**PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

**HELD ON THURSDAY, 6 JULY 2015**

**PRESENT**:, Cllr Mrs J Tomblin (Chairman), Cllr Mrs S Cameron (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs P Chester-Master, Cllr G Edwards, Cllr Mrs R Freyne and Cllr Mrs C Sutton

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE**:) Mr N Dummett (CPRE), Mr R and Mrs J Canton, Mr C Huck and Ms M Longstaff,

Mrs J Beadle, Mrs S Guiliford, Mr T Warren, Mrs A Smith, Mr C and Mrs K Thornton, Mr I Jones, Mr H and Mrs S Spivey and Mrs C Braidwood (Clerk)

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| **1.** | Apologies and Reasons for AbsenceCllr N Price |
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| **2.** | **Declarations of Interest & Code of Conduct** |
| **2.1** | **Member’s Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda** |
|  | None |
| **2.2** | **Updates to Members Register of Interests** |
|  | None |
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| **3.** | **Planning** |
| **3.1** | New Planning Applications |
|  | **15/01923/FUL** **Land Parcel East Of Witpit Lane Preston Gloucestershire**Proposed development of solar photovoltaic modules including access, temporary construction compound; single and double inverter platforms; transfer station; collecting station; security fencing; CCTV cameras and poles; landscaping; and associated works and infrastructure including underground cable along London Road verge and Witpit Lane verge and related equipment to allow connection to the electricity distribution network |
|  | The Chairman explained that the meeting had been called to give residents a final opportunity to air their views about the planning application before the Parish Council finalised and submitted its response to CDC. The Parish Council had made every attempt to gather the Parish’s comments and it would appear that many concerns had been addressed during recent visits to Belectric’s Willersey site. However, the one overwhelming concern was the size of the site particularly in relation to the size of the Village and the proximity to the solar farm site in Ampney Crucis. The Chairman also said that it was unfortunate that Mr Rogers (Belectric) was unable to attend the meeting to answer any additional questions that might arise.Residents present were then asked if they had any comments or questions and the following issues were raised:* Agreed that size is an issue together with inconsistency of information e.g. Belectric has told residents that the size was dependent upon connecting to grid.
* Can’t disagree with solar principle.
* It was acknowledged that Belectric has been reasonable if it does as it says it will – no environmental concerns.
* Are there plans for a storage facility on the site ? Concern about inverters running at night and lack of proven safety.
* Batteries are unknown technology and need more information.
* The Bridleway is hardly mentioned in the Environmental report and is not given enough significance.
* The report on the land quality is questionable although it was acknowledged that it was written by a perfectly reputable company.

Nick Dummett, CPRE;* Protection of countryside is a material consideration and this development would cause significant damage to the landscape.
* There are many alternative sites in the area that are far less damaging.
* The application does include substantial battery storage of electricity for use on the site

The Applicant asked why this meeting had been called now and Cllr Mrs Freyne explained that the Council needed to seek residents views and carry out due diligence. He added that the development of a solar farm would result in a reduction of tractor journeys through the village. **RESOLUTION 23/15**It was **RESOLVED** to make the following response:Preston Parish Council supports the development of solar renewable energy and welcomes the opportunity to work with Belectric to increase supply to the national grid. However, Preston Parish Council objects to this proposal on the grounds of size. The proposed 94-acre site will dominate the small community of Preston and destroy the open view from the bridleway and the Witpit Lane Bridge. The proposal is alien and urbanising; it does not fit well in the rural landscape and does not conserve or enhance it. This rural view is a valuable asset to local residents, visitors and walkers and the loss of this amenity is a significant material consideration. The Parish Council wishes to see a reduction in the overall size of the application by removing the area parallel to the bridleway, equating to half of the first field. This amendment together with significant planting would result in the proposal being less visible from the Witpit Lane Bridge and the bridleway.In addition, there is considerable local concern regarding the cumulative impact created by an existing solar farm in close proximity in the adjoining Parish of Ampney Crucis together with plans for another 2 such farms within a 5-mile radius. However, if CDC is minded to approve the application, Preston Parish Council requests that the following issues be conditional on any planning approval and to be agreed with the Parish Council* A transport plan to cover the building phase and include – a mobile wheel washer to be on site for vehicles leaving the site; A417 London Road to be kept clean throughout the working day; all road and verge damage (especially on Witpit Lane and A417 London Road) to be repaired at the expense of the developer; no heavy vehicles to use the road through the Village; working hours to be restricted to a reasonable time and enforced.
* Landscaping of the site including screening to protect the view from Witpit Lane Bridge and the bridleway.
* Details of Security, Lighting and Fencing.
* Details of any battery storage to be used in the future
* Decommissioning Method and Funding

Furthermore, the Parish Council requests that CDC gives a view on the scale of solar development across the District that it considers would be detrimental to the landscape as there are currently no guidelines but an increasing number of solar farm planning applications. |
| **3.2** | **Planning Items Received since Publication of the Agenda**None |
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| **4.** | **Any Other Business**None |
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| **5.** | **Date and Time of Next Meeting** **Thursday, 3 September 2015 at 7 pm in the Village Hall** |

**There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.38 pm**