

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL

HORTON KIRBY & SOUTH DARENTH COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATION CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Reference	23/03181/FUL
Site	Chimmens Solar Farm Speedgate Farm Mussenden Lane Horton Kirby, Kent
Proposal	Construction and operation of a solar farm with all associated works, equipment necessary infrastructure and biodiversity net gains. New Access track.
<input type="checkbox"/> Support	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Objection & Reasons	<p>Given the limited time available and the impact of the Christmas and end of year holiday period the HKSD PC is concerned that it has not had adequate time to prepare a detailed response to the planning application and its extensive supporting documentation.</p> <p>Additionally, the lack of specific planning guidance (Supplementary Planning Guidance) from SDC, the existence of an already approved plan for a “same size” facility in close proximity, the PCs past experience, lessons learned and principles established from that earlier planning application and notwithstanding the reports in support of the application, e.g.-Agricultural Impact Assessment, Construction Traffic Management Plan, Ecological Report, Glint and Glare Assessment and Landscape and Visual Assessment the PC has further and wider concerns which it feels it needs time to consider:- such as those relating to the impact on wild life, the green belt, visual openness, ancient woodland and in particular the wider impact on the semi-rural nature of the Parish and its community of such a development in close proximity to a “Same size” facility</p> <p>Therefore, this response sets out its preliminary objections without prejudice to any material matters which may be identified as the application is subject to further detailed scrutiny and further clarification.</p> <p>1 Overview issue and general considerations</p> <p>The Council accepts the need for more environmentally friendly energy sources; however, provision and time should be made for RES to consult further with HKSD PC and other stake holders prior to approval of the application</p>

However, given the limited time, since the PC received the full Planning Application, for consideration, the PC has not been able to undertake any detailed discussions with the applicant to seek clarifications or remedies to its wider concerns and requests that approval not be granted until appropriate discussions have been undertaken.

2 Access to the site post installation: the PC objects the appropriateness of a separate ongoing access off Mussenden Lane, as indicated in the application, with particular reference to traffic approaching from its junction with Rays Hill, Lombard Street and Eglantine Lane, notwithstanding its present traffic usage this is a narrow winding lane with numerous blind spots and a further increase in traffic would be undesirable.

The applicant should consider the use of the access opened up for heavy installation traffic and other post installation heavy traffic as the continuing operational access.

3 Siting of the development: the SDC Pre-Application Advice Enquiry letter, to the applicant, refers to the need to “steer the scheme away from the Village boundaries of Horton Kirby and those occupiers within Saxon Place.

There doesn't appear to be significant change in the solar array lay out from the original plan whereby almost the entire array lies within the HKSD Parish.

4 Community benefit: The PC established principles and a process of managing community benefit during its extensive direct discussions with the developer of the earlier “same size” facility by way of a Unilateral Undertaking, to make payments to a “Village Community Fund” registered charity , any up-front payments and ongoing payments. It should be noted that these arrangements are consistent with the practices of other renewable energy developers and local communities.

The suggested “shopping list” set out in the documentation and the implication that this list, along with any future suggestions, will be determined and managed by the applicant is not consistent with the established principles of the HKSD PC.

Given the limited time to provide a response to the application ,the PC has not been afforded the time to undertake the detailed negotiations with the applicant to make such arrangements before approval and request that approval not be granted until appropriate agreements, consistent with the principles already adopted by the PC have been entered into.

<input type="checkbox"/> <p>No objection No comment</p>	
<p>Further Comments:</p>	<p>Recommendations of the Working Group (WG) to the Horton Kirby & South Darenth Parish Council (HKS) (PC) 7th January 2024</p> <p>1.0 Introduction</p> <p>The application is for a solar farm of 49.9MW, as this is below the 50MW capacity above which it would be considered a Strategic Energy Development requiring referral to Central Government: thus, the planning application can be determined by the local planning authority Sevenoaks District Council (SDC).</p> <p>SDC does not have Renewable Energy Specific Planning¹ guide lines; therefore, the application will be determined in accordance with Material Planning considerations set out in the guidance note accompanying the Parish/Town Council consultation letter.</p> <p>The proposal is the same order of size as the Horton Wood project (plan approved), consequently, the planning application structure and supporting documentation follows that which was required for the Horton Wood application and differs only in detail on matters specific to the location and its immediate environs.</p> <p>With regard to the response to the community benefit suggestions made in the applicants response to its consultations,² the applicant would appear to have treated this as a “shopping list” in a manner that indicates that these and future suggestions, will be determined and managed by the applicant, this is not consistent with the established principles of the HKSD PC, adopted in response to the Horton Wood application, whereby such suggested benefits are determined and funded through the “Horton Kirby and South Darenth Village Community Fund”, a registered charity being independent of both the developers and the PC, from any up-front and ongoing mitigation payments made, by way of a “Unilateral Undertaking” between the applicant and the PC. It should be noted that HKSD PC arrangements are consistent with the practices of other renewable energy developers and local communities. It should be noted that the PC gained experience, lessons learned and established principles from the earlier “same size” Solar Farm planning application.</p> <p>SDC officers had a “Pre-Application Advice Enquiry meeting with the applicants on the 24th February 2023, this resulted in SDC issuing a Pre-Application Advice Letter PAAL³, I draw this specifically to your attention as it is instructive of what the planning authority expects of the applicants.</p>

¹ See email from S Mitchell to NM 08/08/2023

² See Community Involvement Statement : section 6.2 Addressing Feedback

³ See: Planning Statement. (via SDC Planning Portal Appendix 1 – Pre-Application Advice (SE/PA/23/00003

	<p>SDC received the formal planning application on the Tuesday 1 November 2023 comprising a total of 63 documents comprising individual files Reports, and Graphics. The application was validated and formal consultation letters issued on Tuesday 19 December with a Parish Council closing date for comments by 12 January 2024.</p> <p>The consultation period cuts across the Christmas and New Year holiday period and seriously limits the WGs' ability to scrutinise the detail of the application or to seek any clarifications from the applicants which would have facilitated the making of a detailed well-considered recommendation of a suitable Parish Council consultation response.</p> <p>The following recommendation is made having due regard to the constraints highlighted above and does not comment on other matters, which may be of contention and become important material issues in determining the application during the planning process.</p>
From	Horton Kirby & South Darenth Parish Council
Date	10 th January 2024