



Strategic Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee held at The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester, NN12 6AD on Monday 11 December 2023 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Phil Bignell (Chair)
Councillor Kevin Parker (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Ann Addison
Councillor André González De Savage
Councillor Rosie Herring
Councillor Rosie Humphreys
Councillor David James
Councillor Charles Manners
Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor Bob Purser
Councillor Danielle Stone

Substitute Members:

Councillor Stephen Clarke

Also Present:

Sue Ricketts
Jon Williams
Councillor Ellis, Evenly Parish Council
Councillor Breese, Middleton Cheney Ward
Alister Veitch, Applicant
Tania Mathias, the Agent

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Alan Chantler

Officers:

Chris Burton, Principal Planning Policy Officer
Shaun Robson, Head of Service - Development Management
Katherine Hall, Head of Legal Services - Place
Nicky Scaife, Development Management Team Leader
Hayley Usher, Development Management Highways
Diana Davies, Democratic Services Officer

151. Minutes

The Committee were advised that due to the reduced time between committees, the Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee of 21 November 2023 would be presented for approval at the Strategic Planning Committee of 23 January 2024.

152. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

153. **Chair's Announcements**

The Committee were advised to disregard any lobbying material presented to them from the public gallery. The Agenda and the Supplemental Information distributed to members would be the subject of discussion of the meeting.

154. **WNS/2022/1557/EIA - Astwick Green Power, Land North of Barley Mow Farm, Buckingham Road, Evenley**

The Committee considered the construction and operation of an anaerobic digestion facility, ancillary infrastructure, landscape planting and the construction of a new access road and access from the B4031.

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the information in the report and provided a presentation which included maps, plans, site layout and photographs from various viewpoints to provide contextual information.

Sue Rickets addressed the Committee in objection to the application, raising concerns regarding; the operational hours, the intensity and longevity of the plant's operation; the traffic management on and off site and the associated road safety risks; the limitations of the Traffic Statement; the impact of additional large vehicles on the surrounding highways; the origin of the feedstock and the anticipation that it may not be sourced locally; and the requirement for installation of trief kerbing to ensure correct directional movement of site traffic.

Jon Williams addressed the Committee in objection to the application, raising concerns regarding; the proximity of the plant to his home; the increase in HGV vehicles passing his house; highways safety; the quality of the data provided by the applicant to support the application; increase in fossil fuel consumption; removal of high grade agricultural land; that the gestate figures had been underestimated which would require additional vehicle movement or the additional burn-off/flare of the excess gas; environment impact concerns; safety aspects and the absence of a HSE assessment of the site; pollution from particulate emissions; the visual impact on the greenfield site, mitigation measures would take 17 years to mature.

Councillor Ellis, Evenly Parish Council, addressed the Committee in objection to the application, raising concerns regarding; the scale, location and visual amenity; the interpretation of West Northamptonshire Councils Local Plan Policy SS2, EMP3 and EMP6; the increased heavy traffic; operational days and hours; effectiveness of the planting mitigation measures; and the safety of the site.

Councillor Breese, Middleton Cheney Ward, addressed the Committee in objection to the application, raising concerns regarding; the accuracy of the policies being applied to approve the application; the accuracy of the road transport survey; the classification of the site as a small farm; no contracts entered in to with farmers;

unacceptable impacts on the area; insufficient data provided regarding pollution controls and mitigation; that the report, had omitted to fully address concerns for the committee to consider, with conditions being applied which left final decisions delegated to officers; absence of a S.106 agreement as requested by highways in their consultation response.

Councillor Breese summed up the policies pertinent to her objections: National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 158, paragraph 56; West Northants Joint Core Strategy S1, S10, S11; added two quotes from the Inspector of the Greatworth appeal; 'renewable does not give them primacy over other considerations' and 'the location is an unavoidable and very strong locational driver of being able to connect to the national grid'; the South Northamptonshire Council Local Plan part 2, ENP3, ENP6; and the Sustainability Test.

Alister Veitch, the Applicant, addressed the Committee in support of the application, outlined the environmental and economic benefits of the application and the contribution it would have in tackling climate change. He advised the biomethane gas would heat 8,000 homes; the anaerobic digestion process would save over 28,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually; the organic digestate fertilizer would replace expensive carbon intensive artificial fertilizers and improve the soil quality; reduce water pollution; and would boost the local economy. Local concerns regarding traffic movement and safety were addressed in an Operational Travel Management Strategy.

During the course of the Committee, members gave consideration to:

- The additional traffic movement, the impact on local highways, traffic management proposals
- The reasons for Flaring and the anticipated frequency
- Regulation and enforcement of odour emissions from the site
- Concerns for pollution from diesel emissions
- Transportation methods of materials both on and off site
- The provision of renewable low carbon energy and energy security.
- Concern for the size of application the landscape mitigation measures and the detrimental visual impact of the application on the local amenity
- The policies in the NPPF, the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy the South Northamptonshire Council Local Plan Part 2
- The economic benefits to the community
- The traffic movement data provided to support the application
- Traffic movement on and off site would be limited by planning condition
- Method of containment of materials on site
- Decommissioning of the site would require a condition should the application be approved
- Lack of a written consultation response from the Ministry of Defence
- The classifications of local rural diversification and industrial development
- Concern for the impact of lighting of the site on the local area

Councillor Gonzalez de Savage proposed that the application be rejected and not supported on the grounds of, traffic impact, odour, light pollution and visual impact. And that the Committee adjourn to draft the proposed motion. The proposition was

seconded by Councillor Manners and on being put to the meeting the vote was declared carried with 9 voting in favour and 2 against.

Councillor Stone refrained from voting.

The meeting was adjourned at 17.00 to allow Members to seek legal advice and discuss with Officers an alternative recommendation to that contained in the Officer Report.

Councillor Stone left the meeting and did not participate in either the adjournment discussion or the subsequent vote.

The meeting reconvened at 17.30.

The Development Manager updated Members and members of the public in attendance as to the position following the adjournment. The Development Manager read out the alternative recommendation for Members further consideration; It is considered that the scale, height, and massing of the proposed development would not minimise the adverse impacts on the people and the natural environment. As such it would have an unacceptable impact on the landscape character of the surrounding area contrary to Policies S1 and S11 and therefore the application should be refused.

Councillor Gonzalez de Savage proposed the alternative recommendation, the proposition was seconded by Councillor Manners and on being put to the meeting the vote was declared carried with 9 voting in favour and 2 against.

In reaching its decision, the Committee considered the case officer's report and presentation, the public representations, and the Committee Updates.

Resolved: that Permission be refused. It is considered that the scale, height, and massing of the proposed development would not minimise the adverse impacts on the people and the natural environment. As such it would have an unacceptable impact on the landscape character of the surrounding area contrary to Policies S1 and S11 West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014).

Councillor Pritchard left the meeting at 17.45pm.

155. **WND/2022/0901 Land at Fawsley Estate, Fawsley, Northamptonshire**

The Committee considered the renewable energy generating station comprising ground mounted photovoltaic solar arrays with primary substation, inverter stations, cabling, access gates, site access, internal tracks including infrastructure, security fencing, CCTV, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with a verbal update. Two late representations were received in objection to the application on the grounds of visual impact, construction noise, traffic blight, size of the application and the impact on the character of the area and affect the view from the hotel would have a detrimental effect on the business. The Principal Planning Officer outlined the

information in the report and provided a presentation which included maps, plans, site layout and photographs from various viewpoints to provide contextual information.

Tania Mathias, the Agent, addressed the Committee in support of the application, and outlined; the design, delivery and benefits of the application; the suitability of the site; and the pressures to respond to the climate emergency;

During the course of the Committee, members gave consideration to:

- The Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) to ensure that any ash trees that die back were replaced with a native species tree
- The siting of solar panels on land designated as, Special Landscaped Area
- The condition which would ensure the applicant contacted the Council with the proposed location, design, materials, and colour of the substation on site prior to commencement of works
- The provision of 2.4 meter high, deer fencing, the inclusion of gaps to allow wildlife access. Provision of signage with Contact information of the persons responsible for the site
- Low grade agricultural land below the panels would be utilised for limited grazing
- The topography of the land mitigating the visibility of the proposed PV panels
- The proposed number movements on the site, post construction, and the proposed lighting
- The biodiversity net gain

Councillor Gonzalez de Savage proposed that the application be approved, the proposition was seconded by Councillor James and on being put to the meeting was declared carried unanimously.

In reaching its decision, the Committee considered the case officer's report and presentation, the public representations, and the Committee Updates.

Resolved: that Permission be granted subject to conditions with delegated authority to the Assistant Director – Planning and Development to approve an amendment to conditions as deemed necessary.

The meeting closed at 6.32 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____