



Longfield Solar Farm

Environmental Statement [PINS Ref: EN010118]

Chapter 1: Introduction

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Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd (hereafter referred to as the 'Applicant') has commissioned this Environmental Statement (ES) in relation to an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for Longfield Solar Farm (hereafter referred to as the 'Scheme').
- 1.1.2 The Scheme comprises the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array electricity generating facility and electrical storage facility with a total capacity exceeding 50 megawatts (MW) and export connection to the National Grid, including an extension to the existing Bulls Lodge Substation. The Scheme will be located within the 'Order limits' (the land shown on the Works Plans (see [EN010118/APP/2.2]) within which the Scheme can be carried out). The area subject to the Application comprises the Solar Farm Site, the Grid Connection Route, the Bulls Lodge Substation Site, and some areas for highways works or access referred to as the Site Access Works.
- 1.1.3 The Scheme falls under the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1-1) and is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and requires an application for a DCO. The application for the DCO is being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, with the decision on whether to grant a DCO being made by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (hereafter referred to as the 'Secretary of State') pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1-1).
- 1.1.4 The Scheme is considered to be 'EIA development' as defined by the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended in 2018) (the 'EIA Regulations') (Ref 1-2). This ES forms part of the application for a DCO and presents the findings of the EIA undertaken for the Scheme in accordance with the EIA Regulations and the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1-1).
- 1.1.5 This chapter is supported by the following figures in Volume 3:
Figure 1-1: Scheme Location.
Figure 1-2: Order limits.
- 1.1.6 A Glossary and list of abbreviations for the ES is provided in **Chapter 0: Contents, Glossary and Abbreviations** of the ES [EN010118/APP/6.1].

1.2 The Scheme

- 1.2.1 The Scheme will comprise the installation of PV Panels, an on-site Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), and associated infrastructure. Subject to obtaining the necessary consents, the construction is expected to start no earlier than 2024 and construction will require an estimated 24 months, with operation anticipated to commence no earlier than 2026. It is anticipated that the Scheme will have an operational lifetime of approximately 40-years, with decommissioning assumed for the purposes of this assessment to be not

- earlier than in 2066 (noting that the Bulls Lodge Substation Extension would remain operational and not be decommissioned).
- 1.2.2 It is not intended that the Scheme will be built in phases, with the exception of the BESS. The BESS may be constructed in two phases, with the first part built alongside the PV Panels, and a second phase after five years of operation.
 - 1.2.3 The location of the Scheme is shown in **Figure 1-1**. The land within the Order limits and its surroundings are described in **Chapter 2: The Scheme** of the ES [EN010118/APP/6.1], with the consideration of alternatives described in **Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution** of this ES [EN010118/APP/6.1]. The Order limits comprises 452.93ha (with 453ha being used for the ES) of land for PV Panels, BESS, Grid Connection Route, Bulls Lodge Substation Extension, Site Access Works and associated infrastructure including landscaping and biodiversity measures, centred on National Grid Reference TL 74179 14620 and located 5.7 kilometres (km) north west of Chelmsford and approximately 1.1 km to the west of the village of Terling.
 - 1.2.4 Further information on the proposed infrastructure and design within the Order limits is provided in **Chapter 2: The Scheme**.
 - 1.2.5 Environmental impacts arising from the Scheme have been studied systematically as part of the EIA process, and the results are presented within this ES. The baseline for the assessment has been derived from surveys and studies within and around the Order limits. This is explained further in **Chapter 5: EIA Methodology** of this ES [EN010118/APP/6.1], and in the methodology section of each technical assessment chapter.
 - 1.2.6 The EIA process has considered impacts resulting from the construction, operation (including maintenance), and decommissioning phases of the Scheme, and considers measures to avoid, reduce or mitigate any significant adverse effects on the environment and where possible, enhance the environment. It also identifies ‘residual’ impacts, defined as impacts remaining following the implementation of mitigation measures.
 - 1.2.7 The structure of this ES is outlined in **Table 1-1** below.

Table 1-1: ES Structure

| Volume | Chapter | Description |
|----------|--|--|
| Volume 1 | Chapter 1: Introduction | The ES considers the environmental effects associated with a number of identified topics, which may result in significant environmental effects. Each topic is presented in a separate technical chapter and details the results of the environmental assessment, likely significant effects arising from the Scheme, and the proposed mitigation measures. Each chapter also presents the potential cumulative effects resulting from other present, or reasonably foreseeable projects together (i.e. cumulatively) with the Scheme. |
| | Chapter 2: The Scheme | |
| | Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution | |
| | Chapter 4: Consultation | |
| | Chapter 5: EIA Methodology | |
| | Chapter 6: Climate Change | |
| | Chapter 7: Cultural Heritage | |
| | Chapter 8: Ecology | |

| Volume | Chapter | Description |
|-----------------|---|---|
| | Chapter 9: Water Environment Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Amenity; Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration Chapter 12: Socio-Economics and Land Use Chapter 13: Transport and Access Chapter 14: Air Quality Chapter 15: Human Health Chapter 16: Other Environmental Topics | Chapter 16: Other Environmental Topics includes consideration of ground conditions, glint and glare, major accidents and disasters, telecommunications, and waste. |
| | Chapter 17: Effect Interactions | This chapter considers 'effect interactions' that lead to combined effects on sensitive receptors. |
| | Chapter 18: Summary of Significant Environmental Effects | This chapter presents a brief summary of the residual significant effects remaining following the implementation of mitigation. |
| Volume 2 | Technical Appendices | A set of appendices is provided for reference. These comprise background data, technical reports, tables, figures and surveys which support the assessments in this ES. |
| Volume 3 | Figures | A set of figures is provided to accompany Volume 1 |
| N/A | Non-Technical Summary (NTS) | The NTS is presented in a separate document to provide a concise description of the Scheme, the considered alternatives, baseline, assessment methodology, potential environmental effects and mitigation measures. The NTS is designed to provide information on the Scheme and the EIA in an accessible format using non-technical language which can be understood by a wide audience and to assist interested parties with their familiarisation of the Scheme. |

1.3 The Applicant

- 1.3.1 The Applicant, Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd is a joint venture formed by two industry specialists: EDF-Renewables and Padero Solar.
- 1.3.2 EDF-Renewables is a global renewable energy affiliate of the EDF Group. Present in over 20 countries, EDF-Renewables has developed over 23 terawatt-hours per year of renewable electricity across 22 countries.

- 1.3.3 Padero Solar has developed over 60 solar PV projects globally and currently operates 165 MW of solar projects in the UK. It is a part shareholder of PS Renewables, which maintains more than 1 gigawatt of solar capacity in the UK on behalf of 12 different clients and is currently promoting another solar energy farm DCO in the UK.

1.4 Legislative and Planning Policy Context

Consenting Process

- 1.4.1 The Scheme is defined as a NSIP under Sections 14(1)(a) and 15(2) of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1-1), as it is an onshore generating station in England exceeding 50 MW generating capacity.
- 1.4.2 The Planning Act 2008 provides that the Secretary of State is responsible for determining the application for development consent, with the power to appoint a single person or a panel from the Planning Inspectorate to manage and examine the application (referred to as the 'Examining Authority'). In its role, the Examining Authority will examine the application for the Scheme and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will then decide whether to grant a DCO.
- 1.4.3 In accordance with Section 104(2) of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1-1), the Secretary of State is required to have regard to any relevant National Policy Statement (NPS), amongst other matters, when deciding whether or not to grant a DCO. However, the Scheme's proposed energy generating technology is not specifically referenced by an NPS and therefore the DCO will be determined in accordance with Section 105 of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1-1).
- 1.4.4 Section 105(2) of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1-1) provides the basis for deciding the DCO application and the Secretary of State must have regard to the provisions set out in this section of the Planning Act 2008. This includes any matters which the Secretary of State thinks are both important and relevant to their decision.
- 1.4.5 A DCO, if granted, has the effect of providing consent for development, in addition to a range of other consents and authorisations, where specified, as well as removing the need for some consents (such as planning permission). Section 115 of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1-1) also states that a DCO can include consent for 'associated development', which is development that is not an NSIP in its own right, but is associated with, the NSIP. This may be development that supports the construction, operation, or decommissioning of the NSIP; which helps to address the impacts of the NSIP; or is of a type normally brought forward with the NSIP.

EIA Regulations

- 1.4.6 The EIA Regulations specify which developments are required to undergo EIA and schemes relevant to the NSIP planning process are listed under either of 'Schedule 1' or 'Schedule 2'. Those developments listed in Schedule 1 must be subject to EIA, while developments listed in 'Schedule 2' must only be subjected to EIA if they are considered "likely to have significant effects on the

environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location". The criteria on which this judgement must be made are set out in Schedule 3.

- 1.4.7 The Scheme is a 'Schedule 2' development under Paragraph 3(a) of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations as it constitutes '*Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water*'.
- 1.4.8 The Applicant has confirmed to the Planning Inspectorate under Regulation 8(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations that an ES will be provided with the DCO application for the Scheme (as required by Regulation 5(2)(a) of the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 ('APFP Regulations') (Ref 1-3)), as it is considered there is the potential for the Scheme to meet the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations.
- 1.4.9 The issues that the Applicant considers the EIA needed to address were identified in the EIA Scoping Report submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 5th November 2020 (**Appendix 1A** of this ES [EN010118/APP/6.2]). The EIA Scoping Report was developed following initial consultation with a number of statutory consultees and was informed by the EIA team's experience working on a number of other solar farm projects. The Planning Inspectorate reviewed and consulted on the EIA Scoping Report and adopted (on behalf of the Secretary of State) a Scoping Opinion on 16 December 2020 (the Scoping Opinion) which included the formal responses received by the Planning Inspectorate from consultees (**Appendix 1B** of the ES [EN010118/APP/6.2]). Key issues raised in the Scoping Opinion are summarised and responded to in each technical chapter of this ES. Please note that there were late responses received from the following consultees; these have been appended to the end of the Scoping Opinion for clarity:
- a. Boreham Parish Council
 - b. Colchester Borough Council
 - c. Hatfield Peverel Parish Council
 - d. Historic England
 - e. Natural England
- 1.4.10 These issues have been considered during the EIA process.

National Policy Statements

- 1.4.11 The Scheme's proposed energy generating technology is not currently specifically referenced by a National Policy Statement (NPS) and therefore the DCO will be determined in accordance with Section 105 of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1-1).
- 1.4.12 The EIA takes account of the following NPSs, which are considered to be matters that will be important and relevant to the Secretary of State's decision as to whether to grant a DCO for the Scheme:
- a. Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN1) (Ref 1-4);
 - b. National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (Ref 1-5); and

- c. National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (Ref 1-6).
- 1.4.13 The Government is currently consulting on proposed revisions to the Energy NPSs, as part of its review of the current NPSs. It is doing this in order to reflect its policies and strategic approach for the energy system that is set out in the Energy White Paper (December 2020), and to ensure that the planning policy framework enables the delivery of the infrastructure required for the country's transition to net zero carbon emissions. As part of the Energy NPS review process, the Government published a suite of Draft Energy NPSs for consultation on 6 September 2021. These include the following Draft NPSs, which are expected to be important and relevant to the Secretary of State's decision, and have therefore been taken into account by the EIA:
 - a. Draft Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (Draft NPS EN-1),
 - b. Draft National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy (EN-3) (Draft NPS EN-3), and
 - c. Draft National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (Draft NPS EN-5).
- 1.4.14 A summary of the relevant considerations for each technical assessment is provided for each environmental topic (**Chapters 6 to 16** of the ES [EN010118/APP/6.1]).

National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.4.15 The National Planning Policy Framework (Ref 1-7) (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are to be applied. It is a material consideration in planning decisions under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Paragraph 5 of the NPPF makes it clear that the document does not contain specific policies for NSIPs and that applications in relation to NSIPs are to be determined in accordance with the decision making framework set out in the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1-1) and relevant NPSs, as well as any other matters that are considered both important and relevant. However, Paragraph 5 goes on to confirm that the NPPF may be a matter that is both important and relevant for the purposes of assessing DCO applications. The EIA for the Scheme therefore has regard to the relevant policies of the NPPF as part of the overall framework of national policy.

Local Planning Policy

- 1.4.16 Policies in Local Plans may be considered 'important' and 'relevant' matters and can influence the content of local impact reports (which the relevant local authorities pursuant to Section 56A of the Planning Act 2008 will produce following submission of the application for the DCO) which the Secretary of State must have regard to in its decision making in accordance with Section 105(2) of the Planning Act 2008.
- 1.4.17 The Scheme lies within the administrative areas of Braintree District Council and Chelmsford City Council.
- 1.4.18 Local planning and other local policy documents that may be relevant to the Scheme include the following:

- a. Chelmsford Local Plan 2013-2036 adopted May 2020 (Ref 1-8).
 - b. Braintree District Local Plan 2013-2031 Section 1, Adopted 22 February 2021 (Ref 1-9)
 - c. Braintree District Local Plan Review, adopted 2005 (saved policies only) (Ref 1-10).
 - d. Braintree Core Strategy, adopted September 2011 (Ref 1-11).
 - e. Essex Minerals Local Plan, adopted July 2014 (Ref 1-12).
 - f. Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan, adopted July 2017 (Ref 1-13).
 - g. Essex County Council Adapting to Climate Change Action Plan (2011) (Ref 1-14).
 - h. Chelmsford City Council Making Places Draft Supplementary Planning Document (Ref 1-15).
 - i. Chelmsford City Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan (2020) (Ref 1-16).
 - j. Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015–2033 (Ref 1-17).
- 1.4.19 On adoption in February 2021, Section 1 of the Braintree District Local Plan 2012-2021 replaced, in part, the strategic policies CS1, CS4, CS9, and CS11 of the Braintree Core Strategy. Section 2 of the draft Braintree Local Plan, 2017 (Ref 1-19) is undergoing examination. Although the likely timetable for completion of the examination is currently scheduled for Winter 2021/2022, if it is adopted it will replace policies in the Braintree Local Plan Review (Ref 1-9) and Braintree Core Strategy (Ref 1-11). The draft local plan may also be an important and relevant matter either as the newly adopted Development Plan or as an advanced draft.

Consideration of Planning Policy in EIA

- 1.4.20 The ES describes and takes into account the national and local planning policies that are relevant to the EIA, with a summary provided for each environmental topic. The ES does not assess if the Scheme is in accordance with planning policy. This has been undertaken and set out in the Planning Statement **[EN010118/APP/7.2]**. The Planning Statement is a separate document that accompanies the application for a DCO.
- 1.4.21 The purpose of considering the planning policy in the EIA is two-fold:
- a. To identify policies that could influence the sensitivity of receptors (and therefore the significance of effects) and any requirements for mitigation; and
 - b. To identify planning policies that could influence the methodology of the EIA. For example, a planning policy may require the assessment of an impact or the use of a specific methodology.
- 1.4.22 A summary of national and local planning policy relevant to each technical assessment is provided within the relevant chapters for each environmental topic.

1.5 Consultation and Preliminary Environmental Information

- 1.5.1 The Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) Report was prepared and published in May 2021 to satisfy the requirement of the EIA Regulations (Ref 1-2). ‘Preliminary environmental information’ is defined in the EIA Regulations as information “*which (a) has been compiled by the applicant; and (b) is reasonably required for the consultation bodies to develop an informed view of the likely significant environmental effects of the development (and of any associated development)*”.
- 1.5.2 Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 7 (EIA: Process, Preliminary Environmental Information, and Environmental Statements) (Ref 1-18) notes: “*A good PEI document is one that enables consultees (both specialist and non-specialist) to understand the likely environmental effects of the Scheme and helps to inform their consultation responses on the Scheme*”.
- 1.5.3 In order to enable consultees to understand the likely environmental effects of the Scheme, the PEI Report presented preliminary findings of the environmental assessments undertaken up to that point. This allowed consultees the opportunity to provide informed comments on the Scheme, the assessment process, and preliminary findings prior to the finalisation of the DCO application and this ES. The Applicant sought the views of consultees on the information contained within the PEI Report, and there was an opportunity within the process up to submission of the DCO application for both the EIA and the project design to have regard to comments received.
- 1.5.4 Further detail on the consultation undertaken is provided in **Chapter 4: Consultation** of the ES [EN010118/APP/6.1].

1.6 The Environmental Statement

- 1.6.1 Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations sets out the information for inclusion in Environmental Statements.
- 1.6.2 Table 1-2 below summarises where the requirements of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations have been addressed in the ES.

Table 1-2: Requirements of Part 1 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations

| Requirement | Location in this ES |
|--|--|
| A description of the development, including in particular: (a). a description of the location of the development | Chapter 1: Introduction Chapter 2: The Scheme |
| (b). a description of the physical characteristics of the whole development and the land-use requirements during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. | Chapter 2: The Scheme |
| (c). a description of the main characteristics of the production processes, for instance, nature and quantity of the materials used. | Chapter 2: The Scheme |
| (d). an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (water, air and soil | Chapter 2: The Scheme |

| Requirement | Location in this ES |
|---|---|
| <p>pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation, etc.) resulting from the operation of the Scheme.</p> | <p>Chapter 6: Climate Change Chapter 9: Water Environment Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration Chapter 13: Transport and Access Chapter 14: Air Quality Chapter 15: Human Health Chapter 16: Other Environmental Topics</p> |
| <p>An outline of the main alternatives studied by the applicant and an indication of the main reasons for the applicant's choice, taking into account the environmental effects.</p> | <p>Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution</p> |
| <p>A description of the relevant aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development, including, in particular, population, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, including the architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the inter-relationship between the above factors.</p> | <p>Chapters 6-16 (technical assessments) Baseline Conditions sections</p> |
| <p>A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, which should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development, resulting from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the existence of the development; (b) the use of natural resources; (c) the emission of pollutants, the creation of nuisances and the elimination of waste, and the description by the applicant of the forecasting methods used to assess the effects on the environment; (d) the risks to human health, cultural heritage or the environment (for example due to accidents or disasters); (e) the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects; (f) the impact of the project on climate and the vulnerability of the project to climate change; (g) the technologies and the substances used. | <p>Chapters 6-16 (technical assessments) Likely Impacts and Effects sections</p> |
| <p>A description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment.</p> | <p>Chapters 6-16 (technical assessments) Scheme Design, Impact Avoidance and Mitigation and Enhancement Measures sections</p> |

| Requirement | Location in this ES |
|--|--|
| A description of the expected significant adverse effects of the development on the environment deriving from the vulnerability of the development to risks of major accidents and/or disasters. Where appropriate, this description should include measures envisaged to prevent or mitigate the significant adverse effects of such events on the environment and details of the preparedness for and proposed response to such emergencies. | Chapter 16 (Other Issues) Section 16.4 Major Accidents and Disasters |
| A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 5 of this Part. | Non-Technical Summary |
| A description of the forecasting methods or evidence, used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved | Chapters 6-16 (technical assessments) Limitations or Assumptions sections |
| A reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the environmental statement. | Chapters 6-16 (technical assessments) References section |

1.6.3 Where the technical chapters of the ES identify the need for consents or licenses that will not be sought through the DCO, this is outlined in the **Consents and Agreement Position Statement [EN010118/APP/3.3]**, which is a separate document submitted alongside the ES as part of the Application.

1.7 IEMA Quality Mark

1.7.1 AECOM is an Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Registered Impact Assessor and holds the IEMA EIA Quality Mark as recognition of the quality of our EIA product and continuous training of our environmental consultants. A Statement of Competence is included within the ES (**Appendix 1C** of the ES **[EN010118/APP/6.2]**), outlining the relevant expertise or qualifications of the experts who prepared the ES.



1.8 References

- Ref 1-1 HMSO (2008) The Planning Act 2008.
- Ref 1-2 Her Majesty's Stationary Office (HMSO) (2017) The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.
- Ref 1-3 HMSO (2009) Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009.
- Ref 1-4 Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), (2011) National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1/).
- Ref 1-5 DECC (2011) National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3).

- Ref 1-6 DECC (2011) National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5).
- Ref 1-7 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2019) National Planning Policy Framework.
- Ref 1-8 Chelmsford City Council (2020) Chelmsford Local Plan.
- Ref 1-9 Braintree District Local Plan 2013-2031 Section 1, Adopted 22 February 2021.
- Ref 1-10 Braintree District Council (2005) Local Plan Review.
- Ref 1-11 Braintree District Council (2011) Braintree District Council Local Development Framework: Core Strategy (adopted September 2011).
- Ref 1-12 Essex County Council (2014) Essex Minerals Local Plan.
- Ref 1-13 Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (2017) Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan.
- Ref 1-14 Essex County Council Adapting to Climate Change Action Plan (2011).
- Ref 1-15 Chelmsford City Council (2020) Making Places Draft Supplementary Planning Document.
- Ref 1-16 Chelmsford City Council (2020) Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan (2020).
- Ref 1-17 Hatfield Peverel Parish Council 2019 (made December 2019).
- Ref 1-18 Planning Inspectorate (2020) Advice Note 7: EIA: Process, Preliminary Environmental Information and Environmental Statements.
- Ref 1-19 Braintree District Council (2017) Braintree District Council Local Plan.