

Reference: APP/Z2830/A/112165035

Appeal by Broadview Energy Developments Ltd, Spring Farm Ridge.

Witness: Roger Miles, 3 Cross Lane, Helmdon, NN13 5QL
(Please note that I cannot attend on Friday 18th May)

Statement

I have been the Helmdon Parish Paths Warden since October 2006. I liaise regularly with the Greatworth PPW and am familiar with the footpaths and bridleways that would be impacted most severely by this development. Rights of way and proposed turbine locations are shown on the map attached as Appendix 1.

These paths run through a very attractive, undulating rural landscape and join with other excellent paths. Walkers of varying abilities can and do enjoy a wide range of circular walks in open countryside with gentle slopes and excellent views. Path AN10 through the site is a vital link to other paths but its amenity value would be destroyed by this development.

Equally, Path AN10 is a vital direct footpath link between the villages of Helmdon and Greatworth and as such is an essential alternative for pedestrians to the extremely dangerous B4525 road. As the costs of motoring seem set to continue to rise, this safe and direct link will become more and more valuable.

Another serious problem is that the turbines would dominate the views from many other paths. Well-used routes from Helmdon to Stuchbury (AP13, 14 to AN15, 16 and bridleway AP15/AN32) will suffer a dramatic loss of amenity across the intimate valley (see Helmdon Circular Walk No.2 at Appendix 2).

Please consider that your assessment of the amenity loss from this development must include these fine walks. Particularly the circular routes, beginning from Priory Farm (on AP13), and going out along the side of the valley to Stuchbury (See Helmdon Stuchbury and Greatworth Windfarm Action Group Photomontage Packs A and B, View 7). These excellent walks will have the turbines in close, full view throughout. The development will be very intrusive on this landscape.

Northants County Council have invested in new bridges, stiles and gates to improve the accessibility of these and many of our other paths, because of their amenity value for the local communities. They are also aware that many informal and organised groups (eg Ramblers, WI groups) often travel to walk here. Recently a National Railway Heritage walking group used the paths through the site.

Could walkers go elsewhere? Well yes, they do go east from Helmdon but the

good, elevated routes around Astwell Park begin too far out for many walkers. All the western paths which would be damaged by this development actually begin with two routes from opposite Helmdon School; thus these paths are much more accessible to all ages and levels of fitness.

Thinking of the wider community, I must also urge you to consider the harm this development would do to the regular Health Walks from both Helmdon and Greatworth. These weekly walks are organised by trained volunteers, supported locally by South Northants Council and are run under a scheme set up initially by Natural England and the British Heart Foundation, now sponsored by Macmillan Cancer Care (see Appendix 3).

Every Thursday a Helmdon Health Walk group enjoys a sociable, safe way to take regular exercise in the country; single women and others lacking confidence to walk far afield alone are especially appreciative of these walks. In the summer there are also longer evening walks on Mondays.

The leaders of the Health Walks need all the paths in this area, but particularly AN10, in order to plan good, varied routes for the regular walkers. As the records show, we average about 15 walkers each time, drawn from a pool of about 40 that includes regulars from Brackley and further away. Recently, March 22nd was a fine day and a group of 26 used AN10. Furthermore I invite you to note that in 2011 over 50 group walks included 9 through the proposed development site on AN10.

During the construction of this development, path AN10 would not be viable and thereafter not good for walking, especially because of the positioning of the site access roads. Thus a significant proportion of the routes for our Health Walks will be lost.

Frankly we will not be able to continue with the frequency and variety of walks for this locally and nationally valued activity, if this development is allowed.

The amenity loss evidence against this proposal is compelling; but we walkers are not NIMBYs. When the Blackpits Barn waste recycling centre was set up there was an agreed diversion of path AP20. Recently we worked constructively with the owner of the "Tanks a Lot" business to agree a diversion of AN10 to achieve better separation of moving tanks from walkers. That gain would be rendered futile by these turbines being put in the wrong place.

(710 words)

APPENDIX 1

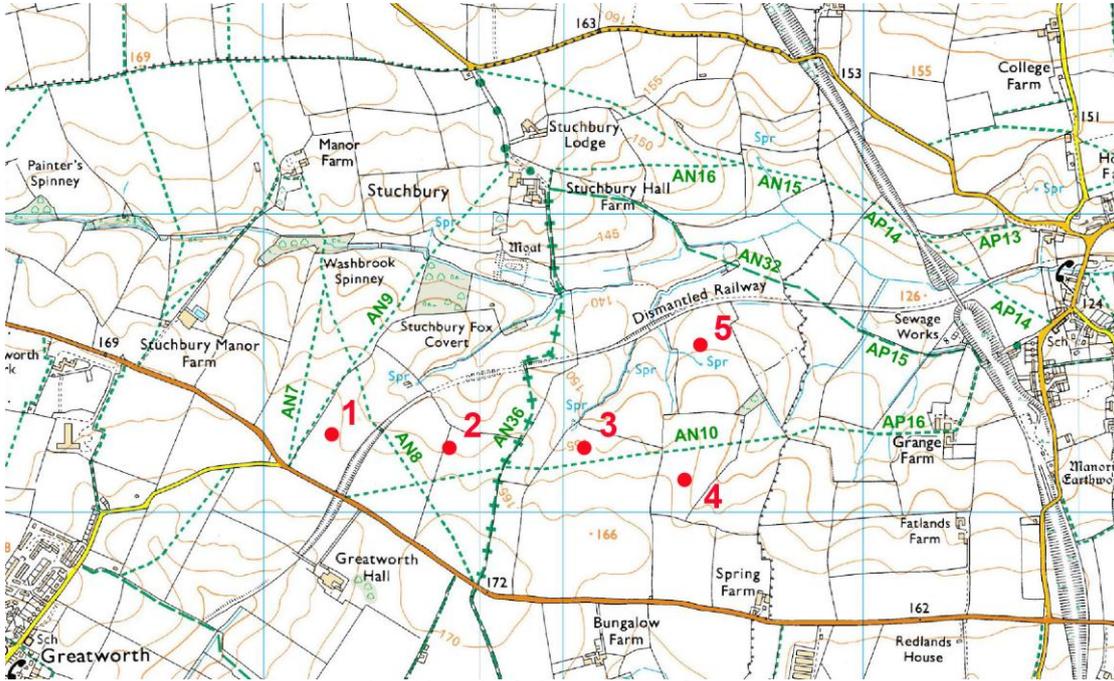


Image produced from the Ordnance Survey Get-a-map service.
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APPENDIX 2



A CIRCULAR WALK TO STUCHBURY

The Parish Plan survey in 2004 found that many people wanted more information about the footpaths in and around the village. The working party that was formed to survey the network of paths and to promote their use has prepared this leaflet and the Helmdon Young Husbands Organisation (HY-HOs) have kindly helped with the printing costs.

This route starts and ends at Helmdon School; it goes to the farms that are all that remains of a lost village that straddled a track way dating back to Anglo-Saxon times. There are fine views across open countryside to admire on the way, especially from Stuchbury when you turn back towards Helmdon.

The full circle of approximately 3 miles can be walked in about 75 minutes but will take longer when the ground is wet or frozen! Parts of this walk can be very muddy when wet, or rutted in dry weather, and so stout footwear is needed as well as warm clothing for the exposed higher ground. Also do note that several stiles and narrow bridges must be crossed. Whilst enjoying the countryside do please respect its life and work: keep to the public paths, fasten all gates behind you, leave livestock, crops and machinery alone, keep your dogs under close control and take your litter home. Particular care is needed to control dogs in the sheep pastures on the return leg of this route.

Ordnance Survey map number 207 in the Explorer series of 1:25000 scale leisure maps covers this area.

START

From the School head as if to go up Station Road then at the corner fork right into the lane sign-posted "village recycling centre" and ahead is a brick-built tunnel under the old railway. Go through the tunnel then fork right towards the sewage works! The next path is in fact a "Bridleway" as the signs show, and so is available to horse riders as well as walkers; horses and cattle may well have churned up the ground so care is needed to avoid stumbling. At the end of the roadway, go through the metal gate on your left, remembering to shut it securely behind you. With the hedgerow on your right, walk straight ahead to the next gateway, then straight across the next field to a 'dog-leg' bend in the hedge. From here the path goes diagonally to the right across a large field and cuts

through a line of trees that indicate where the line of the former Banbury to Northampton railway used to run. New gates and fencing protect newly planted trees here.

From the second new gate bear left across the corner of the field to a gate in the middle of the hedge that runs left to right ahead of you, with a copse of trees further ahead across the next field. This gate is on the Helmdon Parish boundary and leads from a stock grazing field into an arable field so shutting this gate is very important!

From the gate go directly across the arable field to the copse of trees; here the path winds through the bushes to the right, crossing a stream and uneven ground. When you emerge into the open, walk a few yards along the right side of a field to another stream crossing and the beginning of a rising walk up the right hand side of a large field. The path curves round gradually and continues up to a metal gate near two ponds. The official path goes through the metal gate and across one field to the open grass in front of Stuchbury Hall Farm. However, if this last field is full of cows, the farmer would prefer you to go off the official path, between the ponds, and then left up the grass track to the open area in front of the farm.

After a rest to admire the view, face the front of Stuchbury Hall Farm and note that the tarmac road ends at a gate on your left. From here you can see a lane, which is in fact the old Anglo-Saxon track, sloping down between high hedges. It goes down to a ford and you may wish to explore this diversion before heading back to Helmdon. But to complete this circular walk route you need to turn the other way and go to your right along the narrow road, passing some farm buildings on your left and then curving round to pass the entrance to another farm on the right.

Continue on the road to a pair of houses on the left and a gateway onto the Helmdon to Sulgrave road. If you are fed up with walking on muddy ground then turning right here will take you back to Helmdon on the road but in places there is no verge and so care is needed when traffic approaches.

But to continue our route on field paths, find the high stile on the right, just behind the open gate and step up over it. Now head diagonally across this grass field and look for a stile in the middle of the low fence between this field and the next. There are no visible traces of the old village here but some believe there were dwellings and a church hereabouts; you just have to use your imagination!

As the black arrow indicates, the path from the stile slants to the right across the next field to join the end of a farm track. Here the path goes through between the trees and a ruined old building, then into an arable field. Now the path runs down the left hand hedgerow on a wide headland. From the gateway near the next corner the path runs straight on across an arable field to a gap in a stout hedge where a wooden bridge crosses a stream that is the Helmdon Parish boundary. However, if this field is muddy then the grassy headland continues down the side of the worked ground and then round to the right to the bridge.

From the bridge follow the line pointed by the arrow, and bear to your right across this field towards one of the gaps in a thin old hedge near a large tree. Continue diagonally up across the next field towards the old railway line, just before the viaduct.

Cross over the old railway line and go through the gateway then diagonally to your right go down the slope of this grass field to meet the track of the old Banbury and Northampton railway again. The bottom of this field is often marshy but swinging round to the right and then left gives better footing; soon you are on planks across a ditch before stiles either side of the former railway. Ahead the path from the second stile goes slanting left across a grass field towards the school, and a stile in the corner next to the last of the houses is visible on your left. Climbing this high stile completes the circle!



APPENDIX 3

Helmdon Health Walks



HEALTH WALKS are part of the national 'Walking for Health' scheme which has been developed by local partners. The walks aim to provide opportunities for people who currently do little or no exercise to take advantage of this free easy and beneficial activity. Trained volunteers Walk Leaders will be leading the health walks.

Health Walks

- ◆ Every Thursday starting at 1:45pm
- ◆ Meet at the Reading Room, Church Street, Helmdon

Summer Evening Health Walks

- ◆ Starts Monday 14 May 2011 at 7:00pm
- ◆ Then every Monday thereafter until Monday 20 August
- ◆ Meet at the Bell Inn, Church Street, Helmdon
- ◆ Circular health walks of about 2 hours
- ◆ Return to the pub before dusk!

No need to book, just turn up on the day. Please note NO dogs allowed and children under 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

Health walks are fun, safe and **FREE**. You don't need any special equipment, just dress sensibly for the weather and wear appropriate footwear for the conditions.



South Northamptonshire Council

Questions? Contact Colin Hull 01327 322337 or email colin.hull@southnorthants.gov.uk