



Botley West Solar Farm

Application Cover Letter

1.1

Application Form

November 2024

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Revision P0

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a); Planning Act 2008; and Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations

Approval for issue

Jonathan Alsop

15 November 2024

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Prepared by:

**RPS
20 Western Avenue,
Milton Park, Abingdon,
Oxfordshire, OX14 4SH
United Kingdom**

Prepared for:

**Photovolt Development Partners GmbH,
on behalf of SolarFive Ltd.**

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Glossary

| Term | Meaning |
|---------------|------------------------|
| The Applicant | SolarFive Ltd |
| The Project | Botley West Solar Farm |

Photovolt Development Partners GmbH (PVDP) on behalf of SolarFive Ltd
16 Great Queen Street,
Covent Garden,
London,
WC2B 5AH

FAO: Caroline Hopewell
The Planning Inspectorate
National Infrastructure Directorate
Temple Quay House
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Planning Act 2008: Application for a Development Consent Order for Botley West Solar Farm (ref. EN010147)

Dear Caroline,

On behalf of Photovolt Development Partners GmbH (PVDP) for the Applicant, SolarFive Ltd (SolarFive), we are 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 Botley West Solar Farm (the Project).

1 Subject of the Application

This application is for a DCO for the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of a photovoltaic (PV) solar farm and associated infrastructure, with an electrical output of 840MWe.

Connection is proposed into the National Grid transmission system via a new National Grid 400kV substation to be located close to the existing National Grid 400kV line that runs between Cowley and Walham. A detailed description of the Project is provided within the Environmental Statement at Chapter 6 – Project Description [EN010147/APP/6.3] and a Non-Technical Summary is provided [EN010147/APP/6.2]. A separate Guide to the Application has also been provided [EN010147/APP/1.3] including the Electronic Application Index, and which has also been provided as a stand-alone Excel Sheet in the requisite PINS format [EN010147/APP/1.4].

This DCO application is required as the Project is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) pursuant to sections 14(1)(a) and 15(1) and (2) of the PA 2008, as an onshore generating station in England that does not generate electricity from wind and has a capacity exceeding 50 megawatts (MW). The decision on whether to grant development consent will be made by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net

Zero (Secretary of State). The NSIP and associated development are formally described in Schedule 1 of the draft DCO [EN010147/APP/3.1]. The draft DCO is provided in both Word and .pdf versions, as required by PINS.

The Project will make a substantial contribution to the need for renewable energy, as set out in the Planning Supporting Statement [EN010147/APP/7.1]. The UK's energy security and net zero obligations will only be delivered if we can enable the development of new low carbon sources of energy at speed and scale. This is the Government's critical national priority for low carbon infrastructure, set out in NPS EN-1 (January 2024) – see section 4.2 para 4.2.2. Wind and solar are the lowest cost ways of generating electricity, helping reduce costs and providing a clean and secure source of electricity supply (as they are not reliant on fuel for generation). Government analysis shows that a secure, reliable, affordable, net zero consistent system in 2050 is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar (NPS EN-1 para 3.3.20). If consented, the Botley West Project will play a vital role in this respect. The Government goal of 70GW by 2035 of solar development is currently, and for the foreseeable future, significantly behind meeting this target by some 42GW (see the Applicant's 'DCO Solar Capacity Calculation', Chapter 5, Alternatives, Figure 5.7 [EN010147/APP/6.4]). The scale of the problem of meeting net zero and to deliver clean, reliable and secure energy to the UK, is immense; the scale of the solution needs to mirror the scale of the problem.

2 Application fee and documents

A fee of £8,796 was paid by BACS transfer to the Planning Inspectorate on 14 October 2024, the reference given to this payment is EN010147.

The application has been submitted via a File Transfer system, which allows the transfer of all application documents, as agreed with the Planning Inspectorate.

3 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 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) 'Planning Act 2008: Pre-application stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects' Guidance (April 2024)
- The Planning Inspectorate's 'Advice on the preparation and submission of application documents' (August 2024).

It is understood that the Planning Inspectorate will publish the Application (with any necessary redactions and excluding any confidential documents) on the Planning Inspectorate's webpage following acceptance. The Applicant is content for PINS to undertake early publication, as soon as practical, after submission.

The Badger Survey Report submitted as part of this Application contains confidential information, and is marked as red in the electronic index [EN010147/APP/1.4] and Guide to Application [EN010147/APP/1.3]. The report details are as follows:

- Environmental Statement Volume 3, Appendix 9.8: Badger Survey Report [EN010147/APP/6.5].

In line with the Planning Inspectorate's 'Advice on the preparation and submission of application documents', a GIS shapefile showing the Order limits for the Project was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, via email, on 15 October 2024. Further to this, a draft of the electronic application index tracker was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, via email, on 30 October 2024.

A section 55 Checklist [EN010147/APP/1.1.1] submitted by the Applicant is included within this Application, assisting the Planning Inspectorate's compliance check of the Application.

4 Consent Flexibility

The evolving nature of renewable energy and technology means a degree of flexibility is proposed under the draft DCO [EN010147/APP/3.1] and supporting work plans [EN010147/APP/2.3]. Flexibility will facilitate the utilisation of any technological advancements that occur post consent, during construction of Botley West Solar Farm. To achieve this, detailed designs of some elements cannot be confirmed until the tendering process for the design and construction of the Project has been completed. At the point of submission, design parameters have been established to present the likely worst-case scenario of the Project.

The principles of the 'Rochdale Envelope' as described in the Planning Inspectorates Advice Note 9: Rochdale Envelope (July 2018), have informed the EIA process, ensuring that assessment of maximum parameters occurs where flexibility needs to be retained in the Project.

The Environmental Impact Assessment undertaken as part of this Application considered the flexibility sought in the draft DCO, assessing the reasonable worst-case scenario. The Outline Layout and Design Principles document [EN010147/APP/7.7] sets out the design parameters within which the Project is proposed to be constructed and operated, alongside the Planning Supporting Statement [EN010147/APP/7.1] which considers the principles of the development and its environmental acceptability against policy and guidance, including the Very Special Circumstances (Appendix 8) to support development in the Green Belt.

5 Habitats Regulations Assessment

A Habitats Regulation Assessment process has been undertaken to inform the Project. The Habitats Regulations Assessment Report (HRAR) [EN010147/APP/6.5] applies the legislative requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the "Habitats Regulations") to the Project.

The HRAR identifies all relevant European sites potentially affected by the Project and sets out the screening undertaken for the purposes of the Habitats Regulations. The scope of the sites to be considered was agreed with Natural England during pre-submission engagement. Cothill Fen SAC and Oxford Meadows SAC were identified as requiring consideration as to whether they could be affected.

The Habitats Regulations set out that where a likely significant effect cannot be ruled out, the competent authority should make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for the designated site in view of the conservation objectives of that site. The only likely significant effect that cannot be ruled out, is water quality impacts on the Oxford Meadows SAC.

The HRAR provides sufficient information for the Secretary of State to undertake an appropriate assessment to determine whether the Project would have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site. It is concluded that once avoidance measures have been accounted for, it is considered that no adverse effect on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC is predicted due to the Project in combination with other plans/projects.

6 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, is listed in the Book of Reference [EN010147/APP/4.3] and shown on the land plans [EN010147/APP/2.4]. The Statement of Reasons [EN010147/APP/4.1] also provides details of the negotiations to date.

The Book of Reference [EN010147/APP/4.3] has been prepared and submitted in compliance with Regulation 5(2)(d) of the APFP Regulations, according with the Department for Communities and Local Government guidance 'Planning Act 2008: Guidance related to procedures for compulsory acquisition of land' (September 2013).

Details of the adequacy of the funding for compensation are provided in the Funding Statement [EN010147/APP/4.2]. The Statement of Reasons and Funding Statement are submitted in compliance with Regulation 5(2)(h) of the APFP Regulations.

7 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 within the document Consents and Licences Required Under Other Legislation [EN010147/APP/5.2] enclosed within this submission.

8 Pre-application Consultation

The Applicant has had careful regard to the pre-application consultation requirements of the PA 2008, complying with the guidance on pre-application consultation published by the Planning Inspectorate in relation to major infrastructure applications, and responses received during pre-application discussions 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 [EN010147/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 the relevant guidance.

9 Other Matters

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 Secretary of State.

In accordance with Regulation 5(3) of the APFP Regulations, all 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.

Essential plans are identified and referenced within the application form. As discussed, the Badger Survey Report submitted as part of this Application contains confidential information [EN010147/APP/6.5], and a redacted version is provided accordingly. The draft DCO [EN010147/APP/3.1] is provided in both Word and .pdf formats, as required.

The Applicant will keep all application documents under review and will endeavour to provide updates (where it considers it necessary to do so) during the examination of the Application considering questions and comments received from the Examining Authority and Interested Parties.

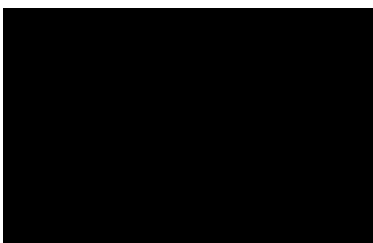
Statements of Common Ground have been drafted and are being advanced with statutory consultees and the host authorities. These will be finalised post-submission, but well in advance of examination hearings. The relevant line within the electronic index [EN010147/APP/1.4] associated with the Statements of Common Ground [EN010147/APP/7.5] is not therefore used as a reference at this point.

There are also some other lines and references in the electronic index that are not used;

- Reference EN010147/APP/2.1 is replaced by Fig 1.1 Site Location and Order Limits Overview, which is a figure in the ES [EN010147/APP/6.4] to avoid duplication;
- Reference EN010147/APP/7.2 is not used;
- References EN010147/APP/7.3.5, 7.3.7 and 7.3.8 are not used; and
- Reference EN010147/APP/7.4 is not used.

We look forward to hearing from you in relation to a formal acceptance of this Application. If we can be of any assistance, please contact me using the details provided below.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Alsop

Planning Director

For and on behalf of RPS

 [rps.tetratech.com](mailto: [REDACTED]@rps.tetratech.com)

