Little Crow
Solar Park

Little Crow Solar Park, Scunthorpe

PLANNING STATEMENT

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PLANNING STATEMENT

LITTLE CROW SOLAR PARK

LAND TO THE EAST OF THE STEELWORKS, SCUNTHORPE

ON BEHALF OF INRG SOLAR (LITTLE CROW) LTD

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PLANNING | DESIGN | ENVIRONMENT | ECONOMICS

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement supports an application for Development Consent Order ["DCO"] for the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of a ground mounted solar park with an intended design capacity of over 50MWp [megawatts peak]. The development is located to the east of the Scunthorpe Steelworks and is known as Little Crow Solar Park ["the Development"]. The Application is being submitted by Pegasus Group on behalf of INRG Solar (Little Crow) Ltd ["the Applicant"].

1.2 The Application for a DCO must be submitted to and determined by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industry Strategy because the Development is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project ["NSIP"] under the Planning Act 2008, with a total capacity exceeding 50 MW.

1.3 The development proposal relates to the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of Little Crow Solar Park a renewable led energy scheme. The main elements of the development will be the installation of a ground mounted solar park covering an area of approximately 225 hectares. There will also be electrical connection infrastructure and the point of connection into the local electricity grid is directly to the 132kV underground electricity cable which already runs through the development site.

1.4 All the issues relevant for the assessment of the application are set out in this Statement. However, this Statement should be considered in conjunction with the complete application submission package, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the development. Where appropriate this Statement sign posts these documents and they should be referenced for more detailed considerations of specific issues.

1.5 The application package includes the following documentation: -

- **Covering Letter**
- **Application Form**
- **Application Guide and Application Index**
- **Application Drawings**

- **Development Consent Order Pack**: -

i. **Draft Development Consent Order**

ii. **Explanatory Memorandum**

iii. **Book of Reference**

iv. **Statement of Need**

- **Design and Access Statement**
- **Planning Statement [this statement]**
- **Consultation Report**
- **Consultation Report Technical Appendices**
- **Statement of Statutory Nuisance**
- **Grid Connection Statement**
- **Environmental Statement Non-Technical Summary**
- **Environmental Statement, divided into:**

v. **Environmental Statement Non-Technical Statement**

vi. **Environmental Statement Main Written Statement -** Comprises the main volume of the Environmental Statement, including 'general chapters' that describe the EIA context, provide a description of the order limits and development, and set out the scope of the Environmental Statement, followed by the 'technical chapters' for each environmental theme with the associated figures concluding with a summary. These are: Landscape and Visual; Ecology and Nature Conservation; Cultural Heritage and Archaeology; Transport and Access; Agricultural Circumstances; and Socio-Economic Issues**.**

vii. **Environmental Statement Technical Appendices -** Comprise the technical appendices supporting the main report, these include technical studies comprising:

- **Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy**
- **Phase 1 Ground Conditions Desk Study**
- **Geotechnical and Phase II Contamination Report**
- **Woodland Management Plan**
- **Minerals Assessment Report**
- **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan**
- **Outline Decommissioning Strategy**
- **Grid Network Constraint Report**
- **Outline Soil Management Plan**
- **Air Quality Assessment and Carbon Assessment**
- **EMF Assessment**
- **Outline Battery Safety Management Plan**
- **Arboricultural Impact Assessment**
- **Noise Impact Assessment**
- **Extended Phase 1, Arable Plants, great Crested newts & Water Vole**
- **Wintering Birds Survey**
- **Breeding Birds Survey**
- **Bat Activity Survey**
- **Great Crested Newt Risk Avoidance Method Statement**
- **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan for Biodiversity**
- **Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan**

- **Habitats Regulation Statement – No Significant Effects Report**
- **Cultural Heritage Baseline Study**
- **Geophysical Survey Report**
- **Archaeological Watching Brief**
- **Archaeological Fieldwalking Survey**
- **Archaeological Evaluation**
- **Transport Statement**
- **Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan**
- **Agricultural Baseline Report**

1.6 The application documentation demonstrates the diligent approach adopted by the Applicant, and their experienced consultant team in delivering a well-considered development based on identified need and sound environmental, social and sustainable development considerations.

Pre-Application Consultation

1.7 The planning application was finalised following extensive non-statutory and statutory consultation with the local community, council and other statutory consultees. The table below provides an overview of the phased approach the applicant adopted for the pre-application consultation process. These are discussed in detail in the accompanying Consultation Report [Document Ref 4.1 LC REP].

Stage of Consultation Phase	**Key Dates**	**Description**
Non-Statutory engagement and consultation	December 2017 to November 2018	Non-statutory discussion with public and statutory consultees through extensive informal consultations. Public exhibitions were held in

		January 2018 which introduced the preliminary designs to the host community.
Agreeing the SOCC	3rd August 2018 to 28th November 2018	The approach to the formal statutory consultation was agreed with North Lincolnshire Council in November 2018.
Statutory Consultation	3rd December 2018 to 4th March 2019	The Statutory pre-application consultation was carried from 3rd December 2018 to 4th March 2019. Duty to consult accorded with the requirement of both section 42 and section 47 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended).
Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Opinion	19 December 2018 to 25th January 2019	At the same time as the statutory pre-application consultation, the applicant made a request to the Secretary of State, via the Planning Inspectorate, for an EIA Scoping Opinion. The Planning Inspectorate issued a Screening Direction after consultation with prescribed bodies under regulation 10(6) of the EIA Regulations 2017.
Post-Statutory Engagement	March 2019 to August 2020	Informal consultation and continued engagement undertaken between March 2019 and August 2020 to keep stakeholders informed of

		progress and to agree Statement of Common Ground with prescribed consultees.

2. THE SITE AND ENVIRONS

2.1 This section contains a summary of the site and its environs. An extended description of the site and surrounds is presented within Chapter 3 of the Environmental Statement [Document Ref 6.3 LC ES CH3].

2.2 The site is located on a localised ridge between the settlements of Scunthorpe to the west and Broughton to the east. The village of Broughton is separated from the site by an extensive area of dense forest and woodland. Between the main residential and commercial areas of Scunthorpe, directly adjacent to the western boundary of the site, lies the extensive industrial complex of the Scunthorpe steelworks.

2.3 To the north the ridge continues approximately 11km to the banks of the Humber Estuary. Also, to the north is an area of heathland known as Risby Warren. To the south the ridge runs approximately 35km to the City of Lincoln. A Roman Road, Ermine Street runs adjacent to Broughton to the east of the site. A secondary scarp slope known locally within Scunthorpe as 'The Cliff' lies to the west. Away from Scunthorpe the landscape is largely rural.

2.4 The development site (excluding the area identified for the temporary construction compound) extends to approximately 225 hectares and is comprised largely of arable fields which are bounded and heavily contained by dense woodland to the north, east and south, which serve to provide significant screening of the site from the wider landscape. The Application boundary extends to include the area required for the Development and the area required for the temporary construction compound.

2.5 Adjacent to the north east corner of the development site is a former conventional oil well compound, known as Broughton B1. This was sunk in 1984 by BP Petroleum Development Limited. The oil well compound is demarked by perimeter fencing and lies outside the development boundary of the application proposal. The former oil well area is excluded from the order limits.

Landform and Topography

2.6 In terms of landform the site lies on the edge of a localised ridge, raised slightly above the surrounding landscape, which would generally give potential for it to be visible from much of the wider landscape. However, as the site survey work has

confirmed, surrounding woodland encloses much of the site, and therefore any views remain generally well contained.

2.7 The local ridge forms part of a wider scarp and vale topography. The site straddles part of the west facing scarp slope and the east facing limestone plateaux which runs eventually into the lower dip slope towards the River Ancholme.

Land Use, Buildings and Infrastructure

2.8 Land use across the site is predominantly agricultural with fields laid down to a mixture of arable and managed grassland. Some forestry operations are being undertaken within the surrounding woodland resulting in the storage of logs in piles next to the main access track through the site. There is no built form within the site, but a poultry unit is located adjacent to the east of the site, whilst to the west the vast expanse of industrial development associated with the Scunthorpe steel industry lies adjacent to the site.

2.9 This area extends for more than 2km beyond which the lies the urban area of Scunthorpe. Various utilities cut through the site and these include a water main; 11kV and 33kV overhead power lines; and, a double row of 132kV overhead pylons. The lines pass through the adjacent woodland without opening up large gaps in which the site can be seen.

Agricultural Land

2.10 The application is supported by a detailed soil survey undertaken by Daniel Baird Soil Consultancy Ltd. The agricultural land classification survey has found that the majority of the site is deemed to be Grade 3b agricultural land (77.5%). The rest of the site is spilt between Grade 3a (16.5%) and Non-agricultural uses (6%).

Biodiversity Features and Environmental Designations

2.11 The site generally comprises open arable farmland, which is surrounded by a network of hedgerows and ditches, as well as, extensive woodland plantations. The most frequently encountered habitat at the site consists of open arable farmland. The arable fields comprised a mixture of spring-sown cereals and oilseed rape, as well as game cover crops at the edge of some fields. Field margins are characterised by coarse, semi-improved grassland. This habitat is also encountered alongside farm tracks and in some areas of fields which had been left fallow.

2.12 Field boundary hedgerows are generally species-poor although the hedgerows varied in height, length, condition and management[1].

2.13 The northern, eastern and southern boundaries are bordered by woodland, mainly comprising semi-mature to mature plantation broadleaved woodland but with some coniferous elements and semi-natural woodland also present. Small pockets of broadleaved woodland are also present in the west of the site. Broughton Far Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Broughton Alder Wood SSSI are located 820m and 920m east of the site boundary respectively. Broughton West Wood Local Wildlife Site (LWS) partially borders the east of the site, and is designated for its woodland habitat. Portions of the woodland to the east of the site are designated as Ancient Woodland.

Cultural Heritage

2.14 The site of the former medieval Gokewell Priory (NLHER ref. MLS1805) is located within the northern area of the site. This is a non-designated site and survives as above-ground remnant earthworks and potential belowground archaeological remains.

2.15 The landscape surrounding the site of the former medieval priory has undergone extensive change since the medieval period. The medieval field systems are no longer extant, and the surrounding area is now made up of very large, modern blocks of agricultural land. The agricultural regimes have also changed noticeably since the medieval period, with more intensive ploughing and use of the land.

2.16 There are a number of designated heritage assets located within 2km of the site, the nearest being the Grade II Listed Buildings Springwood Cottage and barn (c.650m to the north east (NHLE Ref: 1083734 & NHLE Ref: 1310038), and Grade II Raventhorpe House, located c. 900m south of the Site (NHLE Ref: 1346807) and Raventhorpe Medieval Settlement, located c.900m south of the Site (NHLE Ref: 1016426).

Hydrology

2.17 The site is located in Flood Zone 1, at low risk of flooding, according to the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning, consistent with its elevated location.

[1] Under a forestry licence

There are a few areas of isolated ponding in the site – indicative of the generally free-draining nature of the soil. In the west of the site the water is shown to issue from a spring line and flows westwards.

2.18 The site contains a number of watercourses, generally running north south along the slope, and linked by watercourses flowing down the slope. A detailed topographic survey has been undertaken of the site, and shows that the channels are well-defined and approximately 1m deep.

2.19 Localised areas up to 50m wide appear to have a very gentle fall to the east. There are no evident watercourses or signs of surface water flows to the east, indicating that the rainfall infiltrates into the ground where it lands, ie the shallow gradient allows infiltration.

Ground conditions

2.20 The complete site area is classified as underlain by freely draining slightly acid sandy soils. These have typically low fertility arable land cover, and drain to groundwater. The complete site area is underlain by Newport 1 Type Soils. These are deep well drained sandy and coarse loamy soils. They are free draining and permeable in unconsolidated sands or gravels, which have a relatively high permeability and high storage capacity. The uppermost 300mm of the soil profile is sandy and 'light'.

Air quality

2.21 North Lincolnshire Council has declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), which incorporates part of Scunthorpe town centre and an area east of Scunthorpe, including the steelworks site. The development site is located within the AQMA.

Access

2.22 The site is served by a number of unnamed roads that mostly come off the B1027. Roads leading to the site already serve HGVs associated with the steelworks, which is accessible from Dawes Lane to the north of the site. The proposed construction traffic route is therefore considered to be suitable for use by the relatively low number of HGVs that will be associated with the construction period.

Public Rights of Way

2.23 A Public Right of Way (Footpath 214 on the Definitive Rights of Way Map[2]) crosses the site. The definitive rights of way show how the route, within the order limits, follows a mixture of field boundaries and the existing farm track.

[2] https://www.northlincs.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/definitive-map/

3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

3.1 The section of the Statement sets out a summary of the description of the development. A full schedule of the proposed works and requirements is set out in the draft Development Consent Order (Document Ref 3.1 LC DCO). A detailed description of the development is contained with Chapter 4 of the Environmental Statement (Document Ref 6.4 LC ES CH4) and supporting planning application drawings (Document Refs 2.8 LC DRW to 2.41 LC DRW).

3.2 The main element of the proposal is the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of a ground mounted solar park with an intended design capacity of over 50MWp (megawatts peak) with associated development.

3.3 An operational lifespan of 35 years would be sought linked to the first export date from the development. The development will progress in accordance with a phasing plan. A single substation compound will serve the whole development, and this will be required for the duration of the development and retained thereafter. The substation compound would be located near the northern boundary of the application site and to the east of the existing double row of 132kV overhead electricity pylons which traverse the site.

3.4 The need for flexibility in design, layout and technology is identified in a number of National Policy Statements to address uncertainties inherent to the Development. This very pertinent to solar and battery industries due to the rapid pace of change in technology. Accordingly, the ability of the applicant to micro-site during the construction phase is an important consideration and this could be a requirement to reflect any technological advancement or changes in plant design or shape. In this regard, the applicant proposes the imposition of a pre-commencement requirement for the submission of a phasing plan and detailed design plan to the Local Planning Authority for approval. The purpose of this submission would be to: -

- Clarify the construction & operational sequencing of the development; Demonstrate compliance with the requirements included in the DCO; and
- Demonstrate that the final detailed design remains within the parameters of the design principles and therefore the Rochdale Envelope standards considered by this Environmental Statement.

The works

3.5 The proposal comprises seven land use zones or works zones, these are: -

- Work No. 1: Arrays of Ground Mounted Solar Panels
- Work No. 2A: Battery Energy Storage System
- Work No. 2B: Battery Energy Storage System (alternative location)
- Work No. 3: Formation of Ecological Corridors
- Work No. 4: Substation Building and Compound
- Work No. 5: Upgrade to Main Access Track
- Work No. 6: Perimeter Development Buffer
- Work No. 7: Temporary Construction and Decommissioning Compound

3.6 These work zones are presented on the drawing Works Plan (Document Ref 2.8 LC DRW). The description of the work within each work zone is provided below.

WORK NO. 1: ARRAYS OF GROUND MOUNTED SOLAR PANELS

3.7 The design principles of the solar panels are: -

- A generating station comprising arrays of ground-mounted solar panels with a gross electrical output of over 50 megawatts peak
- All solar panels will be located within the Work No. 1 area as defined on the Works Plan
- Total land coverage of the solar panels would be c800,00sq m. Subject to the wattage output of the solar panel selected for construction the potential maximum range for energy generation is between 150MWp and 200MWp.
- An array is a galvanised steel and anodised aluminium mounting structure with the solar panels attached to it
- The maximum top height of the arrays will be 3.5m

- The minimum height of the lowest part of the arrays will be 0.7m
- All solar panels will be south facing
- Solar panels will be dark blue, grey or black in colour
- Indicative slope of the solar panels from horizontal would be 15 degrees
- Internal access track of permeable construction
- Typical minimum distance between edge of the arrays to the 1.8m high perimeter fencing would be 3m
- Biodiversity would be promoted within and around the arrays
- CCTV positioned along the perimeter of the arrays on 3m high poles
- Planting and ecological works incorporating the biodiversity objectives and management prescriptions in accordance with the Outline LEMP

3.8 The solar panels would convert solar irradiance into direct current (DC) electricity. A solar panel consists of a layer of silicon cells, an anodised aluminium frame and various wiring to allow current to flow from the silicon cells. Silicon is a non-metal with conductive properties that allow it to absorb and convert sunlight into electricity. When light interacts with a silicon cell, it causes electrons to be set into motion, which initiates a flow of electric current3. The solar panels are connected in series and set out on south facing arrays. The arrays will be laid out in multiple parallel rows running east to west across the various field enclosures. The mounting structure and solar panels will be static. The distance between the arrays would respond to topography but would typically be between 3.5 metres to 6 metres. Land between and beneath the arrays will be used for biodiversity enhancements and seasonal sheep grazing. If sheep grazing is not possible then grassland will be managed through a grass cutting regime.

3.9 The mounting structure will be supported at intervals by double mounted posts set approximately 3.75m apart. The posts will be pushed into the ground with a small

[3] It was first discovered in 1839 by Edmond Becquerel and can be generally thought of as a characteristic of certain materials (known as semiconductors) that allows them to generate an electric current when exposed to sunlight.

plant rig to depths between 1m to 2m and this will be guided by localised ground conditions. The exception to this is within areas of archaeological interest where the posts will be fixed into concrete pads resting on top of the ground.

3.10 For archaeological interests, an archaeological exclusion zone has been provided around the area containing the former Gokewell Priory4. No arrays or cable runs will go through this area. The area will be used to provide biodiversity measures and will be delineated with a 1.8m high perimeter fence. The existing public right of way running through this area will be retained.

3.11 The design shows six rows of panels (in landscape alignment) and the design principle is set by the overall length of the solar panels, which is set at 7.67m.

3.12 The insulated DC cables from the solar panels will be routed in channels fixed on the underside of the mounting structure. The DC string cables will run along the entire underside of each row. The electrical cabling from each array will be concealed through shallow trenches linking the solar panels to the inverters and transformers and then to the main substation. The cable trench will typically be between 0.5m to 1.1m in depth and up to 1.0m wide. The cable trench may also carry earthing and communications cables and will be backfilled with fine sands and excavated materials to the original ground level.

3.13 Cable trenching will not take place through any archaeological sensitive areas.

3.14 The inverters, transformers and associated switch gear are required to convert the DC energy produced by the arrays into AC energy, these will be located across the Works area as shown on Works Details – Whole Site Plan (Document Ref 2.10 LC DRW). The AC cable will also be laid in trenches and would run directly to the main substation compound.

3.15 The arrays would be set within perimeter fencing up to 1.8m in height with wooden supporting posts placed at intervals of c. 3.5m.

3.16 The perimeter fencing would be either green or galvanised aluminium in finish and would typically follow the outer field boundaries containing the solar panels. The minimum distance between the edge of the arrays and the perimeter fence would

[4] Further details of the former Gokewell Priory is contained within the Cultural Heritage Baseline Study (Environmental Statement Technical Appendices 8.1).

be 3m. A CCTV system mounted on poles will be positioned at intervals along the inside face edge of the perimeter fencing (between the fence and the arrays).

3.17 Part of this Work zone also provides an alternative location for the battery energy storage system which is positioned to the north of the proposed substation compound. The alternative location may be utilised if, for example, technological advances with solar which allow the overall footprint of the development to be reduced, thus the battery energy storage system can be relocated amongst the solar panels.

WORK NO. 2A: BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM & WORK NO. 2B BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM

3.18 Two alternative locations are presented for the associated battery energy storage system these are Work No. 2A and Work No. 2B and the Environmental Statement has considered both options. Work No 2B is positioned amongst Work No 1. This option could be utilised if the post-consent detailed design of the ground mounted solar panels allows for a reduction in their development footprint which in turn may allow the battery storage facility to be located within Work No. 2B instead of the location allocated for Work No. 2A. If Work No. 2A is constructed the area identified in the works plan for Work No. 2B will be used to house solar panels (as part of Work No.1). If, however, Work No. 2B is constructed, the area identified in the works plan for Work No. 2A will be used for the ecological corridor (as part of Work No. 3).

3.19 The design principles of the battery energy storage system for either location, namely Works No. 2A or Works No. 2B are:-

- A battery energy storage system
- The candidate storage capacity is 90MW
- Total land coverage of the battery energy storage system compound would not exceed 11,200 m sq
- The system would be made secure by a 3m high gated palisade fence

- Battery containers would have a maximum length of 17m, maximum width of 3m and a maximum height of 4m. The maximum storage capacity of a single battery container would be 6MW

- The battery containers would be dark green in colour

3.20 The battery energy storage system consists of containerised battery units that can store energy and are able to release or absorb energy from the power network. Being able to absorb and release energy, the battery energy storage system at Little Crow can be used to contribute towards the frequency balancing services, where the power is being generated or absorbed statically or dynamically depending on the system frequency. When there is not enough power, batteries are discharged to balance under frequency preventing black and brown outs. To balance over frequency batteries are charged to prevent dangerous spikes across electricity infrastructure[5].

3.21 The maximum development footprint of the battery energy storage system will be 70m by 160m and will be surfaced with stone chippings. Under normal conditions the development will be unmanned. Visual checks will be undertaken during maintenance visits to the development.

3.22 The candidate equipment to be installed at the battery energy storage system include: -

- Security fencing – 3m high palisade fencing

- Internal access tracks

- Vehicular parking within a gated compound

- 16 no. containerised battery units

- 18 no. skid mounted transformers and inverters

[5] The National Electricity Transmission System is an islanded network with no AC connections to other networks. In order to manage the system frequency within the normal operating range 49.5Hz to 50.5Hz, National Grid relies on frequency balancing service providers to modulate their active power output or consumption in order to minimise the imbalance between generation and demand on the system. The extent of the required modulation is determined by the deviation of the system frequency from 50Hz. A change in grid frequency is caused by an imbalance of supply and demand.

- Cable circuits connecting to the substation compound
- 2 no. client switchroom containers housing the switchgear
- Earthing and communication circuits
- 6 no. CCTV on 3m pole mountings

WORK NO 3: FORMATION OF ECOLOGICAL CORRIDORS

3.23 Ecological and biodiversity measures are promoted across the entire Order Limits area and this is enhanced within Work No 3.

3.24 Within this area, a number of measures and features are proposed for the benefit of biodiversity. This includes the planting of new hedgerows and bolstering of existing field boundaries to increase coverage of this habitat, provide effective landscape screening, and to improve connectivity of the hedgerow and woodland network across and beyond the order limits.

3.25 Several measures have been designed specifically for the benefit of wildlife species which are targeted for conservation both locally and nationally. Circa 10 ha of the Work area will be cultivated annually to promote suitable conditions for uncommon and declining arable plants to thrive. An area totalling approximately 23 ha within the Work area will be managed under a seasonal grazing regime with the aim of providing optimal conditions for ground-nesting farmland birds during the breeding season. Field margins and easements spread across the work area will be sown with a species-rich acid grassland seed mix, which will contain larval food plants and nectar sources for several pollinating invertebrate species of conservation importance, which are present locally. A considerable number of features for nesting birds and roosting bats, as well as hibernation/sheltering sites for various species, will be installed at the field boundaries.

3.26 The described measures will be managed and maintained for the benefit of the respective target ecological features for the lifespan of the scheme.

3.27 Other key development within this work area include

- planting and ecological works incorporating the biodiversity objectives and management prescriptions in accordance with the outline LEMP;

- internal access tracks;
- fencing archaeological exclusion zone;
- swale buffer;
- temporary diversion of public footpath;
- underground connection to the electricity network; and
- cable trenches.

WORK NO 4: SUBSTATION BUILDING AND COMPOUND

3.28 A single substation compound will be required for the development and this will likely be constructed at the start of the development. Following construction and commissioning the substation compound will be adopted and become the property of the District Network Operator, who will maintain the compound throughout the lifetime of the development. The decommissioning of the substation is not considered as part of the application as this will be the property of the DNO and as such would be outside the gift of the developer to decommission.

3.29 The function of the new substation will be to take power from the solar arrays and connect this to the existing 132kV underground cable that runs through the order limits.

3.30 The maximum development footprint of the substation compound will be 80m by 80m and will be surfaced with stone chippings. Under normal conditions the development will be unmanned. Visual checks will be undertaken on a monthly inspection visit to the development. Whilst external lighting will be installed at the substation for emergency work during hours of darkness, the substation will not normally be lit.

3.31 The candidate equipment to be installed at the substation would include: -

- Security fencing – 2.4m high palisade fencing with an electrical fence backing of 3m high from ground level.
- Car parking

- NPG Control Room - A small single-story amenities building housing the main control systems and welfare unit with WC. The building would have a maximum height of 8m.
- Customer Switchroom – A small single storey building housing the switchgear for controlling the power flows from the solar park and battery storage. The building would have a maximum height of 5m.
- 1 No. NPG 11KV pad-mounted transformer (provides standby LVAC supplies in event of power failure)
- 2 no. Flood light columns at a maximum height of 5m
- Gantry with voltage and current transformers
- Circuit breakers
- Earthing circuits
- Cable circuits
- Cable trenches
- Access track with separate access provision for the District Network Operator to access its substation
- Cess pit
- sealing end structures
- high level 132kV busbars
- low level disconnectors

3.32 The initial preparatory work would comprise the temporary removal and storage of topsoil and the installation of a temporary stone capping in the substation construction area to provide a clean and stable working platform. Where required, excavations and concrete foundations will be provided for the substation electrical equipment.

3.33 An earth grid would be installed below the ground to create an 'earth mat' to make the compound electrically safe. The substation support structures, and electrical equipment then would be erected.

3.34 Following construction of the substation compound by the Independent Connection Provider ('ICP') the ICP will request Northern Power Grid ('NPG') to review the substation compound and confirm it meets with their requirements. The ICP will also complete a Connection Agreement requesting NPG to connect the substation to their network. Once this review is completed and NPG are satisfied that the substation compound meets their requirements NPG will proceed to connect the substation to their network. NPG will also issue an Adoption Agreement to be completed by the ICP. The Adoption Agreement when completed transfers the ownership of the substation compound to NPG. Electrification of the fence would take place when the substation has been connected to the electricity.

WORK NO 5: UPGRADE TO MAIN ACCESS TRACK

3.35 The existing access track fronting the B1207 will be used for the development for all phases, namely, construction, operation & maintenance and subsequent decommissioning. The unbound granular track, with 2 No. passing bays, will be upgraded with similar materials and drainage channels where required. Vegetation will be removed in order to achieve visibility splay at the site access for construction and this would be maintained during the operational period. The vegetation management requirements would be set out in the LEMP in accordance with the outline LEMP.

WORK NO. 6: PERIMETER DEVELOPMENT BUFFER

3.36 For the outer edge of the development, a typical development buffer of 10m would be provided between the edge of the order limits and the perimeter fencing. This allows the provision of future mitigation planting should it be required during the lifetime of the development. The provision of any additional mitigation planting would be assessed as part of the ongoing yearly management of the LEMP and submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before its implementation. The buffer area would also accommodate a temporary diversion to the Public Right of Way footpath that would be implemented during the construction and decommissioning periods. The temporary diversion follows the southerly outer edge of the fields containing the solar panels. The purpose of the

temporary diversion is to provide clear separation between construction workers and any members of the public using the public right of way footpath. Development within Work No. 6 include: -

- security fencing, boundary treatment and other means of enclosure and internal access;
- bunds, embankments and swales;
- temporary diversion of public footpath during construction and decommissioning;
- ancient woodland buffer;
- public footpath buffer;
- pond buffer;
- hedge buffer;
- swale buffer; and
- mitigation planting and maintenance corridor. Planting and ecological works incorporating the biodiversity objectives and management prescriptions in accordance with the Outline LEMP.

WORK NO. 7: TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION AND DECOMMISSIONING COMPOUND

3.37 If all elements were constructed as at the same time, then the construction period will take approximately 11 months (up to 47 weeks).

3.38 The supporting Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (Document Ref 7.36 LC TA9.2) assumes the worst-case scenario whereby the entire development is constructed in a single phase. Details of the expected traffic movements are considered in detail through Chapter 9 and the Outline CTMP which includes the maximum expected number of vehicle movements.

3.39 Prior to commencement of any phase of development a Construction Environmental Management Plan, which build upon the Outline CEMPs (Document Refs 7.8 LC

TA4.1 & 7.27 LC TA7.7) and a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan for that phase of development would be submitted to and approved by the relevant planning authority and this will be secured by requirements of the DCO.

3.40 Construction activities will be carried out Monday to Friday 07:00-18:00 and between 08:00 and 13:30 on Saturdays. Where possible, construction deliveries will be coordinated to avoid HGV movements during the traditional AM peak hour (08:00-09:00) and PM peak hour (17:00-18:00).

3.41 During the construction phase (or phases) one main construction compound will serve the development and this will be located off the main site entrance, thus reducing the distance delivery vehicles will need to travel after reaching the site's entrance.

3.42 The temporary construction / decommissioning compound would comprise: -

- Temporary portacabins providing office, canteen, and welfare facilities for construction operatives (the dimension of the portacabins would vary and the maximum size for individual units is expected to be 10m by 3m with a maximum height of 3m).
- Parking area for construction and workers vehicles
- Secure compound for storage
- Temporary hardstanding
- Wheel washing facilities
- Temporary gated compound
- Storage bins for recyclables and other waste

3.43 All construction vehicles will exit through the wheel wash area in order to reduce the spread of mud and dirt onto the local highway network. Temporary roadways may be utilised to access parts of the development site and this would be guided by weather conditions at time of construction. The objective would be to use temporary matting to avoid excessive soil disturbance or compaction. The temporary construction compound would be removed within three months after the completion of work or each phase of work if development is constructed in phases.

OUTLINE LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

3.44 The development proposal is an example of a development which presents considerable opportunity for landscape and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement. The Landscape and Biodiversity proposal are discussed in detail in the supporting Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Document Ref 7.28 LC TA7.8). The objectives are: -

- To create new grassland habitats through seeding existing arable land with of locally appropriate native species
- Hedgerow planting
- To manage the grassland to establish a diverse sward beneath the arrays
- To manage grassland outside the array for wildlife
- To manage areas to provide suitable conditions for arable flora
- To manage hedgerows to provide habitat for a range of species and ensure visual screening of the site from the footpath
- To manage aquatic habitats as necessary
- To provide sheltering features around the site for nearby populations of bats, birds and other notable faunal species
- To assess the need and implement any additional planting required along the outer edge of the development resulting from any significant felling of woodland located outside the boundary of the site.
- To monitor the site and assess the success of management and adherence to the prescribed management
- Provision of 15m where the development site adjoins Scheduled Ancient Woodland.

3.45 Ecological and biodiversity measures are promoted across the entire site and this is enhanced within Work No. 3. Following construction, land between and beneath the panels, namely Work No. 1, would be used for biodiversity enhancements and

seasonal sheep grazing. Tree planting would be introduced along the north east section of the development boundary. The field boundary hedgerows located within the Order Limits will be managed in accordance with the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan.

3.46 The woodland located to the north, east and west of the order limits are not under the control of the applicant and as such will continue to be managed by the respective landowners. The buffer zone located around the inner periphery of the order limits allows for the provision of future mitigation planting should it be required during the lifetime of the development.

3.47 In terms of requirements, prior to commencement of each phase of the authorised development, a LEMP covering that phase of authorised development and in accordance with the outline LEMP would be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.

OPERATIONAL LIFESPAN

3.48 An operational lifespan of 35 years would be sought, starting from the first export date of the development.

3.49 During the operational phase, the activities on site would amount to servicing and maintenance of plant and equipment associated with the development, including solar panels, inverters, transformers, battery energy storage system, substation compound and vegetation management in accordance with the Outline LEMP.

STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS

3.50 The provision of easements for the existing services that traverse the site, such as overhead powerlines and the 21 inch iron water main, are incorporated into the candidate layout design (Document Ref 2.10 LC DRW). No arrays will be erected within the agreed easements and thus unrestricted access will be available to the statutory undertakers at all times. Concrete cross-overs will be provided where the internal access tracks cross any existing underground services.

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CARBON DISPLACEMENT[6]

[6] For every 5MW installed, a solar farm will power over 1,500 homes annually (based on an average annual consumption of 3,300 kWh of electricity for a house) and save 2,150

3.51 Based on the candidate design varying between 150MWp to 200MWp, the solar park would generate clean renewable energy for the equivalent of between 45,000 and 60,000 homes a year. The anticipated CO_2 displacement is between 64,500 and 86,000 tonnes per annum. There could also be additional carbon displacement linked to the associated battery storage if these were charged by renewable energy.

3.52 The proposal would provide a clean, renewable and sustainable form of electricity. It would make a valuable contribution to the generation of electricity at a local level. The scheme would add to the Council's progress in meeting its renewable energy target. It would also assist in meeting national targets.

ROUTING

3.53 It is proposed that construction traffic will arrive from the M180 junction 4, the A15, the A18, the B1208 and B1207 to the site access. From the M180 junction 4 vehicles will use the A15 northbound to the Briggate Lodge Roundabout and then travel east along the A18 towards Brigg. From the A18, vehicles will turn left onto the B1208. The B1208 measures between approximately 5.5 and six metres wide. Vehicles will travel along the B1208 to the junction with the B1207 and then continue straight ahead into the site access.

3.54 No construction vehicles associated with the development proposal would travel through Broughton.

TEMPORARY DIVERSION OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY FOOTPATH DURING CONSTRUCTION AND DECOMMISSIONING.

3.55 Temporary diversion of a section of footpath 214 a public right of way ('PRoW') traversing the Order Limits will be required only during the construction period of the arrays and substation.

3.56 The temporary closure will be secured through the DCO and during the duration of the temporary closure the existing footpath will be diverted along an alternative temporary path which will run around the southern perimeter of the site until it re-joins the existing PRoW at the site boundary.

tonnes of CO2, source the Solar Trade Association https://www.solar-trade.org.uk/solar-farms/

3.57 The temporary diversion will only be required to allow the build out of the solar park and main substation compound and this will be for approximately 11 months. No construction works would be carried out with regards to the solar park and main substation compound until the provision for the temporary footpath has been made available within the site. The temporary diversion will cease following the energisation of the solar panels and the substation compound. Temporary diversion of the footpath would also take place during decommissioning. The temporary diversion is shown on Proposed Temporary Diversion of Public Footpath 214 (Document Ref 2.39 LC DRW)

DECOMMISSIONING

3.58 Following a 35 year generation period, the development would then enter a single decommissioning stage.

3.59 Within six months of cessation a decommissioning strategy would be submitted to the relevant planning authority for approval. The decommissioning strategy would detail how plant and machinery located within the Order Limits would be removed. The decommissioning strategy will follow the principles laid out in the Outline Decommissioning Strategy (Document Ref 7.9 LC TA4.2).

3.60 The exception to this is the substation and DNO access track which will remain in perpetuity or until such time as it is decommissioned by the DNO.

3.61 Temporary diversion of the footpath would also take place during decommissioning.

ALTERNATIVE DESIGN

3.62 Over the course of the design process, the project team have continuously refined the scheme's design to encompass the Council and other stakeholders' feedback at numerous junctures together with specialists' advice. At the preliminary stage of the development, the applicant considered the suitability of a wider parcel of land in-between the steelworks and the B1207 that extended to the north up to Higher Santon. Following preliminary assessment, the northern area was dismissed for reasons that included its proximity to human receptors from Higher Stanton and its predicted higher quality land. Key changes to the design introduced during the non-statutory consultation period included the introduction of a development exclusion zone extending around the former Gokewell Priory; a temporary diversion

of the public right of way during the construction period and the refinement to the approach towards biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures. The biodiversity measures were refined during the statutory consultation period and other alterations for this stage of development included the provision of concrete shoes for the solar panels located within another area of archaeological interest.

SITE SELECTION

3.63 The remaining section of this chapter summarises the site selection process undertaken to identify the development area.

3.64 One of the biggest constraints which has to be considered when developing renewable led energy scheme is securing a viable point of connection to the electricity network. Securing grid connection is very difficult and problematic for energy proposals and sourcing a site with viable grid connection is a reasonable constraint to take into account. Increasingly, electrical connections are being forced back to substations and Bulk Supply Points as the amount of renewable generation connected within the electrical lines has grown. For storage schemes the situation is more complex as the connecting substation must have sufficient export and import capacity.

3.65 The proposed development will be served by an electrical (grid) looped connection to the existing short section of underground 132kV cables within the development site. Typically, the point of connection (PoC) for a project of this size would be located outside the site boundary and in many instances would necessitate the laying of kilometres of underground cable at a substantial cost to connect to the electricity network and potentially rendering projects unviable. The PoC is on the Northern Power Grid (NPG) network section known as Keadby – Broughton – Teed – Scawby Brook overhead 132kV line circuit.

3.66 The applicant has accepted the grid offer from NPG and secured the 99.9MW export capacity required for a project of this size. The grid offer accepted can only be used for the Little Crow Solar Farm and cannot under be transferred to any other site, as this would be deemed by NPG as a significant alteration to the original application. The only viable connection voltage for a project of this size is 132kV and it requires the construction of a new 132kV substation on-site.

3.67 The 99.9MW capacity which has been secured by the applicant, has taken the NPG electricity network to its maximum fault level. Therefore, no further distributed generation connections can be connected on to NPG's existing electricity network, within the locality at this time without further significant reinforcement works to the electricity network. The detailed Grid Network Constraints Report is presented at Appendix 4.3 (Document Ref 7.10 LC TA4.3). It should be noted how national Grid carry out periodic reviews of the network and this in turn may allow the applicant to secure a slightly higher export capacity at time of construction.

3.68 The 99.9MW capacity has also taken the National Grid Electricity Transmission electricity network very close to its network capability NGET has confirmed that upgrades to the 132kV switchgear and cabling at Keadby substation will be required at a budget cost of £22M. This will have a direct impact on the connection costs and timelines for future projects that have not already secured grid connection offers and may render them unviable in terms of cost and timescales. Accordingly, all energy scheme searches start with grid proximity and capacity availability with the incumbent, as this determines where a development can connect to the electricity grid.

3.69 Having established the point of connection, the development site itself was selected through an extensive site sieving exercise based on a range of technical, environmental and economic factors. Whilst each issue is important on its own merits, for nationally significant infrastructure projects each factor must be weighted and measured against other sustainability considerations.

- Solar irradiation levels & shading – An important consideration is selecting a site of suitable shape, orientation and size that can accommodate the proposed development. Large open fields without vegetated boundaries reduce the impact that small fields can have on the layout design. Typically, buffers are left around field edges to vegetation due to shading, tree root protection zones and other constraints such as ditches which have an impact on the installed capacity of an array. So significantly less capacity can be sited within a group of smaller fields compared to fewer larger fields.

- Topography - The preference is for a site with a southerly aspect; however; northerly aspect sites cannot be dismissed. However, the outcome of selecting a site with a northerly aspect would be a need to increase the

overall development footprint of the scheme (operational need to increase the distance between the arrays in order to avoid overshadowing of solar panels).

- Proximity to sensitive human receptors - This criterion requires an assessment of how the proposed development would relate to potentially sensitive human receptors on the site and in relation to neighbouring land uses including proximity to populated areas and or local villages.

- Site access during construction - In order to construct a large scale renewable led energy scheme, an appropriate access for construction vehicles must be available.

- Flood risk - Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Solar panels are categorised as water compatible and may be sited in flood zones 1, 2 3a and 3b. However, the ancillary components (such as Inverters and Substations) are not water compatible. Accordingly, whilst it is acceptable for part of the site to be located within a higher flood risk zone; locating entire sites within such zones should be avoided.

- Landscape considerations - The landscape and visual effects of energy projects will vary on a case by case basis according to the type of development, its location and the landscape setting of the proposed development. For example, the landscape setting may be industrial in nature with a predominance of vertical features, or it may be dominated by individual developments of lesser scale.

- Agricultural land - Ground mounted solar parks are temporary structures and as such they do not lead to the sterilisation of agricultural land. Accordingly, unlike residential development they do not constitute permanent development resulting in the permanent loss of agricultural land. For ground mounted solar parks, national policy seeks to minimise impact on best and most versatile agricultural land except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations.

- Heritage - Historic environment - It is preferable for solar park sites to have low levels of archaeological interest and a lack of designated sites, such as scheduled monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas within or adjacent to the site. Assets within or adjacent to a development site could have an impact on the location and design of an array. Proposals should demonstrate that no substantial harm is caused to heritage assets; where there is an impact on heritage assets relevant mitigation measures should be considered to lessen impact.

- Biodiversity and geological conservation - When assessing a potential solar park site, national and international nature conservation designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland sites and nature reserves are generally avoided as site locations. Areas adjacent to such designations may have potential for development depending on the nature of the designation and of the land potentially subject to development.

- Commercial Agreement with the Landowner(s) - In order to implement a solar park development, the agreement of the landowner(s) is required. Commercial terms have been agreed with the landowner(s) for the construction and operation of a solar and battery energy storage system on the land.

REQUIREMENTS

3.70 The application includes various outline management plans and documents that are intended to be detailed and finalised post-consent and these would be secured through the discharge of various proposed requirements. The suggested requirements are laid out in the draft Development Consent Order (Document Ref 3.1 LC DCO), these cover: -

- Time limit to implement development

- Expiry of development consent

- Decommissioning and site restoration

- Phases of authorised development - The authorised development must not be commenced until a written scheme setting out the phases of construction

of the authorised development has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority

- Detailed Design Approval - No phase of the authorised development may be commenced until written details of the following for that phase have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority
- Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP)
- Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs)
- Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)
- Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)
- Construction hours
- Surface and foul water drainage details
- Archaeology
- Protected Species - No work to commence in any phase until final pre-construction survey work has been carried out for that phase to establish whether a protected species is present on any of the land affected, or likely to be affected, by the authorised development or in any of the trees to be lopped or felled as part of that state of the connection works.
- Temporary diversion to public footpath - Not to commence the authorised development or any decommissioning until a public rights of way management plan for any sections of the public rights of way footpath 214 proposed to be temporarily closed and diverted on the temporary diversion of public footpath plan has been submitted to and, approved by the local planning authority.
- Amendments to approved details - Any amendments to or variations from the approved details must be in accordance with the principles and assessments set out in the environmental statement. Such agreement may only be given in relation to immaterial changes where it has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the local planning authority or that other person that the subject matter of the agreement sought is unlikely to give

rise to any materially new or materially different environmental effect from those assessed in the environmental statement.

4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 By virtue of its potential generating capacity, which stands at over 50MW, this project constitutes a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). Therefore, instead of applying to the local authority for Planning Permission, the developer must apply to the Planning Inspectorate for a different permission called a Development Consent Order (DCO). The process for applying for a Development Consent Order is set out in the Planning Act 2008 (the 'Act')[7].

4.2 The Act introduced a new system for consulting on, examining and determining NSIPs as defined by Section 14 of the Act. The main legislative and procedural requirements relating to NSIPs are set out within the following:

- The Act;
- The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (as amended) (the APFP Regulations); and
- The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the 2017 EIA Regulations).

4.3 The Act is the principal legislation governing the Examination of an application for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and the decision whether to grant development consent. The development consists of a solar photovoltaic (PV) generating station with an output in excess of 50 megawatts (MW) and this currently comprises an NSIP to which sections (s)14(1)(a) and s15(2) of the act apply.

4.4 Section 104(1) of the Act applies if *'a NPS has effect in relation to development of the description to which the application relates'* (a 'relevant National Policy Statement'). In such a case, the SoS would have to determine an application in accordance with the relevant National Policy Statement (NPS), subject to where specific exceptions apply (s104(3)).

[7] The Project constitutes a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) by virtue of section 14 (1)(a) and section 15 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008) which includes within the definition of an NSIP any onshore electricity generating station in England or Wales of 50 Megawatt capacity or more. Under section 31 PA 2008 a development consent order (DCO) is required to develop a NSIP. Under section 37 PA 2008 this can only be granted if an application is made to the Secretary of State (SoS).

4.5 Where s104 does not apply, an application falls to be decided under s105 of the Act. Section 105(2) requires the SoS to have regard to:

- any LIR (within the meaning given by the Act s60(3)) submitted to the SoS before the specified deadline for submission;
- any matters prescribed in relation to development of the description to which the application relates; and
- any other matters which the SoS thinks are both important and relevant to the decision.

4.6 Reflecting on the above, National Policy Statements form the overarching policy documents when determining an application for NSIPs and should form the basis for determination of decisions. However, there is no NPS which specifically deals with ground mounted solar and as such the application must be determined under Section 105. However, there are aspects of three NPSs, which are considered to be both important and relevant to the decision on this application and as such are material consideration. The National Planning Policy Framework and the extant Development Plan for North Lincolnshire are also material but do not override the policies set out in NPSs. The application must primarily therefore demonstrate accordance with the relevant aspects of the following: -

- National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1);
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3); and,
- National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks (EN-5)

National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) dated July 2011

4.7 The National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) sets out the national policy for energy infrastructure, which encompasses renewable energy schemes generating more than 50MW. EN-1 is part of a suite of national policy statements issued by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change and ratified by Parliament.

4.8 It has effect in combination with the relevant technology specific NPS, National Policy for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3), and together they provide the primary basis for decisions made by the Examining Authority.

4.9 EN-1 is divided into five parts.

4.10 **Part 1** sets out the background to the policy document. **Paragraph 1.71** identify how all energy NPSs have been subject to an Appraisal of Sustainability ["AoS"], as required by the Planning Act 2008. The key points from the AoS for EN-1, as set out at **paragraph 1.7.2**, are: -

- The energy NPSs should speed up the transition to a low carbon economy and thus help realise UK climate change commitments sooner that continuation under the current planning system.

- The energy NPSs are likely to contribute positively towards improving the vitality and competitiveness of the UK energy market by providing greater clarity for developers which should improve the UK's security of supply and, less directly, have a positive effects for the health and well-being I the medium to longer term through helping to secure affordable supplies of energy and minimizing fuel poverty, positive medium and long term effects are also likely for equalities;

4.11 **Part 2 of EN-1** sets out the Government policy on energy and energy development infrastructure. It confirms the following;

- Government is committed to meeting its legally binding target to see greenhouse gas emissions be at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels[8];

- the need to effect a transition to a low carbon economy so as to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and

- the importance of maintaining secure and reliable energy supplies as older fossil fuel generating plant closes as the UK moves towards a low carbon economy

4.12 Government's wider objective for energy infrastructure includes contributing to sustainable development and ensuring that energy infrastructure is safe.

4.13 **Paragraph 2.2.27** of the EN-1 goes on to state

[8] UK is now working towards a 2050 net zero target

"Sustainable development is relevant not just in terms of addressing climate change, but because the way energy infrastructure is deployed affects the well-being of society and the economy."

4.14 **Part 3 of EN-1** defines and sets out the need that exists for nationally significant energy infrastructure. With regards to decision making, paragraph 3.1.1. of EN1-1, states that

"the UK needs all the types of energy infrastructure covered in this NPS in order to achieve energy security at the same time as dramatically reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

4.15 **Paragraph 3.1.2 states**

"It is for industry to propose new energy infrastructure projects within the strategic framework set by Government. The Government does not consider it appropriate for planning policy to set targets for or limits on different technologies".

It then goes on to identify how NSIP applications should therefore be assessed on the basis that the Government has already demonstrated that there is a need for those types of infrastructure and that the scale and urgency of that need is as described in the EN-1.

4.16 In terms of the planning balance, **paragraph 3.1.4 of EN-1** states

"The [determining authority] should give substantial weight to the contribution which projects would make towards satisfying this need when considering applications for development consent under the Planning Act 2008".

4.17 **Section 3.3 of the EN-1** discusses the need for new nationally significant electricity infrastructure projects. The key reasons why Government believes there is an urgent need for new electricity NSIPs are identified as: -

- Meeting the energy security and carbon reduction objectives;
- Need to replace closing electricity generating capacity;
- The need for more electricity capacity to support an increased supply from renewables.

- Future increases in electricity demand; and
- The urgency of the need for new electricity capacity.

4.18 **Paragraph 3.3.11** identifies how renewable sources, such as solar, are intermittent and as such will require back-up sources at times when the availability of intermittent renewable sources is low. **Paragraph 3.3.12** goes on to identify how electrical storage technologies can be used to compensate for the intermittence. The application proposal delivers on both of these fronts.

4.19 **Part 3.4 of EN-1** specifically discusses the role of renewable energy and states; -

> The UK has committed to sourcing 15% of its total energy (across the sectors of transport, electricity and heat) from renewable sources by 2020 and new projects need to continue to come forward urgently to ensure that we meet this target. Projections suggest that by 2020 about 30% or more of our electricity generation – both centralised and small-scale – could come from renewable sources, compared to 6.7% in 2009. The Committee on Climate Change in Phase 1 of its advice to Government in September 2010 agreed that the UK 2020 target was appropriate, and should not be increased. Phase 2 was published in May 2011 and provided recommendations on the post 2020 ambition for renewables in the UK, and possible pathways to maximise their contribution to the 2050 carbon reduction targets.
>
> Large scale deployment of renewables will help the UK to tackle climate change, reducing the UK's emissions of carbon dioxide by over 750 million tonnes by 2030. It will also deliver up to half a million jobs by 2020 in the renewables sector…

4.20 With regards to the urgency for renewables, **paragraph 3.4.5** explains that in order to largely decarbonize the power sector by 2030, it is necessary to bring forward new renewable electricity generation projects as soon as possible. It goes on to state

"The need for new renewable electricity generation projects is therefore urgent".

4.21 **Part 4 of EN-1** sets out certain strategic principles to be applied in respect of nationally significant energy infrastructure schemes including the presumption in favour of development.

4.22 **Paragraph 4.1.2** states how the determining authority should start with the presumption in favour of granting consent to applications for energy NSIPs. That presumption applies unless any more specific and relevant polices set out in the relevant NPSs clearly indicate that consent should be refused.

4.23 The presumption is also subject to the provisions of the Planning Act 2008.

4.24 **Paragraph 4.1.4** of EN-1 states how in considering any proposed development, and in particular when weighing its adverse impacts against its benefits, the determining authority should take into account: -

- Its potential benefits including its contribution to meeting the need for energy infrastructure, job creation and any long-term or wider benefits; and
- Its potential adverse impacts, including any long-term and cumulative adverse impacts, as well as any measures to avoid, reduce or compensate for any adverse impacts.

4.25 Development consent obligations that are agreed with local authority is considered through **paragraph 4.1.8** and states that the determining authority may take these into account provided that they are relevant to planning, necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms, directly relates to the proposed development, fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development, and reasonable in all other respects.

4.26 **Part 4.4** deal with alternatives. **Paragraph 4.4.1** states

"From a policy perspective this NPS does not contain any general requirement to consider alternatives or to establish whether the proposed project represents the best option".

4.27 That said **paragraph 4.4.2** identified how applicants are obliged to include in their ES, as a matter of fact, information about the main alternatives they have studied and this should include an indication of the main reasons for the applicant's choice, taking into account the environmental, social and economic effects.

4.28 **Paragraph 4.4.3** goes on to state that where there is a policy or legal requirement to consider alternatives the applicant should describe the alternatives considered in compliance with these requirements.

4.29 On the issue of design for energy infrastructure, **paragraph 4.5.1** of the EN-1 identifies how (inter alia)

"Applying "good design" to energy projects should produce sustainable infrastructure sensitive to place, efficient in the use of natural resources and energy used in their construction and operation, matched by an appearance that demonstrates good aesthetic as far as possible. It is acknowledged, however that the nature of much energy infrastructure development will often limit the extent to which it can contribute to the enhancement of the quality of the area".

4.30 **Paragraph 4.9.1** of the EN-1 recognises that

"The connection of a proposed electricity generation plant to the electricity network is an important consideration for applicants wanting to construct or extend generation plant".

It goes on to state how

"In the market system, it is for the applicant to ensure that there will be necessary infrastructure and capacity within an existing or planned transmission or distribution network to accommodate the electricity generated".

4.31 **Part 5 of the EN-1** sets out the generic impacts that may or may not be pertinent to specific projects, these are lists as: -

4.32 Table 5.1 EN-1 Generic Impacts

Topic	**Commentary**
Land use	With regards to agricultural land classification, para 5.10.8 states how applicants should seek to minimize impacts on the best and most versatile agricultural land except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations. Paragraph 5.10.15 identifies how the determining authority should ensure that applicants provide justification when locating sites on best and most versatile agricultural land.

	With regards to mitigation, EN-1 states that there may be little that can be done to mitigate the direct effects of an energy project on the existing use of the proposed site.
Landscape and Visual	Paragraph 5.9.8 sets out that for nationally significant energy infrastructure, projects need to be designed carefully, having regard to siting, operational and other relevant constraints the aim should be to minimize harm to the landscape, providing reasonable mitigation where possible and appropriate.
Biodiversity and geological conservation	As a general principle, development should aim to avoid significant harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests, including through mitigation and consideration of reasonable alternatives; where significant harm cannot be avoided, then appropriate compensation measures should be sought.
Historic Environment	Paragraph 5.8.8 states that as part of the ES the applicant should provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets assessed by the proposed development and the contribution of their setting to that significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset. Paragraph 5.8.12 goes on to state that in considering the impact of the proposed development on any heritage asset, the determining authority should take into account the particular nature of the significance of the heritage assets and the value that they hold for this and future generations. This understanding should be used to avoid or minimize conflict between conservation of that significance and proposals for development.

Dust, odour, artificial lighting	Paragraph 5.6.3 of EN-1 recognises that for energy NSIP, some impacts on amenity for local communities is likely to be unavoidable. The aim should be to keep impacts to a minimum, and at a level that is acceptable.
Flood Risk	Applications for energy projects of 1 hectare of greater in flood zone 1 should be accompanied by a flood risk assessment. The surface water drainage arrangements for any project should be such that the volumes and peal flow rate of surface water leaving the site are no greater than the rate prior to the proposed project, unless specific off-site arrangements are made and results in the same net effect.
Air Quality and Emission	Paragraph 5.2.6 states "*Where the project is likely to have adverse effects on air quality the applicant should undertake an assessment of the impacts of the proposed project as part of the Environmental Statement*". The ES should describe: any significant air emissions, their mitigation and any residual effects distinguishing between the project stages and taking account of any significant emissions from any road traffic generated by the project; the predicted absolute emission levels of the proposed project, after mitigation methods have been applied; existing air quality levels and the relative change in air quality from existing levels; and any potential eutrophication impacts.
Socio Economic	Paragraph 5.12.3 states "*Where the project is likely to have socio-economic impacts at local or regional levels, the applicant should undertake and include in their application an assessment of these impacts as part of the ES".* The effects should consider: the creation of jobs and training opportunities; the provision of additional local services and improvements to local infrastructure, including the provision

	of educational and visitor facilities; effects on tourism; the impact of a changing influx of workers during the different construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the energy infrastructure. This could change the local population dynamics and could alter the demand for services and facilities in the settlements nearest to the construction work (including community facilities and physical infrastructure such as energy, water, transport and waste). There could also be effects on social cohesion depending on how populations and service provision change as a result of the development; and cumulative effects – if development consent were to be granted to for a number of projects within a region and these were developed in a similar timeframe, there could be some short-term negative effects, for example a potential shortage of construction workers to meet the needs of other industries and major projects within the region.
Traffic and Transport	With regards to decision taking, EN-1 recognises that a new energy NSIP may give rise to substantial impacts on the surrounding transport infrastructure and the Planning Inspectorate should therefore ensure that the applicant has sought to mitigate these impacts, including during the construction phase of the development. Where the proposed mitigation measures are insufficient to reduce the impact on the transport infrastructure to acceptable levels, the IPC [now PINS] should consider requirements to mitigate adverse impacts on transport networks arising from the development.
Water Quality	Where the project is likely to have effects on the water environment, the applicant should undertake an assessment of the existing status of, and impacts of the proposed project on, water quality, water resources and physical

	characteristics of the water environment as part of the ES or equivalent

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)

4.33 EN-3 contains policies specifically relating to specific renewable energy infrastructure and it is designed to be read in conjunction with EN-1. The document focuses on schemes relating to onshore wind, offshore wind and energy from biomass. Paragraph 1.8.2 states that the NPS does not cover any other types of onshore renewable energy generation that were technically viable over 50MW when the document was published in July 2011. The emergence of large scale ground mounted solar projects therefore follows the publication of this document.

National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks (EN-5)

4.34 The National Policy Statement on Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) was adopted in July 2011. Whilst EN-5 principally covers above ground electricity lines of 132kV, paragraph 1.8.2 confirms that EN-5 will also be relevant if the electricity network constitutes an associated development for which consent is sought, such as a generating station.

4.35 Part 2 of EN-5 sets out a number of assessment and technology specific matters. Paragraph 2.2.2 points out that the location of electricity networks will often be determined by the particular generating station and the existing electricity network. Part 2 sets out particular generic impacts concerning biodiversity and geological conservation, landscape and visual, noise and vibration, and electric and magnetic field effects.

4.36 The Development will incorporate a new substation and a relatively short underground 132kV connection to the existing 132kV underground cable located close to the centre of the site, and as such minimises the scale and extent of the new development required as existing infrastructure can be utilised. In line with EN-5, the new Development substation has been assessed as part of the Development and the findings of its effects on the environment are set out in the ES.

National Planning Policy Framework

4.37 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

4.38 Overall, the NPPF sets out the over-arching presumption in favour of sustainable development. Material for this application is how Government has placed a greater emphasis on the delivery of infrastructure, including energy and how this is integral towards fulfilling the economic arm of achieving sustainable development including energy and how this is integral towards fulfilling the economic arm of achieving sustainable development [9].

4.39 The Framework is clear that planning decisions must be made in accordance with planning law. Paragraph 2 states that planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Local Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 2 continues that: "Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements". Paragraph 5 states: -

> The Framework does not contain specific policies for nationally significant infrastructure projects. These are determined in accordance with the decision-making framework in the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and relevant national policy statements for major infrastructure, as well as any other matters that are relevant (which may include the National Planning Policy Framework). National policy statements form part of the overall framework of national planning policy, and may be a material consideration in preparing plans and making decisions on planning applications.

4.40 **Paragraph 8** of the Framework identifies how the planning system has three overarching objectives towards achieving sustainable development.

[9] As part of the second iteration of the Framework (2nd edition), Government introduced new wording that requires to decision taker to take into consideration the recommendations of the National Infrastructure Committee. The definition of economic objective was also been extended to include the identification and coordination of the provision of infrastructure.

4.41 The NPPF stated how these objectives are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives. Paragraph 8(a) *'an economic objective'* has been strengthened and the NPPF now makes it clearer how ***"identifying and coordinating provision of infrastructure"*** is integral towards fulfilling the economic arm of achieving sustainable development. The three overarching objectives are listed as: -

> a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
>
> b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
>
> c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

4.42 **Paragraph 9** advises how these overarching objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of policies in the Framework. Paragraph 10 states *"So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a* ***presumption in favour of sustainable development"***.

4.43 **Paragraph 15** of the Framework sets out how the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. **Paragraph 20** identifies how, in line with the presumption on favour of sustainable development, plans should make sufficient provision for the provision of infrastructure and energy.

4.44 **Section 14** of the NPPF relates to meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. **Paragraph 150** of the NPPF sets out the planning policy perspective with regards to increasing the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy. Through the paragraph, Government requires the decision maker to: -

> a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);
>
> b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and
>
> c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.

4.45 Section 15 of the NPPF relates to conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. **Paragraph 170** highlights that new development should be prevented from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. It identifies how decisions should provide net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

North Lincolnshire Local Development Framework (LDF)

4.46 The legal requirement under s38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to determine applications for development consent in accordance with North Lincolnshire's Development Plan documents does not apply to applications under the 2008 Act. However, NPS EN-1 paragraph 4.1.5 provides that the policies contained within the Development Plan documents and other Local Development Framework documents may be considered important and relevant in planning decision making, but national policy will prevail where there is a conflict with the Development Plan for the purpose of the Secretary of State's planning decision

making. The Development Plan is therefore a material consideration for the Secretary of State and has accordingly been considered as part of the policy.

4.47 The components of the Development Plan pertinent to the order limits and development proposal comprises: -

i. **Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted June 2011).**

4.48 The Core Strategy DPD was adopted by North Lincolnshire Council in June 2011 and it sets out the local policy framework to deliver sustainable growth within the administrative area up to plan period of 2026. One of the strategic objectives of the Core Strategy (objective no. 7) is to promote the use of renewable energy and support the reduction in the consumption of non-renewable resources such as fossil fuels. This application proposal achieves these requirements.

4.49 The relevant policies pertinent to the development proposal are set out below: -

- Policy CS1: Spatial Strategy for North Lincolnshire
- Policy CS2 Delivering More Sustainable Development
- Policy CS5 Delivering Quality Design in North Lincolnshire
- Policy CS6 Historic Environment
- Policy CS16 North Lincolnshire's Landscape, Greenspace and Waterspace
- Policy CS17 Biodiversity
- Policy CS18 Sustainable Resource and Climate Change
- Policy CS19 Flood Risk

4.50 Each policy is identified in turn below.

4.51 **Policy CS1** of the Core Strategy sets out the broad framework around which the spatial development strategy for North Lincolnshire is based upon. **Policy CS2** considers sustainable development and states that only development which is essential to the functioning of the countryside will be allowed to take place. Notably it states sustainable development includes increasing the use of renewable energy in construction and operation.

4.52 The amplification to the policy states at paragraph 5.59 *"Whilst policy CS1 sets out the principle elements that make up the overall spatial strategy, policy CS2 sets out how this will be implemented using a sequential approach to the location of future development that is based on the settlement hierarchy and taking into account other sustainability criteria. This meets national and regional planning policy requirements to deliver development in the most appropriate places"*.

4.53 This sequential approach sets out how development proposals within North Lincolnshire should focus on previously developed land and buildings within the Scunthorpe urban area, followed by other suitable infill opportunities within the town, then by appropriate greenfield urban extensions.

4.54 **Policy CS5** sets out the design principles for all new development within the administrative area of North Lincolnshire and states that all new development should be well designed and appropriate for their context. It should contribute to creating a sense of place. A key criterium is the incorporation of appropriate landscaping and planting which enhances biodiversity or geological features.

4.55 **Policy CS6** relates to historic environment and promotes the effective management of North Lincolnshire's historic assets including preserving and enhancing the rich archaeological heritage.

4.56 Through **Policy CS16** the Council will seek to protect, enhance and support a diverse and multi-functional network of landscape and greenspace by requiring development to improve the quality and quantity of landscapes. This includes the creation and maintenance of green infrastructure.

4.57 **Policy CS17** relates to biodiversity and states that development must retain, protect and enhance features of biological and geological interest to produce a net gain in biodiversity by designing in wildlife, and ensuring any unavoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated.

4.58 **Policy CS18** relates to sustainable resources and climate change. The policy aims to foster development which reduces North Lincolnshire carbon footprint. The preamble of the policy states at **paragraph 11.21** of the Core Strategy is pertinent to this application proposal and states ***"The key issue for the LDF is how it reconciles the need to reduce reliance on fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas by generating energy from renewable resources with the need to***

protect and enhance our landscapes and minimise their impact on communities". The proposal contributes to these requirements.

4.59 The policy actively promotes the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy in appropriate locations including the following criteria:-

- Supporting renewable sources of energy in appropriate locations, where possible, and ensuring that development maximises the use of combined heat and power, particularly at the South Humber Bank employment site and where energy demands for more than 2MW are required for development.

- Supporting new technology and development for carbon capture and the best available clean and efficient energy technology, particularly in relation to the heavy industrial users in North Lincolnshire, to help reduce CO2 emissions.

4.60 **Policy CS19** considers flood risk and states that the council will support development proposals that avoid areas of current or future flood risk, and which do not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

Other Relevant Material Considerations

4.61 There is an array of other material considerations that are considered relevant to the Development and many of these are acknowledged within the various chapters of the ES, notably Chapter 5 (Document Ref 6.5 LC ES CH5) and the Statement of Need (Document Ref 3.4 LC DCO).

4.62 Rather than set all of this in the main body of this Statement, a simple list of sources is provided with any key policy or other legislative drivers summarised in Section 5. This is not a definitive list of material considerations and is not intended to provide a review of all documents assessed throughout the full ES.

4.63 Other material planning considerations include:-

- North Lincolnshire's Supplementary Planning Document – Planning for Renewable Energy (published November 2011);

- North Lincolnshire's Supplementary Planning Guidance – Planning for Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Development (published January 2016);
- National Planning Practice Guidance Suite, including;
    i. Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (last updated 18 June 2015)
    ii. Practical Guidance on Climate Change (last updated 27 March 2015)
- European Directive 2009/28/EC
- UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009);
- Energy Security Strategy (2012);
- Energy Act (2013); and
- Clean Growth Strategy (2017).

5. PLANNING APPRAISAL

5.1 This section of the Statement contains a detailed analysis of the Application against the relevant planning policy and other material considerations. These considerations have been derived from an understanding of the process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and the key policy documents set out in the previous section, and various assessments and surveys of the site and its surrounds that form part of the Application.

5.2 This appraisal begins by assessing the 'principle' of the Application in policy terms to understand the need for the development and how alternatives have been considered, as required and understood by various key policies.

5.3 The relevant planning issues are then considered against the development management topics set out in Part 5 of EN-1. Therefore, this section is broken down into the following issues which are considered pertinent to aid the decision-making process.

- **Principle of Development**

a) *Need for the development;*

b) *Sustainable development; and,*

c) *Alternatives*

- **Land Use and Agricultural Land**
- **Landscape and Visual**

d) *Landscape character*

e) *Visual amenity*

- **Biodiversity and Geological Conservation**
- **Historic Environment**

f) *Physical effects*

g) *Non-physical effects*

- **Dust, Odour, Artificial Lighting**
- **Flood Risk**
- **Air Quality and Emission**
- **Traffic and Transport**; and
- **Water Quality**

Each of these issues is examined in turn.

Principle of Development

Need for the development

5.4 The explicit need to introduce a step change in how the country deals with the climate change was recognised by Parliament who, on 1 May 2019, declared an environmental and climate change emergency following the finding of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change that to avoid more than 1.5°C rise in global warming, global emissions would need to fall by around 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching net zero by around 2050. Through the declaration, Government recognises a need to move swiftly to capture economic opportunities and green jobs in the low carbon economy while managing risks for workers and communities currently reliant on carbon intensive sectors. As part of its contributions to international efforts, the UK also has domestic legislation and policies in place to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

5.5 The Climate Change Act 2008 established long-term statutory targets for the UK to achieve reductions in greenhouse gases by 2050 against a 1990 baseline. The Act originally set a legally binding target of an 80% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. On 12 June 2019, as a direct response to the climate change emergency declaration, the Government laid the draft Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 to amend the Climate Change Act 2008 by introducing a target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is otherwise known as a 'net zero target' because some emissions can remain if they are offset by removal from the atmosphere and/or by trading in carbon units. The Order was made on 26 June 2019 and came into force on 27 June 2019.

5.6 In June 2020, the Committee on Climate Change published its Reducing UK Emissions report which provides an annual review of UK progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This is the first annual report since the UK set a legally-binding 'net zero by 2050' target, and was due to be released in the lead up to the UN climate conference in Glasgow (before this was postponed and pushed back to 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic).

5.7 The report provides important new advice to Government on framing a recovery from Covid-19 that both accelerates the transition to Net Zero and strengthens our resilience to the impacts of climate change, whilst driving new economic activity. The report states that energy networks must be strengthened in order to support the electrification of transport and heating. The report highlights five investment priorities, one of which addresses the UKs energy networks. Headliners for the report can be summarises as: T

- Effective and decisive action is needed to secure our recovery from COVID-19 and also to accelerate the transition to Net Zero and strengthen our resilience to the changing climate.

- It is 12 months since Net Zero became law, requiring the UK to reduce net emissions of greenhouse gases to zero by 2050. Initial steps towards a net-zero policy package have been taken, but this was not the year of policy progress that the Committee called for in 2019. **Current policy is insufficient for even the existing targets and a net zero target would not be credible unless policy is ramped up significantly.**

- Power sector plans are advancing in line with the large scale required to achieve net-zero target. The power sector has been a major success story in the past decade. Emissions have decreased around 62% over the period 2008 - 2018 reflecting real decarbonisation of energy produced in the UK. The carbon intensity of the grid fell from around 500 gCO_2/kWh in 2010 to 246 gCO_2/kWh in 2018. Electricity generated from renewables was 25 TWh in 2008 (7% of mix), and rose to 100 TWh in 2018 (34% of mix). This has resulted in a transition from fossil fuel-based power to renewables Electrification will increase demand for electricity over the coming decades.

- The goal to substantially expand supplies of low-carbon power must be accompanied by steps in the Energy White Paper to encourage a resilient

and flexible energy system. The Energy White Paper was scheduled for publication in Spring 2020, but the Covid-19 outbreak has delayed this.

- **Delivery of renewable energy generation must continue to progress with great urgency in order to meet the UKs next carbon budget. Consistently strong deployment of low-carbon generation is crucial to the Net Zero target.**

5.8 The National Grid has also carried out extensive work on what needs to be done to reach UK's 2050 net zero target. It's Future Energy Scenarios[10], published in July 2020, identifies how reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050 is achievable. However, it requires immediate action across all key technologies and policy areas and full engagement across society and consumers. The document explores four different pathways towards decarbonising the UK energy system and these are linked to variables from the level of decentralisation to the level of societal change. Importantly, National Grid identifies that a 'steady progression' approach will not enable the UK to meet its 2050 target. In reaching net zero emissions by 2050, National Grid believes that: -

- At least 40 GW of new low carbon capacity is connected to electricity system in the next 10 years alone.
- At least 3 GW of wind and 1.4 GW of solar need to be built every year from now until 2050.

5.9 It is therefore acknowledged that in order to achieve net zero major investment and electrification of much of our heating, industry and transport is required. Cleaner power generation and major changes in the way that energy is used will also be needed.

5.10 BREXIT is also a material consideration for energy and climate change. Government has explored the relationship between BREXIT, energy and climate change through its Briefing Paper published on 9 November 2018[11]. The salient points are: -

[10] https://online.flippingbook.com/view/621114/22/
[11] House of Commons Briefing Paper: Brexit Energy and Climate Change

- There is currently uncertainty about the Brexit impact on a number of issues including: the UK's departure from Euratom, the future of the EU internal energy market (IEM) and the status of the single electricity market (SEM) on the island of Ireland.

- The impact of Brexit on UK energy and climate change policy is subject to the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. The possible consequences vary based on whether the outcome is a full Brexit deal, a sector-specific deal, or in the case of no Brexit deal.

- Brexit has the potential to impact the UK's civil nuclear industry, including nuclear supply of electricity

- The UK is currently a full member of the EU internal energy market (IEM). The IEM allows harmonised, tariff-free trading of gas and electricity across Europe (through interconnectors), leading to lower prices and greater security of supply. Britain has four electricity interconnectors with Europe and the island of Ireland providing 4GW of electricity interconnector capacity: 2GW to France (IFA); 1GW to the Netherlands (BritNed); 500MW to Northern Ireland (Moyle); and 500MW to the Republic of Ireland (East West).

- The IEM facilitates harmonised, tariff-free trade across these interconnectors. The flow of electricity between interconnected markets is driven by cost differentials. When the price of electricity is lower in one market, energy will flow from that market to the higher priced market. The effect of this is to make the prices in each converge - they increase in the exporting market and decrease in the importing market.

- As wholesale gas and electricity prices in the UK are generally higher than elsewhere in Europe, interconnection has caused a reduction in wholesale prices, and hence consumer prices in the UK.

5.11 Leaving the IEM has the potential to impact the trade of energy through interconnectors. The Briefing Paper identifies how one potential impact of leaving the IEM is an increase in the cost of energy imports and this in turn would be passed on to UK's householders and businesses. In terms of energy security, it notes how the interest of the UK should be to increase the flexibility and resilience of grid,

especially with increasing intermittent renewables. The development proposal would contribute towards the objectives set out in the briefing note.

5.12 The **Energy Act (2013)**[12] aimed to '*power low-carbon economic growth for the UK'*. At its core is the need to ensure that, as old power plants are taken offline, the UK remains able to generate enough energy to meet its needs even if demand increases. Doing this while also decarbonising requires significant investment in new infrastructure to be brought forward.

5.13 The Government places significant emphasis on securing increased investment across the energy systems whilst minimising, as much as possible, the public costs for securing such investments and makes multiple references to investing in solar without government support. The assessment is highly supportive of low carbon energy and advises that the crucial first step to reducing carbon emissions is to enable an increasing deployment of renewables. The Government believes that a suitable mix of renewable energy is required, but highlights that solar energy is an effective low cost option in the production of energy and with its use in the longer run consumers would pay the same in real terms for their energy as today.

5.14 These policies and targets feature prominently in the energy NSIP regime and National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1). Part 1 of EN1 emphasises that energy NSIPs must speed up the transition to a low carbon economy and contribute positively towards improving the vitality and competitiveness of the UK energy market. Part 2 of EN-1 specifically references the commitment to meeting the UKs legally binding target to see greenhouse gas emissions cut. The development accords with these requirements.

5.15 For renewables, EN-1 is clear that there is a need for these types of infrastructure and that the scale and urgency ensure that there must be no upper limits on capacity. Decision makers must give substantial weight to the contribution NSIP projects will make towards satisfying this need. However, EN-1 is also clear that meeting these targets requires major investment in new technologies, electrification of much of the heating, industry and transport, prioritisation of sustainable energy and cleaner power generation. Key to unlocking this in the ability to provide power when it is most required, i.e. at night and winter months. The battery element of the scheme, while not a renewable energy itself, enables

[12] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/32/contents/enacted

the transition to low carbon energy production by storing energy and releasing it into the system when it is most required. Furthermore, this project is being brought forward without public subsidies and relies solely on private sector investment.

5.16 Whilst EN-3 provides assessment and technology-specific information on certain renewable energy technologies it does not include solar PV development. Paragraph 1.8.2. explains the reasoning for this, i.e. at the time of drafting EN-3, which was published in 2011, Government did not consider other forms of renewable energy generation to be viable over the relevant NSIP threshold. The Development offers the opportunity to harness solar power at utility scale thus provide a clean, affordable and reliable energy to the consumers. The Development is considered to comply in principle, as it will contribute to the Government's objective for transition to a low carbon economy and increasing the energy generation from large scale renewable energy infrastructure.

5.17 Turning to the National Policy Statement on Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5). The Development will incorporate a new substation and a relatively short underground 132kV connection to the existing 132kV underground cable located close to the centre of the site, and as such minimises the scale and extent of the new development required as existing infrastructure can be utilised. In line with EN-5, the new Development substation has been assessed as part of the Development and the findings of its effects on the environment are set out in the ES. The development complies with relevant requirements of EN-5.

5.18 At a regional level, the development aligns with the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership's Clean Energy ambition as set out in its Blueprint for an Industrial Strategy, and has the potential to contribute to aspirations to cement the Humber's position as the UK's energy estuary, building upon the sub-region's prominent role in the shift to decarbonise national energy production.

5.19 At a local level the North Lincolnshire Core Strategy through Policy CS2 encourages the effective use of land by sequentially focussing large scale solar parks on previously developed land. However, it also notes that previously developed land is a limited resource within North Lincolnshire whereby the Core Strategy states a significant amount of Greenfield development will be required to accommodate new homes[13]. The shortage of previously developed land is clearly reflected and

[13] See para. 8.14 of the North Lincolnshire LDF Core Strategy 2011

referenced within the Development Plan for North Lincolnshire whereby a collection of land-use allocations for permanent development on greenfield.

5.20 Policy C of the North Lincolnshire's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Solar Photovoltaics also seeks to steer such developments to previously developed land but it goes on to state that such sites can also be located within industrial land and its margins. Importantly though, the SPG does not place an embargo on the use of agricultural land and rather seeks that it is located on poorer quality land and not higher quality agricultural land. Where higher quality land is required this should be clearly justified. As stated elsewhere in this Statement, the site is identified as mainly comprising Grade 3b agricultural land (poorer quality), the contributing factors to the soil limitations are due to limited depth and/or elevated stone and sand content.

5.21 Therefore, it is considered that there is a demonstrable and overarching policy drive from both planning and other legislative documents to deliver renewable energy on the scale and size proposed by this Development. The urgency by which this needs to be delivered should be given great weight in the decision making process and any adverse impacts of the development must be considered against this comprehensive and pressing need to deliver energy capacity in the form of renewable sources.

Sustainable development

5.22 Turning to sustainable development, paragraph 8 of the Framework confirms there are three dimensions to sustainable development, these are economic, social and environmental gains. Paragraph 8 advises that in order to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be pursued in mutually supportive ways through the planning system.

Economic Gains

5.23 NPS EN-1, Paragraph 5.12.1 states that energy infrastructure projects may have socioeconomic impacts at local and reginal levels. Paragraph 5.12.2 advises that where a project is likely to have such effects, they should be assessed as part of the EIA, whilst paragraph 5.12.3 provides guidance for the assessment.

5.24 Chapter 11 of the Environmental Statement (Document Ref 6.11 LC ES CH11) provides an assessment of the Socio-Economic impact the scheme. The salient points are set out below.

5.25 The development will provide the host community with employment and business opportunities for component suppliers / installers and those involved in grid connection, transport and logistics. Where possible, local businesses will be contracted for relevant parts of the scope of works over the period of construction (labour and materials such as hardcore etc), operation and maintenance. There will be additional induced impacts during the construction period with any incoming construction workers (engineers, project managers etc) spending their wages at a local level (restaurants, retail stores etc) and using local accommodation.

5.26 North Lincolnshire has an older population when compared with the regional and national picture, while jobs growth has been flat over the last five years. Wages are also below the UK average, but higher than Yorkshire and The Humber as a whole. North Lincolnshire is also faced with the issue of having a net outflow of commuters who work in other parts of the region. The flat labour market and net outflow of commuters would suggest that more developments that create new employment opportunities are needed to support growth in the District.

5.27 In respect of the construction phase, the assessment indicates that the Proposed Development will have the following temporary effects:

- 233 direct and indirect/induced construction jobs and indirect/induced supply chain jobs over the six-month construction programme.
- £6.3million of gross value added over the six-month construction programme.
- £160million of direct capital investment during the six-month construction programme.

5.28 In respect of the operational phase, the assessment suggests that the Proposed Development will have the following permanent effects:

- 13 net additional jobs in the North Lincolnshire economy.

- £660,000 of gross value added per annum in the North Lincolnshire economy or £5.7 million over ten years (present value).

5.29 Overall, the proposal would provide renewable energy infrastructure that would contribute towards building a strong, responsive carbon zero economy.

Social Gains

5.30 Social gain would be provided through the generation of local electricity that will be connected directly to the local grid; the proposal would reduce reliance upon overseas energy sources.

5.31 The energy production would help to meet the national and local need for energy and therefore the development would fulfil an important social role.

Environmental Gains

5.32 Turning to environmental gains these would be secured through carbon reduction, soil improvements and local biodiversity enhancements. As detailed elsewhere in this statement, the proposed development would help support the transition to a low carbon future and produce a significant amount of renewable energy. Turning to soil improvements, the proposal will eliminate compaction, allow the soil and vegetation properties to improve and contain the rainfall within the site by infiltration into the ground. The proposed solar farm is an example of a development which presents considerable opportunity for landscape and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement and the following objectives have been set for the development: -

- **Objective 1**: To create new grassland habitats through seeding existing arable land with of locally appropriate native species

5.33 Following installation of the solar panels, the grassland within and beneath the solar panels will be seeded with a seed mix containing a variety of native grasses and wildflowers suitable for grazing.

5.34 Easements throughout the site will be seeded with a lowland acid grassland mix which contains the larval and adult foodplants of wall Lasiommata megera, grayling Hipparchia semele and small heath Coenonympha pamphilus butterflies, which are

species targeted for conservation nationally and which are known to occur within the locality.

- **Objective 2:** Hedgerow planting

5.35 Following the installation of the security fencing adjacent to the public footpath, native hedgerows containing locally appropriate species including Spindle and Purging Buckthorn will be planted in front of the fencing.

- **Objective 3:** To manage the grassland to establish a diverse sward beneath the arrays of ground mounted solar panel

5.36 Parts of the site around the arrays will be managed to create diverse grassland habitat, which will benefit a wide range of wildlife. Within these areas, grazing will be restricted during the summer months to allow plants to flower and set seed, and also to provide optimal conditions for ground nesting farmland bird species.

- **Objective 4:** To manage grassland outside the array for wildlife

5.37 The grassland within the field margins will be managed as rough tussocky grassland that will benefit a range of species including birds, bats, small mammals, invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians.

- **Objective 5:** To manage areas to provide suitable conditions for arable flora

5.38 Parts of the site will continue to be cultivated to allow rare arable plants to persist at the site following the cessation of arable farming. A particular focus will be given to providing conditions suitable for henbane Hyoscyamus niger, which is a species vulnerable to future extinction in the wild and was the species of highest priority to nature conservation recorded at the site. Arable field margins are a habitat type targeted for conservation both locally and nationally

- **Objective 6:** To manage hedgerows to provide habitat for a range of species and ensure visual screening of the site from the footpath

5.39 The hedgerows will be allowed to grow to the full height of the security fencing, (approximately 2m high) and will be trimmed on a rotational basis, to maintain a tight form, outside the bird nesting season.

- **Objective 7**: To manage aquatic habitats as necessary

5.40 Ponds and watercourses will be monitored and managed where necessary; scrub encroachment and colonisation from harmful alien species will be dealt with as appropriate.

- **Objective 8:** To provide sheltering features around the site for nearby populations of bats, birds and other notable faunal species

5.41 A variety of bird boxes will be installed on mature trees throughout the site for farmland and woodland bird species such as barn owl Tyto alba, little owl Athene noctua nuthatch Sitta europaea, robin Erithacus rubecula and a variety of small passerines, as well as tree sparrow Passer montanus and starling Sturnus vulgaris, which are both Lincolnshire BAP priority species.

5.42 Bat boxes will be installed onto mature trees within the site. These will include boxes at the edge of woodland habitats which be suitable for woodland species (such as noctule Nyctalus noctua, brown longeared bats Plecotus auritus and Natterers bats Myotis nattereri). All bats species are included within the Lincolnshire BAP.

5.43 The proposal would therefore deliver on the environmental arm of sustainable development.

5.44 Overall, the development would positively contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. It would improve biodiversity; it would provide renewable energy infrastructure that would contribute towards building a strong, responsive carbon zero economy; social gains would be delivered by fostering a well-designed scheme which is safe for the environment.

5.45 Reflecting on the above, the social, economic, cultural and environmental issues are balanced and integrated for this proposal and as such in applying the legislative requirements of presumption in favour of sustainable development, it is clear that the need for the application proposal has been clearly justified as should be approved without delay.

Alternatives

5.46 The consideration of alternatives is set out in detail in Chapter 4 of the ES that supports the Application. In summary, legislation connected to Environmental Impact Assessments mandates the Applicant to consider alternatives. However,

consideration of alternatives can also be one of the keyways in which the impact of the Development can be reduced, by exploring alternative avenues and their relative advantages and disadvantages for achieving the development objectives.

5.47 With regards to renewable energy, the principal methods of considering alternatives is through the site selection process and the establishment of a site which is both technically feasible and which minimises potential environmental impacts. Alternative energy generating solution is also a material consideration together with the 'do nothing' approach.

5.48 The 'do nothing' option would entail leaving the development site in its current condition and it is assumed that the current land use would remain as it is, that is, available for agricultural use. It is an obvious statement that any impacts associated with the proposed development would therefore not occur. However, the 'do nothing' option will result in the loss of potential renewable energy source and storage proposed by the development proposal.

5.49 In terms of site selection, one of the biggest constraints which has to be considered when developing renewable led energy scheme is gaining a viable point of access to the utilities network. Gaining grid connection is very difficult and problematic for energy proposals and sourcing a site with a viable grid connection is a reasonable constraint to take into account. Increasingly, electrical connections are being forced back to substations and Bulk Supply Points as the amount of renewable generation connected within the electrical lines has grown.

5.50 For battery storage schemes the situation is more complex as the connecting substation must have sufficient export and import capacity. The proposed development will be served by an electrical (grid) looped connection to the Northern Power Grid ("NPG") network section is known as Keadby – Broughton – Teed – Scawby Brook overhead 132kV line circuit.

5.51 The Applicant has accepted the grid offer from NPG and secured the 99.9MW export capacity required for a project of this size. The grid offer accepted can only be used for the Little Crow Solar Farm and cannot be transferred to any other site, as this would be deemed by NPG as a significant alteration to the original application. The only viable connection voltage for a project of this size is 132kV and it requires the construction of a new 132kV substation on-site.

5.52 Having established the point of connection, the development site itself was selected through an extensive site sieving exercise based on a range of technical, environmental and economic factors. Whilst each issue (listed below) is important on its own merits, for NSIP each factor must be weighted and measured against other sustainability considerations and the overarching need to deliver development. List of issues to consider in site selection:-

- Solar irradiation levels & shading;
- Topography;
- Proximity to sensitive human receptors;
- Site access during construction;
- Flood risk;
- Landscape considerations;
- Agricultural land;
- Heritage;
- Biodiversity and geological conservation; and
- Commercial Agreement with the Landowner(s).

5.53 The site selection and alternatives are considered through Chapter 4 of the Environmental Statement (document ref 6.4 LC ES CH4).

5.54 The rest of this section broadly summarises the suitability of the site in relation to specific issues listed under Table 5.1 of EN-1. Section 6 of this Statement summarises the 'Planning Balance' demonstrating that taking in the above factors, the site is considered to represent sustainable development and should be approved in principle.

Land Use and Agricultural Land

5.55 NPS EN-1 paragraph 5.10.8 advises that applicants should seek to minimise impacts on the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification) and preferably use land in areas

of poorer quality (grades 3b, 4 and 5), and paragraph 5.10.15 advises that the IPC should give little weight to the loss of poorer quality agricultural land (in grades 3b, 4 and 5).

5.56 The proposal is temporary in nature with a modelled operational lifespan of up to 35 years. Following cessation of development, and as part of the contractual obligations with the landowner, all panels, batteries, security fence and inverters would be decommissioned, and all plant and machinery will be removed from site. Therefore, arguably there will no permanent loss of any agricultural land.

5.57 In terms of impacts derived from Little Crow Solar Park, the introduction of an alternative use for 35 year will add significantly to the organic matter levels in the soil, particular within Work No. 1 [area for ground mounted solar panels] and Work No. 6 [Perimeter development buffer]. This will help the soil to hold moisture, which will then be available to the crops for growth. There will be an expected increased productivity from arable cropping uses following the removal of the panels. This outcome is a significant benefit when measured against the baseline quality of extant soil. Agricultural use would also be maintained via seasonal grazing.

5.58 As stated earlier, detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) surveys of the site have been undertaken by Daniel Baird Soil Consultancy Ltd (Baird Soil) and found agricultural land in grades 3a and 3b within the surveyed area Grade 3b accounted for 173 hectares (or 77% of survey area) and Grade 3A tallied 36.6 hectares (or 16.3% of surveyed area). Approximately half of the exclusion zone is Grade 3A land and this will not be used to accommodate any plant or machinery associated with the development. Within the remainder of the order limits, Grade 3A landforms small wedges between the wider areas of Grade 3b. These small wedges are not farmed separately and therefore the order limits is farmed to reflect the lower Grade 3b. The landowners are not able to farm the areas of grade 3a separately due to the physical limitations when using large-scale modern farming machines. Furthermore, overall, 89% of North Lincolnshire is in some form of agricultural use with 54% of this land being classified by DEFRA as Land Quality Grades 1 (excellent quality) and 2 (very good quality) compared to a 16% average for England. National guidance with regard to use of BMV land is therefore set against the general backdrop and presumption that BMV land is in short supply whilst lower quality land prevails. The situation within North Lincolnshire is the

polar opposite, whereby the BMV land dominates the agricultural landscape. At a district level only 2% of north Lincolnshire's agricultural land is classified as Grade 4 'very poor' with negligible areas classified as grade 5 'very poor'. This restricts the availability of poorer quality agricultural land and itself sets out the compelling evidence to justify that the site selection is appropriate in term of agricultural land when assessing the availability of poorer quality land within the district.

5.59 Overall, it is considered that the development confirms with the EN-1 and NPPF, as it utilises poorer quality land when comparing the availability of BMV land within the district; it will diversify the use of the land whilst retaining part of the agricultural function by making the site available for sheep grazing; the introduction of an alternative use for 35 year will add significantly to the organic matter levels in the soil; and furthermore, at the end of the operational life, the land, with the exception of the DNO substation, can be restored to its current state. For these reasons the development also conforms with Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy.

Landscape and Visual

5.60 NPS EN-1, Section 5.9 provides detailed guidance for the assessment of landscape and visual effects. The applicant should carry out a landscape and visual assessment and report it in the ES. The LVIA should include reference to any landscape character assessment and associated studies as a means of assessing landscape impacts relevant to the proposed project. The Applicant's assessment should also take account of any relevant policies based on these assessments in local development documents in England.

5.61 Landscape and Visual Impact considerations are presented within chapter 6 of the Environmental Statement (document ref 6.6 LC ES CH6). The salient points are set out below.

5.62 This LVIA has considered the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed the Development. An appropriately sized study area of 5km has been selected, based on the scale of the development, and a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) has been produced to help to identify the landscape and visual receptors with the potential for significant effects.

5.63 Land use across the site is agricultural predominantly agricultural fields laid down to a mixture of arable and managed grassland. The site lies within a landscape which is characterised by the adjacent large-scale industrial area and the electrical power which the area draws in from the national grid. It lies within a farmland area surrounding the town and industry of Scunthorpe, in which in addition to views of the town and the steel works, pylons cut across the landscape and views include other large scale industry and wind turbines beyond.

5.64 The number of locations which offer the potential for views towards the Development are very limited, in part due to the surrounding woodland.

Landscape Character

5.65 The introduction of the solar panels would represent a direct and notable change to the land use on the site, and notwithstanding that the ground beneath the solar panels would be managed as grassland, it is acknowledged that for the lifetime of the Development there would be a significant impact on landscape character within the site and its immediate surroundings.

Visual Amenity

5.66 Footpath 214 runs through the site area from the woodland to the east of the site to Santon and the edge of the of the steelworks to the north west. The effects on walkers using this route as it passes through the development itself will be significant. The route would be typically defined on both sides by fencing 15m apart. The effects of the fencing will be softened slightly by new native hedgerows planted adjacent to the path offset to allow wide grassy verges on both sides of the path. The minimum width of buffer would open up within the Gokewell exclusion area whereby the new hedgerow planting would run parallel to the boundary of the archaeological exclusion zone. Aside from this footpath route, there would be no other significant impacts on visual receptors arising from the proposals.

5.67 In order to reduce the likelihood of significant adverse landscape and visual effects, mitigation has been included within the design of the proposals. This included consideration of the location of the site, which due to its location adjacent to woodland is screened from large parts of the landscape.

5.68 In addition, the design of the proposals incorporate a series of landscape proposals which include the planting of new hedgerows along the security fences adjacent to the public right of way through the site and the sowing of wildflower seed in the margins between the path and the hedges. Tree planting would also be introduced along the north east section of the development boundary.

5.69 It is important to appreciate that some effect on landscape character and visual amenity is an inherent consequence of a new development of this type and scale. However, in this case, any potential for adverse impacts are limited by existing vegetation as well as the topography of the landscape. As such, for a scheme of its scale the landscape and visual impacts arising are highly limited. Those limited effects which have been identified should therefore be balanced against the benefits of the proposed development. EN-1 recognises that all NSIP will have landscape and visual effects, and they should be acceptable. Where the Development is expected to result in significant landscape and visual effects they will be appropriately mitigated. Furthermore, the Development would provide valuable social and economic benefits. As such, the Development is considered to fully comply with NPS EN-1, the NPPF and Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy.

Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

5.70 NPS EN-1, paragraph 5.3.3 advises that where a development is subject to EIA, the ES should clearly set out any effects on internationally, nationally and locally designated sites of ecological or geological conservation importance, on protected species and on habitats and other species identified as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity. Paragraph 5.3.4 states that the applicant should demonstrate how the project has taken advantage of opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geological conservation interests.

5.71 The Application submission is supported by an ecological survey undertaken by Clarkson and Woods Ltd and this is presented as Chapter 7 of the Environmental Statement (Document ref 6.7 LC ES CH7) and is supported by numerous technical appendices (document refs 7.22 LC EA7.1 to 7.29 LC TA7.9). The report identifies and describe all potentially significant ecological effects associated with the proposed development and identify appropriate enhancement measures where required. The salient points are discussed below.

5.72 The majority of the survey area comprises 17 predominantly arable fields bordered by a network of hedgerows and extensive woodland plantations. A range of habitats on/immediately adjacent to the site was identified; however, the majority of habitat within the Development (arable and semi-improved grassland) is of low ecological value.

5.73 Habitats within and adjacent to the site were assessed as being suitable for a variety of notable and protected species. A number of designated sites were present immediately adjacent to the site and/or within the zone of influence of the development.

5.74 A total of 21 "Important Ecological Features" (IEFs) were identified: Broughton Far Wood SSSI, Heron Holt LWS, Broughton West Wood LWS, Manby Wood LWS, Broughton Far Wood LWS, Rowland Plantation LWS, Broughton West Wood SNCI, Santon Wood SNCI, arable field margins, semi-natural broadleaved woodland, plantation broadleaved woodland, hedgerows, ponds, ditches, bats, brown hare, breeding birds of open habitats, breeding birds of boundary habitats, wintering birds of open habitats, great crested newts and invertebrates. Mitigation for badgers has also been included due to a requirement for legal compliance.

5.75 The Development is a considerable distance from the Humber Estuary a Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Conservation Area (SAC) and Ramsar site. The area encompassing the SPA is situated approximately 11km north of the site at the closest point, whilst the SAC and Ramsar site is located 9km west at the closest point. It primarily receives its designation for its estuarine habitats, which support a range of associated species including internationally important assemblages of wintering and migratory birds.

5.76 The majority of impacts are expected during construction with habitat loss, fragmentation, disturbance of species through noise and vibration, degradation of habitats by pollution or dust deposition. Fewer operational phase effects were noted as post construction activity at the site would be minimal. Beneficial effects have been identified through cessation of intensive arable farming practices, as well creation and management of a range of different grasslands and native hedgerows on site which will improve connectivity as well as foraging and nesting/ sheltering habitat for a range of species.

5.77 The design of the Development has been modified at an early stage to ensure that the most ecologically valuable habitats within the survey area are retained within the development, and a number of mitigation measures have been identified that are considered essential to reduce or eliminate potential adverse effects from both the construction and operational phases. Key mitigation measures to minimise construction related effects will be the preparation and implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) that will be in accordance with the supporting Outline CEMP.

5.78 The creation and management of these habitats will be secured through a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan. This includes conservation management of grassland to increase its species richness and ensure land is available for use by ground nesting birds, and management of hedgerows to maximise their value for wildlife. Other measures include the retention and ongoing management of land for arable plants species. Bat and bird boxes will also be installed and hedgerows in-filled where appropriate.

5.79 Small pockets of broadleaved woodland are also present in the west of the site. Phased forestry operations take place in the surrounding woodland and this matter is discussed in the supporting Woodland Management Plan, submitted as part of the Application within the Environmental Statement.

5.80 In terms of Habitat Regulation, the assessment accompanying the application submission has concluded that the scheme will have no significant effects on any of the designated international sites identified (Document Ref 7.29 LC TA7.9). The accompanying ***Habitats Regulations Statement – No Significant Effects Report*** provide the information required by the Secretary of State to carry out its duties in this respect.

5.81 By adhering to the recommended avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures, the Development will be in line with relevant local and national planning policy, and the implementation of the recommended ecological enhancements would provide a positive, permanent contribution to biodiversity on the site. In summary, the Development is considered to comply with EN-1, the NPPF and Core Strategy Policy CS17, as it is designed to minimise any likely significant effects on ecology, ornithology and designated sites, and provide net biodiversity gain. The

creation and management of green infrastructure across the site also accords with the requirements of Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy.

Historical Environment

5.82 Paragraph 5.8.1 of NPS EN-1 states that construction, operation and decommissioning have the potential to result in adverse impact on the historic environment. Where a development site has the potential to include heritage assets, or where the development has the potential to affect the setting of a heritage assets, appropriate assessments should be carried out to demonstrate the significance of the impacts on those assets.

5.83 The historical environment is considered through Chapter 8 of the Environmental Statement (Document ref 6.8 LC ES CH8) and its supporting technical appendices (document refs 7.30 LC TA8.1 to 7.34 LC TA8.5). The assessment has included a review of a comprehensive range of available sources, in accordance with key industry guidance, in order to identify known and potential heritage assets located within the application site and its environs which may be affected by the proposals. The potential effects of the proposals on the significance of identified heritage assets, including any potential physical effects upon buried archaeological remains, and potential non-physical effects resulting from the anticipated changes to the settings of heritage assets, have been assessed. The salient points of the assessment are discussed below.

5.84 The closest designated heritage assets to the site comprise two Grade II Listed Buildings, Springwood Cottage and barn located c 650m to the north east of the Application Site and Raventhorpe House (a Grade II Listed Building) and the Scheduled Monument of Raventhorpe medieval village, both located c 900m to the south of the order limits. The site includes the former medieval Gokewell Priory which comprises an above-ground remnant earthworks and potential below-ground archaeological remains, but principally derives its historical significance from the archaeological interest and evidential value of said remains.

Physical effects

5.85 The development has the potential to affect known archaeological remains associated with possible prehistoric and medieval archaeological remains, as well as, archaeological remains of uncertain date. The excavation of cable trenches and

building foundations, the insertion of new roads, and inserting/removing any mounting system structures (and any associated landscaping or services) have the potential to truncate or totally remove the archaeological remains within their footprint. In order to ensure that no harm or any direct physical effects occur upon the remains of the medieval Gokewell Priory, this area has been excluded from the Development through the implementation of an archaeological exclusion zone. In addition to the archaeological exclusion zone the following measures have been included to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are taken regarding other archaeological remains (as detailed within the Construction Environmental Management Plan):

- A no-dig zone within which concrete pads will be utilised, around the potential prehistoric round barrow (ring ditch).
- In order to avoid the potential barrow recorded as a cropmark, trench cables have been relocated.
- A programme of archaeological recording to the implemented during any works within the peripheries of the archaeological exclusion zone (i.e. around pylons to the east and during cable trench excavations within the south-east corner).
- An archaeological monitoring (watching brief) during ground works within sensitive areas in Fields 7 and 10, and during excavation of the swale to the west of the archaeological exclusion zone.

Non-physical effects

5.86 The various heritage assessments referenced earlier have established that the development would not lead to harm to any designated heritage assets located in the vicinity of the Site, including the Scheduled Raventhorpe deserted medieval village, and no further mitigation with regard to these assets is required.

5.87 Overall, as with the Development's impact on landscape, for the scale and nature of the proposed development very few impacts are expected from the Application. Suitable measures are in place to ensure that archaeological remains are protected, and the Development will have limited impacts on designated assets outside of the site.

5.88 Where the development is likely to result in effects on archaeological assets, appropriate mitigation measures have been proposed, to minimise the harm and make the development acceptable. Furthermore, it is considered that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the effects on the archaeological assets and historic landscape character. As such, the Development is considered to comply with EN-1, the NPPF and Core Strategy Policy CS6.

Dust, odour, artificial lighting

5.89 Paragraph 5.6.3 of EN-1 recognises that for energy NSIP, some impacts on amenity for local communities is likely to be unavoidable. The aim should be to keep impacts to a minimum, and at a level that is acceptable.

5.90 In relation to dust, both the Air Quality Assessment and Carbon Assessment (document ref 7.12 LC TA4.5) and Environmental Statement chapter on ecology and nature conservation (document ref 6.7 LC ES CH7) have assessed the likely impacts on human and other sensitive receptors, and provided suitable mitigation strategies to avoid any unacceptable impacts. The nature of the development means that lighting and odour emissions are very limited and would not be considered likely to cause any nuisance to the amenity of any local communities. Indeed, the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment demonstrates how well contained the site is with the wider landscape in terms of visual impact. The impacts are therefore kept to a minimum and as such conform with the requirements of EN-1.

Flood Risk

5.91 NPS EN-1 (paragraph 5.15.2) advises that an appropriate assessment of the existing status and impacts of the proposed project on water quality, water resources and physical modifications to the water environment should be undertaken, whilst NPS EN-5 (paragraph 2.4.1) requires applicants to set out to what extent the proposed development is expected to be vulnerable, and as appropriate, how it would be resilient to flooding, particularly for substations.

5.92 The Application is supported by Flood Risk Assessment prepared by Clive Onions (Document Ref 7.3 LC TA3.1). The salient points of this assessment are set out below.

5.93 The site is entirely in Flood Zone 1 according to the EA Flood Map for Planning and appropriate development in this area. The local area to the site is not sensitive in terms of surface water flood risk. The site is currently used for arable farming which causes compaction, reduces absorption of rainwater by the soil and increases soil runoff, particularly after harvesting. It should also be noted that the use of pesticides and fertilisers in arable farming affects the quality of water entering the environment from the site.

5.94 In order to ensure that runoff is not increased swales are proposed within the Development. The cessation of arable farming will eliminate compaction, allow the soil and vegetation properties to improve and contain the rainfall within the site, by infiltration into the ground. Where permanent features such as tracks and other hardstanding is required, it is recommended that this will be formed in permeable construction, or in this case of the transformer units will be formed with permeable gravel beds to encourage infiltration.

5.95 The development therefore brings significant benefit to the management of surface water, a reduction in runoff leaving the site and incorporates improvements in water quality entering the environment. The development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. A management programme is included which ensures the soil and watercourse conditions will remain favourable for the lifetime of the development. The proposal meets the requirements of national and local policy regarding flood risk. To summarise, the development is considered to comply with NPS EN-1, the NPPF and Policy C19 of the Core Strategy in relation to flood risk considerations.

Air Quality and Emissions

5.96 NPS EN-1, states that infrastructure development can have adverse effects on air quality. The construction, operation and decommissioning phases can involve emissions to air which could lead to adverse impacts on health, on protected species and habitats, or on the wider countryside. NPS EN-1, paragraph 5.2.6 goes on to say that where the project is likely to have adverse effects on air quality the applicant should undertake an assessment of the impacts of the proposed project as part of the Environmental Statement. As cited in the Scoping Opinion (document ref 7.1 LC TA1.1), the Inspectorate considers that in light of the location and nature of the Proposed Development; the limited number of nearby receptors; and the

availability of standard controls, the Proposed Development is unlikely to give rise to significant construction or decommissioning air quality effects. It was agreed that construction and decommissioning air quality effects may be scoped out from the Environmental Statement. An Air Quality assessment of the construction traffic emissions together with a carbon offset assessment supports the submission and presented as supplementary information supporting the Chapter 4 of the Environmental Statement (document ref 7.12 LC TA4.5).

5.97 The salient points of the assessment are identified below.

5.98 The main impact in terms of air quality is the proposed construction traffic route, which is to run along the B1208 in the direction of the A18, A15 and M180. This route bypasses a number of pollution receptors; residential properties in Broughton, located 1km east of the proposed site boundary.

5.99 The closest buildings to the proposed site comprise the poultry sheds and farmhouse located to the east of the site. The proposed Solar Park area is located within the boundary of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) declared by North Lincolnshire Council.

5.100 The AQMA was declared due to exceedances of the 24-hour mean air quality objective for PM10. A qualitative dust and air quality assessment has been prepared to determine the significance of air quality and construction traffic dust impacts during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development, in addition to an assessment of the carbon footprint and potential savings introduced as a result of the Development (this is set out in more detail in the Socio Economic section).

5.101 A qualitative assessment of impacts of construction activities upon air quality was undertaken following the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) guidance methodology.

5.102 The main findings of the air quality assessment are summarised as follows:

- Following the construction dust assessment, the Development is found, in relation to dust soiling, and air quality, to have a negligible impact during the construction phase of the Development.

- For the earthworks and roadway construction activities, the impact was found to be a low risk. In relation to human health impacts, the risk ratings are the same as with dust soiling.

- Providing effective mitigation measures are implemented, such as those outlined in the CEMP, impacts from dust emissions during the construction phase would be not significant.

5.103 Therefore, it is not expected that there will be any significant residual effects on air quality taking account of any significant emissions from any road traffic generated by the scheme. Existing air quality levels will remain relatively unchanged.

5.104 With an overview of the Air Quality Assessment, the Development is assessed to comply with EN-1 and NPPF, as the effects will be mitigated and minimised, so that it does not result in a detrimental impact on the local residential amenity in terms of air quality. The development is not expected to directly or indirectly result additional air pollutants and worsening levels of air quality within the area surrounding the order limits.

Traffic and Transport

5.105 With regards to decision taking, EN-1 recognises that a new energy NSIP may give rise to substantial impacts on the surrounding transport infrastructure and the Planning Inspectorate should therefore ensure that the applicant has sought to mitigate these impacts, including during the construction phase of the development.

5.106 Transport and highways considerations are considered in detail through Chapter 9 of the supporting Environmental Statement (document ref 6.9 LC ES CH9) and its associated technical appendices (document refs 7.36 LC TA9.1 & 7.37 LC TA9.2). To summarise, during the operational phase of the development it would be excepted that there would only be limited vehicle movements associated with maintenance and security of the site, therefore, the focus of any likely transport impacts is around the construction of the development and subsequent decommissioning.

5.107 The construction period is expected to take approximately 11 months (up to 47 weeks). The construction phase for the solar farm includes the erection of security

fencing, the preparation of the site, installing the access tracks, assembly and erection of the arrays of ground mounted solar panels, installation of the inverters/transformers, construction of the substation compound and the grid connection works. The construction of the battery energy storage system will include the erection of security fencing, preparation of the site, installation of the access roads, assembly of the battery system, construction of the substation compound and the grid connection works.

5.108 The components which are required to construct the solar farm and battery scheme will arrive in 40ft containers, around 2,162 (4,324 two way movements) by 15.4m articulated vehicles would be expected. There will also be additional 16 No. movements for the battery containers which are 53ft long. Assuming all deliveries arrive within a 47 week period and Monday to Saturday, this equates to, on average, around eight deliveries (16 movements) per day by the largest vehicles.

5.109 A maximum of up to 100 construction workers are anticipated to be on site during peak times during the construction period. A temporary construction compound will be provided and will provide storage, parking for contractors and turning for HGVs. In addition to the HGV movements identified above, there will also be a small number of construction movements associated with smaller vehicles such as the collection of skips for waste management and the transportation of construction workers and sub-contractors. It is likely that that there could be up to 10-14 LGV movements per day. This includes minibuses transporting construction workers.

5.110 Where possible, construction deliveries will be coordinated to avoid HGV movements during the traditional AM peak hour (08:00-09:00) and PM peak hour (17:00-18:00). Due to the site operational hours (07:00-19:00), construction worker travel will occur outside of the peak hours. As such, there is unlikely to be many, if any, peak hour trips associated with the site.

5.111 A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be implemented during the construction phase of the Development. The aim of the CTMP is to minimise the effect of the construction phase on the highway network. No additional mitigation is required during the operational phase due to the low transport impact of site maintenance.

5.112 Overall, it is not considered that the Development will give rise to any substantial impacts on the surrounding transport infrastructure and CTMP will mitigate any

these impacts in so far as possible, in accordance with the requirements of EN-1, the NPPF and local planning policy.

Water Quality

5.113 EN-1 seeks that where the project is likely to have effects on the water environment, the applicant should undertake an assessment of the existing status of, and impacts of the proposed project on, water quality, water resources and physical characteristics of the water environment as part of the ES or equivalent. A Phase 1 Ground Conditions Desktop Study (document ref 7.4 LC TA3.2) has been prepared by Integrale and the Flood Risk Assessment (document ref 7.3 LC TA3.1) prepared by Clive Onions. The studies have indicated that the current site has a prolonged history of agricultural usage. There is no specific evidence of significant large-scale ironstone extraction or landfilling within the boundaries proven to date, with the exception of the extreme southwestern zone, where opencast workings are annotated on the 1994 map.

5.114 The site is marked by soils which, by the nature of their high permeability, readily transmit a wide range of pollutants because of the rapid drainage and low attenuation potential. The uppermost 300mm of the soil profile is sandy and 'light'. As set out above, an improvement in water quality entering the environment can be expected due to the cessation of the use of pesticides and other fertilisers. The desk top study concludes that the likelihood of solar array construction creating an adverse or worsening impact on the contaminant exposure model given above is therefore considered low. There is very limited risk of any new controlled water pollutant linkage being created due to the very shallow depth of construction activity, and the non-polluting nature of the development.

5.115 Any potential relevant contamination sources are considered to be limited to remnant metals in soils within any localised backfilled ironstone pits, and air borne derived particulates from the extensive industrial complex to the west and southwest, remaining within shallow depth site topsoil.

5.116 Again, the assessment sets out that across the majority of the site it is not considered likely that any runoff or enhance erosion will occur, in view of the granular soils, described as being well-drained or free-draining. Overall, the development would not have any adverse impacts on water quality, water resources and physical characteristics of the water environment and as such accord

with the water quality requirements of EN-1, the NPPF and Policies C18 & C19 of the Core Strategy.

6. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

6.1 The proposal is for the installation of arrays ground mounted solar panels to provide over 50MWp, equating to the annual energy consumption of approximately 40,000 households and with an anticipated CO_2 displacement following one year of generation is circa 50,000 tonnes. There can be no question but that this should carry significant weight. But there is an added factor here. Something that makes the scheme even more remarkable, and that is it will facilitate the co-location of battery energy storage and this should also be a factor of significant additional weight.

6.2 It is acknowledged that in the recent Cleve Hill Solar Park DCO Decision, the Secretary of State agreed with the Examining Authority in identifying that significant weight should be attributed to the solar element with regards to the identified need for renewable energy and its consistency with local and national policies on sustainable development. The Secretary of State also agreed with the Examining Authority that the proposed co-located battery energy storage system was a factor of significant additional weight[14],[15]. The same must be true of the Little Crow Solar Park development.

The extent to which the proposal is consistent with the Government's policies in meeting the challenge of climate change

6.3 The Development is clearly in accordance with the Government's policies on meeting the challenge of climate change. National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) sets out the starting point for decision making, this being the presumption in favour as set out in **Paragraph 4.1.2.** The presumption means that the determining authority should grant permission for development unless specific and relevant policies indicate that the consent should be refused.

[14] Cleve Hill secretary of State Decision Letter dated 28 May 2020. https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010085/EN010085-001956-200528%20EN010085%20CHSP%20Secretary%20of%20State's%20Decision%20Letter.pdf

[15] Cleve Hill Examining Authority's Report dated 28 February 2020. https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010085/EN010085-001956-200528%20EN010085%20CHSP%20Secretary%20of%20State's%20Decision%20Letter.pdf

6.4 Under the NPPF one of the core principles is the need to support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate; and to encourage the use of renewable resources. The Development does both of those things. Planning is also acknowledged to play a key role in securing reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and in supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy. The Application proposal contributes towards this. The NPPF says that applications for renewable energy should be approved if the impacts are acceptable. Here while there are visual and heritage setting impacts these are not unacceptable. Accordingly, in this case the NPPF favours approval.

6.5 The PPG explains the importance of increasing energy from renewable technologies *"will help to make sure the UK has a secure energy supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions to slow down climate change and stimulate investment in new jobs and businesses"*. The development proposals contribute to meeting those objectives.

6.6 Reflecting on the planning balance and turning to sustainable development, it is widely understood in planning that there are three dimensions to sustainable development, these are economic, social and environmental gains. National Policy advises that in order to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be pursued in mutually supportive ways through the planning system.

6.7 The socio-economic information in the previous section outlines the number of jobs and the gross value added to the local economy alongside the scale of the capital investment. A total of £12 million can be expected to be added to the North Lincolnshire economy over the life-time of the development. Around 233 direct and indirect/induced construction jobs and an additional 13 permanent jobs will be created in the North Lincolnshire economy. The development therefore fulfils an important economic role.

6.8 Social gain would be provided through the generation of local electricity that will be connected directly to the local grid; the proposal would reduce reliance upon overseas energy sources. The energy production would help to meet the national and local need for energy and therefore the development would fulfil an important social role.

6.9 Turning to environmental gains these would be secured through carbon reduction and local biodiversity enhancements. The proposed development would help

support the transition to a low carbon future and produce a significant amount of renewable energy. The introduction of seasonal sheep grazing together with appropriate management to facilitate the development of a diverse grassland beneath the array would benefit a range of native wildlife for a 35 year period. The proposal would therefore deliver on the environmental arm of sustainable development.

6.10 It is acknowledged that there will inevitably be a change in the landscape character of the area, however this impact is limited and the design of the proposal, most notably the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan ensures that the proposal is in line with relevant policy in EN-1 in that it has regard to siting, operational and other relevant constraints and minimises harm to the landscape, providing reasonable mitigation where possible and appropriate.

6.11 The selected site is appropriate in that it can accommodate the proposed solar park without significantly affecting the landscape character of the wider countryside or any amenities of residents in the vicinity. The temporary and reversible nature of the development, together with the measures that are to be taken to enhance and encourage the ecological diversity of the site, will ensure that in the long term the site can not only be restored to its current use, but will also have been improved. The wider environmental benefits and sustainability credentials associated with the increased production of energy from renewable sources represents a significant case in favour of the development proposals.

6.12 The cessation of intensive agricultural practices within the development site, which is partly located within the development boundary, will in turn allow the introduction of ecological enhancement that will benefit a range of native wildlife for the entire generation period of 35 years.

6.13 It is clear from the Solar PV Strategies and Clean Growth Strategies that solar PV is one of the Government's priority renewable technologies. The Government's Industrial Strategy considers that energy storage is one of the eight great technologies in which the UK can become a global leader.

Extent to which the proposed development is consistent with the development plan for the area

6.14 At a local policy level, it is considered that the proposal is supported by the Development Plan when judged against the key relevant policies as a whole.

6.15 The proper approach in this regard is that articulated by Sullivan J. in R v Rochdale MBC, ex p Milne [2000] Env. L.R. 1. He said that "It is not at all unusual for development plan policies to pull in different directions … there may be no clear cut answer to the question: "is this proposal in accordance with the plan?". The local planning authority has to make a judgment bearing in mind such factors as the importance of the policies which are complied with or infringed, and the extent of compliance or breach … it is enough that the proposal accords with the development plan considered as a whole. It does not have to accord with each and every policy therein." The main development plan policies pertinent to this application are policies CS2, CS6, CS16, CS17, CS18 and CS19. The applicant case on the main policies are as follows: -

- CS2: this policy identifies how sustainable development includes the development of renewable energy within the countryside. The application proposal is clearly in compliance with this policy.

- CS6: The application proposals comply with the policies in the NPPF on heritage assets and as such there is also compliance with this policy.

- CS16: It is important to appreciate that some effect on landscape character and visual amenity is an inherent consequence of a new development of this type and scale. However, in this case, any potential for adverse impacts are limited by existing vegetation as well as the topography of the landscape. As such, for a scheme of its scale the landscape and visual impacts arising are very limited. The application proposal is clearly in accordance with this policy.

- CS17: The application is designed to minimise any likely significant effects on ecology, ornithology and designated sites, and provide net biodiversity gain. The application proposal is clearly in accordance with this policy.

- CS18: This policy relates to sustainable resources and climate change. The policy aims to foster development which reduces North Lincolnshire carbon footprint. The application proposal is clearly in accordance with this policy.

- CS19: The development brings significant benefit to the management of surface water, a reduction in runoff leaving the site and incorporates improvements in water quality entering the environment. The development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. A management programme is included which ensures the soil and watercourse conditions will remain favourable for the lifetime of the development. The application proposal is clearly in accordance with this policy.

6.16 For all these reasons it is contended that the application proposals are in accordance with the Statutory Development Plan. In applying the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development, in particular with regards to decision taking, it is considered that the proposal accords with the Development Plan as a whole and as such the development should be approved without delay.

Community Support

6.17 The Solar PV Strategies emphasise that *"the planning concerns of local communities are properly heard"* and here they were. There is overwhelming local support, and this demonstrated by: -

- The fact that the overwhelming majority of responses by local people to the planning application itself have been supportive with very few objections from local people.

- The fact that the Parish Councils in whose areas the Development is located support the Development.

- The fact that the local authority and many of the statutory consultees have already reached provisional agreement with regards to the various Statement of Common Ground with limited matters still unresolved[16].

- The local MP, Nick Dakin MP, has expressed that he has no concerns over the development and hopes the proposals will progress positively.

- The Local Authority in which the Development is located support the Development. Neighbouring Authorities have also supported the principle of development.

[16] Refer to Document Ref 9.3 LC OTH – Statements of Common Ground Overview.

6.18 There has been throughout a very high level of unparalleled local public support for the proposals. In the light of the Localism Act and Agenda this is a very significant material consideration to which weight should be attributed.

Community Benefit

6.19 The PPG on Renewable and low carbon energy says that the aim should be to seek "positive local benefit from renewable energy development", and says "local planning authorities may wish to establish policies which give positive weight to renewable and low carbon energy initiatives which have clear evidence of local community involvement and leadership" in the foreword to the UK Solar PV Strategy Part 1 Greg Barker MP said *"local communities must be willing partners in solar expansion; not just consulted but respected and where ever possible, financial partners in local projects*".

6.20 INRG Solar (Little Crow) Ltd have pledged a fund of £250,000.00 which North Lincolnshire Council have agreed to administer for distribution to the local areas of Broughton and Appleby. In terms of mechanisms, a representative from both parish councils will be involved in the governance of the fund. The developer contribution will be made following completion of the grid connection works.

6.21 The application proposal is thus doing everything that both the local community and the Government, through policy statements, have been seeking. This is thus an important material consideration in support of the application proposals.

6.22 Overall, the proposals are entirely suitable to the site and its surrounds; consistent with Planning Policy and all relevant material planning considerations; and will achieve a high-quality design as envisaged by planning policy.

6.23 For all the reasons outlined in this Planning Statement, it is considered that the application proposals are entirely consistent with the relevant planning policies and consent should be granted.