

CENTRAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
SCHEDULE OF ADDITIONAL LETTERS

Date: 5 December 2013

NOTE: This schedule reports only additional letters received before 5pm on the day before committee. Any items received on the day of Committee will be reported verbally to the meeting

Item No.	Application No.	Originator:
5	13/03519/FUL	Agent

A letter was circulated to Members on 30th November by residents objecting to the scheme. The letter outlined 26 individual points of objection. The applicant has responded as follows to the points raised:

It appears that most of the points raised have already been addressed in the planning application documents and supplementary information provided post submission. We also note that the letter contains a number of inaccuracies, un-supported assertions and raises issues which are not relevant for consideration by a planning committee. Notwithstanding this we have set out below our response to correct and clarify a number of points:

Topography - The panel heights proposed are as standard for most solar farms and do not relate to the surface gradient. The site was chosen due to its favourable topography which assists in the effective screening of the development, as a consequence, the site will be more expensive to develop but we have accepted this compromise in the interests of minimising potential environmental and landscape impact.

Current use - The field is currently in agricultural use and can therefore be used for arable crops or grazing as the farmer may freely decide. Our proposal involves the site being put down to pasture and wildflowers during the life of the solar farm and the vegetated surface will only serve to improve run-off characteristics through the process of evapotranspiration. No where could it be argued that bare earth surfaces are more beneficial than vegetated surfaces when in controlling surface water run-off and reducing the potential silting of water courses.

Noise – The noise assessment has been undertaken by an experienced acoustics engineer, using conservative assumptions to illustrate just how little noise would be produced by this development in a worst case un-mitigated scenario. The assessment does not take into account soft ground attenuation, acoustic cladding of the inverter housing or the preferential positioning of the equipment. We are confident that we are able to meet any planning condition which may be required in this regard and that any noise arising from the development will be in-audible at the nearest residential properties.

Landscape – The photomontages illustrate the effectiveness of the topography and the proposed hedgerow and screen planting used in the design and layout of the solar farm at various stages in the development's 25 year life. The montages show the planting at the stage of implementation and at 10 years, however the hedgerow will provide increasingly effective screening from year one and the site is unlikely to be visible from any of the viewpoints from year 3-4.

Glare and Glint – The detailed analysis has demonstrated that no glint and glare will be experienced by properties to the West of Cound Brook. For this reason specific details of Boreton Brook Cottages or indeed other properties in this area are not included in the final report.

Heritage Assets – In the area of identified crop marks it is proposed that the panel arrays will be secured to the ground by precast concrete ballast. Therefore rather than driving posts into the ground, the supporting frames in the vicinity of the identified crop mark feature will rest on the surface, thereby leaving this feature in situ and undisturbed.

Cound Brook/bridge and ford – The site will be put down to grazing and wildflower meadow ensuring that the surface of the land retains the run-off characteristics no greater than if the site was to continue in its current use.

Access to track – We have undertaken an assessment which proves that articulated HGVs are able to access the site, however, if required vehicles could turn into Green Farm. In all cases there is no need for vehicles to travel through the centre of Condover village.

Site Selection – As we have previously emphasised the application site is not the most advantageous site in the area from a commercial viewpoint but we have decided to select this location due to its suitability from an environmental perspective.

Engagement with the Community - we have attempted to undertake detailed consultation with local residents including a public exhibition attended by 52 people where only 2 recorded objections, 4 were neutral and 4 recorded support for the scheme. We have also attended 2 Parish Council meetings, attended a personal meeting with a local resident and corresponded with those parties who have raised questions to us. Throughout the consultation we have listened carefully to residents and consultees and made a number of design changes in response to their feedback. We are keen to maintain a dialogue with the wider community, including the residents of the Boreton Cottages, during the development process, and in implementing the community benefit proposals which have been offered.

Location of Solar Parks – This project is not public funded. The cost of the development is entirely provided for by private investment and is based on returns on investment which make this and other investments in the area and at latitudes further north viable. The proposed development represents the renewable energy output equivalent to over 4,000 x 2kw rooftop schemes. The statement regarding National Grid, Germany and Spain is not correct.

Climate Change – Background data for the estimated 134,192 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide saving over the life of the solar farm is set out in the Design and Access Statement. This figure is calculated using information published by the Department for Energy and Climate Change in their annual Fuel Mix Disclosure Tables which provide an average value for CO2 produced per kwh of electricity produced in the UK, based on data from the UK greenhouse gas inventory.

Location of site – As previously stated this site was selected due to its environmental suitability and not solely based on the commercial advantages. We have considered several hundred sites throughout the UK and a majority have been rejected by our own selection process where they are in areas with landscape designations, ecological sensitivity, flood risk, or visually intrusive. We do not see the relevance of the reference to the Ellough Airfield site as planning permission was granted for a 14.1MW development on that site in April 2013, the Condover site is 9.4MW. A larger 24MW scheme at Ellough Airfield is currently the subject of a High Court appeal by the developer Lark Energy.

Community benefit – The development of the solar farm will result in the following benefits to the community immediately surrounding the site and in the wider area during the life of the solar farm:

- The installation of up to a maximum of 42KW of photovoltaic panels on local properties and community buildings under an appropriate allocation formula. This is equivalent to over £50,000 of funding at current market rates, and would generate up to £150,000 of energy savings to relevant properties over the lifespan of the proposed development, at current energy prices.
- Consideration of the potential to provide a fibre cabinet capable of linking to the local domestic broadband network.
- Payment of approximately £35,000 per annum of business rates that will contribute directly to the cost of providing local services, administered by Shropshire Council under the Business Rates Retention Scheme - Renewable

Energy . Over the life of the project this will amount to approximately £1,200,000 which will be retained 100% by Shropshire Council.

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13/03519/FUL

Agent

Photomontages from applicant 03/12/13 (these were requested by Condover Parish Council at a recent meeting attended by officers):



View from south (Boreton Cottages) as constructed



View from south after 10 years



View from east as constructed



View from east after 10 years



View from south (Boreton Brook Cottages) as constructed



View from south (Boreton Brook Cottages) after 10 years

The applicant has advised verbally that the photomontages validate the conclusions of the landscape and visual impact assessment accompanying the application, demonstrating the limited visibility of the proposed site and the effectiveness of proposed screening measures.

6.	13/02251/FUL	Email from Agent 04 Dec 13
<p>The application is going before committee tomorrow with the changes to the Copthorne Road access as agreed with the Highway Officer in order to address the concerns raised by members. The entrance off Copthorne Road is now 13 metres from the bus stopping area, reducing the potential conflict with stopping buses. In addition to this the gates to the development are set well back into the site preventing stopping over the pavement. This entrance now provides access for 5 residential parking spaces, the remaining 16 are in the main car park off Copthorne Park. The applicant will provide signage within their site restricting usage of this entrance to residents and directing visitors and other vehicles to access via Copthorne Park.</p> <p>At the previous committee members raised concern with the provision of parking at exiting sheltered housing schemes they have visited. I would like to make members aware that traditionally sheltered housing developments would have had only 30% parking provision, this scheme in order to address the changing lifestyle of the older population, the high level of 2 bed apartments proposed and the increase in car ownership over recent years has 100% onsite parking provision which is well in excess of what is provided on older schemes.</p> <p>I hope the amended scheme will now address members concerns and the proposed development will meet with their approval.</p>		

7.	13/03670/FUL	Email from Cllr Hannah Fraser (Abbey) 05 Nov 13
<p>"I request that this scheme be determined at committee for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the Highways department have made it clear that they consider the highways issues to be bettered under this agreement than under existing planning permissions. However, public experience is that the highways issues are extremely difficult in this area, and that access to the development from Horsefair will be acutely detrimental to the amenity of the area, and hazardous for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, and to properties. In the past, property has been damaged through being hit by vehicles due to the narrow access on Horsefair. 2) whilst the parking provision has been increased from the original application, the existing pressures on parking spaces are acute in this area, and the development will exacerbate this. 3) Section 106 monies will be secured to improve the road situation, however it is not yet known how those monies will be spent and what form the road improvements will take. Drivers and pedestrians currently feel that the vehicular access to Horsefair over the pavement is hazardous, and I have previously talked to Mike Davies about getting proper road access put in here. The setting is extremely sensitive, being close to the scheduled ancient monument of the Abbey, and if this sort of work is to be undertaken there is likely to be a great deal of public controversy. I would far rather that these matters are discussed in open session so that the public are aware of the issues and members given the opportunity to reflect on the implications of the decision for the historic setting of the Abbey, which is such an important gateway to our town. 4) A landlord to 50 tenants on Abbey Foregate has contacted me to say that his tenants park on Horsefair, and he would strongly object to double yellow lines or reduction in on-street parking in this area. This highlights the need for the highways improvements to be outlined in principle so that members and the public know what the implications of the development will be. 		

5) One of the closest neighbours of the scheme did not receive the usual letter informing residents that a planning application had been submitted and has therefore had little opportunity to consider the scheme. The Council will be accused of making decisions in secret and of obfuscating public participation in the planning process if the decision does not go to committee. The Council is open to the accusation of not following due process in this one particular, and I feel it is incumbent upon the Council to maintain an open and transparent decision making process to ameliorate this circumstance.

6) I am informed by a resident that the development will have a detrimental effect on the residential amenity due to loss of outlook, and concerns have also been expressed about the effect on the conservation area of the architectural quality of the proposals. The proposals have been described as very plain and unsympathetic to the delightful aspect of the existing almshouses or the grandeur of the Abbey and Abbey Foregate.

7) There is some concern about the proximity of the open market development with the almshouses, and whether there would be any incompatibility between these uses. If Severnside were to take on the open market housing, would this be for older people or open to all ages, and would the two parts of the development be compatible with regard to the amenity of all residents?

I recognise that there is a desire to reduce the number of planning decisions going to committee, however the specific circumstances of this development in the environs of the historic Abbey and the particularly acute access and parking issues warrant discussion in open session. I trust that this can be arranged in a timely manner to address the time sensitivities you mention.”

7.	13/03670/FUL	SC Tree Officer
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Conditions 8, 12 and 15 should be replaced with up-to-date versions:

Tree Protection Condition

All trees and hedges which are to be retained in accordance with the approved plans shall be protected in accordance with the BS 5837: 2012 "Trees in relation to Design, Demolition and Construction recommendations for tree protection”

Unless altered by prior written agreement with the LPA, the development hereby approved shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the submitted Tree survey document and Tree protection plan.

The protective fence shall be erected to the satisfaction of the LPA prior to commencing any approved development related activities on site, including demolition, breaking out existing hard surfaces, ground levelling, site preparation or construction. The fence shall be maintained throughout the duration of the development and be moved or removed only with the prior approval of the LPA.

Reason: To safeguard the amenity of the site by protecting trees and land retained for future tree planting from damage during development

Landscape condition

Prior to the on-site implementation of approved development, the applicant is to submit to the written satisfaction of the LPA a landscape plan, detailing the location, numbers, species, size, planting pattern and means of support and protection of trees and hedgerows to be planted in association with the approved development. The plan shall indicate the time of planting and by when it shall be completed. An initial maintenance

programme (years 1-3 post planting) shall be included for planting in communal areas.

Reason: To ensure appropriate planting to compensate for trees and hedgerows lost to approved development and to complement and enhance the visual character of the development.

Landscape Implementation

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with the timetable approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or plants that, within a period of five years after planting, are removed die or become, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced with others of species, size and number as originally approved, by the end of the first available planting season.

Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of a reasonable standard of landscape in accordance with the approved designs.
