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## North Yorkshire Council

### Strategic Planning Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 14 April 2026 commencing at 10.00 am.

Councillor Andy Paraskos in the Chair and Councillors Bob Packham, Derek Bastiman, Andy Brown, John Cattanach, Hannah Gostlow, David Hugill, Andrew Lee, John McCartney, Yvonne Peacock, Neil Swannick, Roberta Swiers and Andrew Timothy.

Officers present: Nicki Lishman - Senior Democratic Services Officer, Fiona Hunter, Development Management Team Leader and Kate Lavelle – Solicitor, Planning and Environment.

Apologies: Robert Windass.

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**Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book**

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#### **141 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Robert Windass, Councillor Caroline Goodrick substituted.

Councillor Andrew Lee arrived at 10:20am.

#### **142 Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2026**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2026 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

#### **143 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **144 ZB25/00887/FUL - Installation of a solar farm with associated works at land at East Cowton**

The Head of Development Management – Community Development Services sought determination of a planning application for the installation of a solar farm comprising ground mounted Solar PV panels with a generating capacity of up to 19MW(AC), including mounting framework, inverters and transformers, 2 no. substations, a container, control room, cabling, deer proof fence, CCTV, internal tracks and associated infrastructure, landscaping, biodiversity net gain, permanent grid connection hub and environmental enhancements for a period of 40 years on land at East Cowton, North Yorkshire.

The application was brought to the Strategic Planning Committee as it was considered that the application raised significant planning issues, relating to the scale and type of the development and the potential for cumulative impact arising from the relationship between the proposal and adjacent developments.

Prior to the start of the presentation, the Development Management Team Manager gave a

verbal update on comments that were recently received in which concerns were raised that there was insufficient information to come to a lawful decision. Those matters which were not addressed on the committee report were commented on as below. Other matters raised were covered within the committee report and further assessment was not required.

The perceived lack of information included:

- Whether a grid connection was achievable, with the network having capacity to take the electricity generated. This was a material planning consideration, with the weight to be given a matter of planning judgement. For example, weight could be given to the enhanced sustainability if the system had capacity and no physical works were needed to upgrade the national grid.

The scheme had a Stage 2 Gate Offer from the National Energy System Operator for grid connection, which included an indicative connection point and completion date, so it was recommended that moderate positive weight be attached as it was likely the grid would be able to receive the energy.

- A lack of a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit. This was recommended to be a pre-commencement condition. The development would be in breach of condition if this was not satisfactorily complied with.
- Reliance on conditions. Conditions were a fundamental part of the decision notice, and the type and number of conditions were not unusual for a development of this type and scale. The conditions proposed in this case were considered capable of meeting the NPPF tests and constituted a lawful mechanism for controlling development.

The officer presented a detailed series of photographs and plans showing the location of application, the views of the site from various directions, the plans for the development on the site and other associated information.

Elaine Simpson, East Cowton Parish Council, spoke to object to the application.

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson, Division Councillor, was unable to attend the meeting. Her written statement, supporting the view of the Parish Council, was read aloud at the meeting.

James Walker, applicant, spoke in support of the application.

Members queried:

- Whether the inclusion of recommended condition 11cc) was relevant as the plans did not show a battery storage facility. It was clarified that the proposed development does not include battery storage and officers confirmed that condition 11cc) would be corrected.
- The applicant mentioned a potential financial contribution to the local community. The officer advised that such contributions could not be secured through planning conditions or a Section 106 agreement, as they did not meet the statutory tests of necessity, relevance and proportionality. Any contribution would be voluntary and outside the formal planning process and should not influence the committee's planning decision. The applicant confirmed their intention to engage separately with the Parish Council.
- North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service made no comment on the application. The officer advised that they prioritise comments on any developments with the highest fire risk and, as there was no battery storage with this application, the risk was less.

- Members welcomed the proposed condition restricting the use of chemical treatments under the solar panels however, concern was raised that the wording of Condition 13 might allow chemical treatments prior to installation, potentially undermining the intention of the condition. Officers agreed this was a valid concern and proposed that the condition be reworded, with delegated authority to officers in consultation with the Chair, to ensure chemicals cannot be used to clear the land prior to installation.
- Members referred to concerns raised by the Parish Council about long-term site restoration and whether a financial bond could be required to ensure funds were available to decommission the site. Officers advised that the Council did not have an adopted policy and that consequently a planning obligation to pay a financial contribution in the form of a bond on this particular site would not meet the statutory tests of necessity, relevance and proportionality. However, officers would raise the matter with the Local Plan policy team for consideration in future policy development.

The officer confirmed that the majority of the site was classified as Grade 3b agricultural land, with a small area of Grade 4 and the application was considered compliant with national policy.

The officer summarised the strong national policy support for renewable energy, and policies in the Local Plan. The development would generate electricity from a renewable source and thus contribute towards national and regional targets for the generation of renewable energy and the reduction of CO2 emissions.

It was explained that the application was considered by committee in part due to potential cumulative impacts with other solar developments in the area and confirmed that if the current application were approved, cumulative impacts would need to be considered both now and in the determination of future applications.

Members raised the importance of ensuring that construction and operational access routes were strictly adhered to was emphasised, including during flood events, in order to avoid nuisance to surrounding communities.

Members queried whether a financial bond could be required to support site restoration decommissioning of the site at any point.

Officers advised that North Yorkshire Council did not routinely require such bonds for solar developments and the Council did not have an adopted policy. Officers agreed to raise the matter with the Local Plan policy team for consideration in future policy development.

Officers acknowledged comments from Members about the importance of clear and timely communication with parish councils in future applications.

Councillor Andy Brown proposed and Councillor Packham seconded that Members be minded to grant the application and delegate authority to the Head of Development Management in consultation with the Chair to determine the application subject to the amendment to conditions 11cc) and condition 13.

## **Decision**

Members were unanimously minded to GRANT the application and delegate authority to the Head of Development Management in consultation with the Chair to determine the application subject to the amendment to conditions 11cc) and 13.

Due to late arrival at the meeting, Councillor Andrew Lee was not permitted to vote.

**145 Any other items**

There were no items of urgent business.

**146 Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 1pm on Friday 24 April 2026 at Scarborough Town Hall.

The day was incorrectly recorded as Tuesday on the agenda.

The meeting concluded at 11:10am.