

**An address to the WODC Planning Committee
Monday 16 March in Witney**

Good afternoon.

We have an extremely good relationship with our resident and landowner Mr. Harry Metcalfe and the Parish is very grateful to him for allowing the development of two flood defence bunds built on his land. We have all worked together to achieve a great result, significantly supported by WODC and the Environment agency.

The proposal to apply for planning to build a solar farm was invited for discussion by Mr. Metcalfe weeks before Ecotricity submitted the application. We walked the boundary of the proposed site with the neighbouring farmer and we noted four key areas of concern.

We discussed these with Mr. Metcalfe and he suggested that we discuss them with Ecotricity.

We did this and a number of emails were exchanged but no site meeting was forthcoming and our feeling was that the points raised were not being considered or acted upon.

We advised the WODC planning officer that due to the apparent lack of action we had no alternative but to object to the application. We also advised Ecotricity and Mr. Metcalfe.

The key areas of our concern are:

- This proposal could become the third solar farm to be erected within half a mile of each other in our Parish. Our Parish rejected the second development at Stonelands, as did WODC but the HM Inspector upheld the appeal.

Planning practice guidelines contained within the National policy Framework give clear advice regarding the sight of more than one solar farm in an area. I have an extract of the guideline available for your reference.

- The proposed access for this development at Shilton Downs Farm is through Ladburn Lane. This lane is six metres wide from pavement to grass verge. Residents do park cars on the road. The flow of large delivery vehicles will become a major problem.

We urged Ecotricity to consider an alternative point of access. Recent experience with delivery vehicles at Stonelands has resulted in OCC highways and the Parish having to make site visits to ensure that the public highway is kept both safe and accessible.

- The proposed site boundary near to Ladburn Lane is in our opinion too close to housing and should be moved further into the site as should the site boundary close to the barns and farm cottage.

- The proposed 'control hut' near to residents of Ladburn Lane should be moved in line with the suggested site boundary change.

Another Solar farm with no reasonable consideration given to concerns raised by the Parish has put us in a difficult position with a resident who has been most supportive to us and we are made to feel extremely uncomfortable with the proposal.

On behalf of the Parish, I would ask the planning committee to give their considerations to these key areas of concern when having their discussions regarding the viability of this application.

Thank you.

Shilton Parish Council 12 March 2015

Planning Practice Guidelines

National Planning Policy framework

Para 13 ref: 5-013-20140306

What are the particular planning considerations that relate to large scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic Farms?

The approach to assessing cumulative landscape and visual impact of large scale solar farms is likely to be the same as assessing the impact of wind turbines. However, in the case of ground-mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography the area of a zone of visual influence could be zero.

Para: 022

How should cumulative landscape and visual impacts from wind turbines be assessed?

Cumulative landscape impacts and cumulative visual impacts are best considered separately. The cumulative landscape impacts are the effects of a proposed development on the fabric, character and quality of the landscape; it is concerned with the degree to which a proposed renewable energy development will become a significant or defining characteristic of the landscape.

Cumulative visual impacts concern the degree to which proposed renewable energy development will become a feature in particular views (or sequences of views), and the impact this has upon the people experiencing those views. Cumulative visual impacts may arise where two or more of the same type of renewable energy development will be visible from the same point, or will be visible shortly after each other along the same journey. Hence, it should not be assumed that, just because no other sites will be visible from the proposed development site, the proposal will not create any cumulative impacts.

Para: 023

What information is needed to assess cumulative landscape

and visual impacts of wind turbines?

In identifying impacts on landscape, considerations include: direct and indirect effects, cumulative impacts and temporary and permanent impacts. When assessing the significance of impacts a number of criteria should be considered including the sensitivity of the landscape and visual resource and the magnitude or size of the predicted change. Some landscapes may be more sensitive to certain types of change than others and it should not be assumed that a landscape character area deemed sensitive to one type of change cannot accommodate another type of change.

In assessing the impact on visual amenity, factors to consider include: establishing the area in which a proposed development may be visible, identifying key viewpoints, the people who experience the views and the nature of the views.

The English Heritage website provides information on undertaking historic landscape characterisation and how this relates to landscape character assessment.

The bullets below set out the type of information that can usefully inform assessments.

Information to inform landscape and visual impact assessments

- a base plan of all existing windfarms, consented developments and applications received, showing all schemes within a defined radius of the centre of the proposal under consideration
- for those existing or proposed windfarms within a defined radius of the proposal under consideration, a plan showing cumulative 'zones of visual influence'. (A zone of visual influence is the area from which a development or other structure is theoretically visible). The aim of the plan should be to clearly identify the zone of visual influence of each windfarm, and those areas from where one or more windfarms are likely to be seen
- the base plan and plan of cumulative zones of visual influence will need to reflect local circumstances, for example, the areas covered should take into account the extent to which factors such as the topography and the likely visibility of proposals in prevailing meteorological conditions may vary
- maps of cumulative zones of visual influence are used to identify appropriate locations for visual impact studies. These include

locations for simultaneous visibility assessments (i.e. where two or more schemes are visible from a fixed viewpoint without the need for an observer to turn their head, and repetitive visibility assessments (i.e. where the observer is able to see two or more schemes but only if they turn around)

- sequential effects on visibility occur when an observer moves through a landscape and sees two or more schemes. Common routes through a landscape (e.g. major roads; long distance paths or cycle routes) can be identified as 'journey scenarios' and the proposals impact on them can be assessed
- photomontages showing all existing and consented turbines, and those for which planning applications have been submitted, in addition to the proposal under consideration. The viewpoints used could be those identified using the maps of cumulative zones of visual influence. The photomontages could be annotated to include the dimensions of the existing turbines, the distance from the viewpoint to the different schemes, the arc of view and the format and focal length of the camera used

at the most detailed level, description and assessment of cumulative impacts may include the following landscape issues: scale of development in relation to landscape character or designations, sense of distance, existing focal points in the landscape, skylining (where additional development along a skyline appears disproportionately dominant) and sense of remoteness or wildness

Planning Committee Statement – 16.03.15

Thank you chair, councillors, ladies and gentleman.

My name is Daniel Shoosmith, Project Developer at Ecotricity, the applicant.

Ecotricity have been working with the landowner at Shilton Downs to develop a solar park on his land.

The planning officer's report concludes that the proposal adheres to the Local Development Plan and is acceptable on its merits.

The comprehensive Environmental Report submitted in support of the planning application presents robust environmental assessment across a broad range of potential impacts including: the character and appearance of the area, residential amenity (access and noise), heritage assets, protected species and cumulative impacts among others. These assessments concluded that the potential impacts from this development are acceptable. The planning officer draws the same conclusions in her report accepting that all potential impacts are suitably addressed.

In landscape and visual terms, the Environmental Report findings based on site investigations are that the low-level nature of the scheme, coupled with the topographical nature of the landform and existing proposed vegetation, result in a high degree of visual containment. Therefore visibility of the scheme would be very limited as would intervisibility between the Proposed Development and other solar schemes close by.

The solar park at Shilton is forecast to generate the equivalent electricity demand of just under 2,400 typical UK homes¹. A valuable contribution to the broader UK energy mix.

Government Policy and Planning Policy Guidance (Solar Strategy) supports solar PV proposals that are appropriately sited and give proper weight to environmental considerations such as landscape and visual impact, heritage and local amenity. Ecotricity consider that the proposal accords with these policy requirements. The scheme will also ensure continued agricultural use, through pasture, and the grazing of sheep between the panels, and includes a range of enhancement measures designed to increase biodiversity.

The Government's commitment to renewable energy is clearly defined in energy and planning policy. In recognition of the importance of securing a sustainable, low carbon and affordable energy mix ambitious targets have been set requiring 20% of electricity demand to be supplied from renewable sources by 2020. The National Planning Policy Framework adopts a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' and underlines the importance of renewables of all scales.

In conclusion, there is strong policy support for this development, it is acceptable in principal and it qualifies when tested against planning policy and other material considerations. The National Planning Policy Framework asks local authorities to recognise the merits of renewables of this scale and urges them to approve an application if its impacts are acceptable.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

¹ Calculation based on an installed capacity of 10.8MW using a site specific capacity factor of 10.6% derived from PVGIS dataset (PVGIS, 2012). Calculation based on 'medium' UK domestic electricity consumption of 4,229 kWh, per annum (DECC, 2012). Carbon savings calculations derived from the expected generation above and based on the latest DECC emission factor figures reported annually of 454g/kwh of CO2 for grid-mix of electricity generation and 701g/kwh of CO2 for fossil fuel-mix of electricity generation (DECC, 2014).

Good Afternoon

With regards to this planning application I am sure the committee is aware of the various comments of neighbouring residents but I would just like to emphasise the main concerns we have.

As the proposed houses will not have sufficient parking spaces allocated to them, a major concern is the problem we are sure will be caused by on road parking so close to the Burford Road junction, causing a serious risk for vehicles entering or exiting Davenport Road which can be very busy at times. Buses and Lorries have often had difficulty getting through due to the number of parked cars; image the consequences if an emergency vehicle had the same problem. We also wonder where all the works vehicles will be parked during construction.

Another worry for those of us who live very close to the site in question is that the new two storey dwellings would overlook our gardens and houses to a considerable degree. Loss of light and overshadowing an adjacent garden has also been mentioned as a serious worry. These aspects of the plans may not seem important to anyone who will not be affected but for those of us close enough to suffer the results of inappropriate building they really do matter. The frontage of the proposed houses will be much closer to those opposite them than existing houses on the street as these are set further back from the road, this is due to them having longer driveways and front gardens. We therefore feel that privacy would definitely be an issue to the front, as well as to the rear, of this development.

There is also an environmental issue regarding the number of trees that would be felled as they are home to many species of birds and also bats have been seen flying in and out of said trees and hanging from electric cables nearby.

We believe that the building of two dwellings of this size would be a case of over-development on a relatively small plot. There is a very limited amount of outdoor recreational space being allowed for family homes of these proportions. Perhaps a more appropriate and sensible option would be one single storey dwelling with adequate parking and garden space, which would not have such a negative impact regarding traffic issues and problems for existing residents.

This planning proposal has caused a lot of concern and worry for all the people who would be affected by it so we hope that you will all agree with the recommendation for refusal of planning permission for these four-bedroom properties.

Thank you for listening

FIONA HEELEY

RE. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 15/00087/FUL

You may wonder why what appears to be a small development has been brought to this committee – WELL - it's because flooding is the biggest issues for this area of Bampton.

As far as this application is concerned any increase to the existing footprint will adversely affect surrounding homes.

In addition the applicant may be able to make his whole property flood resistant but this will inevitably displace enough water to increase the probability of these surrounding homes flooding.

There are also several inconsistencies in the application:

It states the property is on flood zone 3a, The E A do not confirm this as no modelling has been completed, this point has also been made by the WODC engineer who goes on to say "I do not consider that this development should be permitted" and gives the full reasons why.

It misrepresents your own flood report on the 2007 flood event by reorientating the map and stating "no houses south of Fishers Bridge flooded" – YES THEY DID.

In addition as you know WODC is vigorously fighting an appeal against Gladman, the land speculator, regarding the Aston Road development that reconvenes in April and you can be sure Gladman are watching all planning decisions that allow any building on the flood zone and will use this as evidence at the appeal

Also the report that covers 'Flooding and other issues', has been produced on non headed paper, not dated, without contact details of any kind and is just attributed to a 'Local Authority Drainage Engineer', who could be anybody from anywhere and I don't believe should be given any credence and of course does NOT address WODC Engineers points in that NO modelling has been done.

Remember when this property was marketed the estate agent, Martin Cox, included a clear statement: "West Oxfordshire District Council Planning Department have been consulted regarding further development of the site and planning permission was not likely to be approved on the following grounds " The specific technical rational were then quoted and majored on flooding issues.

This application is:

- Opposed by local residents
- Allowing it would set dangerous precedent that to build on flood zone 3 is OK
- It could easily jeopardise the Aston Road Appeal
- It is strongly opposed by your own Engineers
- And recommended for refusal by your planning officer.

Please do the right thing for Bampton and refuse this application

Planning Ref: 15/00260/FUL

Weald Manor Farm - Application for 10 houses

I represent the large number of Weald residents who once again wish to oppose this application. You have now heard from us on 3 previous occasions, most recently in October last year.

Please bear in mind Weald is a hamlet. Once described as a funny little backwater. As you know this site was a former farmyard with a cowshed, pigsty and 2 barns. Typical scattered farm buildings. You cannot replace it with a dense build of 10 houses.

It would be entirely out of character and urbanise this rural setting instantly.

Although now confined to the farmyard footprint, the application shows that the new internal floor space doubles that of the existing buildings.

We remain worried about the increase in traffic. Ten houses would averagely bring about another one hundred traffic movements a day.

On your visit to the site last year, you negotiated the blind turn at the Clanfield Road junction and drove down the narrow, single track lane. You will have noted the lack of passing places and footpath. You parked on the grass verges, because, had you parked on the road, you would have blocked it.

Those of us currently living in Weald readily admit to using our cars to go to the shops, post office and surgery. The new residents would do exactly the same.

They will drive their children to school on the way to work. This will give rise to additional, unmanageable levels of traffic, both in Weald and around the school.

They will **not** walk because it is not safe and it's too far.

This will also stop the lane being used as a countryside leisure facility. There are many walkers, dog-walkers and horse riders who enjoy the lane at the moment.

We already have 160 new houses coming to Bampton. We have accepted that there has to be some new housing. There **is** now apparently a 5 year land supply. These 10 houses **are not** needed. The recently published SHMAA considered this site to be too remote for housing.

Justifying what is in effect a small suburban development, because of the need to pay for the repair and upkeep of Weald Manor, will in fact, harm the very heritage you are trying to preserve. The harsh reality, though difficult for the owner, may be that it has to be sold.

The Parish Council has also once again supported our views. To grant this application would set an unacceptable precedent leading to several other applications being made.

Weald is a Conservation Area. It needs to be protected.

This is a development of a disproportionate scale, in an inappropriate, unsustainable location. The reduction in size from 17 to 10 houses makes no real difference at all.

It does not justify any departure from, or change to, the previous reasons for rejecting the application.

Please, do not defer your decision. Please, refuse this application today.

Ms. [Name] [Address]

Three minute presentation to WODC Planning Committee 16th March

1. We thank your officers for the positive comments in Paragraph 5.2 of their report. Our following comments address further matters in the report.
2. The scale of the proposal has been much reduced and kept within the boundaries of the farmyard. The existing landscape and new planting will completely screen the development both locally and in broader views from the open countryside. These measures, clearly shown on the drawings, together with the removal of power lines along Weald Street and the high quality of the scheme will, at the least, preserve the character of the Conservation Area.
3. The footpath previously proposed is not included in this scheme, reflecting the significant reduction in dwellings and recognizing the objections from local neighbours.
4. We will carry out an archaeological field investigation when the outcome of the application is clearer. We will respect its findings.
5. The drainage relief pond, constructed after the flooding of 2007, allows for run off from the proposed development. None the less, the scheme will provide additional surface water storage beneath the reconstructed farmyard with controlled outflow to the relief pond. All hard surfacing will be of permeable construction. The development itself does not of course increase the amount of rainfall running off the site.
6. The foul drainage is taken to a biodisc sewage treatment plant within the site and will not be connected to the public sewer.
7. The survey of Weald Manor is by a specialist surveyor and does not include routine maintenance of the building (see page 2 of his report), but provides a planned programme of essential repair and restoration works.
8. The current tenant of the cattle shed has confirmed his willingness to move and we are committed to providing new premises. Appropriate consents will be obtained to accommodate the move.
9. The planned financing for the scheme is from capital funds augmented by a bank loan. This is structured to provide both loan repayment and funding for the programme of repair and restoration at Weald Manor. We are happy to meet your officers and explain the financial arrangements to give reassurance.
10. Whilst our architect is confident that the design matters in respect of the four affordable flats can be resolved to allow this element of the proposal to be maintained, we are very happy to offer a financial contribution towards off-site affordable housing instead of providing the affordable flats on site. We can discuss this in more detail with your officers.
11. We believe that this more modest proposal offers great benefits to the local community and ask for the opportunity to work with your officers to resolve the outstanding matters.