

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010151

Appendix 15.2 - Consultation

Document Reference: 6.3 ES Volume 2, 6.3.97 Appendix 15.2

April 2025



Beacon Fen Energy Park Environmental Statement Appendix 15.2 - Consultation

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Quality information

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This Appendix 15.2 has been prepared by Wardell Armstrong LLP (part of SLR) ('WA') on behalf of Beacon Fen Energy Park Ltd (the 'Applicant') in support of an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for Beacon Fen Energy Park (the 'Proposed Development').

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1. Appendix 15.2

1.1 Consultation

1.1.1 This appendix presents a full summary of consultation undertaken to date, including scoping comments, expanding a summarised list in Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15).

Consultation Undertaken to Date

- 1.1.2 Consultation has been ongoing throughout the preparation of the DCO application; it can broadly be divided into the following key stages:
 - EIA Scoping;
 - Early Non-Statutory Consultation;
 - Direct Topic-Specific Consultation; and
 - PEIR Consultation.
- 1.1.3 Table 1 provides a summary of the consultation activities undertaken in support of the preparation of the Socio-economic Chapter.

Table 1 Summary of Consultation Undertaken to Date

ORGANISATION	DATE	FORM OF CONSULTATION	COMMENT	SUMMARY OF OUTCOME
EIA Cooping		CONSOLIATION		
EIA Scoping				
Planning	26/05/2023	Scoping Opinion	"The Applicant proposes to scope out negative side	Confirmed that the negative
Inspectorate			effects of local economic growth (specifically price	side effects of local economic
(PINS) on behalf			inflation and economic dependence on the	growth can be scoped out of
of SoŚ			Proposed Development) on the basis that these are	the ES.

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			unlikely due to the scale and type of the Proposed Development.	
			The Inspectorate has considered the characteristics of the Proposed Development and is content that significant side effects on price inflation and economic dependence on the Proposed Development are unlikely to result in likely significant effects and therefore this matter can be scoped out."	
			"The Applicant proposes to scope out the effects of population immigration from the Proposed Development on local services and infrastructure. The reasoning provided is that a large part of the workforce would likely come from the Direct and Indirect Areas of Influence (AOIs). As noted in paragraph 13.5.2 of the Scoping Report, no details are available at this stage concerning the number of direct and indirect jobs expected. As such it is not clear on what basis the assumption that the majority of the workforce would come from the Direct and Indirect AOIs has been made. Therefore, on the basis of the information provided, the Inspectorate cannot agree to scope this matter out at this stage."	Pressure on local services and infrastructure from population immigration are now scoped in and assumptions on workforce numbers are presented in Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref : 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15).
			"The Scoping Report states that the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in the physical displacement of households or farms in the Proposed Development area as "the land is mostly	Physical displacement scoped in at the PEIR stage due to partial information on the cable route and access route

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			agricultural, and the final design of the cable routes and solar farms should omit any construction". This wording is unclear. The Inspectorate assumes that the Applicant is implying that the Proposed Development area is in an area of very low population density and construction activities would not directly impact on households or farm buildings through their displacement.	location. Final design assessed in the ES (Chapter 15: Socioeconomics (Document Ref : 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15)) avoids physical displacement.
			Figure 13.1 in the Scoping Report shows the location of communities and farms in relation to the Proposed Development site boundaries. This figure shows that there are communities and farms located within and near the site boundary (namely Howell on the edge of the Northern solar array site, Boughton and Little Hale Fen Farm located within the Cable Route Search Area and Thorpe Latimer farm on the edge of the Southern Solar array site). Although the Cable Route Corridor is not yet refined at this stage, based on the information provided, it is unclear whether physical displacement of these receptors could occur. Therefore, the Inspectorate cannot agree to scope this matter out at this stage."	
			"The Scoping Report states that mitigation measure requirements will not be covered within the socioeconomic assessment and instead will be covered within other environmental aspects of the ES. Where such measures avoid what would otherwise be significant socioeconomic effects, these measures, as well as the mechanism by	Cross-referencing provided for environmental mitigation measures in Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15) where such measures avoid what would otherwise be

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			which they are secured by the DCO, should be adequately described within the socioeconomics chapter and cross-referencing provided to enable intra-project effects to be understood".	significant socioeconomic effects.
			"The Proposed Development site will affect a number of PRoW but no surveys are proposed to understand the baseline use of these PRoWs. It is therefore unclear of the usage of these routes. The ES should assess impacts to PRoW from the Proposed Development where significant effects are likely to occur and clearly signpost where this has been assessed in the ES. The Applicant's attention is drawn to ID 3.4.1."	Three separate onsite high-level studies of potentially affected PRoWs showed general low use of PRoW in the area. The assessment of PRoW use was initially planned to be complemented for Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref : 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15) with qualitative interviews with landowners whose land is crossed by the footpaths. Nonetheless, due to limited impact on the PRoWs and limited use found during site visits, site observations were sufficient to inform Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref : 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15).

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(Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)	16/05/2023	Scoping Opinion	"The range of the topics appears reasonable. We will be able to comment in further detail as the project progresses."	No action needed.
North Kesteven District Council (NKDC)	18/05/2023	Scoping Opinion	"The Scoping Report identifies potentially negative effects associated with the inevitable removal of land from agricultural production and that there may be businesses / tenants / occupiers currently undertaking agricultural operations across the site boundary who may cease to do so for the duration of the operational phase of the development. Paragraph 13.6.1 states that potential socioeconomic impacts are based on the interactions between the expected project activities and the people and communities. Five examples are then given as to where impacts might be anticipated. This should be expanded to consider whether any tourism accommodation providers in the area that will be adversely affected by the solar farm. The chapter also implies that no livelihoods will be lost as a consequence of the development and that agricultural workers may be offered re-training and re-skilling to work on the solar farm, however there is no indication as to what number of farms will be affected by these proposals or what the potential loss of agricultural employment will be.	The following aspects have been added to Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15): Net gain of jobs following HCA Additionality guidance to account for loss of agricultural jobs; Quantification, to the extent possible, of the number of affected farms; Quantification of local economic opportunities for local businesses, construction workforce and accommodation providers; Outline of future opportunities in the Local Employment Plan (in preparation); Assessment for the possibility of continued grazing; Quantification of socio-economic benefits, to the extent possible, from the

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			The Scoping Report covers construction jobs (table 13.1), and how they might impact the local communities in terms of demands on service provision. However, there is limited reference to the type of local opportunities the construction process will offer, both in terms of direct job opportunities during the construction phase, and longer term in terms of permanent full time operatives to monitor and maintain the solar farm.	change from agricultural use to solar panels.
			The ES should therefore identify how local businesses may benefit from maintenance contracts related to the project, along with opportunities for specialist contractors to be hosted by local accommodation providers during the construction phase. In addition the Scoping Report refers to the potential to retrain agricultural workers to work on the solar farm, but it does not reference the potential for employment opportunities via apprenticeships. Economic benefits to the town of Sleaford should also be quantified if possible, associated with the possible hosting of construction workforce during the construction phase.	
			In addition, there is only limited reference in the proposed scope to any socio-economic benefit enduring from continued agricultural use of part or all of the site. For example this could include enabling some continuance of agricultural activity through sheep grazing or alternative forms of cropping among panelled areas (subject to the	

ORGANISATION	DATE	FORM OF CONSULTATION	COMMENT	SUMMARY OF OUTCOME
			above comments in relation to agricultural land and soils).	
			The applicant should therefore quantify whether and how there are socio-economic benefits stemming from a change from predominantly arable agricultural use of the site predevelopment to a solar and possibly pastoral use post-development.	
			We suggest that the applicant should also identify a mechanism by which any changes in agricultural activity (and ergo any associated socio-economic effect) can be secured through the DCO process.	
			With reference to direct, indirect, temporary and permanent employment jobs created through construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning, this information should be presented along with identification of:	
			 opportunities for using local businesses on various aspects of the construction phase; 	
			 how the applicant would go about supporting local business procurement; 	
			 financial estimates of economic benefits of the construction phase to the local economy including hotel spend etc; 	

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			 opportunities to encourage apprenticeships; and 	
			 financial estimates and local opportunities associated with ongoing maintenance over the 60-year operational period. 	
			In terms of potential economic benefits, the Council notes that an established way of calculating the extra value generated by local spend on contractors and services would be by using LM3 multipliers which the applicant might wish to consider depending on the certainty of construction contracts etc at this stage. The multiplier can be found at: https://www.lm3online.com/".	
NKDC			"Finally, paragraph 13.4.6 refers to tourism, with table 13.1 referring to potential impacts including potential 'reduction of touristic attraction and change of tourism profile' of the wider area. As set out in further detail below there are potential implications regarding the delivery of the Lincolnshire Reservoir which is partly overlapped by Beacon Fen South.	After removing Beacon Fen South, comparing the two developments is no longer necessary. Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref : 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15) also includes an assessment of potential beneficial and adverse impact
			The Anglian Water project website confirms that the proposed reservoir will also create space for wildlife, such as wetlands, alongside enabling new recreational and educational activities and natural places for people to explore including providing	on tourism, recognising NKDC's key priority to enhance visitor economy.



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			opportunities for local businesses and tourism. The illustrative site plan suggests that the proposals could include watersports and visitor centre facilities which (without prejudice) in their own right have potentially significant broader economic benefits for the District and surrounding areas.	
			Enhancement of the visitor economy is a key priority for North Kesteven District, and whilst there is not yet any quantitative, qualitative or financial assessment of the above options and opportunities associated with the Lincolnshire Reservoir, it would appear likely to offer more long term employment, socio-economic and tourism benefits and opportunities than the proposed solar farm at Beacon Fen South. Those impacts would also be permanent, not temporary (60 years). In the context of cumulative effects, the ES should therefore seek to quantify any negative socio-economic impacts stemming from potentially prejudicing delivery of the Lincolnshire Reservoir."	
UK Health Security Agency (HSA)	12/05/2023	Scoping Opinion	"Human Health and Wellbeing - OHID This section of OHIDs response, identifies the wider determinants of health and wellbeing we expect the ES to address, to demonstrate whether they are likely to give rise to significant effects. OHID has focused its approach on scoping determinants of health and wellbeing under four themes, which have been derived from an analysis of the wider	Agreed and no major change required in terms of including the determinants of health, Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15) already scoped in the increased exposure of communities to noise and traffic, as well as the influx of

ORGANISATION	DATE	FORM OF CONSULTATION	COMMENT	SUMMARY OF OUTCOME
			determinants of health mentioned in the National Policy Statements. The four themes are: • Access • Traffic and Transport • Socio-economic • Land Use"	workers causing stress on local services, and restricted access to recreation places. Following NPS EN-1 2023, assessing health impacts on identified vulnerable groups, they are included in Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15) and appropriate mitigation measures proposed.
			"Suggestion to consider human receptors when designing mitigation and management of major accidents and disasters. Ultimately the likelihood of major accidents and disasters is considered to be low in connection to public health".	Potential risks in relation to accidents and disasters are considered within the following chapters and reports, which did not identify likely effects of the Proposed Development which could result in an accident or disaster: • Chapter 9: Access & Traffic (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol.1, 6.2.9) • Chapter 11: Water Resources & Flood Risk (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol., 16.2.11) • Chapter 12: Climate Change (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol., 16.2.12)

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			"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".	 Chapter 13: Glint and Glare (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol., 16.2.13) Appendix 1.4: Ground Conditions Desk Study (Document Ref: 6.3 ES Vol., 6.3.102) More focus was placed on the determinants of health, taking into account inequalities in exposure to impacts (this is thanks to considering vulnerable receptors in Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15), and maximising co-benefits in physical exercise when assessing the impact on recreation.
Direct Topic-Spe			T	
Solar Array Area Landowner	22/06/2023	In-person meeting on site	N/A	Baseline data collection.
Ewerby and Evedon Parish Council	22/06/2023	In-person meeting on site with Parish Chairman.	N/A	The aim of this meeting was primarily to inform the socio-economics baseline. The meeting also suggested the Ewerby and Evedon Parish Council is concerned about

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				local traffic impacts during construction and overall visual impacts.
North Kesteven District Council (NKDC)	28/06/2023	Online meeting with Alan Gray and Michelle Tasker.	N/A	NKDC is concerned about accommodation availability due to construction workforce influx, especially in terms of cumulative impacts.
Stepping Out Walks	13/03/2023	E-mail exchange	N/A	This consultation provided baseline data for the use of PRoW in and around Site boundary.
PEIR consultation	า			
Natural England	05/03/2024	PEIR response	"Section 15.5.18 of the Socio-Economic Chapter notes that there are no accessible Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the Solar Array Area, however there are accessible PRoW crossing the Cable Route Corridor. Consideration should be given to closures/diversions of PRoW during construction and decommissioning. There may be opportunity to develop increased understanding of, or association with, the development where routes with visual access into the development site are retained during construction so users are able to see the progress of the development." "As there is a current absence of and PRoW within the solar array area, there may be potential within the development to enhance the network of right of way in the area by creation of permissive footpaths	There will not be any diversions of the existing PRoWs, information on any temporary closures will be communicated in advance with the council, parishes and the local walking groups. During construction, there will be managed crossing points for the Access Route. This will provide some extent of visual access for PRoW users. PRoW Ewer/12/1 is being extended in a south and westerly direction as a permissive path terminating in

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			Infrastructure design and Biodiversity Design, i.e. providing green corridors throughout the site. At present, the Indicative Mitigation Layout shows a small area of permissive footpath to be created in the Northernmost corner of the site, however no further provision has been made across the remainder of the site."	and will be in place for the operational duration of the project, on a route to be determined via discharge of requirement, but approximately running in a south easterly direction along Car Dyke then heading south west on the north side of Hodge Dike. An undetermined number of footbridges (unlikely to be more than eight in number) to cross existing watercourses, will be required.
North Kesteven District Council	06/03/2024	PEIR response	"Paragraph 15.5.19 notes that there is one inaccessible footpath crossing the Solar Array Area - LL Ewer 12/1, and that the site visit in June 2023 confirmed this lack of access. Photo 15.1 shows that there is no bridge that would make it possible to cross the dyke to the east of the footpath and access the LL Ewer 12/1 footpath. Paragraph 15.6.16 notes that construction will most likely affect accessibility of the footpaths presented in pink in Figure 15.3 and that the only long-term effect will be on LL Ewer 12/1, which was found to be inaccessible and having no users."	PRoW Ewer/12/1 is being extended in a south and westerly direction as a permissive path terminating in the vicinity of Ewerby Thorpe, and will be in place for the operational duration of the project, on a route to be determined via discharge of requirement, but approximately running in a south easterly direction along Car Dyke then heading south west on the north side of Hodge Dike. An undetermined number of footbridges (unlikely to be more

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				than eight in number) to cross existing watercourses, will be required.
			"Paragraph 15.6.25 notes that it is considered unlikely that access to the fishing reservoir in the southern part of the site will be maintained however this is not yet confirmed. The applicant should justify any proposal for closing access; which presumably is on the grounds of safety/security. The indicative mitigation layout suggests that the reservoir will be retained along with access to it from Howell Fen Drove. On the basis that this is one of the few existing, albeit 'private' recreational elements of the site baseline, opportunities for its retention as part of the development should be explored."	The reservoir will not be accessible to members of the public during operation as it is to be used for irrigation and managed as a place for wildlife. As such, the current angling activity will not be able to continue. This is also due to security reasons (there will be access restrictions on site apart from the permissive pathway).
			"Paragraphs 5.5.18 to 5.5.33 sets out the existing recreational land use baseline at the site and wider area and summarises that the Council is interested in exploring visitor economy opportunities that could evolve around the proposed development, which could include promotion of renewable energy, guided walks and school visits. This commitment remains and the Council would be pleased to explore these further however at present there is nothing within the Figure 1.5 site layout which points to these opportunities being accommodated."	As part of Outline Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan (Document Ref: 6.3 ES Vol. 2, 6.3.98), the Applicant will investigate the potential for a programme of activities which promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics ('STEM') education and careers. This will be targeted at primary school pupils, secondary school pupils,

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				college students and / or other young people in the area.
			"Paragraph 15.6.3 states that the majority of contractor staff are expected to arrive at the Site by minibus. However, there are no estimates contained in the draft chapter as to the proportions/numbers of workers who might require local hotel accommodation throughout the duration of the construction phase. It is likely that this will be in Sleaford. The Heckington Fen DCO considered and assessed impacts on hotel capacity including on the availability of such accommodation for visitors and tourists. Negative impacts were concluded in the Heckington Fen ES in relation the latter. The same exercise should be carried out; both in isolation and cumulatively with the Heckington Fen project."	Quantitative assessment of accommodation impact (both in isolation and cumulatively with Heckington Fen and other developments) is provided in Chapter 15: Socio-economics (Document Ref : 6.2 ES Vol. 1, 6.2.15), and appropriate mitigation measures designed.
			"The Council notes from paragraph 15.7.2 that a Local Employment Plan is currently being produced and will be provided as part of the DCO application. The LEP will seek to prioritise local employment, reskill temporary farm workers to avoid economic displacement or support in finding alternative agricultural work, reskill workers after the operational phase and potential upskilling of local residents through apprenticeships. The applicant is referred back to the Council's EIA Scoping response for further detail on the suggested content of the LEP."	Scoping Opinion comments are acknowledged and incorporated into the Outline Skills, Supply Chain and Employment (Document Ref: 6.3 ES Vol. 2, 6.3.98).



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			"As above, from overall review, including the Figure 1.5 Indicative Mitigation Layout, the Council does not consider that the project has yet embedded sufficient recreational, tourist/visitor economy and potentially educational enhancements. The chapter notes that the existing public bridleway Ewer/1103/1 east of Ewerby is poorly used. However, this is probably due to the fact that it is a short route stopping at the highway edge south of Ewerby Thorpe. The applicant notes that the short section of footpath Ewer/12/1 in the north eastern site boundary has access and ditch crossing issues and proposes a short section of permissive path connecting to the immediate west of it. The existing short section of path connects into SKym/8/1 which then runs on the southern bank of the River Slea/Kyme Eau. The LCC PROW mapping tool suggests that there is existing connectivity from Ewer/12/1 onto SKym/8/1 across a culverted part of Midfodder Dyke/Car Dyke. This should be confirmed by the applicant."	The final design includes an enhancement of the LL Ewer 12/1 PRoW as illustrated in Figure 6.31 Landscape Strategy Plan (Document Ref: 6.4 ES Vol. 3, 6.4.42).
British Horse Society	08/03/2024	PEIR response	"DEFRA has recorded 884 horses in the immediate NG34 postcode area (2021), making a total of £ 6,088,108 contribution to the economy. There are livery yards in the area creating employment and using equine services (vet, farrier, feed, instructors, etc) as well as the growing interest in equestrian tourism ('take your horse on holiday'). There are horse riders and carriage drivers in this area."	The Applicant notes that there is an equine facility (stables) immediately bordering the site along Howell Fen Drove. However, Chapter 9: Access & Traffic (Document Ref: 6.2 ES Vol.1, 6.2.9) does not find significant effects from construction traffic on non-

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				motorised users (including horse-riders).
			"Public Bridleways Ewerby 1103 is not accurately recorded on your plans. It runs from Ewerby to Howell Lane."	The Applicant notes this response and has subsequently corrected this mistake. It was previously recorded as a footpath in the 2024 Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) map (Figure 15.3), is labelled as a bridleway in 2025 Environmental Statement (ES) map (Document Ref: 6.4 ES Vol. 3, 6.4.79). The locations were checked onsite and confirmed that the location matches what the map presents.
			"The bridleway and byway network in this area is limited and fragmented, therefore forcing equestrians to ride/lead/drive on the main roads to reach the safety of off-road provision further afield. The 517 ha identified for the solar array should provide community benefit; one such benefit would be providing dedicated or permissive bridleways (to include pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, wheelchair/mobility scooter users) or byways (inclusive of carriage drivers) within this	The Applicant is enhancing the footpath network in the area of influence as part of the Proposed Development. Providing a bridleway would connect it to a network of PRoWs within the Site, therefore it was not feasible for the Proposed Development.



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			development. At present the plans appear to show no such mitigation."	
Lincolnshire County Council	11/03/2024	PEIR response	"Based on the Socio-Economic chapter what is considered and the methodology in this section of the PEIR appears reasonable."	N/A
			"The development of a Local Employment Plan is acknowledged. As this is being prepared at the moment, it is unclear what the contents of the plan will be, but inclusion of supply chain and skills, in addition to employment would be welcomed."	The Outline Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan (Document Ref: 6.3 ES Vol. 2, 6.3.98) is covering the supply chain and skills elements.
			"Although what is included in the PEIR looks reasonable, and a community benefit fund is suggested in the Statutory Consultation booklet, LCC would be keen to see benefits to the 11 local host communities and economy explored further, particularly with regards to local energy, as current growth data indicates that there may be local primary substation headroom constraints in the area during the construction phase and early operational phase of this project."	Whilst not necessary to address any impacts of the Proposed Development or a material planning consideration for the purposes of the determination of the Application, the Applicant is voluntarily planning to set up a Community Development Plan.
			"Public Rights of Way (PROW) Ewer/12/1 extends across the north-eastern corner of the Site. There are a number of PROW within the Cable Route Corridor and 4 PROW in the access route corridor. The developer is advised to seek advice from the Council's PROW Officer in relation to any proposed diversions and/or stopping up of PROW that maybe required prior	No PRoW diversions are currently planned for the Proposed Development. Information on any temporary closures will be communicated to the local walking groups. During construction, there will be managed crossing points for the Access Route. A Streets,

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			to the submission of the DCO. A Public Rights of Way Management plan should therefore be provided in the DCO submission."	Rights of Way and Access Plans (Document Ref: 2.5) has been prepared. Considering the above mitigations and lack of diversions or permanent closures, a PRoW Management Plan is not considered as necessary for this Proposed Development. Considering the above mitigations and lack of diversions or permanent closures, a PRoW Management Plan is not considered as necessary for this Proposed Development.
			"In general LCC support the suggestion made by NKDC for an additional route to be created within the site. However, we recommend that a circular route is considered rather than a linear route to the existing pond NKDC are seeking to link into." "LCC are of the view that further improvements and benefits in respect of public access could be delivered as part of the scheme. Appendix 1 to this letter sets out areas of the site where the authority considers additional improvements could be made and we would welcome further discussion with the developer regarding these."	The final design includes an enhancement of the LL Ewer 12/1 PRoW, illustrated in Figure 6.31 Landscape Strategy Plan (Document Ref: 6.4 ES Vol. 3, 6.4.42).