



Meeting note

Project name	Longfield Solar Farm
File reference	EN010118
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	4 September 2020
Meeting with	Longfield Solar Farm
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Inception meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Applicant and the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) case team introduced themselves and their respective roles. The Inspectorate advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely. The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the meeting note could be delayed up to six months (if requested by the Applicant for commercial reasons), or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

Project information and background

The Longfield Solar Farm project is a joint venture between EDF Renewables and Padero Solar Limited. Both these companies have previous experiences of preparing applications for development consent under PA2008.

The project is located about 4.5 miles North East of Chelmsford (close to the village of Terling on the River Ter). The site has good access links to the A12 and is circa 582 Ha. The setting of the project is rural. The project has the benefit of a grid connection with an import/export capacity of 500MW. The project team is currently reviewing layout design options within the site for both the grid connection and the battery storage facility. In addition, the Applicant is looking at both overhead lines and underground cable options for the grid connection. The Applicant confirmed that it was aware of the safety concerns relating to battery storage that had come to light during the Cleve Hill examination.

Environmental Matters

The Applicant described the characteristics of the site and the development, noting that the site was subject to limited environmental constraints. Existing constraints include the River Ter Site of Special Scientific Interest located to the North West of the site, ancient woodland within the site (for which an offset would be provided) and a small population of great crested newts. Ecological surveys and soil surveys are ongoing. The ancient woodland close to the project will continue to be in the stewardship of the current landowner. The Applicant confirmed that there were no Scheduled Monuments on site

and the closest was over 2km away. The Applicant suggested that visual impact of the scheme would be reduced by the existing landform and woodland.

The Applicant stated that a geophysical survey was being undertaken of the site but suggested that impacts on buried archaeology were unlikely as the site is situated on agricultural land that is regularly disturbed by deep ploughing, which is likely to have disturbed any features present.

The Applicant has yet to finalise traffic and noise surveys and is considering the implication of Covid-19 on the baseline assumptions for assessments.

Glint and glare impacts were discussed and the Inspectorate raised whether there were any potential impacts on flying clubs.

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that its cumulative assessment would take into account Highways England's adjacent A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme.

Compulsory Acquisition and Special Category Land

The option for the lease for the land needed for the project has been secured. The Applicant is not aware of any Special Category Land being impacted by the project.

It was confirmed that there are Public Rights of Way over the site but they are fragmented. The Applicant isn't currently planning to divert any of them but has been considering opportunities to link footpaths within the site.

Project timescales

- Scoping and non-Statutory consultation Q4 2020 (likely to be October 2020)
- Statutory consultation provisionally Q2 2021
- Submission provisionally early part of second half of 2021

The Inspectorate highlighted to the Applicant the risk of having both Scoping and non-Statutory consultation running in parallel.

The project will be made public in September 2020. The Applicant intends to agree the Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) before submitting it for statutory consultation. The Applicant was advised to draft the SoCC so it could handle changes to the current Covid-19 guidance on social gatherings.

The Applicant confirmed it had built in time for a draft document review in its programme. The Inspectorate advised the review usually takes 6-8 weeks. However, this can be reduced if the review is targeted.

Any other business

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held after the next project milestone (post scoping/non-statutory consultation)

Follow ups

- Applicant to send the Inspectorate the new case proforma back.

