath Road And New Road Tytherington - Construction of a 9MW solar farm including substation, transformer stations, access tracks and perimeter fencing.

Council Response: There are short term benefits to local hotel and B&B businesses should this scheme proceed and the Parish Council takes into account the pros and cons of three months traffic disruption versus the benefit of 25 years of renewable energy. Despite the site not being within the parish boundary, the parish council would like to submit the following comments to the planners regarding the traffic impact:

"Lorries approaching from M5 J14 would be turning left off the A38 onto Cuttsheath Road (the popular Wyevale Garden Centre junction), this is a tight turn requiring lorries to swing into the opposite lane of oncoming traffic and AEE may wish to consider rerouting their arriving lorries via M5 J16 (Almondsbury) as a right hand turn onto Cuttsheath Road would be a simpler manoeuvre due to a designated lane in the centre of the road for north bound vehicles turning right. The laybys serving the route along the A38 from M5 J16 are larger and have more parking bays for waiting lorries than those between the site and M5 J14.

There is concern over the narrowness of Cuttsheath Road and a query on whether the extent of the traffic light controlled zone is sufficient.

There is a query over whether there is adequate width for two lorries to pass beyond the controlled zone and request that South Gloucestershire Council's Highways Department investigate this.

There is concern over potential damage to Cuttsheath Road and its verges should the lorries delivering to the site be particularly large and the Parish Council would like the Highways Department to be asked whether a lorry size restriction needs to be applied."

00476/14 Consultation: Details of the PSP Plan and supporting information, including copies of the consultation event exhibition boards, presentations and the Local Green Space Guidance

The Parish Council has requested that the green space in front of Orchard View be designated as Local Green Space. It is noted that Mr Sprackman has submitted his own proposals for the use of parts his land, including for the field at the end of Moorslade lane for use as a park and share site.

00477/14 Matters for Further Discussion / Information

00477.1/14 Planning

It is agreed that an extension of the consultation period for the parking restrictions on Sundayshill Lane be requested.

Date of Next Meeting Tuesday 16th September 2014 at 7.30 pm

This concluded the business of the meeting, which closed at 8.45 pm.