



NOTES FROM KILN FIELDS SOLAR MEETING

Thursday 30th Sept, 1.30pm via MS Teams

Present Parish Councillors Brian Baker, Stephen Harnett; Clerk Susan Turner
Mark Harding for Enviromena, Chris Atkinson for Barton Wilmore.

- 1 Introductions: Mark Harding, Enviromena Divisional Director for Europe including UK.
Chris Atkinson, Planning Associate, Barton Wilmore.
- 2 Enviromena has UK office based in Grazeley and London-based shareholders.
 - i Enviromena is developer and installer, and operates the site throughout life of project. Don't install and walk away after two years; responsible for long term environment and biodiversity of the site.
 - ii Their business to achieve best returns in terms of energy generation. But also to manage trees and hedgerows on a site and work with their surroundings; to ensure landscape remains intact, where possible improved, taking screening into account.
 - iii Distance between panels optimised to enable vegetation growth beneath. [Apparent they're not looking to continue agricultural use.]
 - iv Construction phase will be most disruptive, when most traffic will be generated. Buildings on site will all be piled foundations, keeping concrete to a minimum. Perimeter fence will be deer fencing, will ensure security of site.
- 3 Barton Wilmore on Planning issues
 - i Barton Wilmore (BW) has delivered a number of renewable energy planning projects.
 - ii Planning policy at national level is positive in terms of new energy schemes. NPPF guidance is taken up in Hart Local Plan Policy NBE10 which in principle supportive, subject to demonstrating no adverse harm to landscape, ecology, heritage, highway.
 - iii Landscape – one of the big issues for solar. This site benefits from existing mature trees, adjoining areas of woodland. The present field demarkation will be retained. BW will produce a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment as part of the Planning Application. This will assess landscape character and the potential to mitigate impact. Identifies views around the site which are assessed at Year 1 and at Year 15. The master plan will identify where hedging / screening needs to be enhanced.
 - iv The site includes Flood zones 1,2 & 3. Majority in 1, a quarter of the site in 2 & 3. Solar deemed 'essential infrastructure', and so 'sustainable' in zones 3a and b. The DNO (Distribution network operators) substation will be at NW of site in flood zone 1.
 - v Recognised that there are heritage assets in proximity of the site – listed buildings and Conservation Areas incl Heckfield. Heritage Statement will be submitted as part of application – will consider cultural, heritage and setting including archaeology.
 - vi Ecologist was appointed as part of the initial survey team. As agricultural land, this is deemed to be low ecological value with the exception of hedgerows and trees. All existing trees and field boundary hedgerows to be retained where possible. It may be necessary to remove one or two trees for access.

Solar farms are good at enabling biodiversity net gain: the net gain calculation will be submitted with the application. Work to improve the landscape feeds into enhancing biodiversity. There will be little habitat affected by the construction of the site, but a good level of improvement.

4

Q&A:

- i This site was previously owned by the Wellington Estate. The Estate still holds the timber rights and also sporting rights. How will you deal with this access, the local Shoot does shoot across this piece of land? Mark said they had done due diligence. Will take this info away and investigate if any significant issue.
- ii To discuss habitat... From a farming perspective, encouraged to be environmentally friendly, trying to do our bit to improve habitat. Mark said ecology is one of the biggest parts of the project. 'There is an obligation to ensure we provide the set level of biodiversity improvement and it is our intention to do that. Our intention is to ensure all aspects of delivery and operation of the site up to scratch.'
- iii Re access... Chris noted that once the site is operational, there will be two access points and very low traffic, potentially two vehicle trips per month (a vehicle akin to a small scall transit / 4x4). For traffic at construction stage, BW will submit a Construction & Travel plan which will identify routes most travelled to the site. Construction will take three or four months.
 Question – Will traffic management include traffic light management on B3349? Mark said the Travel plan will include all details of number of vehicles and how to manage. Chris said safety was the primary focus throughout the development / construction operation. Safety is paramount for site personnel and public road users; traffic movement is the biggest threat to safety.
 Question: Presume coming into site off the bend on the main road – so to consider how to get to the rest of the site... Having farmed this site for a while, there are some ditches to cross and if constructing in winter will need a hard road, be it temporally, to get in and out. Would want to do this in summer. Mark said he had visited the site, from both entrances, has walked it in winter and summer, has seen the issues might face. He would choose access from a main road where possible, a full assessment has been made for all times of the year. Clearly the preference is a summer build, specially in UK, but timing will be subject to planning and grid connection. 'Looking for the least problems to us and those around site.'
- iv Chris noted a further two planning issues:
 Agricultural land A couple of years ago, a Ministerial Statement advised that Solar and Wind installations should avoid the 'best and most versatile' agricultural land. It is incumbent on the applicant to demonstrate that this is the case. Survey of the site indicates the vast majority Grade 3b, with a small sliver to east side being 3a, nothing higher, so not 'best and most versatile'.
 Trees in and adjoining the site, important to retain where possible, and protect. Two elements to this – a Tree survey, and an Arboricultural impact assessment – the latter to ensure all development is outwith any root protection zones, and that during construction the trees are protected.
- v Question re connection to grid. Mark said will be a new connection to Bramley sub station via underground cable. Have a provisional connection route planned, c5km. This is not the longest route to be taken, probably longer than average, but not a concern, they have a route that is not going to cause disruption to others, not going across land. Mark will supply map of indicative route.
- vi Question: which way will the panels face? Answer: fixed due south. (Some are tracker sites but not this one.)

- vii Question: What happens when the panels wear out? Are they recycled? Mark said all components have a long life, use higher quality 'tier one for solar'. Panels are guaranteed to 80% of optimum output to year 25. Otherwise the main components to consider are the inverters, multiple across the site, can potentially fail after 10-15 years. At the end of life at 40 years, the farm will either be retained by the Solar project or converted back to its original state. (The present planning permission is to end at 40 years.) All solar modules are recycled: must have in place an environmental strategy and procedural waste management warranty. Also all new products must be properly sourced, ethics of business are reviewed.
- viii Questions on maintenance: How will the site be maintained? How will it be managed? How will the grassland be kept? Mark said: The maintenance offering for the whole site will be by Enviromena in-house teams. This includes maintenance of the solar systems, modules and components; safety of the site including health and safety; managing hedgerows, grass cutting.
 Question: Noxious weed are becoming more of a problem now the County Council is not regularly mowing the roadside – get weed seeds across farmland. Mark responded that their sites are always kept tidy, be it keeping the grass cut, preventing litter.
 Question – Managing grass land for biodiversity doesn't always equate to grass being frequently cut and tidy. Is wildlife and biodiversity a priority? Mark said perhaps he over-emphasised 'tidy' in response to the previous question. It is a planning requirement to ensure biodiversity net gain, maintaining for wildlife will be key.
- ix Question: The advertised site capacity for power generation is for 6,700 homes. Is this at peak or average? And how does this reduce over time, given the panels are only guaranteed to 80% efficiency after 25 years? Mark said the 6,700 homes was a guidance figure taken from average energy use from annual production across solar parks. There is degradation over time, the guarantee are minimum levels, the published energy levels are for the first 5 or 10 years. If the site is underperforming, maintenance or replacement of components will address this, clearly wish to see optimum production.
- x Question: Considering seasonal variation, shorter days in winter, this is where battery storage comes in? Mark said there are constraints on the grid at this site, battery storage is not part of this project, had there been an opportunity to put storage on site would have looked at it. In general terms energy storage is key, but we are nowhere near providing too much energy at the moment. Company model is to combine the two: this site is stand alone solar, some are stand alone storage, others combined.
- xi Question: Is Enviromena renting or buying the site? Mark, this confidential at present.
- 5. Note from Mark: Any concerns, questions to contact him. Only 10 minutes away, happy to meet on site.