



# Chailey Parish Council

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## Minutes

**A meeting of Members of the Chailey Parish Council Planning and Environs Committee (Urgent Planning Matters) was held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015 in the Reading Room, Chailey Green commencing at 7.30 pm.**

**Present:** Cllr. J. Millam, (Chairman).  
Cllrs. S. Avery, M. Evans, K. Matthews, P. Olbrich.

**Public present:** 20 plus for Tomkins Farm / 3 for Oxbottom Lane

**In attendance:** B. Newell (Clerk).

**15/49. Apologies:** None

**15/50. Verbal Representations by members of the public:**  
**LW/15/0292 (Tomkins Farm, Cinder Hill, BN8 4HP)**

- i) Verbal representations were received from Mr Philip O'Connor, owner of the land proposed for solar development. Mr O'Connor spoke of the positive advantages of introducing a solar farm. It would produce electricity for the local area whilst still having the capacity to graze sheep. Although the land is suitable for arable farming, the yield that is produced is no longer a viable business especially for small farmers. Using the land for solar panels is an opportunity to create clean and sustainable energy which will benefit the whole community.
- ii) Verbal representations were received from Ms Emma Siddons from Hadstone Energy Ltd. Ms Siddons spoke of the advantages of introducing a solar farm and took the opportunity to clear some of the misrepresentations that she felt had grown amongst Chailey residents. She argued that there would be little visibility of the panels. The footpaths do not cross common land, they will cross Mr O'Connor's land. Panels will be 7 feet high and not 9 and will not be visible. There will be a gap at the bottom of the land for sheep grazing. The electricity produced does not feed into the national grid but will be used in the local network and will therefore reduce the areas reliance on fossil fuel, fracking etc.
- iii) Verbal representations were received from Mr David Campion, representing the "Stop Industrialising Tomkins Farm" group. Mr Campion acknowledged the importance of developing renewable energy, but concluded that for a number of reasons, Tompkins Farm is not an appropriate site for such a source. The farm land is good, it is not considered to be of poor quality. It is within an isolated green field that is open to view. 20,000 panels will have a high visible impact. The quality of the surrounding area should be taken into consideration; the footpaths are not used for access but for everyone's enjoyment. Mr Campion produced a paper which was made available to read and lists in more details the group's objections.
- iv) Verbal representations were received from Mr James Bamford, also representing "Stop Industrialising Tomkins Farm". Mr Bamford summed up that over 1,000 people have already opposed the application and he is anticipating collecting more objections. 148 people have written to Lewes District Council with their concerns. 95% oppose the plan, 5% are in favour indicating that it is the wrong development in the wrong location. Mr Bamford went on to discuss further concerns and provided paperwork to the Parish Council to view.

After representations were made, there continued to be a lengthy debate arguing the advantages and disadvantages of Tomkins Farm change of use from agriculture land to a solar farm.

- 15/51. Declarations of Interest by Councillors:** Cllr. Millam declared interest in planning Ref LW/15/0292 (Tomkins) and requested that Cllr Evans take the Chair for this application. Declaration of interest was also received from Cllr Olbrich.

Of note: Emma Siddons of Hadstone Energy Ltd asked the Chair at the end of the meeting to request that the Clerk include in her record that she believed two other Councillors (Cllrs Avery and Barnard) should have declared an interest and withdrawn from discussion. On the advice that CPC received from the Legal Adviser to Lewes District Council was that:

- Any Councillor who has had a pecuniary relationship with Mr O'Connor (owner of Tomkins Farm) should declare an interest and should not be part of any decision the Council might make (as this could be interpreted as prejudicial);
- Any Councillor who regards him/herself as a neighbour should declare this as an interest, but it would not be considered prejudicial and the Councillor may take part in the discussion and vote on the outcome. It is important to note that the Parish Council is not deciding the matter, but only responding as a statutory consultee – the matter would be different for a District Councillor who would have to seek a dispensation.
- If the Council cannot constitute a quorum, then it may make a recommendation.

Cllrs Avery and Barnard declared an interest as a neighbour. Chair clarified with them their relationship - Mr O'Connor has grazed his sheep on Cllr Avery's land but no charge was made and this is/was a neighbourly gesture on both sides; Cllr Barnard is a tenant in his property and has had no financial dealings with Mr O'Connor. As CPC understand this ruling, both properly declared their interest but continued the debate.

- 15/52. Items not on the agenda considered as a matter of urgency:** None

- 15/53. To consider Lewes District Council Planning Applications:**

The Planning Applications presented were duly considered by members and the following responses agreed:

Received date: 28.4.15	Response date: 27.5.15	Planning Ref No.	Name and Address of Applicant	Work Requested:	CPC Decision
		LW/15/0292	Hadstone Energy Ltd 89 Worship Street London EC2A 2BF	Tomkins Farm, Cinder Hill, BN8 4HP Planning Application – Temporary change of use from agriculture to a solar farm with continued agriculture and associated infrastructure for Hadstone Energy Ltd.	<u>Objection.</u>  See comment below
Received date: 28.4.15	Response date: 27.5.15	LW/15/0299	Persimmon Homes South East Scholars House 60 College Road Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6SJ	Lane West of Oxbottom Lane, Newick Outline Planning Application – Residential development of up to 33 family and affordable homes including access on Oxbottom Lane and associated landscaping, open spaces, pedestrian cycle links and ancillary development for Persimmon Homes South East	<u>Objection.</u>  See comment below

CPC's decision to Tompkins Farm (LW/15/029) – **Objection:**

- 1). The proposed installation would destroy the unique historic character of a rural and sensitive location. Moreover, the site is isolated and poorly accessible, about one kilometre from the nearest public road, which itself is only a quiet rural lane, designated as unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles.
- 2). The Lewes Local Plan makes provision under CT1 and CT 3 to restrict development outside Planning Boundaries except for certain purposes which do not include this type of semi-industrial development. This is specifically to protect the rural landscape which is a characteristic of the District and the related AONB.
- 3). The proposed site is bounded to the north and west by public footpaths, from which the development would be highly visible. Medium distance and longer distance views would also be possible from other public vantage points.
- 4). The isolated position of the site and its visual prominence from these view points make it a vulnerable location, unlikely to be readily absorbed into the natural environment.
- 5). Moreover, the characteristics of the site and surrounding land would result in the installation appearing as an isolated development in countryside which makes an important contribution to the rural setting and character of nearby villages such as Chailey and Newick. The character of this landscape would be significantly affected and eroded by the proposed development, owing to the size and position in this vulnerable location.
- 6). In addition, the loss of countryside and the effect on the character of the landscape would be evident beyond the site. The open field setting and sloping nature of the land to the south and west would result in medium distance visibility from footpath 11 and Markstakes Lane to the south. Some longer distance views would also be evident from elevated vantage points such as footpath 52 to the south and to the north west, as a result of the topography of the area.
- 7). Over-development of this site is therefore inappropriate. Councillors also were concerned that not all the effects of the development would be reversible and that a brownfield site would be created in the heart of a rural landscape.

CPC's decision to land west of Oxbottom Lane, Newick (LW/15/0299) – **Objection:**

- 1). Premature and prior to the core strategy going through. It's not an allocated site and is outside the development area. It is not a sustainable nor accessible location.
- 2). Amenities of nearby area are too small to take on development.
- 3). North Chailey has been allocated 30 dwellings, this exceeds the limit.
- 4). Traffic coming out of site will either go down an unsuitable, narrow country lane or access the busy A272 which is already difficult to access. Risk of road traffic accidents will increase.
- 5). Council are against widening of Oxbottom road.
- 6). Mix of housing is unsuitable; affordable housing should be spread out and not put in a disadvantaged corner as on the plans.
- 7). The site is either good for a small number of 4 bed houses with gardens or re-organised with a decent proportion of 1 or 2 bed houses.
- 8). Development of such a site will erode the boundaries of Newick and Chailey.

15/54. **Date of next Planning & Environs Committee meeting:**  
Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2015

**Signed:**

**Chairman**

**Date:**