The Planning Inspectorate
Yr Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

SCOPING OPINION:

Springwell Solar Farm

Case Reference: EN010149

Adopted by the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) pursuant to Regulation 10 of The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

02 May 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.0.1 On 22 March 2023, the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) received an application for a Scoping Opinion from Springwell Energyfarm Ltd (the Applicant) under Regulation 10 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) for the proposed Springwell Solar Farm (the Proposed Development). The Applicant notified the Secretary of State (SoS) under Regulation 8(1)(b) of those regulations that they propose to provide an Environmental Statement (ES) in respect of the Proposed Development and by virtue of Regulation 6(2)(a), the Proposed Development is 'EIA development'.

1.0.2 The Applicant provided the necessary information to inform a request under EIA Regulation 10(3) in the form of a Scoping Report, available from:

http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/document/EN010149-000006

1.0.3 This document is the Scoping Opinion (the Opinion) adopted by the Inspectorate on behalf of the SoS. This Opinion is made on the basis of the information provided in the Scoping Report, reflecting the Proposed Development as currently described by the Applicant. This Opinion should be read in conjunction with the Applicant's Scoping Report.

1.0.4 The Inspectorate has set out in the following sections of this Opinion where it has / has not agreed to scope out certain aspects / matters on the basis of the information provided as part of the Scoping Report. The Inspectorate is content that the receipt of this Scoping Opinion should not prevent the Applicant from subsequently agreeing with the relevant consultation bodies to scope such aspects / matters out of the ES, where further evidence has been provided to justify this approach. However, in order to demonstrate that the aspects / matters have been appropriately addressed, the ES should explain the reasoning for scoping them out and justify the approach taken.

1.0.5 Before adopting this Opinion, the Inspectorate has consulted the 'consultation bodies' listed in Appendix 1 in accordance with EIA Regulation 10(6). A list of those consultation bodies who replied within the statutory timeframe (along with copies of their comments) is provided in Appendix 2. These comments have been taken into account in the preparation of this Opinion.

1.0.6 The Inspectorate has published a series of advice notes on the National Infrastructure Planning website, including Advice Note 7: *Environmental Impact Assessment: Preliminary Environmental Information, Screening and Scoping* (AN7). AN7 and its annexes provide guidance on EIA processes during the pre-application stages and advice to support applicants in the preparation of their ES.

1.0.7 Applicants should have particular regard to the standing advice in AN7, alongside other advice notes on the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) process, available from:

https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/legislation-and-advice/advice-notes/

1.0.8 This Opinion should not be construed as implying that the Inspectorate agrees with the information or comments provided by the Applicant in their request for an opinion from the Inspectorate. In particular, comments from the Inspectorate in this Opinion are without prejudice to any later decisions taken (e.g. on formal submission of the application) that any development identified by the Applicant is necessarily to be treated as part of a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) or Associated Development or development that does not require development consent.

2. OVERARCHING COMMENTS

2.1 Description of the Proposed Development

(Scoping Report Chapter 2 and 3)

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
2.1.1	Paragraph 2.1.2	Installation, construction and decommissioning methods	The Scoping Report states that the installation, construction and decommissioning methods to be utilised will be determined by the appointed contractor(s) while the EIA will represent a 'worst case'. The ES should set out the construction and design parameters and the works that will be involved for each of the three sites comprising the Proposed Development to ensure a clear understanding of assumptions and cumulative construction impacts to ensure that the worst-case construction scenarios are understood.
2.1.2	Section 2.2	Flexibility	The Inspectorate notes the Applicant's intention to apply a 'Rochdale Envelope' approach to maintain flexibility within the design of the Proposed Development, namely relating to the number of solar PV modules or construction methods. Scoping Report paragraph 2.2.7 also states that the design parameters will be further developed during statutory consultation. The Inspectorate expects that at the point an application is made, the description of the Proposed Development will be sufficiently detailed to include the design, size, capacity, technology, and locations of the different elements of the Proposed Development or where details are not yet known, will set out the assumptions applied to the assessment in relation to these aspects. This should include the footprint and heights of the structures (relevant to existing ground levels), as well as land-use requirements for all elements and phases of the development. The description should be supported (as necessary) by figures, cross-sections, and drawings which should be

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			clearly and appropriately referenced. The Inspectorate considers that early refinement of options will support a more robust assessment of likely significant effects and provide certainty to those likely to be affected. Where flexibility is sought, the ES should clearly set out and justify the maximum design parameters that would apply for each option assessed and how these have been used to inform an adequate assessment in the ES. The Inspectorate advises that each aspect chapter includes a section that outlines the relevant parameters / commitments that have informed the assessment.
2.1.3	Paragraphs 2.5.9 and 2.5.10	Use of borrow pits	The ES should provide details regarding the consideration of the proposed borrow pit locations. The potential environmental impacts should be considered, including cumulative effects arising from the working and restoration and where significant effects are likely to occur.
2.1.4	Paragraph 2.5.16	Habitat creation	Scoping Report paragraph 2.5.16 states that a programme of construction reinstatement and habitat creation will commence during the construction phase. The Inspectorate expects that these are included in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP). The description of habitat creation measures should include the location, extent, type of habitat creation, timeframe for establishment, ongoing maintenance requirements and any accompanying plans. Should habitat creation be included off-site, the area should be included in the red line boundary of the Proposed Development.
2.1.5	Section 2.7	Decommissioning	The ES should provide a description of the activities and works which are likely to be required during decommissioning of the Proposed Development, including the anticipated duration. Where significant effects are likely to occur as a result of decommissioning the Proposed Development, these should be described and assessed in

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			the ES. Any proposals for restoration of the site to agricultural or other use should also be described.

2.2 EIA Methodology and Scope of Assessment

(Scoping Report Chapter 4)

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
2.2.1	Section 4.5	Baseline conditions	It is noted that a number of surveys have been undertaken which have informed the Scoping Report however these have not been included or appended. Any information relied upon for the assessments in the ES should be appended to the ES in order for the Inspectorate to gain a full understanding of issues. The Applicant should ensure that surveys are up to date and adhere to current good practice.
2.2.2	Section 4.8	Mitigation and monitoring	The Scoping Report refers to several mitigation plans which will be provided with the application documents. The draft mitigation plans provided with the application should be sufficiently detailed to demonstrate how significant effects will be avoided or minimised and the ES should clearly demonstrate how the implementation of these plans will be secured. Any measures identified to minimise likely significant effects should be consulted on with relevant consultation bodies. Mitigation measures should be clearly identified and justified in the ES with an explanation provided on how this mitigation would be secured through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process.
2.2.3	Paragraph 2.4.61	Lighting	The Report states that the National Grid Substation (NGS) compound, Project Substation compound, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) compounds, and Collector Compounds would include lighting, in

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			accordance with relevant standards, but will not be permanently lit. External lighting should be assessed in a lighting assessment, for all elements and phases of the Proposed Development. It should be explained what measures are proposed to minimise light spill into the surrounding area and minimise impacts on sensitive human and ecological receptors.
2.2.4	Section 5.11	Transboundary	The Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State (SoS) has considered the Proposed Development and concludes that the Proposed Development is unlikely to have a significant effect either alone or cumulatively on the environment in a European Economic Area State. In reaching this conclusion the Inspectorate has identified and considered the Proposed Development's likely impacts including consideration of potential pathways and the extent, magnitude, probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impacts. The Inspectorate considers that the likelihood of transboundary effects resulting from the Proposed Development is so low that it does not warrant the issue of a detailed transboundary screening. However, this position will remain under review and will have regard to any new or materially different information coming to light which may alter that decision. Note: The SoS' duty under Regulation 32 of the 2017 EIA Regulations continues throughout the application process. The Inspectorate's screening of transboundary issues is based on the relevant considerations specified in the Annex to its Advice Note Twelve, available on our website at http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/legislation-and-advice/advice-notes/

2.3 Environmental aspects proposed to be scoped out

(Scoping Report Chapter 5)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed aspects to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
2.3.1	Section 5.2	Glint and glare	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out a Glint and Glare ES aspect chapter, however a detailed stand-alone glint and glare assessment is proposed to be submitted in support of the DCO application. A description of any relevant mitigation measures and safety considerations will be included in the Proposed Development Chapter in the ES. The Inspectorate is content with this approach, however the stand-alone glint and glare assessment should be included as a technical appendix to the ES as well. The stand-alone glint and glare assessment should assess the worse-case scenario. In the event that glint and glare effects are identified, it should be used to inform the relevant chapters in the ES, in particular for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) aspect Chapter.
2.3.2	Section 5.3	Heat and radiation	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out an assessment of impacts from heat and radiation during construction, operation and decommissioning as no significant sources are anticipated. The Inspectorate draws the Applicant's attention to the response from Ashby de la Launde, Bloxholm with Temple Bruer and Temple High Grange Parish Council (Appendix 2) regarding heat and micro-climatic impacts. The agrees that this matter may be scoped out from further consideration, on the basis that the ES clearly signposts any identified sources of heat (and radiation), and how this has been considered with respect to site-selection, site layout, and mitigation design.
2.3.3	Section 5.4	Major accidents and disasters	A standalone Chapter for major accidents and disasters is not proposed on the basis that the nature, scale, and location of the Proposed Development is not considered to be vulnerable to or to

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed aspects to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			give rise to significant impacts in relation to the risk of accidents and major disasters. Scoping Report Table 5-1 presents a list of possible major accidents and disasters that will require consideration including flooding, fire risk, aircraft disasters, rail accidents and plant disease. The Report states that the above potential major accidents and disasters will be considered in the design of the Proposed Development and covered in the flood risk assessment, Battery Safety Commitments, glint and glare assessment and planting design and Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP). The Inspectorate has considered the characteristics of the Proposed Development and agrees with this approach. However, the ES should clearly signpost where these impacts are assessed in other relevant chapters and where any relevant mitigation measures are secured, if required.
2.3.4	Section 5.5	Utilities	The Scoping Report suggests that existing infrastructure will be identified through consultation and a desk-based study and will inform the design and protective provisions to avoid impacts on receptors. The oCEMP will include any additional mitigation measures to protect against interference with below ground utilities during construction. The Inspectorate is content that a standalone ES Chapter for utilities is not required. However, the ES should explain the findings of the desk-based study and signpost to where any required mitigation measures are secured.
2.3.5	Section 5.6	Human Health	The Scoping Report proposes that impacts to human health will be considered in other relevant Chapters including Air quality; Landscape and visual; Noise and vibration; Traffic and transport. Potential human health effects from glint and glare will be considered in the glint and glare assessment. The Inspectorate is content with this

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed aspects to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			approach, however the ES should clearly set out potential impacts to human health from the Proposed Development during construction, operation and decommissioning and cross-reference where impacts are assessed within the ES; this may extend beyond the chapters proposed above, e.g. Land Contamination.
2.3.6	Section 5.7	Material assets	The Scoping Report proposes to include a description of the potential streams and volumes of construction and operation materials within the Project Description chapter of the ES, in lieu of a standalone chapter. The Report proposes to manage impacts through a Materials Management Plan required through an oCEMP. Scoping Report paragraph 5.7.6 states that it is not intended to remove significant quantities of excavated arisings from the site during construction and that where possible, soil arisings will be balanced through a cut and fill exercise to retain volumes on site. However, there is no reference to the potential use of borrow pits. The Inspectorate agrees that this can be scoped out as a specific chapter of the ES; however borrow pits should be considered within the ES Chapter on Land, soils and groundwater, and the ES Project Description should confirm the cut and fill balance.
2.3.7	Section 5.7	Waste	The Scoping Report proposes to include a description of the potential streams and volumes of construction and operational waste disposal within the ES Project Description chapter and manage impacts through an outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan, and a Site Waste Management Plan required through the oCEMP. There is no commitment to recycle solar panels at decommissioning. The ES should include an assessment of waste impacts for the decommissioning phase and include and outline what measures, if any, are in place to ensure that components (e.g. batteries and

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed aspects to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			panels) are able to be diverted from the waste chain and managed in line with the waste hierarchy based on available technology at the time. The ES should also consider the requirement for cumulative impacts to be assessed at decommissioning due to a number of solar farms in the local area also likely to be decommissioning in a similar timescale.
2.3.8	Section 5.8	Population - private property and housing, community land and assets, and development land and businesses	The Inspectorate agrees with the proposal to scope out an assessment of impacts on private property and housing, community land and assets, and development land and businesses as the Scoping Report states there are none of these types of assets located within the site boundary. The ES should ensure however that the socio-economic effect of amenity impacts (e.g. visual impacts on tourism/ recreational receptors, disruption/ diversion of Public Rights of Way (PRoW)) is clearly addressed in other relevant chapters and mitigated through management plans.
2.3.9	Section 5.8	Population - agricultural land holdings/ socio-economic benefits	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out impacts to agricultural land holdings, considering that the loss of these agricultural operations is not expected to lead to a significant effect in relation to employment in the local area. Paragraph 5.8.19 of the Report anticipates various socio-economic benefits as a result of the Proposed Development and proposes to submit a Socio-Economic Benefits Statement with the DCO Application, separate from the ES, to highlight the positive impacts on the local and regional area. The Inspectorate considers that such an assessment should form part of a specific chapter of the ES which considers both the positive and negative socio-economic impacts of the development, including the cumulative loss of agricultural operations within the region.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed aspects to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
2.3.10	Section 5.8	Population - walkers, cyclists and horse riders	There are a number of PRoW within the Site boundary some which would be temporarily diverted during the construction phase. The Applicant proposes to present these and detail relevant mitigation measures in a Public Rights of Way Commitments document, separate from the EIA process. The Inspectorate considers that surveys should be undertaken to provide baseline data in relation to the use of the PRoWs affected by the Proposed Development and the ES should provide a figure clearly depicting the location of said PRoWs. The ES should assess impacts to PRoW and on walkers, cyclists and horse riders from the Proposed Development (and cumulatively with other developments) such as the need for temporary closures or diversions, or reduction in amenity, where significant effects are likely to occur.
2.3.11	Section 5.9	Water – flood risk	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out increases in flood risk during construction (paragraph 5.9.14), operation (paragraph 5.9.24) and decommissioning (paragraph 5.9.31). However, a Flood Risk Assessment would be submitted with the application. Given the nature of the site and the development, and subject to ensuring no increase in flood risk and agreeing design and mitigation measures with Environment Agency, Lincolnshire County Council (the Lead Local Flood Authority) and the Witham First Internal Drainage Board, the Inspectorate is content to scope these matters out of the ES.
2.3.12	Section 5.9	Water	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out the following from the ES, on the basis of drainage design and mitigation measures controlled through an oCEMP: • sedimentation and pollution of watercourses as a result of silt laden runoff arising from construction (paragraph 5.9.16);

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed aspects to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			• water pollution as a result of chemical spillages during construction (paragraph 5.9.17) and operation (paragraph 5.9.25); • watercourse pollution as a result of cements and concretes being mobilised in surface water runoff (paragraph 5.9.18); • alterations in the surface water regime during construction; • increased foul flows to the foul sewers network during operation (paragraph 5.9.28); • disposal of contaminated water in the event of a BESS fire (paragraph 5.9.29); • increased demand for drinking water during operation (paragraph 5.9.30); and • impact of the decommissioning works on water quality (paragraph 5.9.31). The Inspectorate notes that impacts from herbicide and pesticide mobilisation have not been discussed in the Scoping Report and that horizontal directional drilling may be required but a breakout plan is not proposed. The Inspectorate does not consider enough evidence regarding the final design and control measures has been provided to scope impacts to water quality out during construction or decommissioning. The ES should identify relevant receptors and pathways of effect, the likely mitigation required to mitigate such effects and any monitoring required; this should include a drilling fluid breakout plan which should also be submitted with the Application if trenchless techniques are employed.
2.3.13	Section 5.9	Water resources	The Scoping Report does not consider water resources although the site is located within an area of 'serious water stress' designated by

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed aspects to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			the Environment Agency. The ES should provide details relating to water supply and demand requirements during construction and operation (including in the context of BESS fire risk) and water resources should be assessed in the ES where significant effects are likely to occur.
2.3.14	Section 5.9	Water Framework Directive	The Scoping Report identifies the potential for contamination of surface water and groundwater bodies. Given the geographic location of the Proposed Development, the ES should consider the potential impacts on Water Framework Directive (WFD) water bodies. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the Inspectorate's Advice Note Eighteen: The WFD in this regard. The ES should explain the relationship between the Proposed Development and any relevant water bodies in relation to the current relevant River Basin Management Plan.
2.3.15	Section 5.10	Electric, magnetic and electromagnetic fields (EMF)	The Applicant proposes to scope out EMF on the basis that the Proposed Development would not require cables and infrastructure exceeding 132kV; a threshold set out by Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) Power Lines: Demonstrating compliance with EMF public exposure guidelines, A Voluntary Code of Practice 2012 guidance. However, the project description at paragraph 2.4.1 of the Scoping Report includes "up to two new 400kV transmission towers to facilitate the electrical connection of the National Grid Substation to the existing 400kV transmission line". It is also noted that the location of the proposed 400kV National Grid Substation compound has not yet been determined. Given the uncertainty surrounding the location of the substation and proximity to receptors, the ES should address the risks to human health arising from EMF to the extent that it is relevant to the nature of the development, taking into account relevant technical guidance,

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed aspects to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			and where significant effects are likely to occur. The Inspectorate considers that the ES should demonstrate the design measures taken to avoid the potential for EMF effects on receptors from the substation infrastructure.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT COMMENTS

3.1 Air Quality

(Scoping Report Section 6.1)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.1.1	Paragraph 6.1.9	Site activities and road traffic exhaust emissions during operation	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out these matters given that the site activities and movement of vehicles during operation are expected to be minimal. On this basis, the Inspectorate agrees that these matters can be scoped out. The ES must however provide information on the nature of vehicle movements during the operational phases (alone and cumulatively) and confirm these projections fall below the relevant thresholds set out in guidance. The ES project description should also confirm that there are no emissions from operational plant that require further assessment.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.1.2	Paragraph 6.1.2	Study area	The Scoping Report states that the study area for sensitive ecological receptors will be up to 50m from the Site boundary or 50m from the edge of the roads. The ES should provide justification with reference to the relevant guidance for the study area for ecological receptors and agree with relevant consultation bodies.
3.1.3	Paragraph 6.1.11	Demolition	Scoping Report paragraph 6.1.11 refers to four sources of potential dust and particulate matter effects but only lists three: earthworks; general site activities; and trackout. Demolition is not scoped in. Given that there are no demolition works proposed during construction, the Inspectorate agrees that this can be scoped out during construction, however should the decommissioning phase

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			entail demolition works then these should be assessed, where significant effects are likely to occur.
3.1.4	n/a	Plan	The ES should be accompanied by a plan showing the location of sensitive air quality receptors within the vicinity of the Proposed Development to aid understanding of the extent of effects.

3.2 Biodiversity

(Scoping Report Section 6.2)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.1	Paragraph 6.2.9	Internationally and nationally statutory designated sites (all phases)	The Scoping Report seeks to scope out these receptors on the grounds that there are no internationally protected nature conservation sites within 10 km of the Site and no nationally protected statutory designated nature conservation sites within 2 km of the Site. The Inspectorate agrees that the proposal is unlikely to adversely impact any European or internationally designated nature conservation sites or nationally designated sites and this matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.2.2	Paragraph 6.2.9	Blankney Brick Pit Local Wildlife site (LWS); Temple Road Verges, Welbourn to Brauncewell 2 LWS; A15, Slate House Farm to Dunsby Pit Plantation 1 LWS; A15, Green Man Road to Cuckoo Lane 2 LWS; Bloxholm Wood LWS / Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust reserve (all phases)	The Scoping Report states that these sites would be avoided by the current Proposed Development design minimum offset distance of 15m from LWSs and they would also be protected by the oCEMP. It is not possible to locate these LWSs on the Environmental Features Plan in Appendix C of the Scoping Report as it is not accompanied with a schedule of sites. No site layout options have been presented and as such it is not confirmed that impacts have been avoided. The ES should consider any impacts upon local wildlife and geological sites, including local nature reserves with reference to the reasons for designation, and the findings of other impact assessment disciplines (noise, air quality, water resources). The ES should clearly present the location of LWSs and how they interact with the Proposed Development. The assessment of potential direct and indirect effects on LWSs needs to be made.
3.2.3	Paragraph 6.2.9	Other 17 LWS within 2 km of Site (all phases)	The Scoping Report seeks to scope these receptors out due to the distance from the Site and a lack of relevant links or impact pathways. The Scoping Report has not supported this with evidence

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			regarding the sites and impact pathways, in light of this the Inspectorate is unable to scope these receptors out at this stage.
3.2.4	Paragraph 6.2.9	Lowland Meadow Priority Habitat (all phases)	The Scoping Report proposes to avoid the grassland parcels assessed as priority habitat Lowland meadow by design, and protect them through the oCEMP. No site layout options have been presented and as such it is not confirmed that impacts have been avoided. The Inspectorate is unable to agree to scope this receptor out at this stage.
3.2.5	Paragraph 6.2.9	Hedgerows and hedgerow trees (all phases)	The Scoping Report states that the Proposed Development would be designed to include a buffer from panels to boundary features including hedgerows and trees and measures in the oCEMP would safeguard their protection. It also states that mitigation for any habitat loss will be included in the oLEMP. A commitment to provide habitat mitigation/compensation cannot be relied upon to scope habitats out. An assessment should identify the relative nature conservation value of receptors, any impact pathways, the extent and significance of effects, and should demonstrate that the mitigation hierarchy has been applied. The Inspectorate is unable to agree to scope this receptor out at this stage.
3.2.6	Paragraph 6.2.9	Ponds (all phases)	The Scoping Report states that no ponds would be lost to the Proposed Development and the implementation of the oCEMP would include standard practice pollution prevention measures. No site layout options have been presented and as such it is not confirmed that impacts have been avoided. No detail has been provided regarding the proposed mitigation measures. Insufficient information has been provided to enable the Inspectorate to scope out ponds at this stage.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.7	Paragraph 6.2.9	Semi-improved grassland (all phases)	The Scoping Report states that the oLEMP would include measures to sufficiently compensate for habitat loss and to protect any retained areas of this habitat during construction. A commitment to provide habitat mitigation/compensation cannot be relied upon to scope habitats out. An assessment should identify the relative nature conservation value and apply the mitigation hierarchy. The Inspectorate is unable to agree to scope this receptor out at this stage.
3.2.8	Paragraph 6.2.9	Invasive species (all phases)	The Scoping Report seeks to scope out this receptor as no invasive species were identified during the Preliminary Ecological survey and that if any are found during further survey, then an invasive species method statement would be implemented to prevent the spread of this species during construction. The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out if no invasive species are identified. Should invasive species be identified during further survey work, an assessment of the effects arising from the spread of invasive species during construction and decommissioning should be included within the ES and biosecurity measures incorporated into the oCEMP where necessary.
3.2.9	Paragraph 6.2.9	Invertebrates (all phases)	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out invertebrates due to a lack of records of protected species and a lack of high-quality habitat within the Site that could support an important invertebrate assemblage. The Inspectorate notes that the fields at the northern and southern edges of Springwell West have not been surveyed. This matter can be scoped out if the Applicant can demonstrate that no protected species or high-quality habitat are observed following completion of the surveys, with agreement from the relevant consultees.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.10	Paragraph 6.2.9	Reptiles (all phases)	The Scoping Report argues that the majority of the site is unsuitable for reptiles and seeks to scope them out on this basis. It suggests that precautionary measures would be detailed in the oCEMP to safeguard low numbers of reptiles that may be present in semi-improved grassland areas. The Inspectorate considers that further reptile surveys should be undertaken but restricted to the areas of suitable habitat identified in the PEA.
3.2.11	Paragraph 6.2.9	Non-ground nesting birds (all phases)	The Scoping Report argues that through the retention of boundary hedgerows and trees and implementation of precautionary measures detailed in an oCEMP, nests would be safeguarded during construction. The Scoping Report does not anticipate any effects during operation and does not mention decommissioning. No site layout options have been presented and as such it is not confirmed that habitats will be retained. No detail has been provided regarding the proposed precautionary mitigation measures. Insufficient information has been provided at this stage to enable the Inspectorate to scope out this matter.
3.2.12	Paragraph 6.2.9	Wintering birds (all phases)	The Scoping Report states that the site is not considered of importance for overwintering waders and wildfowl due to distance from coast and any significant wetland areas (i.e. it is more than 35 km from the Wash Special Protection Area). The Inspectorate agrees that the site is not likely to represent functionally linked habitat to any European sites, nevertheless the site could still have value for wintering birds and impacts could arise from the substantive land use change for the proposed development; therefore this matter should be scoped in.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.13	Paragraph 6.2.9	Barn owl (all phases) Marsh harrier (all phases) Bats (foraging/commuting and roosting) (all phases)	The Scoping Report states that disturbance arising from construction and decommissioning to these species would be mitigated by buffer zones and measures detailed within the oCEMP and oLEMP, and any loss of foraging habitat would be mitigated through habitat creation and enhancement secured through the oLEMP. The Scoping Report does not anticipate any significant effects to these species during operation. A commitment to provide habitat mitigation/compensation cannot be relied upon to scope habitats out. The ES should assess impacts on these species during construction and decommissioning as well as operation and this should include impacts from habitat loss, disturbance and lighting.
3.2.14	Paragraph 6.2.9	Water vole (all phases) Otter (all phases) European eel (all phases)	The Scoping Report states that no ponds or watercourses will be lost to the Proposed Development but where small sections of watercourses may be affected, 'standard mitigation' and pollution prevention measures (secured with the oCEMP) would be implemented. Given the potential for watercourses to be affected, and the lack of detail regarding the proposed mitigation measures, the Inspectorate is unable to scope these species out at this time.
3.2.15	Paragraph 6.2.9	Badger (all phases)	The Scoping Report states that all known setts would be retained with an appropriate buffer and implementation of precautionary measures detailed in an oCEMP would mitigate for any residual risk. No site layout options have been presented and as such it is not confirmed that habitats will be retained. No detail has been provided regarding the proposed precautionary mitigation measures.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			Insufficient information has been provided at this stage to enable the Inspectorate to scope out this matter.
3.2.16	Paragraph 6.2.9	Deer and other mammals (all phases)	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out the impact of fencing on foraging and dispersal for deer and other unspecified mammals on the grounds that the fencing will be designed to be 'semi-permeable' allowing movement across the site. The Inspectorate agrees that no likely significant effects are anticipated for deer and therefore an assessment can be scoped out of the ES. The application should provide further details regarding fencing design.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.17	Paragraph 6.2.7	Impact pathways	Scoping Report paragraph 6.2.7 refers to habitat loss/ degradation but fails to describe any other impact pathways (e.g. disturbance, lighting, habitat fragmentation/ severance, collision risk). The Proposed Development would entail a range of activities with the potential to generate ecological impacts. The ES Ecology chapter should consider all potential impact pathways and assess any impacts arising from the Proposed Development which are likely to result in significant effects on ecological receptors. Justification for scoping out any ecological impact should be provided.
3.2.18	n/a	Plants, veteran and ancient trees	Notable flora is not specifically addressed within the survey scope. Consideration should be given to scarce arable flora that could occur in arable fields and be adversely affected by changes in land use. There is no information on veteran and ancient trees in the Scoping Report. The ES should identify any veteran trees and assess any

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			significant effects on these receptors where they are likely to occur and propose adequate mitigation where identified.
3.2.19	n/a	Brown hare, hedgehog	Scoping Report paragraph 6.2.5 notes the presence of brown hare and hedgehog in the study area but these have not been proposed to be scoped into the assessment. The ES should consider effects on these species and be supported by robust survey data, unless otherwise agreed with relevant consultation bodies.

3.3 Climate

(Scoping Report Section 6.3)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.3.1	Paragraph 6.3.9	Climate resilience during construction, operation and decommissioning – flooding	Scoping Report Table 5-1 states that the majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to flooding will be covered in the Flood Risk Assessment appended to the ES. On this basis, the Inspectorate agrees that significant effects are not likely to occur and an assessment of resilience to flooding can be scoped out of the Climate chapter of the ES. Th Inspectorate agrees that given the distance of the site to the coastline, sea-level rise is not a relevant consideration.
3.3.2	Paragraph 6.3.9	Climate resilience during construction, operation and decommissioning – high heat, wind speeds	The Inspectorate agrees that this can be scoped out of the assessment on the basis of embedded resilience of solar PV modules to high heat and wind speeds. However, the ES project description should explain how the development has been designed to be resilient to such effects.
3.3.3	n/a	In-combination Climate Change Impact (ICCI) Assessment	The Scoping Report has not proposed to scope in/out an ICCI assessment. Solar panels have potential to alter precipitation runoff rates and patterns. In light of this, and in the absence of more detailed information regarding drainage design and controls, the Inspectorate considers that the ES should consider effects arising from a change in precipitation as a result of climate change in-combination with the scheme, where significant effects are likely to occur.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.3.4	n/a	n/a	n/a

3.4 Cultural heritage

(Scoping Report Section 6.4)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.4.1	Paragraph 6.4.9	Setting effects on all heritage assets within the study area (construction)	The Scoping Report argues that the construction phase effects resulting from changes in the setting of heritage assets will be temporary and no worse than the operational phase effects, therefore, it is not considered necessary to repeat the settings assessment for the construction phase. Given that setting can be negatively affected through more than simply visual effects (e.g. noise, dust) the Inspectorate does not agree with the assumption that the construction phase effects would be no worse than the operational phase effects and therefore does not agree to scope out this phase.
3.4.2	Paragraph 6.4.9	Impacts on the setting of listed dwellings within settlements over 1 km from the Site (operation)	The impacts on setting to these receptors are proposed to be scoped out on the basis that the positive contribution made by setting to the significance of residential listed buildings within settlements is typically confined to their immediate street scene. The Scoping Report does not justify why and how the 1km reference has been derived. The Inspectorate considers there is insufficient evidence provided to scope out this matter at this stage.
3.4.3	Paragraph 6.4.9	Listed K6 telephone kiosks (operation)	These receptors are proposed to be scoped out on the grounds that their surroundings make a neutral contribution to their significance as they are found in a variety of contexts throughout the UK. The Inspectorate agrees that significant effects on such assets are unlikely to arise and this matter can therefore be scoped out of the ES.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.4.4	Paragraph 6.4.9	Various findspots recorded by LCC HER (listed in Scoping Report) (construction and operation)	The Scoping Report explains that as findspots, these have been removed from the Site and the heritage significance of their former locations would not be harmed by the Proposed Development. The Inspectorate agrees that the findspots can be scoped out of the ES.
3.4.5	Paragraph 6.4.9	Milepost 20 metres south of Ashby Lodge Farm (Grade II Listed) (operation)	The Scoping Report argues that the positive contribution made by setting to the significance of the milepost derives from its relationship with the road network, and this would not be altered by the Proposed Development during operation. The Inspectorate agrees on this basis that this asset can be scoped out of this phase.
3.4.6	Paragraph 6.4.9	Avro Lancaster crash site (operation)	This receptor is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that its significance does not draw on its wider surroundings. The Inspectorate agrees this asset can be scoped of the operational assessment.
3.4.7	Paragraph 6.4.9	Hawker Hurricane crash site (operation)	This receptor is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that its significance does not draw on its wider surroundings. The Inspectorate agrees this asset can be scoped of the operational assessment.
3.4.8	Paragraph 6.4.9	Sites of former extractive pits in Ashby de la Launde and Bloxholm, and Rowston (construction and operation)	These receptors are proposed to be scoped out on the grounds that they have negligible importance and significant effects upon them are therefore unlikely. The Scoping Report has provided no justification/evidence to support its assessment of 'negligible importance' and therefore the Inspectorate is unable to scope this matter out at this stage.
3.4.9	Paragraph 6.4.9	All heritage assets within the study area during decommissioning	The Scoping Report seeks to scope out the decommissioning phase on the basis that it would not result in impacts to any additional heritage assets not affected during construction and operation, and changes in

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			the setting of heritage assets in the surrounding area will be no worse than the construction or operational phase effects. The Inspectorate considers that there is potential for decommissioning stage effects on buried archaeological resource, such as the potential for harm due to compaction, removal of piles, and subsequent potential changes in drainage patterns. In addition, given that the potential effects on setting during decommissioning are likely to be similar to those experienced during construction the Inspectorate is of the opinion that this matter cannot be scoped out at this stage. Cultural heritage should be a consideration as part of any outline decommissioning plans.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.4.10	Paragraph 6.4.1	Consultation	The Applicant is also advised to liaise with the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire who act on behalf of North Kesteven District Council, especially in relation to the scope of and timing of any intrusive evaluation following completion of the geophysical survey.
3.4.11	Paragraph 6.4.2	Study area	The Scoping Report proposes a 2 km study area for non-designated assets. For the assessment of setting, the study area should be agreed with the relevant stakeholders and informed by the visual analysis.
3.4.12	Paragraph 6.4.3	Data sources	The Applicant is advised to also consider the North Kesteven District Council's local list of non-designated heritage assets and the Scopwick and Kirkby Green Neighbourhood Plan which contains schedules and descriptions of heritage assets within the Plan area.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.4.13	Paragraphs 6.4.4 and 6.4.6	Intrusive evaluation	The Scoping Report proposes a programme of archaeological investigation and recording secured by a DCO Requirement. Measures to mitigate risk to buried archaeological remains such as exclusion zones/ avoidance routes and concrete shoes rather than piles require a robust understanding of archaeological risk to be effective. These considerations should be factored into the programme and scope of intrusive evaluation (if required), to be agreed with the statutory consultees. Noting the responses from North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council indicating the potential need for intrusive field evaluation to understand the full extent of any potential impact, and inform a fuller programme of archaeological investigation and ultimately the scheme design, the Inspectorate advises that further discussions are held with the relevant consultation bodies to discuss the detailed findings of desk studies and geophysical surveys, and whether these area adequate to inform design, assess the effects of the scheme and demonstrate that any potential significant effects can be adequately mitigated. Pending the results of the non-intrusive surveys the Inspectorate is not in a position to agree that a programme of intrusive archaeological investigation is not required to inform the ES.
3.4.14	Paragraph 6.4.8	Receptors to be scoped in	The ES should assess the effects on the Conservation Areas at Scopwick, Blankney and Bloxholm where significant effects are likely to occur.

3.5 Landscape and visual

(Scoping Report Section 6.5)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.5.1	Paragraph 6.5.9	Assessment of impacts to Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) during construction, operation and decommissioning	The Scoping Report states that the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB is located over 20km away from the Proposed Development. Due to the distance and intervisibility, an assessment of impacts on the AONB is proposed to be scoped out of the LVIA. Considering the nature and characteristics of the Proposed Development and the distances involved, the Inspectorate agrees that an assessment of impacts on the AONB can be scoped out of the ES.
3.5.2	Paragraph 6.5.9	Assessment of impacts to Lincoln Cliff Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) during construction, operation and decommissioning	The Scoping Report states that the Lincoln Cliff AGLV is located over 3km to the west of the Proposed Development and it is proposed to be scoped out due to no intervisibility confirmed through field work. On this basis, the Inspectorate agrees that an assessment of impacts on the AGLV can be scoped out of the ES. The ES should demonstrate there is no intervisibility with reference to photos from field work or other appropriate evidence.
3.5.3	Paragraph 6.5.9	Other Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) in the North Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment during construction, operation and decommissioning	Although some distant visibility is indicated by the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV),the Scoping Report proposes to scope out this matter on the basis that the field work has established that there would be no intervisibility between the site and any other LCAs. The Inspectorate is content for these receptors to be scoped out, however the ZTV should be reviewed with the final scheme and presented in the ES to demonstrate that there is no intervisibility.
3.5.4	Paragraph 6.5.9	View from Villages/ hamlets of Metheringham, Bloxham, Digby, Dorrington, Ruskington,	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out this matter on the basis that it is highly unlikely there would be any views of the Proposed Development from these settlements when taking into account of

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
		Leasingham, Cranwell, Royal Air Force (RAF) Cranwell, Wellingore and Navenby and other settlements along the A607 during construction, operation and decommissioning	intervening hedgerows and other vegetation, stating that any glimpses would be distant, filtered and negligible. The ES should demonstrate there is no intervisibility, otherwise the potential effects on views and visual amenity within the ZTV where significant effects are likely to occur should be assessed.
3.5.5	Paragraph 6.5.9	Assessment of impacts to PRoW and local roads beyond 3km from the site during construction, operation and decommissioning	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out these receptors in the LVIA due to the distance and intervisibility. The Inspectorate considers that these matters may be scoped out on the basis of the relatively short duration of any potential effect.
3.5.6	Paragraph 6.5.9	Assessment of impacts to isolated residential properties over 1km from the site during construction, operation and decommissioning	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out this matter on the basis that it is a matter of private visual amenity which would not give rise to an overbearing effect on residential amenity. Insufficient information has been provided regarding the nature of these receptors and extent of visibility, therefore the Inspectorate is unable to scope out this matter out at this stage.
3.5.7	Paragraph 6.5.9	Assessment of impacts to users of the rail network, specifically the section between Metheringham and the level crossing on the B1191 during construction, operation and decommissioning	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out these receptors in the LVIA due to their sensitivity being medium/ low. The Inspectorate considers that these matters may be scoped out on the basis of the relatively short duration and intermittent nature of any potential effect.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.5.8	Paragraphs 6.5.2 and 6.5.7	Study area	The Scoping Report paragraph 6.5.2 proposes that the LVIA study area will be within 3km of the site boundary of the Proposed Development and extended to 5km for the National Grid and Project Substation and National Grid connecting towers. However, the full extent of potential visibility of the Proposed Development is not yet fully known and the ZTV mapping contained within Appendix F identified potential visibility beyond these extents. The ES should justify the extent of the study area/s with reference to recognised professional guidance and the extent of the likely impacts, informed by fieldwork and relevant models or approaches such as the ZTV. The Applicant should agree the study areas with relevant consultation bodies.
3.5.9	Paragraph 6.5.6	Mitigation	The Scoping Report states that an oLEMP will be developed to secure the long-term management of the landscape and biodiversity strategy. The ES should cover the establishment period of any Landscape Scheme. The Inspectorate draws the Applicant's attention to the comments of Lincolnshire County Council regarding the establishment period and content of the management plan (see Appendix 2 of this Opinion).

3.6 Land, soils and groundwater

(Scoping Report Section 6.6)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.6.1	Paragraph 6.6.9	Land contamination and minerals (all phases)	The Scoping Report justifies scoping out impacts to land based on the findings of a Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA), embedded mitigation measures and industry best practice procedures. The Scoping Report states that any negative implications for the Mineral Safeguarding Areas would be minimised and considered as part of the Proposed Development design. The findings of the PRA have not been presented in detail within the Scoping Report and paragraph 6.6.5 seems to suggest some risk of contamination. In light of this, there is insufficient evidence to scope this matter out at this stage. The ES should be supported by the findings of a PRA and where land contamination is identified, the ES should assess significant effects where they are likely to occur. Potential risks of soil and water contamination from leaks, improper storage, or spills during the construction phase, should be mitigated through implementation of standard best practice measures secured via the oCEMP. The Inspectorate considers that a Minerals Assessment should be undertaken to inform and influence the design and layout of the development and demonstrate how impacts to Mineral Safeguarding Areas have been minimised. The ES should also confirm if borrow pits are proposed, assess the impacts, and identify the location of these within the Order Limits. The ES should demonstrate that the Minerals Planning Authority has been consulted in respect of all of the proposals and that the proposed development does not impact on future ambitions for minerals extraction within the region.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.6.2	Paragraph 6.6.9	Groundwater (all phases)	The Scoping Report argues that the quality of groundwater in Source Protection Zones (SPZs) would be appropriately protected by embedded mitigation measures, and the project surface water strategy would mirror the existing surface water regime, so having minimal effect on the existing groundwater conditions. The site overlies an SPZ and a Principal Aquifer of high vulnerability and construction activities may lead to a creation of contamination pathways e.g. piling, trenching, borrow pits. The ES should assess impacts from all phases of the development to groundwater where significant effects are likely to occur. Best practice measures should be employed and secured via the DCO to ensure any potential pollution impacts are minimised.
3.6.3	Paragraph 6.6.9	Soils (operation)	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out operational impacts to soils as significant vehicle movements within the Site during operation are not anticipated and therefore the potential for compaction is considered limited. The Inspectorate agrees that impacts from compaction could be scoped out of the operational phase. However, there is no reference in the Scoping Report as to whether or how agricultural land use would be continued across the site alongside the operation of the solar farm. Changes to the hydrogeological regime as a result of the Proposed Development may also affect the quality of soils within the Site and this should be assessed within the ES.
3.6.4	Paragraph 6.6.9	Soils (decommissioning)	The Scoping Report argues that any effects on soils during decommissioning would not be expected to be significant as the number of vehicle movements is anticipated to be less than during the construction phase, limiting the potential for compaction of soils to occur. Decommissioning works are also less likely than

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			construction works to adversely impact on agricultural field drains as there would be no requirement for piling etc., so are less likely to result in deterioration of soil quality. The Inspectorate agrees with the rationale for scoping this matter out.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.6.5	Paragraph 6.6.5	Agricultural Land Classification (ALC)	The Scoping Report explains that an ALC survey is currently underway. The scope of the survey should align with the Natural England 'Technical Information Note TIN049: Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile land, 2nd edition (2012)'.
3.6.6	Paragraph 6.6.5	Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)	The Scoping Report notes that the proximity of RAF Digby suggests that there is the potential for unexploded ordnance to have been present at the Site. The ES should assess the risk of disturbing UXO through piling and other works.
3.6.7	Paragraph 6.6.8	Agricultural land (operation)	The Report proposes to scope in the operational impacts of the proposed development in terms of the loss of agricultural and BMV land because of the removal of this land from productive use. The assessment should also include and detail mitigation measures to remove, reduce or minimise such impacts.

3.7 Noise and vibration

(Scoping Report Section 6.7)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.7.1	Paragraph 6.7.9	Operational vibration	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out this matter on the basis that fixed plant items or structures would not emit discernible levels of vibration during the operational phase. Based on the nature and characteristics of the Proposed Development, the Inspectorate agrees that operational vibration may be scoped out from further assessment. The ES project description should demonstrate that operational plant and equipment is of a type and to be used in locations unlikely to result in significant vibration impacts on sensitive receptors.
3.7.2	Paragraph 6.7.9	Operational road traffic noise	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out an assessment of noise associated with operational traffic on the basis that once operational the Proposed Development would generate minimal traffic. Considering the characteristics of the Proposed Development, the Inspectorate is content that this matter can be scoped out. The ES project description should confirm the anticipated trip generation (including number and type of vehicles) required for routine maintenance during operation to justify this.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.7.3	Paragraph 6.7.2	Study area and sensitive receptors	Scoping Report paragraph 6.7.2 states that the study area will be defined based on the Applicant's experience of solar farm developments and proposed locations of operation equipment/ structures and construction/decommissioning pathways. The ES should explain how the study area and sensitive receptors have been

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			selected with reference to relevant supporting evidence, such as noise modelling/ noise contour mapping.
3.7.4	Paragraph 6.7.4	Baseline survey	The Scoping Report proposes the baseline noise monitoring to be undertaken along the site boundary. The ES should explain how the baseline noise monitoring locations were chosen and how they are deemed to be representative of nearby receptors.
3.7.5	Paragraph 6.7.5	Sensitive receptors	The Scoping Report states that the receptors likely to be incorporated into the assessment are all residential in nature. The ES should also consider if there are any ecological receptors that require consideration in respect of noise related impacts.
3.7.6	n/a	Plans	The ES should provide a plan showing the location of all sensitive receptors identified for assessment overlayed with noise contour mapping to aid understanding of the potential for significant effects relating to noise.

3.8 Traffic and transport

(Scoping Report Section 6.8)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.8.1	Paragraph 6.8.9	Operational traffic	The Scoping Report states that the effect of operational traffic is likely to be minimal. The Inspectorate has considered the characteristics of the operational phase of the Proposed Development and based on the low levels of anticipated traffic generation is content that this matter can be scoped out. The ES description of development should clearly set out the operational vehicle types and numbers (with reference to thresholds within guidance) to justify this position.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.8.2	Paragraph 6.8.2	Study area	The scoping report suggests a study area to include the B1189, B1188, B1191, and A15. The ES should also describe how the Proposed Development is likely to affect the Strategic Road Network; significant effects should be assessed where they are likely to occur.
3.8.3	Paragraph 6.8.6	Mitigation - highway improvements	If highways works/improvements are required as part of the mitigation for significant effects arising from construction transport, these should be fully explained within the ES and an assessment of any likely significant effects as a result of these works should also be presented, as relevant. This should include consideration of any potential impacts to railway assets, such as bridges and level crossings, located on HGV routes.
3.8.4	Paragraph 6.8.11	Impact assessment methodology	The impact assessment is proposed to be based on the methodology outlined in the Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic (1993). The Inspectorate understands that this guidance is

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			planned to be updated by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). The ES should take account of future updates where relevant.

3.9 Cumulative Effects

(Scoping Report Chapter 7)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.9.1	n/a	n/a	No matters have been proposed to be scoped out of the assessment.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.9.2	n/a	Other projects	The study areas, methodologies (including other projects included in the assessment) particularly with respect to impacts on 'best and most versatile' agricultural land and landscape, should be agreed with the statutory consultation bodies and any exclusions should be clearly justified and explained with reference to PINS Advice Note 17: Cumulative effects assessment.

APPENDIX 1: CONSULTATION BODIES FORMALLY CONSULTED

TABLE A1: PRESCRIBED CONSULTATION BODIES[1]

SCHEDULE 1 DESCRIPTION	ORGANISATION
The Health and Safety Executive	Health and Safety Executive
The National Health Service Commissioning Board	NHS England
The relevant Integrated Care Board	NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board
Natural England	Natural England
The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England	Historic England
The relevant fire and rescue authority	Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue services
The relevant police and crime commissioner	Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner
The relevant parish council(s) or, where the application relates to land [in] Wales or Scotland, the relevant community council	Blankley Parish Council
	Wellingore Parish Council
	Temple Bruer with Temple High Grange Parish Council
	Cranwell, Brauncewell and Byard's Leap Parish Council
	Scopwick and Kirkby Green Parish Council
	Rowston Parish Council
	Martin Parish Council
	Ashby De La Launde and Bloxholm Parish Council
The Environment Agency	Environment Agency (Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire and East Midlands)

[1] Schedule 1 of The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (the 'APFP Regulations')

SCHEDULE 1 DESCRIPTION	ORGANISATION
The Civil Aviation Authority	Civil Aviation Authority
The Relevant Highways Authority	Lincolnshire County Council
The relevant strategic highways company	National Highways
The relevant internal drainage board	Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board
	Upper Witham Internal Drainage Board
	Witham First Internal Drainage Board
	Witham Third Internal Drainage Board
The Canal and River Trust	Canal and River Trust
The Crown Estate Commissioners	The Crown Estate
The Forestry Commission	Forestry Commission (East and East Midlands)
The Secretary of State for Defence	Ministry of Defence

TABLE A2: RELEVANT STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS[2]

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
The relevant Integrated Care Board	NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board
The National Health Service Commissioning Board	NHS England
The relevant NHS Trust	East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Railways	Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd
	National Highways Historical Railways Estate
Civil Aviation Authority	Civil Aviation Authority

[2] 'Statutory Undertaker' is defined in the APFP Regulations as having the same meaning as in Section 127 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008)

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
Licence Holder (Chapter 1 Of Part 1 Of Transport Act 2000)	NATS En-route Safeguarding
Universal Service Provider	Royal Mail Group
The relevant Environment Agency	The Environment Agency (Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire and East Midlands)
The relevant water and sewage undertaker	Anglian Water
	Severn Trent
The relevant public gas transporter	Cadent Gas Limited
	Northern Gas Networks Limited
	Scotland Gas Networks Plc
	Southern Gas Networks Plc
	Wales and West Utilities Ltd
	Energy Assets Pipelines Limited
	ES Pipelines Ltd
	ESP Connections Ltd
	ESP Networks Ltd
	ESP Pipelines Ltd
	Fulcrum Pipelines Limited
	GTC Pipelines Limited
	Harlaxton Gas Networks Limited
	Independent Pipelines Limited
	Indigo Pipelines Limited
	Last Mile Gas Ltd
	Leep Gas Networks Limited
	Quadrant Pipelines Limited

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
	Squire Energy Limited
	National Grid Gas Plc
The relevant electricity distributor with CPO Powers	Eclipse Power Network Limited
	Energy Assets Networks Limited
	ESP Electricity Limited
	Fulcrum Electricity Assets Limited
	Harlaxton Energy Networks Limited
	Independent Power Networks Limited
	Indigo Power Limited
	Last Mile Electricity Ltd
	Leep Electricity Networks Limited
	London Power Networks Plc
	Mua Electricity Limited
	Optimal Power Networks Limited
	The Electricity Network Company Limited
	UK Power Distribution Limited
	Utility Assets Limited
	Vattenfall Networks Limited
	Utility Assets Limited
	National Grid Electricity Distribution Midlands Limited
The relevant electricity transmitter with CPO Powers	National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc
	National Grid Electricity System Operator Limited

TABLE A3: SECTION 43 LOCAL AUTHORITIES (FOR THE PURPOSES OF SECTION 42(1)(B))[3]

LOCAL AUTHORITY[4]
Boston District Council
Cambridgeshire County Council
City of Lincoln Council
East Lindsey District Council
Leicestershire County Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Newark and Sherwood District Council
Norfolk County Council
North East Lincolnshire Council
North Kesteven District Council
North Lincolnshire Council
North Northamptonshire Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Peterborough City Council
Rutland Council
South Holland District Council
South Kesteven District Council
West Lindsey District Council

[3] Sections 43 and 42(B) of the PA2008

[4] As defined in Section 43(3) of the PA2008

APPENDIX 2: RESPONDENTS TO CONSULTATION AND COPIES OF REPLIES

CONSULTATION BODIES WHO REPLIED BY THE STATUTORY DEADLINE:
Anglian Water
Ashby de la Launde, Bloxholm with Temple Bruer and Temple High Grange Parish Council
Boston Borough Council
Canal and River Trust
City of Lincoln Council
East Lindsey District Council
Environmental Agency
Forestry Commission (East and East Midlands)
Health and Safety Executive
Historic England
Lincolnshire County Council
Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service
National Grid Gas Plc (National Gas Transmission) – two responses received (05 April and 18 April 2023)
National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc
National Highways
NATS En-route Safeguarding
Natural England
Newark and Sherwood District Council
NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board
Norfolk County Council
North East Lincolnshire Council

North Kesteven District Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Peterborough City Council
Severn Trent
South Holland District Council
Scopwick and Kirkby Green Parish Council
West Lindsey District Council

Anglian Water Services
Thorpe Wood House
Thorpe Wood
Peterborough
PE3 6WT

www.anglianwater.co.uk
Our ref ScpR.SFS.NSIP.23.ds

Gary Chapman
EIA and Land Rights Advisor
The Planning Inspectorate

springwellsolarfarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

18 April 2023

Dear Gary

Springwell Solar Farm
EIA Scoping Report consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the scoping report for the above project which is within North Kesteven District in Lincolnshire.

Anglian Water is the appointed water and sewerage undertaker for the site shown on Figure 1 in Appendix A. The site is between Blankney in the north east and Temple Bruer in the south west and straddles the A15 Sleaford Road. The following response is submitted on behalf of Anglian Water in its statutory capacity and relates to potable water and water assets along with wastewater and water recycling assets.

- The Scheme – Existing infrastructure

There are significant existing Anglian Water assets including water mains along the road network which serve the local villages. The site also crosses over with the Water Recycling Catchments of Metheringham, Rowston (serving Scopwick) and Martin and so includes sewers and rising mains. Maps of Anglian Water's assets are available to view at the following address:

http://www.digdat.co.uk/

Anglian Water notes that at 5.5.2 (page 51) the promoter identifies Anglian Water pipeline (clean) from the utility search. We would support efforts to minimise and potentially remove impacts on water and water recycling assets through project layout, design and construction approaches. At 5.9.26 (page 64) the promoter indicates that sewerage supply and capacity will be assessed with Anglian Water. The statement that 'The Proposed Development is expected to have an impact on the public foul water sewers in the vicinity of the Site due to the increase in foul flows arising from the Proposed Development' means we do not agree that the impact of foul flows can be scoped out (para 5.9.28, page 64). It may be possible to scope out the impact

once that assessment work has been undertaken and following consultation by the promoter with the Environment Agency.

Anglian Water also does not agree (para. 5.9.32) with the promoter scoping out water from the EIA. Anglian Water is progressing its Water Resources Management Plan and as a water scarce area designated by the Environment Agency and following detailed assessment work, we are now advising that new non household water supply requests (construction and operational phases) may be declined as these could compromise our regulatory priority of supplying existing and planned domestic growth. The flows needed to fill water storage tanks – in the event that the promoter decides not to use rain water harvesting on site to meet this non potable demand – will need to be assessed by Anglian Water to advise whether a supply in feasible with jeopardising domestic supply or at a significant financial or environmental cost. Our new position on non- household supply is due to our joint aim with the Environment Agency of reducing abstraction to protect habitats and the wider environment. The promoter will need to submit a request for water supply setting out the new daily demand for each stage of the project.

The open position at para 5.9.11 on water use during construction means that the promoter will need to establish whether concrete production, for example, would be offsite or would need an on-site supply in order to assess the water supply options with Anglian Water. Further advice on water and wastewater capacity and options can be obtained by contacting Anglian Water's Pre-Development Team at:

planningliasion@anglianwater.co.uk

On the question of Flood Risk Assessment (para. 5.9.32) we would welcome engagement on Anglian Water's existing drainage apparatus. However, we would advise that in accordance with the drainage hierarchy, surface water should first look to be managed by Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Only if the promoter could demonstrably prove that infiltration rates for example precluded SuDS in a specific location would Anglian Water consider surface water connections to the public sewer. We consider that SuDS should be used at the Substation compound (para. 2.4.65) and Anglian Water would currently resist a provision providing for a surface water connection to the public sewer in the draft DCO Order.

In view of the guidance in the National Policy Statements we would have anticipated that the scoping would have included and then considered the approach to water supply, water resources and water recycling assets. Anglian Water requests that these points are assessed early in the EIA to set out how the project will be supplied with water, its wastewater managed, how water assets serving residents and business will be protected and how design has been altered to reduce the need for new water infrastructure or the diversion of existing assets.

We support the inclusion of water (5.9.16 onwards) in a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). The CEMP and a Surface Water Management Plan should include steps to remove the risk of damage to Anglian Water assets from plant and machinery including haul roads. Further advice on minimising and then relocating Anglian Water existing assets can be obtained from:

connections@anglianwater.co.uk

- Water Resources

The site is in the Central Lincolnshire Water Resource Zone (WRZ), which supplies water to area from the Humber and Scunthorpe to Grantham and Sleaford including Lincoln. We have flagged above the new position on water resources and note that whilst the scoping considers water environment impacts it does not look at water resources. As the site is within an area of 'serious water stress' designated by the Environment Agency and water is used in the project construction and operation this indicates that water resources should be assessed in the EIA.

- Engagement

Anglian Water would welcome the instigation of discussions with Springwell Energy Farm Limited as the prospective applicant, in line with the requirements of the 2008 Planning Act and guidance. Experience has shown that early engagement and agreement is required between NSIP applicants and statutory undertakers during design and assessment and well before submission of the draft DCO for examination. Consultation at the statutory PEIR stage would in our view be too late to inform design and may result in delays to the project. We would recommend discussion on the following issues:

1. Requirement for potable and raw water supplies if rainwater harvesting and other resources within the site are not used
2. Impact of development on Anglian Water's assets including abstraction
3. Requirement for water recycling (sewer) connections
4. The design of the project to minimise interaction with Anglian Water assets and specifically to avoid the need for diversions which have carbon costs
5. Confirmation of the project's cumulative impacts (if any) with Anglian Water projects
6. Draft Protective Provisions

A set of draft Protective Provisions will be sent to the promoter to include in the draft DCO.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require clarification on the above response or during the pre- application to decision stages of the project.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Darl Sweetland DMS MRTPI
Spatial Planning Manager

Cc info@springwellsolarfarm.co.uk

Ashby de la Launde, Bloxholm with Temple Bruer and Temple High Grange Parish Council

Response to the Springwell Solar Farm EIA Scoping Report

Format of response:

1. Introduction highlighting why this proposal is not suitable in this area.
2. Comments on areas within the scoping document.
3. Areas requiring inclusion within the scoping document.
4. Conclusions.

1 - Introduction

We are shocked and hugely disappointed that such a proposal is in the process of being submitted; the project goes against all key planning and agricultural policies.

Our response will highlight why:

- The Springwell Solar Farm proposal is not suited to this area in Lincolnshire.
- The need to protect agricultural land from development is paramount.
- The Impact of the proposed Solar Farm development will be utterly devastating to the local area, residents and wildlife.

Inappropriate use of agricultural land

Food security is of paramount importance and protected via government policy.

- Research by Campaign for Rural England reveals that almost 14,500 hectares of the country's best agricultural land, which could grow at least 250,000 tons of vegetables a year based on typical yields, has been permanently lost to development since 2010. This research highlights the following consequences of the reduced use of land for agriculture as follows:
  - Two million fewer people can be fed 'five a day' from vegetables homegrown in England, as prime farmland is lost to development.
  - Food security concerns are increasing, with 60% of England's finest agricultural land at the highest risk of flooding from climate change.
  - Nearly 300,000 homes have been built on prime farmland, with an extra 1,400 hectares used for renewable energy projects; despite the availability of previously developed brownfield land waiting for regeneration.
  - The East of England has lost 3,232 ha of Best, Most Versatile (**BMV**) land since 2010 — the greatest absolute loss within a single region.

- The National Planning Policy Framework makes the protection of BMV land a priority; the need clearly evidenced by the increase in food poverty within the UK, and the food shortages experienced during the recent pandemic.

- Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is a system used in England and Wales to grade the quality of land for agricultural use; aiding planning decisions affecting greenfield sites, in-order to protect good quality land from development. The system classifies land into five grades, with grade 1 being the best quality. Planning policies state that the

valuable grades 1, 2 & 3a should be protected from development not associated with agriculture of forestry.

- ❖ The negative impact of the Springwell proposal on English food security is massive. The whole development is on grade 2 and 3 land (primarily grade 2), highly productive agricultural land. If this land is developed, more food imports will be inevitable, with increased costs and uncertainty regarding food availability.
- ❖ The development would result in the loss of agricultural land for 40 years, with little hope of the land ever being returned to agricultural use. The location of the proposed solar farm strikes at the heart of Lincolnshire's stunning and highly productive agricultural land – this must be protected.

- Research into global warming and climate change has predicted that vast areas of UK land will be lost to the sea over the next 30 to 40 years; Lincolnshire being most at risk of all UK counties. (Reference Coastal Climate Central). In addition, the UK will see a significant increase in flooding. This data analysis provides further evidence of the importance of protecting prime agricultural land.

- In response to a petition titled 'Ban development on agricultural land to increase food self-sufficiency' DEFRA made the following statement:

  "This Government has committed to broadly maintaining current levels of food production in the Food Strategy, to ensure our continued levels of food security.

  There will always be multiple pressures on land which require individual landowners, managers and Government to make decisions about trade-offs. DEFRA and DLUHC are working on striking the right balance. The National Planning Policy Framework aims to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land from significant, inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals; recognising the economic and other benefits of this land. It sets out a clear presumption away from the use of high-quality agricultural land for development where possible.

  DEFRA are committed to making the most of brownfield land and existing policy for protecting greenfield remains firmly in place.

  Recognising the importance of food security, in the Agriculture Act 2020 the Government made a commitment to produce an assessment of our food security at least once every three years. The first UK Food Security Report was published in December 2021. The report recognises the contribution made by British agriculture to our resilience, and the importance of strong domestic production to our food security. It considers the UK's food supply sources overall, noting that domestic production and diversity of supply are both important to our food security".

- Soil Testing
  A recent leaflet produced by Springwell, informed local residents of imminent soil testing within the proposed site, over a 6-week period. It is imperative that an independent, government appointed organisation, confirms the findings.

<u>Wildlife</u>

Regardless of mitigation, there is no doubt the project will have a detrimental effect on wildlife and habitats. The site area is heavily populated with wildlife, including deer, muntjac, hares, rabbits, foxes, badgers and birds of prey.

The proposal is out of proportion and the development would cause significant harm and change the landscape

- The scale of harm in this location is such that, it would **not** be outweighed by the wider benefits of the renewable energy provision.

- The Secretary of State, Planning Inspectors and Planning Officers have identified that solar farm developments do invariably detract from the unspoiled character and appearance of the landscape.

- The solid structures of the proposed solar arrays would form a strong physical presence of industrial appearance which would change the character of the rural fields in which they are located and be significantly out of proportion.

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- The proposed development would be an incongruous industrial and alien intrusion that would be harmful to the landscape character of the area, and a discordant feature within the pastoral setting. It would clearly cause harm to the visual enjoyment of those that live in, or visit the area.

- The proposed development is out of keeping with rural character of the area.

  The solid structures of the arrays would form a strong physical presence of industrial appearance which would change the character of the rural fields in which they are located. The development would be visible in wider views, and would form an incongruous expanse of metal structures out of keeping with the intimate and rural character of the area, and would be disproportionate to the scale of other landscape features.

  The solar farm would significantly adversely impact the character and appearance of the landscape. The expansive tranquil landscape of open green fields with far reaching views would turn into a semi-industrial, utility-grade power complex, with fields of 3m high dark solar panels, shipping containers containing electrical equipment and security fencing. As such, we consider the proposed development contravenes Local Planning Policy, which requires that development proposals protect, enhance or restore the landscape character for its own intrinsic beauty, for future generations.

2 - Comments in relation to the Scoping Report

- Springwell have commissioned RSK Environment Ltd to prepare the Environment Impact Assessment but they are not an independent body. They are owned by a major US private Equity firm called Ares who are directly involved in the Green Energy Market. The whole report would appear to give the developers one sided viewpoint only, with little effort made to investigate negative impacts in any respect, which we find **completely unacceptable.**

Referencing individual areas within the scoping report:

Description of the Proposed Development (2)

- Our research has highlighted that the land is highly unlikely to be returned to agricultural land, indeed, how can the land be 'returned to agricultural land' as stated in the original Springwell consultation booklet, when only the above ground infrastructure is proposed to be removed? More information needs to be provided detailing what exactly will remain subsurface and how will the developers a) return the land to be used again for agriculture, b) reinstate lost habitats and c) reintroduce lost species. 40 years cannot be viewed as temporary.

Approach to EIA (4)

- The mitigation claims that the development will avoid any wildlife site by15m, however this does not allow for the impact of removing open space from adjacent woodland.
- Regarding all mitigation in relation to bio diversity, how have all the distances been decided? We seek evidence relating to the effectiveness of the distances chosen.
- The scale and variety of wildlife in the area has not been given adequate inclusion within the scoping document; nor has the impact and threat the development would pose on wildlife. The scoping document is dismissive, when in reality the impact on local wildlife is huge, warranting significant consideration and inclusion.

Factors to be scoped out (5):
Due to this development being unprecedented due to size (over 6 times bigger than any previous project), there is no available comparable data. As such, ALL factors should be considered and not scoped out. Mitigating factors should be thoroughly investigated to relate to the sheer size of this development and current data and guidelines should be regarded as irrelevant.

REF 5-1 is an invalid link.

Glint and Glare (5.2)

- This should not be scoped out. There are no guidelines setting out a particular methodological approach to delivering a glint and glare assessment. The paragraph says the Secretary of State should assess the potential impact on glint and glare on nearby homes and motorists. Clearly this should be included, with particular emphasis on the panels facing houses, horses and oncoming traffic.
- There are operational military bases in close proximity to the development; RAF Cranwell, RAF Waddington, RAF Conningsby. In addition, the area also a number of private airfields, all of which should be consulted and considered.
- The Lincs & Notts Air Ambulance is based at RAF Waddington. As such they would have to fly over the site for any emergencies to the south east of their headquarters. It is imperative that they are consulted to discuss the impact of glint and glare while flying over the area, and possible landing difficulties.
    - There are a number of isolated properties within the site that rely on the Air Ambulance as their fastest emergency response.

Heat and radiation (5.3)

- According to actionrenewables.co.uk PV panels can reach temperatures of 65 degrees Celsius or more at the height of summer at which point solar cell efficiency and overall output will be significantly reduced. The laws of thermodynamics tell us that with increased heat comes decreased power output, and this applies to solar panels. Therefore, warmer temperatures will always mean less output for solar panels. The application site is situated within one of the hottest recorded parts of the UK. The Met Office recorded the hottest temperature in the UK during 2022 to be in Coningsby, Lincolnshire, only 10 miles from the proposed site.
- The scale of the solar farm is extensive and indeed unprecedented. The expansive volume of PV panel arrays with battery storage units and substations (also emitting heat from cooling systems) will inevitably create its own microclimate. The geographic extent of this must be determined. In combination with the free draining quality of the heathland soils, it has potential to cause failure of proposed mitigating landscaping measures due to heat stress and this could easily impact crops grown within adjacent land. Increased heat and change of environment might also prove harmful to local flora and fauna which could in turn be detrimental to pollinating insects and the life cycle of many species. In addition, the potential for localised temperature rises due to heat radiating from the installation, could also negatively affect local residents (health and amenity concerns). ‘ The impact of heat and radiation should therefore be ‘scoped in’ to the EIA. The potential impact also feeds into considerations of human health (section 5.6), the scope of which needs to be expanded accordingly and included within the EIA.
- While the black surfaces of solar panels absorb most of the sunlight that reaches them, only a fraction (around 15 percent) of that incoming energy gets converted to electricity. The rest is returned to the environment as heat. The panels are usually much darker than the ground they cover, so a vast expanse of solar cells will absorb a lot of additional energy and emit it as heat, affecting the climate.
- In a recent study, Pavao-Zuckerman, lead author Greg Barron-Gafford of the University of Arizona School of Geography and Development, and their research colleagues recently published their findings in the journal Nature Scientific Reports in a paper titled "The Photovoltaic Heat Island Effect: Larger solar power plants increase local temperatures.” For this study, the team defined the heat island effect as the difference in ambient air temperature around the solar power plant compared to that of the surrounding landscape. Findings demonstrated that temperatures around a solar power plant were 5.4-7.2 °F (3-4 °C) warmer. The result demonstrates that there are potential heat costs to generating green power and should be investigated further.

Major Accidents and Disasters (5.4)

- It is crucial that attention be brought to the recent battery explosion in Liverpool (supported by multiple sources including solarpowerportal.co.uk, energy-storage, News reports and many major media platforms). The explosion at the BESS facility at Carnegie Road, Liverpool was a result of a failure within one of the battery racks in one container which led to a thermal runaway which in turn produced gases within the container culminating in a large explosion with parts of the container being blown across the compound to a distance of 23m. The main fire took 6 hours to bring under control but the continual recycling of heat from the Li-ion batteries remained an issue and defensive fire-fighting continued on-site for a total of 59 hours. The fire and explosion were deemed to have been caused by the failure of one or more battery units, but the root cause of the battery failure remains unknown. The report stated there was a significant risk to emergency responders. Battery safety is a serious consideration which should be thoroughly investigated before mitigating factors can be applied.
- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue need to be consulted regarding this factor to ensure they have both the manpower and resources to tackle any such emergency and to ensure an action plan is created / plausible.

Utilities (5.5)

- There is a need to consult Connexin

Human Health (5.6)

- No mention of the well-being and mental health implications of any aspect of the project; noise, privacy, vibration, visual impact, traffic, air pollution and physical health.
- To be completely surrounded by an industrialised landscape can have nothing but a detrimental effect on residents' mental health.
- Whilst 'property value' is not usually classed as a material consideration, feedback from local residents has been significant in this respect. The implications of such should be considered within the scope of human health:
  - ❖ The development will create huge stress for residents wishing to sell their property with property prices and potential buyers both likely to be significantly decreased.
  - ❖ Worries associated with the consequences of decreased property value: less financial stability, less inheritance for children, owners less able to financially help children with first home/university etc.
- The report must take into account the possible risk to health, both during construction and long term, from magnetic fields and radiation (such as childhood cancer risk) to the huge increase in traffic during construction (such as residents with existing cardio pulmonary conditions).
- Reassurance and evidence are required to prove that the physical and mental health of local residents and visitors will not be impacted by the proposal.
  - A lack of data covering a 40-year period, plus the lack of a comparable sized solar farm, is extremely worrying in this regard.

Public rights of way (ProW)

- The development will significantly reduce recreational use (not increase it, as insinuated in the proposal). Even if reinstated, it is very unlikely that anyone will want to use ProW between fields full of panels and deer fencing.
- The Planning Inspectorate's report on the refusal of a solar Farm in Alfreton, Derbyshire included the buzzing created would distract from the enjoyment of walkers using the footpaths and possibly be heard at night by residents.
- Evidence is needed that people will continue to use footpaths, cycle and ride in an industrial landscape. Currently scoped out and justification and dismissed – inclusion needed.
- Feedback from local residents supports the above unanimously.

Impact on local businesses

- Using the term "within the site boundary" is an inaccurate way of deciding if businesses will be affected. The impact 'outside of the site boundary' has been ignored completely. Venues off all kinds for miles around, will undoubtably see a reduction in business.
- Tourism will be adversely affected. It is highly likely to be a reduction of occupancy in hospitality venues when construction is complete, which has not been mentioned.
- People will venture out for the day to enjoy the countryside, not however a solar farm.
- A development of the nature and scale will have a tangible socio-economic impact upon surrounding businesses and the propensity for people to visit/engage in countryside recreation. It is reasonable to anticipate that the visual impact will prove detrimental to the character of wider locality (land within the development's anticipated zone of visual influence and surroundings), which will in turn prove damaging to local businesses that benefit from tourism/countryside recreation. Significant research and justification are needed in this area.
- The suggested socio-economic benefits have not been properly investigated or justified; there are no shops to benefit. The area is agricultural and as such, the "temporary benefit to local economy" referred to in the document is inaccurate.
- The socio-economic consequences of the development should be examined more broadly.

Electric, Magnetic and Electromagnetic fields (5.10)

- There is no data outlining the "power size/ output" of the panels, battery storage and inverters.
- The guidelines referenced in the report (REF 5-11) also contain information about studies linking magnetic fields with cancer, specifically childhood cancer and leukemia. These findings need to be thoroughly reported on.
- The guidelines referenced are 25 years old and whilst may still be relevant regarding electrical power lines, there is no mention whatsoever of solar or pv panels. Due to the changes and advances in technology, these guidelines are not adequate to warrant scoping out E, M, EMF. More studies and investigations are needed to ensure the long-term safety of residents and produce a safe and more accurate report. This should especially apply to fields in close proximity to residential properties where there will be almost constant exposure.
- Are there any studies on the dangers of exposure for 40 years? What level of research and insurances have been taken to date to ensure health safety? What level of assurances can local residents expect?
- If this factor is not deemed worthy of inclusion within the scoping document, why does the inclusion of plans to have "ongoing consultation with RAF Digby to avoid any interference with their operations" remain, especially considering there is a buffer zone around the camp.

Air Pollution (6.1)

- 48 months of construction traffic whilst temporary could have an adverse effect on residents with cardio pulmonary conditions as well as a potential increased risk of childhood asthma and should be added to the report.
- “Given the nature of the Proposed Development, no site activities resulting in significant emissions to air are anticipated during operation” Surely this is incorrect, more research is needed regarding the number of vehicles needed to build the site.
- Accurate data needs to be provided in order to calculate the possible environmental impact of diesel emissions, dust, fumes etc.
- Quoting The British Heart Foundation: *‘When you breathe in poor quality air, the air pollutants can travel deep into your bloodstream through your lungs, and to your heart. This can damage blood vessels by making them narrower and harder, increasing the risk of developing heart and circulatory diseases”.*
- Reassurances urgently required.

Biodiversity (6.2)

- Data from the PEA must reflect monitoring location rather than being representative of populations on the whole site. There would likely have been a lot more recording if this project had been known about. If more widespread monitoring had commenced at the time of the PEA (April and May 2022) the results would be very different.
- The development has the potential to result in the direct loss of habitat needs of protected and notable species. A significant number of extra surveys are required including a year-round ecological survey covering mating, nesting/breeding, migration and habitat at the very least.
- Natural England recommends the avoidance of solar developments in or near to areas of high ecological value. The area proposed has numerous endangered species, for example; residents have reported multiple sightings of brown hares and many species of deer (including a white stag). In the same report it was stated that “the lack of evidence available relating to the ecological impact of solar farms is concerning”.
- Government legislation for an EIA (legislation.gov.uk) requires a ‘description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment’ There is no mention of this in the scoping report; this needs to be included.

3 - Areas requiring inclusion within the scoping document

In addition to the need for increased input raise in the table above, the following areas require inclusion within the scoping document:

Government legislation relating to scoping reports (legislation.gov.uk), requires the inclusion of the appraisal of alternative reasonable options, together with justification for the chosen option; taking into account the impact on the local environment. This requirement is lacking and needs to be included.

Financial Justification over alternatives

- There is no reference to cost v benefits analysis, nor justification in respect of the use of alternative Off Shore Wind Turbines (research highlights off shore wind turbines are a favoured alternative, due to increased productively, lower costs per unit and reduced impact).

  Ref. Regan Power 'The wind is a more efficient power source than solar. Wind turbines release less CO2 to the atmosphere. A wind turbine produces 4.64 grams of CO2/1kWh while the solar panel produces 70 grams of CO2/1kWh. Wind power consumes less energy and produces more energy compared to solar panels.
  By comparison with off-shore wind, solar farms are hugely inefficient. • A 140-acre solar park is said to be capable of supplying electricity to about 9,000 homes. One wind turbine in the North Sea has the capacity to power 16,000 homes. • In terms of efficiency rating i.e., the amount of power exported to the grid, solar's rating is between 11 and 15% whereas for off-shore wind the figure is 50%+. • On one day last year it has been reported that 78% of the UK's electricity came from off-shore wind.

- All costs need to be incorporated, including the costs associated with importing additional food products, shielding, lighting, maintenance, security etc.

Impact on local residents

- The impact on local residents has been dismissed, alarmingly so. The impact will be huge, with an array of differing implications, including disruption, traffic, visual impact, noise, vibration, light pollution and health. Significant consideration of all impacts affecting local residents is required.
- Security implications – CCTV, lighting, fencing etc. How will this affect local residents?
- The welfare of horses and livestock should be scoped into the document.
- Affecting the quality of life for our serving RAF personnel in Digby, is unacceptable for many reasons, including mental health issues and the ability to recruit.

Wildlife

The impact on local wildlife is currently seriously under represented and needs further inclusion.

Ecological Impact

- Natural England recommends the avoidance of solar developments in or near to areas of high ecological value. In the same report it was stated that "the lack of evidence available relating to the ecological impact of solar farms is concerning". The rural nature of the proposed area, inevitably creates a high ecological value to both humans and nonhumans alike. Inclusion required.

Negative visual impact for users of the footpath and bridleway across the site

- The proposed plans insinuate advantages will be generated by newly created footpaths; however, this is extremely misleading in our view.
- Currently there are extensive open views of green fields and agricultural farmland. The development would create significant adverse visual impact along any footpath or bridleway within the area, with arrays of 3 m high dark coloured solar panels which would tower above walkers blocking those views. Any footpath or bridleway would be separated from the site by a high security fence. The solar panels and fencing would destroy the wide, open views and create an unpleasant tunnel along the footpath and bridleway, degrading the amenity value.
- The solar farm development would turn a pleasant and rural area into an industrialised area, protected by CCTV cameras, lighting, high fencing and warning signs – a far cry from the current beauty of the area.
- Detailed analysis of how the proposal meets current planning policy relating to the protection of rights of way, is required.

Road networks

- The current road networks are inadequate and would not cope with the increased heavy traffic during development (already overburdened and unsuitable for large vehicles).
- Lincolnshire is the only county in the UK without a motorway.
- The B1191 (we reiterate the ‘B’ classification), is already a busy road providing the majority of vehicular access to RAF Digby from the A15.
- Lincolnshire County Council already struggle to find funds to repair the roads which become rife with potholes every year, consequently causing issues for motorists and cyclist with damaged tyres and road traffic accidents. Details of how these issues can be managed, if at all, need to be incorporated within the scoping report.
- Recognition of the road network limitations, need to be included within the scoping

In relation to heritage, the development would harm the settings of many historic and listed buildings within the area.

- There is an outstanding collection of older buildings within the vicinity of the site area, many of which are one of a kind, which need to be preserved and protected in their own right. Development of such buildings involve close scrutiny by Heritage England and local planning policies relating to the preservation of historic assets. Associated legislation is both numerous and extensive. The omission of detail in this area within the scoping report is unacceptable and inclusion essential.
- The lack of local knowledge in this respect is clearly evident and objectionable on many counts.
- The scoping report states that ‘whilst there may be glimpse from individual properties over 1km from the site; this does not give rise to an overbearing effect on residential amenity’. We wholeheartedly disagree with this statement. Further research and inclusion required.

Size of development – VAST
- An unacceptable and unprecedented scale – generating overriding harm.
- Inappropriate sizing; fundamentally changing the tranquil character of the area.
- The unknown consequences of a development of this size, will need major government input and review – it cannot be viewed in the same light as smaller proposals -timescales need to be incorporated for this work to be completed.

4 – Conclusion

We do not believe that the scoping document describes accurately, or fully represents the views of the affected local community.

The scoping document is incomplete, dismissive of key impacts and inaccurate in some areas; this is completely unacceptable.

There is a critical need to preserve agricultural land and UK food safety. The need to protect the site's productive agricultural land (a finite resource), is undoubtedly of prime importance. Lincolnshire has England's best food producing land – future food security has to be protected. 40 years is not temporary; the argument that the land can be returned to agriculture after decommissioning is misleading (the construction of a solar farm this size and the associated costs involved, make it very unlikely that the site will ever be returned to its' current agricultural use). There is no weight to any claims that the development is temporary and can be reversed.

The Loss of productive arable land is disastrous long term, escalating inflation and causing an increased reliance on imported food.

We believe there is a **policy conflict** (where government seeks to protect and enhance our domestic production to maintain food security, while also encouraging the growth of solar energy production). We recognise the need to balance both energy and food security, but solving one problem whilst affecting the other, is NOT the answer.

The list of negative impacts is extensive (impact on local residents and wildlife, the industrialisation of the countryside, loss of key agricultural land, the need for increased food imports, lack of adequate road networks, lost opportunities to enjoy recreation in the area etc. etc.) The adverse effects would demonstrably outweigh any benefits from this scheme; whilst alternative options are available. **The scoping document fails to address each and every impact adequately. Indeed, we feel the dismissive nature of key issues (suggesting they are unworthy of attention), denotes deception.**

Any solar farm developments should be limited to brownfield land and poorer quality unproductive land; located on already industrialised land, on roof tops or adjacent to motorways, not on productive agricultural land, or in an area which will cause significant visual impact to the residents and visitors.

Off Shore Wind Turbines offer a favourable solution to energy generation, a view supported by many senior government ministers.

All of the villages and hamlets affected, exude an abundance of quintessentially English charm; the cream stone buildings, a rare victorian walled garden, the open countryside

and the abundance of wildlife. The area is popular with walkers, cyclist, pedestrians, and horse riders. This unique beauty represents history with an abundance of older properties, built using local materials, never to be replaced.The need to safeguard this English heritage for future generations in undeniable and absolutely essential. Placing a solar farm next to such valuable heritage assets is not only out of character, but incomprehensible and utterly damaging to the historic landscape.

Feedback received to date from local residents, demonstrates the unanimous opposition to the proposal (further details are available if required).

All references included within this response, can be provided if required.

As Parish Councillors, we feel we have a duty to do all we can to protect our community, agricultural land resource and historical assets.

B O S T O N
BOROUGH COUNCIL
Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, Lincolnshire, PE21 8QR

Application no: B/23/0115
Case Officer: Abbie Marwood
Email: planning@boston.gov.uk

Date: 13 April 2023

The Planning Inspectorate
Environmental Services
Central Operations
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Consultation from the Planning Inspectorate to BBC for a EIA Scoping Opinon in relation to Springwell Solar Farm, North Kesteven.

Thank you for your recent consultation in relation to the above.

I write to confirm that the Council has no comments to make on the Scoping Opinion at this time. However, as the scheme progresses the Council would wish to be further consulted.

This advice is therefore based upon the information available at this time. Please note that the advice is given without prejudice to any future decision made by the Local Planning Authority upon the receipt of further information.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the case officer Abbie Marwood.

Yours faithfully

Mike Gildersleeves
Assistant Director – Planning and Strategic Infrastructure

Canal & River Trust
Making life better by water

National Infrastructure Planning
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Your Ref EN010149

Our Ref IPP-190

Thursday 20th April 2023

By email only:
SpringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Gary Chapman,

Proposal: Springwell Solar Farm – Reg 10 Consultation and Reg 11 Notification

Location: Metheringham, Lincolnshire

Waterway: Grantham Canal, River Trent and River Witham

Thank you for your consultation relating to the above scheme.

The Canal & River Trust ("the Trust) is a statutory party[1] for the purposes of s.88(3) of the Planning Act 2008 and the Trust is a statutory undertaker for the purposes of s.127 of this Act. We are the charity who look after and bring to life 2000 miles of canals & rivers.

Having reviewed the location of the project and the relationship of the proposed solar farm and its associated infrastructure with our network, we do not believe that the proposals as shown would cross land owned or operated by the Trust or impact our interests. Our closest waterway is the River Witham approximately 7 kilometres northeast of the site boundary. Should the scheme be amended to potentially affect the River Witham (or any other of our waterways named above), we would welcome further consultation on the proposals, so that we can advise about any potential impact for our interests.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any queries you may have.

Yours sincerely,

Hazel Smith MRTPI
Area Planner – Midlands

[redacted]@canalrivertrust.org.uk

https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams/planning-and-design

[1] Reg 3 & Schedule 1, Infrastructure Planning (Interested Parties and Miscellaneous Prescribed Provisions) Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/4620

Directorate of Communities & Environment
Simon Walters MBA, ACG, MCMI
City Hall, Beaumont Fee
Lincoln, LN1 1DF

Telephone: (01522) 881188
Facsimile: (01522) 567934
Website: www.lincoln.gov.uk

The Planning Inspectorate

Julie Mason is dealing with this matter
Direct Dial: [redacted]
E-mail: [redacted]@lincoln.gov.uk
Our Ref: 2023/0210/LAC
Your Ref:
Date: 29th March 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Location: Springwell Solar Farm
Proposal: Scoping Opinion for Springwell Solar Farm

Thank you for your consultation on the above and I would confirm that the City of Lincoln Council has no comments to make regarding this proposal.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Assistant Director - Planning

East Lindsey
DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Hub, Mareham Road, Horncastle, Lincolnshire. LN9 6PH
T: 01507 601111
www.e-lindsey.gov.uk

Your Reference: EN010149

Our Reference: S/086/00627/23/IC

Contact: Miss Michelle Walker

Ext: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]@e-lindsey.gov.uk

Date: 4 April 2023

Ms. S. Newman,
The Planning Inspectorate,

By e-mail:-
springwellsolarfarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Ms Newman,

APPLICANT: Springwell Energyfarm Ltd
PROPOSAL: request for an EIA Scoping Opinion
LOCATION: SPRINGWELL SOLAR FARM

Thank you for consulting East Lindsey District Council on the EIA scoping opinion for the proposed Springwell Solar Farm.

I can confirm that this authority has no comments to make at this time.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Mike Gildersleeves
Assistant Director - Planning & Strategic Infrastructure

Stephanie Newman
The Planning Inspectorate
Environmental Services
Operations Group 3
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Our ref: AN/2023/134186/01-L01
Your ref: EN010149

Date: 18 April 2023

Dear Stephanie

Application by Springwell Energyfarm Ltd (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Springwell Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

Thank you for consulting us on the Scoping Report for the above project on 23 March 2023.

We have reviewed the Report and have the following comments to make on it, for issues that fall within the Environment Agency's remit. We set these out using the appropriate section headings in the Report.

Section 5.9: Water
Flood Risk: Most of the site boundary sits within Flood Zone 1 – land identified as having a low probability of flooding on the Environment Agency's flood map for planning and the Report shows that essential infrastructure will be located here. There are no river crossings or interaction with embankments or assets.

We therefore support the proposal to exclude flood risk from the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), subject to ensuring no increase in flood risk and agreeing design and mitigation measures with us.

Section 6.6: Land, soils and groundwater
Groundwater Quality: Based on the available information, the proposed development area is understood to be predominantly Greenfield in nature. We therefore consider the potential for significant or widespread contamination at the site to be low. Nevertheless, areas of the site boundary are underlain by Principal and Secondary aquifers – geological strata that provide significant quantities of drinking water, water for business needs and support rivers, lakes and wetlands. In addition, a Source Protection Zone (SPZ) is present in the area of the site around Scopwick. This is an inner zone (SPZ1), providing protection around a groundwater abstraction source located to the west of Scopwick. There is also a total catchment zone (SPZ3) located across the southwest section of the site.

We therefore support the proposal for land, soils and groundwater to be scoped into the EIA. We understood that a 'desk-based PRA Report has been prepared, which assesses the potential risks on the existing land, soil and groundwater baseline, including contamination issue' (Scoping Report Section 6.6.6) and that this will be used to inform intrusive ground investigations. We agree with this approach, and recommend that developers:

1. Follow the risk management framework provided in 'Land contamination: risk management' when dealing with land affected by contamination
2. Refer to our Guiding principles for land contamination for the type of information that we require in order to assess risks to controlled waters from the site – the local authority can advise on risk to other receptors, such as human health
3. Consider using the National Quality Mark Scheme for Land Contamination Management which involves the use of competent persons to ensure that land contamination risks are appropriately managed
4. Refer to the contaminated land pages on gov.uk for more information

Section: 6.2 Biodiversity
The site boundary sits in the catchment of the `Bringing the Limestone Becks Back to Life' project. The project is a successful collaboration between East Mercia Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency, and the Wild Trout Trust and aims to improve and protect Lincolnshire's limestone becks from deterioration. Opportunities for biodiversity enhancement that support the ambition of the project should therefore be sought.

Information on the project can be found in the attached document and from our Environment Programme Team who can be contacted on 02030 254940.

Further pre-application consultation
Should the Applicant wish us to review any technical documents or want further advice to address the environmental issues, we can do this as part of our charged for service. Further engagement at the pre-application stage will speed up our formal response to their application and provide them with certainty as to what our response to the Development Consent Order application will be. It should also result in better quality and more environmentally sensitive development. As part of our charged for service, we will provide a dedicated project manager to act as a single point of contact to help resolve any problems. We currently charge £100 per hour, plus VAT. The terms and conditions of our charged for service are available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-and-marine-licence-advice-standard-terms-for-our-charges

Should you require any additional information, or wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact me at the number below.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Moffatt
Sustainable Places - Planning Advisor

Direct dial [redacted]
Direct e-mail [redacted]@environment-agency.gov.uk

End

Bringing the Limestone Becks Back to Life

A partnership approach

WILD TROUT TRUST

EAST MERCIA RIVERS TRUST

BRINGING THE LIMESTONE BECKS BACK TO LIFE

EAST MERCIA RIVERS TRUST

Registered office address: Loddington House, Main Street, Loddington, Leics, LE7 9XE

M. [redacted]

E. [redacted]

W. https://www.eastmercia.org

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Registered office address: Ceres house, Searby Rd, Lincoln LN2 4DW

M. [redacted]

E [redacted]

W. https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency

WILD TROUT TRUST

Registered office address: Unit 4, Broadfield Court, Sheffield S8 0FX

M. [redacted]

E. [redacted]

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Published November 2022

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Hosted by East Mercia Rivers Trust, the Witham Catchment Partnership (WCP) was formed on principles set by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA). CaBA is an inclusive initiative that brings together interested parties to work towards Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan.

The River Witham is 132 km (85 miles) long and its catchment incorporates major tributaries such as the rivers Brant, Till, Barling's Eau, Bain and Slea, creating a diverse network of habitats across Lincolnshire. Within the catchment are two similar, but distinct, network of springs, the chalk streams in the Lincolnshire Wolds and the limestone becks on the western limestone ridge.

Like chalk streams, the Lincolnshire limestone becks filter high-quality groundwater and are an important aquifer for the River Witham. However, the becks have not received the same attention as chalk streams, yet their ecological status is also classified as high priority under the Biodiversity Action Pan. Moreover, the social history of the becks is arguably far more significant. Many villages revolve around our rivers and streams, and this is particularly true of the limestone becks, as most are named after the village that grew around it. I am delighted that we now have a document that sets our vision for the limestone becks.

Over my lifetime, I have witnessed the diminishing ecological value of Lincolnshire's watercourses; most are now classed as poor to moderate in terms of their water quality. As a founder of Lincolnshire Rivers Trust and a trustee for the new East Mercia Rivers Trust, I am keen to see landscape scale changes to the river habitat in Lincolnshire. I look forward to seeing this partnership flourish and scale up the ambition to restore and bring the limestone becks network back to life.

Dr Jon Bolland
Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Hull
Founder & Trustee, East Mercia Rivers Trust
November 2022

THE LINCOLNSHIRE LIMESTONE REGION

Spanning an area of over 3,000 square kilometres on the western side of Lincolnshire, the Limestone outcrops encompasses heathland, aquifers, and a variety of unique high-value wetland habitats, providing benefits for local communities, visitors, and wildlife alike. Headwaters, such as the limestone becks, in a near natural state, are of national importance and are classified as a priority habitat.

Extending from the north of Lincoln, down past Grantham to the south, this region has a rich variety of wildlife and vegetation and remains a quintessential emblem of the English pastoral countryside. A rich source of building material, the limestone has been quarried for centuries, and heavily influences the appearance of Lincolnshire's town, villages and notably Lincoln Cathedral as iconic and enduring monuments of the region.

Limestone Gravel is critical for spawning fish

Derived from the Old Norse word bekkr, a beck is a small river or stream. Supplied by consistent flows of high-quality water, if in good condition, the becks support a rich aquatic flora and fauna, rarely found in Eastern England. The limestone geology gives its waters many unique properties, providing calcium rich conditions and acting as an aquifer in the headwaters, where millions of cubic meters of valuable groundwater are stored.

Recognised as a European habitat feature (H7220), the rare Tufa landscapes in Lincolnshire encompass reefs, cascades, dams, terraces, barrages, domes, and splash pools and are home to rare invertebrates, mosses, bryophytes, and algae. This mineral feature can only form when flow conditions are right for calcium carbonate to deposit. The Lincolnshire geology provides the perfect conditions to develop these structures, and these are rarely found in Eastern England.

David Hutchinson,
Witham & Ancholme Catchment Co-ordinator, Environment Agency

As the becks wind their way to the sea, they bring vital sediment and nutrients, creating unique wetland habitats that contains a wealth of irreplaceable fauna and flora. From Tufa waterfalls and vibrant wet meadows to flood storage and water purification, the becks are an important part of Lincolnshire's heritage. Nearly 80% of total licenced abstractions within the Lincolnshire limestone region is predominantly used for public water supply, highlighting the significance of the limestone aquifer. Unfortunately, over the decades many of these unique habitats have been lost forever.

Landscapes that once stored water in times of high flow and released it gradually through lower flow periods have disappeared. Many of these wetland habitats are in danger due to the steady degradation and over abstraction.

The Lincolnshire Limestone Becks are now in poor condition; disconnected from their floodplains, historically straightened, and deepened, and facing a range of pressures including over abstraction and habitat loss.

THE LIMESTONE BECKS AND THEIR UNIQUE RELEVANCE

Social history

For centuries the limestone becks have played an important role in the lives of communities across Lincolnshire. Acting as the backdrop for the agricultural growth of the region, these watercourses were closely tied to rural ways of life.

The numerous villages dotted throughout Lincolnshire's Limestone belt owe their existence to the presence of the becks, with the names of waterways and the communities they sustained reflecting one another. A clear example of this is the picturesque village of Welton, the name of which derives from the Saxon *Welltuna*, meaning head of the well or bubbling spring.

> *"Improvements to the [Branston] beck have encouraged more families to enjoy the site. Waterwheel Lane has been enhanced through landscaping and the provision of picnic tables for children and families to enjoy at weekends and much has been achieved through the help of local volunteers. The Parish Council hopes to bring forward further projects for improving the watercourse as it was clear from local response that the work carried out is enhancing natural habitats along the banks of the beck,"*
>
> ***Ray Cucksey,***
> ***Councillor for North Kesteven District Council***

Known as the breadbasket of England, Lincolnshire has a rich farming history and to this day communities maintain deep connections to the land. In recent years many of the UK's natural habitats have been degraded or lost, and with their passing, the links between people and nature have vanished.

Welton well-dressing circa 1924

The strong cultural connections between communities and their becks stretch back to pagan origins and the perceived healing properties of the limestone becks' waters. At one time, a common practice was to carry out well dressing ceremonies - a tradition that involved decorating the local spring to act as a 'thanksgiving' for the blessing of bountiful pure water.

Sadly, the last known traditional well dressing ceremony took place in 1924, but recent community interest has helped revive awareness of these ancient practices and allowed communities to re-engage with their local becks recreating this cultural ritual.

A key aim in our work in restoring the Limestone Becks is to rebuild these human connections, allowing communities and visitors alike to enjoy the natural recreation and benefits from these rare limestone wetland habitats and their unique natural beauty.

Heritage

From the earliest signs of human settlement in Lincolnshire dating back more than 100,000 years the region has a rich and varied history of human habitation. With the area becoming a key site for extensive Roman development in the first millennia, wetland landscape of the becks helped to support the growth of major settlements in the modern era.

During the medieval and industrial ages, the becks were the powerhouse for much development and numerous historic mill buildings remain in the landscape as well as evidence of a thriving brewing industry, fuelled by the pure beck water.

> *"The history of this region is unique, from its Roman origins to tales of highwaymen, there is much to be celebrated by enhancing and restoring the limestone becks. They were once part of a very important heathland that has largely been lost."*
>
> ***Matthew Parr, Geomorphology Specialist, Environment Agency***

This industry also fuelled a more nefarious element of the region's history as the heathland that covered the headwaters of Branston, Dunston, Scopwick, and Digby provided perfect cover for the exploits of 18th century highwaymen – the most notorious of which was Dick Turpin.

This legendary outlaw spent much time in the Lincolnshire limestone region and the bleak, western heath at Wainham Hollow on Dunston Beck was a favoured ambush point. The success of Turpin's robberies even led to the construction of the Dunston Pillar, a towering inland lighthouse, designed to make the road safer and give good vantage across the heath.

Tourism

Alongside the vital connection to existing communities, the limestone becks have also played an important role in helping to attract tourists to the area and bring fresh investment for local businesses. Restoration projects such as the Branston beck or Cringle Brook have created new interest in the local flora and fauna and helped to highlight the beauty of Lincolnshire's natural scenery.

Across Lincolnshire, the visitor economy sector generates an estimated £2.39 billion annually, and supports 30,000 full time equivalent jobs. Much of this tourism is driven by the appeal of the region's natural habitats and areas such as the Lincolnshire Wolds have exemplified the benefits that conservation can deliver. Raising the profile of the limestone becks, and restoring their natural beauty, therefore offers improving the outlook for local communities and attracting new visitors to the region.

Biodiversity

Steady human intervention over the last century has degraded many natural habitats in the UK but through local partnerships many fragile river ecosystems are now beginning to thrive again.

> *"It is a delicate act to balance support for biodiversity with the needs of agriculture, but the restoration of the becks has proven that this can be achieved. There are ways to manage drainage sympathetically to wildlife and this has benefits for the whole of the natural landscape,"*
>
> ***Mark Schofield,***
> ***Conservation Officer***
> ***Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust***

Important species, many endangered and protected by law, make their home in the Lincolnshire Limestone region include water voles and otters, both of which have benefitted from local restoration efforts over the last decade.

Freshwater invertebrates, such as the caddisfly, soldierly, shrimp, dragonflies, damselflies, and the critically endangered white clawed crayfish still flourish in some becks, along with fish species such as eels, brown and sea trout, and the European bullhead. Beetle species including the rare Crucifix and Necklace ground beetles, have also benefitted. While the cool, calcium-rich conditions found in the becks have supported important freshwater plants such as the Marsh Marigold.

Water quality

> *"The floodplains of the limestone becks provide a vital tool to improve the water quality across Lincolnshire. They provide a valuable buffer and help to filter sediment and other pollutants from the rivers,"*
>
> ***Dr Tim Jacklin,***
> ***Conservation Officer, Midlands***
> ***Wild Trout Trust***

One key ecosystem service benefit of the limestone becks, that has been degraded over the years, is their ability to filter and purify water. Thanks to their winding courses, foliage, and permeable floodplains they act as a continual water purification system, allowing the river to deposit sediment and naturally filter out pollutants.

This has a knock-on effect, not only for direct users of the river, but for everyone connected with the water system, creating a healthier environment for all. Improving the water quality across the region will help usher in a future where rivers are clean and ecologically sound.

Water security

Protecting the UK's water supplies has become a political priority in the 21st century as climate change, extreme weather, pollution, and drought all threaten the security of the nation's annual rainfall patterns, its waterways, storage, and extraction systems. The need to restore the becks has highlighted their importance as a nature-based solutions to ease Lincolnshire's water stress and future continuity of supply over the coming century. Data from the Environment Agency highlights that without major changes in strategic land planning, housing developments and investment, the amount of water available in England could be reduced by 10 to 15 percent by 2050.

Through partnership with organisations such as The Rivers Trust and Wild Trout Trust, local communities have been able to introduce measures on their limestone becks to start aiding natural flood management, improve water quality and ensure the supply of safe, clean water for generations to come.

> *"I'm very pleased to have had the work carried out by Lincs Rivers who have put some 'natural features' back into the route of the beck. Having had the work done there is a base of ecological improvement there which could be added to in the future, and this may well be the catalyst to accessing further environmental funding"*
>
> ***Andrew Scoley,***
> ***Landowner on Branston Beck***

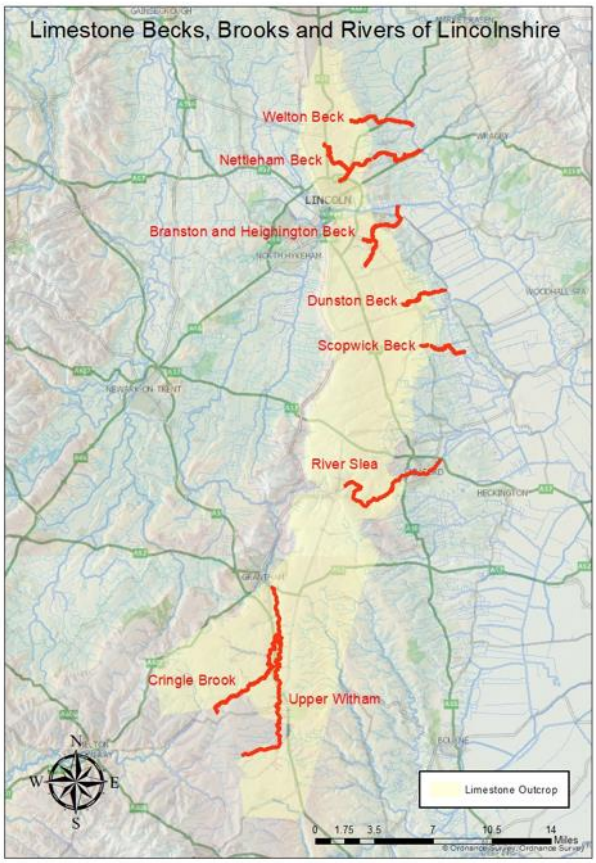
Rare Tufa Waterfalls

BRINGING THE LIMESTONE BECKS BACK TO LIFE PROJECT

About the project

Started in 2017, the *Bringing the Limestone Becks Back to Life* project has been a successful collaboration between East Mercia Rivers Trust (previously Lincolnshire Rivers Trust), the Environment Agency, and the Wild Trout Trust. It aims to improve and protect Lincolnshire's limestone becks from deterioration. The geological term for limestone watercourses is *karst systems*.

The partnership has identified the Welton, Nettleham, Branston and Heighington, Dunston, Scopwick becks and Cringle Brook as its immediate priorities, but our interest also includes the River Slea and parts of the Upper Witham catchment.



There is strong potential to enhance the connective corridors for wildlife through projects of all sizes, from the introduction of wet woodland, instream wood materials to major floodplain reconnections to support threatened species e.g., water voles, kingfisher, otters, brown trout, white-clawed crayfish, and invertebrates. Lincolnshire is known to be a haven for dragonflies and water voles and the limestone becks are an ideal habitat for creating new habitat strongholds.

Project approach

Community reconnection

Given their historical importance, the project partners share a vision of reconnecting communities and landowners with their local becks. This involves promoting engagement through farming communities, schools, parish councils and other local groups to encourage their involvement in restoration projects, citizen science, habitat monitoring and community events. This results in the collation of baseline environmental information, identification of sites for small and major habitat enhancement works and enhances nature connectedness associated with improving mental health, in particular lowering depression, and anxiety levels.

Main activities include:

1. Developing communications and permanent interpretation connecting the limestone beck network, promoting their social history and ecological value, and working in partnership with the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) to promote eco-tourism through established mechanisms such as Visit Lincolnshire
2. Creating an advisory sub-group for the limestone becks within the Witham Catchment Partnership extending the collaboration from Environment Agency and Wild Trout Trust to local authorities, Anglian Water and Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership.
3. Increasing skills for people from all ages by engaging communities, parish councils, schools, and local groups through activities such as Mayfly in the Classroom (MiC), EMRT's Water Vole Warriors, volunteering events and citizen science projects.
4. Working with GLNP to build an ecological database for the limestone becks through citizen science projects such as invasive mapping and invertebrate sampling.
5. Building landowner participation in water security, the protection of summer flows and habitat restoration through facilitated visits to large-scale habitat restorations at Upper Cringle Brook, Branston Beck and Dunston Beck.
6. Encourage local communities, parish councils and landowners, to 'adopt' a long-term focus on the limestone becks and to open the door to opportunities for continued restoration and engagement work.
7. Add value to existing and extend catchment sensitive farming programmes which will seek to improve water quality by providing advice on how to reduce the impact of diffuse pollution and habitat degradation.

Habitat restoration

Our recent project successes have brought knowledge and experience into the partnership and paved the way for us to deliver small and large-scale habitat improvements across the catchment. Habitat restoration on the Upper Cringle Brook was thought to be beyond repair, as it was reduced to a straight, deep-sided, overgrown ditch. The resulting floodplain reconnection, channel installation and wildflower meadow are expected to not only improve habitat for wildlife, but substantially increase water storage during times of high rainfall and improve water quality for farming communities downstream. On the Branston Beck project the team were able to enhance the design to benefit a previously unrecorded community of water voles.

Both these limestone beck habitat restoration projects, along with others such as works at Manthorpe near Grantham on the Upper Witham, where a former mill flood bank was successfully removed to create a new wetland habitat for wildlife, are promoted as exemplar projects to demonstrate to landowners, the benefits of beck habitat enhancements.

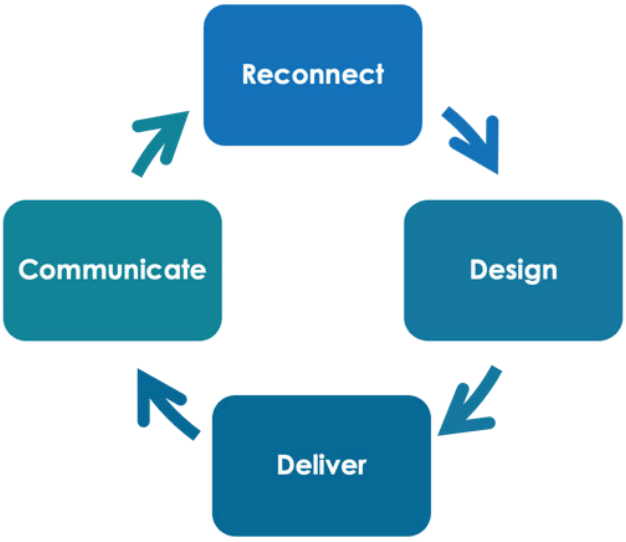
The partnership intends to build separate project bids for donor funding to deliver major habitat restoration and enhancement work on the six priority limestone becks, Welton, Nettleham, Branston and Heighington, Dunston, and Scopwick Beck, Cringle Brook along with the Upper Witham and River Slea.

Main activities include:

1. Identifying sites and designing plans to restore and enhance 6-12km of limestone beck and the riparian corridor, with particular focus on:
    a. Increasing channel and floodplain morphological variability and connectivity through the creation of new, riffles, pools, and seasonally wet floodplain.
    b. Improving their current ecological and chemical water quality status.
    c. Developing natural flood management measures to improve local water storage during high rainfall events for downstream communities.
    d. Create suitable habitat for Lincolnshire's most iconic limestone beck fauna and flora.
    e. Installing limestone gravel to provide spawning habitat for the Brown Trout, a priority species under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.
    f. Increasing back channels to support greater macro-invertebrate diversity and create new habitat for white-clawed crayfish and spawning grounds for brown and sea trout populations. This also adds resilience for fish and other species, by providing refuge during periods when the watercourse is in spate.
    g. Introducing native wetland vegetation and trees by planting species that provide benefits for catchments, as well as a range of insects, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals.
    h. Remove existing barriers to fish passage to reconnect habitats and increase the resilience of fish and eel populations.
    i. Identifying and protect Lincolnshire's tufa waterfalls
2. Building ecological baseline data and knowledge of the becks through pre-project assessments then post-project evaluation and monitoring, by
    a. Conducting ecological and specific species surveys, and archaeological assessments of their water heritage. These also inform the design and consent submission processes, support project delivery to plan for any necessary mitigation.
    b. Undertaking pre and post river condition assessments.
    c. Monitoring of water quality through invertebrate sampling.
    d. Tracking changes over time through drone and photographic footage.

Looking to Lincolnshire's future

Strengthening community and civic pride is an important part of the project, for connecting the limestone beck network and engaging local people in securing their long-term protection and improvement. Interpretation, signage, and promotional activities will help raise, retain, and reinforce the importance of the limestone becks throughout the project, linking to wider Lincolnshire civic and heritage activities to promote ecotourism. The project partners will mentor and nurture local groups to maintain a focus as the project is a continual cycle of *reconnect, design, deliver and communicate*. All these activities are intrinsically linked and not exclusive to ensure that more of this precious habitat is not lost forever.



Project progress

As sample of past projects is as follows.

Upper Cringle Brook

Cringle Brook is a tributary of the river Witham, located south of Grantham. It is a spring-fed limestone beck, 12km in length. While the lower sections of the Brook remain relatively natural, the Upper Cringle Brook has been historically straightened and deepened.

View of top section of site before works
Credit: Andrew Chick

View of top section of site after works
Credit: Andrew Chick

Site before works with old channel to right
Credit: EA

Same view with newly connected floodplain
Credit: EA

With permission of the landowner, Easton Estates, a 1-km section of the Brook between Skillington and Stoke Rochford was restored with a new one-hectare lowered floodplain, a pond with secondary channels and a back channel added, along with the creation of a 1.7-hectare wildflower area, built using material from the floodplain adaptation.

Branston (Sandhill) Beck

The Branston Beck (also known as Sandhill Beck) rises near Mere Hall, just to the east of Waddington airfield near Lincoln and flows north-eastwards, through the villages of Branston and Heighington, to join the river Witham drainage system on Washingborough Fen

In 2019, brushwood berms were introduced to increase sinuosity along with some tree thinning on Cliff Farm at Waterwheel Lane, followed by gravel installation along a 400-m stretch of the beck around Heath Farm. This created a pool-riffle sequence, improving the habitat, particularly for fish, who can feed, find shelter and spawn, and invertebrates can thrive.

Heath Farm: Before

Heath Farm is downstream from Cliff Farm where habitat improvements were carried out in 2022 on 1.2km stretch from a footbridge on the Spires and Steeples footpath to Sycamore Close. Works completed include tree work along the full stretch of beck, the creation of a mill pond, new channels, ponds and lowering of the floodplain, planting of wetland vegetation, and the installation limestone gravel, all which will improve the habitat particularly for brown trout and water voles. With volunteers, native plug plants were planted, grass seed was sown, and a wildflower meadow created on 0.5ha of land.

Heath Farm: After

Nettleham Beck

Before

Nettleham Beck, with a spring source near Riseholme, rises to the west of Nettleham village and flows through Nettleham and Sudbrooke to join the Barling's Eau near Langworth. In 2019, a habitat improvement project was undertaken along Sudbrooke Parish Council's Playing Field stretch of Nettleham Beck.

The channel was very straight and uniform in shape with steep banks, and invertebrate sampling revealed the water to be of poor quality. The banks were regraded, and the channel was narrowed with the installation of berms (low level shelves) and natural wood deflectors to reintroduce sinuosity. A team of volunteers planted over 1,000 plug plants.

After

Scopwick Beck

Scopwick Beck is a small stream which rises a short distance to the west of Scopwick village and flows east and south-eastwards through Scopwick and Kirkby Green, into the drainage dike system which ultimately joins the River Witham via Billinghay Skirth.

In 2017, berms were installed along a straightened section of Scopwick beck, to reintroduce a sinuous meandering channel, with varied habitats and flow types, helping aquatic invertebrates and fish. Volunteers, and members of the local community, took part to learn new skills and knowledge of river ecology.

Berm installation

Dunston Beck

Dunston Beck rises west of the village, on Dunston Heath. The beck flows in an easterly direction, through the village centre and joins the Car Dyke near Nocton Wood

Before

After

The initial project in 2021 at Dunston Prior Lane restored a four-hundred and thirty metre section reconnecting it with its floodplain. This involved extensive floodplain lowering of a 2-ha agricultural field and water level raising within the beck using gravel riffles.

These measures targeted improvements for fish and invertebrates. Additional benefits were provided through wildflower planting the finished site included rare local wetland plant species propagated by the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

In Mar 22, on land owned by Dyson Farms created a new floodplain, the current straightened channel has been realigned in a more sinuous and natural form, increasing its length from 350 to 420 meters. It now has a pool and riffle sequence as well as back channels, ponds, and scrapes within the new floodplain also complementing the Dunston Prior Lane project.

Dyson Farms Aerial July 22

Disclaimer

The information contained in this document is intended for public use.
Please contact East Mercia Rivers Trust

From: Squire, Sandra <sandra.squire@forestrycommission.gov.uk>
Sent: 20 April 2023 13:55
To: Springwell Solar Farm <SpringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: EN010149 - Springwell Solar Farm Scoping Opinion

Thank you for consulting the Forestry Commission on this proposal.

As the Governments forestry experts, we endeavour to provide as much relevant information to enable the project to reduce any impact on irreplaceable habitat such as Ancient Semi Natural woodland, as well as other woodland.

We are satisfied there is no Ancient Woodland within the development area. However, there are numerous small fragmented woodlands within the development area.

We note the scoping report suggests woodland creation will be undertaken to connect woodlands and enhance wildlife corridors and that there are no plans to remove any existing trees or woodlands.

We would recommend that planting should be targeted to enhance existing woodland and ecological networks by buffering the existing woodland to create larger blocks of ideally at least 5ha. Species and provenance of new trees and woodland need to be considered to establish a more resilient treescape which can cope with the full implications of a changing climate. When planting new trees and woodland, ensure that biosecurity is robust to avoid the introduction of pests and diseases.

Details should be provided of how the existing trees and woodlands will be protected during the construction phase, protection measures can include taking care not to cut tree roots or causing soil compaction around trees (e.g., through vehicle movements or stacking heavy equipment) or contamination from poisons.

Access to the woodlands should also be considered for future management, as woodland management will improve and maintain biodiversity.

If any information is required on woodland planting and management, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes

Sandra

Sandra Squire

Local Partnership Advisor

East & East Midlands

Tel: [redacted]

[redacted]@forestrycommission.gov.uk

Health and Safety Executive

CEMHD Policy - Land Use Planning,
NSIP Consultations,
Building 1.2,
Redgrave Court,
Merton Road,
Bootle, Merseyside
L20 7HS.

HSE email: NSIP.applications@hse.gov.uk

Mr Gary Chapman (EIA and Land Rights Advisor)
The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Date: 31 March 2023

By email only:
springwellsolarfarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Mr Chapman

PROPOSED SPRINGWELL SOLAR FARM (the project)
PROPOSAL BY SPRINGWELL ENERGY FARM LTD (the applicant)
INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (ENVIROMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017 (as amended) REGULATIONS 10 and 11

Thank you for your letter of 23 March 2023 regarding the information to be provided in an environmental statement relating to the above project. HSE does not comment on EIA Scoping Reports but the following information is likely to be useful to the applicant.

HSE's land use planning advice

Will the proposed development fall within any of HSE's consultation distances?

According to HSE's records, the proposed DCO application boundary for this Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project falls into a small part of the outer zone of a Major Accident Hazard Pipeline at a single location. This is based on the site boundary in Appendix A of "EN010149-000006-EN010149 - Scoping Report.pdf" downloaded from http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/document/EN010149-000006.

The major accident hazard pipeline is operated by National Grid Gas Plc and has the ref number 2704.
The Applicant should make contact with the above operator, to inform an assessment of whether or not the proposed development is vulnerable to a possible major accident. There are three particular reasons for this:

1. The pipeline operator may have a legal interest in developments in the vicinity of the pipeline. This may restrict developments within a certain proximity of the pipeline.
2. The standards to which the pipeline is designed and operated may restrict major traffic routes within a certain proximity of the pipeline. Consequently, there may be a need for the operator to modify the pipeline or its operation, if the development proceeds.
3. To establish the necessary measures required to alter/upgrade the pipeline to appropriate standards.

HSE's Land Use Planning advice is dependent on the location of areas where people may be present. Based on the information in the Scoping Report "EN010149-000006-EN010149 - Scoping Report.pdf", it is unlikely that HSE would advise against the development.

Hazardous Substance Consent

Based on http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/document/EN010149-000006, it is not clear whether the applicant has considered the hazard classification of any chemicals that are proposed to be present at the development. Hazard classification is relevant to the potential for accidents. For example, hazardous substances planning consent is required to store or use any of the Categories of Substances or Named Hazardous Substances set out in Schedule 1 of The Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations 2015 as amended, if those hazardous substances will be present on, over or under the land at or above the controlled quantities. There is an addition rule in the Schedule for below-threshold substances. If hazardous substances planning consent is required, please consult HSE on the application.

Consideration of Risk Assessments

Regulation 5(4) of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 requires the assessment of significant effects to include, where relevant, the expected significant effects arising from the proposed development's vulnerability to major accidents. HSE's role in NSIPs is summarised in Advice Note 11 'working with public bodies in the infrastructure planning process' Annex G on the Planning Inspectorate's website [Advice notes | National Infrastructure Planning (planninginspectorate.gov.uk)] - Annex G – The Health and Safety Executive. This document includes consideration of risk assessments under the heading "Risk assessments".

Explosives sites

HSE has no comment to make as there are no licensed explosives sites in the vicinity.

Electrical Safety

No comment from a planning perspective.

At this time, please send any further communication on this project directly to the HSE's designated e-mail account for NSIP applications at nsip.applications@hse.gov.uk . We are currently unable to accept hard copies, as our offices have limited access.

Yours sincerely

Pp Shirley Rance

Cathy Williams
CEMHD4 NSIP Consultation Team

From: Allen, Tim [redacted]
Sent: 20 April 2023 18:20
To: Springwell Solar Farm <SpringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Cc: Jan Allen [redacted]>
Subject: Historic England Advice EN010149 – Springwell Solar Farm – Reg 10 Consultation and Reg 11 Notification our ref PL00792677

Dear Ms Newman

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11
Application by Springwell Energyfarm Ltd (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Springwell Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

Thank you for your letter of the 23 March 2023

HISTORIC ENGLAND ADVICE

The Historic Environment should be scoped in and we welcome its inclusion

In particular (but without prejudice to other issues) we note the potential for :-

Setting impacts upon Temple Bruer Knights Templar Preceptory Scheduled Monument ref 1007686 and Grade I listed building ref 1254328

Setting impacts upon Brauncewell medieval village Scheduled Monument ref 1018397 and Grade II listed Church of All Saints ref 1254135

Setting impacts upon Dunsby medieval village Scheduled Monument ref 1018395

Setting Impacts on Scopwick Conservation Area including numerus listed building chief amongst which is the Grade II* listed Church of the Holy Cross

Setting impacts upon the grade II* listed Church of St Oswald 1064285 and associated listed buildings / undesignated assets.

Setting of Listed buildings in former parkland at Ashby de la Launde

And for potential impacts related to :

Numerous cropmark features plotted in the National Mapping Programme suggestive of quite busy late prehistoric – Romano British landscape

Undesignated NHRE asset ref 349061 to NE of Kingfisher Court - Probable Prehistoric or Roman settlement consisting of enclosures and a trackway seen as cropmarks.

Undesignated NHRE asset ref:1061192 - Mareham Lane Roman road running from Bourne to Lincoln via Sleaford, partly covered by modern road and part surviving as cropmarks and in parish boundaries – and associated features.

Undesignated NHRE asset ref: 1061215 - Probable Roman Road (and associated remains) between Sleaford and Lincoln on the line of the A15 + GII listed Milepost 1061824

Undesignated remains associated with former RAF Digby aka RAF Scopwick

Undesignated crop marks NHRE asset ref 1057715 – south of Ash Holt Probable Prehistoric or Roman rectangular and square enclosures seen as cropmarks.

Undesignated find spot NHRE ref 349439 – Four Cinerary Urns and late Roman Coin found near site of Brickyard Farm

We welcome reference to geophysical survey and trial trenching.

We refer you to the detailed advice of our local government archaeological curator colleagues who can access their Historic Environment Record.

Solar schemes present risk to buried archaeological remains through panel fixing, cabling, substations, fencing, biodiversity features etc, these impacts can be effectively managed through a sound process of archaeological assessment with a particular focus upon the identification areas of highest or uncertainty through desk-based assessment or HER, Portable Antiquities Scheme and cartographic data, aerial photography, lidar and geophysical survey and deposit modelling. Whilst large scale solar schemes have relatively high degrees of elasticity (when compared to say housing or quarry schemes) this potential to deploy open areas of grass (exclusion zones) or differential support schemes (concrete shoes rather than piles) or cable avoidance routes / sensitive location of substations / habitat ponds etc, all these are only effective where one has a robust understanding of archaeological risk. The sooner and better these understandings can be achieved the better risks will be managed. Whilst micro piling a ploughed flat iron-age field system might appear a low impact the same could not be said of an early medieval burial ground or Roman Villa, hence iterative process of investigation is necessary to characterise features revealed through non-intrusive survey and to test apparent blank areas.

In the case of 20th century military remains you should contact the Ministry of Defence for advice and it is likely that specialist survey techniques and methodology and UXO survey may be needed.

See our published Setting Guidance GPA3 https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/heag180-gpa3-setting-heritage-assets/

See our published advice on Planning and Archaeology https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/planning-archaeology-advice-note-17/

See our published advice on Deposit Modelling https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/deposit-modelling-and-archaeology/

See our published advice on renewable energy https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/commercial-renewable-energy-development-historic-environment-advice-note-15/

Yours sincerely

Tim Allen

Tim Allen MA FSA

Development Advice Team Leader (North)

Midlands Region

Historic England

The Foundry, 82 Granville Street, Birmingham B1 2LH

Direct Line [redacted]

http://www.historicengland.org.uk/ | @HistoricEngland

Historic England

Work with us to champion heritage and improve lives. Read our Future Strategy and get involved at historicengland.org.uk/strategy.
Follow us: Facebook | Twitter | Instagram Sign up to our newsletter

BY EMAIL ONLY
FAO Stephanie Newman – Snr EIA Advisor
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20 April 2023

Your Ref: EN010149
Our Ref: NSIP19

Dear Stephanie

SCOPING OPINION REQUEST BY SPRINGWELL ENERGYFARM LTD IN RELATION FOR AN ORDER GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR THE SPRINGWELL SOLAR FARM

I write in response to your letter dated 23 March 2023 seeking this Authority's views and comments on the Scoping Report prepared by RSK Environment Ltd in connection with the above proposal.

The Council has reviewed the information contained within the Scoping Report and offers the following comments which we request the Inspectorate considers in the preparation of its final Opinion.

Section 2.4 – Operational design of Proposed Development

- **Para. 2.4.7 (Mounting Structure)** - Two options are currently being considered for the mounting structure e.g. single axis tracker or tracker platform. This suggests that a fixed mounting system is not being proposed and the Inspectorate is invited to clarify this. In the event that a fixed mounting structure is proposed then the ES and all relevant assessments will need to also consider the impacts of this option. If not, the ES will in any case need to assess both options and any potential impacts arising from each (e.g. noise, glint and glare, landscape and visual impacts, etc) until or unless a decision is taken on which option would be used in advance of completing the ES.

- **Paras. 2.4.10 onwards (Balance of Solar System)** - Different configuration options currently being considered for the inverters, transformers and switchgears. The ES will need to assess all options being considered at this stage (e.g. string or centralised inverters; independent outdoor or contained indoor equipment) and any potential

impacts arising from each of these (e.g. noise, landscape and visual impact, etc) until or unless a decision is taken on which option would be used in advance of completing the ES.

- **Paras. 2.4.29 onwards (Battery Energy Storage System - BESS)** - Two options being considered at this stage which include consolidated or distributed BESS. The ES will need to assess all options being considered at this stage (e.g. string or centralised inverters; independent outdoor or contained indoor equipment) and any potential impacts arising from each of these (e.g. noise, landscape and visual impact, etc) until or unless a decision is taken on which option would be used in advance of completing the ES.

- **Paras. 2.4.39 onwards (National Grid Connection (NGC) and new 400kV Transmission Towers (TT)) -** Several potential locations identified and so all options will need to be assessed. The NGC and TT will be a permanent features and not decommissioned and removed at the end of the project period (40 years) like the 'temporary' PV solar park. Therefore the EIA and assessments will need to make a clear distinction between those impacts which it might view as temporary (e.g. the PV park) and those which would be permanent (e.g. the NGC and TT).

- **Paragraph 2.4.61 (Lighting)** states that the NGC compound, Project Substation compound, BESS compounds, and Collector Compounds would include lighting, in accordance with relevant standards, but will not be permanently lit. Whether scoped in or out of the ES, external lighting should be assessed in a lighting assessment to include consideration of glare, glow, lux levels and consideration of Environmental Zone (ILE standards) source intensity levels relative to the countryside location of the site.

- **Paras 2.5.9 (Borrow Pits)** – the location of potential borrow pits will need to be identified and must be included within the proposed Order Limits of the development and an assessment of impacts, including cumulative effects, arising from the working and restoration of identified borrow pits included as part of the ES.

Section 3 – Reasonable Alternatives

- The Council agrees that a consideration of alternatives should be presented. Reasonable alternatives include different layouts, scales, technologies adopted, design parameters as well as different sites. The ES should explain in detail what criteria have been used to identify the chosen option and explain what criteria have been applied as well as reasons why other alternatives have been dismissed.
- In regard to alternative sites, this is particularly key as the proposal includes the creation of a new NGC in order to connect into the 400kV overhead powerline network. A new NGC could potentially be constructed to give access to any other 400kV powerline network and so the ES will need to explain and justify why this site has been chosen over potential alternative sites/locations. Alternative sites/locations could therefore include anywhere along the same 400kV powerline route/corridor and so include sites elsewhere within the District as well as within the County and even

nationally given this is a 'national infrastructure project' and therefore locational need factors are not relevant and any other 400kV powerline network could potentially act as a connection point for a new NGC.

- The assessment of alternative sites should also consider the scope for connection into existing National Grid connection points currently in existence (like those proposed by other registered NSIP solar projects currently being promoted within the County) and explain why connection or upgrade of these to facilitate connection has been dismissed.

Section 4 – Approach to EIA

- **Para. 4.2.6** – it is accepted the list of consultees is not a definitive list however it is recommended that identified consultees include Navenby Parish Council, RAF Waddington, RAF Cranwell and Internal Drainage Boards.
- **Table 4.1** – It is unclear how the proposed minimum offset distances of 10m from hedgerows and 15m to locally designated wildlife sites have been identified and derived. The basis and justification for these distances needs to be explained.

  Under 'Land and soils' it is stated that the proposal will seek to retain fields that comprise majority Grade 1 and 2 within arable production where possible. This should however be extended to include Grade 3a land as this is still classed as 'best and most versatile'.

Section 5 – Environmental factors proposed to be scoped out

- **5.2 - Glint and Glare** – disagree with the proposal to scope out this as a specific chapter of the ES and to instead be considered as part of a separate assessment. Whilst the Council accepts that each case must be considered on its merits, glint and glare impacts were scoped into the ES for the Heckington Fen Solar Farm (NSIP Ref: EN010123) although the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) agreed that aviation impacts could be excluded. In this case there are three RAF bases in and around the proposed development and so we recommend that PINS seek the advice of those bases in relation to potential glint and glare impacts, not least given that there is the potential for tracking panels to be used. Furthermore, there is the potential for cumulative and in-combination effects with other topics/chapters considered by ES (e.g. landscape and visual impact, impacts on residential amenity assessment) and so this should form part of the ES so that any cumulative and in-combination effects can be assessed together and not form part of a separate assessment that sits outside the ES.
- **5.6 - Human health** – agree this can be scoped out as a specific chapter in the ES and that considerations will form part of other topics/chapters.
- **5.7 - Material assets and waste chapter** – agree that this can be scoped out as a specific chapter of the ES on the condition consideration of potential borrow pits is included within the chapter/section under Section 6.6 (Land, soils and groundwater). The location of potential borrow pits will need to be identified and must be included within the proposed Order Limits and an assessment of impacts, including cumulative effects, arising from the working and restoration of identified borrow pits included as part of the ES.

- **5.8 - Population** – Paragraph 5.8.1 states that the requirement to consider population in UK EIA practice was introduced via the 2017 update to the EIA Regulations, with impacts to population taken to refer to socio-economic impacts. There is no proposed ES chapter heading dealing solely with socio-economic impacts and instead the applicant suggests that a 'Socio-Economic Benefits Statement' will be submitted in support of the DCO Application.

  Paragraph 5.8.19 states that socio-economic benefits are expected with regards to the increase in the level of temporary employment; the subsequent gross value added to the economy; the uptake in the occupancy rate for beds in local hospitality venues, etc. Potentially negative effects associated with the inevitable removal of land from agricultural production which would result in the cessation of businesses/tenants/occupiers currently farming the land are also highlighted. The ES should quantify whether and how there are socio-economic benefits or negative impacts stemming from a change from the predominantly arable agricultural use of the site to that of the solar development proposed and also any possible pastoral use post-development.

  The Council submits that such an assessment should form part of a specific chapter of the ES which considers both the positive and negative socio-economic impacts of this development.

- **5.9 - Water –** disagree with the proposal to scope out this as a specific chapter of the ES and to instead be considered as part separate assessments (e.g. Flood Risk Assessment and Construction Environmental Management Plan). There is too much uncertainty at this stage given the site area is significant, possible site layout and potential location of the BESS and NGC as well as drainage requirements, etc. Therefore we consider this should be included as specific chapter in the ES.
- **5.10 - Electric, magnetic and electromagnetic fields** – note powerlines/cables up to 132kV are not expected to exceed ICNIRP exposure guidelines but there is no mention or reference to the NGC and new Transmission Towers (TT) and associated 400kV cables.

  RAF Digby is the HQ of the Joint Cyber and Electromagnetic Activities Group and is located immediately west of proposed Springwell Central. Given the potential impacts associated with the NGC, TT and 400kV an assessment is likely to be required however it is recommended that PINS takes into account the views of RAF Digby and relevant defence consultees before agreeing whether this topic should be scoped out of the ES.

Section 6 - Environmental factors to proposed to be scoped in

Section 6.1 - Air Quality

- The Council agrees this matter should be 'scoped in' and appropriate assessments included as part of the ES.
- If borrow pits are proposed then the location of these will need to be confirmed along with any potential impacts associated with the working and restoration of those sites (e.g. dust and traffic emissions) on receptors close to those specific sites.

- No specific comments regarding the proposed methodology of scope of the assessment at this stage.
- Recommend that comments and advice provided by North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) be taken into account.

Section 6.2 – Biodiversity

- The Council agrees this matter should be 'scoped in' and appropriate assessments included as part of the ES.
- Unclear how embedded mitigation measures identified in Table 4.1 have been identified/derived. For example, it is proposed that a minimum offset distance of 10m from hedgerows and 15m to locally designated wildlife sites – how have these been identified?
- No specific comments regarding the proposed methodology of scope of the assessment at this stage.
- Recommend that comments and advice provided by NKDC, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England be taken into account.

Section 6.3 – Climate

- The Council agrees this matter should be 'scoped in' and appropriate assessments included as part of the ES.
- This chapter/section should:
  - take into account GHG emissions associated with the full life-cycle of the development and potential sources of GHG emissions. This includes emissions associated with the production of the PV panels and other supporting equipment as well as that associated with the transportation, construction and operation of the development, including replacements that may be necessary during the lifetime of the development; and
  - identify the potential savings in GHG emissions associated with the operation of the development as a result of the consequent reduction in use of more carbon-emitting electricity generation methods; and
  - assess any increase in carbon emissions as a result of the need to transport/import food and crops from elsewhere which would have otherwise been grown on the arable farmland that would be lost or removed from production as a consequence of the development. Such an assessment would enable the full carbon gains or benefits of this proposal to be properly understood.
- The Council requests that the Inspectorate therefore requires the applicant to include such an assessment within the ES.

Section 6.4 – Cultural Heritage

- The Council agrees this matter should be 'scoped in' and appropriate assessments included as part of the ES. We would refer PINS and the applicant to the more general comments provided by the Council's Historic Environment Team which are attached to this response – Appendix 1. The following points are however highlighted and we would

request that PINS take these into account when issuing its decision and/or the applicant take these into account when preparing the PEIR/ES.

- Whilst the applicant has discussed this proposal with the County Historic Environment Team they are also advised to liaise with the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire who act on behalf of NKDC especially in relation to the scope of and timing of any intrusive evaluation following completion of the geophysical survey.
- We expect the desk based evaluation to be complete and the field evaluation to be well underway by the time the PEIR is produced. It's vital that a competent full desk based assessment (DBA) be completed at the earliest opportunity as desk based work provides the basis for initial understanding. This is informed by, and built upon, by a full air photo/LiDAR assessment and geophysical survey which in turn assists in the development of the trial trenching programme. The **full suite** of archaeological evaluation is required and must be completed in time to inform the mitigation strategy which will lay out how the developmental impact on archaeology will be dealt with. **This needs to be submitted as part of the EIA (and not left as a DCO Requirement as suggested in paragraph 6.4.6 – see comments below).**
- Paragraph 6.4.2 references LCC's "*General guidance on large schemes including NSIPs, EIAs…etc"* and it is proposed that a study area of 2km from the site boundary be used for assessing non-designated assets and 5km, informed by the ZTV, for assessing designated assets. Given the uncertainty regarding extent and footprint of the site area, possible site layout and positioning of various elements at this stage, the proposal has the potential for both direct physical impacts on heritage assets as a result of construction and also on the setting of heritage assets due to the extent of possible visual change. It is therefore recommended that the study areas for both designated and non-designated assets be the same at 5km.
- Paragraph 6.4.3 - data sources need to also include reference to Scopwick and Kirkby Green Neighbourhood Plan which contains schedules and descriptions of heritage assets within the Plan area.
- Paragraph 6.4.6 - indicates that additional mitigation to off-set adverse impacts will take the form of a programme of archaeological investigation and recording secured by a DCO Requirement. As indicated above, the Council cannot agree to this approach and recommends that PINS makes clear that the full suite of archaeological evaluation pre-submission/determination. We are aware that on-site geophysical survey work is anticipated to be completed by the end of April 2023 and until the results of those surveys are known the Council cannot agree to a programme of archaeological investigation being deferred to a post decision DCO Requirement. It is highly likely that trial trenching will be required not only across known or suspected archaeology but also across the 'blank' areas to obtain baseline evidence where previous evaluation techniques have not identified archaeological remains.
- Paragraph 6.4.7 - the significance of each asset must be assessed prior to scoping which assets would be affected. Modelling should particularly include any identified assets which have the potential to be visible or have their setting affected by the taller elements of the development.
- Paragraph 6.4.8 - receptors to be 'scoped in' need to also include reference to Conservation Areas at Scopwick, Blankney and Bloxholm.
- Paragraph 6.4.9 - proposes to scope out setting impacts on listed dwellings within settlements over 1km from the site. There is no assessment contained in the Scoping

Report to support this and to justify why and how the 1km reference has been derived. The reference just to 'dwellings' rather than 'buildings' is also unclear and so needs to ne clarified as to does the decision to single out K6 kiosks for consideration.

- Paragraph 6.4.11 - the assessment of heritage assets and impacts within the landscape needs to begin from an understanding of the significance of each heritage asset in order to assess the potential impact of the development upon them and put forward any potential benefit or mitigation of proposed negative impact. It is not just potential visual impact with views to, from and across any other heritage asset which may be affected and how it can be viewed from any point which is publicly accessible, it's also how the heritage asset is experienced kinetically and within its landscape. Assessment of all this must start with an understanding of the significance of each heritage asset and any interrelationships it may have with other heritage assets as well as the landscape in which it sits, for example remnant field boundaries of the field system that surrounded and supported a Medieval village.
- Assessments of significance should be undertaken for all designated and undesignated assets which may be affected to ensure any assets subject to proposed descoping has an evidence base.

Section 6.5 – Landscape and Visual

- The Council agrees this matter should be 'scoped in' and appropriate assessments included as part of the ES.
- We would refer PINS and the applicant to the jointly-procured detailed feedback provided by AAH on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council and NKDC contained in Appendix 2 of this response - 'Technical Memorandum 1: AAH TM01' and request that PINS incorporate this advice into their final opinion. The following points are however highlighted and we would request that PINS take these into account when issuing its decision and/or the applicant take these into account when preparing the PEIR/ES.
- We would also expect the production of the Landscape and Visual chapter of the ES which would be in the form of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), and any supporting information (such as plans or figures) which reflect current best practice and guidance from, as a minimum, the following sources:
  - *'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment'*, (GLVIA3), April 2013 by the Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA);
  - *'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*', Natural England (2014);
  - '*Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals'*, 17th September 2019 by the Landscape Institute (LI);
  - *'Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 1/20 Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs)'*, 10th January 2020 by the Landscape Institute (LI) ;
  - *'Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 04/20 Infrastructure',* April 2020 by the Landscape Institute (LI); and
  - *'Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 2/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations'*, May 2021 by the Landscape Institute (LI).
- At this initial stage, the content and level of information provided within *Section 6.5* is generally considered satisfactory, however, we would expect to discuss this content and

approach as part of the iterative process. Due to the scale and extent of the site and proposed development, we would be able to discuss and agree the *Scoping questions* within *Section 6.5.14* as part of this ongoing process, as at this stage it is not possible to provide full answers to these questions.

- Viewpoints & Photomontages - the final locations of viewpoints are to be reviewed and agreed with LCC and other relevant stakeholders. The final viewpoint selection should also consider views of taller and more conspicuous elements, such as battery storage or sub-stations once the layout is more developed, as well as consider potential key, or sensitive, viewpoints. We would welcome an initial discussion and subsequent workshop (on site if appropriate) with the developer's team in regards to proposed viewpoints.

  Photomontages/Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs) should be produced and the number, location and level/type of the these should be agreed with LCC and other relevant stakeholders. At this stage, it is deemed appropriate that these should be produced to illustrate the proposals at different phases: Existing Situation (baseline), Operational (year 1) and Residual with planting established (10 to 15 years).

- The methodology should clearly lay out the process of assessing temporary and permanent elements of the scheme, and the LVIA should clearly identify those elements that would not be decommissioned at the end of the life of the development. This is of particular importance in relation to the NGC which it is assumed will be a permanent feature.
- Study Area - at this early stage, the proposed study area extents should be discussed and further reviewed as the full extent of potential visibility of the development is not yet fully known, and the ZTV mapping contained within Appendix F of the Scoping Report does identify potential visibility beyond these extents. The ZTV mapping would need to be updated once the proposals have developed (as stated within paragraph 13.5) and the study area should not be fixed until the full extents of visibility are known from both desktop and site work. It therefore seems appropriate to assume a (minimum – TBA) 5km study area across the scheme rather than a reduction to 3km for the solar array or collector compounds/distributed BESS.
- Sections 6.5.8. and 6.5.9 identify a range of potential landscape receptors to be scoped in or out of the LVIA, however at this early stage of the project we request these be reviewed and consulted upon further once proposals have been developed and we are not in a position to confirm their inclusion or omission. We therefore request that PINS makes it clear in its response that these matters have yet to be agreed.
- Cumulative Landscape and Visual effects should be assessed in regards to other major developments, and in particular commercial scale solar developments, as appropriate in regards to proximity and scale (also see comments under Section 7).
- At this stage it is not relevant to comment on any potential mitigation or layout of the development. Best practice guidance, relevant published landscape character assessment's and Local and County Council Policy and Guidance should be referred to and implemented as appropriate.

Section 6.6 – Land, Soils and Groundwater

- The Council agrees this matter should be 'scoped in' and appropriate assessments included as part of the ES.
- The ES and ALC assessment should clearly identify how much of the site comprises of agricultural land and identify its ALC grade and current use. The ES should identify what (if any) measures would be taken to retain the agricultural land in productive use (i.e. sheep grazing, hay/silage production) and how this would be secured. The ES should also give consideration to the economic effects of the loss or change to the use of the agricultural land as well as a consideration of the potential carbon footprint created through the displacement or removal of this land from productive use. This needs to be properly calculated to ensure that the full carbon gains or benefits of this proposal are accurate.
- Paragraph 6.6.8 suggests scoping in the operational impacts of the proposed development in terms of the loss of agricultural and BMV as a consequence of the removal of this land from productive use. The Council agrees with the inclusion of this however the assessment should also include and detail mitigation measures to remove, reduce or minimise such impacts. For example, the possibility of retaining some areas of land in productive use which also act as buffers and stand-offs; enabling some continuance of agricultural activity through sheep grazing or alternative forms of cropping among panelled areas, etc. As part of the ES the applicant should identify a mechanism by which any changes in agricultural activity and associated socio-economic effect can be secured through the DCO process and provide evidence of this (e.g. use of planning conditions, legal agreements, covenants, etc)
- The 'alternatives' exercise needs to consider alternative site layouts and potentially a reduction in MW generating capacity in order to demonstrate avoidance or minimisation of agricultural land impacts (as recommended by the Draft NPS EN-3 March 2023).
- Reference is given to the proximity of Mineral Consultation and Mineral Safeguarding Areas within the current Minerals & Waste Local Plan. It is stated that as the majority of the land take would be temporary, future extraction would be possible after decommissioning. This would not apply in respect of the proposed NGC and so this needs to be taken into account.
- A Minerals Assessment will be required as part of the application. The findings of this assessment could inform and influence the design and layout of the development and potentially remove areas of land that lie close to existing quarries or which could potentially be worked in the future.
- Unless considered elsewhere within the ES, this chapter will need to also consider potential borrow pits that may be used as part of the development. The ES should confirm if borrow pits are proposed and identify the location of these which must be included within the proposed Order Limits. The ES will also need to contain an assessment of impacts, including cumulative effects, arising from the working and restoration of identified borrow pits and these included as part of the ES.

Section 6.7 – Noise and Vibration

- The Council agrees this matter should be 'scoped in' and appropriate assessments included as part of the ES.

- No specific comments regarding the proposed methodology of scope of the assessment at this stage.
- Recommend that comments and advice provided by NKDC.

Section 6.8 – Traffic and Transport

- The Council agrees this matter should be 'scoped in' and appropriate assessments included as part of the ES.
- The Council is generally agreeable to the methodology and approach detailed within the Scoping Report but recommends that discussions with the Highway Authority continues in order to ensure that the scope of the assessments is agreed. A Transport Assessment for the construction period will be required and safety and capacity impacts will need to be assessed to ensure that the impact on the highway network is acceptable. The primary point of operational access is assumed to be directly from or via the A15 Sleaford Road and onto the B1191. Access points and locations will therefore also need to be identified and discussed with Highways.
- This chapter of the ES should also consider potential cumulative construction effects (and where relevant operational effects) associated with other large-scale and NSIP scale projects including Triton Knoll, Viking Link, Heckington Fen Solar park (including works to Bicker Fen Substation), Beacon Fen Energy Park, Temple Oaks Renewable Energy Park and the Lincolnshire Reservoir depending on the timeframes of those projects. The assessment should also considered TCPA projects including the Sleaford West and potentially the Sleaford South SUEs (A17/A15 corridor), along with the Lincoln South East Quadrant (SEQ) SUE which sits alongside parts of the A15 and B1188.
- A Travel Plan would be required for a project of this scale to ensure that the significant numbers of construction workers are encouraged to use alternative modes to the private car.
- There is an extensive network of public rights of way (PRoW) within the site which link with the surrounding settlements. Opportunities to create new and expanded routes that would improve access and links between settlements should be considered with potential additional public footpaths and bridleways created as part of the development. Any such routes should not utilise routes used for construction or maintenance activities and be a minimum width of 4m for public footpaths and 5m for public bridleways. Any fencing alongside a public path should be open mesh construction and not close board timber fencing or metal palisade to avoid the creation of narrow claustrophobic. Any new routes to be created should look to be formally adopted as part of the Definitive Rights of Way network rather than permissive routes which could potentially be removed at any point during the life of the project. If permissive routes are proposed then details of what mechanisms would be adopted to ensure these remain in place for the duration and life of the development is needed.

Section 7 - Cumulative Effects

- The Council agrees this matter should be 'scoped in' and appropriate assessments included as part of the ES.
- The Council disagrees that NSIP projects must lie within the ZoI of the development which is based on the study area for each environmental factor considered in the EIA.

The County is currently subject of several other NSIP projects and these all need to be taken into account in terms of potential cumulative effects in particular in respect of LVIA and impacts on 'best and most versatile' agricultural land. Of particular relevance are the following:

- West Burton Solar Project
- Cottam Solar Project
- Gate Burton Energy Park
- Heckington Fen Solar Park
- Mallard Pass Solar Park
- Temple Oaks Renewable Energy Park
- Tillbridge Solar Project
- Beacon Fen Energy Park
- Lincolnshire Reservoir

We are aware that there may well be further NSIP projects coming forward in the not to distant future and therefore we reserve the right to highlight other projects as and when these become known and can advise how these might be treated with reference to Table 2 of Advice Note Seventeen 'Cumulative effects assessment relevant to nationally significant infrastructure projects'.

Local Community Comments

Finally, in addition to the above comments, the Council has also been sent and received a copy of comments and views on the proposed Scoping Report prepared by a local Parish Council. Attached to this response is a copy of that response/comments which we have been asked be brought to the attention of the Inspectorate. The Council recognises that local residents and communities have the benefit of local knowledge and so is supportive of their involvement and comments at this stage and invites the Inspectorate to therefore take these comments into account and, where considered necessary, require appropriate assessments or information to be provided as part of the ES by stating this explicitly within its formal response.

I trust the information and comments set out above are useful and should you seek clarification on any of the issues highlighted above please feel free to contact Marc Willis (Applications Manager) at marc.willis@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

for Neil McBride
Head of Planning

Enc. Appendix 1 – Comments from LCC Historic Environment Team
Appendix 2 – Comments from AAH – LCC and NKDC jointly appointed landscape consultant
Appendix 3 – Comments from Scopwick and Kirkby Green Parish Meeting

Springwell Solar scoping report response – LCC Historic Environment Comments

We are for the most part pleased with the proposed approach to Cultural Heritage laid out in the scoping report.

Regarding the requirements for archaeological work which will need to be completed before the DCO submission, we would expect the desk based evaluation to be complete and the field evaluation to be well underway by the time the PEIR is produced.

It's vital that a competent full desk based assessment (DBA) be completed at the earliest opportunity as desk based work provides the basis for initial understanding. This is informed by and built upon by a full air photo/LiDAR assessment and geophysical survey which in turn assists in the development of the trial trenching programme. The full suite of archaeological evaluation is required. The evaluation work must be completed in time to inform the mitigation strategy which will lay out how the developmental impact on archaeology will be dealt with, therefore this will need to be submitted as part of the EIA.

Section 6.4.1 of the scoping report states that *"Further consultation with Lincolnshire County Council will be carried out to confirm the scope of and timing of any intrusive evaluation following completion of the geophysical survey."* Trial trenching is required not only across known or suspected archaeology but also across the 'blank' areas to obtain baseline evidence where previous evaluation techniques have not identified archaeological remains. Trenching results are essential to get a full understanding of the archaeology which will be impacted across the full impact zone and and will inform an archaeological mitigation strategy which is reasonable, appropriate and fit for purpose.

Trial trenching is part of the standard range of archaeological evaluation and full trenching results are essential for effective risk management and to inform programme scheduling and budget management. Failing to do so could lead to unnecessary destruction of heritage assets, potential programme delays and excessive cost increases that could otherwise be avoided. A programme of trial trenching is required to inform a robust mitigation strategy which will need to be agreed by the time the Environmental Statement is produced and submitted with the DCO application.

Regarding the Study Area (section 6.4.2) and the EIA Baseline Information (sections 6.4.3 and 6.4.4), these are required for the main site boundary **and any proposed connection route options**. Until they are descoped all connector route options need to be properly assessed as part of the development and as part of the Environmental Statement (ES).

Section 6.4.4 ends with the following statement: "*The need for, scope, and timing of intrusive evaluation will be negotiated and agreed with the statutory consultees following completion of the desk-based assessments and geophysical survey."* As stated above, a sufficient trenching programme across the impact zone is essential in understanding the character, depth and extent of surviving archaeology which would be impacted by the development.

Section 6.4.6 is entitled 'Additional (secondary and tertiary) mitigation', what is the primary mitigation?

The proposed mitigation options of Section 6.4.6 includes preservation in situ, excavation and 'watching brief'. Archaeological topsoil strip, map and record is also an essential part of the suite of archaeological mitigation techniques, and all of these will need to be informed by sufficient evaluation including trenching to determine where archaeologically sensitive areas are and their full extent to inform a competent reasonable mitigation strategy.

Regarding section 6.4.7 Description of likely significant effects, please be advised that the significance of each asset must be assessed prior to scoping which assets would be affected. Modelling should particularly include any identified assets which have the potential to be visible or have their setting affected by the taller elements of the development.

Regarding section 6.4.11 Proposed assessment methodology, the assessment of heritage assets and impacts within the landscape needs to begin from an understanding of the significance of each heritage asset in order to assess the potential impact of the development upon them and put forward any potential benefit or mitigation of proposed negative impact.

It is not just potential visual impact with views to, from and across any other heritage asset which may be affected and how it can be viewed from any point which is publicly accessible, it's also how the heritage asset is experienced kinetically and within its landscape. Assessment of all this must start with an understanding of the significance of each heritage asset and any interrelationships it may have with other heritage assets as well as the landscape in which it sits, for example remnant field boundaries of the field system that surrounded and supported a Medieval village.

Assessments of significance should be undertaken for all designated and undesignated assets which may be affected to ensure any assets subject to proposed descoping has an evidence base.

In conclusion, the EIA will require the full suite of comprehensive desk-based research, non-intrusive surveys, and intrusive field evaluation for the full extent of proposed impact. The results should be used to minimise the impact on the historic environment through informing the project design and an appropriate programme of archaeological mitigation. The provision of sufficient baseline information to identify and assess the impact on known and potential heritage assets is required by **Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (Regulation 5 (2d))**, **National Planning Statement Policy EN1 (Section 5.8**), and the **National Planning Policy Framework**.

Sufficient information on the archaeological potential must include evidential information on the depth, extent and significance of the archaeological deposits which will be impacted by the development. The results will inform a fit for purpose mitigation strategy which will identify what measures are to be taken to minimise or adequately record the impact of the proposal on archaeological remains which must be submitted with the EIA.

This is in accordance with The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 which states ***"The EIA must identify, describe and assess in an appropriate manner…the direct and indirect significant impacts of the proposed development on…material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape."*** (Regulation 5 (2d))

AAH consultants

Technical Memorandum 1: AAH TM01

Lincolnshire County Council, Springwell Solar Farm

Landscape and Visual Scoping Opinion

This Review has been carried out by AAH Consultants on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and relates to landscape and visual issues and elements only. It is based upon a review of the relevant sections of the following document:

- *Springwell Solar Farm; Scoping Report; 21st March 2023.* Prepared by *RSK Environment Limited* for *Springwell Energy Farm Ltd.*

Overall, we would expect that the assessment of potential Landscape and Visual matters and evolving proposals relating to the Springwell Solar Farm, as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), follow an iterative process of engagement and consultation to ensure the following are not fixed at this stage and are discussed, developed and agreed at subsequent technical meetings:

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) Methodology;
- Development, and subsequent ZTV, parameters;
- Study Area extents (distance);
- Viewpoint quantity and locations;
- Photomontage/Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs):
    - Quantity and location;
    - Phase depiction;
    - AVR Type and Level.
- Mitigation Measures/Landscape Scheme/Site Layout;
- Cumulative effects, including surrounding developments to be considered; and
- The extent as to which a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) should be considered (based on the Landscape Institute TGN 2/19) if there are residential properties with receptors likely to experience significant effects to their visual amenity.

We would also expect the production of the Landscape and Visual chapter of the Environmental Statement (ES), which would be in the form of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), and any supporting information (such as plans or figures) reflect current best practice and guidance from, as a minimum, the following sources:

- *'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment'*, (GLVIA3), April 2013 by the Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA);
- *'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'*, Natural England (2014);
- '*Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals'*, 17th September 2019 by the Landscape Institute (LI);
- *'Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 1/20 Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs)'*, 10th January 2020 by the Landscape Institute (LI) ;
- *'Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 04/20 Infrastructure',* April 2020 by the Landscape Institute (LI); and

- *'Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 2/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations'*, May 2021 by the Landscape Institute (LI).

While the focus of this review is on Landscape and Visual matters, other information provided within the report, and associated Appendices, has also been considered, providing background and context to the site. At this initial stage of the NSIP process, the content and level of information provided by the developer within *Section 6.5 Landscape and visual* are generally considered satisfactory, however, as stated previously, we would expect to discuss this content and approach as part of the iterative process. Due to the scale and extent of the site and proposed development, we would be able to discuss and agree the *Scoping questions* within *Section 6.5.14* as part of this ongoing process, as at this stage it is not possible to provide full answers to these questions. The following should be considered in the evolving assessment and layout:

Viewpoints

The final locations of viewpoints are to be reviewed and agreed with LCC and other relevant stakeholders. The final viewpoint selection should also consider views of taller and more conspicuous elements, such as battery storage or sub-stations once the layout is more developed, as well as consider potential key, or sensitive, viewpoints. We would welcome an initial discussion and subsequent workshop (on site if appropriate) with the developer's team in regards to proposed viewpoints.

Photomontages

To gain an understanding of the visibility of the development and how the panels and infrastructure would appear in the surrounding landscape, Photomontages/Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs) should be produced. The number and location of the agreed viewpoints to be developed as Photomontages/AVRs should be agreed with LCC and other relevant stakeholders and produced in accordance with *TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals*. At this stage, it is deemed appropriate that these should be produced to illustrate the proposals at different phases: Existing Situation (baseline), Operational (year 1) and Residual with planting established (10 to 15 years). The Photomontage/AVR Level and Type is to be discussed and agreed.

Methodology

As stated previously, the LVIA should be carried out in accordance with the GLVIA3 and undertaken by suitably qualified personnel. The methodology provided at *Section 6.5.11 and Appendix D* is typical of those used for ES Chapters and standalone LVIA where potential significant effects can be considered and reflects the guidance in GLVIA3. We would request that the most up to date technical guidance be used and the methodology is further interrogated at the next phases of the project.

The *Landscape and Visual* methodology within *Appendix D* identifies that **Significant** effects are identified as those that are "*Major or Major/Moderate*", and that in the case of predicting *Moderate effects* professional judgement will be applied. This is fine and follows GLVIA3, however for full transparency, we would expect that a full explanation be provided in the assessment as to whether a Moderate effect on a receptor is assessed as being **Significant** or not, and not simply relying on stating that an effect is not significant "based on professional judgement".

The methodology should also clearly lay out the process of assessing temporary and permanent elements of the scheme, and the LVIA should clearly identify those elements that would not be

decommissioned at the end of the life of the development, such as the National Grid substation, and assessed accordingly.

Scope of the Study Area:

It is acknowledged in *Section 6.5.2* that, based on desktop (ZTV mapping) and field study, an initial Study Area covering 3km has been allowed for the proposed development, and an extended Study Area covering 5km for the National Grid substation and National Grid connecting tower. At this early stage, we recommend these extents are discussed and further reviewed as the full extent of potential visibility of the development is not yet fully known, and the ZTV mapping within *Appendix F* does identify potential visibility beyond these extents. The ZTV mapping would be updated once the proposals have developed (as stated within paragraph 13.5) and the study area should not be fixed until the full extents of visibility are known from both desktop and site work.

Once the study area has been defined, the LVIA should also provide a justification for the full extent/distance, which would be further refined as part of the iterative process.

Landscape

Published landscape character areas have been identified, however to align with GLVIA3 the LVIA should include an assessment of landscape effects at a range of scales and likely need to include a finer grain landscape assessment that includes the Site and immediate area that also considers individual landscape elements or features that make up the character area. *Sections 6.5.8*. and *6.5.9*. identify a range of potential landscape receptors to be scoped in or out of the LVIA, however at this early stage of the project we request these be reviewed and consulted upon further once proposals have been developed and we are not in a position to confirm their inclusion or omission.

Visual

Several visual receptors are identified within *Sections 6.5.5*. and *6.5.8*. We would expect that the visual assessment would include for identification of visual receptors, and not just an assessment of any agreed viewpoints, which should clearly cross reference viewpoints to associated receptors. *Sections 6.5.8*. and *6.5.9*. identify a range of potential visual receptors to be scoped in or out of the LVIA, however at this early stage of the project we request these be reviewed and consulted upon further once proposals have been developed and we are not in a position to confirm their inclusion or omission.

The visual assessment should take account of the 'worst case scenario' in terms of winter views, and effects associated with landscape mitigation at the Operational Phase (year 1), Residual Phase with planting having established (10 to 15 years), and at the Decommissioning Phase.

The LVIA should ensure all elements associated with the development are considered and assessed, such as battery storage, sub-stations, CCTV poles and boundary fencing, which may be more visible than panels due to height, mass and extent.

Cumulative impacts

Cumulative Landscape and Visual effects should be assessed in regards to other major developments, and in particular commercial scale solar developments, as appropriate in regards to proximity and scale.

Mitigation and Layout

As this is an iterative process, at this stage it is not relevant to comment on any potential mitigation or layout of the development. However, best practice guidance, relevant published landscape character assessment's and Local and County Council Policy and Guidance shall be referred to and implemented as appropriate.

We would also expect the landscape and planting scheme is coordinated with other relevant disciplines, such as ecology, heritage or civils (e.g. SuDS features), to improve the value of the landscape and reflect appropriate local and regional aims and objectives. Any Landscape Scheme and associated Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan should accompany the ES which should cover the establishment period, which is assumed would be up to 15 years to cover the period up to the residual assessment. The management plan should provide for both new planting and existing retained vegetation and how it will be managed and protected through all phases of the development.

Oliver Brown CMLI
AAH Landscape

Mob: [redacted]
[redacted]
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14th April 2023

Observations relating to Chapter 5 of the Springwell Solar Farm EIA Scoping Report

Note: For ease of comprehension statements taken from the text of the Springwell Scoping Report submitted by Springwell Energy Farm Ltd are shown in **RED** text

5. Environmental factors proposed to be scoped out

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. As part of the EIA process and based on the information available to date, there are a number of environmental factors, as listed under Section 4.1 above, for which it is considered an assessment as part of the EIA is not justified, and therefore a standalone chapter is not proposed to be presented in either the PEIR or ES

5.6. Human Health

5.6.1. It is proposed that consideration of the potential effects to human health as a result of the Proposed Development will be covered through the findings of other assessments undertaken as part of the EIA process, as follows:

- Air quality;
- Landscape and visual;
- Noise and vibration; and
- Traffic and transport.

* * * * *

The following are detailed Osbervations chalenging the arguments put forward for scoping out environmental factors from the EIA assessment by Springwell Energy Farm Ltd

Referring to **Advice Note Seven: Environmental Impact Assessment: Process, Preliminary Environmental Information and Environmental Statements**

5.11 The Planning Inspectorate considers that suitable justification to support the scoping out of aspects and matters should include information to address the following questions:

1. Is there an impact pathway from the Proposed Development to the aspect/matter?
2. Is the aspect/matter sensitive to the impact concerned?
3. Is the impact likely to be on a scale that may result in significant effects to the aspect/matter?
4. Could the impact contribute cumulatively with other impacts to result in significant effects to the aspect/ matter?
5. Is there a method of avoidance or mitigation that would reduce the impact on the aspect/matter to a level where significant effects would not occur?
6. Is there sufficient confidence in the avoidance or mitigation method in terms of deliverability and efficacy to support the request?
7. Is there empirical evidence available to support the request?
8. Do relevant statutory consultees agree with the request?
9. Have you had regard to (a) relevant National Policy Statement(s) (NPS) and specifically any requirement stated in the NPS(s) in respect of the assessment of this aspect/matter?

Observation. The subsequent comments and observations will demonstrate that factors proposed to be scoped out of the EIA are not justified as they fail to follow the above Guidelines.

5.6 Human Health

5.6.2. Each of these chapters within the EIA Scoping Report and subsequent PEIR and ES will consider the potential effects to human health within their own assessments. Outside of the EIA process, a glint and glare assessment will be undertaken (see Section 5.2 above), which will consider the potential human health effects from glint and glare.

5.6.3. There are a number of PRoW crossing the Site which might be used for recreational purposes. Any temporary diversions will be detailed in the Public Rights of Way Commitments, which will be submitted in support of the DCO Application.

Observation. Temporary diversions potentially lasting two years will substantially impact the community's freedom of the community to walk the local countryside with adverse consequences to their health and well being.

5.6.4. Any changes to PRoW will be agreed in consultation with North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council in order to ensure there are suitable diversions or replacements in place. Impacts to users of PRoW are therefore expected to be minimised and where they do occur they will be short term and temporary. As such, it is not expected that changes to the PRoW will significantly impact recreational use of the Site and therefore it is proposed to scope this matter out of further assessment.

Observation. It is not clear whether all the current footpaths and permitted paths are covered in the text since the facility to walk within the development site extends to more than just the PROWs found there. This entire facility is enjoyed and valued not only by the parish but also by the surrounding wider community in the District. A reduction to any of these will impact all communities' freedom of the community to walk the local countryside with adverse consequences to their health and well being.
Comment. The proposal to scope out this factor is challenged.

5.6.5. As any potential human health impacts will be captured by the aforementioned assessments and there are not expected to be any significant human health impacts outside of these assessments, it is proposed that human health is not subject to dedicated assessment and therefore excluded from the scope of the EIA.

Observation. The above observations fundamentally challenge the Report's assertion that "human health is not subject to dedicated assessment and therefore excluded from the scope of the EIA.", since in each proposed example quite the opposite appears to be true.
Comment. The proposal to scope out this factor is challenged

5.8 Population

Private property and housing.

5.8.6. None of the land to be used is allocated for residential development and no new planning applications have been submitted for housing development within the Site boundary. Therefore, there will be no effects to property or housing.

Observation. Within the development's Site boundary work associated with the development is being planned to take place on land allocated for housing in the made Neighbourhood Plan.
Comment. The proposal to scope out this factor is challenged

5.8.7. As no significant effects are expected in relation to private property and housing, it is proposed that these matters be scoped out of further assessment.

Oservation. The changes to the local environment arising from the proposed development will very inevitably impact the value of public and private residential property and housing in the area contributing cumulatively to other social/economic impacts . This is a factor that should not be excluded from the EIA assessment
Comment. The proposal to scope out this factor is challenged

5.8.9. As no significant effects are expected in relation to community land and assets, it is proposed that these matters be scoped out of further assessment.

Observation. The community benefits from its current environment as a rural agricultural area which the proposed development as a mega-sized industrial plant will fundamentally impact. Therefore this should not be scoped out of the EIA assessment
Comment. The proposal to scope out this factor is challenged

Agricultural land holdings, development land and businesses

5. 8.10. The nature of the agricultural holdings across the Site boundary varies and there will inevitably be land taken out of agricultural production. There may be businesses / tenants / occupiers currently undertaking agricultural operations across the Site boundary who may cease to do so for the duration of the operational phase of the development. The loss of these agricultural operations is not expected to lead to a significant effect in relation to employment in the local area.

5.8.11. There are no other businesses present within the (development) Site boundary. There is no land allocated for employment use, nor are thereany planning applications yet to be determined that will generate m

employment opportunities at the Site. Therefore this should be scoped out of the EIA assessment

Observation. The development will impact on the numbers employed on land held by the landlord and as well have a significant effect on employment by the many peripheral trades and businesses associated with agriculture in that area during the operational phase and beyond it.

While at present there are no other businesses, land allocated for business use, or planning applications for such within the Site, there nevertheless is the possibility that such, say as small cooperative agricultural holdings or business enterprises being generated any time in future as an alternative to the proposed development. Therefore these should not be scoped out of the EIA assessment
Comment. The proposal to scope out this factor is challenged

5.8.18. As the PRWC will minimise any potential impacts to walkers, cyclists and horse riders during the construction phase and no significant permanent effects are expected in relation to walkers, cyclists and horse riders during the operational phase of the Proposed Development, it is proposed that these matters be scoped out of further assessment

Observation. As with 5.63 and 64 it is not clear whether all the current footpaths and permitted paths are covered in the text. This facility is enjoyed and valued not only by the parish but also by the surrounding wider community in the District. A reduction to any of these will impact all communities' freedom of the community to walk the local countryside with adverse consequences to their health and well being.
Comment. The proposal to scope out this factor is challenged

5.8.19. As no significant effects to population are expected across any of the five matters detailed in LA 112, it is proposed to exclude population from the scope of the EIA. However, socio-economic benefits as a result of the Proposed Development are expected with regards to:
• Increase in the level of temporary employment;
• The subsequent gross value added to the economy;
• Uptake in the occupancy rate for beds in local hospitality venues; and

• A small number of long term employment opportunities during operation.

Observation. The suggested increase in benefits can at best only be in the short term. Meanwhile tas stated above he value added to the local economy resulting from the development will be negative as will occupancy rates in hospitality venues. This inevitably has significant effect on the population.
Comment. The proposal to scope out this factor is challenged

5.8.20. Therefore, a Socio-Economic Benefits Statement will be submitted in support of the DCO Application, highlighting the positive socio- economic impacts of the Proposed Development on the local and regional area. This statement will be produced outside of the EIA process and thus to avoid any potential for confusion or repetition, the Applicant does not consider it necessary to consider socio-economic impacts in an EIA context as well

Observation. As the effects on population have been demonstrated as significant factors to the EIA as affecting the local and regional area it is justified that it should also be included in the EIA Report'FINAL VERSION OBS ON SPRINGWELL SOLAR FARM SCOPING REPORT
Comment. The proposal to scope out this factor is challenged

Conclusion The preceding observations demonstrate that the proposal to scope out from the EIA environmental factors factors of significance without suitable justification will invalidate its very purpose and is therefore to be challenged.
These factors should be made to be part of this EIA process.

* * * * * *

John Woodward
12.04.2023

APPENDIX A

PART 1 - COMMENTS RECEIVED VIA NO2SPRINGWELLSOLAR EMAIL ADDRESS

This document is structured with the relevant Scoping Report section extract followed by comment received.

1. Rochdale Envelope

2.2.3. In order to maintain flexibility in the design, it is the Applicant's intention to use the 'Rochdale Envelope' approach within parameter ranges. The Planning Inspectorate's Advice Note Nine 'Rochdale Envelope' [Ref 2-1] provides specific guidance to applicants on the degree of flexibility that could be considered appropriate under the PA2008 regime.

Comment Received:

The Rochdale Envelope approach was developed to assist with the development of much large national infrastructure projects such as HS2 where at the start it is difficult to know what matters will be relevant as the project develops. This flexible approach is not appropriate for a development of this limited and static nature where the matters to be considered can be determined at the start. Its use in this context would be an abuse of the process allowing the Applicants to change their plans at will without proper scrutiny.

2. Landscaping, Habitat Management and Biodiversity Enhancement

2.4.53. The Proposed Development will include landscaping, habitat management, biodiversity enhancement, and amenity improvements, which will be explored as the design progresses. This will be sensitivity designed to retain and enhance ecological and recreational connectivity.

2.4.54. Where possible, existing trees, hedgerows, public rights of way and Local Wildlife Sites would be retained.

Comment Received

The words 'explored' and 'recreational connectivity' are not specific enough again the information in the ES needs to be more specific.

3. Lighting

2.4.61. The National Grid Substation compound, Project Substation compound, BESS compounds, and Collector Compounds would include lighting, in accordance with relevant standards, but will not be permanently lit.

Comment Received

Just lit after dark? Needs to be specific.

4. Use of borrow pits

2.5.9. The use of borrow pits during construction of the Proposed Development will be considered as the design develops. The potential benefit of including borrow pits as part of the Proposed Development include:

• Allows extracted aggregate to be transported to construction locations (largely via site access tracks) within the Site.

• Generates significantly lower levels of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) movements on the local highway network than importation of aggregate from commercial quarries.

• Reduces cost risks arising from double handling, importation from commercial quarries and landfill disposal.

2.5.10. The benefit of using borrow pits will be carefully considered against any potential environmental impacts. Further detail on the approach to identifying suitable borrow pit locations and justification for their inclusions as part of the Proposed Development will be provided as part of the PEIR and ES.

Comment Received

This is a cost cutting exercise allowing the Developers to quarry their own aggregate out of the heath sub-soils to use to build temporary roads and hardstandings; further details and approval from the Environment Agency should be gained. The land where borrow pits are excavated will never be returned to proper agricultural use and this procedure should be prohibited as unnecessary and open to abuse. Unnecessary as there is a limestone quarry adjacent to the proposed site. Open to abuse as there is no monitoring of the 'rubbish' that may end up being dumped in a pit rather than properly (and more expensively) disposed of.

5. <u>Construction Reinstatement</u>

2.5.16. A programme of construction reinstatement and habitat creation will commence during the construction phase.

Comment Received

The above statement is a contradiction in terms, the construction machinery and the work being carried out will be disruptive and will have an adverse effect on wildlife, surely 'during' should be 'after' and further specific detail is required.

Regarding the solar equipment end of life recycling and agricultural land remediation:

6. <u>Soils Management</u>

2.6.9. An Outline Soils Management Plan (oSMP) will be prepared and submitted with the DCO Application. The oSMP will follow the principles of best practice to maintain the physical properties of the soil, with the aim of restoring the land to its pre-construction condition at the end of the lifetime of the solar farm.

Comment Received

With regard to agricultural land remediation. The document states the land will return to agricultural use at the end of the 40 year period, will the ES confirm that if the development is approved all of the concrete bases, foundations, piles and all other sub-structure elements are grubbed up, crushed and recycled on site into aggregate and then removed for future construction use, also where necessary replacing any topsoils with a similar heathland soil where required?

If this land is not properly restored it will not be able to be farmed in a conventional manner, unable to be cultivated or harvested due to the potential damage to farm machinery. Wild

grasses and weeds will grow and it will look something like the old Butlins Filey holiday camp site does today. I like to see wildflowers growing but not 4,200 acres of them, when this best and most versatile land should be growing food crops

7. <u>Above ground infrastructure decommissioning and DEMP</u>

2.7.2 At the end of the operational phase, any above ground infrastructure would be dismantled and removed in accordance with industry best practice at the time. The use of decommissioned materials would follow the waste hierarchy such that they would be reused where possible before recycling and disposal were considered.

2.7.3. At the time that decommissioning would take place, the regulatory framework, good industry practices and the future baseline could have altered. The Applicant would consider and implement a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) taking account of good industry practice, its obligations to landowners under the relevant agreements and all relevant statutory requirements. An Outline DEMP (oDEMP) will be submitted in support of the DCO Application, which will be secured by a DCO

Comment Received

The ES should properly address this? At the moment solar panels at the end of their usable life are finding their way into landfill in Africa. As far as we know there is no recycling facility in the UK. The West's relationship going forward with China is uncertain.

Springwell should fully address these matters at this pre-planning stage.

The Lincoln Heath is a very fragile part of our county. The heathland soils are light in nature with an element of limestone particles within the growing medium, very free draining to the limestone brash subsoils which continue down to the water bearing strata which is the Central Lincolnshire aquifer which provides drinking water to many hundreds of thousands homes.

PART 2 – ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION IN AN ES SPECIFIC TO THIS SITE

Flood risk and management: the villages of Scopwick and Kirkby Green have been adversely effected by flooding particularly during periods of high rainfall with an increasing incidence in recent years. The problems created by old and poorly maintained surface water drainage and sewerage systems may be exacerbated by the hard landscaping and the solar panels themselves. This should be investigated at an early stage in assessing the suitability of the land for solar panels.

Pollution: the natural aquifer which is a unique feature of the Lincolnshire Heath and feeds the many springs and streams which occur along the site of the proposed solar development should be assessed and protected. The risks of pollution need to be assessed and monitored. In particular those associated with known risks of harmful chemicals from solar panels and battery installations.

Protected Species: the area is home to many protected species well adapted to the current landscape of open farmland and small woodlands. A full protected species survey should be carried out before construction begins and the habitats protected from development. The

area is home to the wild brown hare whose numbers have declined rapidly in recent years due to habitat loss. They are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and listed as a priority species under the UK post 2010 Biodiversity Framework. The area is also an important habitat for birds of prey including the red kite, buzzard and barn owl. The number of barn owls is declining and this native bird was placed on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern (2021). Similarly the area has important populations of ground nesting birds namely skylarks and lapwings, both species named on the Red List as numbers have been subject to recent dramatic decline. Other animals reported in the area and protected by law include bats, hazel dormice, slow-worms and badgers. The area is also home to several populations of deer, whose populations range over fields threatened with being fenced off and covered with solar panels. At a time when the UK has been assessed as one of the most ecologically impoverished countries in the world, it is proposed to take large areas of open countryside and valuable wildlife habitat for industrial use.

Health of those living and working in the area should be considered particularly the effects on mental health. The pandemic highlighted the importance of being out in nature for our mental health. The considerable disruption of construction over many months together with the industrialisation of the landscape with high metal fencing, closely packed solar panels, lighting, cctv and 3.5m high solar stations housing transformers on this vast scale will necessarily have a negative impact on mental health in an area which is used for both residential and recreational purposes.

Compiled by Mrs Jill Moran

APPENDIX B – COMMENTS FROM MR MARC WILLIAMS

The scoping document seems extremely one sided. As a Parish we need to ensure our voices are heard.

1.1.1 commissioning RSK to prepare the EIA. RSK are not an independent body. They have a biased towards these projects as their ultimate parent company invest in these projects. We should be pushing for a truly independent body. This should be clearly highlighted as a major concern by the PC. RSK are own by a major US private Equity firm called Ares who are directly involved in the Green Energy Market.

1.5.3 RSK looking to take certain things out of scope in the EIA? This seems to be a common strategy by solar factory developers. Similar strategy was deployed by Mallard Pass developers. We should strongly object. The following should not be taken out of scope - 5.2 (Glint & Glare), 5.3 (Heat & Radiation), 5.4 (Major accidents and disaster), 5.5 (Utilities), 5.6 (Human health), 5.7 (Material assets and waste), 5.8 (population) and 5.9 (Water).

At 5.8 (Population) they reference a document known as LA 112. LA 112 is not relevant they need to reconsider - LA112 is for transport projects this isn't a transport project (Design Manual for Roads & Bridges) There are major impacts to all the groups above as highlighted by the 95% who voted against this project in the last Parish meeting.

- 5.8.5- 5.8.7 Private Property & Houses
    - They see no impact on our properties
- 5.8.8-5.8.9 Community Land & Assets
    - They want this out of scope, they miss the point we live in this area for the outstanding natural beauty.
- 5.8.10-5.8.14 Agricultural & Development Land
    - I believe this contradicts much of what was published in the Neighbourhood plan.
    - How can they position this as out of scope when they are taking 4200 acres of Best Most Valuable farmland out of production.
- 5.8.15-5.8.18 Walkers Cyclists & Horse Riders
    - They see no impact and indicate this should be out of scope. For all of these groups the significant change to the landscape will have a material impact.
    - We are meant to be promoting health and wellbeing and the countryside is a key element of this.

They say that in 40 years the site will be decommissioned and returned to prior condition. However if we consider 2.4.6, 2.4.19, 2.4.20, 2.4.21, 2.4.24, 2.4.27, 2.4.37, 2.4.38, 2.4.43, 2.4.48 this is clearly not going to happen. These areas are going to be covered in concrete to create hard standing platforms. This along with piling to create footings for the panels this land will never be used again for farming. What cast iron assurances will there be that ever piece of concrete will be removed from the land? Soil management 2.6.9 totally contradicts what's stated in 2.7.2 which states only stuff above ground will be dealt with

Where does the significant amount of concrete required to convert this farmland into an industrial site meet any green credentials?

- Concrete pillars for the panels
- Concrete under Independent Outdoor Equipment
- Concrete under inverters & Transporter Stations
- Concrete in Collection Compounds
- Concrete in Substations Compounds
- Concrete in Battery Storage Areas
- Concrete in National Grid Substation Areas
- Concrete in Transmission Tower

There is going to be fencing at a minimum height of 2.5 metres up to 3m high, with CCTV up to 5 metres high also lighting. The CCTV is a gross intrusion into our human rights with security tracking our right to roam freely in the countryside. We should object strongly on the ground of privacy and human rights.

2.2 Rochdale Envelope – This seems like an opportunity for the develop to materially change critical elements after a potential consent is granted. We should strongly object. With the resources available to EDF they should be in a position to fully scope and list everything before consent is granted.

2.2.12 Extensive network of Public Rights of Way. These have been in place for many years and were originally scoped by MR Eric Parker, these included 4 promoted walks. These walks will be fundamentally changed and spoilt. At a time when we are focussed so much on people's mental wellbeing this will have a significant detrimental impact.

2.3.24 Cultural Heritage – There are a significant number of Listed Heritage sites across the planned site. These sites will all have their outlooks spoilt by the development.

2.4.62 Drainage - There is already increased risk of flooding in the Scopwick area. The document 5.9.23 references Cook & McQueen (2013) when discussing runoff and potential impacts on flooding. This was a modelled classroom study on a tiny scale. It did demonstrate a small increase. They cannot seriously be using a classroom-based study to take Water out of scope. The potential change to drainage on a site this large could be significant.

Red Kites are protected by Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. The protection of Red Kite is the longest continuous Conservation project in the World. There are several nesting in and around Scopwick house.

2.5.9 Use of borrow pits - can the planning inspectorate guarantee that these sites won't be filled with construction contaminates and then back filled. Ref 5.7 materials, assets & waste

3.1.1 reasonable alternatives - why has no alternative site or source of power generation been considered.

4.10 Opportunity to enhance the environment WHERE POSSIBLE – there is zero commitment – the only part of the EIA that isn't concrete.

- Panels shipped from China
- Concrete on the Land
- Alteration of Drainage

- Removal of Best most valuable farmland out of production resulting in increase in import and the associated carbon footprint

5.5 Utilities – How can they look to make utilities out of SCOPE

There is a significant risk with the Exolum Pipeline that crosses the Blankney estate. This pipeline is a critical piece of infrastructure and needs to be accessed at anytime.

5.8.19 They are trying to indicate that there will be a positive Socio Economic impact.

Whilst during the construction phase there may be a few extra hotel/B&B rooms rented out the longer-term cost will be much higher as potential tourist will avoid the areas and the impact on property could be devastating.

Parish Meeting – Springwell Solar Farm

12th April 2023, Scopwick Village Hall

MINUTES

Chairman: Cllr John Money

Speakers: Jill Moran, Mark Williams

Others present: 75 attendees – residents of Scopwick and Kirkby Green and representatives of Parish, District and County Council

Minuted by Jules Wilkins

1. **Chairmans welcome and opening remarks**
   Mr Marc Williams proposed that John Money chairs the meeting as he has relevant experience. Mrs Jill Moran seconded the proposal. A question was raised regarding Mr Money's current position as Parish Councillor. It was clarified that this meeting is a parish meeting and not governed by the Council.

   Marc Williams explained the purpose of the meeting was to agree the community response to the Springwell Solar Farm Scoping Report. He emphasised the urgency of the requirement for feedback and timescales concerned.

   Cllr Money took the Chair and declared that he is currently a Parish Councillor and will be retiring in May. He is also standing for the District Council in the upcoming election. He further disclosed his previous involvement with Blankney Estates and his personal position against the development of the proposal by Springwell Solar.

   Cllr Money explained that the meeting was called by 8 parishioners as required for a Parish meeting to take place to agree the comments on the Scoping Report to be forwarded to the Parish, District and County Councils. He explained the agenda for the meeting, including the importance of relating all comments to relevant sections of the Scoping Report. The outcome of the meeting will be communicated to Council and District Councils and our MP.

2. **Process overview and comments received by contributors**
   Jill Moran provided a recap of the background to the Springwell Solar Farm Scoping Report as follows:

   EDF Renewables in partnership with Luminous Energy are working on the Springwell Solar Farm. Together they form the Applicant, Springwell Energyfarm Limited.

   The Applicant has secured an 800 Mega Watt connection agreement with National Grid. The size of the project means that an application must be made to the national planning body (the Planning Inspectorate) rather than our local District or County Councils. Ultimately the decision on the application is made at Government level by the then Secretary of State acting on a recommendation by the Planning Inspectorate. This process takes years rather than months and we are still in the early stages, what the Planning Inspectorate terms the

'pre-application' stage. Full details of the process and copies of all documents in the case can be viewed on the PI website - just google PI Springwell.

The only document to have been submitted by the Applicants so far is the Springwell Solar Farm Scoping Report which forms the basis of a scoping request to the Planning Inspectorate for its opinion (an Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Opinion) setting out the information to be provided in an Environmental Statement (ES) relating to the proposed development. Before publishing a Scoping Opinion, the Inspectorate has a duty to consult the relevant consultation bodies, which are prescribed by legislation. Scopwick and Kirkby Green Parish Council and North Kesteven District Council are consultation bodies for the purposes of EIA scoping. They have been asked to inform the Planning Inspectorate of information they consider should be provided in the Environmental Statement. The deadline for doing so is 20th April 2023.

The purpose of this meeting is to assist our Parish and District Councils with that response and ultimately to ensure that as much is 'scoped in' the instructions to the Applicants as possible so that the resulting Environmental Statement covers all the issues which the residents and our representatives at the Parish and District Councils consider relevant to this site and proposal. It is the Applicants responsibility to provide the Environmental Survey in line with the Scoping opinion and it is standard practice for them to employ their own consultants to draft these documents.

As the Parish and District Councils only have until the 20th April to send their response to the PI, this meeting is to gather views and distribute them to our local authorities.

As part of the no2springwellsolar group, Jill has been gathering comments via the email list and summarised these at the meeting to encourage further comment and support at the meeting. The summarised comments re provided at Appendix A and include reference to:

- The Rochdale Envelope
- Landscaping, Habitat Management and Biodiversity Enhancement
- Lighting
- Use of Borrow Pits
- Soils Management (relating to restoration of the land after the end of solar equipment life)

Jill also provided some issues for consideration in an Environmental Statement specific to this site relating to Flood risk and management, Pollution, Protected species and Health. Further details on these can also be found in in Appendix A.

3. Project concerns

Marc Williams submitted further comments relating to the Scoping Report, details of which can be found at Appendix B. Comment headings and their relevant sections are provided below:

- Approach to the EIA is biased (section 1.1.1)
- 'Scoping out' certain aspects important to the community (s1.5.3)
- Rochdale Envelope - use designed to enable material change to critical elements after potential consent granted (s2.2)
- Public Rights of Way - will be fundamentally changed (s2.2.12)
- Cultural Heritage - sites in the area affected will have outlooks spoilt by the development (s2.3.24)

- Site decommissioning - lack of assurance (s2.4)
- Drainage - research reference used regarding runoff and flooding not relevant (s2.4.62)
- Borrow Pits - concern regarding construction contamination (s2.5.9)
- Alternatives – no evidence of consideration of alternative sites or sources of power generation (s.3.1.1)
- Opportunity to enhance the environment – no commitment (s4.10)
- Utilities – question how this can be out of scope (s5.5)
- Inaccuracies and potential use of incorrect document references (s5.8)
- Socio-Economic impact – applicant indicates there will be a positive impact (s5.8.19)

4. Questions on comments received

The following questions were received by the chairman in the meeting:

What is the Parish Council going to do with the results of tonight's meeting?
The chairman responded that they will make an official response to the Planning Inspectorate.

The scoping report does not define which footpaths are going to be affected. Not just official ones but also the permissive ones which create a more enjoyable walking experience. There needs to be more clarity on this.

John Woodward stated he has sought advice from the Planning Inspectorate regarding 'quality of life' issues being ignored and the scoping out of certain points in the Scoping Report. The Planning Inspectorate stated there were 9 points that have to be proven to scope something out and Mr Woodward will provide this to Jill to identify where Springwell Solar have not complied. Mr Woodward also submitted further comments in writing and these are attached at Appendix C.

Referring to a statement by the Parish Clerk at the last Parish meeting that he communicated with Springwell and would chase up a response. Has any correspondence come back?

The chairman responded that he was not aware of any response.

if we are not confident that the Parish Council will properly represent our views who will address this?

The chairman responded that it is the Parish Council's responsibility to represent the community and the community cannot communicate directly with the Planning Inspectorate, only with the statutory consultants. Marc Williams responded that there is a Parish Council meeting on 18th April when they will discuss this (Cllr Money confirmed this) and the public are welcome to attend.

Will we send 3 copies then, to District Council, Parish Council and County Council? The chairman responded that the Parish Council should take on board what the parish meeting says in its response to the Planning Inspectorate. Copies of the minutes will also be sent to the District Council and County Council.

It was stated that the key point is the law and the inspectorate. The chairman suggested that communication should be with the Chief Executive of each body and not the planning dept.

The wildlife study appears inaccurate, states they have only seen one Kite for example. Can we do anything about this?

The chairman responded that probably the best time to address this is once the application has been lodged with the Planning Inspectorate as it will need to be more specific. Jill Moran stated she had contacted Lincs Wildlife Trust who advised her to use the iRecord app to report wildlife as these reports will go forward to the Planning Inspectorate. Jill urged attendees to use the app to build a more accurate wildlife understanding.

5. Receive further comments

The following comments were made at the meeting:

There was an Environment and Scrutiny Committee meeting at the County Council where it was apparent that at least 5 NSIPs are going through at the moment and there is a real risk that the grid cannot take it (which will mean not just solar panels but ore pylons and overhead cables).

Regarding section 3.1.3 (Alternatives), I would like to propose that not just alternative sites but also alternative energy sources eg offshore wind farms are included.
The chairman responded that this should be included in our response but it is highly likely that the Planning Inspectorate will say they are only considering that specific application.

4.1 – closures to public rights of way. Reference to 'relevant stakeholders' – need to put forward what we consider specific stakeholders to be.

Agree with chairman's point about smaller solar sites being preferable and these have been supported. Was told by Springwell that they hadn't considered any other sites but they do have to as part of planning application. Springwell will know all the points we will raise about environment etc and will have response. We need to be looking at what is unique to our area to argue out point as the general arguments have been overcome in previous applications elsewhere. The chairman responded that these points will be better included when the application is made to Planning Inspectorate.

Another attended voiced his concern about waiting until application stage. The chairman clarified the difference between the Scoping Report stage and full application.

An attendee asked when do we get to the stage where we need funding for proper legal advice? The chairman responded that we are getting to that stage now and have been discussing funding options eg JustGiving site. Other options were suggested including pro bono work and Universities. Nottingham University did a survey that included the Beck and surrounding area, perhaps we could get hold of their research?

An attendee stated he has done research on lithium battery storage which will be predominantly on A15 area. There is a relevant Oxford University paper which he will pass

on for inclusion on the website. There is a high level of danger with these units and the fire service have no guidance on dealing with lithium battery fires.

6. **Motion proposed**
   a. Alan Anderson put forward a form of words for the motion proposed:

      To request the Parish Council consider using the comments made this evening and duly note in their response to the Planning Inspectorate regarding the Springwell Scoping Report. Together with communicating the aforesaid to the Chief Executive of North Kesteven District Council, CEO of Lincolnshire County Council and Dr Caroline Johnson MP

      The motion was seconded by several attendees.

   b. An amendment was proposed to remove the word 'consider' making a stronger statement of expectation.

   c. The following motion was tabled for a vote:

      To request the Parish Council use all the comments made this evening and duly note them in their response to the Planning Inspectorate regarding the Springwell Scoping Report. Together with communicating the aforesaid to the Chief Executive of North Kesteven District Council, CEO of Lincolnshire County Council and Dr Caroline Johnson MP

      In favour – 72
      Against – 0
      Abstentions – 3

      Motion carried unanimously.

7. **Chairmans closing remarks**
   The chairman thanked the minute taker and speakers, the Parish Council for use of the Hall and those present for attending.

   The meeting ended at 8.50pm.

Minutes: Jules Wilkins

13th April 2023

Ref: EN010149 – Springwell Solar Farm

Fire and Police Headquarters
Deepdale Lane
Nettleham
Lincoln
LN2 2LT

Tel: (01522) 582222

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Requirements

Recognising that Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue (LFR) are statutory consultees as a result of the Planning Act 2008 and applications that involve 'National Significant Infrastructure Projects' (NSIPs), we will work and engage with the developer as project evolve, to ensure it complies with the statutory responsibilities that we enforce.

The developer should produce a risk reduction strategy (Regulation 38 of the Building Regulations) as the responsible person for the scheme as stated in the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. We would also expect that safety measures and risk mitigation is developed in collaboration with LFR.

The strategy should cover the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the project. During the construction phase the number of daily vehicle movements in the local area will significantly increase. The Service will want to view the transport strategy to minimise this impact and prevent an increase in the number of potential road traffic incidents. Any development should not negatively impact on the Service's ability to respond to an incident in the local area.

LFR recognises the use of batteries (including lithium-ion) as Energy Storage Systems (ESS) is a new and emerging practice in the global renewable energy sector. As with all new and emerging practices within UK industry the Service would like to work with the developers to better understand any risks that may be posed and develop strategies and procedures to mitigate these risks.

The developer must ensure the risk of fire is minimised by:

Procuring components and using construction techniques which comply with all relevant legislation.

The inclusion of Automatic Fire Detection systems in the development design.

Including automatic fire suppression systems in the development design. Various types of suppression systems are available, but the Service's preferred system would be a water misting system as fires involving Lithium-ion batteries have the potential for thermal runaway. Other systems would be less effective in preventing re-ignition.

Including redundancy in the design to provide multiple layers of protection.

Designing the development to contain and restrict the spread of fire through the use of fire-resistant materials, and adequate separation between elements of the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS).

Developing an emergency response plan with LFR to minimise the impact of an incident during construction, operation and decommissioning of the facility.

Ensuring the BESS is located away from residential areas. Prevailing wind directions should be factored into the location of the BESS to minimise the impact of a fire involving lithium-ion batteries due to the toxic fumes produced.

The emergency response plan should include details of the hazards associated with lithium-ion batteries, isolation of electrical sources to enable fire-fighting activities, measures to extinguish or cool batteries involved in fire, management of toxic or flammable gases, minimise the environmental impact of an incident, containment of fire water run-off, handling and responsibility for disposal of damaged batteries, establishment of regular onsite training exercises.

The emergency response plan should be maintained and regularly reviewed by the occupier and any material changes notified to LFR.

Environmental impact should include the prevention of ground contamination, water course pollution, and the release of toxic gases.

The BESS facilities should be designed to provide:

- Adequate separation between containers.

- Provide adequate thermal barriers between switch gear and batteries,

- Install adequate ventilation or an air conditioning system to control the temperature. Ventilation is important since batteries will continue to generate flammable gas as long as they are hot. Also, carbon monoxide will be generated until the batteries are completely cooled through to their core.

- Install a very early warning fire detection system, such as aspirating smoke detection/air sampling.

- Install suitable gas monitoring / detection that will support early detection of leaks/issues, within the BESS containers. Consider Volatile Organic Compound (VOC), sensors as they respond to droplets of organic solvent.

- Consider the installation of internal suppression protection within BESS containers. Suitable systems/strategies should be installed / developed to ensure the fire does not propagate beyond a single cabinet.

- Ensure that sufficient water is available for manual fire-fighting. An external fire hydrant should be located in close proximity of the BESS containers. − The water supply should be able to provide a minimum of 1,900 l/min for at least 120 minutes (2 hours). Further hydrants should be strategically located across the development. These should be tested and serviced at regular intervals by the operator. If the site is remote from a pressure feed water supply, then an Emergency Water Supply (EWS) meeting the above standard should be incorporated into the design of the site e.g. an open water source and/or tank(s). If above ground EWS tanks are installed, these should include facilities for the FRS to discharge (140/100mm RT outlet) and refill the tank.

- The site design should include a safe access route for fire appliances to manoeuvre within the site (including turning circles). An alternative access point and approach route should be provided and maintained to enable appliances to approach from an up-wind direction.

- As the majority of BESS are remotely monitored, consideration should include the fixing of an Information Box (IB) at the FRS access point. The purpose of the IB is to provide information for first responders e.g. Emergency Response Plan, to include water supplies for firefighting, drainage plans highlighting any Pollution Control Devices (PCDs) / Penstocks etc for the FRS.

- Consideration of external visual indicator that allows effected area to be easily identified.

LFR are aware that large scale BESS is a fairly new technology, and as such risks may or may not be captured in current guidance in pursuance of the Building Regulations (as amended) and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This will highlight challenges the FRS have when responding to Building Regulations consultations. For this reason, we strongly recommend applying the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 855 Standard for the Installation of Stationary Energy Storage Systems.

From:	[redacted]
To:	Springwell Solar Farm
Subject:	FW: [EXTERNAL] EN010149 – Springwell Solar Farm – Reg 10 Consultation and Reg 11 Notification
Date:	05 April 2023 09:04:33
Attachments:	image001.png image002.png image003.png EN010149 Letter to stat cons Scoping & Reg 11 Notification.pdf EXTERNAL National Gas Transmission Enquiry Response - Job No. GE1_29022056.msg Solar farm guidance V3 100915- Gas D Final (2).pdf Holding Objection - National Gas Transmission GE1_29022056.pdf

Good Morning,

National Gas Transmission operates 3 high pressure gas pipelines in the vicinity of the proposed solar farm. The site boundary doesn't appear to encroach on the pipelines or easements, but there is a potential risk of electrical interference from the proposed solar farm and battery energy storage systems.
The developer will need to provide an earthing report and electrical risk assessment to show that the potential transfer voltages to the pipelines are within safe levels, and pre and post energisation surveys may be required.
I would be happy to arrange a meeting with the developer to discuss the project.

Please contact Phil Booth if you have any questions: [redacted]@nationalgas.com

Please find a holding objection letter and guidance attached.

Thanks

Lisa Gibson
Asset Protection Assistant
Asset Protection

[redacted]
[redacted]@nationalgas.com

national gas transmission

National Gas Transmission, Warwick Technology Park, Gallows Hill, Warwick, CV34 6DA
nationalgas.com I Twitter I LinkedIn

From: .box.assetprotection
Sent: 30 March 2023 15:32
To: SpringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk
Subject: [EXTERNAL] EN010149 – Springwell Solar Farm – Reg 10 Consultation and Reg 11

Notification

Good Afternoon,

With regards to the attached Planning Application, please find National Gas Transmission's LSBUD response attached.

This has now been passed over to an engineer and we will provide you with a formal response as soon as possible.

Thanks

Lisa Gibson
Asset Protection Assistant
Asset Protection

[redacted]
[redacted]@nationalgrid.com

National Gas Transmission, Warwick Technology Park, Gallows Hill, Warwick, CV34 6DA
nationalgas.com I Twitter I LinkedIn

National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill, Warwick
CV34 6DA

Asset Protection
National Gas Transmission
National Grid
Warwick
Direct Tel: 07929 657565
Email: lisa.gibson@nationalgas.com

Planning Work?
Please enquire with us at
www.lsbud.co.uk

National Gas Emergency Number:
0800 111 999*

*Available 24 hours, 7 days/week.
Calls may be recorded and monitored.
www.nationalgas.com

Date : 4/5/2023
Our Reference: c

Your Reference: EN010149 - National Gas Use Only

Dear Lisa Gibson/National Gas Transmission

Ref: Site Address Not Provided

National Gas Transmission exercises its right to place a Holding Objection to the above proposal which will cross our High-Pressure Gas Pipeline.

- We would draw your attention to the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations 1992, the Land Use Planning rules and PADHI (Planning Advise for Developments near Hazardous Installations) guidance published by the HSE, which may affect this development.

- To visit the Land Use Planning site, please use the link below:
https://www.hse.gov.uk/landuseplanning/methodology.htm

- No buildings should encroach within the Easement strip of the pipeline

- No demolition shall be allowed within 150 metres of a pipeline without an assessment of the vibration levels at the pipeline. Expert advice may need to be sought which can be arranged through National Gas Transmission.

- National Gas Transmission has a Deed of Easement for each pipeline which prevents change to existing ground levels, storage of materials. It also prevents the erection of permanent / temporary buildings, or structures. If necessary National grid will take action to legally enforce the terms of the easement.

- You should be aware of the Health and Safety Executives guidance document HS(G) 47 "Avoiding Danger from Underground Services", and National Gas Transmission's specification for Safe Working in the Vicinity of National Gas Transmission High Pressure gas pipelines and associated installations - requirements for third parties T/SP/SSW22. You should already have received a link to download a copy of T/SP/SSW/22, from our Plant protection Team, which is also available to download from our website.

- To view the SSW22 Document, please use the link below: https://www.nationalgrid.com/uk/gas-transmission/document/113921/download

- A National Gas Transmission representative will be monitoring the works to comply with SSW22.

- To download a copy of the HSE Guidance HS(G)47, please use the following link:
- http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg47.htm

- National Gas Transmission will also need to ensure that our pipelines access is maintained during and after construction.

- Our pipelines are normally buried to a depth cover of 1.1 metres however; actual depth and position must be confirmed on site by trial hole investigation under the supervision of a National Gas Transmission representative. Ground cover above our pipelines should not be reduced or increased.

- If any excavations are planned within 3 metres of National Gas Transmission High Pressure Pipeline or, within 10 metres of an AGI (Above Ground Installation), or if any embankment or dredging works are proposed then the actual position and depth of the pipeline must be established on site in the presence of a National Gas Transmission representative. A safe working method must be agreed prior to any work taking place in order to minimise the risk of damage and ensure the final depth of cover does not affect the integrity of the pipeline.

- Excavation works may take place unsupervised no closer than 3 metres from the pipeline once the actual depth and position has been has been confirmed on site under the supervision of a National Gas Transmission representative. Similarly, excavation with hand held power tools is not permitted within 1.5 metres from our apparatus and the work is undertaken with NGT supervision and guidance.

Pipeline Crossings

- Where existing roads cannot be used, construction traffic should ONLY cross the pipeline at locations agreed with a National Gas Transmission engineer.

- All crossing points will be fenced on both sides with a post and wire fence and with the fence returned along the easement for a distance of 6 metres.

- The pipeline shall be protected, at the crossing points, by temporary rafts constructed at ground level. No protective measures including the installation of concrete slab protection shall be installed over or near to the National Gas Transmission pipeline without the prior permission of National Gas Transmission. National Gas Transmission will need to agree the material, the dimensions and method of installation of the proposed protective measure. The method of installation shall be confirmed through the submission of a formal written method statement from the contractor to National Gas Transmission.

- Please be aware that written permission from National Gas Transmission is required before any works commence within the National Gas Transmission easement strip.

- A National Gas Transmission representative shall monitor any works within close proximity to the pipeline to comply with National Gas Transmission specification T/SP/SSW22.

- A Deed of Indemnity is required for any crossing of the easement including cables

Cables Crossing

- Cables may cross the pipeline at perpendicular angle to the pipeline i.e. 90 degrees.

- A National Gas Transmission representative shall supervise any cable crossing of a pipeline.

- An impact protection slab should be laid between the cable and pipeline if the cable crossing is above the pipeline.

- Where a new service is to cross over the pipeline a clearance distance of 0.6 metres between the crown of the pipeline and underside of the service should be maintained. If this cannot be achieved the service must cross below the pipeline with a clearance distance of 0.6 metres.

All work should be carried out in accordance with British Standards policy

- BS EN 13509:2003 - Cathodic protection measurement techniques

- BS EN 12954:2001 - Cathodic protection of buried or immersed metallic structures – General principles and application for pipelines

- BS 7361 Part 1 - Cathodic Protection Code of Practice for land and marine applications**.**

I have enclosed a location map to show the location of National Gas Transmission high-pressure gas pipeline(s) within the vicinity of your proposal.

Yours sincerely

Asset Protection Assistant

nationalgrid

Guidance for developing solar farms near to gas distribution and transmission pipelines

Plant Protection should be your first point of contact if you want to carry out work near to gas distribution and transmission assets.

Phone: 0800 688 588
Email: plantprotection@nationalgrid.com
Address: National Grid
Plant Protection
Block 1
Brick Kiln Street
Hinckley
LE10 0NA
Website: https://www.beforeyoudig.nationalgrid.com

Timescales

Please be aware that we need a considerable amount of notice if you want to set up a solar-farm development. In previous cases, it has taken up to a year to allow work to start on-site. To avoid any unnecessary delays, please consider this when contacting Plant Protection.

Rights of access

You need to keep our rights of access free from construction, to make sure that we can always gain access when we need to carry out maintenance. Please check the conditions which are outlined in National Grid document T/SP/SSW/22 relating to the width of access routes and other restriction details that apply when working near to our pipelines before designing the layout of the solar panels. T/SP/SSW/22 can be downloaded from : http://www2.nationalgrid.com/uk/Safety/library/
Select "Download" next to "Working safely in the vicinity of above 7bar pipelines".

Before work starts

In the early stages of planning and before any work starts near our assets, you need to contact Plant Protection and follow our plant protection process.

We will need to work together to identify the following:-

Information you will need to provide

a. Information about any vehicles, plant or equipment that will need to cross the pipeline at any stage.
b. Your proposals for routing the cables. We may be concerned about parallel cable runs that are within 50m of our pipeline.

Support you need from us and checks we must carry out

c. Our Plant Protection team should clearly mark any rights of access to our pipeline on-site.
d. We will need to carry out pipeline coating checks to ensure the pipe is in good condition.

Site design layout that you must keep to

e. Vehicles, plant and equipment can only cross the pipeline at agreed locations.
f. If any of the following need to cross our pipeline, they should be perpendicular (at 90 degrees) to the pipeline.
    - Cables
    - Drains
    - Fences
    - Boundaries
g. Footings, panels and other equipment must not be on our rights of way.
h. You may need to provide a deed of indemnity[1] for any cables and slabs that need to cross our pipeline.
i. Long-term access must be agreed in order for us to be able to maintain the pipeline within the site.

[1] A deed of indemnity is an agreement that specifies the actions and consequences which would result should damage to our assets occur.

Electrical installations and pipeline cathodic protection (CP)

We apply cathodic protection[2] to our steel pipeline systems. Our policy and legislation is in line with the requirements of BS EN 12954 (please go to www.bsigroup.co.uk for more information).

Stray currents from electrical installations such as solar farms, wind farms, cables (AC and DC), substations and overhead lines can have an adverse effect on the CP system and its ability to protect the buried steel pipeline.

To make sure the electrical design and any cables that cross our pipeline do not reduce the effectiveness of existing cathodic protection on our steel pipeline systems, please consider the following when designing the layout of the solar panels.

- AC or DC interference in our pipeline from cables running parallel to it.
- Grounding system - earth leakage studies should take into account the effects of earth leakage and fault currents on our pipeline.
- You should arrange for CP specialists to monitor the CP system by carrying out assessments both before and after constructing the solar farm to make sure its performance has not been affected. You will have to cover the cost of the monitoring and any work that is necessary to protect the pipeline.

Contact details

For more information and to send us information before you start work, please contact our Plant Protection team.

Phone: 0800 688 588
Email: plantprotection@nationalgrid.com
Address: National Grid
Plant Protection
Block 1
Brick Kiln Street
Hinckley
LE10 0NA
Website: National Grids Electricity And Gas Location Enquiry System (EAGLES)
https://www.beforeyoudig.nationalgrid.com

Further information

[2] Cathodic protectioin is an electrical system applied to the pipeline to control corrosion by reducing the pipelines electrical potential. This is achieved through a variety of system designs and will differ depending on the natural and built environment conditions.

For more information about working near gas pipelines please visit our work safely library and download “Above 7bar Gas Guidance” http://www2.nationalgrid.com/uk/Safety/library/

National Gas Emergency Number: 0800 111 999*

*Available 24 hours, 7 days/week.
Calls may be recorded and monitored.
www.nationalgas.com

Asset Protection
National Gas Transmission
National Grid House
Warwick
CV34 6DA
Email: assetprotection@nationalgrid.com

Our Ref: 29022056 EN010149 - National Gas Use Only

Thursday, 30 March 2023

Lisa Goodwin
National Grid House Warwick Technology Park Gallows Hill
Warwick
Warwickshire
CV34 6DA

National Gas Transmission – High Risk Response Letter

Dear Sir/ Madam,

An assessment has been carried out with respect to National Gas Transmission plc's apparatus and the proposed work location. Based on the location entered into the system for assessment the area has been found to be within the High Risk zone from National Gas Transmission plc's apparatus and you **MUST NOT PROCEED** without further assessment from Asset Protection.

Before you go ahead with these works, you are required to send your plans and a description for to us to review them at assetprotection@nationalgrid.com. We will contact you within 28 days of receipt.

It is **YOUR** responsibility to take into account whether you are required to or would benefit from referring to the HSE Land Use Planning App (LUP), available from HSE's website. (Please note for some works this is a requirement for them to take place) More information on the LUP is available at https://www.hse.gov.uk/landuseplanning/

Please note this response and any attached map(s) are valid for 28 days.

Yours sincerely

Asset Protection Team

Your Responsibilities and Obligations

The "Assessment" Section below outlines the detailed requirements that must be followed when planning or undertaking your activities at this location.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the information you have submitted is accurate and that all relevant documents including links are provided to all persons (either direct labour or contractors) working for you near National Gas Transmission plc's apparatus, e.g. as contained within the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations.

This assessment solely relates to National Gas Transmission plc (NGT)

This assessment does **NOT** include:

- National Gas Transmission's legal interest (easements or wayleaves) in the land which restricts activity in proximity to National Gas Transmission's assets in private land. You must obtain details of any such restrictions from the landowner in the first instance and if in doubt contact Asset Protection.

- Recently installed apparatus.

- Apparatus owned by other organisations, e.g. Cadent, National Grid Electricity Transmission plc, other gas distribution operators, local electricity companies, other utilities, etc.

It is **YOUR** responsibility to take into account whether the items listed above may be present and if they could be affected by your proposed activities.

This communication does not constitute any formal agreement or consent for any proposed development work; either generally or with regard to National Gas Transmission plc easements or wayleaves nor any planning or building regulations applications.

National Gas Transmission plc or their agents, servants or contractors do not accept any liability for any losses arising under or in connection with this information. This limit on liability applies to all and any claims in contract, tort (including negligence), misrepresentation (excluding fraudulent misrepresentation), breach of statutory duty or otherwise. This limit on liability does not exclude or restrict liability where prohibited by the law nor does it supersede the express terms of any related agreements.

If you require further assistance please contact the Asset Protection team via e-mail (assetprotection@nationalgrid.com) or via the contact details at the top of this response.

Are My Works Affected?

Is your proposal an Initial Enquiry or Planned Works Application?

Initial Enquiry

As your works are at an "initial" stage, any maps and guidance provided are for information purposes only. This is not approval to commence work. You must submit a "Planned Works" enquiry at the earliest opportunity and failure to do this may lead to disruption to your plans and works. Asset Protection will endeavour to provide an initial assessment within 28 days of receipt of a Planned Works enquiry and, dependent on the outcome of this, further consultation may be required. In any event, for safety and legal reasons, works must not be carried out until a Planned Works enquiry has been completed and final response received.

Planned Works

Your proposal is in proximity of National Gas Transmission plc's apparatus, as shown on the attached map, which may impact, and possibly prevent, your proposed activities for safety and/or legal reasons.

You must not commence any work until you have sent details to us at assetprotection@nationalgrid.com and have received a response back confirming that we have no objections to the work taking place. You must read and follow all the guidance provided when planning or undertaking any activities at this location.

We will contact you within 28 working days of you providing us with the details of your work at the email address above. Please email, or call us at 01926 654844, if you have not had a response within this time frame.

Assessment

Affected Apparatus
The apparatus that has been identified as being in the vicinity of your proposed works is:

- National Gas Transmission Pipelines and associated equipment

Requirements

National High Pressure Gas Pipelines

BEFORE carrying out any work you must:

- Ensure that no works are undertaken in the vicinity of our gas pipelines and that no heavy plant, machinery or vehicles cross the route of the pipeline until detailed consultation has taken place.
- Carefully read these requirements including the attached guidance documents and maps showing the location of apparatus.
- Contact the landowner and ensure any proposed works in private land do not infringe National Gas Transmission's legal rights (i.e. easements or wayleaves). If the works are in the road or footpath the relevant local authority should be contacted.
- Ensure that all persons, including direct labour and contractors, working for you on or near National Gas Transmission's apparatus follow the requirements of the HSE Guidance Notes HSG47 - 'Avoiding Danger from Underground Services' This guidance can be downloaded free of charge at http://www.hse.gov.uk
- In line with the above guidance, verify and establish the actual position of mains, pipes, cables, services and other apparatus on site before any activities are undertaken.

DURING any work you must:

- Ensure that the National Gas Transmission requirements are followed for work in the vicinity of High pressure pipelines including the supervision of the digging of trial holes.
- Comply with all guidance relating to general activities and any specific guidance for each asset type as specified in the Guidance Section below.
- Ensure that access to National Gas Transmission apparatus is maintained at all times.
- Prevent the placing of heavy construction plant, equipment, materials or the passage of heavy vehicles over National Gas Transmission apparatus unless specifically agreed with National Gas Transmission in advance.
- Exercise extreme caution if slab (mass) concrete is encountered during excavation works as this may be protecting or supporting National Gas Transmission apparatus.
- Maintain appropriate clearances between gas apparatus and the position of other buried plant.

GUIDANCE

National Gas Transmission Network data

The Network map for National Gas Transmission assets can be downloaded at the following link in GIS format.
www.nationalgas.com/land-and-assets/network-route-maps

High Pressure Gas Pipelines Guidance:
If working in the vicinity of a high pressure gas pipeline the following document must be followed: 'Specification for Safe Working in the Vicinity of National Gas Transmission High Pressure Gas Pipelines and Associated Installation – Requirements for Third Parties' (SSW22). This can be obtained from:
<Link to SSW22 once it has been updated and signed off>

Essential Guidance document:
https://www.nationalgas.com/sites/gas/files/documents/8589934982-Essential%20Guidance.pdf

You should be aware of the following information regarding National Gas Transmission's high pressure underground pipelines and associated apparatus:

- Our underground pipelines are protected by permanent agreements with landowners or have been laid in the public highway under our licence. These grant us legal rights that enable us to achieve efficient and reliable operation, maintenance, repair and refurbishment of our gas transmission network. Hence we require that no permanent structures are built over or under pipelines or within the zone specified in the agreement, materials or soil are not stacked or stored on top of the pipeline route and that unrestricted and safe access to any of our pipeline(s) must be maintained at all times.

- The information supplied is given in good faith and only as a guide to the location of our underground pipelines. The accuracy of this information cannot be guaranteed. The physical presence of such pipelines may also be evident from pipeline marker posts. The person(s) responsible for planning, supervising and carrying out work in proximity to our pipeline(s) shall be liable to us, as pipeline(s) owner, as well as to any third party who may be affected in any way by any loss or damage resulting from their failure to locate and avoid any damage to such a pipeline(s).

- The relevant guidance in relation to working safely near to existing underground pipelines is contained within the Health and Safety Executive's (www.hse.gov.uk) Guidance HS(G)47 "Avoiding Danger From Underground Services" and all relevant site staff should make sure that they are both aware of and understand this guidance.

- Our pipelines are normally buried to a depth of 1.2 metres or more below ground and further information may be found on the plans provided. Ground cover above our pipelines should not be reduced or increased.

- Any proposed cable crossings are subject to approval from National Gas Transmission, completion of a Deed of Consent and must remain a minimum of 600mm above or below the pipeline. All works associated with cable installation must be supervised by National Gas Transmission. Cables cannot be pulled through until a Deed of Consent is in place.

- If it is planned to use mechanical excavators and any other powered mechanical plant, it shall not be sited or moved above the pipeline.

- If it is planned to carry out excavation to a depth greater than 0.3 metres, embankment or dredging works, the actual position and depth of the pipeline must be established on site with our representative

and a safe working method agreed prior to any work taking place in order to minimise the risk of damage and ensure the final depth of cover does not affect the integrity of the pipeline.

- The digging of trial holes to locate the pipeline must be carried out under the supervision of our on-site representative following approval of RAMS. Excavation works may take place unsupervised no closer than 3 metres from the pipeline once its actual location has been confirmed. Similarly, excavation with handheld power tools may take place no closer than 1.5 metres away.

- For operational and safety reasons National Gas Transmission requires unrestricted access to our Above Ground Installations and Compressor Stations. We would request that any proposed changes to roads/layouts in the vicinity of our site have regard to the need to maintain access.

- Any construction traffic should either cross the pipeline using existing roads or at agreed crossing locations using agreed protective measures.

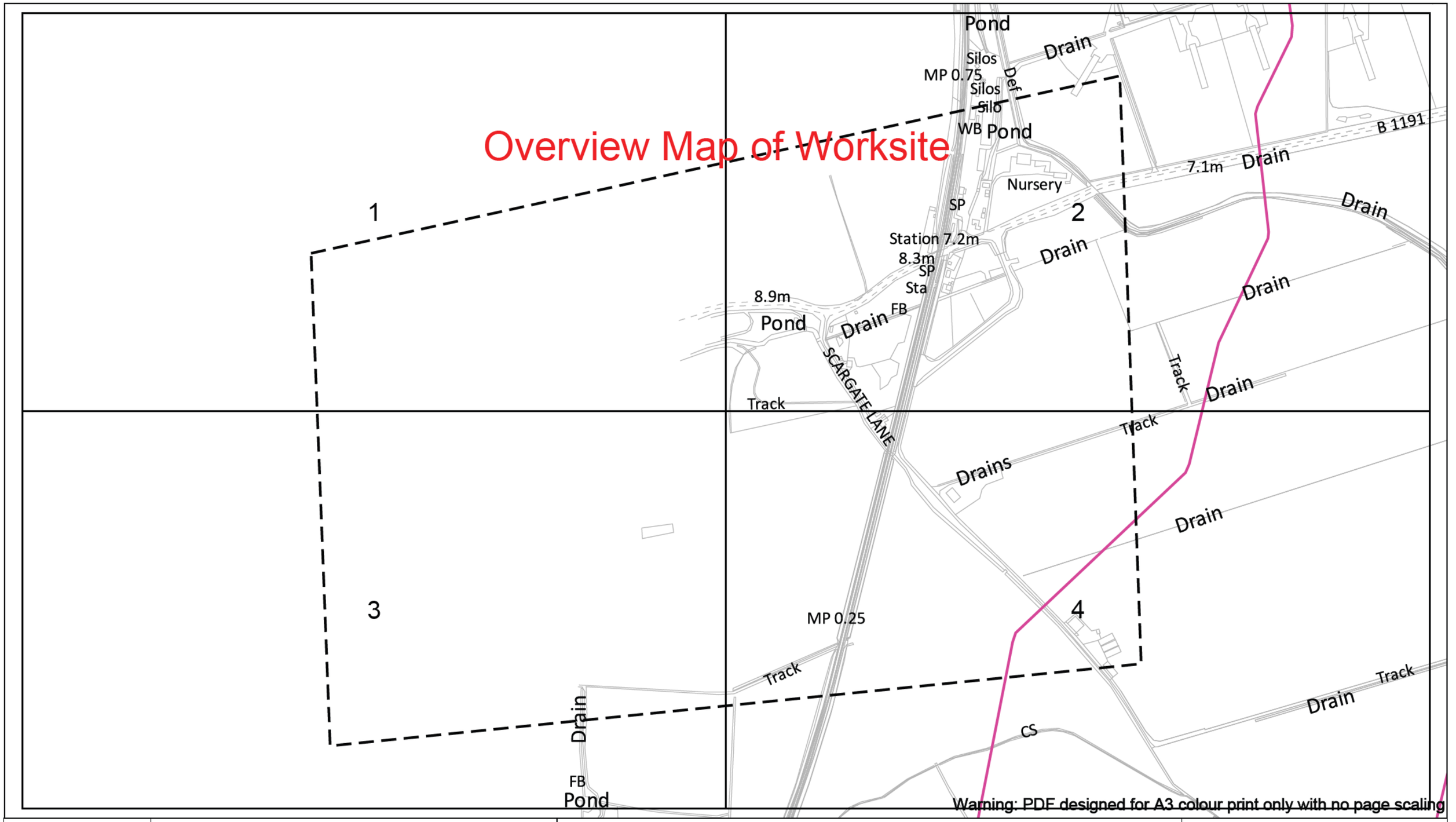
- Ground anchors for scaffolding stay wires should only be sited in the vicinity of the pipeline after the pipeline position has been confirmed on site with our representative and the ground anchor position agreed.

- If your proposals include the installation of wind turbines then the minimum separation between the pipeline and the nearest turbine should be 1.5 times the mast height.

- If your proposals include the installation of a Solar Farm, all assets must remain outside of the National Gas Transmission easement, all cable crossings must be agreed during the design stage, a Deed of Consent undertaken and an Earthing report must be provided for review. National Gas Transmission must retain access to its assets at all times once works have been completed.

The relocation of existing underground pipelines is not normally feasible on grounds of cost, operation and maintenance and environmental impact. Further details can be found in our specification for: safe working in the vicinity of National Gas Transmission high pressure gas pipelines and associated installations – requirements for third parties: T/SP/SSW/22 (see link above or copy enclosed)

Overview Map of Worksite



Warning: PDF designed for A3 colour print only with no page scaling

Date Requested: 30/03/2023
Job Reference: 29022056
Site Location: 509039 357841
Requested by:
Miss Lisa Goodwin
Your Scheme/Reference:
EN010149 - National Gas Use Only

Scale: 1:5125 (When plotted at A3)

IMPORTANT NOTICES

This plan shows those pipes owned by National Gas Transmission PLC in its role as a licensed Gas Transporter (GT). Gas pipes owned by other GTs, or otherwise privately owned, may be present in this area. Information with regards to such pipes should be obtained from the relevant owners. The information shown on this plan is given without warranty, the accuracy thereof cannot be guaranteed. Service pipes, valves, syphons, stub connections, etc., are not shown but their presence should be anticipated. No liability of any kind whatsoever is accepted by National Gas Transmission PLC or their agents, servants or contractors for any error or omission. Safe digging practices, in accordance with HS(G)47, must be used to verify and establish the actual position of mains, pipes, services and other apparatus on site before any mechanical plant is used. It is your responsibility to ensure that this information is provided to all persons (either direct labour or contractors) working for you on or near gas apparatus. The information included on this plan should not be referred to beyond a period of 28 days from the date of issue.

National Gas Transmission Emergency Number: 0800 111 999
Available 24 hours, 7 days/week. Calls may be recorded and monitored

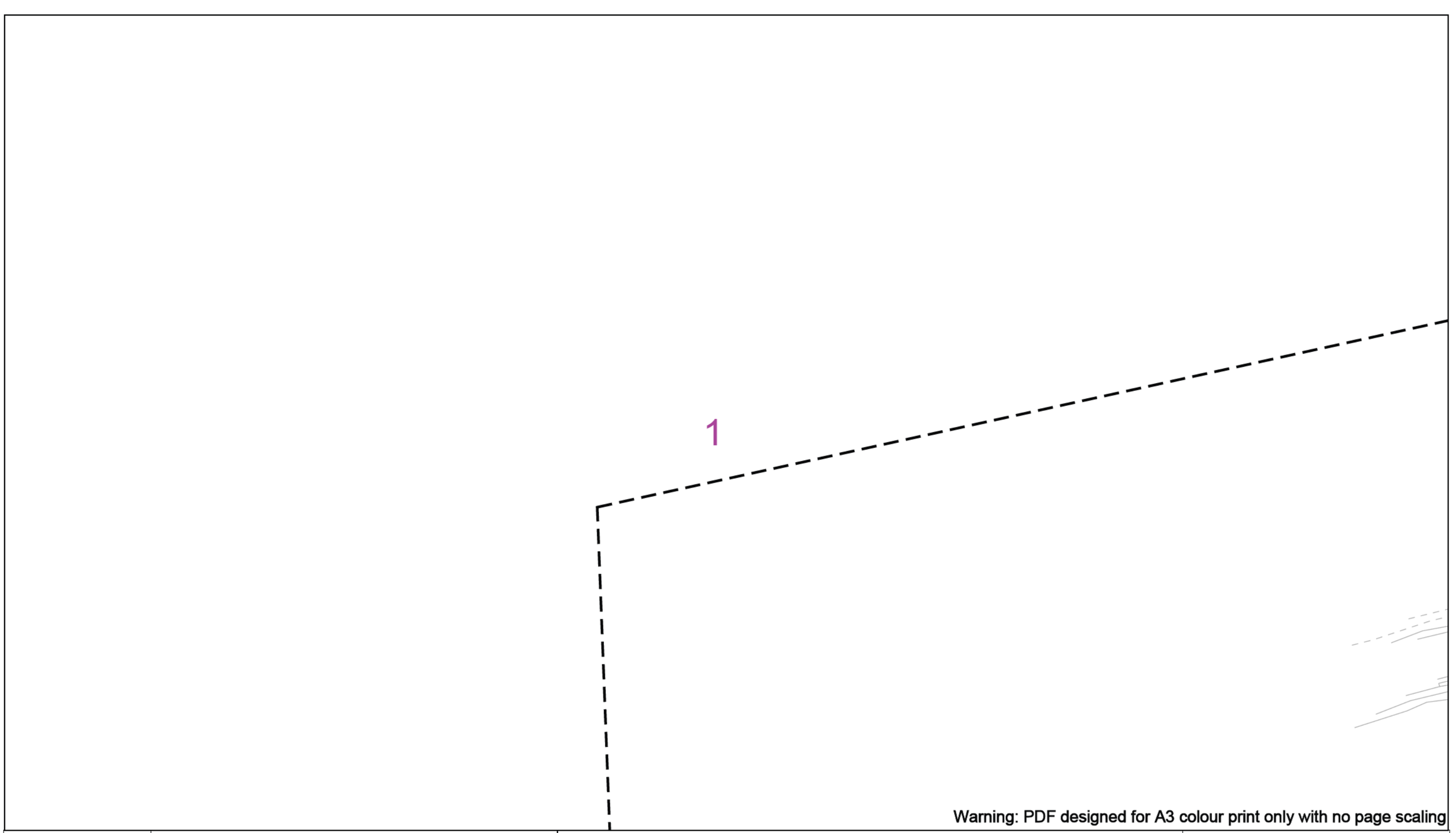
Warning: PDF designed for colour print only with no page scaling

Dig Sites Area: Line:

NHP Mains

national gas transmission

National Gas Transmission
National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill
Warwick
CV34 6DA
AssetProtection@NationalGrid.com



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Date Requested: 30/03/2023
Job Reference: 29022056
Site Location: 509039 357841
Requested by:
Miss Lisa Goodwin
Your Scheme/Reference: EN010149 -
National Gas Use Only

Scale: 1:2500 (When plotted at A3)

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National Gas Transmission Emergency Number: 0800 111 999
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100m

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national gas transmission

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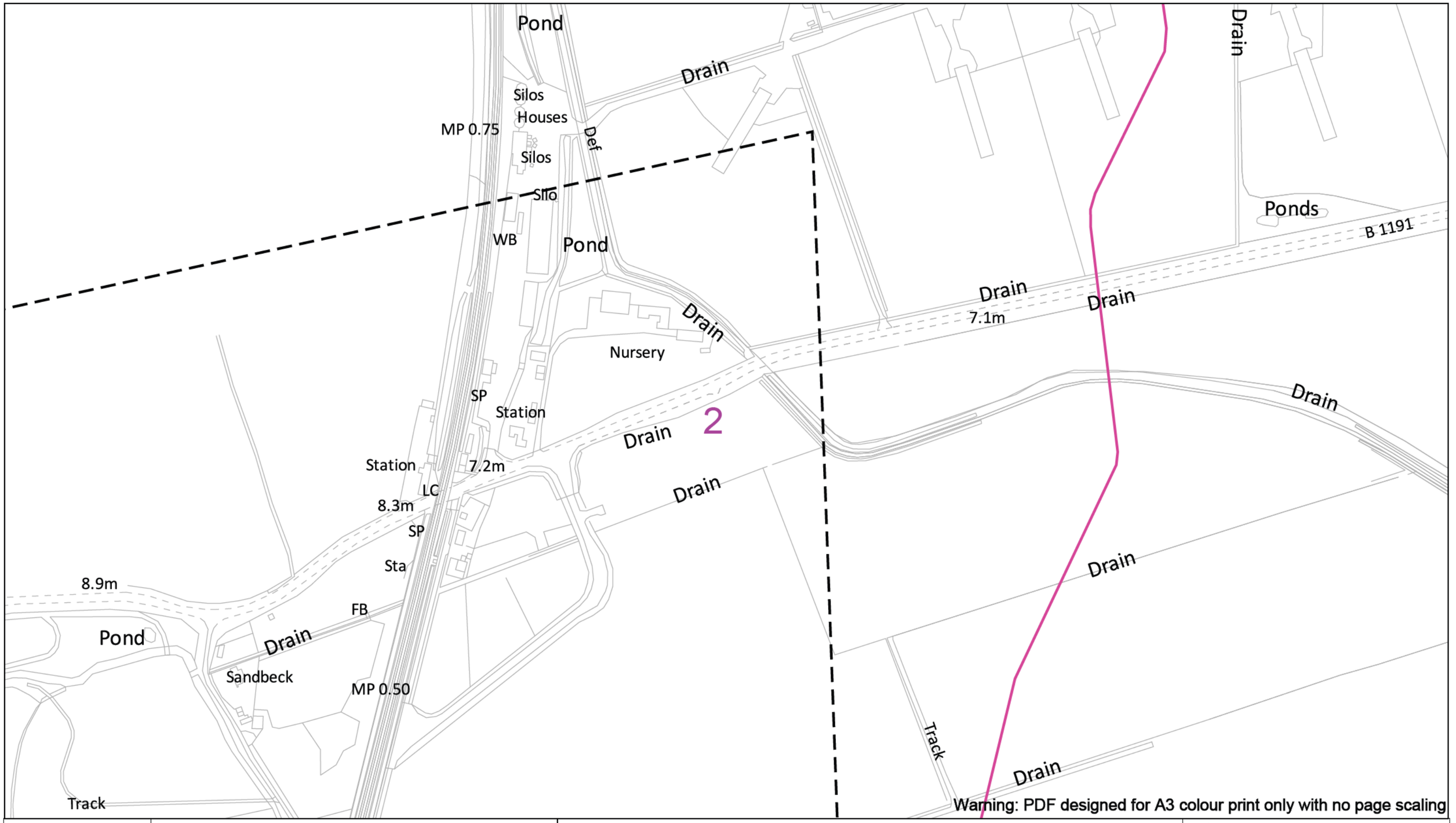

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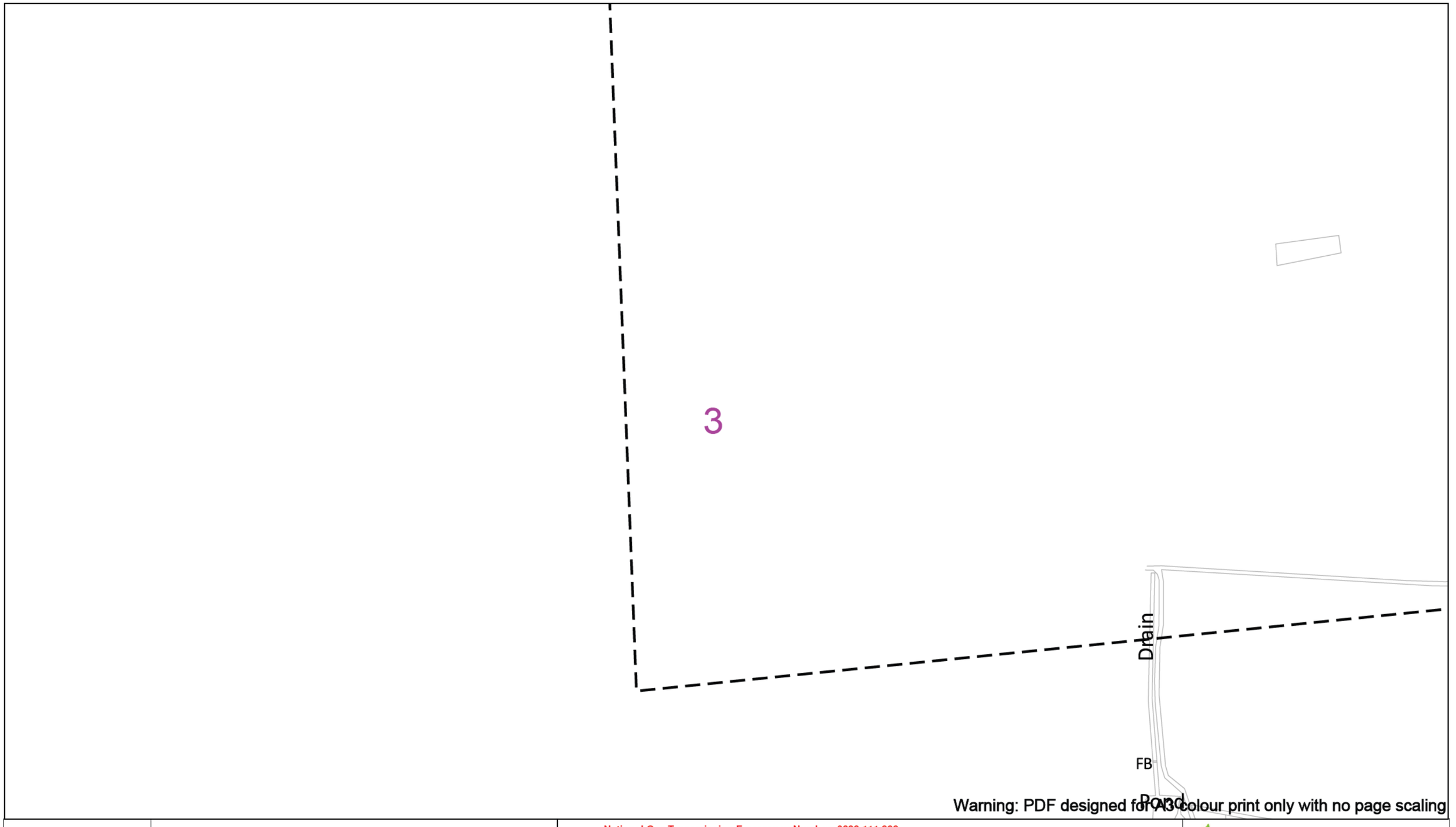

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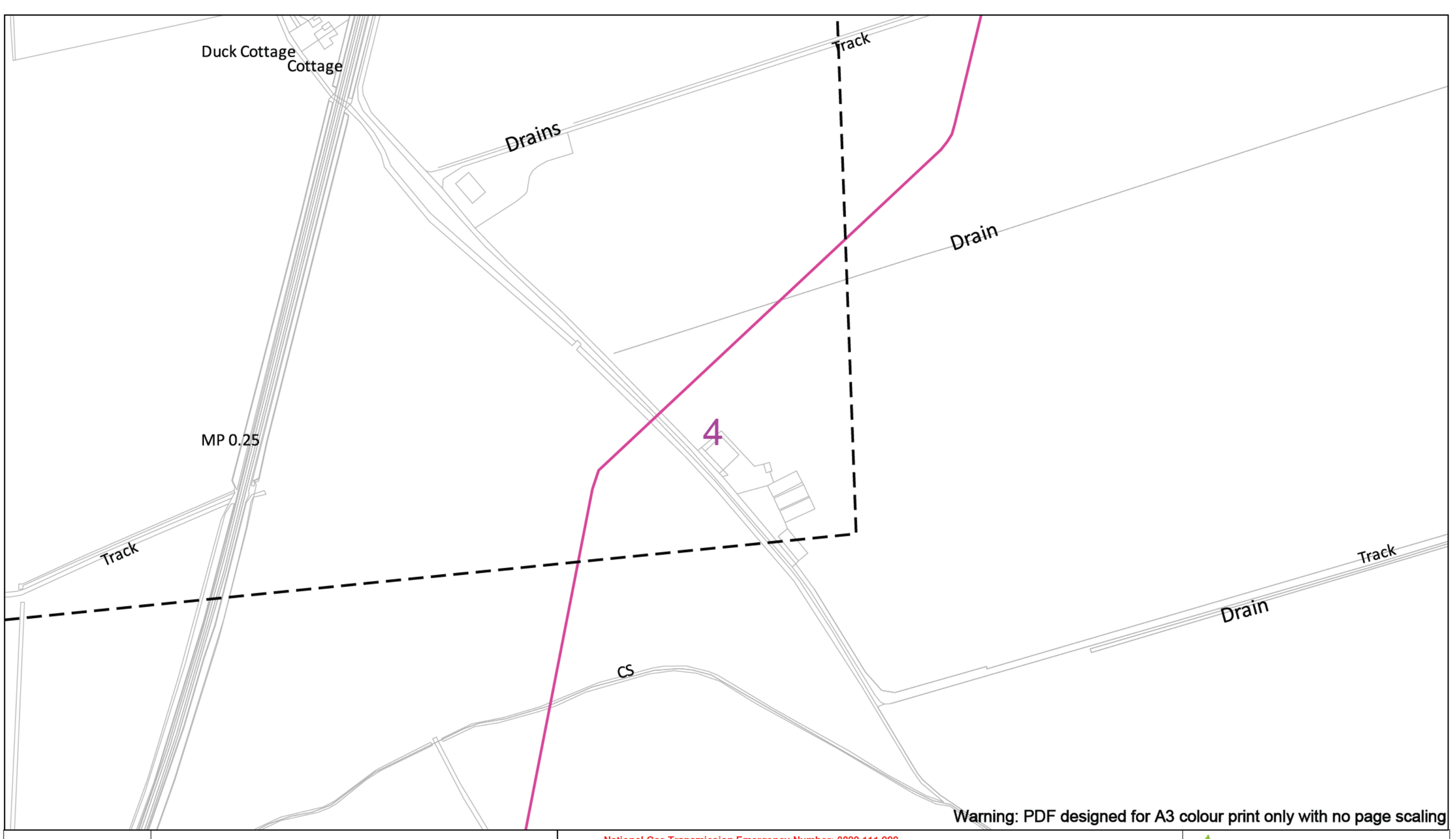

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100m

Dig Sites Area: Line:

NHP Mains

National Gas Transmission
National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill
Warwick
CV34 6DA

AssetProtection@NationalGrid.com

ENQUIRY SUMMARY

Received Date
30/03/2023 14:19

Work Start Date
20/04/2023

Your Reference
EN010149 - National Gas Use Only

Location
Centre Point: 509039 357841
X Extent:
Y Extent:
Postcode: LN4 3PG

Map Options
Paper Size: A3
Orientation: LANDSCAPE
Scale: 1:2500
Real World Extents: 1198m x 966m

Enquirer Details
Organisation Name: National Grid
Contact Name: Lisa Goodwin
Email Address: [redacted]@nationalgrid.com
Telephone: [redacted]
Address: National Grid House Warwick Technology Park Gallows Hill, Warwick, Warwickshire, CV34 6DA

Enquiry Type
Planned Works

Activity Type
Planning Applications

Work Types
Solar Farm

Notes/Works Description (if supplied)
Application by Springwell Energyfarm Ltd (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent f
r the Springwell Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

Site Contact Name (if supplied)

Site Contact Number (if supplied)

National Gas House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill, Warwick
CV34 6DA

+44 (0) 1926 65 3000
nationalgas.com

Environmental Services
Operations Group 3
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

Submitted via email to: springwellsolarfarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

18 h April 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

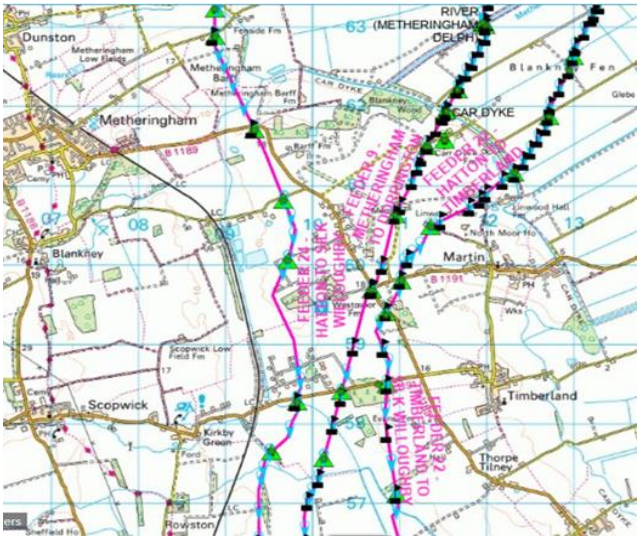
Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11

Application by Springwell Energyfarm Ltd (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Springwell Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

I refer to your email dated 23rd March 2023 regarding the above proposed DCO. This is a response on behalf of National Gas Gas PLC (NGT). Having reviewed the scoping consultation documents, NGT wishes to make the following comments regarding gas infrastructure which may be affected by proposals.

NGT has three feeder mains located within the vicinity of the Order limits near Scopwick and Kirkby Green however these are currently located to the East outside of the Order limits. The closest pipeline is:

- Feeder Main 24 – Hatton to Silk Willoughby



For information purposes only at this stage:

Please note that NGT has existing easements for this pipeline which provides rights for ongoing access and prevents the erection of permanent / temporary buildings/structures, change to existing ground levels or storage of materials etc within the easement strip.

You should also be aware of NGT's guidance for working in proximity to its assets, further guidance and links are available as follows.

Please be aware of the specific guidance for developing solar farms near to gas transmission pipelines:

https://www.nationalgas.com/document/82936/download

UKOPA Good Practice Guide - Requirements for the Siting and Installation of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Installations in the Vicinity of Buried Pipelines - UKOPA/GP/014 Edition 1

Where the Promoter intends to acquire land, extinguish rights, or interfere with any of NGT's apparatus, NGT will require appropriate protection and further discussion on the impact to its apparatus and rights including adequate Protective Provisions. A Deed of Consent will also be required for any works proposed within the easement strip.

Key Considerations:

- NGT has a Deed of Grant of Easement for each pipeline, which prevents the erection of permanent / temporary buildings, or structures, change to existing ground levels, storage of materials etc.

- Please be aware that written permission is required before any works commence within the NGT easement strip. Furthermore a Deed of Consent will be required prior to commencement of works within NGT's easement strip subject to approval by NGT's plant protection team.

- The below guidance is not exhaustive and all works in the vicinity of NGT's asset shall be subject to review and approval from NGT's plant protection team in advance of commencement of works on site.

General Notes on Pipeline Safety:

- You should be aware of the Health and Safety Executives guidance document HS(G) 47 "Avoiding Danger from Underground Services", and NGT's Dial Before You Dig Specification for Safe Working in the Vicinity of NGT Assets. There will be additional requirements dictated by NGT's plant protection team.

- NGT will also need to ensure that its pipelines remain accessible during and after completion of the works.

- Our pipelines are normally buried to a depth cover of 1.1 metres, however actual depth and position must be confirmed on site by trial hole investigation under the supervision of a NGT representative. Ground cover above our pipelines should not be reduced or increased.

- If any excavations are planned within 3 metres of NGT High Pressure Pipeline or, within 10 metres of an AGI (Above Ground Installation), or if any embankment or dredging works are proposed then the actual position and depth of the pipeline must be established on site in the presence of a NGT representative. A safe working method agreed prior to any work

taking place in order to minimise the risk of damage and ensure the final depth of cover does not affect the integrity of the pipeline.

- Below are some examples of work types that have specific restrictions when being undertaken in the vicinity of gas assets therefore consultation with NGT's Plant Protection team is essential:
  - Demolition
  - Blasting
  - Piling and boring
  - Deep mining
  - Surface mineral extraction
  - Landfilling
  - Trenchless Techniques (e.g. HDD, pipe splitting, tunnelling etc.)
  - Wind turbine installation
  - Solar farm installation
  - Tree planting schemes

Pipeline Crossings:

- Where existing roads cannot be used, construction traffic should ONLY cross the pipeline at agreed locations.
- The pipeline shall be protected, at the crossing points, by temporary rafts constructed at ground level. The third party shall review ground conditions, vehicle types and crossing frequencies to determine the type and construction of the raft required.
- The type of raft shall be agreed with NGT prior to installation.
- No protective measures including the installation of concrete slab protection shall be installed over or near to the NGT pipeline without the prior permission of NGT
- NGT will need to agree the material, the dimensions and method of installation of the proposed protective measure.
- The method of installation shall be confirmed through the submission of a formal written method statement from the contractor to NGT.
- An NGT representative shall monitor any works within close proximity to the pipeline to comply with NGT specification T/SP/SSW22

Cable Crossings:

- Cables may cross the pipeline at perpendicular angle to the pipeline i.e. 90 degrees.

- Where a new cable is to cross over the pipeline a clearance distance of 0.6 metres between the crown of the pipeline and underside of the service should be maintained. If this cannot be achieved the service shall cross below the pipeline with a clearance distance of 0.6 metres.

- A new service should not be laid parallel within an easement strip

- Clearance must be at least 600mm above or below the pipeline

- An NGT representative shall approve and supervise any cable crossing of a pipeline.

- A Deed of Consent is required for any cable crossing the easement

Where the promoter intends to acquire land, extinguish rights, or interfere with any of NGT apparatus, protective provisions will be required in a form acceptable to it to be included within the DCO. NGT requests to be consulted at the earliest stages to ensure that the most appropriate protective provisions are included within the DCO application to safeguard the integrity of our apparatus and to remove the requirement for objection.

Adequate access to NGT pipelines must be maintained at all times during construction and post construction to ensure the safe operation of our network.

Yours Faithfully

[redacted]

Vicky Cashman
Land & Planning Consultant
[redacted]@stirling-land.co.uk

Further Safety Guidance

To download a copy of the HSE Guidance HS(G)47, please use the following link:

https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg47.htm

Working Near National Gas Assets

https://www.nationalgas.com/land-and-assets/working-near-our-assets

Specification for Safe Working in the Vicinity of National Gas High Pressure Pipelines and Associated Installations

https://www.nationalgas.com/document/82951/download

Tree Planting Guidance

https://www.nationalgas.com/document/82976/download

Excavating Safely

https://www.nationalgas.com/document/82971/download

Dial Before You Dig Guidance

https://www.nationalgas.com/document/128751/download

Essential Guidance:

https://www.nationalgas.com/gas-transmission/document/82931/download

Solar Farm Guidance

https://www.nationalgas.com/document/82936/download

National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill, Warwick
CV34 6DA

Ellie Laycock
Development Liaison Officer
UK Land and Property
[redacted]@nationalgrid.com
Tel: +44 (0)[redacted]

www.nationalgrid.com

SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY:
springwellsolarfarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

18 April 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION BY SPRINGWELL ENERGYFARM LTD (THE APPLICANT) FOR AN ORDER GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR THE SPRINGWELL SOLAR FARM (THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT)

SCOPING CONSULTATION RESPONSE

I refer to your letter dated 23rd March 2023 in relation to the above proposed application. This is a response on behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission PLC (NGET). Having reviewed the scoping report, I would like to make the following comments regarding NGET infrastructure within or in close proximity to the current red line boundary.

NGET has high voltage electricity overhead transmission lines within the scoping area. The overhead lines form an essential part of the electricity transmission network in England and Wales.

Overhead Lines

4ZM 400kV OHL	Bicker Fen – Spalding North – West Burton
	Bicker Fen – Walpole – West Burton

National Grid Substation

We note reference to a National Grid substation within the scoping report. With regards to connections element please note that NGET welcomes further discussions with the applicant prior to submission of the DCO.

I enclose a plan showing the location of NGET's existing apparatus in the scoping area.

National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill, Warwick
CV34 6DA

Specific Comments – Electricity Infrastructure:

- NGET's Overhead Line/s is protected by a Deed of Easement/Wayleave Agreement which provides full right of access to retain, maintain, repair and inspect our asset

- Statutory electrical safety clearances must be maintained at all times. Any proposed buildings must not be closer than 5.3m to the lowest conductor. NGET recommends that no permanent structures are built directly beneath overhead lines. These distances are set out in EN 43 – 8 Technical Specification for "overhead line clearances Issue 3 (2004)".

- If any changes in ground levels are proposed either beneath or in close proximity to our existing overhead lines then this would serve to reduce the safety clearances for such overhead lines. Safe clearances for existing overhead lines must be maintained in all circumstances.

- The relevant guidance in relation to working safely near to existing overhead lines is contained within the Health and Safety Executive's (www.hse.gov.uk) Guidance Note GS 6 "Avoidance of Danger from Overhead Electric Lines" and all relevant site staff should make sure that they are both aware of and understand this guidance.

- Plant, machinery, equipment, buildings or scaffolding should not encroach within 5.3 metres of any of our high voltage conductors when those conductors are under their worse conditions of maximum "sag" and "swing" and overhead line profile (maximum "sag" and "swing") drawings should be obtained using the contact details above.

- If a landscaping scheme is proposed as part of the proposal, we request that only slow and low growing species of trees and shrubs are planted beneath and adjacent to the existing overhead line to reduce the risk of growth to a height which compromises statutory safety clearances.

- Drilling or excavation works should not be undertaken if they have the potential to disturb or adversely affect the foundations or "pillars of support" of any existing tower. These foundations always extend beyond the base area of the existing tower and foundation ("pillar of support") drawings can be obtained using the contact details above.

- NGET high voltage underground cables are protected by a Deed of Grant; Easement; Wayleave Agreement or the provisions of the New Roads and Street Works Act. These provisions provide NGET full right of access to retain, maintain, repair and inspect our assets. Hence we require that no permanent / temporary structures are to be built over our cables or within the easement strip. Any such proposals should be discussed and agreed with NGET prior to any works taking place.

- Ground levels above our cables must not be altered in any way. Any alterations to the depth of our cables will subsequently alter the rating of the circuit and can compromise the reliability, efficiency and safety of our electricity network and requires consultation with National Grid prior to any such changes in both level and construction being implemented.

National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill, Warwick
CV34 6DA

To download a copy of the HSE Guidance HS(G)47, please use the following link:
http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg47.htm

Further Advice

We would request that the potential impact of the proposed scheme on NGET's existing assets as set out above and including any proposed diversions is considered in any subsequent reports, including in the Environmental Statement, and as part of any subsequent application.

Where any diversion of apparatus may be required to facilitate a scheme, NGET is unable to give any certainty with the regard to diversions until such time as adequate conceptual design studies have been undertaken by NGET. Further information relating to this can be obtained by contacting the email address below.

Where the promoter intends to acquire land, extinguish rights, or interfere with any of NGET apparatus, protective provisions will be required in a form acceptable to it to be included within the DCO.

NGET requests to be consulted at the earliest stages to ensure that the most appropriate protective provisions are included within the DCO application to safeguard the integrity of our apparatus and to remove the requirement for objection. All consultations should be sent to the following email address: **box.landandacquisitions@nationalgrid.com**

I hope the above information is useful. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The information in this letter is provided not withstanding any discussions taking place in relation to connections with electricity customer services.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Ellie Laycock
Development Liaison Officer, Complex Land Rights

nationalgrid | National Grid Web Map

Legend

Fibre Cable

Fibre Cable Commissioned

Towers

Towers Commissioned

OHL 400Kv

OHL 400Kv Commissioned

Notes

0 0.45 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 km

N

Printed By: Ellie.Laycock

Scale: 1:50,000

Date: 4/13/2023 Time: 6:06 PM Page size: A4 Portrait

Note: Any sketches on the map are approximate and not captured to any particular level of precision.

Our ref: EN010149
Your ref: EN010149

Catherine Townend
Spatial Planner
Midlands Operations Directorate

The Planning Inspectorate
Environmental Services
Central Operations
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

National Highways
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham
B1 1RN

Via email:
springwellsolarfarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Tel: [redacted]

18 April 2023

Dear Sir or Madam,

EIA Scoping Opinion – Springwell Solar Farm

Thank you for providing National Highways with the opportunity to respond on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping request for Springwell Solar Farm.

National Highways has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as a strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). It is our role to maintain the safe and efficient operation of the SRN whilst acting as a delivery partner to national economic growth. In relation to this consultation, our principal interest is in safeguarding the A1 and A46 trunk roads, located approximately 27km (17 miles) to the west of the site.

In responding to sustainable development consultations, we have regard to DfT Circular 01/2022: The Strategic Road Network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development ('the Circular'). This sets out how interactions with the Strategic Road Network should be considered in the making of local plans and development management proposals. In addition to the Circular, the response set out below is also in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other relevant policies.

We note that this consultation is in accordance with Regulations 10 and 11 and is the first pre-application consultation being undertaken to inform a subsequent Development Consent Order (DCO) application. It is understood that a DCO submission is necessary as the proposal is considered to be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) given the site's energy output is expected to exceed 50 Megawatts.

In relation to this Stage One consultation, National Highways has reviewed the submitted Scoping Report (dated March 2023). We understand from this that National Highways has been identified as a statutory consultation body which must be consulted prior to adopting its Scoping Opinion and developing a subsequent Environmental Statement.

The below sets out our initial review of this proposal and the further information that we will require to fully consider the proposal's impact on our network:

National Highways' Considerations

Site Access and Boundary

It is noted that the site will not be accessed directly from the SRN and is located far enough from the SRN that there should be no physical impacts to our network. Consequently, we would have no comments regarding site access or boundary matters.

Operation - Traffic Impacts

It is anticipated that during normal operations vehicle trips to the site for maintenance purposes will be minimal. In view of this, we are unlikely to have any concerns relating to traffic impacts on our network once the site is operational, particularly considering the distance from our network.

Construction - Traffic Impacts

According to the scoping document, construction is indicatively scheduled to commence in 2026 and last for approximately 48 months across two phases. This will be followed by a commissioning period of approximately six months. It is stated that a Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) and Environmental Statement (ES) will be produced to provide further details on the proposed construction activities.

The Environmental Statement will include a Traffic & Transport chapter informed by a transport assessment. National Highways is appropriately listed as a key consultee in this regard. The scoping report however suggests a study area to include the B1189, B1188, B1191, and A15. Routes managed by National Highways are not mentioned.

Whilst it may not be necessary to include the Strategic Road Network in the detailed study area, National Highways will require information on the number of HGVs that will be travelling on the SRN to transport materials and equipment to the site. We also require an understanding of the time of day they will likely be arriving and leaving.

Information regarding the access and exit routes and arrival/departure times of workers during the construction period should also be provided to enable sufficient understanding and management of construction traffic and to minimise impacts on the SRN.

The above information is necessary to understand the potential impact of construction traffic on the SRN and whether it will be necessary to include any parts of the SRN in the study area for the transport assessment.

We therefore suggest that the following information be provided in the PEIR for National Highways consideration:

- Trip generation – information about the anticipated levels of traffic the development would generate. This should include a breakdown of staff commuting trips, and HGV/delivery trip generation for construction phases. The data should include an hourly breakdown of trips to/from the site. The avoidance of trips during the SRN peak hours, i.e., 08:00-09:00 (AM peak hour) and 17:00-18:00 (PM peak hour) would be welcomed.
- Trip assignment – information about traffic routings (for the construction phases) in relation to the SRN presented in absolute numbers and percentages.
- Depending on the scale and distribution of new trips, it may also be necessary to indicate how traffic associated with the development proposal will impact on the SRN in the peak hours. These impacts should be considered for the site both as a standalone operation, and cumulatively with other nearby solar farm applications, (plus any wider committed developments), to consider whether the development will result in material implications for SRN junctions. Junctions of interest for the SRN are likely to be the A46/A17 and A46/A1.

We hope this is useful in the progression of the DCO application. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Catherine Townend
Midlands Operations Directorate
Email: [redacted]@nationalhighways.co.uk

From: NATS Safeguarding <NATSSafeguarding@nats.co.uk>
Sent: 20 April 2023 12:33
To: Springwell Solar Farm <SpringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Cc: Newman, Stephanie <[redacted]@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Springwell Solar Farm - Scoping consultation and regulation 11 notification [SG35173]

Our Ref: SG35173

Dear Sir/Madam

The proposed development has been examined from a technical safeguarding aspect and does not conflict with our safeguarding criteria. Accordingly, NATS (En Route) Public Limited Company (NERL) has no safeguarding objection to the proposal.

However, please be aware that this response applies specifically to the above consultation and only reflects the position of NATS (that is responsible for the management of en route air traffic) based on the information supplied at the time of this application. This letter does not provide any indication of the position of any other party, whether they be an airport, airspace user or otherwise. It remains your responsibility to ensure that all the appropriate consultees are properly consulted.

If any changes are proposed to the information supplied to NATS in regard to this application which become the basis of a revised, amended or further application for approval, then as a statutory consultee NERL requires that it be further consulted on any such changes prior to any planning permission or any consent being granted.

Yours faithfully

NATS

NATS Safeguarding

E: natssafeguarding@nats.co.uk

Date: 19 April 2023
Our ref: 427311
Your ref: EN070008

Gary Chapman
EIA and Land Rights Advisor
The Planning Inspectorate
SpringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

BY EMAIL ONLY

Consultations
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 900

Dear Mr Chapman

Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping consultation under Regulation 10 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulation 11

Proposal: Springwell Solar Farm
Location: At land owned by Blankney Estates and on several parcels of farmland from the A15 in the west to the B1189 in the east

Thank you for seeking our advice on the scope of the Environmental Statement in the consultation dated 23 March 2023.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

A robust assessment of environmental impacts and opportunities based on relevant and up to date environmental information should be undertaken prior to a decision on whether to grant a Development Consent Order. Annex A provides Natural England's general advice on the scope of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA).

Natural England has received recent notification from the applicant that they wish to enter into a Service Level Agreement to allow engagement and advice throughout the development of the project, this request is currently under consideration. We acknowledge that no consultation to inform the biodiversity assessment has been undertaken to date and that consultation will be undertaken with North Kesteven District Council to seek to agree the assessment methodology and biodiversity assets of sufficient importance to be considered in the EIA.

For this specific proposed development, the Environmental Statement (ES) should particularly consider the following:

1. Impact of the proposed development on designated sites:

The proposal is unlikely to adversely impact any European or internationally designated nature conservation sites or nationally designated sites and has not triggered a current Natural England Impact Risk Zone.

2. In-Combination/Cumulative impacts

The Environmental Statement should include in-combination/cumulative assessment of the whole development proposal. Section 7 of the EIA Scoping Report discusses the need for cumulative assessment, and the methodology to be used in this assessment. Natural England would like to note the significant number of Solar projects currently proposed in Lincolnshire and the East Midlands. These projects include Cottam Solar Project, West Burton Solar Project, Tillbridge Solar Project, Heckington Fen Solar Project, Gate Burton Solar Project, Mallard Pass Solar Project. As such, it is important that all possible cumulative impacts from these projects on the environment are considered within the ES.

3. Loss of Agricultural Land (BMV)

Section 6.6.5 indicates that national level data shows the site contains a high proportion of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. It is also noted that an ALC survey is currently underway across the site, which is welcomed. This should normally be at a detailed level, e.g. one auger boring per hectare, (or more detailed for a small site) supported by pits dug in each main soil type to confirm the physical characteristics of the full depth of the soil resource, i.e. 1.2 metres. The survey should cover the entire site, including any proposed cable routes.

In order to both retain the long-term potential of this land and to safeguard all soil resources as part of the overall sustainability of the whole development, it is important that the soil is able to retain as many of its many important functions and services (ecosystem services) as possible.

The following issues should be considered and included as part of the Environmental Statement (ES):

- The degree to which soils would be disturbed, damaged or lost as part of the development. This should include a breakdown of temporary and permanent impacts to soils (including amounts and proportions of BMV land) from all parts of the development, including, but not necessarily limited to: Solar PV panel areas, substations and other associated infrastructure, cable routes and biodiversity enhancement areas.

- The ES should set out details of how any adverse impacts on BMV agricultural land can be minimised through site design. The results of the ALC survey should be used to influence the site design; areas of BMV land should be avoided wherever possible.

- The ES should also set out details of how any adverse impacts on soils can be avoided or minimised and demonstrate how soils will be sustainably used and managed, including consideration of areas for green infrastructure or biodiversity net gain. The aim will be to minimise soil handling and maximise the sustainable use and management of the available soil to achieve successful after-uses and minimise offsite impacts. A Soil Management Plan should be used to prevent unacceptable impacts to the soil resource on the site.

Further information is available in the Defra Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soil on Development Sites which should be referenced within the Soil Management Plan. Further guidance is also set out in the Natural England Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land and the British Society of Soil Science Guidance Note Benefitting from Soil Management in Development and Construction.

4. Regionally and Locally Important Sites

The ES should consider any impacts upon local wildlife and geological sites, including local nature reserves. The ES should set out proposals for mitigation of any impacts and if appropriate, compensation measures and opportunities for enhancement and improved connectivity with wider ecological networks. Consultation should therefore take place with the Ecology Officers for Lincolnshire County Council. Non-statutory consultees such as the Wildlife Trusts should also be approached; we note the stated intention to consult Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust.

5. Protected Species

The ES should assess the impact of all phases of the proposal on protected species. We note preliminary surveys have taken place and that the ES will provide details of any proposed mitigation measures required. Consideration should be given to the wider context of the site, for example in terms of habitat linkages and protected species populations in the wider area.

Natural England's standing advice[1] provides guidance on how protected species should be dealt with in the planning system. The Standing Advice should not be treated as giving any indication or providing any assurance in respect of European Protected Species (EPS) that the proposed development is unlikely to affect the EPS present on the site; nor should it be interpreted as meaning that Natural England has reached any views as to whether a licence may be granted.

6. Biodiversity Net Gain

The ES should include a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Habitat Management Plan. We note the intention to include a LEMP, which should encompass the information required to explain how the site will continue to be managed for the lifetime of the development. In Addition, the Habitat Management Plan (or LEMP) should also provide details on:

- Retention and enhancement of existing habitat features such as hedgerows, woodland and ponds;
- ensuring created habitats establish and any remedial actions should they fail to establish initially;
- proposed habitat connectivity to surrounding habitats which would contribute to the wider Nature Recovery Network.

The EIA Scoping Report notes that a substantial net gain in biodiversity will be achieved, however, no specific reference to Biodiversity Net Gain, or use of the DEFRA Metric, has been made. We recommend that a biodiversity Net Gain assessment is carried out, using the Defra Biodiversity Metric 4.0, to quantify the gains created for biodiversity.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals

Although government intends to mandate measurable biodiversity net gain for all new development at present there is no mandatory requirement to do this for NSIPs until 2025. We therefore advise that taking the net gain approach would make this development exemplary and would be illustrative of the intent to work to benefit the environment through development. Natural England would be pleased to advise on any plan of action regarding BNG.

Please be advised that the Defra metric should not be used to assess impacts and calculate compensation for habitat damage or loss in designated sites or irreplaceable habitats. Any impacts on such habitats and sites should be assessed in accordance with planning policy and via the environmental assessment.

7. Impact on Protected and Local Landscapes

The proposal is not located within or in the distinctive setting of the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Nonetheless, the ES should include an assessment of local landscape character through the consideration of the relevant National Character Areas and any local landscape character assessments. We would expect the following forms of guidance to be used.

- *'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment'* (3rd Edition) (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013;
- *'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'*, Natural England, 2014: and
- *'Visual Representation of Development Proposals Technical Guidance Note' 06*/19, Landscape Institute, 2019.

8. Connecting People with Nature

Measures to help people to better access the countryside for quiet enjoyment and opportunities to connect with nature should be considered. Such measures could include reinstating existing footpaths or the creation of new footpaths, cycleways, and bridleways. Links to other green networks and, where appropriate, urban fringe areas should also be explored to help promote the creation of wider green infrastructure. Access to nature within the development site should also be considered, including the role that natural links have in connecting habitats and providing potential pathways for movements of species.

Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be incorporated where appropriate.

We note there is an extensive network of public rights of way within the site which link with the surrounding settlements. We would expect access to these to be retained and temporary diversions placed as necessary. There may also be opportunities for new permissive paths and linkages to existing paths, as well as for improving the interpretation of the countryside, the solar project and the biodiversity enhancements that it may bring, via the use of measures such as interpretation boards.

Further Information

Annex A Provides Natural England's general advice on the scope of all Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA).

Should the proposal be amended in a way which significantly affects its impact on the natural environment then, in accordance with Section 4 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Natural England should be consulted again.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter please contact Robbie Clarey at [redacted]@naturalengland.org.uk or on [redacted]. Please send any new consultations or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Robbie Clarey

Planning and Environment Lead Adviser
East Midlands Area Delivery

Annex A – Natural England Advice on EIA Scoping

General Principles

Schedule 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, sets out the information that should be included in an Environmental Statement (ES) to assess impacts on the natural environment. This includes:

- A description of the development – including physical characteristics and the full land use requirements of the site during construction and operational phases
- Expected residues and emissions (water, air and soil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation etc.) resulting from the operation of the proposed development
- An assessment of alternatives and clear reasoning as to why the preferred option has been chosen
- A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development including biodiversity (for example fauna and flora), land, including land take, soil, water, air, climate (for example greenhouse gas emissions, impacts relevant to adaptation, cultural heritage and landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors
- A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment – this should cover direct effects but also any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium, and long term, permanent and temporary, positive, and negative effects. Effects should relate to the existence of the development, the use of natural resources (in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity) and the emissions from pollutants. This should also include a description of the forecasting methods to predict the likely effects on the environment
- A description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment
- A non-technical summary of the information
- An indication of any difficulties (technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered by the applicant in compiling the required information

Further guidance is set out in Planning Practice Guidance on environmental assessment and natural environment.

Cumulative and in-combination effects

The ES should fully consider the implications of the whole development proposal. This should include an assessment of all supporting infrastructure.

An impact assessment should identify, describe, and evaluate the effects that are likely to result from the project in combination with other projects and activities that are being, have been or will be carried out. The following types of projects should be included in such an assessment (subject to available information):

a. existing completed projects;
b. approved but uncompleted projects;
c. ongoing activities;
d. plans or projects for which an application has been made and which are under consideration by the consenting authorities; and
e. plans and projects which are reasonably foreseeable, i.e. projects for which an application has not yet been submitted, but which are likely to progress before

completion of the development and for which sufficient information is available to assess the likelihood of cumulative and in-combination effects.

Environmental data

Natural England is required to make available information it holds where requested to do so. National datasets held by Natural England are available at http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/data/default.aspx.

Detailed information on the natural environment is available at www.magic.gov.uk.

Natural England's SSSI Impact Risk Zones are a GIS dataset which can be used to help identify the potential for the development to impact on a SSSI. The dataset and user guidance can be accessed from the Natural England Open Data Geoportal.

Natural England does not hold local information on local sites, local landscape character, priority habitats and species or protected species. Local environmental data should be obtained from the appropriate local bodies. This may include the local environmental records centre, the local wildlife trust, local geo-conservation group or other recording society.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

General principles

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs174-175 and 179-182) sets out how to take account of biodiversity and geodiversity interests in planning decisions. Further guidance is set out in Planning Practice Guidance on the natural environment.

The potential impact of the proposal upon sites and features of nature conservation interest and opportunities for nature recovery and biodiversity net gain should be included in the assessment.

Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) is the process of identifying, quantifying, and evaluating the potential impacts of defined actions on ecosystems or their components. EcIA may be carried out as part of the EIA process or to support other forms of environmental assessment or appraisal. Guidelines have been developed by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Designated nature conservation sites

Internationally Designated Sites

The ES should thoroughly assess the potential for the proposal to affect nationally and internationally designated sites of nature conservation importance, including marine sites where relevant. European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) fall within the scope of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'). In addition paragraph 181 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that potential SPAs, possible SAC, listed or proposed Ramsar sites, and any site identified or required as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitat (European) sites, potential SPAs, possible SACs and listed or proposed Ramsar sites have the same protection as classified sites (NB. sites falling within the scope of regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 are defined as 'habitats sites' in the NPPF). Under Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations, an appropriate assessment must be undertaken in respect of any plan or project which is (a)

likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and (b) not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site. The consideration of likely significant effects should include any functionally linked land outside the designated site. These areas may provide important habitat for mobile species populations that are qualifying features of the site, for example birds and bats. This can also include areas which have a critical function to a habitat feature within a designated site, for example by being linked hydrologically or geomorphologically.

Should a likely significant effect on a European/Internationally designated site be identified (either alone or in-combination) or be uncertain, the competent authority may need to prepare an appropriate assessment in addition to the consideration of impacts through the EIA process. Further guidance is set out in Planning Practice Guidance on appropriate assessment https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appropriate-assessment

Nationally Designated Sites

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and paragraph 180 of the NPPF. Further information on the SSSI and its special interest features can be found at www.magic.gov .

Natural England's SSSI Impact Risk Zones can be used to help identify the potential for the development to impact on a SSSI. The dataset and user guidance can be accessed from the Natural England Open Data Geoportal.

The Environmental Statement should include a full assessment of the direct and indirect effects of the development on the features of special interest within the SSSI and identify appropriate mitigation measures to avoid, minimise or reduce any adverse significant effects. The consideration of likely significant effects should include any functionally linked land outside the designated site. These areas may provide important habitat for mobile species populations that are interest features of the SSSI, for example birds and bats. This can also include areas which have a critical function to a habitat feature within a site, for example by being linked hydrologically or geomorphologically.

Regionally and Locally Important Sites

The ES should consider any impacts upon local wildlife and geological sites, including local nature reserves. Local Sites are identified by the local wildlife trust, geoconservation group or other local group and protected under the NPPF (paragraph 174 and 175). The ES should set out proposals for mitigation of any impacts and if appropriate, compensation measures and opportunities for enhancement and improving connectivity with wider ecological networks. Contact the relevant local body for further information.

Protected Species

The conservation of species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

is explained in Part IV and Annex A of Government Circular 06/2005 *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System*.

The ES should assess the impact of all phases of the proposal on protected species (including, for example, great crested newts, reptiles, birds, water voles, badgers and bats). Natural England does not hold comprehensive information regarding the locations of species protected by law. Records of protected species should be obtained from appropriate local biological record centres, nature conservation organisations and local groups. Consideration

should be given to the wider context of the site, for example in terms of habitat linkages and protected species populations in the wider area.

The area likely to be affected by the development should be thoroughly surveyed by competent ecologists at appropriate times of year for relevant species and the survey results, impact assessments and appropriate accompanying mitigation strategies included as part of the ES. Surveys should always be carried out in optimal survey time periods and to current guidance by suitably qualified and, where necessary, licensed, consultants.

Natural England has adopted standing advice for protected species, which includes guidance on survey and mitigation measures . A separate protected species licence from Natural England or Defra may also be required.

District Level Licensing for Great Crested Newts

District level licensing (DLL) is a type of strategic mitigation licence for great crested newts (GCN) granted in certain areas at a local authority or wider scale. A DLL scheme for GCN may be in place at the location of the development site. If a DLL scheme is in place, developers can make a financial contribution to strategic, off-site habitat compensation instead of applying for a separate licence or carrying out individual detailed surveys. By demonstrating that DLL will be used, impacts on GCN can be scoped out of detailed assessment in the Environmental Statement.

Priority Habitats and Species

Priority Habitats and Species are of particular importance for nature conservation and included in the England Biodiversity List published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Most priority habitats will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. Lists of priority habitats and species can be found here. Natural England does not routinely hold species data. Such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or species are considered likely.

Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land. Sites can be checked against the (draft) national Open Mosaic Habitat (OMH) inventory published by Natural England and freely available to download. Further information is also available here.

An appropriate level habitat survey should be carried out on the site, to identify any important habitats present. In addition, ornithological, botanical, and invertebrate surveys should be carried out at appropriate times in the year, to establish whether any scarce or priority species are present.

The Environmental Statement should include details of:

- Any historical data for the site affected by the proposal (e.g. from previous surveys)
- Additional surveys carried out as part of this proposal
- The habitats and species present
- The status of these habitats and species (e.g. whether priority species or habitat)
- The direct and indirect effects of the development upon those habitats and species
- Full details of any mitigation or compensation measures
- Opportunities for biodiversity net gain or other environmental enhancement

Ancient Woodland, Ancient and Veteran Trees

The ES should assess the impacts of the proposal on any ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, and the scope to avoid and mitigate for adverse impacts. It should also consider opportunities for enhancement.

Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland Inventory which can help identify ancient woodland. The wood pasture and parkland inventory sets out information on wood pasture and parkland.

The ancient tree inventory provides information on the location of ancient and veteran trees.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission have prepared standing advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees.

Biodiversity net gain

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF states that decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

Biodiversity Net Gain is additional to statutory requirements relating to designated nature conservation sites and protected species.

The ES should use an appropriate biodiversity metric such as Biodiversity Metric 3.0 together with ecological advice to calculate the change in biodiversity resulting from proposed development and demonstrate how proposals can achieve a net gain.

The metric should be used to:

• assess or audit the biodiversity unit value of land within the application area

• calculate the losses and gains in biodiversity unit value resulting from proposed development

• demonstrate that the required percentage biodiversity net gain will be achieved

Biodiversity Net Gain outcomes can be achieved on site, off-site or through a combination of both. On-site provision should be considered first. Delivery should create or enhance habitats of equal or higher value. When delivering net gain, opportunities should be sought to link delivery to relevant plans or strategies e.g. Green Infrastructure Strategies or Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Opportunities for wider environmental gains should also be considered.

Landscape

Landscape and visual impacts

The environmental assessment should refer to the relevant National Character Areas. Character area profiles set out descriptions of each landscape area and statements of environmental opportunity.

The ES should include a full assessment of the potential impacts of the development on local landscape character using landscape assessment methodologies. We encourage the use of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), based on the good practice guidelines produced jointly by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment in 2013. LCA provides a sound basis for guiding, informing, and understanding the ability of any location to accommodate change and to make positive proposals for conserving, enhancing or regenerating character.

A landscape and visual impact assessment should also be carried out for the proposed development and surrounding area. Natural England recommends use of the methodology set out in *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013 (*(3rd edition) produced by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment and Management. For National Parks and AONBs, we advise that the assessment also includes effects on the 'special qualities' of the designated landscape, as set out in the statutory management plan for the area. These identify the particular landscape and related characteristics which underpin the natural beauty of the area and its designation status.

The assessment should also include the cumulative effect of the development with other relevant existing or proposed developments in the area. This should include an assessment of the impacts of other proposals currently at scoping stage.

To ensure high quality development that responds to and enhances local landscape character and distinctiveness, the siting and design of the proposed development should reflect local characteristics and, wherever possible, use local materials. Account should be taken of local design policies, design codes and guides as well as guidance in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code. The ES should set out the measures to be taken to ensure the development will deliver high standards of design and green infrastructure. It should also set out detail of layout alternatives, where appropriate, with a justification of the selected option in terms of landscape impact and benefit.

Heritage Landscapes

The ES should include an assessment of the impacts on any land in the area affected by the development which qualifies for conditional exemption from capital taxes on the grounds of outstanding scenic, scientific, or historic interest. An up-to-date list is available at www.hmrc.gov.uk/heritage/lbsearch.htm.

Connecting People with Nature

The ES should consider potential impacts on access land, common land, public rights of way and, where appropriate, the England Coast Path and coastal access routes and coastal margin in the vicinity of the development, in line with NPPF paragraph 100. It should assess the scope to mitigate for any adverse impacts. Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP) can be used to identify public rights of way within or adjacent to the proposed site that should be maintained or enhanced.

Measures to help people to better access the countryside for quiet enjoyment and opportunities to connect with nature should be considered. Such measures could include reinstating existing footpaths or the creation of new footpaths, cycleways, and bridleways. Links to other green networks and, where appropriate, urban fringe areas should also be explored to help promote the creation of wider green infrastructure. Access to nature within

the development site should also be considered, including the role that natural links have in connecting habitats and providing potential pathways for movements of species.

Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be incorporated where appropriate.

Soils and Agricultural Land Quality

Soils are a valuable, finite natural resource and should also be considered for the ecosystem services they provide, including for food production, water storage and flood mitigation, as a carbon store, reservoir of biodiversity and buffer against pollution. It is therefore important that the soil resources are protected and sustainably managed. Impacts from the development on soils and best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land should be considered in line with paragraphs 174 and 175 of the NPPF. Further guidance is set out in the Natural England Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land.

The following issues should be considered and, where appropriate, included as part of the Environmental Statement (ES):

- The degree to which soils would be disturbed or damaged as part of the development
- The extent to which agricultural land would be disturbed or lost as part of this development, including whether any best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land would be impacted.

This may require a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey if one is not already available. For information on the availability of existing ALC information see www.magic.gov.uk.

- Where an ALC and soil survey of the land is required, this should normally be at a detailed level, e.g. one auger boring per hectare, (or more detailed for a small site) supported by pits dug in each main soil type to confirm the physical characteristics of the full depth of the soil resource, i.e. 1.2 metres. The survey data can inform suitable soil handling methods and appropriate reuse of the soil resource where required (e.g. agricultural reinstatement, habitat creation, landscaping, allotments and public open space).
- The ES should set out details of how any adverse impacts on BMV agricultural land can be minimised through site design/masterplan.
- The ES should set out details of how any adverse impacts on soils can be avoided or minimised and demonstrate how soils will be sustainably used and managed, including consideration in site design and master planning, and areas for green infrastructure or biodiversity net gain. The aim will be to minimise soil handling and maximise the sustainable use and management of the available soil to achieve successful after-uses and minimise off-site impacts.

Further information is available in the Defra Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soil on Development Sites and

The British Society of Soil Science Guidance Note Benefitting from Soil Management in Development and Construction.

Air Quality

Air quality in the UK has improved over recent decades but air pollution remains a significant issue. For example, approximately 85% of protected nature conservation sites are currently in exceedance of nitrogen levels where harm is expected (critical load) and approximately 87% of sites exceed the level of ammonia where harm is expected for lower plants (critical level of 1µg) [1].A priority action in the England Biodiversity Strategy is to reduce air pollution impacts on biodiversity. The Government's Clean Air Strategy also has a number of targets to reduce emissions including to reduce damaging deposition of reactive forms of nitrogen by 17% over England's protected priority sensitive habitats by 2030, to reduce emissions of ammonia against the 2005 baseline by 16% by 2030 and to reduce emissions of NOx and SO_2 against a 2005 baseline of 73% and 88% respectively by 2030. Shared Nitrogen Action Plans (SNAPs) have also been identified as a tool to reduce environmental damage from air pollution.

The planning system plays a key role in determining the location of developments which may give rise to pollution, either directly, or from traffic generation, and hence planning decisions can have a significant impact on the quality of air, water and land. The ES should take account of the risks of air pollution and how these can be managed or reduced. This should include taking account of any strategic solutions or SNAPs, which may be being developed or implemented to mitigate the impacts on air quality. Further information on air pollution impacts and the sensitivity of different habitats/designated sites can be found on the Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk).

Information on air pollution modelling, screening and assessment can be found on the following websites:

- SCAIL Combustion and SCAIL Agriculture - http://www.scail.ceh.ac.uk/
- Ammonia assessment for agricultural development https://www.gov.uk/guidance/intensive-farming-risk-assessment-for-your-environmental-permit
- Environment Agency Screening Tool for industrial emissions https://www.gov.uk/guidance/air-emissions-risk-assessment-for-your-environmental-permit
- Defra Local Air Quality Management Area Tool (Industrial Emission Screening Tool) – England http://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/laqm

Contribution to local environmental initiatives and priorities

The ES should consider the contribution the development could make to relevant local environmental initiatives and priorities to enhance the environmental quality of the development and deliver wider environmental gains. This should include considering proposals set out in relevant local strategies or supplementary planning documents including landscape strategies, green infrastructure strategies, tree and woodland strategies, biodiversity strategies or biodiversity opportunity areas.

[1] Report: Trends Report 2020: Trends in critical load and critical level exceedances in the UK - Defra, UK

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Stephanie Newman
Environmental Services
Operations Group 3
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN
Sent via e-mail to:
springwellsolarfarm@planninginspectorate .gov.uk

Our ref: 23/00590/NPA
Your ref: EN010149

4th April 2023

Dear Ms Newman,

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11

Application by Springwell Energyfarm Ltd (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Springwell Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

Scoping consultation and notification of the Applicant's contact details and duty to make available information to the Applicant if requested

I refer to the above consultation received by this Authority on 23rd March 2023 which relates to the proposed installation of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generation and storage facility on a site approximately 14km to the east of the boundary of Newark and Sherwood District Council, within North Kesteven, Lincolnshire.

I can advise that Newark & Sherwood District Council have no comments to make on the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report (by RSK Environmental Limited Dated March 2023).

Please note that this matter has not been formally reported to the District Council's Planning Committee. In these circumstances the comments are those of an Officer of the Council under delegated power arrangements.

If you require any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact my colleague, Laura Gardner, the case officer, who has dealt with this consultation, on 01636 655907.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Lisa Hughes - Business Manager – Planning Development

From: LINCS-SECTION106 (NHS LINCOLNSHIRE ICB - 71E) <licb.lincs-section106@nhs.net>
Sent: 23 March 2023 15:27
To: Springwell Solar Farm <SpringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: Springwell Solar Farm - Scoping Consultation

Good Afternoon

Thank you for sharing the Scoping Consultation for Springwell Solar Farm.

NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board does not have any comments to make.

Kind Regards

Emily

Emily Turk

S106 Support Officer

NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board

Tel: [redacted]

My working days are: Monday, Wednesday & Thursday

From: Stephen Faulkner [redacted]@norfolk.gov.uk>
Sent: 23 March 2023 20:03
To: Springwell Solar Farm <SpringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Cc: Mark Annetts [redacted]@norfolk.gov.uk>
Subject: Springwell Energyfarm Ltd - Scoping Opinion

FAO Stephanie Newman Senior Environmental Impact Assessment Advisor on behalf of the Secretary of State

Thank you for consulting Norfolk County Council on the above Project – scoping opinion.

Give then location of the development I can confirm that the County Council does not have any comments to make on this project.

Regards

Stephen

Stephen Faulkner BA(Hons), MSc, DipTP, MRTPI

Principal Planner – National Infrastructure Planning Lead Officer

Community and Environmental Services

Tel: [redacted]

Norfolk County Council

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From: Cheryl Jarvis (EQUANS) [redacted]@nelincs.gov.uk>
Sent: 23 March 2023 17:03
To: Springwell Solar Farm <SspringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: EN010149 - North East Lincolnshire Response

Good afternoon,

I can confirm there are no comments to make.

Kind regards

Cheryl Jarvis FD, MSc, MRTPI

Development Manager

Development Management - Planning

Places & Communities – NEL

[redacted]@nelincs.gov.uk

Tel. +44 (0)[redacted]

Mob. +44 (0)[redacted]

Working in partnership

equans.co.uk

New Oxford House, George Street
Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire, DN31 1HB

Your Ref : EN010149
Our Ref : 23/0254/NSIP
Contact : Nick Feltham
Email : [redacted]@n-kesteven.gov.uk

North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Planning Inspectorate
Environmental Services Central Operations
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol BS1 6PN
By email only - springwellsolarfarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

19th April 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11

Application by Springwell Energy Farm Limited for an Order granting Development Consent for the Springwell Solar Park on land between Blankney, B1188, Scopwick, Ashby De La Launde, RAF Digby, B1191, A15 and Temple Bruer Parish, Lincolnshire.

Thank you for your consultation request under regulation 10(6) of the EIA Regulations. North Kesteven District Council, as a consultation body and host authority, wishes to make the following comments in regard to information to be provided with the Environmental Statement Scoping Report. The following comments are made, following the structure of the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report undertaken by RSK Environment Limited (21 March 2023).

Procedural Observations – Conflict with Advice Note Seven

North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) recognises that the applicant undertook a period of initial pre-application consultation on the proposed development, which ended on 7th March. Following that process the applicant has since presented to NKDC Councillors and has undertaken a review of the feedback received from the non-statutory consultation process.

However, the Council is concerned that the timescales adopted unilaterally by the applicant – culminating in this Reg. 10 and 11 Scoping Opinion request to the Inspectorate - has undermined the degree to which the information contained in the Scoping Report could be relied upon as a robust representation of the potential significant environmental effects of the proposed development. On that basis the Council's view is that the submission of the Scoping Report is premature and we would encourage the Planning Inspectorate to decline to accept it.

District Council Offices, Kesteven Street, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 7EF
Tel: 01529 414155 Email: customer_services@n-kesteven.gov.uk Web: www.n-kesteven.gov.uk

The Scoping Report is dated 21 March 2023, only 2 weeks following the end of the non-statutory consultation process and our position is that this significantly compresses and restricts the opportunity for the applicant to have meaningfully considered, reflected upon, and addressed representations made during this initial non-statutory consultation and to account for how those representations have informed the scale, layout and composition of the scheme.

Our view is that this submission does not comply with the guidance set out in Advice Note Seven 'Environmental Impact Assessment: Process, Preliminary Environmental Information and Environmental Statements'.

Paragraph 5.8 of the advice note recommends that applicants undertake their own non-statutory consultation with the consultation bodies, or others, prior to submission of a Scoping Request to allow for refinement of options ahead of the formal request. It notes that applicants may choose to consult on preferred sites or solutions.

Paragraph 5.9 then cautions that applicants should consider carefully the best time to request a scoping opinion, and that "*in order to gain the most benefit, applicants should consider requesting the opinion once there is sufficient certainty about the design of the Proposed Development and the main design elements likely to have a significant environmental effect".*

Continuing, it advises that applicants "*should avoid submitting requests with multiple and varied design and layout options*" however that if this cannot be avoided and options remain under consideration (for example a number of route corridors associated with a proposed linear development) "*applicants should be aware that this may affect the ability of the Planning Inspectorate and consultation bodies to provide detailed comments".*

Finally, paragraph 5.9 notes that "*should a high level of uncertainty remain around key design elements of the Proposed Development this is likely to limit the Planning Inspectorate's ability to agree to scope out aspects/matters to enable the refinement of the ES".*

As we set out and highlight below under specific chapter headings, other than very high-level location plans and indicative layouts for the eastern, central and western parcels that are contained in the Scoping Report (specifically the Appendix B 'Zonal Masterplan') the Council has not (nor, we assume have any other interested parties) seen any preferred options/solutions, alternatives or design proposals of the type envisaged by advice note 7 and which are deemed essential to ensure a robust Scoping process.

As an example, it has only been recently confirmed in the Scoping Report that a new National Grid Substation (NGS) will form part of the DCO. However whilst Appendix B then suggests that the NGS will be accommodated within Springwell West, there is then significant uncertainty as to where it will be accommodated within that zone (as demarcated by the blue hatching. Similarly Appendix B also suggests that any or all of the eastern, central and western zones could accommodate collector compounds and the distributed BESS. Grid connection routes/corridors, field parcels or tranches of land that are liable to accommodate panels or alternatively would be reserved for buffer zones and ecological mitigation (beyond the very loose references contained in the Scoping Report) are not illustrated on the zonal masterplan.

The large number of variables at this stage mean that the Council are unable to give particularly detailed feedback and we would also anticipate that other statutory and non-statutory consultees might experience similar challenges. Mindful of this high level of uncertainty regarding design and layout options and alternatives we would therefore request that PINS have very careful regard to their own guidance at paragraphs 5.8 and 5.9 of the advice note, when considering whether a meaningful Scoping Opinion can be made.

Notwithstanding our procedural concerns we can provide the following feedback.

Section 1 - Introduction

No comments

Section 2 – Description of the Proposed Development

Paragraph 2.2.7 notes that further detail on draft design approach that is being used to inform the EIA is presented in Section 2.4 and that design parameters will be further developed for statutory consultation and presented in the PEIR, with final parameters and limits of deviation presented in the ES, draft order and works plans. Whilst we accept that design parameters and layout will evolve as the scheme progresses, as above the Council's view is that there is insufficient detail across the collective Scoping Report including its Appendices to provide any meaningful feedback even in relation to preliminary design considerations.

Paragraph 2.3.2 confirms that elements of the proposals will be permanent; notably the National Grid Substation. The NGS is confirmed as a component of the scheme at paragraph 2.4.1. The applicant will need to ensure that the respective sections of the ES dealing specifically with the NGS acknowledge and address this matter when applying significance criteria and the overall assessment of effects. In many cases the emerging overall assessment, where presented in the Scoping Report, highlights the temporary/reversible nature of the development when drawing those initial conclusions however clearly this will not be the case for the NGS.

Mindful that the NGS is likely to be permanent operational development that is not decommissioned at/ahead of the 40-year lifetime of the solar park, the Council considers it likely that this will increase the prospect and probability that the solar park would seek repowering or partial repowering beyond 40 years. Whilst we appreciate that such a scheme is not before PINS and they are required to consider the Scoping Report as submitted we would request that this potential scenario is accounted for.

Paragraph 2.4.7 states that the mounting structure carrying the solar PV modules will be designed to face southwards on a single-axis tracker or on a tracking platform. Both options should be considered specifically in the context of LVIA, glint and glare and noise.

Paragraphs 2.4.17, 23, 25, 34, 37, & 43 – as above there are significant unknowns in terms of the location, layout and composition of the BOSS, BESS and NGS. It is clear that different configuration options are currently being considered for the inverters, transformers and switchgears.

The ES will need to assess all options being considered at this stage (e.g. string or centralised inverters; independent outdoor or contained indoor equipment) and any potential impacts arising from each of these (e.g. noise, landscape and visual impact, etc) until or unless a decision is taken on which option would be used in advance of completing the ES.

Paragraph 2.4.61 states that the NGS compound, Project Substation compound, BESS compounds, and Collector Compounds would include lighting, in accordance with relevant standards, but will not be permanently lit. Whether scoped in or out of the ES, external lighting should be assessed in a lighting assessment to include consideration of glare, glow, lux levels and consideration of Environmental Zone (ILE standards) source intensity levels relative to the countryside location of the site.

Paragraph 2.5.9 states that borrow pits might be used to source construction material. The relevant chapters of the ES must consider associated impacts, e.g. in relation to minerals impacts/potential sterilisation, groundwater/hydrology, noise/vibration, residential amenity, ecology and restoration of the pits. If proposed, the borrow pits must be included within the proposed Order Limits of the development.

With reference to paragraph 2.7.4, as above the NGS is expected to be a permanent feature that needs to be factored into the overall assessment of impacts.

Section 3 - Reasonable Alternatives

This section is focussed solely on alternative layouts and the ‘no development’ scenario; for example at paragraph 3.2.3 which states that ‘the size, scale, and preferred location for key features (permanent and temporary) of the Proposed Development will require careful consideration as the design process evolves’. There is no specific reference to alternative sites, nor the degree to which the various environmental or other constraints will be factored into the search parameters in order to identify and potentially rule out (with evidence) what those alternatives are.

It is accepted that the grid connection option is a key locational factor for solar farms however unlike the other known registered and pending NSIP solar schemes in Lincolnshire which have grid connection offers at existing substations via National Grid, in this case the export of energy requires a new NGS as part of the DCO.

The Scoping Report states that up to two new 400kV transmission towers are needed to facilitate the electrical connection of the National Grid Substation to the existing 400kV transmission line and that the towers would be located within 50m of the existing 400kV overhead transmission line which crosses Springwell West.

On this basis, in the absence of any other discussion or supporting information in the Scoping Report the ‘reasonable alternatives’ site search area is theoretically anywhere in a linear corridor along the identified 400kV circuit; which therefore encompasses expansive areas of land not only within the District but also outside the District and potentially beyond the Lincolnshire county boundary (in theory, nationally given this is an NSIP project and therefore locational need factors are not relevant and any other 400kV powerline network could potentially act as a connection point for a new national grid connection).

The search area proposed by the Council in relation to Heckington Fen Solar Park was county-level (in the context of NSIP-scaled solar farms registered with PINS in the West Lindsey/Bassetlaw and South Kesteven/Rutland districts) and in consideration of the grid connection options associated with those schemes. We requested that evidence should be provided from the National Grid confirming whether and why alternative connections into existing substations (for example Bicker Fen, Cottam, Ryhall, Spalding) could not be secured.

In the Council's view the approach to considering alternative sites should initially start with the applicant evidencing why grid connections into these substations cannot be made. This should not be on the basis of simply ruling those out on the basis of an excessive grid connection distance; but to provide written evidence from National Grid of an inability to offer a connection point on capacity or other infrastructure grounds and the earliest timescale, where applicable, that an offer might be made.

If this can evidenced, the second element of that exercise is to then consider alternatives on the 400Kv circuit (which passes through Springwell West) and which (as above) is in theory of considerable length. The assessment should have regard to environmental constraints including BMV land impacts and should not focus solely on land that is 'not BMV', but rather also areas that comprise lesser proportions of BMV.

In terms of the 'site specific' consideration of alternatives (without prejudice to our comments in relation to alternative sites) we consider that the exercise also needs to consider alternative site layouts within Springwell east, central and west including potentially a reduction in MW generating capacity aligned with location of the respective Agricultural Land Classification Grades in order to demonstrate avoidance or minimisation of agricultural land impacts.

As currently proposed we do not consider that the applicants proposed assessment of alternatives (in part by reference to Appendix B) is sufficient.

Section 4 – Approach to EIA

Paragraph 4.2.6 states that as part of the EIA process, the applicant will consult with a range of statutory and non-statutory consultees. Whilst noting that the subsequent list is not exhaustive, it does not include the MOD/DE/DIO, Internal Drainage Board, and RAF Cranwell and Waddington.

Paragraph 4.3.1 notes that as the detailed design of the Proposed Development is still emerging, as are the environmental surveys and assessments required to support the planning and EIA process, the Scoping Report is provided based on the information available at the time of writing. It then advises that any changes to the scope of the EIA will be reported in the ES to reflect design and layout iterations and changes to reflect ongoing engagement. Paragraph 4.4.1 then notes that the study areas for respective chapters have been defined individually for each environmental factor, taking into account the geographic scope of the potential impacts relevant to that factor and the information required to assess those impacts.

The Council does not support this approach and we would refer you back to PINS Advice Note 7 as referred to above.

Table 4.1 sets out a series of mitigation measures for example offset/buffer distances from ecological receptors and noise separation distances to residential property. However, it is unclear how these have been defined and as such justification should be presented in the ES. In addition, the 'Land and Soils' section of that table states that 'The design of the Proposed Development will seek to retain fields comprising majority Grade 1 or Grade 2 agricultural land within arable production where possible'. However, there is no reference to sub-grade 3a (which also comprises BMV agricultural land) or commitment to either retain or reduce impacts thereto (see also below).

Paragraph 4.10.2 states that 'Enhancement measures will be assessed in accordance with steps set out in the National Planning Policy Framework'. This should be expanded to the range of national and local policy and guidance statements including the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (2023) (including associated evidence base reports) and the Scopwick and Kirkby Green Neighbourhood Plan.

Section 5 – Environmental Factors to be Scoped Out

Glint and Glare

Paragraph 5.2.3 suggests that glint and glare can be excluded from the scope of the EIA, however, that a detailed stand-alone glint and glare assessment will be undertaken and submitted in support of the DCO Application, considering ground-based (residential dwellings, road, and rail) and airborne (airfields, Air Traffic Control Towers, and approaching aircrafts) receptors.

Whilst each case must be considered on its merits, glint and glare impacts were scoped into the ES for the Heckington Fen Solar Farm however the Planning Inspectorate agreed that aviation impacts could be excluded. Mindful of the use of airspace above and around Springwell by the three RAF bases referred to, we recommend that PINS seek the advice of those bases in relation to potential glint and glare impacts, not least given that paragraph 2.4.7 references the potential use tracking panels.

The March 2023 consultation draft 'National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)' states at paragraph 3.10.12 that 'Utility-scale solar farms are large sites that may have a significant zone of visual influence' and that 'the two main impact issues that determine distances to sensitive receptors are therefore likely to be visual amenity and glint and glare.'

At this stage, in the absence of any detailed or indicative site layout options we would request that glint and glare is scoped into the ES. There are large concentrations of residential property as identified in the 'Appendix C – Environmental Features Plan' in particular around the northern edge of Scopwick, Kirkby Green, the southern and eastern edges of RAF Digby and at more scattered isolated dwelling and farmstead locations throughout the study area and where the suggested DCO/red line boundary immediate abuts those locations or is at least in very close proximity.

Whether or not PINS agree with this approach we would highlight paragraph 3.10.94 of the 2023 consultation draft EN-3 which states that ‘Applicants should map receptors to qualitatively identify potential glint and glare issues and determine if a glint and glare assessment is necessary as part of the application’. Paragraph 3.10.95 then notes that ‘When a quantitative glint and glare assessment is necessary, applicants are expected to consider the geometric possibility of glint and glare affecting nearby receptors and provide an assessment of potential impact and impairment based on the angle and duration of incidence and the intensity of the reflection’.

Risk of Accidents and Disasters

With reference to paragraph 5.4.4, the applicant also proposes to scope out the risk of major accidents and disasters, which they state will be considered throughout the design process of the Proposed Development and will include siting the potentially hazardous equipment, such as the BESS and grid infrastructure, at a suitable distance from sensitive receptors.

Whilst PINS agreed to scope out a standalone Chapter for major accidents and disasters in consideration of the Heckington Fen Solar Farm, this was on the basis that ‘that the nature, scale, and location of the Proposed Development is not considered to be vulnerable to or give rise to significant impacts in relation to the risk of accidents and major disasters’. However, whilst not implicit in that Scoping Opinion, the BESS and grid infrastructure including probable composition and site area were identified on the indicative site plan with reasonable certainty at that time.

In the case of Springwell, the Appendix B – Zonal Masterplan confirms significant unknowns and uncertainty in terms of the probable locations for the collector compounds and distributed BESS, the NGS and project substation across all three parcels. Some of these areas abut or are very close to concentrations of residential property or isolated dwellings and the A15. The degree of uncertainty and variability of layout at this stage suggests that the risk of accidents and disasters should be scoped in and where the applicant’s suggestion that this risk can be ‘designed out’ through subsequent design and layout iterations should be relied upon. A smoke plume assessment should also form part of this chapter.

Human Health

Paragraph 5.6.1 states that consideration of the potential effects to human health as a result of the proposed development will be covered through the findings of other assessments undertaken as part of the EIA process. The Council agrees with this suggestion.

Material Assets

Paragraph 5.7.1 defines material assets as ‘substances used in each lifecycle stage of a development, with particular focus on the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning or ‘end of first life’ (deconstruction, demounting, demolition and disposal) phases” [Ref. 5-7]. Material assets can include ‘material’ (i.e. physical resources that are used across the lifecycle of a development) and ‘excavated arisings’ (i.e. soil, rock, or similar resource generated by excavations)’.

Paragraph 5.7.6 states that it is not intended to remove significant quantities of excavated arisings from the site during construction and that where possible, soil arisings will be balanced through a cut and fill exercise to retain volumes on site. However, there is no reference to the potential use of borrow pits, and relative to the Heckington Fen Solar Park the Springwell proposals are set across a significantly larger site area, with more variable topography and also comprise the NGS.

Whilst the potential for minerals sterilisation is to be addressed in the 'Land, soils and groundwater' chapter, and other environmental effects associated with the potential use of borrow pits (for instance noise, historic environment, vibration, ecology/biodiversity) could be assessed elsewhere in other ES Chapters, the Planning Inspectorate should satisfy themselves that there is sufficient information available with the Scoping Report including the Appendix B – Zonal Masterplan to scope out this topic area.

Population

Paragraph 5.8.1 states that the requirement to consider population in UK EIA practice was introduced via the 2017 update to the EIA Regulations, with impacts to population taken to refer to socio-economic impacts. There is no proposed ES chapter heading dealing solely with socio-economic impacts (instead the applicant suggests that 'Socio-Economic Benefits Statement' will be submitted in support of the DCO Application), however the Council suggests that there should be.

Paragraph 5.8.19 states that socio-economic benefits as a result of the Proposed Development are expected with regards to the increase in the level of temporary employment; the subsequent gross value added to the economy; the uptake in the occupancy rate for beds in local hospitality venues; and a small number of long term employment opportunities during operation.

The Scoping Report identifies potentially negative effects associated with the inevitable removal of land from agricultural production and that there may be businesses/tenants/occupiers currently undertaking agricultural operations across the site boundary who may cease to do so for the duration of the operational phase of the development. However, there is no reference in the proposed scope to any socio-economic benefit enduring from continued agricultural use of part or all of the site.

Paragraph 6.6.8 (see also below) suggests scoping in the operational impacts of the proposed development in relation to the loss of agricultural and BMV land owing to the direct impact on its availability of such land, however there is no outline of any suggested mitigation measures. For example this could include enabling some continuance of agricultural activity through sheep grazing or alternative forms of cropping among panelled areas.

The applicant should therefore quantify whether and how there are socio-economic benefits stemming from a change from predominantly arable agricultural use of the site pre-development to a solar and possibly pastoral use post-development. We suggest that the applicant should also identify a mechanism by which any changes in agricultural activity (and ergo any associated socio-economic effect) can be secured through the DCO process.

Furthermore, Figure 7 'Visual Receptors' maps the location of the 'Stepping Out' and 'Spires and Steeples' walking routes through the study area. The lack of detail relating to site layout options means that there is a potential direct impact of these walking routes becoming surrounded by solar panels and associated infrastructure. Walking, cycling and horse riding is a key visitor attraction/promotion for this part of the District and therefore potential socio-economic effects and mitigation should be discussed.

There is limited information in the Scoping Report in relation to direct, indirect, temporary and permanent employment jobs created through construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning. This information should be presented along with identification of;

- opportunities for using local businesses on various aspects of the construction phase;
- how the applicant would go about supporting local business procurement;
- financial estimates of economic benefits of the construction phase to the local economy including hotel spend etc;
- opportunities to encourage apprenticeships; and
- financial estimates and local opportunities associated with ongoing maintenance over the 40-year operational period

In terms of potential economic benefits, the Council notes that an established way of calculating the extra value generated by local spend on contractors and services would be by using LM3 multipliers which the applicant might wish to consider depending on the certainty of construction contracts etc at this stage. The multiplier can be found at https://www.lm3online.com/.

Finally the Council only agrees that the sensitive receptor 'population' impacts can be scoped out as long as residential visual amenity effects are assessed in full in the LVIA chapter.

Water

Paragraphs 5.9.19, 5.9.23 and 5.9.32 describe how the development and utilisation of the site has the potential to result in marginal increased localised flood risk due to increases in impermeable area associated mainly with the infrastructure elements, but that the solar panels themselves will not result in a direct increase in impermeable area of the site as they will be raised above the ground level. It is also noted that only very limited parts of the site are located in flood zones 2 or 3.

The Scoping Report states that in light of the above, it is proposed to exclude water from the scope of the EIA, subject to ensuring no deterioration of water quality or increase in flood risk and agreeing design and mitigation measures with the Environment Agency, Lincolnshire County Council (the Lead Local Flood Authority) and the Witham First Internal Drainage Board.

Whilst the site is primarily underlain by limestone bedrock with some areas of sandstone, mudstone and siltstone, suggesting that infiltration methods might be appropriate, nevertheless the Council is aware that geotechnical and ground investigations have yet to be undertaken.

On the basis of that uncertainty, and given the site area is significant with a number of possible site layout options not least the potential location of the BESS and NGC as well as their associated drainage requirements (impermeable surfacing), we consider that 'water' should be scoped in as a specific chapter in the ES. The Planning Inspectorate should therefore defer to the drainage consultees prior to scoping out this chapter, not least given the significant variability identified.

Electric, magnetic and electromagnetic fields

Section 5.10.3. quotes Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) guidance, which alongside the 1998 guidelines published by International Commission on Non – Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) states that underground cables and overhead power lines at voltages up to and including 132 kV are not capable of exceeding the ICNIRP exposure guidelines. However, there is no reference to the proposed transmission towers and 400kv NGS connection.

RAF Digby is the HQ of the Joint Cyber and Electromagnetic Activities Group and is located immediately west of Springwell Central. Paragraph 5.10.4 states that ongoing consultation will be held with RAF Digby throughout the design of the development to avoid any interference with their operations, and that it is proposed to exclude electric, magnetic and electromagnetic fields from the scope of the EIA.

The Scoping Report contains no discussion or analysis of potential electric, magnetic and electromagnetic field effects on the operations of RAF Digby, whether and how avoidance or mitigation of effects is to be adopted, and where the Appendix B – Zonal Masterplan identifies potentially suitable areas for the collector compounds and distributed BESS on land close to MOD property to the east of RAF Digby. As above section 5.10.3 only references ICNIRP guidelines in relation to the 132kv circuit. The Planning Inspectorate should therefore be guided by the relevant defence consultees before agreeing whether this topic should be scoped out of the ES.

Transboundary effects

The Council agrees that this topic can be scoped out.

Section 6 – Environmental Factors to be Scoped In

Air Quality

We have no objection to the issues to be scoped in to the Air Quality chapter at paragraph 6.1.8. There are no references to BESS and NG substation operational impacts however we note that operational air quality was not scoped into the ES for the Heckington Fen scheme.

IAQM guidance advises the need for a construction dust assessment if there are human receptors within 50m of the boundary of the site, or within 50m of construction vehicle trackout routes, and if there are ecological receptors within 50m of the site boundary or the trackout routes. Whilst the site DCO boundary is noted, the layout of development is still fluid and therefore the need for a dust assessment should be reserved until the location of trackout routes and access etc are confirmed.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Please find attached detailed comments from the Council's consultant ecologist, AECOM (Appendix 1). In summary;

- There is no reference to or commitment to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (see below)
- We disagree that impacts on certain LWS's can be screened out (see below)
- We disagree with the conclusion that there are no Ancient Woodlands impacted. The Ancient Woodland Inventory is not definitive and generally omits woodlands smaller than 2ha, therefore, the applicant should ensure that all woodlands in the zone of influence are considered.

The summary survey scope (Section 6.2.4) does not identify the methods to be applied or the survey timings. As a consequence, there is insufficient information to confirm that the survey work completed to date is appropriate and sufficient.

Reptile surveys will be needed if the habitats of relevance cannot be avoided as indicated and the great crested newt survey scope does not confirm that the off-site ponds located within 500m of the proposed development have been surveyed for this species
There is no reference to Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1 bird species or notable flora and we disagree that the need for wintering bird surveys can be scoped out

The reference to 'barns' at 6.2.2 (preliminary bat roost assessments) should be extended to 'buildings' given that these might also be used for roosting.

Paragraph 6.2.9 states that impacts on LWS's at Blankney Brick Pit LWS, Temple Road Verges, Welbourn to Brauncewell 2 LWS, Slate House Farm to Dunsby Pit Plantation 1 LWS, Green Man Road to Cuckoo Lane 2 LWS and Bloxholm Wood LWS/Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust reserve are to be scoped out as they 'are avoided by the current Proposed Development design'.

However, as above no layout options have been presented and as such it is not confirmed that impacts have been avoided. Furthermore the paragraph states that the scheme will incorporate a minimum offset distance of 15m from Local Wildlife Sites however it is unclear how this 15m distance has been derived relative to the characteristics of each LWS. The Council therefore considers that they should be scoped into the assessment.

Whilst paragraph 6.2.10 states that opportunities for ecological enhancement within the site are diverse, it also states that no specific enhancement measures have yet been agreed and that a detailed biodiversity design will be produced and implemented outlining how a substantial net gain in biodiversity will be achieved.

Paragraph 3.10.119 of the 2023 draft EN-3 confirms that solar proposals should aim to achieve environmental and biodiversity net gain in line with the ambition set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan and any relevant measures and targets, 'including statutory targets set under the Environment Act or elsewhere'. A minimum BNG of 10% is therefore required although it is anticipated that development of this scale will be able to deliver considerably in excess of this.

The applicant is advised that Local Ecological Network, Biodiversity Opportunity and Green Infrastructure Mapping, along with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been prepared for Central Lincolnshire by the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership. These maps and strategies identify the known existing areas of high biodiversity value and areas of local biodiversity priority where it is considered most important and feasible to target habitat creation, extension and restoration. The applicant should refer to these in the formulation of BNG proposals.

Climate

Paragraph 6.3.2 states that GHG emissions 'will be estimated based upon project-specific data that may relate to activities outside the Site boundary (e.g., water provision and wastewater treatment outside of the Site boundary, or the embodied carbon within construction materials and solar PV modules as a result of the energy used for production).

The Council requests that GHG emissions should also account for the replacement of panels and any other operational/infrastructure elements during the lifetime of operation, and the applicant should also address 'alternatives' in the context of GHG offset to reflect revised layouts or overall energy generation capacity in relation to BMV land considerations (see below). This must include manufacture, shipping etc.

The approach to the assessment should consider the full life-cycle of the proposed development and potential sources of GHG emissions. GHG emissions offset through the production of lower carbon electricity compared to grid average emissions during the operational phase should also be accounted for within the GHG emissions calculations.

The ES should incorporate sufficient detail on emissions calculations (estimated and actual) to cover pre-construction, construction phase, life time (including operational and maintenance) and decommissioning. Ideally this should include the expected payback period for all estimated emissions and ensure ongoing emissions are calculated during the lifetime of the proposal (est. 40 years).

The Council also requests consideration of methods to increase in-situ carbon sequestration from effectively leaving the land fallow for the expected 40 years (in the absence of any details of agricultural land impact 'mitigation' at this stage). This could include low growing plants (e.g. sweet yellow clover and vetches) as part of a BNG strategy that could assist with increasing the organic content of the soil and locking carbon.

Cultural Heritage

With reference to paragraph 6.4.1 the applicant should also liaise with the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire (on behalf of the Council) in relation to the scope of and timing of any intrusive evaluation following completion of the geophysical survey. The Scoping Report states that Lincolnshire County Council has also approved a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for geophysical survey of the site. This was not discussed or agreed in advance with North Kesteven District Council and therefore we reserve the right to make representations on its scope.

With reference to paragraph 6.4.2, we recommend that a 5km buffer from the site boundary should include both designated and non-designated heritage assets (NDHA).

Paragraph 6.4.3 'Data sources to inform the EIA baseline characterisation' makes no reference to the Council's local list of non-designated heritage assets and its criteria for assessment. A copy of the latest list can be provided on request. In addition there is no reference to the 'made' Scopwick and Kirkby Green Neighbourhood Plan which contains schedules and descriptions of heritage assets within the Plan area. Whilst there are no Conservation Area appraisals for Blankney and Scopwick there is a high level character summary contained at Appendix 9 of the archived 2007 NKDC Local Plan which whilst prepared some time ago still serves as a source of information.

Paragraph 6.4.6 notes that additional mitigation to off-set adverse impacts will take the form of a programme of archaeological investigation and recording secured by a DCO Requirement. The Council is aware that on-site geophysical survey work is anticipated to be completed by the end of April. Pending the results of those surveys the Council cannot yet agree that a programme of archaeological investigation can be deferred to a DCO Requirement, and we caution that pre-submission trial trenching will likely be required in at least some parts of the site.

Paragraph 6.4.8 lists the receptors/matters to be scoped into the assessment however this does not include the Conservation Areas at Scopwick, Blankney or Bloxholm. Furthermore it does not reference or confirm NDHAs to be assessed – which as above should be within 5km and should ideally include proactive identification and assessment using adopted Council guidance – see Local List of Non-Designated Heritage Assets | North Kesteven District Council (n-kesteven.gov.uk).

Paragraph 6.4.9 proposes to scope out setting impacts on listed dwellings within settlements over 1km from the site. We disagree with this suggestion as there is no assessment contained in the Scoping Report to support this and to justify why and how the 1km reference has been derived. The reference just to 'dwellings' rather than 'buildings' is also unclear. It is also unclear why listed K6 kiosks have been singled out for consideration.

In the absence of detailed layout options and a plan of the HER entries applicable to the site area (those entries referred to/summarised in paragraph 6.4.9), the Council is also unable to agree to the schedule of HER entries proposed to be scoped out. There is no spatial mapping of these entries contained within the Scoping Report and we will need to review this information in conjunction with Lincolnshire County Council before commenting further.

The assets proposed to be scoped out of assessment at paragraph 6.4.9 are not supported by an evidence base and appear to be piecemeal and based largely on setting effects (rather than an assessment of the significance of the asset and the likely impact of the proposals) or on the type of record (for example findspots). Any proposal to 'descope' designated or relevant non-designated assets must be informed by an evidence base demonstrating the lack of direct or indirect impact upon the heritage asset and its significance.

The Settings Assessment/Heritage Impact Assessment needs to demonstrate an understanding of the significance and context of each of those assets in order to assess the impact of the development upon them and propose any mitigation.

In terms of archaeological considerations, detailed feedback is provided by the Council's archaeological consultant, the Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire (HTL) in the attached Appendix 2. In summary HTL comment that the proposals for construction of a solar farm will necessarily have an impact on any buried archaeological remains. Piling, building foundations, cable trenching, access roads, building compounds and construction traffic are all known impacts and the cumulative effect will be significant; therefore, trial trenching is required to establish the baseline conditions and to understand the nature and extent of the impacts on the archaeological remains.

Paragraph 6.4.4 suggests that trial trenching might not be required and 6.4.6 states instead that archaeological investigation and recording could be secured by a DCO Requirement. However, HTL comment that there is currently insufficient information on the presence, character, date and significance of any archaeological deposits and that the results of the full desk-based assessment including the aerial photographic and Lidar assessments together with the results of the geophysical survey will need to inform the programme of trial trench evaluation.

Mitigation through archaeological excavation may be required. Without detailed information on the archaeological potential and the likely impact of the proposals, mitigation by means of a 'watching brief' during construction is not considered acceptable as a first response.

The section entitled 'Opportunities for enhancing the environment' (6.4.10) has not considered the positive and / or beneficial effects of the programme of archaeological surveys and investigations to be undertaken during this process and the added value that a large development can make to archaeology and cultural heritage. The programme of archaeological works should include proposals for community outreach, public engagement and dissemination of the results.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

We would refer the applicant to the jointly-procured detailed feedback provided by AAH on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council and North Kesteven District Council contained in Appendix 4, 'Technical Memorandum 1: AAH TM01'. AAH generally agree with the approach advocated for the LVIA chapter but note that the final locations of viewpoints are still to be reviewed by the applicant and will need to be agreed with LCC, NKDC and other relevant stakeholders. The final viewpoint selection should also consider views of taller and more conspicuous elements, such as battery storage or sub-stations once the layout is more developed, as well as considering potential key, or sensitive, viewpoints. The relative prematurity of the submission and the large number of variables and options in terms of site layout mean that no illustrative viewpoints have been provided at scoping stage.

AAH request that photomontages are produced to illustrate the proposals at different phases namely the existing situation (baseline), Operational (year 1) and Residual with planting established (10 to 15 years). AAH also advise that the methodology should also clearly lay out the process of assessing temporary and permanent elements of the scheme, and the LVIA should clearly identify those elements that would not be decommissioned at the end of the life of the development (such as the National Grid substation), and assessed accordingly.

Paragraph 6.5.2 states that based on analysis of the ZTVs (Figures 1-3) and field work undertaken to date, 'it is considered unlikely that there would be any view of the solar array or collector compounds/distributed BESS beyond 3 km of the Site boundary'. It is therefore suggested that a 3 km study area offset from the boundaries of the site is adequate and proportionate for the consideration of landscape and visual effects. The same paragraph notes that any visibility of the National Grid and Project Substation would be limited to a maximum distance of 5 km from the site.

We note though that, whilst each case must be assessed on its merits relevant to the surrounding topography, a 5km study area for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was proposed in relation to the Heckington Fen solar farm and where in that case the maximum height of built infrastructure was markedly lower than the National Grid and Project Substation proposed at Springwell.

AAH comment that at this early stage, the proposed study area extents should be discussed and further reviewed as the full extent of potential visibility of the development is not yet fully known, and the ZTV mapping contained within Appendix F of the Scoping Report does identify potential visibility beyond these extents.

The ZTV mapping would need to be updated once the proposals have developed (as stated within paragraph 13.5) and the study area should not be fixed until the full extents of visibility are known from both desktop and site work. It therefore seems appropriate to assume a (minimum – TBA) 5km study area across the scheme rather than a reduction to 3km for the solar array or collector compounds/distributed BESS.

The data sources and policy considerations referred to in paragraph 6.5.3 should be revised to the 2023 adopted CLLP and where Appendices B and D in particular of the Scopwick and Kirkby Green Neighbourhood Plan 2021 – 2036 should be referred to alongside the Design Code by way of considering any impacts on key views and green gaps.

Paragraph 6.5.5 states that 'There are no tourist attractions or recognised viewpoints from which the Proposed Development may be visible', however these attractions and viewpoints are seemingly not defined or mapped.

The 'decommissioning' references in paragraph 6.5.6 do not refer to the retention of the NGS and associated infrastructure as permanent development, and the degree to which additional (secondary and tertiary) mitigation will be formulated to reflect this.

Sections 6.5.8. and 6.5.9. identify a range of potential visual receptors to be scoped in or out of the LVIA, however at this early stage of the project we request these be reviewed and consulted upon further once proposals have been developed and we are not in a position to confirm their inclusion or omission. It is assumed that the reference at paragraph 6.5.8 to 'Residents of the barracks at RAF Digby' means all MOD residential property.

As above, on the basis that no further information has been provided to date to justify that significant landscape and visual effects arising from the solar array/collector compounds/distributed BESS and NGS/PS would be limited to 1km and 3km respectively, we cannot yet agree that assessments of impacts on users of the PRoWs/local road network and residential properties should be restricted to those distances.

In addition it is not clear how the applicant will define a developed footprint or settlement curtilage by way of assessing impacts on residents and visitors to the villages of Scopwick, Kirkby Green, Blankney and Ashby De La Launde vs 'isolated' properties. As a minimum maps 2a and 2b contained in the Scopwick and Kirkby Green Neighbourhood Plan should be used however the Council would wish to agree the study area for all named settlements including Blankney and Ashby De La Launde.

In terms of residential visual amenity, paragraph 6.5.11 quotes from Technical Guidance Note 02 / 19 'Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) and states that the LVIA will present, as an appendix to the main assessment, a residential amenity assessment of visual effects on residential properties for any property where these is a possibility that the visual effects may approach the 'public interest' (harm) threshold referred to in the guidance.

The RVAA should not focus solely on individual or groups of properties however should consider the magnitude of change to residential amenity on a 'settlement scale' basis taking account not only of fixed address points but also the experiences of residents of those settlements when travelling into and around those areas. This is notwithstanding that the 2019 RVAA guidance (paragraph 4.8) states that 'Properties are normally assessed individually, but if their outlook and / or views are in all aspects the same (for example if a development is visible from the rear gardens only of a small row of houses) they could be assessed as one (group)'.

This is particularly relevant to Scopwick, Kirkby Green and Ashby de la Launde where the suggested site area/Order Limits overlap with most of the roads and rights of way passing into and through those settlements meaning that (depending on buffer zones and detailed layouts) there may be limited visual relief and separation from extensive unbroken arrays of panels, experienced on a 'day to day' basis and a potentially overbearing or overwhelming residential amenity impact felt across the lifetime of the development.

The absence of any detailed layouts prevents further feedback at this stage and we therefore wish to agree the scope of the assessment further. Paragraph 1.8 of the 2019 RVAA guidance states that 'Judgements formed in respect of Residential Visual Amenity should not be confused with the judgement regarding Residential Amenity because the latter is a planning matter'.

The 2019 guidance focusses generally on 'living conditions' associated with views and impacts from fixed points/addresses. In addition paragraph 4.14 recommends describing and evaluating the predicted magnitude of visual change and related visual amenity effects for properties, rather than potentially settlement-wide 'experiential' residential impacts for residents who, whilst individually may not experience significant adverse affects associated with outlooks or changes of view from their property may be unable to disconnect with a sense of potential 'enclosure' by development in and around where they live, work or spent recreational time.

Strict adherence to 2019 RVAA guidance to the detriment of residential amenity (as opposed to residential *visual* amenity) may therefore not be appropriate in this case.

Land, Soils and Groundwater

Appendix 3 contains advice from the Council's agricultural consultant, Landscope. Paragraph 6.6.4 of the Scoping Report confirms that whilst a walkover survey of the site and surrounding area has been undertaken as part of the baseline assessment (20 - 21 October 2022), an Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey has not yet been concluded as is underway to provide confirmation of ALC across all areas of the site.

Paragraph 3.10.14 of the March 2023 consultation draft 'National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)' states that 'Where the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land (avoiding the use of "Best and Most Versatile" agricultural land where possible)'.

The confirmation that ALC surveying is still underway across the site reinforces the Council's concerns regarding the prematurity of this scoping submission and the failure to align layout options (including the more permanent or semi-permanent infrastructure elements) to maximise the use of non-BMV land.

The ALC survey has been commenced without reference to or agreement with the Council (in terms of its scope) and as such we reserve the right to request additional augering or analysis depending on the results presented in due course. We note that the percentages of BMV land across the site calculated to date using the National Level Data show that 32.8% of the Site is Grade 2 land (497Ha) and 67.2% of the Site is classified as Grade 3 land (1,020Ha). It is therefore probable that a further substantial hectarage is comprised of Grade 3a 'good' quality agricultural land pending the outcome of the ALC survey.

The report notes that the Natural England 'Technical Information Note TIN049: Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile land, 2nd edition (2012)' will be used for the purposes of assessment, and mindful that ALC survey is underway without prior consultation with the Council we would highlight that TIN049 recommends a frequency of one boring per hectare for a detailed assessment. It is also important that the ALC survey is undertaken in line with the MAFF 1988 guidelines.

Without prejudice, and mindful that the National Level Data mapping envisages a composition of Grade 2 and 3 land only, the Council considers that any information presented in the ALC assessment would not be representative if undertaken below the augering frequency suggested in Technical Advice note 49.

According to available published data and local knowledge, the soils locally are mainly Marcham 343e and Aswarby 512a Soil Associations. Both of these soils are limestone based, with shallow well drained loamy soils, over limestone and deeper brown earths. Occasionally there are heavier clay soils present of the Curdridge 841a Association.

Previous ALC surveys locally on these soils and similar have indicated a mixture of Grades 2, 3a and 3b land. It is likely that the shallower soils will be 3b, whilst deeper soils will be 3a or Grade 2, even with some areas of Grade 1. The ALC should identify where BMV land is and the scheme should seek to protect and minimise damage to higher grade land wherever possible in line with national planning policy.

Without prejudice to the ALC survey the Council's view is that there is undoubtedly a large proportion of BMV land in this vicinity and only a full ALC will identify where it is and what the Grade and quality is. Laboratory analysis of representative samples should be used to determine textures.

Either the 'Land, Soils and Groundwater' or the 'Ecology and Biodiversity' chapter of the ES should also consider the interplay between agricultural and ecological/BNG impacts – and therefore the degree to which effects are temporary/reversible.

There is evidence that organic matter builds up in biodiversity areas at a faster rate than arable farmland and this may benefit the land, but it is not a factor in the assessment of ALC. Long term, where biodiverse land becomes ecologically important there is the possibility of land becoming assigned with environmental designations, such as SSSI status, though generally this has not so far occurred on other solar sites. If land remains uncultivated for longer than five years, then permission may be required from Natural England to bring the land back into arable cultivation.

Any material enhancement in the botanical diversity of the sward (to the extent that the application site may then considered to be of ecological value), will limit the capacity for the land to be returned to arable use after the solar farm has been decommissioned. The EIA (Agriculture) (England) (No.2) Regulations 2006 prohibit the physical or chemical cultivation of what are considered to be 'semi-natural areas'. 'Cultivation' is not clearly defined and does not necessarily require land to have been ploughed and therefore there is a possibility that areas of environmentally 'enhanced' land within the site may not be permitted to return to arable farmland after the 40 year period.

The 'alternatives' exercise also needs to consider alternative site layouts and potentially a reduction in MW generating capacity aligned with location of the respective ALC Grades once the report has been analysed, in order to demonstrate avoidance or minimisation of agricultural land impacts as recommended in paragraph 3.10.14 of the March 2023 draft EN-3.

Paragraph 6.6.6 makes no reference to the avoidance of BMV land in the scheme's approach to additional (secondary and tertiary) mitigation. This is in conflict with the above draft EN-3 document. Paragraph 6.6.7 'description of likely significant effects' simply sets out that it is 'anticipated that there will be a reduction in the availability of BMV land' without any commitment to minimise or avoid those effects through ongoing review of the scheme layout. The same paragraph suggests that the majority of the land use will be short-term and temporary, some will be long-term but temporary (construction and operation) and some will be permanent (for example the National Grid substation).

Mindful that the NGS is likely to be permanent operational development that is not decommissioned at/ahead of the 40-year lifetime of the solar park, the Council considers it likely that this will increase the prospect and probability that the solar park would seek repowering or partial repowering beyond 40 years. Whilst we appreciate that such a scheme is not before PINS and they are required to consider the Scoping Report as submitted we would request that this potential scenario is accounted for not least with reference to whether any residual BMV impacts are able to be classed as temporary/reversible.

There is no reference in the Scoping Report as to whether and how agricultural land use continuance across the site is to be delivered alongside the operation of the solar farm. This should be addressed in the ES chapter and should include;

- Acknowledging the proposed change from primarily arable farming to solar

- Whether any pastoral farming (for example sheep grazing) is proposed within the site, and if so where and how this is to be secured. This should include;

    - identifying whether contracts are in place for pastoral farming;
    - whether those contracts span the operational duration of the scheme (40 years minimum); and
    - whether and how the applicant considers that such contractual obligations, and more broadly, a change from one type of agricultural activity (pre-development) to another (post-development) could be legally secured, monitored and enforced through the DCO regime – for example through the use of Requirements/legal agreement

- For all other areas within the site whether or how those areas will remain in agricultural activity with the presence of solar panels and BNG habitat/landscaping implementation

In order to satisfy Schedule 4 (7) of The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 the applicant must be able to identify and arguably secure any measures relied upon to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects; not least where this is partly relied upon by any proposed change in agricultural activity across the site.

As a general observation, this part of Lincolnshire/North Kesteven District is a mainly arable farming area with only limited sheep grazing operations. Whilst it is possible to graze the areas under and between the panels, it is unlikely to be very cost effective for a grazier. The difficulties of rounding up sheep and handling them, together with finding sick or wounded animals makes the grazier's workload harder and more complex. As such the economics of moving sheep to and from the site will be marginal. Grass does not tend to grow well under the panels themselves and there are often areas that are dry and barren or that only host weed species, due to heavy shading.

Grazing management is also not easily compatible with standard biodiversity management practices at Solar Photovoltaic sites due to fundamental population biology principles. As the site is in arable production at present, currently it may have a relatively low level of biodiversity (although see the comments submitted by AECOM in Appendix 1). The grazing management plan may, therefore, lead to a modest increase in species richness at the site from current base levels, but it will not deliver the level of biodiversity that the site could potentially achieve if biodiversity gains were prioritised over agricultural production.

By grazing land for agricultural livestock production, the level of disturbance is high. This prevents plant species with a slow establishment rate (which often are those which are ultimately strong competitors) from growing – and thus the invertebrates that feed on these species are also excluded from the area. Areas which promote high species diversity often use low intensity grazing as a means to promoting biodiversity.

Grazing represents a form of disturbance to the area, thus preventing any one species becoming too dominant. It also helps manage the sward to provide an optimum habitat for invertebrates.

Stock densities are generally monitored and adjusted to prevent either under and overgrazing and to ensure the sward contains a mix of long and short vegetation with some plants in flower. There is therefore some conflict between maintaining the land in agricultural production and improving biodiversity. Whilst not incompatible, site based issues, such as soil type(s) and local agricultural practices may therefore pose conflicts which the relevant ES chapter/s should assess.

Landscope also advise that the ES contains a farm holdings impact statement with reference to the farm holdings affected by the proposal and which addresses viability, infrastructure and long term consequences on the individual holding. Finally, Landscope note that paragraph 2.6.9 commits to submitting an Outline Soils Management Plan (oSMP) with the DCO Application and they recommend that the oSMP is structured to include the headings contained in their Appendix 3 advice, not least to address soil structural issues and waterlogging that has occurred on solar farms elsewhere in the UK.

With reference to paragraph 6.6.8 we would recommend seeking the advice of the defence consultees regarding the possible need to scope in the potential for UXO around RAF Digby.

Paragraph 6.6.9 suggests that impacts on the Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) could be scoped out through consultation with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) to ensure that any negative implications for the MSA is minimised. Our view is that it would be premature to scope this issue out at this stage however we would defer to Planning Inspectorate and LCC assessment.

The development design and layout in part relies upon and needs to be informed by the findings of the Minerals Assessment and on the basis of the Appendix B zonal masterplan there is significant uncertainty as to where and whether buffer or safeguarding zones around quarries have been considered; to include Longwood and Brauncewell Quarries.

Noise and Vibration

With reference to paragraph 6.7.4, the Planning Inspectorate are advised that the baseline approach adopted at Heckington Fen included reference to Professional Practice Guidance on Planning and Noise (ProPG, Association of Noise Consultants, Institute of Acoustics, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, 2017)', BS 5228 Parts 1 and 2 (British Standard Institute, 2009, amended 2014) and BS 4142 (British Standard Institute, 2014 amended 2019.

The same paragraph notes that monitoring will be undertaken in the form of long-term noise measurements, typically of 1-week duration, in order to quantify the existing noise environment and sources of noise impacting the assessment receptors and would encompass continuous periods throughout daytime and night, accounting for the likely operational times of the Proposed Development.

The Council wishes to agree both the location and timing of background noise monitoring locations to take account of issues such as the seasonality of land use (harvest), traffic peaks/school holidays (road traffic noise) and whether there are any concentrations of airspace use for example by RAF Waddington, Cranwell and Coningsby. The applicant has recognised mineral extraction activity from Brauncewell Quarry (off A15) and Longwood Quarry (off Long Wood Lane) however should check with those operators whether there are any peaks or patterns of quarrying activity which might also influence baseline noise assessment.

Paragraph 6.7.7 does not refer to any noise associated with possible use of tracking panels. This option has not yet been ruled out and therefore the noise chapter of the ES needs to consider operational noise associated with motors, plant and equipment associated with the pivoting and rotation of panels. Cumulative noise impacts may then need to be assessed stemming from the creation of variable 'corridors' down which noise could pass depending on the alignment of panels at different times of the day.

This should also account for the operational noise generated by substations, inverters and other noise-emitting plant and equipment relative to those corridors and the off-site sensitive receptor locations. In addition the paragraph doesn't specifically refer to noise associated with borrow pits although this is inferred through reference to earthmoving.

The 'Decommissioning Assessment' section of paragraph 6.7.11 doesn't refer to the permanent retention of the NGSS.

Traffic and Transport

Paragraph 6.8.4 suggests referencing relevant DfT traffic count data for the B1188, B1189, B1191 and A15 links with regard to construction traffic routeing to each respective access. Solar panels and components will potentially arrive via east coast ports and therefore the ES should also factor in construction vehicle impacts along the A17 corridor unless otherwise scoped out in consultation with the Highway Authority.

This should include cumulative construction (and where relevant operational) effects associated with Triton Knoll, Viking Link, Heckington Fen solar (including works to Bicker Fen Substation), Beacon Fen solar, Temple Oaks solar and the Lincolnshire Reservoir depending on the timeframes of those projects. TCPA (1990) projects requiring cumulative assessment of transport effects include the Sleaford West and potentially the Sleaford South SUEs (A17/A15 corridor), along with the Lincoln South East Quadrant (SEQ) SUE which sits alongside parts of the A15 and B1188.

We agree that operational transport impacts can be scoped out of the ES as noted in paragraph 6.8.9.

There is an extensive network of public rights of way (PRoW) within the site which link with the surrounding settlements. Opportunities to create new and expanded routes that would improve access and links between settlements should be considered with potential additional public footpaths and bridleways created as part of the development.

Any such routes should not utilise routes used for construction or maintenance activities and be a minimum width of 4m for public footpaths and 5m for public bridleways. Any fencing alongside a public path should be open mesh construction and not close board timber fencing or metal palisade to avoid the creation of a narrow claustrophobic environment.

Any new routes to be created should look to be formally adopted as part of the Definitive Rights of Way network rather than permissive routes which could potentially be removed at any point during the life of the project. If permissive routes are proposed then details should be provided of the mechanisms to be adopted to ensure these remain in place for the duration and life of the development.

The applicant should also investigate the potential to deliver/accommodate the elements of the Scopwick/Kirkby Green to Metheringham Railway Station Community Projects detailed in Appendix A of the SKGNP where these are located within the DCO boundary.

Section 7 – Cumulative Effects

Paragraphs 7.1.16 and 7.1.17 of the Scoping Report state that in order to be taken forward for cumulative effects consideration, NSIP or DNS development, transport infrastructure developments, approved energy infrastructure developments and other forms of development must lie within the Zone of Influence of the Proposed Development.

The ZoI is then defined as the study area for each environmental factor considered in the EIA for the Proposed Development and that the environmental factor-specific study areas, and appropriate justifications for these study areas, will be provided in the ES. The Scoping Report states that the search area for forming the long list of other existing development and/or approved developments will be based on the greatest ZoI in terms of distance.

This approach is not accepted by cross reference to a number of the ZoIs expressed elsewhere in the Scoping Report. For the avoidance of doubt the Council suggests that cumulative effects associated with BMV agricultural land impacts (i.e. in relation to 'Land, soils and groundwater') should as a minimum include all of the NSIP solar projects in Lincolnshire at Heckington Fen, Beacon Fen, Tillbridge Solar, Temple Oaks, Cottam, West Burton, Gate Burton and Mallard Pass along with BMV agricultural land impacts associated with the Lincolnshire Reservoir. We reserve the right to highlight other projects as and when these become known and can advise how these might be treated with reference to Table 2 of Advice Note Seventeen 'Cumulative effects assessment relevant to nationally significant infrastructure projects'.

Depending on the LVIA ZTVs associated with the projects located within the North Kesteven District there are not anticipated to be any cumulative LVIA impacts however some cumulative transport impacts associated with construction phases might occur across the North Kesteven and South Kesteven/Rutland solar NSIP schemes depending on respective project timescales and construction traffic routeing.

Other Issues/Conclusion

The ES should be prepared with reference to the 2023 Central Lincolnshire Local Plan which was adopted on 13th April 2023, rather than the 2017 CLLP which has now been replaced. The applicant is also advised that the proposed DCO boundary includes the allocated residential development site 'Land North of Heath Road, Scopwick' subject to Policy 12a of the SKGNP which is identified for the development of around 14 dwellings. The DCO boundary should therefore exclude this site and on a precautionary basis will need to assume development within the SKGNP Plan period in terms of sensitive receptor locations and baseline assessment where relevant to the specific ES chapters.

In addition as set out above the revised draft NPS EN-3 expressly considers Solar Photovoltaic Generation (page 82 onwards) and is subject to a period of consultation ending on 25 May 2023. Consequently depending on the point at which the DCO is applied for, and during consideration of the application, either s104 or s105 of the Act will be engaged. Even if still in draft, the March 2023 consultation versions of EN-1 and EN-3 will be a material consideration.

Finally we would reiterate that this Scoping Report, dated 21 March 2023, was submitted only 2 weeks following the end of the non-statutory consultation process and our position is that this significantly compresses and restricts the opportunity for the applicant to have meaningfully considered, reflected upon, and addressed representations made during this initial non-statutory consultation and to account for how those representations have informed the scale, layout and composition of the scheme.

On that basis our view is that this submission does not comply with the guidance set out in Advice Note Seven 'Environmental Impact Assessment: Process, Preliminary Environmental Information and Environmental Statements'. We are concerned that the timescales adopted unilaterally by the applicant – culminating in this Reg. 10 and 11 Scoping Opinion request to the Planning Inspectorate - has undermined the degree to which the information contained in the Scoping Report could be relied upon as a robust representation of the potential significant environmental effects of the proposed development.

This is borne out by the relatively large number of unknown factors or matters 'to be agreed' with relevant consultees. On that basis the Council's view is that the submission of the Scoping Report is premature and we would encourage the Planning Inspectorate to decline to accept it.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Development Manager
Planning Services

Appendix 1 – AECOM ecology response 5th April 2023
Appendix 2 – Heritage Trust of Lincolnshire response 12th April 2023
Appendix 3 – Landscope response April 2023
Appendix 4 – AAH Consultants response

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5th April 2023

Our Reference 60468641 Springwell Solar DCO

Dear Nick

Springwell Solar Farm Scoping Report: Review of Approach for Biodiversity Survey and Impact Assessment

I provide detailed advice below with reference to the Scoping Report dated 21 March 2023. However, I first address the scoping questions posed in Section 6.2.24 of the Scoping Report.

Responses to the Applicant's Scoping Questions

Do you agree with the proposed list of consultees? *I consider the identified list of ecology consultees to be appropriate. The consultation with Natural England will support the conclusions in relation to potential impacts on statutory sites and requirements for Habitats Regulations Assessment.*

Do you agree with the proposed study areas? *I am in general agreement with the study areas. However, I would query (given the very limited information provided) the restriction of badger surveys to the site only given the potential for impacts on habitat accessibility and commuting routes, and consequently inter-relationships between badger clans. The study areas for national and international designations should also consider the Impact Risk Zones identified by Natural England, rather than relying solely on fixed search distances.*

Do you agree that the data sources listed to inform the EIA baseline characterisation are appropriate? *I agree with the data sources identified.*

Do you agree that the surveys proposed to inform the EIA baseline characterisation are appropriate? *I agree these are generally appropriate, but there are omissions. There is no specific mention of flora, but the arable landscape could support a number of scarce arable plant species of conservation concern and dependent on maintenance of cultivation regimes. As identified above there is a need for further clarity on the approach for badger. Similarly, insufficient information has been provided to agree that wintering birds can be scoped out. It is also not clear what approach is being taken in relation to the Schedule 1 bird species that could occur in the zone of influence.*

Are any receptors/assets/resources not identified that you would like to see included in the EIA? *See response to the above question. The information submitted with the Scoping Report is not sufficient to allow me to agree with the scoping assessment provided in Section 6.2.9. Supplementary information will be expected at PEIR stage.*

Do you agree with the proposed additional (secondary and tertiary) mitigation measures and is this mitigation appropriate? *The identified measures seem reasonable as a starting point. It is not possible to provide a formal response to this question given the very limited information provided. No reports were provided for the surveys completed in 2022. I defer further advice on this until the PEIR stage, which I anticipate will provide more comprehensive and detailed information on the work completed, the constraints identified, and potential impact pathways.*

Do you agree with the receptors/matters that are proposed to be scoped in and out of the EIA? *With certain exceptions, insufficient information has been provided to transparently explain, and therefore support and agree, the scoping of relevant ecological receptors. Further information will be required at the PEIR stage.*

Do you agree with the proposed factor-specific assessment approach? *The impact assessment approach based on standard good practice CIEEM methods is acceptable. The applicant should confirm that the current iteration of this guidance has been utilised. This is dated 2022, not 2018 as stated. A biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment should be provided to demonstrate no net loss of, and a minimum 10% net gain in, biodiversity in accordance with local planning policy and to ensure consistency with other recent solar fam applications in the district. The current iteration of the good practice method is Biodiversity Metric 4.0.*

Baseline Conditions

I agree that the prevailing land use (intensive arable production) limits the scope for potential ecological impacts and offers good opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.

The identified Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) of relevance are consistent with the sites identified in the online Local Plan Policies Map ('Aurora'). As the reasons for designation have not been defined in the Scoping Report it is not possible at present to agree that LWS can be screened out or that the proposed mitigation (including stand-off distances) is sufficient.

The screening for statutory designation is likely correct but consideration should be given to the Impact Risk Zones defined by Natural England.

The Scoping Report states (in Section 2.3.19) that there are no ancient woodlands (an irreplaceable habitat) in the zone of influence. This is not certain, and instead the conclusion should be (given the desk based resources utilised and the limitations of these) that there are no recorded ancient woodlands in the area. The Ancient Woodland Inventory is not definitive and generally omits woodlands smaller than 2ha. Therefore, the applicant should ensure that all woodlands in the zone of influence have been suitably assessed to demonstrate the absence of potential ancient woodland. Formal consultation with Natural England would be required if potential ancient woodlands are identified. In the absence of this, potential ancient woodlands should be protected in accordance with current Standing Advice[1].

I found no information on veteran and ancient trees (irreplaceable habitat) in the Scoping Report. These could occur in areas of woodland, as free standing trees or in hedgerows. The presence/ absence of veteran and ancient trees should be clarified at PEIR stage. If present, such trees should be protected in accordance with current Standing Advice[2].

The Scoping Report omits information on Green Infrastructure, which encompasses land identified as Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs). The online Local Plan Policies Map identifies BOAs in all three component parts of the proposed solar farm. BOAs are covered by specific planning policy (within both the current and emerging local plans) and have relevance to BNG assessment. Appendix 4 of the emerging local plan identifies the principles for development with BOAs. This should be considered and addressed by the Applicant. Further information in relation to this should be provided at PEIR stage.

The Scoping Report identifies the presence of priority hedgerows within the site. Further information should be provided on the approach taken to identifying these. I assume that Hedgerow Regulations methods have been employed to collect structured data on hedgerows, and to identify any 'important' hedgerows. I would encourage this approach and would emphasise that all Hedgerow Regulations criteria should be addressed. These include heritage, landscape and wildlife criteria.

The Scoping Report identifies the presence of a number of priority habitats. These are priorities at the national level, as well as in terms of (as stated in Section 6.2.5) the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions
[2] As footnote 1.

The Scoping Report identifies a suite of notable bird species of cultivated and farmed land. These bird species are likely to be affected by changes in land use and management arising from the Proposed Development. This will be a relevant consideration to address in the impact assessment and when developing the mitigation and habitat compensation strategy. In support of this, the applicant should refer to the relevant Standing Advice[3].

Study Areas and Survey Scope

The following advice supplements my response to the applicant's questions (see above).

My understanding of the site and the approach to scoping is constrained by the lack of reports for the surveys completed in 2022, including the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report. The latter would have been a beneficial supplement to the Scoping Report.

In most cases, the summary survey scope (Section 6.2.4) does not identify the methods to be applied or the survey timings. As a consequence, there is insufficient information to allow me to confirm that the survey work completed to date is appropriate and sufficient. This will need to be reviewed and agreed at PEIR stage.

The approach to habitat survey does not include mention of specific requirements for BNG assessment i.e. Site Condition Assessment. The current best practice method for this is set out in the guidance for Biodiversity Metric 4.0[4]. A MoRPH assessment is likely to be required to calculate baseline river units if watercourses (with the exception of ditches) are present in or adjacent to the red line boundary.

Further information is needed on the approach to hedgerow survey. As stated above, a comprehensive Hedgerow Regulations assessment is encouraged. Similarly, further information is needed on the approach to veteran and ancient tree survey.

The survey approach for badger needs to deliver data suitable to assess the relevant impacts and to meet requirements of Standing Advice[5]. This includes considerations around access to foraging and watering areas, habitat connectivity (given badgers can be faithful to specific movement routes), and implications for territorial boundaries (e.g. from the erection of an extensive network of security fencing). Given the absence of detailed survey information and an understanding of main sett locations, I am not certain that surveys should be restricted to the site boundary. This should be clarified further at PEIR stage.

Reptile survey will be needed if the habitats of relevance cannot be avoided as indicated.

The great crested newt survey scope does not confirm that the off-site ponds located within 500m of the proposed development have been surveyed for this species. This should be confirmed at PEIR stage.

No specific mention is given to Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1 bird species. A variety of such birds could occur, and not all can necessarily be encompassed within the scope of a standard breeding bird survey (e.g. due to the timing of their breeding activity). The PEIR should provide more detail on the approach to Schedule 1 birds. Relevant species will include but may not be restricted to barn owl (which may nest in trees as well as buildings), quail, red kite, hobby and marsh harrier.

Notable flora is not specifically addressed within the survey scope. Plants are a relevant species consideration for purposes of PEA and impact assessment (e.g. refer to Box 2 in the PEA guidelines[6]). I consider that specific consideration should be given to scarce arable flora that could occur in arable fields and be adversely affected by changes in land use. Botanical surveys may also be needed in support of evidence gathering to determine presence/absence of ancient woodland.

Given the limited information and rationale provided, I am not in a position to agree that wintering bird surveys can be scoped out. I agree that because relevant designations are located at great distance

[3] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/providing-and-protecting-habitat-for-wild-birds
[4] https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6049804846366720
[5] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/badgers-advice-for-making-planning-decisions
[6] https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Guidelines-for-Preliminary-Ecological-Appraisal-Jan2018-typo-edit.pdf

the site is not likely to represent functionally linked habitat. However, (as with breeding birds) wintering birds are not solely a consideration in relation to designations. The site could still have value for wintering birds, and impacts could arise from the substantive land use change for the proposed development (extensive losses of arable farmland and the enclosing of the landscape).

Approach to Impact Assessment

As advised above with reference to the questions posed, I agree with the approach to ecological impact assessment. This should reference the CIEEM (2022) guidance, as the current iteration of the good practice approach.

The assessment should identify and show regard to relevant planning policy and related guidance, including and particularly National Policy Statements (NPS) EN-1, EN-3 and Planning Inspectorate Advice Note Ten in relation to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). NPS EN-4 is not likely to have direct relevance (as its remit is pipelines), but its requirements in relation to ecology could be translated to cable laying for grid connections e.g. requirements in relation to reinstatement of habitats, and avoidance of important hedgerows.

Given the progress made to date on ecological surveys, I consider that it will be possible to submit a relatively comprehensive and complete ecological impact assessment with the PEIR (as opposed to a more high-level assessment). I encourage this approach as it will permit detailed review and advice in advance of submission of the DCO application.

Likely Significant Effects and Scoping of Receptors for Impact Assessment

The assessment of potential direct and indirect effects on LWS needs to be made with reference to the reasons for designation, and the findings of other impact assessment disciplines (noise, air quality, water resources). Until this has been reported, I am not in a position to agree that there are no likely significant effects on LWS. I also cannot agree that the committed 15m stand-off distance is sufficient. Therefore, I do not agree that LWS can be scoped out.

I agree with the Scoping Report that impacts on birds will be an important consideration (see above) in terms of impact assessment and legislative/policy compliance.

I agree that the lowland meadow priority habitat can be scoped out provided that the habitat is retained and that the proposed development would not prevent/obstruct potential for suitable long term management. This habitat could be a suitable target for habitat enhancement/BNG.

I cannot agree that hedgerows, other priority habitats or (with certain exceptions as identified below) relevant affected species can be scoped out as the relevant survey methods, results and rationale has not been provided to inform decision-making on this.

Section 6.2.9 gives the impression that the commitment to provide habitat mitigation/compensation has been relied on to scope habitats out. The first step is to identify the relative nature conservation value and apply the mitigation hierarchy. Habitat compensation should be a last resort, especially where priority habitats would be affected.

I agree that there is likely to be a case, given commitments for habitat stand-offs, for scoping bats out. However, I defer a final decision on this until the survey results are provided at PEIR stage. This is because a specific uncertainty has been identified in Section 6.2.12. Further, the Scoping Report identifies the presence of barbastelle bat (a Red Data List species) and does not discount potential for this species to be affected.

The grounds for scoping out invertebrates, barn owl, water vole, otter and fish seems reasonable. I also agree reptiles can be scoped out provided the identified higher risk habitats are retained. Precautionary working methods would be sufficient to address the low risk of reptiles being encountered and affected in the wider site.

No likely significant effects would reasonably be anticipated in relation to roe and fallow deer. However, they remain a welfare consideration. Further information is needed on how movement corridors can be maintained for deer, and how mammal gates could apply to animals as large as deer (given needs for security).

Biodiversity Opportunities

The Applicant has not committed to a BNG assessment within the Scoping Report. A BNG assessment will be required to ensure consistency with preceding solar farm projects of comparable scale. This is also a requirement of emerging local planning policy. Biodiversity Metric 4.0 should be utilised unless substantive work has already progressed using Metric 3.1 (the preceding iteration of the metric, which remains approved for use where already adopted[7]). Use of this metric will deliver a structured repeatable evidence base for agreement that no net loss has been achieved, and that a meaningful biodiversity gain can be secured.

The identified opportunities (Section 6.2.10) seem a reasonable starting point. Therefore, I do not wish to make any additional recommendations for habitat creation or enhancement at this time. I agree with the commitment to provide an outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) with the final application.

I recommend that the applicant reviews their list to ensure that mitigation measures are not presented as enhancement opportunities. Mammal gates fall into this category. Similarly, arable interventions would likely represent mitigation for impacts on birds from loss of arable farmland elsewhere within the site.

I do not consider drystone walls to represent meaningful biodiversity enhancement, although they may have incidental benefits for a limited suite of species (but likely less so that creation of semi-natural habitats e.g. hedgerows).

Further explanation is needed for the proposed 'herbal ley' and associated management regimes before it can be agreed that this would deliver meaningful benefits for biodiversity. Particularly, given the impact on farmland birds from changes in land use. With reference to standard definitions, ley usually represents a temporary land-use rather than permanent habitat creation. So, use of this terminology suggests this habitat would not be comparable with wildflower meadow and may need regular replacement sowings to maintain a biodiversity value. Further, a brief internet search indicates such seed mixes are typically marketed as forage for livestock and to improve soil fertility, rather than for purposes of biodiversity enhancement.

Cumulative Impacts and Effects

Given the characteristics of the affected landscape and its habitats, and the species likely to be associated with these, I cannot identify any likely cumulative effects. However, given the limited information received, this would need to be reviewed in more detail at PEIR stage.

In terms of 'intra-project effects', I consider these should be addressed in the main biodiversity impact assessment chapter so that a single cohesive assessment of the impacts and effects of the Proposed Development is reported. This should consider the conclusions of other relevant chapters in more detail (e.g. any potential significant air quality impacts). For example, a combined summary of habitat losses will need to be reported (regardless of the activities contributing to this) for purposes of impact and BNG assessment, and to transparently demonstrate that no net loss and net gain has been achieved.

The approach to assessment of 'inter-project effects' is appropriate.

Yours sincerely

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[7] https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6049804846366720

Cultural Heritage - comment on Springwell Solar Farm Scoping Report
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report to accompany a request for a Scoping Opinion from the Planning Inspectorate (prepared on behalf of the Secretary of State) for the proposed Springwell Solar Farm.

The Cultural Heritage section (6.4) of the Scoping Report notes that the Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record (HER) has been consulted in preparation of the Scoping Report.

- Consultation, study areas:

The Report states that the study areas have been defined as 2km from the site boundary for non-designated heritage assets and 5km for designated historic assets in accordance with the document ('Guidance for large schemes including NSIPs and EIAs, General Scoping Opinion for the Historic Environment') provided by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC).

The LCC guidance also sets out the data sources that should be included to inform the baseline conditions. From the list of sources included in the Report (6.4.3) some have yet to be consulted / interrogated.

The Report notes consultation with LCC, and an intention to consult with Historic England and the local planning authority's (LPA's) conservation officer. Consultation on the cultural heritage, relating to matters on archaeology, should also include the archaeological advisor to the LPA, North Kesteven District Council.

- Surveys to inform the EIA, baseline conditions:

The report notes that a full desk-based assessment including aerial photographic and Lidar data will be produced. The full suite of desk-based information needs to be assessed to inform the baseline.

The baseline conditions as mentioned in the report focus on the HER data and number of non-designated and designated assets recorded and therefore represents only a partial evidence base.

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for geophysical survey has been agreed with LCC.

- Trial trenching:

The report states only that *the need for, scope and timing of intrusive evaluation will be negotiated and agreed with statutory consultees following* completion of the desk-based and geophysical surveys.

The proposals for construction of a solar farm will necessarily have an impact on any buried archaeological remains. Piling, building foundations, cable trenching, access roads, building compounds and construction traffic are all known impacts and the cumulative effect will be significant. Therefore, trial trenching is required to establish the baseline conditions and to understand the nature and extent of the impacts on the archaeological remains.

There is currently insufficient information on the presence, character, date and significance of any archaeological deposits. The results of the full desk-based assessment including the aerial photographic and Lidar assessments together with the results of the geophysical survey will inform the programme of trial trench evaluation.

In order to determine the presence, absence, significance, the depth and extent of any archaeological remains which could be impacted by the development, trial trenching should target

areas where archaeological remains have been identified in the foregoing, non-intrusive surveys as well as areas where the surveys have not detected archaeological remains.

The programme of trial trenching should be set out in a written scheme of investigation (WSI) to be agreed with the archaeological consultees prior to commencement of the field investigation.

The results of the trial trenching and foregoing surveys will inform the archaeological mitigation strategy.

- Mitigation:

It is proposed that where primary mitigation (by design) is not feasible that additional mitigation (6.4.6) *will take the form of a programme of archaeological investigation and recording secured by a DCO Requirement. Such a programme may include pre-commencement phases of archaeological excavation and / or archaeological "watching brief" during construction.*

There is currently insufficient information to determine the nature and scope of the mitigation (whether by design or through archaeological investigation). A trial trench evaluation is required in order to establish the baseline conditions, provide an appropriate assessment of the significance of likely effects and inform the mitigation strategy.

Mitigation through archaeological excavation may be required. Without detailed information on the archaeological potential and the likely impact of the proposals mitigation by means of a 'watching brief' during construction is not considered acceptable as a first response.

The results of the assessments and site specific evaluation will inform the archaeological mitigation strategy. The results should be used to minimise the impact on the historic environment through informing the project design and an appropriate programme of archaeological mitigation (secured in the DCO).

- Likely significant effects:

The likely significant effects (6.4.7) cannot be determined in the absence of an assessment of the baseline conditions. The section acknowledges the uncertainty of potential direct and indirect effects. It is not considered appropriate to propose that certain heritage assets be scoped out at this stage.

The assets proposed to be scoped out of assessment (6.4.9) are not supported by an evidence base and appear to be piecemeal and based largely on setting effects (rather than an assessment of the significance of the asset and the likely impact of the proposals) or on the type of record (for example findspots). Any proposal to 'descope' designated or relevant non-designated assets must be informed by an evidence base demonstrating the lack of direct or indirect impact upon the heritage asset and its significance.

The Settings Assessment/Heritage Impact Assessment needs to demonstrate an understanding of the significance and context of each of those assets in order to assess the impact of the development upon them and propose any mitigation.

Section 6.4.9 also proposes scoping out all heritage assets at decommissioning. The nature of these assets has yet to be determined and assessed and, for example where identified assets may have been avoided / protected in situ during construction / operation they may be under threat from disturbance or destruction during decommissioning. Cultural heritage should be a consideration as part of any outline decommissioning plans.

The section entitled 'Opportunities for enhancing the environment' (6.4.10) has not considered the positive and / or beneficial effects of the programme of archaeological surveys and investigations to be undertaken during this process and the added value that a large development can make to archaeology and cultural heritage. The programme of archaeological works should include proposals for community outreach, public engagement and dissemination of the results.

- References

Reference should be made to planning and specialist cultural heritage and archaeological guidance and standards and should include the Lincolnshire County Council Archaeology Handbook (2019) which sets out requirements for work in the county, including archiving and deposition.

In summary, the EIA will need to contain sufficient information on the archaeological potential and must include evidential information on the depth, extent and significance of the archaeological deposits which will be impacted by the development. The results will inform a fit for purpose mitigation strategy which will identify what measures are to be taken to minimise or adequately record the impact of the proposal on archaeological remains.

The provision of sufficient baseline information to identify and assess the impact on known and potential heritage assets is required by Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (Regulation 5 (2d)), National Planning Statement Policy EN1 (Section 5.8), and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 6.4.14 Scoping questions

• *Do you agree with the proposed list of consultees?*
No, the archaeological advisor to the local planning authority should be included.

• *Do you agree with the proposed study areas?*
Yes, the report defines a study area of 2km for non-designated heritage assets and 5km for designated heritage.

• *Do you agree that the data sources listed to inform the EIA baseline characterisation are appropriate?*
Yes, if a full desk-based assessment is provided in accordance with the guidance provided by LCC.

• *Do you agree that the surveys proposed to inform the EIA baseline characterisation are appropriate?*
No, geophysical survey has been included, however, a programme of archaeological trial trenching has not been included and is required to inform the baseline conditions, an appropriate assessment of impact and the mitigation strategy.

• *Are any receptors / assets / resources not identified that you would like to see included in the EIA?*
All heritage assets as identified through the EIA process should be included (the required assessments, surveys and investigations have yet to be carried out).

• *Do you agree with the proposed additional (secondary and tertiary) mitigation measures and is this mitigation appropriate?*
No. Insufficient information is available to understand the mitigation measures that may be required. A programme of archaeological trial trenching is required to inform an appropriate mitigation strategy to be included in the Environmental Statement.

• *Do you agree with the receptors / matters that are proposed to be scoped in and out of the EIA?*
No. As the evidence base and assessments have yet to be carried out or completed no receptors / matters should be scoped out of the EIA at this stage.

Denise Drury
Senior Historic Environment Officer
Heritage Lincolnshire
12th April 2023

Review of Scoping Opinion Springwell Solar Project

NKDC

March/April 2023

LANDSCOPE
LAND & PROPERTY

Contents

Review of Scoping Opinion Springwell Solar Project

Instructions to Landscope

Landscope - Introduction/background (p10-34), Land, soils and groundwater (p115 onwards) and Cumulative Effects (p137 onwards).

1. The Site and Proposal

The Proposed Development comprises the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) generating modules, battery storage facilities, and grid connection infrastructure with a capacity in the region of 800MW.

The Site is located within the administrative boundary of North Kesteven District Council, in the county of Lincolnshire. The Site measures approximately 1,702 hectares (ha) and extends across three distinct parcels (referred to as Springwell West, Springwell Central and Springwell East). The Site boundary and three land parcels are presented in **Appendix 1**.

Walkover Survey

Paragraph 6.6.4 indicates that a walkover survey has occurred, and this will be *useful in establishing the practicalities of the soil survey and ALC*.

6.6.4. Surveys to inform the EIA baseline characterisation
• A walkover survey of the Site and surrounding area has been undertaken as part of the baseline assessment (20 - 21 October 2022, as reported in the PRA report). This included taking notes, annotating site plans and taking photographs.

• An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey is underway to provide confirmation of ALC across all areas of the Site.

2. Agricultural Land Classification and Soils

The majority of the site is shown as Grade 2 and/or Grade 3 on the provisional ALC maps of the area. **Appendix 2** shows the approximate location of the 3 main areas in relation to land grades. The scoping document indicates that:-

- *Agricultural land survey: ongoing (on-site survey work to be completed by the end of April)*

Appendix 2 also shows the likelihood of best and most versatile land (BMV) in the general area. Large parts of the site fall within the higher categories, where 40-60% of the land is likely to be BMV.

It is important that the ALC survey is undertaken in line with the MAFF 1988 guidelines and TIN049. These documents set out the precise methodology by which the ALC survey should be undertaken, with auger bore sampling at 1 hectare intervals and a suitable number of soil pits dug to determine the precise nature of the soil(s).

The Scoping Document states:-

Soils
An ALC survey is currently being undertaken at the Site.
National level data shows that most of Springwell Central and the southern section of Springwell West is classified as Grade 2 agricultural land. Percentages of best and most versatile (BMV) land across the

Site calculated to date using the National Level Data show that 32.8% of the Site is Grade 2 land (497Ha) and 67.2% of the Site is classified as Grade 3 land (1,020Ha). Grade 2 is defined as very good quality agricultural land and Grade 3 is defined as good to moderate quality agricultural land.

Publicly available soils mapping shows the whole Site to be covered by soils within Soilscape 3, which are defined as shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone. These are categorised as freely draining and are generally used as arable and grassland.

According to available published data and local knowledge, the soils locally are mainly Marcham 343e and Aswarby 512a Soil Associations. Both of these soils are limestone based, with shallow well drained loamy soils, over limestone and deeper brown earths. Occasionally there are heavier clay soils present of the Curdridge 841a Association. **Appendix 3** sets out a description of each of these three soil associations from Cranfield University.

The area locally is known as The Heath. Previous ALC surveys locally on these soils and similar have indicated a mixture of Grades 2, 3a and 3b land. It is likely that the shallower soils will be 3b, whilst deeper soils will be 3a or Grade 2, even with some areas of Grade 1.

The ALC should identify where BMV land is and the scheme should seek to protect and minimise damage to higher grade land wherever possible in line with national planning policy. There is undoubtedly a lot of BMV land in this vicinity and only a full ALC will identify where it is and what the Grade and quality is. Laboratory analysis of representative samples should be used to determine textures.

3 Ecological effects

Where land is used for biodiversity it would not be available for agriculture. However even if it is available for some form of cutting or grazing it is unlikely that the ALC grade will change significantly during the life of the project. There is evidence that organic matter builds up in biodiversity areas at a faster rate than arable farmland and this may benefit the land, but it is not a factor in the assessment of ALC.

Long term, where biodiverse land becomes ecologically important there is the possibility of land becoming assigned with environmental designations, such as SSSI status, though generally this has not so far occurred on other solar sites.

Revisions to the Environmental Impact Assessment rules regarding the cultivation of agricultural land suggest that if land remains uncultivated for longer than five years, then permission may be required from Natural England to bring the land back into arable cultivation.

Any material enhancement in the botanical diversity of the sward (to the extent that this site is considered to be of ecological value), will limit the capacity for the land to be returned to arable use after the solar plant has been decommissioned. The EIA (Agriculture) (England) (No.2) Regulations 2006 prohibit the physical or chemical cultivation of what are considered to be 'semi-natural areas'.

Cultivation is not clearly defined and does not necessarily require land to have been ploughed. The application of pesticides and fertiliser may be sufficient, but the biodiverse areas are much less likely to receive these treatments once established and there is the possibility that large areas of

environmentally interesting land may therefore not be allowed to return to arable farmland after the 40 year period. This is a complex area as there may be planning conditions that require land to be returned to agriculture as part of any consent and it is an open question whether the compliance with a 'restoration' condition 'trumps' any future environmental status or requirement.

Grazing management at this Site is not easily compatible with standard biodiversity management practices at Solar Photovoltaic sites due to fundamental population biology principles. As the site is in arable production at present, it currently has a relatively low level of biodiversity. The grazing management plan may, therefore, lead to a modest increase in species richness at the site from current base levels, but it will not deliver the level of biodiversity that the site could potentially achieve if biodiversity gains were prioritised over agricultural production.

By grazing land for agricultural livestock production, the level of disturbance is high. This prevents plant species with a slow establishment rate (which often are those which are ultimately strong competitors) from growing – and thus the invertebrates that feed on these species are also excluded from the area.

Areas which promote high species diversity often use low intensity grazing as a means to promoting biodiversity. Grazing represents a form of disturbance to the area, thus preventing any one species becoming too dominant. It also helps manage the sward to provide an optimum habitat for invertebrates.

Grazing for biodiversity enhancement usually occurs between October and April, which will allow plants to flower and set seed. The stock densities are monitored and adjusted to prevent either under and overgrazing and to ensure the sward contains a mix of long and short vegetation with some plants in flower.

There is therefore some conflict between maintaining the land in agricultural production and improving biodiversity. Whilst not incompatible, site based issues, such as soil type(s) and local agricultural practices may create future problems. Often biodiversity areas particularly target the highest grades on agricultural land and any future restriction that might prevent its return to cultivation should be a consideration in the planning process and in the conditioning of any consent.

4 Cumulative Impacts including District ALC

There are a number of small(er) and largescale Solar PV schemes in Lincolnshire, with others planned or proposed. There are five known solar project NSIP schemes; specifically in relation to impacts on agricultural land. The situation is a moving picture as new proposals come froward from time to time. Most of these sites are proposed on farmland. Lincolnshire and N Kesteven in particular are agricultural areas with substantial areas for land within the Best and Most Versatile category. Much of the non BMV land will be Grades 3b and 4 with very little Grade 5.

A county-level alternative assessment area should be applied which as a minimum should consider scope for connection into the National Grid at the locations proposed by the registered NSIP solar projects named above, and with specific consideration of agricultural land impacts.

For a project of this scale where the project will tie up the land for up to 40 years, there will be some impact. The area is large locally and if the quantities of BMV are as expected or similar then the impact will be moderately significant. However if the BMV is greater and of higher grades then I would expect the impact to be more significant at a District Level. Environmental Impact Assessments give guidance

on the size and quality of Land Grade that is or can be affected by development proposals. The loss of such a large area of land would normally be considered as significant at District level, even though the use is 'temporary'. Any permanent loss of land due either to construction or through biodiversity designation may affect this assessment further.

5 Sheep Farming and Other Farming Impact

This part of Lincolnshire is a mainly arable farming area with only limited sheep grazing operations. Whilst it is perfectly possible to graze the areas under and between the panels, it is unlikely to be very cost effective for a grazier. The difficulties of rounding up sheep and handling them, together with finding sick or wounded animals makes the grazier's workload harder and more complex.

As such the economics of moving sheep to and from the site will be marginal. However, most examples quoted do not charge much or anything for the grazing and this may make it sufficiently attractive for a local farmer or shepherd with a 'flying flock'.

Land in use for solar panels is generally ineligible for the normal agricultural subsidies, such as the Basic Payment Scheme (now being phased out) and the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). It does not prevent land from being managed in similar ways, but there will be no payments available to farmers (e.g. graziers) for compliance and this could make farming less financially attractive going forward.

The site will probably have to be (re)seeded to grass, or species rich grassland, but this will probably occur after the panels have been sited on the land. In my experience grass does not grow well under the panels themselves. There are often areas that are dry and barren or that only host weeds species, due to heavy shading.

As part of any environmental statement there should be an impact statement with reference to the farm holdings affected by the proposal. This should address viability, infrastructure and long term consequences on the individual holding.

6 Construction Phase

Soil Damage During Construction

Soil structure can be significantly damaged during the construction phase of the process. There is a lot of trafficking of vehicles on the land to erect the panels and if this work is undertaken when soils are wet, there can be significant damage. Much of this damage can be remedied post construction but not all and it is possible that long term drainage issues occur on the site due to the construction. **Appendix 4** shows photographs of before during and after construction of a large solar farm in Hampshire where soil structural issues were a major problem post construction. Once the panels are in place usual agricultural practices such as subsoiling become difficult

During the construction phase many of the areas will affect soil and water issues. **Appendix 5** sets out a basic Soil Management Plan that should be established as part of the Construction Phase, to minimise the impact on soil resources. The following headings should be included in the Soil Management Plan.

- Site preparation;
- Import of construction materials, plant and equipment to Site;

- Establishment of Site construction compounds and welfare facilities;
- Cable installation;
- Temporary construction compounds;
- Trenching in sections
- Upgrading existing tracks and construction of new access
- roads within the Site;
- The upgrade or construction of crossing points (bridges /culverts) at drainage ditches within the Site;
- Appropriate storage and capping of soil;
- Appropriate construction drainage;
- Sectionalised approach of duct installation;
- Excavation and installation of jointing pits;
- Cable pulling;
- Testing and commissioning; and
- Site reinstatement (i.e. returning any land used during construction, for temporary purposes, back to its previous condition).
- Use of borrow pits

Para 2.6.9 sets out what the intention is for a soil management plan.

Soils Management

2.6.9. An Outline Soils Management Plan (oSMP) will be prepared and submitted with the DCO Application. The oSMP will follow the principles of best practice to maintain the physical properties of the soil, with the aim of restoring the land to its pre-construction condition at the end of the lifetime of the solar farm.

Biographical

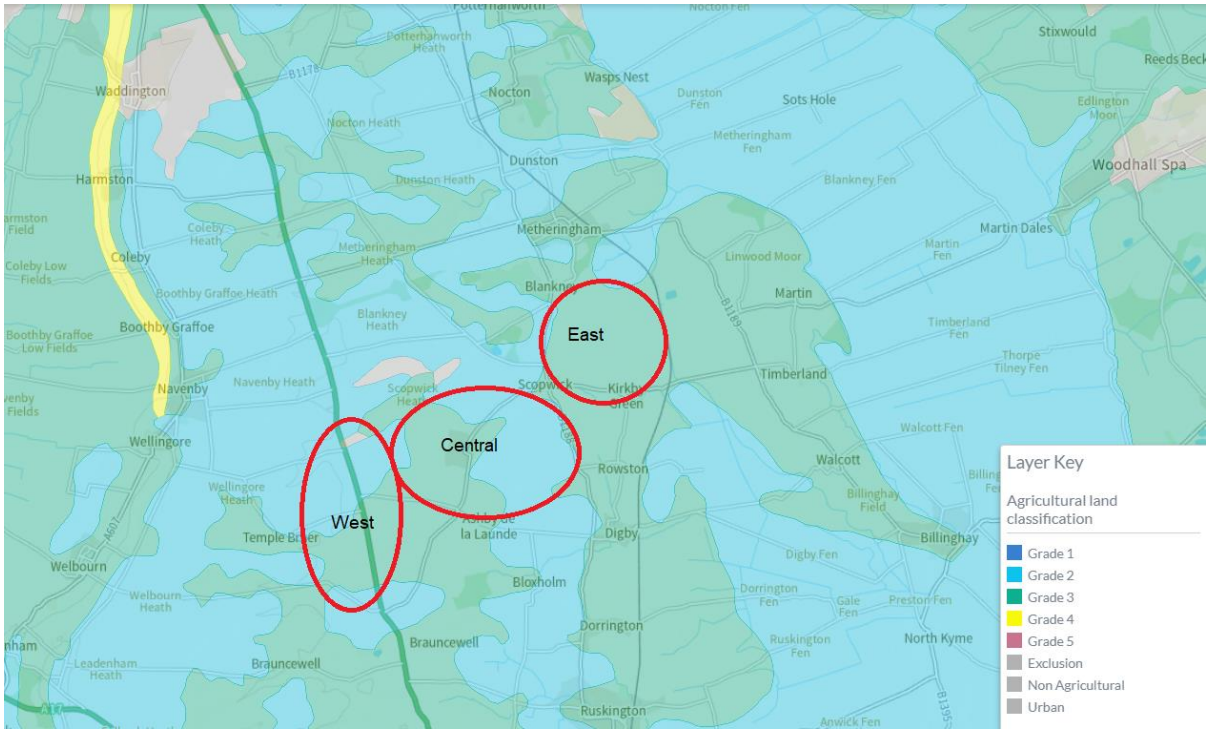
Sam Franklin BSc (Hons) MSc MISoilSci PIEMA FBIAC
A Panel Member of the Agricultural and Land Drainage Tribunal

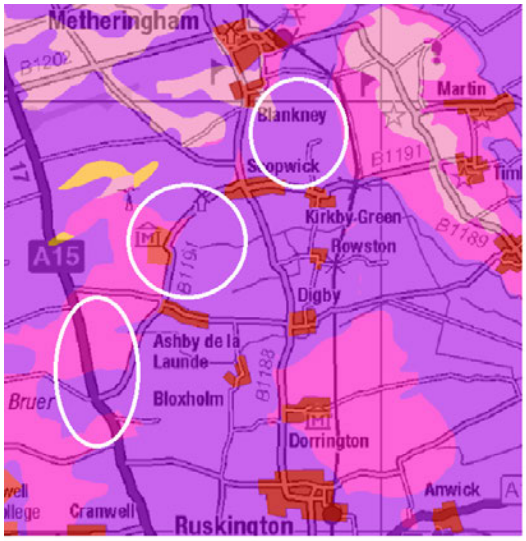
- Sam is a Member of the Institute of Professional Soil Scientists and a Life Member of the British Society of Soil Science. He undertakes soil survey and land management work for private clients, developers, local authorities and government agencies and has worked on soil restoration, flood risk, drainage and land improvement projects, as well as Agricultural Land Classification for roads, development sites, renewable energy projects and EIA. He has been a Professional Associate of the Institute of Environmental Assessment, since 2001.
- He has an MSc from Cranfield University, attending Cranfield advanced training in Soil Matters, Land Evaluation, Soil & Water: Principles and Management in Production Systems and soil science courses of IPSS and Lancaster University. He has given talks, demonstrations and on-farm advice on ALC, soil and water management, land drainage, rainwater harvesting and soil husbandry. Sam has worked overseas in dryland climates and is familiar with land drainage, irrigation scheduling and reservoir design.
- From a family farm, Sam has a BSc (Hons) in Agriculture from Newcastle University and has considerable practical, farm-based agricultural, horticultural and soils management experience gained on mixed, livestock, horticultural and arable units and international work. Sam is a Fellow of the British Institute of Agricultural Consultants (FBIAC) and holds the Royal Horticultural Society Certificate in Horticulture.
- As a qualified chartered surveyor (MRICS, FAAV) and agricultural consultant he has over 35 years of experience across a wide range of property matters including both commercial and housing planning projects, compulsory purchase, new roads, pipelines and rail projects, development land, farming, property management, renewable energy, minerals, land restoration, archaeological surveys, and EIA.
- Sam has been managing director of a surveying and rural planning business since 2001 (www.landscope.co.uk). Previous employment includes five years at the RSPB, work for other environmental and conservation organisations, regarding landscape restoration & management, habitat creation, minerals restoration and woodland management; all requiring detailed soils, water and environmental knowledge.
- He has undertaken soil and water management, soil husbandry and Catchment Sensitive Farming work for Natural England and since 2003 has given regular rural planning consultancy advice to Local Planning Authorities, mainly across southern, eastern and midland England; acting as agricultural, equestrian and rural resource expert, regularly attending planning committees, public inquiries, hearings, NSIP and examinations in public.

Appendix 1

Springwell Solar Farm

Appendix 2





Predictive BMV Land Assesment © Defra

- High likelihood of BMV land (>60% area bmv)
- Moderate likelihood of BMV land (20 - 60% area bmv)
- Low likelihood of BMV land (<= 20% area bmv)
- Non-agricultural use
- Urban / Industrial

Appendix 3

0343e MARCHAM

Detailed Description

Marcham association consists mainly of the Marcham and Cranwell series, typical brown rendzinas and typical brown calcareous earths respectively, on gently undulating land between 30-100m O.D. in central Lincolnshire. The association occurs on the Lincolnshire Limestone close to remnants of till or plateau sands and gravels. The shallow to moderately deep brown coarse loamy soils are slightly stony, permeable and well drained. Small areas of Elmton and Aberford series are included. Marcham and Elmton series occur mainly on flat plateau sites with Cranwell and Aberford soils in dry valleys and hollows. To the north-west of Sleaford, Cranwell rather than Marcham soils are the dominant component and elsewhere small patches of moderately deep non-calcareous loamy soils occur.

Soil Water Regime

The soils are permeable and well drained (Wetness Class I) and readily accept winter rainfall with little surface run-off. Marcham soils are moderately droughty for arable crops. Cranwell soils, being deeper, have larger reserves of available water and are slightly droughty, although droughtiness varies with the depth to limestone. These droughtiness assessments assume that plant roots abstract a significant volume of water from the underlying, well-fissured limestone.

Cropping and Land Use

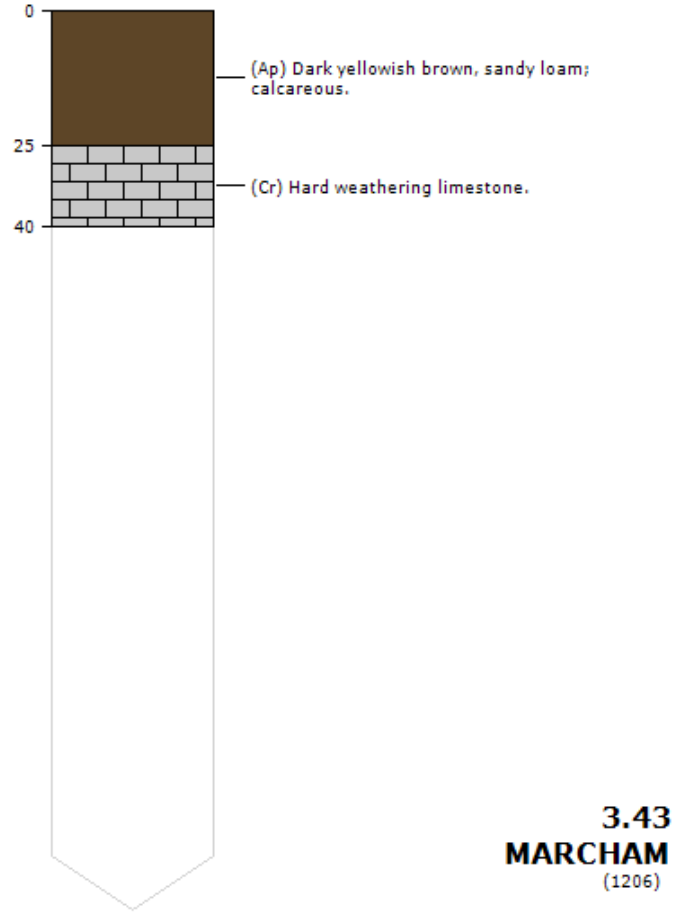
Cereals are widely grown on these soils, with sugar beet and potatoes. The soils are easily worked and there are adequate periods for autumn and spring cultivations even in wet years, but surface stones may cause patchy germination, inaccurate seed spacing, and harvesting difficulties in sugar beet and potatoes. Yields from direct drilling of autumn and spring-sown crops are similar to those using conventional techniques. Under grass the main soils have very high trafficability and there is little risk of poaching. The small available water reserves in Marcham soils limit grass growth mainly to spring and early summer but the deeper Cranwell soils give better autumn growth. Grass for drying is grown locally.

0343e MARCHAM

Definition

Major soil group:	03 lithomorphic soils	Shallow, with a distinct, humose or peaty topsoil, but no subsurface horizons more than 5 cm thick (other than a bleached horizon). Normally over bedrock, very stony rock rubble or little altered soft unconsolidated deposits within 30 cm depth.
Soil Group:	4 rendzinas	Calcareous, over chalk, or extremely calcareous rock rubble or soft unconsolidated deposits.
Soil Subgroup:	3 brown rendzinas	(with brownish distinct topsoil that is not extremely calcareous)
Soil Series:		light loamy lithoskeletal limestone

Brief Profile Description



0512a ASWARBY

Detailed Description

The Aswarby association consists mainly of fine loamy gleyic brown calcareous earths, Aswarby series; with fine loamy brown rendzinas, Elmton series; clayey calcareous pelosols, Haselor and Evesham; and clayey pelo-stagnogley soils, Denchworth series. It occurs on level to gently undulating land over interbedded Jurassic limestone and clays extending from Humberside to south Lincolnshire. Fine loamy Aberford series, and fine loamy over clayey Wickham seriesoften occur locally.

The association occurs on the Cornbrash and Great Oolite limestones which are often only 2 m thick in Lincolnshire and are underlain by slowly permeable clay or clay-shale. The soils occur in the middle of the dipslope in central Lincolnshire but on valley sides of the lower dipslope in south Lincolnshire. The relative proportions of component soils vary with the proportion of limestone and clay beds, the width of outcrop and position in the landscape. There are wide outcrops of thin limestone near Sleaford where Aswarby soils are dominant with the clayey soils present around the fringes. In other parts of Lincolnshire the distribution of soils is more patchy and Elmton soils are more common.

Aswarby soils are normally shallow with limestone within 60 cm depth. They are distinguished from Aberford soils by having a yellowish brown rather than strong brown matrix colour and faint subsoil mottling. Some soils similar to Aswarby series with distinct mottling within 40 cm depth are included. Fine loamy over clayey Wickham soils occur in valleys of south Lincolnshire.

The main area in the region is near Scunthorpe where thin limestones are underlain by slowly permeable clay or clay-shale. Aswarby soils, which experience some temporary waterlogging, and the well-drained Elmton series are most common overall but their distribution, and that of the associated contrasting clayey soils, is variable.

Soil Water Regime

Waterlogging in Aswarby soils is for short periods only, and is caused by slowly permeable clay beds underlying the thin limestones (George and Robson 1978). Most fields with Aswarby series, however, have perimeter ditches and farmers commonly identify these soils as the wetter of the brashy limestone soils. Aswarby soils are well drained or only occasionally waterlogged (Wetness Class I or II) but the ancillary clayey soils are seasonally waterlogged (Wetness Class III). The land accepts winter rainfall readily with only little surface runoff but there is some lateral flow at shallow depth where clayey subsoils occur. Denchworth and Aswarby soils are slightly droughty for most crops but Elmton and Haselor series are moderately droughty. All the soils are moderately or very droughty for grass.

Cropping and Land Use

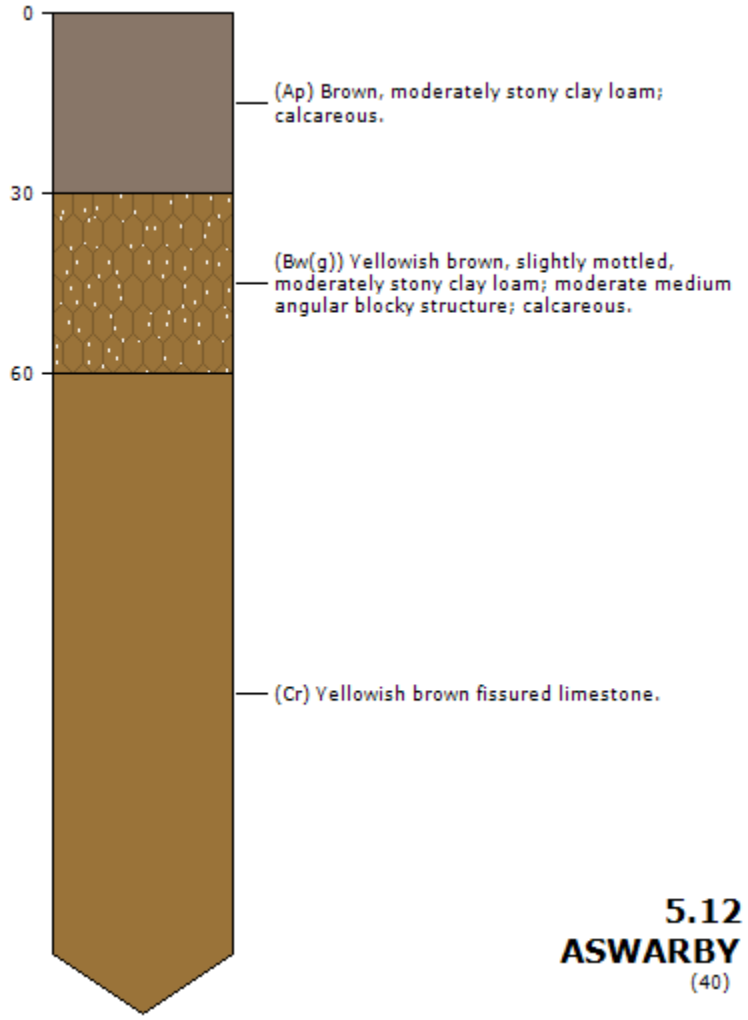
Aswarby and Elmton soils are easily cultivated but the clayey Denchworth, Haselor and Evesham soils are more difficult to work. Many of these clayey soils have a large content of very fine clay and are very sticky when wet. Some Aswarby and Elmton soils have many stones which hinder cultivations. Locally in south Lincolnshire, these soils have weakly fissured rock at shallow depth that restricts rooting, causing crop failure in years that are dry in May and June.

The land is mainly arable with cereals, sugar beet, potatoes and temporary grassland. Potatoes are irrigated locally. Droughtiness limits grass yields and summer grazing. The land is easy of access and there is little risk of poaching on Aswarby and Elmton soils but Haselor and Denchworth soils poach and rut easily. There is only slight risk in slurry acceptance on Aswarby and Elmton soils but moderate to severe risk on Haselor and Denchworth soils. Available potassium levels are moderate and phosphorus low to moderate; low levels being characteristic of the clayey soils.

Definition

Major soil group:	05 brown soils	With dominantly brownish or reddish subsoils and no prominent mottling or greyish colours (gleying) above 40 cm depth. They are developed mainly on permeable materials at elevations below about 300 m.0.D. Most are in agricultural use.
Soil Group:	1 brown calcareous earths	Non-alluvial, with calcareous loamy or clayey subsoils without significant clay enrichment.
Soil Subgroup:	2 gleyic brown calcareous earths	(faintly mottled with permeable subsoil)
Soil Series:		medium loamy material over lithoskeletal limestone

Brief Profile Description



0841a Curdridge

Detailed Description

Curdridge and Deepdale series are deep, permeable coarse loamy soils on fine-grained Jurassic sand and sandstone but Denchworth soils are slowly permeable clayey soils on clay-shale. The association occurs on level to gently rolling land on the narrow outcrop of Kellaways sand, sandstone and clay beds extending the length of Lincolnshire into Humberside. Included are Wickham, Lawford and fine sandy Paradise (Clayden and Hollis 1984) soils. Curdridge and Deepdales series are co-dominant in central Lincolnshire. In north Lincolnshire there are more sand and sandstone beds than elsewhere and here fine sandy soils are present. Patches of blown sand also occur in north Lincolnshire giving sandy topsoils. In south Lincolnshire the association adjoins areas of chalky till and locally has inclusions of Lawford and Wickham series where thin Head overlies clay-shale. Many Curdridge soils become finer-textured with depth owing to the presence of interbedded clay and sandstone bands. Many areas have thick clay-shale bands below 1 metre depth.

Soil Water Regime

Curdridge and Deepdales soils are affected by groundwater and are occasionally waterlogged (Wetness Class II). Denchworth soils, even when drained, are seasonally waterlogged for longer periods (Wetness Class III). The soils respond well to drainage but pipe drains in the loamy soils become blocked with fine sand. There is local seepage on some slopes. The main soils are water retentive and are slightly or non-droughty for the main arable crops but moderately droughty for grass. Denchworth soils are more droughty and are very droughty for grass.

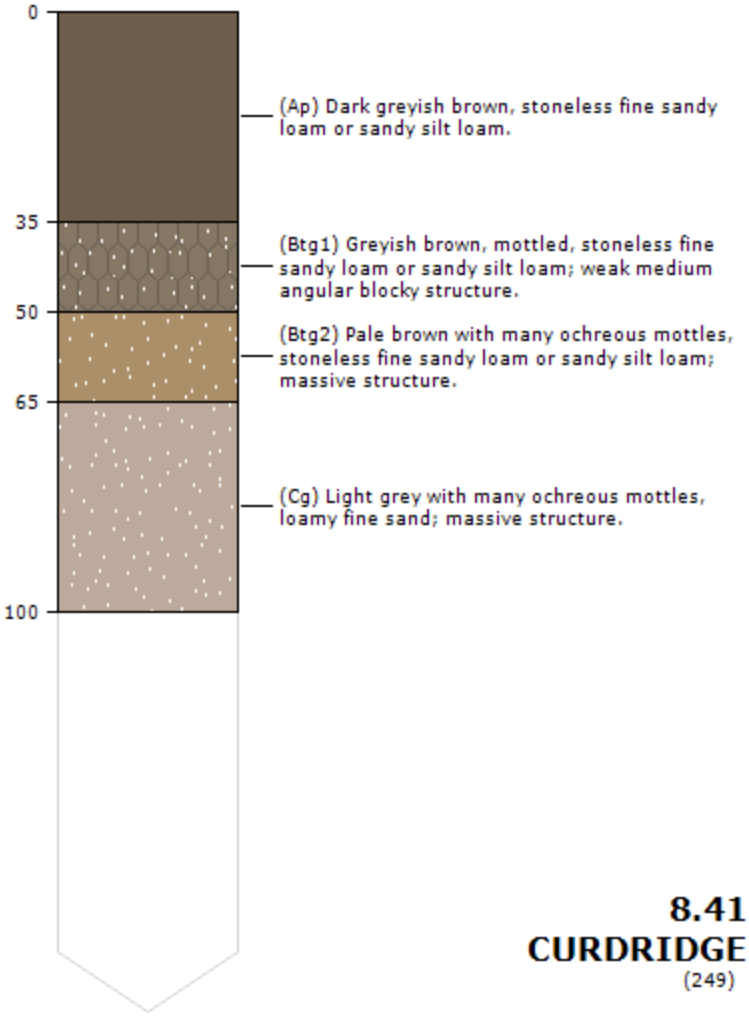
Cropping and Land Use

Curdridge and Deepdales soils are easy to cultivate and there are ample opportunities for autumn and spring landwork. The large fine sand content gives rise to surface capping which delays seedling emergence. When worked at unsuitable times, subsurface compaction occurs which reduces infiltration and causes surface wetness. This can be remedied easily by shallow subsoiling. Denchworth soils are more intractable than the other soils and less time is available for cultivation especially in wet springs. The common occurrence of loamy and clayey soils in the same field makes it difficult to time cultivations correctly.

The land is mainly arable. Cereals, sugar beet and potatoes are the main crops but field vegetables, mainly onions, are grown on Curdridge and Deepdales soils. The little grassland is mainly on Denchworth soils which have low potential yield due to droughtiness, poach easily and are not trafficable when wet. With direct drilling the yield of winter cereals is similar to that from conventionally cultivated soils but the yield of spring crops is appreciably reduced. Available phosphorus and potassium levels are moderate. Liming is required periodically on Denchworth soils.

Definition

Major soil group:	08 ground-water gley soils	Seasonally waterlogged soils affected by a shallow fluctuating groundwater-table. They are developed mainly within or over permeable material and have prominently mottled or greyish coloured horizons within 40 cm depth Most occupy low-lying or depressional sites.
Soil Group:	4 argillic gley soils	With a distinct topsoil and a clay-enriched subsoil.
Soil Subgroup:	1 typical argillic gley soils	(with loamy topsoil)
Soil Series:		light loamy material passing to sand or soft sandstone



8.41
CURDRIDGE
(249)

Appendix 4

Soil Management Plan (Outline)

1. The soil stripping, handling, storage and replacement operations should be undertaken in a manner that is consistent with suitable specification and methodology set out in a Soil Management Plan.
2. All topsoil and subsoil material shall be stripped from areas affected by top soil storage bunds, subsoil storage bunds, general fill bunds, hard-standings and other constructions including temporary access roads and vehicle trafficking routes, and shall be stored separately in bunds from any imported material and shall be used for the restoration of the temporary soil storage site unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
3. Soils should be stripped, stored and replaced in line with the MAFF Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils Sheets 1, 2, 3 and 4 - http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090306103114/http:/www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/land-use/soilguid/index.htm .
4. Topsoil and subsoil storage bunds should be placed in approved locations and constructed to ensure secure storage without damage, loss or contamination.
5. Topsoil and subsoil should be stored in bunds not exceeding 3m in height above adjacent existing ground level and shall be constructed and shaped by excavator only (dump trucks should not traffic across the bunds at any time).
6. Imported general fill material should be stored in bunds not exceeding 4m in height above adjacent existing ground level.
7. Bunds should be seeded to grass at the earliest opportunity and shall not be allowed to over-winter without grass cover.
8. No topsoil or subsoil should be sold or otherwise removed from the site.
9. Within 3 months of their construction, the Developer should provide a detailed plan of soil storage bunds showing details of position, volume and soil type. The Developer shall be responsible for maintaining an up-to-date record of all soil storage and general fill bunds throughout the life of the site.
10. The stripping, movement and re-spreading of topsoil and subsoil material should only be undertaken when the topsoil and subsoil material is in a dry and friable condition and the ground is sufficiently dry to allow the passage of heavy machinery and vehicles over it without damage to the soils.
11. All injurious weeds, as defined by the Weeds Act 1959, growing within the working site should be eradicated or adequately controlled by approved method.
12. All vegetation growing on soil storage bunds and peripheral areas within the site should be kept in tidy condition by cutting at least once during the growing season.
13. The boundary of the development should be made stock proof for the duration of the temporary development.
14. All temporary plant, machinery, buildings, fixed equipment, roads and areas of hard standing including site compounds should be removed.
15. The natural subsoil base material should be comprehensively ripped to a minimum depth of 500mm to break up surface compaction before any soil material is spread. The developer should give the Planning Authority notice of an intention to carry out this operation. All large stones and boulders, wire rope and other foreign material arising should be removed. Special attention should be given to areas of excessive compaction such as haul roads where deeper ripping may be necessary.

16. The Developer should be responsible for providing all necessary training of operatives and site supervision by suitably qualified personnel to ensure that the soil replacement operation is carried out in the approved manner.
17. Prior to the commencement of spreading soil, all stones, boulders or foreign objects likely to impede normal agricultural cultivations should be removed from that area.
18. The soil material set aside for use in any agricultural restoration should be spread uniformly in the correct sequence (subsoil followed by topsoil) over the ripped base material, and should be rooted and scarified to full depth without causing mixing between different soil layers. The reinstated agricultural soil profile should be total 450mm thickness overlying prepared and free draining natural stony base material, and should consist of 250mm topsoil and 200mm subsoil derived from the soil stripping operation. This soil profile should meet the technical requirements of the identified Agricultural Land Classification Grade on restoration.
19. All base material ripping, soil spreading and cultivation operations should be carried out in such a manner as to minimise compaction and achieve unimpeded drainage down through the soil profile.
20. Any part of the site restored for agricultural purposes which is affected by localised settlement that adversely affects the agricultural after use should be re-graded including the re-construction of the soil profile to approved specification.
21. Following restoration of the soil materials, the land will be cultivated, seeded and managed appropriately for a minimum of a year and until agreed with the Local Planning Authority that the land meets satisfactory requirements.

Conditions during construction

Appendix 5

1

2

3

4

5

6

Conditions as construction proceeds

Commencement

Mid construction

Near completion

Examples of Localised Drainage Issues/ No Grass Under Panels

AAH consultants

Technical Memorandum 1: AAH TM01

Lincolnshire County Council, Springwell Solar Farm

Landscape and Visual Scoping Opinion

This Review has been carried out by AAH Consultants on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and relates to landscape and visual issues and elements only. It is based upon a review of the relevant sections of the following document:

- *Springwell Solar Farm; Scoping Report; 21st March 2023.* Prepared by *RSK Environment Limited* for *Springwell Energy Farm Ltd.*

Overall, we would expect that the assessment of potential Landscape and Visual matters and evolving proposals relating to the Springwell Solar Farm, as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), follow an iterative process of engagement and consultation to ensure the following are not fixed at this stage and are discussed, developed and agreed at subsequent technical meetings:

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) Methodology;
- Development, and subsequent ZTV, parameters;
- Study Area extents (distance);
- Viewpoint quantity and locations;
- Photomontage/Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs):
    - Quantity and location;
    - Phase depiction;
    - AVR Type and Level.
- Mitigation Measures/Landscape Scheme/Site Layout;
- Cumulative effects, including surrounding developments to be considered; and
- The extent as to which a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) should be considered (based on the Landscape Institute TGN 2/19) if there are residential properties with receptors likely to experience significant effects to their visual amenity.

We would also expect the production of the Landscape and Visual chapter of the Environmental Statement (ES), which would be in the form of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), and any supporting information (such as plans or figures) reflect current best practice and guidance from, as a minimum, the following sources:

- *'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment'*, (GLVIA3), April 2013 by the Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA);
- *'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'*, Natural England (2014);
- '*Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals'*, 17th September 2019 by the Landscape Institute (LI);
- *'Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 1/20 Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs)'*, 10th January 2020 by the Landscape Institute (LI) ;
- *'Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 04/20 Infrastructure',* April 2020 by the Landscape Institute (LI); and

- *'Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 2/21 Assessing landscape value outside national designations'*, May 2021 by the Landscape Institute (LI).

While the focus of this review is on Landscape and Visual matters, other information provided within the report, and associated Appendices, has also been considered, providing background and context to the site. At this initial stage of the NSIP process, the content and level of information provided by the developer within *Section 6.5 Landscape and visual* are generally considered satisfactory, however, as stated previously, we would expect to discuss this content and approach as part of the iterative process. Due to the scale and extent of the site and proposed development, we would be able to discuss and agree the *Scoping questions* within *Section 6.5.14* as part of this ongoing process, as at this stage it is not possible to provide full answers to these questions. The following should be considered in the evolving assessment and layout:

Viewpoints

The final locations of viewpoints are to be reviewed and agreed with LCC and other relevant stakeholders. The final viewpoint selection should also consider views of taller and more conspicuous elements, such as battery storage or sub-stations once the layout is more developed, as well as consider potential key, or sensitive, viewpoints. We would welcome an initial discussion and subsequent workshop (on site if appropriate) with the developer's team in regards to proposed viewpoints.

Photomontages

To gain an understanding of the visibility of the development and how the panels and infrastructure would appear in the surrounding landscape, Photomontages/Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs) should be produced. The number and location of the agreed viewpoints to be developed as Photomontages/AVRs should be agreed with LCC and other relevant stakeholders and produced in accordance with *TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals*. At this stage, it is deemed appropriate that these should be produced to illustrate the proposals at different phases: Existing Situation (baseline), Operational (year 1) and Residual with planting established (10 to 15 years). The Photomontage/AVR Level and Type is to be discussed and agreed.

Methodology

As stated previously, the LVIA should be carried out in accordance with the GLVIA3 and undertaken by suitably qualified personnel. The methodology provided at *Section 6.5.11 and Appendix D* is typical of those used for ES Chapters and standalone LVIA where potential significant effects can be considered and reflects the guidance in GLVIA3. We would request that the most up to date technical guidance be used and the methodology is further interrogated at the next phases of the project.

The *Landscape and Visual* methodology within *Appendix D* identifies that **Significant** effects are identified as those that are "*Major or Major/Moderate*", and that in the case of predicting *Moderate effects* professional judgement will be applied. This is fine and follows GLVIA3, however for full transparency, we would expect that a full explanation be provided in the assessment as to whether a Moderate effect on a receptor is assessed as being **Significant** or not, and not simply relying on stating that an effect is not significant "based on professional judgement".

The methodology should also clearly lay out the process of assessing temporary and permanent elements of the scheme, and the LVIA should clearly identify those elements that would not be

decommissioned at the end of the life of the development, such as the National Grid substation, and assessed accordingly.

Scope of the Study Area:

It is acknowledged in *Section 6.5.2* that, based on desktop (ZTV mapping) and field study, an initial Study Area covering 3km has been allowed for the proposed development, and an extended Study Area covering 5km for the National Grid substation and National Grid connecting tower. At this early stage, we recommend these extents are discussed and further reviewed as the full extent of potential visibility of the development is not yet fully known, and the ZTV mapping within *Appendix F* does identify potential visibility beyond these extents. The ZTV mapping would be updated once the proposals have developed (as stated within paragraph 13.5) and the study area should not be fixed until the full extents of visibility are known from both desktop and site work.

Once the study area has been defined, the LVIA should also provide a justification for the full extent/distance, which would be further refined as part of the iterative process.

Landscape

Published landscape character areas have been identified, however to align with GLVIA3 the LVIA should include an assessment of landscape effects at a range of scales and likely need to include a finer grain landscape assessment that includes the Site and immediate area that also considers individual landscape elements or features that make up the character area. *Sections 6.5.8*. and *6.5.9*. identify a range of potential landscape receptors to be scoped in or out of the LVIA, however at this early stage of the project we request these be reviewed and consulted upon further once proposals have been developed and we are not in a position to confirm their inclusion or omission.

Visual

Several visual receptors are identified within *Sections 6.5.5*. and *6.5.8*. We would expect that the visual assessment would include for identification of visual receptors, and not just an assessment of any agreed viewpoints, which should clearly cross reference viewpoints to associated receptors. *Sections 6.5.8*. and *6.5.9*. identify a range of potential visual receptors to be scoped in or out of the LVIA, however at this early stage of the project we request these be reviewed and consulted upon further once proposals have been developed and we are not in a position to confirm their inclusion or omission.

The visual assessment should take account of the 'worst case scenario' in terms of winter views, and effects associated with landscape mitigation at the Operational Phase (year 1), Residual Phase with planting having established (10 to 15 years), and at the Decommissioning Phase.

The LVIA should ensure all elements associated with the development are considered and assessed, such as battery storage, sub-stations, CCTV poles and boundary fencing, which may be more visible than panels due to height, mass and extent.

Cumulative impacts

Cumulative Landscape and Visual effects should be assessed in regards to other major developments, and in particular commercial scale solar developments, as appropriate in regards to proximity and scale.

Mitigation and Layout

As this is an iterative process, at this stage it is not relevant to comment on any potential mitigation or layout of the development. However, best practice guidance, relevant published landscape character assessment's and Local and County Council Policy and Guidance shall be referred to and implemented as appropriate.

We would also expect the landscape and planting scheme is coordinated with other relevant disciplines, such as ecology, heritage or civils (e.g. SuDS features), to improve the value of the landscape and reflect appropriate local and regional aims and objectives. Any Landscape Scheme and associated Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan should accompany the ES which should cover the establishment period, which is assumed would be up to 15 years to cover the period up to the residual assessment. The management plan should provide for both new planting and existing retained vegetation and how it will be managed and protected through all phases of the development.

Oliver Brown CMLI
AAH Landscape

Mob: [redacted]
[redacted]@aahplanning.com
www.aahconsultants.co.uk

14th April 2023

From: Nina Wilson <nina.wilson@nottscc.gov.uk>
Sent: 20 April 2023 10:38
To: Springwell Solar Farm <SpringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: Springwell Farm Scoping

Dear Stephanie,

Thank you for consulting Nottinghamshire CC on the above, we have no comments to make at this stage of the process.

Regards

Nina

Principal Planner (Policy)

Place, Nottinghamshire County Council

County Hall

West Bridgford

NG2 7QP

[redacted]

Telephone: 01733 453410 (9am - 1pm Mon, Wed, Fri)
Email: planningcontrol@peterborough.gov.uk
Case Officer: Mr M A Thomson
Our Ref: 23/00899/CONSUL
Your Ref: EN010149

PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL

Planning Services

Sand Martin House
Bittern Way
Fletton Quays
Peterborough
PE2 8TY

Peterborough Direct: 01733 747474

Planning Inspectorate

29 March 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

Planning enquiry

Proposal: Application by Springwell Energyfarm Ltd (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Springwell Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

Site address: Springwell Solar Farm

Further to your enquiry received on 23 March 2023, in respect of the above, the Local Planning Authority makes the following comments:

The Local Planning Authority has no comments or observations.

I trust that the above advice is of use however should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details shown at the top of this letter.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Mr M A Thomson
Senior Development Management Officer

From:	Asset.Protection
To:	Springwell Solar Farm
Subject:	RE: EN010149 – Springwell Solar Farm – Reg 10 Consultation and Reg 11 Notification
Date:	29 March 2023 14:02:15
Attachments:	image004.png image005.png EN010149-000006-EN010149 - Scoping Report.pdf EN010149 Letter to stat cons Scoping Reg 11 Notification.pdf

ST Classification: OFFICIAL PERSONAL

Good afternoon

Please be advised that the site boundary is outside STW's area of responsibility.

Kind regards
Anna Cheung

Asset Protection
Asset Strategy & Planning
Chief Engineer

Council Offices
Priory Road
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE11 2XE

Admin 01775 764725
DC Officers 01775 764703

planningadvice@sholland.gov.uk
www.sholland.gov.uk

Springwell Energyfarm Ltd
Cardinal Place
80 Victoria Street
London
SW1E 5JL

24th March 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

PLANNING: PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Reference:	**PE-00088-23**	**Case Officer:**	**Polly Harris-Gorf**
Location:	**Springwell West, Central & East**		
Proposal:	**Proposed Solar Farm**		

Response sent Fri 24/03/2023 16:38

by R Fidler.

This planning advice is given in good faith but is an officer opinion only and therefore is not binding on any formal decision the Council may make following the receipt of a planning application.

BUILDING REGULATIONS

The works that you are proposing may also require Building Regulations and this informal advice or any subsequent planning permission does not give authority under Building Regulations to commence work. Please contact the Building Control section for further information on 01775 764557

[redacted]ly

Polly Harris-Gorf, Principal Planning Officer
[redacted]**@sholland.gov.uk**

From: Fidler, Richard [redacted]@sholland.gov.uk>
Sent: 24 March 2023 16:38
To: Springwell Solar Farm <SpringwellSolarFarm@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: PE-00088-23 Springwell West, Central & East. Scoping consultation and notification. PINS ref EN010149

Dear Stephanie Newman

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11

Application by Springwell Energyfarm Ltd (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Springwell Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

Scoping consultation and notification of the Applicant's contact details and duty to make available information to the Applicant if requested

I refer your letter of consultation dated 23 March 2023.

I confirm that South Holland District Council has no comment to make.

Yours sincerely

Richard Fidler

Development Manager

South Holland District Council

T: [redacted]

E: [redacted]@sholland.gov.uk

www.sholland.gov.uk | www.boston.gov.uk

Scoping Report Response

This is a response of **Scopwick and Kirkby Green Parish Council** to the request for feedback regarding the proposed Springwell Development Scoping Report. This matter has caused genuine concern within our parish and the views of our community form a large part of this response (see appendices).

Comments

Section 2.23: The Rochdale Envelope approach was developed to assist with the development of much larger national infrastructure projects such as HS2 where at the start it is difficult to know what matters will be relevant as the project develops. This flexible approach is not appropriate for a development of this limited and static nature where the matters to be considered can be determined at the start. Its use in this context would be an abuse of the process allowing the Applicants to limit the scope of the application and change their plans at will without proper scrutiny.

Section 2.4: The words 'explored' and 'recreational connectivity' are not specific enough in the ES. The area Springwell East in particular has a very high density of PROW which need full recognition in the scoping report.

Section 2.4.6 Particular concerns regarding lighting, fencing and security cameras. The extent, duration and intensity of lighting needs to be fully illuminated.

Section 5 Environmental factors proposed to be scoped out.

Scopwick and Kirkby Green Parish Council consider following factors should not be taken out of scope:

- 5.2 (Glint & Glare)
- 5.3 (Heat & Radiation)
- 5.4 (Major accidents and disaster)
- 5.5 (Utilities)
- 5.6 (Human health)
- 5.7 (Material assets and waste)
- 5.8 (Population)
- 5.9 (Water)

We consider that all aspects are potentially of major concern to our parish. We accept that some of these factors will be covered by other agencies and reports. However, we consider these need to be fully covered by the EIS as a whole, especially in view of the very large scale and potential degree of hazard associated with this development.

Some of the considerations appear to have been minimalist and fail to address the perceived level of harm to our community.

Some particular concerns are highlighted below:

Section 5.8.5- 5.8.7 Private Property & Houses

- Disagree with no impact on our properties.

Section 5.8.8-5.8.9 Community Land & Assets

- Disagree with removing from scope, a very high density of public access routes pass between blocks of solar panels in Springwell East.

Section 5.8.10-5.8.14 Agricultural & Development Land

- Concerns that this contradicts with the recently published Neighbourhood Plan.

Section 5.8.15-5.8.18 Walkers Cyclists & Horse Riders

- The applicant identifies no impact and indicate this should be out of scope. For all these groups the significant change to the landscape may have a material impact and should be in scope given the especially high density of public access in Springwell East.

Section 6: Environmental factors to be scoped in.

Despite these factors being scoped in we have additional expectations in aspects of biodiversity, cultural heritage, landscape and visual and Land, soils, and groundwater. As residents of Scopwick and Kirkby Green, the Springwell East development in particular will have a major impact on the ability of our community to enjoy local countryside and we seek to minimise this potential impact on our health and wellbeing.

It should be recognised that Scopwick and Kirkby Green are two of the most attractive villages in Lincolnshire and welcome many visitors and tourists. The potential restriction on local business development and its future sustainability needs to be fully explored and mitigated.

In conclusion, this proposed development has already generated very strong opposition by a large number of parishioners at recent public meetings. The scale of this development and impact on the landscape is beyond what any parish of our size should be expected to accept.

Appendices:

APPENDIX A

PART 1 - COMMENTS RECEIVED VIA NO2SPRINGWELLSOLAR EMAIL ADDRESS

This document is structured with the relevant Scoping Report section extract followed by comment received.

1. <u>Rochdale Envelope</u>

2.2.3. In order to maintain flexibility in the design, it is the Applicant's intention to use the 'Rochdale Envelope' approach within parameter ranges. The Planning Inspectorate's Advice Note Nine 'Rochdale Envelope' [Ref 2-1] provides specific guidance to applicants on the degree of flexibility that could be considered appropriate under the PA2008 regime.

Comment Received:

The Rochdale Envelope approach was developed to assist with the development of much large national infrastructure projects such as HS2 where at the start it is difficult to know

what matters will be relevant as the project develops. This flexible approach is not appropriate for a development of this limited and static nature where the matters to be considered can be determined at the start. Its use in this context would be an abuse of the process allowing the Applicants to change their plans at will without proper scrutiny.

2. Landscaping, Habitat Management and Biodiversity Enhancement

2.4.53. The Proposed Development will include landscaping, habitat management, biodiversity enhancement, and amenity improvements, which will be explored as the design progresses. This will be sensitivity designed to retain and enhance ecological and recreational connectivity.

2.4.54. Where possible, existing trees, hedgerows, public rights of way and Local Wildlife Sites would be retained.

Comment Received

The words 'explored' and 'recreational connectivity' are not specific enough again the information in the ES needs to be more specific.

3. Lighting

2.4.61. The National Grid Substation compound, Project Substation compound, BESS compounds, and Collector Compounds would include lighting, in accordance with relevant standards, but will not be permanently lit.

Comment Received

Just lit after dark? Needs to be specific.

4. Use of borrow pits

2.5.9. The use of borrow pits during construction of the Proposed Development will be considered as the design develops. The potential benefit of including borrow pits as part of the Proposed Development include:

• Allows extracted aggregate to be transported to construction locations (largely via site access tracks) within the Site.

• Generates significantly lower levels of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) movements on the local highway network than importation of aggregate from commercial quarries.

• Reduces cost risks arising from double handling, importation from commercial quarries and landfill disposal.

2.5.10. The benefit of using borrow pits will be carefully considered against any potential environmental impacts. Further detail on the approach to identifying suitable borrow pit locations and justification for their inclusions as part of the Proposed Development will be provided as part of the PEIR and ES.

Comment Received

This is a cost cutting exercise allowing the Developers to quarry their own aggregate out of the heath sub-soils to use to build temporary roads and hardstandings; further details and approval from the Environment Agency should be gained. The land where borrow pits are

excavated will never be returned to proper agricultural use and this procedure should be prohibited as unnecessary and open to abuse. Unnecessary as there is a limestone quarry adjacent to the proposed site. Open to abuse as there is no monitoring of the 'rubbish' that may end up being dumped in a pit rather than properly (and more expensively) disposed of.

5. Construction Reinstatement

2.5.16. A programme of construction reinstatement and habitat creation will commence during the construction phase.

Comment Received

The above statement is a contradiction in terms, the construction machinery and the work being carried out will be disruptive and will have an adverse effect on wildlife, surely 'during' should be 'after' and further specific detail is required.

Regarding the solar equipment end of life recycling and agricultural land remediation:

6. Soils Management

2.6.9. An Outline Soils Management Plan (oSMP) will be prepared and submitted with the DCO Application. The oSMP will follow the principles of best practice to maintain the physical properties of the soil, with the aim of restoring the land to its pre-construction condition at the end of the lifetime of the solar farm.

Comment Received

Regarding agricultural land remediation, the document states the land will return to agricultural use at the end of the 40 year period, will the ES confirm that if the development is approved all of the concrete bases, foundations, piles and all other sub-structure elements are grubbed up, crushed and recycled on site into aggregate and then removed for future construction use, also where necessary replacing any topsoils with a similar heathland soil where required?

If this land is not properly restored it will not be able to be farmed in a conventional manner, unable to be cultivated or harvested due to the potential damage to farm machinery. Wild grasses and weeds will grow, and it will look something like the old Butlins Filey holiday camp site does today. I like to see wildflowers growing but not 4,200 acres of them, when this best and most versatile land should be growing food crops.

7. Above ground infrastructure decommissioning and DEMP

2.7.2 At the end of the operational phase, any above ground infrastructure would be dismantled and removed in accordance with industry best practice at the time. The use of decommissioned materials would follow the waste hierarchy such that they would be reused where possible before recycling and disposal were considered.

2.7.3. At the time that decommissioning would take place, the regulatory framework, good industry practices and the future baseline could have altered. The Applicant would consider and implement a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) taking account of good industry practice, its obligations to landowners under the relevant agreements and

all relevant statutory requirements. An Outline DEMP (oDEMP) will be submitted in support of the DCO Application, which will be secured by a DCO.

Comment Received

The ES should properly address this? At the moment solar panels at the end of their usable life are finding their way into landfill in Africa. As far as we know there is no recycling facility in the UK. The West's relationship going forward with China is uncertain.

Springwell should fully address these matters at this pre-planning stage.

The Lincoln Heath is a very fragile part of our county. The heathland soils are light in nature with an element of limestone particles within the growing medium, very free draining to the limestone brash subsoils which continue down to the water bearing strata which is the Central Lincolnshire aquifer which provides drinking water to many hundreds of thousands of homes.

PART 2 – ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION IN AN ES SPECIFIC TO THIS SITE

Flood risk and management: the villages of Scopwick and Kirkby Green have been adversely affected by flooding particularly during periods of high rainfall with an increasing incidence in recent years. The problems created by old and poorly maintained surface water drainage and sewerage systems may be exacerbated by the hard landscaping and the solar panels themselves. This should be investigated at an early stage in assessing the suitability of the land for solar panels.

Pollution: the natural aquifer which is a unique feature of the Lincolnshire Heath and feeds the many springs and streams which occur along the site of the proposed solar development should be assessed and protected. The risks of pollution need to be assessed and monitored. In particular those associated with known risks of harmful chemicals from solar panels and battery installations.

Protected Species: the area is home to many protected species well adapted to the current landscape of open farmland and small woodlands. A full protected species survey should be carried out before construction begins and the habitats protected from development. The area is home to the wild brown hare whose numbers have declined rapidly in recent years due to habitat loss. They are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and listed as a priority species under the UK post 2010 Biodiversity Framework. The area is also an important habitat for birds of prey including the red kite, buzzard, and barn owl. The number of barn owls is declining, and this native bird was placed on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern (2021). Similarly, the area has important populations of ground nesting birds namely skylarks and lapwings, both species named on the Red List as numbers have been subject to recent dramatic decline. Other animals reported in the area and protected by law include bats, hazel dormice, slow-worms and badgers. The area is also home to several populations of deer, whose populations range over fields threatened with being fenced off and covered with solar panels. At a time when the UK has been assessed as one of the most ecologically impoverished countries in the world, it is proposed to take large areas of open countryside and valuable wildlife habitat for industrial use.

Health of those living and working in the area should be considered particularly the effects on mental health. The pandemic highlighted the importance of being out in nature for our mental health. The considerable disruption of construction over many months together with the industrialisation of the landscape with high metal fencing, closely packed solar panels, lighting, CCTV and 3.5m high solar stations housing transformers on this vast scale will necessarily have a negative impact on mental health in an area which is used for both residential and recreational purposes.

Compiled by group secretary.

APPENDIX B

COMMENTS FROM SCOPWICK RESIDENT (MW)

The scoping document seems extremely one sided. As a Parish we need to ensure our voices are heard.

1.1.1 commissioning RSK to prepare the EIA. RSK are not an independent body. They have a biased towards these projects as their ultimate parent company invest in these projects. We should be pushing for a truly independent body. This should be clearly highlighted as a major concern by the PC. RSK are owned by a major US private Equity firm called Ares who are directly involved in the Green Energy Market.

1.5.3 RSK looking to take certain things out of scope in the EIA? This seems to be a common strategy by solar factory developers. Similar strategy was deployed by Mallard Pass developers. We should strongly object. The following should not be taken out of scope - 5.2 (Glint & Glare), 5.3 (Heat & Radiation), 5.4 (Major accidents and disaster), 5.5 (Utilities), 5.6 (Human health), 5.7 (Material assets and waste), 5.8 (population) and 5.9 (Water).

At 5.8 (Population) they reference a document known as LA 112. LA 112 is not relevant they need to reconsider - LA112 is for transport projects this isn't a transport project (Design Manual for Roads & Bridges) There are major impacts to all the groups above as highlighted by the 95% who voted against this project in the last Parish meeting.

- 5.8.5- 5.8.7 Private Property & Houses
  - They see no impact on our properties
- 5.8.8-5.8.9 Community Land & Assets
  - They want this out of scope, they miss the point we live in this area for the outstanding natural beauty.
- 5.8.10-5.8.14 Agricultural & Development Land
  - I believe this contradicts much of what was published in the Neighbourhood plan.
  - How can they position this as out of scope when they are taking 4200 acres of Best Most Valuable farmland out of production.
- 5.8.15-5.8.18 Walkers Cyclists & Horse Riders
  - They see no impact and indicate this should be out of scope. For all of these groups the significant change to the landscape will have a material impact.
  - We are meant to be promoting health and wellbeing and the countryside is a key element of this.

They say that in 40 years the site will be decommissioned and returned to prior condition. However, if we consider 2.4.6, 2.4.19, 2.4.20, 2.4.21, 2.4.24, 2.4.27, 2.4.37, 2.4.38, 2.4.43, 2.4.48

this is clearly not going to happen. These areas are going to be covered in concrete to create hard standing platforms. This along with piling to create footings for the panels this land will never be used again for farming. What cast iron assurances will there be that ever piece of concrete will be removed from the land? Soil management 2.6.9 totally contradicts what's stated in 2.7.2 which states only stuff above ground will be dealt with.

Where does the significant amount of concrete required to convert this farmland into an industrial site meet any green credentials?

- Concrete pillars for the panels
- Concrete under Independent Outdoor Equipment
- Concrete under inverters & Transporter Stations
- Concrete in Collection Compounds
- Concrete in Substations Compounds
- Concrete in Battery Storage Areas
- Concrete in National Grid Substation Areas
- Concrete in Transmission Tower

There is going to be fencing at a minimum height of 2.5 metres up to 3m high, with CCTV up to 5 metres high also lighting. The CCTV is a gross intrusion into our human rights with security tracking our right to roam freely in the countryside. We should object strongly on the ground of privacy and human rights.

2.2 Rochdale Envelope – This seems like an opportunity for the develop to materially change critical elements after a potential consent is granted. We should strongly object. With the resources available to EDF they should be in a position to fully scope and list everything before consent is granted.

2.2.12 Extensive network of Public Rights of Way. These have been in place for many years and were originally scoped by MR Eric Parker, these included 4 promoted walks. These walks will be fundamentally changed and spoilt. At a time when we are focussed so much on people's mental wellbeing this will have a significant detrimental impact.

2.3.24 Cultural Heritage – There are a significant number of Listed Heritage sites across the planned site. These sites will all have their outlooks spoilt by the development.

2.4.62 Drainage - There is already increased risk of flooding in the Scopwick area. The document 5.9.23 references Cook & McQueen (2013) when discussing runoff and potential impacts on flooding. This was a modelled classroom study on a tiny scale. It did demonstrate a small increase. They cannot seriously be using a classroom-based study to take Water out of scope. The potential change to drainage on a site this large could be significant.

Red Kites are protected by Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. The protection of Red Kite is the longest continuous Conservation project in the World. There are several nesting [redacted]

2.5.9 Use of borrow pits - can the planning inspectorate guarantee that these sites won't be filled with construction contaminates and then back filled. Ref 5.7 materials, assets & waste

3.1.1 reasonable alternatives - why has no alternative site or source of power generation been considered.

4.10 Opportunity to enhance the environment WHERE POSSIBLE – there is zero commitment – the only part of the EIA that isn't concrete.

- Panels shipped from China
- Concrete on the Land
- Alteration of Drainage
- Removal of Best most valuable farmland out of production resulting in increase in import and the associated carbon footprint

5.5 Utilities – How can they look to make utilities out of SCOPE

There is a significant risk with the Exolum Pipeline that crosses the Blankney estate. This pipeline is a critical piece of infrastructure and needs to be accessed at any time.

5.8.19 They are trying to indicate that there will be a positive Socio-Economic impact.

Whilst during the construction phase there may be a few extra hotel/B&B rooms rented out the longer-term cost will be much higher as potential tourist will avoid the areas and the impact on property could be devastating.

APPENDIX C - Observations relating to Chapter 5 of the Springwell Solar Farm EIA Scoping Report by Scopwick resident JW

5. Environmental factors proposed to be scoped out.

5.1. Introduction

5.1.1. As part of the EIA process and based on the information available to date, there are a number of environmental factors, as listed under Section 4.1 above, for which it is considered an assessment as part of the EIA is not justified, and therefore a standalone chapter is not proposed to be resented in either the PEIR or ES.

5.6. Human Health

5.6.1. It is proposed that consideration of the potential effects to human health as a result of the Proposed Development will be covered through the findings of other assessments undertaken as part of the EIA process, as follows:

• Air quality;
• Landscape and visual;
• Noise and vibration; and
• Traffic and transport.

Detailed Observations on the arguments put forward for scoping out environmental factors from the EIA assessment.

5.6.2. Each of these chapters within the EIA Scoping Report and subsequent PEIR and ES will consider the potential effects to human health within their own assessments. Outside of the EIA process, a glint and glare assessment will be undertaken (see Section 5.2 above), which will consider the potential human health effects from glint and glare.

5.6.3. There are a number of PRoW crossing the Site which might be used for recreational purposes. Any temporary diversions will be detailed in the Public Rights of Way Commitments, which will be submitted in support of the DCO Application.

Observation. Temporary diversions potentially lasting two years will substantially impact the community's freedom of the community to walk the local countryside with adverse consequences to their health and well-being.

5.6.4. Any changes to PRoW will be agreed in consultation with North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council in order to ensure there are suitable diversions or replacements in place. Impacts to users of PRoW are therefore expected to be minimised and where they do occur, they will be short term and temporary. As such, it is not expected that changes to the PRoW will significantly impact recreational use of the Site and therefore it is proposed to scope this matter out of further assessment.

Observation. It is not clear whether all the current footpaths and permitted paths are covered in the text. This facility is enjoyed and valued not only by the parish but also by the surrounding wider community in the district. A reduction to any of these will impact all communities' freedom of the community to walk the local countryside with adverse consequences to their health and well-being.

5.6.5. As any potential human health impacts will be captured by the aforementioned assessments and there are not expected to be any significant human health impacts outside of these assessments, it is proposed that human health is not subject to dedicated assessment and therefore excluded from the scope of the EIA.

Observation. The above observations fundamentally challenge the Report's assertion that "human health is not subject to dedicated assessment and therefore excluded from the scope of the EIA.".

<u>Population</u>

5.8.7. As no significant effects are expected in relation to private property and housing, it is proposed that these matters be scoped out of further assessment.

Observation. The changes to the local environment arising from the proposed development will very inevitably impact the value of public and private residential property and housing in the area. This is a factor that should not be excluded from the EIA assessment.

5.8.9. As no significant effects are expected in relation to community land and assets, it is proposed that these matters be scoped out of further assessment.

Observation. The community benefits from its current environment as a rural agricultural area which the proposed development as a mega-sized industrial plant will fundamentally impact. Therefore, this should not be scoped out of the EIA assessment.

<u>Agricultural land holdings, development land and businesses</u>

5.8.11. There are no other businesses present within the (development) Site boundary. There is no land allocated for employment use, nor are there any planning applications yet to be determined that will generate employment opportunities at the Site. Therefore, this should not be scoped out of the EIA assessment.

Observation. While at present there are no other businesses, land allocated for business use, or planning applications for such within the Site, there nevertheless is the possibility that such, say as small cooperative agricultural holdings or business enterprises being generated any time in future as an alternative to the proposed development. Therefore, these should not be scoped out of the EIA assessment.

5.8.18. As the PRWC will minimise any potential impacts to walkers, cyclists and horse riders during the construction phase and no significant permanent effects are expected in relation to walkers, cyclists and horse riders during the operational phase of the Proposed Development, it is proposed that these matters be scoped out of further assessment.

Observation. As with 5.63 and 64 it is not clear whether all the current footpaths and permitted paths are covered in the text. This facility is enjoyed and valued not only by the parish but also by the surrounding wider community in the district. A reduction to any of these will negatively impact health and well-being.

Conclusion

5.8.19. As no significant effects to population are expected across any of the five matters detailed in LA 112, it is proposed to exclude population from the scope of the EIA. However, socio-economic benefits as a result of the Proposed Development are expected with regards to:

- Increase in the level of temporary employment;
- The subsequent gross value added to the economy;
- Uptake in the occupancy rate for beds in local hospitality venues; and
- A small number of long-term employment opportunities during operation.

5.8.20. Therefore, a Socio-Economic Benefits Statement will be submitted in support of the DCO Application, highlighting the positive socio- economic impacts of the Proposed Development on the local and regional area. This statement will be produced outside of the EIA process and thus to avoid any potential for confusion or repetition, the Applicant does not consider it necessary to consider socio-economic impacts in an EIA context as well.

Observation. The preceding observations demonstrate that the conclusions set out above in 5.8.19 are flawed in that the EIA proposes scoping out many factors of significance which will invalidate its very purpose. The missing factors should be made to be part of this EIA exercise.

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5th April 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION REFERENCE NO: 146529 (PINS Ref EN010149)

PROPOSAL: PINS consultation on behalf of the Secretary of State for its opinion (a scoping Opinion) as to the information to be provided in an Environmental Statement - EN010149

LOCATION: Springwell Solar Farm

Thank you for identifying West Lindsey District Council as a consultation body and advising that the Secretary of State will be preparing a Scoping Opinion on the information to be provided in an environmental statement (ES). As the case officer I have read through the Scoping Report (SR) by Springwell Energy Farm Ltd dated 21st March 2023 with Section 2 of the SR describing the proposed development including the different phases from construction to decommissioning. Overall it is consider that the SR to be well written and comprehensive.

Planning Policy Context:
The site is a good distance (approximately 8.8 miles) outside the closest West Lindsey District boundary near Cherry Willingham. The statutory development plan for the purposes of S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2012-2036. It is expected that the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Review will be adopted on 13th April 2023 following examination and acceptance of all modifications recommended by the examining inspector. This would then have full weight as part of the Development Plan. As the district of West Lindsey is part of Central Lincolnshire its statutory development is also the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2012-2036, soon to be Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Review.

The Environmental Statement should consider National Planning Policy and Guidance as follows:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- National Planning Practice Guidance (to include):

  - Climate Change
  - Historic Environment
  - Environmental Impact Assessment
  - Air Quality

  - Light Pollution
  - Healthy and Safe Communities
  - Natural Environment
  - Noise
  - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
  - Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements in Decision-taking
  - Water Supply, Wastewater and Water Quality

- National Design Guide 2019
- National Design Model Code 2012
- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)*
- Overarching National Policy Statement on Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)*

* Currently under review by Central Government[1]

Landscape and Visual Impact:
As set out in the SR the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) should follow the guidance of the Landscape Institute "Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (2013), as proposed. An iterative approach, which guides the layout and scheme design should be followed.

The location of the proposed Solar Park would be approximately 8.8 miles (14.3 kilometres) to 12.3 miles (19.9 kilometres) from the shared North Kesteven and West Lindsey district boundary. The height of the development (including infrastructure) would primarily be no more than around 6 metres high, however paragraph 2.4.43 of the SR states that *"The National Grid Substation compound would have an approximate footprint of 500m x 500m in plan, and up to 15m in height. The majority of the infrastructure would be up to 6m in height, however, the steel gantries are assumed to be up to 15m in height".* The SR in paragraph 2.4.39 assumes that the National Grid Substation would be on the site. It is requested that more clarity and certainty is provided in the ES statement in terms of the location and appearance of the National Grid Substation which would have structures up to 15 metres in height.

Given the height of the development subject to the location of the 15 metre high unit it would either not be expected to be in view from any parts of the West Lindsey District or if in view would not be expected to have an unacceptable harmful visual impact on the West Lindsey District. Therefore it is not considered likely that any viewpoints from West Lindsey would be necessary and no residential properties in West Lindsey are expected to be affected.

Cumulative Effect:
West Lindsey which is part of Central Lincolnshire, with North Kesteven District Council and Lincoln City Council, and is expecting four large scale solar projects (nationally significant infrastructure) to be applied for through a Development Consent Order in addition to Springwell Solar Farm. These are (with update):

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-new-energy-infrastructure-review-of-energy-national-policy-statements

- 600MW Cottam Solar Project

Proposed across 3 sites on land (1270Ha) in proximity of Sturton by Stow and Willingham by Stow, Corringham and Blyton. The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) confirmed on 9*th* February that this project has been accepted for examination.

- 500MW Gate Burton Solar Project

The development is proposed on a 684Ha site to the south of Gainsborough/Lea. It was accepted for examination on 22nd February,

- 480MW West Burton Solar Project

Proposed across 3 sites (788Ha) on land to the south of Sturton by Stow. The Planning Inspectorate have advised they received an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) on 21st March. They will make a decision on whether to accept the application for examination, by 18th April.

- 500MW Tillbridge Solar Project

1400Ha site on land between Corringham and Glentworth. It is anticipated by PINS, that the developer will submit their application in Q4 2023. Before that, the developer will be required to advertise and undertake public consultation, which is anticipated they will hold around May/June 2023.

Whilst the structure of the ES appears to be generally acceptable it is imperative that any Environmental Impact Assessment clearly considers within its structure the cumulative effect of Springwell Solar Farm with these other solar farm projects and any other solar Farms in Central Lincolnshire such as the Fiskerton Solar project, which is an extant development, with consent to expand. There are questions as to how all these developments taken together will affect Central Lincolnshire's character, as traditional rural Lincolnshire Countryside.

Yours faithfully

Ian Elliott
Senior Development Management Officer
On behalf of West Lindsey District Council

If you want to know more about how we use your data, what your rights are and how to contact us if you have any concerns, please read our privacy notice:
www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/planning-privacy

If you require this letter in another format e.g. large print, please contact Customer Services on 01427 676676, by email customer.services@west-lindsey.gov.uk or by asking any of the Customer Services staff.