

The Planning Inspectorate  
FAO: Alison Down  
Via email to:  
[greenhill@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:greenhill@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

17th September 2024

**Our Ref: 24/01879/CONINF**  
**Your Ref: EN010170-000015**

Dear Ms Down,

**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 in relation to the consultation on the Scoping Opinion for the above development.

Milton Keynes City Council has reviewed the applicant's EIA Scoping Report (prepared by: Lanpro, dated: July 2024). Our comments relate to the Site G and the cable route search area within the Council's boundary.

The Council recognises that this response is being sent beyond the statutory consultation period and will not be including in the Planning Inspectorate's Scoping Opinion, but understands that the comments will be forwarded to the applicant separately.

In general, it is considered that the Scoping Report clearly sets out a comprehensive scope within each topic area for inclusion within the Environmental Statement. Comments have been received from specialist officers within the Council, but in the main they concur with the conclusions in the

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[planning.services@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:planning.services@milton-keynes.gov.uk)  
01908 691691

Civic, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes MK9 3EJ  
[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk)

applicant's Scoping Report, and are therefore not repeated here. The following specific comments are noted:

#### Chapter 5 Legislative Context and Energy Policy

The applicant has incorrectly identified the local plan for Milton Keynes as the Core Strategy from 2013. This was replaced by Plan:MK in 2019, which is correctly noted elsewhere in the document. The Minerals Local Plan from 2017 is correctly referenced. The emerging Milton Keynes City Plan (regulation 18 consultation draft July 2024) should be included in the list of emerging plans.

#### Chapter 7 – Landscape and Visual Impact

The LVIA should make reference to the latest Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment 2022, and the guidance under the relevant Landscape Character Profile.

The scoping request mentions a list of viewpoints, but these are not shown on a map for consideration, the project LVIA consultants should provide the Council with proposed locations for viewpoints and photomontages on a plan with sample photographs for review by the Council's Landscape and Conservation teams.

Obvious suggestions for viewpoints would be:

- Nearest footpaths and bridleways including but not limited to the Three Shires Way and Milton Keynes Boundary Walk;
- Registered parks and gardens;
- Setting / grounds of listed properties;
- Residential properties with clear sight lines towards the development in particular but not limited to Lavendon; and
- Public roads (e.g. laybys / gateways where viewpoint photos can be taken).

In Milton Keynes, the GF9 and 13 field parcels east of Lavendon bridleway BW 15 are located in identified locally attractive landscape which is currently non-designated but being considered as a designation in the local plan review. Specific to this site the area would fall within the Ouse Valley Special Landscape Area, the relevant text starts from page 80 of the scoping report.

#### Chapter 8 – Ecology

If the survey work in relation to bats suggests the adjacent ancient woodland may support roosts of high conservation significance or could support rare bat species which favour ancient woodland, additional advanced survey techniques may need to be deployed to understand the potential impacts of the solar farm on the local bat population. Recently published primary literature (Journal of

Applied Ecology) suggests solar farms may have significant adverse impacts on bat activity, therefore we would want to be sure there were no adverse effects on the bats, or the ancient woodland, given it is so close.

### Chapter 9 Hydrology, Flood Risk Drainage

Lavendon is a Critical Drainage Catchment, as identified in the Milton Keynes Surface Water Management Plans (2016). It has a recorded flood history as per published Section 19 Flood Investigations carried out by the LLFA. Plan:MK states that development within a CDC, should investigate the potential for the scheme to reduce or mitigate existing risk in the surrounding area. There is an opportunity for this development to incorporate additional SuDS or Natural Flood Management measures within the site, which would reduce flood risk overall downstream in accordance with the NPPF and PPG.

Whilst the applicant references the Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea), guidance makes note of development in current and future medium and high flood risk areas considering all sources of flooding, including areas at risk of surface water flooding.

The applicant suggests that solar panels will shed water to the undeveloped surface. Solar farms may be considered to have a low risk in relation to surface water flooding, however this is only the case when there are mitigation measures in place. The use of SuDS features such as buffers, swales, filter strips, and filter drains to interrupt and slow the channelised flows should be considered. A supporting land management plan to keep land in good condition is also required. Lack of maintenance leads to an increased concentration of surface water and erosion in such areas, which can create channelised flows, increasing the volumes and rates of surface water discharge.

The LLFA are pleased to note the incorporation of permeable surfaces and French drains. However, the overall impermeable area used to calculate the required volume of storage should include any areas of permeable/porous surfaces as these will be positively drained into the system. Replacing the existing topsoil with a permeable surface will not entirely replicate the greenfield situation.

The document states that the ordinary watercourses are the responsibility of the LLFA to maintain. For the avoidance of doubt, riparian owners are responsible for a stretch of watercourse that runs on, under or on the boundary of their land. As LLFA, we consent new work, which affects the flow of ordinary watercourses and have the power to enforce remedial works on unapproved construction work within ordinary watercourses or those not undertaking their riparian responsibilities. Planning permission does not remove the need for consent.

## Chapter 11 Minerals

Establishing the significance of the impact on mineral resources needs to consider the extent, magnitude, duration and reversibility of the scheme as well as the extent, likely quality and situation of the mineral resource. While the scheme would be operational over approximately 60 years it would ultimately be a temporary land use, and any mineral resources present would not be permanently sterilised.

Notwithstanding this, to enable a full assessment of the level of impact the scheme would have on mineral resources it would be appropriate for further details to be provided in the final Environmental Statement (ES) with respect to the presence of, extent, likely quality, and siting of any mineral resources within Site G. A Mineral Sterilisation Appraisal/Mineral Resource Assessment (MSA/MRA) should be carried out to inform the Mineral Assessment that is proposed to form part of the ES.

It is recommended this follows best practice for MSA/MRA as set out in Mineral Safeguarding in England Good Practice Advice British Geological Survey 2011, Mineral Safeguarding Practice Guidance (Mineral Products Association & Planning Officers Society) April 2019, and the Minerals section of the Planning Practice Guidance.

This letter forms the Council's response to the applicant's Scoping Report, and as agreed, we would be grateful for it to be forwarded to the applicant as a late representaiton.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Verdegem  
Team Leader (Strategic Team)  
Development Management  
on behalf of the Head of Planning