

Minutes of Bucklesham Parish Council Meeting
Held on 31st January 2023 at 7:00pm
In Bucklesham and Foxhall Village Hall, IP10 0DZ

Present

Cllr Trevor Bickers

Cllr Evelyn Bloomfield

Cllr David Brinkley (Chair)

Cllr Rhea Gardner

Cllr Clive Lenton

Cllr Lynda Seagroatt

Cllr Mick Richardson (ESC)

Ruth Johnson (Clerk)

6 members of the public were present

1. Apologies for absence:

a. To receive apologies for absence.

Apologies had been received from Cllr Heather Owen (illness).

b. To accept apologies for absence.

Acceptance of the apology of Cllr Owen was proposed by Cllr Lenton, seconded by Cllr Seagroatt and all were in agreement.

2. To receive any:

a. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest.

There were none.

b. Declarations of Non-Pecuniary Interest.

There were none.

c. Applications for Dispensation on Agenda Items.

There were none.

d. Declarations of Gifts or Hospitality received over the value of £25.00

There were none.

e. Notification of Lobbying with reference to Planning Applications to be discussed.

There were none.

3. Public Participation – To receive:

i. Reports from County and District Councillors:

• Suffolk County Cllr Patti Mulcahy:

No report or any other communication had been received from Cllr Mulcahy.

• East Suffolk District Cllr Mick Richardson and Cllr Richard Kerry:

Cllrs' monthly reports as well as many informative updating emails on various subjects had been previously received and circulated by the Clerk.

Chair's initials:

ii. Questions from any member of the public:

- Two residents of the village wished to inform the Council of their objection to the Solar Farm Planning Application (item 5 on the agenda) as they had been unable to attend the public meeting held on the 24th January. The Chair allowed considerable time for both residents to fully explain their objections.
- A further resident who had been present at the public meeting on 24th January wished to restate their objections to the Solar Farm Planning Application. The Chair thanked the resident and assured them that the Council had listened.
- A resident of the village asked the Council if they had been informed of the outcome of the Traffic Survey conducted on Nacton Lane (from Bob Nichols to the Seven Hills Roundabout). Despite requests to Suffolk Highways, the Clerk had received no information with regards to the data from the survey. The Clerk agreed contact Highways to request the information again.

4. To agree Minutes of meeting dated 4th January 2023:

All Councillors agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting. Cllr Bloomfield proposed that the minutes should be signed, this was seconded by Cllr Brinkley and all Councillors agreed.

The minutes had already been published on the website in draft form in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

Action: Clerk

5. Planning: To discuss the following planning applications received:

- a. **DC/22/4401/FUL** - Installation and operation of a Solar Farm together with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure, Land East Of Bucklesham Village And the A1093 Bucklesham Hall Drive, Bucklesham

A public meeting had taken place on Tuesday 24th January 2023 in the Bucklesham and Foxhall Village Hall to allow residents of the village to express their opinions. The meeting had been widely advertised through a Bugle Bulletin and on posters in the notice boards around the village, as well as the Bucklesham village website. There were nine residents in attendance on the night. One stated their support for the planning application, five were opposed and three did not share their opinion.

The Parish Council had been contacted by five villagers via email. These were read aloud at the meeting. Three residents were in support of the application and two were opposed to it. There had also been three further comments from residents recorded by the Clerk who had wished to register a comment of support for the application.

Councillors had previously met with representatives from Novus, the developers of the Solar Farm, on the site in 2022. All Councillors had an opportunity to read the documents on the planning portal and many had researched the proposal prior to the meeting.

Chair's initials:

The Clerk had been asked to contact Novus with questions arising from the public meeting. Firstly, to ascertain where the Solar panels would be manufactured. Arslaan Tahir, Program Manager from Novus, stated this was most likely to be either China or Germany as they purchase panels from both countries, but at this stage it was too early to say which one it would be.

Secondly, the Clerk was asked to confirm if there would be matting used under the panels and if the land would be sprayed with chemical weed killer. Mr Tahir stated it was their aim for the ground to regenerate naturally and that absolutely no matting would be used. He also confirmed that the land would not be chemically managed as this would not be of ecological benefit. The supporting documents to the Planning Application explain this fully. Mr Tahir stated that the desire is for the land to be allowed to regenerate back to Heathland to encourage invertebrates and insects, including the very rare Black Mining Bee.

Councillors made the following comments:

- The public meeting was poorly attended, only 7 households were represented which makes it very difficult to accurately reflect the views of our community.
- The public meeting on Tuesday 24th January was useful but to have such a low turnout from the village was a little disappointing. Can we assume therefore that most people are ambivalent about this project?
- If this was an application that villagers were opposed to the Village Hall would have been full at the public meeting. It was very disappointing that people did not attend and share their opinions but this shows that they do not object.
- Is the site in question appropriate? Are there more suitable sites?
- I am sure there are other suitable locations but is it our responsibility to direct the developers to other sites and we should deal with what's in front of us.
- There is a recognised need to reduce carbon emission by 78% , the UKs 2050 net zero target is set out in Climate Change Act 2008. Bucklesham Parish Council be playing our part in making this happen.
- If we know that fossil fuels are harming the atmosphere and greener sources of energy need to be found, everyone should give this serious consideration.
- Novus are a well-known and respected solar energy developer.
- There is a recognised great need for renewable energy in the UK to protect our future needs for a secure, affordable and sustainable place.
- There is a desire to come away from the need for fossil fuels and assist in reducing UK carbon emissions.
- Regarding protection of animals, the developer would have to prove that care has been taken to protect wildlife and natural habitat.
- All environmental, ecological, glint and glare, landscape and visual assessments, plus other reports have been submitted and these will have to satisfy the planning officers and committee.
- We are informed that the solar panels have a capacity of 28 MW's, with a fixed angle of 20 to 25 degrees, and a maximum height above ground of 3 meters. This capacity is sufficient to offset the needs of 6,000 homes.

Chair's initials:

- The panels have a 5 metre set back from boundaries, plus a further 10 metres as required to avoid shading. We can insist on a high level of planting to mitigate on residential properties in the vicinity. The panels have a non-reflective surface with self-coloured frames.
- East Suffolk's plan states that they will support low carbon and renewable energy developments subject to major impacts on energy, infrastructure projects, providing these can be mitigated adequately.
- I agree that we need to do something for 'green energy' but it does not all have to be electricity – there are many other options; hydro treated vegetable oil, CO² Capture etc.
- Solar energy is an immediate solution, those other alternatives will take years to develop.
- The energy generated will only be for 6,000 homes which is not many in the grand scheme of things.
- I agree this is a very emotive subject and we all have sympathy for those who live close to the development.
- There are many pros and cons, we have listened to those villagers who did wish to share a view and it is 50/50 in support and opposition with others showing no objection.

The Chair stated that he felt the Council had done its best to open the discussion to the village and ask for their comments. The public meeting that had been organised had been widely publicised to allow all residents an opportunity to have their say. The Chair agreed that there were a number of 'pros' and 'cons' for the proposal but that the Council had to put emotion aside and comment on the application in front of them rather than speculating on what may or may not happen in the future.

It was agreed that there were a large number of documents on the Planning Portal and that although Councillors had done their very best to read and understand them, many were extremely technical, and it must be noted that the Parish Councillors are not experts in this field. The Councillors were then asked by the Chair to vote on the three options available to them reflecting, in their opinion, the views of parishioners.

Cllr Bloomfield proposed that the Council support the Planning Application which was seconded by Cllr Bickers. Four Councillors voted against this proposal with two voting in favour. Cllr Lenton proposed that the Council register a comment of 'No Objection' to the proposal. This was seconded by Cllr Brinkley with five Councillors in favour and one against. Therefore, the Clerk was asked to write to East Suffolk Planning Department stating the Council had 'No Objection' but wished to make the following comments:

- That the opinions of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust must be given great weight when the application is discussed, and that if permitted, conditions should be in place to safeguard wildlife
- That all Public Rights of Way in the area are protected and remain open and accessible to all
- That the questions posed by the SCC Archaeological Service be answered in full, to their satisfaction

Chair's initials:

- That the proposed planting of screening hedgerow be substantial established saplings and young bushes to expedite the screening of all the development site as opposed to young whips that will take years to mature

6. To receive agenda items for next meeting on Wednesday 1st March 2023:

Councillors requested that the following items be placed on the agenda for the next meeting:

- The Coronation of HM King Charles III
- An update on the development on Levington Lane
- The many potholes in the Village

There were no other agenda items at the meeting from the Councillors, but the Clerk reminded them that all projects going forward would be included and that any new items should be notified to her at least one week before the meeting.

Action: Clerk

The meeting closed at 7:55 pm.

Signed:
Chair

Date:

Ruth Johnson
Clerk to Bucklesham Parish Council

Chair's initials: