

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Planning, Transport and Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER 2013**

**Present:** Councillor Collins (Chairman), and  
Councillors McLoughlin, B Mortimer, Munford, Ross,  
Springett, Watson, de Wiggondene and Mrs Wilson

69. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEBCAST

**RESOLVED:** That all items on the agenda be web-cast.

70. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chittenden and Mrs Watson.

71. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor B Mortimer and Mortimer substituted for Councillor Chittenden.

72. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

There were no Visiting Members.

73. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures.

74. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

**RESOLVED:** That all items be taken in public as proposed.

75. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2013

The following amendment to the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2013 was proposed. The amended wording related to Item 54, Five Year Supply Mid-Year Update, Page 2, paragraph 3:

"In response to Members questions it was confirmed that completions and non-completion figures (for planning permissions) were included in the supply calculations presented, but that the number of dwellings in the planning permissions category could not be moved to the completions category until a survey had been undertaken. No dwellings were unaccounted for."

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November, subject to the amendment highlighted, be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and duly signed.

76. SOLAR ENERGY ADVICE NOTES

Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development and Sue Whiteside, Team Leader, Spatial Policy outlined the purpose of the Solar Energy Advice Notes to the Committee.

The Committee was asked to consider the advice notes for Domestic and medium scale solar PV arrays (up to 50kW) and solar thermal, and Large scale (>50kW) solar PV arrays and recommend that they be adopted as planning policy advice notes that would advise decision making when determining planning applications.

Members considered the following as part of their discussion and evaluation of the Solar Energy Advice notes:

- The negative impact on natural habitats of reflective arrays from large scale solar PV;
- The usefulness of an appendix containing website addresses for organisations that relate to and compliment the information contained in the advice notes such as [www.buglife.org.uk](http://www.buglife.org.uk);
- The possible, incorrect assumption, that once planning permission had been granted for a solar farm the classification of the land would change from Greenfield to Brownfield;
- The need for the advice notes to be referenced in the relevant policies contained within the Local Plan to ensure that they are purposeful;
- The issue of solar farms being granted planning permission and the capability of the local grid being able to take the energy output generated;
- The long term responsibility for returning land to its original use after the term granted for the planning permission for the solar farm expires or in the eventuality that the solar farm is abandoned before the end of its planning permission.

The Committee's concerns resulted in the following recommendations being proposed during the course of the discussion:

- That the following paragraph be added after paragraph 3.50 on page 23 of the document, The Planning Policy Advice Note for Large Scale Solar PV Arrays:
  - "Polarising light from reflective arrays is understood to have a significant negative impact on invertebrates, especially aquatic species that mistake glare from the arrays for water. Design can help to overcome these impacts. The use of agricultural sheeting and large areas of solar panning in sensitive areas, particularly near water-bodies, should be

limited, or sources of polarized light should be broken up by adding non-polarizing patterns, areas or grids that block horizontal light.”

- That an appendix be added to the Solar Farm Advice Notes containing helpful websites to assist Officers, Councillors and the Public (for example the Invertebrate Conservation Trust, [www.buglife.org.uk](http://www.buglife.org.uk));
- That additional wording be added to the Solar Farms Advice Notes to clarify that granting planning permission for Solar Farms does not change the land classification from Greenfield to Brownfield;
- That further emphasis be placed in the Local Plan on the Solar Farm Advice Notes and the requirement for it to be read in conjunction with the applicable policies it relates to;
- That in order to ensure the local grid is capable of receiving additional inputs from Solar Farms and the energy required, there is early engagement with energy companies for proposed Solar Farm planning applications. Further emphasis should be placed on this required in the advice notes (Electricity generating capacity, page 29); and
- That additional wording be added to the Solar Farm Advice Notes that clearly states that the cost and responsibility for returning land to its original use at the end of its permitted term or when usage ceases remains with the landowners (Duration of planning permission and potential conditions, page 29). This responsibility should be made clear, in writing, as part of every planning application made.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) That the following paragraph be added after paragraph 3.50 on page 23 of the document, The Planning Policy Advice Note for Large Scale Solar PV Arrays:

“Polarising light from reflective arrays is understood to have a significant negative impact on invertebrates, especially aquatic species that mistake glare from the arrays for water. Design can help to overcome these impacts. The use of agricultural sheeting and large areas of solar panelling in sensitive areas, particularly near water-bodies, should be limited, or sources of polarized light should be broken up by adding non-polarizing patterns, areas or grids that block horizontal light.”

- b) That an appendix be added to the Solar Farm Advice Notes containing helpful websites to assist Officers, Councillors and the Public (for example the Invertebrate Conservation Trust, [www.buglife.org.uk](http://www.buglife.org.uk));
- c) That additional wording be added to the Solar Farms Advice Notes to clarify that granting planning permission for Solar Farms does not change the land classification from Greenfield to Brownfield;

- d) That further emphasis be placed in the Local Plan on the Solar Farm Advice Notes and the requirement for it to be read in conjunctions with the applicable policies it relates to;
- e) That in order to ensure the local grid is capable of receiving additional inputs from Solar Farms and the energy is required, there is early engagement with energy companies for proposed Solar Farm planning applications. Further emphasis should be placed on this required in the advice notes (Electricity generating capacity, page 29); and
- f) That additional wording be added to the Solar Farm Advice Notes that clearly states that the cost and responsibility for returning land to its original use at the end of its permitted term or when usage ceases remains with the landowners (Duration of planning permission and potential conditions, page 29). This responsibility should be made clear, in writing, as part of every planning application made.

77. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Future Work Programme. It requested that it receive a hard copy of the agenda for the meetings in January and February 2014 as far in advance of the meeting as possible.

Sue Whiteside, Team Leader, Spatial Policy confirmed that her team would ensure that this request was fulfilled.

**RESOLVED:** that the agenda papers for the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee's January and February 2014 meetings are received in hard copy as far in advance of the meetings as possible.

78. DURATION OF MEETING.

6.30pm to 7.45pm