Submission ID: [redacted]

Wheldrake Parish Council
Consultation Response – Light Valley Solar Farm
Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN0110012
Subject: Proposed Construction Traffic Route – A19, Crockey Hill, Wheldrake Lane and Escrick

Wheldrake Parish Council wishes to raise significant concerns regarding the proposed construction traffic route from the A19 at Crockey Hill, along Wheldrake Lane towards Escrick, particularly in relation to highway safety, the suitability of the local road network and the potential impacts on Wheldrake village.

Whilst the Parish Council recognises the need to identify suitable construction access routes, it considers that the proposed route requires further detailed assessment and clarification before it can be considered acceptable.

1. Consultation with City of York Council Highways

The Parish Council notes that the proposed route includes Wheldrake Lane, which falls within the highway authority area of City of York Council, rather than North Yorkshire Council.

The applicant's documentation refers to discussions with North Yorkshire Council regarding traffic considerations. However, it is unclear whether City of York Council, as the relevant highway authority for Wheldrake Lane, has been formally consulted regarding the suitability of the proposed route.

The Parish Council requests confirmation of:

- Whether City of York Council Highways has been formally consulted on the proposed route.
- Whether a highway safety and suitability assessment has been undertaken by, or agreed with, City of York Council.
- Whether City of York Council has confirmed that the road is suitable for the anticipated volume, frequency and type of construction vehicles, particularly HGVs.
- What measures, if any, City of York Council considers necessary to mitigate the impact of construction traffic.

The Parish Council considers it essential that the highway authority responsible for the road is directly involved in assessing and approving its suitability.

2. Suitability of Wheldrake Lane for HGV Traffic

Wheldrake Lane is a rural country road and was not designed to accommodate sustained volumes of heavy construction traffic.

The Parish Council has concerns regarding the road's suitability, including its alignment, bends, available carriageway width and the potential for conflict between HGVs and other road users.

The Parish Council requests that a detailed route assessment is undertaken, including consideration of:

- The number of daily HGV movements anticipated, including peak construction periods.
- The size and type of vehicles proposed to use the route.
- The ability of HGVs to safely pass oncoming vehicles.
- Visibility, road geometry and the suitability of bends and junctions.
- The potential for damage to the highway and verges.
- The cumulative impact of construction traffic alongside existing agricultural, commercial and residential traffic.

The Parish Council does not consider that the route's suitability should be assumed simply because it is an existing public highway.

3. Highway and Pedestrian Safety Concerns – Pool Bridge Farm

Of particular concern to Wheldrake Parish Council is the existing highway safety situation at Pool Bridge Farm on Wheldrake Lane.

The farm attracts visitors from outside the immediate area, many of whom may be unfamiliar with the road and its layout. The Parish Council is aware of previous accidents associated with this location.

The entrance and exit to Pool Bridge Farm is situated on a bend on a road subject to the national speed limit of 60mph, creating existing concerns regarding visibility and the safety of vehicles entering and leaving the premises.

Of even greater concern is the presence of a bus stop on the opposite side of the road, directly in the vicinity of the farm entrance and exit. This means that pedestrians, including visitors to the farm and bus passengers, may need to cross Wheldrake Lane at this location.

The combination of a bend, a 60mph speed limit, turning vehicles and pedestrians crossing the carriageway already presents significant potential hazards.

The introduction of regular HGV construction traffic would introduce an additional risk, particularly given the size, weight and stopping distances of heavy vehicles. An HGV approaching around the bend at or near the permitted speed could have insufficient time or distance to respond safely to pedestrians crossing the road or vehicles slowing or turning into the farm.

The Parish Council is particularly concerned that the proposed construction traffic arrangements could increase the likelihood and severity of collisions at a location where vulnerable road users are already exposed to traffic travelling at relatively high speeds.

The Parish Council therefore requests that a specific highway and pedestrian safety assessment is undertaken at Pool Bridge Farm, including:

- Existing accident history and recorded collision data.
- Visibility distances on both approaches to the bend and farm entrance.
- The location and use of the bus stop and the safety of pedestrians crossing the road.
- The interaction between HGVs, vehicles entering and exiting the farm, buses and pedestrians.
- Whether the existing national speed limit is appropriate during the construction period.
- Whether temporary or permanent speed restrictions, warning signage or other physical highway safety measures would be required.
- Whether the proposed route can safely accommodate the anticipated HGV movements without introducing unacceptable additional risks to pedestrians and other road users.

The Parish Council considers that this location warrants particular scrutiny and that the existing risks must not be compounded by the introduction of significant construction traffic.

The Parish Council does not consider it appropriate for the proposed construction route to be approved until these safety

concerns have been specifically assessed and City of York Council Highways has confirmed whether the route can safely accommodate the additional HGV movements.

4. Impact on Wheldrake Village

Although the proposed construction route would approach only the outskirt of Wheldrake rather than passing directly through the village centre, the Parish Council remains concerned about the wider impact on the community.

The additional HGV movements could result in increased traffic, noise, vibration, road deterioration and disruption for residents and other road users.

There are also concerns regarding the potential impact on local traffic movements, particularly at busy periods, and the interaction between construction vehicles and existing traffic accessing or leaving Wheldrake.

The Parish Council requests further information regarding the anticipated duration of construction traffic movements, the number of vehicles expected each day, proposed operating hours and any arrangements to avoid peak traffic periods.

The assessment should consider the cumulative impact of all construction-related traffic rather than assessing individual access routes in isolation.

5. Prevention of Construction Traffic Travelling Through Wheldrake Village

A significant concern for the Parish Council is how the proposed route would be enforced.

Although the intended access is from the A19 at Crockey Hill, Wheldrake Lane can also be approached from the opposite direction through Wheldrake village.

The Parish Council is concerned that construction vehicles could approach the route through the village centre, whether due to satellite navigation instructions, driver error, unfamiliarity with the area or attempts to take alternative routes.

The Parish Council therefore seeks clear assurances that construction traffic will not be permitted to travel through Wheldrake village centre.

In particular, the Parish Council requests confirmation of:

- How the approved construction route will be communicated to all contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and delivery drivers.
- Whether a mandatory routing agreement will be incorporated into the Construction Traffic Management Plan.
- What physical signage or other measures will be installed to direct construction traffic from the A19 and prevent inappropriate routing through Wheldrake.
- Whether vehicle tracking or delivery monitoring will be used to ensure compliance.
- What arrangements will be in place for residents to report construction vehicles using unauthorised routes.
- What enforcement action will be taken where drivers or contractors fail to comply.

The Parish Council considers that signage and instructions alone may be insufficient without effective monitoring and enforceable requirements.

It therefore requests that the prohibition on construction traffic travelling through Wheldrake village centre is expressly secured through the approved Construction Traffic Management Plan, with clear responsibilities for monitoring, reporting and enforcement.

6. Further Information and Requested Safeguards

Before any proposed route is approved, the Parish Council requests that the applicant provides:

1. Written confirmation of consultation with City of York Council Highways and its response.
2. A detailed highway suitability and road safety assessment of Wheldrake Lane, including Pool Bridge Farm.
3. Forecast daily and peak HGV movements, vehicle types and construction traffic operating hours.
4. Details of any proposed highway improvements, temporary speed restrictions or other safety measures.
5. A Construction Traffic Management Plan containing mandatory and enforceable routing restrictions to prevent HGVs travelling through Wheldrake village centre.
6. Arrangements for monitoring compliance, responding to residents' complaints and addressing any highway damage attributable to construction activities.

Conclusion

Wheldrake Parish Council has serious reservations regarding the suitability of Wheldrake Lane as a construction traffic route, particularly given its rural character, the existing safety concerns at Pool Bridge Farm and the potential for construction traffic to travel through Wheldrake village.

The Parish Council is particularly concerned that the proposed route appears to have been considered in consultation with North Yorkshire Council, whilst it remains unclear whether City of York Council, as the relevant highway authority, has assessed or agreed to its use.

The Parish Council requests that these matters are fully addressed before the proposed route is accepted and that appropriate, enforceable safeguards are secured to protect highway safety and the residents of Wheldrake.

Wheldrake Parish Council