

Planning Committee

Wednesday, 19 January 2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Michael Chalk (Chair), Councillor Julian Grubb (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Imran Altaf, Karen Ashley, Tom Baker-Price, Aled Evans, Andrew Fry, Timothy Pearman and Alex Fogg

Also Present:

Karen Hanchett – County Highways

Officers:

Helena Plant, Paul Lester, Amar Hussain, Simon Jones and Claire Gilbert

Democratic Services Officer:

Sarah Sellers

47. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gemma Monaco. Councillor Alex Fogg attended as substitute for Councillor Monaco.

Apologies were also received on behalf of Councillor Brandon Clayton who had been due to attend as a speaker in his ward member capacity for agenda item 5.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declaration of interest.

49. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10TH NOVEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that

The Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 10th November 2021 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

50. UPDATE REPORTS

There was no Update Report.

51. 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

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, its siting and location and access arrangements. The site's location, adjacent to the existing Feckenham National Grid substation was part of the design, and Members were referred to the reasons why that particular location had been selected as set out at pages 22 to 24 of the agenda.

The purpose of the site would be to store electricity and to aid 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.

The site would be operated remotely, with occasional site visits, and would produce 11 full time equivalent jobs.

Officers explained that the site was located entirely in the Green Belt and Members were referred to the analysis of Green Belt issues set out on pages 24 to 30 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 based upon locational need, the innovative nature of the technology to be used and the contribution the site would make to the national target of decarbonisation.

With regard to HGV routing, it was noted that the application had previously been deferred by Planning Committee for this element to be looked into in more detail. Officers summarised the different routes available, and Members were referred to the HGV routing plan set out on page 25 of the Site Plans and Presentations Pack.

The construction phase was expected to take 18 months, and in peak periods (months 1 to 3 and 8 to 9) there could be up to 58 two way HGV movements per day, and together with associated staff vehicle movements, this could produce a total of up to 98 two way movements per day. Officers pointed out that this level of vehicle movements would be temporary and confined to the construction period only, reducing to a minimal level once the site was operational.

As a contractor had not been appointed yet, it was premature to be able to advise Members what specific routes would be used. However, it was noted that routes 1,3 and 5 had been assessed by County Highways as unsuitable for HGV movements, whilst routes 2,4 and 6 had been found to be suitable. Following consultation with the County Abnormal Loads Team, the recommended route for abnormal loads would be Route 1 with mitigating measures in place including night working and road closures.

Officers commented on some of the other elements of the application including the proposed woodland habitat planting to enhance bio-diversity and previous concerns raised about fire safety issues. Officers re-iterated the comments made at the previous meeting that they were satisfied that fire safety had been properly addressed by the applicant, and that provision had been made for a site specific Fire Safety Statement to be submitted (Condition 21).

In conclusion, the application would enable for the provision of electrical infrastructure to support the National Grid in the West Midlands, and was supported by national policy around decarbonisation and the Borough Council's declaration of a climate emergency. Very Special Circumstances had been demonstrated and the impact on the Green Belt was judged to be relatively minimal. As such the application was recommended for approval.

At the invitation of the Chair the following speakers addressed the Committee under the Council's Public Speaking Rules: -

- Councillor Craig Warhurst – Ward Member for Astwood Bank and Feckenham
- Ms Naomi Heikalo – agent for the Applicant

In debating the application Members referred to a number of issues including:-

- Concerns about the suitability of some of the routes for HGV movements due to congestion and road safety.
- The extent to which the developer should be permitted to choose the routes that are used (based on the ones which

had been found acceptable by County Highways) as opposed to choice of route being controlled by a condition.

- The fact that traffic disruption would be temporary for the duration of the build phase.
- The longer term community and environmental gains from the scheme going ahead in terms of the infrastructure that would be created and the benefits to the supply of electricity and de-carbonisation.

In response to the points raised by Members the County Highways officer gave further information on the assessment and suitability of the 6 routes as shown on the HGV routing plan and re-iterated that the added vehicle movements would be temporary in nature. It was noted that the choice of route would normally be left to the contractor (once appointed) and there was a mechanism for the LPA to influence arrangements through the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) as set out in condition 13.

RESOLVED that

Having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be GRANTED subject to the conditions set out on pages 42 to 47 of the agenda.

52. APPLICATION 21/00799/FUL - LAND EAST OF BERROWHILL LANE FECKENHAM WORCESTERSHIRE B96 6QJ - MR K MORTON

Agricultural track

Officers outlined the application for the installation of a track of 75 metres in length and 200 mm in depth across agricultural land in the green belt to enable access between the Berrowhill Lane and land owned by the applicant.

Officers took Members through the plans and images on the Site Plans and Presentations Pack from which it was noted that in December 2021 the track had already been installed, pending the outcome of the planning application.

Officers explained that due to the location of the site close to an adjacent field with “ridge and furrow” topography, an archaeological condition had been agreed and would involve the digging of a test trench (Condition 3). Members were referred to the comments of the county archaeology service on page 52 of the agenda.

There had been no objections from statutory consultees, save for the comments from Feckenham Parish Council (page 50) and the application was recommended for approval on the basis that an agricultural need had been demonstrated.

At the invitation of the Chair the Applicant Mr Kim Morton addressed the Committee under the Council's public speaking rules.

RESOLVED that

Having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be GRANED subject to the conditions set out on pages 55 to 56 of the agenda.

53. APPLICATION 21/01618/FUL - GREENLANDS BUSINESS CENTRE STUDLEY ROAD REDDITCH B98 7HD - JOHN HOMER ON BEHALF OF REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Proposed installation of air source heat pump to service existing business centre

Members received a report outlining the proposal to install an air source heat pump at Greenlands Business Centre. Officers outlined the location and appearance of the heat pump.

In addition to the images in the Site Plans and Presentations Pack, officers advised that an amended plan had been received which would form part of Condition 2. The changes in the amended plan were of a minor nature and did not change the officer recommendation which was for approval.

RESOLVED that

Having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations planning permission be GRANTED subject to the conditions set out on pages 59 to 60 of the agenda and to the addition to Condition 2 of the following additional plan reference: -

"Drawing No. CN2139-ALT-ZZ-XX-DR-Z-1401 rev. P2 Site Plan"

54. APPLICATION 21/01619/FUL - TOWN HALL WALTER STRANZ SQUARE REDDITCH B98 8AH - JOHN HOMER ON BEHALF OF REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Proposed installation of air source heat pump and associated equipment including external buffer vessel

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Members received a report outlining the proposal to install an air source heat pump and buffer vessel. Officers outlined the location and appearance of the equipment which would be located on the eastern side of the Town Hall Roof.

RESOLVED that

Having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be GRANTED subject to the conditions set out on page 63 of the agenda.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.31 pm