

SUBJECT TO RATIFICATION AT THE 9th SEPTEMBER 2024 MEETING

Minutes of the Parish Council held on Monday, 12th August 2024 at the MRCC commencing at 7pm.

Present: Councillor I Harrison (Chair)
Councillor P Beddoe
Councillor S Dolby
Councillor N Hutchings
Councillor S Preston
Councillor M Talbot

Also in attendance: 40 members of the public and District Councillor Mrs Saddington together with Mark Noone and Elena Sarieva from Elements Green.

NM057-25 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Councillor Oliver.

NM058-25 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

NM059-25 Minutes

The minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday, 8th July 2024 were accepted as a true and correct record.

NM060-25 Public 10 Minute Session

The Chair suspended the meeting at 7.02pm for the public session.

No questions were raised so the meeting was immediately reconvened.

NM044-25 To receive a presentation from Elements Green regarding potential mitigation measures in relation to the Great North Road Solar Park

The Chair welcomed representatives from Elements Green to the meeting. The purpose of their attendance was to enable residents to share their views on what mitigation measures residents would wish to see, should the development go ahead, i.e., additional planting, footpaths or panels removed from a certain area.

The Parish Council had yet to reach a formal decision on whether it would support or object to the proposals. That decision will be informed by various information including survey results and feedback from residents over the past 12 months.

The Chair suspended the meeting at 7.03pm and introduced Mark Noone, UK Country Manager, with Elements Green and Elena Sarieva, Head of Planning.

Mr Noone introduced himself and gave an overview of the present position with the development. It was confirmed that statutory consultation would be in November.

The £1m per annum NG+ community scheme would be spent on community issues. One area the NG+ fund could support was to provide grants to residents to make their homes more energy efficient, i.e, with solar panels or ground source heat pumps. Residents were encouraged to contact Elements Green with anything they may want to have (www.gnrsolarpark.co.uk/contact-us)

The Chair thanked Elements Green for their introduction and opened the floor to residents.

A resident referred to the Rights of Way available within the village. Most of the panels for this scheme were in Bathley, with large areas of solar panels projected near to Vicarage Lane. There were currently no footpaths on Vicarage Lane and the resident suggested that permissive footpaths could be introduced to allow a circular walk from the village. Permissive footpaths would fill in the gaps between current Rights of Way.

A concern was expressed regarding the mapping information that was available. At the moment, the resolution did not allow specific comments on what was proposed as it was difficult to identify where any screening would be. Figures from an ongoing survey in the village currently showed 70% against the development, 15% for and 15% undecided. It was difficult to suggest any mitigation due to it being difficult to see specific details for full impact.

Mr Noone signposted residents to the landscaping masterplan that was available on the Website (www.gnrsolarpark.co.uk/documents)

Locally there were serious concerns about the loss of farming land, with the survey showing 50/50 concerns of energy security against food security.

A resident expressed interest in the construction programme. At the moment roads were difficult to navigate, and extra traffic would impact on that. There appeared to be a disconnect between the need for people to maintain a normal lifestyle and construction traffic

Elements Green advised that, as part of the planning application, they would have to enhance roads. There would be a construction traffic management plan which would include surveying roads. Construction hours would be limited to avoid rush hour and school runs. The traffic management plan would assess different parameters and would be part of the consultation in November.

A resident asked whether there would be any specific prohibition of lorries coming down Main Street. Councillor Talbot advised that there was already a 7.5t weight limit already in place on Main Street. The Chair advised that one mitigation measure for the village should be a CCTV number plate recognition monitoring system provided in conjunction with Via, to allow Via/Police to prosecute where appropriate.

Reference was made to many of the roads dating back to the Inclosure Award, including ancient hedges that were planted for a purpose. Care will need to be taken to mitigate the process on how those roads would be developed. Residents were used to walking in open fields and not along a gravel path.

Elements Green advised this would be part of the consultation.

A question was asked about the management and maintenance of the proposed trees and planting over the 40 year term and doubt expressed that the District Council, as planning authority, could effectively monitor and respond to planning conditions such as tree planting and footpath maintenance, given the experience of the Parish Council in recent years. There were areas in the village that had landscaping conditions attached to permissions which were not enforced.

Elements Green confirmed the maintenance and upkeep would form part of a legal requirement if permission were granted.

The Chair asked whether there was a bond available should the project collapse within a period of time.

Elements Green confirmed there was, plus included in the planning application would be details on decommissioning at the end of the term. Decommissioning formed part of the Development Control Order.

A resident referred to the difficulty in identifying different areas on the map due to purple and pink being used. They considered that a better colour scheme needed to be developed.

A question was asked as to whether Elements Green would sell the park after it had been developed, should permission be granted.

Elements Green advised that, if developed, would often hang on to a portion and maintenance as a liquidity position. If it was a going concern and making profit there would always be other companies willing to buy it. This biggest cost of the scheme was at the start.

A resident asked whether providing Elements Green providing a footpath from North to South Muskham would be within the scope of the NG+ fund as it would be community enhancement.

Elements Green advised infrastructure projects became more difficult if they were not within the area of the park. It may be possible to do it through NG+.

Elements Green made reference to the 'Nottinghamshire Community Trust' a charity that would run the NG+ community benefit scheme. This had not been formed as yet.

Reference was made to the screening and that it would be useful to have some idea of what screening would be effective. Additionally, in reality traffic would be driving through the village. It would be useful to have a 'hotline' available for residents to be able to report issues should the 7.5t limit be breached.

Elements Green advised that there would be a visual amenity plan which would be available in November for certain viewpoints. Regarding community relationships, there would be a Community Liaison Officer managing the day to day liaison, with any issues raised passed on to the Site Manager.

A resident suggested it would be good for all villages affected by the development to be connected by footpaths.

Elements Green advised they would be working on a footpath strategy.

There was concern from a resident who lived on Vicarage Lane about construction traffic backing up at the level crossing and asked whether any survey had been done on that impact. Further, there were no footpaths on Vicarage Lane.

Elements Green confirmed that the impact assessment for traffic would be supplied to the Parish Council. In terms of construction, individual roads would be servicing a particular area for a few months and then move on to another area.

There was an element of scepticism amongst residents present at the effectiveness of any traffic management plan.

A resident asked when the NG+ funding would start.

Elements Green confirmed that a small amount was available in 2024 and 2025, but the main element would come in 2026.

The Chair referred to the cumulative impact assessments and whether this included solar and wind within a 10km radius.

Elements Green confirmed that the assessment would look at all applications and residential.

The Chair queried when the impact assessment in relation to flood risk mitigation would be available. It was understood that Nottinghamshire County Council was currently reviewing this.

Elements Green confirmed it would be published in October and then form part of the consultation in November. In terms of the consultation, there would be 8 in person events arranged, together with an online element.

A resident referred to the suggestion that there had been some harassment of tenant farmers asked what mitigation was in place for them.

Elements Green responded that was the responsibility of the land owner not of Elements Greent.

The Chair understood that a number of otter holts had been identified in the area and asked where the exclusion zone of 200m was from.

Elements Green advised that otters and water voles had been surveyed. During the construction there would be mammal gates for them to use. The 200m was from each holt or suspected holt. Details would be included in the ecological report including mitigation.

The Chair asked what the practical mitigation was on the loss of habitats, especially as it was understood Red Kites had been observed working in the fields off Vicarage Lane and these were not in the original environmental impact assessment report.

Elements Green advised that there would be a number of dedicated areas free of solar panels which would be left for ground nesting birds. A further mitigation would be phasing and staging of the development to allow time and space for wildlife to move around. There would be 800 acres available, together with the planting of 50,000 trees.

A resident asked whether Elements Green had been in touch with National Highways to determine if there were any plans to widen the A1 as this could impact on the area highlighted for the park.

Elements Green advised they were required to consult with National Highways and were not aware of any other major projects, apart from the A46 dualling

Councillor Beddoe asked how the NG+ fund was allocated across the parishes, and whether it was index linked. It was considered that Elements Green may have to manage expectations £1m per annum only equated to £55,000 per parish.

Elements Green confirmed that the NG+ fund was index linked and that the amount they were putting in was double the amount that the Government recommended.

A question was asked regarding the longevity of the panels and whether they would last 40 years. Further, with the rate technology was progressing the resident was concerned that the park would become a white elephant in years to come as other forms of energy overtook it.

Decommissioning was raised as an issue with residents asking what would happen at the end of 40 years.

Elements Green confirmed that the panels would be taken down and the land would go back to the land owner. Arrangements for decommissioning were a requirement of the Development Consent Order. The panels would be recycled, or reused elsewhere.

Clarification was sought on the distance panels had to be away from residential properties.

Elements Green confirmed it was 100m or more depending on the visual amenity. Panels don't generate noise but sub-stations will so the park would be designed so they were 300m away from the closest property.

A resident asked if the park would devalue properties.

Elements Green advised it would depend on the design.

A resident considered that the land would not be fit for agricultural use at the end of the 40 years.

Elements Green responded that over farming had degraded the land value and when the land was left for 20-30 years it replenished the sub strata of the soil.

The Chair thanked representatives for Elements Green for attending, and residents for their input and reconvened the meeting at 8.02pm. The Chair advised that a synopsis of the meeting would be shared with Elements Green, and residents were encouraged to send any further comments or concerns direct to the Clerk.

Representatives from Elements Green left the meeting at 8.05pm.

The Chair again thanked residents for their input and for the very valid questions asked during the open session. The Parish Council would consider what mitigation to put forward.

The Chair of the Parish Council was leading a collective group of parishes affected by the proposals. The group were looking to put a robust response together for when the formal application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. The Chair advised that, in light of recent decisions taken by the new Government, the likelihood was that this park would go ahead. Nevertheless JPAG and NASSAG would do all that it could to stop the proposals or at least seek the best mitigation available. It was important that parishes kept engaging with the developer.

It was understood that the District Council could comment on the size of the NG+ community fund and whether or not it was sufficient. The Parish Council would be pushing for a view on that.

The next meeting of the joint group of parishes was scheduled for 15th August.

Councillor Mrs Saddington advised that the District Council had failed to support a planning appeal for a BESS application, and had also agreed to not defend a planning appeal for two solar farm applications on the edge of South Muskhams & Little Carlton Parish. This action was concerning and had been raised with the Chief Executive.

The District Council is the Planning Authority and while they won't determine this application they will be expected to respond to the Planning Inspectorate. The Chair referred to a recent Facebook post by the District Council thanking Elements Green for sponsoring their 'Education Provider of the Year Award'. This was not considered appropriate and the Parish Council would be considering a response to this later on the agenda.

At the invitation of the Chair, a resident referred to the District Council's development of a new solar energy plan. At the moment, any proposal for ground based solar panels above 50kw had to go through the centralised process of an NSIP. There was a proposal that this may increase to 150kw before being considered an NSIP. This could lead to all the fields that did not have panels being available for developers to fill in all the gaps.

At the June meeting of the Parish Council it had been agreed that financial support would be available to retain a planning consultant, in conjunction with the other parishes.

The Chair advised that the Parish Council would determine its position at the next meeting which would be held on Monday, 9th September 2024 at 7pm. Residents would be welcome to attend.

NM045-25 To consider any matters that need to be raised with District Cllr Mrs Saddington

There were no matters that needed to be raised.

Councillor Mrs Saddington advised that the email addresses for the Chief Executive of the District Council, and the Director of Planning would be posted on the Muskham Messenger for residents.

NM046-25 Newark & Sherwood District Council

(a) To consider a response to the Public Consultation on the Draft Interim Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document

Members were asked to review the document and forward any comments to the Clerk. The Chair had identified that the document did not include the risk around local connections, especially on the transfer of properties which should be addressed.

(b) To consider a response to the Public Consultation on the Draft Solar Energy Supplemental Planning Document

Members were asked to review the document with a view to a response being formulated at the September meeting.

(c) To receive details of the Lloyds Tour of Britain – Stage 4

Members noted the details of the Stage 4 Lloyds Tour of Britain which would come through the district on Friday, 6th September. The nearest village it would go through was Norwell.

NM047-25 To consider any matters that need to be raised with County Councillor Laughton

This item would be taken if, and when, County Councillor Laughton arrived.

NM048-25 Nottinghamshire County Council

There were no matters to consider.

NM049-25 Planning

- (a) 24/01115/HOUSE – Elm Tree House, Crab Lane, North Muskham - Single storey side extension

Members noted that the applicant had submitted a more detailed Flood Risk Assessment for the application, however, it was not considered to be robust and refers to a history of 'potential flooding' when this property has flooded in the past.

Members noted that the proposals would see the imprint of the property increase from 191sqm to 256sqm, the size of another property. From local knowledge, the area where the extension is planned is whether flood water comes around the property. If permission was granted then that flood water would be displaced on to Crab Lane.

After discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Hutchings, seconded by Councillor Talbot, that objection be raised to the application on the flood risk and the cumulative impact the proposals would have.

- (b) Decision Notice – 24/00633/HOUSE – Green Ridges, Crab Lane, North Muskham – Two storey side and two storey and single storey rear extension, existing dormer windows changed to pitched, new porch canopy and render to existing dwelling and extension of hardstanding. 24/01189/TPO – Four Trees, Old Great North Road, North Muskham - Undertake works to trees protected by TPO N247 and identified as T2: Reduce Sycamore tree in rear garden by 5m all-round.

Members noted the tree works proposed and that permission had been granted for the work.

- (c) To consider a response to the Winthorpe with Langford Neighbourhood Plan consultation
Members were asked to review the Neighbourhood Plan as requested.

The Clerk would circulate the document to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group as an example.

NM050-25 Parish Council Matters

To note the Interim Consultation Response from Elements Green

This item had been considered under Minute No NM044-25.

The Chair referred to the draft letter to the Chief Executive of Newark & Sherwood District Council expressing concern at the acceptance of Elements Green as a sponsor. Members AGREED with the content and the Clerk was asked to submit it as soon as possible.

NM053-25 Financial Matters

- (a) Accounts for payment

The Chair referred to the accounts for payment. It was AGREED unanimously that the following accounts be agreed for payment:

- Clerk's Wages – July - £299.60
- PAYE – July – £74.80

- Village Handyman – June - £648.13 (inc insurance)
- Village Handyman – July - £439.19
- North Marsh Refund - £120
- BBQ Costs - £395.01
- WaterPlus - £24.07
- RA & EE Ingram – Basketball Base - £78
- Martin Talbot Builder (various) - £160.25
- MRCC – Grass Cutting – April to June - £144.18
- MRCC – Grass Cutting – July to Sept - £144.15
- MRCC - Meetings 4th & 11th July - £27.50
- MRCC – 50% electricity (June) - £25.15
- MRCC – June PC Meeting - £13.75
- MRCC – 50% electricity (May) - £28.80
- MRCC – May PC Meeting - £13.75
- Ultimate Print & Design – Parish Council Banner - £96
- Nick Hutchings Architect – Printing – £19.02
- Martin Talbot Builder – Installation of Bins - £195

In relation to the bill for the electricity to the external light at the MRCC, the Clerk was asked to advise the MRCC that the Parish Council would no longer contribute to the increased costs and suggested the MRCC may wish to consider removing it.

(b) To note any Receipts

The following receipts were noted:

- Newark & Sherwood Community Lottery – £124
- BBQ Receipts - £744.50 (cash)

(c) Financial Report – to 31st July 2024

Members noted the financial report to 31st July 2024.

(d) To note progress regarding the return of donations made towards the North Marsh project

Members noted that there was only one donation that now needed to be returned. Councillor Talbot undertook to contact the resident to obtain bank details.

(e) To note the conclusion of the External Review of the 2023-24 Financial Accounts by PKF Littlejohn and to receive the External Auditor's Report

Members noted the conclusion of the External Review. No matters had been raised that needed to be addressed by the Parish Council. The Clerk would now progress publication of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit.

NM054-25 Notts Association of Local Councils

(a) August Newsletter and details of the Annual General Meeting

Members received and noted the August Newsletter.

The Newsletter contained details of the Annual General Meeting of the Association that would be held at the YMCA on Saturday, 12th October between 1.30pm and 4.30pm. The Clerk advised there was a new award this year for Chairs who had over 12 years of service. As Councillor Harrison met that criteria it was AGREED that a nomination be submitted.

NM055-25 Correspondence

The Clerk referred to correspondence received from Via regarding repairs to the A1 roundabout. There would be overnight closures from Monday, 9th September to Thursday, 12th September 2024.

Members were pleased that the works were now progressing.

NM056-25 Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 9th September 2024

The meeting closed at 9 pm.