

HELMDON PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the Extra-Ordinary meeting of Helmdon Parish Council held on Wednesday 15th December 2010 in the Reading Room, Church Street, Helmdon at 7:30m pm

Present: Councillors Adhemar, Barnes, Burns, Duncombe, England, Coatsworth, Thorne
Parish Clerk: Liz Hart

One members of the public was present.

Action

1 Apologies

The following apologies were received and accepted:

Cllrs Earl, Crouch – work commitments

2 To be considered for observation:

Application number: S/2010/1437/MAF

Location: Spring Farm Ridge, land to the north of Welsh Lane between Greatworth and Helmdon

Proposal: Wind farm comprising the erection of five wind turbines plus underground cabling, meteorological mast, access tracks, control building, temporary site compound and ancillary development (Includes Environmental Statement)

The Parish Council resolved to object to the application for the following reasons:

The Parish Council notes that the two Public Meetings and the Broadview Presentation at the Primary School has provided the opportunity for it to gauge the views of the electorate; it is estimated that approximately 90% of the electorate in the Parish is against the proposal.

The Environmental Impact Statement contains ecological survey information that is inaccurate. This is because correct procedures were not followed by Broadview's contracted experts. The surveys are inadequate (i.e. not carried out recently enough to take account of new incomers such as peregrine falcons and red kites), incorrect (not carried out over a sufficient period of time to collect accurate data), and incomplete (not containing a full survey of the many species local people know to be present). Examples are the bat survey which does not satisfy regulatory guidelines, the disregard of many species of bird on the red list, and the disregard of the importance of key hedgerows and coppices as wildlife corridors. All of this indicates the intention of the applicant to hasten plans for development and gloss over matters that could be detrimental to the application. The applicant has failed to take the advice of the Environment Agency as regards approaching local authorities such as the Parish Council for information regarding flooding.

The Parish Council notes that the surveys continually gloss over important aspects which would need to be fully resolved before any proposal went ahead and simply dismisses them as irrelevant. An example of this is to be found in the Hydrology Survey regarding the impact of the proposal on the flooding issues within Helmdon village. The Parish Council would point to the fact that inadequacies in these particular surveys indicate that other surveys too may be lacking in accuracy and relevance.

The Parish Council has deep concerns on the implication of the reception of Emergency Services by the proposal, a problem which has not been resolved in the EIS.

The impact on the amenity of Rights of Way, in particular in the siting of two turbines, is thought to be in contravention of current guidelines and regulations, and completely unacceptable for reasons of public health and safety.

The Parish Council notes the following British Horse Society Guidance regarding the ideal

distance to Bridleways:

'That, as a starting point when assessing a site and its potential layout, a separation distance of four times the overall height should be the target for National Trails and Ride UK routes, as these are likely to be used by equestrians unfamiliar with turbines, and a distance of three times overall height from all other routes, including roads, with the 200m recommended in the Technical Guidance to PPS 22 being seen as the minimum, where it is shown in a particular case that this would be acceptable. The negotiation process recommended in PPS 22 should indicate whether, in the particular circumstances of each site, these guidelines can be relaxed or need strengthening to minimise or eliminate the potential difficulties.'

There do seem to be inconsistencies of approach evident on careful study of Broadview's application with regard to bridleways, in as much as they advocate a 200 m exclusion zone around a route that crosses the north of the site, (where no turbines are proposed) but conveniently reduce the exclusion zone to 100m on a route to the south of the site with more equine traffic when this would impinge unfavourably with the location of turbines.

3

Finance

a) To approve bills for payment

Cllr Coatsworth proposed, seconded by Cllr Barnes that the following bill for payment be paid, £200 having been allocated to the publication of the newsletter in the budget. All were in favour.

The meeting closed at 8:29 pm