



ALDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Planning Committee** meeting held on Monday 15th February 2021 at 2.30pm using video conferencing using ['Zoom' meeting website](#) -- meeting ID:82871572984

Present: Cllrs M Cherry (Chairman), E Samuelson, J Lefton, A Rubinson and G Taylor (co-opted member).

Officer: P Paley (Planning Officer)

There were also 42 members of the public.

351. Apologies for absence

An apology was received from Cllr S Khawaja

352. Declarations of interest on any item on the Agenda.

a) Disclosable pecuniary interests they or their spouse/partner have in any matter which is to be considered at this meeting.

None.

b) Members must also declare any other pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests they have in any matter to be considered at this meeting.

Cllr A Rubinson declared a non pecuniary interest in planning application number, 21/0050/FULEI, Land North Of Butterfly Lane, Land Surrounding Hilfield Farm And Land West Of Hilfield Lane Aldenham Hertfordshire as she is involved with a local action group formed to oppose the application.

353. To confirm the Minutes and appendices of the meeting held on 1st February 2021.

The minutes were confirmed and signed by Cllr M Cherry as a true record of that meeting.

354. To adjourn the meeting for members of the public to address the Committee (if any) in accordance with Standing Order 1 d.

Cllr M Cherry suspended standing orders and invited the members of the public to speak.

Three members of the public spoke regarding planning application number 21/0050/FULEI, Land North Of Butterfly Lane, Land Surrounding Hilfield Farm And Land West Of Hilfield Lane Aldenham (Renewable energy generating station.)

Twenty-five members of the public chose to observe.

The members of the public were thanked and standing orders were resumed.



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355. To receive a report from the planning consultant regarding planning application number 21/0050/FULEI and to decide the response to send to Hertsmere Borough Council: -

Location: - Land North Of Butterfly Lane, Land Surrounding Hilfield Farm And Land West Of Hilfield Lane Aldenham Hertfordshire.

Proposals: - Installation of renewable led 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.

Cllr M Cherry opened the discussion by acknowledging the three main key issues that emerged from the feedback received from members of the public: -

- i) The negative impact it would have on public rights of way.
- ii) The proposal would not be a form of diversification of the rural economy and no benefit to it.
- iii) There are no special circumstances to justify this proposal in the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Members also discussed the report commissioned following the planning committee meeting on 1st February from a planning consultant. The report reviewed the proposals in the planning application. This report will form part of the submission to Hertsmere Borough Council planning department to support the recommendations of Aldenham Parish Council. It was then

Resolved

a) That a summary of the points raised in the report plus other factors is sent to HertsmereBC planning department.

b) That the consultants report is sent to HertsmereBC planning dept as it is referenced in the comments.

c) That the consultants report is put on the website.

The objections of the Planning Committee are given in the appendix 1 at the end of the minutes.

356. For information: Planning Applications of the following type: - Certificate of Lawful Development (Existing) CLE, Certificate of Lawful Development (Proposed) CLP and Listed Building Consent LBC.

21/0158/PD42 52 Links Drive

Proposal: - Single storey rear extension. Depth - 8m, Height - 3m, Eaves 3m



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21/0151/LBC Glebe House Church Lane Aldenham Watford

Proposal: -Replacement of the existing single glazed units in the ground floor bay window with slim profile double glazed units (Application for Listed Building Consent).

These were noted.

357. Planning decisions by Hertsmere Borough Council

The following applications were approved by Hertsmere Borough Council: -
20/2072/HSE 15 Williams Way (APC – No objection with comment)
20/2023/FUL Bio Products Laboratory, Dagger Lane, Elstree (APC – No objection with conditions)
20/2043/HSE 60 The Ridgeway (APC – No objection with concerns)
20/2018/HSE Roundbush House, Round Bush Lane, Aldenham, Watford (APC – No objection with comment)
20/2066/FUL Site At Scrubbitts Wood, Gills Hill (APC – No comment)

The following application has gone to appeal: -
20/0193/FUL Land Surrounding Kemprow Farm, Kemprow, Aldenham (APC – Query and comments)

358. Date of next meeting

The next Planning Committee meeting will commence at 2.30pm on Monday 1st March 2021.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 4.00pm.

Chairman..... Date.....

359. Planning Applications

21/0139/HSE 1 Sidney Cottages, Aldenham Road. Elstree

Proposal: - Construction of two storey rear extension, single storey side extension and alterations to fenestration.

No objection.

21/0140/HSE 2 Sidney Cottages Aldenham Road Elstree

Proposal: - Construction of two storey rear extension, single storey side extension and alterations to fenestration.

No objection

21/0165/HSE 28 Shenley Hill



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Proposal: - Installation of front boundary automated sliding gates with associated metal framing and timber closed boarded acoustic fencing with associated landscaping and parking.

Object: -

The proposed gates are too high and are not set back an adequate distance from the road. This a busy main road and there should be enough space for a car to pull off the road safely in front of the gates. These features would be in breach of the Hertsmeare Planning and Design Guide E para. 7, k: -

'The installation of high security gates can create a sense of segregation, can increase fear and perception of crime and will be resisted by the Council. Where planning permission is granted exceptionally for gates because of the particular circumstances of an individual property, they should be set back from the street, modest in scale, well screened, capable of closing quietly and should not dominate the street scene in any way. The same principles will apply to piers, columns and walls adjoining the gates'.

Also, members agreed that vegetation is needed at the front of the fencing to keep the verdant nature of the road. This would be in line with the Radlett Neighbourhood Plan HD3.2, d: -

'Spaces in front of homes shall enhance and improve the verdant character of the local streetscape.'

21/0189/FUL Bhaktivedanta Manor Dharam Marg Hilfield Lane Aldenham

Proposal: - Construction of a gatehouse to include associated hard landscaping

No objection.

21/0209/HSE 24 The Grove

Proposal: - Construction of a part single/part two storey rear extension following demolition of existing rear extension.

Members had no objection subject to the parking standards being met for the increased size of the house.

21/0217/FUL Battlers Green Farm Common Lane

Proposal: - Change of use from Class E office to Class F.1 learning centre (Unit 21D) and Class E physiotherapy centre (Unit 20B & Unit 20C).

No objection.

21/0210/HSE 37 Battlers Green Drive

Proposal: - Demolition of existing side outbuilding and construction of part single, part two storey rear extension and two storey side extension to include removal of brick flue, insertion of 4 x roof lights, new front entrance canopy and alterations to fenestration.



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Object: -

a) The proposal does not comply with the two metre (to the boundary rule). This would not comply with policy HD5, para e, of the Radlett Design Code from the emerging Radlett

Neighbourhood Plan: -

'Spacing between the building and boundary shall be no less than 1m at ground floor level and a minimum of 2m for extensions which are 2 or more storeys'

Likewise, the boundary spacing would not accord with the guidelines set out in section 4j and k of the Hertsmere Planning and Design Guide E: -

'Proposals in these areas should ensure that two storey side extensions should be located a minimum of 2 metres away from the side boundary – regardless of the position of any existing ground floor extension or garage to be replaced.'

b) The proposed extension will breach the 45-degree angle rule. This does not comply with Section 1, b of the Hertsmere Planning and Design Guide E.

'Rear extensions should be set comfortably within the line drawn at 45 degrees from the nearest edge of the neighbouring front or rear facing windows.'

c) Members agreed that the extension could be improved, visually, by a 'set in'. Also, the style of fenestration would not be in keeping with neighbouring properties. It would not therefore comply with SADM30 of the Hertsmere Site Allocations and Development Plan,

'Development which complies with the policies in this Plan will be permitted provided it:

(iii) results in a high quality design.

In order to achieve a high quality design, a development must:

(i) respect, enhance or improve the visual amenity of the area by virtue of its scale, mass, bulk, height, urban form;'

Planning application at Luton Airport: -

Application number 21/00031/VARCON

Location: - London Luton Airport Way Luton

Proposal: - Variation of Conditions 8 (passenger throughput cap), 10 (noise contours), 22 (car parking management), 24 (travel plan) and 28 (approved plans and documents) to Planning Permission 15/00950/VARCON (dated 13th October 2017) to accommodate 19 million passengers per annum and to amend the day and night noise contours.

Members agreed that this is a highly technical consultation.



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Members would be concerned if there is an increase in noise over Radlett at night, if more night flights are permitted, and also in the day.

The increase in passengers would also result in a rise in numbers of rail passengers travelling to the airport. Members would question whether trains would need upgrading and whether there would be an increase in rail movements.

Members also questioned where these proposals fit in to meeting the zero carbon target.

We strongly object to this application. As part of our consideration of this application we have had the input and assistance of a planning consultant who has analysed the application. The report from David Lane of DLA dated February 2021, is attached as part of our objection.

In summary the following are identified as grounds for refusal:

1. **Impact on Public Rights of Way.** The proposal will have an undue impact on the users of the Public Rights of Way across the site in question. Point 7.0 (Issue no 2) in the attached report.
2. **The proposals will not aid farm diversification and the rural economy.** This is detailed in section 8.0 (issue 3) of the attached report. The HBC site allocation and development plan 2016 precedes the NPPF by 3 years. Section 8 provides commentary on the soil classification and highlights that the land could be Grade 1 without the soil wetness factor. This could presumably be achieved with better drainage systems. It is also worth pointing out that the applicant hasn't tested the soil in accordance with defra guidelines (1 per hectare not 1 per 4 hectares as the applicant has done). Local knowledge of the intensive level and type of crops grown on large areas of the site would indicate significant areas are at least a Grade 3a classification. As the consultant's report highlights, much land in Hertsmere falls into Grade 3 and land in Grade 3b can be considered to be of moderate sensitivity and a valuable resource.
 - The proposal would reduce the ability of the site to grow crops and over such a large site the proposal would appear to be arable/crop displacement rather than farm diversification.
 - The impact of the proposals will be negligible on the rural economy. 2 maintenance visits per month are not going to generate any benefit.
 - The soil health of the land could be improved by other methods, without the intervening development of the site as a solar power plant.
3. **Inappropriate development in the Metropolitan Green Belt which is not outweighed by other factors.** Section 9 of the attached report highlights why this is so. The applicant admits that the development is inappropriate development. It is worth highlighting the following points:
 - the proposals including 3300 cu.m of buildings, combined with the security fencing of 2.2m must have a substantial impact on and cause significant harm to the openness by reason of its spatial aspect and the industrial nature of the proposed buildings. Consequently, the land would not be kept permanently open.
 - The green belt serves 5 purposes and the land in question scores highly in 'assisting in preventing neighbouring towns from merging' and assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The relatively high scores for these factors is indicative of the substantial harm the proposed development would cause.
 - Great emphasis is placed on the theoretical amount of renewable electricity generated in Hertsmere. Most renewable electricity is wind driven and there

is nothing in government policy that requires local planning authorities to be self-supporting in energy production.

- Lack of alternative sites is due to the search being driven by a desire to be within 5km of the Elstree substation is a weak argument. A UK wide search would be entirely appropriate for electricity generation and so little weight can be given to this argument.
- Temporary and reversible impacts is covered by the relevant PPG which recognises that duration of a development and its remediability is a factor to be taken into account. The applicant refers to 'operational' years which means the 35 years is a minimum. **This cannot be considered temporary.**
- Other considerations do not outweigh the totality of the harm caused by the proposals. **Very Special circumstances do not exist and so the application should be refused permission.**

Additional points raised by APC

1. Public consultation - this has been totally inadequate and disingenuous. To move a significant application such as this during the Covid pandemic when the public cannot be fully and properly engaged is totally unreasonable and taking advantage of the situation. Zoom presentations such as that given to APC lacked detail on the installation and impact on PRow. Many of the public will have been unable to access such meetings even if they knew about them. One public Zoom presentation was insufficient especially when much of the Parish was not made aware. The applicant advises it dropped leaflets to 500 households. Strangely none of these were to residents of Radlett, not even those backing onto fields overlooking the site. Presumably this was to avoid attention being drawn to the proposals and limiting public dissent. This application should have waited until public meeting could be held and the wider public engaged. As such very little weight can be given to the quantum of feedback from such limited public consultation. The level of objections generated to date by the application is a better indication of public feeling and no doubt with proper public engagement the level of public dissent will be much greater

2. It is clear from various research that solar panels in the UK climate are an inefficient way to produce electricity and presumably why the UK government has placed emphasis on wind power. The government paper produced in November 2020 titled 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution' makes no mention of the use of solar power. Point 9 covers 'Protecting our natural landscapes' and Point 10 'Green Finance and Innovation', highlights ten priority initiatives for the new net zero fund to invest in which does not include solar.

[Website for government 10 POINT PLAN BOOKLET.pdf](#)

The applicant states in the environmental statement (non-technical) 3.3 The Proposed Development "It proposes the use of the best available technology, delivering greater levels of solar efficiency by utilising bifacial panels which increase continuous electrical productivity by 4% when compared to traditional monofacial systems".

However, this application uses fixed panels without tracking which is cheaper and **is not the best technology.** The most efficient capture of solar energy is

dependent on the solar panel tilt to be perpendicular to the sun at all times. Fixed systems fail to achieve this due to the shifting positioning of the sun at different times of the day and per season.

[Website link to information on solar panels](#) panels

3. Footpaths and Bridleways. We have noticed that not all footpaths have been included in the proposals. For example, the historically established route across field 12 has been omitted, no doubt so the whole field can be covered in panels. This is a well-established route used by many locals.
4. Visual impact seems to have been assessed from only 12 points over the 300 acres. This is totally inadequate and has excluded some key vantage points, for example along the heavily used Footpath 17 leading from Batlers Farm to Watling street.
5. The impact of noise from plant and equipment will be significant to both walkers and wildlife. The inverter/transformer stations distributed around the fields do not seem to be designed to prevent noise emissions.
6. The impact on wildlife has been referred to but it doesn't take into account larger mammals such as foxes/muntjac deer whose ability to roam will be significantly affected. The security fencing as shown on the plans would not allow anything other than small creatures such as mice to pass through. The plans mention larger entrances being made in the fencing as required but an inadequate provision.
7. In assessing the environmental benefits of solar panels, the life cycle should be looked from how and where they are manufactured to the cost and impact of decommissioning.
8. The prospect of the land be returned to agricultural use after a minimum of 35 years will be negligible. Who will enforce or recall such a planning condition, the costs of decommissioning will most likely far outweigh future income flows from growing crops. In effect building this solar power plant will result in 300 acres of green belt being turned into industrial land.
9. The proposals do not consider the fact that a large area of land between Watling street and common lane is currently being considered by Hertsmere for land allocation to housing. The proposal known as R2 will mean further green belt being swallowed up alongside this scheme.
10. The Solar Plant will have a negative effect on the five Schools which surround this green belt land. In particular, The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys School, The Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls and Aldenham School all of which use this open space for recreation including the likes of cross-country and Combined Cadet Force activities. The possible continuous hum from the equipment and heat that the solar panels would generate could also be considerable for the many thousands of children that attend these Schools. Furthermore, the fact that the visual impact will change so dramatically from the

openness of the green belt which it is now, to what amounts to a fenced industrial site, is unacceptable.

11. The proposals are in breach of the Radlett neighbourhood plan policy GA1 Walking and Cycling Networks as 'Development that reduces the quantity, functionality and/or quality of walking and cycling networks would not be supported'.

12. The Lead local flood authority comments say that the submitted flood report does not comply with the PPG (as revised 6 April 2015) to the NPPF, and there are potentially many factors that need to be looked into in order to minimise flooding. In order to overcome an objection, the applicant should have to deal with the points the Sustainable Drainage Officer has made, for proper assessment. It mentions water displacement and surface water overflow, and how the information in the application is lacking and could affect flooding. There is a blatant omission of number of posts, CCTV cameras & road lengths on the site and calculations regarding these and the volume of the substances used to support them which would affect flooding on & around the site. The volume of concrete for one CCTV support is 60X45xx45 cm³. From a chart obtained from Peter Elms from Alpaca, the total length of internal roads on site will be 3375.35m approx. 2 miles. From drawing Hf5.0 we can work out the maximum volume to be excavated - W 3.5-6m x D .8m x L 3375.35m =16,200 m³, which is larger than 6 Olympic swimming pools. This soil will be excavated, disposed of and replaced by concrete, aggregate and geotextile. This fact alone will have an effect on water displacement, drainage and overflow.

13. Elstree Green have applied to the National Grid for not only 49.9MW in 2025 but a further 7.1MW in 2027 showing the cumulative total capacity to be 57MW. There are screen shots and links below showing this.

[Website link to National Grid register](#) register

Presumably this because the applicant does not want the application to go straight the Secretary of State. Where will the addition of 7MW be or will it be in a new field, and where is that? This needs to be answered? This approach compounds the disingenuous nature of the application.

14. With this application for inappropriate development in the Green Belt, clearly not meeting the high levels of justification required to show the 'very special circumstances' needed to develop such a scheme in the Greenbelt; Hertsmere must not allow this scheme to proceed. If they do it will breach their and government policies and create precedent for the rest of the Metropolitan Green Belt and elsewhere to be destroyed in a similar manner.