

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Committee - West held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Tuesday, 23 January 2024 at 2.00 pm

**Present:**

Cllr Simon Coles (Chair)  
Cllr Derek Perry (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Caroline Ellis	Cllr Habib Farbahi
Cllr Andy Hadley	Cllr Ross Henley
Cllr Steven Pugsley	Cllr Mike Rigby
Cllr Sarah Wakefield	Cllr Rosemary Woods
Cllr Gwil Wren	

**Other Members present remotely:**

Cllr Dave Mansell

**64 Apologies for Absence** - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Cllr Andy Sully.

**65 Minutes from the Previous Meeting** - Agenda Item 2

Resolved that the minutes of the Planning Committee - West held on 21 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

**66 Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 3

It was noted that all members of the Committee had received correspondence from the Applicant for planning application 23/22/0028.

Cllr Gwil Wren declared an Other Registerable Interest in respect of application 23/22/0028 as he was the Division member and had been briefed of this

application as a district councillor and had past associations with both Milverton and Halse parish councils. He also knew the landowner, one of the main objectors and the Chair of Milverton Parish Council. Whilst having considerable knowledge of the application he believed that he had no conflict of interest and it had not fettered his discretion.

**67 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 4**

No members of the public had registered to address the Committee.

**68 Planning Application 23/22/0028 - Land at Preston Farm, Preston Bowyer, Milverton - Agenda Item 5**

The Planning Officer introduced the application to the Committee with the assistance of a PowerPoint presentation.

The Committee was addressed by two objectors who raised their concerns which included the loss of arable land and the fire risk to nearby woodland.

The Applicant and two supporters also addressed the Committee and their comments included the need for solar energy in the current climate change emergency, that the temporary use of the land would be fully reversible and the biodiversity net gain it would create during its lifetime.

In response to questions from Members it was confirmed that:

- Approximately 20%-25% of the site was within the parish of Halse and 75%-80% within the parish of Milverton.
- The site contained agricultural land of grades 1, 2, 3a & 3b and had previously been used for arable crops, but was currently being used as pasture for cattle.
- That the Applicant had a connection to the National Grid lined up.
- After 40 years the land would have to be restored to its former condition (including suitable engagements) to the satisfaction of the local planning authority.

Whilst the Committee had reservations over the temporary, albeit for 40 years, loss of good quality agricultural land they had to balance this against the Council's Core Strategy Policy and Climate Emergency Strategy as well as the new National Policy Statement for Energy that came into force on 17 January 2024.

After some debate It was proposed by Councillor Rigby to approve the application and this was seconded by Councillor Pugsley.

**Resolved**

That planning application 23/22/0028 for the installation and operation of solar farm with associated works, equipment and infrastructure on land at Preston Farm, Wiveliscombe Road, Preston Bowyer, Milverton be GRANTED permission subject to the conditions listed in the Agenda report.

(voting: 8 in favour, 3 abstentions) Cllr Wren abstained from voting.

**69 Planning Application 19/23/0006 - Palmers Green Cottage, Stewley Road, Hatch Beauchamp - Agenda Item 6**

The Planning Officer presented the report with the aid of a presentation.

The Applicant spoke in support of his application.

It was commented that the proposal was an improvement and Members noting that the only reason the application was before them was that the Agent regularly worked for the Authority felt that it was appropriate to grant permission.

It was proposed by Councillor Wren to approve the application and this was seconded by Councillor Rigby.

**Resolved**

That planning application 19/23/0006 for the erection of a two storey extension to the side of dwelling and creation of vehicular access at Palmers Green Cottage, Stewley Road, Hatch Beauchamp be GRANTED permission subject to the conditions listed in the Agenda report.

(voting: unanimous in favour)

**70 Appeal Decisions (for information) - Agenda Item 7**

Members noted the appeal decisions.

**(The meeting ended at 3.23 pm)**

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**CHAIR**