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Your ref: EN010118
My ref: 22/00001/NSIP
Telephone: 01245 606826
Date: 14 March 2022

Dear Mr Raywood

Application by Longfield Solar Energy Farm Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Longfield Solar Farm

Adequacy of Consultation Request

I am responding on behalf of Chelmsford City Council to your letter dated 1 March 2022 regarding the Adequacy of Consultation Request.

Having had regard to:

1. Duty to Consult - Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (PA2008) Section 42
2. Duty to Consult the Local Community - Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (PA 2008) Section 47 and,
3. Duty to Publicise - Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (PA 2008) Section 48.

I can confirm that Chelmsford City Council consider that Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd have carried out adequate pre-application consultation in accordance with the provisions as set out in Sections 42, 47 and 48 of the Act.

The Applicant commenced early engagement with Chelmsford City Council (CCC) together with Braintree District Council and Essex County Council (collectively known as the host Authorities) from September 2020. This was well in advance of the commencement of the formal statutory consultation process.

Regular joint meetings have been held with Chelmsford City Council and the host Authorities throughout the majority of the pre-application process, up until the date the Development Consent Order (DCO) was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

An application for a scoping report under the EIA Regulations was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State on 30th October 2020 and a scoping opinion was adopted by the Secretary of State on 16th December 2020. A full response was provided from Chelmsford City Council on 3rd December 2020 and the Applicant sought to subsequently respond to the matters raised.

Between 2nd November 2020 and 14 December 2020, Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd conducted a period of non-statutory consultation. The consultation took place during the COVID 19 pandemic restrictions

and used a range of publicity including a mixture of online and written mediums.

Chelmsford City Council provided a full response to the non-statutory consultation on 14th December 2020. The response raised a number of points including the need to consider the environmental impacts of the proposal, the potential effect on landscape and visual impact and the loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land which the Applicant subsequently sought to respond to.

Following the non-statutory consultation, Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd refined their proposals leading to a reduction in the proposed site area through the removal of proposed development to the north of the River Ter as well as other alterations.

Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd produced a draft Statement of Community Consultation which was reviewed by the host Authorities. Chelmsford City Council responded to this on 9th April 2021. The Applicant sought to respond to this. As part of the draft consultation, Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd agreed to delay the publication of the final Statement of Community Consultation until after local elections held on 6th May 2021.

The Statement of Community Consultation was advertised in local newspapers on 27 May 2021 and Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd conducted a period of statutory consultation from 1 June 2021 until 13 July 2021.

Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd allowed 42 days to comment rather than the 28 calendar days to respond. The Applicant consulted during a period when the COVID 19 pandemic meant there were restrictions on holding public meetings and events. A flexible consultation was held to allow people from across the community to respond which was compatible with social distancing requirements.

Chelmsford City Council made substantive comments to the proposal dated 12 July 2021. These are summarised and listed within the Statement of Consultation pages 92 to 167 refer. The Applicant has subsequently sought to address these comments.

Consultation and engagement was also undertaken with the wider community. Their comments are summarised and considered within the Statement of Consultation, pages 168 to 257 refer.

Following the statutory consultation, Longfield Solar Energy Farm Ltd made a number of alterations and changes to the Order limits which required further targeted consultation from 26 October to 23 November 2021. Following a formatting error on the scheme boundary plan, a corrected scheme boundary plan was prepared with additional further targeted consultation taken place between 11 January and 8 February 2022.

In addition to the above, I have read the Applicants Consultation Report dated February 2022 which sets out the Applicants consultation programme in full. I am satisfied that they have undertaken an extensive and inclusive consultation.

In this respect, Chelmsford City Council considers the Applicants consultation to be adequate in line with

Sections 42, 47 and 48 of the Planning Act 2008

Yours sincerely,



Ruth Mabbutt MRTPI
Planning Officer
(Chelmsford City Council Longfield Lead)

For

Mr David Green
Director of Sustainable Communities