



EARL STONHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting (Planning) of the Parish Council held at the Village Hall, Earl Stonham on **Monday, 5th February 2024 at 7pm.**

Present:

Councillors: M Gillett (Chairman)
S Budd
H Stanford
S Baker
K Wilkinson
M Mann

In Attendance J Blackburn – Clerk
District Councillor Nick Hardingham
Sam Dix – Low Carbon
Beverley Rodbard-Hedderwick – Low Carbon
Alex Jessop – Suffolk Wildlife Trust
24 members of the public

ES113/23/24 – APOLOGIES OF ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr Turner.

ES114/23/24 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Budd declared an interest in the planning item.

ES115/23/24 – APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION

None had been received.

ES116/23/24 – PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Ref: DC/23/04644 - Planning Application - Erection of a Solar Photovoltaic Farm with associated substations and other supporting infrastructure including inverters and transformers, fencing, CCTV and landscaping. Location: Land West of Blacksmiths Lane, Earl Stonham

Mr Sam Dix and Ms Beverley Rodbard-Hedderwick went through a presentation of the application with the amended parts of the proposed plan.

Mr Dix explained that the application would be taken to the Planning Committee during March 2024. If approved, work would not commence for two years.

Members of the public present raised the following concerns / points:

- Visual impact upon adjacent homes – a bund was suggested to help reduce the visual impact
- Blacksmiths Lane had no passing places as mentioned in application
- Owner of the land had a 200 metre clearance from his home to the solar panels – therefore, all homes should have the same clearance
- Sewer – problematic system currently – pipe should be moved to outside of the proposed site to enable access for Anglian Water
- Entrance to site should be 160 metre visibility splays
- Damage would be caused to Blacksmiths Lane which was very concerning

- Access to site from Blacksmiths Lane should be for the sole use of UK Power Network – ALL other traffic should use access at Spongs Farm
- Flooding – recent rainfall caused a lot of flooding around the site, if used for solar panels water would run off the land and cause problems for surrounding area which included three listed buildings
- Sub-station should be repositioned
- Suggestions re bunds, ditches and hedges placed in certain positions
- Ditches – how would ditches within the site work with those of landowners outside of the site
- Proposed hedges – Horse Chestnut and Beech – were not appropriate – should be Hazel or Blackthorn
- Land was good agricultural land

Mr Dix replied to the comments above and stated the following:

- Suggestion of bund – yes, could be considered and looked into
- Access onto Blacksmiths Lane - a speed survey could be carried out in relation to the actual speed of traffic to assess
- Flooding – swales and ditches were being incorporated into the plan to help with possible floods. Checks have been made at eight locations around the site including soak away rate – swales would accommodate excess water. Maintenance of swales and ditches would be ongoing
- Position of sub-station – relocation could be considered
- No trees to be removed from the site
- Maintenance of hedging – vehicles would be able to get inside the swales in order to cut hedging
- Ditches – the ditches inside the site would provide storage for water from the land and would not connect to ditches outside of the site

Cllr Hardingham assured residents that he would take all the comments made to the Planning Committee and would speak in objection to the proposal going ahead. Should the proposal be approved, he had a list of conditions that he would put forward.

Mr Jessop made the following comments:

- From an Ecology point of view the application was an improvement from the initial application
- Watercourse improvements were needed
- Woodland area seemed small – scrub would be more appropriate
- Hedgerows were appropriate and were standard requirements – 2 metres in width
- Corridor through centre of plan was of a good width for wildlife
- Legally, there was no protection needed for the deer to move freely
- Skylark mitigation should be priority

A new footpath around the site, which would meet up with a permissive footpath could be an option. When voted upon four members of the public were in agreement.

Members of the Parish Council agreed with the comments made above and continued to object to the application.

It was AGREED: That the Parish Council objected to the application. **Clerk to action.**

The meeting finished at 8.40pm.

Chairman: Dated: