

## Braintree District Council

### Written Summary of Comments made During ISH2 (Environmental) - 29/09/2022

#### Longfield Solar Farm [PINS Ref: EN010118]

#### 1. Written Summary of Comments made by Tim Havers ('TH') (Planning Lead for BDC)

##### Agenda Item 2 'Main Discussion Points' – Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land - Policy

- 1.1 TH was asked by the Inspector to clarify which parts of Adopted Policy LPP73 the Longfield scheme would not comply with with regard to loss of BMV. TH confirmed that LPP73 is taken from our newly adopted Local Plan and that the overarching thrust of the policy is to seek the protection of BMV. So the identified conflict is a general conflict with this (as the proposal would result in the loss of BMV). Notwithstanding this, it does state within the policy that there is a balancing act which should be undertaken and that the amount of renewable energy a scheme would generate needs to be balanced against the loss of BMV. So BDC are identifying a degree of conflict with the Policy insofar as the policy seeks to protect BMV, however there would then be a balancing act to be carried out and the amount of renewable energy generated will be balanced against that loss of BMV, and obviously that balancing exercise is for the Inspector to undertake and to come to a conclusion.
- 1.2 The Inspector then asked TH if that balancing act from the Council's perspective has been undertaken in the LIR submitted by BDC. TH advised that it had only taken place to a limited degree because the Council's understanding of the LIR was that the Council were not to undertake a planning balance assessment in the way that we would in a Committee Report for a strategic scheme where we would normally come to a clear and definitive conclusion.
- 1.3 TH then clarified the BDC position in relation to the 'temporary' nature of the loss of BMV. BDC have not definitively said that the loss of BMV for a 40 year period is 'permanent'. BDC have raised it as a question. It's a long period of

time. So, whereas normally a temporary planning consent would be for a significantly shorter period of time, in TH's experience, 40 years is quite a substantial time. So BDC are not saying that we disagree completely that 40 years could be considered to be 'temporary', rather that there is a question mark as to whether that length of time could be viewed within the normal meaning of 'temporary' or whether it needs to be acknowledged that that is actually quite a long period of time.

- 1.4 TH then clarified further that BDC's position is that there would not be a 'permanent' loss of BMV, other than the small area identified as such in the Council's LIR (and the applicant's submission).

#### Agenda Item 2 'Main Discussion Points' – *Battery Safety*

- 1.5 TH confirmed to the Inspector BDC's position in relation to Battery safety. BDC did raise this as an issue of concern, however BDC went through the Battery Safety Management Plan in detail which is a comprehensive document and demonstrates that the Applicant has engaged with the relevant Consultees including Essex Fire and Rescue. Provided that this Battery Safety Management Plan is in place then BDC raise no objection on battery safety grounds.