

## CROMHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Cromhall Parish Council, PO Box 129, Wotton-under-Edge, Glos GL11 9DH

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### MINUTES of the Extraordinary meeting of Cromhall Parish Council to be held at 7.30pm, on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023, at Cromhall Village Hall, Talbots End, Cromhall GL12 8AJ.

Present: Paul Daly, Mark Daniel, Daren Jeffery, Mike Line, Andy New, Lorraine Palmer and David White

In Attendance: Tracy Norris (Clerk and RFO) and Ward Councillor John O'Neill

Members of the public: 22

#### 1. Submissions from the Public (60 minutes)

The public presented considered and well-articulated objections and concerns over the solar farm proposal. Whilst mindful the need for renewable energy production, concerns were raised over the sheer size of the proposal and its impact on the landscape, size of development and proximity to other solar sites, construction access routes, public rights of way, lost heritage, biodiversity and wildlife, flooding and loss of productive land, and harm to the community.

Councillors thanked the public for their remarkable efforts in their presentations, and it was agreed for two of the presentations to be uploaded on the Council website for the public to view.

19 members of the public left the meeting.

Cllr M Line left the meeting.

#### 2. Apologies for Absence

To NOTE and DECIDE on apologies for absence.

#### 3. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

None declared.

#### 4. Planning

For the Council to REVIEW and COMMENT on planning application

**[P22/07114/F](#) Varley Farm Talbots End Cromhall South Gloucestershire GL12 8AJ - Construction of a solar farm with associated works, equipment and infrastructure.**

RES were invited to attend the meeting and declined.

**RESOLVED** – Unanimously agreed to **OBJECT**.

Notes from discussions:

The stated duty of a planning dept is to strongly question even the small loss of grade 3a land when considering a solar farm planning application and to even to consider if there are better alternative land options when land is graded at 3b. As there are numerous fields bordering the M5, wouldn't it be better to utilise these rather than blight another Village in an area which is already under huge building development pressures.

National England must be consulted if a proposed site has over 20Ha of grade 3a BMV land, it is not clear what Hectare proportion of the land has been highlighted as 3a on the RES sponsored land survey. It would be good to see the extended survey notes and report to ascertain the accuracy and legitimacy of the survey and its stated results.

Defra lists land at Varley farm to be grade 3. It is only data latterly provided by a third party (paid by RES) that has offered a discrepancy to this. As a result of this new survey the land has now conveniently been designated a mix of grade 3A – 4 farming land. From the information provided of this survey it is unclear who took the soil samples or can independently verify that the samples are taken from where they are assigned. It appears highly unlikely that such a neat pattern of uninterrupted 3b/4 land is now in evidence.

The land at Varley farm is still largely rated of good and moderate viability for a range of crops and so serves a real and 'on the doorstep' benefit to the local food production / farming community.

The land at Varley farm backs immediately onto grade 2 listed properties and has significant heritage protection applied automatically, which voids any potential act which detracts from the historical aspect and adjoining landscape.

There is no practical way that the proposed access route to the site is a sensible solution. Farley lane is not much more than single lane / farm track, which itself is prone to flooding. The ridiculous idea that using this track will reduce disruption from HGV's is laughable and denies the danger this imposes on the village. The stated quantity of construction vehicles that will visit the site is in our opinion massively understated and the ambition that these vehicles just appear at Farley Lane without journeying through the village or impacting the surrounding area is paper thin in believability. There will also be destruction caused by the HGVs to historic hedgerows and limbs from an ancient oak tree along this route.

There is already a solar farm approved at Wickwar (the largest in Europe) which will effectively all but border this application if approved, and there are also several more solar farms within a few miles of Cromhall. We are a village with a small quantity of homes, yet it appears we need the capacity to serve more houses than the eye can see from the tallest local hill and all at the foot of our gardens! Does it not make more sense to locate solar farms nearer their intended targeted population instead of blighting a small village on all sides?

There are already 8 large scale solar sites within a 5-mile radius of Cromhall. Which if related to the national solar site average means this area has approx. 13 times the national average (including Varley farm application) by solar square km.

Local environmental knowledge highlights that there is a well-established biodiversity of grasslands, hedgerows and wildlife on Varley farm. The layout plan does not clearly show plans for the existing hedgerows but vaguely promises 1km of new hedging, yet the Solar farms that we have witnessed do not adequately make provision for the displaced flora and fauna and barely shield the solar panels from view despite pre planning promises.

Anyone can attend and speak at the South Glos Planning Committee meeting to five their views on the proposals, either as an individual or as part of a group, and dates and details of meetings can be found on the South Glos planning website.

Noise pollution from electricity generators, Site traffic, Construction traffic.

There are several Badger sets on the boundary of the site, Varley farm has documented enforcement to prevent TB issues stemming from an active Badger population. Badger displacement and the creation of wider problems within the neighbouring area are a real concern to the local farming community.

Flooding issue – no explanation of how the two streams crossing the land will be managed.

House depreciation 2 ½%

Concern over the reduction to Cromhall residents' access to public footpaths, walks in nature and wellbeing.

The Parish Council has made no such agreement with RES re the donation of Speed Cameras mentioned in RES publicity statements.

Meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Chairman:

Date: