

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council
held on Wednesday, 2 March 2005 at 7.30 p.m.
in the Village Hall, Abbots Bromley, pursuant to notice having been given.

Present: Cllrs: PJ Charles (Chairman), C Cook, DT Eatough, AE Elkington, RT Esling,
L Fox, RSV Jarman, KA McLoughlin, JA Needham

Also present: EA Roy (Clerk)

Apologies for absence: None.

Members of the public attending: Martin Horan, Barrie & Linda Waring,
Colin & Margaret Cumberlidge, Simon Davis, John & Pat Evans,
Neil & Margaret Hoskison, Gerold & Yvonne Holmes, David Bradbury,
Roy Aitkenhead, Sally Ann Newstead, David & Jeanette Murray,
Graham Hindley, Sam Peart, Julie Gasser, Richard Griffiths, Alex Fox,
Peter & Pam Smith, Phil Ryan, Simon Wilson, Shirley Mann

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Minute 112: Public Session

The Chairman welcomed members of the public present and invited them to address the Council.

Mr Murray (Radmore Wood) observed that there were high local costs to the proposed development – these were landscape impact, noise and loss of tranquillity and were not offset by any local benefits. He suggested that the green benefits from the development would so minimal that they bore no comparison to the local cost. He then summarised recent wind farm application history and the fact that few were now being approved – even on appeal.

Mr Bradbury (Bagots View) reminded everyone that he was one of the villagers most impacted by the view of the proposed wind farm and listed a number of aspects of wildlife that he considered would be affected detrimentally by the development. He also expressed worries about noise.

Mr Aitkenhead (Schoolhouse Lane) was concerned about the impact on deer. These are unable to cope with noise and he described the potential impact on pregnant deer, and suggested that the consequences of this could wipe them.

Mrs Mann (Schoolhouse Lane) said that she was in favour of the wind farm and could not agree with the views expressed by others that seemed without foundation. She felt there was no evidence for many of the fears being voiced.

Mr Horan (Hobb Lane) said that he disagreed with the previous speaker and said that he had calculated 230 wind farms like that proposed would be required to match Rugeley. Even so, due to the vagaries of the wind, the energy cannot be depended on or stored for later use. He provided feedback from an estate agent indicating that his property could be devalued by 20%. He then listed a number of potential omissions from the Environmental Statement relating to such matters as alternate sites, two nearby properties, noise levels at properties, impact on his well and several areas where results are presented to support conclusions without any supporting evidence. Since the well is his only source of water, the allusions to contamination and effects on ground water are extremely significant. He also referred to a Guardian article based on German experience.

Mr Peart (Paget Rise) said that he was concerned about alternative sources of power and pointed out that Rugeley power station creates mainly water vapour and little noise. The impact of low frequency noise was a major concern and the fact that the study ignores this is extremely worrying. Any increase in the background noise effectively moves the datum for further applications.

Mr Waring (Ashbrook Lane) introduced himself as an energy consultant working to improve efficiency and had never found himself in the position of recommending such a non-viable alternative as wind energy. The subsidies distort the position so dramatically – otherwise it would never be given a second thought.

Mr Evans (Parkside Farm) returned to the theme of water and explained the history of the water-courses now being labelled incorrectly as drains. He was entirely dependent on Bagot Park groundwater for his supply and the impact of the turbines would be massive.

Mr Wilson (Bagot Street) thought that there was an over-exaggeration of the noise and asked who had visited a wind farm. Several had. He thought that noise was overrated as an issue given that these would be set in an agricultural environment where noise from machinery was a regular occurrence. (Interruptions argued that the noise was continuous and could not be controlled by those who were affected).

Mr Fox (Lichfield Road) confirmed that house price was not a planning consideration, but amenity value was.

Mrs Murray (Radmore Wood) reminder everyone just how large the turbines would be in comparison to the pylons that we already have across our fields. Her fear was that the drive to wind farms would prove a short-term policy that would leave us with a legacy blotting our landscape.

Mr Hoskison (Paget Rise) agreed with previous objections and pointed out that the only beneficiary was absent landlord.

Mr Cumberlidge (Uttoxeter Road) said that he had not been impressed by the independent consultant at the previous public meeting, and this did not give him any confidence in the value of their advice.

Mr Fox responded to this reporting on action taken since the meeting. As Ward Councillor he has followed the process of this proposal over two years and was not encouraged to support the application by what he knew so far. He balanced the benefits for the viability estate against the impact on the small number of people who will be significantly impacted by the proposal. Was such an installation appropriate for East Staffordshire? If agreed, it would give rise to similar applications in the area.

Mr Hindley (Hall Hill Lane) recounted some experiences of wind farms in Holland that had led him to believe they were a good thing. However, having listened to arguments over recent weeks he had begun to doubt the value of the scheme and thought it should be turned down.

Rev Davis (Vicarage) said that he had enjoyed listening to the debate but suggested that those who were putting leaflets through doors should have sufficient courage of their convictions to add their names. He pointed out that energy conservation would result in three times the return on money spent on a wind farm.

Mr Horan reported that the turbine type proposed was no longer being made and therefore the proposal was suspect. The future removal of the renewals subsidy could lead to failure of the wind generating company and this in turn could result in abandonment of the scheme and the turbines being left to deteriorate.

The Chairman issued a reminder that ESBC had requested comments to be sent to them by 12th March in order that they have time to properly consider them.

Mr Aitkenhead recounted concerns expressed in 1981 when the Staffordshire Way was routed through the park that had proved to be unfounded, but said that he thought the wind turbines would have a much greater impact.

Mr Evans asked if, when the roadway was put in, it would be left there – making this into a brown field site.

Mr Horan asked if the designation of the land would change as the result of approval. Mr Fox replied that it would not, and any permission would have conditions attached that would not permit full commercial development although continued farm diversification would be considered.

The Chairman thanked the members of the public for their contributions. Normal business was resumed at 20:33.

Minute 113: Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minute 114: Planning

114.1 Applications

Discussion of the information gathered from the previous meetings – and from representations by members of the public earlier in the meeting ensued. Following this, the Council unanimously agree that it would oppose the application and on the grounds covered in the following response.

382 - PA/26905/004: Bagots Park, Dunstall Lane: Erection of seven wind turbines, upgrade existing access tracks from the site access off B5013, extraction of stone from borrow pits, construction of site access tracks and passing places, temporary hard-standing and site office facilities and sub-station

Received: 03/02/05 Due: 12/03/05 Response: The Parish Council unanimously opposes this scheme, believing it is inappropriate for the proposed location for a number of reasons:

- (1) There is totally inadequate recognition in the application of the way that neighbouring properties are entirely dependent on groundwater from the area to which they have a legal right in perpetuity. The information that is included on this subject acknowledges the risks of short-term contamination and long-term disruption. Livelihoods depend on these water sources and the potential damage is quite unacceptable.
- (2) The application considerably understates the impact on visual amenity for neighbouring properties and the damage to the landscape which extends over a wide area. The special status of the area was identified in the Staffordshire County Council document "Planning for Landscape Change" and denoted on map 7 as a preferred area for woodland planting initiatives. The proposed scheme would also be in conflict with "Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan" policies NC1 and NC2.
- (3) A large number of residents have voiced concerns over the impact of noise and are not reassured by the data supplied in the Environmental Statement which appear to overlook at least one of the neighbouring properties. The fact that the proposed wind turbines are no longer available seems to invalidate even the simulations that are included. Experiences from existing wind farms indicate that the impact on neighbouring residents is consistently far more severe than the predictions made before construction. The proposed location is a tranquil area where quiet is enjoyed by residents and walkers - both from the locality and tourists - walking the Staffordshire Way. Destroying the peacefulness of this environment is at odds with PPG 24 para 5 which recognises the need to protect areas with high recreational amenity value from noise generating development.
- (4) Section 10 relegates deer to "Other species" and seems oblivious to the potential risks to the deer population of this development. Deer are easily startled by noise and, during pregnancy, this can cause spontaneous abortion of the foetus with

consequential risk of infection in the mother. In the wild such infection is undetected, untreated and can lead to mortality. The variety of sounds emanating from the turbines as they adapt to changing conditions throughout 24 hours every day of the year cannot fail to affect the deer. Given the historic significance of deer to the area, and the related heritage and tourism generated by the Horn Dance, it would be difficult to imagine any aspect of the local wildlife more intrinsic to the character of this parish. The potential impact on buzzards also seems to have been overlooked.

- (5) The proposed development will generate no long-term employment in the area and so does not make a major contribution in the context of agricultural diversity. The Parish Council does not find the suggested benefits for electrical power generated and reduced CO₂ convincing. Firstly, significant errors in the calculation of the CO₂ saving have been identified which affect the forecast by orders of magnitude. Also, no account is taken of CO₂ generated by the construction and removal. Significant amounts will be generated from the manufacture of the large quantity of cement required and the turbines themselves. Similarly, the large number of HGV movements throughout the period of construction will also create CO₂. Without a full life-cycle model and accurate calculations, any prediction of CO₂ must be treated with extreme caution. Secondly, the predicted power outputs are gross and take no account of the power consumed in construction, transmission losses and turbine efficiency. Additionally, the quoted power factor is way in excess of that typically achieved elsewhere, and the combination of these issues irretrievably undermines the credibility of the forecast power generated.

In summary, the Parish Council believes that the application understates or overlooks significant aspects of the impact on the locality while exaggerating the minimal benefits that might accrue. Were the application to be approved, this would represent an extremely high cost to be paid locally for no proven benefit either in this area or to the national drive for renewable energy.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk communicate this response to the local planning authority.

Minute 115: Date, time and place of next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 30 March 2005 in the Memorial Room at the Village Hall.

The Meeting concluded at 21:30 pm.

Chairman Date:

Proposed: Seconded: