



DRAFT Minutes of the Urchfont Parish Council (UPC) Planning Meeting held in Urchfont Village Hall on Wednesday 14th February 2024

Present: Councillor's: Moscrop (PM – Chair) Bamber (SB – Vice Chair), Hill (TH), Gibb (HG), Shears (SS) and Rotherford (JR)

Councillor for Urchfont & Bishops Cannings: Philip Whitehead (PW)

Members of the Public (for all or part of the meeting): Mr and Mrs Holt, Mr and Mrs Crawford, Mrs Craik, Mr MacPhearson, Mr Hills, Malcolm Smith, Mrs Jean Willis, Nicky Hammond, Brenda Potter, Pauleen Kendall

- 1. Apologies: Counillor Rotherham (PH) and Bob Lunn (Clerk)**
- 2. Declarations of Interest
PM for 22 High street
SH for Cuckoo farmhouse**
- 3. Minutes of a meeting held on 10th January 2024**

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconder | Resolution |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| Proposal to approve | TH | PM | Unanimous for SH abstained as not at meeting |

- 4. Matters arising from Minutes of 10th January 2024**
- 5. Plans for discussion**

PL/2023/10332 - Full planning permission - Installation of a solar farm comprising ground mounted solar PV panels with a generating capacity of up to 49.9 MW, including mounting system, permanent on site grid connection hub, inverters, underground cabling, stock proof fence, CCTV, internal tracks and associated infrastructure, landscaping, biodiversity net gain and environmental enhancements for a temporary period of 50 years on Land South of Potterne Park Farm, nr Potterne, Devizes, Wilts, SN10 5QT

PL/2023/10332 - Solar Farm

The above application was discussed at UPC full planning council meeting on 14/02/2024.

1) Member of the public Mr. Steve Holt spoke during public participation. His statement is below.

'Planning Application PL/2023/10332 – Potterne Park Solar Farm
Reasons to reject the planning application

The proposed Solar Farm at Potterne Park Farm (PPF) is a vast 200 acre site on a North Facing slope within a beautiful tranquil rural area. An area rich in wildlife and essential for the preservation of rare species of birds, bats and other animals – as well as an important sanctuary for people's physical and mental well-being for those living in Devizes, Potterne, Easterton, Market Lavington and surrounding villages.

This is not a debate about solar energy, this is the wrong project in the wrong place. The North facing aspect of the

site has meant that the proposed solution is sub-optimal and in the wider context of the national grid this proposed site is a poor choice of location.

The key points for rejecting this project are:

a. The beauty of the valley – This special valley is a beautiful tranquil rural area untouched, essentially, since the railway came through in the 1900's. It neighbours the AONB of Pewsey vale. The impact on the landscape of the proposal is severe. The vast site on a north facing slope, is elevated above the valley and visible from practically everywhere in the valley. It is overlooked by a number of households and there are 5 well used Public Rights of Way that cross the site. This 200- acre site is bigger than the village of Potterne itself. This is not a hidden project and will impact the very character of the valley.

b. Wiltshire's target within its 'High Ambition Pathway' is to facilitate 590MW of solar capacity by 2030. Including recently approved solar farm developments a total of 820MW should be operational in Wiltshire by 2026. Wiltshire Council have already exceeded their most ambitious target by 39%. This is not a must do project for Wiltshire, there are other priorities in the solar space. The generation capacity of the grid in this area is highly constrained meaning other projects such as rooftop solar will be frozen out if this project goes ahead.

c. The application claims this is a temporary 50 year lease and the land can be returned to agriculture after that period. The likelihood of the land being return to its former use is very low, given the building of the substation/connection point to the transmission network will ensure the site remains too important to host electrical infrastructure beyond the proposed lease term. The likely scenario here is that once built the substation will facilitate planning requests for a second solar farm on the remainder of Potterne Park Farm and other electrical infrastructure.

d. Biodiversity – the valley has a delicate ecosystem which borders ancient woodland and these fields are foraging sites for a number of bat and bird species. Our own expert studies show 12 species of bat, 4 of which are endangered, use these areas. The Ecological Impact Assessment in the proposal in our view dangerously understates the importance of the area to bats and other wildlife. It is a criminal offence to remove the habitats of these bats.

e. Agricultural Land – these fields have been farmed for decades. There is as much need to protect farmland due to the pressures on feeding a growing population (40% of our food is imported) as there is to convert and lose this land area for energy production. These fields produce above average yields for winter wheat and grass for the county. This is good productive agricultural land, not poor quality as claimed in the proposal.

f. Access – The problems with access for construction traffic should not be easily dismissed. The Potterne Wick junction off the A360 required for site access is notoriously difficult. Outside the immediate site access there are two routes for construction traffic proposed – one through Devizes and Potterne, which is inappropriate given the town's traffic problems, and the other route via Seend and Worton. This goes past a school and through a road marked as unsuitable for heavy vehicles. Where the road then joins the A360 is a hazardous right hand turn which is difficult enough in an ordinary car. Our estimates are for around 1700 round trips by HGV's which is 3.5 times greater than the figures quoted in the planning application. The access plans are inadequate, unsafe, and not feasible.

g. Residents do not feel they have been adequately consulted prior to the application being submitted and do not feel their views have been properly reported to the council. Integrity and transparency are vital in public decision making and this represents a serious failure of due process.

This is not a rejection of the need for renewables or solar - it is a rejection of this particular site. This area has more than demonstrated its support for solar investment. There are 6 solar farms within a 5 mile radius of Potterne and given the proximity of the AONB this is quite a concentration and demonstrates a serious commitment. This area of Wiltshire is doing its bit on solar, doing more is not in the local plan - this is a designated area for agriculture not development.

The project is counter to the core policies within the Wiltshire Core Strategy. The proposal does not meet the thresholds of Core Policy 42 on renewable energy installations as claimed and is counter to Core Policy 50 on biodiversity and geodiversity and Core Policy 51 on Landscape.

The clear conclusion from the points outlined above is that this is the wrong solution in the wrong place. The priority for this area is agriculture and the protection of a Special Landscape Area, and we intend to request that categorisation for this valley to prevent the industrialisation of this tranquil rural landscape in the future. Tourism is an important plank in our growth strategy going forward for the Devizes area and valley is one of our best assets. The priority for this valley is not development and not solar. We request you reject the proposal.

Specific additional points of note for Urchfont Parish Councilors

Access – There is the possibility (probably no more than 30%) that access to the site will be sought to come via Urchfont. This is because of the difficulties accessing via Potterne Wick. This of course would see an unacceptable number of HGV's coming through the village past the school and down the country lane to come in via the bridleway at Crookwood. We don't believe the developers will get permission to do this, and currently it is not in their submission, but it is a possibility. It should also be noted that even if site access comes via Potterne Wick considerable traffic congestion will affect those coming through Stroud Lane to Urchfont.

Other Solar developments in the area - There are 3 other solar farms potentially in the pipeline that may affect the area. There is one at One Tree Hill, Potterne that is in the public domain, one at Sleight and one East of Urchfont at Wedhampton. EIA Screening requests have been made for these last 2 but what the plans are for development are not known. Urchfont PC may well be aware of these applications, but we are not aware of their status. The planning process is such that parish councils can get caught unawares as to these massive developments as seen by the 2 raised in Potterne.'

Member of the public Jackie Waddell spoke next. She agreed with all the comments made by Mr. Holt and further added that she was especially worried about construction traffic through the Urchfont parish which would have a detrimental impact on the village and residents.

Councillor Hill closed for public participation and opened up for councillor comments.

Councillor Hill noted that the vast majority of comments on the planning application were opposed to the solar farm and that Urchfont was a consultee in the process as will not be directly impacted by the farm as it does not sit in the parish.

Councillor Bamber commented that she agreed with Member of the public Mr Holt and had concerns due to the size of the proposed farm, the huge towers, flood lighting. It is too big and clearly in the wrong place. In addition the fact that there were rare species of bats and the roads around the proposed site are far too small were other factors not to support this application.

Councillor Rotherford stated that the overall comments were negative and although most people would support solar and renewable energy. Due to the size of the proposed farm and the potential traffic implications during construction he would not support it.

Councillor Gibb Agreed and stated that renewable energy is great but supports the objection to this specific farm.

Councillor Whitehead stated that he would not comment on the application due to potentially being on chair of planning but did state that having reviewed the transport summary report he had concerns about the access especially by the 360. Also the fact that this proposed solar farm was huge and would be strongly visible from the AONB.

Councillor Hill stated that he is from a farming background in Devon but despite the ask of production of food for the nation, this site would be suited for grass for cows but cow manure produced methane and if other crops had to be used fertilizers would be needed which had other restrictions so they were caught between a rock and a hard place. Farmers had to make a living, and renewable energy would help with this however due to the community issue with this farm he would not support it.

Councillor Holt stated he saw no issue for Urchfont Parish apart from during the construction phase and is fully in support of renewable energy so supports the application.

Councillor Moscrop stated she would agree with the community comments and as such would not support the farm.

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconded | Resolution |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| UPC Object to planning application | TH | PM | 1 against SH 6 for |

Councillor Hill – invited Mr Crawford to speak. Mr Crawford objected to the applications. His statement is below.

‘Mike Crawford owner of Number 23 High Street.

My objection is solely in respect of the proposed position of the new fence between numbers 22 & 23. Your Chairman of the Planning Section (Trevor) advised me on Monday, before he even saw the site, that and I think I’m quoting him correctly – “the Parish Council doesn’t care about the boundaries - its role is to comment on the type of fencing relative to the property and its surroundings”.

The Governments, Role of a Parish Council on Planning Matters does state that boundary disputes and rights of access are not material matters for consideration. However, it also states that Layout, Design, Appearance and impact are material matters, particularly in conservation areas and with Listed Buildings.

These properties are in a conservation area and are listed buildings - as such I believe the Parish Council should care. The Design and Heritage Statement claims there will be no detrimental effect on the Heritage Assets. This is simply not correct - The plans will result in a significant detrimental effect as they seek to materially alter a Heritage Site by moving the in-situ fence line so that it ends abutting the corner of number 23, thereby blocking a concrete pathway that has been clear and open for the past 51 years.

A 6 ft fence in this position will make it impossible to even see the Thatch eave, wall or window, let alone allow the regular cleaning and maintenance, necessary with this type of listed building.

I take my responsibilities as a custodial owner of a Heritage Asset very seriously and I sincerely hope that the Parish Council does too. These properties are nearly 400 years old, and I believe it is our collective responsibility to ensure they are protected so they can survive for another 400 years. Any alterations to the site, which could cause serious harm to the fabric of the buildings should not be tolerated.

Of the eleven people, to date, who have written in support of this application, not one has seen the physical layout of this heritage site from number 23’s side of the fence.

A government heritage website states “heritage assets are irreplaceable, and any potential harm requires clear and convincing justification”. These plans will cause harm and provide no justification at all.

My comments to the Wiltshire Council provide a number of practical options and I, therefore, appeal to the Parish Council to register support for the application but with a recommendation to add a condition that, to preserve a listed building for future generations, any new fence must follow the in-situ fence line exactly, thereby leaving the pathway clear for number 23, as it has been for the past 51 years.

Councillor Hill thanked Mr Crawford for his comments and then invited the applicant Ms Craik to comment. Her Statement is below

‘Clarification of supporting evidence and comments.

We require an immediate, solid, physical fence in order to provide a screen to ensure privacy and security to minimise the impact of the ongoing neighbourly dispute with number 23, which has resulted us feeling threatened, vulnerable and reluctant to use our garden.

As stated in the planning application, which has been entered as a direct result of the complaints made to Wilts Council by the occupants of 23, it is requested that permission be granted for a new, permanent fence to be installed along the legal boundary, as defined by HM Land Registry. The current fence was sited incorrectly due to unintentional garden encroachment by the previous occupant, and was seen as a quick fix. As planning permission is now being sought, the opportunity presents itself to rectify the boundary inaccuracy. The complaint cited their aversion to the temporary screen that we attached to the existing fence, in an attempt to increase privacy and diffuse the deteriorating situation.

The application is for a woven wooden fence, 5 foot in height, with a 1 foot wooden lattice trellis on the top. This will provide an immediate screen, and whilst our preference would be for a 6 foot fence, the compromise will still provide a greater element of privacy and security than currently available. This is required as a matter of urgency due to the ongoing dispute.

The suggestion of a living hedge by the Conservation Officer is not appropriate due to the length of time this will take to grow and form the required visual screen. Maintaining this on both sides will not be appropriate due to the dispute and it will not provide the solid barrier that is required to separate the dogs. Already established planting will immediately soften the new fence, further enhancing the visual effect.

It is worth noting that, of the 2 complainants in this application, one has recently installed a large, dominant, close board modern fence along the rear boundary of 22 and 23 (the other complainant), for which planning permission was not sought. This is not in-keeping, and the majority of it is over 5 feet in height, yet no complaint was registered by 23.

The new fence will not prevent the access of the occupants of 23 into the garden of 22. As has been discussed, and confirmed through our solicitor’s correspondence, they have a right to enter onto a section of 22’s property for the specific purpose of “*repairing, maintaining, renewing, altering, rebuilding or cleaning*”, with reasonable notice.

There has been significant support noted from many of the local residents who have cited no complaints or objections.

Due to my partners regular and prolonged operational deployments with the Royal Navy, I will continue to spend up to 10 months per year living alone. I therefore request that the resolution of this matter is treated with urgency in order I can return to using my garden in privacy and restore a feeling of security.

In response to the previous comments(anything that needs to be said ...)

It is acknowledged that 22 have a right to enter onto a section of her property for the specific purpose of “*repairing, maintaining, renewing, altering, rebuilding or cleaning the First Floor Projections*”. However, that right is only where necessary and for those specific purposes only. It is also “with notice.” If you require access to our client’s property for one of those specific purposes you must give our client advance notice (which she insists must be in writing), and take no longer than necessary. You must also not harass, abuse or intimidate her during that access and must not look into her windows or otherwise behave in a manner which invades their privacy.

- The picket fence was replaced when the hedge was removed as there were remnants of a previous fence on the same line and the garden required to be secured to keep the dogs enclosed. No landscaping can be done adjacent to the Cartway until soil has recovered. Due to previous aggressive hedging the nutrient level is severely depleted and pH acidic. This will not sustain much vegetation hence wild flowers and green manure have been planted.’



Other documents submitted

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconder | Resolution |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| No Objection | TH | SH | Unanimous for PM did not vote |

PL/2024/00116 - Full planning permission - Formation of vehicular access at Land adjoining B3098, Foxley Corner, Urchfont

As this application was for agricultural access there were no comments

| Proposal | Proposer | Secunder | Resolution |
|--------------|----------|----------|---------------|
| No Objection | TH | PM | Unanimous For |

PL/2024/00188 - Notification of proposed works to trees in a conservation area - T1 T2 - Species unknown – Fell at CEDAR LODGE, GREENGATE ROAD, WEDHAMPTON, DEVIZES, SN10 3QB

Simple works required

| Proposal | Proposer | Secunder | Resolution |
|--------------|----------|----------|---------------|
| No Objection | TH | HG | Unanimous for |

PL/2023/11090 - Householder planning permission - Installation of 4 new "Velux" roof lights in west-facing pitched roof, each measuring 78mm tall by 55mm wide at 1 Manor Farmyard, Urchfont, Devizes, SN10 4BA

Mr Hills spoke and stated that 1 Manor farmyard is a lovely house however there is minimal light and ventilation inside. He was looking for the smallest velux windows to be able to provide some much needed light into the house. Councillor Whitehead stated that the house next door had such windows and would therefore be in fitting with the area. Councillor Hill stated that as the house was a focal point in the village he felt that the windows whilst he empathized with Mr Hills would detract from the features and aesthetics of the house and village. Coucillor Holt stated that he is aware at how dark the house is inside and the current windows are not fit for purposed but would suggest black conservation windows with a vertical bar would be better suited.

| Proposal | Proposer | Secunder | Resolution |
|---|----------|----------|---------------------------------|
| UPC propose we support the application subject to a Condition that black Conservation Velux windows with a vertical bar at mid point would be more appropriate in the Conservation Area with the property being in the background of one of the most photographed scenes in the area. | SH | PM | 6 in favour 1 objection - TH |

PL/2024/00854 - Full planning permission for Horse Menage at Bridge Farm, Crookwood Lane, Potterne, Devizes, SN10 5QS

No additional comments

| Proposal | Proposer | Secunder | Resolution |
|--------------|----------|----------|---------------|
| No Objection | TH | SH | Unanimous for |

PL/2024/00657 - Notification of proposed works to trees in a conservation area - T1 - T6 - 6 x Ash trunks – remove at 7 THE ORCHARD, URCHFONT, DEVIZES, SN10 4QX

No additional comments

| Proposal | Proposer | Second | Resolution |
|--------------|----------|--------|---------------|
| No Objection | TH | HG | Unanimous for |

PL/2024/00398 - Listed building consent (Alt/Ext) - Replace French casement doors in existing C21 lean-to rear extension with two-light casement window at Cuckoo Farmhouse, Cuckoo Corner, Urchfont, Devizes, SN10 4RA

SH declared conflict of interest due to working with Mr Everit previously

| Proposal | Proposer | Second | Resolution |
|--------------|----------|--------|-------------------------------|
| No Objection | TH | HG | SH abstained Unanimous for |

PL/2023/06036 - Listed building consent (Alt/Ext) - Retention of single storey extension and removal of unauthorised ventilation system and proposed new ventilation system to Commercial Kitchen at The Lamb Inn, The Green, Urchfont, Devizes, SN10 4QU

Comments made by Councilor Hill Previous extension was incorrect and far too bog as well as in the wrong place.

| Proposal | Proposer | Second | Resolution |
|--------------|----------|--------|---------------|
| No Objection | TH | SH | Unanimous for |

PL/2023/05904 - Full planning permission - Retention of single storey extension and removal of unauthorised ventilation system and proposed new ventilation system to Commercial Kitchen at The Lamb Inn, The Green, Urchfont, Devizes, SN10 4QU

Comments made by Councilor Hill Previous extension was incorrect and far too bog as well as in the wrong place.

| Proposal | Proposer | Second | Resolution |
|--------------|----------|--------|---------------|
| No Objection | TH | SH | Unanimous for |

PL/2024/01287 - Consent under Tree Preservation Orders - Turkey Oak (T6) - reduce crown by 2/2.5m to previous reduction points. Red Oak (T3) - reduce crown closest to property (Jubilee House) by 2/3m and balance remaining crown to match. Wild Cherry (T4) - reduce in height by 2/3m and shape crown to match at JUBILEE HOUSE, TOWNSEND, URCHFONT, DEVIZES, SN10 4R

| Proposal | Proposer | Second | Resolution |
|--------------|----------|--------|---------------|
| No Objection | TH | JR | Unanimous for |

PL/2024/01268 - Removal/variation of conditions - Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) on PL/2022/09673 to include two skylights in the roof of bedroom 1 at New End Cottage, New End, Urchfont, Devizes, SN10 4RQR

| Proposal | Proposer | Seconder | Resolution |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| No Objection | TH | SS | Unanimous for |

6. Decisions received from Wiltshire Council up until 2nd February 2024

PL/2023/10289 - Proposed Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Hawthorn tree - Reduce 2mtrs. Hazel - Pollard to 2mtrs. Twisted Willow tree - Reduce 3mtrs at OAKSTON, HIGH STREET, URCHFONT - NO OBJECTION

PL/2023/10633 - Proposed Works to Trees in a Conservation Area - Multi-stemmed Common Buckthorn (T1) - fell to ground level at PYNCENT COTTAGE, THE GREEN, URCHFONT, DEVIZES, SN10 4RB - NO OBJECTION

7. Matters for Report

Date of Next Scheduled Meeting: 13th March 2024 as part of the Full Council meeting.