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David Harvey, DHA on behalf of
Oaklands Farm Solar Limited
(By email)

Your Ref:

Our Ref: EN010122

Date: 5 March 2024

Dear Mr Harvey

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) – Section 51

Application by Oaklands Farm Solar Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Oaklands Farm Solar Park

Advice following issue of decision to accept the application for Examination

On 5 March 2024 the Secretary of State decided that the application for the above project satisfied the Acceptance tests under s55 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). The Planning Inspectorate's Acceptance checklist and the application documents have been published and made available on the project page of our [website](#).

In undertaking checks at the Acceptance stage, the Inspectorate has made some initial observations in relation to the application. This letter comprises advice to the Applicant provided under s51 of the PA2008 in respect of these initial observations. The Applicant should pay attention to its content and consider how appropriate action might be taken in response.

Draft Development Consent Order (Doc 3.1) (DCO) and Explanatory Memorandum (Doc 3.2) (EM)

The observations made in respect of the DCO and EM are appended to this letter.

Book of Reference (Doc 4.3)

We advise that the Book of Reference is updated before the Applicant gives notice of the deadline for the submission of relevant representations under s56 of PA2008, in order that there can be certainty that all relevant persons (including those within s56(2)(d)) have been notified and are afforded the opportunity to submit a relevant representation. The Examining Authority (ExA) may ask for the position to be clarified at or before the Preliminary Meeting. Where relevant, the Land Plans (**Doc 2.2**) and the Statement of Reasons (**Doc 4.1**) should also be updated.

Environmental Statement (Doc 6.1) (ES)

The Applicant is advised to review the ES to ensure that all documents consistently refer to the National Policy Statements designated in January 2024.

Appendix 4.4: Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (Doc 6.1)

Paragraph 3.1.1 references the likely need for replacement of faulty or broken equipment to ensure the continued effective operation of the Proposed Development. The Applicant should clarify whether there is potential for mass panel replacement to occur during the Proposed Developments lifespan and if so, whether this has been assessed as a worst case scenario.

ES Chapter 4 – Project Description (Doc 6.1)

Paragraph 4.40 states that the grid route corridor typically crosses obstacles of various nature for which special installation techniques must be considered. The Applicant should consider providing crossing method statements for the various types of crossings proposed.

ES Non Technical Summary (Doc 6.2)

The table of contents within the ES Non Technical summary requires amending/ updating. The introduction section is included within the previous aspect for some cases. The Applicant should ensure that the table of contents are accurate within each application document.

ES Chapter 10 Figure 10.1 – 10.9 (Doc 6.1)

Figure 10.5 only appears to display one of the Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) described within ES Chapter 10. The Applicant should provide a figure which clearly depicts both of the AQMAs and their extents.

Flood Risk Assessment (Doc 6.1) (FRA)

The ES states that solar farms are not explicitly referred to in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), however Annex 3: Flood Risk vulnerability classification of the NPPF includes solar farms within those developments listed as essential infrastructure. As such, a sequential test and an exception test should be undertaken and included in an updated FRA.

The updated FRA should also differentiate between Flood Zones 3a and 3b.

Consultees identified on a precautionary basis

Given the individual circumstances of this case, the Inspectorate advises taking a precautionary approach to consultation under s42(1)(a) of PA2008 to ensure that all persons potentially affected by, or potentially likely to have an interest in the application are given the opportunity to participate fully in the Examination of the application. On this basis, the Applicant may wish to serve notice on the bodies listed in Box 6 of the s55 checklist when it serves notice of the accepted application under s56(2)(a) of the PA2008; unless there is a specific justification why this is not necessary.

Minor errors and omissions

There are minor errors and omissions, as detailed in Box 30 of the s55 checklist. It is also recommended that the Applicant undertakes a general review of the documents identified for consistency, typographical errors and grammar as the following example has been noted:

- 'access' is misspelt at page 48 of the DCO.

Submission of updated documents

It would be helpful and assist the Examination process if the information or amendments to the relevant application documents were submitted to the Inspectorate before the end of the Relevant Representations period.

Summary

Please pay close attention to the advice set out in this letter, the accompanying appendix and previous advice issued regarding [draft documents](#) and act on it accordingly. This will contribute towards a more efficient Examination. An ExA, once appointed, may ask questions regarding these matters or request updated documents unless these are provided.

We trust you find this advice helpful, however if you have any queries on these matters please do not hesitate to contact our office using the contact details at the head of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Naoual Margoum

Naoual Margoum
Case Manager

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