

Pre-Planning Virtual Meeting re Moat Solar Farm

28th January 2021 at 6.30pm

Present:

Sean Murphy from Elgin Energy, Ben Lewis and Tom Edmunds from Barton Willmore

Cllrs Mrs Howley, Mrs Marcovecchio, Mrs Duffield, Mrs Moseley, Cllr Mrs Gooch (observed only) the Town Clerk and Cllr Hammond from Taynton Parish Council.

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Beard and Heathfield.

A presentation was given on the proposed proposals and an overview of the company.

If planning consent is obtained:

The panels will be pile driven into the ground, so land can be restored after use. Sheep would be grazing the site.

A space of 2 – 6 metres would be left between rows of the panels.

Hedgerows would be maintained around the site.

CCTV cameras would need to be installed, as will deer fencing.

The Public Rights of Way footpaths would remain unchanged, but may have some diversions during construction.

The substation is to be situated south of the site and the hope is to connect into the existing pylon. All other connections will be underground.

Taking onboard some comments received during the consultation, the proposed site is increasing in size to that of the original plan; this is to accommodate more screening and to pull back some of the panels. The solar area will not be increased.

The access to the site would only be from the direction of the B4215 and no HGV's will go through Kents Green.

This area of the land available is being used, as it is relatively low quality land compared to further west towards Moat Farm.

An overview of the consultation process was given. A planning application will be submitted in February 2021 and the website consultation will re-open during the screening of the project. Elgin Energy are prepared to consider comments and may amend plans if required.

A community benefit fund of £3,000 per megawatt will be given to the Town Council.

Questions Raised:

Consultation letters were dated 18th December, but were not delivered for 4 or more days later; why couldn't the consultation wait until after Christmas? Could the consultation be extended as some people had less than 4 weeks to respond?

The consultation was extended by a week and will be re-opened once the planning application has been submitted and during the screening of the project. Apologies were given for the delay in the letters being delivered. If residents are not able to

complete the online form, telephone communication is an option. A public event could not take place due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

Could the application be delayed until a face to face consultation can take place? Unfortunately not, as there is no clear path as to when a meeting could take place. If anyone does not have access to the online documents, they can be posted.

Two properties close to the site did not receive letters; how was it decided who would receive notification? Properties that would be impacted on the site should have received letters and apologies were given for those who did not. Letters can be resent if required.

A Cllr had responded to the consultation asking to be contacted and had not, why was this? Mr Murphy agreed to look into this.

A query was raised regarding the land quality, as the whole site had been used for growing the same crop. A land classification survey had been undertaken and has shown the land to be 3b. The land classification report will be submitted as part of the planning application.

Would the community benefit payment be a one-off? Yes. Discussions on regarding who will receive the community benefit, will take place between the developers and councils.

A comment was made whether the proposal was proportionate to the site, especially as there is a smaller solar farm over the road.

The panels have a 40 year lifespan; so what happens to them once they degrade? They are largely recycled. Equipment has improved and so their lifespan is longer than it used to be.

The B4215 regularly floods, what impact will this development have on the flood risk in the future? A flood risk assessment will be submitted as part of the planning application. There will be little difference pre and post development. The Lead Local Flood Authority are being consulted and will need to sign off the risk assessment.

Main concerns received by residents were regarding the consultation process, loss of view affecting both residents and tourism businesses and the effect on property prices.

The proposed development area is referred to as southwest of Newent, whereas the maps show it to be to the southeast of Newent.

Concerns were raised regarding noise from the inverter/transformer. A noise assessment will be submitted as part of the planning application. The inverter sound is similar to a bathroom fan and will not be noticeable unless in close proximity.

It was pointed out that there is no infrastructure at the farm for keeping animals, as Moat is an arable farm.

What other uses are available for the land under the panels. The only animals that can graze are sheep. There is no other product, but some areas will be wildflower areas.

A property was incorrectly named on the map on the documentation. The company is aware of this and has been in contact with the resident.

There is a cluster of houses that overlook the area; what measures could be taken to mitigate the loss of rural view? The landscape team have recently revisited the site and are looking into options.

How does the size of this site compare to others? The size of this project and the impact is different than those in open, less accessible sites. The biggest site with planning approval is 900 acres. The proposed size is becoming more common, as the smaller sites are no longer commercially viable.

If security fencing is being fitted, how will the footpaths stay open? The deer fencing would be erected either side of the footpath by the panels.

Would the company be prepared to hold a public zoom meeting? This will be considered.