

**Draft Minutes of the Brixton Parish Council Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> August 2014,**

**Brixton Community Room, 7.00pm**

**In attendance:**

Cllr Liz Hitchins (Chair)

Cllr Michael Wills (Vice Chair)

Cllr Ian Calvert

Cllr Deborah Jessop

Cllr Gay Murch

Representatives from Due South Energy, Sun Edison and Your Shout (PR): Steven Edwards, Susannah Miller & Josh Bart.

10 Parishioners attended.

**OPEN FORUM**

**(These notes do not form part of the official minutes)**

Cllr Hitchins invited Steven Edwards, Chief Executive of Due South Energy, Susannah Miller, Sun Edison and Josh Bart, Your Shout (PR) to present on planning application 07/1814/14/F, Solar Farm.

Several potential sites are considered for each renewable energy project and strict regulations are applied in assessing the suitability of a site.

Sun Edison build, operate and develop solar plants. Have approximately 800 projects worldwide and 10+ in the UK.

Your Shout assists on projects so that information is disseminated properly and consultation is foremost making sure this is a well informed, well managed project.

**Q&A**

Mrs Garner Gatley: there is concern from the residents of Harestone cottages regarding road access and traffic disruption. Why does the cable need to be laid along the road rather than in fields?

Steven Edwards: The cable route is dictated by the network operator. The shortest possible route is always sought but this is not a viable project if it goes across fields due to compensation for the landowners.

Mrs Garner Gatley: What about the residents?

Josh Bart: Measures will be put in place to minimise the impact. Will forward the relevant document to Mrs Garner Gatley.

Mrs Garner Gatley: How long will the road be up?

Steven Edwards: Permission needs to be granted by Highways Agency and a schedule agreed. This will be done in chunks using a burrowing method.

Philip Griffin: Is the cable being stored at the drop off site?

Steven Edwards: The contractors will decide this.

Mrs Garner Gatley: More detail needs to be provided on this. Seems that residents have been shown very little consideration. Steven Cane has stated that there will be 8 (each way) trips from drop off site to site daily, will there be more with contractors?

Susannah Miller: Majority of equipment is on site for erection of panels but some additional equipment will be needed.

Cllr Jessop: How many large HGV's per week?

Josh Bart: do not have the answer to that as yet.

Mrs Garner Gatley: What are the hours of work?

Josh Bart: 5 days per week, hours to be confirmed. There will always be a nominated banks man.

Joy James: What will happen with the closures and diversions from the Deep Lane and A38 road works?

Steven Edwards: Were not aware of these, had not been informed, take this on board.

Derek Austin: How can the Parish Council approve or otherwise an application when not given all the relevant facts?

Rosemary Deeley: How will the village benefit? Solar Panels for the school are simply a carrot. Do we really need it here? Mr Bastard, the company and the school are the only ones who benefit, they do not have to put up with the disruption.

Cllr Calvert: We do have to look to the future. Langage is an eyesore, wind turbines are an eyesore, solar panels are not.

Rosemary Deeley: It seems that all the development is occurring in Brixton Parish.

Mrs Garner Gatley: Why develop agricultural land when there is industrial or Brownfield?

Steven Edwards: Factory sites are ideal and there is a big push from government to use such sites if possible. Brownfields are also not readily available. Good quality arable land is never selected, always grade 3b or below.

Derek Austin: Clarify 3b?

Steven Edwards: DEFRA grade all agricultural land. The lowest grade is 4 which is marshy/stony land and 3b is non-ideal land.

Sally Axell: has sent letter of objection. Letter contained following reasons:

- 1) Loss of agricultural land.
- 2) Sheep do not graze under the panels.
- 3) The area is of landscape value. Views will be disturbed.
- 4) Have ecology surveys been carried out? Bats, badgers, skylarks, stag beetles etc
- 5) Loss of income from tourism
- 6) System of solar power is flawed. No power at night or in the winter when most needed.
- 7) Supposed to be sustainable but the minute government funding stops it is no longer sustainable.

Steven Cane: Has stated that there would be 8 (there and back) trips per day. Lorries cannot go past Woollaton so tractor will be used. This would be a maximum. The drop off area will only be in use for 9 months and after this period it is in the contract that the land returns to agricultural use. Has helped on three or four of these solar sites and has knowledge of them All equipment is boxed up and relatively compact.

Cllr Jessop: Do the poles that hold up the panels need tapping in? How loud would this be? Is there a limit on decibels?

Steven Cane: This would be done with a normal post rammer.

Steven Edwards: Actual decibel level not known but no requirement for ear defenders.

Roy Evans: Subsidy will be reduced April 1<sup>st</sup> next year. If project completed before this will they maintain subsidy?

Steven Edwards: Yes. Confident that there will be a continuous demand for energy.

Susannah Miller: Waiting of confirmation as to how long the subsidy will last.

Rosemary Deeley: what about the impact on property prices for residents?

Josh Bart: Here to discuss this particular Solar Scheme. Appreciates that solar panels are not a residential view of choice but this site is well screened and visual impact is at a minimum. The plans include measures to address this. Impact on residents and tourists alike is minimal. There are buffer schemes, the panels are well spread, and the developers are conscious and sympathetic. If good, well thought out projects go ahead this minimises the risk for potential bad projects. There will be some disruption but this will be well managed and kept to a minimum. It is worth bearing in mind that this is a better option than some others may be.

District Cllr Squire: Are there any employment gains for the area?

Susannah Miller: the site is operated and maintained by in house staff. There would be minimal employment gain for the area, mainly maintaining landscaping, grazing etc.

Jeremy Marshall: Resident closest to the project. Has concerns regarding the impact on livestock from noise of construction, not only dogs but horses too.

Josh Bart: will forward the relevant part of the construction plan. Will find out working hours, anticipated decibel levels, etc.

Susannah Miller: If application is approved, there will be a nominated Construction Liaison Officer.

Cllr Jessop: are there any further projects anticipated in the Brixton area?

Steven Edwards: no, not that this company has any knowledge of.

Stephen Serpell: What is happening with packaging? Is this to be burnt?

Susannah Miller: waste will be taken off site.

Derek Curtis: Is this then more traffic? Is concerned over the amount of traffic along the access lane to the drop off site.

Cllr Jessop: Is it even possible for a large HGV to go up the lane?

Cllr Hitchins: Weight restriction on lane.

Steven Edwards: For access weight restriction does not apply.

Rosemary Deeley: Are the panels British made or imported?

Susannah Miller: Manufactured abroad.

Philip Griffin: Can the output from the panels be offset against the wind farm proposed for Sherford?

Steven Edwards: As a result of public consultation an approach has been made to Redtree.

Consultation is ongoing.

Cllr Murch: The parish needs to gain more from the project if it does go ahead. Look to the example of the benefits that Brixton Composters bring. Can there not be negotiations with the landowner regarding rental income or the District Council regarding the meeting o criteria for renewable energy?

Cllr Calvert: Have any other projects given a percentage of profits to the area they're located in?

Susannah Miller. There will be a community fund. Already in discussions with the school regarding roof panels that will heat their pool and reduce bills. The company is looking at community ownership options however this is a complex matter with many restrictions and limitations.

Stephen Serpell: How quickly do the panels degrade?

Steven Edwards: There is a manufacturer's guarantee that they will function at minimum of 80% of potential in 2025.

Cllr Calvert: Can confirm this from own panels.

Cllr Hitchins: What happens at the end of the 30 years in the contract?

Josh Bart: The panels will be removed and the land returned to its original use. This is a condition of the application. There is a decommissioning bond to fund restoration.

Cllr Hitchins read a letter of objection from Patrick Loxdale.

Josh Bart: Can confirm that there is nothing underhand or cynical going on.

District Cllr Squire: can confirm that the earliest committee this could go to at South Hams District Council would be September. A representative from Brixton Parish Council would be entitled to attend.

### End of Open Forum

#### 1. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies received from: Cllr Cane, Cllr Gray, Cllr Martin, Cllr Oates.

#### 2. Councillors' declarations of interest:

There were no declarations of interest from the Councillors present. Cllr Oates had noted in email correspondence that he declared an interest as his business is a tenant of the landowner.

#### 3. Planning Matters

##### 3.1 To consider and make a recommendation on:

**Applicant:** Due South Energy & SunE Project6 Ltd

**App No:** 07/1814/14/F

**Proposal:** Installation of ground mounted solar array (total site area 201800m<sup>2</sup>), estimated output 8.7mw and associated infrastructure.

**Location:** SX561 531 land adjacent to Balls Wood, Brixton

A site visit had taken place at 6pm Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> August. Approximately 12 people attended, Cllr Murch, Cllr Calvert, Cllr Wills and Cllr Jessop were in attendance.

**Cllr Murch:** The location of the site is well hidden and visibility is not an issue. It is the issue of the construction and related noise, disruption and traffic that is the problem. These are narrow, restricted lanes. The size of vehicle accessing the site is not clear and there is concern that the weight limit is not applicable for access to the drop off site.

**Philip Griffin:** Concern re the precedent set for the industrialisation of the area.

**Cllr Wills:** Sherford is already happening; there is this application and the prospect of wind turbines in the area. Are both proposals required? Is this the thin end of the wedge and setting a dangerous precedent?

**Position:** objects to the application.

**Cllr Jessop:** In two minds. Has taken on board the fact that there are currently no renewable energy projects in the parish. Understands the concerns of parishioners. Can see the point that by accepting a smaller, well managed project, could potentially say no to a further project.

**Position:** Undecided.

**Cllr Murch:** This is a relatively small proposal and each proposal should be viewed individually. Does have concerns over traffic and this needs to be looked into before anything else. The disruption regarding the laying of the cables, the uncertainty regarding the size and frequency of Lorries etc.

This was raised in the pre-application procedure. More could be done for the benefit of the Parish.

**Position:** Supports the application providing transportation is viable.

**Cllr Calvert:** A past application in Spriddlestone area had raised concerns for him and despite seeing the future potential of solar energy cannot get past the 9 months of disruption for some parishioners. The application was very professional but more solid facts were required regarding vehicle movements. Would have supported but not enough facts available to allay concerns.  
Position: objects to the application.

**Cllr Hitchins:** sees agricultural land as vital to the parish. A whole new town is being built, a majority of which is in the Parish of Brixton. There is also potential industrialisation at the quarry site. Is this the thin end of the wedge? Example of Elburton Village – this is no longer a village but has been consumed by development.

Is all for solar energy but panels should be positioned on commercial and domestic buildings, should not be on agricultural land.

The site itself is hidden from view, the panels are high quality and non reflective.

Concerned over the size of the lorries, danger for other road users.

This has been a good example of consultation and application but cannot support.

Position: objects to the application.

Cllr Wills proposed a motion to reject the application.

Cllr Calvert Seconded this motion.

Cllr Wills, Cllr Calvert and Cllr Hitchins voted in favour of the proposed motion.

Cllr Murch and Cllr Jessop voted against the proposed motion.

Cllr Hitchins confirmed that Brixton Parish Council had voted to object to the application on the following grounds:

- 1) Traffic: size and weight limit issues
- 2) Narrow lanes
- 3) Impact on parishioners in area
- 4) Timing and frequency of deliveries unclear.

### **3.2 To consider and make a recommendation regarding the serving of a new Tree Preservation Order 2014 Northlands, Brixton, PL8 2AX:**

The area of woodland in question was noted and Cllrs confirmed that this would be beneficial to maintaining the character and quality of the landscape.

Cllr Wills proposed a motion to support as served.

Cllr Jessop seconded the motion.

The vote was unanimous from all Councillors present in favour of supporting as served the Tree Preservation Order.

### **4. Date of the next Meeting:**

The next scheduled meeting of Brixton Parish Council is on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> September at 7pm, Brixton Community Room.

The Meeting was declared closed at 9.15pm