

Spexhall Parish Council

An Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council was held at the Village Hall, Spexhall on Monday, August 21st 2023 at 7-30pm.

Minutes:

Present:

Cllr. L. LeLean (Chair); Cllr. A. Coles (Vice-Chair); Cllr. N. Roper; Cllr. L. Sharman and Cllr. C. Thompson:

Paul Widdowson (Clerk); one parishioner and one observer:

1) Apologies:

Councillors accepted the apologies of Cllr. D. Carter:

2) To receive Declarations of Interest and confirm all Members have reviewed their Declaration of Interest Forms: Councillors to declare any Pecuniary or Non-Pecuniary Interests. Members may subsequently declare an interest at any point in the meeting:

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3) Requests for dispensations:

There were no requests for dispensations.

4) Public Session: Members of the public have fifteen minutes to ask questions.

There were no questions from the members of the public.

5) Planning Matters:

Proposal: *Temporary ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm with battery energy storage; along with continued agricultural use, ancillary infrastructure, security fencing, landscaping provision, ecological enhancements and associated works.*

Address: *Land To The North Of Gray's Lane, Wissett, Halesworth, Suffolk.*

Ref: *DC/22/3313/FUL*

The Chair, Cllr. L. LeLean, reminded Councillors that they must come to the meeting with an open mind over the items on the agenda.

The Chair allowed a parishioner to go through a submission to the Council and to give their view on the planning application.

The Councillors discussed the planning application in much detail and agreed the following second response of Spexhall Parish Council to the Planning Application DC 22 3313 FUL.

The Parish Council refuses this planning application.

It has been noted that the objections raised by the Parish Council's previous submission have not been addressed by the developer. It has also been noted that the new planning application has still not addressed these concerns. In view of this, the Parish Council lists below the objections to the revised planning application.

1) The revised application appears to propose an 87.5% increase in the energy capacity of the BESS (from 40MWh to 75MWh); There are very serious concerns regarding the 'thermal runaway' fire risks associated with the lithium-ion battery storage system:

In the revised application, the developer has still failed completely to provide a 'suitable and sufficient' Fire Risk Assessment as required by (Criminal) Law.

The developer has submitted a revised Fire Safety Management Plan which, 12 months on from the previous 'plan', identifies itself in its opening paragraph as a 'discussion document' and cannot therefore be a robust plan.

The developer has given negligible consideration to the letter from Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service dated 18th January 2023 and no consideration to date of the recently released National Fire Chiefs Council 'Grid Scale BESS Guidance' document.

The developer has consistently played down residents' concerns regarding such fire risks at Public Meetings and in its documents.

Such fires emit gases toxic to human and animal life.

Such fires result in heavily contaminated soil especially by copper oxides and lithium compounds.

There is no water available on or near the proposed site, Halesworth Fire Station is unmanned and those at Bungay and Beccles are 22 minutes away.

2) There are deep concerns regarding the noise that the site would generate:

East Suffolk Council Environmental Protection (EP) team still express concerns regarding the quality of the Noise Impact Assessment commissioned by the developer.

The site is in an area of tranquillity that has to be experienced to be believed.

Site noise, especially at night, will affect residents' quality of life.

3) Residents in close proximity to the proposed site have serious concerns regarding the 'glint and glare' aspect of the Photo Voltaic (PV) panels:

The developers' commissioned study accepts that '51 out of 90 dwellings within a 1km ring would be subject to geometrically possible solar reflection'.

4) The loss of amenity:

Residents and Tourists alike value the Grays Lane area for its tranquillity and varied wildlife.

Local horse riders, dog-walkers, cyclists and ramblers value the area for those same reasons.

Proposer: Cllr. N. Roper:

Seconder: Cllr. A. Coles:

The Meeting closed at 9-03pm.