

Buckden Parish Council District

Councillor's Report – 14th June 2022

General

Following my election to Huntingdon District Council (HDC), I have taken up a Cabinet position - I am now the Exec Councillor for the Corporate Governance and Shared Services portfolio under the new administration. This is in addition to my Buckden, Diddington and Southoe duties. In future months, I hope to be able to further update residents on relevant information gained from my new and added responsibilities.

Solar Farms

I wish to inform residents that no formal Planning Applications have yet been made for the proposed Solar Farm in Diddington or the one near the Old Flower Mills in the Great Ouse Valley. The latter potential application is the most contentious from a village perspective.

The proposed site is situated within the Great Ouse Valley 'Priority Area' of the HDC Local Plan policy area LP3 'Green Infrastructure', and also within a target area of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy. The site is within the Huntingdonshire District Council Landscape Character Area (LCA) 04 – Ouse Valley. Furthermore, an assessment of the impacts upon the landscape arising from the proposal must be framed within the context of the 'Great Ouse Valley' policies of the Buckden Neighbourhood Plan.

HDC have acknowledged that the principle of the proposed development in this countryside location is considered to conflict with the Great Ouse Valley – Protection of Ouse Valley' policy of the Buckden Neighbourhood Plan.

I have recently visited the Diddington site, which will not conflict with Buckden's Neighbourhood Plan. The site is well hidden from view and, if the application goes ahead, cars travelling South on the A1 may briefly see the backs of the solar panels. I noted that the proposed plan includes a cable from the site to Grafham Water. Anglian Water use vast amounts of electricity to pump water from and to the reservoir – It's likely that the renewable, solar energy, contribution will largely, 'green', our water supply if the planning application is successful.

Access to the Diddington site, primarily during the construction phase, is the most challenging issue – currently the most favoured access is via Perry Road. If planning is successful, construction could start circa March 2023, though this is an estimated start date.

HDC Local Plan

I understand that the HDC Local Plan is likely to be updated in 2024 – this timeframe will allow HDC to consult with local communities, interested parties and other local government organisations. My understanding is that the Parish Council will also have the opportunity to update our Neighbourhood Plan – I advise the Parish Council to take any opportunity presented to influence the Local Plan and to start scoping out potential changes to the Neighbourhood Plan.

[A1 Safety Group](#)

As promised prior to my election as District Councillor, I have joined the A1 Working Group alongside our Parish Council representatives and National Highways. With reference to the Solar Farm discussion, I note that it is possible for the timeframe for the potential Diddington Solar Farm construction to clash with the potential Roundabout changes in the Spring of 2023 – this needs to be discussed at the Group.

Wishing you all well,

Martin

Martin Hassall

District Councillor for Buckden, Diddington and Southoe

Executive Councillor for Corporate & Shared Services

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