

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Planning Committee held at Virtual - Online meeting on Wednesday, 21st April, 2021 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Members:

Councillor Ley (Chair)

Councillors Davies, Fowler, Gubb, Jenkins, Lane (substitute for Councillor Chesters), Leaver, Mackie, Prowse, D. Spear, L. Spear and Tucker

Officers:

Chief Executive, Business Information Systems Manager, Lead Planning Officer (North), Lead Planning Officer (South) and Planning Officer

Also Present:

Councillors Biederman, Lofthouse and Walker

10. VIRTUAL MEETINGS PROCEDURE - BRIEFING AND ETIQUETTE

The Chair outlined the virtual meeting procedure and etiquette to the Committee and attendees.

The Corporate and Community Services Officer confirmed the names of those Councillors present.

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Chesters (who appointed Councillor Lane to be her substitute), Councillor Mack and Councillor Yabsley (who appointed Councillor Barker to be his substitute).

12. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest announced.

13. 60823: FORMER YELLAND POWER STATION, LOWER YELLAND, BARNSTAPLE, DEVON EX31 3EZ

The Committee was presented with a virtual site visit by the Lead Planning Officer (South) which included various photographs and maps of the site, of the site as it was currently, and as it would be if the planning was approved.

As part of the site visit, the Committee was shown:

- A map of the B3233 Instow to Bickington, with the site outlined in red.
- The access to the site from the main road (B3233) junction to Yelland Quay.
- Existing access and bus-stop- showing good levels of visibility.
- Ariel view of the junction.
- A map showing the slight change to the alignment of the access road. The road would meet full highways standards, with footpath and cycleway to one side.
- Drone footage along the access road, past the existing employment sites, around the flooded turbine hall area and jetty. The footage then showed the areas across the concreted area and jetty, across to the mud flats and then back to the residual buildings from the demolished power station.
- The location of the Tarka Trail where it crossed the coastal footpath. This included views of the Isley Marsh and the ash-beds.
- An eye-level walkthrough of the site as it currently stood – this included the storage and large piles of sand and gravel, and areas of concrete.
- Still photos – identified the location on the south west edge of the site where the pond would be situated.
- The main road through the site to the jetty.
- Areas to be designated for open space.
- Key viewpoints from Northam Burrows, Crowpoint, Blackstone Rock and the South West coast path. Images were shown of each as at 'year zero' and 'year ten' following the completion of the development.

The Lead Planning Officer (South) advised that:

- The at the point where the Tarka Trail crossed the Coast path, the levels of the Tarka Trail would be raised/sloped upwards to the path, and then sloped downwards. The location of the crossing had been chosen to minimise the effect on any mature trees and also to minimise any ecological impact.
- A new carpark would be provided (as part of the Section 106 agreement) for those using the Tarka Trail and coast path, which would replace the current on-street parking along the access road. This parking was currently permissive only.
- The site was currently used for commercial use and was covered with residual waste from the power station. The preparation of the site would include lots of filling in of the areas, which included the flooded turbine hall which would need to be filled and capped.
- The site level would be raised by approximately 2.6m.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Lead Planning Officer (South) advised the following would be presented at the Committee meeting on 28th April 2021:

- Flood defence measures
- Technical drawings of the levelling of the site.

- Details of the operation of the proposed carpark for users of the Tarka Trail.
- Removal of asbestos and any dangerous materials.
- Tree protection, and monitoring thereof.

14. 71708: LAND AT LITCHARDON CROSS, NEWTON TRACEY, EX31 3QE.

The Committee were presented with a virtual site visit by the Planning Officer (RB) which included various photographs, maps and video footage of the site and surrounding area and maps and views as it would be if the planning was approved.

As part of the site visit, the Committee was shown:

- A map of the area of the proposed solar farm.
- A map of the terrain levels
- Photos of the area in the local vicinity to the proposed solar farm
- A photo of St Michael's School, with St Peter's Church in the foreground.
- Maps showing to locations of nearby wind turbines at Collacott and Litchardon.
- A map showing the location of Brookham Farm which was positioned between fields 19-21, and adjacent to field 9. Photos of the farm house, and from the farmhouse were presented.
- View from Holmacott, Huish Moor, Higher Litchardon, Voscombe and Green Fields.
- An aerial view of the site layout – with proposed locations of panels around the existing wind turbines.
- An image of an example of the mesh deer-fencing which would surround the perimeter of the site (at 2.1m height).
- A photo of a bi-facial solar pv module – from different angles.
- A 30m by 40m sub station
- A photo of an example access track.
- A virtual walkthrough of the site, once developed, at year one, and as at year ten. This was provided for the view from Brookham Farmhouse to Litchardon Cross and from the road near the farmhouse back toward the northeast. Mitigating planting was shown near fields 19 and 20, with an impression of the view after five years.
- A photo taken from the layby on the A39 showing both the wind turbines of Collacott and Litchardon either side of the A39.
- Photos of the views of the site from various locations, near to, and further from, the proposed site, some showed how views could be affected after five years, to allow for planting to mitigate the views, other view were provided during the winter – so that the effects when vegetation was reduced could be seen. The views included;
 - From the road at Holmacott Cross
 - Local road at Huish Moor
 - Footpath at Knightacott
 - Local road at Prospect Corner
 - Eastacombe Cross

- Crest of B3232 at Alverdiscott
- Saunton, road to hotel (theoretically outside of the range/view radius.
- Higher Litchardon
- Lower Meadow Cottage

The Planning Officer advised that:

- There were a number of properties in the vicinity of the site: Higher Litchardon, Orchard Farm, Brookham, Meadow Cottage, Rose Cottage, Acorn Cottage, Fremington Cottage, Huish Moor, Holmacott.
- The majority of the site was within flood zone one and partially in a critical draining area.
- The application was for the change of use of 21 fields of agricultural land to a solar farm.
- There would be 32 transformers on site – each at 6m x 2m, painted green.
- Access tracks would cross the site – each created from stones laid over a membrane.
- Although Higher Litchardon/Meadow Cottage had ground floor windows at the rear of the property from which the solar panels would be visible without mitigation. This could be reduced with planting. The extract from the LEMP (Landscape Management Plan) showed the proposed banking and woodlands which would be visible from ground/eye level which would reduce the impact. Although it could still be viewed from the roof dormer windows.
- The view from Huish Moor was separated by the landfill site.
- Greenfields and Voscombe were both approximately 350m from the site, both faced south with the rear of the buildings facing the site. To the rear of Greenfields was existing vegetation, and to the rear of Voscombe there were existing outbuildings.
- The connection compound would be 100m from New House and Prospect House. No objections had been received.
- Very distant view of the site may be seen from Nottison Cross.
- Views in the medium range would mainly be mitigated by vegetation and the natural rise and fall of the landscape. Over the five years following the creation of the solar farm the vegetation growth would improve the screening of the views.
- Extensive consultation had taken place and all properties in the vicinity were notified. Site notices had been issued.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Lead Planning Officer (South) advised the following would be presented at the Committee meeting on 28th April 2021:

- The plan of the building works, details of the building phases and dates for phases.
- Logistics regarding the transportation of equipment to site – along with sizes of vehicles involved.
- Details of the solar panels / finishes, and information regarding possible glare.
- Further information about the employment creation as mentioned within the reports.

Chair

The meeting ended at 12.12 pm

NOTE: These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.

This page is intentionally left blank