

MEETING OF INGOLDSBY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of **Ingoldsby Parish Council Meeting** held in the Village Hall, Ingoldsby on Wednesday 17 September 2014 at 7.45pm.

There were 39 parishioners present including County Councillor M Hill.

1. WELCOME REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN (14/154)

a) The Chairman, Councillor Harrison welcomed Members to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. Those in attendance: Councillors Eldred, Ward-Barrow, Wedge and Weller. The Chairman informed the meeting that the Parish Council would be dispensing with procedure for the extraordinary meeting to allow the parishioners to present their views on agenda item 4a, the solar farm installation at the Grange, Ingoldsby. The Chairman informed the meeting that in the event of any offensive behaviour the meeting would be closed.

2. APOLOGIES (14/155)

a) District Councillor Peter Stephens.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST & DISPENSATIONS (14/156)

a) None.

4. PLANNING MATTERS (14/157)

a) S14/1432: Renplan Consulting Ltd, Installation of Solar Farm, The Grange, Ingoldsby

The Chairman summarised the current position in relation to the screening opinion for S14/1432.

He told the meeting that on 6 May 2014 Renplan Consulting Ltd submitted a request to SKDC for a screening opinion to determine whether the installation of a solar array development with a design capacity up to 50MW on land at the Grange, Ingoldsby constitutes an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development. On 26 June 2014 SKDC publicised their decision stating that the proposed development does not require an EIA. He briefly explained EIA and told the meeting that the local Parish Councils and Meetings had not been consulted on the screening opinion. He told the meeting that the Clerk had stumbled across the screening opinion by chance when preparing for the July Parish Council meeting. The Parish Council had put together a leaflet which was delivered door to door to make parishioners aware of the screening opinion. The Chairman reported that the Parish Council now understand that the development will cover 233 acres not 116 as was initially thought and falls within the parishes of Lenton, Keisby and Osgodby and Hanby not Ingoldsby.

The Chairman went on to say that Lenton Parish Meeting have already formed an opposition group (SCORCHIO). The Chairman made the meeting aware of the proposed solar development in Ropsley and highlighted that Ropsley & District Parish Council were consulted on the screening opinion for that particular development which SKDC have determined is EIA. The Chairman told the meeting that the Parish Council had written to the Planning Officer, Mr P Moore at SKDC to lodge their concerns that there had been no consultation and the Chairman summarised the response received from Mr Moore; he acknowledges that; ***'the proposal is fairly large and as such will potentially have a local landscape/visual impact. However, scale in only one of many factors that has been taken into account – it was considered that the principal impact would not be of such magnitude and complexity to warrant EIA'***

He has confirmed that the planning department do not have a statutory duty to consult on screening opinions and says;

'that the Council is unable to reverse or reconsider its screening opinion on the Lenton/Ingoldsby proposal'

but an appeal can be made to the Secretary of State under Part 4, Paragraph 8 of the EIA Regulations 2011.

Before opening the public forum the Chairman stated that the Parish Council will represent the views of parishioners and stated that an Ingoldsby opposition group must be a separate entity to the Parish Council.

Councillor Martin Hill said that he could not believe that the District Council had not insisted on EIA for what would be the second largest solar installation in the Country. He said that he did not want to pre-judge the views of the parish but his view was that if the majority were opposed that it would be appropriate to appeal to the Secretary of State.

Councillor Ward Barrow said that he is not in opposition to solar panels but does not like disinformation. He said that the developer would be the only one to benefit from the installation, he questioned the feasibility of grazing sheep beneath the panels and the much used bridleway that cuts across the land, he talked about food production, development on the land after 25 years, highlighted the impact on the rural highways infrastructure, discussed the level of productivity of the installation and the lack of information that had been supplied by the developer. In conclusion he stated that in his personal opinion land at the Grange was not the right place for the installation. He said that despite his personal views he would as a Parish Councillor represent the views of parishioners.

Mr Charles Adcock, the applicant said that he would like to work with the Parish Councils but could not comment on the EIA as this was out of his control. He said that his family have farmed the land for three or four generations and he talked about the difficulties that farmers currently faced, a poor year had led to low yield and the value of their produce was in decline. He said that he like many other farmers were looking to diversify and this opportunity had presented itself. Mr Adcock went on to say that he had not submitted or seen the application to SKDC but he did acknowledge that the maps were next to useless. He said that the two fields that will be seen from Bitchfield Road have been withdrawn amid concern for one family living nearby but he said that he hoped that this would not reduce the overall acreage. He said that he hoped from his own perspective that the development does go ahead and he talked about the benefits to wildlife and wild flowers. Mr Adcock said he was keen to hear the reasons for opposition.

Mrs Jo Morris-Turner, the Chairman for Lenton Parish Meeting responded immediately to Mr Adcock and she expressed her concern that the plans that have been submitted to the planning department are inaccurate. Mr Adcock confirmed that some of the land in the plans does not belong to him. Mrs Morris-Turner said that to say no one will be affected by the development is cruel and she listed the 86 listed properties locally, the 2 areas of ancient woodland, the 2 conservation areas and the links to Roman settlements.

Ms Jane Harris, Scotland Lane said that she is against the proposed installation. She demonstrated the scale of the development. She said that the location was inappropriate. In conclusion she said that she loves the farm at the Grange and she loves to walk and ride around the area and the prospect of losing that makes her feel sad.

Ms Jackie Williams, Bitchfield asked whether solar installation present any risk to health.

Mr Roy Thomson asked whether a precedent is being set. He said that he can appreciate Mr Adcock's position but said that in years to come there would be ample electricity but a shortage of food due to the loss of agricultural land.

Mr Roger Green, Scotland Lane said that he often cycles along the bridle track that runs through the Grange. He said it is very beautiful and give enormous pleasure to him and others. He also said that he has sympathy for Mr Adcock and his family who have farmed the land for generations and his feelings towards the proposed installation are divided. He did say however, that he was not pleased that there had been no consultation in relation to the EIA.

Councillor David Harrison, The Chairman for Ingoldsby Parish Council expressed his fears for the locality if both the Grange Farm and Ropsley installations are approved; the village will become encircled by development which will devalue the price of properties and affect the sustainability of the school. The Chairman reminded parishioners to direct their comments through the Chair and not to Mr Adcock.

Mr Adcock, the applicant spoke about the energy requirements of the housing development on Somerby Hill in Grantham. He said that if he didn't allow the development on his land, another farmer would.

Mr Les Berry said that solar farms were being discussed on Radio Lincolnshire earlier in the day. He went on to say that the applicants want to make as much money as possible for their 'foreign' investors; the money will not be used for the benefit of the British economy but will disappear abroad.

Mr Mark Williams, Bitchfield said that we all need to take collective responsibility for the dilemma that farmers are faced with; if we paid more for our food farmers would not be in a position where they have to diversify.

Mr Roy Thomson suggested that solar panels are installed on all new builds at the Somerby Hill development. He re-iterated his previous comments.

Ms Jane Harris asked if the plans are changed whether this will invalidate the decision for the EIA. The Chairman asked the Clerk for clarification. The Clerk said she did not know but would consult with Mr Moore.

Mr Francis Gilbert introduced himself as a newcomer to the village. He said that he is dismayed at the application. He teaches the theory of EIA at Nottingham University. His view was that a challenge should be lodged with the Secretary of State.

Ms Kath Groom, Ingoldsby said that if Ropsley and District Parish Council have been consulted in relation to the screening opinion for their development this must surely set a precedent for all other developments.

Councillor Darryl Weller said that she feels strongly that an EIA is essential and it is beyond belief that SKDC have determined otherwise. She said that SKDC are arguing on the basis that they have followed their guidelines but it is not about a yes or a no, it is about gathering as much information as possible so that everyone is well informed. She said that the developer have not submitted a planning application as yet. She concluded by saying that the Parish Council feel bulldozed as the EIA was determined before the Parish Council was even aware of the screening opinion. She said she feels strongly that there has been a lack of information.

An un-named parishioner asked whether Ingoldsby Parish Council had appealed to Mr Eric Pickles. Mrs Morris-Turner confirmed that Lenton Parish Meeting have lodged an appeal with Mr Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. She said she has also appealed to Ms L Truss, the Minister responsible for Food and Rural Affairs. Ms Morris-Turner said that she does have a degree of sympathy for the planners at SKDC.

Carol Thomson, Lenton said she was told that there would be floodlights and 9ft high panel fencing.

Mr Adcock said in response that there would be no floodlights but a deer style fence would be erected. Councillor Ward-Barrow asked Mr Adcock whether there would be an audio warning system. Mr Adcock said that he could not say for sure but confirmed there would be CCTV surveillance.

Councillor Martin Hill said that Lincolnshire County Council support renewable energy but now feel that Lincolnshire has enough wind turbines. The position in relation to solar installations is that they should not be sited on agricultural land and there was some discussion surrounding the grade of land. Councillor Hill advised the meeting to take a view on whether they are for or against the installation. He noted that the question of how the electricity will be linked to grid needs to be addressed.

Jane Harris asked Mr Adcock the grade of the land. Mr Adcock was not prepared to respond to the question.

Mr Taylor, Humby said that the purpose of the EIA is to draw out as much information as possible to inform a decision.

Mr Berry asked Mr Adcock to withdraw his application and to re-submit it with reduced acreage to allow the Parish Council to appeal to the planning department for EIA. The Chairman informed Mr Berry that his comments were inappropriate.

Councillor Barry Wedge said that the Parish Council will seek to establish whether changes to the plans will invalidate the decision on EIA.

One parishioner who spoke at the beginning of the meeting said that he was very unhappy about the lack of consultation with local communities.

The Chairman asked for a show of hands from Ingoldsby parishioners only, of those in support of appealing the EIA decision; 19 in favour, 1 against, abstentions not recorded.

The Chairman again asked for a show of hands from Ingoldsby parishioners only, of those opposed to the proposed installation: 17 against, 2 in favour and 4 abstentions.

There was further discussion relating to the formation of an opposition group. Mrs Morris- Turner said that membership to the Lenton opposition group was open to all but spoke about the merit of having a separate opposition group in Ingoldsby. The Chairman asked for volunteers to run the opposition group.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Mr Moore to confirm that if acreage/plans change a new determination in relation to EIA is required. Clerk to appeal the EIA with Mr Eric Pickles.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

5. **DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS (14/158)**

- a) Wednesday 15 October 2014 at 7.45pm.
- b) Wednesday 10 December 2014 at 7.45pm.
- c) Wednesday 18 March 2015 at 7.45pm.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.18pm.