



OAKLANDS FARM SOLAR PARK

Applicant: Oaklands Farm Solar Ltd

Covering Letter

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The Planning Inspectorate
National Infrastructure Directorate
Temple Quay House
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

FAO: Ms Naoual Margoum, Case Manager

Date
8th February 2024

Dear Ms Margoum

Planning Act 2008 – Application for a Development Consent Order for Oaklands Farm Solar Park, South Derbyshire

Planning Inspectorate Application Reference: EN010122

On behalf of Oaklands Farm Solar Ltd (“the Applicant”), I am pleased to enclose an application for a Development Consent Order (“DCO”) (“the Application”) pursuant to Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 (“PA 2008”) for the proposed Oaklands Farm Solar Park, which would be located on land at Oaklands Farm, to the south-east of Walton-on-Trent and to the west of Rosliston in South Derbyshire (“the Proposed Development”).

Subject of the Application

The Application is for a DCO to construct, operate, maintain and decommission an energy generating facility comprising ground mounted solar photovoltaic (“PV”) arrays and an onsite substation, together with an associated Battery Energy Storage facility (“BESS”) and supporting infrastructure including a below ground electrical connection to the National Grid substation at the former Drakelow power station.

The Application is required because the Proposed Development is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (“NSIP”) pursuant to Sections 14(1)(a) and 15(1) and (2) of the PA2008, as an onshore generating station in England with a capacity exceeding 50 megawatts (MW). As such the decision on whether to grant development consent will be made by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (“the SoS”). The NSIP and associated development are formally described in Schedule 1 of the draft DCO [EN010122/APP/3.1].

Application fee and documentation

A fee of £8,244 has been submitted by BACS transfer to the account of the Planning Inspectorate on the 24th January 2024 prior to the submission of this application.

This Application is submitted via a file transfer system which has been agreed with the Planning Inspectorate prior to submission.

A GIS shapefile showing the Order Limits for the Proposed Development was issued to the Planning Inspectorate via email on the 14th December 2023. A draft version of the Document Index was also first shared with the Planning Inspectorate on 19th January 2024.

A Section 55 Checklist [EN010122/APP/1.3] which has been completed by the Applicant has been included with the Application to assist with the Planning Inspectorate's compliance check of the Application.

Application formalities

This Application is made in the form required by Section 37(3)(b) of the PA 2008 and the application documents comply with the requirements in Section 37 of the PA 2008 and those set out in:

- The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (the APFP Regulations);
- The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations);
- The Planning Act 2008: Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects – Application Form Guidance (June 2013), published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities;
- The Planning Inspectorate's 'Advice Note Six: Preparation and Submission of Application Documents'.

The Applicant confirms that the Application can be published (with any necessary redactions and minus any confidential documents) on the Planning Inspectorate's webpage as soon as possible after the submission of the application.

Description of the Proposed Development

A non-technical description of the Proposed Development is included in the Guide to the Application [EN010122/APP/1.4]. A more detailed technical description of the Proposed Development is included in Chapter 4 of the Environmental Statement ("ES") [EN010122/APP/6.1].

Need for the Project

The recently designated National Policy Statement EN-1 makes clear that there is an urgent need for new low carbon NSIPs (including solar PV) to be delivered as soon as possible, to provide security of supply, an affordable and reliable electricity system and to ensure that the Government's Net Zero targets and commitments are being achieved. EN-1 states that there is a Critical National Priority for the provision of nationally significant low carbon infrastructure.

The Proposed Development would provide for an export capacity of some 163MW (AC) of electricity, together with 37.5MW of energy storage capacity, which would serve both to provide for low carbon electricity generation as well as improving the resilience of the electricity network. The need for the Proposed Development is established through the National Policy Statements, which is discussed in full in the Planning Statement [EN010122/APP/7.1] which accompanies the Application.

Consent Flexibility

Solar PV continues to be a rapidly evolving technology and as a result the draft DCO [EN010122/APP/3.1] and Works Plan [EN010122/APP/2.3] propose a degree of flexibility to allow for the latest technology and designs to be used at the time of construction. The exact design details of the Proposed Development would not be confirmed until the tendering process for the design of the Proposed Development have been completed and a detailed design, in accordance with the ES [EN010122/APP/6.1] and Design Statement [EN010122/APP/7.2], has been approved by the local planning authorities.

The ES and the Design Statement include design parameters. The ES has considered and assessed those design parameters in order to reflect the flexibility sought in the draft DCO, in

accordance with the 'Rochdale Envelope' principle, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of the ES. The draft DCO then secures the key design mitigation measures identified within the ES.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Application includes a Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Report in the ES [EN010122/APP/6.1–Appendix 6.2] as required by Regulation 5(2)(g) of the APFP Regulations. The HRA Report identifies all European sites potentially affected by the Proposed Development and sets out the screening undertaken for the purposes of the Habitats Regulations, and has been prepared in accordance with the Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 10 'Habitats Regulations Assessments'. Where likely significant effects could not be ruled out those effects have been further assessed by the HRA Report. The HRA Report provides sufficient information for the SoS to undertake an Appropriate Assessment to determine whether the Proposed Development would have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site. The Applicant's Appropriate Assessment, set out in the HRA Report, concludes that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of European sites as a result of the Proposed Development.

Compulsory Acquisition

The land over which the Applicant is seeking powers of compulsory acquisition of land, rights and interests and powers of temporary possession in the draft DCO for the purposes of the Proposed Development is listed in the Book of Reference [EN010122/APP/4.3]. The Book of Reference has been prepared and is submitted in compliance with Regulation 5(2)(d) of the APFP Regulations.

The Statement of Reasons [EN010122/APP/4.1] also provides details of the powers sought and negotiations to date.

Details of the adequacy of the funding for compensation are provided in the Funding Statement [EN010122/APP/4.2]. The Statement of Reasons and Funding Statement are submitted in compliance with Regulation 5(2)(h) of the APFP Regulations.

Other Consents

A summary of other consents and licences likely to be required in addition to those being requested as part of the draft DCO is provided in the application document Consents and Agreements Statement [EN010122/APP/3.3].

Pre-Application Consultation

The Applicant has had careful regard to the pre-application consultation requirements of the PA 2008, the guidance on pre-application consultation issued by DCLG and the Planning Inspectorate, and its pre-application discussions held with the Planning Inspectorate, as required by Section 50(3) of the PA 2008.

As required by Section 37(3)(c) of the PA 2008 the Application is accompanied by a Consultation Report [EN010122/APP/5.1] which provides details of the Applicant's compliance with Sections 42, 46, 47, 48 and 49 of the PA 2008, the APFP Regulations, the EIA Regulations and relevant guidance.

Other Matters

As required under Regulation 5(3) of the APFP Regulations, application plans, drawings or sections provided under Regulation 5(2) are no larger than A0 size, are drawn to an identified scale (not smaller than 1:2500) and, in the case of plans, show the direction of north. Where appropriate larger scale key plans, showing the Order Limits in the context of features across a wider area, have been provided at a smaller scale.

In accordance with Regulation 5(5) of the APFP Regulations, the Applicant retains all responses to the consultation carried out under Part 5 of the PA 2008 and can make them available at the request of the Planning Inspectorate and/or the SoS.

The Applicant has identified statutory/non-statutory sites or features of nature conservation which are referenced in the Statutory and Non-Statutory Nature Conservation Designations Plan [EN010122/APP/2.5]. There are no Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites located within or close to the Order Limits.

The Badger Survey which accompanies the ES [EN010122/APP/6.1-Appendix 6.7] contains confidential information and has been clearly marked as such.

The Applicant will keep all application documents under review and will provide updated versions where necessary to do so during the examination of the Application as updates are required or in response to questions and comments received from the Examining Authority and Interested Parties.

We look forward to hearing from you in relation to the acceptance of this Application. If you do have any queries please do not hesitate to contact use on the details provided.

Yours sincerely

Ashley McInnes

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Oaklands Farm Solar Limited