

TYDD ST GILES PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee of Tydd St Giles Parish Council held in the Community Centre on Thursday 20th June 2024

Present - Cllr T Brown (Chairman), Cllr B Allen, Cllr M Carter, Cllr K Malin, Cllr B Barber (FDC), D Gibbs (Clerk), 3 members of the Pathfinder Clean Energy Community Relations Team, 15 members of the public

001/24 Apologies for Absence

Cllr G Clifton, Cllr M Connell, Cllr L Slade

002/24 Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

- a) Cllr Brown was nominated as Chairman by Cllr Allen, seconded by Cllr Carter and duly elected.
- b) Cllr Malin was nominated as Vice Chairman by Cllr Allen, seconded by Cllr Carter and duly elected.

003/24 Planning Applications

- a) F/YR24/0457/F - Installation of 49.9MW ground mounted solar photovoltaic panels with associated battery storage, substation and ancillary plant and infrastructure, and erection of 2.0m high (max height) security fencing and 3.0m high pole mounted CCTV cameras - Land at Treading Field, Treading Drain, Tydd St Giles

Representatives from Pathfinder Clean Energy presented their proposals and answered questions. Having heard and considered the presentation on behalf of the applicant and the views of the members of the public present at the meeting, the Council is unable to support the application until the following matters are resolved:

1. At the meeting, the developer's representatives gave a commitment for £7,000 (assumed to be index linked) per annum to be provided for ten years to a Community Benefit Fund for Tydd St Giles. The Parish Council challenged that this should be extended to a period of 40 years matching the life of the project. This is the time frame of community benefits offered by the developers of the adjacent Treading Bank solar farm and is consistent with many other solar farms.
2. Confirmation to be provided as to the qualifications and experience of the firm which prepared the Agricultural Land Classification Soil Survey, in light of the related concerns raised in the Written Ministerial Statement by the Energy Secretary in May 2024. Also, a clearer explanation of the results of this soil survey which downgraded the majority of the land from MAFF Grade 2 classification to Grade 3a. How clearcut was the conclusion that the land is 3a rather than 2? It appears to be a very marginal determination. We suggest Fenland District Council engages relevant experts to critically appraise the soil survey.
3. A satisfactory explanation should be provided for the high ratio of land use area per MW of output energy. This development is estimated to use 2.81 hectares per MW whereas the adjacent Treading Bank solar farm is expected to be only 1.46

hectares per MW, and the neighbouring Meridian proposal at Crowland only 1.20 hectares per MW. The national policy statement for renewable energy (EN-3) on page 90 states that a solar farm requires between 2 and 4 acres (0.80 - 1.62 hectares) per MW. There seems to be scope to reduce the loss of Best and Most Valuable agricultural land by improving the efficiency of land use in line with other solar farms and best practice guidance.

4. PACE should provide a detailed justification for their decision to limit their site search to a 1km corridor either side of the 132kv power line as this restriction may have unnecessarily ruled out other potentially more preferable sites.

5. The construction of this facility would result in considerable damage to fragile narrow rural roads. Will the cost of rectification be borne by the developer and not become a burden on the public purse and what process will be established to ensure that this is the case?

6. The Elloe Bank bridleway forms a key section of an important rural equestrian network to the west of the Parish. How will this be made safe during the construction period and what measures will be included to ensure that it retains its rural appearance in perpetuity after the completion of the development?

7. Noise levels - notwithstanding the favourable conclusions in the noise report regarding forecast noise levels, the developer should commit to monitoring actual noise levels once the solar farm is operational and to introduce further mitigation if significant adverse noise impacts are experienced in practice.

- b) F/YR24/0455/VOC - Variation of condition 09 (Hedge Retention) of planning permission F/YR20/1211/F (Erect a 6-bed 3-storey dwelling with garage and temporary siting of a mobile home during construction) to enable changes to front boundary hedge and include a post and rail fence 1.2m high (max) - Plot 1, Land West of Magnolia Cottage, Kirkgate, Tydd St Giles

Members expressed the view that the removal of the ancient hedgerow was a deliberate act in contravention of a known planning condition and that if such matters are to be tolerated, they should not be included in the conditions attached to the granting of permission. Members resolved to object to the application.

004/24 Update on Recent Planning Applications

F/YR22/0368/F at Tydd Golf Club is pending.

F/YR23/0958/O at Land South of Hall Bank is pending.

F/YR23/1073/F at Land East of Cirston House, Hockland Road is pending.

F/YR24/0034/O at Land North of Windy Willows, Church Lane was granted.

F/YR24/0239/F at Land South of Elton House, Church Lane was granted.

F/YR24/0291/O at Land North of Tydd Steam Brewery, Kirkgate is pending.

F/YR24/0239/F at Fir Tree Farm, Bees Lane was granted.

F/YR24/0382/TPO at Sycamore Lodge, Broad Drove East is pending.

The Chairman expressed his frustration that the District Council seems to ignore its own policy and the views of Parish Councils in determining planning applications, resulting in inconsistency in the decision-making process.

005/24 Other Planning Matters

None.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.