

WELLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held at the Community Centre
at 7.30pm on Tuesday 21st April 2015

<u>Item</u>	<u>Minutes</u>	<u>Action</u>
	<p>Present Parish Cllrs: Mrs J Gowan (Chair); Mrs L Langford, Mr Dan Miller, Mr J Morrison, Mrs J Shoesmith, Mr D Wood</p> <p>Also in attendance: Ward Cllr A Blackshaw (for part of meeting), Mrs Chris Bucknell (Parish Clerk) and 69 members of the public.</p> <p>For Planning application 150608 – Nick Williams - Berrys (Agent) Mr Paul Dawes (Applicant)</p> <p>For Planning application 150929 – George Hughes & Harry Simpson – A R Partners (Agents) Mr Neil Makin (Applicant)</p> <p>1.0 To Accept Apologies for Absence – Cllr S Crane</p> <p>2.0 To Receive Declarations of Interest Cllr Langford declared a non-pecuniary interest in planning application 150929. The Chair used her discretion to allow Cllr Langford to remain in the room, answer any questions, take part in the debate, but not to take part in any vote.</p> <p>2.1 To Consider Requests for Dispensations As all councillors, to some degree, were considered to have a non-pecuniary interest in both applications (as they could affect the whole Parish), it was proposed that a dispensation be recorded in order to enable all Councillors to remain in the room, take part in the discussion and vote accordingly. It was felt that this was best practice given the details of the applications and the fact that all Councillors lived within the Parish. Resolved: The dispensation was agreed</p> <p>3.0 To Consider Planning Matters The Chair opened by saying that as both applications were particularly complex and as the Parish Council must not be seen to pre-determine the applications by the way it presented the facts, the agents and landowners for both applications had been invited to attend to present the applications and answer questions. The Chair added that it was the role of the Parish Council to consider the merits of these applications as alternative sources of power, as well as the benefits to and impact on the residents of Wellington and environs of the Parish. The Parish Council representation to Herefordshire Council had to be made on material planning matters alone and the Chair stressed that the public should not assume that all views put forward could be incorporated into this response. All residents were encouraged to make their own direct representations as soon after the meeting as possible.</p> <p>150608 – Land adjacent to Haywood Industrial Estate, Orchard Green Lane, Wellington. Proposed erection of a 750KW anaerobic digestion (AD) plant Nick Williams representing the agent Berrys gave a presentation on the proposals. Paul Dawes, the landowner and applicant was also present.</p> <p>Questions from the public were invited with only those living in the Parish able to speak and a strict 3 minute limit imposed on each representation.</p>	

A question on the Archaeological condition was raised. The Chair noted that at a minimum a desk based report would be requested.

Questions from the public were also raised about odour, the impact the building would have on the landscape, and increased traffic on the A49. It was noted that the site covered 1.8 hectares and was 70 meters from the A49 at its closest point.

The Chair then invited comments from the Councillors.

The unanimous agreement of the Council was that, in principle, there were no objections to the application but this was subject to clarification, agreement and further information on some aspects of the application, with the right to object at Committee stage if the additional information provided was not satisfactory.

Resolved: To produce a response to Herefordshire Council based on the above comments. This to be circulated to Cllrs prior to submission.

The comments below take into account discussions at the meeting expanded to reflect the submission to HC which was agreed by Councillors post meeting.

Location - Information was required on what other locations were considered before selection of this particular site, given its visual impact on the parish and surrounding areas

A49 - Comments from Herefordshire Council Transportation Department concerning capacity of the local network and the request to reconsider the entrance to the site were noted. It was noted that no mention was made by Transportation or the applicant of the fact that the lane (referred to as Orchard Green Lane but locally known as Haywood Lane) was already very heavily used by HGV's accessing and exiting Tarmac Lafarge quarry. The Parish Council felt that a condition should be placed on this application that improvements to the junction must be made, especially to create an appropriate sized central refuge to allow slow moving vehicles to wait for a clear road without impeding oncoming lanes of traffic.

Transport of raw and finished materials to and from the site - The report accompanying the application provided annualised average vehicle movement figures in and out of the plant. It was noted that almost five times the amount of chicken litter would be imported from the south, potentially increasing traffic and use of the A49 junction five-fold. The Parish Council requested that the applicant provided accurate data for traffic movement during the peak maize/beet/other crop harvest rather than averaged annual figures. Additionally accurate data is required on the number of movements to and from Dinmore Estate and to and from the Marden Estate so that impact could be accurately assessed on the A49 junction and over Wellington level crossing.

Noise and Odour - Local residents expressed significant concerns about both of these issues; data as regards direction of noise or odour plume as a result of prevailing winds was requested. The Parish Council requests a condition on planning that all vessels/tanks on site are adequately covered and that all vehicles entering and exiting the site are also covered to minimise odours.

Public Right of Way - Comments made by the PROW Officer are noted; Wellington Parish Council would expect to be fully consulted on any proposals submitted for diversion of footpath WG34 and would resist its diversion onto the public road.

Archaeology - The comments made by the Archaeological Advisor are noted and the Parish Council awaits sight of the desk-based assessment and field evaluation prior to its final decision, given the potential that the site may be of archaeological importance.

Water Table - The construction of the site calls for excavation to be carried out in order to sink a platform 2.15m below the existing ground level. Local knowledge indicates that the area in question has a high water table and the Parish Council requests more information in this regard as to what investigations have or will be carried out.

JG/
Clerk

Limit of Operation - The Parish Council requests that a condition be placed on any approval that might be issued, that the operation of the plant is restricted to the volumes of material outlined in the application and only from the locations specified (eg chicken litter from Hereford and crops from applicant's own land).

150929 – Stocks House Farm, Land West of C1109 Upper Wellington, HR4 8AZ

Proposed installation of an 1 MW solar photovoltaic (PV) farm and ancillary infrastructure

The Chair noted that there were a number of errors and anomalies in the documentation submitted in the formal planning application and she asked that the following points were clarified before the agents gave their presentation.

Number Of Panels – The information leaflet (which was not delivered as claimed in planning statement page 1 item 1.6) stated 3800 panels which would supply 240 average UK households Page 8 of the design and access statement item 2.7 stated 1000 households. Page 2 of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment item 2.3 claimed 3850 and Page 3 of the Planning Statement item 3.1 4276

Ownership Of Land - The site boundary is indicated with a red line which includes the first section of Claypits Lane, which is not in the ownership of the Makins; historical searches show that it was at some point a husbandry lane and is a well-used PROW.

Information Concerning the Topography – it was felt this was confusing. Page 7 of the main document, section 02 site assessment states “the site is well located geographically for solar gain and is relatively flat.....” On the following page 2.10 it mentions that the site runs across “various field enclosures” where there is only one; 2.13 mentions ditches where there do not appear to be any. Page 10 of the same document item 2.25 states “..this will be largely hidden from view by the surrounding landscaping and natural screening and beneficial topography...” Page 8 of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) statement states under 4.12 that the site “..has slightly elevated topography” but on page 7 item 4.4 it states “....Adzor Bank a local steep sided hill which rises to 188m...” It was felt the applicant should know whether the land was flat or steep.

Extent of Visibility - page 18 of the LVIA assessment refers to Fig 1 appendix B as being a demonstration of the influence the local topography has on theoretical views using a Zone of Theoretical Visibility Map – in the index appendix B is listed as an inverter specification sheet. It was accepted that the map appears elsewhere in the document, but not as Appendix B

The Chair also cited a number of general inaccuracies.

- The dates of the crime impact assessment.
- Page 7 of the Site Assessment says Wellington is in the New Forest National Park (there is also a reference to Langley in the New Forest).
- Greenacres is said to be a property to the south west when it is in fact to the south east.
- The LVIA assessment says the site is in Hertfordshire.

The representatives from A R Partners could not comment in any depth on the above inaccuracies and said they would look into them and report back to the Parish Council.

George Hughes and Harry Simpson representing the agent A R Partners gave a presentation on the proposals. Neil Makin, the landowner and applicant was also present.

Questions from the public were invited, again with only those living in the Parish able to speak and a strict 3 minute limit imposed on each representation.

There were significant concerns from members of the public regarding the proposal, mostly surrounding visual impact of the development. Parishioners and Parish Council alike objected strongly to the impact this ‘industrialisation’ would have on views within the locality including from

the public rights of way which run north and south of the site, as well views from the wider area.

No evidence has been provided that any other sites in Herefordshire have been considered, where the installation would be less obtrusive. The Agents said that this site had been put forward by a Network of Farmers; it was unclear what this referred to.

2 submissions from members of the public who could not be present were read out by the Clerk.

The Chair then invited comments from the Councillors.

Inaccuracies - The Parish Council had great concern that statutory consultees may be judging the application on the misleading statements made in the original submissions.

Cllrs were asked to vote on the application. Six of the seven parish councillors were in attendance; one declared a non-pecuniary interest as a neighbouring landowner and was unable to vote, one abstained and four voted against the application.

Whilst not opposing the idea in principle of alternative sources of energy, the Parish Council asked that the location of this installation and its impact on the community and the surrounding countryside be taken into account.

Resolved: To refuse the application and to submit comments to Herefordshire Council based on the above. This to be circulated to Cllrs prior to submission.

The comments below take into account discussions at the meeting expanded to reflect the submission to HC which was agreed by Councillors post meeting.

Impact on Landscape - The installation is planned for the south facing slope of Adzor Bank, a steep sided hill which is a local landmark that can be seen not only from the surrounding area and neighbouring properties, but from significant distances away, including neighbouring hamlets (eg Portway). The applicants claim in the Design and Access statement (page 7) that the site is "...relatively flat..." and has "...good road access..." Both of these statements are untrue.

Number of Panels - In addition to the panels (which are listed variously as either 3800, 3850, 4254 or 4276), the site will be surrounded by a 2m high fence, some lighting and security cameras. The Parish Council would want it to be a condition of any approval that there should be no permanent night-time illumination nor movement/heat activated lighting.

Agricultural Land - The application claimed that the proposed site is poor quality farmland and difficult to manage due to its topography. It has been in agricultural use for many years, has been cropped successfully (using machinery) and is currently planted to wheat. No technical evidence has been offered to prove claims of poor soil quality.

It is understood that the land would be returned to its original state after 25 years. Given that there are no guarantees about the financial stability of the applicant's business and whilst understanding that a percentage of the profit is held in escrow for the purpose of reinstatement, if AR Partners/Pegasus cease to exist in the intervening years, no satisfactory answer has been provided as to who would be responsible for returning the land to its original condition, other than a statement made by the applicant that the site could be sold.

Road Access - The site is accessed from a "farm" track (PROW) which leads off a narrow country lane just below the brow of a hill and where it is not possible for two vehicles to easily pass, especially tractors or large vehicles. The access is considered totally unsuitable despite the claim of good road access.

Site Boundary/Ownership of Land – As noted above part of the land outlined in red in the plan does not belong to the applicant and no satisfactory explanation has been received.

JG/
Clerk

Effects On Neighbouring Properties & Wildlife

Glare - There are residential properties within very close proximity of the proposed site. The applicants have been asked on more than one occasion to provide reference sites for concerned neighbours to visit in order to assess both noise and glint/glare and none have been forthcoming.

Noise Emission – the absence of detail on noise is of great concern. The Parish Council requests more technical data on potential noise from the inverters.

The Parish Council also wish to see data concerning the proven, scientific effects of such installations on wildlife in general.

Water Run-Off - Local knowledge shows that the PROW to the south of the hill becomes extremely boggy in wet weather as a result to some extent, of water run-off from the field in question. Whilst acknowledging the content of the Flood Risk Assessment that accompanies the application and the statement that the soil has “good drainage characteristics” and that the Environment Agency is on record as stating that solar farms “do not increase rate of run-off”, there is no specific local data provided with the application that this issue has been considered other than in a generalised manner. Additional water run-off could result in the PROW becoming less accessible and the field to the south of the application site being the recipient of additional water.

Local Benefit - With applications of this type not bringing any statutory S106 financial benefits to the community, it is disappointing that this application brings at all to the residents of Wellington, even those most affected.

4.0 To Note Date and Time of the Annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 30th April 2015 at 7.30 pm.

5.0 To Note Date and Time of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

Thursday 14th May 2015 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm

Signed Date 14th May 2015
Chairman of Wellington Parish Council