

## Longfield Solar Farm – Development Consent Order (DCO)

Interested Party Reference No: 20031536

### Deadline 3 Submission from Essex Area Ramblers

Following on from my oral submission made at the Hearing on September 29<sup>th</sup>, this submission confirms the Ramblers current position.

The Ramblers support the principle of Solar Farms, but are concerned that PRoWs are adequately maintained and where possible improved, and have concerns about the impact on visual amenity.

There are a considerable number of PRoW which pass through or run adjacent to the Order limits.

The Ramblers accept that there will be some disruption to the PRoW during the Construction and Decommissioning phases, but are satisfied that the applicant intends to mitigate their impact as far as is practical.

The Ramblers accept that during the 40 year operational phase, all the PRoW will be reinstated with adequately wide corridors, provided that all the mitigation measures described in their ES are implemented.

However, the Ramblers are very concerned that the Applicant has identified that there will be a significant visual impact to users of some of the PRoW during the operational stage.

The Ramblers have reviewed the other third party submissions including the Wynne-Williams Associates Report, which identified *‘a moderate adverse impact for a short stretch of the Ter Valley to the west of Sandy Wood.’*

In their view *‘field PDA1 should be removed from the scheme to retain the valley character alongside the Essex Way footpath.’*

The Ter valley is recognised as a highly sensitive landscape and the solar arrays would be visible from the Essex Way footpath, which runs along the valley floor and the solar arrays would be difficult to shield even with increased mitigation.

This adverse effect could be eliminated if field PDA1 was removed from the scheme and the Ramblers support the removal of field PDA1 because of its visual impact on the Essex Way, which is a strategic long distance footpath running from Epping to Harwich, a distance of 130 kms.

The Ramblers are pleased that the applicant has confirmed that fencing at the edges of PRoW will not be palisade fencing and that hedges will be planted adjacent to them, and on balance withdraw their objection, but should the DCO be granted the Ramblers request that:

- Field PDA1 is removed from the scheme
- Footpaths should be at least 1.8 metres wide and bridleways or byways should be at least 5 metres wide.

- Trees, hedges or other plants should be planted so that fences are screened from path users.
- The developer should provide proposals for the maintenance of plants and the PRow.
- Materials and designs of buildings and fencing should be given careful consideration.
- The applicant should commit to keeping the PRow routes open at the end of the operational phase and,
- The Ramblers are kept informed of progress on the scheme and be consulted as detailed plans and construction details are produced.

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Area Walking Environment Officer ,

Essex Area Ramblers

October 2022