

**PLANNING COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on WEDNESDAY, 22
JUNE 2022 at 10.00 am**

Present: Councillor S Merifield (Chair)
Councillors M Caton, R Freeman, G LeCount, M Lemon (Vice-Chair), B Light, R Pavitt and M Sutton

Officers in attendance: N Brown (Development Manager), C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer), A Lindsell (Democratic Services Officer), E Smith (Solicitor) and L Trevillian (Principal Planning Officer)

Public Speakers: Councillor M Foley, J Hartley-Bond, R Haynes, V Knight, T Mawer, D McPherson, C Mizen, V Knight, C and R Siddle, Councillor M Tayler, A Temple, J and M White and T Wilson.

PC166 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bagnall, Emanuel, Fairhurst and Loughlin.

Councillor Caton substituted for Councillor Loughlin and Councillor Light substituted for Councillor Fairhurst.

PC167 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2022 were approved.

PC168 S62A APPLICATIONS

The Development Manager presented the S62A Applications report that detailed the applications which had been submitted direct to the Planning Inspectorate. He said that the PINS hearing date for the Former Friends School site had yet to be notified.

The report was noted.

PC169 SPEED AND QUALITY REPORT

The Development Manager presented the Speed and Quality Report. He said that the crucial factor was how the rolling figures moved forward.

The report was noted.

PC170 **QUALITY OF MAJOR APPLICATIONS REPORT**

The Development Manager presented the Quality of Major Applications report.

The report was noted.

PC171 **UTT/21/1833/FUL - CUTLERS GREEN LANE, LAND WEST OF THAXTED, THAXTED**

The Principal Planning Officer presented an application for the proposed construction and operation of a solar farm comprising ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) arrays and battery storage together with associated development, including inverter cabins, DNO substation, customer switchgear, access, fencing, CCTV cameras and landscaping.

The application was recommended for approval subject to those items set out in section 17 of this report:

- Completion of a s106 Obligation Agreement in accordance with the Heads of Terms.
- If the freehold owner shall fail to enter into such an agreement, the Interim Director of Planning and Building Control shall be authorised to REFUSE permission following the expiration of a six month period from the date of Planning Committee.

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the additional information given in the Late List and summarised the answers that had been provided in respect of the outstanding questions from the Planning Committee report on 19 January 2022.

The meeting adjourned between 10.30 am and 10.40 am to address technical broadcasting issues. This was then followed by the public speakers.

The Principal Planning Officer responded to questions from Members in respect of:

- A wood comprising 20,000 trees and a wildflower meadow.
- Possible effects on flooding, drainage and contamination.
- Richmond in the Wood being Grade 2 listed; the possibility of conditioning the provision of a cordon sanitaire/buffer zone around the property.
- Whether there had been sufficient consultation time.
- Any benefits to the local community.
- Noise and vibration levels.
- Access to the site.
- The regularity of landscape surveys.
- The effect on the special verges to be included in a Construction Management Plan.
- De-commissioning arrangements.
- Whether the Norfolk appeal decision had been reviewed. The officer confirmed that it had not been reviewed.

Members discussed:

- Provision of a wood of 20,000 trees, a wildflower meadow and a protection zone for the listed buildings.
- The need for further discussions to take place through re-consultations with local residents and the Parish Council.
- Food security; the effects on food supply of potentially removing the ability to manufacture one million loaves of bread per annum.
- That no compelling case had been provided to justify siting a solar farm at this location.
- The impact on Heritage assets and the requirement to have additional space around listed buildings. It was noted that Loves Farm was also a listed building.
- The need to review the Norfolk appeal decision.
- The need for further clear and fool proof details in respect of de-commissioning arrangements and for clear timelines to be identified in a Decommissioning Method Statement.
- The need to be more strategic moving forward.
- The requirements for timescales to be identified in respect of landscaping arrangements.
- The Rochdale Envelope principle.
- The debate as to whether the development be for 25 years or 40 years.
- Investigation of the displaced flood risk.
- Whether red light could be used instead of white; in order to protect bats.

Councillor Pavitt proposed to defer the application in order that matters raised during the course of the discussion could be taken forward.

Councillor LeCount seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED to defer the application.

Councillor M Foley (County Councillor), Councillor M Tayler (Ward Councillor), T Wilson (Hands Off Thaxted), J & M White, C & R Siddle, D McPherson, T Mawer, C Mizen, A Temple, V Knight and R Haynes (on behalf of the Parish Council) all raised concerns about the application. Matters raised included insufficient consultation time, the use of the Rochdale Envelope principle, food and energy security issues, the use of Grade 2 prime quality productive agricultural land, drainage and flooding concerns, noise issues, fire and safety issues, lack of benefits to the local area, traffic concerns

J Hartley-Bond (Low Carbon) spoke on behalf of the applicant in support of the application and addressed the various issues raised above.

PC172 **UTT/21/3777/OP - START HILL, GREAT HALLINGBURY**

This item had been withdrawn.

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm.