

# REPRESENTATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

## Wednesday 15 December 2021

**Planning Application Number: 6/2020/0595 Fossil Farm**

### **Support**

Sandra Ellis

I am writing to you with my support for the above application for the following reasons, and I would like it noted that I have no affiliation whatsoever to the application or any person making it.

I am a former chairman of the Winfrith Parish council and for the past fifteen years I have been the Chairman of the Winfrith Site Stakeholder Group for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

During that time I have fought very hard to bring the Winfrith Site back to heathland - all on record - which is now happening. Informed by my experience with the decommissioning work, I think this proposal is a very good one.

Solar Farms have very little impact on the land where they are installed and on the community that they neighbour. We already have one or two around here and provided they are well screened no one takes any notice of them. I also consider that the extensive ecological enhancements that are being proposed will be a great complement to the heathland reinstatement at the Winfrith Atomic Energy site and together they will provide a fantastic boost to the habitat of our local wildlife.

The application if approved would be a continuing asset to the production of electricity without the need for fossil fuels which, at the time of writing is slowly being reduced around the world to try and limit the rise of global temperatures and the impacts in climate change, which is currently being discussed by world leaders at Cop26.

The need for Electricity is going to rise exponentially in the coming years and with Nuclear Power options limited and fossil fuels very much in decline, any land that is a potential viable site for Solar Power should be considered.

I understand that there is support locally for this project and I appreciated that there is some objection too. I would just add that over fifty years ago the objections to an experimental nuclear power station being built on Winfrith Heath, known as Thomas Hardy's Egdon Heath, was so great there was a long debate in Parliament - I still have the Hansard Report. The build went ahead and as we all know the site, as well as experimenting with nine different types of reactors, produced electricity for the national grid.

Our need for power remains and it grows. We must replace our old power stations and we have a duty to our children to build sources of power that safeguard the environment for future generations. Solar Farms are a good and safe way to do it.

Yours sincerely  
Sandra I Ellis.

Eric Sealey – MD Fossil Farms

We started farming North Fossil at Winfrith 37 years ago, during that time and to date it has grown a mix of grass, cereals and maize.

Farming has evolved significantly in that time. Diversification has always been important and we are proud of the farming business we have nurtured, providing locally grown and reared produce to our community which also provides jobs to members of our local community. With major changes to farming policy it is becoming more important than ever before to diversify our business to help ensure we can keep farming and providing food.

We recognise that the economic sustainability of the farm goes hand in hand with the environmental sustainability of the farm. In recent weeks the matters of global environmental pressure have been at the top of every agenda. It is clear to see that this will bring more challenges to farming and as a farming family, we can see that a central pillar of our business – raising beef cattle – could be called into question if it is not done in an environmentally less intensive manner.

We have considered the options presented by renewable energy for many years and we believe that using some of our land for a solar farm is an essential piece of the puzzle as we transition to a sustainable farming future.

The land that is being proposed for the solar farm is the poorest areas of land we farm and the least naturally productive. By changing the way we use this land it will help to reduce our overall farm carbon footprint. This land will benefit from being rested and if the solar farm is approved, it will become an area of permanent pasture which will allow the soil to restore, yet it will still be agriculturally productive as sheep can graze amongst the panels and in the margins, but without any artificial fertilisers being applied.

As the stewardship of our farm passes to the next generation our farming activities must evolve once again. Generating clean, renewable energy will safeguard the economic and environmental sustainability of our farm, helping to ensure we can continue to provide locally produced food sustainably for generations to come.

Eric Sealey, Landowner.

Statement from the applicant Hugo House of Spring CHE Ltd in relation to application: 6/2020/0595

Good morning chairman and members of the committee. Your officers have recommended that permission is granted for our solar farm proposal at North Fossil Farm.

Following extensive preapplication discussion and consultation, our clean energy project has received significant community support and has no outstanding objections from Statutory Consultees. I would like to highlight some of the important

factors and benefits of our proposal.

Our vision for North Fossil Farm is to create a pioneering project that delivers new renewable energy, significant ecological benefits and allows for the continuation of agriculture - providing a model of how farming, clean energy and wildlife can thrive side-by-side.

If approved, the proposal can deliver enough locally-generated, clean electricity to supply more than 14,000 homes with over 9,000 tonnes of carbon emissions saved every year.

We wholeheartedly agree with the consultation response of Dorset's landscape officer which states,

*'the landscape where this particular installation is proposed is perhaps amongst the most appropriate that there is in the Purbeck area for this type of development' and 'could actually represent an exemplar scheme'.*

Winfrith receives some of the highest levels of sunshine in the UK - this maximises the site's potential to produce clean electricity. As the neighbouring Winfrith Nuclear Facility is decommissioned, this presents a rare opportunity to 'plug-in' new generation and make an economically viable connection to the electricity grid.

Solar panels will be installed on around 30% of the total site area, but less than 5% of the land is actually disturbed. This leaves space to boost biodiversity by sowing wildflowers and grasses, restoring existing hedgerows and planting new native woodland, providing a haven for Dorset's unique wildlife. The project will achieve a significant 194% net gain in biodiversity.

The land will be grazed by sheep and rested from intensive agricultural use. This will reduce chemical inputs, restore soil condition and replenish soil carbon. The project is fully reversible and after 40 years the land will be revitalised, ready for harvest and benefit from an improved and resilient ecosystem.

The consensus at the recent COP26 conference was irrefutable: to avoid catastrophic climate change, we have to keep global warming below 2°C and we must act now.

Dorset Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency and announced their goal to become carbon neutral by 2040. Projects such as North Fossil Farm Solar are critical to achieving 'Net-Zero' for Dorset and the UK and avoid the worst effects of climate change.

We have worked diligently with officers to ensure our proposal is robust and delivers meaningful environmental benefits. We therefore respectfully request that permission is granted in accordance with officer recommendation.