

Minutes of Bucklebury Parish Council Planning Committee

Meeting held on Monday 26th September 2011 at 8.00pm in The Victory Room, Bucklebury Village.

Present: Mr. B. Dickens (Chairman); Mrs. P. Frankum; Mr. P. Brook; Mr. A. Stott; Mr. J. de Lara; Mr. A. Gilbert; Mrs. L. Clarke; Mr. J. Brims; Mr. Q. Webb; Mrs. H. Pratt (Clerk).

Apologies: Mr. S. Beeson; Mr. T. Slatford; Mr. H. Hind.

Others: Paul and Sharon Wastie; Kevan Leggett; Jonathan Moss; Gillian Beale; Elizabeth Fenston; Andreas Hempell; Franziska Hempell.

Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

Public Session.

PS1. Hillfoot Farm, Hillfoot, Application 11/01849/FUL.

Mr. Brims introduced this application which involves two 22m cylinders which have a total height of 9.75m. It is currently planned that 3.5m of each cylinder will be buried in the ground, leaving 6.25m protruding. There is also a control room which will house the generator run from the methane, and have a chimney of 8m for burning off methane in an emergency. Slurry from the cattle pens and silage, all produced on the farm are required for the methane production. No additional products need to be bought into the plant. The generation capacity is 190 Kw of power and 40 Kw of heat.

The meeting was **closed** for members of the public to speak.

Mr. Hempell, the applicant, said that when he originally investigated biogas production, a number of years ago it was not financially viable, but now with more encouragement from the government it has become practical.

The slurry from 120-130 cattle kept on a solid floor has been spread on the fields; this under the biogas installation will be used to fuel the system. This will be supplemented with high energy crops like maize.

The process requires two tanks: the digester which is kept full at all times, and then emptied into a storage tank for 4-5 months. The product from the storage tank will have no smell and will be spread on the fields.

The Combined Heat and Power (CHP) unit will be housed in a building where it is easier to maintain and any sound levels can be reduced.

Mr. Hempell said that he hoped to be able to sink the two tanks an additional 3m into the ground but that this is dependent upon the Environment Agency and the level of the water table. It may be possible to locate the second tank so that it is less visible from the cottages at Hillfoot. The chimney could be moved such that it is in line with the ridge of the barn and therefore less intrusive. He is willing to consider different types of screening; bunds and tree planting were both discussed. The tanks are located such that the slurry can be moved from the barn to the tank using gravity. The digester runs at 40°C, surplus heat will be used to heat the farm house and may in the future be offered to other properties at Hillfoot. There are approximately 30 biogas installations in the UK.

The flue from the CHP is only for use in an emergency situation. The tanks operate at atmospheric pressure. Should the generator be out of action for a short period of time (e.g. for servicing) there is capacity in the tank for any gas produced. Should the generator be out of action for a longer period of time, the methane produced must be burnt off as it is illegal to release it.

Mr. Leggett asked questions on whether the installation represented change of use and on the

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viability of the plant. The plant does not represent a change of use. The feed-in power tariff is guaranteed for 20 years, pay back on the installation will be reached after only 10 years. Concerns were voiced about safety reports on biogas installations in Germany which indicate that there are issues with 60% of installations. It was noted that many of these installations are in excess of 20 years old. The Environment Agency issue a standard permit and carry out annual inspections of biogas installations; they must also meet all Health and Safety requirements.

Mr. Moss commented on the proposed location of the tanks and how much they would obstruct the countryside view from his home and his enjoyment of it; it being approximately 200m from his property. He commented that the installation represented industrialisation of an AONB green field site. Mr. Moss and his family have concerns about sound levels in the garden and the potential for smell. He felt that sinking the tanks a further 3m into the ground and relocating the second tank would make a significant difference.

The meeting was **reopened**.

For information on the decision taken by BPC on this application please see under Planning Decisions.

Planning Decisions.

- P1. 11/01293/HOUSE Elmtree Cottage, Marlston.
3 bay car port with machine store.
It was unanimously agreed that BPC has **no objection** to this application.
- P2. 11/01782/HOUSE Osgood Holding, Sadgrove Lane.
Proposed new outdoor swimming pool.
BPC unanimously agreed **no objection** to this application, however it was suggested that a condition of any approval is that any supporting equipment should be in one of the existing outbuildings or sunk into the ground.
- P3. 11/01795/HOUSE Kiln House, Broad Lane.
New porch and pitched roof over bay window.
It was unanimously agreed that BPC has **no objection** to this application.
- P4. 11/01657/HOUSE Brynmill, Long Grove.
Single storey extension, first floor side extension and replacement dormer window.
BPC unanimously agreed that they had no objection on this application.
- P5. 11/01849/FUL Hillfoot Farm, Hillfoot.
Biogas installation.
It was agreed that the installation whilst being green and having much support would have a significant impact on those parishioners living close by. For this reason it was decided to make a site visit on Saturday 1st October and to agree observations to be returned to WBC at the BPC meeting on 10th October.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.

Next Planning Committee Meeting:	Monday 24 th October at 8pm, Victory Room.
Next BPC Meeting:	Monday 10 th October at 7.45pm, Memorial Hall.

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