

## **DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2015 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Williamson (Chairman)

Cllr. Miss. Thornton (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs. Ayres, Brookbank, Brown, Clark, Cooke, Edwards-Winser, Firth, McGarvey, Orridge, Mrs. Parkin, Raikes, and Walshe

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Bosley, Gaywood, Miss. Stack and Underwood

Cllrs. Ayres, Mrs. Davison, Davison, Piper and Scholey were also present.

### 87. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Development Control Committee held on 18 December 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 88. Declarations of Interest or Predetermination

There were no declarations of interest or predetermination.

### 89. Declarations of Lobbying

All Members declared that they had been lobbied in respect of minutes item 90 – SE/14/03361/FUL Skinners Farm, Skinners Lane, Edenbridge TN8 6LW.

### 90. SE/14/03361/FUL Skinners Farm, Skinners Lane, Edenbridge TN8 6LW

The proposal was for a Solar PV Park complete with landscaping mitigation, inverters, substation, security fence, infra red CCTV, access for the landowner to farm, new planting and all necessary ancillary works.

The application was referred to Committee at the request of Councillor Scholey for the reason that no policy held by Sevenoaks District Council development plan covered the building of renewable energy structures in the Green Belt. In the absence of such a policy that had neither been subject to scrutiny by Members nor subject to public consultation, Councillor Scholey did not believe that it was appropriate that a decision, which could set a precedent in the District, should be taken under delegated authority.

Members' attention was brought to the main agenda papers and the late observation sheet. Member's noted that page 3 paragraph 2 line 2 of the late observation sheet should have read that the 'recommendation for refusal within the main papers remain unchanged.'

The Committee was addressed by the following speakers:

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Against the Application:	Mr. George Gotobed
For the Application:	Mr. Arthur Bell
Parish Representative:	Cllr. Mrs. Davison
Local Member:	Cllr. Scholey

Members asked questions of clarification from the Speakers and Officers. In response to questions, Mr. Bell explained that a community benefit would be the Town Council receiving a financial payment per annum. He also advised that financial viability was a factor in selection of the site.

The Planning Manager advised Members that the Council had no involvement with any agreement to do with financial payments offered to local organisations by the developer and he could not therefore advise on whether any such agreement could be given weight. If Members were minded to go against the Officer's recommendation, officers would need to consider what conditions could be imposed. He also advised that he could not comment on whether an alternative site that had been suggested would be suitable or preferable to the application site as officers had not had any opportunity to consider the merits of the possible alternative. The recommendation was based on the information provided in the papers.

It was moved by the Chairman and duly seconded that the recommendation in the report to refuse planning permission be agreed.

Members discussed whether there would be a community benefit to the solar farm. It was considered whether the proposal had sufficient grounds for very special circumstances in line with paragraph 91 of the NPPF as the site was within Green Belt land.

The motion was put to the vote and it was

Resolved: That planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

The land lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt where strict policies of restraint apply. The proposal would be inappropriate development harmful to the maintenance of the character of the Green Belt and to its openness. The Council does not consider that the very special circumstances and the sequential analysis put forward in this case are sufficient to justify overriding policy held within the National Planning Policy Framework, policies LO1, LO8 and SP2 of the Sevenoaks District Core Strategy and guidance held within the National Planning Practice Guidance.

The proposed development would significantly harm the visual amenities of those who use the network of public footpaths that pass the site. In the short term, prior to the proposed natural screen establishing itself on site, the appearance of the proposed fencing around the site and the appearance of the panels and associated structures would significantly detract from the visual amenities of the immediate area around the site. Once established, the screen would reduce the appreciation of the open character of the area to those using the public footpaths, particularly the footpath that currently runs in a north-south directly adjacent to the application site. This conflicts with policy LO8 of the Sevenoaks District Core Strategy.

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THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.15 PM

CHAIRMAN