

MAIN CASE

Reference No: 20/01016/CCA

Proposal: Creation of an Energy Centre to serve the village of Swaffham Prior via a heat supply network. Centre will include a small visitors, education and exhibition space within an existing agricultural building. Erection of solar photovoltaic PV Panels, a borehole ground source heat collector with associated pumps and machinery, landscaping and associated works.

Site Address: Goodwin Farm 1 Heath Road Swaffham Prior Cambridge CB25 0LA

Applicant: Cambridgeshire County Council

Case Officer: Andrew Phillips, Planning Team Leader

Parish: Swaffham Prior

Ward: Bottisham
 Ward Councillor/s: Charlotte Cane
 John Trapp

Date Received: 29 July 2020 **Expiry Date:** 19 August 2020

[V81]

1.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

1.1 Members are requested to endorse the consultation response proposed by Officers, set out below:

1.2 East Cambridgeshire District Council support projects for renewable energy development in accordance with policy ENV6 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015. East Cambridgeshire District Council raise no objection to the proposals but do request that conditions are appended to any grant of permission which cover the following:

- Request that any ground piling works are restricted to the hours of 09:00 – 17:00 each day Monday – Friday. None on Saturdays, Sundays or Bank Holidays.
- Request that construction works (excluding ground piling works) are restricted to the hours of 07:30 – 18:00 each day Monday – Friday; 07:30 – 13:00 on Saturdays; and None on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

- East Cambs District Council wish to see conditions appended to any grant of permission which requires a detailed scheme for soft landscaping and its ongoing maintenance to be submitted and approved in writing. The schedule shall include, planting plans, a written specification; schedules of plants noting species, plant sizes, proposed numbers/densities; and a detailed implementation programme. It shall also indicate all existing trees and hedgerows on the land and details of any to be retained. The works shall be carried out prior to the end of the first planting season following completion of the development. The condition should also allow scope for replacement planting, if any tree or plant is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies. The maintenance scheme shall set out:
 - methods for the proposed maintenance regime;
 - detailed schedule;
 - details of who will be responsible for the continuing implementation
 - details of any phasing arrangements
- That prior to any work commencing on site a condition is secured for a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- East Cambs District Council wish to see a condition appended to any grant of permission which secures a comprehensive scheme of biodiversity improvements as part of the development.

In addition the County Council will need to satisfy itself that there is no detrimental harm to the horse racing industry in the local area; following concerns having been raised by the horse racing industry regarding water quality/supply.

2.0 SUMMARY OF APPLICATION

- 2.1 This application is a being determined by Cambridgeshire County Council. East Cambridgeshire District Council is a consultee and not the determining body.
- 2.2 The proposal is made up of four elements:
- Energy centre with the air source heat collectors located to Goodwin Farm
 - Underground ground sourced heat collector, defined by boreholes and pipework
 - Solar farm
 - Underground heat network to non-listed buildings within the village
- 2.3 These combined will form a Neighbourhood Heating System designed to reduce/remove the requirement of the village using fossil fuel (oil) to heat its properties.
- 2.4 No listed building application has been submitted alongside the current application, therefore any works to install to listed buildings will require separate listed building consent in order to benefit from the proposed heating system.

- 2.5 It is also understood that the solar farm, unlike most solar farm applications, is seeking a permanent permission in order to secure the long term powering of the air source heat pumps at the energy centre.
- 2.6 The full planning application, plans and documents submitted by the Applicant can be viewed online via Cambridgeshire County Council's Public Access online service, via the following link <https://planning.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/online-applications/> and the County Council application reference: CCC/20/054/FUL

4.0 THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

- 4.1 The application site is 20.9 hectares (51.6 acres) and covers the energy centre, underground heat collection system, solar farm and the vast majority of roads within Swaffham Prior.
- 4.2 The Adopted Local Plan defines Swaffham Prior as:
"an attractive fen-edge village, five miles west of Newmarket and ten miles north-east of Cambridge.

The village contains a large number of Listed Buildings, and most of the High Street is designated a Conservation Area. Local village facilities include a primary school, village hall, a public house, a scout hut, and a parish playground. There is a regular bus service to Newmarket and Cambridge, which runs six days per week."

- 4.3 In 2012 it was a village of 340 dwellings and had a population of 830.
- 4.4 To the north of the village is Devils Dyke.
- 4.5 The energy centre on Heath Road is located adjacent to the employment site allocation SWP2.
- 4.6 There is a Public Right of Way (PRoW) that runs across the field which is proposed to be used for the underground heat collection and solar farm on Heath Road. National Grid pylons also cross this element of the site.

5.0 RESPONSES FROM CONSULTEES

- 5.1 Responses were received from the following internal consultees and these are summarised below. The full responses are available on the Council's web site. While other comments were received, this Council is not the determining authority and on this basis these comments will not be referred to. The other people seeking to comment on the application were directed to make their comments to Cambridgeshire County Council Local Planning Authority.

Environmental Health - 4 August 2020

States:

"I would advise that construction times and deliveries during the construction phase are restricted to the following:

07:30 - 18:00 each day Monday - Friday

07:30 - 13:00 on Saturdays and
None on Sundays or Bank Holidays

I would also advise that prior to any work commencing on site a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) regarding mitigation measures for the control of pollution (including, but not limited to noise, dust and lighting etc) during the construction phase. The CEMP shall be adhered to at all times during the construction phase, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority (LPA). I have read the CEMP dated July 2020 but this is primarily concerned with ecology and not the points listed above.

If it is necessary to undertake ground piling I would request that a method statement be produced and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) before work takes place. If there is no intention to utilise ground piling then I would request this be confirmed in writing and a condition which prevents it be attached until such time as a ground piling method statement is agreed with the LPA.

I have read the Noise Impact Statement dated the 17th July 2020. The report has taken in to account the LPA requirement for internal sound levels to be met with a partially open window and finds that the cumulative noise level from all operations on site will be below background sound level during the day and night. For these reasons I have no issues to raise at this time.”

6.0 The Planning Policy Context

6.1 East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015

GROWTH 2	Locational Strategy
GROWTH 3	Infrastructure requirements
GROWTH 5	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
ENV 1	Landscape and settlement character
ENV 2	Design
ENV 4	Energy efficiency and renewable energy in construction
ENV 6	Renewable energy development
ENV 7	Biodiversity and geology
ENV 8	Flood risk
ENV 9	Pollution
ENV 11	Conservation Areas
ENV 12	Listed Buildings
ENV 14	Sites of archaeological interest
EMP6	Development Affecting the horse racing industry
COM 5	Strategic green infrastructure
COM 7	Transport impact
COM 8	Parking provision
SWP 2	Employment allocation, land east of Goodwin Farm, Heath Road

6.2 Supplementary Planning Documents

Design Guide

Contaminated Land
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water
Renewable Energy Development (Commercial Scale)

6.3 National Planning Policy Framework 2019

- 2 Achieving sustainable development
- 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9 Promoting sustainable transport
- 11 Making effective use of land
- 12 Achieving well-designed places
- 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16 Conserving & enhancing the historic environment

7.0 PLANNING COMMENTS

7.1 With East Cambridgeshire District Council only being a consultee on this proposal the main elements that will be considered are principle, residential amenity, visual amenity, historic environment, horse racing industry and impact on the highways.

7.2 Principle of Development

7.3 On 21st October 2019 East Cambridgeshire District Council declared a 'Climate Emergency', acknowledging that East Cambridgeshire is a major contributor to Greenhouse gas emissions. The minutes from the Full Council meeting show that East Cambridgeshire "is at significant risk from climate change by both drought from reduced rainfall and flooding from rising sea levels, with the Environment Agency reporting that the river flow on the Ely Ouse is 'notably low', and reports suggesting that a 1.5 rise in temperature would see most of East Cambs under salt water with Ely becoming an island and the fen edge villages becoming coastal villages". At the meeting the Council committed to a number of aims including to "Consider other actions that could be implemented, including (but not restricted to): renewable energy generation and storage, providing electric vehicle infrastructure and encouraging alternatives to private car use, increasing the efficiency of buildings, in particular to address fuel poverty; proactively using local planning powers to accelerate the delivery of net zero-carbon new developments and communities, coordinating a series of information and training events to raise awareness and share good practice."

7.4 Policy ENV6 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 sets out that renewable energy schemes will be supported wherever possible and that the wider environmental, social and economic benefits will be given significant weight, unless these benefits are outweighed by significant adverse impacts that cannot be remediated and made acceptable in relation to:

*The local environment and visual landscape impact.
Impact on the character and appearance of the streetscape/buildings.
Key views, in particular those of Ely Cathedral.*

Protected species.
Residential amenity.
Safeguarding areas for nearby airfields; and
Heritage assets.

- 7.5 Policy ENV6 states that the visual and amenity impacts of proposals will be assessed on their merits, both individually and cumulatively. Provision should be made for the removal of facilities and reinstatement of the site, should they cease to operate.
- 7.6 The Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Renewable Energy Development' sets out on page 8 that "In summary proposals for renewable energy generation will be considered on their merits, on a case by case basis. The Council will take account of any environmental, economic or social benefits and will consider whether there are any adverse impacts, for example on landscape character, the natural and historic environment, public rights of way and highway network, residential amenity and the operation of aviation sites. The Council will refuse planning permission for commercial scale renewable energy schemes where it is considered that there are significant adverse impacts which outweigh the wider benefits of renewable energy development identified above. The Council will also consider to what extent any adverse impacts can be mitigated through the design and siting of proposals or by applying appropriate planning conditions. The views of local communities, residents, parish and town councils, community groups and all elected representatives relating to commercial scale renewable energy schemes will also be given significant weight in the determination of planning applications."
- 7.7 Based on the information provided, East Cambridgeshire District Council has no objections to the proposed development as it is considered to meet the overarching aims of the Council's Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents which relate to renewable energy.
- 7.8 Residential Amenity
- 7.9 Policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 requires proposals to ensure that there are no significantly detrimental effects on the residential amenity of nearby occupiers. The Council is aware of other solar farm projects in the district where ground piling has created issues with residential amenity. The Council would request that appropriate conditions are appended to any grant of permission which restrict construction and ground piling times, to ensure that residential amenity is not impacted.
- 7.10 Visual Amenity
- 7.11 Policy ENV1 of the Local Plan 2015 requires proposals to protect, conserve and enhance traditional landscape features and the unspoilt nature and tranquillity of the area. Policy ENV2 of the Local Plan 2015 requires proposals to ensure that location, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and colour relate sympathetically to the surrounding area and each other. Paragraphs 127 and 130 of the NPPF seek to secure visually attractive development which improves the overall quality of an area and is sympathetic to local character and history.

- 7.12 The proposed energy centre is primarily located within an existing barn on Heath Road and while there will be external plant and provision of additional hard landscaping, this element will have only a very minor impact upon the visual character of the area.
- 7.13 The underground heating collection system and underground heating network to the properties will have no noticeable impact upon the visual character of the parish, due to the vast majority of the works being underground.
- 7.14 The solar farm located in the eastern edge of the site measures approximately 0.92 ha or 2.27 acres. The solar panels measure approximately 2.3m (7.5ft) in height, with 2.5m (8.2ft) height substation.
- 7.15 The developer has submitted a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), which makes it clear it believes the solar farm element will have a high impact on the visual character during construction to the properties on Mill Hill, Bye's Farm and the footpath that runs through the site. Post construction once soft landscaping has had chance to establish it believes the proposal will have a moderate impact on the visual character from these locations. It also states from Devil's Dyke there will be moderate impact during construction phase and low impact once soft landscaping has established.
- 7.16 In regards to the LVIA it should again be noted that the case officer for the County Application has already gone to the developer asking for additional information in order to get clarification on the impact from public viewpoints.
- 7.17 However, with the solar farm element being relatively very small for a solar farm the use of native hedging will substantially obscure the development. While the area is predominantly open landscape, with only limited field hedges, planting is not considered to be development and is not considered to detrimentally affect the overall quality of this landscape.
- 7.18 It is, therefore, considered subject to conditions requiring a soft landscaping scheme and maintenance for at least 15 years the proposal should comply with policies ENV1 and ENV2 of the Adopted Local Plan.
- 7.19 It should be noted that depending on the exact future routes of the neighbourhood heating system pipework it may impact on the roots of the protected trees within the Conservation Area of Swaffham Prior or trees with a Tree Protection Order; this may require this authority to consider and determine future Tree Preservation Order/Tree Work applications.
- 7.20 Historic Environment
- 7.21 With no listed building application(s) being submitted to this Council until such time (and if) County approve the overall neighbourhood heating scheme it is difficult to assess the impact on individual listed buildings.
- 7.22 With a pipe being needed to connect each property to the network, the impact on the individual listed buildings is unlikely to be any greater than the connection to existing oil tanks. However, these will need to be judged on their individual merits

at the time of submission either as individual applications or as part of a local listed building consent order.

- 7.23 The impact to Devil's Dyke is considered under the visual amenity section of this report.
- 7.24 Impact on Archaeology will be covered by a separate consultee based within Cambridgeshire County Council.
- 7.25 The proposal is considered to comply with the principles of policies ENV11 and ENV12 of the Adopted Local Plan.
- 7.26 Horse Racing Industry
- 7.27 It is noted that concerns have been raised by the horse racing industry regarding water quality/supply. However, it should also be noted that at the current time additional information is being awaited by the developer's agent following a conversation with the case officer for the application being considered by Cambridgeshire County Council.
- 7.28 The County Council will need to determine that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact upon the horse racing industry as required by policy EMP6 of the Adopted Local Plan.
- 7.29 Highways
- 7.30 It is expected with a Public Right of Way (PRoW) running through the site (next to the solar farm) and with the amount of public highways within the site; the views of the Local Highways Authority and the PRoW Team within County Council will be duly considered.
- 7.31 The proposal is likely to have a substantial impact on the local roads while pipe work is laid into the village highways. While this will be likely covered by highway legislation this should also form part of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). Normally planning conditions should not be added when other legislation is in place. However, in this case so much of the site is the adopted public highway. A condition should be requested to ensure a suitable CEMP is brought forward prior to work commencing in order to ensure elements of residential amenity and impact on traffic movements are jointly and fairly considered.
- 7.32 While a CEMP has been submitted as well as construction traffic management plan the current CEMP only focuses on biodiversity and the construction traffic management plan is not detailed enough, nor does it consider the impact on works within the main settlement area of Swaffham Prior.
- 7.33 Summary
- 7.34 This application is a being determined by Cambridgeshire County Council and Officers have recommended a consultation response for Members of the Planning Committee to endorse, as defined with paragraph 1.2.

7.35 No objection is raised, but conditions are requested as set out in the recommendation section of this report.

<u>Background Documents</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact Officer(s)</u>
20/01016/CCA	Andrew Phillips Room No. 011 The Grange Ely	Andrew Phillips Planning Team Leader 01353 665555 andrew.phillips@eastcambs.gov.uk

National Planning Policy Framework -

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 -

<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Local%20Plan%20April%202015%20-%20front%20cover%20and%20inside%20front%20cover.pdf>