

Meeting Type	Ordinary
Date	2 nd March 2022
Time	19.00
Venue	Ashorne Village Hall
Councillors Present	Stephen Bolton (Vice Chairman), Krys Pietrecki (arrived 7.30pm), Roger Wright, Thomas Hiorns, George Struthers
In Attendance	Locum Clerk Eleanor Choudry
Members of the Public	18

1) WELCOME and APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from D Cllr Anne Parry.

2) DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Agenda item 10 c) ii – Cllr Hiorns – Who employs Matthew Bates from ‘Herb & Grow’.

3) Presentation by Novus about Elm Farm Solar Park delivered by Simon Murrells and Richard Turner – see appendix 1

Questions were raised during the presentation. Presenters were unable to answer when the biodiversity net gain of 90% would be realised. Residents were angered by photos showing the proposed area in summer with high dense hedges and leafy trees explaining that for at least 5 months of the year the trees are without leaves and the hedges hollow. Residents asked the value of income created for the parish. The presenter initially said £50k per annum but Cllr Struthers corrected the figure calculated to £6240 per annum.

4) Question and answer session regarding Elm Farm Solar Park

Resident Dan Simkins asked about the business connection between Novus, Innova and Corylus and how they were related. It was explained that Corylus was a separately owned planning consultancy company that shared the same office space. There is a financial link between the companies so reports written by Corylus for the Novus application would mean that Corylus benefit financially. The presenters stressed that they use other consultants and that they are bound by Code of Conduct and are Chartered Professionals.

Resident Will Carroll questioned that as the height of the solar panels is 3.1 metres when looking at the back of the proposed site taking the height of the field plus the 3.1 metres would mean that the panels would be elevated 40 foot from the road creating a danger for drivers.

Mark Boorman resident of Newbold Pacey advised that Highways had concerns over the road safety and that there had not been adequate demonstration that it was safe or unsafe. Cllr Wright asked what was said at the pre application meeting by SDC regarding road safety. The presenters said that SDC did not raise it as an issue. The glare depends on the sun and there is woodland further back on the site. Resident Dan Simkins stated that the Glint and Glare Assessment was a desktop survey and such an elevation at the back of the site could not be mitigated.

Resident Andrew Marshall explained that he has looked at speed limits on the road concerned and it is a ‘notorious rat run’. There are 2 entrances on the road and the hump sign was installed after a fatality. Another very serious accident has also happened on this stretch of road. Due to the undulating countryside the road is used by many cyclists. It is a very dangerous road. The presenters explained that operational activity would take place on the site twice a month.

Resident Sheila Marshall asked how much Novus were spending on the borders, how long it will take to grow and how wide it will be. The Landscape Management Plan is on the planning portal. The species would be native deciduous and 5 metres wide border. Cllr Wright asked about the height of the fence. It was explained that the fence would be 2 metres high, deer proof with mammal gates for badgers.

Resident Rob Loads declared an interest as he lives in Riverhouse, the old Vicarage which dates back 800 years. Mr Loads asked if Novus had considered how unique and beautiful and precious the nature of the villages of Ashorne and Newbold Pacey were. Mr Loads said that the solar farm was absurdly out of scale and tantamount to vandalism and no consideration had been given to residents in the presentation of the visual impact. Mr Loads gave examples of how he supports reducing climate change. It would be devastating for those who live in the area if the glorious rolling countryside was covered in 'grey tombstones' and he did not think Novus was aware of resident's feelings. Mr Loads stated that it was 'a disgraceful proposal that should be withdrawn'. The presenters responded that any planning decision is emotive. Policies guide the developments and that is why Novus carry out community engagement as its really important to shape and refine. Novus heritage studies have assessed archaeological studies and also landscape studies. The presenters apologised that the presentation did not include references to the impact on residents or the nature of the villages.

Resident Mark Freeman asked about the height and nature of the CCTV poles with 40 cameras and speakers and whether there was any lighting. The cameras point inwards and are motion activated with infra-red on 3 metre galvanised poles. The speaker is a deterrent to warn anyone trespassing on the site and there would not be any lighting.

Cllr Hiorns asked about the fencing and water troughs for animals on the site. Novus could provide smaller fencing within the site for grazing animals and water troughs and access to tend animals.

Resident Andrew Marshall displayed a 3.1 metres pole explaining that this is the height of the solar panels and the back of the panels will be in view. He stated that the application is a sales document all about making profit for Novus because of the electrical supply and a willing landowner to lease the land. Ashorne and Newbold Pacey residents strongly object and the application is flawed eg Core Strategy CS5 etc. SDC describe the landscape as 'Feldon' dating back to tudor times, it is the rising, rolling countryside that SDC said should be protected. The document is full of errors and is misleading. All descriptions/photos show the area in high summer when for 5 months of the year there will be no screening. Today the hedges are hollow and the top section of the site can be seen for about 2/10ths of a mile, no amount of screening will affect that. The screening planted will take 6-10 years to get to the height shown in the photos and still won't be screened for 5 months of the year. The application is dishonest with viewpoints 2 not reflecting and viewpoint 4 not relevant. It is a dangerous road, it's in a conservation area. Well-being is a major factor and no one wants to see a sea of blue/black panels. We are not NIMBY's and are all worried about climate change but solar farms such as those in Bishops Itchington are on flat land and cannot be seen. At Drayton the solar farm can hardly be seen.

Discussion ended at 8.05pm

5) CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Cllrs received and agreed the minutes from the ordinary meeting on 5th January 2022 as a true and accurate record.

Proposed Cllr Wright

Seconded Cllr Hiorns **All in Favour**

6) **PUBLIC FORUM** – No further discussion.

7) **UPDATE FROM WARD MEMBERS**

a) Penny-Ann O’Donnell, County Councillor – no report received.

i – Chairs meeting Cllr Penny-Ann O’Donnell

ii – Five update items were put forward by Our Parishes Acting Chair - Cllr Bolton

1) Village Hall entrance flooding – Geoff Hobday WCC to meet with Cllrs O’Donnell , Bolton & Severn Trent to resolve.

2) Newbold Pacey blocked drain – Geoff Hobday WCC resolving.

3) Missing 50mph signs – Cllr Bolton – is in progress with Geoff Hobday WCC.

4) Grit bins installation – awaiting Geoff Hobday WCC

5) Visual fence at the square on left hand side – Geoff Hobday WCC resolving.

b) Anne Parry, District Councillor

NPAPC District Councillor Report – March 2022

Firstly please accept my apologies for the March meeting of Full Council as I am away overseas from 26 February – 14 March 2022.

Council Tax

At Full Council on 21 February, the Budget was approved to increase the Council Tax by £5, which would make the council tax bill for a Band D property be £154.12 per annum, which represents 7.4% of the total council tax bill.

Increases by WCC will be £57.42 and Warwickshire Police will be £9.75 for Band D properties.

In preparing the 2022/23 Base Budget, the over-riding principle is to budget for the continuation of services at the existing level. In terms of garden-waste the charge is proposed to increase to £42 for 2022/23 and then by £2 per annum. Car parking changes are planned to remain unchanged.

Proposed Solar Farm - Land at Elms Farm

Whilst I am not opposed to the principle of a solar farm at Elms Farm, I have objected to this application in view of its size at 18.05 hectares as I believe it will cause significant harm to the character of the landscape being such a large solar farm at over 44 acres. In addition, I have serious concerns about the close proximity of the site to the Newbold Road, which is one of the most dangerous roads in Warwickshire, and the developers have ignored my request for extensive screening to motorists. Consequently I feel this is a significant highway concern.

Wellesbourne Campus/Airfield

SDC is working with the University of Warwick, CWLEP and WMCA on the development of Wellesbourne Campus and Lotus is looking to expand its current presence generating up to 300 new jobs. The flying functions at Wellesbourne Airfield are continuing to be protected by Stratford District Council with the development of opportunities which will complement the Wellesbourne Campus and boost local business and job opportunities.

South Warwickshire District Council

Stratford District Council and Warwick District Council awaiting feedback from the Secretary of State in respect of the submission document on the proposed merger. In the meantime an extensive amount of work is being undertaken across the two councils with a joined up approach to services.

Business Grants

There are statutory (£2.7k, £4k or £6k dependent on rateable values) and discretionary grants (to be determined depending on uptake) for businesses affected by Omicron. Applications via SDC's website.

Help for Residents on Increased Energy Prices

Following the recent announcement that the price cap increase on energy charges will impact millions of households, Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils are continuing to work with local charity Act On Energy to promote the grants, advice and support available to residents in South Warwickshire.

Act On Energy can offer advice on local funds such as the Household Support Fund, provide energy saving tips to reduce household energy usage and assist those in fuel debt to work directly with their supplier. The charity can also assist the most vulnerable households with free low-cost energy installations such as energy efficient light bulbs and draught proofing measures. Act On Energy can be contacted on 0800 988 2881 with a range of advice on their website <https://actonenergy.org.uk/>

Both Councils will also be administering the £150 Council Tax rebate for properties rated band A-D, which will be issued to eligible households in April.

8) CORRESPONDENCE

- a. Village Hall Grant towards the cost of the platinum jubilee street party. Cllrs all in favour of the letter sent from Cllr Bolton to the Events Committee.
- b. Email from William Heynes re flooding – As per agenda item 7 ii) 2).
- c. 20's Plenty for Warwickshire – Cllr Bolton advised that Cllrs can sign up individually or as a PC. As there is a question over the validity as it could undermine the 30mph limit Cllrs did not progress the idea.
- d. NALC and virtual meetings – Cllrs agreed to sign the petition requesting to hold virtual meetings as and when required.

Proposed Cllr Bolton

Seconded Cllr Pietrecki

All in Favour

- e. Adoption & Implementation of LGA Councillor Code of Conduct – Cllr Pietrecki to chase Phil Grafton at SDC. To be added as an item on the May agenda.
- f. Defibrillator – Cllr Struthers agreed to source CPR training and display step by step instructions on usage. An update to be provided at May meeting.

9) FINANCIAL REPORT

- a. Cllrs received and approved the Finance Report for November, December 2021 and January 2022.

b. Cllrs to receive and approve payments that the RFO is to progress – It was noted that payment for McAfee Security on parish laptop had been paid automatically by the previous Clerk and a reimbursement would need to be issued.

c. The Bank statements for the period have been received.

d. The Bank Reconciliation for the period has been received and is to be approved.

Proposed Cllr Pietrecki

Seconded Cllr Bolton

All in Favour

e. Audit of accounts – Appointment of independent examiner – Cllr Wright proposed to delegate responsibility to seek the Internal Auditor to Cllr Pietrecki and all Cllrs agreed.

f. Website payments and update – The Walking Guide payment from Wellesbourne PC was being dealt with by SDC Cllr A Parry.

g. Budget precept for 2022/23 update – A response had not yet been received from SDC regarding the precept request.

h. The Locum Clerk agreed to minute the meeting in May if recruitment had not taken place.

10) AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY & MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a. Village Hall no update

b. Church

i) No response has been received from the church regarding the Grant Application. Cllrs agreed to remove this item from future agendas.

ii) The church war memorial - deferred to private and confidential item 15b.

c. Allotments

i. Update on Allotments – There is two-thirds of a plot that remains untenanted and it will be advertised. Rent reminders are due to be issued this month.

ii. Update on Tenancy Agreement with 'Herd & Grow' – It was proposed that the rent be increased from £350 to £370 per annum. There is currently not a tenancy agreement between Matthew Bates at 'Herd & Grow' and the PC. Usually the tenant would be responsible for the fencing. Matthew Bates had offered to provide free labour to replace the whole of the bottom fence if the PC paid approximately £500 for the fences. A formal farm business tenancy would then be agreed ensuring there were no further costs to the PC and the PC could continue with the reliable tenant.

Proposed Cllr Pietreck

Seconded Cllr Wright

All in Favour with 1 abstention

ii) Erection of shed/s without Council permission – A new tenant has erected a substantial shed prior to reading the tenancy agreement advising of the need for council permission. Cllr Pietrecki is awaiting the tenant's response and will chase up prior to the May meeting.

d. Emergency Plan - Unfortunately the Emergency Plan has not progressed due to the lack of Clerk/Chair. This is ongoing.

e. Village Hut News

i. Proposed Parish Clerks update – Discussed in item 15a.

ii. Cllr Bolton to write meeting report for Newsletter – The Clerk to send draft minutes in good time for the publication of the newsletter is 15/3.

f. Infrastructure including Footpaths and Village Maintenance

i. Village Hall Flooding As per agenda item 7a i

ii. Cumbrian Clock Company update - Work to start 21 – 28th March 2022.

iii. Bridge repairs update Ongoing, awaiting fine weather.

iv. Council assets (repairs and replacement) As per agenda item 7 a ii and 8f.

v. Tree Charter Update – As per agenda item f vii.

vi. Work on noticeboard and bench by lengthsman – The cost of £200 is to be paid directly from the PC not the Lengthsmans budget.

viii. Platinum Jubilee – Committee and activities – Cllr Bolton to inform the Events Committee that Cllr Hiorns will join the committee as a Cllr representative. The Village Hall Committee are celebrating 100-year anniversary of the Hall and are organising a street party for the jubilee. Every child in the parish will receive a jubilee crown (commemorative coin). Discussion took place regarding the planting of a tree/trees to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. Cllr Struthers to contact a tree specialist to source an appropriate tree/s. The public can email Cllr Bolton with suggestions for tree planting to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. Cllr Bolton to investigate display boards showing a the figure of eight walk from 'Walks around Wellesbourne and surrounding villages' walking guide of Ashorne and Newbold Pacey with 'snippets' of information about the two villages.

Cllr Bolton proposed that an application for a grant be made to WALC for the purchase of the display boards to be made.

Proposed Cllr Bolton

Seconded Cllr Hiorns

All in Favour

viii. Laptop software renewal etc – see agenda item 9b.

g) Welcome Pack Committee – no update

h) Oakley Woods – report from Judy Cooper in last January's edition of the Village Hut News

i) Planning

i. Parish Plan Update – The last Parish Plan was carried out in 06/2006 and needs updating. Cllr Bolton had asked Jim Thornton & Andrew Marshall if they would like to be involved and they have both agreed. Jim suggested that a team of 4 would be good to go forward with this project. Cllr Bolton is in the process of finding 2 more suitable candidates for this team.

ii. Planning applications – 21/04106 Content Cottage – comments had been submitted to SDC.

iii. - 22/00088 Tree at Hob House – comments had been submitted to SDC.

iv. – 22/00003/FUL Elm Farm Solar Park – Cllr Wright proposed the following wording reply:

While the Parish Council generally supports Solar Farm provision, it considers this application totally inappropriate in both scale, design and location. The proposed site sits above the low valley land of Wellesbourne village and directly adjacent to the very busy B4087 road emitting visual distraction resulting from panel glare.

Located adjacent to the Feldon Special Landscape Area, The SDC "Renewable Energy Landscape Sensitivity Study" states 'development sites should be generally fairly small on flat land screened by hedges and trees to avoid adverse effects on the topography and landscape pattern. Parish Council maintain this application is in conflict and fails to meet the principles of the study, will cause extreme demonstrable harm to the visual amenity of the area, and for the reasons given records 'Total Objection' to the proposals of Application 22/00003/FUL Elm Farm Solar Farm.'

Proposed Cllr Wright **Seconded** Cllr Bolton **All in Favour**

j. Human Resources – see item 15a

k. Training –

i. Cllr Bolton and Cllr Struthers to attend Climate Change day conference on 30/3. Cllr Struthers has attended: 1. Understanding Governance

2. Digital mapping for Parish Councils

3. Fundamentals for Councillors

11) ISSUES RAISED BY COUNCILLORS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS – Proposal to declare a 'Climate Change Emergency Declaration' by Parish Council.

12) RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN Awaiting applications.

13) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

4th May 2022 at 19.30, Ashorne Village Hall. Locum Clerk agreed to attend if new clerk has not been recruited. Note 3 meetings in total.

14) CLOSURE OF THE MEETING TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Cllr Bolton closed the meeting at 21.43

15) PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL Recruitment of Clerk ongoing.

Signed Chairman.....

Date 4th May 2022