



Saving the world one village at a time...

Gamlingay Environmental Action Group

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Gamlingay Parish Council
The Almshouse Chapel,
Church Street,
Gamlingay, Sandy,
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SG19 3JH

8 September 2011

Re: Planning Application S/1447/11: Photovoltaic Cells at Station Road, Gamlingay

I am writing with the response of Gamlingay Environmental Action Group (GEAG) to the Planning Application S/1447/11: Photovoltaic Cells at Station Road, Gamlingay (August 2011). GEAG is an active local group with a substantial membership among Gamlingay residents. We work with local organisations and individuals to raise awareness of environmental issues, to support sustainable development, and to protect local and global environments. We are an independent group, and are not affiliated to any other organisation.

GEAG welcomes the proposal for an array of photovoltaic cells to be installed at Station Road, and we urge the council to support this application. Our reasons are as follows:

1. Local Context

Cambridgeshire County Council's Climate Change and Environment Strategy includes a commitment to 'increase the amount of renewable energy produced and used in the County'. The South Cambridgeshire District Council's Climate Action Plan is currently under review, but the council's website notes that 'as a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration the Council is committed to taking positive actions in terms of both climate change mitigation and adaptation.' Gamlingay Parish Council is a member of the South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership which aims to support 'local activities and projects that will directly contribute to reducing energy bills and tackling climate change'.

The solar array proposed for Station Road will help local government to achieve all these aims and aspirations. It is a low-impact and highly sustainable development that will increase the amount of electricity generated locally. This makes the local community more resilient to future energy supply difficulties as well as substantially reducing carbon emissions from the parish. Solar arrays divert very little if any land away from food production (unlike many biofuel crops), sustainably support local business, and allow for the diversification of land use at an uncertain time for agriculture. These are positive outcomes for the local environment and the local economy, and will help to create a more sustainable and more resilient community.

The development itself is likely to have minimal impact on the local environment. The proposed site is arable land, in close proximity to farm buildings. GEAG has not been able to inspect the site, but we doubt that it has significant ecological value. The visual impact of solar arrays is very slight, since they are low-lying structures. In this case, the proposed site is away from the road and on low-lying ground, so we doubt that the array will be visible except from the air and, perhaps, from edge of Potton Wood (which in any case is not a public right of way).

2. National Context

The government has committed the UK to halving carbon emissions by 2025, from 1990 levels, as a first step on the path towards its long-term goal of cutting emissions by 80% by 2050. To meet these targets, national and local government will have to adopt all possible measures to cut energy consumption and increase renewable generation. Solar arrays, such as that proposed at Station Road, are an important part of the energy mix that will be required in the coming years. In addition, shortages of fossil fuels in the coming years will mean that, to be secure and to meet the needs of households and industry, the nation will have to dramatically increase the quantity of electricity generated from renewables.

3. Global Context

Fossil fuel reserves will shortly begin to be depleted. Renewable forms of energy generation will be needed globally to tackle this shortfall if we are to avoid a major energy crisis. In addition, few, if any, serious scientists now doubt that human emissions of CO₂ are contributing to global warming. There is widespread agreement among scientists and governments that very substantial cuts in CO₂ emissions will be needed if we are to avoid dangerous climate change. No single initiative will deliver these cuts or provide the energy that we need for the future. Instead, a range of options, including generation of electricity from renewable sources such as sunlight, will be needed. The Station Road proposal is a small contribution to solving that larger global problem.

For all the reasons above, GEAG very warmly welcomes Planning Application S/1447/11, and urges the Parish Council to support it.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brycchan Carey', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brycchan Carey
Co-ordinator, Gamlingay Environmental Action Group.