

Notes of a site meeting held on **Thursday 25 April 2024** commencing at 10.00am at Land at Park Farm, Loudham Hall Road, Loudham, IP13 ONW.

Planning Committee South Members present:

Councillors Mark Packard (Chair), John Fisher (Vice Chair), Tom Daly, Mike Deacon, Colin Hedgley, Debbie McCallum, Mike Ninnmey, Rosie Smithson

Officers present:

Katy Cassidy (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Matt Makin (Democratic Services Officer (Regulatory)), Rachel Smith (Principal Planner (Development Management, Central Area Lead))

Also in attendance was the applicant's representative, a representative of Wickham Market Parish Council, a representative of Ufford Parish Council, and the occupant of Sandpit Cottage.

The site meeting was undertaken in accordance with the Council's Constitution which sets out details of the arrangements for site visits by Members associated with planning applications.

Apologies for absence were received in advance of the site meeting from Councillors Seamus Bennett and Tom Daly.

The purpose of the site meeting was a 'fact finding' exercise only and to provide Members with an opportunity to view the site and its surroundings.

NOTE: the representative from Wickham Market Parish Council left the site meeting following the initial introductions.

The site meeting began in the farmyard of Park Farm. The Committee proceeded from the farmyard along Loudham Hall Road towards the junction with Sandpit Cottage.

NOTE: Councillor McCallum and the applicant's representative joined the site meeting at this point.

The Principal Planner distributed site plans to all present and noted the Committee's current location at the southern boundary of the application site. In response to questions from the Committee, the Principal Planner advised that the total area of the application site was 26.4 hectares and that the proposed wattage for the solar farm was under the threshold to consider it a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). The Principal Planner also highlighted on the site plans the location of the connection point with the National Grid.

The Committee continued along Loudham Hall Road and stopped further along the southern boundary of the application site. The Principal Planner highlighted the element of woodland within the site that was excluded from the plans, along with the public right of way that crossed the site. As the Committee progressed further on the highway, the Principal Planner highlighted the proximity of Loudham Hall.

The Committee paused on the southern boundary at the existing access and observed views into the site. The Principal Planner outlined the extent of the site from this viewpoint. In response to questions from the Committee, the Principal Planner advised that the public right of way would be widened, with additional planting being put in, and that the main objections to the application

related to its visual impact. The Principal Planner confirmed that the estate manager of Loudham Hall had objected to the application and that the existing access, which would be used for construction access, would be retained.

The Committee continued along Loudham Hall Road to the bridge spanning the A12 and took in views of the site from this location. The Principal Planner highlighted the existing intermittent vegetation screening the site from the A12 and noted that the applicant proposed to increase this screening. In response to a question from the Committee it was confirmed that the applicant also intended to put in place planting to screen the development from the River Deben.

The Committee retraced its steps along Loudham Hall Road to the access to Sandpit Cottage and entered the lane leading to the property. The Committee proceeded past Sandpit Cottage to the water treatment centre beyond and the Principal Planner noted the site's proximity to the adjacent meadow, indicating where the solar panels would be located.

In response to a question from the Committee, the Principal Planner stated that the public right of way was accessible and advertised as part of a circular walking route in the area.

The Committee then proceeded to Sandpit Cottage and were met by the occupant, who escorted the Committee across a paddock on the property to the boundary with the application site. When asked by the Chair of the Committee, the occupant confirmed that this boundary would be visible from the first-floor bedroom of Sandpit Cottage. The Committee also proceeded along the boundary to take in views into the application site.

The site visit concluded at 11.08am.