

Draft Minutes

Mettle Hill Working Group

Thursday 27th November 2014

In Attendance: Philippa Hart (PH), Margaret Lynch (ML), Sheila Watson (SW), Rob Searles (RS), Andy Young (AY), Thomas Birch (TB), Jane Finlay (JF), Vic Skuse (VS), Simon Parkinson (SP)

Apologies: Steve Hawkins , Joe Kennedy (JK), Julian Fenner (JF)

Update on SunEdison

PH informed the meeting that a positive offer of a £50,000 community grant has been received from SunEdison for local initiatives benefitting the Meldreth community. This is a sum of money akin to a s.106 agreement where a developer is required to give money to the community in which the development is being built: here the development is the Bury Lane Solar Farm currently under construction behind Bury Lane Farm Shop.

There is also an offer from SunEdison to explore the possibility of a community-owned solar energy scheme and to that end the plans and photographs of Mettle Hill have been forwarded to SunEdison. Initial soundings at SunEdison have cast initial doubt on the suitability of the site both in terms of the amount of clean up that would need to be undertaken and because it is smaller than SunEdison is used to developing: it was observed that solar developers have been used to putting large solar schemes on "clean" agricultural land and SunEdison is a large multi-national used to large scale developments.

PH also reported that, following discussion with a planning officer at SCDC and subject to all the usual caveats, a solar scheme would be an acceptable alternative use for the site.

Reaction to a possible solar use on the Mettle Hill site ranged from positive, (provided the site is viable and the village agrees) on the basis that it will yield an income which can be applied towards local projects and capital schemes, to negative eg on basis that the cost of manufacture of the solar panels and other equipment is considerable and seldom factored into the headline yield figures. All agreed that this use on a brownfield site is better than taking

agricultural land out of production, but that a quantity of solar panels would not sit happily on a mixed use scheme for the site.

ACTIONS AGREED:-

PH to continue discussions with SunEdison. Also to look further into a community owned solar project in Reach, currently the subject of a planning application.

ML to look into cost of manufacture of solar equipment and likely income streams.

Update on Live/Work Units

JK was given the plans and photographs for the site after the last meeting but was unable to attend to provide further detail on site layout and likely demand.

The group is still very keen to explore this possible use.

ACTION:-

JK to report to next meeting.

Update on planning issues incl. Self Build

PH reported that discussion with a planning officer at SCDC has not resulted in any of the possible uses being rejected. We can therefore continue to explore a chalet park, live/work and self build. Self build is treated the same as straight planning for residential use, and it was therefore considered expedient to also explore a general residential use for the site, although also observed that exploiting its value for arms length residential use would not have the possible transformative effect on the Meldreth community that the other proposed uses would bring.

It was agreed that further research need to be carried out on chalet parks.

ACTION:-

PH to look at the Self Build register on the SCDC a website. Also to explore ordinary residential use on the site.

PH and SW to visit the chalet park site at Ashwell.

AY to investigate costing and revenues of chalet parks.

JF to visit the Graveley site

TB to speak to a contact at Hoddesdon.

Possible other uses

PH was asked by a resident to bring up a woodland burial site. It was observed that there is already one at Barton, that the village cemetery has plenty of capacity, and that this is a use unlikely to generate income or pay for itself.

AOB

PH reported that the Mettle Hill Fighting Fund actually only has about £4,000 in it, rather than the £8,000 originally believed.

There was discussion about the possible cost of clearing up the front of the site and opening the access, but maintaining security.

ACTION:-

It was hoped that JF would conduct a survey of the site, including a costing of how much it would cost to clear and make safe the travellers' area.

VS to price the work to the frontage of the site and also to give an estimate of the cost of clearing and making safe the travellers' area.

PH to argue for a slice of the SunEdison community grant to supplement the Fighting Fund at the next Parish Council meeting.

Date of next meeting: 7pm Monday 12th January Venue as before.