

NEWBOLD PACEY AND ASHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting held 27.1.11

Present Chris Thornton, Chris Pate, Steve Bolton, Marilyn Boardman, Judy Cooper, David Close, David Johnson, Roger White

Apologies : Priscilla Cook

Purpose of the meeting : To consider and discuss the proposal for a Solar Farm on the Newbold Road . Meeting also attended by 27 residents.

Declaration of Interests: 1 from Steve Bolton a personal / professional interest related to work carried out for the Little family.

Steve outlined the purpose of the meeting and asked William Little to provide some information about the proposal.

William Little: A Belgian company –Infinity- is approaching the District Council and is carrying out a feasibility study and scoping analysis to determine the possibility of installing a solar farm on arable farmland owned by the Little family adjacent to the Newbold Road. There is currently no planning application and it is likely to be the end of March before there is a possibility of one. The site will potentially cover 11 hectares on the right hand side of the Newbold Road between Newbold Pacey and Wellesbourne. The site will be visible from the road and public rights of way. The solar panels will be 2 ½ metres at the highest points. If planning permission is granted Infinity may keep the project on hold depending on the availability of Government grants.

Councillor Roger Wright: Circulated a map showing the location of the proposed site. The District Council will look at the environmental impact and will also consider the opinions of local people. The site will cover 14.5 hectares, there will be 22,000 panels in 40 rows and the panels could be up to 3 metres in height.

Councillor Wright raised the following issues:

- How will the generated energy be transmitted to the National Grid ?
- What will be the impact of the housing equipment ?
- What evidence is there that the scheme has been designed to minimise impact ?
- Character of landscape – is the scheme the best use of the land ?
- Hours of sunlight in this area are considerably less than in the south west.
- Would the solar farm be more appropriately based on other sites e.g old airfields at Long Marston or Snitterfield.
- Is there a potential impact on aeroplanes using the flight path to Wellesbourne airfield ?
- The landscaping of the site will need to prevent glare
- There is a major gas main running through the field – no developments are possible within 400 metres of the pipe.

Councillor David Close: There are considerable environmental concerns including:

- What level of security will be required [possibly fences 6-8 feet high] ?
- What type of solar panels are anticipated [fixed or rotating] ?

The residents were invited to make comments etc.

Andrew Marshall :

1. A sub station will need to be installed to feed the Grid.
2. Have there been any changes related to generation of power since the District Plan was produced ? **William Little** : Councils have to consider the “balance” between the need for renewable energy and the environmental impact.

Colin Boardman: It is important to stamp on this now due to the impact on the environment. It will be an industrial activity on a green field site. Solar panels are an inefficient means of generating electricity. The chemicals used in the manufacture of the panels including arsenic pose a threat to the land.

Mr Hirons: asked about the length of the lease. **Steve Bolton** replied that 3 years is allowed for building the project and then 25 years for generating power.

Alison Haines:

What will be the impact of the traffic used in the construction phase ? Newbold Road is very busy and there have already been a number of accidents on the bend at New bold Pacey and at the old entrance to Flint Hall. **Councillor David Close** replied that there are concerns about reflection /glare and that therefore it is a highway safety issue. There will be a need for permanent access to the site which may also constitute a hazard.

Andrew Marshall: commented that the proposed scheme poses a dilemma – renewable energy is required but in the same way that residents have been concerned about local building schemes they will also be concerned about the impact of a solar farm on the environment.

Councillor Roger Wright: The District Council will be conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment to determine the general principles of acceptability. They will welcome views from the Parish Council and also any individual responses from residents.

The person to contact is Matthew Neal at SUA District Council. He can be contacted by letter or e-mail matthew.neal@stratford-dc.gov.uk or by phone 01789 260356. Information should reach him by Wednesday, 2nd March.

Chris Pate: Solar panels are an inefficient means of providing energy and as such do not warrant the destruction of the landscape. The Government subsidy was only intended for individuals and may not be available for large scale projects in the future. **Steve Bolton** pointed out that the subsidy is only available until April 2012.

Mr Hirons asked that if Infinity gets permission to build how much time do they have before they commence development. **Steve Bolton-** the same time scale as other planning permission requirements i.e. 3 years.

As there were no more questions / comments Steve Bolton declared the public meeting closed.

The members of the Parish Council then discussed the response that they would make to the District Council.

[see draft letter attached]