

THRILOW PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an Extraordinary Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 17th September 2014 at Thriplow Village Hall at 7.30 pm

Present

Councillors: Jane Gough (Chairman), David Easthope, Derek Pinner, Barbara Pointon, David Rhodes, Terry Smith

District/ County

Councillor:

Clerk: Martyn Corbet

Also Present: Aly Anderson, Geoff Axe, Mark Brogan, Sarah Clarkson, Edward Connolly, Paul Earnshaw, Simon Everett, Jack Lindop, Edward Smith, Nigel Smith, Robert Smith, Melissa Tayabali, Jeannette Tomlinson, George Turner, David Woolstan

1. Apologies for Absence:

There were apologies for absence from Cllrs Russell

Cllr Gough introduced representatives of the land owners who were present to assist with any queries raised.

The meeting was closed to allow members of the public to make their points about the further application submitted in respect of this development dated the _____ 2014. The original application having been discussed at the meeting held on the 28th November 2013 subsequently amended and then withdrawn. Once this had occurred the meeting resumed.

2. Consideration of the Parish Council's response to application S/1687/F/14 – erection of a Solar Farm on land to the east of Church Street

After hearing the comments of the members of the public. The Parish Council having previously considered the documents filed in support of the amended application. The Parish Council decided to recommend approval of the application by a majority of 3 to 2. Comments made were as follows:

One councillor was not against the application. She did not find it to be offensive. It does mean that there will be no houses on the site for the next 25 years. She believes there is more noise from the A505 and other roads than there will be from the site. She also took note that of the 800+ eligible to attend the meeting only some 12 had come along. She felt that there was not a big enough number present to persuade her of a majority against the project and voted to recommend acceptance.

Another councillor said that he generally supported the principle of solar farms and found the arguments opposing it unconvincing. He voted to recommend acceptance provided there is a provision for a community benefit.

Another councillor agreed that the proposal was not too offensive. The part of the proposal south of The Drift would only be visible from Heathfield. It will be difficult to see anything from the village north of The Drift. He is in favour of the principle of solar farms and recognises the need for renewable energy. They are the best way of getting it. He is opposed to wind farms. Solar farms blend in much better. After 25 years the area will revert to agricultural land. He voted to recommend acceptance.

Another councillor was against the proposal and voted not to recommend acceptance. The

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area is Green Belt land and valuable as such. These spaces are needed and should be kept. Both settled parts of the parish look out onto Green Belt land Thriplow looks out onto the land and Heathfield backs onto it.

The remaining councillor said that he has not changed his mind since the last meeting to discuss the previous proposal. He said that in his opinion the proposal will not enhance the area by making it more attractive or accessible. The proposal cannot improve it. He is also concerned about what happens at the end of the life of the development and the return of the land to its present state. He would be happier if there was a guarantee of this by way of a Sinking Fund. The proposed hedges would not screen the development for at least 8 years. Why is a hawthorn hedge proposed? He would like a more suitable hedge bearing in mind the elevation. He cannot see a solar farm would improve and have a positive impact upon the area. The Green Belt is there to protect the area.

Thriplow Parish Council decided by 3 to 2 to recommend acceptance of the proposal.

There being no further business, the chairman thanked everyone for attending and the meeting ended at 9.25 pm.

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Jane Gough
Chairman

Date: