

# WELLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held at the Community Centre  
at 7.30pm on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Item	Minutes	Action				
	<p><b>Present</b>  <b>Parish Cllrs:</b> Mrs L Langford (Vice Chair), Mr D Miller, Mrs J Shoesmith, Mr D Wood</p> <p><b>Also in attendance:</b> Ward Cllr Pauline Crockett, 14 members of the local community, Ward Cllr Kema Guthrie, 2 residents from Moreton on Lugg and Mrs Chris Bucknell (Parish Clerk)</p> <p><b>Mr Howard Jones</b> - Director of Planning Caulmert (Agent)  <b>Mr Tony Wehby</b> – Director of Earthworm Energy Ltd (Applicant)</p> <p><b>1.0 To Accept Apologies for Absence</b> – Cllr J Gowan, Cllr S Crane, Cllr B Prince</p> <p><b>2.0 To Receive Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p><b>2.1 To Consider Requests for Dispensations</b>  All members of the Parish Council declared a non-pecuniary interest on the basis of living in the Parish.  <b>Resolved:</b> In the interest of the public to allow all members of the Parish Council to remain in the room and take part in the discussions and vote.</p> <p><b>3.0 To Consider Planning Matters</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="193 1144 1401 1395"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="193 1144 363 1227">Reference Number</th> <th data-bbox="363 1144 1401 1227">Application</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="193 1227 363 1395">152188</td> <td data-bbox="363 1227 1401 1395">Land opposite Aylus Cottages, Auberrow, Wellington Proposed erection of a solar photovoltaic array, including metering and inverter kiosks, security cameras, fencing and gates and a temporary construction compound and access track</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The Vice Chair introduced Mr Howard Jones (Agent) and Mr Tony Wehby (Applicant) and put the project into the local context with the addition of projected slides showing where the project was to be located, the site plan, a view of the panels, the security fencing and the security cameras.</p> <p>The Agent and Applicant were invited to speak and answer questions from the public.</p> <p>Mr Howard Jones (Agent) put the project in the context of national policy framework which was aimed at promoting renewable energy, saying this was reflected in the policies of Herefordshire Council.</p> <p>He went on to detail the project, saying the site was to cover an area of 10.5 hectares and would consist of the erection of a series of solar panels set in rows across the site. The panels would be 2.2 meters high at the rear, 0.8 meters at the front with 8 meters between the rows. In addition there would be 3 inverter kiosks to enable the power to go into the grid, these would be grey in colour, 2.4 meters high with a footprint of 6 meters x 2.4 meters. There would also be 3 x CCTV poles, 5 meters in height. The security fencing would be 2.4 meters high comprised of green fencing with 3 strands of barbed wire on the top. The construction and layout was planned to enable the site to</p>	Reference Number	Application	152188	Land opposite Aylus Cottages, Auberrow, Wellington Proposed erection of a solar photovoltaic array, including metering and inverter kiosks, security cameras, fencing and gates and a temporary construction compound and access track	
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continue to function as a wildlife corridor.

Mr Jones spoke about why the particular site had been chosen, referring to the Agricultural Land Classification System which classified agricultural land according to versatility and suitability for growing crops. The top three grades, Grade 1, 2 and 3a, were the best and most versatile land, having significant protection from development, with grade 3b, 4 and 5 classified as poorer quality with less agricultural potential. Mr Jones stated that 71% of the land identified for the project fell within category 3b and 29% within category 3a which was in line with government policy to direct development to lower classes of agricultural land.

Mr Tony Wehby (Applicant) outlined some of the operational issues. During the construction phase it was stated there would be a maximum of 15 light vehicle movements in and 15 out per day with limited HGV deliveries. These movements would be on a closely managed operational rota so that there was no congestion.

The solar array would have a 25 year lifespan, after which it would be dismantled and the land returned to agricultural use.

It was also noted that Herefordshire was one of the few areas where power could be reversed back into the grid. It was also noted that projects like this were of benefit to local farmers as it gave them the opportunity for diversification.

The Vice Chair thanked the Agent and Applicant and asked if some anomalies in the application could be addressed before opening up questions to the public.

The application mentioned the Church of St Margaret's and also the Church of St Mary's. It was confirmed that St Mary's was a clerical error.

Section 5.6.2. stated that the nearest receptor for any possible substation noise was 225 m from the solar farm. The application form puts Westfield only 184 metres away and Aylus Cottages, Little Orchard and Auberrow House much closer. The Applicant stated that equipment would be sited in an acoustic enclosure which would shield nearby dwellings from any noise.

The Vice Chair queried why the proposed barn conversion (planning number 150977-permission granted) at Westfield was not looked at and scored as a 'receptor'.

Section 5.8-5.9.1 stated 'The proposed solar array is located in the open countryside away from any residential dwellings'. The Vice Chair noted that this was not correct as there were several properties in close proximity.

Section 3.6.1. and 6.0.5. referred to the land being currently down to grass and grazed by sheep, whereas the application site is in fact an arable field. The applicant noted that this would be established at a later date.

Section 7.1.1. Flood Risk Assessment – the Vice Chair felt there would be more run off from the panels than from uncovered land.

Section 3.8.7 Design and Access Statement states the construction of the solar farm would offer employment opportunities for local companies together with material expenditure. The applicant confirmed that all work would be tendered for locally.

The meeting was opened for questions from members of the public, both those resident within the Parish and the resident of Aylus Cottage who was directly affected by the development.

The questions focused mainly on the size and visual impact of the development and the potential impact on local dwellings both in terms of loss of view and in terms of loss of value.

Cllr Crockett queried how the power got back into the grid and why such a large site had been chosen when others would have had less impact on nearby dwellings. The applicant stated that the power is fed back into the grid through an inverter which will be situated in an acoustic housing to minimise the impact of any sound. The site had been chosen as connection back into the grid was available and the field was low yield in terms of its agricultural category, these two issues aligning with government policy.

It was queried what would happen at the end of the 25 year period if the applicant company no longer existed. The Agent confirmed that there was a de-commissioning fund available if necessary and this formed part of the legal agreement.

Several comments were made about the size of the development. The Agent and Applicant said they would consider reducing it but given the connection back to the grid and the category of land it offered an excellent opportunity for a development of this sort.

Comments were made about the level of traffic during the development phase. The Applicant confirmed there would be no traffic through the village and all vehicles would use the entrance off the A49. A condition confirming this would be acceptable.

The impact on PROW was mentioned with particular reference to the fence. The Applicant said a hedge could be erected if this was what the local community wanted.

The potential for glare from the panels was mentioned as Wellington was frequently over flown by RAF jet aircraft. The Agent confirmed that the non-reflective nature of the panels and surrounding retained trees and vegetation would ensure that the visual impact of the development is limited. He also stated that the construction of the panels was approved by the Civil Airline Authority.

A letter from a resident of Aylus Cottages who could not attend the meeting was read out.

The Vice Chair then asked the Parish Councillors for their views on matters not already covered.

Cllr Shoesmith noted that the Archaeological Report has been carried out by a highly reputable company, but whilst it was both thorough and extensive, it appeared to be primarily desk based, with no test excavations. Cllr Shoesmith said that in view of the importance of the nearby site at Wellington Quarry, and of other sites in the surrounding area, should planning permission be granted, she urged that an archaeologist be on site to observe all major ground disturbance.

Cllr Wood voiced concern once more about the level of traffic, saying he felt this would not be enforceable, also noting the road numbers in the application needed clarifying. Cllr Wood also challenged the stated number of 15 vehicle movements in and out, saying that with an estimated maximum of 45 workers on site this was unrealistic. The Applicant confirmed that the number of vehicle movements was accurate and that they would be actively managing movement to and from the site.

Cllr Wood felt that mud from the site could be a safety hazard and queried this and how HGV vehicles were going to turn in such a restricted space without damaging the road surface. The Applicant stated that a temporary access track would be constructed along with a stone/gravel space where lorries could turn off the road and unload without having to go on the land. Cllr Wood felt that advice should be sought on the maximum size of vehicle that would be allowed, with a condition that all mud on the road must be cleaned away daily by the contractor and any damage to the road be fully rectified before the work is completed. The applicant was accepting of this proposal.

CLlr Wood stressed that the recently completed and adopted Community Led Plan had very clearly shown that the thing people valued about Wellington was its rural character. He felt this scale of development would severely disadvantage local people, asking the Applicant and Agent, if the permission were granted, to discuss further the things that were of concern to the local residents. This was agreed.

In terms of Section 106 monies, or financial benefit to local people through reduced energy costs, the Applicant stated that any Section 106 proposals would come from the Local Authority and energy costs were imposed through the energy suppliers, and were not under the jurisdiction of the Applicant or Agent.

The Vice Chair asked the Parish Councillors to vote on the proposal and all were opposed to it.

The following points were summarised and would go forward to the Parish Council's response to the application

- The proposed site is out of scale and character with its surroundings and would have a major visual impact in the landscape for nearby residential dwellings, from the surrounding PROW network and from the wider area.
- The level of vehicle movements based on 15 vehicles for 45 workers plus HGV movements will cause disruption and a safety hazard for residents and those travelling through the village
- Consideration needs to be given to cumulative effect if the Stocks Farm solar array project gained planning permission.

**Resolved:** To oppose the application. The Vice Chair would draft a response and send it to Councillors for approval.

**To Note Date and Time of the next Regular Meeting of the Parish Council**

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Signed ..... Date 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015  
Chairman of Wellington Parish Council