

22/01291/ESF

Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park
Newmarket Road
Bottisham
Cambridgeshire

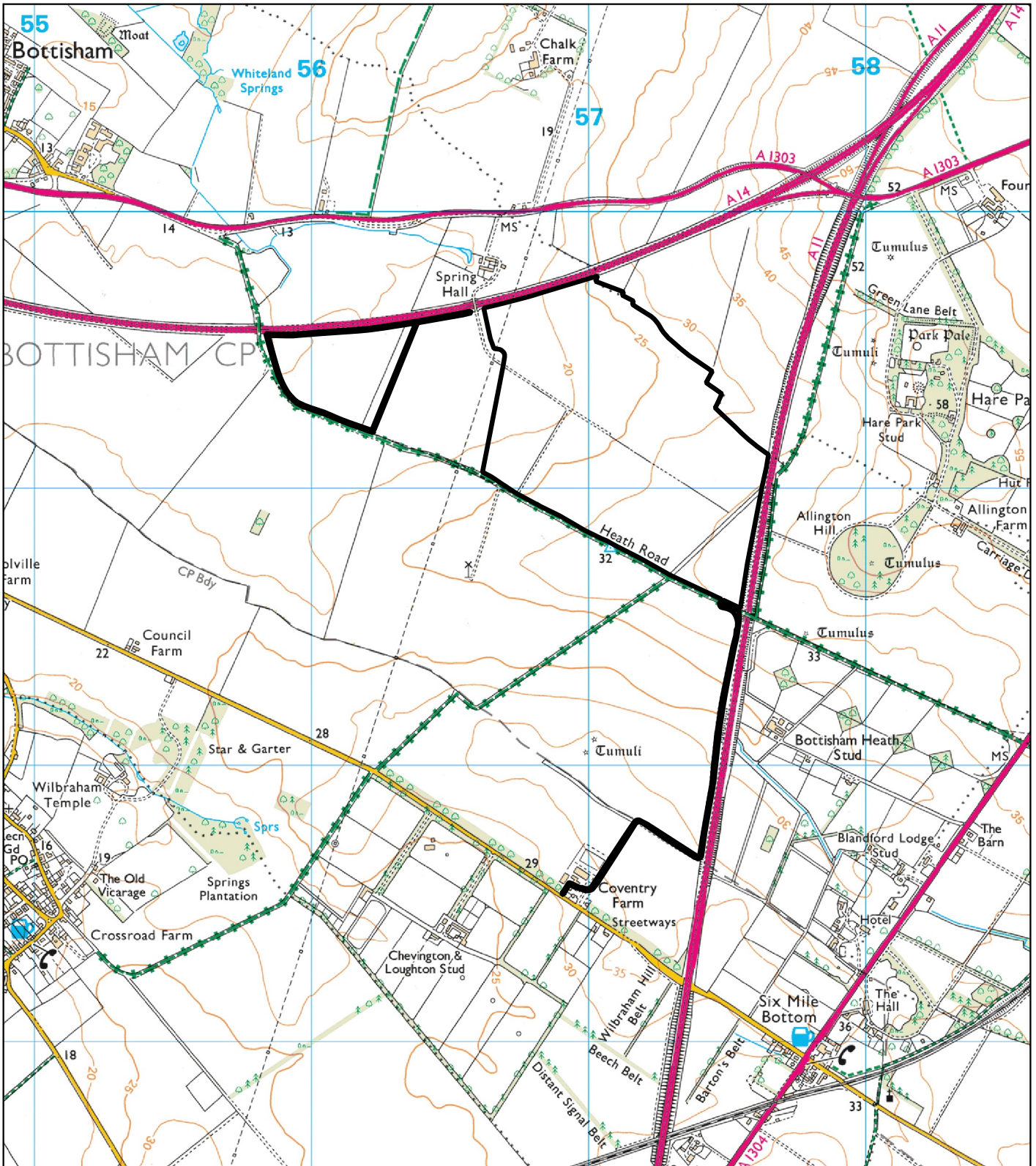
Installation of a Renewable Energy Park comprising ground mounted solar panels; access tracks; inverters, transformers; substation and battery energy storage system; customer cabin; underground cables and conduits; perimeter fence; CCTV equipment; temporary construction compound; and associated infrastructure and planting scheme

To view all of the public access documents relating to this application please use the following web address or scan the QR code:

<http://pa.eastcambs.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=RKQ8HXGGN0R00>



AGENDA ITEM 5



22/01291/ESF



Six Oaks Renewable Energy
Park
Newmarket Road
Bottisham

East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Date: 13/10/2023
Scale: 1:20,000



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TITLE: 22/01291/ESF

Committee: Planning Committee

Date: 15 November 2023

Author: Planning Team Leader

Report No: Y93

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Site Address: Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park Newmarket Road Bottisham Cambridgeshire

Proposal: Installation of a Renewable Energy Park comprising ground mounted solar panels; access tracks; inverters, transformers; substation and battery energy storage system; customer cabin; underground cables and conduits; perimeter fence; CCTV equipment; temporary construction compound; and associated infrastructure and planting scheme

Applicant: Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park Ltd

Parish: Bottisham

Ward: Bottisham

Ward Councillor/s: Charlotte Cane
John Trapp

Date Received: 18 November 2022

Expiry Date: 10 March 2023 agreed extension of time until 17.11.23

1.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Section 13 of the NPPF states that substantial weight should be given to the Green Belt and inappropriate development should not be permitted except in 'very special circumstances'. It is considered there would also be some visual impacts and biodiversity, however these can be mitigated through the use of conditions, as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Notwithstanding this, the proposal would generate enough electricity for 10, 730 homes with an annual carbon offset of 9430 tonnes. On this basis there are substantial benefits of the scheme which contribute to the local and national targets

for reducing carbon emissions. The Local Authority has also declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, followed by the adoption of the Climate Change SPD in 2020.

- 1.3 It is considered that there are substantial benefits environmental benefits of the scheme which clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and all other identified harm. As such the proposal is considered to accord with Chapter 14 of the NPPF; National Policy Statements for Energy EN1 and EN3 and the East Cambridgeshire Climate Change SPD.
- 1.4 Members are advised that if they resolve to approve this application, the Council are required to give the Secretary of State (under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (Consultation England) Direction 2021 as applied to Major development in the Green Belt) the opportunity to call in the application as it is a major application for inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 1.5 Members are recommended to APPROVE the application subject to the recommended conditions summarised below: The conditions can be read in full on the attached appendix 1.

- 1 Approved Plans
- 2 Development within 3 years
- 3 Construction Traffic Management Plan
- 4 Sufficient space for vehicles to turn
- 5 Biodiversity management plan
- 6 No laying of services
- 7 Foul and surface water
- 8 Soft landscaping scheme
- 9 Foul and surface water
- 10 Temporary fencing
- 11 Noise levels
- 12 Limit construction times
- 13 Construction Environmental Management Plan
- 14 Details of piling
- 15 Lighting scheme
- 16 Maintenance soft landscaping
- 17 Archaeological Works
- 18 Decommissioning works
- 19 Restrict amount of electricity
- 20 Details of the BESS
- 21 Emergency Response Plan
- 22 Water Quality
- 23 Earthing and harmonics report
- 24 Adhere to Skylark Management Plan

2.0 SUMMARY OF APPLICATION

- 2.1 The application is for the comprehensive development of a solar farm operational for 40 years, comprising of the following.

- **Ground mounted solar panels**
These will cover 32 hectares (79 acres) of the site as a whole and each panel will be 3 metres (approximately 10 feet) in height. The panels are set at between 20 and 25 degrees and arranged in rows of 2 lots of 26 panels.
- **Access tracks**
There are existing tracks within the existing farm complex which will be upgraded where necessary. The upgrade will be using crushed stone that overtime grass will grow over. These tracks are permeable and there is no need for additional drainage.
- **Inverters/transformers**
Solar panels create 'direct electricity', which to work with the 'alternating current' electricity has to be converted which is through Inverters and Transformers.
An inverter is 100 cm (3ft) by 70 cm (2 ft) by 37cm (1 ft) and there are 232 across the site.
A transformer is 6.1 metres (20 ft) in length, 2.4 metres wide (8 ft) and 2.9 metres in height, (9.5ft) with 9 units across the site.
- **Substation**
This is required by UK Power Networks and would be a brick construction, with the final finish to be agreed by way of condition. The substation would be 6.9 metres (20 ft) in height; 17 metres (55.7 ft) in length and 10 metres (33 ft) in width.
The substation will form part of a compound that will be enclosed by 2.4 metre (7.8 ft) high palisade fencing.
- **Battery energy storage system (BESS)**
A BESS contains a switchgear container, battery rack housing and PCS Converter unit. The finish would be agreed by way of condition.
A switchgear container is 12.2 metres (40ft) in length; 2.4 metres (7.8) wide and 2.5 metres (8.2ft) in height.
Battery rack housing is 6 metres in length (20 ft); 2.4 metres in width (7.8ft) and 2.5 metres in height (8.2ft).
PCS converter housing is 3.7 metres (12 ft) in length; 2.4 metres (7.8ft) in width and 2.5 (8.2ft) metres in height.
Each unit is set of the ground by 0.62 metres (2ft) to give an overall height of the containers 3.4 metres. (11ft)
- **Customer cabin**
The customer cabin is for security and for the controls of the solar farm. The cabin will be 6.1 metres (20 ft) in length; 2.4 metres (7.8ft) wide and 2.9 (9.5 ft) metres in height. The finish of the cabins is to be agreed via condition.
- **Underground cables/conduits**
These connect the solar panels together and onto the transformer/converters.
- **Perimeter fence**
Stock style fencing would be sited around the perimeter of the solar farm, and a gap would be provided to enable wildlife to traverse across the site.
- **Planting scheme**
 - Species rich hedgerow
 - Species rich grassland
 - Hedgerow restoration
 - Tree planting

- **CCTV**

No lighting is proposed, however infrared CCTV cameras would be provided on poles 2 metres (6.5ft) high and would face into the site. In the event of lighting being required this can be secured by way of condition.

The solar array would export up to 49.995MWe of renewable electricity to the National Grid.

- 2.2 The full planning application, plans and documents submitted by the Applicant can be viewed online via East Cambridgeshire District Council's Public Access online service, via the following link <http://pa.eastcambs.gov.uk/online-applications/>.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 22/00072/SCREEN

SCREENING OPINION - Installation of ground mounted solar array and Battery Energy Storage System

Issued 5 May 2022

4.0 THE SITE AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

- 4.1 The site is approximately 78.65 hectares (194 acres) of arable land set within the Cambridge Green Belt. The site is sat between the A14 and A1103 to the north and the A11 to the south and is accessed from Wilbraham Road. The site is predominantly within East Cambridgeshire, with the access being located within the adjoining Local Authority, South Cambridgeshire.

- 4.2 The site is not adjoining any village, within either Local Authority boundaries and forms part of other land in arable farming, although unknown if its within the same ownership.

- 4.3 The site is bound by established hedgerow to the west where it adjoins the Public Right of Way, (Byway 25/7) with a bank of trees to the east. The ground rises from Wilbraham Road to the site where it then starts to gently slope away.

5.0 RESPONSES FROM CONSULTEES

- 5.1 Responses were received from the following consultees, and these are summarised below. The full responses are available on the Council's web site.

Bottisham Parish Council- 13 January 2023

In addition to the comments already made to ECDC, Bottisham Parish Council at the January 5th meeting, voted unanimously to support his application.

Bottisham Parish Council - 12 December 2022

The Parish Council would request that construction vehicles should access the site via the A1303/Little Wilbraham Road junction (the junction opposite that The Missing Sock public house), not the A1303/Wilbraham Road junction.

Great Wilbraham Parish Council - 23 December 2022

We would like to register the following concerns with respect to the development:

- 1 HGVs passing through Great Wilbraham. During construction and maintenance of the site we would request that no HGVs should be allowed to pass through Great Wilbraham as they access the site. Access should be from A11 or A1303 via the Six Mile Bottom Road.
- 2 Cable connection of the site to the National Grid. In the past we have experienced substantial disruption as cabling from a solar park in the south of Great Wilbraham parish was laid through Great Wilbraham and on to connection with the National Grid beyond Fulbourn. We understand that the cabling route for the Six Oaks development is still under discussion and will be the subject of a second planning application to SCDC. We would request that cabling should not be allowed to follow routes through Great Wilbraham - specifically routes that may affect our biodiverse public footpaths (such as Streetway) or our public highways through Great Wilbraham.

Little Wilbraham and Six Mile Bottom Parish - 13 January 2023

Whilst the parish council is generally supportive of the application for a solar farm on this site, it has a number of points to raise in relation to this application:

1. Traffic Management Plan. The TMP must take account of the significant increase in traffic that will happen during the construction phase. The Wilbraham Road is a fast, busy through-route and any additional heavy traffic on this road must be subject to careful control.
2. Ridge should work with the local communities and County Highways to ensure that noise, disruption, traffic back-up is kept to a minimum by careful timetabling and by having traffic management liaison staff employed. Following construction, the flow of traffic should be discussed with the local communities.
3. The access point for the site should be patrolled at all times during construction. Notice should also be given of the delivery of any abnormal loads or any other aspects of construction that might lead to traffic back-up.
4. The application is for a solar farm but there are no details given of how the energy produced on site will be connected to the grid at Cherry Hinton. There needs to be a detailed plan produced relating to proposals for the cabling route and this needs to be agreed with County Highways, relevant landowners and with local communities.
5. To date the community involvement arrangements have been directed principally at Bottisham. Although the site is located in Bottisham parish, much of the direct impact of the site will be on our parish of Little Wilbraham and Six Mile Bottom. The parish council believes that the applicant should engage more formally in community involvement that includes the Wilbrahams and Six Mile Bottom.

Ward Councillors - No Comments Received

Local Highways Authority - 28 June 2023

In response to the re-consultations 20th June and 23rd June, I have reviewed the additional information submitted. None of this information seems related to

highways (substation lighting, greenbelt assessment, habitat) so I have no further comments to add.

Local Highways Authority - 30 March 2023

The revised Traffic and Access Statement has addressed most of my previous comments.

The vehicle tracking provided demonstrates that the existing access is sufficient to accommodate one-way HGV traffic. It cannot accommodate two such vehicles passing simultaneously. The risk of two HGVs meeting at the site access can be managed with advanced booking / timing of deliveries (to be confirmed in any future Construction Traffic Management Plans). However, based upon the traffic flow information provided, the access should be sized to allow for an HGV to access the site while a smaller vehicle (van or mini bus) is leaving. Alternatively, due to the tidal nature of forecast traffic, deliveries could be restricted through the CTMP so that they do not coincide with peak arrival / departure timings for construction workers. I note that the applicant has proposed that construction compound and haul road layouts will be detailed within a future CTMP. This approach is agreed in principle, but the applicant should note that the internal construction route needs to be laid out in such a way to ensure the risk of vehicles reversing onto the highway is suitably mitigated. This will need to detail appropriate haul road widths to allow for vehicle passing and / or suitable passing places and space for HGV turning.

I also acknowledge that the applicant is stating that the construction traffic route will only be via the A14 to the north. Site operatives and visitors will need to be informed as appropriate that construction routing is not to take place from the south via Six Mile Bottom and the A11. This can be confirmed in a CTMP.

Provided the applicant addresses the above comment regarding the design / use of the Wilbraham Road junction and a Construction Traffic Management Plan is conditioned, I do not object. In the event that the LPA are mindful to approve the application, please append the following Conditions to any consent granted:
Conditions

HW1A: No development shall take place until full details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to illustrate the following: A Construction Traffic Management Plan which shall include construction traffic routing, timings / management of deliveries, site compound layouts, haul road details and other items as required to demonstrate highway safety will be safeguarded throughout the construction and decommissioning phases.

HW14A: Prior to first occupation or commencement of use of the development sufficient space shall be provided within the site to enable vehicles to enter, turn and leave the site in forward gear and to park clear of the public highway. The area shall be levelled, surfaced, and drained and thereafter retained for that specific use.

Local Highways Authority - 17 May 2023

I have reviewed the additional information submitted in support of the application and my previous comments dated 30th March remain applicable. I am awaiting further information regarding the site access but otherwise the proposals are acceptable.

Local Highways Authority – 11 May 2023

I have reviewed the additional information submitted in support of the application and my previous comments dated 30th March remain applicable. I am awaiting further information regarding the site access but otherwise the proposals are acceptable.

Environmental Health - 23 June 2023

I have read the Substation Lighting Plan documents and am happy with the i

Design Out Crime Officers - 27 June 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this application. I note the amended plan in relation to the external lighting for the substation.

Experience would suggest that installing large amounts of any expensive and desirable equipment (E.G. Solar Panels and associated cable and infrastructure) in isolated rural locations will attract criminals. This appears to be borne out by the increase in reported offences Nationally, some including violence. With this in mind, the location for such installations is important along with appropriate and proportionate security measures, which will need to be considered on a site-specific basis. Basic crime prevention is about putting layers of security in place to delay and deter criminals. As well as physical security measures such as fencing, there must be either sufficient natural surveillance, monitored electronic security measures, or both prompting an appropriate response.

As per my previous comments regarding perimeter fencing and CCTV, lighting is also an important safety and security measure. Our recommendation for the external lighting is as follows.

- Lighting - A fully qualified lighting engineer should be able to design a lighting plan to provide security and safety of people and the property on site as well as reducing the effects on ecology and local wildlife habitat. Consideration could be given to utilising a PIR system which operates when motion is detected and incorporates a slow rise in the lighting level, minimising glare, and light pollution.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Design Out Crime Officers - 13 December 2022

We have seen some cable thefts with violence from similar locations nationally. Cambridgeshire have seen a rise in this type of offence, this includes theft of cables and solar panels. It is also an area known for hare coursing and nighttime poaching.

With the above in mind, please see following recommendations:

- Security Fencing - I note the proposed fencing and landscaping. Our recommendation is that 2m high weld mesh fencing and security gates should be used which would reduce the possibility of climbing or cutting and offers good surveillance.
- CCTV - While CCTV is not a universal solution to security problems, it can help deter vandalism or burglary and assist with the identification of culprits

once a crime has been committed. The provision and effective use of CCTV fits well within the overall framework of security management and is most effective when it forms part of an overall security plan. CCTV should meet BS EN 50132-7: 2012+A1:2013 CCTV surveillance systems for use in security applications. CCTV Signs should conform to the Information Commissioners Office regulations and placed in relevant areas around the site. Our Rural Crime Team (RCAT) request that all CCTV companies are to be made aware of the site layout should there be a camera activation as this assist in a timely deployment of officers.

- Lighting - I would see what lighting is being considered for the site as this will complement the CCTV mentioned above.

National Highways - 7 July 2023

Referring to the consultation on a planning application dated 22 June 2023 referenced above, in the vicinity of the A11 and A14 that forms part of the Strategic Road Network, notice is hereby given that National Highways' formal recommendation is that we:

- c) recommend that planning permission not be granted for a specified period (see reasons at Annex A).
- d) recommend that the application be refused.

National Highways - 28 July 2023

Referring to the consultation on a planning application dated 22 June 2023 referenced above, in the vicinity of the A11 and A14 that forms part of the Strategic Road Network, notice is hereby given that National Highways' formal recommendation is that we: recommend that conditions should be attached to any planning permission that may be granted (see Annex A - National Highways recommended Planning Conditions & reasons); Highways Act 1980 Section 175B is/is not relevant to this application.¹This represents National Highways' formal recommendation and is copied to the Department for Transport as per the terms of our Licence.

Should the Local Planning Authority not propose to determine the application in accordance with this recommendation they are required to consult the Secretary of State for Transport, as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Affecting Trunk Roads) Direction 2018, via transportplanning@dft.gov.uk and may not determine the application until the consultation process is complete. National Highways has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as a strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such we work to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity.

The application site is situated to the south of the A14 and the west of the A11. The proposed development seeks permission for the installation of a Renewable Energy Park, including Ground Mounted solar panels, substation and battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure. Due to the sensitive location between

two SRN Trunk Roads, A11 and A14, we reviewed the accompanying Glint and Glare Assessment. Following a review of the document, we confirm we are content that with the information provided and the proposed mitigation. Accordingly, National Highways are now content that this application can be approved, based on the following planning condition:

Condition 1

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted 'Biodiversity Management Plan: Hedgerows' prepared by Ridge Clean Energy.

Reason - To ensure the safe operation of the A11 and A14 trunk roads.

Standing advice to the local planning authority

The Climate Change Committee's 2022 Report to Parliament notes that for the UK to achieve net zero carbon status by 2050, action is needed to support a modal shift away from car travel. The NPPF supports this position, with paragraphs 73 and 105 prescribing that significant development should offer a genuine choice of transport modes, while paragraphs 104 and 110 advise that appropriate opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport should be taken up.

Moreover, the build clever and build efficiently criteria as set out in clause 6.1.4 of PAS2080 promote the use of low carbon materials and products, innovative design solutions and construction methods to minimise resource consumption.

These considerations should be weighed alongside any relevant Local Plan policies to ensure that planning decisions are in line with the necessary transition to net zero carbon.

Environment Agency - 3 May 2023

Thank you for consulting us on the above application. We have reviewed the new documents as submitted and we have no further comments. Please refer to our previous letter referenced AC/2022/131378 for information regarding our no objection and proposed conditions.

Lead Local Flood Authority - 16 May 2023

we can remove our objection to the proposed development.

The above documents demonstrate that surface water from the proposed development can be managed through the use of suitable planting to mitigate the surface water runoff from the solar panels. Swales are also proposed throughout the scheme to intercept any overland flows and assist in the discharge of water back into the ground. The gravel area in the southeast of the site will drain into a basin, which subject to infiltration testing will discharge water back into the ground.

We request the following conditions are imposed:

Condition

No laying of services, creation of hard surfaces or erection of a building shall commence until a detailed design of the surface water drainage of the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Those elements of the surface water drainage system not adopted by a statutory undertaker shall thereafter be maintained and managed in accordance with the approved management and maintenance plan.

The scheme shall be based upon the principles within the agreed Flood Risk Technical Note prepared by RAB Consultants (ref: RAB3018 Version 1.0) dated 25 April 2023 and shall also include:

- a. Full results of the proposed drainage system modelling in the QBAR, 3.3% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) (1 in 30) and 1% AEP (1 in 100) storm events (as well as 1% AEP plus climate change), inclusive of all collection, conveyance, storage, flow control and disposal elements and including an allowance for urban creep, together with an assessment of system performance.
- b. Detailed drawings of the entire proposed surface water drainage system, attenuation, and flow control measures, including levels, gradients, dimensions, and pipe reference numbers, designed to accord with the CIRIA C753 SuDS Manual (or any equivalent guidance that may supersede or replace it).
- c. Full detail on SuDS proposals (including location, type, size, depths, side slopes and cross sections).
- d. Site Investigation and test results to confirm infiltration rates.
- e. Demonstration that the surface water drainage of the site is in accordance with DEFRA non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems.
- f. Full details of the maintenance/adoption of the surface water drainage system.
- g. Permissions to connect to a receiving watercourse or sewer.

Reason

To ensure that the proposed development can be adequately drained and to ensure that there is no increased flood risk on or off site resulting from the proposed development and to ensure that the principles of sustainable drainage can be incorporated into the development, noting that initial preparatory and/or construction works may compromise the ability to mitigate harmful impacts.

Condition

No development, including preparatory works, shall commence until details of measures indicating how additional surface water run-off from the site will be avoided during the construction works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The applicant may be required to provide collection, balancing and/or settlement systems for these flows. The approved measures and systems shall be brought into operation before any works to create buildings or hard surfaces commence.

Reason

To ensure surface water is managed appropriately during the construction phase of the development, so as not to increase the flood risk to adjacent land/properties or occupied properties within the development itself; recognising that initial works to prepare the site could bring about unacceptable impacts.

Informatives

Infiltration

Infiltration rates should be worked out in accordance with BRE 365. If infiltration methods are likely to be ineffective then discharge into a watercourse/surface water

sewer may be appropriate; however, soakage testing will be required at a later stage to clarify this.

OW Consent

Constructions or alterations within an ordinary watercourse (temporary or permanent) require consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority under the Land Drainage Act 1991. Ordinary watercourses include every river, drain, stream, ditch, dyke, sewer (other than public sewer) and passage through which water flows that do not form part of Main Rivers (Main Rivers are regulated by the Environment Agency). The applicant should refer to Cambridgeshire County Council's Culvert Policy for further guidance:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/water-minerals-and-waste/watercourse-management/>

Please note the council does not regulate ordinary watercourses in Internal Drainage Board areas.

Pollution Control

Surface water and groundwater bodies are highly vulnerable to pollution and the impact of construction activities. It is essential that the risk of pollution (particularly during the construction phase) is considered and mitigated appropriately. It is important to remember that flow within the watercourse is likely to vary by season and it could be dry at certain times throughout the year. Dry watercourses should not be overlooked as these watercourses may flow or even flood following heavy rainfall.

County Highways Transport Team - 6 December 2022

Based on the information submitted, I am unable to make an informed decision on the application.

Traffic Volumes

The submitted Traffic and Access Statement includes details of HGVs only and omits other vehicle trips associated with contractors / site operatives / visitors. This is not accepted. Any assessment must be based upon total anticipated vehicle flows. As construction traffic is expected to fluctuate throughout the nine-month programme, the applicant will need to highlight the anticipated variation in traffic over this length of time.

To quantify whether highway impacts of construction traffic may be considered severe, the applicant has benchmarked the development impacts against traffic flows obtained from a Department for Transport traffic count (ID 800343). This data contains out of date (2018) Annual Average Daily Flows only which cannot be disaggregated by time. Instead, the application should be based upon observed traffic flows which can be easily obtained by placing an Automatic Traffic Counter along Wilbraham Road. The survey date should be no older than three years from date of application determination. Traffic flows have only been provided for the construction phase. While this may be the most intense phase of the development lifecycle, data must also be provided for the operational and decommissioning phases as there could be residual impacts in need of consideration.

One abnormal load is anticipated throughout the construction phase. I would like to ask the applicant to clarify if this will be abnormal in weight or width / length. If the load is of abnormal dimensions, supportive vehicle tracking may be required. Construction traffic routing is shown via the A14 and the A1303. I would like to ask the applicant to clarify if this is the only permitted routing as, access via the A11 is

more direct if arriving from the south. That being said the A1304 / Wilbraham Road / Brinkley Road crossroads is not necessarily suited for large construction vehicles and is particularly ill suited any abnormally sized loads.

Site Access - Construction

Access is proposed for the construction phase from an existing agricultural access, although based upon the submitted information, it is difficult to identify the specific location.

An existing access is not necessarily suitable for intensification of use without mitigating works. The applicant will therefore need to submit details of the existing access arrangements, and potentially an enhanced design. For avoidance of doubt, the Local Highway Authority's minimum requirements are set out below:

- The access must be capable of achieving inter-vehicle visibility splays commensurate with the signed speed limit (4.5m x 215m in this case). However, I will accept reduction in the y-distance based upon the observed 85th percentile vehicle speed. The necessary visibility splays must be fully contained within the application boundary and / or the highway boundary.
- The access must be sized to allow passing of the largest vehicles expected to need regular access to the site, presumably a 16.5m articulated truck and 12m rigid truck.
- The access must have a metalled surface for the length of the largest anticipated construction vehicle or 10m from the carriageway edge, whichever is longer.
- Any gates across the construction access must be set back sufficiently to allow the largest anticipated vehicle space to wait fully off the highway, or else the gates must stay open throughout the working day.

Site Access - Operation / Decommissioning

The submission states that some regular access will be required during the 40-year operational phase prior to the final decommissioning stage where there will again be an intense period of activity. It is unclear what access arrangements will be maintained for operation / decommissioning and what vehicles the access needs to be designed for. I would like to seek this clarification from the applicant.

Site Layout

The applicant states that the internal construction access route will have a typical width of 4m. This is insufficient to allow two vehicles to pass and thus could result in vehicles reversing onto the public highway. This arrangement may be acceptable with the inclusion of regular passing places, but in absence of a plan showing the access road, I am unable to advise further.

A site-specific layout, rather than a typical layout, should be provided for the construction compound. However, should the applicant prefer, this can be omitted for a future Construction Traffic Management Plan (to be conditioned).

Summary

In summary, I require the following information:

- All vehicle trip generation for construction, operational and decommissioning phases. Trip generation for the construction phase needs to be profiles across the nine-month build out.
- Clarification regarding construction traffic routing.

- A (dimensioned) design for the site access capable of safely accommodating intensified traffic flows. If no mitigation is deemed necessary, details of the existing access must still be included.
- Supportive vehicle tracking for the site access.
- Visibility splays commensurate with the stopping sight distance for the signed speed limit or 85th percentile observed vehicle speed.
- Internal access route layout, inclusive of passing places.
- Observed and up-to-date traffic flows along Wilburton Road.

If the applicant is unwilling or unable to amend the application or provide additional information as outlined above, please advise me so I may consider making further recommendations, possibly of refusal. This response should be read in parallel to that of the County's Transport Assessment team and Definitive Map Officer.

ECDC Trees Team - 1 August 2023

No comments further to those made 16th May 2023 requiring the provision of a soft landscaping scheme including a planting and maintenance specification by condition. The soft landscaping details must include:

- 1) A scaled plan showing the locations of new and existing vegetation
- 2) A tree pit design specification (See below)
- 3) A schedule detailing sizes and numbers/densities of all proposed trees/plants (Hedging ideally needs to be planted at 0.60m centres in a double staggered row, usually a 20% mix of five species for a native species hedge)
- 4) Specifications for operations associated with plant establishment (planting specification, weed control, mulching, watering pruning etc.) to include a program for the timings of the landscape works and maintenance, to ensure successful establishment and survival of new planting and having regard to the timing of the commencement of the development hereby permitted.

Tree pits to be excavated to a minimum size of 600mm larger than the container, root ball or bareroot stock and shall be square so as to avoid root girdling issues.

The base of the tree pit shall be slightly domed and only 'broken' up in the event of inadequate drainage.

Backfill tree pit with subsoil up to ~400mm depth from ground surface and with topsoil above ~400mm depth from ground surface or to match the existing soil profiles.

Watering 'dishes' to be created around the base of each tree, to hold water directly over root ball during watering.

1m diameter mulched dish for Standard trees/3.0m in height or smaller

Bare root, root ball or container multi-stem trees shall be single staked as a minimum double staked as required, fixed with suitable tree ties (biodegradable if available and suitable)

Trees to be mulched with minimum 50mm settled depth, medium grade ornamental wood mulch.

Trenches for hedge planting will be dug to a minimum depth of 400mm and width of 600mm, with the plants put into the ground at the same depth at which they had been previously grown in the nursery.

All plants need to be well heeled in after planting and watered in during dry weather.

All hedging to be mulched with minimum 50mm settled depth, medium grade wood mulch.

As most hedging plants are supplied as bare root specimens measures are to be taken ensure that the roots do not dry out prior to planting such as healing in or covering root with damp straw.

Planting to be undertaken in the first planting season (October to February) after completion of development activities.

ECDC Trees Team - 16 May 2023

The revised habitat enhancement drawings provide information on the location of new and restorative hedge planting and a percentage mix for these areas which is acceptable subject to supplying a planting and maintenance specification. The seven new trees indicated for planting adjacent to the battery storage area have not been specified as to what species they will be, nor do they have a planting and maintenance specification but all the details relating to the soft landscaping scheme can be provided by condition if required.

The previously mentioned concerns regarding the trees adjacent the underpass shading out solar panels has been removed with the area most likely to be shaded now identified as becoming new native grassland for nesting birds.

Therefore, there are now no tree related objections to this application subject to the provision of a soft landscaping scheme including a planting and maintenance specification by condition. The soft landscaping details must include:

- 1) A scaled plan showing the locations of new and existing vegetation.
- 2) A tree pit design specification (See below)
- 3) A schedule detailing sizes and numbers/densities of all proposed trees/plants (Hedging ideally needs to be planted at 0.60m centres in a double staggered row, usually a 20% mix of five species for a native species hedge)
- 4) Specifications for operations associated with plant establishment (planting specification, weed control, mulching, watering pruning etc.) to include a program for the timings of the landscape works and maintenance, to ensure successful establishment and survival of new planting and having regard to the timing of the commencement of the development hereby permitted.

Tree pits to be excavated to a minimum size of 600mm larger than the container, root ball or bareroot stock and shall be square so as to avoid root girdling issues.

The base of the tree pit shall be slightly domed and only 'broken' up in the event of inadequate drainage.

Backfill tree pit with subsoil up to ~400mm depth from ground surface and with topsoil above ~400mm depth from ground surface or to match the existing soil profiles.

Watering 'dishes' to be created around the base of each tree, to hold water directly over root ball during watering.

1m diameter mulched dish for Standard trees/3.0m in height or smaller

Bare root, root ball or container multi-stem trees shall be single staked as a minimum double staked as required, fixed with suitable tree ties (biodegradable if available and suitable)

Trees to be mulched with minimum 50mm settled depth, medium grade ornamental wood mulch.

Trenches for hedge planting will be dug to a minimum depth of 400mm and width of 600mm, with the plants put into the ground at the same depth at which they had been previously grown in the nursery.

All plants need to be well heeled in after planting and watered in during dry weather.

All hedging to be mulched with minimum 50mm settled depth, medium grade wood mulch.

As most hedging plants are supplied as bare root specimens measures are to be taken ensure that the roots do not dry out prior to planting such as healing in or covering root with damp straw.

Planting to be undertaken in the first planting season (October to February) after completion of development activities.

ECDC Trees Team - 2 February 2023

The design and access statement mentions a scheme for soft landscaping, yet this has not been provided. Tree planting stated to comprises of 7 Rowans which don't tend to do well locally as such are scarce in this locality, these trees are also a small-scale species unlikely to offer significant screening. Block plan does not include and landscaping either existing or proposed but indicates the removal of all the existing hedges within the site which includes species rich defunct hedge in the centre of site. The trees adjacent the underpass are likely to shade adjacent panels but the application does not include an arboricultural assessment or a hedgerow assessment to allow assessment of this, the shading information should also take account of the future growth potential of these trees for the life of the scheme. All the hedgerows should be assessed in accordance with the 1997 hedgerow regulations.

County Council Ecologist - 29 December 2022

We are concerned that the proposal scheme has the potential to result in adverse impact to a County Wildlife Site, as discussed below. We are also concerned about the likelihood of the proposed Biodiversity and Landscape Management Plan being delivered.

We recommend that East Cambridgeshire's ecological advisor (Wildlife Trust) be consulted on these matters, as well as the assessment for protected species, such as adverse impacts to ground-nesting birds.

Proposals

Proposal comprises an array of ground-mounted solar photovoltaic panels (max. 3m in height) is set out within a fenced area of approximately 72.4 hectares and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). As well as necessary electrical and supporting infrastructure to export and generate electricity to the grid and charge the battery.

Access to the site is required during construction, through operation, and finally during the decommissioning of the site at the end of the project's operational life. Proposed development will be accessed from Wilbraham Road, using existing farm entrances and farm tracks, crossing the Heath Road Byway Open to all Traffic. Where sections of new, upgraded or widened access track are required, these will have the appearance of typical vernacular farm tracks with a crushed stone running surface. The running surface (4.5m wide) is laid over a stone sub-surface which itself is typically constructed upon a geotextile membrane A perimeter fence would be installed to protect the panels from theft. The fence will be stock style fencing with wooden posts and open wire mesh up to 1.8m tall.

Chapter 8 of the written statement does not set out any landscape scheme or biodiversity enhancement as part of the proposal.

Heath Road/Street Way Green Lanes County Wildlife Site

We are concerned that the ecological assessment of the Heath Road/Street Way Green Lanes County Wildlife Site is inaccurate. Paragraph 9.867 of the Written Statement (Volume 2B) states that: "One County Wildlife Site, the Heath Road/Street Way Green Lanes lies adjacent to the proposed development. It will be crossed by the site access track". However, a section of Heath Road/Street Way Green County

Wildlife Site (CWS) falls within the red-line boundary (see figure 9.1).

The proposal includes a maintenance track to be constructed within this County Wildlife Site (figure 1.2). The proposed tracks for the development will have the "appearance of typical vernacular farm tracks with a crushed stone running surface built up over geotextile placed on top of prepared (scraped and levelled) topsoil at, or just below, existing ground level" (paragraph 8.11, Written Statement, Volume 2A). The Typical Access Track Detail (figure 7.3) drawing also shows excavations of the shoulder of the track to contain cables, with the turf or topsoil being reinstated and re-seeded.

This CWS is designated for its grassland and nationally scarce flora. The section of CWS within the Site has been recorded as neutral grassland and bordered by hedgerows on the Phase 1 Habitats Map (figure 9.2). The proposed removal of topsoil and compaction of the soils / surfacing works, as part of the creation of a maintenance track, will result in the permanent loss of the grassland habitat and potentially nationally scarce plant populations for which the County Wildlife Site has been designated. Any works within the shoulder of the track, including excavations and reseeded, has the potential to further degrade the quality of the CWS grassland habitat. It is likely that the scheme will result in adverse impact to this local wildlife site. The assessment hasn't determined the level of impact on this wildlife site, nor incorporated any avoidance, mitigation, or compensation measures.

Therefore, we object to the current proposal.

The ecological assessment must be updated to assess the level of impact of the scheme on the County Wildlife Site. This should include detailed botanical surveys to assess the baseline condition of the County Wildlife Site, as well as identifying the location of any notable plant species, for which it is designated. The mitigation hierarchy must be followed, and all works must be excluded from the County Wildlife

Site. Where this is not possible, mitigation measures should be adopted, with any residual impact addressed through compensation measures. Opportunities to enhance the County Wildlife Site should be incorporated into the scheme.

The ecological assessment should also consider the cumulative impact of the "underground 33kV cable will run from the substation compound across fields to Wilbraham Road and on to Fulbourn Substation following the highway and field/track margins".

This MV cable (shown on Figure 1.2) will result in the excavation of a substantial proportion of the grassland within the section of County Wildlife Site located to the south of the proposed red-line boundary. Although these works are subject to separate consenting procedures, it is understood they are integral to the solar farm scheme. The combined on-site habitat loss and off-site degradation to this County Wildlife Site, directly as a result of this solar farm, has the potential to result in

the loss of nationally scarce plants and a significant amount of the grassland for which the CWS has been designated. This must be considered as part of the current application.

Biodiversity And Landscape Management Plan (Appendix 9-3, Volume 2B)

The proposed development set out at Chapter 8 of the Written Statement (Volume 2B) does not commit to any landscape or biodiversity enhancement as part of the scheme. The application is not supported by an outline landscape scheme / parameters plan. We are therefore concerned that the applicant is not committed to deliver the biodiversity mitigation, compensation and enhancements set out in the Biodiversity and Landscape Management Plan.

Furthermore, we consider that some of the proposals within the BMLP are unrealistic or not adequately incorporated into the scheme design:

The BLMP proposes to restore lowland species-rich grassland across the entire site, stating that it "will be managed after construction of the Project either by sustainable grazing or cutting". Other solar farms have demonstrated that the majority of the grassland will develop into poor quality grassland, supporting only a small number of plants that can tolerate the extreme conditions, with species-rich grassland restricted to the small areas of tracks between the arrays that are unaffected by shading that can be managed effectively.

We note the aspiration to graze the site to maximise its biodiversity value but in reality, very few solar farms are grazed, this is a particular concern given the lack of commitment by the Applicant to graze the site. As a result, it is recommended that the site be identified as modified grassland rather than neutral grassland (UK Habitats criteria).

The BLMP states that the fence will be designed / managed to "avoid barriers to mammal movement". However, this is not demonstrated within the submission documentation, with neither the Typical Fence Design drawing (figure 7.3) or Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (figure 9.3) showing any access points / permeability of the fence for wildlife. It is considered that the proposed line of Rowan trees (see Figure 9.3) is not characteristic of the local landscape. We suggest ECDC's landscape / tree officer be consulted on this issue. We seek that native tree species resilient to predicted climate change are selected. No tree planting should be undertaken within the County Wildlife Site.

The BLMP provides no compensation measures for the loss of habitat for breeding farmland birds associated with open ground, such as lapwing, skylark, yellow wagtail, and corn bunting. These adverse impact further compound by loss of suitable arable farmland as a result of other solar farms and other development in Cambridgeshire. Adequate compensation must be provided. Finally, it is noted that the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (figure 9.3) doesn't accurately reflect the proposed development, such as the omission of maintenance tracks shown on the PV layout drawing REC1002-100 Rev A (figure 1.2).

Cambridge Airport - 3 February 2023

We refer to your consultation email dated 31st January 2023. The airport safeguarding team has assessed the proposal in accordance with the CAA ADR -

Aerodromes Regulation 139-2014 and it does not conflict with the safeguarding criteria for the airport. Accordingly, we have no aerodrome safeguarding objection to the proposal based on the information provided.

Defence Infrastructure Organisation Safeguarding (Wind Turb) - 6 February 2023

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) Safeguarding Team represents the Ministry of Defence (MOD) as a consultee in UK planning and energy consenting systems to ensure that development does not compromise or degrade the operation of defence sites such as aerodromes, explosives storage sites, air weapon ranges, and technical sites or training resources such as the Military Low Flying System. The applicant has submitted an Environmental Statement Full application seeking Environmental Impact Assessment approval for a proposed Installation of ground mounted solar array and Battery Energy Storage System

The application site occupies the statutory safeguarding zones surrounding Cambridge Airport. In particular, the height, and bird strike safeguarding zones surrounding Cambridge Airfield and is approximately 7.3km from the centre of the Airfield.

After reviewing the application documents, I can confirm the MOD has no safeguarding objections to this proposal.

The MOD must emphasise that the advice provided within this letter is in response to the data and information detailed within the developer's document, submitted in support of application 22/01291/ESF, as referred to in the consultation letter dated 23rd November 2022, received from East Cambridgeshire District Council.

Any variation of the parameters (which include the location, dimensions, form, and finishing materials) detailed may significantly alter how the development relates to MOD safeguarding requirements and cause adverse impacts to safeguarded defence assets or capabilities. In the event that any amendment, whether considered material or not by the determining authority, is submitted for approval, the MOD should be consulted and provided with adequate time to carry out assessments and provide a formal response.

I trust this is clear however should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Environment Agency - 25 August 2023

Thank you for the consultation dated 04 August 2023. We have reviewed the documents as submitted and our position of no objection remains the same from our previous response (referenced AC/2022/131378/01 and dated 13 December 2022). Our recommended condition from this response still stands. See the section below for further information.

Information regarding Battery Energy Storage Systems, also previously referred to in AC/2022/131378/01, still remains relevant.

Required Information

We have reviewed document 'RAB 3018 TECHNICAL NOTE' dated 27 April 2023. The additional information referred to in document only deals with surface water. The condition we recommended also includes foul drainage and how firewater will be dealt with. Neither of these issues appear to have been addressed yet.

Environment Agency - 13 December 2022

We have no objection to the proposed development provided the below planning condition is included on any planning permission.

The proposed location overlies a major aquifer which is used extensively for public drinking water supply abstractions. The south-east corner of the site where the substation and battery storage compound are located is within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ) 2. Any pollutants entering the ground in this area will reach the abstraction point within 400 days. The rest of the site is within a SPZ3. Any pollutant entering the ground in this area will eventually end up at the abstraction point.

There appears to be a culverted watercourse running through the south-west corner of the site. The applicant should ascertain the exact location of this culvert prior to starting any works at site.

There is very little information on any proposed drainage arrangements on site. There is no mention of foul drainage arrangements during the construction phase. Consideration should be given to how any firewater will be contained and disposed of in the event of a fire at the site.

Environment Agency position

The proposed development will be acceptable if the following measures are implemented and secured by way of a planning condition on any planning permission.

Condition

The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a scheme to:

- dispose of foul and surface water
 - contain and dispose of any contaminated water resulting from firefighting has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.
- The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reason(s) - To protect ground and surface water.

General comments on Battery Energy Storage Systems

Energy storage will play a significant role in the future of the UK energy sector. Effective storage solutions will benefit renewables generation, helping to ensure a more stable supply and give operators access to the Grid ancillary services market. The National Grid's Enhanced Frequency Response programme will provide a welcome catalyst for a significant level of battery storage deployment in the UK. Currently, DEFRA does not consider the need to regulate the operation of battery energy storage systems (BESS) facilities under the Environmental Permitting Regulations regime. Although these are a source of energy to the National Grid they do not result in the direct impact to the environment during normal operations. We do not generally object to battery storage proposals, however, the potential to pollute in abnormal and emergency situations should not be overlooked. Applicants should consider the impact to groundwater from the escape of firewater/foam and any metal leachate that it may contain. Where possible the applicant should ensure that there are multiple 'layers of protection' to prevent the source-pathway-receptor pollution route occurring. In particular, proposals should avoid being situated near to rivers and sensitive drinking water sources.

However, an important factor that can be overlooked by parties involved in new battery storage projects or investing in existing projects is that battery storage falls within the scope of the UK's producer responsibility regime for batteries and other waste legislation. This creates additional lifecycle liabilities which must be understood and factored into project costs, but on the positive side, the regime also creates opportunities for battery recyclers and related businesses. Operators of battery storage facilities should be aware of the Producer Responsibility Regulations. Under the Regulations, industrial battery producers are obliged to:

- take back waste industrial batteries from end users or waste disposal authorities free of charge and provide certain information for end users.
- ensure all batteries taken back are delivered and accepted by an approved treatment and recycling operator.
- keep a record of the amount of tonnes of batteries placed on the market and taken back.
- register as a producer with the Secretary of State.
- report to the Secretary of State on the weight of batteries placed on the market and collected in each compliance period (each 12 months starting from 1 January). Putting aside the take back obligations under the producer responsibility regime, batteries have the potential to cause harm to the environment if the chemical contents escape from the casing. When a battery within a battery storage unit ceases to operate, it will need to be removed from site and dealt with in compliance with waste legislation.

The party discarding the battery will have a waste duty of care under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to ensure that this takes place. The Waste Batteries and Accumulators Regulations 2009 also introduced a prohibition on the disposal of batteries to landfill and incineration. Batteries must be recycled or recovered by approved battery treatment operators or exported for treatment by approved battery exporters only. Many types of batteries are classed as hazardous waste which creates additional requirements for storage and transport.

Other advice to applicant

Construction phase activities need to be carefully managed to prevent pollution. An overview of pollution prevention advice can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pollution-prevention-for-businesses>

We would advise early discussion with the Environment Agency regarding any proposed discharges to watercourse/land as part of this development, e.g. dewatering.

Fuel, oil and chemical storage needs to comply with the Control of Pollution (Oil Storage) (England) Regulations 2001 where relevant. For further information see here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/storing-oil-at-a-home-or-business>

Spill kits should be located in delivery and storage areas in the event of a spillage or leak.

Only clean uncontaminated surface water should be discharged to any watercourse, soak away (including SUDS) or surface water sewer.

Vehicle washing effluent must be collected and disposed of to an appropriately authorised site. Sewage should be discharged to the foul sewer where possible. If

this is not possible then please refer to this page of our website for other options and requirements: <https://www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks>.

Operational phase

During the operational phase there is a potential risk to groundwater from small leakages of chemicals from the solar panels. Regular inspection and maintenance of these structures is key to reducing the likelihood of this occurring.

Permanent structures containing oil, e.g. transformers, fuel/oil storage tanks, should be provided with the appropriate level of secondary containment (see above link to guidance on oil storage) which is regularly inspected, and any spillages or leaks dealt with as soon as possible. Spill kits should be provided in these areas and staff should be trained on what to do in the event of a spillage/leak.

Historic England - 21 December 2022

Historic England provides advice when our engagement can add most value. In this case we do not wish to offer advice. This should not be interpreted as comment on the merits of the application.

We suggest that you seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisers. You may also find it helpful to refer to our published advice at <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/find/>

It is not necessary to consult us on this application again unless there are material changes to the proposals. However, if you would like advice from us, please contact us to explain your request.

Cambs Wildlife Trust - 4 July 2023

I have reviewed the additional Skylark Management Plan and Habitat Enhancement Figures 1 & 2. I can confirm that the measures proposed including numbers of plots and broad locations are acceptable, as is the proposed monitoring regime. I am therefore happy to sign off these documents as suitable mitigation for the proposed development, along with the other measures set out in other ecological reports.

Cambs Wildlife Trust - 26 May 2023

This professional ecological advice has been provided in accordance with the Service Level Agreement held with East Cambridgeshire District Council.

The additional drawings supplied show a 15-metre grassland buffer to the Heath Road County Wildlife Site which would be acceptable if it comprises native species-rich grassland. The plans show the locations of new hedgerows and their proposed species mixes, though these do not include the additional species I suggested. The plans also show locations for proposed grassland strips for breeding birds such as skylark. However, these are likely to be too narrow to be effective as it has been shown that skylarks prefer large open areas away from hedgerows or structures such as solar panels. This aspect of the proposals remains unacceptable, and it is likely that an off-site mitigation on an adjacent farmland may be a more realistic mitigation & compensation solution for this species.

Many of the detailed comment I made in my previous response of 16/12/2022 will need to be integrated into the proposed Biodiversity Management Plan, should the application be approved.

I hope these comments are of help to you. If you have any queries regarding this advice, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Cambs Wildlife Trust - 16 December 2022

This professional ecological advice has been provided in accordance with the Service Level Agreement held with East Cambridgeshire District Council.

Ecological Impact Assessment

The submitted ecological chapter of the Environmental Statement covers all the relevant issues and has included a comprehensive range of surveys, including some of the most extensive surveys for birds of any solar park proposal locally. The full range of ecological impacts has been described and a range of appropriate avoidance, mitigation and enhancement recommendations included. However, there are a number of changes as well as a number of additional measures which should be incorporated into the scheme, which are set out below in my comments on the biodiversity management plan.

There are also a number of points of clarification that are required from the ecological information submitted.

The ecological chapter and Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) both refer to the enhancement of 2.5 Km of hedgerow and the creation of 1.1 Km, however, I have not been able to find a plan showing where these improvements are located. In addition, the hedgerow biodiversity net gain assessment only describes a 2% gain, which is significantly below what would be expected with this amount of hedgerow creation and enhancement. From looking at the BNG assessment spreadsheet, it appears that the hedgerow enhancement tab has not been completed which may account for the discrepancy. The applicants should clarify this apparent contradiction and provide a plan showing where hedgerows will be retained, enhanced, and created.

The application site is adjacent to the Heath Road / Street Way County Wildlife Site (CWS), selected for its species-rich grassland, which in the past was more calcareous in nature, though now tends towards neutral grassland due to years of sub-optimal or limited management. A 5-metre buffer is proposed along all hedgerows, and therefore I presume also along the CWS. However, the extent of the buffer along the CWS could usefully be widened to help facilitate better management of the CWS and to facilitate natural colonisation of the CWS wild plants into any newly created grasslands. The quality of any wildflower grassland under and between the solar panels is likely to be limited by practical constraints to management, for example hay cutting not being practical between solar panels, and the difficulties of securing grazing management in this mainly arable farmed part of the country. Therefore, the creation of a wider buffer, for example 20 metres of species-rich grassland that could be managed in a more ideal way in conjunction with the CWS would be a significant improvement to the scheme. We also strongly suggest that management of the CWS forms part of the proposals and is included within the BMP.

The ecology chapter and BMP both refer to provision being made for ground nesting birds adversely impacted by the proposed development. However, there isn't a plan showing where this will be located, and the extent of proposed solar panels would not appear to allow for this within the boundary of the application site? Skylarks are unlikely to nest among the panels in significant numbers, so the location should be shown now, particularly if it requires removal of some of the solar panels or an off-site solution.

Biodiversity Management Plan

The Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) includes a number of acceptable proposals, so I have not commented on those and only make observations below where I have comments or concerns.

I welcome the broad approach to wildflower grassland creation, including pre-design soil testing (essential) and use of seeding supplemented with green hay from the adjacent CWS (if possible). This latter approach has the potential to help deliver better management to the CWS which it desperately needs. While the possibility of grazing the new grasslands is described, this may be a challenge to achieve and without it, the quality of the new grassland habitats is likely to be limited. This however is accounted for in the BNG assessment (see below).

The Breeding Bird Protection Plan is also welcome. The proposed hedgerow management to allow hedges to grow to 3 metres high and 2 metres wide and be allowed to flower and fruit is also welcome. I would just like to clarify that this is possible, and that this objective won't be compromised by the location of the hedgerows in relation to the solar panels.

I have a number of comments and proposed changes to the Biodiversity Management Plan, which are set out below:

- Management of the Heath Road / Street Way Green Lanes CWS should form part of the proposals and be included within the BMP.
- A wider buffer (suggested minimum 20 metres) of species-rich grassland should be created adjacent to the CWS.
- A bespoke wildflower species mix should be used for the grassland creation, including a number of locally appropriate chalk species. Although Heath Road CWS has been described as neutral grassland it is at the calcareous end of the neutral spectrum and would with better management tend toward calcareous grassland (as it was in the past).
- The suggestion of grazing management is welcomed but may be challenging to achieve. The proposed alternative cutting approach (one cut in August / September) will not sustain good quality grassland habitat on former nutrient enriched arable soils. Firstly, the cuttings will need to be removed, and secondly, a second cut is likely to be required in early spring, or alternatively much of the grassland mown short during the autumn and early spring growing season.
- The species mix for the proposed hedgerows could be further enhanced with the addition of species typical of the local chalk landscape, planted at a low frequency, including Buckthorn, Dogwood, Wayfaring Tree, and Privet.
- The location of the proposed area for ground nesting birds should be shown now in the outline BMP.

- Why has Rowan been selected for planting in the south-east corner? This is not a typical species of the chalk landscape, so would a more locally appropriate species be better?
- Where are the locations for the proposed bird & bat boxes and are these required if the proposed tall and thick hedgerows are planted? If they are to be included, there should be a plan showing their locations.
- The proposal is for a 20 cm gap at the base of all security fencing. However, will that be compatible with sheep grazing? Would the alternative of mammal gates also suggested be better?
- The monitoring proposals for habitat creation and birds are welcomed. I do however recommend that the monitoring of the habitats is continued throughout the whole life of the development to demonstrate delivery of BNG and wider biodiversity objectives for the full 40 years of the solar park. Additional monitoring should take place at year 20, 30 and 40.

As the submitted BMP is only an outline, significant more detail in a full plan will be required prior to commencement of development.

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

The submitted Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment provides an accurate representation of the baseline conditions of the application site and appropriate predictions for the post-development biodiversity value. The habitat baseline has been assessed as 152 Biodiversity Units (BU), and the post development situation predicted to achieve 252.52 BU, a net gain of 100.52 BU (or 66%). This is based on the change from arable cropland to low value grassland habitats.

The hedgerow baseline has been assessed as 123.4 Hedgerow Biodiversity Units (HBU) and post development situation as 125.4 HBU, a net gain of 2%. This figure does not seem accurate as the enhancement of 2.5 Km and creation of 1.1 Km of new hedgerow would be expected to achieve a significant increase. Addition of the hedgerow enhancement tab into the metric may resolve this apparent anomaly.

Conclusions

The ecological report and Biodiversity Management Plan should both be updated to incorporate these changes. If planning permission is granted, the recommendations in the ecological report (updated with our additional proposals) should be secured through the use of appropriately worded planning conditions. With these changes there are no biodiversity policy reasons to refuse this application.

However, there is a wider sustainability question of whether arable land capable of growing food should be converted to solar parks, rather than solar being developed associated with existing and new buildings? The loss of the cropland potentially has an indirect negative impact on biodiversity elsewhere if habitats are lost to grow food crops elsewhere in the UK or world. Likewise, the loss of cropland to solar parks, reduces the potential for cropland elsewhere to be devoted to nature recovery with the creation of higher quality habitats in the right locations and better than anything that will be achieved under a solar park.

I hope these comments are of help to you. If you have any queries regarding this advice, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Asset Information Definitive Map Team - 22 December 2022

I write in response to the application of the Installation of a Renewable Energy Park comprising ground mounted solar panels; access tracks; inverters, transformers; substation and battery energy storage system; customer cabin; underground cables and conduits; perimeter fence; CCTV equipment; temporary construction compound; and associated infrastructure and planting scheme, at Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park Newmarket Road Bottisham Cambridgeshire.

The site is bordered to the east by Public Byway 7, Bottisham, with one point being used for access. To view the location of the Byway please view our interactive map online which can be found at <http://my.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/myCambridgeshire.aspx>. Below are our comments on the application:

According to your design and access statement: DA.54 The solar farm will have a perimeter fence, which will be stock style fencing with wooden posts. This type of fencing is chosen to be less intrusive and more rural in character than other types of fencing.

- Temporary fencing with shielding netting should be erected alongside all PROW and permissive paths before construction commences and maintained until hedges are high enough to shield users from the visual impact of the development.
- The British Horse Society advice on Solar Farms noise explains that noise from inverters can be intrusive, and could potentially be disturbing to equestrian users of the Bridleway 204/5. It should be noted that a horse's range of hearing is wider than a humans and sounds are audible at lower decibels.
- With regard to the proposed fencing and landscaping and the public rights of way, this will need to be set back from the PRoW in accordance with the County Council's boundary policy which is available to view in the guidance for planners and developers document available here [Public Rights of Way - Guidance for Planners and Developers v4 \(cambridgeshire.gov.uk\)](http://cambridgeshire.gov.uk).

Whilst the Definitive Map Team has no objection to this proposal, the Byway must remain open and unobstructed at all times.

Informatives

Should you be minded to grant planning permission we would be grateful that the following informatives are included:

- Public Byway 7, Bottisham must remain open and unobstructed at all times. Building materials must not be stored on Public Rights of Way and contractors' vehicles must not be parked on it (it is an offence under s 137 of the Highways Act 1980 to obstruct a public Highway).
- The Public Byway must not be used to access the development site unless the applicant is sure they have lawful authority to do so (it is an offence under S34 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 to drive on a Public Byway without lawful authority).

- No alteration to the Byway's surface is permitted without our consent (it is an offence to damage the surface of a public footpath under s 1 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971).
- Landowners are reminded that it is their responsibility to maintain boundaries, including trees, hedges, and fences adjacent to Public Rights of way, and that any transfer of land should account for any such boundaries (s154 Highways Act 1980).
- The granting of planning permission does not entitle a developer to obstruct a Public Right of Way (Circular 1/09 para 7.1).
- Members of the public on foot, horseback and pedal cycle have the dominant right of passage along the public byway; private vehicular users must 'give way' to them.
- The Highways Authority has a duty to maintain Public Rights of Way in such a state as to be suitable for its intended use. (S41 Highways Act 1980 and S66 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981). If the surface of the Byway is damaged as a result of increased motorised vehicle usage, the Highways Authority is only liable to maintain it to a Byway standard. Those with private vehicular rights will therefore be liable for making good the surface of the Public Right of Way.

Furthermore, the applicant may be required to temporarily close public rights of way whilst construction work is ongoing. Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) are processed by the County Council's Street Works Team and further information regarding this can be found on the County Council's website at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/highway-licences-and-permits/>

Cambridge Ramblers Association - 29 November 2022

I am responding on behalf of the Cambridge Group of the Ramblers, a statutory consultee, to Planning Application 22/01291/ESF in Bottisham by Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park.

We have no substantive comments on the proposal to construct a renewable energy park, involving a large number of solar panels on land between the A14 and A11 in Bottisham parish. However, we are concerned about the proposals insofar as they impact on the restricted byway Heath Road, running from grid refs 558596 to 576586, as well as the byway known as Street Way, running from grid refs 562580 to 573587.

We are very pleased to read that the applicants propose to avoid using Heath Road as an access for construction traffic - and, presumably, ongoing maintenance. We request that a condition of any planning permission granted should explicitly state that no construction or maintenance traffic should access the site via Heath Road; the only exception is the crossing point from the farm tracks identified in the planning documents.

We note the Environmental Statement's promises to enhance the hedgerows alongside the north/east side of Heath Road - namely maintenance which will enable the hedgerow to grow by a further 1 metre high over 4 years, with infilling of sections of the route where the hedgerow is currently missing or sparse. We request that ongoing maintenance and improvement to this hedgerow is also included as a planning condition. This should cover the entire 40-year life of the development. We also request that the proposed tree planting alongside Heath Road by the new battery storage area traffic access road is well-maintained

throughout the 40-year life of the development. There is some conflicting information regarding the height of the perimeter fence on the north side of the hedge. We request that this is no higher than 2m and it is at least 3m away from the hedge line. Any new hedging or tree planting which fails should be replaced.

We request that Heath Road is kept open throughout construction, with only temporary closures managed by a banksman when traffic needs to cross the route.

One area of concern, not fully addressed by the applicants, concerns the underground cable connection link between the site and Fulbourn sub-station. The Environmental Statement indicates that the desired route is either along, or close to, the byway Street Way. We are very worried that Street Way will be dug up; experience elsewhere suggests that this historic grassy surface could be trashed and turned into a mud bath. We request that the cable route runs alongside, not along, the byway, preferably in adjoining farmland; the byway surface should not be disturbed. This is a County Wildlife site, and it should be conserved. Please ensure that the Ramblers are consulted on the proposed 'consenting process' for this power connection.

Environmental Health - 8 December 2022

I have read the NIA dated the 10th October 2022 (but issued on the 11th).

The report indicates that operational noise will be below existing ambient noise levels. I would recommend the following condition to ensure this is enforceable -

"The specific rated noise level emitted from the site shall not exceed the existing background noise level. The free field sound level shall be measured and/or calculated at the boundary of the nearest noise sensitive property. The noise level shall be measured and/or calculated in accordance with BS 4142:2014+A1:2019.

Section 5 mentions that -

"During construction deliveries will be restricted, wherever possible, to off peak weekdays to reduce impacts on local road users. Off-peak is considered to be between 09:00 and 15:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00 12:00 Saturday mornings.' No Deliveries will take place on Sundays or Bank Holidays."

This is more restrictive than what we would usually request but if you are in agreement I would have no objections to this.

Section 7 states that -

"It is understood that there will be approximately 2520 deliveries expected across a 9-month period working Monday-Friday and Saturday 07:30 - 13:00 whilst the site is being constructed. There will be up to 364 deliveries per month. With there being 21 working days in a month this averages out as 17 deliveries per day."

Some clarification would be appreciated as this seems to suggest that deliveries could take place between the hours above but with an effort to restrict those to those off-peak hours previously mentioned.

I would advise that construction times (and deliveries if the previously mentioned hours cannot be agreed) during the construction phase are restricted to the following:

07:30 - 18:00 each day Monday - Friday
07:30 - 13:00 on Saturdays and
None on Sundays or Bank Holidays

I would also advise that prior to any work commencing on site a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) regarding mitigation measures for the control of pollution (including, but not limited to noise, dust and lighting etc) during the construction phase. The CEMP shall be adhered to at all times during the construction phase, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

The NIA advises that if piling is required then a PMS and CEMP specifically for the activity will be produced. I would ask that this is conditioned.

I have read the Glint and Glare Assessment dated the 10th November 2022 which finds that -

"Glare is theoretically possible at 10 of the 15 residential receptors assessed within the 1km study area. The initial bald-earth scenario identified potential impacts as High at 10 receptors and None at the remaining five receptors. Upon reviewing the actual visibility of the receptor, glint and glare impacts reduce Low at two receptors and to None at all remaining receptors."

I have no concerns to raise concerning this element.

I would recommend a condition which prevents any external lighting from being installed without approval from the LPA in order to protect the amenity of neighbouring properties.

No other comments to make at this time but please send out the environmental notes.

Cambridgeshire Archaeology - 25 November 2022

Our records indicate that the site lies in an area of high archaeological potential, in the vicinity of Hare Park Barrow Cemetery (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record reference. 06757). Hare Park and Allington Hill where a series of Bronze Age tumuli or barrows, both designated as Scheduled Monuments and non-designated, occur to both sides of the current A11. These include scheduled bowl barrows to the north-east of the development (CHER ref. 1016819), a further group of five bowl barrows to the northeast (CHER ref. 1016818) and four scheduled bowl barrows to the south-east (CHER ref. 06751). Further barrows have been located from cropmarks across the Hare Park Barrow Cemetery area to the south (CHER ref. 06744 and 06745) east (CHER ref. 06755 and 06302) and north-east (CHER ref. 06737). The activity in this area appears to be clustered around the north-east to southwest course of 'The Street Way' (CHER ref. MCB31325) a communication route of prehistoric origin discussed by Cyril Fox in his 1923 publication The Archaeology of the Cambridge Region. Further scheduled remains include the Roman settlement of Allington Hill (CHER ref. 1006901), which lies to the east of the development.

Geophysical survey and the creation of a Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment (HEDBA) has been undertaken, which revealed linear anomalies a possible trackway and a sub-rectangular enclosure, the latter of which now falls outside the proposed development area.

Due to the archaeological potential of the site a further programme of investigation and recording is required in order to provide more information regarding the presence or absence, and condition, of surviving archaeological remains within the development area, and to establish the need for archaeological mitigation of the development as necessary. Usage of the following condition is recommended:

Archaeology Condition

No demolition/development shall commence until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has implemented a programme of archaeological work, commencing with the evaluation of the application area, that has been secured in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) that has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. For land that is included within the WSI, no demolition/development shall take place other than under the provisions of the agreed WSI, which shall include:

- a) The statement of significance and research objectives.
- b) The programme and methodology of investigation and recording and the nomination of a competent person(s) or organisation to undertake the agreed works.
- c) The timetable for the field investigation as part of the development programme.
- d) The programme and timetable for the analysis, publication & dissemination, and deposition of resulting material and digital archives.

REASON: To safeguard archaeological assets within the approved development boundary from impacts relating to any demolitions or groundworks associated with the development scheme and to ensure the proper and timely preservation and/or investigation, recording, reporting, archiving and presentation of archaeological assets affected by this development, in accordance with national policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2021).

Informatives:

Partial discharge of the condition can be applied for once the fieldwork at Part c) has been completed to enable the commencement of development.

Part d) of the condition shall not be discharged until all elements have been fulfilled in accordance with the programme set out in the WSI.

Lead Local Flood Authority - 3 July 2023

Having reviewed the revised documentation we can confirm that the LLFA has no further comments beyond those set down in our response of 16 May 2023 (ref: 201109128). Our position therefore remains supportive of the development, subject to imposition of the previously suggested condition.

Informatives

Infiltration

Infiltration rates should be worked out in accordance with BRE 365. If infiltration methods are likely to be ineffective then discharge into a watercourse/surface water

sewer may be appropriate; however, soakage testing will be required at a later stage to clarify this.

OW Consent

Constructions or alterations within an ordinary watercourse (temporary or permanent) require consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority under the Land Drainage Act 1991. Ordinary watercourses include every river, drain, stream, ditch, dyke, sewer (other than public sewer) and passage through which water flows that do not form part of Main Rivers (Main Rivers are regulated by the Environment Agency). The applicant should refer to Cambridgeshire County Council's Culvert Policy for further guidance:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/water-minerals-and-waste/watercourse-management/>

Please note the council does not regulate ordinary watercourses in Internal Drainage Board areas.

Pollution Control

Surface water and groundwater bodies are highly vulnerable to pollution and the impact of construction activities. It is essential that the risk of pollution (particularly during the construction phase) is considered and mitigated appropriately. It is important to remember that flow within the watercourse is likely to vary by season and it could be dry at certain times throughout the year. Dry watercourses should not be overlooked as these watercourses may flow or even flood following heavy rainfall.

Lead Local Flood Authority - 22 December 2022

At present we object to the grant of planning permission for the following reasons:

1. Insufficient surface water strategy

Whilst it is broadly accepted that solar farms do not respond in the same way as impermeable surfaces, they can lead to localised channelling of rainfall, particularly on sloping sites. This has the potential to increase flood risk downstream and therefore an adequate assessment of surface water runoff as a result of the development needs to be carried out.

Options such as the inclusion of a French drain at the base of each row to intercept flows, inclusion of a swale(s) at the lowest parts of the site and designing panels with horizontal slots across the surface area should be considered as measures to manage surface water.

In addition to the above, for a full application the following should be included within the surface water strategy:

- I. Existing impermeable area
- II. Proposed impermeable area / developable area
- III. A description of site topography
- IV. Identification of watercourses within the vicinity of the site and their outfalls and associated flood risk
- V. A description of ground conditions (using site investigation where possible)
- VI. Identification of any surface water flood risk
- VII. Existing site drainage arrangements
- VIII. Proposed method of surface water disposal
- IX. Existing and proposed runoff rates (if discharging off-site)
- X. Existing and proposed runoff volumes (if discharging off-site)
- XI. Required volume of attenuation (m³ per m² of impermeable area)
- XII. Preliminary SuDS proposals

XIII. Infiltration test results in accordance with BRE365 (or second viable option for surface water disposal if testing hasn't yet been undertaken)

XIV. Drainage layout drawing and supporting hydraulic calculations

2. Gravel surfacing

Any proposed gravel surfacing should be modelled as impermeable surfacing. Replacing the existing topsoil with gravel will not entirely replicate the greenfield situation. Gravel behaves differently to grassland and can be subject to compaction over time, reducing the ability for water to drain through its voids. The gravel area should therefore be included as part of the total impermeable area.

Informatives

Infiltration

Infiltration rates should be worked out in accordance with BRE 365/CIRIA 156. If infiltration methods are likely to be ineffective then discharge into a watercourse/surface water sewer may be appropriate; however, soakage testing will be required at a later stage to clarify this.

Ordinary Watercourse Consent

Constructions or alterations within an ordinary watercourse (temporary or permanent) require consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority under the Land Drainage Act 1991. Ordinary watercourses include every river, drain, stream, ditch, dyke, sewer (other than public sewer) and passage through which water flows that do not form part of Main Rivers (Main Rivers are regulated by the Environment Agency). The applicant should refer to Cambridgeshire County Council's Culvert Policy for further guidance:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/water-minerals-and-waste/watercourse-management/>

Please note the council does not regulate ordinary watercourses in Internal Drainage Board areas.

Pollution Control

Surface water and groundwater bodies are highly vulnerable to pollution and the impact of construction activities. It is essential that the risk of pollution (particularly during the construction phase) is considered and mitigated appropriately. It is important to remember that flow within the watercourse is likely to vary by season and it could be dry at certain times throughout the year. Dry watercourses should not be overlooked as these watercourses may flow or even flood following heavy rainfall.

Assistance For Developers o Cambridgeshire County Council has a surface water guidance document which is available to view here. This document provides checklists and templates to help ensure you include sufficient information within your drainage strategies. Following this guidance will help reduce the risk of an objection which can hold up a planning application. o We also offer a pre-application service which enables you to discuss your drainage proposals with the LLFA Officers prior to submission of a formal application.

Natural England - 13 December 2022

NO OBJECTION

Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes. Natural England's generic advice on other natural environment issues is set out at Annex A

Planning Casework Unit - 10 January 2023

I confirm that we have no comments to make on the environmental statement.

Cadent Gas Ltd - 4 August 2023

We have no objection in principle to your proposal from a planning perspective. We have a 219 MM ST HP pipeline in the vicinity of the works area which will need to be protected at all times this has an easement in place with BPD distances which must not be encroached upon crossed over or anything built or placed/stored on or over the pipeline in or on top of the main or easement.

No mechanical excavation within 3m of the pipeline without plant protection present.

Cadent Gas will need to be further contacted before works start to ensure safety practices and protection methods in relation to our high -pressure assets are in place before works start and throughout the life of the project if required.

Any damage or any action that puts the pipeline at risk will be reportable to the HSE. Please refer to MAHP and the BPD noted below.

What you need to do

Please review our attached plans, which detail the Cadent gas asset/s in the area. If your application affects one of our high- pressure pipelines, it is a statutory requirement that you input the details into the HSE's Planning Advice Web App. For further details, visit www.hse.gov.uk/landuseplanning/planning-advice-web-app.htm. The HSE may wish to apply more stringent criteria for building proximity after assessment. Please ensure that you formally consult with them before you proceed.

In order to help prevent damage to our asset/s, please add the following Informative Note into the Decision Notice:

Cadent Gas Ltd own and operate the gas infrastructure within the area of your development. Prior to carrying out works, please register on www.linesearchbeforeudig.co.uk to submit details of the planned works for review, ensuring requirements are adhered to.

The original holding objection was triggered due to the presence of a High Pressure Major Accident Hazard Pipeline (MAHP) and/or an Intermediate Pressure Pipeline and/or an Above Ground Installation.

The minimum building proximity distance (BPD) for the pipelines and associated installations is as follows:

- Specific MAHP BPD (15 METERS MIN)
- Specific IP BPD (3 METERS MIN)
- Specific AGI BPD (based upon the hazardous area zoning)10 METERS MIN

The building proximity distance taken from The Institution of Gas Engineers and Managers publication IGEM/TD/1 Edition 5 which is the standard applicable to steel pipelines and associated installations for high pressure gas transmission and IGEM/TD/3 Edition 5 Steel and PE pipelines for gas distribution.

Cadent Gas Ltd - 3 August 2023

Your planning application - Holding objection

We have received a notification from the LinesearchbeforeUdig (LSBUD) platform regarding a planning application which is in the vicinity of our gas asset/s. We are placing a holding objection on the proposal whilst our engineering team reviews the available information. We will be in touch once we have reviewed the proposals in

more detail. In the meantime, we may contact you for more information to help us make the decision.

What you need to do

Please review our attached plans, which detail the Cadent gas asset/s in the area. If your application affects one of our high-pressure pipelines, it is a statutory requirement that you input the details into the HSE's Planning Advice Web App. For further details visit www.hse.gov.uk/landuseplanning/planning-advice-web-app.htm

Your responsibilities and obligations

Cadent may have a Deed of Easement on the pipeline, which provides us with a right of access for a number of functions and prevents change to existing ground levels and storage of materials. It also prevents the erection of permanent/temporary buildings, or structures. If necessary Cadent will take action to legally enforce the terms of the easement.

This letter does not constitute any formal agreement or consent for any proposed development work either generally or related to Cadent's easements or other rights, or any planning or building regulations applications.

Cadent Gas Ltd - 24 November 2022

see EDRMS

HSE (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects) - 4 August 2023

HSE is a statutory consultee for certain developments within the consultation distance (CD) of major hazard sites and major accident hazard pipelines, and has provided planning authorities with access to HSE's Planning Advice WebApp <https://pa.hsl.gov.uk>

- I should therefore be grateful if you would arrange for HSE's Planning Advice WebApp to be used to consult HSE for advice on this application, which lies within the CD of Pipeline 1710.

Should you or your colleagues need any additional help in using the new WebApp to obtain HSE's advice on a proposed development, a central support service is available at lupenquiries@hse.gov.uk or by telephoning on 0203 028 3708.

NB On 1 August 2021 HSE became a statutory consultee with regard to building safety (in particular to fire safety aspects) for planning applications that involve a relevant building.

A relevant building is defined in the planning guidance at gov.uk as:

- containing two or more dwellings or educational accommodation and
- meeting the height condition of 18m or more in height, or 7 or more storeys

National Grid - Electricity - 4 August 2023

After receiving the details of your planning application, we have completed our assessment. We have no objection in principle to your proposal from a planning perspective.

We have a 219 MM ST HP pipeline in the vicinity of the works area which will need to be protected at all times this has an easement in place with BPD distances which must not be encroached upon crossed over or anything built or placed/stored on or over the pipeline in or on top of the main or easement.

No mechanical excavation within 3m of the pipeline without plant protection present.

Cadent Gas will need to be further contacted before works start to ensure safety practices and protection methods in relation to our high -pressure assets are in place before works start and throughout the life of the project if required.

Any damage or any action that puts the pipeline at risk will be reportable to the HSE.

Please refer to MAHP and the BPD noted below.

What you need to do

Please review our attached plans, which detail the Cadent gas asset/s in the area. If your application affects one of our high- pressure pipelines, it is a statutory requirement that you input the details into the HSE's Planning Advice Web App. For further details, visit www.hse.gov.uk/landuseplanning/planning-advice-web-app.htm. The HSE may wish to apply more stringent criteria for building proximity after assessment. Please ensure that you formally consult with them before you proceed. In order to help prevent damage to our asset/s, please add the following Informative Note into the Decision Notice:

Cadent Gas Ltd own and operate the gas infrastructure within the area of your development. Prior to carrying out works, please register on www.linesearchbeforeudig.co.uk to submit details of the planned works for review, ensuring requirements are adhered to.

The original holding objection was triggered due to the presence of a High Pressure Major Accident Hazard Pipeline (MAHP) and/or an Intermediate Pressure Pipeline and/or an Above Ground Installation.

The minimum building proximity distance (BPD) for the pipelines and associated installations is as follows:

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- Specific AGI BPD (based upon the hazardous area zoning)10 METERS MIN

The building proximity distance taken from The Institution of Gas Engineers and Managers publication IGEM/TD/1 Edition 5 which is the standard applicable to steel pipelines and associated installations for high pressure gas transmission and IGEM/TD/3 Edition 5 Steel and PE pipelines for gas distribution.

Your responsibilities and obligations

This letter does not constitute any formal agreement or consent for any proposed development work either generally or related to Cadent easements or other rights, or any planning or building regulations applications.

Cadent Gas Ltd or their agents, servants or contractors do not accept any liability for any losses arising under or in connection with this information. This limit on liability applies to all and any claims in contract, tort (including negligence), misrepresentation (excluding fraudulent misrepresentation), breach of statutory duty or otherwise. This limit on liability does not exclude or restrict liability were prohibited by the law nor does it supersede the express terms of any related agreements.

If you need any further information or have any questions about the outcome, please contact us at [\[box.eaplantprotectionops@cadentgas.com\]](mailto:[box.eaplantprotectionops@cadentgas.com]) / quoting your reference at the top of this letter.

Fire and Rescue Service – 29th September 2023

1. Water Supplies and Firefighting – Dependent on the system design and size there should be consideration for adequate water provision to the site with sufficient water run off containment to protect the environment. The requirements of these will be dependent on the system design. Previous fires in BESS sites globally have utilised extensive quantities of water and this should be a consideration. Although there are dry extinguishing agents present on the market our preference is for a deluge water system.

2. Access to and around the site for emergency vehicles – Access should be provided in accordance to Approved Document B5 Vehicle Access. Each service has a difference in fleet provision so early communication about the site layout is paramount to allow us to determine access that is suitable for fire engines in the area.

3. Operational emergency preparedness – There should be suitable and sufficient plans that identify actions to be taken if an emergency event takes place. This should incorporate both on-site and off-site emergency actions. This information should also be available to emergency responders. Our risk team can support with our requirements for information.

4. Environmental impact following an emergency event – We request that early communication with Environment Agency is carried out to understand ground water risk. This should take into account the application of significant water in the event of an incident. The exact calculations should be supported by understanding the design of the BESS system. Provision should be in place to allow firefighting actions to take place without posing any risk to the environment.

5. Design, testing, construction and decommission of the site – We request that the details of the BESS system are provided with evidence of detailed testing of safety systems implemented. Any emergency plans and information should include the construction, operation, and decommissioning of the site.

Consultations sent but no comments received

County Highways Transport Team

South Cambs District Council

The Ely Group of Internal Drainage Board

Economic Development

Minerals And Waste Development Control Team

5.2 A site notice was displayed near the site on 16 December 2022 and a press advert was published in the Cambridge Evening News on 1st December 2022.

5.3 Neighbours – 19 neighbouring properties were notified, and the 8 responses received are summarised below. A full copy of the responses is available on the Council's website.

- 2 responses fully support the application
- 2 responses fully support as there are community projects going to benefit from the proposal
- 5 responses raise the following concerns:
 - The road is used by cyclists and many other large vehicles

- Will the road be repaired as the surface is poor?
- How will cyclists be protected at the site entrance?
- No access from the A11 or A1103
- No cabling should be allowed through Great Wilbraham
- Traffic should be restricted in residential areas
- Loss of hedgerows
- How is the grazing/CWS mitigation going to be secured?
- Characteristics of the Green Belt will be harmed
- 40 years is not a temporary permission
- Increase in traffic
- Increase in crime
- Lack of details for the temporary facilities

6.0 THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023)

GROWTH 2	Locational strategy
GROWTH 5	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
ENV 1	Landscape and settlement character
ENV 2	Design
ENV 4	Energy and water efficiency and renewable energy in construction
ENV 6	Renewable energy development
ENV 7	Biodiversity and geology
ENV 9	Pollution
ENV 10	Green Belt
ENV 12	Listed Buildings
COM 7	Transport impact
COM 8	Parking provision

6.1 Supplementary Planning Documents

Developer Contributions and Planning Obligations
 Design Guide
 Contaminated Land - Guidance on submitted Planning Application on land that may be contaminated
 Flood and Water
 Natural Environment SPD
 Climate Change SPD

6.2 National Planning Policy Framework 2021

- 2 Achieving sustainable development
- 11 Making effective use of land
- 12 Achieving well-designed places
- 13 Protecting Green Belt land
- 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 16 Conserving & enhancing the historic environment

6.3 Planning Practice Guidance

6.4 Greater Cambridge Green Belt 2021

7.0 PLANNING COMMENTS

7.1 Environmental Statement

- 7.1.1 The site would use arable farmland, 15% would be grade 3a land with the remaining 85% grade 3b. The grading of agricultural land is 1 -5, with 1 being the most excellent. Grade 3 is divided into 'a' and 'b'. 'A' being good quality with 'b' being moderate quality land. The proposal would not lead to the most excellent and fertile of farmland being lost.
- 7.1.2 The site would enhance the existing planting on the site, with improving existing hedgerows and planting new sections of hedgerow. With regard to ecology, a skylark management plan has been considered acceptable with further ecological enhancements including a ground nesting bird grassland area; buffer zone of approximately 15 metres (49ft) of species rich grassland and bird and bat boxes. This will equate to a 66% increase in habitat units and 2% growth in hedgerow units.
- 7.1.3 The site is within flood zone 1, which is considered to have the lowest probability of flooding, however due to its size is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). There are no heritage assets within close proximity to the site, although the application is supported by a Heritage Assessment. The site is not in close proximity to a SSSI, AONB, Ramsar sites, Conservation Areas, Special Protection Area (SPA) or Nature Reserves.
- 7.1.4 The Environmental Statement concludes that the overall development would not have any significant or cumulative effects.

7.2 Principle of Development

- 7.2.1 The site is wholly contained within the Cambridge Green Belt. Chapter 13 of the NPPF identifies the aims of the Green Belt as a whole and this is supported by the Greater Cambridgeshire Green Belt 2021.
- 7.2.2 Paragraphs 147 – 151 of the NPPF discuss what proposals are considered appropriate development in the Green Belt, and paragraph 151 states “When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise of inappropriate *development*. *In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. **Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.***” On this basis, the provision of a renewable energy project is considered to be inappropriate development. However, if it can be demonstrated there are very special circumstances, and environmental benefits the project can be considered acceptable and amount to very special circumstances to outweigh the presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 7.2.3 Paragraph 158 of the NPPF, Chapter 14 ‘Managing the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change’ states that renewable energy should be approved if its

impacts can be made acceptable. There are caveats which relate to wind turbines, however on the whole projects should be approved where they can. In paragraph 154, it states *'when new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure risks can be managed'*.

7.2.4 As an overview, renewable energy projects such as solar farms are inappropriate development unless there are very special circumstances, using chapter 13 of the NPPF. In Chapter 14 of the NPPF, it seeks approval of renewable energy projects subject to the impacts being considered acceptable. On this basis it is necessary to assess the impacts of the development on the Green Belt, which will be discussed below.

7.2.5 There are 5 purposes of the Green Belt (para 138 of the NPPF)

- To check unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging together
- To assist in the safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and urban land.

7.2.6 The 'Greater Cambridge Green Belt 2021' outlines 3 aims of the Cambridge Green Belt.

- Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact and dynamic city with a thriving historic centre
- Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting
- Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge merging into another and with the city

To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas & to prevent neighbouring towns merging together

7.2.7 The site is located between the A1303, A1304, A14 and A11. The nearest settlements from the proposal are identified below. Using that the site is at an intersection of 4 'A' roads and in an isolated location, it cannot be considered to be allowing 'unrestricted urban sprawl'. The proposal will not link any of the nearest settlements, and therefore on this basis would not compromise these aims of the Green Belt.

Settlement	Distance from site kilometres	Distance from site in Miles
Bottisham	2.5	1.5
Six Mile Bottom	2.7	1.6
Great Wilbraham	3	1.8
Swaffham Bulbeck	3	1.8
Fulbourn	6	3.7
Newmarket	7	4.3
Cambridge	8	5

To assist in the safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

7.2.8 The site is currently used as part of an arable farm operation. It is surrounded by open fields, with limited development. However, its character is limited by its location at an intersection of the A11 and A14, which has an urbanising feel. Whilst this will be located in the countryside, it sits on land which is predominantly hidden by the banks of the A11 and A14. The site sits discreetly as the land slopes away, so visually there would be limited visual encroachment into the countryside.

To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

7.2.9 The site is approximately 8km (5 miles) from the proposal. When standing at the edge of the site there are limited views into the historic core of Cambridge, these views are mainly obscured by the airport and Industrial development to the edge of Cambridge. It is considered that the distance between the proposal and the historic centre is such it would have limited or no impact upon this heritage asset. In the Cambridge Green Belt 2021, whilst it does not assess the Green Belt within East Cambridgeshire, in figure 4.1 (p113) states that the land immediately adjacent to the proposed site, has limited contribution to the overall purposes of the Green Belt in relation to purpose 1. (Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact and dynamic city with a thriving historic centre) With regard to the quality of setting, (Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting) the land adjacent to the proposed site was considered to have a moderate impact, followed by a moderate impact on the environs. (Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge merging into another and with the city) It is considered on balance that the impact on the setting of the historic city of Cambridge would be limited.

To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and urban land.

7.2.10 Solar farms are by their nature need to be locations where there is significant solar gain and are often this is found in large open expanses of open land. Urban areas very rarely have large expanses of open land available for development. There are many factors which contribute to why urban areas are not suitable for solar farms; price of land; contamination issues and lack of availability. On this basis they are often located in rural locations in order to maximise the capture of the sun's rays. This proposal would not prevent the recycling of urban or derelict land for other land uses.

Recent Decisions

7.2.11 Evidence has been provided by the applicant and through the case officer, to establish whether 'solar farms' are being considered contrary to Green Belt policy and what has been happening nationally. This section looks at recent decisions regarding solar farms around the country that are located within the Green Belt. A copy of these decisions is available on the Council's website. Due to the number of decisions and the length of decision, it was seen as unsustainable to attach as appendices.

7.2.12 In Appeal APP/W1525/W/22/3300222, in Chelmsford, the Inspector concluded that the use of the land for solar panels for 40 years is a long time, however it is temporary, it will be reinstated so it would lead to moderate harm to the Green Belt. The Inspector also agreed that solar panels on previously developed land (PDL) is not the most secure or efficient use of land. Whilst there was harm to the Green Belt, the benefits were considered to outweigh this harm by meeting climate change; delivery of

renewable energy projects; facilitate the country's transition to a low carbon future and on this basis meet very special circumstances.

- 7.2.13 At North Warwickshire Borough Council gave planning permission on two sites in the Green Belt for a solar farm and battery storage. (applications PAP/2021/0605 and PAP/2021/0651) In their report that the impact of the solar farm would have moderate harm and that the life of the solar farm is limited to 40 years.
- 7.2.14 Telford and Wrekin are seeking to challenge an appeal decision, whereby the Minister allowed the development of a solar farm in the Green Belt and AONB. The Council had commented that *"This would result in significant harm to the character of the area and thus impact on the enjoyment of the area by receptors using the local public rights of way,"*. The Minister concluded that the solar farm would not harm the setting of the landscape, and overturned the original Inspectors decision and that of the Local Planning Authority.
- 7.2.15 At South Gloucestershire Council, the conclusion of the planning officer was that very special circumstances applied as there was a need to secure renewable energy; the council had declared a climate emergency; biodiversity net gain; improvements to local green infrastructure and would allow for farm diversification. (application P20/13909/F)
- 7.2.16 At Central Bedfordshire, planning permission was granted for a solar farm on the basis the benefits outweighed the harm to the Green Belt. The proposal would provide power for 9,000 homes; meet Government guidance on climate change; not lead to a loss of most fertile agricultural land and increase renewable energy production. (application CB/20/03856/FULL)
- 7.2.17 At Kirklees Council planning permission was granted on the basis that the benefits of the proposal outweighed the harm to the Green Belt. (application 2021/93644)
- 7.2.18 In close proximity to the site is a solar and wind farm albeit outside of the boundary for East Cambridgeshire, and within the adjacent Local Planning Authority, South Cambridgeshire District Council. The distance between the proposed solar farm and the existing wind and solar farms is approximately 2.7 km (1.7 miles). The wind farm site is within the Green Belt and part of the Cambridge Green Belt. In the determination of the application. it was stated that *"For the reasons given at IR12.57, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that there is no substance to objections relating to the location of the appeal proposals just beyond the edge of the Cambridge Green Belt."*
- 7.2.19 With regard to the solar farm the Local Planning Authority considered that *"The installation of a solar farm is considered to represent appropriate development within the countryside providing given that there are no suitable brownfield sites available in the area of the scale required and the proposal would allow the land to continue to be used for agricultural purposes through grazing."*

Summary of the impact on the Green Belt

- 7.2.20 The harm identified is that solar farms are considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, however there are locational factors which suggest the harm would be minimal, it being located between 2 'A' roads; the land sloping away and being on

the very edge of the Green Belt. However, are there very special circumstances which could support the siting of the solar farm in this location.

- 7.2.21 In 2019 East Cambridgeshire District Council declared a Climate Emergency and published the Climate Change SPD and A Strategy and Action Plan to Boost the Environment and Help Mitigate Climate Change. This declaration is a 'very special circumstance' as the Council acknowledges more needs to be done to secure energy for the future through the use of renewable energy. There is an identifiable need for renewable energy projects across the country, and they need to be in locations which are in areas whereby they are not overshadowed by buildings which would limit the effectiveness of the panels. This is why, solar farms are located in rural areas as they have uninterrupted sun. On this basis the Council, has identified that they need to deliver more projects which reduce carbon emissions, and this proposal would lead to a reduction in carbon of 9430 tonnes per annum. This is a very special circumstance which weighs heavily in favour of the project and meets the requirements of paragraph 151 of the NPPF, whereby if very special circumstances apply, planning permission maybe granted planning permission.
- 7.2.22 It is noted that South Gloucestershire; Central Bedfordshire; Kirklees and South Cambridgeshire Councils concluded that the need for the solar farm in order to meet climate change outweighed the minimal harm to the Green Belt. This is also supported in chapter 14 of the NPPF, whereby even in vulnerable areas the risks can be weighed in favour of the proposal. (paragraph 154 of the NPPF))
- 7.2.23 The site itself has a relationship with energy production, with the pylons and power lines which wind through the site, with a connection to the Fulbourn Substation having been already secured. The nature of the site, which is already enclosed by natural features and set lower than surrounding land assists in not conflicting with the aims of the Green Belt. On this basis the vulnerable location, can be considered acceptable as the risks can be weighed in favour of the proposal, (paragraph 154 of the NPPF)
- 7.2.24 The proposal would provide energy for 10,730 homes in Cambridgeshire, a county that has a growing in population and would offset 9430 tonnes of carbon dioxide (annually). The site would also see a 66% increase in habitats, adding to the biodiversity of the area. This is a significant improvement to the local environs and as such would meet the tests of paragraph 158 of the NPPF, as its impacts can be made acceptable. The proposal would also seek to reduce greenhouse gases in accordance with paragraph 154 of the NPPF. Further to this paragraph 174 of the NPPF seeks developments to provide a net gain in biodiversity, of which this scheme will deliver a 66% net gain in biodiversity.
- 7.2.25 The land used for the solar panels is not the most fertile or versatile agricultural land and the process is reversible, albeit over 40 years and possibly not in some of our lifetime, it is essentially temporary. This view was supported in the Inspectors decision for the Appeal APP/W1525/W/22/3300222 and shared in Central Bedfordshire. Whereby it was temporary and did not lead to the loss of most fertile land. This is a consideration in paragraph 183 of the NPPF.
- 7.2.26 On this basis, whilst the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, there are very special circumstances which apply to the proposal and as such consider that

whilst there will be some harm to the Green Belt this is outweighed by the very special circumstances discussed and outlined below:

- 66% net gain in biodiversity
- Reduction of in excess of 9 tonnes of carbon annually
- Provide secure power for 10,730 homes for the next 40 years
- Does not lead to a loss of most fertile agricultural land
- It is a reversible project, in 40 years
- The Council has declared a climate emergency

7.2.27 Members are advised that if they resolve to approve this application, the Council are required to give the Secretary of State the opportunity to call in the application as it is a major application for inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

7.3 Residential Amenity

7.3.1 The site is in an area isolated from residential dwellings, although there are 3 dwellings in close proximity. Bottisham Heath Stud Cottages are approximately 0.5km (0.3 miles) from the edge of the solar farm with the A11 between the 2 sites. Breckland Cottage is adjacent to the road access the solar farm, however the solar panels are 1.1 km (0.6 miles). Spring Hall is approximately 0.1km (0.1miles) from the site, however separated by the A14.

7.3.2 Whilst the dwellings are relatively close to the development, in regard to Spring Hall and Bottisham Stud Cottages they are separated by the A11 and A14. It is considered that these are unlikely to be affected by the proposal due to the separation by the 'A' Roads.

7.3.3 Breckland Cottage is furthest from the solar panels and on this basis, it is considered the impact of the physical structures would not cause harm to the neighbours' amenities. However, the access road to the solar farm adjoins their residential boundary and therefore consideration is given to the noise and disturbance from the use of the access road. In consultation with the Local Highway Authority, they are mindful of this, and it is suggested that a condition is appended to any planning consent requiring the submission of a Construction Traffic management Plan, to ensure that during construction the impacts can be managed to ensure amenities and highway safety is maintained.

7.3.4 It is considered that the amenities of the nearby neighbours can be managed by way of condition. The proposals will not be overbearing, lead to a loss of light or privacy in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan 2015.

7.4 Visual Amenity

7.4.1 The site is situated between the A11 and A14, on land which gently slopes away and not on elevated land. It is not to say, that the solar farm will not be visible from aspects of the A11 and A14, however these will be the only long and intermittent views. The site is bounded by a Public Right of Way, however there is significant hedging to this boundary which will be enhanced through the delivery of the scheme. The contour of

the land, as it slopes away will limit views from the Public Right of Way of the solar panels. In consultation with the County's Public Right of Way team, did not raise any objections to the proposal. The team welcomed the use of stock fencing and the infilling and planting of new hedgerow, although do require that whilst the hedge is being established, netting is erected to reduce the views of solar panels, which would seem reasonable.

- 7.4.2 With regard to views from adjoining settlements, there will be limited views from the nearby settlements of Bottisham; Six Mile Bottom; Little and Great Wilbraham. The views from the village of Bottisham, are going to be limited as the land is undulating and is interrupted by the A14 which acts a buffer between the settlement and the proposal.
- 7.4.3 Six Mile Bottom sits southeast of the proposal, there will be no or very limited views from the village itself. However, it is accepted there will be views as you approach from the A1304, whereby the road is elevated and then falls away as you enter the village. From the elevated part of the A1304, there will be some limited views although this is predominantly screened by Hare Park and existing established planting.
- 7.4.4 Great Wilbraham sits directly south of the site which from the centre of the village will have no views of the site. There will be limited views from Wilbraham Road, although due to the undulating nature of the land, these views will be minimised.
- 7.4.5 Little Wilbraham sits south west of the site and there will be no views of the proposal from the village centre. Again, limited views from Wilbraham Road of the proposal.
- 7.4.6 In summary, due to the undulating nature of the site it is considered that the views of the proposal are going to be limited. It is accepted there will be some views, however these are going to be intermittent and in the distance. It is considered that the proposal can be landscaped to mitigate views, and these will last over the lifetime of the project and once it has been decommissioned.
- 7.4.7 In 40 years, it is expected that the solar panels and associated equipment will be removed. A condition can be applied and has been applied to other renewable energy applications for details of how this will take place and how the land will be reinstated. Whilst this information will not be available to determine the application, the land will be required to be reinstated, including additional biodiversity features. On this basis the proposal is considered to comply with policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan 2015.

7.5 Historic Environment

- 7.5.1 Spring Hall is a Grade II Listed building; however, this is dissected from the site by the A14. It is considered there is a neutral impact on the setting of this heritage asset in accordance with Policy ENV12 and the NPPF.
- 7.5.2 In consultation with the Historic Environment Team, it was acknowledged that there were some archaeological potential of the site. It was noted the potential for bronze age burial grounds; prehistoric communication route and remains of the Roman settlement of Allington Hill. On this basis a pre commencement condition for archaeological programme of investigation is required in the event of planning permission being granted.

7.5.3 It is considered that the overall impact on the heritage assets would be neutral and as such does not need to be weighed against the public benefit of the scheme. On this basis the proposal is considered to comply with policies ENV12, ENV14 of the East Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan 2015 and the NPPF.

7.6 Highways

7.6.1 The application has been assessed by the Local Highway Authority and National Highways, and both have raised no objections to the scheme, although conditions have been suggested. The Local Highway Authority have considered that the proposal will not have a significant impact on the locally based roads. Some works are required to the access however this can be achieved through condition. A condition is also required for a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) this would include the agreed traffic route; timings for deliveries; compound layout and haul road details.

7.6.2 Concerns have been raised from local residents over the use of residential roads, and this can be dealt with through the CTMP to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority and Local Highway Authority by way of condition. Whilst initially there will be some disturbance during construction, this will be for a temporary period over 9 months, it is anticipated that there will be an increase of vehicles by 15%, which is not considered to be significant to warrant a refusal of development proposed.

7.6.3 National Highways have assessed the application and in particular the Glint and Glare Assessment which they found subject to the mitigation measures proposed would be acceptable. The mitigation requires the provision of additional native hedgerows or the infilling of existing hedgerows to a height of 2.5 metres (8 feet) along the northeast and northwest boundaries.

7.6.4 Once the solar farm is operational, there will be a monthly visit undertaken by the energy company for maintenance purposes. On this basis, once the solar farm is up and running there will be limited vehicles visiting the site, so will have minimal or no noise or disruption to local residents or on the highway network.

7.6.5 The solar panels to be used in this development have a lifespan of 40 years, and after this date would be redundant. On this basis, a scheme for decommissioning the site and reinstatement of the land, will lead to increased vehicle activity during this stage. A condition can be appended to manage this and the return of the land to agricultural use.

7.6.6 It is considered that the proposal can meet the requirements of policies COM7 and COM8 through the use of conditions, which is acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.

7.7 Ecology

7.7.1 The application was supported by Biodiversity and Landscape Management Plan, which was updated during the life of the application, with expert assessments from the Cambridge Wildlife Trust (CWT). As a conclusion with the submission of the additional information the proposal was considered to be acceptable, leading to a 66% increase in biodiversity and 2% increase in hedging. The measures proposed are listed below.

- Planting of a native species grassland
- Planting and infilling of native hedgerows
- Management of Skylarks, including creating fallow plots approximately 2 per hectare (this roughly equates to 1 per acre)
- Grazing sheep
- Barn owl box
- 20 x songbird nest boxes
- 10x bat boxes
- Wood piles for invertebrates
- Gaps under fences to ensure mammals can negotiate the site.

7.7.2 In consultation with the CWT, the scheme was considered acceptable and would need to be conditioned to ensure all of the mitigation measures proposed are included in any planning permission granted. This would also need to be monitored and after 3 years, if it was noted that there had not been a significant increase in the baseline of biodiversity, additional measures would be put in place and then surveyed again in 5, 10 and 15 years respectively.

7.7.3 It is considered that the proposal would comply with policy ENV7 of the East Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan 2015 and Natural Environment SPD. It would increase the ecological value of the site by 66%, which is significant and weighs heavily in favour of the proposal.

7.8 Flood Risk and Drainage

7.8.1 Consultation was undertaken with the Environment Agency who raised no objection to the proposal subject to the appendage of a condition. The site is in excess of 1 ha and was therefore supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The site is within flood zone 1, the least likely to flood location, albeit in extreme occasions. The proposal being for energy, does not require to determine if a Sequential Test or Exception Test is required as this is essential infrastructure to support the population. The information provided within the FRA mitigates flood risk by locating the substation and cabin away from any watercourses; decompact the soil to enable filtration through the soil and using the Construction regulations 2015. It is considered that subject to a condition for details of a surface and foul water disposal scheme the proposal meets the requirements of ENV8 of the East Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan 2015.

7.9 Fire Safety

7.9.1 The proposal includes the provision of Battery Energy Storage (BESS), which have become national news due to the risk of fire. In March 2023 the MP for Basingstoke motioned a bill (Standing Order No.23) to make the local fire services a statutory consultee for battery storage planning applications. The MP considered that the batteries are hazardous and therefore the Environment Agency (EA); HSE and the Fire Safety Service should be consulted on such applications. The reason behind this, is due to in the event of a fire the only way to distinguish is through cooling the apparatus down with water and wait for it to extinguish. In the event of the fire, it can allow for toxic chemicals to seep into watercourse and cause environmental harm. The MP recognised there is a need for these facilities, particularly in light of climate change and not being

able to rely on other countries for our energy however the safety of the batteries needs to be considered.

7.9.2 East Cambridgeshire District Council have already undertaken these consultations in advance of the Members Bill, however it is important to acknowledge there may be a change in circumstances in the future should this Bill be implemented. Whilst, the consultations have been undertaken, there was a delay in getting some of the responses. With regard to the EA have raised no objection, although do require conditions relating to how foul water and fire water will be dealt with.

7.9.3 In consultation with the HSE, no objections have been raised to the proposal. With regard to the Fire Service, they have made suggestions with regard to how fire safety can be managed within the site. Having reviewed their comments and other planning permissions granted, it has been considered that can be dealt with by way of condition. East Cambridgeshire District Council have previously issued planning decisions on this basis, and it would seem unreasonable to take a different approach with this application. On this basis, it is considered that subject to a pre commencement condition the scheme can address the risk of fire in accordance with policy GROWTH 3.

7.10 Planning Balance

7.10.1 With the need to create energy from sustainable methods, allowing continued economic growth, the transition to electric cars and the reduction in using natural gas to heat properties places a significant requirement on the planning system to allow renewable energy schemes. The scheme is also highly likely to improve biodiversity and drainage on the site, as well as long term benefits to agricultural land quality. The merits of the scheme far outweigh any short-term harm identified.

7.10.2 It is considered that the cumulative impacts are not great enough to harm the Green Belt and warrant the refusal of this application, based upon the very special circumstances that apply. However, it is likely there will be a limited detrimental impact to the overall enjoyment of the countryside in the short term given the number of solar panels and the time for the planting to be established.

7.10.3 It has been assessed that the proposal will have less than substantial harm to heritage. However, this level of harm is clearly outweighed by the public benefit of renewable energy and the requirement of an archaeology condition.

7.10.4 The proposal is considered to comply with the adopted Local Plan, Renewable Energy Development SPD, Natural Environment SPD and National Policy (NPPF). On this basis it is recommended that the application is approved, subject to the recommended conditions.

8 COSTS

8.10 An appeal can be lodged against a refusal of planning permission, or a condition imposed upon a planning permission. If a local planning authority is found to have acted unreasonably and this has incurred costs for the applicant (referred to as appellant through the appeal process) then a cost award can be made against the Council.

- 8.11 Unreasonable behaviour can be either procedural ie relating to the way a matter has been dealt with or substantive ie relating to the issues at appeal and whether a local planning authority has been able to provide evidence to justify a refusal reason or a condition.
- 8.12 Members do not have to follow an officer recommendation indeed they can legitimately decide to give a different weight to a material consideration than officers. However, it is often these cases where an appellant submits a claim for costs. The Committee therefore needs to consider and document its reasons for going against an officer recommendation very carefully.
- 8.13 In this case members' attention is particularly drawn to the following points:
- The Council has declared a climate emergency
 - Fundamental need for renewable energy projects
 - No objections from statutory bodies
 - Previous appeals and decisions across the country

9 APPENDICES

Appendix One – Recommended Conditions

Appendix Two - Environmental Statement Summary by East Cambridgeshire District Council

Appendix One

Recommended conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced within 3 years of the date of this permission.
1. Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended.
2. No development shall take place until full details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to illustrate the following: A Construction Traffic Management Plan which shall include construction traffic routing, timings / management of deliveries, site compound layouts, haul road details and other items as required to demonstrate highway safety will be safeguarded throughout the construction and decommissioning phases.
2. Reason: In the interests of highway safety, in accordance with COM7 and COM8 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015. The condition is pre-commencement as it would be unreasonable to require applicants to undertake this work prior to consent being granted.
3. Prior to first occupation or commencement of use of the development sufficient space shall be provided within the site to enable vehicles to enter, turn and leave the site in forward gear and to park clear of the public highway. The area shall be levelled, surfaced, and drained and thereafter retained for that specific use.
3. Reason: In the interests of highway safety, in accordance with COM7 and COM8 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.
4. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted 'Biodiversity Management Plan: Hedgerows' prepared by Ridge Clean Energy.
4. In the interests of highway safety, and to ensure the safe operation of the A11 and A14 trunk roads in accordance with COM7 and COM8 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.
5. No laying of services, creation of hard surfaces or erection of a building shall commence until a detailed design of the surface water drainage of the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Those elements of the surface water drainage system not adopted by a statutory undertaker shall thereafter be maintained and managed in accordance with the approved management and maintenance plan. The scheme shall be based upon the principles within the agreed Flood Risk Technical Note prepared by RAB Consultants (ref: RAB3018 Version 1.0) dated 25 April 2023 and shall also include:
 - a) Full results of the proposed drainage system modelling in the QBAR, 3.3% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) (1 in 30) and 1% AEP (1 in 100) storm events (as well as 1% AEP plus climate change), inclusive of all collection, conveyance, storage, flow control and disposal elements and including an allowance for urban creep, together with an assessment of system performance.

- b) Detailed drawings of the entire proposed surface water drainage system, attenuation and flow control measures, including levels, gradients, dimensions and pipe reference numbers, designed to accord with the CIRIA C753 SuDS Manual (or any equivalent guidance that may supersede or replace it).
 - c) Full detail on SuDS proposals (including location, type, size, depths, side slopes and cross sections).
 - d) Site Investigation and test results to confirm infiltration rates.
 - e) Demonstration that the surface water drainage of the site is in accordance with DEFRA non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems.
 - f) Full details of the maintenance/adoption of the surface water drainage system.
 - g) Permissions to connect to a receiving watercourse or sewer.
5. Reason: To ensure that the proposed development can be adequately drained and to ensure that there is no increased flood risk on or off site resulting from the proposed development and to ensure that the principles of sustainable drainage can be incorporated into the development, noting that initial preparatory and/or construction works may compromise the ability to mitigate harmful impacts. In accordance with policy ENV8 of the East Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan 2015.
 6. No development, including preparatory works, shall commence until details of measures indicating how additional surface water run-off from the site will be avoided during the construction works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The applicant may be required to provide collection, balancing and/or settlement systems for these flows. The approved measures and systems shall be brought into operation before any works to create buildings or hard surfaces commence
 6. Reason: To ensure surface water is managed appropriately during the construction phase of the development, so as not to increase the flood risk to adjacent land/properties or occupied properties within the development itself; recognising that initial works to prepare the site could bring about unacceptable impacts. In accordance with policy ENV8 of the East Cambridgeshire District Council Local Plan 2015.
 7. No above ground works shall take place until a soft landscaping scheme has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be maintained as approved, and the scheme shall include:
 - 1) A scaled plan showing the locations of new and existing vegetation
 - 2) A tree pit design specification (See below)
 - 3) A schedule detailing sizes and numbers/densities of all proposed trees/plants (Hedging ideally needs to be planted at 0.60m centres in a double staggered row, usually a 20% mix of five species for a native species hedge)
 - 4) Specifications for operations associated with plant establishment (planting specification, weed control, mulching, watering pruning etc.) to include a program for the timings of the landscape works and maintenance, to ensure successful establishment and survival of new planting and having regard to the timing of the commencement of the development hereby permitted.

Tree pits to be excavated to a minimum size of 600mm larger than the container, root ball or bareroot stock and shall be square so as to avoid root girdling issues.

The base of the tree pit shall be slightly domed and only 'broken' up in the event of inadequate drainage

Backfill tree pit with subsoil up to ~400mm depth from ground surface and with topsoil above ~400mm depth from ground surface or to match the existing soil profiles.

Watering 'dishes' to be created around the base of each tree, to hold water directly over root ball during watering

1m diameter mulched dish for Standard trees/3.0m in height or smaller

Bare root, root ball or container multi-stem trees shall be single staked as a minimum double staked as required, fixed with suitable tree ties (biodegradable if available and suitable)

Trees to be mulched with minimum 50mm settled depth, medium grade ornamental wood mulch

Trenches for hedge planting will be dug to a minimum depth of 400mm and width of 600mm, with the plants put into the ground at the same depth at which they had been previously grown in the nursery.

All plants need to be well heeled in after planting and watered in during dry weather.

All hedging to be mulched with minimum 50mm settled depth, medium grade wood mulch.

As most hedging plants are supplied as bare root specimens' measures are to be taken ensure that the roots do not dry out prior to planting such as healing in or covering root with damp straw.

Planting to be undertaken in the first planting season (October to February) after completion of development activities. If within a period of the use of the site as a solar farm from the date of planting, or replacement planting, any tree or plant of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place, unless the Local Planning Authority gives it consent to any variation.

7. Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.
8. No development shall take place until a scheme to dispose of foul and surface water has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme(s) shall be implemented prior to first use of the solar farm hereby approved.
8. Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding and to improve and protect water quality, in accordance with policies ENV2 and ENV8 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015. The condition is pre-commencement as it would be unreasonable to require applicants to undertake this work prior to consent being granted and the details need to be agreed before construction begins
9. Prior to the commencement of development details of the temporary fencing with shielding netting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local

- Planning Authority. The fencing shall be erected alongside the Public Right of Way and permissive paths and maintained until the planting has been established.
9. Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.
 10. The specific rated noise level emitted from the site shall not exceed the existing background noise level. The free field sound level shall be measured and/or calculated at the boundary of the nearest noise sensitive property. The noise level shall be measured and/or calculated in accordance with BS 4142:2014+A1:2019.
 10. Reason: To safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers and rural character of the area, in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.
 11. Construction times and deliveries, with the exception of fit-out, shall be limited to the following hours: 07:30 - 18:00 each day Monday – Friday, 07:30 - 13:00 on Saturdays and
None on Sundays or Bank/public Holidays.
 11. Reason: To safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers and rural character of the area, in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.
 12. In the event of the foundations from the proposed development requiring piling, prior to the commencement of development the applicant shall submit a report/method statement to the Local Planning Authority, for approval in writing, detailing the type of piling and mitigation measures to be taken to protect local residents from noise and/or vibration. Noise and vibration control on the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
 12. Reason: To safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers and rural character of the area, in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.
 13. Prior to any work commencing on the site a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority regarding mitigation measures for noise, dust, and lighting during the construction phase. These shall include, but not be limited to, other aspects such as access points for deliveries and site vehicles, and proposed phasing/timescales of development etc. The CEMP shall be adhered to at all times during all phases.
 13. To safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers and rural character of the area, in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015. The condition is pre-commencement as it would be unreasonable to require applicants to undertake this work prior to consent being granted.
 14. The Lighting scheme shall be implemented as approved in accordance with the Six Oakes Lighting Plan, Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3. The scheme shall be maintained in perpetuity, unless otherwise agreed in writing. The scheme does not allow for any additional lighting without express consent from the Local Planning Authority.

14. To safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers and rural character of the area, in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.
15. Prior to any occupation of the development, a scheme for the maintenance of the soft landscaping; for the lifespan of the proposal from last occupation, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All works shall be maintained in accordance with the agreed scheme. The scheme shall include the following:
 - A) methods for the proposed maintenance regime.
 - B) detailed schedule.
 - C) details of who will be responsible for the continuing implementation
 - D) details of any phasing arrangements
15. To ensure the longevity of the landscaping scheme, in accordance with policy ENV1 and ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.
16. No development shall take place within the area indicated until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority.
16. To ensure that any archaeological remains are suitably recorded in accordance with policy ENV14 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015. The condition is pre-commencement as it would be unreasonable to require applicants to undertake this work prior to consent being granted.
17. The Local Planning Authority shall be notified in writing, within 5 working days of the date of the first export of power from the site. This permission expires 40 years from the date of the first export of power or 6 months after the solar panels on site are no longer being used for the production of energy. After this date, the site shall be reinstated to arable agricultural land in accordance with a Decommissioning Scheme that shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the expiration of this permission.
The scheme shall address, though not be limited to, the following areas:
 - Soil management
 - Hours of works
 - Lighting
 - Noise
 - Traffic and highway impacts
 - Public Rights of Way
 - Wildlife
 - Soft landscaping including protection measures
17. Reason: The application has been assessed and determined on this basis.
18. The, hereby approved, solar farm shall only export up to 49.995MWe of renewable electricity to the National Grid during peak operation.
18. Reason: The application has been assessed and determined on this basis.

19. Prior to commencement of development details of the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include the following as a minimum:

- Details of component procurements and construction techniques, including reference to all relevant guidance and legislation.
- Details of the automatic fire detection and suppression systems to be incorporated in the development design.
- Measures to incorporate redundancy in the design to provide multiple layers of protection.
- Measures to contain and restrict the spread of fire through the use of fire-resistant materials, including adequate separation between elements of the BESS; and
- Measures to ensure that sufficient water is available for manual firefighting, including the location of fire hydrants.

19. Reason The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

20. Prior to the commencement of development, an Emergency Response Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall include:

- Details of the hazards associated with lithium-ion batteries.
- Isolation of electrical sources to enable firefighting activities.
- Measures to extinguish or cool batteries involved in fire.
- Management of toxic or flammable gases.
- Measures to minimise the environmental impact of an incident, including containment of fire water run-off, prevention of ground contamination and water course pollution and the release of toxic gases.
- Handling and responsibility for disposal of damaged batteries.
- Establishment of regular onsite training exercises.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and the Emergency Response Plan shall be maintained and reviewed on a regular basis (at least once every 2 years) in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority, with any material changes notified to the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Services.

21. Reason: To ensure proper infrastructure for the site in the interests of public safety in that adequate water supply is available for emergency use. This is supported by paragraph 95 of the NPPF. The condition is pre-commencement

as it would be unreasonable to require applicants to undertake this work prior to consent being granted.

22 The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a water quality risk assessment report has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The report shall include:

- the specification of any electrical transformers, batteries, and any other equipment on site (as applicable) with regard to the volumes and composition of any potentially polluting substances.
- assessment of the risks (including from leakage, fire, explosion, malicious interference) to water quality presented by any electrical transformers, batteries,
- ancillary or other equipment or materials within the development, and details of
- the measures to be implemented to control those risks.
- The risk control measures proposed by the report shall be implemented as approved

22 Reason: Reason: To ensure that risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property, and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors, in accordance with policy ENV9 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015. The condition is pre-commencement as it would be unreasonable to require applicants to undertake this work prior to consent being granted.

23 No development shall commence until an Earthing and Harmonics Report has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall commence in accordance with the agreed details.

23 Reason: To ensure proper infrastructure for the site in the interests of public safety. This is supported by paragraph 95 of the NPPF. The condition is pre-commencement as it would be unreasonable to require applicants to undertake this work prior to consent being granted and the details need to be agreed before construction begins.

24 Prior to the commencement of development the Skylark Management Plan, by Ecology Consulting dated June 2023 shall be implemented as agreed and maintained throughout the life of the solar farm hereby approved.

24. Reason: To protect and enhance species in accordance with policies ENV1, ENV2 and ENV7 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.

25. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the drawings and documents listed below		
Plan Reference	Version No	Date Received
Supplementary Green Belt Assessment		15th June 2023
Six Oakes Skylark Management Plan		15th June 2023

Six Oakes Habitat Enhancement Fig 1		15th June 2023
Six Oakes Habitat Enhancement Fig 2		15th June 2023
Transport and Access Statement		16th March 2023
SIX OAKS SUBSTATION LIGHTING		22nd June 2023
RCE1002-100	A	2nd November 2022
RAB 3018 Technical Note	V1	27th April 2023
Location Plan		2nd November 2022
Planning Statement 2		18th November 2022
Design & Access Statement		18th November 2022
Flood Risk Assessment 2.0		18th November 2022
Noise Impact Assessment A1938 R01b		18th November 2022
Geophysical Survey		18th November 2022
Glint & Glare		18th November 2022
Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment PN3424		18th November 2022
Socio Economic Statement		18th November 2022
Statement of Community Involvement		18th November 2022
Vol 1 - Non-Technical Summary		18th November 2022
Vol 2A - Written Statement		18th November 2022
Vol 2B-App 4_1		18th November 2022
Vol 2B-App 5_1		18th November 2022
Vol 2B-App 9_1		18th November 2022
Vol 2B-App 9_2		18th November 2022
Vol 2B-App 9_3		18th November 2022
Vol 2B-App 9_6		18th November 2022
Vol 2B-App 9_7		18th November 2022
Vol 2B-App 10_1		18th November 2022
Vol 2B-App 10_2		18th November 2022
Vol 2B-App 10_3		18th November 2022
Vol 3-Figures		18th November 2022
Vol 4-Visualisations		18th November 2022

25. Reason: To define the scope and extent of this permission

Appendix Two

Environmental Statement Summary by East Cambridgeshire District Council

Decision and conditions

Planning Committee is being asked to grant approval for this application on the 15th November 2023

Reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the development on the Environment

It was considered that an Environmental Statement was needed to cover the significant amount of energy farm developments having taken and potentially taking place in the locality there will be a cumulative significant impact upon the visual character of the area and the amount of high-quality farmland being used.

This was detailed under reference 22/00072/SCREEN

The developer submitted an Environmental Statement, which also addressed the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment within it and included biodiversity.

The developer also submitted with the application were:

- Geophysical Report.
- Historic Environment report;
- Noise Impact Report and
- Transport Assessment.

Further reports were also received.

- Green Belt Report dated 15/06/23.
- Skylark Management Plan dated 15/06/23 and
- Lighting Plan dated 22/06/23.

Main reasons and considerations on which the decision is based

The decision was based on the information provided by the developer that formed the Environmental Statement. In addition to this it was based on consultation responses and neighbour representations.

The application was considered and determined with regard to East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 as amended 2023, Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Documents, National Planning Policy Framework 2023 and Cambridge Green Belt 2021.

With the submitted documentation it was not considered necessary to seek independent specialist advice on agricultural land or landscape. In regards to heritage comments were received and considered from Historic England, the Council's Conservation Officer and the Historic Environment Team (Archaeology).

Summary of results of the consultations undertaken and how these results have been incorporated or otherwise addressed

A range of consultees and local residents mentioned landscape issues, cumulative development, loss of agricultural land and heritage.

The relevant parts in the committee report:

7.1 Environmental Statement

7.2 The application was screened under planning reference 21/00062/SCREEN where it was concluded that:

“It was considered that an Environmental Statement was needed to cover the significant amount of energy farm developments having taken and potentially taking place in the locality there will be a cumulative significant impact upon the visual character of the area and the amount of high-quality farmland being used.”

7.3 It is generally considered that by 2050 the world will have a homo sapiens (humans) population of around 9 to 10 billion (currently around 7.5 billion). There is substantial scientific argument that we can currently feed 10 billion people, though not necessarily sustainably. Starvation is, therefore, currently down to greed and bad management of food production/storage/distribution and not down to lack of agricultural land.

7.4 The site would use arable farmland, 15% would be grade 3a land with the remaining 85% grade 3b. The grading of agricultural land is 1 -5, with 1 being the most excellent. Grade 3 is divided into ‘a’ and ‘b’. ‘A’ being good quality with ‘b’ being moderate quality land. The proposal would not lead to the most excellent and fertile of farmland being lost.

7.5 The site would enhance the existing planting on the site, with improving existing hedgerows and planting new sections of hedgerow. With regard to ecology, a skylark management plan has been considered acceptable with further ecological enhancements including a ground nesting bird grassland area; buffer zone of approximately 15 metres (49ft) of species rich grassland and bird and bat boxes. This will equate to a 66% increase in habitat units and 2% growth in hedgerow units.

7.6 The site is within flood zone 1, which is considered to have the lowest probability of flooding, however due to its size is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). There are no heritage assets within close proximity to the site, although the application is supported by a Heritage Assessment. The site is not in close proximity to a SSSI, AONB, Ramsar sites, Conservation Areas, Special Protection Area (SPA) or Nature Reserves.

7.7 The Environmental Statement concludes that the overall development would not have any significant or cumulative impacts.

7.8 Historic England and the Council’s own Conservation Officer have raised no objections.

7.9 It is noted that Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Team have requested a condition which can be duly attached.

7.10 The proposal complies with policies ENV6, ENV11, ENV12 and ENV14 of the Adopted Local Plan.

Description of measures to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset

In regards to landscape impact, it was considered that a condition was required in order to ensure suitable landscape measures were incorporated, as well as associated maintenance. (Conditions 5, 7 and 15 as provided in Appendix 1)

In addition, a landscape management plan is required to ensure the long term maintenance of the landscaping as well as biodiversity improvements. (Conditions 7, 15 & 24 as provided in Appendix 1)

A condition is also required to ensure heritage (archaeology) is duly preserved and recorded. (Condition 16 as provided in Appendix 1)

Finally, a condition is required to ensure that the site is suitably restored once the solar farm is no longer required. (condition 17 as provided in Appendix 1)

Monitoring measures

Will be covered by conditions.

The recommended conditions can be enforced (Breach of Condition Notice) if a developer fails to comply with them.

Public participation process

The Planning Committee process allows for the Parish Council and members of the general public to speak.

10 neighbouring properties were notified, and the responses received are summarised below. Site notices were put up on the 16th December 2022 and again 28th September 2023 and the last notice put in the press on the 28th October 2023. A full copy of the responses is available on the Council's website.

Background Documents

22/01291/ESF

Please note that these decisions are available on the Councils website and are documents attached to application 22/01291/ESF

22/00072/SCREEN

2021/93644 – Kirklees Council

P20/13909/F – South Gloucestershire Council

PAP/2021/0605 – North Warwickshire Borough Council

PAP/2021/0651 - North Warwickshire Borough Council

CB/20/03856/FULL – Central Bedfordshire Council

APP/W1525/W/22/3300222 - Planning appeal decision Chelmsford City Council

National Planning Policy Framework -

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 -

<http://www.eastcamb.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Local%20Plan%20April%202015%20-%20front%20cover%20and%20inside%20front%20cover.pdf>

