

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Committee

11 May 2011

**AUTHOR/S:** Executive Director / Corporate Manager – Planning and Sustainable Communities

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### **S/0567/11- BOURN**

**Construction of Soalr Energy Farm to include installation of solar panels, with on-site plant and machinery, access tracks, security fencing, landscpaing and associated works – Land East of Broadway & South of access to Grange Farm Park for Vogt Solar Ltd**

**Recommendation: Delegated Approval**

**Date for Determination: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2011**

Formal comments have been received from the **Council's Landscape Officer**. He notes the amended plan addresses most of the issues raised. The proposal would therefore substantially reduce the visual impact to the properties on Broadway and views from the public footpath to the southeast. Additional information is requested regarding the proposed percentage of each native species in the hedge mix along with the total number of plants and trees. It is also suggested the new section of hedge opposite the sewage works is plotted as accurately as possible and dimensioned.

A landscape condition is therefore recommended to ensure this additional detail is provided.

The applicant has provided a draft Unilateral Undertaking for the contribution of £20,000 towards the cost of renewable energy projects in the parish of Bourn. The Council's Legal team will be sent this draft document to ensure the wording is appropriate and that development is likely to come forward as a result.

**Cambridge Microfab Limited**, a business located opposite the site on Broadway, have objected to the scheme and note the application does not satisfactorily address the previous reasons for refusal. The objections are based on the loss of residential amenity and undue environmental disturbance such as noise and the location of transformers and inverters, the height, number and location of the panels, the impact of the security fencing, noise disturbance from the transformers and inverters, the scheme being unsustainable as it imports materials from Germany, failure to address biodiversity considerations, failure to address archaeological issues, the lack of community involvement, and failure to meet the requirements of policies DP/2 and DP/3. The site is also considered to be contrary to Policy NE/2 given concerns regarding connection to the grid, other more suitable sites in the locality, lack of provision for removal of the facilities and reinstatement of the site should the facility cease operation, adverse impact upon the environment, and the lack of solar farms mentioned in the policy.

The occupiers of **Park Farm, Broadway** object to the scheme given its inappropriate location, its scale and bulk, and the industrial approach to the village. The proposed screening would take a number of years to mature and would be deciduous. There are also concerns regarding times of construction given potential noise disturbance.

A further letter from **Park Farm, Broadway** questions the Feed In Tariff aims regarding large scale farms. The revised application is also considered inappropriate given hours of construction, the height and new location of the generator buildings, how the scheme would be linked to the grid, pollution to the local water environment, and interruption to radio frequencies. The previous reasons for refusal are not considered to have been overcome.

A letter has also been received from **Andrew Lansley MP**. He agrees with the previous refusal and notes the site remains visibly unattractive to locals.

Despite these points raised, the recommendation remains that of approval. Whilst the concerns from the local population are noted, it is considered that the landscaping detail will significantly reduce the impact upon the landscape in line with the original report.

**Contact Officer:** Paul Derry - Senior Planning Officer  
Telephone: 01954 713159