

Springwell Solar Farm

Equality Impact Assessment

EN010149/APP/7.18
November 2024
Springwell Energyfarm Ltd

APFP Regulation Reg5(2)(q)
Planning Act 2008
Infrastructure Planning
(Applications: Prescribed Forms
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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of this document

- 1.1.1. This Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been prepared on behalf of Springwell Energyfarm Ltd., a joint venture between EDF Renewables UK and Luminous Energy (hereinafter referred to as the 'Applicant'), in relation to an application made to the Secretary of State for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for Springwell Solar Farm (the 'Proposed Development'), located within the administrative areas of North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council (the 'Site') as shown in **ES Volume 2, Figure 1.1: Location Plan [EN010149/APP/6.2]**.
- 1.1.2. This EqIA considers the potential equality impacts related to the application for the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating facility on protected characteristics groups identified within the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**. The Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) and appointed Examining Authority is required to consider potential equality impacts under the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]** in considering the DCO Application in line with its Public Sector Equality Duty. Further explanation of the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]** is detailed in **Section 2 Legislation and Policy Context** of this report.
- 1.1.3. This EqIA is structured as follows:
- **Introduction** – presents a description of the Site context and the Proposed Development;
 - **Legislation and policy context** – outlines the legislation and policy context relevant to the EqIA, notably the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**, North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council equality specific policies;
 - **Methodology** – outlines the methodology used for the assessment of equality impacts;
 - **Equalities Baseline** – presents the baseline conditions in relation to protected characteristics groups at a ward, district, county and national level;
 - **Consultation and engagement** – provides an overview of consultation and engagement activities undertaken;
 - **Assessment of impacts** – indicates the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on protected characteristic groups;
 - **Summary of actions secured through the DCO** – sets out a summary of the actions secured through the DCO to avoid, minimise or mitigate negative equality impacts; and

- **Summary of impacts** – provides an overview of the equality impacts on the protected characteristics groups affected.

1.2. The Proposed Development

- 1.2.1. A summary of the description of the Proposed Development can be found in Section 3.1 of the **Environmental Statement (ES) Volume 1, Chapter 3: Proposed Development Description [EN010149/APP/6.1]**. The terminology used in this document is defined in the Glossary **[EN010149/APP/6.1]**.

1.3. The Order Limits and surroundings

- 1.3.1. The Proposed Development is located within the administrative boundary of North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council.
- 1.3.2. The location of the Site is shown in **ES Volume 2, Figure 1.1: Location Plan [EN010149/APP/6.2]**. The Proposed Development will be located within the 'Order Limits' (the land shown on the **Works Plans [EN010149/APP/2.3]** within which the Proposed Development can be constructed, operated and decommissioned). The extent of the Order Limits is presented in **ES Volume 2, Figure 1.2: Order Limits [EN010149/APP/6.2]** and comprises approximately 1,280 hectares (ha) of land.
- 1.3.3. The Order Limits contains three areas of land, namely, Springwell West, Springwell Central and Springwell East which are outlined in **ES Volume 2, Figure 1.2: Order Limits [EN010149/APP/6.2]**.
- 1.3.4. The Site is located in close proximity to the settlements of Blankney, Scopwick, Kirkby Green, and Ashby de la Launde. The settlements of Metheringham, Ruskington, Navenby and Digby are also located within 3km of the Order Limits at its nearest point.
- 1.3.5. The Royal Air Force (RAF) Digby Station is located adjacent to the Order Limits, to the north of Springwell West. The station is home to the tri-service Joint Service Signals Organisation, part of the Joint Forces Intelligence Group of Joint Forces Command. All flying at Royal Air Force Digby ceased in 1953.
- 1.3.6. The land within the Order Limits predominantly consists of agricultural fields, interspersed with hedgerows, small woodland blocks and farm access tracks. The hedgerows range between lengths of dense tall vegetation (shrub and tree species) and thin lines of vegetation with sporadic shrubs and trees present. These fields typically contain dried grass, lucerne, maize, spring barley, sugar beet, winter barley and winter wheat.

1.3.7. There is a variation in the features immediately surrounding each of the distinct land parcels within the Order Limits, as presented below and illustrated on **ES Volume 2, Figure 2.1: Environmental Considerations Plan [EN010149/APP/6.2]**:

- Springwell West: forms the southernmost parcel of land within the Order Limits and is intersected by the A15. This parcel is characterised by relatively open agricultural landscape and lies adjacent to the Bloxham Wood Nature Reserve in the south-east.
- Springwell Central: forms the central parcel of land within the Order Limits, providing connectivity between Springwell West and Springwell East. This parcel is directly adjacent to RAF Digby and B1191 to the west, Ashby de la Launde to the south and relatively open agricultural fields to the east.
- Springwell East: forms the northern and easternmost parcel of land within the Order Limits. This parcel of land is bounded by the settlements of Scopwick to the south, Kirkby Green to the south-east, Blankney in the north, the B1188 to the west, and a Peterborough - Lincoln railway line to the east.

2. Legislation and policy context

2.1. Legislation

2.1.1. The legislation relevant to this EqIA is outlined below.

Equality Act 2010

2.1.2. The Equality Act 2010 [Ref. 1] sets the legal foundation to protect people from discrimination and to advance equal accessibility and opportunity. The Equality Act 2010 [Ref. 1] came into force on 1 October 2010 and superseded a range of other pieces of legislation regarding discrimination including, but not limited to, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Equality Act 2010 [Ref. 1] provides the basic framework of protection against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in services and public functions, work, education, associates and transport. The Equality Act 2010 [Ref. 1] sets out the following nine protected characteristics under which discrimination is unlawful:

- **Age:** this refers to persons defined by either a particular age or a range of ages. This can include children (aged under 16), young people (aged 16-25), older people or pensioners (i.e. those aged 65+), the elderly/very old (i.e. those aged 85+);
- **Gender reassignment:** this refers to people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process for the purpose of reassigning their gender identity;
- **Being married or in a civil partnership:** marriage or civil partnership can be between a man and a woman or between two people of the same sex;
- **Being pregnant or on maternity leave:** pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after birth. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth;
- **Disability:** a disabled person is defined as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. It can also include people who have progressive conditions such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), cancer, or multiple sclerosis, even where someone is able to carry out day to day activities;
- **Race:** the Equality Act 2010 defines race as encompassing colour, nationality (including citizenship) and ethnic or national origins;

- **Religion or belief:** religion means any religion a person follows. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief, and includes those people who have no formal religion or belief;
- **Sex:** this refers to a man or to a woman, or a group of people of the same sex, while gender refers to the wider social roles and relationships that structure men's and women's, boys' and girls' lives; and
- **Sexual orientation:** a person's sexual orientation related to their emotional, physical and/or sexual attraction and the expression of that attraction.

2.1.3. Part 11, Chapter 1, Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]** places a statutory duty on public bodies to have due regard to equality considerations in the decision-making process on planning applications, referred to as the 'Public Sector Equality Duty'. This requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristics and those who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.

2.1.4. This also includes having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. This involved having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristics that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it; and
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2.1.5. The objective of this EqIA is to assist the appointed Examining Authority in its assessment of the DCO Application with regard to its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**, and to provide relevant information for equality issues to be fully considered as part of the decision-making process by the relevant Secretary of State. This is achieved by systematically identifying and assessing the potential impacts arising from

the design and implementation of the Proposed Development for groups which share one or more protected characteristic.

2.1.6. The Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]** does not specifically require an EqlA nor define how it should be carried out. The Public Sector Equality Duty is to have 'due regard' to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**.

2.1.7. The Government Equalities Office Guidance (December 2023) **[Ref. 2]** for public authorities clarifies that the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]** does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an EqlA, but it emphasises the importance of consciously considering equality in decision-making.

Equality and Human Rights Commission

2.1.8. The Equality and Human Rights Commission **[Ref. 3]** champions equality and human rights for all, working to eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, protect human rights and to build good relations, ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to participate in society. It is an independent statutory body established under the Equality Act 2006 and it opened on 01 October 2007.

2.1.9. It combines the responsibilities and powers of the three previous equality commissions: the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission, which had responsibility for promoting racial, disability and sex equality in Britain **[Ref. 4]**.

2.1.10. The Equality and Human Rights Commission provides details of the duties and responsibilities of public authorities in Britain. It covers the Public Sector Equality Duty and the implications of the Human Rights Act 1998 for all public sector organisations.

2.1.11. In preparation of this EqlA, due regard has been given to the following documents:

- Equality and Human Rights Commission, The Essential Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty (2014a) **[Ref. 5]**;
- Equality and Human Rights Commission, Engagement and the Equality Duty: A Guide for Public Authorities (2014b) **[Ref. 6]**;
- Equality and Human Rights Commission, Equality Act 2010: Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty England (2023) **[Ref. 7]**;
- Equality and Human Rights Commission, Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making England (and non-devolved Public Authorities in Scotland and Wales) (2014c) **[Ref. 8]**; and

- Government Equalities Office, Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty What do I need to know? A Quick Start Guide for Public Sector Organisations (2011) [Ref. 9].

Planning Act 2008

- 2.1.12. The Planning Act 2008 ('the 2008 Act') [Ref. 10] established a legal framework for applying for, examining, and determining DCO applications for National Significant Infrastructure Projects. It sets out the requirement for obtaining development consent as well as thresholds for classifying projects as nationally significant. Under the 2008 Act, the development consent may be granted only if an application is made for it, with the Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 [Ref. 11] further setting out application requirements.
- 2.1.13. Section 104 of the 2008 Act requires the Secretary of State, when determining DCOs, to have regard to the provisions of National Policy Statements where they have effect. National Policy Statements are produced by the UK Government and comprise the Government's objectives for the development of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. Although this DCO application is not being determined under Section 104 at this stage, this has been included to provide context as to the policy background, with National Policy Statement EN-1 [Ref. 12] detailed under **Section 2.2** below.
- 2.1.14. The 2008 Act does not contain any specific guidance relating to protected characteristics and equalities, but it does include a duty to consult with the local community as part of the DCO application process.

2.2. National Planning Policies

- 2.2.1. There is a range of national policy relevant to the Proposed Development which is discussed in the relevant ES Chapters. This section outlines the National Policy Framework (2021) and relevant National Policy Statements since they include relevant guidance on equality considerations of local planning and is therefore explicitly relevant for the EqlA.

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (July 2011)

- 2.2.2. The Overarching National Policy Statement (EN-1) [Ref. 12], published July 2011, set out the national policy for delivery of major energy infrastructure. It had effect in combination with a further five (EN-2 through EN-6) technology-specific National Policy Statements issued by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. Together, the National Policy Statements were used to inform the decisions made on applications for energy development that fell within the scope of National Policy Statements as defined by the Planning Act 2008.

- 2.2.3. National Policy Statement EN-1 **[Ref. 12]** provided policy and guidance on generic impacts of major energy infrastructure delivery that could be helpful to local planning authorities in preparing local impact reports.
- 2.2.4. Part 5 of National Policy Statement EN-1 **[Ref. 12]** contains information on pertinent generic impacts of energy infrastructure developments such as air quality and emissions, noise and vibration, and socio-economic. Recognition is made to the adverse effects of energy infrastructure development on, for example, air quality and the health impacts this can have, the impact of excessive noise on the quality of human life due to annoyance or sleep disturbance, and the potential for creation of jobs and training opportunities.

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (July 2011)

- 2.2.5. National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) **[Ref. 13]**, taken together with National Planning Policy EN-1 **[Ref. 12]**, provided the primary basis for decisions on applications it received for nationally significant renewable energy infrastructure. However, National Policy Statement EN-3 **[Ref. 13]** did not cover Solar PV projects as they were not technically viable of producing over 50 MW when the National Policy Statement was published.

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (March 2023)

- 2.2.6. The energy National Policy Statements were originally designated and published in 2011. In December 2020, the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy produced the 'Powering our Net Zero Future' energy white paper, in which it outlines that a review of the energy National Policy Statements would be undertaken to ensure they align with the policies of the white paper as well to ensure that UK has a planning policy framework that could support the investment required to achieve the transition to net zero. In September 2021, consultation on Draft National Policy Statement EN-1 **[Ref. 14]** (as well as Draft National Policy Statement EN-2 through EN-5) began such that the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy could seek views on whether the revised National Policy Statements were suitable to support decision making for investment on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. The revised Draft National Policy Statements EN-1 **[Ref. 15]** was published in March 2023, and underwent a second round of consultation between March and June 2023 which sought more focused views on topics such as clarifying whether offshore wind is a national priority. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero are currently analysing the consultation feedback.

- 2.2.7. EN-1 **[Ref. 15]** sets out national policy for the delivery of major energy infrastructure. The Draft NPS has effect on relevant decisions by the Secretary of State on applications for energy developments that are nationally significant under the Planning Act 2008.
- 2.2.8. Section 4.3 of National Policy Statement EN-1 recognises the potential impacts on health and well-being that energy infrastructure can have, in particular the construction, production and distribution related to energy infrastructure and the potential negative impacts this may have. Direct impacts on health identified include increased traffic, air or water pollution, dust and odours, noise, and hazardous waste or substances. National Policy Statement EN-1 also recognises that new energy infrastructure may affect the composition and size of the local population, and in doing so have indirect health impacts, for example by affecting access to key public services, transport, and open spaces.

2.3. Local Planning Policies

- 2.3.1. As mentioned in **Section 1 Introduction**, the Site lies within the administrative areas of North Kesteven District Council and Lincolnshire County Council. Therefore, the relevant local planning policies of the adopted local development plans for each of the 'host' planning authorities will be considered as part of this EqIA.

Lincolnshire County Council

- 2.3.2. The following Lincolnshire County Council local planning policy and guidance documents have been considered:
- Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (2018-2024) adopted 13 April 2023, Policy S53 **[Ref. 16]**;
 - Lincolnshire County Council (2024) Diversity and Inclusion Policy **[Ref. 17]**;
 - Lincolnshire County Council (2023) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023 **[Ref. 18]**; and
 - Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner (2022) Equality and Diversity Policy **[Ref. 19]**.
- 2.3.3. According to the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**, public bodies are required to publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives at least once every four years. The most recent equality objectives published by Lincolnshire County Council (2024) **[Ref. 18]** primarily focus on its role as an employer and as a provider of publicly accessible buildings. These objectives are therefore not relevant to this EqIA.

North Kesteven District Council

2.3.4. The following North Kesteven District Council local planning policy and guidance documents have been considered for the Springwell Solar Farm EqIA:

- Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Policy (2018-2024) adopted 13 April 2023), Policy S53 **[Ref. 16]**;
- North Kesteven District Council (2017) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy **[Ref. 20]**; and
- North Kesteven District Council (2022) Anti-Social Behaviour Policy **[Ref. 21]**.

2.3.5. According to the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**, public bodies are required to publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives at least once every four years. North Kesteven District Council (2017) has six equality objectives to help drive equality and inclusion across all areas of the Council's work **[Ref. 3]**, as well as demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty:

- Know the diversity of our community and understand its needs;
- Show leadership and commitments in promoting equality and challenging inequality;
- Work in partnership with public, private, voluntary and community organisations to reduce the quality gaps and improve lives;
- Actively engage our community to participate in decision making processes to improve the services we provide;
- Provide services that meet the needs of the diversity of the community and are accessible to all; and
- Have a workforce where everyone is treated equally with dignity and respect, with an ongoing commitments by the Council to regularly report and review our gender pay gap.

2.3.6. North Kesteven District Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (2017) is a statement demonstrating a commitment to:

- Promote equality of opportunity; and
- Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is considered in decision-making, service delivery and employment.

3. Methodology

3.1.1. Every development has the potential to result in positive and negative equality impacts to protected characteristic groups through construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning. The purpose of this EqlA is to consider how the Proposed Development could affect people with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 [Ref. 1]. The assessment process has been carried out as follows:

- Review of relevant local, national and regional policies and legislation documents associated with the Proposed Development and baseline conditions in relation to protected characteristics groups;
- Determine the likely impacts on protected characteristic groups because of the Proposed Development through the review of existing policy documents, and consultation responses and equality baseline data; and
- Assess the magnitude of these impacts on protected characteristic groups and, where possible, identify measures to mitigate negative or enhance positive impacts (for impacts which have the potential for enhancement).

3.2. Baseline

3.2.1. The baseline assessment presents the baseline conditions in relation to protected characteristics at a ward, district, county and national level which could be of relevance to the EqlA. The study area considered for this assessment is focused on the local area (i.e. Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward), including communities in closest proximity to the Order Limits, and at the district level (i.e. North Kesteven). Wider-scale areas (i.e. Lincolnshire County as the statutory body responsible for certain services such as highways and access, and public health), as well as the national level (i.e. England), have also been considered for wider comparison.

3.2.2. The areas and years at which data is presented vary and are often determined by the availability of information, with many statistics relating to equality being unavailable at the local level.

3.2.3. Baseline analysis has been informed by nationally recognised demographic datasets from the Office of National Statistics, including:

- Census 2021 [Ref. 22, 23, 24 and 25];
- Live Births 2021 [Ref. 26]; and
- Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 [Ref. 27].

- 3.2.4. When completing the baseline review, the most up to date Census data (Census 2021) available at the time of writing has been reported. Data from the Census 2021 for the Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward have been used to inform the local baseline data. It worth noting however, that Wards change periodically and as of 2023 the Site currently falls within the Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward. The data that has been used to inform the baseline for this EqIA has used the Census 2021 data adjusted to reflect the Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward boundary **[Ref. 22]**.
- 3.2.5. The nature of the protected characteristics considered by this EqIA means that some equality effects are sensitive and personal in nature, and in some cases public data does not exist at a local level to predict them with certainty. Such protected characteristics may therefore be under-reported or simply not covered by any official data. Public consultation has been conducted to supplement available information and to help identify and verify protected characteristic groups in the area. Further information related to consultation and engagement is detailed in **Section 5**.

3.3. Equality Impacts

- 3.3.1. To identify the impacts that are relevant to equality, disproportionate and/or differential impacts have been identified for groups of people based on their protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**. Protected characteristic groups can experience both disproportionate and differential impacts simultaneously.

Disproportionate Impacts

- 3.3.2. Disproportionate impacts occur when either:
- An affected group contains a disproportionate number of individuals with a shared given protected characteristic; or
 - Where an affected asset is disproportionately used by a protected group.
- 3.3.3. For example, where age is a protected characteristic, and there is a disproportionately higher number of older people living in assisted living/care facilities. Therefore, a disproportionate impact would take place where a negative impact occurs on a living/care facility in relation to noise or air quality.
- 3.3.4. The baseline assessment is used to identify whether a vulnerable group is particularly prevalent in an area in comparison to the ward, district and county averages. If so, the study area is considered to experience a disproportionate impact.

Differential Impacts

- 3.3.5. Differential impacts are where groups of people with shared characteristics are likely to be impacted in different ways compared with the general population. These impacts may occur due to specific needs, or a recognised sensitivity or vulnerability associated with a protected characteristic. Whilst disproportionate impacts consider the number of people affected, differential impacts can occur even when the total number of people affected is small.
- 3.3.6. Protected characteristic groups can experience both disproportionate and differential impacts simultaneously.

3.4. Scope of assessment

- 3.4.1. This EqIA has been prepared and submitted as a supporting document for the DCO Application. The assessment of equality impacts considers positive and negative effects on protected characteristic groups during construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning phases.
- 3.4.2. The assessment has been supported by a significant amount of information and assessment work provided in support of the DCO Application. In particular, the assessment draws upon evidence from the following sources:
- **ES Volume 1, Chapter 3: Proposed Development Description [EN010149/APP/6.1];**
 - **ES Volume 1, Chapter 6: Air Quality [EN010149/APP/6.1];**
 - **ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Climate [EN010149/APP/6.1];**
 - **ES Volume 1, Chapter 12: Noise and Vibration [EN010149/APP/6.1];**
 - **ES Volume 1, Chapter 13: Population [EN010149/APP/6.1];**
 - **ES Volume 1, Chapter 14: Traffic and Transport [EN010149/APP/6.1];**
 - **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) [EN010149/APP/7.7];**
 - **Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (oCTMP) [EN010149/APP/7.8];**
 - **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (oLEMP) [EN010149/APP/7.9];**
 - **Outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (oOEMP) [EN010149/APP/7.10];**
 - **Streets, Access and Rights of Way Plans [EN010149/APP/2.4];**

- **Outlined Public Right of Way and Permissive Path Management Plan (oPRoWPPMP) [EN010149/APP/7.12]; and**
- **Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (oDEMP) [EN010149/APP/7.13].**

- 3.4.3. The assessment of potential equality impacts on each protected characteristic has been focussed on the following key technical aspects of the Proposed Development, associated within its design and during construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning, in respect of the following technical aspects:
- Noise and vibration;
 - Air quality;
 - Climate Change;
 - Traffic and transport; and
 - Population.
- 3.4.4. These aspects have been grouped into three key considerations, informed by the baseline analysis, and carried through to the assessment of potential equality related impacts on protected characteristics:
- Environmental amenity;
 - Accessibility and active travel;
 - Community uses and amenity spaces; and
 - Employment and business.
- 3.4.5. It is recognised that such a list can never be exhaustive as all stakeholders may have a different perception of an impact from that characterised in an ES. Where matters have been raised by interested parties through the pre-application process, these have been considered in the **Consultation Report [EN010149/APP/5.1]**.
- 3.4.6. Should the analysis identify negative equality impacts on protected characteristic groups, an action plan has been prepared to eliminate or minimise these negative impacts.
- 3.4.6.1. The potential equality impacts on protected characteristic groups during the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning phases are set out in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Potential impacts

Impacts arising from the Proposed Development	Study area	Justification
Environmental amenity (air quality, noise and climate)	Local area	Local residents, workers and visitors to the area could be impacted by changes to neighbourhood amenity including air quality, noise and climate considerations.
Accessibility and active travel	North Kesteven District Council	Residents, workers and visitors within North Kesteven District could be impacted by changes to transport.
Community uses and amenity spaces	Local area	Local residents and visitors to the area could be impacted by disruptions to the PRoW. The Proposed Development will enhance and create new community uses and amenity spaces.
Employment and Business	Local area	The Proposed Development will provide employment opportunities.

4. Equalities baseline

4.1. Overview

- 4.1.1. This section provides relevant baseline information, where available, in relation to protected characteristics groups that may be present in the local population.
- 4.1.2. As previously mentioned in **Section 3.2**, the most up to date data (Census 2021) has been used for the baseline context focusing on Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward; North Kesteven District, Lincolnshire County; and England.

4.2. Age

- 4.2.1. According to the Census 2021, Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward, North Kesteven, Lincolnshire County and England have aligning working age populations (between 16 and 74 years) at 74.4%, 71.7%, 73.5% and 72.8%, respectively.
- 4.2.2. Populations within Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward, North Kesteven, North Lincolnshire and England aged under 16 are also similar at 16.8%, 17.0%, 15.7% and 18.5%, respectively.
- 4.2.3. The proportion of residents aged 75 is slightly higher in North Kesteven (11.3%) and Lincolnshire County (11.9%) than in Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward (8.7%) or England (8.5%).
- 4.2.4. **Table 2** presents the population ages profiles for Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward, North Kesteven, Lincolnshire County and England.

Table 2: Population age profile (%) by geographical area (Census 2021)

Age	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
Ages 4 years and under	5.5	4.7	4.7	5.4
Aged 5-9	5.7	5.6	5.4	5.9
Aged 10-15	5.6	6.7	5.6	7.2
Aged 16-19	4.8	3.9	5.4	4.6
Aged 20-24	5.6	4.7	5.6	6

Age	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
Aged 25-34	13.7	11.6	11.5	13.6
Aged 35-49	18.3	17.7	17.1	19.4
Aged 50-64	21.9	21.7	21.4	19.4
Aged 65- 74	10.1	12.1	12.5	9.8
Aged 74-84	6.6	8.4	9	6.1
Ages 85 and over	2.1	2.9	2.9	2.4

4.2.5. The data does not indicate that there is a particularly sensitive age area profile in the local area, however, young or elderly individuals can be more sensitive to impacts caused by the Proposed Development due to the following factors:

- Elderly residents may spend more time at home during the day [Ref. 29];
- Young children’s sleeping patterns include daytime hours [Ref. 29];
- Elderly residents are more vulnerable to changes to accessibility and amenity space, feeling disoriented and being at risk of road traffic collisions [Ref. 30];
- Exposure to noise and poor air quality is known to affect older people and children more [Ref. 31]; and
- Children and elderly may have slower reaction times to changes to the traffic patterns [Ref. 32].

4.3. Sex

4.3.1. **Table 3** provides the population breakdown by sex for Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick, North Kesteven, Lincolnshire County and England.

Table 3: Population breakdown by sex (%) by geographical area (Census 2021)

Sex	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
Female	47.3	51.0	51.0	51.0
Male	52.7	49.0	49.0	49.0

4.3.2. Based on the Census 2021, the sex split in Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward is approximately 47% female and 53% male. The split is slightly more weighted towards the male sex compared to the wider scales of North Kesteven, Lincolnshire County and England where the split is 51% female and 49% male.

4.4. Sexual orientation

4.4.1. A person’s sexual orientation can include their sexual behaviour, attraction, and identity. Sexual orientation is a protected characteristic allowing individuals to choose how to express their sexual orientation without discrimination. This includes discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities, and services on ground of sexual orientation.

4.4.2. Sexual orientation discrimination is possible in various forms that include discrimination arising from self-perceived sexual identity, one’s links to other individuals and their sexual orientation (discrimination by association) or one’s perceived sexual orientation (discrimination by perception).

4.4.3. According to the Census 2021, the proportion of the North Kesteven population aged 16 years and over that identified as gay or lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, queer or other sexual orientation was 2.3%, which was slightly lower than at the national level (3.2%). A full breakdown of sexual orientation by geographical area is presented in **Table 4**. Data is not available for Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward or Lincolnshire County.

Table 4: Sexual Orientation (%) by geographical area (Census 2021)

Sexual Orientation	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
Straight or Heterosexual	-	91.3	-	89.4
Gay or Lesbian	-	1.1	-	1.5
Bisexual	-	1	-	1.3
Pansexual	-	0.1	-	0.1
Asexual	-	0	-	0.1
Queer	-	0	-	0
All other sexual orientations	-	0.1	-	0.2
Not Answered	-	6.4	-	7.5

4.5. Gender Reassignment

- 4.5.1. Gender reassignment is defined as someone who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning his or her sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. It is not necessary for the individual to be under medical supervision or undergoing surgery (the Equality Act 2010, Section 7) **[Ref. 1]**.
- 4.5.2. To be protected from gender reassignment discrimination, one does not need to have undergone any specific treatment or surgery to change from one's birth sex to one's preferred gender. This is because changing physiological or other gender attributes is a personal process rather than a medical one. Protection applies at any stage of the transition, whether you are considering, in the process of, or have completed gender reassignment (as stated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission **[Ref. 1]**).
- 4.5.3. Comprehensive data on gender reassignment, however, is currently limited in England and unreliable. Several social surveys are currently being conducted by the Office for National Statistics and other data collectors across government and wider, however the samples sizes are not large enough to provide robust local-level estimates.
- 4.5.4. Under the Census 20201, included the optional question 'Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?'. Findings for North Kesteven and England are presented in **Table 5**. There is no data available at ward or county level.

Table 5: Gender identity (%) by geographical area (Census 2021)

Ethnicity	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth	-	95.0	-	93.5
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given	-	0.1	-	0.2
Trans woman	-	0.0	-	0.1
Trans man	-	0.0	-	0.1
Non-binary	-	0.0	-	0.1
All other gender identities	-	0.0	-	0.0
Not answered	-	4.7	-	6.0

4.5.5. According to the 2021 Census, 0.1% of residents aged 16 years and over in North Kesteven indicated that they themselves have a gender identity different from the sex registered at birth, which is similar to the proportion at the national level (0.2%).

4.6. Marriage or civil partnership

4.6.1. According to the Census 2021, 29.0% of the residents in Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward aged 16 and over are single (having never married or registered a civil partnership), which is similar to the proportion in North Kesteven (28.2%) and Lincolnshire County (32.3%) but lower than the proportion in England (37.9%).

4.6.2. In Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick, 55.9% of residents are married or in a civil partnership, compared to 52.6% in North Kesteven, 47.6% in Lincolnshire County and 44.7% in England.

4.6.3. The proportion of residents who are separated, divorced, formerly in a civil partnership, or widowed is 15.0% in Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward, and is slightly lower compared with 19.2% in North Kesteven, 20.1% in Lincolnshire County and 17.4% in England.

4.6.4. The percentage breakdown of marriage and civil partnership status by geographical area is presented in **Table 6**.

Table 6: Marriage and civil partnership status (%) by geographical area (Census 2021)

Marriage and Civil Partnership Status	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
Single (never married and never registered a civil partnership)	29	28.2	32.3	37.9
Married or in a registered civil partnership	55.9	52.6	47.6	44.7
Separated, divorced, formerly in civil partnership, or widowed	15	19.2	20.1	17.4

4.7. Pregnancy and maternity

- 4.7.1. The Office for National Statistics does not provide statistics on the number of people who are pregnant. Therefore, this baseline analysis considered live birth data as a proxy. The latest available data from 2022 indicates that the total fertility rate (the average number of live children that a group of women would bear if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates of the calendar year throughout their childbearing lifespan) for North Kesteven is slightly lower (1.36) than in Lincolnshire County (1.46) and England (1.49). A breakdown of total fertility rate is summarised in **Table 7**. Data is not available for Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward.

Table 7: Total Fertility Rate by geographic location

Pregnancy and Maternity	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
Total Fertility Rate*	-	1.36	1.46	1.49
<i>*Total Fertility Rate being the number of children born per woman</i>				

4.8. Disability

- 4.8.1. Data from the 2021 Census identified that 18.7% of residents in North Kesteven are disabled under the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref.1]**, 7.4% of which have their day-to-day activities limited a lot, and 11.3% of which have their day-to-day activities limited a little. Of the remaining 81.3% of the population of North Kesteven who are not disabled under the Equality Act 2010 , 8.2% have long-term physical or mental health condition which does not limit day-to-day activities, and 73.1% have no long-term physical or mental health conditions.
- 4.8.2. The data for North Kesteven is highly comparable to Lincolnshire County, where 20.2% of residents are disabled under the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]** with 8.4% having their day-to-day activities limited a lot, and 11.8% having their day-to-day activities limited a little. Of the remaining 79.9% of the population of Lincolnshire County, 7.5% of residents have long-term physical or mental health conditions but day-to-day activities are not limited and 72.4% of residents have no long-term physical or mental health conditions.
- 4.8.3. This is slightly above the national level where 17.3% of residents are disabled under the Equality Act 2010, of which 7.3% have their day-to-day activities limited a lot, and 10% have their day-to-day activities limited a little. Of the remaining 82.7% of the population who are not disabled under the Equality Act 2010 , 6.8% have a long term physical or mental health condition by day-to-day activities are not limited, and 75.9% have no long term physical or mental health condition.
- 4.8.4. Data at the county level is not available.
- 4.8.5. A breakdown of the percentage of people with a disability by geographic area is presented in **Table 8**.

Table 8: Disability (%) by geographic area (Census 2021)

Disability	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
Disabled under the Equality Act 2010: Day-to-day activities limited a lot	5.8	7.4	-	7.3
Disabled under the Equality Act 2010: Day-to-day activities limited a little	10.7	11.3	-	10.0
Not disabled under the Equality Act 2010: Has long term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities are not limited	7.6	8.2	-	6.8
Not disabled under the Equality Act 2010 : No long term physical or mental health conditions	78.8	73.1	-	75.9

4.9. Race

4.9.1. As defined in the Equality Act 2010, race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. Therefore, this baseline assessment has considered a range of data sources including ethnicity, place of birth and language spoken to provide a baseline analysis of the local area with respect to race.

Ethnicity

4.9.2. The percentage breakdown of ethnic groups by geographical area is summarised in **Table 9**. The Census 2021 shows that the majority of the population within Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward, North Kesteven and Lincolnshire County identify as white (97.9%, 97.2% and 96.0%, respectively), which is larger than the proportion in England as a whole (81.0%).

4.9.3. The second largest ethnic group in Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward and North Kesteven is mixed or multiple ethnic groups

(1.1% and 1.2%, respectively), whilst Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh is the second largest ethnic group for Lincolnshire County (1.6%) and also at the national level (9.6%).

Table 9: Ethnic Groups (%) by geographic area (Census 2021)

Ethnicity	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	0.7	1.0	1.6	9.6
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	0.1	0.4	0.6	4.2
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	1.1	1.2	1.3	3.0
White	97.9	97.2	96	81
Other ethnic group	0.2	0.3	0.6	2.2

Country of birth

- 4.9.4. **Table 10** provides the percentage breakdown of country of birth for Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward, North Kesteven, Lincolnshire County and England.
- 4.9.5. The Census 2021 indicates that in Ashby de la Launde, Digby, Scopwick Ward, North Kesteven and North Lincolnshire, the majority of the population was born in the United Kingdom (UK) (94.9%, 93.9% and 90%, respectively). This is slightly higher than at the national level (82.6%).
- 4.9.6. Of the remaining population of North Kesteven, 3.8% were born in Europe, 0.7% in Africa, 0.5% in the Americas and the Caribbean, 1.0% in the Middle East and Asia, and 0.2% in Antarctica and Oceania (including Australia) and Other.

Table 10: Country of birth (%) by geographical area (Census 2021)

Place of birth	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
UK	94.9	93.9	90.0	82.6
Europe		3.8		7.2
Africa		0.7		6.6
Middle East and Asia		1.0		2.8
The Americas and the Caribbean	5.1	0.5	10.0	5.7
Antarctica and Oceania (including Australasia) and Other		0.2		1.4

Language

- 4.9.7. The Census 2021 identified an individual's 'main language' as 'a person's first or preferred language'.
- 4.9.8. According to the Census 2021, 97.5% of households (aged 16 and over) in North Kesteven have English as a main language and 1.0% of households do not have English as a main language. This proportion is higher than in England at the national level, where 89.3% of households have English (or English or Welsh in Wales) as a main language and 5.0% of households don't have English as a main language.
- 4.9.9. **Table 11** provides the full percentage breakdown of main language by geographic area. Data is not available at ward or county level.

Table 11: Main language (%) by geographical area (Census 2021)

Ethnicity	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
All adults in household have English in England, or English or	-	97.5	-	89.3

Ethnicity	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
Welsh in Wales as a main language				
At least one but not all adults in household have English in England, or English or Welsh in Wales as a main language	-	1.1	-	4.3
No adults in household, but at least one person aged 3 to 15 years, has English in England or English or Welsh in Wales as a main language	-	0.4	-	1.4
No people in household have English in England, or English or Welsh in Wales as a main language	-	1.0	-	5.0

Summary

4.9.10. The largest ethnic group in Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward and North Kesteven is white (approximately 97%) but with less than 10% of people born in different countries other than the UK and only a limited few people speaking a different language than English (1%). It is considered that the Proposed Development could bring employment opportunities in the area for racial groups with disadvantages in the labour market.

4.10. Religion or belief

4.10.1. According to the Census 2021, 41.2% of the population within Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward identify themselves as having no religion, compared to 39.5% in North Kesteven, 38.3% in Lincolnshire County and 36.7% in England at the national level.

4.10.2. For those who identifies with a religion, Christianity was the most common religious group in Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward (51.3%),

North Kesteven (39.5%), Lincolnshire County (53.7%) and England (36.7%).

- 4.10.3. A full percentage breakdown of religion or belief by geographical area is provided in **Table 12**.

Table 12: Religion or Belief (%) by geographical area (Census 2021)

Religion or and Belief	Ashby de la Launde, Digby and Scopwick Ward	North Kesteven	Lincolnshire County	England
No religion	41.2	39.5	38.3	36.7
Christian	51.3	53.5	53.7	46.3
Buddhist	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.5
Hindu	0.1	0.2	0.3	1.8
Jewish	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.5
Muslim	0.1	0.4	0.7	6.7
Sikh	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.9
Other religion	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.6

- 4.10.4. 15 religious facilities have been found approximately within 1km radius to the Order Limits (see **Table 13**).

4.11. Deprivation

- 4.11.1. While deprivation is not classified as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, levels of deprivation have been considered as part of this baseline analysis.
- 4.11.2. The Government’s Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019) measured deprivation by combining indicators including a range of social, economic, and housing factors to give a single deprivation score for each small area across England (defined as Lower Layer Super Output Areas). These factors are divided among seven domains of deprivation as outlined below:
- Income deprivation;
 - Employment deprivation;
 - Education, skills, and training deprivation;
 - Health deprivation and disability,

- Crime;
- Barriers to housing and services; and
- Living environment deprivation.

4.11.3. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019) indicate that North Kesteven ranks as the 268th most deprived district out of 317 districts in England (where 1 is the most deprived). No lower layer super output areas within North Kesteven are ranked in the top 10% most deprived parts of the country.

4.12. Equalities receptors

- 4.12.1. As part of the baseline, a review has been undertaken of the location of community facilities that could have particular relevance to equality, because their users may share a particular protected characteristics or characteristics.
- 4.12.2. The focus of this has been the area surrounding the Order Limits or likely to represent a zone of influence for potential likely significant effects from individual assessments of the Environmental Statement (ES), approximately 1km around the Order Limits.
- 4.12.3. **Table 13** shows local facilities (community, religious, educational and healthcare) that may be particularly relevant to a specific protected characteristic.
- 4.12.4. **Table 14** shows PRoW that are located within and intersecting the Order Limits and that are relevant to protected characteristics, as it directly influences their ability to access and use public spaces safely and inclusively.
- 4.12.5. The data on the protected characteristics of users of different facilities is not public, and there may be other groups or locations which experience similar effects. This review is intended to be representative of facilities/infrastructure most likely to be relevant to equality issues which are also most likely to be subject to effects from the Proposed Development. These have been compared to the assessment of effects on sensitive receptors carried out in the ES, to inform consideration of protected characteristics that may potentially be affected.

Table 13: Local facilities (community, religious, educational and healthcare) located within 1km of the Site.

Facility	Local facility within 1 km of the Site
Community Facility	Little Crafters Boxes
	Ashby Hall
	Scopwick Village Hall
	Navenby Allotments
Educational Facility	Village Hall
	SWiRL Global
	Learning Centre
	RAFAKidz Digby
	Tedder Primary School
	Scout Hall
	Metheringham Primary School
	Navenby Church of England Primary School
	Carre's Grammar School
	The William Alvey School
	Cranwell Primary School
	Willow School
	Sir William Robertson Academy
	Kesteven & Sleaford High School Selective Academy
	St George's Academy
	Ruskington Chestnut Street C E Primary School
	The Welbourn Church of England Primary School
Kirkby-la-Thorpe Church of England Primary School	
Rauceby C.E. Primary School	
St Botolph's Church of England Primary School	
Navenby Church of England Primary School	
The Friends of Queen Eleanor Primary School	
Hill Holt Wood School	
Norwell Church of England Primary School	

Facility	Local facility within 1 km of the Site
	The Old School Nursery
	Metheringham primary School
	Heath Farm Autism Care (UK)
	Kirk House (Nursing Home)
Healthcare Facility Recreational Facility	Scopwick Playing Field
	Blackney Golf Club
	Blackney Cricket Club
	Blackney Stepping Out (Hiking area)
	Metheringham Sports Field
	Metheringham Outdoor Swimming Pool
	Metheringham KP Fitness
Religious Facility	Scopwick Holy Cross Church
	Holy Cross Church
	St. John the Baptist, Temple Bruer
	St. Oswald, Blankney
	St. Wilfrid's Church
	Church of St Clement
	Brauncewell Church
	St. Hibald's Church
	Church of St. Mary
	Scopwick Cemetery
	Metheringham Cemetery
	Navenby Cemetery
	War Memorial in the Churchyard of Holy Cross Church
	Lychgate to St. Oswald's Church
	Church of All Saints
Church of St Andrew	
Church of St Peter	

Table 14: PRow within and adjacent to the Site

PRow	Type	Proposed Development area
Blan/4/2	Public footpath	Springwell East
Blan/4/3	Public footpath	Springwell East
Scop/738/1	Public footpath	Springwell East
Scop/1134/1	Public footpath	Springwell East
Scop/1135/2	Public bridleway	Springwell East
Scop/1135/3	Public bridleway	Springwell East
Scop/1136/1	Public bridleway	Springwell East
Scop/737/1	Public footpath	Springwell East
Scop/10/1	Restricted byway	Springwell East
Scop/10/2	Restricted byway	Springwell East
Scop/11/1	Restricted byway	Springwell East
Scop/8/2	Public footpath	Springwell East
Blan/737/1	Public footpath	Springwell East
Scop/11/2	Restricted byway	Springwell East
Scop/11/3	Restricted byway	Springwell East
Scop/11/4	Restricted byway	Springwell East
Scop/1135/1	Public bridleway	Springwell East
Scop/1135/3	Public bridleway	Springwell East
Scop/7/3	Public footpath	Springwell East
Scop/738/1	Public footpath	Springwell East
Scop/8/1	Public footpath	Springwell East
Scop/1135/4	Public bridleway	Springwell East
Scop/739/1	Public footpath	Springwell East
Scop/3/1	Public footpath	Springwell East
Blan/4a/1	Public footpath	Springwell East
Blan/738/1	Public footpath	Springwell East
Scop/12/1	Restricted byway	Springwell Central
Scop/13/1	Restricted byway	Springwell Central
Rows/5/1	Public footpath	Springwell Central
Brau/8/1	Public footpath	Springwell West

PRoW	Type	Proposed Development area
AshL/4/1	Public footpath	Springwell West
Temp/2/1	Public footpath	Springwell West
Temp/1/1	Public bridleway	Springwell West
Scop/7/2	Public footpath	Springwell West
AshL/11/1	Public footpath	Springwell West

4.13. Summary

- 4.13.1. The local (Ward), and North Kesteven population is generally comprised of younger, working age residents. Most of the residents are married or in a registered civil partnership followed by single residents. The proportion of children living in this Ward is lower than the national average for England.
- 4.13.2. Some households in the local area and North Kesteven have been identified with long term health problems or disability.
- 4.13.3. The local area and North Kesteven are mainly white with most of the residents being born in the UK. A low proportion of the population were not born in the UK, with countries of birth mainly in Europe. The main spoken language is English.
- 4.13.4. Half of the residents are Christian followed by no religion.
- 4.13.5. The population in the local area and North Kesteven is similarly split between male and females. A small proportion of the population was identified as LGBTQ+.
- 4.13.6. **Table 15** summarises the identified impacts and the affected protected characteristics groups for this EqIA and whether the groups might experience disproportionate and/or differential impacts.

5. Consultation and engagement

5.1. Overview

5.1.1. Pre-application consultation and engagement was undertaken in the development of the Proposed Development and was open to all, including statutory and non-statutory bodies, community organisations and local residents.

5.1.2. The main stages of consultation were:

- Phase one: Early plans and proposals (14 January 2024 and 07 March 2023) – a non-statutory consultation on early plans and proposals for the Proposed Development;
- Phase two: Updates plans and proposals (11 January 2024 to 22 February 2024) – a statutory consultation on updated proposals for the Proposed Development, carried out in accordance with a Statement of Community Consultation and relevant legislative requirements; and
- Targeted consultation (Summer 2024) – a targeted consultation on proposed changes to the Site to accommodate highway and footpath improvements identified following phase two consultation.

5.2. Consultation Stages

Phase 1 consultation

Zone of consultation

5.2.1. The Phase 1 consultation was open to anyone with an interest in the Proposed Development who the Applicant considered may be directly or indirectly impact, or who had comments they would like to be considered.

5.2.2. The Applicant defined inner and outer zones of consultation to ensure that consultation activity was appropriate and proportionate to the potential effects of the Proposed Development. These are defined as:

- Inner zone: People living, working or studying closest to the proposals and likely to have a direct interest in the Proposed Development. The zone was drawn taking into account the proposed Site boundary, using existing boundaries such as rivers and roads to set the area. The inner zone totalled 44 square miles and included 3,159 properties.
- Outer zone: People living, working or studying within the administrative boundaries of North Kesteven District Council.

5.2.1. At the same time as consulting the local community, the Applicant also consulted a wide range of stakeholders additional organisations that could have an interest in the Proposed Development. These groups included:

- The host and neighbouring local authorities.
- Statutory bodies (such as the Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England, and others).
- Other community groups and organisations that may have an interest in the proposals (such as Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Lincolnshire Ramblers, and others).

Objective

5.2.1.1. The purpose of the period of Phase 1 consultation was intended to gain early feedback on the design of the Proposed development, the process of Environmental Impact Assessment and the Applicant's initial approach to community benefits. It also helped inform the Applicant's approach to statutory consultation, including the development of the Statement of Community Consultation.

Approach

5.2.2. The Applicant used a range of techniques to publicise the phase one consultation, including:

- Sending a launch leaflet to 3,159 homes and businesses, including any registered care homes/elderly accommodation, within the inner zone to provide information about the consultation, including the timings of the public events and the Applicant's contact details.
- Writing to stakeholders and elected representatives by recorded delivery and email to introduce the Proposed Development and offer a briefing. This included parish councillors, district councillors, county councillors, and Members of Parliament within the inner zone.
- Publishing a website with information about the Proposed Development and phase one consultation.
- Issuing a press release to approximately 50 local and energy industry publications. Five local publications covered the launch, Lincolnshire Live, Lincolnshire Today, Lincolnshire World, East Midlands Business Link and BBC Radio Lincolnshire as well as energy industry publications Renewables, Renewables Now, Planning Resource and Solar Power Portal.
- Placing adverts in the print and digital editions of the Sleaford Target and the Lincolnshire Echo.

- Sharing a post on the launch and consultation period on the EDF Renewables UK & Ireland LinkedIn account (c.87,000 followers), which received 13,467 impressions and 236 click throughs.

5.2.3. The consultation programme was publicised by:

- Sending a newsletter to 3,159 homes and businesses within the inner zone to advertise the start of the consultation period.
- Writing to statutory consultees and elected representatives of people within the inner consultation zone, including parish councillors, district councillors, county councillors, and Members of Parliament, notifying them of the consultation and offering them a briefing by recorded delivery and email. Hard copies of the consultation booklet and consultation questionnaire were included in the letter.
- Issuing press releases to approximately 50 local and energy industry publications. Coverage included Lincolnshire Live, The Lincolnite, LincsFM, ITV News Calendar, Lincolnshire World, BBC Look North East, BBC Radio Lincolnshire, reNews and Solar Power Portal.
- Placing adverts in the print and digital editions of the Sleaford Target on 25 January 2023 and the Lincolnshire Echo.
- Digital advertising was placed on the online pages of Lincolnshire Live from 27 January 2023 to 3 February which was geographically targeted to those in Lincolnshire. This received 250,010 impressions and 636 click throughs to the Springwell Solar Farm website.
- Two rounds of Facebook advertising targeted those within a 16km radius of Springwell, which reached 3,256 profiles.
- Updating the Springwell Solar Farm website with details of the consultation.
- Sharing a 'one week to go' post on the EDF Renewables UK LinkedIn account (c.87,000 followers), which received 3,910 impressions.

Phase 2 consultation

Zone of consultation

5.2.4. The Phase 2 consultation was open to anyone with an interest in the Proposed Development who had feedback they wanted to be considered.

5.2.5. To ensure consultation activity was targeted towards those living, working or otherwise using areas most likely to be affected by the Proposed Development, the Applicant defined two geographic zones – an inner zone and an outer zone – for the purposes of community consultation. Consultation activity was most intensive within the inner zone.

- 5.2.6. The inner zone covered people living, working and studying closest to the proposed Springwell Solar Farm (and likely to be directly affected by the proposals), and their political representatives. This zone included all addresses within two kilometres of the proposed Site boundary, extending in some areas to consider potential wider effects of the Proposed Development and human geographic boundaries (e.g., ensuring all addresses within a settlement were included).
- 5.2.7. The outer zone covered those living, working and studying outside of the inner zone who may be affected by or have an interest in the Proposed Development due to it being proposed within their local authority. This zone followed the local authority boundary of North Kesteven District Council.
- 5.2.8. The Applicant also consulted a wide range of non-prescribed consultees, including neighbouring parish councils, community and hard-to-reach groups, education providers, business representative groups, health organisations and local interest organisations (including ecology, heritage and walking groups). These bodies were consulted due to their local knowledge and interest in the Proposed Development.

Objective

- 5.2.9. The purpose of the Phase two consultation was to seek feedback on the updated plans and proposals for Springwell Solar Farm, including the Preliminary Environmental Information Report. Feedback was sought on the key elements of the Proposed Development, including:
- 5.2.10. The proposals for Springwell Solar Farm, including the preferred location of each of its elements and proposed environmental enhancements and mitigation.
- 5.2.11. The PEIR, which presented an initial account of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development during construction, operation and decommissioning, as well as preliminary details on mitigation measures that could be introduced to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any potentially significant adverse effects.
- 5.2.11.1. How the Proposed Development could contribute to the local community, including the development of a community benefit package.

Approach

- 5.2.12. To ensure that anyone with an interest in the Proposed Development could find out more and share their views, the Applicant designed a consultation strategy comprising a mix of techniques, including:
- Issuing 11,835 letters to local homes and businesses, including any registered care homes/elderly accommodation within this area.

- Holding six public events in locations around the proposed Site boundary, supported by a virtual exhibition and the Springwell Solar Farm website.
- Placing copies of the consultation materials – including the Preliminary Environmental Information Report – in locations around the proposed Site boundary for people to inspect. Copies of the consultation booklet, consultation questionnaire and USBs containing all of the consultation materials were also available to take away from these locations.
- Writing to a number of stakeholders and community organisations to raise awareness of the consultation.
- Providing a range of communication channels to enable anyone to find out more about the Proposed Development and share their feedback.
- Conducting statutory and non-statutory advertising campaigns, including print, digital and social media advertising.

5.2.13. Information on the Proposed Development and preliminary environmental assessment was published for consultation in the following documents:

- Consultation booklet: an accessible, 36-page non-technical overview of the Proposed Development.
- Consultation maps: the updated operational layout for Springwell Solar Farm, with separate maps showing each part of the Proposed Development (known as Springwell East, Springwell Central and Springwell West) to provide alternative formats for people to understand the proposals, as well as a map showing the proposed construction routes, access points and construction compounds.
- Consultation questionnaire: the main mechanism for collecting feedback.
- Exhibition banners: an accessible summary of the Proposed Development, EIA process, the consultation and planning process, approach to community benefit and next steps.
- Virtual exhibition: the exhibition banners, consultation questionnaire, and a portal which enabled users to view 3D visualisations of the Proposed Development from key views around the proposed Site boundary.
- Preliminary Environmental Information Report: the initial results of environmental assessments carried out in support of the Proposed Development, as well as preliminary information on measures to avoid, prevent, reduce or if possible, offset any likely significant adverse effects. The PEIR included a non-technical summary of the preliminary assessment of effects.

5.2.14. The **Consultation Report [EN010149/APP/5.2]** provides a summary of the responses received to the non-statutory consultation and the due regard the Applicant has had to them.

5.3. Purpose of consultation

5.3.1. The Applicant was committed to ensuring that everyone had the opportunity to understand the Proposed Development and provide their feedback. The key objectives for achieving this included:

- Ensuring thorough, open, and transparent engagement and consultation on the proposals;
- Ensuring proposals and concerns are clearly presented, and easily understood;
- Providing sufficient opportunities for interested parties to understand and influence our plans;
- Gathering high quality responses to, and feedback on, our plans to help inform the proposals; and
- Delivering consultation that meets the legal requirements and best practice for the DCO Application.

5.3.2. Furthermore, the consultation process aimed to be inclusive and gather feedback from a wide range of audiences, including those who are seldom heard (under-represented people who might be affected by a proposal and who are less likely to be heard or engage with the consultation process) in public consultations such as people without internet access, seasonal workers, younger people and socially isolated people.

5.3.3. This was achieved by:

- Writing to local authorities and organisations representing individuals and groups that may otherwise be difficult to reach such as seldom heard, identified through desktop research and advice from local planning authorities, to ensure our consultation activity and materials are appropriate and remove barriers to engagement;
- Choosing accessible venues (accessible by wheelchair, accessible parking facilities) for deposit points and public events;
- Publicising the consultation in digital editions of local newspapers and on social media;
- Holding public events at a variety of times, including evenings and weekends to enable participation by people with different time commitments;
- Making provision for people without internet access through the consultation programme. This includes sending a consultation

newsletter to every address within the inner zone (see paragraph 5.2.2 and 5.2.6 for inner zone boundary), holding public events in the area, publicising the consultation in print editions of local newspapers and making hard copies of consultation materials available on-request and at deposit points;

- Providing materials in alternative formats on request (e.g. different languages, large-print or easy read). Contact details to request materials in alternative formats were published on the project website and in our consultation booklet and newsletter;
- Writing to identified organisations representing seldom heard individuals and groups in both the inner and outer zone (See paragraph 5.2.2 and 5.2.7 for outer zone boundary) at the start of consultation to support them in promoting the consultation through their own existing communication channels, such as social media feeds;
- Contacting community and voluntary organisations including parish councils, and schools within the inner zone to offer direct engagement; and
- Providing a variety of communication channels including a freephone number, email address and Freepost for those seeking further information.

5.3.4. More detailed information on the consultation process can be found within the **Design Approach Document [EN010149/APP/7.3]** and the **Consultation Report [EN010149/APP/5.1]**.

6. Assessment of impacts

6.1. Introduction

- 6.1.1. The assessment of impacts considers the potential impacts arising from the Proposed Development, as well as proposed mitigation measures and actions to enhance opportunities from beneficial impacts where applicable. **Positive, neutral and negative** effects has been considered on protected characteristics groups during all the phases of the Proposed Development.
- 6.1.2. A judgement has been made as to the likely effects on protected characteristic groups using available DCO documents, wider evidence gathered, and consultation feedback. In particular, the assessment draws upon evidence as outlined in **Section 3 Methodology**.
- 6.1.3. It is not possible, in the main, to quantify equality impacts on protected characteristic groups, and therefore this section seeks to identify areas with potential for significant residual effects overall.
- 6.1.4. This section also identifies the approach to mitigation, which in part will require ongoing monitoring and management. In most cases, the Applicant has considered mitigation embedded in the design itself, or through Management Plans (see **Section 7 Summary of actions secured through the DCO**) that will reduce the likelihood of significant effects.
- 6.1.5. Because of this, it is important to consider equality of protected characteristic groups not just in advance, but also in the ongoing monitoring and management of the Proposed Development as it progresses. In many cases, mitigating effects on equality is achieved through mitigation required for other impacts. For example, for noise effects, the mitigation measures introduced are chosen to minimise significant effects where possible, irrespective of whether those effects have an equality dimension.
- 6.1.6. In addition to the specific mechanisms for potential effects relating to protected characteristics, there is also the possibility that any effects of the Proposed Development may overall disproportionately affect people with particular protected characteristics due simply to their greater prevalence in the local area.
- 6.1.7. This EqIA considers potential equality impacts on protected characteristic groups arising during the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. On the basis of the findings of the ES submitted with the DCO Application it is anticipated that potential equality effects on protected characteristic groups will include the matters raised in **Section 3.5 Scope of assessment**.

- 6.1.8. A summary of the potential disproportionate and/or differential equality impacts to protected characteristic groups that the Proposed Development may have on the identified protected characteristics groups is presented in **Table 15** in **Section 8**.

6.2. Construction

Environmental amenity

Negative impact: Noise impacts on residential properties

- 6.2.1. There is potential for noise and vibration effects arising from construction of the Proposed Development to have a negative effect on the wellbeing of residents and the amenity of their properties.
- 6.2.2. The **ES Volume 1, Chapter 12: Noise and Vibration [EN010149/APP/6.1]** indicates that during construction the predominant sources of noise will be from activities involving large earthmoving/lifting plant items and potential increase in Heavy Goods Vehicles and general vehicle movements. It is assumed that people with the protected characteristics set out in **Table 15** could be residents and workers surrounding the Site. A list of receptors can be found within the noise and vibration chapter.
- 6.2.3. As per **ES Volume 1, Chapter 12: Noise and Vibration [EN010149/APP/6.1]** no significant effects in relation to noise arising from the noise generated from construction traffic or activities have been found on identified sensitive receptors.
- 6.2.4. Through the implementation of best practice measures outlined within the **oCEMP [EN010149/APP/7.7]** noise levels are not anticipated to exceed 65dBA LA_{eq,T}, and traffic is predicted to increase baseline traffic noise levels by less than 3dB in the short-term. Therefore, construction noise is predicted to be not significant.
- 6.2.5. While the noise levels are expected to be not significant, there remains a potential for negative impacts on protected characteristic groups, as their tolerance for noise can be considerably lower. Groups that spend more time at home during the day, such as the elderly, children, people with disabilities, or pregnant women, may be more vulnerable to noise disturbances. Additionally, certain individuals, including those with dementia or pre-existing medical conditions may experience negative effects. Therefore, a **negative** impact and **differential** effect is expected as a result of the Proposed Development on people with protected characteristics (the elderly, children, people with disabilities and pregnant women) in terms of noise and vibration during the construction phase.

Negative impact: Air quality impacts on residential properties

- 6.2.6. There is potential for air quality effects arising from construction of the Proposed Development to have a negative effect on the wellbeing of residents and the amenity of their properties.
- 6.2.7. As outlined in the **ES Volume 1, Chapter 6: Air Quality [EN010149/APP/6.1]**, construction activities and the operation of site equipment have the potential to result in dust and exhaust gas emissions to the atmosphere. In addition, construction traffic, comprising haulage/construction vehicles and vehicles used for workers' trips to and from the Site, have the potential to release exhaust emissions. Both of which may impact on human receptors.
- 6.2.8. It is considered that the implementation of effective mitigation measures during the construction phase, as outlined in the **oCEMP [EN010149/APP/7.7]**, will effectively mitigate dust emissions generated from construction activities and therefore air quality impacts are likely to be not significant.
- 6.2.9. Although air quality impacts are likely to be not significant, there is potential for negative impacts on protected characteristic groups.. A deterioration in air quality can negatively impact the elderly and people with disabilities as it may exacerbate pre-existing chronic diseases as well as cause new respiratory problems. Furthermore, children might be more susceptible to changes in the environment due to physiological reasons as well as spending more time outdoors. Therefore, a **negative** impact and **differential** effect is expected as a result of the Proposed Development on people with protected characteristics (the elderly, children and people with disabilities) in terms of air quality during the construction phase.

Accessibility and active travel

Negative impact: Increased traffic movements on local road networking

- 6.2.10. The presence of additional vehicles on the local highway as a result of the Proposed Development as well as temporary closures or diversions, and creation of new routes creates the potential to adversely impact on road safety, particularly for the most vulnerable road users including pedestrians and cyclists. This would include those people with the protected characteristics set out in **Table 15**.
- 6.2.11. **ES Volume 1, Chapter 14: Traffic and Transport [EN010149/APP/6.1]** considers the impact on the local highway network, quantifying effects which may result in changes to actual or perceived amenity or safety (for example related to fear and intimidation on and by road users), or on health and wellbeing where community links and access to facilities and employment may be materially changed (i.e. via severance of

communities, driver and passenger delay). Aspects of particular relevance to equality on protected characteristic groups include:

- Severance of communities;
- Non-motorised user delay;
- Non-motorised user amenity; and
- Fear and intimidation on and by road users.

- 6.2.12. As outlined in the **ES Volume 1, Chapter 14: Traffic and Transport [EN010149/APP/6.1]**, 'all vehicle' daily two-way trips are not predicted to increase by more than 30% across any link, including the A15, B1191 and B1188 (identified as the most sensitive) during the construction phase. HGV two-way trips are predicted to increase by more than 30% on a number of these links and while any potential effect would be temporary, potential effects are predicted to arise as a result. However, due to the distribution of HGVs throughout the day, the absolute increase in HGVs is not considered to have an impact on severance during construction.
- 6.2.13. According to the assessment, there are no potential effects relating to pedestrian delay, non-motorised user amenity and fear and intimidation that could arise with the implementation of mitigation measures, for users of the links during the construction phase, including users of the A15, B1191 and B1188.
- 6.2.14. An **oCTMP [EN010149/APP/7.8]** has been prepared and submitted in support of the DCO Application. The **oCTMP [EN010149/APP/7.8]** provides details of construction traffic routing, site access, delivery of materials, construction working hours, and management and monitoring measures. The **oCTMP [EN010149/APP/7.8]** will be implemented and managed by the contractor undertaking the construction works and sets out measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate the environmental effects of traffic during construction, and will limit the impact on existing users of the public highway network or those located close to it.
- 6.2.15. The implementation of the **oCTMP [EN010149/APP/7.8]** will assist with the mitigation of negative impact associated with the increased construction traffic. However, the construction process will still increase the number of vehicles on the road and therefore it is expected that it could cause negative impacts on protected characteristic groups. As outlined in **Section 4**, the elderly and people with reduced or impaired physical abilities may have reduced mobility and slower reaction times, and therefore they may be at greater risk due to the difficulty perceiving or reacting to changes in traffic patterns. Pregnant women and children could be also affected due to slower reaction times. All of these protected characteristic groups may also be more vulnerable to increased stress as a result.

- 6.2.16. Therefore, a **negative** impact and **differential** effect is expected as a result of the Proposed Development on people with protected characteristics (the elderly, children, pregnant women and people with disabilities) in terms of the increased traffic movements during the construction phase.

Community uses and amenity spaces

Negative Impact: Public Rights of Way disruption

- 6.2.17. A number of existing PRoW traverse the Proposed Development.
- 6.2.18. Users to some PRoW are likely to be affected during the construction phase as they require temporary diversion/closure, or alternative routing where the former is not possible. The exact construction phasing and methodology are unknown; therefore, temporarily diverting PRoWs during the construction phase for six months, as set out within the **oLEMP [EN010149/APP/7.9]** and **oCEMP [EN010149/APP/7.7]**. Works (including diversions) to PRoW are shown on the **Streets, Access and Rights of Way Plans [EN010149/APP/2.4]**, which show the locations where existing routes may be affected.
- 6.2.19. **ES Volume 1, Chapter 13: Population [EN010149/APP/6.1]** outlines that access to existing PRoW will be retained during the construction phase, with no permanent closures and a small number of temporary PRoW diversions to allow construction of access tracks to be laid. Diversion or local management is anticipated to be required for PRoW within the Order Limits. Details for these diversions or alternative routings will be confirmed by the Applicant prior to construction. It is expected that detailed management measures will be subject to agreement with relevant officers within North Kesteven District Council and will be secured by Requirement in the **draft DCO [EN010149/APP/3.1]** in a PRoW and Permissive Path Management Plan (PRoWMP) prior to the commencement of construction works.
- 6.2.20. An **oPRoWPPMP [EN010149/APP/7.12]** has been prepared and submitted in support of the DCO Application, which sets out the mitigation, management, and monitoring measures for PRoW. This includes a schedule of PRoW within the Site and the proposed measures to manage any requirements to manage or temporarily close PRoW within the study area during construction. This will be developed in the detailed PRoWMP by the Principal Contractor which will help to ensure that any diversions are as safe and easy to access as possible for any users.
- 6.2.21. Changes to PRoW are expected to have an impact on protected characteristic groups, such as the elderly and people with disabilities as they could feel lost, disorientated, or at heightened risk of being involved in a road traffic collision if routes are not sufficiently marked. Therefore, the

Proposed Development is expected to have a **negative** impact and **differential** effect on the elderly and people with disabilities during the construction phase.

Employment and Business

Neutral Impact: Employment

- 6.2.22. The Proposed Development will provide construction job opportunities over the anticipated four-year construction programme. The Applicant estimates that a maximum of 650 construction jobs will be created during peak periods whilst the average number of construction staff likely to be present on site across the construction phase is approximately 400.
- 6.2.23. **ES Volume 1, Chapter 13: Population [EN010149/APP/6.1]** outlines that the Applicant aims to, where practicable, use local construction and manufacturing businesses during the construction phase, which would help to support the creation of new direct job opportunities for local people. Should it not be possible to source all construction staff locally, there may be a need to draw in construction staff from outside of the area. An **Outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan [EN010149/APP/7.20]** has been prepared which includes details on how the Applicant aims to support and enhance opportunities for employment, skills and the supply chain during the construction phase.
- 6.2.24. However, employment created by the Proposed Development will be required to adhere to anti-discrimination laws with respect to sex, gender reassignment, race, disability and religion as set out in the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**. Therefore, protected characteristic groups including men and women, gender reassignment, disabilities and religion are expected to experience a **neutral** impact with no **differential/disproportionate** impacts as a result of the Proposed Development. Operation (including maintenance).

6.3. Operation (including maintenance) phase

Environmental amenity

Negative impact: Noise impacts on residential properties

- 6.3.1. During the operation (including maintenance) phase, noise will be generated from the operational plant.
- 6.3.2. The Proposed Development includes embedded mitigation during this phase which includes the following:

- A 4m high barrier has been included around the BESS Compound, with a 6m high absorbent barrier positioned around the west, north and east faces of the Springwell Substation transformers;
- A minimum 250m offset from Inverter Transformer Stations (ITS), BESS, Project Substations and Collector Compounds to residential properties;
- A minimum 15m offset from the Proposed Development to existing woodlands;
- A minimum 10m offset from the Proposed Development to all existing hedgerows;
- A minimum 20m offset from the Proposed Development to statutorily and locally designated wildlife sites;
- A minimum 50m offset of ITSs from PRow; and
- The Proposed Development (excluding new landscaping where appropriate) will be set back at least 15m either side from existing or proposed PRow, except where crossings are necessary.

6.3.3. Furthermore, an **oOEMP [EN010149/APP/7.10]** has been developed and submitted in support of the DCO Application which sets out procedures for setting up and publicising a contact point with the contractor to log, monitor and address any complaints associated with noise during the construction and decommissioning phases. A scheme to this effect will be included in the aforementioned management plans. Provision of monthly reporting of information to local residents (including PRow users) to advise of potential noisy works that are due to take place will also be included.

6.3.4. As a result of the implementation of embedded mitigation, predicted noise levels throughout daytime and night-time periods would not exceed 35dB $L_{Ar, T}$ at any sensitive receptors. Such noise levels are considered to represent successful application of the lowest observed adverse effect level within relevant noise planning policy.

6.3.5. While noise levels are expected to be not significant, there is a potential for negative impacts on protected characteristic groups, as their tolerance for noise can be considerably lower. Groups that spend more time at home, such as the elderly, children, people with disabilities, or pregnant women, may be more vulnerable to noise disturbances. Additionally, certain individuals, including those with dementia or pre-existing medical conditions may experience negative effects. Therefore, a **negative** impact and **differential** effect is expected as a result of the Proposed Development on people with protected characteristics (the elderly, children, people with disabilities and pregnant women) in terms of noise and vibration during the operation (including maintenance) phase.

Neutral impact: Air quality impacts on residential properties

- 6.3.6. During the operation (including maintenance) phase the Proposed Development has the potential to affect air quality through release of exhaust emissions from vehicles, although there will only be limited movement of vehicles to the Site for maintenance.
- 6.3.7. **ES Volume 1, Chapter 6: Air Quality [EN010149/APP/6.1]** considers the effect of road traffic exhaust emissions on human receptors during operation (including maintenance) phase to be below the Environment Protection UK and Institute of Air Quality Management 2017 guidance screening criteria [**Ref. 28**] and therefore not significant.
- 6.3.8. No specific operational (including maintenance) phase mitigation measures are required. Nevertheless, best practice mitigation measures can be considered to further reduce any residual effects on air quality. An **oOEMP [EN010149/APP/7.10]** has been prepared and is submitted in support of the DCO Application.
- 6.3.9. As emissions from vehicles during the operation (including maintenance) phase will be limited to vehicles going on site for maintenance purposes and the implementation of best practice mitigation measures, it has been considered that the Proposed Development is expected to have a **neutral** impact and **no differential/disproportionate** effect on protected characteristic groups during the operation (including maintenance) phase.

Positive impact: Contribution to Climate Change

- 6.3.10. People with protected characteristics are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including:
- More variable and extreme weather to spread pests and diseases. Extreme weather events, for example heatwaves, are expected to have an impacts on some protected characteristic groups, for example elderly people, children, pregnant women and people with disabilities as they are more vulnerable to extreme weather conditions [**Ref. 28**].
 - Increased risk of flooding – With climate change likely to alter rainfall patterns and bring more heavy downpours, flood risk is expected to increase in the future. This could impact on properties and infrastructure with serious consequences for people, heritage, businesses and communities. For some disabled people and their carers, it is expected that the risk of flooding could have a greater effect compared to the rest of society as they face greater obstacles in preparing and responding to flood events [**Ref. 33**].
 - Health and well-being – A warming climate has the potential to alter patterns of disease and exacerbate various health issues. Additionally, there is emerging evidence suggesting that increased awareness of

climate change is contributing to anxiety and other mental health concerns, particularly among children [Ref. 34].

- 6.3.11. As set out in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Climate [EN010149/APP/6.1]**, greenhouse gas emissions generated from the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of the Proposed Development total 3,004,263tCO₂e, and the operation (including maintenance) of the Proposed Development displaces 12.7 million tCO₂e that may have otherwise been emitted from gas-generated electricity. The net greenhouse gas savings, compared against equivalent gas-fired electricity generation, are therefore over 9.6 million tonnes of CO₂e.
- 6.3.12. The renewable energy generation of the Proposed Development, and comparative carbon reduction compared to non-renewable methods will have a positive effect on the climate, and therefore **positive** impact and **differential** or **disproportionate** effect on groups with protected characteristic.

Community uses and amenity spaces

Positive impact: Greenspace and Public Right of Way enhancement

- 6.3.13. The Proposed Development includes proposals to provide a community growing area, as well as three new PRow and four permissive paths, and improvements to existing PRow including improvements to accessibility, increased recreational opportunities and improved connectivity.
- 6.3.14. **ES Volume 1, Chapter 13: Population [EN010149/APP/6.1]** has identified a beneficial effect on users since the community growing area will improve access to green open space which has associated physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits as well as an increased sense of place and community. In addition, the enhancement of the PRow will provide recreational and amenity improvements to users and encourage active.
- 6.3.15. An **oOEMP [EN010149/APP/7.10]** has been developed and submitted in support of the DCO Application which includes the provision of monthly reporting of information to local residents (including PRow users) to advise of potential noisy works that are due to take place will also be included.
- 6.3.16. Therefore, it is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **positive** impact and **differential** and **disproportionate** effect to all protected characteristic groups during the operation (including maintenance) phase.

Positive impact: Community uses

- 6.3.17. A new community growing area is proposed to the north of Scopwick. The area is located adjacent to existing community facilities along Vicarage Lane (including the Scopwick cemetery and recreational area) and is adjacent to the Spires and Steeples Trail and Stepping Out Scopwick Loop. The community growing area will be secured via the **Works Plans [EN010149/APP/2.3]** and **Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [EN010149/APP/7.9]** and allows for an area of up to 2ha. The detailed design of the space would be developed post DCO consent in conjunction with the local community.
- 6.3.18. New well-designed community areas are considered to be beneficial for protected characteristic groups as they can provide accessible facilities, making the area more inclusive for people with disabilities. Furthermore, community areas can serve as hubs for social interaction, cultural events, and activities that bring together people from diverse backgrounds, fostering inclusion and reducing social isolation. Community areas will enhance their well-being, mental health and quality of life. Therefore, it is expected that the Proposed Development will have a **positive** impact and **differential** and/or **disproportionate** effect to all protected characteristic groups during the operation (including maintenance) phase.

Employment and Business

Neutral Impact: Employment

- 6.3.19. The majority of direct employment opportunities result from the Proposed Development will be during the construction phase, however there will also be up to 24 operational jobs created during the operational (including maintenance) phase.
- 6.3.20. **ES Volume 1, Chapter 13: Population [EN010149/APP/6.1]** outlines that the operational roles will likely be specialised positions specific to the needs of a solar energy generation facility and therefore would be job roles undertaken by people based both locally and from a wider geographic area. An **Outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan [EN010149/APP/7.20]** has been prepared which includes details on how the Applicant aims to support and enhance opportunities for employment, skills and the supply chain during the operation (including maintenance) phase.
- 6.3.21. However, employment created by the Proposed Development will be required to adhere to anti-discrimination laws with respect to sex, gender reassignment, race, disability and religion as set out in the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**. Therefore, protected characteristic groups including men and women, gender reassignment, disabilities and religion are expected to experience a **neutral** impact with no **differential/disproportionate**

impacts as a result of the Proposed Development during the operational (including maintenance phase).

6.4. Decommissioning

Environmental amenity

Negative impact: Noise impacts on residential properties

6.4.1. The likely noise impacts during the decommissioning phase are considered to be similar to those predicated for the construction phase as it is envisaged that similar plant and works would be used. All decommissioning activities, including traffic flows and construction type activities will implement suitable control measures including the best practice measures included in the **oDEMP [EN010149/APP/7.13]**. Noise levels are therefore, expected to be not significant during the decommissioning phase.

6.4.2. However there is a potential for negative impacts on protected characteristic groups, as their tolerance for noise can be considerably lower. Groups that spend more time at home, such as the elderly, children, people with disabilities, or pregnant women, may be more vulnerable to noise disturbances. Additionally, certain individuals, including those with dementia or pre-existing medical conditions may experience negative effects. Therefore, a **negative** impact and **differential** effect is expected as a result of the Proposed Development on people with protected characteristics (the elderly, children, people with disabilities and pregnant women) in terms of noise and vibration during the decommissioning phase.

Negative Impact: Air quality impacts on residential properties and local facilities

6.4.3. The likely air quality impacts during the decommissioning phase are considered to be similar to the construction phase as it is envisaged that similar plant and works would be used. All decommissioning activities, including traffic flows and construction type activities will implement appropriate mitigation include the best practice measures included in the **oDEMP [EN010149/APP/7.13]**.

6.4.4. Although air quality impacts are likely to not be significant, there is potential for negative impacts on protected characteristic groups. A deterioration in air quality can negatively impact the elderly and people with disabilities as it may exacerbate pre-existing chronic diseases as well as cause new respiratory problems. Furthermore, children might be more susceptible changes to the environment due to physiological reasons as well as spending more time outdoors. Therefore, a **negative** impact and **differential** effect is expected as a result of the Proposed Development on

people with protected characteristics (the elderly, children and people with disabilities) in terms of air quality during the decommissioning phase.

Accessibility and active travel

Negative impact: Increased traffic movements on local road networking

- 6.4.5. **ES Volume 1, Chapter 14: Traffic and Transport [EN010149/APP/6.1]**, details that during the decommissioning phase, the movement of workers, materials and plant are likely to generate trips on the local highway network, similar to the construction phase. It is therefore expected that the impacts are likely to be equal to or less than those during construction.
- 6.4.6. The **oDEMP [EN010149/APP/7.13]** states that a detailed Decommissioning Management Plan will be developed by the contractor prior to the decommissioning phase in consultation with the appropriate Local Planning Authorities. This will include a Travel Plan which sets out strategies to encourage the use of sustainable transport for the decommissioning workforce. Both plans will use the measures detailed in the Construction Traffic Management Plan as their starting point, updated to reflect the circumstances prevailing during the period in which the decommissioning phase is to be carried out.
- 6.4.7. The Transport Management Plans for each phase will ensure the necessary mitigation is achieved to reduce the risk of accidents occurring and reduced environmental amenity. However, the construction process will still increase the number of vehicles on the road and therefore it is expected that it could cause negative impacts on protected characteristic groups. The elderly and some disabled people may have reduced mobility and slower reaction times, and therefore they may be at greater risk due to the difficulty perceiving or reacting to changes in traffic patterns. Pregnant women and children could be also affected as it could increase their stress level and they have slower reaction times.
- 6.4.8. Therefore, a **negative** impact and **differential** effect is expected as a result of the Proposed Development on people with protected characteristics (the elderly, children, pregnant women and people with disabilities) in terms of the increased traffic movements during the decommissioning phase.

Employment and Business

Neutral Impact: Employment

- 6.4.9. As outlined in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 3: Proposed Development Description [EN010149/APP/6.1]**, the Proposed Development will provide decommissioning job opportunities over the anticipated 24-month decommissioning programme.

- 6.4.10. **ES Volume 1, Chapter 13: Population [EN010149/APP/6.1]** states that the likely level of effect during decommissioning is expected to be similar to or less than that experienced during construction. Therefore, similar to the construction phase, during decommissioning the Applicant aims to, where practicable, use local decommissioning workers and businesses during the construction phase, which would help to support the creation of new direct job opportunities for local people. Should it not be possible to source all decommissioning staff locally, there may be a need to draw in decommissioning staff from outside of the area.
- 6.4.11. However, employment created by the Proposed Development will be required to adhere to anti-discrimination laws with respect to sex, gender reassignment, race, disability and religion as set out in the Equality Act 2010 **[Ref. 1]**. Therefore, protected characteristic groups including men and women, gender reassignment, disabilities and religion are expected to experience a **neutral** impact with no **differential/disproportionate** impacts as a result of the Proposed Development.

Summary

- 6.4.12. Overall, impacts on environmental amenity during the construction works are considered to be temporary. Impacts during construction related to noise, air quality and traffic movements can have a **negative differential** effect on people with protected characteristics such as the elderly, children, people with disabilities and pregnant women. Furthermore, disruption to the existing PRow would have a negative differential effect on the elderly and people with disabilities. Impacts will be monitored and mitigated/minimised as far as possible throughout the construction phase in accordance with the Management Plans and mitigation measures outlined above. Impacts during decommissioning phase have been considered to be similar to impacts during construction.
- 6.4.13. The assessment has identified negative and differential effects related to noise on protected characteristic groups (the elderly, children, people with disabilities and pregnant women) during the operation (including maintenance) phase due to the noise generated from the operational plant. Impacts will be monitored and mitigated/minimised as far as possible throughout this phase in accordance with the **oOEMP [EN010149/APP/7.10]** and mitigation measures outlined above.
- 6.4.14. The assessment has identified a **positive differential and/or disproportionate effect** on people with protected characteristics due to the improvements to the existing PRow and the provision of new PRow and community area.
- 6.4.15. Lastly, the Proposed Development is expected to positively contribute to climate change mitigation, which in turn is anticipated to have a **positive**

and differential or disproportionate effect on protected characteristic groups.

7. Summary of actions secured through the DCO

7.1.1. A series of outline Management Plans have been established through collaboration with stakeholders, which include details of iterative and responsive mitigation based on real-time data collection and monitoring, and regular consultation and feedback with stakeholders. These include measures that are collated within an overarching **ES Volume 1, Chapter 17: Mitigation Schedule [EN010149/APP/6.1]** and described in detail within:

- The **oCEMP [EN010149/APP/7.7]** which includes measures relating the mitigation and management, of environmental aspects of the Site, roles and responsibilities, communications and general amenity relating to construction activities;
- The **oCTMP [EN010149/APP/7.8]** which includes measures related to construction traffic (both on-site and on the public highway) to reduce risk of severance or risk of incident and delay, and promote accessibility and public safety on the highway and within the Order Limits;
- The **oOEMP [EN010149/APP/7.10]** which includes measures relating the mitigation and management, of environmental aspects of the Site, roles and responsibilities, communications and general amenity relating to operational activities;
- The **oDEMP [EN010149/APP/7.13]** which includes measures relating the mitigation and management, of environmental aspects of the Site, roles and responsibilities, communications and general amenity relating to decommissioning activities;
- The **oPRoWPPMP [EN010149/APP/7.12]** which includes measures to management public rights of way to ensure they are safe and accessible during the construction and operation (including maintenance) phases of the Proposed Development;

8. Summary of impacts

- 8.1.1. **Table 15** summarises the potential disproportionate and/or differential impacts to protected characteristic groups arising from the Proposed Development during construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommission, as defined in **Section 6 Assessment of impacts**.
- 8.1.2. In some cases, protected characteristic groups can be subject to both disproportionate and differential equality affects.
- 8.1.3. **Table 15** also provides a brief overview of the relevant management plan(s) containing relevant mitigation measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate adverse effects as well as activities to be implemented to enhance opportunities resulting from beneficial impacts.
- 8.1.4. It is envisaged that **Table 15** will be used to monitor equality effects to protected characteristic groups as the Proposed Development progresses.

Table 15: Summary of potential equality impacts to protected characteristic groups of the Proposed Development

Potential Impacts	Description of potential impacts	Phase	Relevant protected characteristics	Differential / Disproportionate	Rating (Positive, neutral or negative)	Mitigation and enhancement measures
Environmental amenity	Noise: With the implementation of mitigation measures it is anticipated that there are no likely noise effects during construction, operational (including maintenance) and decommissioning phase. Nevertheless, noise may impact protected characteristic groups such as the elderly, children, people with disabilities and pregnant women.	Construction Operation Decommissioning	Age, Disability and Pregnancy and Maternity	Differential	Negative	oCEMP [EN010149/APP/7.7]; oOEMP [EN010149/APP/7.10]; and oDEMP [EN010149/APP/7.13]
	Air Quality: With the implementation of mitigation measures it is anticipated that there are no likely air quality effects during construction and similarly	Construction Operation (including maintenance) Decommissioning	Age and Disability	Differential	Negative	oCEMP [EN010149/APP/7.7]; oOEMP [EN010149/APP/7.10]; and oDEMP

Potential Impacts	Description of potential impacts	Phase	Relevant protected characteristics	Differential / Disproportionate	Rating (Positive, neutral or negative)	Mitigation and enhancement measures
	<p>during decommissioning phase. However, there is the potential for protected characteristic groups to be impacted, such as the elderly, children and people with disabilities, due to their susceptibility to changes and pre-existing chronic diseases. Emissions from vehicles during the operation (including maintenance) phase will be limited to vehicles going on site for maintenance purposes. Best practice measures would be considered further and therefore there are no likely air quality effects anticipated during operation.</p>					<p>[EN010149/APP/7.13]</p>
	<p>Climate: People with protected characteristics are more</p>	<p>Operation (including maintenance)</p>	<p>All protected characteristic groups</p>	<p>Differential and disproportionate</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Potential Impacts	Description of potential impacts	Phase	Relevant protected characteristics	Differential / Disproportionate	Rating (Positive, neutral or negative)	Mitigation and enhancement measures
	<p>vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The renewable energy generation of the Proposed Development, and comparative carbon reduction compared to non-renewable methods would have a positive effect on the climate and therefore on protected characteristic groups and during the operation (including maintenance) phase.</p>					
<p>Accessibility and active travel</p>	<p>Changes on traffic movement: With the implementation of mitigation, it is anticipated that there are no likely effects associated with the increased construction traffic during construction and similarly during</p>	<p>Construction Decommissioning</p>	<p>Age, Disability and Pregnancy and Maternity</p>	<p>Differential</p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>oCTMP [EN010149/APP/7.8]</p>

Potential Impacts	Description of potential impacts	Phase	Relevant protected characteristics	Differential / Disproportionate	Rating (Positive, neutral or negative)	Mitigation and enhancement measures
	decommissioning phase. However, the construction process will still increase the number of vehicles on the road and therefore it is expected that it could cause negative impacts on protected characteristic groups such as the elderly, children, disabled people and pregnant women as they are more vulnerable to changes and some may have reduced mobility and slower reaction times.					
Community uses and amenity space	During the construction works there will be disruptions to the existing PRoW which would have an impact on protected characteristics groups such as the elderly and	Construction Operation (including maintenance) Decommissioning	Age and Disability	Differential	Negative	oPRoWPPMP [EN010149/APP/7.12]

Potential Impacts	Description of potential impacts	Phase	Relevant protected characteristics	Differential / Disproportionate	Rating (Positive, neutral or negative)	Mitigation and enhancement measures
	people with disabilities as they could feel lost, disorientated and at heightened risk of being involved in a road collision if routes are not sufficiently marked.					
	The design of the Proposed Development will offer a community growing area and the provision of four new PRow and four permissive paths, as well as improvements to existing PRow including improvements to accessibility, increased recreational opportunities, improved connectivity and has associated physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits as well	Operation (including maintenance)	All protected characteristic groups	Differential and disproportionate	Positive	<p>oOEMP [EN010149/APP/7.10]</p> <p>Works Plans [EN010149/APP/2.3] and Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [EN010149/APP/7.9]</p>

Potential Impacts	Description of potential impacts	Phase	Relevant protected characteristics	Differential / Disproportionate	Rating (Positive, neutral or negative)	Mitigation and enhancement measures
	<p>as increase sense of plant and community. PRow will be put in place for the future and not decommissioned (unlike permissive paths), therefore PRow will provide a legacy benefit. These will have a beneficial effect on all equality groups during the operation (including maintenance) phase as it will enhance their wellbeing and quality of life, and it will promote an active lifestyle. Furthermore, the Proposed Development will provide a new community growing area to the north of Scopwick which will be secured via the Works Plans [EN010149/APP/2.3] and</p>					

Potential Impacts	Description of potential impacts	Phase	Relevant protected characteristics	Differential / Disproportionate	Rating (Positive, neutral or negative)	Mitigation and enhancement measures
	<p>Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [EN010149/APP/7.9]. New well-designed community areas are considered to be beneficial for protected characteristic groups as they can provide accessible facilities, making the area more inclusive for people with disabilities. Furthermore, they serve as hubs for social interaction, cultural events, and activities that bring together people from diverse backgrounds, fostering inclusion and reducing social isolation.</p>					
Employment and Business	The Proposed Development will provide	Construction	Sex, gender reassignment, race, disability	-	Neutral	Outline Employment, Skills and

Potential Impacts	Description of potential impacts	Phase	Relevant protected characteristics	Differential / Disproportionate	Rating (Positive, neutral or negative)	Mitigation and enhancement measures
	<p>construction job opportunities during the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning phases. The Applicant aims to, where practicable, use local and manufacturing businesses during each phase, which would help to support the creation of new direct job opportunities for local people. Should it not be possible to source all staff locally, there may be a need to draw in staff from outside of the area.</p> <p>Employment created by the Proposed Development will be required to adhere to anti-discrimination laws</p>	<p>Operation (including maintenance) Decommissioning</p>	<p>and religious groups</p>			<p>Supply Chain Plan [EN010149/APP/7.20]</p>

Potential Impacts	Description of potential impacts	Phase	Relevant protected characteristics	Differential / Disproportionate	Rating (Positive, neutral or negative)	Mitigation and enhancement measures
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with respect to sex, gender reassignment, race, disability and religion as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

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