

Northern Area Planning Committee

MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 JUNE 2024 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM, SN15 1ER.

Present:

Cllr Chuck Berry (Chairman), Cllr Howard Greenman (Vice-Chairman), Cllr David Bowler, Cllr Steve Bucknell, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Mike Sankey, Cllr Martin Smith, Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall and Cllr Dr Nick Murry (Substitute)

41 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Gavin Grant
Cllr Nic Puntis
Cllr Dr Brian Mathew (Cllr Nick Murry substituting)

42 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 22 May 2024 were considered for approval by the committee.

Resolved

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 May 2024 as a true and correct record.

43 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall declared an interest in application no. PL/2022/05504 as she had been lobbied by both sides as the local member. She declared she would participate in the debate and vote for the item with an open mind.

44 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

45 **Public Participation**

The Chairman explained the rules of public participation and the procedure to be followed at the meeting.

There were no statements or questions submitted.

46 **Planning Appeals and Updates**

Councillor Chuck Berry invited Adrian Walker, Development Management Team Leader, to update the Committee on the pending and determined appeals as per the appeals report included within the Agenda Pack.

Following which, it was:

Resolved:

The Committee noted the appeals report for the period 10 May 2024 to 7 June 2024.

47 **PL/2022/05504: Land at Stonehill, Minety, Wiltshire, SN16 9DX**

Public Participation

Mr Richard Thwaites spoke in support of the application.

Officers from the Development Management Area Team introduced the report which recommended that the Committee approve planning permission, subject to conditions, for the installation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) together with associated ancillary infrastructure, equipment, and access arrangements.

Key considerations identified included:

- Scale of development
- Visual impact
- Design
- Cumulative effects

Members of the Committee then had the opportunity to ask technical questions to the officer.

It was clarified that:

- The proposal did not include a definitive colour but there was a proposed condition that would require the colour to be submitted for approval. The expected colour was green or brown with camouflage also suggested.
- The standard assessment of cumulative impact was used.
- Noise suppressors could be conditioned and that a condition that an emergency plan be submitted for potential fires or contamination had been included in proposal.

- There was no requirement to prove “need” which government legislation sets out clearly.
- Any information received on an application was assumed accurate unless any significant doubt is raised that it might not be.
- A condition to force the return of land to an agricultural state should the site become obsolete (within a decommissioning strategy) was already contained in the proposal and could be enforced.
- There was no proposal to sink the site into the ground to reduce visual impact.
- The land was not considered industrial land and would remain agricultural land even whilst being used for battery storage, and after any potential removal would return to “square one” in terms of planning applications.

Members of the public then had the opportunity to present their views to the committee as detailed above. The local member, Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, also spoke to the application.

A debate followed where councillors considered when the line should be drawn on the cumulative impact of numerous BESS facilities, although it was noted that this application was optimum and neat.

The landscape officer’s comments stating that there would be harm to the landscape was considered.

Concern over safety and potential hazards was considered, although members appreciated planning officer clarification that there was an exemplary record of almost no fires and zero injuries or lasting damage to the surrounding environment at BESS sites.

The committee considered the planning officer’s recommendation for approval with conditions and that this shouldn’t necessarily be disregarded out of hand given the level of consideration put in.

During debate a motion to refuse the application was moved by Cllr Steve Bucknell and seconded by Cllr Mike Sankey with reference to Core Policy 51, cumulative impact, and impact on the landscape.

Resolved

That planning permission be refused.

48 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 14.00pm – 15.45pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Max Hirst of Democratic Services, e-mail committee@wiltshire.gov.uk

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