

CARLTON cum WILLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held in St Peters Church On Monday 9 December 2024

Present: - Kate Homan, Polly Fenwick, Paul Archer, Robert Foster, Nicki Whetstone, Robert Enschede, Gregory Franco, Edith Osborn as Clerk

A quorum was established.

- 1 **Apologies:** Robert Enschede, Henry Batchelor – County Councillor, Geoff Harvey – District Councillor

- 2 **Declarations of Interest**
There were no new Declarations of Interest.

- 3 **Open Forum for public participation**
The Chair confirmed that the response to the consultation had to be submitted by 12 December 2024.
The meeting had been called to hear residents' views on the proposed solar project. She also noted that the Kingsway Solar Community Action group have a website on which there is a lot of helpful information about solar panels, solar farms and their response.

The following points were raised by residents and discussed with parish councillors:

- Solar panels should be installed on roofs rather than on the land
- It is cheaper for the government to have companies use land for the panels than give a grant to homeowners to put panels on their own roofs
- There is a lack of a land framework by government currently. The LibDems are pushing government for a proper framework
- What happens to the footpaths and bridleways running across the proposed parcels of land?
- The river Stour runs through the area selected.
- The Moat House, an ancient monument site, lies half in Carlton and half in Weston Colville. If there are archaeological sites on the land, that will make a difference to whether the project achieves planning.
- There have been celtic and roman finds/coins along the route from Willingham Green to Weston Colville
- Tombs have been found at Willingham Green
- The Icknield Way runs through the proposed land
- Having listed properties in the vicinity makes a difference when considering solar panel installation
- It was pointed out that a 1.8 hectare solar farm proposed for land on the opposite side of the cross roads to the Jellycat warehouse was rejected in 2023 as it would have changed the character of the landscape.
- This project is to use 1,500 acres to generate 500 megawatts of electricity
- The project originally was for parcels of land at A and B on the plan. Henry D'Abo subsequently offered his land which is parcel C
- The land will be leased for 40 years from the farmers
- Downing Renewable Developments have 29 projects in progress around the country, the closest being near Peterborough
- 273 projects have been lodged with the government
- There will be two substations to support the project
- An environmental impact assessment will be made
- An independent view of archaeological sites will be required

CARLTON cum WILLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

- There will be noise from the battery storage areas and the substations. This has not been designed yet so no sites have been selected for installation
- This response by 12 December is required for the non-statutory consultation. The map supplied shows all of the proposed land but that could change by the time of the formal statutory consultation
- Will the parish council collaborate with the other parish councils in the area? Information from the Sunnica development will be sent to the parish council
- Should tree preservation orders, flooding issues, problem areas with the land be highlighted in the response?
- The government has energy targets to reach by 2030
- The UK Solar Alliance have a website which covers projects on farmland across England
- The size if the scheme was noted
- Can solar panels influence the weather patterns in the area?
- What about food security in this country?
- Other countries have stopped large scale solar developments
- East Anglia is the breadbasket of Britain
- Sheep could be grazing between the panels but would that affect sheep farmers in the north of the country
- If too much electricity is generated, some of it might have to be let go
- Could the electricity be used by locals at a reduced rate?
- The panels are made in China so not being environmental by importing them to this country
- Lower Wood – how would access to that nature reserve be dealt with?
- There are badgers, great crested newts, muntjac, barn owls in the area, migrating birds to be considered
- The Wildlife Trust has already written to object to the project
- The fields will be fenced in, 3.7m high, so there will not be easy movement of wildlife in the area
- We should object to area C as A and B affect less people
- Construction traffic will be blocking the roads for three years while the panels are being set up
- What about maintenance of the panels thereafter
- Water will be needed to wash the panels. The water table is high in this area and it cannot be altered
- There is usually flooding of the roads somewhere in the area after heavy rainfall
- Would there be a danger to aircraft as the area covered by panels will be so large?
- The solar farm at Highpoint has been in place for ten years and the panels have not moved in the wind
- There is no evidence that house prices will fall as a result of living near a solar farm
- Ideas for what residents would want in return – trees, hedges? If the view is ruined, can money be spent planting higher hedges?
- Could there be a deep boundary to lessen the impact of the panels?
- Could there be a margin around housing to allow wildlife to move about?
- The connection to the Grid is not until 2032. The substation at Burwell has not been built yet.
- The formal consultation will commence in Autumn 2025, the environmental process will start in May/June 2025 with a statement available later in 2025. Results of the consultation will be submitted to the Secretary of State in August 2026
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CARLTON cum WILLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

- From the experience of the Sunnica project, it is best to identify any experts in the community and use them to support the opposition to the project
- Residents may have to raise funds to help the cause
- Maybe leave out the detail until the statutory consultation process?
- It was noted that landowners may not grant access for a study of the land
- It was noted that area B would be the best area to continue through to planning. Many farms have offered land for this project, Projects close to the A11 are preferable.
- It was noted that there are lots of sites being proposed but the costs of connection vary hugely.
- It was noted that residents opposed the proposal and there were no comments in favour.

4 Kingsway Solar Consultation – proposed solar farm and battery storage project and response by the parish council

The Chair confirmed that the parish council would submit their response based on the comments raised above by residents.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

The Meeting closed at 9.10pm