



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Planning Committee

17 February 2021



Additional Information Report

This report sets out additional information in relation to planning applications for consideration at the Planning Committee on 17 February 2021 that was received after the Agenda was published.

S20/1433

Proposal: Installation of a solar farm comprising ground mounted solar PV panels with a generating capacity of up to 49.9MW, including mounting system, battery storage units, inverters, underground cabling, stock proof fence, CCTV, internal tracks and associated infrastructure, landscaping and environmental enhancements for a temporary period of 40 years and a permanent grid connection hub.

Site Address: Land south of the A1, Foston

Summary of Information Received:

A further three letters of representation have been received since the agenda was published. The points raised are summarised below:

1. Visual impact
2. Flicker and glimmer impacting on drivers on the A1
3. Requesting further screening to northern boundary
4. Impact on wildlife
5. Impact on aircraft
6. Requesting further visual impact survey
7. Requesting development moved away from northern boundary
8. Limited consultation
9. Comments made in relation to community benefit package

Further, a final response from Highways England was received confirming they have no objection to the proposal and including the wording of the conditions they recommend are included.

Officer response to points raised:

It is important to draw a distinction between the loss or change to a private view (which is not a material planning consideration) and impacts on the landscape from an expansive view across a panelled field from an important vantage point. Further, it is worth noting that views from the north of the side would be towards the rear of the panels which are grey in colour and are completely non-reflective and would therefore be less prominent within the landscape. The separation

distance to the nearest residential properties is over 200m away and as such there is not considered to be any justification to move the proposed development any further.

Condition 7 requires the detail of any additional planting to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority before any solar panels are installed. This has been updated to include specific reference to any tree planting that would be necessary as part of the proposed mitigation. The wording of this condition has been agreed with Highways England and they would be consulted prior to any details being agreed and the condition discharged.

The scope of the landscape and visual impact assessment was increased during the life of the application following advice from the Council's landscape consultant and this is now considered to be appropriate to provide a thorough assessment of the visual impacts of the proposed development.

The ecological impacts of the proposed development were fully assessed and the application is supported by various surveys in this respect. The recommendations from these surveys have informed the landscape and ecology management plan, the final version of which is reserved by condition. Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England have been consulted as part of the assessment of the application and both have advised they are content with the proposals and that the development would result in a net gain in biodiversity. Although the installation of stock proof fencing would restrict the free movement of wild animals, such as deer, this could be installed as permitted development under the existing agricultural use of the land.

In terms of any impact on aircraft, the Council have consulted with the Ministry of Defence and Civil Aviation Authority and neither have objected to the proposal.

The extent of the consultation carried out is detailed in the main report and this far exceeds any statutory obligations in this respect and any concerns in this regard are not a reason to refuse planning permission. Comments made in relation to the proposed community benefit package are noted, however this is separate to the planning process and not a material consideration for decision makers.

Response to members request for further information

Members requested further information in relation to the proposed batteries and the sub-station. A detailed plan of the sub-station is included with this report (further details are also required by condition 11) and the applicant has provided the following information in relation to the batteries:

“The market and technology of such batteries is fast evolving and so it is difficult to provide precise models or specifications, however it is most likely that these would be lithium-ion batteries housed within the containers as proprietary systems. The containerised approach means that they could be quickly transported to and from site in the unlikely scenario that any replacement were required.

Their functional role is to increase the viability of the project and allow for ‘grid smoothing’ to prevent peaks and troughs in supply to the network. The ability to discharge power in a controlled manner allows the operator to sell the power during periods of peak demand when the wholesale price of electricity is increased. In the absence of any government subsidy, this forms a key tenet of the economics underpinning the scheme. In summary, they allow the scheme to respond to peaks in electricity demand and therefore improve the overall effectiveness of the scheme.”

Recommendation

The recommendation remains to approve the development, subject to the updated schedule of conditions below.

Time Limits

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In order that the development is commenced in a timely manner, as set out in Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The permission hereby granted shall expire 40 years from the date when electrical power is first exported from the solar farm to the electricity grid network, excluding electricity exported during initial testing and commissioning. Written confirmation of the first export date shall be provided to the Local Planning Authority no later than one calendar month after the event.

Reason: The proposed scheme has a 40 year lifespan.

Approved Plans

- 3 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following list of approved plans:

- i) Site Location Plan drawing no. 20.06_100 Rev C
- ii) Site Block Plan drawing no. 20.06_301 Rev A
- iii) Proposed Site Block Plan DNO substation drawing no. 2006_302

Unless otherwise required by another condition of this permission.

Reason: To define the permission and for the avoidance of doubt.

Before the Development is Commenced

- 4 Before the development hereby permitted is commenced, a written scheme of archaeological investigation shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to provide a reasonable opportunity to record the history of the site and in accordance with Policy EN6 of the adopted South Kesteven Local Plan and Paragraph 199 of the NPPF.

- 5 The archaeological investigations shall also have been completed in accordance with the approved details before development commences.

Reason: In order to provide a reasonable opportunity to record the history of the site and in accordance with Policy EN6 of the adopted South Kesteven Local Plan and Paragraph 199 of the NPPF.

- 6 Development must not commence until a construction method statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The construction method statement shall set out details of all on-site construction works together with details of their timetabling. It shall include details of, and measures to secure:
- the phasing of construction works;
 - the formation and position of the temporary construction compounds;
 - dust management and suppression;
 - cleaning of site entrance, facilities for wheel washing and cleaning the adjacent public highway;
 - pollution control, including the protection of water courses and ground water; subsoil surface water drainage; bunding and siting of fuel storage areas; sewage and foul water drainage and disposal; and emergency procedures and pollution response plans;
 - temporary site illumination during the construction period;
 - the methods to be adopted to reduce the effects of noise occurring during the construction period to the lowest practicable levels and in accordance with B.S. 5228: Noise control on construction and open sites;
 - storage of materials and disposal of surplus materials;
 - the construction of the accesses into the site, the erection of any entrance gates and the creation and maintenance of associated visibility splays;
 - method of working cable trenches, including soil storage and back-filling; and details of cable boring methodologies below roads, water courses and hedges;
 - general soil storage and handling;
 - post-construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas, including cable trenches and area covered by any matting or other areas where the soil has been disturbed or compressed;
 - the sheeting of all heavy goods vehicles construction materials to, or spoil from, the site to prevent spillage or deposit of any materials on the highway;
 - details of control of surface water to prevent it entering the public highway or carrying sediment to the surface water drainage network in the vicinity of the site.
 - identification of buffer strips adjacent to water courses or retained vegetation features such as hedges or trees and sites where birds are nesting;
 - Details of proposed measures to protect root protection areas during construction
 - means to exclude small animals from excavations.

Construction works must be carried out in full accordance with the agreed construction method statement.

Reason: To protect the interests of the rural character of the area, the integrity and safety of the highway network and to protect the amenity of residents, ecological interests and to ensure the site can be restored to agricultural use.

- 7 Before any solar panels are installed a Landscape & Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include, but not limited to, details of the proposed new hedgerow(s) including any tree planting and any strengthening of existing hedgerow planting and shall include details of ground preparation, species and planting pattern. Thereafter the new planting shall be implemented in accordance with a timetable to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The new hedgerow and tree planting shall be managed in accordance with the Management Specification set out in the LEMP.

Reason: To protect and enhance existing landscape features on the site and to mitigate harm to rural character caused by the proposal.

- 8 Cabling works to cross the A1 must not be commenced until details of the exact crossing point and methodology have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in consultation Highways England. Details must include, but not limited to, the following: geotechnical and drainage issues in compliance with the requirements of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

Reason: To avoid disruption to the Strategic Road Network and in the interests of Highway Safety.

- 9 Cabling works to cross the River Witham must not be commenced until details of the exact crossing point and methodology have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

The development must be carried out in accordance with details approved by this condition.

Reason: To protect the river and in the interests of ecological and biodiversity networks.

- 10 The site must only be accessed in accordance with the route shown on the submitted Construction Traffic Route Plan drawing no. 16419-HYD-XX-XX-DR-TP-CTMP-0001.

Reason: In the interests of Highway Safety and to avoid unnecessary noise and disruption to local residents.

- 11 Before any works on the substation area shown on drawing no. 2006_302 are commenced, further details of the plant, fencing and any associated landscaping must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The development must be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect the rural character of the area and in accordance with Policy DE1.

On-going Conditions

- 12 There shall be no permanent illumination on the site unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To protect the rural character of the area and in accordance with Policy DE1.

- 13 All Landscape features within the site shall be managed in accordance with the submitted Landscape & Ecological Management Plan (LEMP).

Reason: so that vegetation and landscape features on the site are properly managed in the interest of ecological mitigation, and wider visual amenity.

- 14 If the solar farm hereby permitted (or any substantial sub-part of the farm) fails to produce electricity for supply to the grid for a continuous period of two years and there is no realistic prospect of the solar farm becoming operational again, a scheme shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for its written approval within 3 months of the end of that 6 month period for the repair or removal of the solar farm. Where repairs or replacements are required the scheme shall include a proposed programme of remedial works. Where removal of the solar farm is required the scheme shall include the same details required under the decommissioning condition of this permission. The relevant scheme shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details and timetable.

Reason: To ensure the solar farm beneficially generates electricity or is otherwise removed to the benefit of the character and appearance and the agricultural potential of the area.

Decommissioning

- 15 Not later than 12 months before the expiry of this permission, a decommissioning and site restoration scheme shall be submitted for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall make provision for the removal of the solar panels and all other associated equipment & paraphernalia and the subsequent restoration of the site. The scheme shall include details of:
- the extent of equipment and foundation removal and the site restoration to be carried out;
 - the management and timing of any works;
 - a traffic management plan to address likely traffic impact issues during the decommissioning period;
 - an environmental management plan to include details of measures to be taken during the decommissioning period to protect wildlife, habitats and tree features on the site;

- location of material laydown areas;
- full details of the removal of the solar arrays, associated buildings and plant, any trackways and sub-surface cabling and all associated works of ground restoration including trench backfilling;
- full details of all other works to restore the land to allow for agricultural production following the removal of structures from the site;
- a programme of implementation.

The approved scheme shall be implemented within 6 months of the expiry of this permission and then proceed fully in accordance with the agreed details in accordance with the decommissioning programme.

Reason: To ensure the site is fully restored to allow agricultural use and to maintain the rural appearance of the area.

Sub-station plan



