



## **Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park**

Equalities Impact Assessment

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Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure)  
Regulations 2009, APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

1. This Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) considers the interests of people who share protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010<sup>1</sup>, with regard to the Great North Road Solar and Biodiversity Park, hereafter referred to as ‘the Development’.
2. Public authorities are required to have regard to the public sector equality duty when exercising their functions under section 149 of the Equality Act<sup>2</sup>. The Secretary of State, in issuing a Development Consent Order for the Development, is such a public authority. In order to assist with the assessment of the Development’s impact on equality and its potential to discriminate against persons who share protected characteristics, this EqIA aims to:
  - Identify and assess any likely effects of the Development on relevant receptors during all phases of the Development;
  - Where appropriate, set out measures to minimise any adverse effects in relevant receptors; and
  - Where appropriate, set out measures to further enhance any beneficial effects on relevant receptors.
3. The EqIA primarily relies on the conclusions presented in the Environmental Statement (ES) [EN010162/APP/6.1]. It examines the ES’ findings to assess whether, and to what degree, potential effects could have different magnitudes on relevant receptors compared to the general population.

## 2 LEGISLATION

### 2.1 THE EQUALITY ACT 2010 AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY (PSED)

4. The Equality Act 2010 is a comprehensive piece of legislation that consolidates and streamlines previous anti-discrimination laws. It aims to protect individuals from unfair treatment, and to promote a more equal society by addressing discrimination based on nine protected characteristics, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
5. The term ‘relevant receptors’ is used within this EqIA to refer to groups of people that have similar characteristics to the nine protected characteristics above, such as people of a particular marital status, race, or age group.
6. The PSED in section 149<sup>2</sup> of the Act requires that public authorities must have due regards to the need to:
  - *“(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*

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<sup>1</sup> Equality Act 2010, c. 15. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15> [accessed on 26/02/2025].

<sup>2</sup> Equality Act 2020, c.15. Section 149. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149> [accessed on 26/02/2025].

- *(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and*
  - *(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.”*
7. The act also states that, “A person who is not a public authority but who exercises public functions must, in the exercise of those functions, have due regard to the matters mentioned [above]”.
8. Paragraph 3 of the PSED outlines the obligations that public authorities must consider regarding how equality of opportunity can be improved between people who share a particular protected characteristic and those who do not:
- *“(a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;*
  - *(b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;*
  - *(c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.”*
9. The Applicant intends to provide enough information in this EqlA to enable the Secretary of State to have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when issuing a Development Consent Order for the Development.

## **2.2 THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1998**

10. The Human Rights Act 1988<sup>3</sup> provides individuals and groups with legal protection of their human rights. The following articles of the Human Rights Act are relevant to the Secretary of State’s decision, including associated powers of compulsory acquisition:
- Article 1: deprivation of possessions; and
  - Article 8: respect for your private and family life.

## **2.3 THE PLANNING ACT 2008**

11. The Planning Act 2008<sup>4</sup> provides a legal framework for submitting, reviewing, and making decisions on DCO applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).
12. The Planning Act precedes the Equality Act 2010 but establishes the framework for addressing equality in the context of NSIPs. This includes requirements such as consulting with communities and groups that may share Protected Characteristics, as well as considering human rights in the context of compulsory acquisition.

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<sup>3</sup> The Human Rights Act (1998) Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents> (Accessed:04/04/2025).

<sup>4</sup> The Planning Act (2008) Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents> (Accessed:04/04/2025).

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 GUIDANCE

13. There is limited guidance on implementing Equality Impact Assessments in the UK, especially with regard to individual projects. However, the following guidance on the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty is available:
  - The essential guide to the public sector equality duty, Equality and Human Rights Commission (2014)<sup>5</sup>;
  - Equality Act 2010: Technical guidance on the public sector equality duty: England, Equality and Human Rights Commission (updated February 2021)<sup>6</sup>; and
  - Equality Act 2010: Public sector equality duty what do I need to know? A quick start guide for public sector organisations, Government Equalities Office (2011)<sup>7</sup>.
14. The guidance listed above is designed for the assessment of policies. In order to assess the potential equality impacts of this Development, the principles within the guidance have been adapted, and applied to this Development.
15. The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has developed guidance for assessing equality impacts<sup>8</sup>, primarily focused on the potential effects of policies. This is, however, also applicable more broadly. The guidance sets out a 5-stage process, with stages 2-4 being particularly relevant to general EqlA. Stages 2-4 are outlined below:
  - *“Part 2 is a screening document to identify whether there is impact. Where impact is identified, Part 3 must be completed;*
  - *Part 3 is a full impact assessment, where evidence is established; and*
  - *Part 4 captures what will be monitored to ensure impact is either reduced, negated or remains constant”.*
16. The screening process, identified in part 2 above, entails evaluating the relevance of the Development to each protected characteristic and providing a rationale to support the determination of its relevance.

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<sup>5</sup> The essential guide to the public sector equality duty, Equality and Human Rights Commission (2014) Available at: [https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/psed\\_essential\\_guide\\_-\\_guidance\\_for\\_english\\_public\\_bodies.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/psed_essential_guide_-_guidance_for_english_public_bodies.pdf) (Accessed:04/04/2025).

<sup>6</sup> Equality Act 2010: Technical guidance on the public sector equality duty: England, Equality and Human Rights Commission (updated April 2023) Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/public-sector-equality-duty/technical-guidance-public-sector-equality-duty-england-0> (Accessed:04/04/2025).

<sup>7</sup> Equality Act 2010: Public sector equality duty what do I need to know? A quick start guide for public sector organisations, Government Equalities Office (2011) Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7995d0e5274a684690aa18/specific-duties.pdf> (Accessed:04/04/2025).

<sup>8</sup> Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment Guidance Document, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (2011) Available at: [https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/162457/frm\\_strategic\\_environmental\\_assessment\\_consultation.doc](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/162457/frm_strategic_environmental_assessment_consultation.doc) (Accessed:04/04/2025).

17. Clear guidance is also offered through The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on ‘Screening and Equality Assessments’<sup>9</sup> and ‘Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment’<sup>10</sup>. This guidance states that “*the EqIA process is intended to anticipate barriers to participation or failings in service provision*”. The guidance also highlights what the key indicators of adverse impacts are, as outlined below:
- “*Lower participation rates compared to other groups e.g., fewer members of Protestant church-based groups applying for grants in light of objections to lottery funding;*
  - *Lower success rates in selection processes e.g., fewer disabled people meeting non-essential selection criteria for jobs – driving licence;*
  - *Eligibility criteria which disadvantage any groups e.g., timing of regular training courses so that those with caring responsibilities cannot take part;*
  - *Access denied compared to other groups e.g., same sex partners denied pension entitlements or other benefits;*
  - *Different charges applied to some groups e.g., concessionary fares extended to men and women at different ages;*
  - *Upper threshold on payments or provision e.g., compensation payments capped irrespective of the number of dependants/children;*
  - *Experiencing poorer quality of treatment e.g., information on fixed penalties/court summons and fines provided only in English to those who are not fluent in the language;*
  - *Experiencing increased difficulty or indignity e.g., public buildings with segregated access for those with mobility disabilities; and*
  - *Changing a policy which reduces benefits disproportionately for one group e.g., contracting out catering services may particularly affect females adversely.”*
18. The above indicators can be used as a helpful reference point when evaluating an individual development.

### 3.2 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

19. The potential equality effects of the Development are confined to aspects that impact people. Areas of the Development that do not affect people have been scoped out of this assessment, as they cannot result in differential or disproportionate impacts on people.
20. Potential categories of effect and the affected population are outlined, with a description and justification provided for the potential impact on relevant receptor groups, considering how their specific characteristics may differ from those of the general population. Where equality effects are identified,

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<sup>9</sup> Screening and Equality Assessments, The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2017) Available at: <https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/Public%20Authorities/S75Advice-ScreeningEQIA.pdf> (Accessed:04/04/2025).

<sup>10</sup> Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment, The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2005) Available at: <https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/PracticalGuidanceonEQIA2005.pdf?ext=.pdf> (Accessed:04/04/2025).

potential mitigation measures to reduce adverse effects, or enhance beneficial effects, are considered.

21. The needs of a group and the recognised sensitivity associated with their protected characteristics are evaluated in order to outline the potential for equality impacts.
22. In certain instances, protected characteristic groups experience both disproportionate and varied equality impacts. This report considers impacts on the receptor groups, rather than specific individuals.
23. There are multiple conditions that could result in an individual experiencing the impacts of the Development in a different, or more significant fashion in comparison with how the general population may experience such impacts. In the cases when an individual is identified that may experience the impacts of the Development differently or informs the project team about themselves or their dependants through consultation, the Applicant would discuss with the affected groups directly, in order to understand their concerns, and suggest any potential mitigation measures that could be implemented where possible. The Applicant will ensure that ongoing discussions with the local community are maintained throughout the entirety of the Development. Communication lines for this purpose are set out in section A5.3.1.2 of the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3] and in section A5.5.2.3 of the outline Operation Environmental Management Plan (oOEMP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.5].
24. Any information on individual circumstances has not been reported on, as it considered a personal matter.
25. The assessment methodology approach set out above is in line with the guidance outlined in section 3.1.

## **4 SCOPE OF THE EQIA**

### **4.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

26. In line with the requirements of the EIA Regulations, the ES considers the population as a general receptor group. Impacts on people, as a result of this Development, that have the potential to disproportionately affect the relevant receptor groups differently, as compared to the wider population are considered within this assessment.
27. The significance of the effects caused by this Development is not assessed within the EqIA. Rather, qualitative descriptive assessments are made about the nature of potential equality effects. This EqIA defines an equality impact as an effect likely to disproportionately or differentially impact groups of people based on their protected characteristics. In some circumstances, protected characteristic groups could be impacted both disproportionately, and differentially.
28. A disproportionate equality effect can be defined as an effect that has a proportionally greater or lesser impact on protected characteristic groups than it does on other members of the general population.
29. A differential equality effect can be defined as an effect that has a different impact on protected characteristic groups compared to other members of the

general population, due to their specific needs, or due to a recognised sensitivity or vulnerability associated with their protected characteristic.

30. As stated in section 3.2, this assessment considers impacts on the receptor groups, rather than specific individuals.

## 4.2 EQUALITY EFFECTS CONSIDERED

31. This assessment considers equality effects that could potentially arise during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Development, although the decommissioning phase effects are anticipated to be the same as the construction phase effects and hence these two phases are considered together.
32. The potential equality effects have been categorised into the following areas, which have been used as the key considerations for the assessment:
- Community infrastructure and open spaces;
  - Employment and business;
  - Traffic, transport and physical accessibility;
  - Noise, and other environmental effects;
  - Crime, safety and personal security; and
  - Health related equality effects.
33. It is acknowledged that different stakeholders may have different interpretations of an equality impact from how it is described within this assessment.

## 5 ASSESSMENT

34. Table 1 sets out the Equality Impact Assessment for this Development.

**Table 1: Assessment of Equality Effects**

Area for Consideration	Equality Effect Assessment
Community infrastructure and open spaces	<p>The site selection and design evolution of the Development has considered potential social impacts. As stated in the Design Approach Document [EN010142/APP/5.6], areas within 100 m of residential buildings were identified as being not preferred, and areas within 50 m of residential buildings were identified as best avoided. In response to consultation, solar areas were set back from residential properties in multiple locations. There is no community infrastructure, such as care homes, places of worship, schools, or local high streets within 100 m of the Order Limits.</p> <p>ES Chapter 18, Recreation [EN010162/APP/6.2.18] sets out likely impacts of the Development on recreational resources, which are principally to Public Rights of Way (PRoW). Of the 117 PRoW within the study area, 8 will be diverted (with 7 diversions) during the operational phase, and 1 will be temporarily closed only during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Development. 21 new permissive paths and 6 new permissive bridleways, totalling 32.6 km of new route, would be created to enhance connectivity between existing footpaths and the broader network, while also</p>

Area for Consideration	Equality Effect Assessment
	<p>serving to reduce road walking and improving overall safety. A community orchard is proposed c. 1 km to the west of North Muskham. These new routes and the orchard are expected to have a beneficial impact on recreational opportunities in the area. The outline Recreational Routes Management Plan (ES TA A18.1 [EN010162/APP/6.4.18.1]) depicts the management and mitigation procedures for Public Rights of Way (PRoW) impacted during the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the Development as well as other new recreational routes, which will be created as part of the Development. The diverted paths will generally be similar to those in the existing PRoW network and will facilitate access to people of varying ages and levels of mobility. It is anticipated that the suggested changes to the PRoW network will not affect relevant receptor groups differently to the general population. It is therefore predicted that the Development will not give rise to any disproportionate or differential impacts to protected characteristic groups due to effects on community infrastructure and open spaces.</p>
Employment and Business	<p>ES Chapter 13, Socioeconomics and Tourism [EN010162/APP/6.2.13] and Technical Appendix A13.2: Outline Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan (OSSCEP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.13.2] outline the likely economic benefits of the Development and the context and characteristics of the local community and economy in which it is located. Increased employment opportunities would primarily impact those employed in roles that directly relate to the construction or operation of the Development. There would be some beneficial indirect effects to the local service industry and on the local economy as a whole. As stated in the OSSCEP, the applicant will introduce initiatives to maximise the diversity of the workforce.</p> <p>The Applicant anticipates that there will not be any disruption on local businesses or charities that provide services to groups with protected characteristics. As stated above, the Development is located an appropriate offset from residential areas and population centres. It is therefore predicted that the Development will not give rise to any disproportionate or differential impacts to protected characteristic groups due to effects on employment and businesses.</p>
Transport and Access	<p>The outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (oCTMP; ES TA A5.2 [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.2]) sets out the measures to manage potential changes in traffic as a result of the construction phase of the Development. At this stage, there are no plans to permanently change any public roads or pedestrian networks other than the 7 diversions to public rights of way. Localised works have been proposed on some minor roads in order to implement passing places and create new, or upgrade existing, access points. These changes will be implemented with due regard to safety and accessibility. It is therefore anticipated</p>

Area for Consideration	Equality Effect Assessment
	<p>that these works will not have any disproportionate or differential effects on protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>Whilst the number vehicle movement will increase as a result of the construction of the Development, ES Chapter 14, Traffic and Transport, [EN010162/APP/6.2.14] considers the anticipated impact of construction traffic on driver delay within the Study Area to be negligible and temporary, and thus not significant. As there are no anticipated significant impacts relating to traffic or journey delay effects, it is predicted the Development will not give rise to any disproportionate or differential impacts to protected characteristic groups.</p> <p>As stated above, the outline Recreational Routes Management Plan details the diversions to the PRow. None of the diverted PRow have been identified as being relied upon by protected characteristic groups. The diverted paths will generally be similar to those in the existing PRow network and will facilitate access to people of varying ages and levels of mobility. With the management and mitigation procedures for the impacted PRow in place, it is expected that the Development will not give rise to any disproportionate or differential effects on protected characteristic groups.</p>
Noise and Vibration	<p>ES Chapter 12, Noise and Vibration, [EN010162/APP/6.2.12] assesses the likely significant effects from noise and vibration as a result of the Development and identifies mitigation measures to address potential impacts. The modelling undertaken as part of this assessment included a number of worst-case assumptions. The assessment concluded that noise or vibration effects are not significant in terms of the EIA Regulations. Mitigation measures have been proposed within the oOEMP and oCEMP in order to minimise any noise impacts across the Development.</p> <p>As outlined above, the site selection process has avoided residential areas and population centres. As there are no reasons for relevant receptor groups to be sited closer to the Development than the general population, it is anticipated that potential noise impacts on relevant receptor groups would not be disproportionate or differential.</p>
Crime, Safety and Personal Security	<p>The site of the Development is largely rural, with the wider area within and surrounding the Order Limits being generally composed of agricultural land, interspersed by occasional woodlands. With this in mind, and the lack of expected changes proposed to Transport and Access, it is anticipated that the Development will not give rise to any changes to safety or the perceived safety of the area.</p> <p>Noise and vibration measures are set out for the construction, operation and decommissioning phases, respectively, in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.3];</li> </ul>

Area for Consideration	Equality Effect Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline Operation Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.5]; and</li> <li>• Outline Decommissioning and Restoration Plan (oDRP) [EN010162/APP/6.4.5.6], which includes provision for a Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) with similar protections to those set out in the oCEMP.</li> </ul> <p>The oCEMP and oOEMP outline the proposed security measures for this Development. Detailed security measures will be set out in the final version of the OEMP and the CEMP, prior to construction and operation, respectively, commencing. The outline measures currently suggested are as follows: <i>‘A fence would enclose the operational areas of the Development for security and public safety, with access points for small mammals. Pole mounted internal facing closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems are also likely to be deployed around the perimeter of the operational areas of the Development. It is likely that movement-triggered lighting and passive infra-red sensors would be deployed for security purposes in Works No. 4 and 5 and potentially at any other pieces of critical infrastructure and construction compounds.’</i></p> <p>The purpose of the proposed security measures is to protect public, employee and contractor safety through all stages of the Development. With these measures and the detailed management plans in place, it is anticipated that potential crime, safety and personal security impacts on relevant receptor groups would not be disproportionate or differential.</p>
Human Health	<p>Human health is considered in many technical areas assessed within the ES. Additionally, a Human Health Impact Assessment (HHIA) has been completed in section 16.4 of ES Chapter 16: Miscellaneous Issues [EN010162/APP/6.2.16]. The assessment includes completing a Mental Well-being Impact Assessment screening process (in ES TA A16.2 [EN010162/APP/6.4.16.2], which identified that risks were low, and no further assessment was necessary. The outcome of the HHIA indicates that the Development is unlikely to negatively affect people’s health and wellbeing in its widest sense. It also concluded that the Development will not give rise to effects that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cause potentially severe or irreversible negative effects;</li> <li>• Affect a large number of people; or</li> <li>• Specifically, may affect people who already suffer poor health or are socially excluded.</li> </ul> <p>Potential adverse effects scoped into the assessment included only potential physical effects arising from slightly reduced air quality as a result of construction and decommissioning plant and traffic. These are assessed as being of minor or negligible significance, based on worst-case assumptions.</p> <p>Potential beneficial effects on health include effects the Development will have through increasing employment and the creation of more</p>

Area for Consideration	Equality Effect Assessment
	<p>traffic -free recreational routes. These are assessed as being of negligible significance on human health.</p> <p>It is therefore predicted that the Development will not give rise to any disproportionate or differential impacts to protected characteristic groups due to health-related equality effects.</p>

## 6 CONCLUSION

35. This EqIA has primarily relied upon the ES to identify the proposed activities associated with this Development, and to assess whether, and to what degree, potential effects could have different magnitudes on relevant receptors compared to the general population.
36. This assessment has concluded that no disproportionate or differential effects on groups of people with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010 would be caused as a result of this Development.
37. Numerous documents referenced in this assessment (such as the outline Recreational Routes Management Plan, outline Construction Traffic Management Plan, outline Operation Environment Management Plan, and outline Construction Environment Management Plan) have proposed mitigation measures to reduce the potential impacts of this Development. Any documents produced in outline will be developed into a detailed management plan before the commencement of the phase of the Development which it relates to. It is anticipated that the detailed management plans will provide the same or greater mitigation measures as the plans provided in outline.