

Minutes of the Parish Council Planning Meeting held on the 1st March, 2021 via Zoom

03.21.00(p) **PRESENT:** Alan Newman in the chair, Stan Coram, John Sones, Andrew Woodgate, Andrew Morton Fiona Watt, District Councillor L Jamieson, County Councillor Robert Lindsay, Bron Curtis, Principal Planning Officer BDC, the clerk and 9 members of the public were present.

03.21.01(p) **APOLOGIES:** Nick Bird

03.21.02(p) **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON AGENDA ITEMS:** There were no declarations of interest.

03.21.03(p) **RECESS FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Members of the Public were invited to give their comments and express their views. Bron Curtis clarified comments where she was able

The Chairman thanked Bron for her attendance and for the contributions from the members of the public

03.21.04(p) **PLANNING:** Application DC/20/05895 - Installation of renewable energy generating station, comprising ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays and battery-based electricity storage containers together with substation, inverter/transformer stations, site accesses, internal access tracks, security measures, access gates, other ancillary infrastructure, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements including Nature Areas. -: Land to The South of Church Farm, Somersham, IP8 4PN and Land To The East Of The Channel, Burstall, IP8 4JL

Notwithstanding its general support of renewable energy, it was resolved by majority to object to the approval of this application for the following reasons:

The application is large, fragmented and out of scale with its immediate environs of Flowton, Burstall and Somersham. The council was therefore concerned that approval of the application would:

1) Lead to a very considerable loss of good quality agricultural land to the detriment of the landscape and food production. With the UK currently producing less than 20% of its food requirements the arguments to support the loss of prime agricultural land need to be very compelling.

The council were also mindful that recent figures from the 'Digest of UK Energy Statistics' show that the current UK electricity generating capacity (335TWh) more than meets the total electricity demand (302TWh). Current figures also show that over the last 25 years total energy consumption is decreasing (due to more efficient use of energy, reduction in population growth and the decline in heavy industry).

The council did not find the application sufficiently compelling to offset the loss of the prime agricultural land.

- 2) Cause road safety dangers on the unclassified road network during the prolonged construction period with heavy vehicles, possible abnormal loads and a considerable increase in workers commuting. This has now been exacerbated by the proposal of a second access to the site rather than the one originally proposed. In particular, the approach through the village of Burstall was felt to be inappropriate for construction traffic.
- 3) Result in the industrialisation of the open countryside and the loss of visual amenity particularly for users of the public right of way network as well as disruption to wildlife. The proposed landscaping, to mask the visual impact as shown in the planning application, would not mitigate the loss of pleasure of walking through the rural setting.
- 4) Lead to cumulative noise from the batteries, transformers and motors driving the panels and will travel across open countryside impacting on the tranquil setting - an effect that will be noticed both when walking on the rights of way and across the wider landscape.
- 5) Cause disruption to traffic flows, agricultural activity and wildlife by the need for cabling to be laid between sites. The Council did not feel the application contained sufficient detail about this impact and the way the cabling would be laid to allow us to make a judgement on this aspect of the application.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The date of the next full meeting is 22 March, 2021.

The meeting closed

Signed:-..... Dated:-.....
Chairman