

CITY PLANS PANEL

THURSDAY, 10TH JUNE, 2021

(1.30PM)

PRESENT: Councillor J McKenna in the Chair

Councillors: B Anderson, D Blackburn,
K Brooks, P Carlill, D Cohen, A Garthwaite,
C Gruen, G Latty, E Nash and N Walshaw

10 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

11 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of Press and Public

There were no items identified where it was considered necessary to exclude the press or public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be considered.

12 Late Items

There were no late items of business.

13 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest made at the meeting.

14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: C Campbell, R Finnigan and P Wadsworth

Councillors: B Anderson was in attendance as a substitute Member.

15 Application No. 20/07999/FU - Installation and operation of a solar park with associated infrastructure and upgraded access at land off Barnsdale Road, Allerton Bywater.

Members considered a report by the Chief Planning Officer which set out details of an application which sought the installation and operation of a solar park with associated infrastructure and upgraded access at land off Barnsdale Road, Allerton Bywater.

Site photographs and plans were displayed and referred to throughout the discussion of the application.

The Planning case officer addressed the Panel, speaking in detail about the proposal and highlighted the following:

- Site / location / context
- The location of the proposed development is on agricultural land to the west of the A656 Barnsdale Road, East of Great Preston, North of Allerton Bywater and South of Kippax and the B6137. The total area of the site is approximately 87.7ha, located within the Green Belt and countryside, towards the south eastern outskirts of the Leeds district. The site comprises of mainly semi-improved grassland, mainly in arable and grazing use, with well-maintained hedgerows along field boundaries. There are a small number of woodland plantations within and surrounding the site and the land falls gently from north to south (from Kippax to Allerton Bywater). The site covers part of the area of the former Kippax Park and is surrounded by several village settlements. The nearest settlements to the site include: Kippax, located approximately 0.2km from the northern boundary of the site; Woodend, located approximately 0.8km to the East; Allerton Bywater, located approximately 0.4km to the South; Ledston, located approximately 0.7km to the East; Residential properties at Kippax, located approximately 0.02km to the North next to Longdike Lane; Home Farm, located approximately 0.07km to the East on Barnsdale Road; Low Lodge, located close to the eastern boundary of the site on Barnsdale Road and adjacent the access/egress point into the site; and, Residential properties, located approximately 0.2km to the south of the site at Park Lane.
- The site also lies close to a sewage works, located to the west and south-west of the site and Kippax Meadows Nature Reserve and Kippax Park Fisheries to the west. There are a range of listed assets within a 2km radius of the site, ranging from a grade I listed building (Ledston Hall) to a number of grade II listed buildings and, also a grade II* registered park and garden (Ledston).
- The proposal is for the installation of a 40MW capacity solar photovoltaic park over 87.7 hectares of land. The temporary permission is sought for a 40 year period, starting on the confirmed date of final commissioning.
- Installation of solar panels arranged into rows, mounted on steel racks and pile driven into the ground.
- Installation of associated solar panel infrastructure including, foundations, external inverters and concrete inverter pads and hardstanding/set down areas;
- Construction of approximately 2.1 km of new 4m wide access tracks (in addition to the upgrade of approximately 1.2 km of existing tracks
- Upgrade of the existing access junction off Barnsdale Road (A656), which includes some widening at the junction to provide visibility splays, together with re-surfacing, protections works and signage;

- Control building measuring 13m (length) x 7m (width) located nearby would be an external 66kv transformer and associated plinth and to the south of it would be an area for switch gear;
- Temporary site compound area for the duration of the construction period, including 5 cabins measuring 10m (length) by 3m (width) to provide for a site cabin, mess facilities, stores, w/c, and dry room, an external generator, an external water tank/ bowser, a 10m (length) x 3m (width) waste management area to include a bunded area for fuel storage, together with a temporary vehicle parking area.
- 2m tall deer-style fencing and access gates to each solar panel area;
- 2.4m tall security fencing to compound area;
- Lighting columns (specification to be agreed) and 6m tall poles mounted with CCTV for site security and monitoring; and,
- Underground electrical cabling and communications cables, set in covered trenches varying between 1.2m and 0.8m depths.
- Site access and egress would be taken from an existing private track off Barnsdale Road (A656), situated close to Low Lodge, a residential property. The construction phase of the proposed development would be approximately 6/9 months, dependant on approved working hours;
- The main purpose of the solar photovoltaic park is to generate renewable electricity for use by the National Grid. The grid connection would be made via underground cabling to the existing Ledston substation located in the south eastern corner of the site, opposite Low Lodge.
- Other alternative sites in West Yorkshire were considered
- This site is in close proximity to an electricity sub-station which is an important consideration
- Impact on local heritage assets
- Environmental mitigation and enhancement
- Proposed tree and hedge protection
- Sustainable development
- Climate Emergency implications
- Members were informed that if granted, the application would be referred to the Secretary of State as a departure from the adopted development plan for Leeds and development within the Green Belt

The Planning Case Officer reported the receipt of 68 representations objecting to the proposal from members of the public (It was also reported that a late objection had being received from the occupiers of Home Farm). The reasons for objection were: unsuitable development within the Green Belt, the scale of the development was large and unsightly, proximity to local villages, the proposal should be sited elsewhere, concerns about glint and glare and concerns about the security of the site. It was also reported that 12 representations of support had been received from members of the public and the local Parish Council who were supportive of the energy generating technology (Carbon savings/ offsetting) the temporary nature of the development, job creation and economic benefits.

Members raised the following questions to officers:

- Could an indication be given as to the number of vehicle movements to and from the site each day
- Kippax Parish Council are seeking 2m tall planting (rather than younger saplings) along the northern section of the site, could this be achieved
- Were there any missed opportunities to provide more tangible and pioneering benefits in terms of soil quality improvements, local food production and research
- Were there any rights of way implications during construction of the development and beyond
- Had there been any representations from the local Member of Parliament
- Had Ward Councillors requested any further mitigation measures
- What would the land status be once the site had been restored
- Would “glint and glare” have an effect at a distance
- Could members of the public gain access to the site
- Planning permission was been sought for a period of 40 years, could this be extended
- Could mitigation be included to screen the site at development stage as well as operational stage
- Would the development set a precedent for other green belt sites

In responding to the issues raised, officers said:

- The Planning Case Officer said there would be some vehicle movements during the construction phase of the development but, once completed and operational vehicle movements would be extremely limited (1 or 2 per week in normal use).
- Members were informed that it was intended to provide 2m tall planting along the northern section of the site, however a continuous 2m line could not be guaranteed
- The Planning Case Officer said the site was a former coal site, however the developer was looking at measures to improve soil quality, it was also reported that the developer was willing to participate in any appropriate research activities (Paragraph No.16 referred)
- Members were informed there were no public right of way issues through the site, there was a “claimed” area along the southern boundary and the existing views from this route would be impacted. It is proposed to mitigate the impact by additional planting.
- The Planning Case Officer confirmed that no representations had been received from the local MP
- No further mitigation measures were requested by Ward Members
- Members were informed that once operations ceased the site would be restored and the status of the land would remain Green Belt
- Members were advised that glint and glare was addressed at paragraphs 106 – 109 of the submitted report. There was no risk to

aviation, the layout of the land/ orientation resulted in insignificant glint and glare

- Members were informed that the site was secured with 2m high screening to deter visitors/ prevent trespass
- Members were informed that once the planning permission had elapsed (after 40 years) all structures would be removed to allow the land to recover. The developer would need to seek planning permission to extend the proposals beyond 40 years.
- Members were informed that some screening would take place in the next planting season ahead of development starting on site
- The Planning Case Officer confirmed that this application would not set a precedent, each planning application was considered on its merits. The particular nature and benefits of this application were considered to overcome the policy harm of inappropriate development in the green belt. Any other applications would have to be considered on their merits.

In offering comments Members raised the following issues:

- This was an exciting scheme and good use of the Green Belt

In drawing the discussion to a conclusion, the Chair suggested there appeared to be a lot of support for this development.

It was moved and seconded that the application be approved in accordance with the report recommendation.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was passed 9 Members voted in favour of the proposal, 2 Members abstained from voting.

RESOLVED – That the application be deferred and delegated to the Chief Planning Officer for approval subject to the specified conditions specified in Appendix 1 of the submitted report (and any other amendments or conditions which he might consider appropriate) and following consultation with the Secretary of State in relation to inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

16 Date and Time of Next Meeting

To note that a further meeting would be held later today, the next meeting of the Panel being arranged for Thursday 8th July 2021 at 1.30pm in the Civic Hall, Leeds.

17 Alderman Robert Wood

Panel Members were informed that former Councillor and City Alderman Robert Wood had recently died.

Members and officers joined the Chair and stood in silent tribute in honour of Alderman Wood.

