

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Development Control Committee**

Held in the Council Chamber, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB at 10.00 am on
Monday, 27 March 2023

PRESENT

Councillors: Elizabeth Poskitt (Chair), Rizvana Poole (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Lidia Arciszewska, Hugo Ashton, Andrew Beaney, Michael Brooker, Colin Dingwall, Harry Eaglestone, Ted Fenton, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, Richard Langridge, Nick Leverton, Andrew Prosser, Geoff Saul, Alaric Smith, Dean Temple and Alex Wilson.

Officers: Phil Shaw (Business Manager - Development Management), Andrew Thomson (Lead Planning Policy and Implementation Officer), Max Thompson (Democratic Services Manager), and Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Support Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Nil.

12 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 7 November 2022, were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from the following Councillors:

C Maynard, L Nicholls & D Jackson.

Councillor Dan Levy attended as a substitute for Councillor Maynard.

Councillor Andy Graham attended as a substitute for Councillor Jackson.

14 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Andrew Beaney stated that he had attended the first forum on the item considered at Agenda Item 5 (Application for Development – 22/03415/FUL).

15 Participation of the Public

There was no separate public participation at the meeting, other than participation detailed within Agenda Item 5 (Application for Development – 22/03415/FUL).

16 Application for Development - 22/03415/FUL - The Driving Centre, Enstone Airfield OX7

4DR

Phil Shaw, Business Manager (Development Management), introduced the application, for the construction of buildings for automotive museum with corporate hospitality (club space, accommodation for members, food and beverage and retail); museum exhibition building; workshops; store; energy centre; construction of supporting holiday homes; amenity facilities; formation of car exercise road; formation of landscaped grounds; associated site services and other works (as amended).

Phil Shaw drew the Committee's attention to the additional representations circulated prior of the meeting, and summarised the main points of the additional subsequent representations made to the committee. Phil Shaw presented a large scale presentation relating to the

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application. Phil Shaw reminded the committee prior to the presentation what was previously approved when the outline application was considered.

Alex Postan, Roger Tyers, Michael Ergatoudis, Kieran Hedigan and Andrew Eaton spoke in favour of the application. Copies of the speeches are attached to the original copy of the minutes.

Councillor Paul North (Sandford St. Martin Parish Council), Councillor Philip Shaw (Enstone Parish Council), Emily Daley, Hamish Laing, and Frederick Hill spoke in objection to the application. Copies of the speeches are attached to the original copy of the minutes.

The Chair read out a pre-submitted statement from Westcote Barton Parish Council in support of the application. A copy of the speech is attached to the original copy of the minutes

John Mitchinson also spoke relating to the application, but was keen to stress that his statement, a copy of which is attached to the original copy of the minutes, was neither in support nor objection to the application.

Phil Shaw continued with the presentation which clarified the following points:

- Representations received regarding the application;
- Light pollution from the site;
- Economic benefits of the site and area;
- Traffic and highways impacts;
- Non-Road traffic provisions;
- Landscape and visual impacts;
- Building heights;
- Accommodation provisions;
- Visitor attractions;
- Biodiversity implications;
- Noise mitigation;
- History of the site;
- Environmental impacts;
- Section 106 Agreements;
- Security arrangements;
- Impacts on Enstone Airfield;
- Sustainability;
- Alignment with the Local Plan;
- Accessibility to the site.

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Phil Shaw guided the Committee through the 2 stage planning balance exercise as applied to the assessment of the impact of the scheme on the heritage assets in the vicinity of the site

Phil Shaw concluded that the planning officer's recommendations were for conditional approval, subject to the applicant first entering into a legal agreement, and to the resolution of AQMA & ecology matters as per the verbal updates that had arrived just before the meeting.

The Chair invited the Committee to discuss the application, which raised the following points:

- Access to the site by means of non-road transport means;
- Employment opportunities arising from the site;
- Car parking at the site for employees;
- Through routes in proximity to the site;
- S106 implications;
- Environmental implications;
- Speed of traffic in the vicinity of the site;
- Use of the site track for racing or procession of vehicles;
- Provision of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs);
- Expansion limitation;
- Management of excess surface water and sewage treatment with Thames Water;
- Membership quantities of the site and motor club;
- Potential community membership for local residents;
- Sizing of accommodation units on the site;
- Glare of windows from sunlight and brightness in summer months;
- Potential disposal of subsequently identified unexploded ordinances;
- Impact of affordable housing in the area;
- Height of buildings compared to previous application;
- Assessments of travel impacts on local area;
- Electronic Vehicle (EV) charging provisions within site car parks.

Councillor Andrew Beaney proposed a deferral of the application to allow for more time to examine the application and its full detail. This was seconded by Councillor Alex Wilson.

In debate, the work of the officers was praised, and attention paid to were vast benefits of the application, such as tourism and benefit to the local economy. Deferral was not considered appropriate due to a perceived high level of detail being in front of the committee during the meeting, and there would be no benefit of delaying the application, thus risking non-determination. It was noted that finer details would need to be considered, and that sufficient time was available during the negotiations on the 106 agreement, and that deferral would not help such matters in order to reach a resolution.

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The proposed deferral was put to a vote. There were 2 votes in favour, 17 against and 2 abstentions.

The deferral was defeated.

Councillor Ted Fenton proposed that the application be approved conditionally, in line with officer's recommendations, subject to the final wording of the conditions as stated within the report being agreed to address some of the detailed points raised by Cllr Beaney. This was seconded by Councillor Richard Langridge and was put to a vote.

There were 18 votes in favour, 3 votes against and Nil abstentions. The vote carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Conditionally approve the application in line with officer recommendations, subject to the conditions for approval as stated within the report being finalised by officers following discussion with Cllrs Poskitt, Beaney and Goodwin.

Councillors Beaney, Wilson and Prosser requested that their votes "against" were put on record. This was subsequently fulfilled by Democratic Services.

The Chair then adjourned the meeting for a 5 minute comfort break and to allow the public participants to leave the Council Chamber. The Meeting was adjourned at 12.44pm, and reconvened at 12.49pm.

17 Botley West Solar Farm - Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

Andrew Thomson, Lead Planning Policy and Implementation Officer, introduced the report, which explained the Development Consent Order (DCO) process for determining applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and to discuss the mechanisms for decision making on NSIP proposals.

Whilst it was accepted that there was no decision to be made at the meeting, it was noted that the Botley West Solar Farm NSIP, will potentially effect a number of parishes within West Oxfordshire and neighbouring districts. It was noted that Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are projects of certain types, over a certain size, which are considered by the Government to be so big and nationally important that permission to build them needs to be given at a national level, by the responsible Government minister (the 'Secretary of State').

The Botley West Solar Farm proposal is the first NSIP to be proposed for West Oxfordshire. The proposal covers an area of approximately 1,400 hectares and affects a number of parishes. The developer for the proposed Botley West Solar Farm has published an indicative timetable for the DCO process, with submission of the application due in winter 2023. There are a number of key milestones during the process that must be met before the final application is submitted.

In debate, it was highlighted that the Secretary of State who's responsibility the proposal will fall under will be The Rt. Hon Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero.

Clarification was sought on which Committee of the Council was retain oversight of the proposals, and it was confirmed by the Lead Planning Policy and Implementation Officer that

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the Development Control Committee would be the Committee designated for consultation as appropriate, given that the applicant will apply for a Development Consent Order.

Members stated that there will need to be due diligence exercised by the Council as a Planning Authority, and that there may be a time where Council come to a view on the proposals. The evidence will be presented in various stages, and that Members will need to keep views to a lower profile, to aid the Council's reputation as a planning authority. It was also highlighted that the discussion was to state the process for the proposals, rather than the proposal itself.

Councillor Andrew Beaney and rose to thank the Chair for her stewardship of the meeting given that the two Agenda Items were deemed as 'hefty' business. Councillor Beaney also highlighted that it was seen that there was not sufficient time for debate given that there was large public participation at the meeting, and that having two formal planning meetings on the same day did not help the Committee's cause.

Councillor Richard Langridge proposed that the Committee note the content of the report, in line with Officer recommendations. This was seconded by Councillor Ted Fenton, was put to vote and was agreed unanimously by the Committee.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Note the information contained in the report.

The Meeting closed at 1.07 pm

CHAIR