

Methwold Parish Council

Meeting of the Methwold Parish Council Planning Committee

Thursday 24th July 2024 at 7pm

21 Room, St George's Hall Complex Methwold

Parish Councillors present: Cllr M French, Cllr T Grassick, Cllr F Riches, Cllr J O'Ware, Cllr R Minkler

Members of the public: 6

Clerk

1. The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence received and agreed Cllr B Horton, Cllr T Thomas, Cllr K Rodriguez, Cllr A Senior

3. Declarations of Interest (In accordance with S31 of the Localism Act 2011) and requests for dispensations – None

The Chairman changed round the agenda to allow the public to speak before the parish council discussed the application.

4. Open Forum for public participation:

Land proposed has been used to grow crops for many years, to include maize, potatoes, corn, wheat, barley.

It was reported that 20-25 people attended the open evening arranged by the Developer.

There is a solar farm already on site, with this proposed application it lends itself to further expansion.

The benefit of an approved application is to the operator and the farmer.

The grass is currently cut too often and too low to benefit the wildlife and biodiversity, not managed as a wildflower meadow but need to encourage this.

40-year lease.

5. 25/01068/FM Construction, operation, maintenance and eventual decommissioning of up to a15MW Solar Farm comprising the construction of solar panels mounted on metal frames, invertors, spares container, substation, auxiliary transformer, DNO substation, new access tracks, underground cabling, perimeter fencing with CCTV cameras and access gates, temporary construction compound, landscaping, and all ancillary grid infrastructure and associated site works at Land At E572391 N297113 Brook Lane Brookville Norfolk

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6. Methwold Parish Council to vote on planning application.

Methwold Parish Council made the following observations which will be sent to the Borough Council Planning Department.

1. Community Benefit - Methwold Parish Council request that a community benefit of a minimum of £1000.00 per 1MW per annum for the lifetime of the solar farm is paid into to a community fund, which will be used to support local initiatives, projects, or organizations. This would be overseen by the parish council but administered by the community benefit group. The parish council would set up a group to include lay members of the community to administer the funds to benefit residents of Methwold Parish.

2. Future proofing this agreement of Community Benefits in the event of a change of Ownership.

3. Biodiversity of the site - greater care is required to ensure the maximization of biodiversity which currently is not the case with the site at present, the use of swift posts/boxes and other initiatives to encourage wildlife should be adopted on this site. The hedges must be properly managed and maintained to encourage nesting birds and other wildlife. Grass cutting should be carried out at appropriate and most beneficial times of the year to minimize the impact on biodiversity.

4. Footpath - there has been an unadopted footpath around the present solar farm site for at least the past 10 years, this is used by many locals as a walking route and needs to be retained and maintained for public use.

5. Construction traffic for the site will use the track from the B1112, White House Drove (not as stated by the Developer - Green Lane, which is on the opposite eastern side of the B1112) without doubt causing severe damage and will need to be properly re-instated.

We request that items 1 to 5 become planning conditions if consent is given for this project.

Meeting ended: 7.50pm