



OAKLANDS FARM SOLAR PARK

Applicant: Oaklands Farm Solar Ltd

Response by the Applicant on Active and Sustainable Travel Enhancements Matters

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Paragraph 5.14.21 of NPS EN-1, requires an Applicant to demonstrate “*how consideration has been given to the provision of adequate active public or shared transport access and provision*”. Paragraphs 5.14.7 and 5.14.18 – 5.14.20 of NPS EN-1 are also applicable.

Active travel is defined as “*modes of travel that involve a level of activity*”¹ and is often used interchangeably with walking and cycling. Given the rural nature of the Site, it is unlikely to provide opportunities for shorter journeys and / or commuting to work or school. As such, opportunities relating to ‘active travel’ are considered synonymous with recreation.

Section 12.5.7 of Chapter 12 – Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation [APP-163] of the ES provides an overview of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within 1km of the Site. As shown in ES Figure 12.1 [APP-164], the Cross Britain Way runs through the Site and there are five other PRoW within 1km.

Consultation has been undertaken with regards to recreation and use of these PRoWs. A questionnaire (ES Appendix 12.1 - Recreation Questionnaires), was issued to a number of recreation/local interest groups including: Derby and South Derbyshire Ramblers, Derby Nomad Ramblers, various cycling groups, the British Horse Society (BHS) and Parish Councils – Drakelow, Rosliston and Walton-on-Trent. Responses are recorded in Table 12.1 of Chapter 12 of the ES.

Responses to the consultation on the Proposed Development suggest that the Cross Britain Way is considered an important route in the local area. There is an annual National Forest Trek which uses the route and anecdotal evidence of use by some local residents. The National Forest Company state that they manage a group of volunteers who maintain the route.

The Cross Britain Way will remain open during construction and operation of the Proposed Development, as detailed in the OCEMP [REP4-036] and ODEMP [REP4-030].

A new permissive path has been included in the Proposed Development, to connect existing PRoW in the local area. The new permissive path will connect the Cross Britain Way with two footpaths (SD13/4/1 and SD/13/1/1) to the south-east of the Oaklands Farm area, as shown on ES Figure 12.2 [APP-164].

The new permissive path is also shown in Appendix 5.6: Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (OLEMP) [REP4-040]. The permissive path will be linked into the wider landscape and ecological management of the Site with hedgerow and wildflower planting adding to the visual and biodiversity value of the path. The Applicant has committed to providing an interpretation / educational board on the Cross Britain Way which includes information on solar energy and carbon saving. The delivery of the new permissive path and interpretation board are secured via the OLEMP [REP4-040] and Requirement 8 of the dDCO.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-local-authority-toolkit/active-travel-local-authority-toolkit#what-active-travel-means>

The ExA has referred to the equestrian interest in the area on several occasions. The Applicant has engaged with the BHS via the PEIR process; the provision of the Recreation Questionnaire (ES Appendix 12.1); and a meeting in April 2022. At the request of the BHS, the Applicant considered whether it was possible for the new permissive path to be of suitable specifications to be used as a bridleway. As detailed in Table 12.1 of Chapter 12 of the ES, the Applicant considered this request seriously however, as the permissive path does not connect to any existing bridleways (the closest bridleway being to the south-west of the Site), it is proposed to remain a footpath.

As detailed in Table 12.1 of Chapter 12 of the ES, during statutory consultation Leicestershire & Rutland Bridleways Association raised concerns that the proposed permissive path within the PEIR did not exit onto Catton Lane directly opposite the footpath from Rosliston village. It was considered inappropriate for *“walkers [to] ‘dog-leg’ along any rural road so this should be remedied”*. As a result, the Applicant redesigned the permissive path to ensure an off-road connection to the local PRow network. The final route of the permissive path is shown on ES Figure 12.2 [APP-164]. Other comments are addressed in the Consultation Report [AS-010].

The Applicant has given considerable thought to the provision of adequate active public travel. In connecting three PRows, the permissive path is a demonstrable benefit of the Proposed Development, rather than mitigation. This demonstrates the Applicant has given due consideration to active travel, as required by Paragraphs 5.14.7 and 5.14.18-21 of NPS EN-1.

Notwithstanding the consideration to active travel given to date and following the Issues Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) and Open Floor Hearings (OFH1 & 2), the Applicant is considering further opportunities to deliver active public or shared transport access and provisions. The Applicant will provide further detail on this at Deadline 6. Given the extent of the Order Limits, the Applicant is constrained as to opportunities that could be provided and needs to consider aspects of safety (e.g., if footpaths were to be installed along public roads).

Active, public, and shared transport provision and accessibility has been added to the remit of the proposed Transport Management Liaison Group, which will be reflected in the revised OCTMP to be submitted by Deadline 6.