

Bardwell Parish Council

Chairman: David Ruffles

DRAFT Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Bardwell Parish Council held on
Tuesday 3rd May 2022, commencing at 7.00pm.
Venue: The Tithe Barn (Bardwell Village Hall), Up Street, Bardwell 1AA.

Present: Cllr David Ruffles (Chairman), Cllr Ali Compton, Cllr John Babraff, Cllr Tony Stokes, Cllr Geoff Clough, Cllr Andrew Smith (also West Suffolk Ward Cllr) and Suffolk County Cllr Joanna Spicer MBE.

Also present for part of the meeting were: 13 Members of the Public, including 5 from Bardwell, 6 from Coney Weston, Euston Estate Director Andrew Blenkinsop, and a representative from Boom Power (applicant for the Solar Farm East of Firsfield).

1. Election of Chairman. Cllr David Ruffles was proposed as Chairman by Cllr Babraff, seconded by Cllr Sanderson. There were no other nominations: Cllr David Ruffles was therefore duly elected as Chairman of Bardwell Parish Council.
2. Election of Vice Chairman: No nominations were received for the role of vice chair. This role will remain unfilled.
3. To receive and approve (if accepted) apologies for absence: None
4. To receive and approve declarations of interest relating to matters included within this agenda.
Cllr Smith: ongoing pecuniary interest re Clerk's salary.
5. Appointment of representatives to outside bodies as Trustees and other relevant appointments.
Appointments are annual unless otherwise stated:
 - 5.1 Bardwell Charity Trustees (2)
Current representatives/Trustees: Cllr Tony Stokes and Cllr Andrew Smith
 - 5.2 Bardwell Playing Fields Committee of Management (2)
Current representatives/Trustees: Cllr Peter Sanderson and Cllr Geoff Clough
 - 5.3 Bardwell Village Hall Management Committee
Current representative/Trustee: Cllr Andrew Smith
 - 5.4 Suffolk Association of Local Councils
Currently Vacant.
(Cllr Tony Stokes holds the role of SALC area Chairman for the area previously covered by St Edmundsbury Borough Council).

Proposal: That the existing postholders, subject to their acceptance, should continue in the roles detailed.

Resolution: All Cllrs agreed to continue in the roles detailed and the proposal was approved accordingly.
The SALC vacancy remains unfilled.

- 5.5 Bardwell Speed Watch: Lead member: Cllr Ali Compton continues in this role.
It should be noted that the Bardwell Speed watch team is independent from the parish council. Cllr Compton's involvement on the speed watch team is not dependent on her being a parish councillor although clearly this 'dual hatted role' is of benefit to the parish council enabling regular reporting at meetings and 'first hand' discussion.
- 5.6 Bardwell Tree Wardens: Bardwell has appointed 2 tree wardens, neither of whom are parish councillors: Sue Grey and Peter Newson.
6. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5th April 2022 (previously circulated).
One amendment was made at item no 6. clarifying that Suffolk County Council did not support the Sunnica Energy Farm proposal: "SCC did not support the application". This was handwritten into the minutes by the Clerk and initialled by the Chairman. **The Minutes of 5th April were then approved by Councillors and signed as an accurate record by the Chairman.**

7. **Public participation session.**

To receive questions from members of the public relating to items included within this agenda. Other matters may be raised at the Chairman's discretion but may not necessarily be responded to during the meeting. Where appropriate, a written response may be provided outside of the meeting or alternatively the matter may be included within a future agenda for discussion

A complaint was raised relating to the bad state of the section of highway at Quaker Lane.

Response: A report will be submitted to to SCC.



A complaint was received in relation to the increasing number of vehicles parked at the top of/on The Green. With vehicles regularly parked on The Green. Understood to be related to the recovery business operating next door to Cleveland House.

Cllr Stokes undertook to bring this to the attention of the Trustees (owners of The Green)

A question was asked about the high fencing installed along Spring Road and beyond.

Response: This is in preparation for planting 120,000 Paulownia trees (c.200ha) on Euston Estate land, which will be harvested on a 10-year rotational basis. Paulownia can capture 10 times as much carbon as native British trees. Plantations are a key way of mitigating the effects of climate change and helping the UK meet net-zero targets. This is a sterile variety, meaning that it will not become invasive. Each plantation will include 10% native trees and 15% open space which will enable grass and wildflowers to be sown, providing different wildlife habitats. The fast-growing Paulownia tree has a commercial timber value too: the quality and strength of its hardwood timber has a range of applications.

Streetlighting along Spring Road (item 11.2): A resident raised concern and opposition to the suggestion proposals for street lighting along Spring Road. He highlighted concerns about light pollution and the loss of 'dark skies', questioned the necessity for lighting in that vicinity, and highlighted the adverse impact upon nocturnal wildlife, suggesting that in a village setting where additional lighting is required people can use torches.

In response it was explained that some councillors share similar concerns but that the proposal is presently only in the process of investigation. It does appear, at the present time, that the costs may be prohibitive. See 11.2 for details.

Solar Farm, East of Firsfield: A number of Coney Weston parish councillors attended the meeting together with Andrew Blenkiron for Euston Estate and a representative from Boom Power, the applicant for the Solar Farm. The solar farm application falls in the parish of Bardwell but also borders Coney Weston. Coney Weston Parish Councillors attended to listen to Bardwell's debate and decision in relation to the planning application. Coney Weston parish council has held a public meeting during which concerns were raised, some of which Coney Weston Cllrs also voiced during the Bardwell public session, in particular to the vehicular movements(Rushford and Coney Weston parishes will endure the bulk of the traffic during the construction phase) due to currently proposed route for the vehicles bringing in materials for the infrastructure, over the small historic Rushford Bridge and through Coney Weston before turning into Norwich Lane and onwards into the parish of Bardwell to the site entrance. Other concerns were also raised in regard to the loss of available land for food production, when alternative options are available such as agricultural building rooves. One of the Coney Weston Parish Councillors stated that he has invited Matt Hancock MP to discuss the concerns on 19th May in Coney Weston.

Response from Boom Power and Andrew Blenkiron:

Currently, there are c.300 articulated vehicle movements travelling the route each year during the sugar beet season.

These are similarly sized vehicles to those that will be required during the construction phase, using the same route and bridge on a regular basis

The number of vehicle movements after the construction phase is complete will be considerably less per annum than currently whilst the land is being farmed;

Currently the route and Rushford bridge have no weight restrictions. There is a commitment to look at other routes, but from a planning perspective the current route is most appropriate;

Once constructed, there are no moving parts requiring vehicles to make constant deliveries. Lorries will operate within legal limits.

c.400 Sheep will be grazed underneath the panels, so the land will continue to be productive. Sheep will only be moved to another area of the Euston Estate during lambing.

After 40 years – the lifespan of the ‘solar farm’ the panels will be removed and the land will be returned to full agricultural use, by which time the structure of the soil will have been significantly improved.

Those present were reminded that valid comments should be included within their consultation response to West Suffolk District Council, for which the deadline has been extended to 23rd May.

A Bardwell resident asked about the height of the auxiliary buildings

Response from Boom Power: Between 6 – 9 metres. However, most are container type buildings and so are at the lower height. Also, the majority of the buildings will be screened.

The public session was then closed to enable Bardwell Parish Council to discuss the application.

8. Planning Applications

To consider planning applications on which the parish council has been consulted.

- 8.1 **DC/22/0445/FUL** Land East of Firsfield, Bowbeck, Bardwell
Planning application - ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays together with substation, inverter/transformer stations, grid connection infrastructure, grid cable route, site accesses, access gates, internal access tracks, security measures, storage compound, and ancillary infrastructure, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.

Following an extensive discussion about of opinions, views and responses (summary attached) **overall**, the majority view of councillors is that whilst there are some environmental concerns associated with a project of this nature, the overriding benefit is that electricity will be generated from the PV solar panels, a renewable energy source.

Resolution Bardwell Parish Council voted to support the application.

Councillors voted

In favour: 5

Against: 1

Abstention 1

(Cllr Smith explained that he abstains from planning application votes due to his role as Chair of the WSC Planning Committee.

**Notes/summary of discussion during this item provided as attachments on pages 7 and 8.
Details of submission to West Suffolk Council (Planning dept) on next page.**

Parish Council response submitted to West Suffolk Council to this application: Support

Parish Council Observations:

Vehicle movements during construction: It is accepted that there will be a significant level of heavy goods vehicle movements during the construction phase that could result in degradation of the already poor highway surface in some locations along the proposed route, parts of which are single carriageway country roads. Bardwell Parish Council trusts that Suffolk County Council, as the highways authority, will have agreements in place with the applicant to ensure that any resulting damage is repaired.

It is understood that this impact/disruption will only be during the 6 – 9 months construction period, (compared to the 40-year life-span of the site), following which vehicle access to the site will be minimal for maintenance, and care of the sheep grazing underneath the panels.

Removal of land from arable production: It is understood that the land will change from arable to pasture grazed by sheep. Bardwell Parish Councillors understand that benefits of this include there being no requirements for pesticides or fertilizers to be used as well as improvements to the protection of the soil (a consequence of shielding by the panels from sun, wind and rain) which, over time, will result in the land becoming significantly more productive and versatile in terms of crops that can be grown at the end of the 40-year period. The pasture-land will also support and encourage wildflowers, insects etc.

Visual Impact: The Parish Council appreciates that there will significant additional planting for screening and where there are gaps in hedgerows, in order to mitigate the visual impact of the development.

Overall, the majority view of councillors is that whilst there are some environmental concerns associated with a project of this nature, the overriding benefit is that electricity will be generated from the PV solar panels, a renewable energy source. *End of response*

8.2 DC/22/0473/HH Harewood 2 Old Mill Court, Bardwell
Householder planning application – single storey side extension; alteration of window openings at first floor to include one new opening.

To note that it was not possible to obtain an extension to the response date (25th April), Councillors responded to the Clerk via email: “No objections were raised”: this response has been submitted.

To note decisions by West Suffolk Council on planning applications on which the parish council has previously been consulted

8.3 DC/22/0454/TCA St Peter and St Paul Church, Church Road, Bardwell
Trees in a conservation area notification – One Yew (T50 on plan) fell. *Application Withdrawn*

8.4 DC/22/0166/VAR Booty Hall The Green Bardwell Suffolk IP31 1AW Planning application
Variation of condition (2) of DC/21/0506/HH to enable the use of amended plan for the annexe to side of property (following demolition of garage/outbuilding) *Approved*

9. To receive reports from District and County Councillors

9.1 District Councillor Andrew Smith

To include details regarding the outcome of the Local plan review and next stage.

Previously three sites were put forward by landowners for potential development with a possible total of 190 properties.

Of these, only one has been included: the Suffolk County Council site at School Lane. This site was previously shown with the potential for 97 properties, but as a result of a persuasive submission by Bardwell Parish Council and input from Cllr Smith in his role as District Councillor, the number of properties being included in the next consultation is 15. In addition, Bardwell has been reclassified as a class A village, rather than a Local Service Centre.

SCC has provided an initial draft proposal for consideration by councillors for the site – albeit neither the type or number of properties shown (20), nor the location of the site, accord with the previous discussion held on site between the Chairman, Cllr Spicer, Cllr Smith and SCC.

SCC has asked for another meeting to discuss their initial proposal but councillors consider that this is too early in the process. It would be more appropriate to wait until after the parish council has considered its position and submitted its response to the next consultation, which opens on 26th May.

Action: Cllr Spicer will contact SCC Officer to advise decision.

9.2 County Councillor Joanna Spicer MBE

Ixworth Thorpe Road: Speed Monitor – Cllr Spicer will ask the SCC officer for advice on interpretation of the results.

Progress update re footbridge over the river: Nothing further to report. Not likely to be open in time for Bardfest. Action: **Clerk to write to Claire Dixon**

Steps and footpath in front of houses in Church Road: see 11.1

Request for white lining and Slow markings on Ixworth Road (towards Bardwell Hall):

Cllr Spicer has advised resident that SCC follow national guidelines and that white lines in this location are not appropriate.

Slow Markings: **Action Clerk to send request to SCC**

10. Chairman's Report – *Any matters dealt with within other items*

11. Highways matters for consideration

11.1 Church Road footpath and steps: to consider response to enquiries and determine appropriate action. Action: **Clerk to write to Havebury and SCC**

11.2 Street Lighting: Spring Road – Update
Still awaiting confirmation of costs from Suffolk County Council highways.
Preliminary estimated costs provided have been c.£2,500 per column.

West Suffolk District Council has confirmed that it will not 'adopt' street lighting columns. Therefore, the parish council would need to budget for all ongoing costs ie: insurance, maintenance, electricity usage.

Street lighting was not installed at the time the Hastoe Houses were built on police advice. Cllr Smith and Clerk met with SCC: The advice received was that for the location/distance required 3 street lighting columns would be appropriate.

To answer questions raised during the public session: Why are street lights being considered?
To assist pedestrians coming from the playing field/Grumpy Goat in the dark
Street lights can discourage antisocial behaviour
Speeding problems along Spring Road

Comments/concerns on the impact of street lighting from the public session included
Lighting encroachment into the village
loss of 'dark skies' in Bardwell
LED light bulbs have an adverse effect on wildlife – this has been noted in Church Road
Part of rural life: 'we take a torch'

11.3 Chairman advised that work to alleviate flooding problems in Low Street and Church Road are scheduled 13th – 15th June (see Roadworks.org)

12. Jubilee Celebrations in Bardwell

12.1 Bardwell School and plans for the Jubilee Torch Relay
See attached.

12.2 Potential for planters: costs, possible location and requirements for long term plan for planting, watering and maintenance.
It was agreed to purchase one planter at the cost of £405. Action: Chairman to organise.

Action: Clerk to organise plaque – similar to those on the benches on The Green
12.3 Existing benches on the Green and Village Sign Post: Maintenance/Refurbishment. (Chairman)
The suggestion/proposal as submitted by the Chairman that an offer to carry out the work by Jeffrey Lewis (a painter and decorator) was accepted.
The Chairman explained that there would be no labour cost, only the cost of materials would be required.
Resolution: Cllrs approved this proposal

13. Community Field

- 13.1 Play area update – Play area will be closed 4th – 6th May to enable work to be carried out to level the ground underneath the roundabout.
Cllr Babraff requested permission to purchase fertilizer to spread on play area whilst it is closed: Granted.
- 13.2 Allotments update – sheds will be installed 6th May
Approximately £560 is left for guttering and water-butts.

14. Finance

- 14.1 Financial report and Invoices for payment (totalling £622.09) were approved.
- 14.2 Salaries and Wages: Clerk/RFO and Litter picker: To ratify (if considered appropriate) the increases as included within the approved budget for 2022/23
To be brought to June meeting: payments re April to be paid as per 2021/22 – adjustments to be made with May payments if approved.
- 14.3 Finance: to receive draft accounts 2021/22 – Draft provided to councillors – to be approved at June meeting
- 14.4 To approve AGAR- Draft provided to Cllrs – To be approved at June meeting
- 14.5 Insurance review – Alternative quotes being sought. Donated play equipment from Stanton site is not to be included within policy (self insure).

- 15. **To review:** Standing Orders - supplied to councillors but since superseded: See June Agenda
Financial Regulations – Supplied to Cllrs for review: See June agenda
Assets list – Provided to councillors: revise to remove small dog bins were replaced by lockdown bins. See June agenda

16. To receive reports

- 16.1 BPFA: Looking at putting additional panels on pavilion roof
- 16.2 Bardwell Charity Trustees: The Fair will be here for 2 weeks
- 16.3 Bardwell Speed Watch: A session was held during the previous week. Cllr Stokes was thanked for producing the latest speed reports; Haven't yet heard when the ANPR will be coming to Bardwell.
- 16.4 Bardwell Village Hall: Cllr Smith will be meeting with architect on Friday morning with a view to progressing the refurbishment and grant applications.

17. Clerk's Report to include

- 17.1 Defibrillator Training 20 April
Very successful; trainers were excellent; 13 attended.
- 17.2 To request S137 donation, as previously agreed in principle, to charity as appreciation for defibrillator training being carried out at no cost.
Have not yet received details of charity.

18. Annual Parish Meeting – 9th May 2022, 7pm in The Tithe Barn - Arrangements (Clerk)

Chairman is not providing wine this year; Clerk advised that she would be provide coffee and cake.
Other councillors were not in agreement with this suggestion and it was agreed that, as in previous years, wine should be supplied.

Action: Clerk

19. Correspondence requiring consideration

Correspondence has been received regarding the opportunity to site a clothing bank in the village. Details attached.

Resolution: The parish council does not wish to progress this opportunity.

20. Questions to the Chair: **None**

21. Next Meeting: Tuesday 7th June 2022, 7pm, in The Tithe Barn, Bardwell Village Hall, Up Street, Bardwell

Meeting closed at 9.24pm

Draft minutes Issued P Smith, Clerk 280422 bardwellpc@gmail.com 01359 221934

Attachment re item 8.1; planning Application: DC/22/0445/FUL Land East of Firsfield, Bowbeck, Bardwell
Summary of discussion

Q. What is the reason for DNR Transfer unit having been moved adjacent to the road from its former position on the consultation plans by the pilgrim shed? This is stated to be 6 metres in height and 3.5 metres about the fence.

A. Boom Power representative (BP) was uncertain of the reason but thought it most likely to be related to the landscaping scheme. Whilst some elements will be visible, most will be camouflaged behind hedgerows and trees. Whilst there will be 9 or 10 buildings/structures, the majority will be the size of a small container. It is intended that there will be 1.5 km of new hedgerow planted and 'gapping up' of 1.6 km of existing hedgerow. BP does not consider that moving the location of the DNR Transfer unit to be materially significant.

Although there are environmental considerations, rapidly increasing energy costs are having a serious impact on everybody.

The electricity generated from this site will feed into the national grid, and will be sufficient to provide energy for 13,700 houses.

This is a strategic solution for the country. The traffic concerns will be temporary and a minor issue going forward.

Which should take priority food or energy?

Concern relating to food shortages and the impact that removing arable land for 40 years will have: There is no need to utilise arable farm land to produce solar energy, there are 600,000 acres of commercial and industrial roofs, together with brown field sites across the country which, if utilised, could exceed the energy requirements of this country.

The best/most productive land is protected by planning policy. The majority of the proposed site is grade 3b which does not fall into this protected category.

Differences of opinion with regards to the efficiency of the panels were aired.

Environmental concerns were raised: BP explained that by the end of year 6 the scheme will have offset the carbon used to produce the panels.

Concern was raised about the significant quantity of panels, batteries and associated buildings etc which will be coming to the end of their use not just in Bardwell but across the country, and the environmental impact this will have, how will all of these elements be safely disposed of? There are chemicals used in the production of the solar panels which prevent the glass from being safely recycled. Frames are constructed of a recyclable material.

Agricultural land taken out of intensive arable production and put to pasture removes the application of pesticides and fertilizers, and reduces erosion of the soil from the wind and rain, due to protection from the panels. It will also save vast quantities of water. After 40 years the soil will be in a much better state: more productive and versatile for the crops that it will be able to sustain.

At the end of 40 years, when it becomes time to dismantle the solar farm, new energy resources will have become available.

The UK benefits from good levels of solar energy being generated, because it works better in cooler systems. Climates

Cllr Smith reminded those present that he abstains from planning application votes due to his role as Chair of the WSC Planning Committee.

Resolution: The majority of the parish council approves of this application.

Whilst it is accepted that there will be highways issues during the construction phase, and some environmental concerns associated with a project of this nature, the over-riding benefit is that electricity will be generated from the PV solar panels, a renewable energy source.

Councillors voted

In favour: 5

Against: 1

Abstention: 1

RE Firsfield Solar Farm planning application item 8.1

For information: Verbal details provided by Cllr Stokes to meeting during discussion

Since the first consultation on this installation, inconsistencies have arisen. The quantity of houses we were advised it would serve, and the Co2 saving, have been reduced by a third. The batteries, which we were told were necessary to maximise the connection and store energy when the grid turns the panels off, are no longer included.

Other factors will reduce the stated benefits even further.

A report at COP 26 last year pointed out that Co2 savings as claimed exclude the Co2 produced in mining the materials, manufacture and transport of the panels, the metal frames, transformers, building construction, cables, perimeter fencing, and CCTV cameras. It does not include the energy and Co2 produced in scrapping the panels, which the Electrical Powers Research Institute concludes to be a major issue as there is no process of recycling, or dealing with the toxic elements.

The International Renewable Energy Agency predicts 78 million tonnes of solar panel waste by 2050.

COP 26 also outlined that Solar Power is unreliable and inefficient in our climate. On overcast or rainy days efficiency drops greatly, with 75% less energy in the winter. A study over a twelvemonth period showed that the best efficiency performance was 22.8%

The Applicant told the Parish Council the panels show degradation by year five, reaching 20% by year 20, thereby reducing the average performance over 40 years.

Paragraph 112 of the NPPF states that the economic benefits of BMVAL (Best and Most Valuable Land) should be taken into account, with preference being given to areas of poorer quality land; it defines BMVAL as grades 1, 2 and 3a.

In the EIA application it stated "that virtually the entire site is moderately good quality Grade 3 with a small part of Grade 2"

The Planning Practice Guidance identifies factors which should be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities for PV solar farms, including encouraging use of non-agricultural land.

The World Banking president said last week: The world faces a "human catastrophe" from a food crisis arising from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as 30% of world's cereals crops come from that region.

UK Cereal crops have declined. The Department of Agriculture figures show a 26% drop in one year through reduced planting and yields.

Food must have a higher priority than energy on farmland, as it is hard to justify to the hungry, that we have green energy instead of food.

The use of sheep beneath solar panels makes no difference to the loss of arable production.

There are other locations for solar with no impact on food, with 600,000 acres of industrial and commercial buildings that can be used instead, which would give the benefit of solar power, retain food production, and prevent the significant visual impact on the landscape.

With all their resources, the applicant has not been consistent on the benefits or viability of this site. I have outlined the inefficiencies, and given the food crisis, I cannot in all conscience agree to panels on good arable land.