By email to:
MeridianSolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

[redacted]
Principal Infrastructure Officer
Planning Services
Lincolnshire County Council
County Offices
Newland
Lincoln LN1 1YL
Tel: [redacted]
E-Mail: nsips@lincolnshire.gov.uk

27 October 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

Meridian Solar Farm Limited EN10169
Lincolnshire County Council – Deadline 3 Response – Comments on Deadline 2 documents
IP No. [redacted]

This letter sets out Lincolnshire County Council's (LCC's) Deadline 3 comments on the submissions to the Examination made at Deadline 2. The comments are presented predominantly under topic areas. As a result, there are some limited repeat references to certain documents where they cross several topic areas.

Outline Battery Safety Management Plan [REP2-006]

Please refer to LCC's answer in response to ExQ1 20.0.12.

Applicant's Comments on Local Impact Reports [REP2-015]

LCC has reviewed the applicant's response to the LIR and has the following comments to make, where paragraphs are not explicitly mentioned, LCC has no further comments or any update on the Council's position to make at this stage.

Site selection and alternatives (1.1 – 1.10)

Whilst noting the applicant's response to the Council's comment about land to the west, north of Bourne, where agricultural land quality is likely to be lower, LCC would question the reference to '*approximately 24km*', given lower quality land is encountered within 18 – 20 km west of the PoC at Weston Marsh.

Grid Connection and BESS

2.1 The LCC note that the TCPA application for Weston Marsh A was approved by South Holland DC planning committee on 21/10/2026. LCC's concerns regarding cumulative impacts from multiple NSIP developments remain.

2.2 In view of the ongoing position from NGET, LCC would maintain its position that a requirement be imposed in any DCO should the SoS be minded to grant consent, in order to restrict the commencement of development, including any preparatory works, until such time as consent has been secured for a connection into the Weston Marsh substation.

Landscape and visual (3.1 – 3.20)

Owing to unforeseen illness, LCC has been unable to provide detailed comments on the applicant's responses to landscape and visual matters raised in our LIR. In the circumstances, LCC can commit, subject to ExA's approval, to provide a response on this particular matter ahead of the next set of Issue Specific Hearings, and intends to submit a late submission into the Examination on or before the 3rd November 2026.

Ecology and biodiversity (4.1 – 4.30)

LCC notes and accepts the Applicant's response in relation to the need for detailed botanical surveys.

LCC maintains its position that additional surveys are required in order to ensure that potential impacts on nocturnal Schedule 1 breeding birds such as barn owl are identified and to properly understand mitigation requirements.

LCC notes the Applicant's response to Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust at REP1-074, Table 5-6 in relation to the production of a Farmland Bird mitigation Strategy and welcomes the additional clarification provided.

LCC notes the Applicant's response in relation to the need for a programme of post construction bat surveys. Given the identified presence of an assemblage of bats which is of national importance, LCC maintains its opinion that a programme of post-construction bat monitoring should be secured in order to further the understanding of the impacts of large-scale solar developments on local bat populations.

LCC notes the Applicant's response in relation to the potential need to update the BNG Strategy at Deadline 3.

LCC notes the Applicant's response to comments on how habitat condition has been assigned to areas where access to surveys was unavailable. LCC maintains that if enhancements to habitat condition are proposed on unsurveyed land, an assumption should be made that these areas are already in good condition unless it can be demonstrated otherwise by additional survey work. LCC will review any updates to the BNG metric and BNG Strategy provided at Deadline 3 in line with this position.

LCC notes the Applicant's response in relation to the establishment of an Ecological Steering Group and will review any updates to the OLEMP (REP1-070) when available.

Traffic and transport (5.1 to 5.20)

The applicant's response to LCC's LIR in respect of traffic and transport are noted. LCC refers the ExA to LCC's responses to ExQ1 18.0.3, 18.0.21, 18.0.37-39, 18.0.44 and 18.0.48 and the SoCG table 13-13 which updates the current position on traffic and transport matters.

Regarding REP2-015, 5.5 – 5.7, there are matters not yet resolved as detailed in the SoCG. At the referenced meeting on 5 October, the applicant agreed to provide more details on the accesses off the A151 and A16, and to give consideration to staggering the accesses on A151. The LCC

Highway Officer advised that the crossroads arrangement on the A road was unsafe. The applicant agreed to provide more details on A16 access with no right turn and also to prepare a passing places proposal for the narrow roads which will be impacted. Once LCC Highway Officers have received and reviewed this information a further update will be provided.

LCC welcomes the applicant's commitments to update the oCTMP and include specific wording related to future technical approvals and costs associated with the approval process. The proposed wording in REP2-015, 5.8-5.9, is considered to be acceptable, however it currently does not make reference to fees, as per the LCC suggested wording, that was included in the CTMP for the Tillbridge Solar DCO and the Springwell Solar DCO.

Regarding the assessment of cumulative effects, notwithstanding the Councils general concerns regarding consecutive and protracted construction impacts on amenity, as highlighted in section 19 of our LIR [REP1-106], the applicant's response and further justification provided in REP2-015, 5.14 – 5.19, on specific points of the assessment of cumulative traffic and transport effects in the ES appears reasonable.

Public Rights of Way (6.1 – 6.12)

LCC welcome the applicant's commitment in REP2-015, 6.4-6.10, to update the outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan (oPRoW-MP) at deadline 3 and we will provide further comments once we have had the opportunity to review the updated document and through the SoCG.

Flood risk and water resources (7.1 – 7.19)

7.10 & 7.11- Whilst noting the applicant's response to the Council's comment about land to the west, north of Bourne, where flood risk is lower, LCC would question the reference to '*approximately 24km*', given that there are areas of Flood Zone 1 within 18 – 20 km of the PoC, to the north and east of Morton for example. Reference to paragraph 5.6.10 of the applicant's Post ISH1 Note: Strategic Site Selection, acknowledges this point.

Cultural heritage (built heritage and archaeology) (8.1 – 8.39)

LCC welcomes the submission of the ES Chapter 8: Cultural Heritage [REP1-016], ES Appendix 8-4: Heritage Setting Assessment [REP1-032] and Crowland Kinetic Views Assessment [REP1-096] and look forward to continuing discussions with the Applicant regarding Crowland Abbey and St Guthlacs Cross.

LCC looks forward to commenting on the designs and working with the Applicant and Historic England to minimise the impact on Wykeham Chapel.

LCC welcomes the production of the Historic Farmstead Group Value Assessment [REP2-016]. LCC would recommend further dialogue to be undertaken with the Applicant regarding how the assessment has reached its conclusions.

LCC welcomes the acknowledgement that the proposals will incur significant operational effects on the historic fenland landscape, its character and historic legibility. This impact will not be restricted to the operational phase, there will be a physical and setting impact during the construction phase.

LCC considers the conclusion by the ExA for the Springwell scheme to apply to any decision-making regarding Meridian and the Applicant should embed this into their outputs.

ES Appendix 12-7: Landscape and Visual Cumulative Assessment [APP-241] and ES Chapter 8: Cultural Heritage [REP1-016] provide useful benchmark data and assessments for HLCA 9 and 10. However, the detailed rationale behind the assessment conclusions needs to be set out clearly.

LCC welcomes the submission of the OAMMS and will work with the Applicant to ensure management of the archaeological resource is undertaken in a robust and proportionate manner through the lifetime of the scheme. LCC agrees that full details of decommissioning methods will be reviewed in relation to the archaeological potential of the Site to determine an appropriate and proportionate approach to archaeological mitigation and that this should be added to the Environmental Mitigation and Commitments Register [REP1-057].

With regard to the applicant's response to archaeological deposits (8.27) LCC is satisfied with the response from the Applicant and has no further comment to make at this stage.

LCC welcome the clarity provided regarding mitigation options contained within the OAMMS. It is accepted that there has been mitigation through design solutions.

In relation to paragraph 8.29, LCC agrees that there is justification for locating the infrastructure in Zones B and C and will work with the Applicant to ensure the proposed mitigation is fit for purpose.

LCC welcomes the commitment for an ACoW to be embedded across the lifespan of the scheme.

Finally, LCC are pleased to see the outline PACES within the OAMMS and Environmental Mitigation and Commitments Register [REP1-057] and look forward to developing this aspect of the scheme further with the Applicant.

<u>Soils, agriculture and land use impact (9.1 – 9.33)</u>

LCC's agricultural consultants, Reading Agriculture Consultants, have responded to all soils, agricultural and land use-related matters from deadline 2 documents within their report, please see Appendix A.

<u>Socio-economics (10.1 – 10.17)</u>

Subject to the comment below on SSCEP funding, LCC have no further comments at this stage, and we will review any further submissions provided and update future iterations of the SoCG accordingly.

In relation to the point made at 10.10 of REP2-015, the applicant has referred to the Community Benefit Fund (CBF). However, the matter raised by LCC in its LIR is in regard to the Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan (SSCEP), and LCC welcoming its inclusion at Requirement 20 of the draft dDCO. The SSCEP and Community Benefit Fund are two separate matters. The Council maintains its position that, given that skills and employment generation are relied upon as a key benefit from the scheme, we would recommend that an annual funding contribution of £50,000 (index linked) is provided for the lifetime of the development, to provide a funding mechanism by which the objectives of the SSCEP can delivered. Such funding would assist the plan's implementation and support the initiatives identified. Without such a commitment to funding, LCC considers that little weight can be attributed to the proposed benefits. There is precedent for this in Lincolnshire, with similar contributions having been secured by way of a section 106

agreement in relation to the Heckington Fen Solar Farm and the Springwell Solar farm developments.

Human Health (11.1 – 11.13)

LCC accepts the applicant's responses to the Human Health concerns raised in the LIR and notes that most of the issues are addressed in the Human Health chapter (Chapter 10) or other appropriate chapters of the Environmental Statement (ES), the Relevant Representations Report, and other control documents.

However, LCC remains of the opinion that due to the lack of evidence around a concentration of large solar farms having or not having a negative effect on human health and community wellbeing, it not possible to conclude that they will be negligible (not significant).LCC welcomes the applicant recognising the opportunities that the Scheme has to deliver health benefits through enhancements to accessible green space, etc., and its commitment to establishing a Community Benefits Fund, should the Development Consent Order (DCO) be granted, which will be shaped by residents so that it best serves their requirements. LCC has no further comments to make at this stage.

Minerals and Waste (12.1 – 12.15)

LCC have reviewed the comments regarding the Minerals and waste chapter of the Councils LIR and have the following comments to make. LCC would refer the ExA to ExQ1, Q20.0.6, with regards to paragraphs 12.1 to 12.7.

LCC accepts that PV panel recycling is possible and that some capacity already exists. However, it is unclear whether sufficient capacity will be in place when needed, herein lies LCCs concern.

With regard to reporting requirements of the oOEMP, LCC welcomes the applicant's commitment to review and update the oOEMP for Deadline 3 and will comment further when the updated version is published.

Cumulative Effects (13.1 – 13.11)

The applicant's response to the Council's LIR in terms of cumulative effects has been reviewed. While the Council acknowledges the applicant's responses, we remain concerned about the potential for significant inter-project effects arising from this development in combination with other schemes. In our view, these cumulative impacts continue to be underestimated, as outlined in our LIR and written submissions.

Fire Safety (14.1 – 14.10)

Please refer to LCC's responses on this topic provided in ExQ1 table.

Draft Development Consent Order (16.1 – 16.15)

LCC has reviewed the applicant's response to comments on the dDCO in section 22 of our LIR [REP1-106]. The applicant's commitment to update the dDCO at deadline 3 in respect of Schedule 14 paragraph 3(3), Schedule 15 Part 5 and the inclusion of protective provision for the benefit of Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue are welcomed. In respect of all other matters raised LCC's position currently remains as set out in its LIR.

The Council intends to participate in ISH2, where the draft DCO will be examined in further detail. We will provide additional input on DCO drafting matters, particularly those raised in our LIR and written representations that remain outstanding. The Council would welcome further discussions with the applicant on outstanding matters and will seek to progress through the SoCG.

Historic Farmsteads Group Value Assessment [REP2-016]

Please see LCC's response to the LIR comments above.

Post ISH1 Note Strategic Site Selection [REP2-017]

No specific comments to raise at this stage of the Examination.

Post ISH1 Note Sequential and Exception Tests [REP2-018]

No specific comments to raise at this stage of the Examination.

Statement of Common Ground

LCC had sight of the updated SoCG from the applicant on 23 October 2026, LCC will review and provide updated comments to the applicant for Deadline 4.

We trust that the ExA finds these comments helpful.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

On Behalf of
[redacted]
Head of Planning

Appendix A: RAC report on response to DL2 comments, October 2026