

Members

TWC/2020/0851 – Roden Solar Plant

It is impossible to address the concerns held by many within the community I represent, in either 3 or 5 minutes.

That said, the issue of global warming is one which needs to be taken seriously.

The United Kingdom, through HM Government, has currently chosen electricity as the major tool in reaching carbon emission neutrality by 2050. Our Authority, when declaring itself a climate emergency authority in 2018, stated in that declaration that it wished to achieve its goal of carbon emission neutrality by 2030 and this, you will recall, was agreed without any political opposition by all Councillors in the Chamber.

Therefore, Members, like yourselves I am also totally committed to that Agenda. We do need to source solutions, but not by putting all the eggs into one basket and where there is construction, we need to remove it all tied up in the overall environmental assessment of the project.

Solar energy recovery is without doubt one such solution, and has a part to play as do wind farms.

Members

Focusing attention on this application, and why I, in this address to Committee, believe it is an essential requirement to defer at this time to ensure that a more substantive evidence-based report is available for you to make a fully informed decision.

Of the 11 policies from the Authority's Local Plan 2011-2031 currently under revision, I wish to comment specifically on SP3, SP4 and ER1.

SP3 – Rural Area

When taking this policy in context, it references

- Addressing the needs of rural communities
- Re-use of previously developed land

It also makes reference to development proposals on best or most versatile land Grades 1, 2, 3a this should also include 3b which within the agricultural land assessment is able to support grazing and some cereal crop growth, the economic and other benefits of the land that should be considered.

I do not believe the proposed development supports any of the objectives this policy references.

SP4 – Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development

This application is 'temporary' albeit 40 years. I question how anyone can interpret any temporary structure or activity can be sustainable?

Therefore I would request members, with the greatest of respect, you seek answers on their inclusion of this to support the recommendation of full granted.

ER1

It is not plausible to argue against this policy's opening statement. However, compliance requires all criteria to be met - not a majority but all of them.

i. Adverse Effects

As referenced in this first part, these are said to be minor. Thereby I argue that accepting in principle adverse effects are contained in the application these are Landscape, ecology, wildlife, heritage assets (inc. ancient monuments) and amenity value

5 of 7 are adversely affected (how can this be MINOR?)

ii. Impact on Local Amenity – not clearly defined

Health, Quality of Life

Noise – the report accepts that noise level increases especially for those who reside closest to the development
Therefore, further studies need to be considered

Visual Intrusion – the report accepts that for a minority, there is an impact reducing annually through mitigation measures within 10 years. – is this acceptable?

Electronic Emissions – no answer is available

Again, these are considered to be MINOR – really?

iii. All mitigating measures have been considered, but they still acknowledge them to be MINOR.

iv. Without the inclusion of a complete decommissioning and reinstatement plan for Members to consider, this has not been complied with.

v. There has been little evidence of partnership or shared ownership of this scheme. Social and economic benefits must be considered relevant. This is reinforced within the NPPF and should be evident.

Members, to conclude, I respectfully ask you to consider the comments from outside bodies and from various organisations which are only available within their submissions.

- a) 8.32 Woodlands, High Value, High Susceptibility to change
- b) 8.35 Development High Magnitude of change
- c) 8.36 Lack of cumulative impacts
- d) 8.37 TWC own independent assessment concludes that the impacts are underplayed and that these proposals which the officer is agreement with as being 'Minor Adverse' are disputed by our own assessor
- e) 8.39 is it acceptable that a time limit equating to 25% of the life time of the development (ie 10 years) which enables this application to be considered as being moderately adverse when in reality what we should be looking for are no adverse effects?

Finally, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) considers that materials used in the make-up of solar panels are hazardous and susceptible to breakage in extreme weather conditions whereby the harmful substances contained in panels would be absorbed into the soil. They then go on to say that the only option for disposal is landfill - both local and national policy requires a zero-landfill objective.

It further estimates that by 2050, globally, 78,000,000 tonnes of panels will need to be disposed of going to either landfill or dumped upon poorer nations, this must (although not a planning requirement) be a consideration for any responsible body.

Hence my request for deferment at this time – there are too many unanswered questions without solutions.

Councillor Stephen Bentley
Ward Member
Edgmond & Ercall Magna