



EYNESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Meeting
in the Bartholomew Room at 6.30pm
on Tuesday 8 October 2019

MINUTES

Councillors Present – Cllr G Beach (Chairman), Cllr P Crowley, Cllr C Edwards, Cllr A Mosson, Cllr S Osborne, Cllr C Rylett and Cllr M Zumbuhl.

Also in Attendance – Clerk to the Council and 5 members of the public.

19/155 To receive apologies for absence – Cllr S Brown, Cllr K Crowe, Cllr P Emery, Cllr R Macken and Cllr N Relph.

19/156 To receive Declarations of Interest in agenda items – None.

19/157 To welcome DWD Property & Planning LLP to present plans for Aurora Solar Farm (Twelve Acre Farm, Chilbridge Road, Eynsham). Planning application [19/02516/FUL](#).

A representative from DWD LLP and Low Carbon UK Solar Investment Company Ltd were invited to provide an overview of the submitted planning application. The application site is 63.4 hectares for use as a solar farm with battery storage which would have the ability of generating 32 mega watts of energy; the equivalent of powering 10,000 homes. There is currently a public footpath running through the middle of the site and a bridleway to the south – both will continue to be available throughout the construction and thereafter. A significant landscaping scheme is proposed to help screen the solar panels which are to be arranged in rows up to 3 metres high. Additional planting and habitat creation is included in the application. The proposed development is subsidy-free and will operate for a period of 40 years at which point it will be decommissioned and the land returned to its previous state.

The anticipated construction period will take 16 weeks with 5 HGV movements per day plus 10 articulated HGV movements over construction period. Proposed working hours are Monday to Friday 07.00-18.00 and Saturday 08.00-13.00. The planning application consultation period ends on 24 October with a decision expectation by 24 December 2019.

DWD and Low Carbon are also consulting with South Leigh parish and meeting with Green TEA and Low Carbon Hub.

19/158 Councillor question & answer session.

Q – Who owns the site? A - The site will remain in the ownership of 12 Acre Farm. It will be leased for a period of 40 years.

Q – What about site access? A – The site will be accessed from the Chilbridge Road during the 16 week construction phase. Pre-application advice received from the District Council was that the Chilbridge Road was preferable over the A40 access. Cllr Beach advised that they will need to apply to amend the current Road Traffic Order in place for the village.

Q – What happens after 40 years? A – The site will be dismantled and parts recycled where possible. The site would then revert back to agricultural use.

Q – Are you aware of SF6 chemical concerns and carbon release into the atmosphere? A – Information will be provided to Cllr Rylett in this respect.

Q – How about the views from the existing footpaths? A The footpaths within the site will be screened with fencing (on the northern route) and hedgerows.

Q – Have they received any complaints from residents after installation of other solar farms? A – General comments received are that people thought it would be more offensive than it actually is.

Q – In respect of biodiversity, there is not much detail about grazing management. A – The [Ecology Report](#) advises how the wildflower meadow would be created and maintained in the future. The Management Plan covers the whole duration of the site.

Q – It was noted that the access route uses the [Grade II Listed Chilbridge](#). Concern was expressed whether it could withstand the proposed HGV use. A – The consultants advise the bridge is OK, however should any issues arise, they will be dealt with. Cllr Edwards felt a Condition Survey prior to the construction phase would be beneficial to safeguard it. DWD felt this could be considered in conjunction with local authorities.

Q – What age is Low Carbon's oldest site in the country? A – The earliest ones built were in 2011/12 – these are not considered to be old.

Q – This part of the area contains a number of disused gravel pits which change the environmental landscape unrecognisably. Would the site be left in an unrecognisable state after it is decommissioned? A – It is always preferable to construct solar farms during periods of reasonable weather conditions, ie not winter so the land is less disturbed. As the land will no longer be intensively farmed, biodiversity will improve. There will be no heavy infrastructure on the site.

Q – Was the site selected because of its height – is it a good selection? A – There is a methodical approach to site selection. A number of issues are considered including the distance from electricity distribution network. Cllr Mosson advised there will be a visual impact on the village. It was noted that a number of sites in the area were considered and operating a smaller solar farm was unsuitable due to the lack of subsidies.

Q – Could you report on Green TEA discussions and connection to the local grid? A – Low Carbon is interested in community ownership and local bodies buying power. (It was felt this should be explored at a later date and not during the meeting).

Q – Where will the point of connection be and will the work require excavating the A40? A – The verges are wide in the Cuckoo Lane area so they will try to dig alongside the public highway where possible. They are talking to Oxfordshire County Council regarding its proposed Park & Ride creation and will try to coincide with the planned construction programme. They will avoid unnecessary disruption where possible.

Q – Would Low Carbon consider extending the life of the site beyond 40 years? A – If an extension is required, a new planning application would be submitted.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm. The Council considered the planning application at its following meeting which commenced at 7.30pm.