

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Julian Grubb (Vice-Chair in the Chair) and Councillors Imran Altaf, Karen Ashley, Tom Baker-Price, Andrew Fry, Gemma Monaco and Timothy Pearman

Also Present:

Sukvinder Agimal – County Highways

Officers:

Helena Plant, Paul Lester and Amar Hussain

Democratic Services Officer:

Sarah Sellers

38. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Michael Chalk and Councillor Aled Evans

Apologies were also received from Councillor Brandon Clayton who had been due to attend as a speaker in his ward member capacity for agenda item.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

40. UPDATE REPORTS

There was no update report.

41. APPLICATION 21/00195/FUL - LAND SOUTH OF ASTWOOD LANE FECKENHAM REDDITCH B96 6HP - MR MICHAEL FLETCHER (STATKRAFT UK LTD)

Construction of a Greener Grid Park comprising energy storage and grid balancing equipment along with associated infrastructure, landscaping and access

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Chair

Officers updated Members that since the committee report had been published one further representation had been received in objection but that this had not raised any new issues not already covered in the summary of public consultation responses on pages 11 to 12 of the agenda.

Officers presented the report and took Members through the slides in the presentation pack. In doing so officers set out the physical elements of the proposed battery storage facility and the reasons for the selection of the particular location for the site adjacent to the existing electricity sub-station. It was noted that the equipment would be used to store, import and export electricity and that the energy park was designed to support the flexible operation of the National Grid and the decarbonisation of electricity supply.

The development would be operated remotely with occasional inspection and maintenance visits. Significant landscaping works were proposed including retention of existing trees, new planting and biodiversity enhancements. These measures would be secured through conditions and the implementation of a Landscape and Biodiversity Mitigation Plan.

It was noted that the site was located entirely within the Green Belt and Members were referred to the Green Belt assessment on pages 19 to 24 of the agenda. Officers had concluded that the impact on the openness of the Green Belt would be limited given the low scale of development and proposed landscaping. Further, that the applicant had demonstrated that Very Special Circumstances existed which could justify the proposal in the Green Belt as set out on page 24 of the report.

With regard to the local highway network, it was noted that during the construction phase there would be an impact arising from daytime HGV deliveries to the site and from an estimated 8 to 12 deliveries of abnormal loads. Officers described the options for HGV routing that had been considered with reference to the Proposed HGV Routing Plan on page 25 of the Site Plans and Presentations Pack, and summarised the reasons why routes A and C had been discounted.

The route preferred by County Highways was Route B along the A441 through Astwood Bank onto the Saltway and then Rockhill Lane, and this had been agreed by the applicant. Provision had been made for necessary upgrades and post completion remedial works at Rockhill Lane which would be carried out at the expense of the applicant. To mitigate the impact of Abnormal Load Vehicles measures adopted would include night working and road closures.

In commenting on other aspects of the application, officers referred to the issues around fire safety which had been raised by Feckenham Parish Council. Members were advised that a further fire safety report had been submitted by the applicant, and that a more detailed suite of documents addressing fire safety would be developed by the applicant during the design phase. Based on the fire safety measures proposed to be adopted by the applicant, and the condition requiring a site-specific Fire Statement to be submitted to the planning authority (Condition 21 on page 42), officers were satisfied that public safety would be adequately addressed.

In assessing the planning balance officers had concluded that the development was in compliance with adopted local plan policies and was strongly supported by Government Policy for sustainable development and zero carbon electricity. As such the application was recommended for approval.

As already noted at the start of the meeting, Councillor Brandon Clayton had sent apologies and would not be able to participate in public speaking as ward councillor.

At the invitation of the Chair the following speakers addressed the Committee, the first speaker in objection and the second two speakers in support: -

- Councillor Hugo Hammersley on behalf of Feckenham Parish Council (written statement read out)
- Mr Guy Nicholson of Stratkraft UK Ltd
- Ms Naomi Heikalo Planning agent of Arcus Consultancy Services

In response to questions regarding the proposed HGV routing, officers from County Highways advised that the roads selected were of appropriate classifications to take HGV vehicles, that HGV vehicles currently used the A441 through Astwood Bank without issues, and that consultation on the HGV routing had not been carried out with Warwickshire County Council.

In debating the application Members commented on a number of issues including the public benefits to energy supply/ the National Grid that would be derived from the scheme, and whether or not the HGV routing plans could be said to be acceptable given the figure of 58 daily HGV movements during the construction phase as set out on page 28 of the agenda. Concerns were expressed around highway safety for the part of the A441 running through Astwood Bank due to the volume of traffic, the presence of parked vehicles,

and vehicle movements for school drop off and pick up for the two schools located on that stretch of road.

The officer recommendation for approval was put to the vote but not carried.

Following further discussion, and in light of the concerns previously expressed regarding the suitability of the A441 for the required HGV movements, an alternative recommendation was proposed and seconded that the application be deferred for the Members to receive more information about the options for HGV routing.

RESOLVED that

The application be deferred to a future meeting of the Planning Committee for officers to provide Members with further information regarding other alternative HGV routes that had been considered and any alternative options not previously explored, the area of concern being the suitability of the A441 for use by HGV movements as proposed under the HGV routing plan.

The Meeting commenced at 7.04 pm
and closed at 8.25 pm