

**Minutes of Oakington & Westwick Parish Council Planning Meeting held at
Oakington Sports Pavilion, Queens Way, Oakington
Monday 24 February 2025 at 7.30pm**

Agenda No:		Action
	Present: Cllrs D Reeves (Chair), T Starling, J Grove, J Bailey, J Camilleri. Clerk: L Lawrence. In attendance: Cnty Cllr F Thompson, Dist Cllr N Warren-Green. 20 members of the public.	
25/P1	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Cllr R Pinter (personal) Dist Cllr T Bygott.	
25/P2	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS None declared.	
25/P3	WILSON'S ROAD SOLAR FARM Ashley Fromberg, Regener8 gave an updated presentation following feedback received at the public open event held in Longstanton in December. He stated that much thought had been given to ecology and they now planned to plant trees and hedgerow along the site perimeter as well as install new ponds on the site for newts habitat. The land itself is low grade agricultural and there will be potential for sheep as well as wildflower planting. There will be a 50%+ biodiversity net gain. Wilson's Road will not be used for construction traffic or site access. The new proposed access will be directly via a new junction straight off the new Northstowe haul road. A community benefit fund will generate approximately £,5,000 PA, which is likely to go to Longstanton parish. They hope to submit the planning application at the end of April 2025 and if approved, work should start late 2026/early 2027. Regener8 will hold a webinar prior to application submission where they would welcome further comments on the plans.	
25/P4	QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM COUNCILLORS REGARDING THE SOLAR FARM PRESENTATION Q. How many solar panels? A. Not sure of exact number but they will be 600-watt panels, total 26 megawatts. Q. Is the site likely to attract rural crime? A. Been the old case where metal has been taken but there will be security cameras with movement sensors on the site. Q. What happens to the actual ground beneath the panels? A. Grassland and wildflowers will be planted around the panels. The frames are installed 1.5 metres deep. The ground quality should actually improve. Q. What will happen to run-off water when it rains? A. There is a ditch already on the site which will be improved. There will be no flooding impact on the local community. Q. Will the light blocked by the panels impact on growing? A. Planning to plant shade resistant species of grass and wildflowers. Q. How high will the panels be? A. 3 metres at highest, 0.8 metres at lowest. Q. Are the panels more efficient than house panels? A. Not particularly. They are better quality and have a longer life span though. Q. Will they generate much power if poor light?	

	<p>A. There will be 10 megawatts of batteries, so that if there is an oversupply on a particular day this can be released later.</p> <p>Q. Have you consider Swavesey & District Riding Club’s request for a bridleway around the site?</p> <p>A. Not aware of this. They have allowed permissive access on some sites where appropriate, but this could damage the wildflowers. The land around the site is owned by Homes England so a discussion would need to be had with them.</p> <p>Q. What will be access be made of?</p> <p>A. Compacted stone track, MOT Type 2 or 3.</p>	
25/P5	<p>QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC REGARDING THE SOLAR FARM PRESENTATION</p> <p>Q.(Young person) Could an animal be injured/killed if they nibbled a wire?</p> <p>A. Never heard of that happening. All cables will be hidden underground. It is common to have sheep on a solar farm.</p> <p>Q. You mentioned at the open event that you are a small company. How many other sites do you have?</p> <p>A. One in Stratford Upon Avon, one in Worcestershire, a few in the planning stages. There is also a small team in Italy.</p> <p>Q. Resident commended Regener8 on the improvements made after the public event comments and asked if they had taken into account that the field is a hunting ground for brown owls?</p> <p>A. No trees or buildings are being removed. There will still be foraging opportunities on the site. However, I will note to follow this up with the ecologist to ensure they are sensitive during the construction phase.</p> <p>Q. I understood that the community fund would be shared between the parishes of Longstanton, Oakington & Westwick and Northstowe. Is that correct?</p> <p>A. No. It hasn’t been finalised yet but is likely to be given to Longstanton as the site is in their parish. However they are open to alternative suggestions. Approx £5,000 a year will be generated for the life of the site (35 years). If you think there would be more impact from a one-off payment Regener8 are open to front loading this somewhat but not the whole amount.</p> <p>Q. I understood from the public event that the community fund would be around £120,000 divided by 3 parishes.</p> <p>A. That is not correct. We didn’t know the amount at that stage.</p> <p>Q. Is there an opportunity to put panels on Northstowe buildings or the Busway P&R site rather than using land?</p> <p>A. The P&R site isn’t large enough for a 26 mega watts farm. It is tricky to get that sort of scale without using land. The government has set strong targets for net zero. Regener8 don’t do roof top panels.</p> <p>Q. Are there any plans to monitor biodiversity?</p> <p>A. No plans for this site. We have had universities undertake studies on other sites. If anyone knows of anyone from a university who might be interested please contact us.</p> <p>Q. The site could be rich in archaeology. Has this been planned?</p> <p>A. A heritage consultant has reviewed it and a geophysical survey has been undertaken. An unexploded bomb survey will likely be needed as well.</p> <p>Q. Where will the connection to the grid be?</p> <p>A. Sub-station on Longstanton Road (B1050) via underground cables.</p> <p>Q. Regarding the Flood Risk Assessment, do you know which catchment site the watershed is in?</p> <p>A. No. I will send the initial drainage plans to the clerk after the meeting. Please feedback any comments/questions on this as soon as possible. Cllr Bailey commented that it is 50/50 – the big track in the centre comes Oakington way and the other side goes Longstanton way. The southern end runs into a ditch which comes out behind the Drift.</p>	

	<p>Q. What is the total area of the site? A. The total within the red line on the map is 44 hectares, total area of panels is approx 100 acres.</p> <p>Q. Will there be any maintenance tracks on the site? A. 2 tracks, 1 road</p> <p>Q. Have you looked at vertical panels? A. Like the concept of agrivoltaics but we are restricted at this site and the quality of the land is not good enough. The panels would also be higher so would be difficult to screen effectively (5 metres)</p> <p>Q. Who will look after the newly planted trees/hedges and what type of trees? A. They will be managed by a local contractor. Exact species is still to be decided. This would be agreed with the LPA but they will be mixed native. If you email me I will get an example species mix to you.</p> <p>Q. Cnty Cllr Thompson stated that 350,000 trees planted by National Highways along the new A14 had died due to lack of maintenance, so it is important that these trees/hedging are looked after properly. Have you liaised with the local councils on this as each has their own biodiversity strategies? A. We are currently scoping the EIA. We will design the site so that it has the highest impact and gain. The county ecologist will no doubt comment on this as part of the planning process.</p> <p>Q. Could birds try to nest in the panels? A. No. They are not like roof panels where birds can potentially nest underneath. We could possibly create some habitats e.g. bird boxes, bee boxes.</p> <p>Q. Could you do some community outreach, e.g. local schools? A. Yes. We would be open to that.</p> <p>Chair thanked Mr Fromberg for attending and members of the public for their questions. <i>6 members of the public left the meeting at 8.30pm.</i></p>	
25/P6	<p>PUBLIC OPEN SESSION ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS</p> <p>Residents of 21 Manor Farm Close stated that if the Manor Farm Close development goes ahead it will have a detrimental impact on their quality of life and they will be writing to both South Cambs DC and the Planning Inspectorate detailing their objections – including privacy, sound vibrations, traffic safety issues, the fact that the developers had used an old floor plan for their property and the access road will actually go within less than 1.5 metres from their bedroom and ensuite as they have extended over the garage. They had also visited the other development that Millen Homes had cited as setting a precedent for a 4-metre shared surface accommodating vehicles and pedestrians but that has an entirely different larger entrance with verges either side which are not included in the 4 metres track.</p> <p>A young Manor Farm Close resident stated there are often badgers, bats, deer and foxes on the land, 2 metres from their back garden. The family has video footage of badgers if it would be useful. Another resident stated this land is a much-needed wildlife corridor and he hoped the field could be turned into a nature reserve and provide a buffer between Oakington and Northstowe. Concern was also expressed by another resident about the very narrow access for emergency vehicles.</p> <p>District Councillor Warren-Green suggested that residents and the PC copy her in on any comments submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.</p>	
25/P7	<p>APPLICATIONS REQUIRING A DECISION</p> <p><u>24/02384/OUT – Land at Manor Farm Close - Outline application comprising 8no. dwellings with all matters reserved except for access.</u> Appeal against South Cambs District Council’s decision to refuse planning permission. To consider making any additional representations to the Planning Inspectorate.</p>	

	<p>Chair read out the CPRE submission statement about the restricted access road potentially affecting rapid access for emergency vehicles, particularly in the event of a fire. They stated that not only does this pose a possible increased risk to any immediately affected property but if a fire is uncontrolled during an extended period of dry weather it could also pose an increased risk of spread to other properties in the vicinity. CPRE had recommended that Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue should be consulted. The Chair had phoned the fire service who confirmed they had not been consulted.</p> <p>Other points discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access road barely passes the 3.75 metre width rule for emergency vehicles • The land is outside the village framework • There is a long-term flood risk to the site • The proposal would result in a further loss of buffer between Oakington & Northstowe • Site ecology and biodiversity should be preserved • CCC Archaeological Officer had confirmed that they had submitted incorrect figures regarding the number of Anglo-Saxon burials in the parish. However they had requested a full archaeological dig if planning is approved. Noted a contaminants survey would also be needed. • The developers have given misleading information about local facilities • The developers have said that ‘virtual’ paths either side of the access road are sufficient for pedestrian safety. However, Para 116 & 117 of the NPPF states development applications should give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements <p>Proposed by Cllr Starling that the PC’s previous objections should be reiterated to the Planning Inspectorate and the additional points raised tonight added in to the submission (including residents’ comments). Seconded by Cllr Camilleri. RESOLVED unanimously.</p> <p>Chair to draft a response and circulate it for comments. Noted submission deadline is 18th March.</p>	
25/P8	<p>DATE OF NEXT PLANNING MEETING</p> <p>Monday 31 March 2025, after Annual Parish Meeting – if required.</p>	
	<p>The meeting was declared closed at 9.07pm</p>	