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To the Applicant
(By email only)

Your Ref:

Our Ref: EN010149

Date: 18 December 2024

Dear Mr Carmichael,

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) – Section 51

Application by Springwell Energy farm Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the Springwell Solar Farm (EN010149)

Advice following issue of decision to accept the application for examination

On 18 December 2024 the Secretary of State decided that the application for the above project satisfied/ d the acceptance tests under section 55 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). The Planning Inspectorate's acceptance checklist and the application documents have been published and made available on the project page of our website.

In undertaking checks at the acceptance stage, the Inspectorate has made some initial observations in relation to the application. This letter comprises advice to the Applicant provided under section 51 of the PA2008 in respect of these initial observations. The Applicant should pay attention to its content and consider how appropriate action might be taken in response.

Designated heritage assets

The Inspectorate notes that there are numerous designated heritage assets located close to the Order limits. The potential effects of the Proposed Development on the settings of designated heritage assets are considered in Appendix 9.1: Archaeological Desk - Based Assessment and Stage 1 Setting Assessment, particularly Annex 12, of the Environmental Statement (ES) (Document Reference 6.3).

Section 8.6 of the Planning Statement (Document Reference 7.2) identifies there will be some less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets considered in Annex 12. The Inspectorate encourages the Applicant to clearly identify which of the designated heritage assets considered in Annex 12 would experience less than substantial harm to their significance as a result of the Proposed Development. Given that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, the Inspectorate also considers that such harm should be identified in Chapter 9 Cultural Heritage of the ES (Document Reference 6.1).

In addition, Appendix 9.1: Archaeological Desk - Based Assessment and Stage 1 Setting Assessment sets out that the potential effects on the settings of Dunsby Scheduled Ancient Monument (Paragraph 6.2.5), Scopwick and Blankney Conservation Areas (Paragraph 6.2.37) and Bloxholm Conservation Area (Paragraph 6.2.39) should be considered in ES Chapter 9 (Document Reference 6.1). However, in the same document Annex 12 considers that they should not be included. The Applicant is encouraged to address these discrepancies.

Flood risk and the sequential test

The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) (Document Reference 7.16) describes that the Proposed Development is primarily located in Flood Zone 1, with a small region within the northeastern corner of the site located in Flood Zones 2 and 3. The FRA does not specify whether the components located within Flood Zone 3 are within Flood Zone 3a or Flood Zone 3b or a combination. Flood Zone 3a and Flood Zone 3b are not differentiated on the figures in the FRA. An updated FRA with plans differentiating Flood Zone 3a and 3b should be reissued.

The Inspectorate observes that Solar PV panels are proposed in areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 and therefore it is necessary to demonstrate that the sequential test for flood risk has been met. Whilst the justification provided in Section 8.5 of the Planning Statement (Document Reference 7.2) is acknowledged, the Inspectorate encourages the Applicant to provide additional explanation to demonstrate that other plots of land within or surrounding the Order limits that are at lower risk of flooding, could not accommodate the proposed Solar PV panels or are less favourable when wider sustainable development objectives are considered.

Minor errors and omissions

There are minor errors and omissions, as reflected in Box 30 of the acceptance checklist.

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/document/EN010149-000266>

Please pay close attention to the advice set out in this letter and act on it accordingly.
It is requested that you action these points before the commencement of the Relevant Representation period.

This will contribute towards a more efficient examination and give any future Examining Authority comfort that the documentation is complete and accurate.

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

Yours sincerely

Bart Bartkowiak

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