**Cotesbach Parish Council**

**Minutes of Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 13th October 2020**

**The The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations came into force on 4th April 2020. Accordingly, due to the current situation, this meeting was held remotely over zoom and phone.**

1. **Members Present**

 Cllr Ed Hunt, Chair, (EH), Cllr Margaret Wild (MW), Cllr Charlie Farley (CF), Patricia Nunn (PN), Parish Clerk and DCllr J Bateman (JB).

 **Members of the Public in attendance**: 2 Parishioners.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

 Apologies received County Cllr Blake Pain (BP) which were accepted.

1. **Discussion on Planning Application for Solar Farm at Northfield House Farm, Cotesbach – 20/01289/FUL**

EH asked the following questions of JB:

**What does Local Plan say about a solar farm application?**

**JB** - the Local Plan is supportive of renewable energy (Chapter 10), but applications must comply with no noise, reduced visual impact, reduced environmental impact, loss of green space and be considered in conjunction with other industrial schemes in the area. Also, that when finished, the area will be restored to what it was before.

**What is the Planning Officer’s stance on this application?**

**JB** - The Case Officer will be guided by the Local Plan but cannot determine what his decision will be.

The site is not overlooked and so has a low level open aspect good for receiving the sun. There will not be any noise and the application does include measures to reduce the environmental impact on the area, although that will be up to the Environmental Agency to report on. Only one property overlooks the site which is unfortunate for the owners and they need to lodge their objections if they wish. No objections have been received by the Case Officer as yet.

**Would you expect the DC to be supportive of the Planning Application?**

**JB** – Would be supportive as in the Local Plan. However, the District does have enough solar farms to support half the District already. The application will go to Planning Committee, due its size, so there will be an opportunity to put views across.

**What about the cumulative impact of the site**?

**JB** – Visual impact is acceptable. The site is discreet for the village except for the footpath.

**Where do we stand in respect of industrial development around the village, i.e. the other solar farm, quarry, Magna Park, on the remaining rural land?**

**JB-** The Local Plan does say that the impact of other developments should be considered, but the Solar Farm has less visual impact at a low level. Only one property can see it.

**What could be developed on that land if not a solar farm?**

**JB –** Unknown, unlikely to be residential but could be used for warehousing. The farmer says that the land cannot sustain arable farming now so he is happy for it to be used for a solar farm.

EH discussed the pros and cons of the application.

**Pros**

* Village will receive £26k as a community fund
* Better than the alternative of warehousing
* Bridleway improvement along a small stretch to A5

 **Cons**

* Loss of green landscape
* Compromises another of the 3 footpaths out of Cotesbach – Quarry and landfill has already compromised 1.
* Cumulative impact of other industrial developments in the area, in particular warehousing but also solar farms
* Other large Solar Farms adjacent to this – not objecting for NIMBY reasons
* Construction traffic and unexpected deliveries / traffic to Cotesbach and nearby properties (Hill Farm)

**MW** added that another con would be the possibility of deliveries going to Hill Farm by mistake.

***JB left the meeting at 1935 but added that any resident could discuss the matter with him personally if they so wish.***

There are also some questions, asked by EH to Lightsource, that are still unanswered.

* Provision of bamboo screening to make it less visual from footpath
* Creation of a Wildlife zone
* Creation of a pathway through the site to create a more circular pathway from Cotesbach to Lutterworth. Alternatively, rather than through middle of farm, round edge along A5 route if fenced off.

EH said that there had not been many comments from village residents about this application so difficult to know what stance to take in respect of their position on this.

It was proposed by EH and seconded by MW, that the PC object to the application on the basis that there are more cons than pros. It is a fairly weak argument as the application does not strongly contravene the Local Plan. However, it does compromise the local environment rather than benefitting it. Also, the developers have not yet answered the 3 outstanding questions asked by EH which could better mitigate the application’s impact. The PC will object on the cumulative impact on the area by this and other industrial units/areas together with loss of green space. **This was agreed and resolved to do. EH**

EH will also contact the case officer to seek his/her views

**CF –** there is also the issue of impact on house prices with the continual development around the village.

**MW –** Cotesbach and the surrounding town/villages have not received much financial benefit from the District despite the continual industrialisation of the area.

EH proposed, seconded by MW, that Lightsource be asked for the Terms of Offer for the funding so it can be contractually agreed should the farm go ahead**. This was agreed and Resolved** **to do.**

**4. Any Other Business**

There was not any other business

**5. Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 15th December 2020 at 7.30pm in Village Hall or by zoom if situation allows.

Meeting ended at 8.57 pm

To resolve that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 13th October 2020 and circulated to all members, be signed as a correct record.

Signature:…………………………………………………………………………….. (Chairman)

Name:……………Ed Hunt………………………………………………….

Date:…………………15th December 2020……………………………………

**Action Point Summary:**

**Action Point 1**: The PC to object to the application for a solar farm. **EH**

**Action Point 2:**  The case officer to be contacted to seek his/her views. **EH**

**Action Point 3:**  Lightsource be asked for the Terms of Offer for the funding so it can be contractually agreed should the farm go ahead**. EH**