

**Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Thirsk Town Council
held on Monday, 3 February 2025 at Thirsk and Sowerby Town Hall**

Present: Cllrs: A Trueman (Chairman), D Duffey, S Holme, A Naughton, F Potter, A Robinson, D Southward, S Ward

Apologies: Cllrs: D Jackson (Alternative Commitment), K Mountford (Illness), B Smith (Alternative Commitment)

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Potter declared an interest and took no part in the discussion/consideration in respect of the following planning application.

Plan brought to the meeting for consultation:

4/02454/HYB Prop: Hybrid planning application consisting of full planning application for the erection and operation of an energy storage system including associated infrastructure, engineering works, and formation of vehicular access from highway; change of use of single dwellinghouse (Hag House) from residential use (Use Class C3) to business use; and outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for the erection and operation of a transmission substation with associated infrastructure, engineering works, landscaping and internal access arrangements, including public parking and access routes

Location: OS Fields Land at Hag Lane, South Kilvington

Applicant: Bellmoor Energy Park Ltd.

The Clerk reminded the meeting that the Town Council is consulted on planning applications but does not make the decisions; it submits observations to North Yorkshire Council who then make the decision.

The Clerk then read out a draft resolution which incorporated the observations which the Town Council proposed to submit to NYC. Cllr Trueman explained that Town Councillors would be asked to vote to recommend refusal of the application.

A member of the public asked whether the Town Council would be making any amendments to the draft resolution arising from matters raised at this meeting. He was advised that amendments could be made if further relevant matters were raised, subject to the agreement of Town Councillors.

Several members of the public addressed the meeting and raised various concerns which included the following:

1. Environmental impact: this could be broken down further and would include matters as water contamination.
2. Has due diligence been carried out on the company making the application? Has the company been refused planning permission in the past for similar applications and is there any information regarding previous incidents of fires/explosion?
3. Concern for the potential for thermal runaway and the adequacy of risk assessments, particularly in respect of fire and explosion, and a concern that the risk of fire/explosion was under-estimated. A concern regarding the capability of the local fire service to cope with a large fire/explosion -

insufficient resources, assistance would be needed from neighbouring fire services.

4. Planning for an evacuation process/escape route/exclusion zone in the event of fire/explosion for people and animals in the vicinity.
5. Access to the site/local infrastructure (currently in the form of farm tracks) including a concern regarding the transportation of large numbers of batteries across land under which it was believed was a hydrocarbon pipe. There would be a vast amount of lorry movements as the site was developed. It was stated that the batteries may have a lifespan of only eight to 10 years and therefore would need to be replaced at that point, involving further lorry movements.
6. Concern regarding the safety of a proposed nature zone which had been proposed as an educational area for children/young people.
7. This energy storage system is not necessary - simply a money-making exercise.
8. It was stated that the area has flooded in the past, despite it being said that this is not a flood plain.
9. This land is farmland and needed for food supply – “No farmland, no food”. There are plenty of brown field sites available.
10. The site will be visible from Sutton Bank and will depreciate Thirsk and the area.

Cllr Trueman thanked members of the public for attending and for the views expressed. He requested that these be emailed to the Town Council so that they could be taken into consideration when the Town Council submits its observations to North Yorkshire Council.

Resolved: that the following observations be submitted to North Yorkshire Council (subject to amendment following the Town Council Extraordinary Meeting)

In view of the impact of the application if it was to be approved, Thirsk Town Council would raise the following points/concerns:

North Yorkshire Council should require that an independent environmental assessment is carried out before the planning application is considered.

North Yorkshire Council should question whether National Power own or have in place agreements under consideration in relation to land parcels adjacent to the site which could leave any development open to further expansion.

The Town Council is not convinced that the independent land classification is 3b.

The site is not on the recently ratified Local Plan and is a green field site.

The presence of residential premises near to the site raises concerns regarding potential off-site risks to local communities and it is not clear whether the National Fire Chief's Council guidance issued in 2023 for BESS site safety has been followed.

SCI statement of community involvement, LVIA viewpoint study, tree survey plan, smoke plume study appear to be missing from the application.

If the application is approved, it would permanently alter what was described by James Herriot as the world class views from Sutton Bank and would have a negative effect on visitor numbers in relation to walking and cycling routes in the area. This could have a detrimental effect on the local economy of Thirsk and surrounding areas as the Town Council is aware that people visit the area for this renowned view, following which they visit and spend time in Thirsk. This is, therefore, a material consideration in relation to the planning application.

Following the points raised, the Town Council would strongly recommend that the application is refused.

If the application is approved, conditions relating to index-linked local fund, de-commissioning fund, fire service recommendations should be applied.

The meeting closed at 7.33 pm.