

TITLEY & DISTRICT GROUP PARISH COUNCIL
DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON
THURSDAY 23RD JANUARY 2024, 7.30 PM
AT STAUNTON ON ARROW VILLAGE HALL

Present: Cllrs R Edwards (Chairman), N Lloyd, J Mitchell, N Davies, C Janson, R Sankey
Ward Cllr Phillips

In Attendance: Parish Clerk R Jones and 7 members of public

1. Apologies Of Absence
None

2. Declaration Of Interest
Cllr Sankey - planning application no: 233578

3. Approval Of Minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 14th November 2023
The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman

4. Receive Comments From

• Ward Cllr Phillips

- Cllr Phillips January update was discussed and noted.
- Details of the planning application for the proposed solar farm development will be included in his February update.
- The great hole at the Rodd on the B4355 has reappeared.
- Stansbatch Shoot – Cllr Phillips informed the meeting that the owners of Stansbatch Shoot have an agreement with the Forestry Commission regarding shooting.
- Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) has launched a public consultation exercise on services resource review proposals. The consultation closes on 4th March 2024.

5. Discussion – Solar Farm Development (90 acres) At Oatcroft Farm, Titley – Planning Application No: 233578

It was noted that the yellow Planning Notices, notifying residents of this application had not yet been put up by the Planning Officer. The date to make comments, will be 21 days from the date the notices are put up. Ward Cllr Phillips will circulate this date, in his February update.

Cllr Sankey (the owner of the above land), summarised his reasons for going ahead with Green Switch Capital, for a solar farm development on his land for 40 years.

The Chairman (Cllr Edwards) went through the notes taken at the public meeting held on 16th January with Green Switch Capital.

The meeting was opened for questions and comments and the following points were noted:

- The objections raised was the visibility and landscape due to the height and size of the proposed site, glint and glare, B4355 entrance and Eywood Lane, screening around the site.
- One resident was concerned that if this large application was approved, it would open the doors for others to 'jump on the bandwagon'
- TG11 (NDP) a survey showed that majority of residents were against large scale solar farm developments.
- Beech Wood was discussed as it is used in the planning application to screen/mask part of the site, but as this is a commercial softwood plantation and has already been thinned, the next step will be a clear fell which will expose the site making it visible to many areas. It was noted that replanting would take years to grow.

- If Beech Wood is clear fell, it will harm the setting of the Grade II Listed Eywood Park and gardens.
- Due to the elevation of the site, concerns were raised regarding Glint and Glare, as it will be seen from many areas.
- The issue of visibility was of great importance, given that the site lacks screening from certain areas. Moreover, the proposed site's land topography would allow it to be visible not only locally but also from several miles away.
- The southern side of the site lacks screening, making it easily visible to the residents living along the B4355.
- The sites size and height will make it visible not only from nearby footpaths but also from a considerable distance. The visibility has the potential to deter tourists, thereby posing a threat to the local economy.
- One of the local residents currently offers holiday accommodation in the area and visitors frequently comment about the stunning surroundings and views. If this application is approved, this will change.
- One resident commented that this application went against the NDP.
- It was noted that if the application is approved, Green Switch Capital will give a community contribution each year for 40 years.

The Chairman asked Cllr Sankey to leave the meeting, whilst the Councillors discussed his application.

5.1. **Parish Councillors Discussion On Planning Application 233578 (Solar Farm Development At Oatcroft Farm, Titley**

The Councillors convened to deliberate on the above application, as well as the comments from the Parish Council, which are to be forwarded to Herefordshire Council.

The following points were noted:

- Issues raised – visibility/landscape due to the height of the site, screening of the site, access using Eywood Lane, junction with the B4355, glint and glare.
- The application was discussed and referenced to the NDP.

The following points were made by Councillors:

- It is not diversification
- It will look like an industrial site or power station on top of a hill at Titley.
- Water run off was a concern
- Could there be any radiation created around the safety zone of the site?
- A discussion took place regarding farming and that there are grants available to farmers, with new options being added.
- It was agreed that solar panels are needed for renewable energy, but this site is not suitable
- Solar panels are ideally suited to be installed on the roofs of industrial buildings, car parks, and residential properties.

Cllr Edwards read out the following from the NDP:

TG11 -

'Renewable Energy

Development proposals for renewable energy generation will be supported where it is shown that the individual and cumulative impacts on the landscape, natural and historic environment, amenity and highway safety and capacity are or can be made acceptable. Community-led renewable energy proposals where benefits can be demonstrated are encouraged'.

- TG 13

'Landscape

Development proposals should protect and enhance the valued landscape by designing, siting and locating development in ways that secure a positive landscape and visual impact and where harm to the landscape cannot be avoided, it must be fully mitigated through sympathetic landscape planting'.

The Councillors commented that this proposal goes against the policies of the NDP and it may make a precedent for more similar sites. It would be better suited on an industrial estate and makes no sense to sacrifice good farmland. Beech Wood was discussed and commented that the trees are mature and would not stand for 40 years, therefore it would not be a secure screening for the site. It was suggested that the Forestry Commission should be contacted for their views on Beech Wood being used as screening. If Beech Wood is felled, it would be visible and have a huge impact on Eyewood Park and contrary to the NDP (TG15 – Historic Environment). It was noted that some residential properties along the B4355 will have a high level of visibility.

It was commented that if this site is approved, a few areas it will be clearly visible from would be Ladylift, Bredenbury, Pembridge, Penrhos, Ivington Hill

Highway issues were discussed further, especially with regards to the construction traffic.

It was agreed that this application does not comply with the policies of the NDP.

It was therefore agreed for Cllr Edwards to draft a response to Herefordshire Council, to be circulated around Councillors, except Cllr Sankey, for their comments.

- **Parish Councillors**

No comments

- **Local Residents**

The local residents had raised their concerns in minute 5.

- **West Mercia Police**

. No comments

6. Co-option Of Councillor (Staunton On Arrow)

A resident from Staunton On Arrow expressed their interest in the vacant Councillor position. Cllr Edwards agreed to contact him.

7. Planning Matters

7.1 The following planning matters were discussed and noted:

- **192515 – Balance Farm, Titley – Re-consultation – amended** application for approval of reserved matters following outline approval – (application no: 160581 – proposed site for the erection of 5 no four bedroom dwellings) – **Valid**
It was noted that this application went before the Planning Committee and was deferred for more discussions on the plans for the site. (Parish Council to send invitation to the agent, to discuss Mrs Vaughans revised plans).
- **232743 – Rodd Court, The Rodd** – the provision of one treehouse and one temporary cabin with associated access parking and landscaping for the purposes of tourists – **Withdrawn**
- **233231 – Staunton Cottage, Staunton On Arrow** – proposed annexe, Ancillary to Staunton Cottage – **Valid**
- **233578 – Land at Oatcroft Farm, north of Eyewood Road, Titley, Kington, HR5 3RU** - Proposed construction of a 30MW Solar Farm for a temporary period of 40 years, including solar photovoltaic arrays, string inverters, transformer stations, a control building, a DNO substation compound, a DNO room, a spares container, a customer substation, perimeter and palisade fencing, internal and external access roads, swales (SuDS) and associated soft landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. – **Valid**
- **233700 – Rodd Court, The Rodd, Presteigne** - Proposed development includes the provision of one temporary cabin with associated access, parking and landscaping for the purposes of tourist accommodation.
Valid

7.2 Open Meeting – Planning Application 233578 – Proposed Solar Farm – Land At Oatcroft, Titley

This was discussed under Minute 5.

7.3 Update – Neighbourhood Development Plan

Herefordshire Council confirmed that the NDP has been adopted.

7.4 Response To Landowner And Agent Regarding Outline Planning – Application Number 192515 – Balance Farm, Titley

The Agent informed the Clerk that he was waiting for instructions from Mrs Vaughan.

8. 8.1 Finance

To receive Clerk's report and approve finances (ex VAT)

- **Clerks Financial statement to 31st December 2023**

The current account balance as at 31st December 2023 was £21,646.39

The expenditure and budget sheets were **approved**.

- **The following payments (Ex VAT) were APPROVED:**

- Clerks salary for November/December as previously agreed by the Parish Council (Chq 101101)

HMRC	Tax due Oct – Dec 2023	£224.60	No VAT
J & J Synnock & Sons	Supply of post-crete	£392.04	+ VAT
Herefordshire Council	Election Costs for 4/5/23	£479.21	No VAT
I.C.O	Data Protection Fee	£40.00	No VAT

9. Lengthsman

9.1 Update – Drive Around With Paul Hunter Locality Steward (Balfour Beatty)

Cllr Edwards (Staunton), Cllr Lloyd (Titley), Cllr Davies (Knill) drove around the parishes with Paul Hunter, who noted any issues raised.

It was noted that despite previous reports, three blocked gulleys along the Stansbatch road (U91607) have not yet been cleared.

Cllr N Lloyd commented that water was still running down Green Lane (U91600)

Clerk to remind Paul Hunter about the blocked gulleys and issue raised on the drive around.

9.2 Annual Inspection Of U91607 Road By Balfour Beatty

The Chairman commented that the Stansbatch road (U91607) is only inspected once a year. Considering the significant traffic volume on this road, the Parish Council should write to Balfour Beatty and the Highways Department, requesting an upgrade in the inspection frequency to more than once a year.

9.3 Expression Of Interest Form 2024/25

It was agreed to submit an Expression Of Interest form for 2024/25.

10. Parish Issues

10.1 Incident With School Bus – Shawl Corner

Simon Hobbs (HC Highways Accident & Safety Manager) emailed the Clerk to inform her that he would speak with management regarding fixing a new sign to the existing one. He will be in contact once he has more details.

It was noted that Mr Morgan had submitted a quote to cut the roadside hedge back.

It was agreed to postpone the decision on the roadside hedge, until Simon Hobbs returns with the decision on the new signage.

10.2 Diverting Footpath at Stansbatch – Mr J Weymouth

There was no update

10.3 The Great Collaboration

Cllr Janson, Edwards and Mitchell attended a course in November, which was very well presented. Cllr Janson agreed to do an information sheet about the course, which could be circulated around the parish. (ways to be circulate it, to be discussed)

10.4 Thermal Imaging Camera

The use of the thermal imaging camera was discussed and noted. Suggested ways to advertise it around the parish was on notice boards/parish website/whatsApp group.

10.5 Airband – Staunton On Arrow Village Hall – update

Staunton And Titley Village halls have been connected.
Knill is being connected.

10.6 Flooding Issues

It was noted that no houses were flooded in the parish.

11. Correspondence

Herefordshire Fire and Rescue Service – Public Consultation (ending 4/3/24)

Cllr Davies agreed to complete the consultation.

12. Date And Place Of Next Meeting

Tuesday 12th March - 7.30pm at Titley Village Hall

Meeting closed 9.55 pm

SIGNED (Chairman) **DATE**