

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WORLDHAM PARISH COUNCIL

8.00 pm Wednesday 11th February 2015

EAST WORLDHAM VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllrs Terry Blake (Chairman), Becky Bagnell, Tessa Gaffney, Tara Goodwyn, Mary Trigwell-Jones, Mr R Twining (Clerk), 21 Members of the public.

87/14 To receive and accept apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from District Cllr. David Ashcroft and District Cllr Andrew Joy, and Parish Cllr Thomas Brock.

88/14 Minutes from previous meeting

Minutes of the Worldham Parish Council held on 14th January were agreed and signed. Proposed by Cllr Gaffney and seconded by Cllr Trigwell-Jones AIF

89/14 To receive and note any declarations of interest relevant to the agenda

None received.

90/14 Suspension of Standing Orders

On the advice of the Clerk, the Chairman asked the Councillors to suspend the Standing Orders to allow the members of the public unlimited time to discuss any issues arising from the planning application for a solar farm at Wilsom Farm on the B3004.

Councillors agreed to this proposal and the resolution to postpone the Standing Orders was proposed by Cllr Goodwyn and seconded by Cllr Trigwell-Jones. AIF

91/14 The floor will be opened to the public to raise any matters of concern or interest

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Blake, gave a short presentation outlining the planning application for a solar farm at Wilsom Farm on the B3004.

- The application site is 22.2 ha (55 acres approx), lying between the B3004 Cakers Lane to the south, and Hangers Way on the northern boundary
- The planned life of the solar farm is 25 years after which the site will be returned to agriculture
- The planned generating capacity is 11 Megawatts
- The site will be enclosed by a 2 metre post and wire security fence with 3 metre high cctv poles.

The applicant has indicated that they will pay the Parish Council, irrespective of whether they support or oppose the application a community benefit of:

- An annual payment of £1,500 per MW for the capacity that is connected to the grid network on or prior to 31st March 2016 for a period of 20 years; amounting to a total potential benefit of £330,000

Or

- An annual payment of £1,000 per MW for the capacity that is connected to the grid network on or after the 1st April 2016 for a period of 20 years; amounting to a total potential benefit of £220,000

Cllr Blake drew the attention of parishioners to two planning guidelines contained in Worldham Parish's Village Design Statement recently adopted by EHDC as 'material planning considerations:'

- New development should not be visually detrimental to the landscape vistas which are visible from many parts of the parish including developments which alter the natural or traditionally managed rural character of the landscape in areas of high visual sensitivity.

- The open countryside between the Parish and Alton should be preserved and protected from inappropriate development including large-scale industrial or commercial development.

Comments from parishioners included some in favour and some against the planning application:

- The need for renewable energy, it is 'another crop'
- It will revert to agricultural land after 25 years, a solar farm is preferable to housing/industrial use
- The only real issue that affects the Parish is the views and vistas. The majority of the solar panels will not be seen
- Why put the solar farm in the countryside when there are lots of acres available on industrial sites - There will be no sequential testing of this application
- Wind turbine operators are being paid million of pounds to stop producing electricity
- What price do we put on the landscape? Must think very hard about what we do with our landscape – this is an eyesore
- A31 is a barrier between Alton and Worldham; Unfortunate to see a solar farm on leaving the urban environment of Alton and entering the countryside - breaching the barrier of A31
- Could be setting a precedent on allowing solar farms on other fields closer to Worldham, but there will come a point when planners will have to take into account the cumulative effect
- The Parish Council is aware, because they have received notification of Environmental Impact Assessment notices, of another potential solar farm application on the B3006 between the industrial estate and within approximately 0.25 miles of the Roundhouse. There is a solar farm being developed on Gaston Lane.
- There are alternative sources of energy such as wave/sea power
- Technology changes may lead to solar panels becoming smaller and more efficient in the future
- Query about the deadline for the ending, or reduction in April 2016, of the government subsidy for solar farms. The financial viability is based on the subsidy for solar energy from the government
- At the end of the 20/30 year period does the site become a brown field site? – it reverts back for agricultural use
- What is behind the Community Benefit offer? – quite common for developers to offer this form of compensation.
- Is 11 megawatts a reasonable figure to expect from a solar farm of this size
- There will be an adverse effect on the Hanger's Way
- Alton is under pressure to expand it's housing by having a solar farm. It might stop expansion of Alton towards Worldham
- From a pragmatic point of view it would be preferable to have a solar farm rather than more housing or a slip road from the A31 onto the B3004. The solar farm would act as a block for further development
- The site is on rising ground, and there would be a need for continuous screening along the B3004,
- The applicant has made little effort to soften the blow of the landscape or to undertake any landscaping or reprofiling the land
- On Wilsom Road (B3004) the 40 mph signifies the start of the countryside coming out of Alton
- Difficulty of taking power into the grid,
- Too large, if it was ½ or 2/3rds of the area it would be more acceptable
- It was noted that the Case Officer at the EHDC Planning Department had expressed concerns about the rising land and how much of the solar farm will be visible
- The buildings had not been softened to blend into the landscape
- A Planning Inspector regarding an appeal for a solar farm in Suffolk turned it down because of the visual impact on the landscape

- Eric Pickles has stated that the preference should be given to brown field sites – EHDC does not have a green quota, - the desktop research for alternative sites may have been inadequate.

On a show of hands 3 members of the public supported the application, 6 opposed the application, 1 was undecided and 11 abstained.

The meeting adjourned at 8.55 and recommenced at 9.05

Councillors noted the comments made by the general public. It was agreed that Cllr Blake would draft a document with all the relevant issues and circulate it to Councillors for their comments.

Councillors felt that the application:

- Was too large for the site
- Breaches the barrier of the A31 and that it is not in the EHDC Core Strategy to have housing on the Worldham side of the A31
- Impacted on the SDNPA as the area is a gateway into the South Downs National Park
- Views from Windmill Hill of the solar farm will be significant.

On a show of hands all Councillors expressed opposition to the planning application.

92/14 Planning

a) Applications received, decisions and actions made since last meeting

The Clerk reported on applications received, decisions and actions made since the last meeting:

- Land Barns North West of Tree Close, Blanket Street, East Worldham: Prior approval - Change of use from agricultural buildings to two dwellings. Planning Appeal to Planning Inspectorate: Appeal dismissed
- 2 Manor Farm Cottages Worldham Hill East Worldham: Single storey extension to rear: Permission Granted
- 1 - 6 Drove Cottages Blanket Street East Worldham: Installation of new septic tank: Permission Granted
- Worldham Park Golf Club, Cakers Lane, East Worldham: New mixed use B1c and B8 building: Permission Granted
- Pullens Hartley Lane West Worldham:- Rebuilding of chimney to the north east end of the property: Comments submitted: no objection
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- Land to the North and South of, Cakers Lane, East Worldham, Alton: Installation of a solar farm and associated infrastructure, including photovoltaic panels, mounting frames, inverters, transformers, substations, communications building, fence and pole mounted security cameras, for the life of the solar farm: Comments to be submitted by 23rd February
- Barns North West of Tree Close, Blanket Street, East Worldham: Prior approval - Change of use from agricultural buildings to two dwellings: Comments to be submitted by 3rd March

93/14 Review of actions from last meeting

Councillors reviewed the actions points from the last meeting and noted the status of each Action Point set out in the Agenda Papers.

94/14 Clerks report

a) Finance - Cheques approved, bank balances. Councillors noted the cheques issued since the last Parish Council meeting and that the total of the bank balances stand at £16,038.82. Councillors noted that £1500 had been transferred from the deposit account to the current account.

b) Correspondence

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council will need to

- a) Adopt new standing orders to allow the public to record and film/video meetings

- b) Implement and adopt a new transparency code
- c) Individually sign and agree that the Clerk can email the agenda out to Councillors

The dates for Parish elections are the 7th May. The notice of the election will be issued on Friday 27th March and nomination forms have to be received by EHDC by 4.00 pm Thursday 9th April.

95/14 Miscellaneous and Any Other Business

- i) Cllr Trigwell-Jones reported a road traffic incident on Blanket Street. A huge lorry delivering to the Selborne Road had caused the road to be blocked and a car was half an inch from falling into the ditch that is adjacent and below 1 Manor Farm Cottages. Margaret Betsworth has requested that bollards should be placed along the bank beside the ditch that is adjacent and below 1 Manor Farm Cottages, West Worldham.
- ii) Cllr Trigwell-Jones stated that she had reported a number of potholes including the ones on Church Lane. Hampshire Highways will need to close Church Lane to affect any repairs.
- iii) Councillors noted that the shrine on the B3004 is getting larger and becoming a distraction to road users. The landowner has raised this with the relatives and has not had any result.
- iv) Cllr Gaffney reported that the pot holes on Clay's Lane had been repaired.
- v) Cllr Blake updated Councillors on the Village Design Statement. The VDS had been adopted by EHDC District Councillors at the last Community forum meeting. The VDS team will be meeting on Friday to discuss the SDNPA response.

96/14 Date of next Meetings: 11th March; 8th April, all starting at 8.00pm
 The Annual Parish Assembly to be held on 22nd April starting at 7.30pm
 The meeting closed at 9.38 pm

Annex A

New Action Points

Action ID	Action detail	Owner
	None	

Actions points from previous Worldham Parish Council Meetings:

Action ID	Action detail	Owner	Status
July 02-10	Clerk to contact Mr Baigent regarding confirming the transfer of land to the Parish Council	Clerk	Letter written – waiting reply
December 01-13	Investigate who owns the piece of land at the far end of Piccadilly Circus where Mr Norgate parks his car	Clerk	On-going
December 02-14	Clerk to investigate Gateway signs	Clerk	On-going