

PLANNING REF : 211081
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Arborfield Green Community Centre
: Arborfield, Reading
: RG2 9ND
SUBMITTED BY : Barkham Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 07/05/2021

COMMENTS:

Based on the views of residents who responded to the survey conducted by Barkham Parish Council (BPC) with all households and via online media in early March 2021, BPC supports the solar farm project being submitted under PA 211081.

Whilst BPC supports the project, support for the planning application in the current form will be conditional on the following issues and questions (as listed below) being satisfactorily addressed before determination.

The questions submitted were:

Question

1. Section 4.1.23 recognises there are alternative routes for the new greenway and states that the Council is open to having discussions with relevant parties accordingly. Some of these routes could lead to a safer crossing location for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, such as a Pegasus type, and away from the sensitive area around the heritage assets. Can these exchanges be concluded before determination of PA211081?
2. What is happening about the half acre of land for additional greenway space requested by St James Church as we do not see any provision for this on the submitted plans?
3. Some planting schedules appear to be very heavy (density and height) and not appropriate to locations where a lighter screening would be more appropriate?
4. Regarding the geophysical study of the site, when will this be carried out and the results known?
5. At what stage in the process will all the Greenways be upgraded and how accessible will they be during the period of construction, especially Footpath 10 and 10a which are regularly used by walkers, especially during holiday periods?
6. The plans show that the solar farm will be connected by an underground cable all the way down Barkham Road from Edneys Hill to the sub station opposite the Leathern Bottel, what are the plans to mitigate the impact on traffic over the 20 weeks of construction period and will the road be resurfaced afterwards?
7. The PA documents mention the expansion of the site into Rooks Nest Farm as being related to discussions with the tenant farmer at High Barn Farm, can WBC update us on the current situation given the email that the farmer recently sent to WBC and our local MP?
8. There will now be substations and transformer sheds on the site, what are the plans to paint these in subdued natural colours and to screen them from views on the existing footpaths and proposed new Greenway?
9. There is mention of possible battery storage units on site, will this be the case or are they definitely ruled out?
10. The perimeter security deer fence shown in the Design Statement appears to

be fully meshed from top to bottom. If this is intended, how will small wildlife habitats gain easy access to the solar farm, given the importance of preserving wildlife corridors?

11. How will the meadow grass under the solar panels be kept low and be properly maintained? Will sheep be grazing within the site?

12. Regarding the farm security lighting, will this only be used for maintenance or will it be used during the construction phase to allow work to continue after dark during the winter months?

13. Given that the solar farm will now be used for 25 years versus 40 years previously, will the Greenways be preserved permanently at the end of the 25 years and the tree planting protected? Also, will the solar farm infrastructure including transformer sheds and substations be permanently removed and the land returned to farming use?

14. Will WBC take advantage of the solar farm construction to provide nearby EV charging points at maybe Barkham Village Hall, Rooks Nest Wood car park, The Bull PH or elsewhere for the benefit of Barkham residents?

15. Will a fire risk assessment be carried out to ensure safe operation and access for the fire service?

And in addition to these we would like to highlight our concerns about HGV traffic using Barkham Street with this additional question:

16. Without causing gridlock how will HGVs constructive traffic safely access the site given that Barkham Street has a 6.6m restricted width that prohibits all large vehicles except buses?