The Planning Inspectorate
Yr Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

SCOPING OPINION:

Proposed Green Hill Solar Farm

Case Reference: EN010170

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

30 August 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.0.1 On 24 July 2024, the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) received an application for a Scoping Opinion from Green Hill Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) under Regulation 10 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) for the proposed Green Hill Solar Farm (the Proposed Development). The Applicant notified the Secretary of State (SoS) under Regulation 8(1)(b) of those regulations that they propose to provide an Environmental Statement (ES) in respect of the Proposed Development and by virtue of Regulation 6(2)(a) the Proposed Development is 'EIA development'.

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

http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/document/EN010170-000012

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

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

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

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

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

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-infrastructure-planning-advice-notes

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

2. OVERARCHING COMMENTS

2.1 Description of the Proposed Development

(Scoping Report Section 4)

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
2.1.1	1.1.8 and 4.2.3	Development Consent Order (DCO) application site boundary	It is stated in para 1.1.8 that as the design and assessment work for the Proposed Development evolves additional land may be included in the DCO application for mitigation works. Para 4.2.3 explains that the minimum or maximum parameters may be changed from those set out in the Scoping Report (SR) in order to minimise the environmental impacts of the Proposed Development. The ES submitted with the DCO application should be based on the most recent scoping opinion adopted, so far as the Proposed Development remains materially the same as the Proposed Development subject to this Opinion. The assessments in the ES must be based on a worst case scenario (WCS) which reflects the maximum parameters of the project the subject of the DCO application.
2.1.2	3.3.258 and Table 8.2	Baseline description	Summer Leys Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is described as a nature reserve "easily qualifying as a LWS". It is unclear whether this site comprises both an LNR and a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). This should be clarified in the ES.
2.1.3	4.1.3	Description of Proposed Development	The description of the Proposed Development within this paragraph omits the underground cables and is inconsistent with the description provided in Section 1.1 of the SR. The Proposed Development should be consistently described throughout the ES and all components identified.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
2.1.4	4.1.3	Description of Proposed Development - substations	It is stated that a number of 132 kilovolt (kV) and 33kV substations will be required, the voltage and number of which will be determined as the design of the Proposed Development progresses. In the event that a number of options are presented in the ES the WCS should be used for the purpose of the assessments, which may vary depending on the technical aspect.
2.1.5	4.1.4	Description of Proposed Development - Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)	The Inspectorate notes that that the location of the BESS as described and shown on the figures is currently its preferred location, but that if it is subsequently decided that this location is unsuitable or that further space is required, it may be located on Sites A, B, C, E, F or G. Should that be the position, the ES should consider the potential environmental impacts in those alternative locations based on a WCS and it should be explained why the selected location represents a better option in environmental terms.
2.1.6	4.1.7	Decommissioning – cable components	It is explained that the underground cable, cable ducts and joint bays would be decommissioned according to the applicable guidance and regulations in place at the time, and that some elements may be removed and some left in situ. The WCS should be used for the purpose of the assessments reported in the ES.
2.1.7	4.3.12	Description of Proposed Development – construction fencing	It is proposed that the details of the construction phase fencing that would be required would be confirmed within the post-consent detailed design. The maximum parameters for the fencing should be identified and a WCS considered in the ES.
2.1.8	4.3.20	Description of Proposed Development – Cable Corridor working width	It is stated that the typical working width for the Cable Corridor is anticipated to be 50 metres (m) but a wider area may be required in some locations. However, SR para 4.1.6 and Table 4.1 identify the maximum design parameter for the Cable Corridor as 50m. Para 4.2.4

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			explains that Table 4.1 presents the parameters used to identify the likely significant effects (LSE) of the Proposed Development, set out the proposed approach and methodology and identify the matters that the Applicant proposes to scope out. The maximum parameters of the components used for the purposes of the assessments must be sufficient to encompass all LSE, consistently reflected in the ES and secured in the DCO.
2.1.9	4.3.21 – 4.3.22	Description of Proposed Development – substations	The wording suggests that there would only be one 400 kilovolt (kV) substation, although other references (including paragraphs 4.1.3 and 4.3.7) state that there would be two. Care should be taken to ensure that the description of the Proposed Development is consistent throughout the ES.
2.1.10	4.3.23	Description of Proposed Development – local grid connections/back-up generators	Reference is made to the need for local grid connections to the National Grid (NG) distribution network to allow the 400kV generating station(s) to obtain short-term auxiliary power to maintain operation in the event that there is a technical problem; and to the potential need for back-up generators if that is not possible. There are no further references made to these components in the SR. If the position is unknown at the time the DCO application is submitted, both options should be described in the ES and the WCS assessed according to individual technical aspects.
2.1.11	4.3.28 and 4.3.31	Mitigation/enhancement measures	Clear differentiation should be made in the ES between measures intended to mitigate LSE and measures provided for purposes of enhancement.
2.1.12	4.3.28	Mitigation/enhancement measures	It is stated that hedgerows on the application site will be managed on a rotational basis to enable wildlife to benefit from them year-round. Details of how this would be managed and where the commitment to it is secured should be included in the ES and cross-reference made to related documents as appropriate. The Inspectorate notes that an Outline

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) is proposed to be submitted with the DCO application.
2.1.13	4.4.18	Removal of waste arisings	Impacts resulting from traffic movements associated with the removal of waste arisings generated by the Proposed Development, particularly during construction and decommissioning, should be assessed within the ES where significant effects are likely to occur.
2.1.14		Figures – red line boundary	The Inspectorate notes that in figures provided the red line boundary denotes only the site areas that contain the solar panels and AD; and the Cable Route Search Area is hatched separately. The red line boundary depicted on the ES figures should encompass the entire application site, ie Sites A – G, the BESS site and the Cable Corridor.
2.1.15	9.4.65 and 10.4.91	Baseline information	The River Nene is described as approximately 1 kilometre (km) from the BESS site in the Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage chapter and approximately 620m in the Ground Conditions and Contamination chapter. Baseline information should be consistent across the assessments.

2.2 EIA Methodology and Scope of Assessment

(Scoping Report Section 2)

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
2.2.1	Section 1.5	Consultation and engagement	This section includes the Inspectorate within a list of statutory consultees with which the Applicant has engaged. For clarification, the Inspectorate is not a statutory consultee and should not be referred to as such. In addition, the timetable for the progressing of the Proposed Development is a matter for the Applicant, to be discussed rather than agreed with the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate notes that Bedford Borough Council (BBC) is not included in the consultee list although its administrative boundary borders the site. The Inspectorate advises that consultation should be initiated with BBC at the earliest opportunity.
2.2.2	2.2.2	Terminology	The proposed structure of the ES chapters includes two headings entitled 'Assessment Methodology'; it is unclear why this would be repeated. 'Embedded Mitigation' and 'Mitigation Measures' headings are proposed. For differentiation, the Applicant may wish to identify the latter as 'additional', consistent with references in the SR to mitigation other than embedded mitigation.
2.2.3	2.2.7	Baseline methodology – agreement with consultees	It is stated that the methods of data collection have been discussed with the relevant consultees where appropriate and that discussion will continue through to submission of the DCO application. The ES should set out the level of agreement reached with relevant consultees about the proposed baseline methodologies.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
2.2.4	2.2.13	Decommissioning phase assessment	It is stated that decommissioning effects are typically no greater than those identified for construction and that such effects may not be assessed separately for some technical assessments contained within the ES. The Inspectorate does not agree with this approach and considers that each technical chapter should consider potential impacts of the decommissioning phase. An assessment should be provided where significant effects may occur. Reference is made to measures to be contained in both an Outline Decommissioning Statement and an Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (ODEMP). It's unclear if these are intended to be separate control documents. Mitigation measures should not be duplicated within supporting documents and they should be clearly signposted from the ES.
2.2.5	2.2.39 and 2.2.43	Cumulative assessment	It is set out that the 'area of influence' for the cumulative assessment to be reported in the ES will be agreed with the Inspectorate (in addition to the host local authorities) and that information relating to other developments will be collected from sources that may include the Inspectorate. It is assumed the latter reference is to information that is available on the National Infrastructure website. For clarity, the Inspectorate will not comment on the scope of the proposed cumulative assessment other than within this Opinion.
2.2.6	2.2.52	Mitigation	Provision of and compliance with an environmental management plan (EMP) is described as a potential 'embedded mitigation' measure. Consideration should be given to the appropriateness of describing an EMP as such, taking into consideration that EMPs contain embedded mitigation measures and often 'additional mitigation' measures too.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
2.2.7	8.3.13	Baseline information - Sites F, G and A.2	The Inspectorate notes that Sites F, G and A.2 were later additions to the Proposed Development and as a result surveys for these Sites are ongoing. The sharing of such information should include BBC as its administrative boundary borders Sites F and G.
2.2.8		Presentation of information	The Inspectorate notes that the list of appendices contained on page 8 of the SR does not identify in which of the appendix documents provided (Parts 1 to 8) each is contained. For ease of navigation, the ES should explicitly identify the location within associated documents of supporting information.
2.2.9		Transboundary	The Inspectorate on behalf of the SoS has considered the Proposed Development and concludes that it is unlikely to have a significant effect either alone or cumulatively on the environment in a European Economic Area State. In reaching this conclusion the Inspectorate has identified and considered the Proposed Development's likely impacts including consideration of potential pathways and the extent, magnitude, probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impacts. The Inspectorate considers that the likelihood of transboundary effects resulting from the Proposed Development is so low that it does not warrant the issue of a detailed transboundary screening. However, this position will remain under review and will have regard to any new or materially different information coming to light which may alter that decision. The SoS' duty under Regulation 32 of the 2017 EIA Regulations continues throughout the application process. The Inspectorate's screening of transboundary issues is based on the relevant considerations specified in the Annex to its Advice Note Twelve, links for which can be found in paragraph 1.0.7 above.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT COMMENTS

3.1 Climate Change

(Scoping Report Section 6)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.1.1	Tables 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4	Sea level rise	The Applicant explains that the Proposed Development is not located in an area that is susceptible to sea level rise. The Inspectorate agrees that significant effects are not likely to occur and that an assessment of sea level rise can be scoped out of further assessment.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.1.2	Paragraphs 6.4.5 and 6.4.12	Significance criteria and methods	The Scoping Report does not set out the significance criteria used for the climate change chapter, nor the guidance proposed to be used for the assessment. If the conclusions in the Climate Change ES chapter rely on the overarching methodology in the ES then this needs to be clearly stated. The ES needs to state which guidance has been used to derive the methods for assessment of this aspect.
3.1.3	Paragraph 6.4.11	Carbon budgets	The Scoping Report states that for operational stages post 2037, the sixth UK carbon budget will be used, as later carbon budgets are not available. Should a later carbon budget become available prior to submission of the application, this should be used for post 2037 rather than the sixth UK carbon budget.

3.2 Landscape and Visual Impact

(Scoping Report Section 7)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.1	Paragraphs 7.4.27 and 7.6.1 and Table 7.7	Landscape receptors	Appendix 7.4 includes a table of scoped in and scoped out receptors and refers to several landscape receptors scoped out; however, no landscape receptors are shown as scoped out within Table 7.7. In the absence of information such as evidence demonstrating clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies, the Inspectorate is not in a position to agree to scope out the landscape receptors listed in paragraph 7.4.27 and Appendix 7.4 from the assessment. The ES should include a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) supported by a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), or the information referred to demonstrating agreement with the relevant consultation bodies and the absence of an LSE.
3.2.2	Table 7.7 and Paragraphs 7.1.11 and 7.1.12	Cable Corridor - landscape and visual effects beyond 0.5km	The Scoping Report states that, due to being barely perceptible further than 0.5km away and only involving the construction phase, receptors beyond 0.5km will not be scoped into the LVIA when considering the Cable Corridor. The Inspectorate considers that receptors beyond 0.5km of the Cable Corridor should be included in the LVIA and the study area boundaries should be fully representative of the Proposed Development. In the absence of information on the infrastructure which would be present within the Cable Corridor once operational, the Inspectorate is not in a position to scope this matter out of further assessment. Furthermore, considering the duration of the construction phase (anticipated programme of approximately 2 years, as stated in paragraph 4.4.1 of the

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			SR) the Inspectorate considers that there is potential for significant effects on landscape character and visual amenity to occur. In the absence of information such as evidence demonstrating clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies, the Inspectorate is not in a position to agree to scope out these matters from the assessment. The ES should include an LVIA supported by a ZTV, or the information referred to demonstrating agreement with the relevant consultation bodies and the absence of an LSE.
3.2.3	Table 7.7	Visual receptors between 1km and 2km wider study area with no direct, extensive and/ or open views towards the Proposed Development	The Scoping Report study areas do not take into consideration the Cable Corridor when applying the buffer areas. The Inspectorate is therefore unable to confirm that the identified receptors can be scoped out of the ES as the whole of the Proposed Development has not been considered. The ES should evidence how the study area has been derived to ensure it is representative and it should be agreed with relevant consultation bodies where possible.
3.2.4	Table 7.7	Visual receptors between 2km and 5km outer study area	As indicated in ID 3.2.2 above, the Inspectorate is unable to confirm that the identified receptors can be scoped out due to the study area not considering the whole of the Proposed Development. The Scoping Report states that effects on visual receptors beyond 2km are expected to be negligible given expected visibility. However, the ZTV illustrated in Figures 7.8 to 7.9.8 show that the panels will be visible beyond 2km. The ES should assess potential effects on views and visual amenity within the ZTV where significant effects are likely to occur. In the absence of information such as evidence demonstrating clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies, the Inspectorate is not in a position to agree to scope these matters from the assessment. The ES should include an LVIA supported by a ZTV, or the information referred to demonstrating

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			agreement with the relevant consultation bodies and the absence of an LSE.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.5	Paragraph 7.1.11 and 7.1.12	Study area - Cable Corridor	This paragraph states that the Cable Corridor is being refined and a 0.5km study area will be used in the ES. Justification as to how this approach accords with standard practice; for example, the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3) 2013, is required within the ES.
3.2.6	Paragraph 7.7.8	Assessment of effects - operation (Year 15)	The SR states that summer photomontages will be used to assess the effects of the Proposed Development at 15 years of operation. This is not considered to represent the WCS and adverse effects will not be fully considered. The Inspectorate recommends that winter photomontages should also be used to identify any long-term effects without the benefit of screening from vegetation.

3.3 Ecology and Biodiversity

(Scoping Report Section 8)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.3.1	8.3.42 and Table 8.3	Hazel dormice	The Inspectorate agrees that hazel dormice can be scoped out of the assessment on the basis that the data search did not return any records within the 2km search area, the habitats are considered sub-optimal and according to the information that hazel dormice rarely occur in Northamptonshire.
3.3.2	8.4.2 and Table 8.3	Operational impacts of electromagnetic fields (EMFs) on terrestrial species and impacts of EMFs resulting from cables within the Sites and Cable Corridor	The Inspectorate agrees that this matter may be scoped out according to the justification provided that significant effects on terrestrial wildlife from EMFs are highly unlikely due to the burial and sheathing of all of the cables; and the relatively low voltage of the 33kV and 132kV cabling. The Inspectorate notes that it is identified that fish species with sensitivity to EMFs could be subject to disturbance resulting from installation of a 400kV cable and that where it is proposed that any such cables cross watercourses the potential effects of EMF will be considered.
3.3.3	Table 8.3	Boughton Green Corner Local Geological Site (LGS) Brampton Halt Cutting LGS Boughton Cross Roads Quarry LGS Pitsford Quarry LGS Bozeat Quarry LGS	The Inspectorate agrees that impacts on these sites may be scoped out on the basis that they are designated solely for their geological interest, the features of which will be discussed in other relevant ES chapters.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.3.4	8.2.1	Legislation - hedgerows	The Inspectorate notes that The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 are included in the list of legislation relevant to the biodiversity and ecology assessments. The baseline information contained within the ES should identify hedgerows within the site according to the above regulations, that may be affected by the Proposed Development. An assessment should be provided where significant effects are likely to occur.
3.3.5	Section 8.3	Baseline - white-clawed crayfish	The potential for white-clawed crayfish to be present in watercourses that cross the site should be considered and an assessment provided where significant effects are likely to occur.
3.3.6	8.3.8 and 8.3.9	Baseline	It is stated in para 8.3.9 that the desk study and data search outlined in para 8.3.8 included the Cable Route Search Area, although the wording therein largely refers only to the solar array/AD Sites. It is also explained that existing records of protected and notable species within 2km of each Site were obtained from the relevant local records centres and that data is also held for the entirety of the Cable Route Search Area. However, the information on species provided subsequently (from para 8.3.21) largely refers only to the Sites. The baseline information contained within the ES should encompass and clearly describe the baseline for the whole of the application site, including the Cable Corridor.
3.3.7	8.3.11	Baseline – bird surveys	It is stated that the scope of wintering bird surveys will vary depending on whether the solar array/AD Sites fall within or outside of the 10km consultation zone (considered to be land functionally linked to the Special Protection Area (SPA)) surrounding the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA. It is not explained why this is the only criteria that has been applied to determine the scope of such surveys or confirmed that would encompass the need to undertake such surveys in other locations which could be affected by the Proposed Development. However, the Inspectorate notes that wintering bird surveys have been or are

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			scheduled to be undertaken for all of the solar array/AD Sites. The methodology should be clarified in the ES. Para 8.3.17 states that the proposed survey scope was confirmed by Natural England (NE) as acceptable to provide an assessment of the Proposed Development. However, it is unclear whether the Discretionary Advice Service (DAS) response from NE contained in Appendix 8.1 applies to the Cable Corridor, parts of which may be through land functionally linked to the SPA. This should be clarified and evidenced within the ES.
3.3.8	8.3.11 and 8.3.12	Baseline surveys - nocturnal wintering bird surveys	It is explained that any of Sites B-G and the BESS site that fall within 10km of any part of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA will be subject to nocturnal wintering bird surveys. Site A is excluded on the basis that it lies 11.5km from the SPA and Site A.2 on the basis that only a very small section of its southernmost field lies just within the 10km consultation zone. The Inspectorate notes that NE agreed the approach in relation to Site A and that a response regarding Site A2 (and Site G) is awaited. NE's agreement or otherwise should be evidenced in the ES.
3.3.9	8.3.15	Baseline surveys – Cable Corridor	It is stated that the survey scope for the Cable Route Search Area has not yet been finalised and a 'proportionate' survey scope is proposed on the basis that the cable installation works would be of a temporary nature. No breeding bird surveys are proposed for the Cable Corridor on the basis that the cable installation works would be temporary and progress linearly and due to their nature would minimise disturbance to birds. The Inspectorate notes that Table 8.1 provides information only in relation to the solar array/AD Sites and that the DAS response from NE contained in Appendix 8.1 agrees the scope of the surveys, which include breeding

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			bird surveys. It is unclear whether this response applies only to the solar array/AD Sites. Full ecological surveys should be undertaken at locations where LSE could arise. The scope of the ecological surveys for the entire site, including the Cable Corridor, should be agreed with Natural England and other key consultees, such as the relevant Councils, where possible, and the level of agreement should be evidenced in the ES. Cross-reference should be provided to relevant information contained in other application documents such as the Consultation Report.
3.3.10	8.3.15	Construction techniques	The Inspectorate notes that horizontal directional drilling (HDD) or open-cut trenching may be used for the construction of the Cable Corridor. The ES should identify the technique to be used at the relevant locations and provide details of the programme and the works, including identifying if any night-time working is anticipated. Justification should be set out for use of the preferred technique at the particular locations and identification of potential impacts and an assessment where LSE could occur should be provided.
3.3.11	Table 8.2	Designated sites	Table 8.2 refers to the designated sites scoped into the assessment and sets out their distance from the solar array/AD Sites. An equivalent table within the ES should also include the same information for the Cable Corridor. It may be clearer for the reader if the nationally and locally designated sites were separated out.
3.3.12	8.3.27	Species records – Cable Route Search Area	It is explained that searches for records of protected and priority species within the Cable Route Search Area will be provided once available. This information should be provided with/appended to the ES.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.3.13	8.3.49	Great crested newts (GCN) - mitigation	The Inspectorate notes that GCN District Level Licensing (DLL) is currently being pursued as a mitigation option for the Proposed Development. The Inspectorate understands that the DLL approach includes strategic area assessment and the identification of risk zones and strategic opportunity area maps. The ES should include information to demonstrate whether the Proposed Development is located within a risk zone for GCN. If the Applicant enters into the DLL scheme, NE will undertake an impact assessment and inform the Applicant whether their scheme is within one of the amber risk zones and therefore whether the Proposed Development is likely to have a significant effect on GCN. The outcome of this assessment will be documented on an Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate (IACPC). The IACPC can be used to provide additional detail to inform the findings in the ES, including information on the Proposed Development's impact on GCN and the appropriate compensation required. It is stated that if DLL is not taken forward the assessment will instead be informed by eDNA survey work of all accessible ponds within the application site and within 250m of any of the Sites or Cable Corridor, where access permission can be obtained. In the event that this option is pursued, the ES should identify any limitations to the information-gathering process and assess the WCS for any areas that cannot be surveyed that are considered to have potential for GCN presence.
3.3.14	8.3.51 and 8.3.61	Baseline – reptile and invertebrate surveys	It is proposed that reptile surveys are not undertaken given the 'relatively low' risk to individual reptiles during the construction and operational phases due to the majority of suitable habitat being located at the field peripheries; and the size of the Sites. It is stated that potential impacts such as habitat loss/fragmentation and the risk of individuals being

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			killed/injured during the construction phase will be assessed and mitigation proposed. The Inspectorate notes that some common reptile species may be present and that some areas of particularly suitable habitat have been identified within the Sites. It is proposed that invertebrate surveys are not undertaken on the basis of the "relatively low distinctiveness" of the Sites' habitats and the nature of the Proposed Development. The Inspectorate notes that a small number of notable invertebrate species records were returned during the desk study and that habitats within the Sites provide suitable opportunities for a range of species. It is unclear whether these statements also apply to the Cable Corridor Search Area and also how appropriate mitigation can be proposed in the absence of baseline data. In the absence of information such as evidence demonstrating clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies, the Inspectorate is not in a position to agree to scope out reptile and invertebrate surveys. Accordingly, the ES should include such baseline information, including for the Cable Corridor, or evidence demonstrating agreement with the relevant consultation bodies and the absence of a LSE.
3.3.15	8.3.54 and Table 8.1	Baseline - wintering bird surveys	It is explained that the majority of the diurnal wintering bird surveys started in October 2023 and continued until February 2024 but that, due to its (later) addition to the Proposed Development in December 2023, two additional surveys are scheduled for October and November 2024 at Site F only. This is inconsistent with Table 8.1 which indicates that no surveys have yet been undertaken for Sites G and A.2 and are scheduled to take place between October 2024 and March 2025. The baseline survey information must be consistent within the ES.
3.3.16	8.3.54	Baseline – fish	No specific fish surveys are proposed. The Inspectorate notes that the Environment Agency (EA), within its scoping consultation response

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			contained in Appendix 2, highlights the availability of its fish survey data. This should be used to inform the baseline, so that receptors and potential impacts can be identified.
3.3.17	8.5.12	Mitigation and compensation	The Inspectorate notes that Northamptonshire Council is working with NatureSpace to create a district-wide mitigation strategy to address impacts on ground-nesting birds, particularly from solar farms (see Appendix 2 of this Opinion). It is recommended that the Applicant engage with the Council on this matter should LSE on ground-nesting birds be predicted and mitigation and/or compensation measures be required.

3.4 Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage

(Scoping Report Section 9)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.4.1	9.6.14	Impacts on foul sewer capacity during operation	The Inspectorate agrees that this matter may be scoped out of the assessment according to the information provided that there would be no foul water discharge from the Proposed Development and therefore no requirement for a mains-connected foul water drainage system.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.4.2	Section 9.4	Flood modelling	It is noted that ongoing flood modelling is to be used to determine the hydrological baseline. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the information contained in the EA's scoping response (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on the appropriateness of particular flood models and potential limitations. The Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) undertaken by the East Riding of Yorkshire Council, may also be a helpful source of local flood risk information. In relation to the assessment of flood risk and the impacts of climate change the Inspectorate highlights the EA's advice that, regardless that the Proposed Development is anticipated to have a 60-year life, a 75-year timeframe should be applied, consistent with the Government's Planning Practice Guidance.
3.4.3	9.4.3	Baseline – Flood Zones	It is stated that as the Cable Route Search Area lies within the areas described for Sites A – G and the BESS site, the baseline is not described separately. However, although SR Section 4 only identifies parts of Sites D – G and all of the BESS site as within Flood Zone 3 (FZ3), the figures contained in SR Appendix 9 show that parts of the

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			Cable Route Search Area near Sites A.2 and C (in addition to Sites D, E, F and the BESS site) are also in FZ3. The baseline for all components of the Proposed Development should be described in the ES. In the event that the above remains the position for the selected Cable Corridor route an assessment of impacts in these locations should be provided where LSE may occur. Floodplain storage that would be lost should be quantified in the ES and appropriate compensation proposed.
3.4.4	9.4.73	Assessment - BESS	This wording refers to the proposed solar panels rather than the BESS infrastructure (the subject of this paragraph), therefore the conclusion in relation to surface water flooding at the location of the BESS is unclear. This should be clarified in the ES. The Inspectorate understands that the location of the BESS may change. The ES should explain how flood risk has been taken into account in determining its location. Wherever the BESS may be proposed to be situated an assessment should be provided where LSE may occur and appropriate mitigation measures proposed and secured as necessary.
3.4.5	Section 9.5	Assessment	The list of 'Potential and Likely Significant Environmental Effects' does not include fluvial flood risk, although this is identified in the baseline conditions set out in Section 9.4 and within the assessment methodology described in Section 9.6. This should be included in such a list contained in the ES and assessed accordingly.
3.4.6	9.6.3	Methodology	The methodology as described here is unclear and reference is made to impacts rather than effects. It is stated that the assessment of the "*significance of impact will be informed by the valuation of the watercourse and the magnitude of impact*". However, it is then explained that according to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), the impact magnitude will be determined only for residual impacts following

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			mitigation. This is also inconsistent with the information provided subsequently in Section 9.6, where impact magnitude and receptor sensitivity are combined to determine the significance of the resulting effect; and the statement that mitigation measures may be considered for effects that are moderate adverse or above. The methodology should be clearly set out in the ES.
3.4.7	Table 9.5	Assessment – water resources	Increased demand on water supply is identified in Table 9.5 as a matter to be scoped in (and the supply of potable water is identified in Chapter 6 Table 6.1 as a potential source of GHG emissions). However, it is not stated whether a water supply would be required during any phase of the Proposed Development or indicated whether abstraction would be required. The Inspectorate notes that the site is located within an area designated as 'seriously water stressed' by the EA. Reference is made only to potable water abstractions, although the EA identify (within its response contained in Appendix 2 of this Opinion) that there are a number of existing licences for other abstractions within or in proximity to the Site. The ES should provide details of water supply and demand requirements during construction and operation (including in the context of BESS fire risk). An assessment should be provided where there is potential for LSE to occur on water resources or demonstration of the absence of LSE with agreement from the relevant consultation bodies. Anglian Water should be consulted at the earliest opportunity. The Applicant is referred to their consultation response contained in Appendix 2 of this Opinion in this regard.
3.4.8	Section 9.6	Assessment – HDD impacts	The Inspectorate notes that there is potential for HDD to be used where watercourses are crossed by the Cable Corridor. The ES should assess impacts from any use of HDD on water resources receptors which are likely to result in significant effects. Should drilling fluid be used in

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			construction, a breakout plan should be submitted with and secured within the DCO application.

3.5 Ground Conditions and Contamination

(Scoping Report Section 10)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.5.1	Table 10.4	Effects on construction workers, including groundworkers; and adjacent users and adjacent residents from exposure to contamination through direct contact/ingestion and inhalation of dust, vapours and asbestos fibres – construction and decommissioning	It is proposed to scope this matter out of further assessment on the basis that measures to be set out in an Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (OCEMP) (examples of which are set out in para 10.8.1), that would be implemented by the Proposed Development's principal contractor, would "*mitigate against significant effects*". The potential impacts should be identified in the ES and the relevant measures contained in the OCEMP identified. However, on the basis of the information provided in the SR and Appendix 10 and the proposed mitigation to be included in the OCEMP, the Inspectorate agrees that this matter may be scoped out from further assessment. Appropriate measures should also be set out in the Outline Decommissioning Statement/ODEMP.
3.5.2	Table 10.4	Effects on controlled waters, including underlying groundwater, from mobilisation of existing contamination via vertical/lateral migration through permeable deposits below the site – construction and decommissioning	It is proposed to scope this matter out on the basis that measures to be set out in an OCEMP (examples of which are set out in para 10.8.1), that would be implemented by the Proposed Development's principal contractor, would mitigate against significant effects. The Inspectorate notes that only limited potential sources of contamination have been identified across the site and that a significant effect is not anticipated. The potential impacts should be identified in the ES and the relevant measures contained in the OCEMP identified. However, on the basis of the information provided in the SR and Appendix 10 and the proposed mitigation to be included in the OCEMP, the Inspectorate agrees that this matter may be scoped out from further

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			assessment. Appropriate measures should also be set out in the Outline Decommissioning Statement/ODEMP.
3.5.3	Table 10.4	Effects on controlled waters, including underlying groundwater, from spillages or leakages of fuels and chemicals and leaching of chemicals from faulty battery incidents (fire damage, ash deposition and extinguishing waters) - construction and decommissioning	It is proposed to scope this matter out on the basis that measures to be set out in an OCEMP, that would be implemented by the Proposed Development's principal contractor, would mitigate against significant effects. No reference is made to an ODEMP. The information provided in para 10.6.8 (which conflicts with para 10.7.6) suggests that construction and decommissioning of the Proposed Development could potentially result in a major/moderate or moderate effect (defined as a significant effect in Chapter 2 para 2.2.28) on controlled waters. The River Nene is described as approximately 620m to the north of the BESS site and would be crossed by the Cable Corridor, where construction works would occur. In the absence of evidence demonstrating no LSE and/or clear agreement of the conclusion with relevant statutory bodies, the Inspectorate is not in a position to agree to scope out this matter from the assessment. Accordingly, the ES should include an assessment where significant effects may occur or evidence of the absence of a LSE and agreement with the relevant consultation bodies.
3.5.4	Table 10.4	Effects on future scheme users, including maintenance workers and PRoW users; and adjacent users and adjacent residents from exposure to contamination through direct contact/ingestion and inhalation of dust, vapours and asbestos fibres - operation	It is proposed to scope this matter out on the basis that measures to be set out in an OCEMP, that would be implemented by the Proposed Development's principal contractor, would mitigate against significant effects. It is not clear how the OCEMP, which would apply to construction works, would be relevant to operational impacts. Notwithstanding this point, the Inspectorate notes that the Proposed Development would not be staffed once operational and that works would be limited to maintenance

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			activities and replacement of panels and batteries (the details of which should be set out in the ES). The potential impacts should be identified in the ES and the relevant measures contained in the OEMP identified. However, on the basis of the information provided in the SR and Appendix 10 the Inspectorate agrees that this matter may be scoped out from further assessment.
3.5.5	Table 10.4	Effects on controlled waters, including underlying groundwater, from spillages or leakages of fuels and chemicals and leaching of chemicals from faulty battery incidents (fire damage, ash deposition and extinguishing waters) via vertical/lateral migration through permeable deposits below the site - operation	It is proposed to scope this matter out on the basis that measures to be set out in an OCEMP, that would be implemented by the Proposed Development's principal contractor, would mitigate against significant effects. It is not clear how the OCEMP, which would apply to construction works, would be relevant to operational impacts. The information provided in para 10.6.9 (which conflicts with para 10.7.6) suggests that operation of the Proposed Development could potentially result in a major/moderate or moderate effect (defined as a significant effect in Chapter 2 para 2.2.28) on controlled waters. The River Nene (part of an SPA, Ramsar site and SSSI) is described as approximately 620m to the north of the BESS site, which is identified as on a Secondary A aquifer, and also would be crossed by the Cable Corridor. The identified mitigation measures relate only to the construction phase and no information is provided on potential operational mitigation. That would need to include measures to address potential contamination impacts on controlled waters and flooding of watercourses arising from waters used to extinguish a BESS fire. In the absence of evidence demonstrating no LSE and/or clear agreement of the conclusion with relevant statutory bodies, the Inspectorate is not in a position to agree to scope out this matter from the assessment. Accordingly, the ES should include an assessment where

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			significant effects may occur or evidence of the absence of a LSE and agreement with the relevant consultation bodies.
3.5.6	Table 10.4	Effects on future users, including maintenance workers; and the built environment and buildings on site from hazardous ground gases accumulating and migrating into buildings, enclosed spaces and sub-floor voids, with subsequent asphyxiation and/or the potential for explosion - operation	It is proposed to scope this matter out on the basis that measures to be set out in an OCEMP, that would be implemented by the Proposed Development's principal contractor, would mitigate against significant effects. It is not clear how the OCEMP, which would apply to construction works, would be relevant to operational impacts. The Inspectorate notes from the information contained in Appendix 10 that no potential significant sources of ground gases or vapours have been identified on or off-site, However, it is also identified that parts of the site are within land potentially impacted by elevated Radon and that the site lies within an area of variable Radon probability, ranging from less than 1% to 10-30% of homes being above the action level for Radon. No reference is made to Radon or Radon protection measures within the SR. The Inspectorate agrees on the basis of the evidence presented that effects on future users of the Proposed Development and the built environment and buildings on site from ground gases may be scoped out from further assessment. However, consideration of impacts resulting from elevated levels of Radon on the site should be included in the ES and an assessment of effects made and mitigation proposed where LSE are likely to occur. Efforts should be made to agree the approach and conclusions with the relevant statutory bodies.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.5.7	10.1.1, 10.5.2, Table 10.1, 10.6.4	Receptors	Although organisms and ecosystems are identified as examples of receptors that could be adversely affected by contamination, they are not subsequently considered within this chapter. Section 2.3 of the Preliminary Geo-Environmental Risk Assessment (Appendix 10) identifies that a number of ancient woodlands and the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI, Ramsar Site and SPA lie within 500m of the application site; and a variety of sites and species that could be affected by the Proposed Development are identified in SR Chapter 8: Ecology and Biodiversity. Chapter 8 does not consider contaminants in relation to impacts on ecological receptors other than a statement that potential impacts in respect of contaminated water will be addressed in the hydrology and drainage chapter. However, they are not addressed therein either. The ES should include consideration of potential impacts on ecological receptors resulting from contamination during all phases of the Proposed Development and an assessment of effects made and mitigation proposed where LSE are likely to occur. Explicit cross-reference should be made to relevant information contained in other ES chapters or supporting documents. Efforts should be made to agree the approach and conclusions with the relevant statutory bodies.
3.5.8	Section 10.4	Baseline	The Inspectorate notes that the EA (in its scoping response contained in Appendix 2) has identified a number of apparent discrepancies in the geological site characterisation for Sites A – G and the BESS site within the Scoping Report and the Preliminary Risk Assessment and that groundwater levels are only specified for isolated areas. The baseline must be accurately and comprehensively described for the entire site within the ES and supporting documents so that relevant receptors, impacts and effects are identified.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.5.9	10.6.8 and10.6.9	Methodology - criteria	Controlled waters and the built environment are described here as of 'moderate' sensitivity. The sensitivity criteria set out in Table 10.1 to be used for the assessment are described as high, medium, low and negligible. Care should be taken within the ES to ensure that the methodology and related terminology are consistently applied.
3.5.10	10.6.5 - 10.6.9 and 10.7.3 – 10.7.7	Assessment – significance of effect	The receptor sensitivity and impact magnitude values set out in the conclusions in Section 7 paras 10.7.3 – 10.7.7, combined therein to determine the level of significance of the resulting effect, differ to those set out in the assessment information within Section 6 paras 10.6.5 - 10.6.9 in respect of the same receptors. According to the significance matrix contained in Table 10.3 the values assigned in Section 6 would result in a different (higher) level of significance of effect for the following: • the contamination of controlled waters during construction, operation and decommissioning; • exposure of future scheme users, including maintenance workers and PRoW users; and adjacent users and adjacent residents to contamination through direct contact/ingestion and inhalation of dust, vapours and asbestos fibres during operation; • direct contact between and accumulation of gas in buildings, enclosed spaces and sub-floor voids of future users during the construction and decommissioning phases. In addition, the sensitivity of future users and the built environment is considered separately in para 10.6.9 and differs between the two receptors, but this is not reflected in the conclusion contained in 10.7.7, and results in a different conclusion, as set out above. The conclusions set out in the ES should be clarified and be consistent with the assessment of impacts and LSE.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.5.11	10.5.1	Effects – from Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)	A review of records of potential UXO risks is listed within the methodology section. Section 2.4.3 of Appendix 10 explains that Site G and the wider area was used during World War II as a practice bombing range. A 'Detailed UXO Risk Assessment Site G' report is contained within Appendix F of Appendix 10 and Appendix 10 Section 2.4.3 summarises the report results. The risk from German UXO is classified as 'Low'; and from allied ordnance as 'Medium'. In respect of mitigation, the report recommends implementing a UXO Risk Management Plan and site-specific UXO Awareness Briefings to all personnel undertaking intrusive works; and UXO Specialist On-Site Support specifically for open excavations. Despite these findings no subsequent reference is made to UXO within this chapter. The ES should include consideration of potential impacts on receptors resulting from UXO on the site and an assessment of effects made and mitigation proposed where LSE are likely to occur. Efforts should be made to agree the approach and conclusions with the relevant statutory bodies.

3.6 Minerals

(Scoping Report Section 11)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.6.1	N/A	N/A	No matters have been proposed to be scoped out of the assessment.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.6.2	Section 11.4	Methodology	The terms used in para 11.4.9 to describe the impact magnitude values differ to those set out in Table 11.2: 'Criteria for Assessing Magnitude of Impacts' (the heading of which incorrectly refers to sensitivity rather than magnitude). In addition, the impact magnitude terms used to determine the level of significance as set out in Table 11.3 differ again. As a result the methodology proposed to be applied to the assessment is unclear. This should be clarified in the ES.
3.6.3	Section 11.4	Assessment	The Inspectorate notes that parts of the site lie within or in close proximity to Minerals Safeguarding Areas and Minerals Consultation Areas. The ES should demonstrate that the relevant Minerals Planning Authorities have been consulted in respect of the proposals and that the Proposed Development does not impact on future ambitions for minerals extraction within the region.

3.7 Cultural Heritage

(Scoping Report Section 12)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.7.1	Table 12.4	Impact to archaeological remains during the operational phase	The SR proposes to scope this matter out on the basis that impacts to buried archaeology would only occur as a result of ground disturbance from construction activities. The Inspectorate agrees that direct impacts to buried archaeology will not occur during operation provided that no additional piling or similar level of ground disturbance is required and that this matter can be scoped out of the ES. For clarity, the Inspectorate considers that indirect impacts on designated heritage assets should be scoped in as the potential for impact remains from piling, compaction, and subsequent potential changes in drainage patterns during operation.
3.7.2	Table 12.4	Impact to archaeological remains during the decommissioning phase	The SR proposes to scope this matter out on the basis that impacts to buried archaeology would only occur as a result of ground disturbance from construction activities. However, it is unknown what activities will occur during decommissioning and therefore there is potential for disturbance to archaeology. In the absence of this information, the Inspectorate cannot agree to scope this matter out. The ES should describe anticipated decommissioning activities and assess potential impacts to archaeology where significant effects are likely to occur.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.7.3	Paragraphs 12.3.1 to 12.3.4 and	Study areas	A 2km study area for designated heritage assets and a 1km study area for non-designated heritage assets is proposed in the SR for the solar array, which does not cover the whole of the Cable Route Search Area.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
	Figures 12.1 to 12.2.5		These study areas need to be fully justified within the ES based on relevant guidance, professional judgement, and agreed with consultation bodies. A 250m study area is proposed for the Cable Corridor once refined at PEIR stage; this will also need full justification within the ES. The SR states that the baseline description for the Cable Route Search Area is included within the array areas and their 2km/1km buffers. Figures 12.1 to 12.2.5 show that the Cable Route Search Area is not fully considered within the SR as part of the baseline description, as there are areas of the Cable Route Search Area that sit outside of the 2km/1km buffers described as part of the baseline. These areas must be included within the baseline description and fully considered within the ES. No reference is made to the ZTV. This should also be considered when defining the study areas, as the buffers proposed as part of the LVIA are up to 5km and this is not reflected in the Cultural Heritage chapter.
3.7.4	Paragraph 12.5.2	Methodology	The SR does not state which guidance is used to inform the methodology. Established technical guidance should be used to derive the methodology and this needs to be identified within the ES. It is not clear from the SR as to which locations of areas for intrusive archaeological investigations are proposed (if any). For the avoidance of doubt, intrusive archaeological investigations should not be limited to the solar array areas and should be undertaken wherever there is a potential for significant effects on buried archaeology. They should be established with reference to the relevant guidance and agreed with the relevant consultation bodies.
3.7.5	Figures 12.1 and 12.2	Representation of archaeological and heritage assets	Whilst the Inspectorate considers the division of Figure 12.1 and 12.2 into individual Figures 12.1.1 to 12.1.5 and 12.2.1 to 12.2.5 to be appropriate, it is not clear from the figures of the SR chapter how the ES will provide reference to the assets represented. At present, the assets are

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			unlabelled, and a full list is not provided. The Applicant should consider how to fully describe and reference the assets, for example using a gazetteer and assigning each asset a reference number which can then be placed onto the relevant figures.

3.8 Transport and Access

(Scoping Report Section 13)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.8.1	Table 13.4	Decommissioning phase	The Applicant proposes to scope out a standalone assessment for the decommissioning phase of the Proposed Development. Decommissioning is anticipated to be similar in duration and nature to the construction phase and impacts are expected to be similar to the construction phase. The SR states that the vehicle movements required during decommissioning are not known at this stage and traffic forecasting for the decommissioning phase is not available. The Inspectorate is content that a standalone assessment for the decommissioning phase is not required at this stage, provided that any effects that are predicted to be significant are assessed in the relevant ES chapters and that an ODEMP is submitted with the application that takes into consideration transport and access.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.8.2	Paragraphs 13.3.6 to 13.3.13	Baseline	No baseline information for the Cable Route Search Area is described in the SR. This should be included in the ES when the Cable Corridor has been refined.
3.8.3	Paragraphs 13.3.14 to 13.3.16	Public Rights of Way (PRoW) users	It is not confirmed at this stage whether the Proposed Development would result in any PRoW, National Cycle Network route or other recreational routes being diverted or stopped up, on either a temporary or permanent basis. This should be confirmed in the ES. The ES should assess impacts (including severance, delay, amenity, fear/ intimidation and safety) on users of PRoW, National Cycle Network routes or other

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			recreational routes during construction, operation and decommissioning which are likely to result in significant effects. The assessment of impacts on users of PRoW should be supported by pedestrian/user counts where possible, with efforts made to agree the locations for such counts with relevant consultation bodies. Where relevant, the ES should assess potential interactions between aspect assessments (for example traffic and transport, noise, dust, recreation, and visual impact). The locations of any diversions or closures should be illustrated on suitable figures in the ES.
3.8.4	Paragraphs 13.4.1 to 13.4.3 and Figure 13.2	Study area	A study area is shown in Figure 13.2 of the SR, which has been based on professional judgement. The ES should justify how the study area has been identified for assessment with reference to relevant industry guidance, sensitive receptors, and agreement with the relevant highway authorities. A plan illustrating the extent of the study area, the expected route(s) of construction traffic, and anticipated numbers of vehicle movements (including vehicle type, peak hour and daily movements) should be included in the ES.

3.9 Noise and Vibration

(Scoping Report Section 14)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.9.1	Table 14.10	Vibration from operation	The SR states that the type of equipment present during the operational phase is of a type that does not generate a significant level of vibration. On this basis, the Inspectorate is in agreement that an assessment of operational vibration can be scoped out of further assessment.
3.9.2	Table 14.10	Operational traffic (noise and vibration)	The SR proposes to scope out an assessment of noise and vibration associated with operational traffic on the basis that the traffic movements would be limited to occasional maintenance visits only. Considering the characteristics of the Proposed Development, the Inspectorate is content that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment. However, the ES project description should confirm the anticipated trip generation (including number and type of vehicles) required for occasional maintenance visits during operation to justify this, as the number and/ or type of vehicle required or frequency of maintenance visits is not specified within the SR.
3.9.3	Table 14.9	Vibration from construction traffic	The Inspectorate notes that vibration from the construction phase is scoped into the ES. However, vibration from construction traffic has not been included in the list of activities therein that would potentially generate vibration. The condition of the roads have not been assessed, nor have the anticipated number and type of vehicles been provided to justify why vibration from construction traffic should be scoped out. The ES should provide evidence to confirm that ground-borne vibration generated from HGV movements (including along access routes) during construction and decommissioning would not result in significant effects

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			on sensitive receptors or include an assessment of the LSE, unless otherwise agreed with relevant consultation bodies.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.9.4	Paragraph 14.2.2	Study area	A 500m study area has been proposed in the SR for the purposes of providing an assessment of LSE. This has not been justified within the text and will need to be agreed with the relevant consultation bodies, as well as justified within the ES according to relevant standards and guidance.
3.9.5	Figures 14.1 to 14.5	Noise monitoring locations	These figures show the location of long term monitoring locations, most of which focus on the solar array areas rather than the Cable Route Search Area. The Inspectorate assumes that baseline noise monitoring will be carried out for the Cable Corridor, once refined, to support the ES.

3.10 Glint and Glare

(Scoping Report Section 15)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.10.1	Table 15.4	Construction and decommissioning phases	The Applicant proposes to scope out effects during the construction and decommissioning phases, stating that these effects will be of lesser significance than during operation as fewer of the solar panels will be in place. On the basis that during these phases the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in glint and glare effects greater than those of the operational phase, the Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment.
3.10.2	Table 15.4	Rail infrastructure	The SR states that, in accordance with standard practice, a 500m buffer has been applied to identify rail infrastructure. There is no rail infrastructure within 500m of the Proposed Development, therefore the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of further assessment.
3.10.3	Table 15.4	PRoW and Horse Facilities	The Applicant proposes to scope out PRoW and Horse Facilities as they are considered to be of 'Low' sensitivity and that LSE would not occur. However, Table 15.2 states that any receptor could experience at least a moderate impact, which is defined by the Applicant as being significant in para 15.4.57. Due to lack of adequate justification, the Inspectorate is not content to scope this matter out of the ES. The Inspectorate considers that this matter should be subject to further assessment in the ES, or supporting evidence should be provided demonstrating the absence of LSE and agreement with the relevant consultation bodies.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.10.4	Paragraph 15.3.7	Sensitive receptors	The Inspectorate also considers that given the current rural nature of the surrounding area, the ES should assess other receptors such as users of vessels on waterways within the ZTV, agricultural workers including when using farm machinery, and ecological receptors in addition to those already identified. The assessment should also consider the implications of these users being at varying heights from ground level, as for example, a horse rider would experience glint and glare at a different angle than a pedestrian.

3.11 Electromagnetic Fields

(Scoping Report Section 16)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.11.1	16.5.1	Electromagnetic fields (EMFs) from the underground cables during decommissioning	For the avoidance of doubt the Inspectorate agrees that this matter may be scoped out of further assessment on the basis that there would be no risk of EMF generation during this phase and dismantling the electrical infrastructure would eliminate any potential EMF source.
3.11.2	16.5.4	EMFs from the transformers, inverters and substations during construction, operation and decommissioning	The Inspectorate notes that radiation from these components in a worst case scenario is predicted to have a 'minor' effect on all receptors as any potential impacts would be identified and mitigated through design prior to the submission of the DCO application. The Inspectorate agrees that EMFs from the proposed transformers, inverters and substations during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases may be scoped out of further assessment on the basis that they would be housed in protective enclosures and the transformers and PV inverters would be 'CE marked', meaning they should not generate or be affected by electromagnetic disturbance. It is also noted that the radiation from these components would be less than that from the proposed underground cables and that the maximum levels of electromagnetic radiation from the cables (where one cable lies within a trench), are predicted to be below the 1998 International Commission on the Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) reference levels for magnetic fields. Additionally, in respect of the substations, the Inspectorate notes that it is considered that radiation would not be significant as they would be at last 100m from the nearest dwelling or workplace and radiation levels reduce

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			with increased distance; and that users of PRoW, as moving receptors, would experience only minimal and transient effects. The Inspectorate notes that the predicted maximum magnetic field produced by the underground cables is specified in SR Appendix 16. The predicted maximum field should also be identified in the ES for the above components.
3.11.3	16.5.4	EMFs from the BESS during construction, operation and decommissioning	The Inspectorate notes that radiation from the BESS(s) in a worst case scenario is predicted to have a 'minor' effect on all receptors as any potential impacts will be identified and mitigated through design prior to the submission of the DCO application. In addition, the Inspectorate notes that it is considered that radiation would not be significant as the BESS(s) would be at least 100m from the nearest dwelling or workplace; and that users of PRoW would experience only minimal and transient effects. The Inspectorate agrees that this matter may be scoped out of further assessment based on the information provided in the SR and Appendix 16 and on the assumption that the predicted maximum magnetic field produced by the BESS(s) would be below the ICNIRP reference levels. However, the predicted maximum magnetic field should be identified in the ES and the relevance of the 100m threshold explained.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.11.4	16.5.1	Assessment – EMFs from the Cable Corridor	The Inspectorate notes that the predicted maximum magnetic field from the proposed underground cables are predicted to be below the ICNIRP reference levels for one cable within a trench, however up to four high-voltage cables within a single trench are under consideration for some sections of the Cable Corridor. The Inspectorate welcomes that, as the

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			specific voltages and quantity of cables within the cable trenches have not yet been determined and it cannot yet be confirmed whether the reference limits would be exceeded, potential EMFs from the Cable Corridor have been scoped in. The ES should describe the design measures proposed to be implemented to avoid the potential for LSEs.

3.12 Air Quality

(Scoping Report Section 17)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.12.1	Table 17.5	Operational vehicle assessment	The SR states that traffic trips during operation are to be below the criteria for assessment as set out in the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) criteria and therefore should be scoped out of the assessment. The Inspectorate, considering the nature and scope of the Proposed Development, agrees to this approach subject to confirmation in the ES that the proposed construction and operational vehicle numbers alone or cumulatively with other proposals on relevant links will not exceed the relevant IAQM thresholds.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.12.2	n/a	Location of receptors	The ES should be accompanied by an appropriate plan illustrating the location of sensitive air quality receptors within the vicinity of the Proposed Development to aid understanding of the extent of effects.
3.12.3	Paragraph 17.4.5	Decommissioning	The SR states that the decommissioning phase will be assessed using the same approach as for the construction phase, however it has not been included within the summary of matters to be scoped into the ES. For the avoidance of doubt, the Inspectorate considers that the proposed approach is acceptable, and an assessment of decommissioning impacts should be scoped into the ES.

3.13 Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation

(Scoping Report Section 18)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.13.1	Paragraph 18.5.2	Socio-economic, tourism, and recreation impacts during decommissioning	The Applicant proposes to scope out a standalone assessment for the decommissioning phase of the Proposed Development. Decommissioning is anticipated to be similar in duration and nature to the construction phase and impacts are expected to be similar to the construction phase. The Inspectorate is content that a standalone assessment for the decommissioning phase is not required at this stage, provided that an ODEMP is submitted with the application that takes into consideration socio-economic, tourism, and recreation impacts.
3.13.2	Paragraph 18.5.2	Impacts upon property value at all phases	The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment in the ES.
3.13.3	Paragraph 18.5.2	Impacts upon crime at all phases	Security is proposed during construction and operation through installation of security fencing, CCTV, and lighting. The Inspectorate considers that significant effects are not likely in relation to crime and community safety and agrees to scope this matter out of further assessment. A description of security and crime prevention measures should be provided in the ES project description.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.13.4	Paragraph 18.2.9	Guidance	The SR states that professional judgement will be used for the assessment, stating that there is a lack of procedural guidance. Whilst

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			this is acceptable in principle, the ES should still point toward recognised good practice methods and guidance that have influenced the professional judgement to ensure a coherent assessment.
3.13.5	Paragraph 18.3.1	Study area	The Applicant is requested to set out the data sources used to inform the assessment including justification of the identified Zone of Influence (ZoI) used within the assessment. Consultation with the relevant Councils is recommended to agree the ZoI and this should be documented within the ES.

3.14 Human Health and Wellbeing

(Scoping Report Section 19)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.14.1	Table 19.6	Health related behaviour (all phases): • physical activity • risk taking behaviour • diet and nutrition	The Applicant proposes to scope out an assessment of physical activity from the ES on the basis that this will be considered under other matters within the Human Health ES chapter. On this basis the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of further assessment. The Applicant proposes to scope out an assessment of risk-taking behaviours on the basis that all on-site personnel would be professional workers and all contractors and operators on-site would have strict health and safety protocols enforced. The Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of further assessment. The Applicant proposes to scope out an assessment of impacts from diet and nutrition, including access to healthy affordable food. The SR states that the Proposed Development will result in the long-term reduction in agricultural land, but as the site represents less than 0.006% of the UK's Utilised Agricultural Area it is unlikely to significantly affect the availability and affordability of food. On the basis that any impacts on Best Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land are assessed in the Agriculture Circumstances ES chapter, the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of further assessment.
3.14.2	Table 19.6	Social environment: • Housing (operation) • Relocation (all phases) • community safety (all phases)	The Applicant proposes to scope out an assessment of impacts on the social environment. The SR states that the Proposed Development will not result in the loss of any dwellings, and the majority of the operational workforce are expected to already be residents within the ZoI. It is stated that the Proposed Development does not involve any population

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
		• social participation, interaction and support (all phases)	displacement or relocation and would not require compulsory purchase of homes or community facilities. Health and safety measures are proposed to be in place which would limit the potential for impacts on community safety, including from crime. These are proposed to be secured through a CEMP. There are no predicted impacts to social or community facilities, with any indirect impacts considered under scoped in elements of the Human Health ES Chapter. The Inspectorate agrees that these matters can be scoped out of further assessment.
3.14.3	Table 19.6	Bio-physical environment: • climate change mitigation and adaptation (construction and decommissioning) • radiation (EMFs) (all phases)	The SR proposes to scope out climate change mitigation and adaptation during construction and decommissioning, on the basis that the impacts of construction activities are not expected to be of the scale to have significant health effects during these temporary phases. The Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of the Human Health ES Chapter as these matters are considered within the Climate Change and Air Quality ES Chapters. The Human Health ES Chapter should provide clear cross-referencing to where the relevant impacts on human health are considered within the Climate Change and Air Quality ES Chapters. The Applicant proposes to scope out an assessment of effects from EMF. The SR states that long-standing exposure limit and health protection guidelines for EMF have been developed by ICNIRP and these have a high safety margin. It is stated that the Proposed Development will comply with these guidelines. It is noted (in Table 19.6) that impacts of EMF radiation can cause community anxieties; this is proposed to be addressed through community engagement. The Inspectorate agrees to scope out the effect of EMFs from all sources and phases, with the exception of the Cable Corridor during construction and operation, in accordance with the proposed approach set out in the

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			EMF ES Chapter and agreed by the Inspectorate. As noted in ID 3.11.4 above, the voltage of the on-site and export cables has not yet been determined, and cables above 132kV have the potential to cause EMF effects. Given the uncertainty surrounding cabling design and proximity to receptors, the Inspectorate is unable to agree to scope EMFs out for the Cable Corridor for the construction and operational phases. The ES should address the risks to human health arising from EMFs, including cumulatively with existing infrastructure, taking into account relevant technical guidance. The Inspectorate considers that the ES should demonstrate the design measures taken to avoid the potential for EMF effects on receptors.
3.14.4	Table 19.6	Institutional and built environment: • health and social care services (operation) • built environment (all phases) • wider societal infrastructure and resources (construction and decommissioning)	The Applicant proposes to scope out an operational assessment of health and social care services on the basis that the Proposed Development is anticipated to utilise local workers within the ZoI during operation. The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment on this basis. It is stated that impacts on the built environment during construction and decommissioning will be mitigated through construction techniques and the use of a CEMP. The Inspectorate considers that this matter can be scoped out. For the operational stage the Applicant states that impacts to the natural environment will be considered in the Landscape and Visual ES Chapter, and that community response to landscape change will be dealt with elsewhere in the Human Health ES Chapter. This approach is deemed acceptable, and this matter can be scoped out of the ES. The SR proposes to scope out health effects related to wider societal infrastructure and resources for the construction and decommissioning

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			phase of the Proposed Development, as it is not projected to generate public health benefits, nor adversities. The economic development elements will be discussed under other heath effect matters. The Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of further assessment.

3.15 Arboriculture

(Scoping Report Section 20)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.15.1	Table 20.4	Impacts to trees in Sites A-G and the BESS site during construction, operation and decommissioning.	It is proposed by the Applicant that this matter is scoped out given that embedded mitigation would be included within the design of the Proposed Development and further mitigation contained in the OCEMP. It is explained that a desk-based assessment found that there are no existing records of ancient and veteran trees or Tree Preservation Orders or Conservation Areas within Sites A-G, the BESS site or the Cable Route Search Area. The Inspectorate notes that para 20.3.6 identifies that tree surveys on Sites A-E (excluding A.2) have so far recorded 16 veteran trees, one of which is also ancient, and that tree surveys on the BESS site and Sites A.2 and G are ongoing. The Inspectorate agrees that significant effects are unlikely to occur on the basis that embedded mitigation to avoid impacts would be included within the design of the Proposed Development and further measures would be contained within the OCEMP. Therefore, the Inspectorate agrees to scope out impacts to trees within Sites A-G and the BESS site out for all phases. However, the ES should describe the mitigation which has been relied upon to avoid significant effects and explain how this has been secured.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.15.2	20.1.3, 20.4.6 and 20.6.3	Effects, mitigation and compensation	The Inspectorate notes and welcomes that a Preliminary Arboricultural Impact Assessment setting out the potential effects and an Outline Arboricultural Method Statement containing proposed mitigation and compensatory planting measures (incorporated within the OCEMP) will be submitted with the DCO application. Para 20.6.3 also states that compensatory measures will be secured in a Landscape and Ecology Mitigation and Enhancement Plan. Explicit cross-reference should be made from the ES to the location of the relevant information contained in the above documents. Enhancement measures should be clearly differentiated from mitigation and compensatory measures.
3.15.3	20.3.4	Assessment – ancient and veteran trees	The Inspectorate notes that there are areas of ancient woodland adjacent to parts of the site. Effects on ancient and veteran trees should be addressed in the ES, where there is potential for likely significant effects to occur and suitable mitigation measures proposed as necessary and secured. The approach to survey and assessment should be agreed with the relevant consultation bodies. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the comments made by the Forestry Commission, in relation to the protection of trees, contained in Appendix 2 of this Opinion.

3.16 Agricultural Circumstances

(Scoping Report Section 21)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.16.1	Table 21.7	Agricultural land holding – construction and decommissioning	No justification regarding the scoping out of this matter is provided within the SR therefore the Inspectorate is unable to agree to scope this matter out of further assessment. The ES should ensure that effects to agricultural land holdings are assessed over the entire lifetime of the Proposed Development including the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. Any deviation from this approach must be fully justified within the ES.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.16.2	Paragraph 21.4.5	Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) surveys	The Applicant states that a decision will be made regarding whether ALC surveys are required for the Cable Corridor once the route has been refined. The Inspectorate expects that an ALC for the whole site, including the Cable Corridor, will be undertaken to support the ES unless there is substantial justification dictating otherwise. The ES should contain a clear tabulation of the areas of land in each BMV classification to be temporarily or permanently lost as a result of the Proposed Development, with reference to accompanying map(s) depicting the grades. Specific justification for the use of the land by grade should be provided. Consideration should be given to the use of BMV land in the Applicant's discussion of alternatives.

3.17 Other Environmental Matters

(Scoping Report Section 22)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.17.1	Section 22.3	Standalone chapter for light pollution during construction, operation and decommissioning	The Inspectorate is content that a standalone quantitative lighting assessment can be scoped out on the basis that lighting impacts will be considered in the Landscape and Visual and Ecology chapters of the ES and will include consideration of potential impacts of directional and intermittent lighting and describe mitigation measures as required. This should include impacts of night-time lighting. The Inspectorate notes that an OCEMP and ODEMP will be submitted with the DCO application and will include a lighting strategy intended to minimise light spill to receptors. Cross-reference should be made from the ES to the relevant measures contained within the management plans.
3.17.2	Section 22.4	Standalone chapter for Major Accidents and Disasters (MA&D)	A standalone Chapter for MA&D is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that potential MA&D will be assessed in other ES chapters where relevant. The shortlist of MA&D to be considered in the EIA contained in Table 22 does not identify the relevant chapter(s) for all of those and none of the SR technical chapters make any reference to consideration of MA&D. The Inspectorate notes that the proposed site boundary falls within the consultation zones of one major accident hazard site (MAHS) and three major accident hazard pipelines (MAHPs) The Applicant's attention is drawn to the Health and Safety Executive's and Northern Gas Networks' consultation response contained in Appendix 2 of this Opinion in this regard.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			The potential for fire resulting from the battery storage component of the Proposed Development is included in the shortlist. However, it is unclear where in the ES the risk of fire would be assessed. The Inspectorate notes that an outline Battery Safety Management Plan is proposed to be submitted with the DCO application. The risk of fire associated with battery storage facilities should be assessed in the ES and relevant mitigation, such as fire-fighting and containment measures, should be set out therein and secured in the DCO, with reference to the proposed Battery Safety Management Plan. No reference is made to MA&D in respect of UXO, although the 'Detailed UXO Risk Assessment' report contained in Appendix 10 identifies the risk from allied ordnance on Site G as 'Medium' and recommends the implementation of a UXO Risk Management Plan. MA&D impacts resulting from UXO should be considered in the ES and an assessment provided where significant effects are likely to occur. Text appears to be missing from para 22.4.5 and the final sentence suggests that the intention may have been to identify some MA&D matters proposed to be scoped out. The Inspectorate notes that Table 22.3 identifies MA&D as an aspect to be scoped out. Based on the above, and in the absence of evidence demonstrating no LSE and/or clear agreement of the conclusion with relevant statutory bodies, the Inspectorate is not in a position to agree to scope out a standalone chapter for MA&D. Accordingly, the ES should include a discrete chapter that identifies potential impacts and provides an assessment where significant effects may occur or evidence of the absence of a LSE and agreement with the relevant consultation bodies.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.17.3	Section 22.5	Standalone chapter for telecommunications, utilities and television receptors	It is proposed that a standalone chapter for these matters is scoped out. It is identified that a number of cables, pylons and pipelines cross the Sites and Cable Route Search Area. Significant effects are considered unlikely as discussions with relevant landowners and undertakers to identify assets have begun and will be concluded prior to submission of the DCO application so that setbacks and safeguarding distances and measures will be incorporated into the parameters of the Proposed Development. The Applicant is referred to the information in Anglian Water's (AW's) response (contained in Appendix 2 of this Opinion) in respect of the location on the application site of their assets. The Cable Corridor will be designed to reduce intersections with pre-existing telecommunications and utilities. A 'Crossing Schedule' will identify where the proposed cables would cross existing utilities and telecommunications infrastructure and the OCEMP submitted with the application will contain measures designed to control construction of the Cable Corridor. Information on existing utilities will be contained within the 'Other Environmental Matters' chapter of the ES, which will describe how the Proposed Development would impact upon these utilities and where appropriate avoidance or mitigation measures have been incorporated. On the basis of this information the Inspectorate agrees that a standalone chapter for these matters can be scoped out of further assessment.
3.17.4	Section 22.6	Standalone waste chapter	It is proposed to scope out a standalone chapter on waste as significant waste impacts are not anticipated during either construction, operation or decommissioning. This is on the basis that the following information will be provided with the DCO application, as stated: estimates by type and quantity of expected residues and emissions and waste produced during the construction and operational phases; an OCEMP which will include

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			measures to minimise waste, such as a waste hierarchy, and set out site management procedures such as waste management, recycling opportunities, and off-site disposal; and a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP). The replacement of the solar panels and batteries during operation will be considered in the ES within the assessment of operational impacts of the Proposed Development. Currently, it is anticipated that "almost all" of the solar panels will be capable of being recycled and reused, in line with best practice guidance at the time of decommissioning. The Inspectorate notes that there is no commitment made that the panels will be recycled at decommissioning and no evidence to support the viability and/or methodology of recycling. The Inspectorate agrees that a standalone waste chapter may be scoped out, on the basis that potential impacts during construction, operation and decommissioning (to the extent possible at the time) will be considered within the relevant chapters of the ES. This should include potential cumulative impacts. The measures proposed to divert waste arisings from the waste chain should be outlined in the ES and explicit cross-reference made to the relevant measures set out in the related management plans. An assessment of effects should be provided in the event that it is concluded that significant effects are likely to occur and additional mitigation measures proposed and secured.
3.17.5	Section 22.7	N/A	Para 22.1.1 and Table 22.3 suggest that the above matters are proposed to be scoped out in their entirety from the EIA. However, the Inspectorate's understanding from the information provided in Sections 22.3 to 22.6 is that standalone chapters are proposed to be scoped out but potential impacts will be considered (and mitigation measures proposed as necessary) in relevant ES chapters. For the avoidance of doubt, and as confirmed in the comments above, the Inspectorate has

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			only agreed to the scoping out of standalone chapters. As advised in the previous sections of this table, the ES should still contain assessments of the relevant matters.

3.18 Cumulative Effects

(Scoping Report Section 23)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.18.1	N/A	N/A	No matters have been proposed to be scoped out of the assessment.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.18.2	23.3.5	Consultation with Councils	Pre-application discussions with North Northamptonshire, West Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes Councils are proposed to be undertaken. The Proposed Development is either on the border of or slightly crosses the Bedford Council administrative boundary and therefore it is recommended that the Applicant also consult Bedford City Council in their pre-application discussions.

APPENDIX 1: CONSULTATION BODIES FORMALLY CONSULTED

TABLE A1: PRESCRIBED CONSULTATION BODIES

Bodies prescribed in Schedule 1 of The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (as amended) (the 'APFP Regulations (as amended)')

SCHEDULE 1 DESCRIPTION	ORGANISATION
The relevant parish council or, where the application relates to land in Wales or Scotland, the relevant community council	Hackleton Parish Council
	Yardley Hastings Parish Council
	Little Houghton Parish Council
	Denton Parish Council
	Brafield on the Green Parish Council
	Castle Ashby Parish Council
	Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council
	Rushden Town Council
	Irthlingborough Town Council
	Lamport & Hanging Houghton Parish Council
	Harlestone Parish Council
	Boughton Parish Council
	Pitsford Parish Council
	Brixworth Parish Council
	Moulton Parish Council
	Walgrave Parish Council
	Old Parish Council
	Overstone Parish Council

SCHEDULE 1 DESCRIPTION	ORGANISATION
	Scaldwell Parish Council
	Holcot Parish Council
	Hannington Parish Council
	Finedon Town Council
	Little Harrowden Parish Council
	Ecton Parish Council
	Earls Barton Parish Council
	Grendon Parish Council
	Bozeat Parish Council
	Wollaston Parish Council
	Great Doddington Parish Council
	Irchester Parish Council
	Sywell Parish Council
	Mears Ashby Parish Council
	Hardwick Parish Council
	Orlingbury Parish Council
	Wellingborough Town Council
	Great Harrowden Parish Council
	Wilby Parish Council
	Strixton Parish Council
	Pytchley Parish Council
	Broughton Parish Council
	Loddington Parish Council
	Great Cransley Parish Council

SCHEDULE 1 DESCRIPTION	ORGANISATION
	Mawsley Parish Council
	Northampton Town Council
	Hardingstone Parish Council
	Upton Parish Council
	West Hunsbury Parish Council
	Duston Parish Council
	Great Houghton Parish Council
	Billing Parish Council
	Hunsbury Meadows Parish Council
	Harrold Parish Council
	Odell Parish Council
	Turvey Parish Council
	Carlton with Chellington Parish Council
	Podington Parish Council
	Ravenstone Parish Council
	Weston Underwood Parish Council
	Olney Town Council
	Clifton Reynes and Newton Blossomville Parish Council
	Clifton Reynes and Newton Blossomville Parish Council
	Lavendon Parish Council
	Harlestone Manor Parish Council
	Far Cotton and Delapre Community Council
	Kingsthorpe Parish Council

SCHEDULE 1 DESCRIPTION	ORGANISATION
The Environment Agency	The Environment Agency
Natural England	Natural England
The Forestry Commission	East & East Midlands and South East & London
The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (known as Historic England)	Historic England
The Canal and River Trust	The Canal and River Trust
The relevant Highways Authority	North Northamptonshire Council
	West Northamptonshire Council
	Bedford Borough Council
	Milton Keynes City Council
	National Highways
The Civil Aviation Authority	Civil Aviation Authority
The Health and Safety Executive	Health and Safety Executive
United Kingdom Health Security Agency, an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care	United Kingdom Health Security Agency
NHS England	NHS England

TABLE A2: RELEVANT STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS

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

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
The Crown Estate Commissioners	The Crown Estate
The relevant police authority	Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
	Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner
	Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
The relevant ambulance service	South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
	East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust
	East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust
The relevant fire and rescue authority	Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service
The relevant Integrated Care Board	NHS Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board
	NHS Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board
NHS England	NHS England
The relevant NHS Trust	East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust
	East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust
The relevant NHS Foundation Trust	South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust
Railways	National Highways Historical Railways Estate
Canal Or Inland Navigation Authorities	The Canal and River Trust

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
Civil Aviation Authority	Civil Aviation Authority
Universal Service Provider	Royal Mail Group
Homes and Communities Agency	Homes England
The relevant Environment Agency	The Environment Agency
The relevant water and sewage undertaker	Anglian Water
The relevant public gas transporter	Cadent Gas Limited
	Northern Gas Networks Limited
	Scotland Gas Networks Plc
	Southern Gas Networks Plc
	CNG Services Ltd
	Energy Assets Pipelines Limited
	ES Pipelines Ltd
	ESP Connections Ltd
	ESP Networks Ltd
	ESP Pipelines Ltd
	Fulcrum Pipelines Limited
	GTC Pipelines Limited
	Harlaxton Gas Networks Limited
	Independent Pipelines Limited
	Indigo Pipelines Limited
	Inovyn Enterprises Ltd
	Last Mile Gas Ltd
	Leep Gas Networks Limited

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
	Mua Gas Limited
	Quadrant Pipelines Limited
	Stark Infra-Electricity Ltd
	National Gas
The relevant electricity distributor with CPO Powers	National Grid Electricity Distribution (East Midlands) Limited
	Advanced Electricity Networks Ltd
	Aidien Ltd
	Aurora Utilities Ltd
	Eclipse Power Network Limited
	Energy Assets Networks Limited
	ESP Electricity Limited
	Fulcrum Electricity Assets Limited
	Harlaxton Energy Networks Limited
	Independent Distribution Connection Specialists Ltd
	Independent Power Networks Limited
	Indigo Power Limited
	Last Mile Electricity Ltd
	Leep Electricity Networks Limited
	Mua Electricity Limited
	Optimal Power Networks Limited
	Stark Infra-Electricity Ltd
	The Electricity Network Company Limited

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
	UK Power Distribution Limited
	Utility Assets Limited
	Vattenfall Networks Limited
The relevant electricity transmitter with CPO Powers	National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc
	National Grid Electricity System Operation Limited

TABLE A3: LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS DEFINED IN SECTION 43(3) OF THE PA2008

LOCAL AUTHORITY
Bedford Borough Council
Milton Keynes City Council
North Northamptonshire Council
West Northamptonshire Council

APPENDIX 2: RESPONDENTS TO CONSULTATION AND COPIES OF REPLIES

CONSULTATION BODIES WHO REPLIED BY THE STATUTORY DEADLINE:
Anglian Water
Bedford Borough Council
Boughton Parish Council
Bozeat Parish Council
Canal & River Trust
Earls Barton Parish Council
Environment Agency
Forestry Commission
Grendon Parish Council
Health and Safety Executive
Historic England
Holcot Parish Council
Kingsthorpe Parish Council
Little Harrowden Parish Council
Mears Ashby Parish Council
Milton Keynes City Council
National Gas
Natural England
Northern Gas Networks
North Northamptonshire Council
Old Parish Council
Scaldwell Parish Council

UK Health Security Agency
Upton Parish Council
Walgrave Parish Council
West Northamptonshire Council

Anglian Water Services
Lancaster House, Lancaster Way,
Ermine Business Park, Huntingdon,
Cambridgeshire. PE29 6XU

www.anglianwater.co.uk

Our ref: GHSF/ScopingR

Environmental Services Operations Group 3
Planning Inspectorate

greenhill@planning inspectorate.gov.uk

8 August 2024

Dear Alison,

Application by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited
Anglian Water scoping consultation response

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Scoping Report for the above project which is within West Northamptonshire Council, North Northamptonshire Council and Milton Keynes City areas. Anglian Water is the appointed water and sewerage undertaker for the sites A to G, the BESS and the cable route/grid connection shown on Figures in Appendix 3.

The following response is submitted on behalf of Anglian Water in its statutory capacity and relates to potable water and water assets along with wastewater and water recycling assets.

The Scheme – Anglian Water existing infrastructure
There are existing Anglian Water assets including water mains within and crossing the identified sites and in roads and areas serving communities within the cable route. Supply pipes cross the access road for site B, for example, including mains water transfer pipelines from Pitsford Reservoir to the northwest that will require specific protection measures. Water recycling assets including foul sewers are within the village areas and so are within the Cable Route Search Area shown in Appendix 3. We note that no reference is made the Anglian Water with the Scoping Report. Reference is made though to utilities at 4.16 to the fact that third party apparatus will need to be crossed. Table 19.5 refers to risk of severance of utilities and the use of the CEMP and crossing schedules. We do not agree that this risk can be scoped out as suggested at page 313. Paragraph 22.4.4 sets out the risk of damage or cut off of utilities from accidents and this is described in Table 22.2. The Outline CEMP is referenced as one way to manage this in the event an asset is disturbed.

Anglian Water (AWS) would have expected that the first approach is to identify assets first through engagement and through the use of geophysical surveys to identify and then remove as far as possible sites and routes which cross existing water and wastewater assets from the application. Then buffers should be agreed for remaining assets and to inform the construction and operation of the proposed scheme, and its

detailed layout and design, following further ground investigations. AWS welcomes the applicant's intention, set out at 22.5.6, to undertake discussions with utility undertakers to agree safeguarding and setbacks (buffers or standoff distances). We note that utilities will be covered in the 'Other Environmental Matters' chapter of the ES and this will include a Crossing Schedule.

Anglian Water would want to ensure the location and nature of our assets serving local communities and strategic water supply infrastructure, are identified and protected. To reduce the need for diversions and the associated carbon impacts of those works, ground investigations would enable the promoter to design out these potential impacts and so also reduce the potential impact on services if construction works cause a pipe burst or damage to supporting infrastructure. The Construction Environment Management Plan (22.5.8) and Construction Traffic Management Plan (13.1.3) should include steps to remove the risk of damage to AWS Water assets from plant and machinery (compaction and vibration during the construction phase) including haul and access roads. We agree that vibration from piling (14.2.11) and construction traffic should be scoped in, to take account of potential effects on our assets within the site (Table 14.9). Further advice on minimising and then relocating (where feasible) Anglian Water existing assets can be obtained from: connections@anglianwater.co.uk

Maps of Anglian Water's assets are available to view at the following address: https://utilities.digdat.co.uk/

Flood Risk, Drainage and Surface Water

Anglian Water notes the absence of any reference to AWS in the Scoping Report in terms of:

- Whether the management of surface water will require a public sewer connection
- If water recycling/sewerage services are required for the construction or operation of the scheme
- If a water supply is required for the construction and operation of the scheme

There is a single reference to foul sewers at 9.6.14 and the report advises that 'there will be no foul water discharge from the Scheme, so no mains connected foul water drainage systems are deemed necessary. As such, impacts on foul sewer capacity is scoped out of further assessment'. On this basis AWS concludes that as there will be no connections to the public sewer, the applicant will remove the standard provision within the draft DCO for a right to connect to the public sewer. This includes all surface water management and surface water flows which could in the event of heavy rainfall and surface or groundwater flooding emanating from the site be directed to the public sewers within or outside of the site. As such AWS understands all surface and groundwater flows will therefore be managed using on site drainage including SuDS in accordance with the sustainability hierarchy.

On the question of Flood Risk Assessment and surface water drainage strategy (paras. 9.6.13 to Table 9.5) we would welcome confirmation (in light of bullet point 4, 9.5.1) that here will be no impact or use of AWS's existing drainage apparatus. We note the

summary of receptors in Table 9.5 and conclude from this that there will be no connections (direct or indirect) to the public sewer and so no potential impact on sewer capacity for existing communities. This would include run-off from proposed building infrastructure and hardstanding areas associated with the BESS and Substation. We consider that SuDS and the potential for rainwater harvesting can serve any non-potable water requirements during construction and at the BESS and Substation compound.

In view of the guidance in the National Policy Statements we would have anticipated that the scoping would have included and then considered the approach to water supply and water resources. AWS requests that these points are assessed early in the EIA to set out how the project will be supplied with water and how design has been altered to reduce the need for new water infrastructure during construction and operation.

Water Resources

The site within the Ruthamford North Water Resource Zone (WRZ) and Ruthamford South WRZ. We note that whilst the scoping considers water environment impacts, including Pitsford Reservoir (Water), and its recreational value (7.4.83) it does not look at impacts on water resources. AWS would anticipate that this would be covered in Chapter 9 – Hydrology, particularly given the reference to 'water supply' in Table 9.1, 'water resource' (9.6.13) and water availability (Table 19.5). As the site is within an area designated by the Environment Agency as 'seriously water stressed' and water may be used in the project construction and operation, this indicates that water resources should be assessed in the EIA. There is no reference to assessment of the carbon costs of relocating water infrastructure if assets are impacted during construction or operation.

AWS notes that the applicant has not sought to scope these matters out by providing sufficient information to reach a conclusion that the project's impact regarding water demands and supply, are not significant. It is noted that under GHG Emissions (Table 6.1), Water is included at construction and operation stages from the supply of potable water as well as treatment of wastewater including for fire suppression (bullet 11, 8.4.2) and cleaning panels. The report makes no assessment of the water demands during construction or operation. There is no assessment of water needed for dust suppression or vehicle washing during construction or the washing of solar panels as a maintenance function during operation. There is no reference to whether these demands may require water connection(s) to the AWS our network are required.

AWS advise that new non household water supply requests (construction and operational phases) may be declined as these could compromise our regulatory priority of supplying existing and planned domestic growth. The flows needed to fill water storage tanks (bullet 5, 10.8.1 and Table 10.4), for example; in the event that the promoter elects not to use rainwater harvesting on site to meet this non potable demand, will need to be assessed by AWS to advise whether a supply is feasible when assessed in terms of the potential to jeopardise domestic supply or at a significant financial or environmental cost. Our position, reached in May 2023 on non- household supply, is due to our joint aim with the Environment Agency of reducing abstraction to protect sensitive environments.

The promoter will need to submit a Water Resources Assessment (WRA) setting out a daily demand for each stage of the project requiring more than 20 cubic metres per day whether this is for domestic or non-domestic uses. The WRA will need to be included, in the ES and be updated through design and assessment iterations to show improved water efficiency. AWS will require the WRA to be updated at the final design and CEMP stage as part of a Pre-Commencement Requirement in the DCO Order. Water use during construction means that the promoter will need to establish whether concrete production, for example, would be offsite or would need an on-site supply in order to assess the water supply options with AWS. Further advice on water and possible consequent wastewater capacity and options can be obtained by contacting Anglian Water's Pre-Development Team at: planningliasion@anglianwater.co.uk

Engagement

Although at 22.5.3 the Report states initial discussions have been undertaken, AWS is not aware that these have been sought with AWS by the applicant. Anglian Water would welcome the instigation of discussions with the prospective applicant, in line with the requirements of the 2008 Planning Act and guidance. Experience has shown that early engagement and agreement is required between NSIP applicants and statutory undertakers during design and assessment and well before submission of the draft DCO for examination. Consultation at the statutory PEIR stage would in our view be too late to inform design and may result in delays to the project. On the basis that fuller consideration of water supply and water recycling matters does identify resources, assets and services may be impacted by the project we would recommend discussion on the following issues:

1. Impact of development on Anglian Water's assets and the need for mitigation
2. The design of the project to minimise interaction with Anglian Water assets/critical infrastructure and specifically to avoid the need for diversions which have associated carbon costs
3. Requirement for potable and raw water supplies
4. Requirement for water recycling (surface water/foul drainage) connections
5. Confirmation of the project's cumulative impacts (if any) with Anglian Water projects
6. Draft Protective Provisions

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

Yours sincerely,

Darl Sweetland DMS MRTPI
Spatial Planning Manager

BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Borough Charter granted in 1166

Chief Executive: Laura Church

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURE ORDER

Bedford Borough Council Ref No.: 24/01516/LPA

To: The Planning Inspectorate

Bedford Borough Council has the following COMMENTS to make with regard to the Proposed Development as notified by PINs for application reference No: **EN010170.**

APPLICANT: Green Hill Solar Farm Limited, Company Registration 13362769 (the 'Applicant').

LOCATION: The Sites (A to G, A.2, and BESS) and Cable Route Search Area are situated in an area of countryside within the administrative boundaries of North Northamptonshire, West Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes Councils, located between the towns of Northampton, Wellingborough and Bedford. The Sites cover an area of approximately 1,194.8 hectares (ha) excluding the Cable Route Search Area and Cable Corridor(s).

PARTICULARS OF DEVELOPMENT:
Green Hill Solar Farm consists of an electricity generating station with a capacity of up to 500 megawatts (MW) comprising of ground mounted solar arrays and associated development including energy storage, grid connection infrastructure and other infrastructure integral to the construction, operation and maintenance of the scheme. (as set out on PINs website)

The Scheme consists of an electricity generating station with a capacity of over 50 megawatts ('MW') comprising ground mounted solar arrays and Associated Development, the latter comprising: energy storage, grid connection infrastructure and any other infrastructure and works integral to the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the Scheme. (as set out by Applicant §1.1.3)

Ref EN010170 - Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations') - Regulations 10 and 11, Application by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited for an Order granting Development Consent for Green Hill Solar Farm (the 'Proposed Development') scoping consultation and notification of the Applicant's contact details and duty to make available information to the Applicant if requested.

To view online go to Project search (planninginspectorate.gov.uk) Green Hill Solar Farm.

COMMENT

In terms of your letter, 25 July 2024, notifying Bedford Borough Council (BBC) as a statutory consultee to the above Application regarding the Scoping Opinion, we have reviewed the Applicant's Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report and, as requested, comment accordingly / inform the Planning Inspectorate of information that BBC consider should be provided in the Environmental Statement (ES).
[Officer Note: For ease of reading, we structure our response to accord with the Applicant's chapter and paragraph headings, The symbol § will be used to refer to paragraph reference]

Further, we refer to PINs Advice Note regarding use of terms, namely:

(PINs Advice Note 7; §3.14) Aspects: The Planning Inspectorate refers to 'aspects' as meaning the relevant descriptions of the environment identified in accordance with the EIA Regulations; and,

(PINs Advice Note 7; §5.7) Matters: The Planning Inspectorate uses the term 'matters' referring to those parts that are a subdivision of the aspect, for example an assessment of a particular species is a 'matter' to the aspect of biodiversity.

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY'
STATUTORY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. **BESS location: Significant concern** is expressed regarding the location of the BESS facility (Flood Zone 3) on the River Nene valley floor and on the boundary with the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Ramsar site in light of the National Fire Chiefs Council's 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems planning – Guidance for Fire and Rescue Services' (November 2022; Version 1) requirements for open water storage ponds to contain contaminated fire water in managing a BESS fire. The ES will need to address both the flooding of the site, breaching of such ponds, and the potential leaching of contaminated fire water into the surrounding ground water and water courses including the Ramsar, SSSI and SPA sites.

2. **Fire and contamination risk:** BBC draws the Applicant's attention to the National Fire Chiefs Council's 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems planning – Guidance for Fire and Rescue Services' (November 2022; Version 1) in respect to the safety of the general public and emergency responders, and site planning requirements relating to BESS facilities, which should be addressed, or be referenced, within the Applicant's submission.

3. **Consultation:** it is noted that the Applicant has not undertaken any consultation to date with Bedford Borough Council (BBC), nor related Parish Councils within Bedford. In light of the linear extent of the Application immediately adjacent to the Borough boundary (Sites F and G), it is suggested that such consultation should be engaged.

4. **Zone of Influence and Cumulative Effect:** in terms of in-combination and cumulative effect assessment, the Applicant references Advice Note 17 leading to defining a Zone of Influence. However, throughout the Scoping Report different distances are used, subject to chapter aspects, which makes for complex reading and eventual assessment. It is suggested (§23.3.2) '*At this stage, it is anticipated that the long list will be based on up to a 5km area of search which aligns with the Study Area for landscape and visual amenity and the likely maximum range of any potential significant effects'* that this distance is adopted for the ZoI in most aspects. A more detailed ZoI is set out in §8.3.8. It is suggested that the Applicant clarifies and uses a consistent approach.

5. **Landscape corridors:** the Applicant addresses perimeter fencing but does not address the potential need for fencing to the public Rights-of-Way and bridleways that cross the site. BBC is concerned that this is not imperially defined and would like to see the proviso of a minimum PRoW width set at 8m for footpaths and 9m for bridleways. An assessment of how these are to be retained, managed, and enhanced should also be set out within any Outline CEMP and Outline LEMP.

6. **Operational phase** (replacement maintenance): for completeness it is suggested that the Operational Phase recognises that the solar arrays and batteries will be replaced during the lifetime of the Proposed Development and consequently the 'severity' of the potential sources of impact set out for the Construction Phase may also be applicable to the Operational Phase.

7. **Manufacture, decommissioning and recycling:** should the solar arrays and BESS be made outside the UK (currently 80% of all arrays are manufactured in China and exported); and, after c.20/40/60-years be decommissioned / recycled outside the UK (currently, the bulk of used solar arrays are exported to and end up in landfill / landfill farms), then it is suggested that the international, cumulative impact should be acknowledged and addressed within the ES. It is suggested that this statement is supported by the reading of the current High Court Ruling R (Finch) v Surrey County Council and others [2024] UKSC20, 20 June 2024, regarding effect generated by a development. It is noted that with current understanding, the short to long-term effects of solar array and BESS life-cycle supply chains are unknown to both the Local Planning Authority and Applicant and consequently some caution has to be set-out in the response and the Environmental Statement.

BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL: Internal consultation responses

Arboriculture	No comments received.
Historic Environment Team (Cultural Heritage)	Comments received: 'BBC would welcome a discussion with the Applicant regarding the approach and assessment (which to date has not occurred) – see §12.1 to 12.3 below.
Countryside Access (Public Rights of Way)	No comments received.
NatureSpace - District Licensing Officers (GCN)	Comments received: '*We agree with the recommendations within the Environmental Impact Assessment (Green Hill Solar*

	Farm Environmental Assessment Scoping Report Revision A, Lanpro Services, July 2024) and therefore advise that a great crested newt Licence is obtained to mitigate against the potential impact the development may have on great crested newts and their habitats'.
Parks and Open Spaces	Comments received: '*No comments to make…'*
Flood Investigation Officer	No comments received.
Highways (Development Control)	Comment received: '*Highways and Development Control has no comments but would like to be kept informed on the progress of the application'*.
Scientific Officer (Contaminated Land & Air Quality)	Comment received: '*Please note that we have no requirements relating to contamination on land with respect to this development'*.
Planning Policy	Comment received: '*We have no comments to make from a policy perspective'*.
Recycling (Waste Services)	Comment received: '*We have no comments to make regarding the above application, in relation to household waste storage and collection arrangement's'*.

ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 (§1.1.3) '*The Scheme consists of an electricity generating station with a capacity of over 50 megawatts ('MW') comprising ground mounted solar arrays and Associated Development, the latter comprising: energy storage, grid connection infrastructure and any other infrastructure and works integral to the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the Scheme*'.

1.2 Currently, the full energy capacity of the Proposed Development is not stated by the Applicant; and, neither is the 'Associated Development' clarified other than in broad outline. In accordance with the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN3) (March 2023) §3.6.2 '*where flexibility is sought*' is acceptable to resolve such project issues leading-up to resolving detailed design on the basis that the Applicant '*assess the likely worst-case …effects'*. This flexibility would accord with PINs Advice Note 9 and is therefore acceptable in principle. However, the nature of all built structures, infrastructure, fencing, and habitat / biodiversity enhancements needs to be clarified as part of the ES and planning submission to ensure a full understanding of their three-dimensionality and related effect.

1.3 (§1.1.7) In light of the fairly generically defined, but substantial area involved, BBC reserves the right to request additional information relating to archaeological surveys within the area stated as 'Cable Route Search Area'. This is requested in light of the remains of a significant historic town having recently been identified in the underlying surrounding area which was previously not known about.

1.4 (§1.5) It is noted that the Applicant has not undertaken any consultation to date with Bedford Borough Council (BBC), nor related Parish Councils within the Bedford administrative area. In light of the linear extent of the Application immediately adjacent to the Borough boundary (namely Sites F and G), it is suggested that such consultation should be engaged.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding the approach as set out by the Applicant in this chapter and makes limited comment in this regard.

2.2 The Applicant's attention is drawn to the National Fire Chiefs Council's 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems planning – Guidance for Fire and Rescue Services' (November 2022; Version 1) in respect of the safety of the general public and emergency responders, and site planning requirements relating to BESS facilities, which should be addressed, or be referenced, within the Applicant's submission.

2.3 (§2.210 – 2.2.16) It is suggested that the EIA should cover all stages of the Proposed Development, namely the manufacture of solar arrays and BESS components, logistics, management, maintenance and replacement, and decommissioning stages. As most of the component parts are imported internationally, the effect of logistics of getting these from point of manufacture to point of installation, and visa-versa in decommissioning (recycling), needs some acknowledgement within the Environmental Statement (ES).

2.4 In dealing with other similar applications, Officers have noted that applicants have acknowledged that over time solar arrays lose their efficiency and are typically replaced on a 20-25 year time frame. The time frame for this Proposed Development is suggested as 60-years (§4.1.2). The Applicant proposes using Bifacial monocrystalline panels which have a theoretical life span of 40-years (§4.4.9). The batteries / BESS have a theoretical life span of 20-years (§4.4.9). In this regard, the replacement maintenance stage of the Proposed Development could generate considerable construction activity say every 20-years (i.e. it is not a benign Site for 60-years). Consequently, these replacement maintenance stages should be addressed within the Environmental Statement. The need for such assessment is noted by the Applicant (§4.4.10) but not adequately addressed in any of the Scoping Report's chapter aspects.

2.5 Further, should the solar arrays and BESS be made outside the UK (currently 80% of all arrays are manufactured in China and exported); and after circa 40-years be decommissioned / recycled outside the UK (currently, the bulk of used solar arrays are exported to and end up in landfill / landfill farms), then it is suggested that the

international, cumulative impact should, as a minimum, be acknowledged and addressed within the ES. It is suggested that this request is supported by the reading of the current High Court Ruling R (Finch) v Surrey County Council and others [2024] UKSC20, 20 June 2024, regarding effect generated by a development. It is noted that with current understanding, the short to long-term effects of solar array and BESS life-cycle supply chains are unknown to both the Local Planning Authority and the Applicant and consequently some caution has to be set-out in the response and the Environmental Statement.

2.6 In terms of both the operational (replacement maintenance) and decommissioning stages regarding the recycling of materials / waste, the Applicant should have some acknowledgement / reference to the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2013. For the purposes of compliance with the Regulations, a producer refers to those that: a) manufacture and sell electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) under their own brand in the UK; b) buy EEE and then make changes to rebrand the product and resell to the UK market (If the maker's brand appears on the equipment, then they are the producer); c) import EEE on a commercial basis into the UK; and, d) are established outside of the UK and supply EEE directly to the UK market by distance selling (e.g. online, mail order or by phone). The definition of producer is sufficiently broad that businesses importing solar / PV panels for installation on large-scale commercial and renewable developments are likely to be included. All producers of EEE are legally required to register with an approved producer compliance scheme (PCS), an industry-managed take-back and recycling initiative. Through registration with a PCS, producers finance the cost of collection, treatment, recycling and disposal of both their own EEE placed on the UK market and any WEEE that their products replace.

Whilst this matter is not strictly a planning matter (rather one of compliance with other legislation), a more detailed assessment of the operational and decommissioning stages regarding the recycling of materials / waste is required by the EIA Regulations in terms of an assessment of long-term, transboundary effect.

2.7 In this regard, the Applicant is referred to Schedule 4(5) of the EIA Regulations '*the description of the likely significant effects on the factors specified in regulation 4(2) should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative,* ***transboundary****, short-term, medium-term and* ***long-term****, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development. This description should take into account the environmental protection objectives established at Union level or United Kingdom level which are relevant to the project…';* and, Schedule 4(6) '*A description of the forecasting methods or evidence, used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or* ***lack of knowledge****) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved'*. [enbolded by Case Officer]

2.8 As a minimum, these matters need to be addressed in the Environmental Statement supporting any future application.

2.9 (§2.2.22 – 2.2.28) It is noted that the 'Degrees of Significance' as tabled by the Applicant is NOT a requirement of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as Amended) nor the related Screening Matrix. The Regulation's interpretation is defined as "*EIA development" means development…likely to have significant effect on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location'*. The Matrix's response to the screening criteria - '*Is a significant effect likely, having regard particularly to the magnitude and spatial extent (including population size affected), nature, intensity and complexity, probability, expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact and the possibility to effectively reduce the impact? If the finding of no significant effect is* ***reliant on specific features or measures*** *of the project envisaged to avoid, or prevent what might otherwise be significant adverse effects on the environment, then* ***these should be identified in bold'.*** The Applicant's proposed gradation has the potential to create ambiguity or potentially downplay aspect matters and consequently the Applicant's Degrees of Significance is not supported.

2.10 (§2.2.30 – 2.2.34) In terms of in-combination and cumulative effect assessment, the Applicant references Advice Note 17 (i.e. §1.5 – '*…the Secretary of State should consider how the "accumulation of, and interrelationship between effects might affect the environment, economy or community as a whole, even though they may be acceptable when considered on an individual basis with mitigation measures in place*."), leading to defining a Zone of Influence. However, throughout the Scoping Report different distances are used, subject to chapter aspects, which makes for complex reading and eventual assessment. It is suggested (§23.3.2) '*At this stage, it is anticipated that the long list will be based on up to a 5km area of search which aligns with the Study Area for landscape and visual amenity and the likely maximum range of any potential significant effects'* that this distance is adopted for the ZoI in most aspects. A more detailed ZoI is set out in §8.3.8. It is suggested that the Applicant clarifies and uses a consistent approach.

3.0 THE SITE and its WIDER CONTEXT

3.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding the approach as set out by the Applicant in this chapter and makes limited comment in this regard.

3.2 (§3.1.4 and §3.4) With regard to the Cable Route Search Area, the Applicant notes that '*The search area will be refined as the design of the Scheme is developed and additional technical surveys are carried out*'. Whilst BBC understands the need for such flexibility, the Applicant should allow for additional technical surveys and related assessment should the Applicant find that the final selected Cable Corridor(s) cuts through and / or effects sensitive archaeological areas or habitats (including hedgerows considered important under the Hedgerow Regulations). This proviso should be inherent in the ES.

3.3 (§3.3) In terms of Bedford Borough Council's jurisdiction, Site F is located circa 2.4km to the west of its administrative boundary whilst Site G is located on its western boundary. Within an elliptical 5km radius of both Sites are located the following planning informants and / or constraints (ref. BBC ArchGIS online maps):

a) Ancient Monument: Wold Farm moated enclosure, Odell; Little Odell abandoned medieval village; Tri-Focal abandoned medieval village, Chellington; Carlton Hall moated enclosure and associated outer enclosure, farm buildings, dovecote, and pond; and Coldharbour Hill.

b) Archaeological Interest Sites: numerous sites stretching from Farndish / Podington in the north, to Carlton in the south.

c) Conservation Areas (north to south): Farndish, Podington, Hinwick, Odell, Harrold, Carlton, and Turvey.

d) Dungee Corner Meadow (SSSI).

e) Ancient Woodlands: several woodlands north of Harrold, Dungee Wood, Park Wood; The Snip Wood, The Oaks Wood, Nun Wood, Threeshire Wood, and Lavendon Wood surrounding Site G.

f) Country Park: Harrold-Odell Country Park, Little Odell.

g) Historic Parks and Gardens: Hinwick House.

h) Listed Buildings: numerous buildings in Farndish, Podington, Hinwick, Odell, Harrold, Carlton, Coldharbour Hill, and Turvey.

i) Rights of Way: numerous routes that form a network that extends across the boundary into North Northamptonshire.

For completeness, the above informants should be recognised in the Applicant's report and assessed accordingly.

3.4 There appears an inconsistency in the extent of the zone of influence / desk study data search (by example §3.3.294 uses a 5km and §3.3.315 uses 6.2km ZoI radius). In this regard BBC is supportive of the approach set out in §8.3.8 which it is suggested should be applied across all aspect matters.

3.5 (§3.3.229 and §3.3.280 to 3.3.283) As noted by the Applicant, Site F drains in totality in a northerly direction towards the River Nene. For assessment purposes it should be noted that the River Nene forms part of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Ramsar site and Irchester Old Lodge Pit SSSI site and consequently warrant additional protection measures in terms of any waterborne pollutants carried from the Site (as noted by Applicant in §3.3.252/356).

3.6 (§3.3.336 / 381 / 382) **Significant concern** is expressed regarding the location of the BESS facility (Flood Zone 3) on the River Nene valley floor and on the boundary with the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Ramsar site in light of the National Fire Chiefs Council's 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems planning – Guidance for Fire and Rescue Services' (November 2022; Version 1) requirements for open water storage

ponds to contain contaminated fire water in managing a BESS fire. The ES would need to address both the flooding of the site, breaching of such ponds, and the potential leaching of contaminated fire water into the surrounding ground water and water courses including the Ramsar, SSSI and SPA sites.

3.7 Further, this concern is warranted in light of the Applicant's comments that the BESS Site has historically flooded (§3.3.381) and falls with Flood Zone 3 (High Risk) (§3.3.382) (further see §9.4.68 to §9.4.70).

4.0 SCHEME DESCRIPTION

4.1 (§4.1.3) '*The* [Proposed Development] *consists of a series of Solar Arrays within Green Hill A, A.2, B, C, D, E, F and G, a BESS, two 400kV substations and a* ***number*** *of 132kV and 33kV substations. Two 400kV Substations will be required which, depending on the location of the BESS, could be located on Green Hill C, E, F or Green Hill BESS. The voltage and number of 132kV and 33kV substations will be determined as the Scheme design progresses*'. Concern is expressed that the full extent of the Proposed Development and (§1.1.3) Associated Development is not clarified making it difficult to assess landscape character and visual impact. Noting that this will be clarified prior to submission, BBC would like to reserve the right to comment further on this matter as required.

It is suggested that the description of the Proposed Development should be more detailed, by example: *proposed new ground-mounted Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) station (xxMW (AC)), fixed and tracker solar panels on supports, and ancillary equipment and buildings including inverters, auxiliary transformer, a switching station building, a relay and control room building, meteorological mast, high security fencing and gates, perimeter CCTV, numerous site accesses off the Public Highways, internal access tracks, 6m wide BESS access road, parking, and associated landscaping and biodiversity enhancements on (circa 1,194 hectares excluding the Cable Route Search Area and Cable Corridor), on land within North Northamptonshire, West Northamptonshire, and Milton Keynes Councils* (the 'Application'), or similar.

Note: heights of buildings and infrastructure will need to be defined to inform an understanding of the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (in this regard, BBC refers to Table 4.1 as informative to the above Proposed Development description).

4.2 In order to ensure optimum land take / use, EN3 §3.10.8 provides an indicative measure, namely: '*A typical 50MW solar farm will consist of around 100,000 to 150,000 panels and cover between 125 to 200 acres*' [circa 50 to 80ha]. On this basis, assuming 80% optimisation of Sites, at 1,194ha the Proposed Development has the capacity to generate circa 596 to 955MW (inclusive of overplanting). It is suggested that this potentially far exceeds the 500MW as stated on the PINs website. In planning terms, the Proposed Development's total land take needs to be justified in terms of the effect on the recipient landscape and habitat, the loss of agricultural soil use, and the long-term changes to the very nature of the countryside community dynamic ('harm') vs national energy self-reliance ('public benefit'). The Applicant will need to justify the land take as suggested above.

4.3 The Applicant is referred to EN3 (§3.10.47 and §3.10.61) which requires '*AC installed export capacity should not be seen as an appropriate tool to constrain the impacts of a solar farm. Applicants should use other measurements, such as panel size, total area and percentage of ground cover to set the maximum extent of development when determining the planning impacts of an application',* and Footnote 84 '*For planning purposes, the proposed development will be assessed on the impacts of the overplanted site'*.

4.4 (§4.1.4) '*Green Hill BESS is currently identified as the preferred location for the BESS, however if further investigation shows that this site is* ***not suitable*** *for the development* ***or if further space*** *is required to meet the Scheme's requirements, then a BESS* ***may also be located*** *on Green Hill A, B, C, E, F and G'* [emphasis by Planning Case Officer]. Significant concern is expressed regarding the potential flexibility of location, or locations, of the BESS, as this station(s) has the potential to cause significant landscape, habitat, and public health and safety harm as noted elsewhere in this review. Consequently, this statement by the Applicant is not supported. Rather, it should be agreed that this aspect will be concluded in agreement with the host authorities and statutory parties prior to submission.

4.5 (§4.1.5 to 4.1.6 and 4.3.17 to 4.3.20) BBC are not supportive of the flexibility of route and width as stated by the Applicant for the Cable Corridors, with widths varying between one to seven metres, and in extremes 50m (4.3.20 – '*The typical working area for the Cable Corridor is anticipated to be 50m wide* ***but a wider area*** *may be required in some locations'*). This is an established landscape defined by tree groups, treed hedgerow, and hedgerows (some potentially important pursuant to the Hedgerow Regulations) bisecting and framing the open countryside, public rights-of-way, and public highways. This un-caveated statement regarding the installation of the underground cables has the potential to do significant harm to this landscape. Currently as things stand this statement by the Applicant is not supported.

4.6 (§4.2.2, 4.3 and 4.3.11) The Applicant requests some flexibility into the design of the Proposed Development, in terms of the Cable Corridors, location(s) of the BESS, infrastructure, and changing technologies, siting the 'Rochdale Envelope' (NSIP Advice Note 9) which in principle supports where flexibility is sought to address uncertainty. However, Advice Note 9 §1.3 states '… *Energy (EN-1), the NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) and the NPS for National Networks all stress the need to ensure that the significant effects of a Proposed Development have been properly assessed'*. Further, Advice Note 9 §2.3 states that such an assessment should be based on '*cautious worst case approach';* that the '*level of information required should be sufficient information to enable 'the main,' or the 'likely significant' effects on the environment to be assessed […] and the mitigation measures to be described'*; and that the need for '*flexibility should not be abused'*… given that the authority responsible for issuing the development consent needs to be satisfied that, given the nature of the project in question, '*it has 'full knowledge' of its significant effect'*. It is suggested that as currently submitted, there is significant uncertainty regarding the Cable Corridors and locations of the BESS. Consequently, BBC note that it does NOT currently have full knowledge of the Proposed Development as required under the EIA Regulations.

4.7 (§4.3.9 to 4.3.10) BESS facility: currently the full 3D-scale of this facility, and its operating capacity (xxMW at AC), is not stated by the Applicant. This information is critical in understanding visual impact on the landscape setting; and, the noise, heating, and habitat effect / impact located immediately adjacent to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Ramsar site, designated for its diverse waterbird habitat and an important waterbird breading area (ref. Ramsar Wetlands Information Sheet, April 2011).

The Applicant is referred to the report by Natural England 'Evidence review of the impact of solar farms on birds, bats and general ecology (NEER0120; March 2017)' in this regard, (pg.40) '*When considering site selection for utility scale solar developments it is generally agreed that protected areas should be avoided. This is reflected in the scientific literature where modelling approaches include many factors such as economic considerations and visual impact but also often avoid protected areas such as SPAs. This is echoed by organisations such as Natural England and the RSPB that recommend that solar PV developments should not be built on or near protected areas. As sensitive species and habitats are not necessarily restricted to the geographical boundaries of protected areas, it is imperative that research is undertaken into the potential interactions between solar PV arrays and biodiversity especially sensitive habitats and species. Quantifying the effect of solar PV developments as a function of distance to protected areas is equally as important as it would allow statutory bodies and ecological organisations to provide more detailed guidance on the placement of these developments* ***where the conservation integrity of a protected area is potentially at risk****. Research into the impacts that solar PV developments may have on biodiversity should be undertaken using a multiscale approach, allowing potential impacts to be understood both within the immediate vicinity of solar farms and within the wider landscape, taking into account ecologically functionally connected land and a wide selection of habitats'* [emphasis by the Planning Case Officer].

In reviewing Figure 3.3.3 (BESS location), extreme concern is expressed regarding the location of the BESS facility on the BESS3 field parcel as the parcel is surrounded on nearly all three sides by the Ramsar site and will have a significant effect on the setting and landscape character; and, would poses a real risk of contamination of leachants from the batteries in terms of both fire water and flooding, into the Ramsar site, SSSI and Upper Nene river corridor.

Currently as presented, BBC is not convinced that the Scoping Report addresses the matter of *'conservation integrity'* of the Ramsar and SSSI sites in sufficient detail to ensure their integrity,

4.8 (§4.3.12) The Applicant address perimeter fencing, but does not address the potential need for fencing to the public Rights-of-Way and bridleways that cross the site. BBC is concerned that this is not imperially defined and would like to see the proviso of a minimum PRoW width set at 8m for footpaths and 9m for bridleways. Further, it is suggested that an assessment of how these are to be retained, managed and enhanced should be set out within any Outline CEMP and Outline LEMP submitted by the Applicant. BBC's concern is that these are important public routes which need to be

assessed as 'sequential visual effects' corridors, rather than as a single viewpoint within a LVIA study. These PRoWs also form important habitat and landscape corridors, hence why the matter of width needs to be addressed by the Applicant. This aspect should be recognised at the onset of the Application.

4.9 Further, BBC suggests that the Applicant consults with the British Horse Society regarding their approach to Public Rights of Way used as footpaths and bridleways and proposed corridor widths.

4.10 (§4.3.24) Site Access: it is suggested that a) the number of site accesses are kept to an absolute minimum; b) the proposed visibility splays are re-assessed (currently stated collectively as 430m from access point), to ensure the absolute minimum removal of existing hedgerows that would affect the landscape setting of the Public Highways. It is suggested that the Applicant evidences their approach to the location of site access in all cases.

4.11 (§4.4.5) BBC is supportive of the Applicant's intent to submit a Construction Environmental Management Plan ('CEMP'). It is suggested that this includes an approach to the operational replacement of solar arrays and the BESS facility during the lifetime of the Proposed Development.

4.12 (§4.4.15) BBC is NOT supportive of leaving the underground ducting and cables in-situ. The ducting and cables contain plastics and metals which are toxic and with gradual breakdown have the potential to leach into the surrounding ground and groundwater causing contamination. The Applicant should be obligated to return the Sites, Cable Corridors, and possible servitudes within the Public Highways used by the Proposed Development, free of such known contamination. It is noted that the statement '*to be left in-situ to minimise adverse environmental effects'* is not substantiated.

4.13 (§4.4.17) '*...the land within the Scheme will be returned to its original use as far as possible...*'. It is noted that during the operational stage (circa 60-years), the soil will lie fallow / be unproductive. There is no evidence submitted by the Applicant that after decommissioning the Site will revert to arable use for food production / habitat creation. Currently there is limited evidence as to how long it would take to revert the soil back to production potential (see §8.4.3 Habitat Loss). Consequently, the soil should be viewed as lost to agricultural use, unless otherwise evidenced by the Applicant.

5.0 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT and ENERGY POLICY

5.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding the legislative and planning policy context as set out by the Applicant and makes no further comment in this regard.

5.2 The Applicant's attention is drawn to the National Fire Chiefs Council's 'Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage Systems planning – Guidance for Fire and Rescue Services' (November 2022; Version 1) regarding safety of the general public and emergency responders, and site planning requirements, relating to BESS facilities which should be addressed, or be referenced, within the Applicant's submission.

5.3 As noted elsewhere, the Applicant should have some acknowledgement / reference to the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2013.

5.4 BBC note that the NPPF is currently under consultation up to September 2024 and that the revised NPPF will be the determinant of any Application coming forward.

6.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

6.1 No comment made.

7.0 LANDSCAPE and VISUAL IMPACT

7.1 (§7.1.1.) '*... the existing baseline scenario within a defined Study Area*' - the Applicant has defined a maximum 5km Outer Study Area which BBC considers to be acceptable (subject to landscape designation requirements).

7.2 (§7.1.2) '*Assessment of visual effects - assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people'*. Whilst in LVIA terms this approach is acceptable, it does not address the more granular experience of the landscape as used along public Rights-of-Way and bridleways. BBC's concern is that these are important public routes which need to be assessed as 'sequential visual effects' corridors, rather than as a single viewpoint within a LVIA study. BBC refers the Applicant to NPPF §104 that states that *'Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails respect of protecting and enhancing public rights of way'* and NPPF §180 (b) that states that planning policy and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment (in part) by '*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside ...'*. This aspect should be recognised at the onset of any Application.

7.3 (§7.2.12) Arboriculture: *'The LVIA will consider the findings of any tree surveys undertaken and consider any effects upon Landscape and Visual receptors should vegetation removal be required as part of the Scheme...'*. BBC notes that this should include addressing the potential removal of hedgerows (including potentially important hedgerows) which form an important structural landscape element to this countryside setting.

7.4 (§7.4.5) BESS location: '*Features such as overhead pylons associated with Grendon Substation are prominent locally and compromise the rural character and detract from the local landscape context of the surrounding wetlands'*. Whilst this statement is one of fact, the Applicant is still minded to consider the significance of this Proposed Development on the setting of the Ramsar site (and SSSI, SPA and LNR) adjacent, the setting being an important planning consideration and integral to the Ramsar designation. (§7.4.6, Fig. 7.10.4 and Table 7.4) It is suggested that local views from <u>within</u> the Ramsar site are evidenced in terms of visual effect of the Proposed Development on the Ramsar site.

7.5 (§7.5.2) *'The visual amenity experience by people'*: whilst the Applicant recognises views from '*people engaged in outdoor recreation (including use of PROWs)'* and (§7.5.63) '*The selection of viewpoints was made on the basis of the following types of publicly accessible viewpoints, as follows: Representative viewpoints (representative of views from a particular PRoW)'*; such views from within Bedford Borough Councils' jurisdiction along its PRoWs and Bridleways towards Site G (with reference to Fig. 7.10.5 (Table 7.6)) appear not to have been considered or consulted upon with BBC.

7.6 (§7.7.5) '*Agreement of viewpoints would be based on those provided on Figure 7.10 Viewpoint Locations and any additional ones proposed by the LPA based on consultation through the LVIA process'*. It is suggested that, as some of the potentially effected viewpoints will be within BBC's boundary, BBC are similarly consulted regarding Sites F and G.

8.0 ECOLOGY and BIODIVERSITY

8.1 (§8.1.4) '*Opportunities for ecological enhancements, in effort to contribute towards local conservation priorities whilst achieving Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) targets in line with the Environment Act 2021 (Ref.16) and national and local policies, will also be presented'*. It is suggested that such opportunities for ecological enhancements are set out against a programme of implementation say at years 1, 5 and 10, or similar, including mitigation measures should the instated landscape planting fail in the first five to ten-years.

8.2 (§8.3.14) '*The Cable Corridor will be assessed in the Environmental Statement, albeit disturbance will be limited in extent given the narrow width of cable trench required…*'. This statement is not supported by the Applicant's statement elsewhere where it is stated that the Cable Corridors would be between one and seven metres, but in some cases 50m in width. It is suggested that this approach is caveated subject to the Applicant tabling the final Cable Corridors.

8.3 (§8.4.2) For completeness it is suggested that the Operational Phase (replacement maintenance) recognises that the solar arrays and batteries will be replaced during the lifetime of the Proposed Development and consequently the 'severity' of the potential sources of impact set out for the Construction Phase may also be applicable to the Operational Phase.

8.4 In terms of potential release of contaminated fire water and smoke from the BESS facility, the Applicant is referred to the Chief Fire Officer's Guidance set out elsewhere in this report. BESS / battery fires are exceptionally difficult to put out, with current best practice suggesting that the fire burns itself out (which could take several days). This creates a scale of contamination, albeit a limited risk, that needs some address in the ES. This matter again raises the concern of the location of the BESS facility next to the Ramsar site.

8.5 (§8.5.7) Whilst the parameters set out by the Applicant are very comprehensive, the EIA Regulations requires the identification and mitigation of 'significant' effect. It would assist the reading of the ES if the Applicant demonstrates how their approach ties back

to the EIA Regulations. This matter is partly addressed in §8.5.18 and 8.5.19 but needs absolute clarity.

8.6 (§8.5.13) Ecological monitoring: BBC would like to see more detail on how this will be undertaken, implemented, and how associated funding required for the duration of the Proposed Development will be obtained. This could be set out as part of any forthcoming Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Plan (OEPMP).

8.7 (Table 8.5) It is noted in this table that low hedgerows, treed hedgerows, scattered woodland and woodland blocks are not recognised as being a habitat in their own right. These may be subject to a 'source of impact' and be a 'sensitive ecological receptor'; there is an inter-dependency between flora and fauna that is silent in this table. There is a concern that due to the extensive scale of this Proposed Development, the inherent characteristic of this countryside landscape will be removed / rationalized to create optimum solar array fields with minimum shadow impact from the framing treed landscape. Such loss will have a direct effect on the fauna habitat and broader landscape character.

9.0 HYDROLOGY, FLOOD RISK and DRAINAGE

9.1 (§9.1.1) In light of the concern regarding the BESS facility and the need to hold contaminated fire water on Site, it is suggested that this matter is included within the 'sources of flooding' (i.e. so much water may be required by the fire services to dampen the fire that the storage ponds may not be able to hold the volume of fire water created).

9.2 (§9.4.68 to 9.4.73) As noted elsewhere, significant concern is raised regarding the potential flooding of the BESS site (Flood Zone 3) from the River Nene, releasing battery contaminants into the water courses. The Applicant's intent to raise the BESS above the fluvial flooding level, if acceptable, will need to be modelled within the LVIA for landscape and visual effect.

9.3 (§9.5.1) It is suggested that the above matter is assessed in terms of '*potential ~~and likely~~ significant environmental effects*'. [BBC suggest clarity, and strike out accordingly]

9.4 (§9.6.15) '*Potential mitigation measures (where required) will be fully assessed on completion of Flood Risk Assessment, Drainage Strategy, WFD Assessment and ES chapters. It is likely that any potential flood risk will be mitigated by sequentially locating development to areas of* ***lowest risk****. Where the flood risk cannot be avoided, flood resistance and resilience measures will be utilised. The solar panels themselves can withstand up to 1m depth of flooding*'. It is suggested that this statement does not address the central concern regarding potential release of contaminated water (either through site flooding making contact with the BESS or fire water) into the Ramsar site and River Nene water course. Whilst the assessment may identify lowest risk to the Proposed Development, this may remain as a Major risk (Sensitivity and Magnitude) to the surrounding Ramsar site et al. This matter requires clarification in the ES.

10.0 GROUND CONDITIONS and CONTAMINATION

10.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding this aspect's approach as set out by the Applicant and makes limited comment in this regard.

10.2 (§10.5.1) '*… provide commentary on potential land contamination and geotechnical constraints in the context of the Scheme'* and (§10.5.2) '*The underlying principle is the evaluation of pollutant linkages via the Conceptual Site Model in order to assess whether the presence of a source of contamination could potentially lead to significant harm'*. It is read that this will address the concerns regarding leaching of potential BESS contaminated battery and / or fire water, as raised above. This matter is raised in §10.6.8 (and §10.7.6) but should be addressed in terms of the Chief Fire Officers Guidance; it is suggested that the impact magnitude may currently be understated.

10.3 (§10.9.1) In light of BESS / lithium battery fires being an evolving understanding, it is suggested the 'cumulative effects to human health' should be stated as an unknown.

10.4 (Table 10.4) In light of the concerns raised regarding the BESS facility (fire and contamination), it is suggested that the Applicant reviews Table 10.4 in terms of matters scoped out, or states that the matters are unknown. Currently, BBC is NOT supportive of this Table.

11.0 MINERALS

11.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding this aspect's approach as set out by the Applicant and makes no further comment in this regard.

11.2 (§11.3.7) Without labouring on the matter of potential ground leaching and contamination from the BESS facility, it should be highlighted that the Applicant themselves has noted that the Site comprises '*fluvial sand and gravel deposits associated with the River Nene*', a substrate that can facilitate the easy movement of contaminants in the soil and groundwater.

12.0 CULTURAL HERITAGE

12.1 Chapter 12 of the Scoping Report deals with matters relating to Cultural Heritage. (§12.3.1) The Applicant confirms that setting impacts on all designated heritage assets located within 2km of the Application site will be scoped in. Only one designated heritage asset, Harrold Lodge Farmhouse (Grade II, list entry no.: 1159546), appears to fall within both the study area and BBC.

12.2 The Applicant does not provide evidence to explain why a 2km study area is deemed appropriate – a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study is included within the submission, however this shows a broader area of theoretical intervisibility than the 2km study area proposed.

12.3 The ZTV study indicates that the majority of designated heritage assets located within the 3 to 5km radius of BBC would not fall within the ZTV. There are, however, a number

of designated heritage assets located within BBC which do appear to fall within the ZTV. (§12.3.1) states that '*designated heritage assets beyond the 2km Study Area may also be assessed if identified as being potentially affected by the Scheme by relevant consultees*'. In the absence of any robust assessment and with the evidence provided in the report, BBC are not in a position at this moment in time to agree to scope out designated heritage assets beyond the proposed 2km radius. Therefore, the ES should provide an assessment of the potential setting impacts on designated heritage assets located up to 5km or provide information demonstrating agreement with the relevant consultation bodies as to why such an assessment is not required (to include the Borough). BBC would welcome a discussion with the Applicant regarding the approach and assessment (which to date has not occurred).

13.0 TRANSPORT and ACCESS

13.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding this aspect's approach as set out by the Applicant and makes no further comment in this regard.

13.2 (§13.1.3) BBC is supportive of the '*Transport Assessment (which will include an Abnormal Loads Assessment), Outline Public Rights of Way* [and bridleways] *Management Plan, and Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), which will be prepared by the Applicant and be submitted with the DCO application*'. [Case Officer's inclusion of bridleways]

13.3 (§13.3.14) Wider Transport Network: BBC note that numerous bridleways cross and surround the Sites, forming an important leisure-use network across the countryside. These should be assessed within the Transport chapter of the ES (as later referenced in §13.5.2).

13.4 Table 13.1: it is suggested that within the High receptor sensitivity category, stabled / riding schools and camping sites are included with the 'receptor type'.

14.0 NOISE and VIBRATION

14.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding this aspect's approach as set out by the Applicant and makes limited further comment in this regard.

14.2 (§14.2.10) ''*During the operational phase, noise would be generated by the substations, inverters, battery units transformers, and tracker panel motors associated with the Scheme. The level of noise at nearby receptors would be dependent on the plant noise emission levels and distance to the receptors. Operational noise levels will be predicted at the nearest residential receptors and assessed to determine the magnitude of any effect'*. It is noted that the location of the BESS, substations, and conversion units have not yet been finalised and consequently this aspect's assessments will need to be undertaken once these have been resolved. Site visits undertaken to similar installations illustrated a higher than anticipated background noise which could affect residential amenity and the Ramsar site.

14.3 (Table 14.9) For completeness, it is assumed that the noise and vibration generated due to the replacement of the solar arrays and batteries during the Operational stage will be addressed similar to the construction stage - '*noise from construction'* and '*noise from construction traffic*' effect.

15.0 GLINT and GLARE

15.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding this aspect's approach as set out by the Applicant and makes no further comment in this regard.

15.2 We note the inclusion of (§15.1.1) Public Rights of Way and Horse Facilities, and the specific reference to the British Horse Society (§15.2.14), which is welcomed.

16.0 ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS

16.1 No comment made.

17.0 AIR QUALITY

17.1 (§17.4.25) (Table 17.5) BBC note the inclusion ('scoping in') of an assessment of a potential fire at the BESS facility; this assessment is welcomed. This should be read against public health and safety matters (Chp. 19: Table 19.5 Air Quality as noted by Applicant), and environmental (Ramsar site) concerns.

18.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC, TOURISM and RECREATION

18.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding this aspect's approach as set out by the Applicant and makes no further comment in this regard.

18.2 (§18.2.7) For clarity, it would be useful if the Applicant states the extent of the ZoI to be used in this Chapter (or approach as suggested elsewhere in this report).

19.0 HUMAN HEALTH and WELLBEING

19.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding this aspect's approach as set out by the Applicant and makes limited comment in this regard.

19.2 (§19.1.1) For clarity, it would be useful if the Applicant states the extent of the ZoI to be used in this Chapter.

19.3 (Table 19.5) Water quality: this health effect should address / make reference to the potential discharge of contaminated fire water into the ground water and River Nene water course.

20.0 ARBORICULTURE

20.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding this aspect's approach as set out by the Applicant and makes limited comment in this regard.

20.2 (§20.4.5) It is noted that the statement regarding Root Protection Areas and canopy spread of recorded trees (scattered woodland and woodland blocks) is welcomed. It is nevertheless suggested that a similar approach is set out for recorded / retained low hedgerows and treed hedgerows within and framing individual Sites.

20.3 (§20.5.1) '*Possible effects to trees from the construction of the Scheme include tree removal, pruning and root loss / damage from: Temporary construction access routes and visibility splays; Permanent access routes and visibility splays*'. Concern is expressed elsewhere that the extensive access visibility splays suggested, and the meandering nature of some of the local roads that could be used for access, could remove significant extents of hedgerows et al. In principle, the current approach to visibility splays and their potential harmful effect on the countryside habitat and setting is not supported.

20.4 (§20.5.2) '*Possible effects to trees from the operation of the Scheme include tree pruning to maintain permanent access routes, visibility splays, parking areas and compounds as well as any pruning to reduce shading to solar panels'*. This statement needs clarification as elsewhere in the Applicant's Scoping Report they reference set-backs and / or corridors to protect the existing low hedgerows, treed hedgerows, scattered woodland, woodland blocks, Ancient Woodlands, and designated protected landscapes. As read against §20.6.1 Mitigation ('*avoid buffer zones, canopy spreads and shade patterns of existing trees'*), the Applicant's intent requires clarification.

20.5 (§20.5.3) '*Proposed effects to trees from the decommissioning of the Scheme are anticipated to be negligible given that the Scheme's infrastructure is likely to be removed via pre-established permanent access routes and is therefore unlikely to require any additional tree removal, pruning or root loss'*. As noted elsewhere, BBC are not supportive of leaving the underground cables in-situ post decommissioning and consequently their suggested removal may have an effect on existing trees. The ES should address mitigation measures to address this matter should it arise.

20.6 (Table 20.4) In light of the fact that Ancient Woodlands are immediately adjacent to Site G, it is suggested that an assessment of impact on the Ancient Woodlands is included within the Scoping Summary.

21.0 AGRICULTURAL CIRCUMSTANCE

21.1 In general, BBC is in agreement regarding this aspect's approach as set out by the Applicant and makes no further comment in this regard.

22.0 OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

22.1 (Table 22.1) IEMA Definitions, Major accident: '*Events that threaten immediate or delayed serious environmental effects to human health, welfare and / or the environment and require the use of resources beyond those of the client or its appointed representatives to manage. Whilst malicious intent is not accidental, the outcome (e.g. train derailment) may be the same and therefore many mitigation*

measures will apply to both deliberate and accidental events'. This should be read alongside the Chief Fire Officer's Guidelines. BBC are not supportive of Table 22.2 'Fire and explosions' statement that this significant public health and safety matter could be scoped out of the ES.

22.2 (§22.6) Waste: the Applicant makes the following statements, namely (§22.6.13) '*It is therefore estimated that the solar panels could require replacement once and the* [BESS] *batteries twice during the operation of the Scheme. The replacement of these will be considered within the assessment of operational impacts of the Scheme in the ES',* and (§22.6.14) '*At the end of the Scheme's operational life, it will be decommissioned. Recycling procedures for the development at the end of its lifetime (including any installed energy storage) will be in line with best practice industry guidelines at the time. At the present time it is envisaged almost all of the solar panels will be able to be recycled and reused. As this is expected to be at least 60-years in the future, it is not possible to identify at this stage either the waste management routes or specific facilities that would be used'.*

As noted by the Applicant, the BESS infrastructure, solar arrays, and cabling will be replaced and / or be decommissioned after circa 20-years, 40-years and 60-years respectively and consequently where this material is sent for 'recycling' it should be addressed within the ES. It is suggested that current practice is that the majority of this material is exported international ending in landfill or landfill farming causing significant harm to the recipient nation of such material. The potential for such international, cumulative impact should, as a minimum, be addressed by the Application. It is suggested that this statement is supported by the reading of the current High Court Ruling R (Finch) v Surrey County Council and others [2024] UKSC20, 20 June 2024, regarding effect generated by development. It is acknowledged that, with current knowledge, the short to long-term effects of solar array and BESS life-cycle supply chains are unknown to the Local Planning Authority and consequently some caution has been set-out in this Screening Opinion review which should similarly be reflected by the Applicant.

22.3 In this regard, the Applicant is referred to the obligations in the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations (2013) and compliance to those obligations will need to be evidenced within any Application made.

22.4 (§22.6.15) (Table 22.3) '*Considering the above, it is concluded that significant waste impacts are not expected during either construction, operation or decommissioning, and hence the need for a separate waste chapter has been scoped out of the EIA'*. As noted above, this statement by the Applicant is not supported, or needs to be evidenced in detail. Currently as presented, BBC note their significant objection to scoping this matter out of the ES.

23.0 CUMULATIVE EFFECT

23.1 BBC has taken as read, where the extent of the ZoI within a specific subject matter is not defined, that the following statement will apply, namely, (§23.3.2) '*At this stage, it is anticipated that the long list will be based on up to a 5km area of search which aligns*

with the Study Area for landscape and visual amenity and the likely maximum range of any potential significant effects'.

23.2 (§23.3.5) '*This screening exercise will be detailed within the ES and will also be consulted upon as part of pre-application discussions with North Northamptonshire, West Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes Councils'*. Officers are surprised and somewhat disappointed that Bedford Borough Council has not been referenced in §23.3.5.

24.0 SUMMARY

24.1 BBC's comments against individual aspects / matters, including a review of the Appendices, are set out in each related chapter above. Consequently, the Applicant's intent as set out in Table 24.1 should be reviewed accordingly.

25.0 BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL'S CONCLUSION

25.1 To meet the requirements of the Infrastructure Planning Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations (2017) (the 'EIA Regulations'), Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIPs) which are likely to have a significant effect on the environment are required to undertake an EIA and to provide an Environmental Statement (ES) to accompany the Application. In accordance with Regulation 10(1), '*a person who proposes to make an application for an order granting development consent may ask the Secretary of State to state in writing their opinion as to the scope, and level of detail, of the information to be provided in the environmental statement'* (a 'Scoping Opinion')'.

Regulation 10(3) of the EIA Regulations states that a scoping request must be accompanied by: '*a) a plan sufficient to identify the land; b) a description of the proposed development, including its location and technical capacity; c) an explanation of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment; and, d) such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make*'.

25.2 The Applicant has submitted a Request for a Scoping Opinion (Assessment Scoping Report, prepared by Lanpro Services, dated July 2024) in accordance with the EIA Regulations which has concluded that there may be the potential for significant effects to arise in relation to the Proposed Development. The Applicant has consequently suggested that further work be undertaken to inform, evaluate, and potentially mitigate against the significant effects as identified and that this will be used to inform the Environmental Statement.

25.3 Bedford Borough Council notes their in-principle agreement with the Scoping Opinion as submitted, albeit that significant concerns have been raised in its review, which in its opinion needs address. BBC reserves its right to comment upon and request further assessment in respect of the Environmental Statement and Application that will support any forthcoming application.

25.4 Finally, BBC does wish to highlight a number of observations with regard to the proposal put forward by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited, namely:

a) The research of hazardous waste testing on solar panels available in the marketplace has indicated that different varieties of solar panels have different metals present in the semiconductor and solder. Some of these metals (for example lead and cadmium) are harmful to human health and the environment at high levels and may leach out / be released during repairs / maintenance to individual site panels, permeating into the local soils, ground water, and water courses.

b) Reading suggests that the type of solar array selected is critical to understand the scale of energy production possible; that the efficiencies of different solar arrays diminish over time at different rates leading to possible increased replacement periods within the life span of the Proposed Development; and lithium battery / BESS facilities are developing technology where the success of recycling is poorly evidenced.

c) Currently, there is no evidence commitment that after decommissioning the Site will revert to arable use for food production/ habitat creation (with ref. NPS EN5 §2.0.25 '*to mitigate the potential detrimental effects of undergrounding works on any relevant agricultural land and soils, particularly regarding Best and Most Versatile land. Such a commitment must guarantee appropriate handling of soil, backfilling, and* ***return of the land*** *to the baseline Agricultural Land Classification (ALC), thus ensuring no loss or degradation of agricultural land')*. Arable soil is a three-dimensional, living bio-habitat and there is very limited research regarding the requirement (in terms of augmenting soil nutrients) and duration required to bring soil back to production potential. Consequently, this matter should be read with some caution.

25.5 BBC note that some of the aspects and matters raised in this review may already have been addressed by the Applicant with the host authorities, but to date, no such discussions have been held with Bedford Borough Council.

REPORT and APPENDICES

The Scoping Report is accompanied by the following documents:

(V01) PINs Letter - notification (received 7 August 2024)

(V02) PINS Letter – notification (dated 25 July 2024)

(V03) Green Hill Solar Farm Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report (dated July 2024; Rev. A); including Appendices Parts 1 to 8.

Due to staffing resources and the relatively short period in which to respond to the Applicant's extensive Environmental Impact Scoping Report, the Council has not been able to revert with all internal consultation from technical consultees. Those that have been received are included in

this report. The response above is solely that of Bedford Borough Council, submitted without prejudice.

Should you require any clarification, please contact: Peter Dijkhuis (Planning Case Officer). (Peter.dijkhuis@bedford.gov.uk).

Planning Services

Decision Date: 21 August 2024

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 06 August 2024 10:14
To: Green Hill Solar
Subject: RE: EN010170 - Green Hill Solar Farm - EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: EST

Dear Sirs

Boughton Parish Council resolved to respond they are in support of solar energy generally, however they would advocate that as much as grade A agricultural land is retained as possible.

Kind regards

Ciara Wanstall
Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Boughton Parish Council

Tel: [redacted]

Please note that the Clerk currently works part time so there may be some delay in any response.

Please note the Parish Council's website and email address has changed.
[redacted] is no longer monitored. Please use this email address to correspond with the Parish Council.

[redacted]

BOZEATPARISHCOUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs L Payne, [redacted]

Email: [redacted]

Response to Greenhill Solar Farm Scoping Report

We appreciate the opportunity to comment upon the Scoping Report because this gives us the opportunity to raise concerns about the proposed contents of the EIA.

In general we are concerned that the level of information provided within the Scoping Report is often superficial and certainly insufficient to make a proper assessment of the adequacy of the proposed contents of the EIA. We have concerns about the proposed assessment methodology for some aspects of the scheme and often there is inadequate information to determine whether the proposed approach is likely to result in a fair assessment of the harms of the scheme. During the pre-consultation we felt that the scheme was presented as a fait accompli and the scoping report gives the same impression.

The scheme covers 9 sites each of which, if considered individually, would be considered to be a large solar farm with some that in their own right being so large that they would exceed the threshold to be decided under the NSIP process. The size and scale of this scheme and its EIA should reflect this and although it is presented as a single scheme it is comprised of many separate sites and we feel that in addition to assessing the scheme as a whole, each site should also be assessed in the level of detail that would be used if each was an individual proposal.

We feel that the Scoping Report needs to be revised and reissued for consultation before proceeding to the EIA stage. The failure to do so is likely to result in an inadequate EIA upon which it would not be safe to decide whether the DCO should be granted.

Some specific concerns are set out below regarding individual sections of the report.

6 Climate Change

This should also consider the direct and indirect climate costs resulting from the change of use of the land in addition to costs and benefits of the scheme itself.

7 LVIA

Given the size and scale of the scheme we are surprised that so few viewpoints are proposed. The number of viewpoints assessed for smaller 49.9 MW schemes (which are the equivalent to the individual sites within this scheme) varies but it is common for there to be around 20. That would lead to the expectation that the 9 sites that make up this scheme would require approaching 200 viewpoints for it to be assessed at the same level.

The selection of truly illustrative viewpoints is essential when trying to represent the visual impact of a scheme. Best practice makes it clear that unless there is a specific reason for selecting a viewpoint location (e.g. to assess the visual impact on a specific item) viewpoints should be chosen that have clear visibility of the scheme. It is also common practise for specific grid references to be supplied in scoping documents so that their suitability can be assessed at the scoping stage.

It is common practice for developers to propose viewpoints that are chosen to represent multiple purposes such as being at a location where a PRoW crosses a road or where a PRoW leaves a village. Unfortunately this almost invariably results in viewpoints being used that have limited visibility of the scheme (for example because views are obstructed by locally rising landforms and/or localised obstructions). However if single purpose viewpoints are used they can be chosen to meet best practise and have clear visibility of the scheme.

Because the Scoping document does not give grid references for the proposed viewpoints it is very difficult to assess the suitability of their proposed locations. However the precise location of viewpoint VP30 is clear because it is specified to be at the junction of two named footpaths. The location where these intercept is beside Grendon Brook where a hedge lies between the viewpoint location and the scheme. In short this viewpoint is entirely unsuitable. However if the viewpoint were to be a few meters away on TA3 in the open field, the scheme would fill the view of the receptor. This example gives little confidence that the proposed viewpoints have been selected conform to best practice and single purpose viewpoints should be proposed instead.

A further concern is that we do not consider that it is acceptable to scope out visual receptors between 2km and 5km Outer Study Areas because this can preclude views and vistas that incorporate multiple schemes, and therefore these should be scoped in. A local example of such a view would be from the section of the Three Shires Way ridge above Bozeat (TA8) from which, on a particularly clear day, there are panoramic views across the landscape that span as far as the Leicestershire borders. Such vistas have the potential to include multiple component sites. The Parish Council strongly feel that this view should be included and assessed within the EIA.

8 Ecology and Biodiversity

The number and extent of the surveys seem very low in comparison to those carried out in respect of other schemes. This is of particular concern given that some sites are functionally linked to a RAMSAR site.

12 Heritage

We are concerned that the proposed methodology does not consider the attributes and value of the historic assets. Table 12.1 Sensitivity of Heritage Assets appears to be merely based upon the hierarchy of the current state of recognition of assets which is not directly relevant to their sensitivity. This is flawed because not all assets have been fully assessed, particularly those that have not previously been under threat. It also does not cater for formerly unknown assets that are discovered during the process of preparing the EIA. It is not uncommon within the planning process for assets whose true significance has not yet been recognised to be reassessed and as a result given a higher formal designation. The Thor missile bases at RAF Harrington which are now scheduled are a case in point. Assets should be evaluated according to their attributes and qualities and not discounted out of hand.

It is also important to consider the quantity of heritage assets impacted within a locality. If there is an adverse impact upon a number of lower-valued assets then the overall level of harm should be considered greater than if there was only harm to a single asset.

It is not acceptable to scope out impacts during the decommissioning phase. Decommissioning has the potential to create greater disturbance of buried archaeology not least because it is likely to be carried out with less care than construction unless it is carefully monitored and controlled.

The scheme includes an expectation that it will be repowered midway through its lifetime. During the 30 or so years before repowering it is likely that there will be significant changes in PV technology which could mean that repowering will not be simply be replacing the old PV panels with new panels and instead be the equivalent of decommissioning the site and the construction of a new site. As a consequence repowering impacts also need to be considered. To do so would be consistent with taking the Rochdale Envelope approach.

13 Traffic and Transport

As with Heritage, there is no consideration of repowering which has the potential to cause greater disruption than construction because this includes the removal of existing equipment and the delivery and installation of the replacement equipment. As previously stated it is likely that there will be significant changes in technology in the period before the site is repowered turning repowering into a far more complex operation than just swapping the panels and tantamount to decommissioning and installing completely new equipment. Again this is necessary under the Rochdale Envelope approach.

Similarly it is of concern that it is proposed to simply scope out decommissioning and this should be included not least so that it can be factored as a component when considering the repowering impacts.

The methodology tables do not contain a consideration of the duration for which adverse impacts are experienced nor the numbers of people affected. Short term disruption that affects few people is more tolerable than long term disruption or disruption that impacts many people.

Table 13.2 Magnitude of Impact also appears to contain errors. The entries for *Driver delay* and *Non-motorised user delay* run together over the page break and some of *Road user and pedestrian safety* and *Hazardous/large loads* do not make sense. Additionally the “Severance of communities” based on percentage increases does not appear to be a logical or reliable metric not least because traffic impacts will move around the different sites that make up overall scheme. If the increased flows are measured against the whole construction period then they will not fairly reflect the impact experienced over a shorter period at a single site.

14 Noise

Noise is a particularly pervasive nuisance and so it is important that it is properly and fairly assessed.

There is a distinct lack of detail regarding noise. We would expect a list of noises sensitive properties and the proposed monitoring locations that will be used to represent their current background noise conditions so that the suitability of the monitoring locations can be considered. The maps within Appendix 14 give a hint of the likely representative monitoring locations, but in insufficient detail to make a critical assessment.

From our experience with other EIAs we assume that the Long Term (LT) locations will be used as representative of conditions at a number of noise sensitive properties and so it is essential that the monitoring locations do not experience higher levels of background noise than the group of properties that they are supposed to represent.

It is not acceptable to allow “representative” properties to be selected simply by choosing the property closest to a site because the background noise conditions at that location can be greater than the properties that they are supposed to represent. For example a location by a road, foliage or watercourse will generally have higher background noise levels than a location in open countryside. LT23 and LT24 are extreme cases of an unsuitable location because they are by the busy A428 and A509 respectively. LT22 and LT7 are also of concern. It may well be that other locations are unsuitable but there is inadequate information to determine whether or not they are.

There does not appear to be a proposal to assess the BESS which would be unacceptable.

Within the methodology The Magnitude of Impact categorises all commercial properties as of Low sensitivity to noise. While this may be the case for some business uses, it would not be so for others. For example some businesses use equipment that is very sensitive to noise and/or vibration or are reliant upon their tranquil location for other reasons. It is therefore unsafe to assume that all commercial premises are of Low sensitivity.

It is not clear why DRMB is proposed with regards to acceptable construction noise because this relates to roads and bridges and not the open countryside. It is also of concern that noise below SOAEL is considered to be of Low magnitude when SOAEL could be significantly louder than LOAEL and therefore noise at SOAEL may be very intrusive in a tranquil area.

15 Glint and Glare

Para 15.3.1 cites that NPS EN-3 (para 2.10.158) states that “Solar PV panels are designed to absorb, not reflect, irradiation. However, the Secretary of State should assess the potential impact of glint and glare on nearby homes, motorists, public rights of way, and aviation infrastructure (including aircraft departure and arrival flight paths)."

Within the methodology we do not consider that the sensitivity table (Table 15.1) is a sound basis for assessing sensitivity as it incorrectly understates the sensitivity of some receptors. The most concerning assessment is that users of PRoWs are specified as being of low sensitivity. Users of PRoWs include at least three categories of receptors: pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. All of these users would find that glint and glare detracts from their enjoyment of their activity, particularly if it affects a significant section of their activity.

Of most concern, however, is that horses are not considered to be highly sensitive. Horses are herd animals that react to any perceived threat by flight. Any sudden change (such as glint or suddenly encountering glare as a cloud clears) can be perceived as a threat thus causing them to bolt. Even cyclists can be temporarily blinded by glint or glare and so become unable to safely assess the terrain for hazards (such as churned up ground) that can cause an accident.

As a consequence the sensitivity of these three categories of receptors should be classified as high for equestrian riders, medium to high for cyclists and medium for pedestrians. The consequence of this is that it is not acceptable to scope out the assessment of PRoWs.

Similarly the unpredictable reaction of horses means that the sensitivity at Horse Facilities must be assessed. This would be particularly important at facilities that offer more than just stabling such as jumps or a ménage. Again this means that it is unacceptable to scope out Horse Facilities which should be considered as highly sensitive.

It is important to also consider that many of the country roads and lanes are also used by walkers, runners, cyclists and horse riders for leisure activities. There are many horse facilities in the area and these can either use the lanes as rides for their users or as a means of accessing the wider bridleway network. Such roads also need to be assessed in a similar way to PRoWs. It is important not to dismiss a cyclist’s need to be able to constantly assess the road surface in order to avoid potentially fatal accidents caused by potholes.

18 Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation

We trust that the statement in 18.8.1 is a cut and paste error and that this section considers the wider socio-economic effects of the scheme and that it does not focus solely on the environmental effects.

It is essential that this section addresses the negative impacts as well as the positive impacts included within the scoping document.

It is not acceptable to scope out impact on property values because the size, scale and massing of the scheme is such that it is likely to change the rural nature of the area resulting in the loss of some or all of the rural premium. There is also the potential for particularly badly affected properties to suffer a substantial loss in value if not even made unsalable.

Conclusion

We consider that the current scoping document requires further work to address the issues raised and that once this has been carried out it another round of consultation should be carried out.

Canal & River Trust
Making life better by water

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

Your Ref EN010170-000015

Our Ref IPD

Monday 19 August 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11. Scoping consultation- application by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Green Hill Solar Farm (the Proposed Development).

Thank you for your consultation.

We are the charity who look after and bring to life 2000 miles of canals & rivers. Our waterways contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities and economies, creating attractive and connected places to live, work, volunteer and spend leisure time. These historic, natural and cultural assets form part of the strategic and local green-blue infrastructure network, linking urban and rural communities as well as habitats. By caring for our waterways and promoting their use we believe we can improve the wellbeing of our nation. The Trust is a prescribed consultee in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) process.

The Trust has reviewed the Scoping Report and can advise that the proposed development (including the nearest parts of the cable search area) is approximately 8km away from the nearest waterways owned or operated by the Trust. It is therefore unlikely to have any impact on our waterways and we have **no comment** to make at this time.

If the proposals become significantly altered, we ask that you re-consult us in order that we can re-consider this position.

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

Yours sincerely,

Ian Dickinson MRTPI
Area Planner
[redacted]

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

Milton Keynes City Council

Alison L Down
EIA Advisor
The Planning Inspectorate

By email only to:
greenhill@pins.gov.uk

21 August 2024

Dear Alison L Down

Planning Act 2008 (As Amended) and The Infrastructure Planning Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

RE: Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) Public Health response to ES Scoping Report for Green Hill Solar Farm proposed by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited

I write on behalf of Vicky Head, Director of Public Health at Milton Keynes City Council, to provide feedback towards the ES Scoping Report for the proposal. Public Health were notified by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) which is the successor organisation to the Strategic Health Authority as defined within Schedule 1 of the 2009 regulations[1].

Under Section 73A(1) of the NHS Act 2006 (As Amended), the Director of Public Health is responsible for all of their Council's duties to take steps to improve the health of the people in its area. Site 'Green Hill G' falls within the Milton Keynes City Council area and our comments are provided in relation to this site and in relation to Chapter 19: Human Health only.

The scoping report identifies and includes air quality, noise, transport (including public rights of way), and socioeconomics, all of which can influence human health. A dedicated human health chapter is also proposed, which we support. The scope for this chapter has identified each of the authorities Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) at 19.3.2, however it is also important that each of the authorities' Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies are also considered. These are statutory documents to be read alongside the JSNAs and are therefore relevant to the ES.

[1] The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

Vicky Head
Director of Public Health
public.health@milton-keynes.gov.uk
Civic, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes MK9 3EJ
www.milton-keynes.gov.uk

We welcome the applicant's commitment at 19.4.8 to engage with public health on their baseline assessment ahead of producing the ES. Table 19.2 presents a range of indicators that would be used to assess receptor sensitivity. It would be helpful to be upfront with exactly which indicators are going to be used to form this assessment and where these will be drawn from. Perhaps when the applicant is engaging with Public Health teams these can be agreed at this stage.

It will be important to sensitively consider the mental health and mental wellbeing implications of the proposed development on existing resident population. We support that this is scoped into the assessment.

Separately Bedford Borough Council is identified in the scope given the authority's boundary is adjacent to 'Green Hill G'. Please be advised that Public Health is a shared service for Milton Keynes City as well as Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire with a shared statutory Director of Public Health.

If you or the applicant wishes to discuss this response or human health matters in relation to Bedford or Milton Keynes please contact Public Health at Milton Keynes City Council in the first instance.

Please note that this response is provided solely from Public Health without prejudice to any other response(s) from Milton Keynes City Council.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Sam Smith
Public Health Principal (Healthy Places).
For and on behalf of Vicky Head, Director of Public Health.
Milton Keynes City Council.

[redacted]

From: Rosemary Smart [redacted]
Sent: 15 August 2024 11:14
To: Green Hill Solar
Subject: Re: EN010170 - Green Hill Solar Farm - EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Your Reference: EN010170-000015

Dear Sir/Madam

Further to your email of 25th July 2024, I am responding on behalf of Earls Barton Parish Council to the scoping consultation on the above numbered application by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited.

In terms of our response, we are given 2 options; either (a) "No comments" or (b) "inform the Planning Inspector of the information you consider should be provided in the Environmental Statement". We respond with the second option, on the understanding that this means: any information which the applicant has requested to be 'scoped out' of the Environmental Impact Assessment, as well as any other relevant information not included in the scoping request.

The main focus of our response is Green Hill E, which borders the parish boundary of Earls Barton, and any cabling routes planned. Earls Barton Parish Council would request that anything affecting the A4500, The Wickets estate or the parish of Earls Barton as a whole is scoped into the report. This includes, but is not limited to:

- transport and access - including impact on the condition of existing roads and road safety
- ecology and biodiversity
- glint and glare
- landscape and visual impact
- noise pollution and vibration
- air pollution/quality
- socio-economics, tourism and recreation
- human health and wellbeing
- loss of agricultural land
- any and all cabling routes that run through the parish of Earls Barton.

I hope this clarifies our position.

Kind regards

Rosemary Smart - BA (Hons)
Clerk to Earls Barton Parish Council
[redacted]

www.earlsbarton.gov.uk

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

Our ref: XA/2024/100129/01
Your ref: EN010170

Date: 22 August 2023

Dear Alison,

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCOPING OPINION CONSULTATION. GREEN HILL SOLAR FARM.

Thank you for your consultation on the 'Green Hill Solar Farm EIA Scoping Report Revision A' prepared by Lanpro Services, dated July 2024. We have reviewed this report and have the following advice:

Our comments are particularly in relevance to Chapter 2: Methodology; Chapter 8: Ecology and Biodiversity; Chapter 9: Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage; and Chapter 10: Ground Conditions and Contamination.

Water Resources

The EIA Scoping report fails to cover the consumptive use of water in scoping the potential impacts to the environment. We expect the applicant to scope in a section on 'Water Resources' or to see this covered in Chapter 9: Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage. This is in line with the 'Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)' paragraph 5.16.7 which advises that the Environmental Statement (ES) should describe "*existing water resources affected by the proposed project and the impacts of the proposed project on water resources, noting any relevant existing abstraction rates, proposed new abstraction rates and proposed changes to abstraction rates (including any impact on or use of mains supplies and reference to Abstraction Licensing Strategies) and also demonstrate how proposals minimise the use of water resources and water consumption in the first instance"*.

Consumptive water use

We recommend early engagement with water companies for any or potable or non-potable water supplies required from the Water Undertaker, as this region is particularly water scarce and supply for non-potable purposes may not be guaranteed.

From the description of the construction and operation phases of the proposal, and from details in other chapters reviewed, we note a number of activities which can require substantial quantities of water. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- dust suppression techniques and Heavy Goods Vehicle(HGV) or other machinery wheel wash;

- on-site concrete batching;
- the use of water in a bentonite clay mix for horizontal directional drilling.

If the quantity of water required for these combined purposes is greater than 20m3 per day, then an abstraction licence will be required. The water demands during construction should not be underestimated, as a licence may only be issued with significant restrictions, which may affect design or approaches to construction. For example, abstraction from surface water in the Nene catchment is likely to be restricted to high flows (more information can be found in the Abstraction Licensing Strategy for the catchment). In this case, consideration of on-site storage of water may buffer demands during periods of low/medium flow, when direct access to water is not permitted.

Dewatering

If dewatering is required for the construction of substation compounds; Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) or for the process of open trench below ground cable corridor construction, this will also require an abstraction licence if it doesn't meet the criteria for exemption in *The Water Abstraction and Impounding (Exemptions) Regulations 2017 Section 5: Small scale dewatering in the course of building or engineering works*. It may also require a discharge permit if it falls outside of our *regulatory position statement for de-watering discharges*.

Consumptive abstraction from Groundwater may not be available. If the dewatering activity can be demonstrated to be discharged to the same source of supply without intervening use (i.e. is non-consumptive), this will increase the likelihood of a licence being granted.

We recommend that a simple 'Water resources Assessment' be undertaken at the EIA stage for consumptive, and non-consumptive demands, which identifies sources of supply (which also includes that from water company supply). This will help to problem solve any initial obstacles early, and help to expedite the permitting process later.

Impacts to other lawful water users

We note that only potable water supply has been considered by the appraisal of potential impacts to existing abstraction. It is not clear as to why abstractions for other purposes have not been considered as receptors in the assessment. There exist a number of abstraction licenses within, or in proximity to, the red line boundary for the cable corridor and the BESS site which also be scoped in.

Water Quality

In general, we are satisfied that the impacts on surface water quality have been scoped in, with the proposed inclusion of a Water Framework Directive Assessment and a Drainage Assessment.

In Section 9.3.1, please include *'The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016'* in the list of regulations. In Section 9.4, please include water quality or WFD status in the baseline conditions.

Section 9.6.11, Table 9.1 proposes using WFD classification to assign the sensitivity/importance of a watercourse. Please note, watercourses not designated under WFD are also susceptible to impacts on water quality, with their sensitivity being determined by their size, flow, and ecology. Information from any site surveys, as well as professional judgement, should also be used when determining the potential sensitivity of a watercourse to water quality impacts.

Flood Risk and modelling

Flood Risk

The proposed development is located across a number of sites, therefore the risk of flooding varies. Overall, we are pleased to see that fluvial and tidal flood risk is scoped in for further assessment in the ES.

The flood zone setting, including a description of the potential surface water flood risk for each of the sites, is set out within the EIA Scoping Report. Due to the risk of flooding at some of the sites, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will be required to support the proposed development. We are pleased to see this acknowledged in paragraph 9.6.15 of the Scoping Report.

The development is stated to have a 60-year lifetime, however in accordance with the *Planning practice guidance* (PPG), in the assessment of flood risk and the impacts of climate change, a 75-year timeframe should be applied. An upper end allowance for the 2080's epoch should also be evaluated as a sensitivity test.

For further information, please see the guidance on undertaking modelling for FRAs available online here: *Using modelling for flood risk assessments - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk*

Please see guidance on assessing climate change for Flood Risk Assessments which can be found here: *Flood risk assessments: climate change allowances - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*.

Built development and potential cable routing will also be subject to the Environmental Permitting Regulations and may require Flood Risk Activity Permits. (Please see advisory section for more information on FRAPs). All development should be set back a minimum of 8 metres from the top of bank of any main river. Guidance on set back from ditches and ordinary watercourses should be sought from other relevant authorities.

Flood Modelling

Section 9.6.13 notes that analysis of flood extents is reliant on the accuracy of the published Environment Agency (EA) Flood Map for Planning, and EA Flood

data. Please note, we do not hold any detailed hydraulic modelling for the ordinary watercourses which bisect the order limits for the development. The Flood Map for Planning for the watercourses which cross the order limits, except for the River Nene and Grendon Brook, is largely based on strategic scale 2d modelling which was undertaken in 2004 using JFlow software. Both the 'Flood Map for Planning' and 'Risk of Flooding from Surface Water' products do not consider the effects of climate change.

Furthermore, it is important to note that some of the ordinary watercourses which bisect the solar panel areas have no associated Flood Zones, due to the small size of their respective catchments (<3km^2). There may be flood risk associated with these watercourses, hence we recommend a generalised 2d modelling used to determine the extent of Flood Zone 2 and 3, where no detailed hydraulic modelling is available. We recommend that further investigation and, where necessary, hydraulic modelling is undertaken for these watercourses, to ensure any risk to the solar panel areas and associated power infrastructure can be properly quantified, considering the impacts of climate change.

Available hydraulic models

We hold the following hydraulic models for watercourses within the vicinity of the order limits. The Grendon Brook hydraulic model (Halrow, 2013) may be of interest for the Battery Energy Storage location and solar panel area F. The Middle Nene hydraulic model (Halcrow, 2013) may be of interest for the Battery Energy Storage Location. Please note, the modelling we hold for the aforementioned watercourses is outdated, therefore it is important to check that any EA modelling data that you do use is suitable for your needs, and representative of current baseline conditions in line with guidance available online here *Using modelling for flood risk assessments - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)

Paragraph 9.4.70 of the Scoping Report acknowledges that the proposed BESS site is largely within flood zone 3, and states that infrastructure will be raised and sequentially located. We are concerned that the proposed BESS site is largely within flood zones 3. Flood risk to critical elements of the site, such as the BESS, should be avoided wherever possible. Any built development within flood zones 2 and 3 will need to quantify loss of floodplain storage and propose suitable compensation for this. We would recommend further consultation on proposed layouts and potential flood mitigation options as the design progresses. Please note that if the BESS is to be in Flood Zone 2 and 3, then it should be designed so that it sits above the 1% (1 in 100) Annual Exceedance Probability plus higher central climate change scenario for the 2080's epoch. An appropriate allowance for freeboard should also be included. The impacts of any loss of floodplain storage should be mitigated for by level for level and volume for volume compensation.

Groundwater and contamination

We have noted several discrepancies in the detailed geological site characterisation of each of the main eight sites informed by the Preliminary Risk Assessment. There are several errors in this data, whereby geological strata, and their corresponding aquifer designation, were not included in the overviews in either the scoping report or Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) (please see **Appendix**). Given the number of errors, we are concerned that there might be other inaccuracies or omissions that have not been identified.

The scoping report does not mention anticipated groundwater levels underlying the site. The PRA only discusses anticipated groundwater levels in isolated areas ("Grendon Land" and Site F). The depth to groundwater across the site could have an impact on foundations and mobilisation of contamination if present. Dewatering may be required where shallow groundwater is present; a permit might be required for this activity. Please see Temporary dewatering from excavations to surface water: RPS 261 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Records of historical boreholes and groundwater depths are freely available from the British Geological Survey (BGS) via their GeoIndex Onshore tool."

Section 10.5.3 suggests that baseline conditions at Site A.2 are likely to be the same as at Site A. These sites are non-contiguous, and the geological setting is different, so this assumption is unfounded.

In addition to the industry best practice guides listed as Section 10.3.1, we advise that these documents are used:

1. The Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection (February 2018): *The Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection (publishing.service.gov.uk)* - this is a useful document that provides an overview of the activities that are acceptable in SPZs
2. Protect groundwater and prevent groundwater pollution (March 2017): *Protect groundwater and prevent groundwater pollution - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

Risks to Groundwater

The report states potential risks to groundwater from all construction works, including installing foundations (for solar panel frames, conversion units and inverters, fencing, substations and BESS) are proposed to be scoped out, and any risks will be managed by using a CEMP. Please note that CEMP only applies to the construction phase.

BESS

BESS fires are a risk to groundwater as it can contain harmful chemicals – both from the batteries that have been burnt, and the chemicals used as fire-suppressants in the water or foam itself. A BESS fire can release lithium, PFAS and hydrofluoric acid,

amongst other hazardous substances into the ground water. As the site is on a Secondary A aquifer (and close to an SSSI and the River Nene), we recommend that the BESS has a pollution control method, such as a sealed drainage strategy, to contain firewater or contaminated surface-waters. This is necessary to contain and manage any fire-fighting effluent, or contaminated surface waters generated by a fire, or other spillages, at the site. We request that the risks to groundwater from fire water during the operational phase be scoped into the EIA.

Section 10.4.90, states that *"there are no licensed groundwater abstractions for potable water within 500 m of Green Hill BESS*". While this is true, there are abstractions for non-potable water, including for agriculture, which are not acknowledged. We expect to see suitable mitigation to prevent any risk to these abstractions.

Historic Landfill sites

We have identified several historic landfill sites within the proposed site area and in close proximity to the development. The PRA considers Sywell Aerodrome, which has been active since 1928, as well as nearby industrial activities and an historical inert waste landfill. This area is underlain by superficial Secondary (undifferentiated) aquifer, and bedrock Secondary A aquifer. The report assumes the cable route will not pass through the known landfill, but justification for this is not given. We recommend the applicant to address the aerodrome and landfill sites with respect to contamination in the scoping report. While the OCEMP Discovery Strategy, discussed in Section 10.8.1, should be sufficient to address the potential risks posed, we cannot rule out the requirement of further investigation in the area, dependent on the final cable route.

Horizontal Directional Drilling

Section 8.3.15 states that horizontal directional drilling may be used at some locations of ecological sensitivity, where traditional trenching methods are not feasible. This work could involve the use of drilling muds, and their use may require a risk assessment and a mitigation strategy, to ensure they do not pose a risk to controlled waters. The proposed use of directional drilling techniques will therefore be assessed with the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR), and the Environmental Statement (ES), which we welcome.

Fisheries, biodiversity and geomorphology

We are pleased to see that this topic has been scoped in for further assessment. We welcome the applicant's ecological enhancement commitments, including efforts to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) targets. As such we recommend the inclusion of a Biodiversity Gain Plan, Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, Invasive and Non-Native Species(INNS) Management Plan and a Bentonite Breakout Plan in the 'Assessment of Impacts' under Section 2.2.53 of the scoping report.

We advise the applicant to consider River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) objectives, Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), WFD mitigation measures/objectives, and Catchment Plans, when developing BNG. We also encourage early BNG engagement throughout the design process to maximise the potential benefits of the proposed development.

We advise liaising with Local Nature Partnerships, Catchment partnerships, and the Nene Rivers Trust when developing BNG. Overall, we encourage the applicant to look at BNG strategically for all solar farms and National Grid projects.

We note that National Implementation for BNG on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects is planned for November 2025. Applicants are therefore encouraged to start considering how BNG will be included in their development proposals, especially those NSIPs likely to submit their DCO application after the implementation date or later.

Further information relating to BNG is linked below:

- Biodiversity Net Gain – GOV.UK
- What you can count towards a development's biodiversity net gain (BNG) – GOV.UK

Under Section 8.2.1, we recommend the inclusion of the following legislation:

1. The Eels (England and Wales) Regulations 2009
2. Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 (SAFFA)
3. Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024
4. Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024

Invertebrates
There is an evidence gap for impacts of solar farms on aquatic invertebrates, however, limited research to-date shows that aquatic invertebrates are attracted to solar panels as a stimulus to induce egg laying. We request the applicant to provide aquatic invertebrate data for the solar array areas, and scope this mechanism for impact in.

Invasive and Non-Native Species
We would advise the applicant to look at mink control within any water vole mitigation plans, and INNS management plan.

Fish
We note that the report does not include our fish survey data. The full understanding of the impacts from construction, operation and decommissioning cannot be fully understood unless adequate fish baseline data is included within the EIA. We recommend the applicant to include fish baseline data for any main watercourses within the site boundary. This should be presented within the PEIR and ES.

This is particularly applicable where open cut trench crossings of linear waterbodies are proposed. Linear waterbodies that are hydrologically linked to main watercourses

may provide suitable habitat for European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) (as well as important refugia for juvenile fish). As such their presence needs to be understood in the baseline in order to inform mitigation.

Lighting, noise and vibration

Impacts on fish from noise and vibration, and artificial lighting during night, as a result of construction and decommissioning activities have not been included in the list of potential impacts. Any artificial lighting near watercourses can interrupt migration and spawning of fish species. Additionally, Sensitive fish species associated with the River Nene could be disturbed from noise and vibration. The EIA should include an assessment on the risk of fish populations within the River Nene and other main watercourses being impacted by such activities. This assessment should also be included in the Noise and Vibration chapter of the PEIR and ES. Mitigation and management of any impacts should be detailed in the CEMP.

Additional advice to the Applicant

Flood risk avoidance – the Sequential Test

Avoiding flood risk through the Sequential Test is the most effective way of addressing flood risk, because it places the least reliance on measures such as flood defences. In line with paragraph 162 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF), development 'should not be allocated or permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding. The sequential approach should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from flooding'.

As the proposal is for a solar farm, which is considered to be 'Essential Infrastructure' as defined in Annex 3 of the NPPF, should the Sequential Test be satisfied, the Applicant must also demonstrate that the Exception Test is passed.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

East Riding of Yorkshire Council have undertaken a Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) which includes local flood risk information to inform the assessment of flood risk for the proposed development. This has not been identified as a source of information within the Scoping Report. The SFRA will also identify any areas of Flood Zone 3b (functional floodplain), which have also not been mentioned within the Scoping Report.

Flood Models

Please be aware that our flood models are not designed to assess third party developments, so the Applicant should not assume that they are suitable for assessing the flood risk associated with the proposal. It is always the Applicant's responsibility to assess the suitability of an existing model on their project. Although our flood modelling is often seen as the 'best available' flood modelling, these are created for our own purposes and usually at a catchment-scale. Although they are

made available for third parties to use, it is up to the Applicant to review the modelling and determine whether it appropriately represents flood risk on a site-specific basis; or whether any updates or modifications need to be made to improve its usefulness in informing the assessment of flood risk. The Applicant should also provide evidence of any modelling checks and subsequent updates carried out and document these in the FRA model reporting.

Flood Risk Activity Permits

Please note that the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 require a flood risk activity permit (FRAP) or exemption to be obtained for any activities which will take place

- On or within 8m of a main river (16 metres if tidal)
- On or within 8m of a flood defence structure or culverted main river (16m if tidal)
- On or within 16m of a sea defence
- Involving quarrying or excavation within 16m of any main river, flood defence (including a remote defence) or culvert
- In the floodplain of a main river if the activity could affect flood flow or storage and potential impacts are not controlled by a planning permission.

If any of the works are likely to require a FRAP under the Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR), we recommend the Applicant deliberates early on whether they are considering the disapplication of the EPR and matters pertaining to FRAPs to be considered as Protective Provisions within the DCO.

Sustainable drainage systems

It is expected that sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) will be provided in new developments wherever this is appropriate. Where infiltration SuDS are to be used for surface run-off from roads, car parking and public or amenity areas, they should:

- be suitably designed
- meet Governments non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems – these standards should be used in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance
- use a SuDS management treatment train – that is, use drainage components in series to achieve a robust surface water management system that does not pose an unacceptable risk of pollution to groundwater

Where infiltration SuDS are proposed for anything other than clean roof drainage in a SPZ1, a hydrogeological risk assessment should be undertaken, to ensure that the system does not pose an unacceptable risk to the source of supply.

See the Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection, position statement G13: *Groundwater protection position statements - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

Pollution prevention
Large construction sites of this nature often cause pollution due to the production of an insufficient CEMP or the failure of contractors to follow the CEMP. To reduce this risk, we recommend ensuring that the Outline CEMP includes pollution prevention measures that can withstand significant heavy rainfall events. Additionally, we recommend the inclusion of monitoring, reporting, and reviewing procedures to ensure the project team and principal contractor have sufficient oversight of employed contractors.

Discharge consents
A water discharge activity permit is required to carry out discharges of sewage and trade effluent. Given the size of the development it is unlikely that the Regulatory Position Statement on *Temporary dewatering from excavations to surface water* can be met and a permit will therefore likely be required to discharge dewatering effluent or surface water run-off generated from areas of exposed soil during construction.

If you don't meet the exemption and require a full abstraction licence you should be aware that some aquifer units may be closed for new consumptive abstractions in this area. *Abstraction licensing strategies (CAMS process) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

Please note that the typical timescale to process a licence application is 9-12 months. The applicant may wish to consider whether a scheme-wide dewatering application rather than individual applications would be beneficial. We suggest talking to our National Permitting Service early in the project planning.

The applicant may also need to consider discharge of groundwater, especially if it is contaminated. More information can be found *here*

Waste
We are pleased to see that the Scoping Report refers to the Construction Code of Practice and CL:AIRE Code of Practice in relation to excavated material and soil arisings. We are pleased to see that a Site Waste Management Plan is being scoped in the ES.

Any waste soil arisings will need to be properly classified, in accordance with Waste Classification Technical Guidance - WM3, and sent to an appropriately permitted facility. If any waste materials are to be imported for use in construction, an environmental permit may be required.

Waste on-site
If materials that are potentially waste are to be used on-site, the applicant will need to ensure they can comply with the exclusion from the Waste Framework Directive (article 2(1) (c)) for the use of, 'uncontaminated soil and other naturally occurring material excavated in the course of construction activities, etc…' in order for the material not to be considered as waste. Meeting these criteria will mean waste permitting requirements do not apply.

Where the applicant cannot meet the criteria, they will be required to obtain the appropriate waste permit or exemption from us. Please be aware that changes to the use of exemptions are expected to be implemented in 2024.

A deposit of waste to land will either be a disposal or a recovery activity. The legal test for recovery is set out in Article 3(15) of the Waste Framework Directive as “any operation the principal result of which is waste serving a useful purpose by replacing other materials which would otherwise have been used to fulfil a particular function, or waste being prepared to fulfil that function, in the plant or in the wider economy.”

We have produced guidance on the recovery test which can be viewed here

You can find more information on the Waste Framework Directive here: *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-permitting-guidance-the-waste-framework-directive*

More information on the definition of waste can be found here: *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/legal-definition-of-waste-guidance*

More information on the use of waste in exempt activities can be found here: *https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/waste-exemptions-using-waste*

Non-waste activities are not regulated by us (i.e. activities carried out under the CL:ARE Code of Practice). However, you will need to decide if materials meet End of Waste or By-products criteria (as defined by the Waste Framework Directive).

This voluntary Code of Practice provides a framework for determining whether or not excavated material arising from site during remediation and/or land development works are waste.

Developers should ensure that all contaminated materials are adequately characterised both chemically and physically, and that the permitting status of any proposed on site operations are clear. If in doubt, the Environment Agency should be contacted for advice at an early stage to avoid any delays.

The Environment Agency recommends that developers should refer to our:

- Position statement on the Definition of Waste: Development Industry Code of Practice and;
- for further guidance Environment Agency - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Waste off-site

The Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations 1991 for dealing with waste materials are applicable to any off-site movements of wastes. The code of practice applies to applicants if they produce, carry, keep, dispose of, treat, import, or have control of waste in England or Wales.

The law requires anyone dealing with waste to keep it safe and make sure it’s dealt with responsibly and only given to businesses authorised to take it. The code of

practice can be found here: *https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/506917/waste-duty-care-code-practice-2016.pdf*.

If the Applicant needs to register as a carrier of waste, they should follow the instructions here: *https://www.gov.uk/register-as-a-waste-carrier-broker-or-dealer-wales*

Where a development involves any significant construction or related activities, we would recommend using a management and reporting system to minimise and track the fate of construction wastes, such as that set out in PAS402: 2013, or an appropriate equivalent assurance methodology. This should ensure that any waste contractors employed are suitably responsible in ensuring waste only goes to legitimate destinations.

Contaminated soil that is, or must be disposed of, is waste. Therefore, its handling, transport, treatment and disposal is subject to waste management legislation, which includes:

- Duty of Care Regulations 1991
- Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2005
- Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010
- The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011

Developers should ensure that all contaminated materials are adequately characterised both chemically and physically in line with British Standards BS EN 14899:2005 'Characterisation of Waste - Sampling of Waste Materials - Framework for the Preparation and Application of a Sampling Plan' and that the permitting status of any proposed treatment or disposal activity is clear. If in doubt, the applicant should contact us for advice at an early stage to avoid any delays.

If the total quantity of waste material to be produced at or taken off site is hazardous waste and is 500kg or greater in any 12-month period, the developer will need to register with us as a hazardous waste producer. Refer to our website at *www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency* for more information.

Bats

Please note more research is necessary to understand the impact of solar farms on bats commuting and foraging. Research to-date has shown that solar arrays can deter species that forage along field edges, as well as those that favour foraging in open habitat.

Battery Storage

Battery storage falls within the scope of the UK’s producer responsibility regime for batteries and other waste legislation. Operators of battery storage facilities should be aware of the Producer Responsibility Regulations. When a battery within a battery storage unit ceases to operate, it will need to be removed from the site and dealt with

in compliance with waste legislation. The party discarding the battery will have a waste duty of care under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to ensure that this takes place. The Waste Batteries and Accumulators Regulations 2009 also apply.

We trust this advice is useful.

Yours faithfully,

Miss Nisa Vishwanath
Planning Specialist – National Infrastructure Team
e-mail: NIteam@environment-agency.gov.uk

Appendix A

10.4.6 Also Alluvium in the centre
10.4.7 Also Rutland Formation (Mudstone) (east) and Stamford Member (Sandstone and Siltstone, Interbedded) (centre)
10.4.9 Alluvium is Secondary A
10.4.10 Rutland Mudstone is Secondary B, Stamford Member is Secondary A
10.4.18 Also small area of Glaciofluvial deposits in south
10.4.19 Also small area of Northampton Sand Formation (Ooidal Ironstone)
10.4.20 Glaciofluvial is Secondary A
10.4.21 Ironstone is Secondary A
10.4.39 Also Bozeat Till
10.4.40 Also Whitby Mudstone Formation (mudstone)
10.4.41 Bozeat Till is Unproductive
10.4.42 Whitby Mudstone is Unproductive
10.4.48 Also Alluvium
10.4.50 Alluvium is Secondary A
10.4.58 Does not mention the historical landfill site immediately adjacent to eastern site boundary (outside site)
10.4.63 Also Kellaways Formation (Sandstone, Siltstone and Mudstone)
10.4.65 Kellaways is Secondary B
10.4.72 Doesn't mention historical landfill off-site near southeast corner 10.4.74 States no superificial in the south, but there is Oadby Member and a thin strip of Alluvium
10.4.77 Part of southern Oadby Member is Secondary A. Alluvium is Secondary A
10.4.78 Cornbrash is both Secondary A and Secondary B (not just Secondary B as stated)
10.4.79 Whole of Site G is within a Drinking Water Protection – Catchment [Ouse (Newport Pagnell to Roxton)]
10.4.90 Does not acknowledge abstractions for non-potable water - nearest is 468m north of site boundary (3x licenced abstractions for washing and dust suppression). Impact on abstraction must be considered, both contamination and groundwater flow
10.4.93 Is there a risk of contamination from the substation?
10.4.94 Also Bozeat Till
10.4.95 There is no mention of Made Ground, but based on site history I would expect some to be present
10.4.96 Bozeat Till is Unproductive
10.4.99 Does not acknowledge groundwater abstractions for non-potable water - these must also be protected and not contaminated
10.4.103 Several historical landfill sites within the site boundary are not acknowledged

[redacted]

From: Squire, Sandra [redacted]
Sent: 22 August 2024 12:53
To: Green Hill Solar
Subject: Green Hill Solar - EIA Scoping Consultation

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Thank you for consulting the Forestry Commission on this proposal.

As the Governments Forestry Experts, we endeavour to provide relevant information to enable the project to reduce any impact on irreplaceable habitat such as ancient semi natural woodland as well as other woodland.

We note there are several areas of Ancient Woodland directly adjacent to some of the site areas and the cable search areas, including Sywell Wood, Horn Wood, Threeshire Wood, Nunn Wood and Cold Oak Copse.

Ancient woodlands are an irreplaceable habitat. They have great value because they have a long history of woodland cover, being continuously wooded since at least 1600AD with many features remaining undisturbed. This applies equally to Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS).

We also note that 16 veteran trees and 1 ancient tree have been identified within the proposed site area.

Section 5.4.32 of EN-1 – The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy states:

"*Applicants should include measures to mitigate fully the direct and indirect effects of development on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees or other irreplaceable habitats during both the construction and operational phases"*

Section 5.4.53 goes on to state:

"*The Secretary of State should not grant development consent for any development that would result in the loss or deterioration of any irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland, and ancient and veteran trees unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists"*

We would particularly refer you to further technical information set out in Natural England and Forestry Commission's Standing Advice on Ancient Woodland – plus supporting Assessment Guide and "Keepers of Time" – Ancient and Native Woodland and Trees Policy in England.

The Standing Advice states that proposals should have a buffer zone of **at least** 15m from the boundary of ancient woodlands to avoid root damage which can result in loss or deterioration of the woodland. Where assessment shows impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, you're likely to need a larger buffer zone. For example, the effect of air pollution from development that can result from a significant increase in traffic.

There are also several areas of Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland within both the site areas and the cable search area. Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodlands are on the National Forest Inventory and the Priority Habitat Inventory (England).

They were recognized under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan as being the most threatened, requiring conservation action. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan has now been superseded but this priority status remains under the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006. (NERC) Sect 40 "Duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity" and Sect 41 – "List of habitats and species of principle importance in England".

Fragmentation is one of the greatest threats to lowland mixed deciduous woodland. Woodlands can suffer loss or deterioration from nearby development through damage to soils, roots and vegetation and changes to drainage and air pollution from an increase in traffic or dust, particularly during the construction phase of a development.

For any woodland within the development boundary, land required for temporary use or land where rights are required for the diversion of utilities, the Root Protection Zone must be taken into consideration. The Root Protection Zone (as specified in British Standard 5837) is there to protect the roots of trees, which often spread out further than the tree canopy. Protection measures include taking care not to cut tree roots (e.g., by trenching) or causing soil compaction around trees (e.g., through vehicle movements or stacking heavy equipment) or contamination from poisons (e.g., site stored fuel or chemicals) and fencing off these areas to prevent unintended incursions into the root protection zone.

A scheme that bisects any woodland will not only result in significant loss of woodland cover but will also reduce ecological value and natural heritage impacts due to habitat fragmentation, and have a huge negative impact on the ability of the biodiversity (flora and fauna) to respond to the impacts of climate change. Woodland also provides habitat for a range of Section 41 Priority Species including all bats. Therefore, measures should be taken to avoid illuminating any woodland to avoid any disturbance to wildlife, this should be detailed in any lighting strategy.

It is expected that there will be a thorough assessment of any loss of all trees and woodlands within the project boundary and the development of mitigation measures to minimise any risk of net deforestation because of the scheme.

Hedgerows, individual trees and woodlands within a development site should also be considered in terms of their overall connectivity between woodlands affected by the development. Perhaps with the creation of some larger woodland blocks and hedgerow/hedgerow trees possibly between the existing woodland blocks on site, to ensure maximum gains to increase habitat connectivity and benefit biodiversity across the whole site, not solely in specific areas or just to be used as screening.

With the Government aspiration to increase tree and canopy cover to 16.5% of land area in England by 2050. The Forestry Commission is seeking to ensure that tree planting is a consideration in <u>every</u> development not just as compensation for loss. However, there are a number of issues that need to be considered when proposing significant planting schemes:

- Biosecurity of all planting stock needs to be considered.
- Woodlands need to be climate, pest and disease resilient.
- Maximise the ecosystem services benefits of all new woodland wherever possible (flood reduction)
- Planting contributes to a 'resilient treescape' by maximising connectivity across the landscape.
- Plans are in place to ensure long term management and maintenance of woodland.

Access will also need to be considered for the future management of both existing and any proposed new woodland planting.

We hope these comments have been useful to you. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes

Sandra

[redacted]

Local Partnership Advisor
East & East Midlands

[redacted]

Subscribe to our newsletter to be the first to hear about the latest information, advice, and news from the Forestry Commission

EN010170 - Green Hill Solar Farm - EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation

Grendon Parish Council feedback

Please see below feedback following receipt of the above scoping documentation on 27/07/24.

In addition to specific comments documented below for relevant sections of the scoping documentation, we also note the following:

- The timeline for review of a document of this scale and detail was insufficient, particularly when issued at a time of year when many Parish Councils do not convene.

Introduction

Section 1.5 Page 13 - Statutory consultees: references Gen Kitchen MP for Wellingborough. With boundary changes at the last general election, the new MPs for each area should be consulted.

The Site and its Wider Context

Section 3.4 Page 58 - Cable Route Search area: the EIA should consider how the River Nene will be impacted, particularly if the proposed approach of tunnelling under the Nene is determined to be the desired approach. This should consider users of the Nene, road networks and surrounding ecology.

Scheme Description

Section 4.3.24 Page 71 - Site access: This scope needs expanding to consider the routes that site traffic will use.

Section 4.4.4 Page 73 - Construction activities: given that the scoping document outlines that activities may be required outside of the documented times, we would request that the EIA considers/documents impacts for the full range of hours that may be utilised.

Section 4.4.12 Page 73 - Operation (noise): Full impact assessment to understand extent and level of noise that will be generated both during construction and ongoing operation of the facility (substation, BESS and movement of panels).

Legislative Context and Energy Policy

Section 5.3.4 Page 75 - Regulation: please can it be clarified if the scope will include consideration of alternate alternative locations.

Climate Change

The scoping document does not include any detail on the wider construction impacts, i.e.carbon footprint/sustainability/wider environmental credentials for sourcing of the solar panels/construction materials.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Section 7.1.7 Page 89 - Study Areas: given local topography we do not regard the proposed study areas as sufficient and would request that these are expanded.

Section 7.1.21 Page 90 - Visual receptors: scope should consider all aspects of visual impact, both buildings, residences, but also broader impacts including footpaths and road networks.

Section 7.2.7/8 Page 91 - Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) + Glint and Glare: we would request that the scope is expanded to understand impact on all properties (not just those with the largest magnitude of effect).

Section 7.2.18/19 Page 92 - Cumulative landscape and visual effects: request that this impact includes existing developments that are already established in the local area (i.e. in addition to the proposed sites for the Greenhill development).

Section 7.4.3 Page 94 - Preliminary Landscape Baseline: the description that views are 'limited to localised short distance views rather than wide-ranging or panoramic' is not accurate for the proposed development area around Grendon. Request that the EIA includes the panoramic/broader impacts across the various sites.

Section 7.7.1 Page 133 (Table 7) - Receptors between 1km and 2km Wider Study Area: we would request that the inscope description includes road users, PRoW users, equestrian and walkers.

Section 7.7.7 Page 134 - Photomontages: request that scope includes visual locations where significant effects are not predicted to ensure a full understanding of impact is obtained.

Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage

Section 9.4.50/58 Page 178/9 - Fluvial Flood Risk Green Hill F and G: Commentary does not accurately capture flood risk/instances in these zones. Full flood risk impact assessment requirement to ensure that recent instances of flooding are captured and considered within the EIA.

Ground Conditions and Contaminations

Table 10.4 Page 200-201 - Conclusions on scoping: Risks/impacts associated with "Spillages or leakages of fuels and chemicals. Leaching of chemicals from faulty battery incidents (fire damage, ash deposition and extinguishing waters)" are listed as out of scope. We would request that these are moved to in scope given the risks to both communities and the local environment.

Glint and Glare

Section 15.4.13/16 Page 252 - Assessment of Sensitivity: We do not believe that Local roads should be considered to be of low sensitivity and would request that this is recategorised to “Medium”.

Section 15.4.19/20 Page 253 PRoW: We would regard PRoW users as more than “low” sensitivity, particularly users that may not easily be able to use alternate PRoW.

Section 15.4.22/24 Page 253 - Horse Facilities: the sensitivity is more than “low”. EIA needs to assess full density of users across the sites, risks to safety and potential PRoW impacts/change of use.

Section 15.4.60/61 Page 258 - Roads: Given the narrow nature of the local roads and potential increased risks from any glint or glare, we would request the EIA scope is expanded to include all roads with any visual impact from the proposed sites.

Section 15.4.66/67 Page 260 - PRoW and Horse Facilities (Glint and Glare): as per previous comments we do not believe that ‘Low sensitivity’ is the correct categorisation and would request that technical modelling for both groups is in scope.

Electromagnetic Fields

Section 16.5.3 Page 266 - Radiation from the Substation and BESS: we would request a full impact assessment to understand the impact for residential dwellings at varying distances from the sites, both those closest to the sites and more broadly (given prevailing winds).

Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation

Section 18.5.2 Page 297 - Impacts on property values and crime: given the limited experience with developments of this scale we do not believe the impact is clearly understood, and would request that this is included in the scope.

Agricultural Circumstances

Section 21.5.2 Page 333 - BMV Land: given the size of the proposed development (c1200ha) is 100ha of BMV land correct? We request that this is reviewed to confirm accuracy.

We would also request that the loss of this arable land is assessed in relation to broader environmental needs and longer term impacts on our communities, e.g. food security.

Other Environmental Matters

Section 22.4.5 Page 337 - Scoping out from ES: we would request that major accidents or incidents are included in the ES. This is critical for the BESS

development, which has potentially severe implications for local communities if an event occurs.

Cumulative Effects

The proposed development will link communities in a way that has not been completed (or assessed) before. We therefore request that potential impacts associated with coalescence need to be factored into this assessment.

Section 23.3.2 Page 344 - other development: we would request that the development area/radius is increased from the proposed 5km to 10km. This is to ensure that existing solar, wind turbines and other developments will be taken into account (and ensure an accurate view on cumulative impact is obtained).

This should also include the cumulative impacts of wider policies both in flight/or proposed within the relevant constituencies e.g. warehousing, house building.

Summary

Section 24.2 Page 347 - Summary of Scoping: we request the following items be moved to in scope:

- Ground Conditions and contaminants: all items currently listed as out of scope), Glint and Glare (PRoW, Horse Facilities).
- Electromagnetic fields: Impacts arising from the BESS, substations, transformers and PV inverters for the Scheme during Construction, Operation and Decommissioning.
- Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation and Human Health: Specific matters (property value and Crime).
- Human Health: Bio-Physical Environment - Radiation.
- Other Environmental Matters: Potential Accidents and Disasters; Telecommunications Utilities and Television Receptors.

Environmental Services
Operations Group 3
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN
Email: greenhill@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

CEMHD - Land Use Planning,
NSIP Consultations,
Building 1.2, Redgrave Court
Merton Road, Bootle,
Merseyside L20 7HS.
NSIP.applications@hse.gov.uk

Date: 13/08/2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

PROPOSED GREEN HILL SOLAR FARM PROJECT
PROPOSAL BY GREEN HILL SOLAR FARM LIMITED
INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017 (AS AMENDED) REGULATIONS 10 AND 11

Thank you for your email on 25/07/2024 regarding the information to be provided in an environmental statement relating to the above project.

HSE's land use planning advice:

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

According to HSE's records, the proposed DCO application boundary for this Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project is within the consultation zones of a major accident hazard site ['MAHS'] and three major accident hazard pipelines ['MAHP']. This is based on the areas shown as 'Area for Solar Panels and Associated Development' and the 'Cable Route Search Area' shown across Appendix 3 and 4 on PDF pages 6 to 16 in the EIA Scoping Report July 2024 (hereafter referred to as 'Scoping Report') [downloaded from: infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010170/EN010170-000018-GHSF - Scoping Report Appendices (Part 1 of 8).pdf] and the GIS files provided on 08/08/2024 (P3535_LPR_ZZ_XX_M2_Z_PRJ_0194_ScopingOpinionMerge.zip).

HSE's records indicate that the major accident hazard site is within the 'Cable Route Search Area – North'. The major accident hazard site is:

- Coleman UK Plc, Holcot Land, Sywell, NN6 0BN, HSE reference 0306

HSE's records indicate that major accident hazard pipelines are in the vicinity of 'Green Hill Area E' and the 'Cable Route Search Area – North'. The pipelines, which are operated by Cadent Gas Ltd, are:

- Stretton Lane / Wootton; HSE ref. number 6933, Transco ref.: 1207
- Mears Ashby / Wellingborough; HSE ref. number 6934, Transco ref.: 1208
- Mears Ashby / Harpole; HSE ref. number 6935, Transco ref.: 1209

The Applicant should contact the above operator to verify the above and to inform an assessment of whether or not the proposed development is vulnerable to a possible major accident. There are three particular reasons for this:

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

HSE's Land Use Planning advice is dependent on the location of areas where people may be present [HSE: Land use planning - HSE's land use planning methodology]. Based on the information in the EIA Scoping Main Report dated July 2024 it is unlikely that HSE would advise against the development.
Please note that the advice is based on HSE's existing policy for providing land-use planning advice and the information which has been provided. HSE's advice in response to a subsequent planning application may differ should HSE's policy or the scope of the development change by the time the Development Consent Order application is submitted.

Would Hazardous Substances Consent be needed?

Hazard classification is relevant to the potential for accidents. Hazardous substances planning consent is required to store or use any of the Categories of Substances or Named Hazardous Substances set out in Schedule 1 of The Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations 2015 as amended, if those hazardous substances will be present on, over or under the land at or above the controlled quantities. There is an "addition rule" in Part 4 of Schedule 1 for below-threshold substances.
Based on the EIA Scoping Report July 2024, it is not clear whether the applicant has considered the hazard classification of any chemicals that are proposed to be present at the development. This may be because there are no in-scope hazardous substances. If hazardous substances planning consent is required, please consult the relevant Hazardous Substance Authority (usually the Local Planning Authority) on the application.

Consideration of risk assessments

Regulation 5(4) of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 requires the assessment of significant effects to include, where relevant, the expected significant effects arising from the proposed development's vulnerability to major accidents. HSE's role in NSIPs is summarised in Advice Note 11 "working with public bodies in the infrastructure planning process" Annex G on the Planning Inspectorate's website: Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects - Advice Note Eleven, Annex G: The Health and Safety Executive - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). This document includes consideration of risk assessments under the heading "Risk assessments".
In the Scoping Report it was not clear if there was consideration of risk assessments arising from the development's vulnerability to major accidents (e.g. from the above identified sites and/or pipelines). We would advise this is considered further in line with Advice Note 11 Annex G taking account of the following: *"it may be beneficial for applicants to undertake a risk assessment as early as possible to satisfy themselves that their design and operation will meet the requirements of relevant health and safety legislation as design of the Proposed Development progresses.".*

Explosives sites

Explosives Inspectorates response is no comment to make as there is no HSE Licensed explosive sites in the vicinity of the proposed development.

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

Yours sincerely

CEMHD NSIP Consultation Team

[redacted]

From: James, Hayley [redacted]
Sent: 21 August 2024 15:13
To: Green Hill Solar
Subject: Your Ref: EN010170, Our Ref: PL00795414, Scoping consultation and notification

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: EST

Dear Sir/Madam,

Your Ref: EN010170
Our Ref: PL00795414

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11 Application by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Green Hill Solar Farm (the Proposed Development) Scoping consultation and notification

Historic England Advice

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above referenced EIA scoping report and associated appendices.

Upon reviewing the assessment methodology that has been applied to the scoping report, our observations are as follows.

The study radius for designated assets seems reasonable, however, professional judgment should still be applied to include particularly sensitive/important assets beyond the fixed radius. The search radius for the non-designated assets is best commented upon by the local planning authority's archaeological advisors in this instance.

We would take the opportunity to highlight the need for an approach to setting impact to take in the kinetic views, rather than fixed viewpoints. For a robust approach to settings impact assessment, we refer you to our published guidance at https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/heag180-gpa3-setting-heritage-assets/.
Photomontages or visualisations would be helpful to aid the understanding of the impact to the setting of the designated and non-designated heritage assets.
The above-mentioned photomontages or visualisations, plus further clarifications on what assets have been scoped out with this approach, would be beneficial in appraising this EIA scoping report.

Without prejudice to any other assets which may be highlighted through the EIA process, we would also draw attention to the concentration of scheduled monuments around Walgrave, including Walgrave moated site (NHLE: 1011036) and Abandoned areas of Walgrave Medieval village (NHLE: 1418583). Additionally the Grade 1 listed Church of St Mary and All Saints (NHLE: 1045863) in Holcot, as well as the Meers Ashby, Ecton, Earls Barton, Grendon, Easton Maudit and Sywell conservation areas, including the designated built heritage assets within them. Furthermore Castle Ashby Registered Park and Garden should be carefully considered for setting impact also.
Of note for consideration is also the landscape interaction of various designated assets with the River Nene, a careful appraisal of impact to setting contribution made by the relationship with the river, and other landscape features is recommended.

Furthermore, we would also take the opportunity to highlight the relevance of our guidance on deposit modelling, which can be found at Deposit Modelling and Archaeology | Historic England, which should be applied alongside our guidance on Planning and Archaeology, which can be found at HEAN 17 Planning and Archaeology, (historicengland.org.uk).

In order to effectively reduce risk to archaeological remains through design and mitigation, an iterative approach to field evaluation should be applied, including but not restricted to Trial trench evaluation, a strategy for which should be developed in consultation with the Local Planning Authority.
Certain classes of asset such as flint scatters and military remains will require bespoke approach. Additionally, any work within the scheduled area will require consultation with Historic England and the granting of consent.

Kind regards,

Hayley James
Inspector of Ancient Monuments
Development Advice | Midlands Region
Historic England | The Foundry | 82 Granville Street | Birmingham | B1 2LH
[redacted]

Holcot Parish Council

Clerk: Mrs. Ruby Cole
32 Old Road
Walgrave
Northampton
NN6 9QW

[redacted]

E-mail: [redacted]
Website: www.holcotvillage.co.uk

20th August 2024

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: EN010170 - Green Hill Solar Farm - EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation

Your ref: EN010170-000015

As per your letter dated 25th July 2024 addressed to us as consultees, we are writing to provide information that is to be considered under the Environmental Statement relating to the proposed development above.

We note that the Applicant accepts that the project constitutes "EIA development" within the meaning of regulation 3 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) ("the Regulations"), "by virtue of factors such as its nature, size and location" and that a DCO application must therefore be accompanied by an Environmental Statement ("ES") (page 11, paras 1.2.2 - 1.2.4 of the Scoping Report)

In terms of our response we are given 2 options: either (a) 'No comments'; or, (b) 'inform the PI of the information you consider should be provided in the ES'.

- We respond with the second option, on the understanding that this means: any information which the applicant has requested to be 'scoped out' of the EIA, as well as any other relevant information not included in the scoping request.
- In responding we have taken guidance from the EIA Regulations. Planning guidance also states: "*Applicants should avoid submitting requests with multiple and varied design and layout options. However, if this cannot be avoided and options remain under consideration*

(for example a number of route corridors associated with a proposed linear development), Applicants should be aware that this may affect the ability of the Planning Inspectorate and consultation bodies to provide detailed comments. In addition, should a high level of uncertainty remain around key design elements of the Proposed Development this is likely to limit the Planning Inspectorate's ability to agree to scope out aspects/ matters to enable the refinement of the ES."

- Our focus is the site Green Hill B near the village of Holcot.

We consider that, contrary to the "Scoping Report" ("SR") which accompanies the application for a scoping opinion, the following information should be provided and addressed in the ES.

1. The SR states (page 24, para 2.2.59) that: "the ES will include a chapter setting out the alternatives considered and the main reasons for selecting the chosen option. The chapter will focus on the following aspects of option selection:

- Site selection.
- Alternative technologies.
- The layout of the Scheme.
- Cable Corridor options.
- The location of supporting infrastructure."

- (i) Having regard to paragraph 2 of Schedule 4 of the Regulations, the "description of reasonable alternatives" should include, inter alia, location, scale and size.

- (ii) The main reasons for selecting the chosen option should also include "a comparison of the environmental effects" of the options.

(It is noted, in this regard, that the SR acknowledges (page 326, para 21.3.14) that it is not known whether the development of Sites A-F would involve development on Grade 3a agricultural land, in addition to Grade 2 land - both Grade 2 and Grade 3a land of course constituting "best and most versatile" agricultural land - because an agricultural survey to determine the sub-classification of the Grade 3 land had not been undertaken. Site selection appears therefore to have been determined contrary to Government advice in the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) that "low and medium grade agricultural land should where possible be sought".

2. Page 16, para 2.2.14 of the SR refers to an "operational phase" of "up to 60 years".

- (i) this is longer than anticipated by the relevant NPS (40 years) which, it is understood, is the typical upper limit (EN-3, para 2.10.65) and needs to be justified and the likely significant environmental effects of the whole period, and separately the additional 20 years, should be assessed in the ES.

- (ii) by reference to page 16, para 2.2.12, 60 years clearly falls within the category "long term" ("lasting more than 5 years") (or more than 10 years for LVIA: para 7.7.3) and cannot sensibly and reasonably said to be temporary.

- (iii) the assessment should therefore be carried out on the basis that the development would, to all intents and purposes, be permanent; not only because 60 years generally represents the entire span of adulthood (or 2 generations) but also because paragraph 163 c) of the NPPF (December 2023) states that: "in the case of applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site, and approve the proposal if its impacts are or can be made acceptable."

3. The proposed "assessment scenarios" (page 17, para 2.2.16 of the SR) include "Construction 2027-2029" and "Operation Year 1 2029" (from Q3).

- No documentary evidence has been provided (e.g. a copy of any relevant, redacted agreement) to demonstrate that a connection to the grid etc would be achieved by 2029.
- Unless and until this documentary evidence be provided, alternative, later "assessment scenario" years should be included in the ES.

4. Page 17, para 2.2.16 of the SR also refers to a decommissioning year of 2089 but there is no reference to any financial bond being proposed to be put in place to ensure that the cost of decommissioning would be met.

- In the absence of a bond, an assessment of likely significant environmental effects only up to 2089 cannot be assumed to suffice.

5. Paragraph 2.2.44 Page 21 This paragraph discusses 'apportionment' of mitigation. The costs of the Applicant's development are unlikely to be borne by existing developments where EIA has already been completed, and should not be borne by the public purse. The Planning Inspectorate should consider how they ensure the rigour that the Applicant puts into developing mitigation proposals (without avoiding costs) and how the report is made realistic in this respect.

6. The titles to the appendices to the SR, as given online, are unhelpful, making it very difficult to find relevant information, e.g. Figures to Chapter 12 – were only eventually found in Part 8 of 8 of the Appendices. Similarly, e.g. the Appendix to Chapter 9 is to be found in Part 2 of 8 of the Appendices. The signposting is unacceptably poor and must be considerably improved in the ES.

(The SR documents have also not been uploaded (presumably by PINS staff) onto the website in sequential order. This does not assist members of the public.)

7. The SR states that there has been a meeting with Gen Kitchen MP for Wellingborough (page 13, para 1.5.1) but makes no reference to meetings with the MP for Daventry constituency (which includes directly affected land within West Northants Council's area) – formerly the Right Hon. Chris Heaton-Harris, now Stuart Andrew MP; nor to the MP for that part of the Milton Keynes' constituency in which part of the proposed project would fall (page 10, para 1.1.9). We believe that the MP's for every impacted constituency should be consulted.

8. Page 20 2.2.39

These paragraphs discuss cumulative impacts. There are two aspects of this analysis necessary:

- The cumulative aspects of the Proposal itself. – for instance, considering the cumulative impact of each facet of the analysis, and also the impact once all facets are considered as a whole.
- The impacts as described in the paragraphs when taken with other approved developments, again against each facet.

Paragraph 23.1.3 on page 343 refers to this analysis in part. However subsequent paragraphs imply that cumulative impact will only be assessed where a facet has a significant impact at a micro-level. Of course, whilst taken alone a facet might have perceived minimal impact, only when taken with other impacts will its individual impact be exacerbated. The Applicant should consider this in their analysis, so that all impacts are taken as a whole, however minor they may appear on an individual basis.

9. We are concerned regarding the coalescence of the proposals with other proposals in the area at NNSUE (Overstone Leys etc) and in the West Northants Council Regulation 18 Local Plan, effectively eliminating the rural element which was and is the main concern of our Parishioners. This is allied to Northamptonshire in general being over-developed with the proposed Solar Farm, HS2, Warehousing Parks, the dualling of the A43, housebuilding etc.

At a very local level, the Sywell Road through Holcot is the *de facto* northern ring road for Northampton and whilst this road is classified by the Applicant as 'a local road' per the definition, it should be included in all road-related assessments as a significant route. (15.4.62 Page 258)

10. For Green Hill B, viewpoints should also be included for Grange Farm and Rectory Farm to the south (off the A43), and for all residential properties on Sywell road to the North. (Table 7.2 Page 128)

11. Viewpoints should be included for Grange Farm and Rectory Farm to the south (off of the A43), and for all residential properties on Sywell Road to the North. (Table 7.2 Page 128)

12. Photomontages from visual locations where significant effects are not predicted should be included. (7.7.7 Page 135)

13. Chapter 18 does not propose assessment of the non-economic impacts on people's lives from a major development of this nature (eg; rurality – people live in rural settings mostly through choice). Assessment of this nature should be included. (Chapter 18 Page 288)

14. Pages 200-201, Table 10.4 of the SR (ground contamination) proposes to exclude matters which should, in our view, be included in the ES. Ditto pages 349 - 350, Table 24.1 (topics proposed to be scoped out) (see further below)

Further, with reference to Table 10.4,

- page 351 likely significant noise and vibration effects related to the operation of the BESS should be assessed.

- page 351 glint and glare – the likely significant effects on public rights of way used by those on horseback (and equestrian facilities), plus the two nearby Airfields in particular Sywell Aerodrome but also Pitsford should be assessed. Sywell has significant air traffic movements making the potential for glare a major safety issue.
- page 351 likely significant effects from electromagnetic fields and ionising radiation arising from BESS, substations, transformers and PV inverters during operation should be assessed.
- pages 351-352 human health – community safety impacts from risk of fire and contamination (and radiation) should be assessed (see further below).
- page 352 arboriculture – likely significant effects on trees in Sites A-G and BESS should be assessed (see further below).
- page 352 other environmental matters – likely significant effects of light pollution, potential accidents and disasters should be assessed. (Light pollution, moreover, should, we consider, be the subject of a separate chapter and not simply referred to, without detailed assessment, in the L&V chapter.

With reference to the foregoing, we feel that

- the <u>uncertainty</u> around the siting (and number) of BESS and the associated transformers of differing sizes in the scoping report is unacceptable.

    - In the context of the local rural environment these are large and potentially hazardous installations requiring an extensive industrial setting.
    - With reference to the guidance for applicants quoted above, we regard this as 'a high level of uncertainty… around key design elements of the Proposed Development'.
    - Therefore, we feel it is unreasonable to scope out any risk of 'ground contamination …spillages or leakages of fuels and chemicals… leaching of chemicals from faulty battery incidents (fire damage, ash deposition and extinguishing waters)' in the construction, operational and decommissioning phases.
    - Despite industry safety measures, battery failure, fire and explosion are well documented in BESS worldwide, and the siting of the BESS in relation to features of the built and natural environment (and people) could be critical. For example, proximity to ancient woodland, crops and watercourses. Of particular concern is the fact that the proposed site B drains down to Pitsford Reservoir any BESS sited here could drastically affect our water supply.

- as regards <u>Glint and Glare</u> (Chapter 15), we do not agree with the contention that the sensitivity of 'local roads, horse facilities and PROW' should be regarded as 'low' (page 252, Table 15.1). Nor do we agree that 'glare coinciding with direct sunlight' (page 251, para 15.4.11) is a mitigating factor. For example, depending on the geometry, a walker, driver or equestrian might deliberately look *away* from the sun only to be met by reflected glare from solar panels. That cannot sensibly be regarded as mitigation. The applicant states (page 257, para 15.4.56) that 'The reflection intensity for solar panels is similar to common outdoor sources of solar reflection (e.g. still water)'. We consider that solar reflection from still water can be a very significant source of glare and therefore the extensive addition of

its equivalent to our local environment where it has never previously existed should be scoped in for *all local receptors*.

- as regards Impacts on trees in Green Hill A-G and BESS (Chapter 20), the applicant has requested that these potential impacts should be scoped out because of the 'embedded mitigation of designing the scheme… and further mitigation that will be included within the OCEMP'. (20.7.1-3 and Table 20.4). Whilst we note the intended mitigation, proposed trees will take many years to grow. We consider that the nature and extent of the proposed loss need to be assessed, as well as the proposed mitigation measures.

- As regards other environmental matters (Chapter 22), the applicant identifies a number of major accidents and disasters which could occur (e.g. BESS fire and explosion) and argues that these will addressed though existing technical assessments and plans such as the Outline Battery Safety Management Plan. It further states that the 'design of the Scheme will evolve during preparation of the DCO application' and that where risks had not previously been identified the design team will address them as necessary through the design process. It argues therefore such major accidents or disasters should be scoped out from the ES. (page 337, para 22.4.5 and Table 22.2). We don't accept this argument and consider that they should be scoped in. Unless the likely significant environmental effects are assessed, the appropriateness of any proposed mitigations cannot be assessed.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Ruby Cole (Mrs)
Clerk & RFO
Holcot Parish Council

Copied to:

Stuart Andrew: Member of Parliament for the Daventry Constituency

Cllr Mike Warren: West Northamptonshire Ward Councillor. Moulton Ward

Holcot Parish Councillors

[redacted]

From: Sarah Wrighton [redacted]
Sent: 14 August 2024 11:58
To: Green Hill Solar
Cc: Kingsthorpe Parish Clerk
Subject: Green Hill Solar Farm EN010170-000015 - Scoping Report response

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: EST

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of Kingsthorpe Parish Council Planning Committee to say that due to the short consultation period over the summer, Kingsthorpe Parish Council Planning Committee are unable to comment on the Environmental Statement relating to the proposed development at this stage, but look forward to further information regarding these proposals.

Kind Regards,

Sarah

Sarah Wrighton, Deputy Clerk
Kingsthorpe Parish Council
☎ [redacted]
[redacted]
✉ [redacted]

Please note, my working days are currently Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, however I do work flexibly. If you receive an email from me outside of your working hours, please do not feel any need to respond to me until you return to work.

www.kingsthorpe-pc.gov.uk

Find us on Facebook

[redacted]

From: Little Harrowden [redacted]
Sent: 21 August 2024 18:27
To: Green Hill Solar
Subject: EN010170 - Green Hill Solar Farm EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: EST

> You don't often get email from [redacted]. Learn why this is important

Good evening,
Thank you for your email regarding the EN010170 - Green Hill Solar Farm EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation.

The response from Little Harrowden Parish Council is as follows and refers to the document as a whole rather than specific sections and paragraphs:

The most significant effect of the Green Hill Solar Farm will be the impact on landscape character and visual amenity due to the size and scale of the proposed site. Little Harrowden Parish Council believes that the size of the proposals needs to be reduced in scale in order to minimise impacts on local residents, particularly in areas which are visible from main roads/populated areas (such as the stretch along Earls Barton Road from Earls Barton towards Mears Ashby, Highfield Road coming out of Mears Ashby and along Wilby Road near to Mears Ashby).

Would you please be so kind as to confirm receipt of the feedback.

Kind regards,

Sylvia Tilaks
Clerk to Little Harrowden Parish Council
https://littleharrowdenparishcouncil.gov.uk/
[redacted]
Mulberry Cottage, 15 Main Road, Grendon, NN7 1JW
Office hours: 1pm-2.45pm Tuesday and Wednesday.

[redacted]

From: Mike Billingham CILCA [redacted]
Sent: 21 August 2024 09:49
To: Green Hill Solar
Subject: Response to Green Hill Farm Scoping consultation information - EN010170-000015

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Dear Sirs

I write on behalf of the parish council and in response to the above letter of consultation dated 25 July 2024.

The Council has some concerns regarding the scoping document for Greenhill Solar Farm, areas C, D, and E.
Particularly the following items that have been scoped out:

22.1.1 - it is proposed to scope out of the environmental statement 'Major accidents and Disasters'. The Parish Council consider that the following proposes significant risk and should be scoped in.

1. BESS.
The recent amendment is that 'Battery Energy Storage Systems' are to be considered in areas 'C' Wood Lodge Farm, and 'E' the central Mears Ashby area of 550 acres.
Battery Storage Systems are notoriously unsafe, liable to catch fire and require hundreds of gallons of water to extinguish. Run-off from such a fire contains significant amounts of pollutants and can contaminate watercourses. Both areas are close to water courses that eventually run into Sywell reservoir at the Country Park.

Water pressure throughout the parish is 'Low' and often unreliable due to antiquated, inefficient water tower and associated pipework. There has been occasions throughout recent times when the village has suffered a number of water supply outages due to the inadequate infrastructure. Full consideration must be given to the local services ability to effectively deal with these potential accidents or disasters.

2. Aviation Incidents.
Given the proximity of Sywell airfield to the 850 acres of solar panels proposed around Mears Ashby, particularly Wood Lodge Farm, which sits at the end of the runway, there is clearly a significant risk of 'glint and glare' to all aircraft within the ATZ (Air traffic Zone of Safety) This zone extends vertically to 2000ft and has a 2km radius. This zone is under absolute control of the tower and nothing is allowed to impinge on the safe operation of 'landing and 'taking off'.

3. Table 24.1

Horse Facilities.
Adjacent to Area ‘D’ is the Equestrian Centre for the sole use of The Hannah Payne Riding for the Disabled Group., Charity No 1119963. patron HRH The Princess Royal.
This provides unique and important horse riding therapy for 3 to 16 year old children.
The Centre, of stables and fields, join up to and are totally overlooked by the first field in Area D. This proposed field has a significant slope bearing down on the field and stables. Horses are notoriously easy to frighten and are animals of flight. The invasion of machinery and noise would put a stop to any riding activity and glint and glare from the panels, once in place, would also spook the horses and their riders.

4. Glint and Glare, only visual receptors scoped in between 1-2km

The owners of the stables and fields have their own property, within the same area as the stables and are approximately 100m from the edge of Area D. The Environmental Impact Assessment report 15.4.27 states the applied distance should be 1km. Glint and glare from the panels on the down slope of Area D, will have a massive impact on the owners. Visual receptors should be scoped in from 0 -2km.

Transport and Access. Chapter 13 Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report.

The Council also has concerns regarding the identification of “local routes” to reach Green Hill sites C, D and E from identified SRN and MRN routes. (Paragraph 13.3). Page 222.

At paragraph 13.3.8 Highfield Road is identified as a suitable local route to access Green Hill site D notwithstanding that this route is described in the report as, “a single lane rural road with limited passing places”.

Highfield Road is unsuitable for HGV’s and large vehicles with no room to manoeuvre and no passing or turning places.

The road has crumbling soft verge and road surface. It is not designed to carry anything other than local traffic.

At paragraph 13.3.9 Wilby Road is identified as bisecting Green Hill site E, “and can be used to access Green Hill site E and the A509”.

Our comments with regards to the suitability of Highfield Road apply equally to Wilby Road.

Additionally, Wilby Road has an acute left right bend in a dip which limits visibility and makes it unsuitable for use by HGV’s. Such usage would pose a significant risk to other road users.

At paragraph 13.3.9 Mears Ashby Road is identified as providing access to Green Hill site E.

This road is a major commuter route between the A45 and A43 and has two blind bends at the summit of high ground limiting visibility for road users. The road also has significant agricultural, cycling and pedestrian traffic.

The identified “local routes” would not allow large vehicles to turn to leave by the same route potentially forcing traffic into the village of Mears Ashby and Sywell.

At paragraph 13.1(page 222) Fig 1 identifies the local road network lined in black.

This includes Highfield Road, Wilby Road and Mears Ashby/Earls Barton Road entering the village of Mears Ashby and being linked by Wilby Road on the Southern boundary of the village and Wellingborough Road on the eastern boundary of the village.

Wilby Road and Wellingborough Road are within the curtilage of the village and are subject to weight restrictions. Access is limited due to road width, on street parking and tight bends. They are unsuitable for use by HGV’s.

The village should not be used as a “rat run” for construction or maintenance traffic as this would pose a significant danger to residents and their property. This would also be a significant increase in the risk of accident around the primary school area. Linking Highfield Road to the other major artery, Earls Barton Road via North Street, along which numerous young children make their way too and from school each day.

The parish council would express its concerns with the overall project and in particular:

1. That there is no analysis of the full cradle to grave impact over the 40 year life cycle of the solar farm.

2. The revenues from the solar farm belong to an organisation that is not based in the UK.

3. Sustainability is not the same as energy security. Whilst the solar farm might create sustainable energy, there is no guarantee that the energy is secure for the duration of the planned life of the solar farm as the offshore legal entity might decide not to sell the energy to the UK grid.

Yours faithfully

--
Mike Billingham CILCA
Parish Clerk
Mears Ashby Parish Council
[redacted]

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[redacted]

From: box.assetprotection [redacted]
Sent: 29 July 2024 13:38
To: Green Hill Solar
Subject: FW: GHSF - Green Hill Solar Farm - . EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation
Attachments: GHSF - Statutory Consultation Letter_.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for your email.

Regarding Scoping Notification and Consultation for GHSF - Green Hill Solar Farm there are no National Gas assets affected in this area.

If you would like to view if there are any other affected assets in this area, please raise an enquiry with www.lsbud.co.uk. Additionally, if the location or works type changes, please raise an enquiry.

Kind regards

Hayley White
Asset Protection Assistant

[redacted]

national gas transmission

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

[redacted]

Date: 20 August 2024
Our ref: 483230
Your ref: EN010170 EIA

BY EMAIL ONLY

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

Customer Services
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

[redacted]

Dear Alison,

Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping consultation (Regulation 15 (4) of the Town and Country Planning EIA Regulations 2017): Application by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Green Hill Solar Farm (the Proposed Development).
Location: Green Hill Solar Farm

Thank you for seeking our advice on the scope of the Environmental Statement (ES) in the consultation dated and received by Natural England on 25 July 2024.

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

A robust assessment of environmental impacts and opportunities based on relevant and up to date environmental information should be undertaken prior to a decision on whether to grant planning permission. Annex A to this letter provides Natural England's advice on the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed development but we would like to include the following information to assist further clarify the recommended scope of the assessment.

Functionally Linked Land

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are classified for rare and vulnerable birds. Many of these sites are designated for mobile species that may also rely on areas outside of the site boundary. These supporting habitats may be used by SPA/SAC populations or some individuals of the population for nocturnal and diurnal foraging and roosting. These supporting habitats can play an essential role in maintaining SPA/SAC species populations. Such areas are considered to be 'functionally linked' to the SPA; proposals affecting functionally linked land may therefore have the potential to adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

The BTO Webs Alert for the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA https://app.bto.org/webs-reporting/alerts.jsp reports that Golden Plover 76% decline since baseline analysis, (high alert, red). Lapwing 45% decline since baseline analysis, Lapwing are part of the water bird assemblage, -26%. Water bird assemblage decline baseline, (medium alert, amber). There is limited information regarding the use of Functionally Linked Land (FLL) for Golden Plover and Lapwing within surrounding area to the SPA.

Due to the continued decline in Golden Plover and Lapwing populations, Natural England have been involved in a partnership project with the Wildlife Trust in surveying and analysing potential functionally linked land within 10km of the SPA. The mapping is based on field criteria for Golden

Plover and Lapwing and historic biological records, and will be progressively enhanced by additional records obtained from Golden Plover and Lapwing records in an ongoing manner.

Further to this, since our last consultation additional parcels of land have been proposed as part of the development and Natural England are currently working with the developer through the Discretionary Advice Service to determine how the proposal should provide suitable mitigation and/or enhance FLL elsewhere, equivalent to that which is being lost.

Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land and Soils

Soil is a finite resource which plays an essential role within sustainable ecosystems, supporting a range of ecosystem services, including storage of carbon, the infiltration and transport of water, nutrient cycling, and provision of food. Natural England would advise that an Agricultural Land Classification survey is undertaken to best understand the grade of soils across all sites.

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

Site Suitability

Natural England would advise consideration of alternative parcels of land, particularly in relation those adjacent to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA and the land designated for BESS. The process of appropriate site selection should be outlined within a report demonstrating the exploration of suitable alternative sites to those which form high functional linkage to the SPA.

Other Advice

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

Please note that Natural England must be consulted on Environmental Statements.

Further advice on EIA scoping is provided in Annex A.

Please send any new consultations or further information on this consultation to [redacted]

Yours sincerely

Nima Staniewick
Sustainable Development Lead Adviser

Annex A – Natural England Advice on EIA Scoping

General Principles

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

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

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

Cumulative and in-combination effects

The ES should fully consider the implications of the whole development proposal. This should include an assessment of all supporting infrastructure.

An impact assessment should identify, describe, and evaluate the effects that are likely to result from the project in combination with other projects and activities that are being, have been or will be carried out. The following types of projects should be included in such an assessment (subject to available information):

a. existing completed projects;
b. approved but uncompleted projects;
c. ongoing activities;
d. plans or projects for which an application has been made and which are under consideration by the consenting authorities; and
e. plans and projects which are reasonably foreseeable, i.e. projects for which an application has not yet been submitted, but which are likely to progress before completion of the development and for which sufficient information is available to assess the likelihood of cumulative and in-combination effects.

Environmental data

Natural England is required to make available information it holds where requested to do so. National datasets held by Natural England are available at http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/data/default.aspx.

Detailed information on the natural environment is available at www.magic.gov.uk.

Natural England's SSSI Impact Risk Zones are a GIS dataset which can be used to help identify the potential for the development to impact on a SSSI. The dataset and user guidance can be accessed from the Natural England Open Data Geoportal.

Natural England does not hold local information on local sites, local landscape character, priority habitats and species or protected species. Local environmental data should be obtained from the appropriate local bodies. This may include the local environmental records centre, the local wildlife trust, local geo-conservation group or other recording society.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

General principles

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs180-181 and 185-188) sets out how to take account of biodiversity and geodiversity interests in planning decisions. Further guidance is set out in Planning Practice Guidance on the natural environment.

The potential impact of the proposal upon sites and features of nature conservation interest and opportunities for nature recovery and biodiversity net gain should be included in the assessment.

Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) is the process of identifying, quantifying, and evaluating the potential impacts of defined actions on ecosystems or their components. EcIA may be carried out as part of the EIA process or to support other forms of environmental assessment or appraisal. Guidelines have been developed by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Local planning authorities have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity as part of their decision making. Conserving biodiversity can include habitat restoration or enhancement. Further information is available here.

International and European sites

The development site is within or may impact on the following **European/internationally designated nature conservation site(s):**

- Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits RAMSAR/SPA/SAC

European site conservation objectives are available at http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/6490068894089216

The ES should thoroughly assess the potential for the proposal to affect nationally and internationally designated sites of nature conservation importance, including marine sites where relevant. European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) fall within the scope of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'). In addition paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that potential SPAs, possible SAC, listed or proposed Ramsar sites, and any site identified or required as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitat (European) sites, potential SPAs, possible SACs and listed or proposed Ramsar sites have the same protection as classified sites (NB. sites falling within the scope of regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 are defined as 'habitats sites' in the NPPF). Under Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations, an appropriate assessment must be undertaken in respect of any plan or project which is (a) likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other

plans or projects) and (b) not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site. The consideration of likely significant effects should include any functionally linked land outside the designated site. These areas may provide important habitat for mobile species populations that are qualifying features of the site, for example birds and bats. This can also include areas which have a critical function to a habitat feature within a designated site, for example by being linked hydrologically or geomorphologically.

Should a likely significant effect on a European/Internationally designated site be identified (either alone or in-combination) or be uncertain, the competent authority (in this case the Local Planning Authority) may need to prepare an appropriate assessment in addition to the consideration of impacts through the EIA process. Further guidance is set out in Planning Practice Guidance on appropriate assessment
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appropriate-assessment

This should also take into account any agreed strategic mitigation solution that may be being developed or implemented in the area to address recreational disturbance, nutrients, or other impacts.

Nationally designated sites

The development site is within or may impact on the following **Sites of Special Scientific Interest:**

- Pitsford Reservoir SSSI
- Badsaddle, Withmale Park & Bush Walk Woods SSSI
- Birch Spinney & Mawsley Marsh SSSI
- Hardwick Lodge Meadow SSSI
- Bozeat Meadow SSSI
- Yardley Chase SSSI
- Irchester Old Lodge Pit Geological SSSI
- Odell Great Wood SSSI
- Dungee Corner Meadow SSSI
- Wollaston Meadows SSSI

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and paragraph 186 of the NPPF. Further information on the SSSI and its special interest features can be found at www.magic.gov .

Natural England's SSSI Impact Risk Zones can be used to help identify the potential for the development to impact on a SSSI. The dataset and user guidance can be accessed from the Natural England Open Data Geoportal.

The Environmental Statement should include a full assessment of the direct and indirect effects of the development on the features of special interest within the SSSI and identify appropriate mitigation measures to avoid, minimise or reduce any adverse significant effects. The consideration of likely significant effects should include any functionally linked land outside the designated site. These areas may provide important habitat for mobile species populations that are interest features of the SSSI, for example birds and bats. This can also include areas which have a critical function to a habitat feature within a site, for example by being linked hydrologically or geomorphologically.

Designated nature conservation sites

The proposal is unlikely to adversely impact any European or internationally designated nature conservation sites (including 'habitats sites' under the NPPF) or nationally designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves or Marine Conservation Zones).

Regionally and Locally Important Sites

The ES should consider any impacts upon local wildlife and geological sites, including local nature reserves. Local Sites are identified by the local wildlife trust, geoconservation group or other local group and protected under the NPPF (paragraph 180 and 181). The ES should set out proposals for mitigation of any impacts and if appropriate, compensation measures and opportunities for enhancement and improving connectivity with wider ecological networks. Contact the relevant local body for further information.

Protected Species

The conservation of species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
is explained in Part IV and Annex A of Government Circular 06/2005 *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System*.

The ES should assess the impact of all phases of the proposal on protected species (including, for example, great crested newts, reptiles, birds, water voles, badgers and bats). Natural England does not hold comprehensive information regarding the locations of species protected by law. Records of protected species should be obtained from appropriate local biological record centres, nature conservation organisations and local groups. Consideration should be given to the wider context of the site, for example in terms of habitat linkages and protected species populations in the wider area.

The area likely to be affected by the development should be thoroughly surveyed by competent ecologists at appropriate times of year for relevant species and the survey results, impact assessments and appropriate accompanying mitigation strategies included as part of the ES. Surveys should always be carried out in optimal survey time periods and to current guidance by suitably qualified and, where necessary, licensed, consultants.

Natural England has adopted standing advice for protected species, which includes guidance on survey and mitigation measures . A separate protected species licence from Natural England or Defra may also be required.

District Level Licensing for Great Crested Newts

District level licensing (DLL) is a type of strategic mitigation licence for great crested newts (GCN) granted in certain areas at a local authority or wider scale. A DLL scheme for GCN may be in place at the location of the development site. If a DLL scheme is in place, developers can make a financial contribution to strategic, off-site habitat compensation instead of applying for a separate licence or carrying out individual detailed surveys. By demonstrating that DLL will be used, impacts on GCN can be scoped out of detailed assessment in the Environmental Statement.

Priority Habitats and Species

Priority Habitats and Species are of particular importance for nature conservation and included in the England Biodiversity List published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Most priority habitats will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. Lists of priority habitats and species can be found here. Natural England does not routinely hold species data. Such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or species are considered likely.

Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land. Sites can be checked against the (draft) national Open Mosaic Habitat (OMH) inventory published by Natural England and freely available to download. Further information is also available here.

An appropriate level habitat survey should be carried out on the site, to identify any important habitats present. In addition, ornithological, botanical, and invertebrate surveys should be carried out at appropriate times in the year, to establish whether any scarce or priority species are present.

The Environmental Statement should include details of:

- Any historical data for the site affected by the proposal (e.g. from previous surveys)
- Additional surveys carried out as part of this proposal
- The habitats and species present
- The status of these habitats and species (e.g. whether priority species or habitat)
- The direct and indirect effects of the development upon those habitats and species
- Full details of any mitigation or compensation measures
- Opportunities for biodiversity net gain or other environmental enhancement

Ancient Woodland, ancient and veteran trees

Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat of great importance for its wildlife, its history, and the contribution it makes to our diverse landscapes. Paragraph 186 of the NPPF sets out the highest level of protection for irreplaceable habitats and development should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland Inventory which can help identify ancient woodland. The wood pasture and parkland inventory sets out information on wood pasture and parkland.

The ancient tree inventory provides information on the location of ancient and veteran trees.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission have prepared standing advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees.

The ES should assess the impacts of the proposal on the ancient woodland and any ancient and veteran trees, and the scope to avoid and mitigate for adverse impacts. It should also consider opportunities for enhancement.

Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland Inventory which can help identify ancient woodland. The wood pasture and parkland inventory sets out information on wood pasture and parkland.

The ancient tree inventory provides information on the location of ancient and veteran trees.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission have prepared standing advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

Biodiversity Net Gain is additional to statutory requirements relating to designated nature conservation sites and protected species.

Proposals for mandatory biodiversity net gain should be in line with the Environment Act 2021 and supporting regulations. Further information on biodiversity net gain, including draft Planning Practice Guidance, can be found here.

The statutory biodiversity metric, together with ecological advice, should be used to calculate the change in biodiversity resulting from proposed development and demonstrate how proposals can achieve a net gain.
The metric should be used to:
• assess or audit the biodiversity unit value of land within the application area

• calculate the losses and gains in biodiversity unit value resulting from proposed development
• demonstrate that the required percentage biodiversity net gain will be achieved

Biodiversity Net Gain outcomes can be achieved on site, off-site or through a combination of both. On-site provision should be considered first. Delivery should create or enhance habitats of equal or higher value. When delivering net gain, opportunities should be sought to link delivery to relevant plans or strategies e.g. Green Infrastructure Strategies or Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Opportunities for wider environmental gains should also be considered.

Landscape

Landscape and Visual Impacts

The environmental assessment should refer to the relevant National Character Areas. Character area profiles set out descriptions of each landscape area and statements of environmental opportunity.

The ES should include a full assessment of the potential impacts of the development on local landscape character using landscape assessment methodologies. We encourage the use of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), based on the good practice guidelines produced jointly by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment in 2013. LCA provides a sound basis for guiding, informing, and understanding the ability of any location to accommodate change and to make positive proposals for conserving, enhancing or regenerating character.

A landscape and visual impact assessment should also be carried out for the proposed development and surrounding area. Natural England recommends use of the methodology set out in *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013 (*(3rd edition) produced by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment and Management. For National Parks and AONBs, we advise that the assessment also includes effects on the 'special qualities' of the designated landscape, as set out in the statutory management plan for the area. These identify the particular landscape and related characteristics which underpin the natural beauty of the area and its designation status.

The assessment should also include the cumulative effect of the development with other relevant existing or proposed developments in the area. This should include an assessment of the impacts of other proposals currently at scoping stage.

To ensure high quality development that responds to and enhances local landscape character and distinctiveness, the siting and design of the proposed development should reflect local characteristics and, wherever possible, use local materials. Account should be taken of local design policies, design codes and guides as well as guidance in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code. The ES should set out the measures to be taken to ensure the development will deliver high standards of design and green infrastructure. It should also set out detail of layout alternatives, where appropriate, with a justification of the selected option in terms of landscape impact and benefit.

Heritage Landscapes

The ES should include an assessment of the impacts on any land in the area affected by the development which qualifies for conditional exemption from capital taxes on the grounds of outstanding scenic, scientific, or historic interest. An up-to-date list is available at www.hmrc.gov.uk/heritage/lbsearch.htm.

Connecting People with nature

The ES should consider potential impacts on access land, common land, public rights of way and, where appropriate, the England Coast Path and coastal access routes and coastal margin in the

vicinity of the development, in line with NPPF paragraph 104. It should assess the scope to mitigate for any adverse impacts. Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP) can be used to identify public rights of way within or adjacent to the proposed site that should be maintained or enhanced.

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

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

Soils and Agricultural Land Quality

Soils are a valuable, finite natural resource and should also be considered for the ecosystem services they provide, including for food production, water storage and flood mitigation, as a carbon store, reservoir of biodiversity and buffer against pollution. It is therefore important that the soil resources are protected and sustainably managed. Impacts from the development on soils and best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land should be considered in line with paragraphs 180 and 181 of the NPPF. Further guidance is set out in the Natural England Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land.

As set out in paragraph 217 of the NPPF, new sites or extensions to sites for peat extraction should not be granted planning permission.

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

- The degree to which soils would be disturbed or damaged as part of the development
- The extent to which agricultural land would be disturbed or lost as part of this development, including whether any best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land would be impacted.

This may require a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey if one is not already available. For information on the availability of existing ALC information see www.magic.gov.uk.

- Where an ALC and soil survey of the land is required, this should normally be at a detailed level, e.g. one auger boring per hectare, (or more detailed for a small site) supported by pits dug in each main soil type to confirm the physical characteristics of the full depth of the soil resource, i.e. 1.2 metres. The survey data can inform suitable soil handling methods and appropriate reuse of the soil resource where required (e.g. agricultural reinstatement, habitat creation, landscaping, allotments and public open space).
- The ES should set out details of how any adverse impacts on BMV agricultural land can be minimised through site design/masterplan.
- The ES should set out details of how any adverse impacts on soils can be avoided or minimised and demonstrate how soils will be sustainably used and managed, including consideration in site design and master planning, and areas for green infrastructure or biodiversity net gain. The aim will be to minimise soil handling and maximise the sustainable use and management of the available soil to achieve successful after-uses and minimise off-site impacts.

Further information is available in the Defra Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soil on Development Sites and
The British Society of Soil Science Guidance Note Benefitting from Soil Management in Development and Construction.

The following additional guidance is provided for minerals and waste development. The ES should consider and, where appropriate, include the following:

- The methods and equipment to be used for the protection, recovery, storage, and sustainable re-use of the different types of topsoil and subsoil, including consideration of any required phasing to minimise soil handling and maximise the sustainable management of the soil.

- The method of assessing whether soils are in a suitably dry condition to be handled (i.e. dry and friable), and the avoidance of soil handling, trafficking, and cultivation during the wetter winter period.

- A description of the restoration criteria, including the proposed soil horizon depths and soil characteristics; normally to an overall depth of 1.2 m over an evenly graded overburden layer (or, in the case of waste reclamation, an evenly graded capping layer), suitable for the proposed end-use, including the restored ALC Grade.

- The effects on land drainage, agricultural access, and water supplies, including other agricultural land in the vicinity. The impacts of the development on farm structure and viability, and on other established rural land use and interests, both during the site working period and following its reclamation.

- The restoration and aftercare of the site, in line with Chapter 17 'Facilitating the Sustainable Use of Minerals' of the NPPF.

- A detailed Restoration Plan illustrating the restored soil profile characteristics, landform and the intended standard of restoration including ALC Grade(s), together with details of surface features; water bodies; the availability of outfalls to accommodate future drainage requirements; and aftercare.

Further guidance is contained in the Defra Guidance for Successful Restoration of Mineral and Waste Sites and the Natural England guidance note Planning and aftercare advice for reclaiming land to agricultural use. Reference could also usefully be made to the Institute of Quarrying (2021) Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils in Mineral Workings which comprises separate sections, describing the typical choice of machinery and methods for handling soils at various phases. The techniques described by Sheets A-D are appropriate for the successful reinstatement of higher quality agricultural land. The Natural England Guide to reclaiming mineral extraction and landfill sites to agriculture also contains useful background information.

Air Quality

Air quality in the UK has improved over recent decades but air pollution remains a significant issue. For example, approximately 85% of protected nature conservation sites are currently in exceedance of nitrogen levels where harm is expected (critical load) and approximately 87% of sites exceed the level of ammonia where harm is expected for lower plants (critical level of 1µg) [1].A priority action in the England Biodiversity Strategy is to reduce air pollution impacts on biodiversity. The Government's Clean Air Strategy also has a number of targets to reduce emissions including to reduce damaging deposition of reactive forms of nitrogen by 17% over England's protected priority sensitive habitats by 2030, to reduce emissions of ammonia against the 2005 baseline by 16% by

[1] Report: Trends Report 2020: Trends in critical load and critical level exceedances in the UK - Defra, UK

2030 and to reduce emissions of NOx and SO_2 against a 2005 baseline of 73% and 88% respectively by 2030. Shared Nitrogen Action Plans (SNAPs) have also been identified as a tool to reduce environmental damage from air pollution.

The planning system plays a key role in determining the location of developments which may give rise to pollution, either directly, or from traffic generation, and hence planning decisions can have a significant impact on the quality of air, water and land. The ES should take account of the risks of air pollution and how these can be managed or reduced. This should include taking account of any strategic solutions or SNAPs, which may be being developed or implemented to mitigate the impacts on air quality. Further information on air pollution impacts and the sensitivity of different habitats/designated sites can be found on the Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk).

Information on air pollution modelling, screening and assessment can be found on the following websites:

- SCAIL Combustion and SCAIL Agriculture - http://www.scail.ceh.ac.uk/
- Ammonia assessment for agricultural development https://www.gov.uk/guidance/intensive-farming-risk-assessment-for-your-environmental-permit
- Environment Agency Screening Tool for industrial emissions https://www.gov.uk/guidance/air-emissions-risk-assessment-for-your-environmental-permit
- Defra Local Air Quality Management Area Tool (Industrial Emission Screening Tool) – England http://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/laqm

Water Quality

The planning system plays a key role in determining the location of developments which may give rise to water pollution, and hence planning decisions can have a significant impact on water quality, and land. The assessment should take account of the risks of water pollution and how these can be managed or reduced. A number of water dependent protected nature conservation sites have been identified as failing condition due to elevated nutrient levels and nutrient neutrality is consequently required to enable development to proceed without causing further damage to these sites. The ES needs to take account of any strategic solutions for nutrient neutrality or Diffuse Water Pollution Plans, which may be being developed or implemented to mitigate and address the impacts of elevated nutrient levels. Further information can be obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

Climate Change

The ES should identify how the development affects the ability of the natural environment (including habitats, species, and natural processes) to adapt to climate change, including its ability to provide adaptation for people. This should include impacts on the vulnerability or resilience of a natural feature (i.e. what's already there and affected) as well as impacts on how the environment can accommodate change for both nature and people, for example whether the development affects species ability to move and adapt. Nature-based solutions, such as providing green infrastructure on-site and in the surrounding area (e.g. to adapt to flooding, drought and heatwave events), habitat creation and peatland restoration, should be considered. The ES should set out the measures that will be adopted to address impacts.

Further information is available from the Committee on Climate Change's (CCC) Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk, the National Adaptation Programme (NAP), the Climate Change Impacts Report Cards (biodiversity, infrastructure, water etc.) and the UKCP18 climate projections.

The Natural England and RSPB Climate Change Adaptation Manual (2020) provides extensive information on climate change impacts and adaptation for the natural environment and adaptation focussed nature-based solutions for people. It includes the Landscape Scale Climate Change Assessment Method that can help assess impacts and vulnerabilities on natural environment features and identify adaptation actions. Natural England's Nature Networks Evidence Handbook (2020) also provides extensive information on planning and delivering nature networks for people and biodiversity.

The ES should also identify how the development impacts the natural environment's ability to store and sequester greenhouse gases, in relation to climate change mitigation and the natural environment's contribution to achieving net zero by 2050. Natural England's Carbon Storage and Sequestration by Habitat report (2021) and the British Ecological Society's nature-based solutions report (2021) provide further information.

Contribution to local environmental initiatives and priorities

The ES should consider the contribution the development could make to relevant local environmental initiatives and priorities to enhance the environmental quality of the development and deliver wider environmental gains. This should include considering proposals set out in relevant local strategies or supplementary planning documents including landscape strategies, green infrastructure strategies, tree and woodland strategies, biodiversity strategies or biodiversity opportunity areas.

North Northamptonshire Council

Development Management Service
Wellingborough Office
Swanspool House, Doddington Road
Wellingborough
NN8 1BP
[redacted]
www.northnorthants.gov.uk

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

Ask for: Mrs Nicola Thompson
Telephone: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]
Our Ref: NW/24/00425/EXT
Your Ref: EN010170-000015
Date: 22 August 2024

FAO Alison L Down

Via email: greenhill@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Alison

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

Application by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Green Hill Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

Scoping consultation and notification of the Applicant's contact details and duty to make available information to the Applicant if requested.

I write further to your letter dated and received on 25 July 2024 regarding the above development.

North Northamptonshire Council understands that its views are sought, as a statutory consultee on the scoping opinion which has been submitted to the Secretary of State under the terms of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. North Northamptonshire Council also understands that the Secretary of State will consult all the relevant statutory bodies in respect of this scoping opinion.

The project is cross border with the main element of the proposed solar farm being within North Northamptonshire Council district (Sites C, D, E, F and BESS) and further sites in the adjoining West Northamptonshire Council (Sites A, A.2 and B) and Milton Keynes Council (Site G). The cabling route is proposed to connect the Sites to the existing Grendon Substation, within North Northamptonshire and referred to as BESS Site within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report. It is noted that the Scoping Report refers to the fact that the exact location of the proposed cabling to connect the Sites to the existing Grendon Substation is not yet known, it will be refined as the design of the Scheme is developed and additional technical surveys are carried out. Temporary construction compounds will also be required.

The submitted Scoping Report contains the following chapters and comments are provided on each of them accordingly.

The Scheme
The sites (as referred to above as Sites A, A.2, B, C, D, E, F, G and BESS) for built development are identified as solar panels, substations and energy storage and are located within a 20-kilometre radius of the grid connection at Grendon Substation. Appendix 3 in the Scoping Report shows the exact locations of these sites. It is noted that the Scoping Report also gives a detailed description of the physical characteristics and constraints of the surrounding areas.

It is understood that the exact type of solar panels is not yet decided and that the options have been separated into Option A (Tracking Panels) and Option B (Fixed Panels). Further detailed assessment of the potential implications of the design should be considered in the Environmental Statement when an option has been decided for each Site. The same should take place for the cabling route once confirmed.

It is noted that the operational life of the Scheme is anticipated to be up to 60 years, followed then by decommissioning.

Alternatives Considered
It is welcomed that the Environmental Statement will contain a chapter that will consider alternative sites. There is reference within the Scoping Report regarding alternatives however detail is limited on alternatives at this stage. Given that there are several Sites within the Scheme, consideration should be given in the first instance as to whether all of these Sites are required, or some could be removed.

Consultation
I can confirm that the applicant has already undertaken early consultation work with North Northamptonshire Council alongside statutory consultees, and it is encouraging that the applicant is undertaking the same with West Northamptonshire Council and Milton Keynes Council. It is welcomed that further consultation will be undertaken with statutory and non-statutory consultees as the process progresses.

Consultation with host and neighbouring Parish and Town Councils, Neighbourhood Planning Groups and elected Members within all three authorities will be very important in the consultation process. Once the solar design detail, cabling route and layout detail is known, engagement and consultation with these parties will be critical.

Comments on the General Approach
Each topic within the Environmental Statement should assess mitigation in detail and should include a schedule of deliverable environmental commitments along with monitoring and control mechanisms. The mitigation order should be avoid, minimise or reduce impact and remedy or compensate.

The Environmental Statement should contain an appendix which sets out the evidence base documents that are to be used to inform the baseline. This evidence should be up

to date and in accordance with the Regulations. North Northamptonshire Council are happy to assist in providing evidence where required.

Proposed Topics

Cumulative Impact

In respect of cumulative impact, the Council offer the following comments.

In addition to in combination cumulative effects from other proposed or permitted schemes in the vicinity of the development, the Environmental Statement should consider the cumulative effect of other large scale solar schemes that are currently in operation in the North Northamptonshire Council district.

Whilst it is accepted these schemes are not located within the immediate area of this site, they are similar large-scale projects that will occupy swathes of agricultural land present within the North Northamptonshire Council district. Examples are Land off Gipsy Lane, Irchester and Land off the Ridge, Great Doddington.

Climate Change

In respect of climate change the North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

The methodology for climate related assessments is sound. It is noted that it is proposed to scope out of the Environmental Statement 'sea level' rise as the scheme is not located in an area that is susceptible to sea level rise. This is considered sensible and agreed.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

In respect of landscape and visual amenity the North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

Both tracking panels (maximum height above ground level – 4.5 metres) and fixed panels (maximum height above ground level- 3.5 metres) are being explored. It's expected that these will be provided in conjunction with conversion units (maximum height of 3.5 metres), compound fencing (palisade fencing), perimeter deer type wire and mess fencing (maximum height 2.5 metres) and CCTV camera poles (maximum height 3 metres).

The Landscape and Visual Impact chapter of the Environmental Statement will consider the likely significant effects of the Scheme on Landscape and Visual receptors during the associated construction, operation, and decommissioning phases. It's expected that the chapter will provide detail of the existing baseline scenario and the nature of change. It will identify the effects upon receptors arising because of the proposed Scheme and the significance associated with identified effects based on the sensitivity of these receptors to change and the magnitude of any change that will likely occur.

Local planning policy is set out at paragraph 7.3.6 of the Scoping Report. For North Northamptonshire, policy 3 'Landscape Character' and policy 26 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy' of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (Adopted 2016) should also be considered and included in future assessments.

Given the scale and nature of the project we are satisfied with the proposed Study Areas for the Local Study Area (1 kilometre), the Wider Study Area (2 kilometre) and the Outer Study Area (5 kilometres) for the Sites, as well as the Study Area of 0.5 kilometres for the proposed from the outer boundary of the Cable Corridor. It is understood that the cable corridor is being refined and ask that North Northamptonshire Council are consulted when this information becomes available.

Landscape Character

The Study Area does not contain any National or Local Landscape specific designations such as National Parks or National Landscapes.

As the report states, at the National level, the Green Hill C, D, E and Green Hill BESS are located within National Character Area (NCA) 89 Northamptonshire Vales. Whilst Green Hill F is located within 91 Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge.

At the regional level, Green Hill C and D are located within Northamptonshire Landscape Character Area (LCA) 5b Sywell Plateau. The majority of Green Hill F is also located within Northamptonshire 5b Sywell Plateau, except for parts of the southern, eastern and western edges which are partly located within the Northamptonshire LCA 4c Ecton and Earls Barton Slopes.

Green Hill BESS is located primarily within LCA 18d The Nene - Billing Wharf to Woodford Mill. A small portion of the southern extent of Green Hill BESS is located within the Northamptonshire LCA 18d The Nene - Billing Wharf to Woodford Mill along with the northern portion of Green Hill F.

The remaining extent of Green Hill F is located within Northamptonshire LCA 8b Salcey Forest and Yardley Chase, with only a very small portion of Green Hill F within Northamptonshire LCA 6c Bozeat Claylands.

At the local level, there are no landscape character receptors. However, a detailed description of the landscape each Site area has been provided. This includes a description of topography, land use and vegetation. Moving forward It's expected that a detailed analysis of landscape value (informed by the Technical Guidance Note 02/21, Assessing landscape value outside national designations) for each Site is undertaken and used to inform judgements.

Visual Baseline

NNC independently appointed landscape consultant has reviewed the selected viewpoints and note that previously recommended viewpoint locations are included and therefore are satisfied that this list is representative of the relevant receptor groups and include key views from public rights of way, roads, settlements and vantage points in the local area. Moving forward NNC independently appointed landscape consultant would expect all viewpoint photography to be presented as Type 1 visuals in accordance with the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual Representation of Development Proposals. It would also be advised that a number of the photographs are presented as Type 4 photomontages to help guide NNC independently appointed

landscape consultant review of the scheme and its impact on visual receptors. These viewpoints should include:

- VP12
- VP13
- VP15
- VP17
- VP20
- VP19
- VP22
- VP26
- VP27
- VP42
- VPNN9
- VPNN10
- VP28
- VP29

Furthermore, NNC independently appointed landscape consultant advise that as part of the Environmental Statement a number of photomontages at 60+ years are produced to show how mitigation measures will benefit the landscape. Ideally, these would show the view after the development has been decommissioned as this will demonstrate the remaining long-term legacy of the scheme. Currently minimal information regarding the outline mitigation proposals have been provided therefore NNC independently appointed landscape consultant has not provided any viewpoint recommendations, however as the strategy is developed, NNC independently appointed landscape consultant asks that North Northamptonshire Council are consulted to discuss these matters.

Methodology

The report confirms that the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be undertaken in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3) 2013. It also states that due to the Sites large scale, it will be considered as one entity in its entirety, before being broken down into individual area and the cable route Search area, which is welcomed.

Assessment Criteria - NNC independently appointed landscape consultant generally agrees with the LVIA approach and methodology, however seeks further clarity regarding the landscape value criteria definitions in Table 7.2.1.3: Landscape Receptor Value. Currently the ‘condition’ for a medium value landscape is defined as a ‘ordinary to good quality landscape’. Whereas a high value landscape is defined as a ‘very high-quality landscape/feature; attractive landscape/feature; exceptional.’. This seems to be a considerable jump in condition, especially considering the difference between terms ‘ordinary’ and ‘very-high quality’. NNC independently appointed landscape consultant therefore recommends that definitions are amended to reduce the disparity between the definition of high and medium value. Terms could include ‘strong strength of character’, ‘high quality’, ‘good quality’ and ‘major contribution’.

Given the dispersed nature of the individual areas, we also want to emphasise the need to consider sequential views when assessing visual effects along transport and public rights of way receptors.

Scoped Receptors

For the most part NNC independently appointed landscape consultant agrees with the landscape and visual receptors that have been scoped in and out of the assessment.

NNC independently appointed landscape consultant does however have the following recommendations:

Night-time - There is no reference in the Scoping Report or associated Landscape and Visual Scoping Sheets (Appendix 7.4 and 7.5) that an assessment of effects from lighting is scoped into the Environmental Statement. Noting the rural, largely unlit environment in which the Proposed Development is located, NNC independently appointed landscape consultant are of the professional opinion that night-time effects should be scoped into the assessment. In turn, visual effects resulting from the introduction of lighting during construction, operation and decommissioning which are likely to result in significant effects should be assessed in the Environmental Statement.

Landscape character - The applicant states that National and Regional landscape character areas will for the most part be scoped in, which is acceptable. However, given many of the areas fall across multiple LCAs and the dispersed nature of the solar array areas, we question whether there is a need to also assess local landscape character. This could be by assessing individual landscape features (such as tree cover, field boundaries, landform and watercourses), the landscape character of each individual area (Green Hill A, A.2, B, C, D, E, F G and BESS) or identified Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) that takes account of settlements, their setting and the areas of land within the Site boundary.

Mitigation Measures

At this early stage NNC independently appointed landscape consultant would not expect to see mitigation measures presented. However, North Northamptonshire Council would ask that the applicant's consultant seeks NNC independently appointed landscape consultant comments and recommendations on any concepts at the earliest opportunity to ensure all possible options for embedded and additional mitigation are taken.

Cumulative Effects

The methodology for assessing cumulative landscape and visual effects is deemed to be acceptable and accords with GLVIA3 definitions. The applicant should consider the use of additional relevant viewpoints where combined views may possible.

Other matters

Trees and Hedgerows - Many of the field boundaries within the study area are formed by mature hedgerows, which are an important feature of the existing character of the landscape. We ask that existing vegetation is mapped and any loss of or impacts to hedgerows, trees or woodland which are likely to result in significant effects on landscape and visual amenity are assessed in the Environmental Statement.

Similarly, there is reference to the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 in Chapter 8 (Ecology and Biodiversity, however it's unclear whether a hedgerow assessment is being undertaken to understand if any hedgerows are classed as 'important' under the Regulations (30 years old and ecology and/or heritage criteria).

The above highlights a number of critical areas of consideration in relation to landscape and visual impacts. The proposed development, which spans multiple areas presents a

complex challenge in balancing the need for renewable energy with the preservation of the local landscape's character and visual integrity.

The assessment of landscape character and visual receptors, as outlined, is generally sound, with a thoughtful approach to identifying and analysing potential impacts. However, the methodology needs some refinement, particularly in defining landscape value criteria, considering night-time visual effects, and ensuring a thorough assessment of local landscape features.

Ecology and Biodiversity
In respect of ecology and biodiversity North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

Wildfire risk
North Northamptonshire Council ecology officer is of the opinion that putting solar panels of this scale could increase the likelihood of wildfire and without a well thought out and thorough mitigation strategy, there is potentially negative impacts of the development. Some of them have been raised in the Scoping Report others have not. One that has not been considered is the potential impact on biodiversity and particularly the ability of the development's ability to deliver its Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) obligations in the scenario where a wildfire destroys the habitats created as part of BNG but also in the wider landscape. It may be prudent (even required) that insurance be taken out to cover this scenario.

The landscape and Biodiversity Net Gain delivery plans will need to show where the firebreaks are to be located citing the distances for clearance from any national guidance (such as Building wildfire resilience into forest management planning) with the ultimate goal of limiting the spread of any wildfire which is also obliviously important when considering the proximity of the proposed solar farm to residential areas (North Northamptonshire Council ecology officer has not considered further here the potential impacts of wildfire on residential areas, though it is strongly advised the appropriate consultees should consider this).

Biodiversity Net Gain
The approach outlined in the Scoping Report is generally acceptable (aside from the point made above regarding wildfire risk needing to be addressed). The rules around stacking and additionality of mitigation delivery will need to be followed and detailed in the Biodiversity Gains Plan. For clarity, before the Local Planning Authority (LPA) approves a biodiversity gain plan, it must check:
- any off-site gains in the plan have been registered.
    - those off-site gains have been recorded as allocated to the development in question.
    - the biodiversity value of the gains in the gain plan matches the value recorded on the register.

Biodiversity net gain: what local planning authorities should do - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

In addition to the Biodiversity Gains Plan the submission of a completed Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain metric and pre and post condition assessment sheets must be submitted.

North Northamptonshire Council ecology officer would add that low stocking density sheep grazing is likely to be the best way managing many of the habitats amongst the solar panels. The inclusion of south facing bee banks (following the Buglife guidance) should be included in the Biodiversity Net Gain grassland habitats (as part of the bare ground element) to aid invertebrates and by default species above and below in the trophic web.

Urban Heat

The proposals have the potential to increase/exacerbate urban heating in the surrounding areas without mitigation. Regarding biodiversity, North Northamptonshire Council ecology officer does not agree with paragraphs 6.4.16 – 6.4.18 (inclusive) and Table 6.3 in the Scoping Report. North Northamptonshire Council ecology officer considers paragraph 6.4.18 is false in its assumptions when it comes to urban heating (and could be wrong in other aspects depending on abiotic factors). The applicants will need to show how receptors (human and biodiversity) are not to be affected for there to be no need for mitigation given the extension to the built realm that this development represents in close proximity to residential areas. In our view, urban heating mitigation can be used under additionality rules for Biodiversity Net Gain delivery. This subject in light of biodiversity, will need to be covered in both Sections of climate change and in Cumulative Effects, with the latter likely to be the more influential in any impacts.

The Loss of Agricultural Land

The loss of agricultural land is often most acutely felt by the following species, and North Northamptonshire Council ecology officer considers that it will be difficult to fully mitigate for the impacts on these species onsite:

- Brown hare – Fields of sufficient size with good lines of sight (unhindered by solar panels) for here's will be needed for mitigation to be successful whether that is on or off site.
- Ground nesting birds – Fields of sufficient size with good lines of sight (unhindered by solar panels) for Ground nesting birds will be needed for mitigation to be successful whether that is on or off site. The North Northamptonshire Council is working with NatureSpace to form a District wide mitigation strategy to cover impacts on Ground nesting birds with solar farms being one of the main focuses for needing mitigation.
- Special Protection Area (SPA) qualifying species & functionally link land Impacts – We find no fault with the statements (so long as Natural England are content with the surveys approach) made in point 8.3.56 of the Scoping Report, but like impacts on Brown hare and Ground nesting birds, mitigation onsite will likely be difficult unless an area is given over as mitigation onsite or delivered offsite.
- Barn owl – Barn owl might be able to utilise the spaces between rows of panels depending on the spacing between the rows, the applicants team will need to demonstrate this with examples where monitoring has shown barn owls a minimum level of gap between the rows. If not possible then mitigation will need

to be delivered offsite or in areas of the site with no built infrastructure, of sufficient size, lacking frequent anthropogenic disturbance and be appropriate grassland habitat.

Other Potential Receptors

The following receptors should not be an issue so long as fairly standard mitigation (construction and post construction phases) measures be put in place;
Badgers, Great Crested Newts (GCN), Reptiles, hedgerows, watercourses and Bats.

Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)

North Northamptonshire Council ecology officer expects the application to be accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment, following CIEEM survey guidelines including all phase 2 surveys recommended in the Ecological Impact Assessment. At paragraph 8.5.1 of the Scoping Report it appears that (though not explicitly stated) an Ecological Impact Assessment is scoped in.

Drainage, water quality & pond creation.

Peak follow management is important because the higher the peak flow above the average/median flow rates the more harm is done to the river system/catchment with higher erosion rates (and subsequent deposition elsewhere downstream) and the more loading put on water treatment assets which can lead to adverse water quality issues when capacity is strained.

The use of water storage tanks does not deal with water quality issues (tanks do not offer any filtration/treatment) related to water discharge from the site, tanks also present a legacy issue for management regarding their deconstruction/decommissioning at the end of their lifetimes with their use not representing best practice. The use of Sustainable Urban Drainage is preferred.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems should be designed in such a way that they hold water through some of the year by raising any out flow pipes off the bottom of the basins. Doing this will enable the flora to have more stability in water availability and thus the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems should then have some stability in the habitats in and around the ponds as well as reducing the peak flows entering the water courses.

General

Local Planning policy is set out at paragraph 8.2.5 of the Scoping Report. For North Northamptonshire, policy 26 ‘Renewable and Low Carbon Energy’ of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (Adopted 2016) should also be considered and included.

At paragraph 8.3.14 it is noted that the Cable Corridor will be assessed in the Environmental Statement and that disturbance will be limited in extent given the narrow width of the cable trench required. This is not agreed at this point in time as the effects on ecology and biodiversity cannot be established until the routes have been defined. North Northamptonshire Council would expect to see full ecological surveys undertaken for these finalised routes.

Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage

In respect of hydrology, flood risk and drainage the Council offer the following comments.

It is noted that a Flood Risk Assessment will be provided to support the Development Consent Order (DCO) application and consultation with the Environment Agency and Local Lead Flood Authority (North Northamptonshire Council) will take place, which is encouraged. Regarding flood risk, Sites within North Northamptonshire (C, D, E, F and BESS) are largely within Flood Zone 1 with a proportion in Flood Zone 3 (part of Site E and part of Site F). Site BESS is largely within Flood Zone 3.

Full surface water drainage detail will be required for all Sites.

NNC Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) advised that the Scoping Report provides sufficient information to be able to comment on the acceptability of the proposed surface water drainage scheme for the proposed development. It is welcomed by North Northamptonshire Council that nothing is proposed to be scoped out of this chapter. In general, the LLFA advise that reports should include calculations of current runoff from site, evidence that "the existing drainage regime of the sites will not be altered", and in the event, it is altered, how this will be addressed. Detailed drainage plans and suitable mitigation methods, a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) Management Plan or Schedule will also need to be submitted.

Ground Conditions and Contamination
In respect of ground conditions and contamination North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

It is acknowledged that a Risk Assessment has been undertaken as part of the Preliminary Risk Assessments and that limited potential sources of contamination have been identified across the Scheme. It is further acknowledged that a Construction Environment Management Plan will be provided with the DCO submission. It is agreed that contamination be scoped out of the Environmental Statement in line with Table 10.4 of the Scoping Report and that the contamination risk can be managed via the mitigation measures proposed.

Minerals
In respect of minerals North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

The safeguarding of minerals is given local and national importance in Section 17 of the NPPF (Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals) and The Northamptonshire Minerals and Wase Local Plan (Adopted July 2017). It is noted that the Scheme will affect areas of safeguarded mineral resource and has the potential to affect allocated and/or permitted mineral workings. It is welcomed by North Northamptonshire Council that a Minerals Assessment will be scoped in the Environmental Statement.

Cultural Heritage
In respect of cultural heritage, the North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

<u>Built Heritage:</u>

The Scoping Report, largely indicates that the following heritage assets will be scoped in:

- All designated built heritage assets within the scheme and 2 kilometres from its boundary.
- All non-designated built heritage assets within the scheme and 1 kilometre from its boundary.
- All heritage assets within 250 metres from the proposed Cable Corridor.

This approach is agreed, and we welcome assurances from the applicant that there is some flexibility, should it be required.

Paragraph 12.3.1 of the scoping report states - Given the scale of the proposals, a 2 kilometres study area for designated heritage assets is sensible. It is welcomed that the applicant assures flexibility to extend the study area to include specific receptors where appropriate.

Paragraph 12.3.2 of the scoping report states - There are no objections to the proposed 1-kilometre study area for non-designated heritage assets, however it is recommended that the same level of flexibility as outlined in 12.3.1 is applied here also.

Paragraph 12.3.3 of the scoping report states - A study area of 250 metres to assess the impact on designated and non-designated heritage assets during the construction phase is appropriate.

Paragraphs 12.3.9 – 12.3.16 of the scoping report states - The figures appear to confirm the statements made within the written summary; however, it would be helpful if the applicant were to share the corresponding shapefiles with the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) and Environmental Statement.

Paragraphs 12.3.21 – 12.3.30 of the scoping report states - The figures appear to confirm the statements made within the written summary; however, it would be helpful if the applicant were to share the corresponding shapefiles with the PEIR and Environmental Statement.

Paragraphs 12.3.31 of the scoping report states - There is no confirmation as to whether the applicant intends to assess and identify any potential, but as yet unidentified, non-designated (built) heritage assets as part of their site visits. There is likely to be several non-designated historic farmstead/ farm complexes, for example.

Paragraph 12.4 of the scoping report states - It is agreed that there is potential for the scheme to have effects upon the settings of built heritage assets during the construction, operational, and decommissioning phase.

Paragraph 12.4.5 of the scoping report states - It is recommended that any vibration assessment extends to built heritage assets within 30 metres of the Cable Corridor, construction access routes, utility diversions, or works areas. It may be the case that heritage assets within the 30 metres buffer could experience impacts from vibration caused by Heavy Goods Vehicle movements, for example, during the construction phase. Commitments and recommendations regarding noise and vibration in terms of

stopping work in the event of unacceptable impacts, monitoring vibration, and reducing vibration (or providing other mitigation) should form part of the Construction Phase Plan.

Paragraphs 12.5.2 – 6 of the scoping report states - All setting assessments should follow the methodology outlined within Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) 2017.

Paragraph 12.5.7 of the scoping report states - Care should be taken not to assume that all Grade ll listed buildings will be of medium heritage sensitivity; there may be instances when a Grade ll listed building should be considered of high (national) heritage sensitivity. For example, some Grade ll listed buildings will be listed because they represent a **nationally significant but localised industry**, such as shoemaking in Northamptonshire.

Paragraph 12.5.10 of the scoping report states – This is agreed. However, North Northamptonshire Council senior built heritage consultant notes that a recent judgement in the High Court has clarified that "negligible effects are material, and while the level of change/ harm may be minimal this still engages paragraphs 206, and 208 of the NPPF. (R (James Hall and Company Limited) v City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council and Co-Operative Group Limited [2019])

Paragraphs 12.5.11- 12 of the scoping report states - Notwithstanding the criteria set out here and within Table 12.2, identified harm to all heritage assets should also be expressed in NPPF terms and the three categories of harm: no harm, less than substantial harm (including negligible harm), and substantial harm.

Archaeology:
It should be noted that at this stage there is a geophysical survey for most of the proposed panel locations, and trial trenching for some of those areas has started; however North Northamptonshire Council planning lead archaeologist have been clear from the start that the trenching must assess areas which the geophysics suggests are blank, as well as those where archaeological remains are visible.

There are numerous known archaeological sites within the areas surveyed and these include Iron Age and Roman settlement and a Roman villa. The Environmental Statement must provide sufficient information to allow formulation of suitable mitigation for these areas and for any areas where new sites are identified by the trenching. Geophysics has limitations and should never be used in isolation to assess sites; it is best employed as part of a suite of techniques which complement each other. While other options apart from trenching have been mentioned in North Northamptonshire Council planning lead archaeologist discussions there has been no commitment so far to carry out evaluation outside areas where the geophysics has detected archaeology. This must be addressed, and it is not acceptable to push the majority of evaluation to a post-consent phase. A proper assessment of the risks of development is crucial.

While it is often stated that solar farm developments are low impact in respect of archaeology, North Northamptonshire Council planning lead archaeologist is increasingly finding out that this is not the case, as older developments are beginning to require maintenance or replacement of piling which can be detrimental to soil profiles

and to any archaeological features or deposits. Furthermore, the decommissioning of these structures, which is almost always not considered at the time of any application, can be extremely damaging. Therefore, North Northamptonshire Council planning lead archaeologist do not agree with the proposal in table 12.4 to scope out impacts during operation and decommissioning.

It is necessary to be as sure as possible that North Northamptonshire Council lead planning archaeologist have fully assessed the archaeological resource within the site – not only for the panel locations but also for the cabling, infrastructure and landscaping. So far, the latter three are not being discussed with North Northamptonshire Council and although it is realised that there are large zones under consideration for the cabling and that this increases the amount of evaluation needed, but without early evaluation there is a very high risk of selecting cable routes which would be expensive and time-consuming to mitigate.

The scale of these proposals makes it even more important to ensure that North Northamptonshire Council planning lead archaeologist have proper assessment and sufficient information to make sound recommendations. The number of archaeological sites which could be affected is currently unknown, and the extent of the proposals increases the likelihood of there being a site or sites of sufficient significance to warrant designation as a Scheduled Monument. It is therefore crucial that adequate evaluation is carried out, and the results included in the Environmental Statement.

Transport and Access
In respect of transport and access North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

Local Highway Authority:
It is noted that a Transport Assessment is to be submitted with the DCO application.

The scope of the Transport Assessment is to be agreed with North Northamptonshire Council and is to include an Abnormal Loads Assessment, Travel Plan, Construction Traffic Management Plan and Public Rights of Way Management Plan.

The application site is likely to be affected by Public Rights of Way. The applicant needs to be made fully aware of their responsibilities in respect of Public Rights of Way which may be affected by the proposed development. When the next stage is reached, North Northamptonshire would be happy to advise.

National Highways
National Highways has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport as strategic highway company under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority, traffic authority and street authority for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The SRN is a critical national asset and as such National Highways work to ensure that it operates and is managed in the public interest, both in respect of current activities and needs as well as in providing effective stewardship of its long-term operation and integrity. In respect of the proposed development, the A45 trunk road is the nearest section of SRN.

Having reviewed the information provided within the Scoping Report, it is apparent that the locations proposed for the solar farm are not likely to impact upon the safe and efficient operation of the SRN. National Highways is therefore satisfied that in terms of the operation of the proposed sites, there shall be no adverse impact to users of the SRN.

National Highways concerns relate primarily to the construction phase of the proposal. It is noted that a Transport Assessment is to be submitted with the DCO. The scope of the Transport Assessment is to be agreed with North Northamptonshire Council and is to include an Abnormal Loads Assessment, Travel Plan, and Construction Traffic Management Plan.

Regarding potential cable routing, a range of routing options are identified, from National Highways perspective, where these routes are to be accommodated within, alongside, or beneath the SRN the relevant licences and permissions shall need to be obtained from National Highways.

It is noted that the construction phase and operational phase will be scoped in the Environmental Statement and the decommissioning phase scoped out as it will broadly follow what is set out in the construction phase, i.e. short term and temporary. This approach is considered acceptable.

Noise and Vibration
In respect of noise and vibration the Council offer the following comments.

Table 14.9 of the scoping report details those noise and vibration matters to be scoped in the Environmental Statement and Table 14.10 details those noise and vibration matters to be scoped out of the Environmental Statement. The justification for both is reasonable and agreed by North Northamptonshire Council.

Glint and Glare
In respect of glint and glare North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

No comment to make on this topic.

North Northamptonshire Council are pleased to see that dwellings, road infrastructure and aviation infrastructure is to be scoped in the Environmental Statement.

Electromagnetic Fields
In respect of electromagnetic fields North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

It is noted that no surveys have been carried out regarding electromagnetic fields as part of the Scoping Report and that the route of the cable corridor has not yet been determined. The Scoping Report concludes that electromagnetic fields from the BESS, substations, transformers, and Photo Voltaic inverters will be scoped out of the Environmental Statement.

Human Health is a material consideration and North Northamptonshire Council consider that given the detail of the cable corridor routing and the siting of the BESS, substations, transformers, and Photo Voltaic inverters have not been finalised, this should be scoped in.

Air Quality
In respect of air quality, North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

The scope for this topic is agreed providing that mitigation measures are reported in the Construction Environmental Management Plan.

Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation
In respect of socio-economics, tourism and recreation North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

Paragraph 18.3.1 of the Scoping Report notes that the scale and geographic distribution of the Scheme means that its effects have the potential to impact a significant geographical area and the associated population. It is noted that agricultural and farming practices and activity will be explored within the Environmental Statement and human health impacts as a result of changes to the socio-economic and recreational environment will also be assessed in the Environmental Statement. The conclusions set out in paragraph 18.5 of the scoping report are considered appropriate in terms of scoping in (socio-economic impacts during construction, during operation and during decommissioning and impacts on tourism and recreation during construction and operation). However, North Northamptonshire Council disagree with paragraph 18.5.2 in that crime should be scoped out of any stage.

The rate of reported offences on solar farms doubled from 2021 to 2022, which was principally driven by an increase in solar panel theft. The rate of reported offending increased by a further approximately 24% from 2022 to 2023. A significant increase in solar cable theft was slightly offset by a reduction in solar panel theft. So far, 2024 trends are mirroring those seen in 2023. However the volumes of cable that have been targeted this year are consistently very large, which has not been seen in recent years on the same scale. There have been multiple offences where over 50 kilometres of cable have been stolen in one night. It should be noted that repeat victimisation of solar farms is common. Also, solar farms under construction are being targeted. This is because cable is delivered on drums and panels in pallets, which make it easy for offenders to manoeuvre and steal large volumes in a short space of time. This information is from OPAL (National Intel for Derious Organised Acquisitive Crime).

It is imperative that the Applicants do integrate security and crime prevention into the development from the outset, not just consider it. This will prevent the Applicants from becoming victims of crime, reducing the performance of the site, cost them money as well as putting personnel in danger.

Crime should be scoped into all stages, and the applicants should provide a security and crime prevention strategy for the construction phase and a security and crime prevention statement for the finished site.

Human Health and Wellbeing
In respect of human health and wellbeing North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

It is agreed that elements of this section will be covered in both a section of its own and touched on within other sections within the Environmental Statement such as landscape and visual impact, climate change or transport and access. Table 19.5 of the scoping report (Health Effects to be scoped in) is considered reasonable and accepted. Table 19.6 of the scoping report (Health Effects to be scoped out) is considered reasonable and accepted.

Arboriculture
In respect of arboriculture North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

It is noted that a Preliminary Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Outline Arboricultural Method Statement will accompany the DCO submission once the final layout and construction details are available, and all surveys completed. There is also the presence of Ancient Woodland in the North Northamptonshire Council sites vicinity which are 'irreplaceable habitats'. The Scoping Summary at Table 20.4 of the Scoping Report is considered reasonable and fair subject to the submission of an Outline Arboricultural Method Statement and a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan to support the DCO submission.

Agricultural Circumstances
In respect of agricultural circumstances, North Northamptonshire Council offer the following comments.

North Northamptonshire Council are pleased to see that soils and agriculture assessment will be scoped and included in the Environmental Statement.

Other Environmental Matters
<u>Lighting</u>
Currently, it does not appear that there will be any permanent exterior lighting on any of the sites in question. It is agreed that this does not have to be a standalone chapter, however it will need to be addressed in other relevant chapters (for example landscape, biodiversity, transport etc).

<u>Major Accidents and Disasters</u>
The scope for this topic is agreed however the risk of battery fire/explosion should be clearly addressed within the Environmental Statement. It is noted that this is picked up in the Air Quality and Socio-Economic chapters.

<u>Waste</u>
The proposed approach to this chapter is agreed by North Northamptonshire Council.

Telecommunications, Utilities and Television Receptors
The proposed approach to this chapter is agreed by North Northamptonshire Council.

Planning Obligations
This application is a Scoping Opinion therefore at this stage no detailed comments are provided regarding planning obligations. North Northamptonshire Council can however confirm that, should a DCO application progress, it may seek planning obligations to mitigate the impact of the development.

Summary
Subject to the detailed comments above, North Northamptonshire Council are broadly agreeable to the proposed scope and methodology of the Environmental Statement. However, key issues or proposed approaches to the Environmental Statement preparation which North Northamptonshire Council do not support from the information presented (or where additional clarity is required) are:

1. The Environmental Statement provides full detail regarding alternatives, including of those within the Sites selected.
2. The Environmental Statement should consider the cumulative effect of other large scale solar schemes that are currently in operation in the North Northamptonshire Council District.
3. The Environmental Statement should refer to all relevant Local Plan policies and these should be considered and included in future assessments.
4. All viewpoint photography to be presented as Type 1 visuals in accordance with the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19, Visual Representation of Development Proposals. It would also be advised that a number of the photographs are presented as Type 4 photomontages to help guide our review of the scheme and its impact on visual receptors.
5. The Environmental Statement should include a number of photomontages at 60+ years to show how mitigation measures will benefit the landscape. Ideally, these would show the view after the development has been decommissioned as this will demonstrate the remaining long-term legacy of the scheme.
6. Further clarity is required regarding the landscape value criteria definitions in Table 7.2.1.3: Landscape Receptor Value.
7. Sequential views are required when assessing visual effects along transport and public rights of way receptors.
8. Night-time effects should be scoped into the Environmental Statement.
9. Local landscape character needs to be assessed and included in the Environmental Statement..
10. Existing vegetation to be mapped and any loss of or impacts to hedgerows, trees or woodland which are likely to result in significant effects on landscape and visual amenity are assessed in the Environmental Statement..
11. Full ecological surveys undertaken for the cable corridor finalised routes.
12. The proposal secures at least 10% net gain in biodiversity to ensure that the value of the development exceeds the pre-development on site habitat value by at least 10%.

13. It is recommended that any vibration assessment extends to built heritage assets within 30 metres of the Cable Corridor, construction access routes, utility diversions, or works areas.
14. The Environmental Statement must provide sufficient information to allow formulation of suitable mitigation for the numerous known archaeological sites within the areas surveyed and for any areas where new sites are identified by the trenching.
15. Evaluation outside areas where the geophysics has detected archaeology is required. It is not acceptable to push the majority of evaluation to a post-consent phase.
16. In terms of archaeology, North Northamptonshire Council planning lead archaeologist do not agree with the proposal in table 12.4 to scope out impacts during operation and decommissioning.
17. The archaeological resource within the site must be fully assessed and included in the Environmental Statement., this includes the cabling, infrastructure and landscaping.
18. The scope of the Transport Assessment is to be agreed with North Northamptonshire Council.
19. Electromagnetic fields from the BESS, substations, transformers and PV inverters should be scoped in the Environmental Statement.
20. The risk of battery fire/explosion should be clearly addressed within the Environmental Statement.
21. Crime prevention during construction, during operation and during decommissioning should be scoped in.
22. Wildlife risk and impact on biodiversity should be scoped in.
23. Impacts on urban heat on biodiversity needs to be scoped in.

This letter forms a response from North Northamptonshire Council on the applicant's scoping opinion for Green Hill Solar Farm NSIP and would be grateful if the comments contained within it can be considered as part of your formal scoping response.

Yours sincerely

George Candler
Executive Director of Place and Economy

[redacted]

From: Before You Dig [redacted]
Sent: 25 July 2024 15:37
To: Green Hill Solar
Cc: Before You Dig
Subject: RE: EXT:GHSF - Green Hill Solar Farm - . EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Hi

NGN has a number of gas assets in the vicinity of some of the identified “site development” locations. It is a possibility that some of these sites could be recorded as Major Accident Hazard Pipelines(MAHP), whilst other sites could contain High Pressure gas and as such there are Industry recognised restrictions associated to these installations which would effectively preclude close and certain types of development. The regulations now include “Population Density Restrictions” or limits within certain distances of some of our “HP” assets.

The gas assets mentioned above form part of the Northern Gas Networks “bulk supply” High Pressure Gas Transmission” system and are registered with the HSE as Major Accident Hazard Pipelines.
Any damage or disruption to these assets is likely to give rise to grave safety, environmental and security of supply issues.

NGN would expect you or anyone involved with the site (or any future developer) to take these restrictions into account and apply them as necessary in consultation with ourselves. We would be happy to discuss specific sites further or provide more details at your locations as necessary.

If you give specific site locations, we would be happy to provide gas maps of the area which include the locations of our assets.
(In terms of High Pressure gas pipelines, the routes of our MAHP’s have already been lodged with members of the local Council’s Planning Department)

Kind regards,

Donna Casey

Admin Assistant – Customer Operation Support
Northern Gas Networks

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Parish Clerk [redacted]
Sent: 13 August 2024 14:27
To: Green Hill Solar
Subject: Old Parish Council's Response RE Green Hill Solar Farm

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: EST

> You don't often get email from [redacted]. Learn why this is important

Dear Sir/Madam,

Old Parish Council confirmed at a meeting, which took place on the 7th of August, that at this stage they have no comment on the Scoping Document.

They would, however, like to be kept informed at all stages of the proposed project.

Kind Regards,
Sarah Gresly

Clerk to Old Parish Council
Please consider the environment - do you really need to print this email?

[redacted]

From: clerk [redacted]
Sent: 22 August 2024 15:38
To: Green Hill Solar
Subject: EN010170-000015 - Green Hill Solar Farm

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing on behalf of Scaldwell Parish Council in response to your letter dated 25th July 2024 regarding:

Application by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Green Hill Solar Farm (the Proposed Development).

Scoping consultation and notification of the Applicant's contact details and duty to make available information to the Applicant if requested.

The Parish Council objects to the proposed development of Green Hill Solar Farm and has the following comments on the scoping document:

1. The Parish Council is concerned over the size and location of the proposed development;

2. The Parish Council has concerns regarding the location of battery packs and the fire risk these may pose. The risk of fire and how this would be dealt with has not been adequately addressed in the information provided. There has not been sufficient assessment of the environmental impact a fire may pose and the risk of contaminated land;

3. The Parish Council has concerns regarding the water levels affected by digging to build the development. There is insufficient information on the environmental impact of this;

4. There are insufficient assessments on the impact on wildlife which the development would have during both the building phase and longer term when the solar panels are operational;

5. The Parish Council is concerned regarding the impact of the electromagnetic fields on wildlife. Whilst the information provided states there will be no impact on wildlife, this is disputed by other studies;

6. The Parish Council is concerned regarding the radiation produced by the proposed solar farm. Studies have shown that this can have an impact on people and it is important that this be sufficiently considered, especially given the proximity of the solar farm to settlements;

7. The Parish Council is concerned regarding the loss of valuable arable land. This has an impact on food security as well as the visual amenity of the area;

8. The Parish Council is also concerned regarding the glare which will be produced by the solar panels and the impact of the development on the visual amenity of the landscape;

9. The visual impact on the character of the local rural landscape is also of concern as the development is being built in greenbelt land. It would be more suited to brownfield sites or industrial areas;

10. The proposed development is at odds with many of the policies within the West Northamptonshire Council local plan.

Yours faithfully,

Katrina Jones
Parish Clerk & RFO
Scaldwell Parish Council
[redacted]

UK Health Security Agency

Environmental Hazards and Emergencies Department
Seaton House, City Link
London Road
Nottingham, NG2 4LA

nsipconsultations@ukhsa.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ukhsa

Your Ref: EN010170-000015
Our Ref: 67511

Ms Alison Down
Environment Services
Operations Group 3
The Planning Inspectorate
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol BS1 6PN

19th August 2024

Dear Ms Down

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
Green Hill Solar Farm Limited EN010170-000015
Scoping Consultation Stage

Thank you for including the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) in the scoping consultation phase of the above application. ***Please note that we request views from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and the response provided below is sent on behalf of both UKHSA and OHID.*** The response is impartial and independent.

The health of an individual or a population is the result of a complex interaction of a wide range of different determinants of health, from an individual's genetic make-up to lifestyles and behaviours, and the communities, local economy, built and natural environments to global ecosystem trends. All developments will have some effect on the determinants of health, which in turn will influence the health and wellbeing of the general population, vulnerable groups, and individual people. Although assessing impacts on health beyond direct effects from for example emissions to air or road traffic incidents is complex, there is a need to ensure a proportionate assessment focused on an application's significant effects.

Having considered the submitted scoping report we wish to make the following specific comments and recommendations:

Environmental Public Health
We understand that the promoter will wish to avoid unnecessary duplication and that many issues including air quality, emissions to water, waste, contaminated land etc. will be

covered elsewhere in the Environmental Statement (ES). We believe the summation of relevant issues into a specific section of the report provides a focus which ensures that public health is given adequate consideration. The section should summarise key information, risk assessments, proposed mitigation measures, conclusions, and residual impacts, relating to human health. Compliance with the requirements of National Policy Statements and relevant guidance and standards should also be highlighted.

In terms of the level of detail to be included in an ES, we recognise that the differing nature of projects is such that their impacts will vary. UKHSA and OHID's predecessor organisation Public Health England produced an advice document *Advice on the content of Environmental Statements accompanying an application under the NSIP Regime*', setting out aspects to be addressed within the Environmental Statement[1]. This advice document and its recommendations are still valid and should be considered when preparing an ES. Please note that where impacts relating to health and/or further assessments are scoped out, promoters should fully explain and justify this within the submitted documentation.

Recommendation

Our position is that pollutants associated with road traffic or combustion, particularly particulate matter and oxides of nitrogen are non-threshold; i.e, an exposed population is likely to be subject to potential harm at any level and that reducing public exposure to non-threshold pollutants (such as particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide) below air quality standards will have potential public health benefits. We support approaches which minimise or mitigate public exposure to non-threshold air pollutants, address inequalities (in exposure) and maximise co-benefits (such as physical exercise). We encourage their consideration during development design, environmental and health impact assessment, and development consent.

Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)

UKHSA notes the intention to include an assessment of the potential impact of electromagnetic fields pertaining to the Cable Corridor in the Environmental Statement for the construction and operation of the scheme (section 16.5 of the Scoping Report). Further details on performing the assessment are available in the UKHSA reference document - Advice on the content of Environmental Statements accompanying an application under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning Regime[1].

Human Health and Wellbeing - OHID

This section of OHIDs response, identifies the wider determinants of health and wellbeing we expect the Environmental Statement to address, to demonstrate whether they are likely to give rise to significant effects. OHID has focused its approach on scoping determinants of

[1] https://khub.net/documents/135939561/390856715/Advice+on+the+content+of+environmental+statements+accompanying+an+application+under+the+Nationally+Significant+Infrastructure+Planning+Regime.pdf/a86b5521-46cc-98e4-4cad-f81a6c58f2e2?t=1615998516658

health and wellbeing under four themes, which have been derived from an analysis of the wider determinants of health mentioned in the National Policy Statements. The four themes are:

- Access
- Traffic and Transport
- Socioeconomic
- Land Use

Having considered the submitted scoping Report OHID wish to make the following specific comments and recommendations.

Baseline health data

The scoping of mental health into the assessment is welcome given the potential for community anxiety from such a scheme. Mental well-being is fundamental to achieving a healthy, resilient and thriving population. It underpins healthy lifestyles, physical health, educational attainment, employment and productivity, relationships, community safety and cohesion and quality of life. A scheme of this scale and nature has impacts on the over-arching protective factors, which are:

• Enhancing control
• Increasing resilience and community assets
• Facilitating participation and promoting inclusion.

The ES should provide additional local data on wider public mental health than is currently contained within the scoping report. The local public health team may have data to to supplement desk-based findings.

Health baseline data should be sufficiently granular to response local communities' health baseline and sensitivities, currently only local authority level data is provided. Data at least at ward level should be provided where available and LSOA if available.

Effective and meaningful community engagement will be important in understanding community anxiety and as a potential mitigation action. Community responses can be a useful source of information.

Recommendation

Advice should also be sought from the local public health team on additional local data. The baseline data should include mental health and wellbeing data. When estimating community anxiety and stress in particular, a qualitative assessment may be most appropriate. This may involve conducting resident surveys but also information received through public consultations, including community engagement exercises. Robust and meaningful consultation with the local community will be an important mitigation measure, in addition to informing the assessment and subsequent mitigation measures.

Health baseline data should be reported at appropriate geographic scale to represent local communities, e.g. at least ward level or LSOA data where available.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of UK Health Security Agency

Please mark any correspondence for the attention of National Infrastructure Planning Administration.

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 22 August 2024 18:35
To: Green Hill Solar
Subject: Re: EN010170 - Green Hill Solar Farm - EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation

> You don't often get email from [redacted]. Learn why this is important

Good afternoon Molly,

At its Ordinary Parish Council meeting on 6th August, my council agreed to submit the following comments:
The Scoping Opinion should include consideration of:
• Solar panels on warehousing taking precedence over green field sites.
• Mechanism for discounts on energy bills for communities living close to solar farms.
• Provision of a community benefit fund

Kind regards,
Emma

Clerk & RFO
Upton Parish Council
[redacted]
Web: www.upton-pc.gov.uk

UPTON
PARISH COUNCIL

Walgrave Parish Council
Serving the people of Walgrave

22nd August 2024

Alison L Down
Environmental Services
EIA Advisor on behalf of the Secretary of State

Dear Alison,

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

Application by Green Hill Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Green Hill Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

Thank you for the consultation letter regarding the above Scoping Opinion. Walgrave Parish Council wish to make the following comments:

- **Statutory Consultees (Page 13)** – We would be grateful for the inclusion of Stuart Andrew the MP for Daventry Constituency;

- **Section 3 – The Site and Its Wider Context** – For Site A it should be noted that Newlands Road is a quiet lane. Quiet lanes are designated minor rural roads intended to pay special attention to the needs of walkers, cyclists, horse riders and the mobility impaired. They are designed to enable users to enjoy country lanes in greater safety and encourage car drivers to respect more vulnerable road users. Viewpoints should be added from Newlands Road looking East.

  Green Lane, off Newlands Road, is currently a well-used permissive route. Viewpoints looking east and west from Green Lane should be added.

  Site A2 is very different in character from Site A and, therefore, cannot be judged to be similar to Site A. Therefore, a full assessment needs to be undertaken separately from Site A.

- **Section 6 – Climate Change** – Consideration should be given to including the impact of reflective heat from the solar panels;

- **Section 7 – Landscape –** A review of Table 7.1 on page 127 has been undertaken, and it includes the visual locations for Site A, however, no visual impact statement points are noted for Site A2, which has a completely different visual impact. We also believe that consideration should be given to additional viewpoints as below:

- For Site A2, consideration for further viewpoints from the Bridleway to the south and from Kettering Road;
- For Site A, consideration to additional viewpoints from Newlands Road as it is a designated Quiet Lane; and
- For Site A, consideration to viewpoints from Green Lane off Newlands Road.

The EIA Scoping Report states that Sites A and A2 will not have a panoramic impact. This is incorrect, as A2 has a panoramic aspect across the valley from Kettering Road.

- **Section 14 – Noise** – Site A2 has been omitted and assumptions for Site A2 should not be made based on Site A.

- **Section 15 – Glint and Glare** – Consideration should be given to Glint and Glare affecting the following routes:
  - Newlands Road with 'Quiet Lane' status and Green Lane off Newlands Road;
  - A43;
  - Kettering Road (leading to the A43 from Walgrave);
  - Bridle Way running one length of Site A2;
  - Equestrian Stables on Newlands Road;

  There is a private airstrip on Lavender Hill, just off the A43 North of Redhouse Road, that has not been considered in the scoping document.

  Furthermore, if Site A2 were to go ahead, this would be close to Sywell Aerodrome and this needs consideration.

- **Section 18 - Socio-Economics** – We request that the impact on house prices be scoped in.

Beyond the above, Walgrave Parish Council has no further comments, and look forward to being consulted when the formal application is made.

Yours Sincerely

N Wright – Clerk [redacted]
T Althorpe – Chair [redacted]

Planning Service
Place Directorate

West Northamptonshire Council
The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE
[redacted]
Web: www.westnorthants.gov.uk

Planning Inspectorate
Alison L Down
EIA Advisor
Environmental Services
Operations Group 3
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

Your Ref: EN010170-000015

Contact: Chris Burton

Telephone No: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]

Date: 22 August 2024

Dear Madam

Application Ref **2024/3623/SCOP**

Proposal **Request for EIA Scoping consultation**

Location **Green Hill Solar Farm**

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY SCOPING CONSULTATION FOR GREEN HILL SOLAR FARM

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) were consulted on the 25 July 2024 as a statutory consultee for the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) application for an electricity generating station with a capacity of up to 500 megawatts (MW) comprising of ground mounted solar arrays and associated development including energy storage, grid connection infrastructure and other infrastructure integral to the construction, operation and maintenance of the scheme.

As a statutory consultee the below provides the LPA's opinion of the submitted Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report (Rev A) by Lanpro Services dated July 2024.

Internal Consultee Responses

The following consultation responses have been received, internally, by the LPA:

Consultee	Comment
WNC Ecology	Having reviewed the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report (Rev A) by Lanpro Services dated July 2024 I confirm that the scope of the Ecology and Biodiversity Assessment (Chapter 8) detailed within the report is a largely appropriate level of assessment with the

	level and range of surveys that I would expect for a project of this scale. I have the following additional comments: The cable route could cross Functionally Linked Land in respect to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA. The impacts, including temporary, should be assessed with appropriate wintering bird surveys of the cable route carried out as required in line with the relevant SPD to inform the impact assessment. In respect of the level of wintering bird surveys required in respect of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA, particularly in respect to Functionally Linked Land, the 1 years' worth of surveys should be assumed as a minimum and depending on the findings of those surveys further years surveys maybe required in line with the relevant SPD. The impacts on animal movements within landscape which will be posed by the proposals should be considered within the ES, for example impact of new security fencing on mammal movements e.g. deer, badgers and bats. Given the largely arable habitats in scope for the proposals, consideration should be given within the planned floral surveys to ensure the presence of potential protected/notable arable weeds is in scope. Consideration does not appear to have been given in the scoping assessment to the potential for White Clawed Crayfish in the watercourses that maybe affected. Pitsford Water SSSI is designated for amongst other things its bird interest. As with the SPA birds associated with Pitsford Water are likely to utilise the surrounding farmland, this should be taken into account within the Impact Assessment as the project will have a significant impact on the habitats within the area.

	The inclusion of a biodiversity net gain delivery in Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Plan (OEPMP) and Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (OLEMP) as referenced in 8.5.15 is welcomed. An appropriate Biodiversity Net Gain metric calculator should be utilised to show measurable net gains can be achieved through the proposals. The report details that the Great Crested Newt District Level Licencing Scheme will be utilised to mitigate and compensate for the potential impacts of the proposal on Great Crested Newts. West Northamptonshire Council holds the District Licence for great crested newts with NatureSpace Partnership administering the scheme on behalf of the council. West Northamptonshire Council would be the authorising authority as the licence holder.
WNC Local Highways Authority	The LHA does not comment on environmental impacts and does not have any comments to make on this EIA scoping opinion request but does note from the submitted document that the applicant intends to submit a separate Transport Assessment, Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan and Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) with the DCO application. It will be necessary to fully scope these documents with the LHA prior to submission of the DCO.
Lead Local Flood Authority	We note that the applicant is planning to submit a flood risk assessment and drainage strategy to support the planning application. Our information requirements in support of applications are outlined in our document Local Standards and Guidance for Surface Water Drainage in Northamptonshire document. We have no further comments on the scoping opinion.
Archaeology	I have already had a good deal of discussion with the applicant's archaeological consultants about the level

	of information needed to assess the impacts on below ground archaeology. At this stage we have geophysical survey for most of the proposed panel locations, and trial trenching for some of those areas has started; however I have been clear from the start that the trenching must assess areas which the geophysics suggests are blank, as well as those where archaeological remains are visible. There are numerous known archaeological sites within the areas surveyed and these include Iron Age and Roman settlement and a Roman villa. The EIA must therefore provide sufficient information to allow formulation of suitable mitigation for these areas and for any areas where new sites are identified by the trenching. Geophysics has limitations and should never be used in isolation to assess sites; it is best employed as part of a suite of techniques which complement each other. While other options apart from trenching have also been mentioned in our discussions there has been no commitment so far to carry out evaluation outside areas where the geophysics has detected archaeology. This must be addressed, and it is not acceptable to push the majority of evaluation to a post-consent phase. A proper assessment of the risks of development is crucial. While it is often stated that solar farm developments are low impact in respect of archaeology, we are increasingly finding out that this is not the case, as older developments are beginning to require maintenance or replacement of piling which can be detrimental to soil profiles and to any archaeological features or deposits. Furthermore the decommissioning of these structures, which is almost always not considered at the time of application, can be extremely damaging. Therefore I do not agree with the proposal in table 12.4 to scope out

	impacts during operation and decommissioning. It is necessary to be as sure as possible that we have fully assessed the archaeological resource within the site – not only for the panel locations but also for the cabling, infrastructure and landscaping. So far the latter three are not being discussed with me. Of course I realise that there are large zones under consideration for the cabling and that this increases the amount of evaluation needed, but without early evaluation there is a very high risk of selecting cable routes which would be expensive and time-consuming to mitigate.
WNC Policy	Thank you for consulting the Planning Policy Team on this Scoping Opinion request. Having reviewed the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report (Rev A) by Lanpro Services, it is confirmed that any future proposals will be required to comply with the requirements of the relevant development plan policies.

LPA Commentary on Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report

The following sets out the LPA's commentary on each relevant section of the submitted Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report (Rev A). The LPA is mainly concerned with Sites A1, A2 and B, as they sit within the LPA's determinative boundary, but consideration has been given to the wider cumulative impact of the scheme. It is hoped that the following commentary will provide a useful backdrop for the applicant's Environmental Statement's (ES) submission.

Climate Change

No comment

Landscape and Visual Impact

The LPA is in broad agreement with receptors and viewpoints proposed.

Section 15.4 of the reports sets out that impacts on Public Rights of Way (PROW's) and Horse Riders should be scoped out of the Glint and Glare assessment due the low significance. It is the LPA's view that though such an approach may be acceptable for a single solar farm, under the 50 mw NSIP limit, the cumulative impact on PROW means that many miles of footpaths will be impacted, potentially harming enjoyment of the countryside.

This cumulative impact is further pronounced because of the potential impact on residents living to the east of Northampton and west of Wellingborough, as large swathes of countryside between the two settlements will be impacted by the introduction of an urbanising feature, with the potential risk for coalescence of the settlements.

As such the LPA the believes that PROW's and Horse Facilities should be upgraded to at least a medium sensitivity.

Ecology and Biodiversity

The LPA are of the view that the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report is largely an appropriate level of assessment with the level and range of surveys that I would expect for a project of this scale though the LPA do have a number of additional comments

The cable route could cross Functionally Linked Land in respect to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA. The impacts, including temporary, should be assessed with appropriate wintering bird surveys, of the cable route carried out as required in line with the relevant SPD to inform the impact assessment.

A link to the Council's website and the relevant SPD is below:

https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/supplementary-planning-documents-spds-other-guides-and-village-design-statements/west

In respect of the level of wintering bird surveys required in respect of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA, particularly in respect to Functionally Linked Land, the 1 years' worth of surveys should be assumed as a minimum and depending on the findings of those surveys further years surveys maybe required in line with the relevant SPD.

The impacts on animal movements within landscape which will be posed by the proposals should be considered within the ES, for example impact of new security fencing on mammal movements e.g. deer, badgers and bats.

Given the largely arable habitats in scope for the proposals consideration should be given within the planned floral surveys to ensure the presence of potential protected/notable arable weeds is in scope.

Consideration does not appear to have been given in the scoping assessment to the potential for White Clawed Crayfish in the watercourses that maybe affected.

Pitsford Water SSSI is designated for amongst other things its bird interest. As with the SPA, birds associated with Pitsford Water are likely to utilise the surrounding farmland, this should be taking into account within the Impact Assessment as the project will have a significant impact on the habitats within the area.

The inclusion of a biodiversity net gain delivery in Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Plan (OEPMP) and Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (OLEMP) as referenced in 8.5.15 is welcomed. An appropriate Biodiversity Net Gain metric calculator should be utilised to show measurable net gains can be achieved through the proposals.

The report details that the Great Crested Newt District Level Licencing Scheme will be utilised to mitigate and compensate for the potential impacts of the proposal on Great Crested Newts.

West Northamptonshire Council holds the District Licence for great crested newts with NatureSpace Partnership administering the scheme on behalf of the council. West Northamptonshire Council would be the authorising authority as the licence holder.

Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage

No Comment

Ground Conditions and Contamination

No Comment

Minerals

No Comment

Cultural Heritage

The LPA's Archaeological officer has been in contact with the applicant's archaeological team and has held a number of discussions. As set out in the commentary (above) there are some reservations over the applicant's push to condition physical archaeological work. It is recommended that this dialogue channel remains open.

The LPA have specific issue with the proposed removal of the operational and decommissioning phases of the site from the ES. It is the LPA's view that much of the damage to archaeological remains is caused by the removal of the support columns.

It is not unplausible to suggest that in a 20/30 year time period the applicant may wish to change the type of solar panels, which may also require new piling or the removal of the current supports. Such actions could cause significant damage to buried remains and should be included within the ES.

Transport and Access

The LPA note the applicant's comments with regards to decommissioning and that this can be scoped out. The LPA recognise that no traffic modelling for 60 years is available and that no one can, with certainty, state what will and will not happen, however, this should not mean a complete absence of assessment. Further it may be that substantial refits of the site may be required throughout its life time, these impacts must also be included and assessed as they could include the replacement of the current panels and supports, seeing a potentially far greater impact than that of just construction and decommission.

Noise and Vibration

No Comment

Glint and Glare

See comment to Landscape and Visual Impact

Electromagnetic Fields

No comment

Air Quality

No Comment

Socio-Economic, Tourism and Recreation

As set out under the Landscape and Visual Impact heading, there is a potential for an impact on recreational pursuits in the countryside due to the scale and massing of the solar farm. The ES should explore the impact on recreational walking, horse riding and other outdoor pursuits, with particular attention focused on the proposed sites to the east of Northampton and west of Wellingborough. This area is particularly sensitive because of the risk of coalescence between the two, large settlements, and the potential reliance of residents in this area of the open countryside.

Human Health and Wellbeing

As with Socio-Economic, Tourism and Recreation, the impact on the potential degradation of PROWS should be considered

Arboriculture

Though in general agreement the LPA would advise that is appears hedgerow's have not been included in the assessment. Hedgerows form an important function with regards to landscape, screening of potential development and overall biodiversity and so should be included within the ES.

Agricultural

No comment

Other Environmental Matters

No comment

Cumulative Effect

As set out, the LPA have concerns regarding the cumulative impact on PROW's and the recreational use of the countryside. Though receptive to the idea that Solar Farms require large, rural areas for construction, the overall expanse and easy accessibility that currently the residents of Wellingborough and Northampton have to the countryside may be eroded by the scale of this proposal.

Summary

The LPA broadly concurs with the applicant's Scoping Submission, it appears well thought out and a good basis to assess the large, and far reaching, environmental impacts that may arise due to progression of this solar farm.

The LPA's main area of concern is that of the decommissioning phase. Though accepting the application will have a 60 year time life, where many impacts will be difficult to assess, the LPA disagree with the assessment throughout the Scoping Report that the impacts of decommissioning will be the same as that of constructing the scheme. Further, the ES should also consider the impact of a refitting of solar panels during the 60 year lifetime. It is also not unreasonable to assume that solar technology will evolve, with the potential for the proposed solar panels and battery storage to be replaced in a 20/30 year time line.

The LPA have also set out some concerns with regards to the ecological submission and have set out where they think further assessment maybe required.

Yours faithfully

James Rodger – Acting Assistant Director of Planning