The Planning Inspectorate
Yr Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

SCOPING OPINION:

Proposed Droves Solar Farm

Case Reference: EN0110013

Adopted by the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) pursuant to Regulation 10 of The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

18 December 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.0.1 On 07 November 2024, the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) received an application for a Scoping Opinion from The Droves Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) under Regulation 10 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) for the proposed Droves Solar Farm (the Proposed Development). The Applicant notified the Secretary of State (SoS) under Regulation 8(1)(b) of those regulations that they propose to provide an Environmental Statement (ES) in respect of the Proposed Development and by virtue of Regulation 6(2)(a), the Proposed Development is 'EIA development'.

1.0.2 The Applicant provided the necessary information to inform a request under EIA Regulation 10(3) in the form of a Scoping Report, available from:

1.0.3 https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN0110013

1.0.4 This document is the Scoping Opinion (the Opinion) adopted by the Inspectorate on behalf of the SoS. This Opinion is made on the basis of the information provided in the Scoping Report, reflecting the Proposed Development as currently described by the Applicant. This Opinion should be read in conjunction with the Applicant's Scoping Report.

1.0.5 The Inspectorate has set out in the following sections of this Opinion where it has / has not agreed to scope out certain aspects / matters on the basis of the information provided as part of the Scoping Report. The Inspectorate is content that the receipt of this Scoping Opinion should not prevent the Applicant from subsequently agreeing with the relevant consultation bodies to scope such aspects / matters out of the ES, where further evidence has been provided to justify this approach. However, in order to demonstrate that the aspects / matters have been appropriately addressed, the ES should explain the reasoning for scoping them out and justify the approach taken.

1.0.6 Before adopting this Opinion, the Inspectorate has consulted the 'consultation bodies' listed in Appendix 1 in accordance with EIA Regulation 10(6). A list of those consultation bodies who replied within the statutory timeframe (along with copies of their comments) is provided in Appendix 2. These comments have been taken into account in the preparation of this Opinion.

1.0.7 The Inspectorate has published a series of advice pages, including Advice Note 7: *Environmental Impact Assessment: Preliminary Environmental Information, Screening and Scoping* (AN7). AN7 and its annexes provide guidance on EIA processes during the pre-application stages and advice to support applicants in the preparation of their ES.

1.0.8 Applicants should have particular regard to the standing advice in AN7, alongside other advice notes on the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) process, available from:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-infrastructure-planning-advice-notes

1.0.9 This Opinion should not be construed as implying that the Inspectorate agrees with the information or comments provided by the Applicant in their request for an opinion from the Inspectorate. In particular, comments from the Inspectorate in this Opinion are without prejudice to any later decisions taken (e.g. on formal submission of the application) that any development identified by the Applicant is necessarily to be treated as part of a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) or Associated Development or development that does not require development consent.

2. OVERARCHING COMMENTS

2.0 Description of the Proposed Development

(Scoping Report Section 2)

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
2.0.1	Paragraphs 1.8.5 – 1.8.10	Consideration of Alternatives	The ES should explain the factors which have influenced site selection and design, including a comparison of the environmental effects. For example, the ES should explain how the design of the Proposed Development has ensured that preference has been made for poorer quality agricultural land instead of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.
2.0.2	Paragraphs 3.2.23 – 3.2.24	Switchgears	Details on the type of switchgear used should be included as part of the ES. Should a gas insulated switchgear option be chosen for the inverters, the use of sulphur hexafluoride (SF6) should be avoided, if possible, in line with National Policy Statement (NPS) for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5).
2.0.3	Paragraph 3.2.29	Horizontal directional drilling (HDD)	The Inspectorate notes that horizontal directional drilling (HDD) may be required during construction of the Proposed Development. The ES should identify the trenching technique to be used at the relevant locations and provide details of the programme and the works, including identifying if any night-time working is anticipated. Justification should be set out for use of the preferred technique at the chosen locations, and identification of potential impacts and an assessment where likely significant effects could occur should be provided.
2.0.4	Paragraphs 3.2.31 – 3.2.35 3.2.43 – 3.2.46	Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated works	The ES should provide the exact location and extent of the BESS and other infrastructure such as site access and highway works in the description, supported by figures.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
2.0.5	Paragraph 3.4.1	Location of construction compounds and associated infrastructure	The ES should provide details on the approximate location and number of the construction compounds and the location of any associated temporary or permanent infrastructure such as access tracks required on the Proposed Development site, and these should be shown on a figure or plan.
2.0.6	Paragraph 3.4.1	New bridges or culverts	The ES should describe where bridge/ culvert structures are proposed and demonstrate that there is sufficient detail regarding the design as to inform an assessment of effects on watercourses and ecology as appropriate.
2.0.7	Section 3.6	Decommissioning	The ES should provide a proportionate description of the activities and works which are likely to be required to decommission the Proposed Development or extend its operational life, and the anticipated duration. The ES should clarify whether the site will be returned to its current use and condition, or the infrastructure that is retained beyond the lifespan of the Proposed Development should be clearly distinguished, such as the proposed access tracks.

2.1 EIA Methodology and Scope of Assessment

(Scoping Report Section 6)

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
2.1.1	Section 3.6	Decommissioning effects	Where significant effects are likely to occur because of decommissioning the Proposed Development these should be described and assessed in the ES. Where it is assumed that the effects of decommissioning are likely to be similar to or no worse than the effects from construction, this should be justified. It is the Inspectorate's opinion that the decommissioning phase should be considered as distinct from construction with any potential effects considered separately.
2.1.2	Paragraph 4.5.15	Determination of significance – professional judgement	The Scoping Report states that whether an effect is determined as significant would be based on professional judgement. The ES should fully justify how significance of effects has been established. Where professional judgement is used in the assessment of likely significant effects this should be made clear in the ES.
2.1.3	Paragraphs 4.5.16 – 4.5.31 Table 4.1	Cumulative Effects Assessment	The ES should consider other developments as part of the cumulative effects assessment (CEA). In addition to the High Grove solar farm proposal, the CEA should consider including the terrestrial components of the Norfolk Vanguard Offshore Wind Farm (OWF) and Norfolk Boreas OWF developments, and other non-solar developments which may have cumulative effects with the Proposed Development. The ES should explain why developments within the study area have been excluded from the CEA.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			Potential developments considered in the CEA should be consulted on with local planning authorities, the highways authority, and other relevant consultation bodies. The ES should include information on the locations of the developments included in the CEA and the distance from the Proposed Development supported by a figure depicting the locations and extent of the identified cumulative developments in relation to the Proposed Development.
2.1.4	Paragraphs 4.5.16 – 4.5.31	Cumulative effects – assessment years	The ES should set out the assumed worst-case assessment years. Where there is potential for construction activities to occur across several sites simultaneously this should be considered to ensure a worst-case assessment is provided. Where different aspect assessments use different assessment years, the reasons for the selection of assessment years should be clearly explained in each case, with reference to relevant guidance.
2.1.5	Paragraphs 4.5.16 – 4.5.31	Cumulative effects – Zone of Influence	The ES should fully justify the study area for cumulative sites with reference to relevant guidance and the likely extent of impacts. The ES should provide a clear justification for the extent of each Zone of Influence (ZoI) and how it captures the effects from the Proposed Development.
2.1.6	Paragraphs 4.6.1 – 4.6.3	Rochdale Envelope	The Inspectorate notes the Applicant's intention to apply a 'Rochdale Envelope' approach to maintain flexibility within the design of the Proposed Development. The Inspectorate expects that at the point an application is made, the description of the Proposed Development will be sufficiently detailed to include the design, size, capacity, technology, and locations of the different elements of the Proposed Development or, where details are not yet known, the ES will set out the assumptions applied to the assessment in relation to these aspects. This should include the footprint and heights

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			of the structures, relevant to existing ground levels, as well as land-use requirements for all elements and phases of the development. The description should be supported as necessary by figures, cross-sections, and drawings which should be clearly and appropriately referenced. Where flexibility is sought, the ES should clearly set out and justify the maximum design parameters that would apply for each option assessed, and how these have been used to inform an adequate assessment in the ES. The Inspectorate advises that each aspect chapter includes a section that outlines the relevant parameters / commitments that have informed the assessment.
2.1.7	N/A	Transboundary effects	The Inspectorate on behalf of the SoS has considered the Proposed Development and concludes that the Proposed Development is unlikely to have a significant effect either alone or cumulatively on the environment in a European Economic Area State. In reaching this conclusion the Inspectorate has identified and considered the Proposed Development's likely impacts including consideration of potential pathways and the extent, magnitude, probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impacts. The Inspectorate considers that the likelihood of transboundary effects resulting from the Proposed Development is so low that it does not warrant the issue of a detailed transboundary screening. However, this position will remain under review and will have regard to any new or materially different information coming to light which may alter that decision. Note: The SoS' duty under Regulation 32 of the 2017 EIA Regulations continues throughout the application process.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			The Inspectorate's screening of transboundary issues is based on the relevant considerations specified in the Annex to its Advice Page 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Transboundary Impacts and Process', links for which can be found in paragraph 1.0.7 above.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT COMMENTS

3.1 Landscape and Visual

(Scoping Report Section 6)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.1.1	Paragraph 6.4.38	Lighting Impact Assessment	The Scoping Report states that a separate Lighting Impact Assessment (LIA) has been scoped out of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The Inspectorate considers that a LIA should be scoped in for further assessment as there is not sufficient information in the Scoping Report that the proposed approach to lighting is unlikely to cause any significant effects. The ES should include a LIA to support a detailed description of the Applicant's proposed approach to lighting and the measures taken to avoid or minimise lighting impacts on human and ecological receptors.
3.1.2	Paragraph 6.5.7 Table 6.9	Landscape Designations – National Designated Landscapes	The Applicant proposes to scope out national designated landscape designations as none are located within or near to the site. The Inspectorate agrees that, in the absence of any nationally designated landscapes such as National Parks or National Landscapes within the vicinity of the Proposed Development, this matter can be scoped out.
3.1.3	Table 6.9	National Character Areas and Suffolk Regional Landscape Character Areas	The Scoping Report states that the more detailed local Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) will form the basis of the assessment of effects on landscape character, informed by National and Regional Character Assessments where relevant. The Inspectorate agrees that National and Regional Character Areas can be scoped out on this basis.
3.1.4	Table 6.9	Local Landscape Character –	The Scoping Report states that the preliminary Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (Figure 6-1) indicates little to no potential visibility from the LCAs listed.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
		(B) Settled Tributary Farmland LCT; (B5) River Wissey Tributary Farmland LCA (E) The Fens LCT; (E2) Saddlebow and Wormegay LCA (H) Settled Farmland with Plantations LCT; (H2) Fincham LCA (J) Plateau Farmland LCT; (J3) Great Massingham LCA	The Inspectorate agrees that these LCAs can be scoped out from further assessment, on the basis that evidence is provided in the ES that there is little to no visibility from these LCAs and that the relevant consultation bodies agree to this approach.
3.1.5	Table 6.9	Visual Effects – Visual Receptor Groups (VRGs) located outside of the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI)	The Scoping Report states that VRGs will only be defined for areas with potential visibility of the Proposed Development. The Inspectorate agrees that these VRGs can be scoped out from further assessment providing information in the ES supports the conclusion that there is no potential visibility of the Proposed Development from the VRGs located outside the ZVI and the relevant consultation bodies agree to this approach.
3.1.6	Table 6.9	Visual Effects – Broadmeadow Common Emanuel's Common Newton Common Bradmoor Common	The Scoping Report states that the preliminary ZTV (Figure 6-1) indicates little to no potential visibility from these Commons. The Inspectorate agrees that visual effects of the Proposed Development from the Commons listed can be scoped out from further assessment providing information in the ES supports the conclusion that there is no potential visibility of the Proposed Development from these receptors, and that the relevant consultation bodies agree to this approach.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.1.7	Table 6.9	Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) – Residential properties beyond 800m distance of the Site Boundary.	Noting that the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note TGN 2/19: 'Residential Visual Amenity Assessment' advises that the requirement for an RVAA is generally dependent on the outcome of a LVIA, the Inspectorate agrees that residential properties beyond this distance can be scoped out from further assessment providing that the ES gives justification on why significant effects would not occur, supported by evidence of agreement to this approach with the relevant consultation bodies.
3.1.8	Table 6.9	Amenity and Recreation Assessment – Local Public Rights of Way (PRoW) located outside of the ZVI, and those which are no longer used, accessible or identifiable on the ground.	The Scoping Report states that local PRoW outside of the ZVI are unlikely to experience environmental impacts which may affect overall experience of the amenity and recreational resource, due to lack of visibility, distance from the Proposed Development or lack of use. The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out from further assessment on this basis providing that evidence in the ES supports this approach, and that the relevant consultation bodies are in agreement.
3.1.9	Table 6.9	Amenity and Recreation Assessment – Broadmeadow Common Emanuel's Common Newton Common Bradmoor Common	The Scoping Report states that these Commons are unlikely to experience environmental impacts which may affect overall experience of the amenity and recreational resource, due to lack of visibility and distance from the Proposed Development. The Inspectorate agrees that an amenity and recreation assessment of these Commons can be scoped out from further assessment on this basis, providing that the relevant consultation bodies agree to this approach.
3.1.10	Table 6.9	Night-Time Effects and Lighting – all phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out the night-time effects and lighting assessment from the LVIA. The Inspectorate considers that impacts on landscape and visual amenity resulting from the introduction of lighting during construction, operation and decommissioning

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			which are likely to result in significant effects should be assessed in the ES, unless it is agreed with relevant consultation bodies that this matter can be scoped out. The ES should ensure that intermittent lighting is assessed in relation to likely significant effects on humans and/or ecology. The ES should explain how the lighting design has been developed to minimise light spill and avoid direct intrusion into nearby properties. The ES should clearly explain the lighting strategy and any measures necessary to avoid or mitigate lighting effects. This should also include consideration of effects relating to intermittent lighting sources such as sensor-triggered security lighting. Any proposed mitigation measures should be described and secured through the DCO. The assessment should cross refer to other relevant aspect assessments and sensitive receptors (such as ecology and cultural heritage).

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.1.11	Section 6.2 Figure 6-1 Appendix 6.3	Study Area	The Scoping Report states that the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) is modelled on a worst-case scenario, with all other potential components of the Proposed Development having lower height parameters. The Inspectorate considers that the Study Area should be informed by the extent of likely effects, including from any potential elevated viewpoints. The final extent of the Study Area should be determined in consultation with the relevant local authorities to ensure it is representative, and evidence of this should be provided in the ES.
3.1.12	Paragraphs 6.3.3	Representative Viewpoints –	The decision on which viewpoints are representative should be agreed with the relevant local authorities where possible.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
	6.7.10 – 6.7.12 Table 6.1 Figure 6-1 Appendix 6.3	Preliminary Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and LVIA Viewpoints Visualisations and ZTV Studies	The Applicant should demonstrate how their approach to using a ZTV complies with the Landscape Institute's guidance on establishing a ZTV for the LVIA. The Landscape Institute's ZTV approach treats the world as 'bare earth' and does not take account of potential screening by vegetation or buildings. The ZTV should be based on the maximum parameters of the Proposed Development.
3.1.13	Paragraphs 6.4.5 – 6.4.12 Table 6.4	Assessment of sensitivity – landscape and visual receptors	Table 6.4 appears to duplicate the sub-heading landscape sensitivity, although visual receptors are referred to in addition to landscape receptors in paragraph 6.4.12 with respect to Table 6.4. The ES should clarify how susceptibility and value are to be used for the assessment for both landscape and visual receptors. The ES should demonstrate how relevant consultation bodies have influenced the choice of receptors and the level of sensitivity assigned to those receptors.
3.1.14	Table 6.4	Landscape and visual effects assessment	To help clearly distinguish between the assessment of landscape effects and the assessment of visual effects, the Inspectorate recommends separate criteria are presented for each assessment, in line with advice in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA).
3.1.15	Paragraphs 6.7.6 – 6.7.9	Mitigation – landscaping and planting	The ES should cover the establishment period of any landscaping scheme and any long-term management needs. Any assumptions made with regards to the height that proposed mitigation planting would have reached by the assessment years should be clearly presented and justified for the purposes of generating photomontages and reaching the assessment conclusions.
3.1.16	Paragraphs 6.8.2 – 6.8.3	Cumulative Effects	The assessment of cumulative effects on visual receptors should distinguish between effect on overall landscape character and on visual impact/amenity generally, as well as any other relevant impacts such as glint and glare.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
	Appendix 6.2		
3.1.17	6.3.20 Appendix 6.3	Photomontages	Photomontages should show all the components of the Proposed Development and demonstrate the Proposed Development before and after mitigation, in order to understand the implications of the worst-case scenario and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation. Photomontages should be provided during the winter as well as in the summer to allow an assessment of maximum visibility from chosen viewpoints and to illustrate the seasonal differences in screening provided by mitigation planting, in line with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), 3rd Edition, 2013). Photomontages should present the likely visual impact at selected locations, particularly with the effects of glint and glare without mitigation. The ES should clearly present any assumptions made with regards to the height that the proposed mitigation planting would have reached by the assessment years, for the purposes of generating photomontages and reaching the assessment conclusions. Efforts should be made to agree the number and location of the selected viewpoints for photomontages with relevant consultation bodies including local authorities, Historic England, and Natural England (NE) and evidence of this agreement should be provided in the ES. The cumulative assessment should be supported by photomontages where appropriate.
3.1.18	NA	Cross referencing – cultural heritage	The LVIA should cross refer to other relevant assessments and sensitive receptors, such as cultural heritage receptors. The ES should explain how the LVIA and cultural heritage assessments have been integrated with clear cross-referencing provided between the Cultural Heritage and LVIA chapters.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.1.19	Paragraphs 3.2.6 – 3.2.8	Type of panels	Where the potential panel solutions are widely different in their physical characteristics, the ES should give consideration to worst-case scenarios for the visual impact of the panel types.

3.2 Ecology and Biodiversity

(Scoping Report Section 7)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.1	Table 7.6	Statutory Designations – River Nar SSSI Castle Acre Common SSSI Breckland Forest SSSI Narborough Railway Embankment SSSI Norfolk Valley Fens SAC East Walton and Adcock's Common SSSI Breckland SAC Roydon Common Ramsar Roydon Common & Dersingham Bog SAC Dersingham Bog Ramsar River Wensum SAC The Wash SPA	The Inspectorate does not agree that these receptors should be scoped out without evidence demonstrating that no significant effects from the Proposed Development are likely and with clear agreement from relevant statutory bodies, where possible. A full assessment of the direct and indirect effects on any national and international designated sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and any mitigation measures to avoid, minimise or reduce any adverse significant effects should be set out in the ES. With respect to air quality impacts, the Breckland SPA, Breckland Forest SSSI and River Nar SSSI features and habitats may be sensitive to changes in air quality from construction traffic and the ES should consider these impacts in the assessment of any likely significant effects. The ES should include information to demonstrate whether or not the Proposed Development site is hydrologically linked to the River Nar SSSI and assess whether any significant effects are likely from water pollution. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation responses received from Natural England and the Environment Agency (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on these matters.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
		The Wash & North Norfolk Coast SAC	
3.2.2	Table 7.6	Non-Statutory Designations – Land Adjacent to the River Nar CWS Priory Meadow CWS Lake West of Castle Acre CWS Mill House Lake CWS Land Adjacent to the River Nar CWS Castle Acre Castle CWS Priory Road U22074 RNR Mill House CWS Narford Lake CWS The Carr CWS Castle Acre Castle CWS Lynn Road Disused Railway CWS Walton Road C65 RNR	The Inspectorate does not agree that these receptors can be scoped out without information demonstrating agreement with the relevant consultation bodies and there is the absence of a likely significant effect. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation responses received from the Environment Agency (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on this matter.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.3	Table 7.6	Specific surveys for Great Crested Newt (GCN)	Specific Great Crested Newt (GCN) eDNA Survey work undertaken by the Applicant indicates GCN are likely absent from all ponds within 250m of the survey area, including ponds within the survey area itself. GCN can travel up to 500m from their breeding ponds. As such, the Inspectorate considers that any ponds up to 500m from the site should be surveyed for the presence of GCN. In the absence of evidence demonstrating clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies, the Inspectorate is not in a position to agree that this matter should be scoped from the assessment. Evidence should be submitted with the ES demonstrating that relevant statutory bodies agree that GCN are likely to be absent, or which demonstrates no likely significant effects from the Proposed Development are not likely.
3.2.4	Table 7.6	Specific surveys for Otter and Water Vole	The Scoping Report states that there is an absence of suitable habitat to support these species within the survey area and these species have been scoped out of the assessment. In the absence of evidence demonstrating clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies, the Inspectorate is not in a position to agree to scope these matters from the assessment. Evidence demonstrating that these species are absent at the time that any DCO application is submitted and clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies, where possible, should be provided with the ES.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.5	Paragraphs 7.2.1 – 7.2.2	Study Area and Zone of Influence (ZoI)	The ES should ensure that the study area reflects the Proposed Development's Zone of Influence (ZoI) and should consider the potential for effects to occur beyond fixed distances, particularly where sites are designated for mobile species such as birds and bats, or where there is hydrological connectivity. Effort should be made to agree the study area(s) with relevant consultation bodies. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the scoping consultation responses from the Environment Agency and Natural England (in Appendix 2 of this Opinion).
3.2.6	Paragraphs 7.3.1 – 7.3.3 7.3.12 Table 7.3	Baseline conditions – surveys	The Inspectorate notes that some ecological surveys are ongoing or set to be completed in 2025. The ES should report the full survey findings and list all receptors identified as potentially present on site and assess significant effects where they are likely to occur. Dependent on the timescales between scoping and submission of the ES, the Applicant should consider whether surveys are current, and should agree the scope and timing of surveys with relevant consultation bodies.
3.2.7	Paragraph 7.6 Table 7.4	Receptor significance	Table 7.4 lists receptor significance with respect to their geographical scale. This should be clarified in the ES so that it is clear how ecological designations and their geographical scale have been interpreted in the assessment of likely significant effects.
3.2.8	Paragraphs 7.7.1 3.2.1 and 3.2.27	Overhead lines - fragmentation of populations and habitats during operation	The ES should consider the potential for overhead lines and related infrastructure to create a barrier to the movement of mobile species such as birds and bats during operation.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.2.9	Paragraph 1.7.8	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	The Proposed Development would be expected to deliver the mandatory minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) from late November 2025 for NSIPs and the ES should demonstrate how this would be achieved.
3.2.10	N/A	Arboriculture – Study area and impact assessment	The Applicant should consider whether an arboriculture study area and arboriculture impact assessment report of the entirety of the site is required to support the ES, with agreement from the relevant consultation bodies, if possible, or alternatively explain in the ES why this is not considered necessary. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response received from King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on this matter.
3.2.11	N/A	Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)	The ES should assess potential impacts from INNS where significant effects are likely to occur. Where mitigation measures are required, the ES should describe these measures and signpost how they would be secured through the DCO.
3.2.12	N/A	Confidential Annexes	Public bodies have a responsibility to avoid releasing environmental information that could bring about harm to sensitive or vulnerable ecological features. Specific survey and assessment data relating to the presence and locations of species such as badgers, rare birds and plants that could be subject to disturbance, damage, persecution, or commercial exploitation resulting from publication of the information, should be provided in the ES as a confidential annex. All other assessment information should be included in an ES chapter, as normal, with a placeholder explaining that a confidential annex has been submitted to the Inspectorate and may be made available subject to request.

3.3 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

(Scoping Report Section 8)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.3.1	Paragraph 8.6.4	Direct Impacts to heritage assets - Construction	The Scoping Report proposes to scope this matter out on the basis that there are no heritage assets within the Proposed Development site boundary. However, it is noted on Figure 2-4 that a number of assets are directly adjacent to the site boundary, including a Grade 1 listed building. Two Scheduled Monuments are also in close proximity to the site. It is not clear where construction activities would take place on the site. Activities such as driving piles for foundations may lead to direct damage to heritage assets in proximity. As such, the Inspectorate considers that potential effects may still occur and is therefore unable to scope this matter out. The ES should either provide an assessment of these effects, or a statement justifying why significant effects are not likely to occur. This statement should include evidence such as the proximity of construction activities in relation to the heritage receptors, likely Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV)/ Light Goods Vehicle (LGV) routes to the site and the number of expected HGV/LGV movements.
3.3.2	Table 8.4	Direct impacts to below ground archaeology - Decommissioning	The Inspectorate agrees that significant effects arising from direct decommissioning impacts to below ground archaeology are unlikely to occur during decommissioning and this matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.3.3	Table 8.4	Indirect impacts to designated and non-designated heritage assets – Construction and Decommissioning	The Inspectorate considers that the Scoping Report does not provide justification as to why construction and decommissioning will not affect the setting of heritage assets. The layout of the Proposed Development, including the location of construction compounds and access points has not been finalised. As such, the Inspectorate does not agree to scope this matter out at this stage. The ES should

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			assess indirect impacts to designated and non-designated heritage assets during construction and decommissioning. The assessment of indirect impacts should also include consideration of receptors such as Castle Acre Castle and Priory Scheduled Monument and the Temple at Narfod Hall. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response from King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council for further information on these receptors.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.3.4	Paragraph 8.2.1	Study Area	The Scoping Report proposes a study area of 5km for high grade heritage assets and 2km for all remaining heritage assets. The Inspectorate is of the opinion that the study area should be informed by the furthest extent of likely significant effects. This should include consideration of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility produced for the Landscape and Visual assessment.
3.3.5	Paragraph 8.3.2	LiDAR	The Scoping Report states that a LiDAR survey has been commissioned to inform the cultural heritage baseline. It is the Inspectorate's opinion that this survey should be informed by Historic England guidance 'Using Airborne Lidar In Archaeological Survey' (2018). For further information on LiDAR, the Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response from Historic England (Appendix 2 of this opinion).
3.3.6	Paragraph 8.4.11	Guidance	It is the Inspectorate's opinion that the assessment should reference Norfolk County Council's 'Standards for Development-Led Archaeological Projects in Norfolk' (NCC 2018).
3.3.7	Paragraph 8.6.2	Embedded mitigation	The Scoping Report states that impacts to buried archaeology will be mitigated through an option to install concrete blocks as ballast, avoiding the need for driven and screw anchored installation and minimising ground disturbance. The ES should

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			consider the impacts from compaction on archaeological deposits, as a result of the use of concrete ballast. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response from Historic England (Appendix 2 of this opinion) for further information on this matter.

3.4 Transport and Access

(Scoping Report Section 9)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.4.1	Paragraphs 9.9.1 – 9.9.2	Alternative modes of construction access	This matter is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that there are no viable alternative modes of transport for construction materials to site and the origin of materials to be used as well as the relevant port is not yet known. On this basis, the Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out.
3.4.2	Paragraphs 9.9.3 – 9.9.4 and Table 9.4	Transport and access effects - Operation	This matter is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that vehicle movements associated with the operation of the Proposed Development are expected to be negligible. The Inspectorate agrees that impacts as a result of operational traffic movements are unlikely to be significant and this matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.4.3	Paragraph 9.9.5 and Table 9.4	Transport and access effects – Decommissioning	The Scoping Report proposes to scope this matter out on the basis that decommissioning effects would be no worse than that of the construction phase. Indicative traffic numbers for either the construction or decommissioning phases are not provided within the Scoping Report and no evidence is provided to support the claim that traffic numbers during decommissioning would be lower than during construction. As such, the Inspectorate is not in a position to scope this matter out at this stage. The ES should identify the likely traffic generated during construction and operation, along with the basis for estimating traffic movements and any measures to manage the impact of traffic on the road network. Where the potential for a significant effect is identified, then this should be fully assessed in the ES.
3.4.4	Paragraphs 9.9.6 – 9.9.8	Hazardous and Large Loads	This matter is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that there are no hazardous features on potential transport routes within the Transport and Access study area and any large loads would be managed by National Highways, the local highway authorities and the Police through the Electronic Service Delivery for Abnormal Loads

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
	And Table 9.4		(ESDAL) system. On the basis that the number and composition of any hazardous loads and any safety measures would be described within the ES, an assessment of impacts associated with the transport of hazardous loads can be scoped out of the ES.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.4.5	Paragraph 9.2.2	Study area	The ES should confirm the final study area and key roads included in the assessment and explain how they have been identified. In addition to engagement with relevant consultation bodies, consideration should also be given to industry guidance, the extent of the potential impacts and likely receptors, both human and ecological. A plan illustrating the extent of the study area, and the expected route(s) of construction traffic, should be included in the ES.
3.4.6	Paragraph 9.4.2	Methodology	The Scoping Report states that "Department for Transport ('DfT') Trip End Model Presentation Program (TEMPRO) Growth Factors" will be used to develop and assess the construction years. Any modelling and growth rates used in the assessment should be agreed with the local transport authority, where possible.
3.4.7	Paragraph 9.4.4	Traffic counts	The Scoping Report states that traffic counts are to be commissioned, the scope and location of which are to be shared with relevant stakeholders. Evidence of consultations and any agreements should be detailed within the ES where relevant. The ES should also confirm the locations where traffic counts have been undertaken, explain why these locations were selected, and confirm the dates that the counts were undertaken.

3.5 Air Quality

(Scoping Report Section 10)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.5.1	Paragraph 10.8.1 Table 10.4	The release of dust and particulate matter – Construction and decommissioning	The Scoping Report states that dust and particulate matter produced during the construction and decommissioning of the Proposed Development would be controlled through measures outlined in the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP), and so significant effects would be unlikely to occur. The Inspectorate agrees that significant effects are unlikely to occur as a result of the release of dust and particulate matter during construction and decommissioning. However, Insufficient information has been provided on the number of expected vehicle movements associated with the construction and decommissioning phases to confirm this. The Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out on the basis that the ES provides a statement, supported by information on expected vehicle movements and the locations of the nearest sensitive receptors, as to why effects would not be significant. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response received from Norfolk County Council (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on this matter.
3.5.2	Paragraph 10.8.1 Table 10.4	The release of dust and particulate matter - Operation	The Inspectorate agrees that operational activities are unlikely to give rise to significant amounts of dust and particulate matter. This matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.5.3	Paragraph 10.8.1 Table 10.4	Vehicle exhaust emissions – Construction and decommissioning	This matter is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that traffic flows during construction are considered unlikely to exceed the screening criteria for sensitive human and ecological receptors. Providing that the ES can demonstrate that the traffic flows during construction will be beneath the IAQM thresholds for further assessment, this matter can be scoped out of the ES.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			The Inspectorate considers that air pollution impacts on nationally and internationally designated ecological sites from construction traffic should be scoped into the assessment. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response received from Natural England (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on this matter.
3.5.4	Paragraph 10.8.1 Table 10.4	Vehicle exhaust emissions - Operation	The Inspectorate agrees that operational vehicle movements are unlikely to result in significant air quality effects. This matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.5.5	Paragraph 10.8.1 Table 10.4	Air quality impacts to sensitive receptors as a result of Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) – Construction and decommissioning	This matter is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that air quality emissions from NRMM would be required to adhere to emissions standards. Providing that the ES confirms the type, quantity, use and duration of the NRMM the Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.5.6	Paragraph 10.8.1 Table 10.4	Air quality impacts to sensitive receptors as a result of Non-Road Mobile Machinery (NRMM) - Operation	The Inspectorate is content that there is unlikely to be a significant impact from NRMM during operation and therefore agrees that this matter can be scoped out of the air quality assessment.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.5.7	Paragraphs 10.4.4 – 10.4.5	Air quality assessment – Study Area	The ES should provide justification for the Study Area with reference to relevant guidance for ecological receptors and agree this where possible with relevant consultation bodies.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			The ES should include a plan showing the extent of the final Study Area, including proposed construction routes, the location of receptors (human and ecological) considered in the assessment.
3.5.8	N/A	Strategic Mitigation	The air quality assessment should also take into account any strategic mitigation for air pollution. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response received from Natural England (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) for further information on this matter.

3.6 Noise and Vibration

(Scoping Report Section 11)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.6.1	Table 11.3 Table 19.1	Noise from traffic – Decommissioning	The ES should include an assessment of this matter or provide further justification for the assumption that decommissioning traffic noise would be similar or less than that during the construction phase, such as clarification of the likely duration of the decommissioning phase and the likely traffic movements associated with this. With details such as construction traffic routes and operational traffic routes still to be determined, the Inspectorate cannot agree to this matter being scoped out. Any significant effects associated with these matters should be assessed in the ES.
3.6.2	Paragraph 11.9.1 Table 11.3 Table 19.1	Vibration from traffic	The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out, provided that further information such as indicative traffic numbers for each of the phases of the Proposed Development as well as the location of transport routes in relation to sensitive receptors are provided with the ES, which demonstrates the absence of likely significant effects, such as evidence that the number and type of traffic movements do not exceed thresholds required for a detailed assessment in line with guidance. Where possible the ES should demonstrate agreement on this with the relevant consultation bodies.
3.6.3	Table 11.3 Table 19.1 Paragraph 11.9.5	Noise from Solar PV Site, BESS, Customer Substation and National Grid Substation – Decommissioning	The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out, provided that information demonstrating that decommissioning activities would not result in noise and vibration effects greater than construction or clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies is submitted with the ES. The ES should include an assessment of this matter or provide information demonstrating agreement with the relevant consultation bodies and the absence of likely significant effects.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.6.4	Table 11.3 Table 19.1 Paragraphs 11.9.3 and 11.9.5	Vibration from Solar PV Site, BESS, Customer Substation and National Grid Substation – Operation and decommissioning	Considering the nature of the Proposed Development the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of further assessment for the operational phase. However, the detailed description of the Proposed Development within the ES should demonstrate that operational plant and equipment is of a type and to be used in locations unlikely to result in significant vibration effects on sensitive receptors. The ES should detail any measures to control vibration emissions during operation. The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out during decommissioning, provided information demonstrating that decommissioning activities would not result in vibration effects greater than construction or clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies is submitted with the ES.
3.6.5	Table 11.3 Table 19.1 Paragraph 11.9.5	Noise from Grid Connection Infrastructure – Operation and decommissioning	Considering the nature of the Proposed Development the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of further assessment for the operational phase. However, the detailed description of the Proposed Development within the ES should demonstrate that operational plant and equipment is of a type and to be used in locations unlikely to result in significant noise effects on sensitive receptors. The ES should detail any measures to control noise emissions during operation. The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out during decommissioning, provided information demonstrating that decommissioning activities would not result in vibration effects greater than construction or clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies is submitted with the ES.
3.6.6	Table 11.3 Table 19.1 Paragraph 11.9.5	Vibration from Grid Connection Infrastructure – Operation and Decommissioning	Considering the nature of the Proposed Development during operation the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of further assessment for the operational phase. However, the detailed description of the Proposed Development within the ES should demonstrate that operational plant and equipment is of a type and to be used in locations unlikely to result in significant vibration effects on sensitive receptors. The ES should detail any measures to control vibration emissions during operation.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out during decommissioning, provided information demonstrating that decommissioning activities would not result in vibration effects greater than construction or clear agreement with relevant statutory bodies is submitted with the ES.
3.6.7	Paragraph 11.4.4	Receptors of low or very low sensitivity	The Scoping Report states that receptors of low or very low sensitivity, with examples of these provided given in paragraph 11.4.4, are proposed to be discounted from the analysis as significant effects are unlikely. The Inspectorate agrees that these receptors can be discounted from the analysis provided that information in the ES demonstrates that there would be no likely significant effects, or that these receptors can be discounted with the agreement of consultation bodies.
3.6.8	Paragraph 11.9.3	Noise and vibration effects on ecological receptors – Operation	The Scoping Report states that operational noise and vibration levels are of a magnitude that they are unlikely to affect ecological receptors and are scoped out of the EIA Noise and Vibration chapter. Vibration effects on ecological receptors are unlikely and so these do not require specific consideration because of the localised nature of vibration impacts. The Inspectorate considers that without further information that this matter should be scoped into the assessment, and evidence should be provided in the ES to show that there would be no likely significant effects, or that this matter can be scoped out with the agreement of consultation bodies. The ES should contain information on potential sources of operational noise and their location to inform the assessment of potential significant effects on sensitive receptors. If this assessment is reported on within the proposed ES Chapter on Ecology this should be cross-referenced to within the Noise and Vibration Chapter of the ES.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.6.9	Paragraphs 11.2.1 – 11.2.4	Study Area	The ES should explain how the study areas for noise and vibration effects have been selected with reference to extent of the likely impacts of the Proposed Development and relevant supporting evidence, such as modelling and/ or relevant guidance. The ES should demonstrate agreement with the relevant consultation bodies where possible on the extent of the study areas and choice of noise sensitive receptors located along the traffic route used during construction.
3.6.10	Paragraph 11.7	Noise and vibration from traffic movements during construction and decommissioning	The ES should provide information on trip generation, traffic routing, noise emissions and distances from receptors including any measures that are to be secured to avoid or reduce likely significant effects. The ES should either include evidence to confirm that ground-borne vibration generated by plant/ activities on site and HGV movements, including along access routes, during construction and decommissioning would not result in significant effects on sensitive receptors, or provide an assessment of the likely significant effects. Traffic noise and vibration should be considered separately and cumulatively in-combination with other noise and vibration effects from the Proposed Development during all phases of the Proposed Development but particularly during the construction and decommissioning phases as part of the assessment.
3.6.11	Paragraph 11.7.10	Construction noise and vibration	The ES should refer to the separation distance of piling operations, drilling or vibratory rolling techniques from receptors, the duration of such activities and the likely levels of vibration that would be experienced at any properties. An assessment of vibration should include detailed justification to explain why significant vibration effects will not arise or the measures that will be employed to avoid such effects.

3.7 Soils and Agricultural Land

(Scoping Report Section 12)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.7.1	Table 12.4	Disturbance and crop loss – Operation and decommissioning	The Inspectorate agrees that effects on agricultural land during the operation phase of the Proposed Development can be scoped out on the basis that significant effects on agricultural land are likely to be restricted to the construction and decommissioning phases. The Inspectorate considers that without further information the decommissioning phase should be scoped in at this stage, and evidence should be provided in the ES to show that there would be no likely significant effects, or that this matter can be scoped out with the agreement of consultation bodies.
3.7.2	Table 12.4	Economic and land use effects for farm businesses and rural economy	The Inspectorate does not agree that this matter should be scoped out of the assessment. The ES should identify the agricultural land uses that will be displaced by the Proposed Development. Potential effects on farm businesses, loss of agricultural production and implications for food security from the Proposed Development should be considered where there is potential for significant effects to occur. Effects such as severance to farm access or changes to the scale and long-term viability of farm holdings affected by the Proposed Development should also be considered. This should consider both effects alone and cumulatively with other projects, cross referenced with the socio-economic assessment in the ES.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.7.3	12.2	Study Area	The ES should clearly set out the study area relevant to the soils and agricultural land use assessments and should include a clear justification as to how the study areas were chosen. The study area and receptors should be depicted on corresponding

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			figures to aid understanding. It should be clear how the selected study area relates to the extent of the likely impacts.
3.7.4	Paragraphs 12.4.1 – 12.4.4	Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land	The ES should quantify the amount of BMV agricultural land that would be temporarily and permanently lost by ALC grade as a result of the Proposed Development, with reference to an accompanying map/s depicting the grades and assess any impacts. The ALC and soil survey should be at one auger boring per hectare or more detailed, supported by pits dug in each main soil type to confirm the physical characteristics. Where ALC data is presented, it should include the entirety of the area required for the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, including any temporary access roads. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response received from Natural England (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on this matter.
3.7.5	Paragraphs 12.5.2 and 12.8.3 – 12.8.12	Impact on soil quality	Any impacts likely to result in significant effects on soil quality should be described and assessed. Any mitigation measures, eg in the proposed outline Soil Management Plan (oSMP), should be described in the ES with reference to relevant guidelines, and secured through the DCO.
3.7.6	Paragraphs 12.7.5 – 12.7.6 Table 12.1	Methodology for Determining receptor sensitivity	High sensitivity of agricultural businesses is described as "(*No farm business is of high sensitivity)"* but no further explanation is provided as to how this has been interpreted. The ES should clearly set out how receptor sensitivity is determined for the assessment including agricultural businesses.
3.7.7	Paragraph 12.8.12	Sheep grazing	Where the ES relies on grazing as mitigation for loss of BMV land, it should be demonstrated that the land is not subject to restrictive covenants that would prevent

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			such use and that such mitigation is secured in respect of the operation of the Proposed Development.
3.7.8	Paragraphs 12.10.2 – 12.10.4	Cumulative effects on available BMV land	The ES should consider the potential for cumulative impacts at a regional scale with other plans and projects that result in a reduction of available BMV land.
3.7.9	N/A	Severance issues	The ES should assess the impacts during construction and operation of potential severance issues for farmers and other landowners. Measures should be included within the DCO application to ensure farmers and other landowners ability to access crops and livestock. Potential effects should be assessed and reported in the ES for all phases of the Proposed Development.
3.7.10	N/A	Agricultural land drainage – impacts on soils and agricultural land	The ES should provide an assessment of agricultural land drainage where there is potential for likely significant effects to occur on soils and agricultural land or demonstrate that no likely significant effects would occur, with agreement from relevant statutory consultees where possible. Where there are inter-related effects, these should be appropriately cross-referenced within the ES.

3.8 Water Resources and Ground Conditions

(Scoping Report Section 13)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.8.1	Paragraph 13.7.3 Table 13.7	Flood Risk – Tidal	As the Proposed Development is not located within 6 km of a tidally influenced stretch of the River Nar the risk of flooding from tidal sources will be scoped out of the ES and accompanying Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The Inspectorate is content for this matter to be scoped out of the assessment on this basis.
3.8.2	Paragraph 13.7.4	Potential effects from historic landfill sites	Potential effects from historic landfill sites will be scoped out of the assessment, due to the absence of landfill sites within 3km of the CSA. The Inspectorate is content for this matter to be scoped out of the assessment on this basis.
3.8.3	Table 13.7 Paragraph 13.7.5	Ground Conditions	The Inspectorate does not consider that effects on ground conditions should be scoped out and the ES should provide sufficient information to demonstrate that the Proposed Development is not likely to have any significant effects with respect to hydrogeological impacts on water quality through the introduction or mobilisation of pollution, and if any mitigation measures are necessary. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation responses received from Anglian Water and the Environment Agency (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on this matter.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.8.4	Paragraph 13.3.4	Flood Risk	The Inspectorate notes the Applicant's intention to provide a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) in support of the assessment for the ES. The ES should assess the potential flood risk to and from the Proposed Development and describe suitable mitigation measures and flood

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			resilient construction techniques that will allow the development to remain operational throughout its proposed lifespan. The ES should be supported with a surface water drainage plan to demonstrate there is no increase in flood risk during the construction phase, and an outline drainage design for all phases of the Proposed Development. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response received from Norfolk County Council (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) on this matter.
3.8.5	Paragraph 13.3.9	Proposed sustainable drainage system (SuDS)	The Applicant proposes that an infiltration-based SuDS for the Substation and BESS would be investigated and that disposal of water to Anglian Water assets is to be considered. Flood risk from surface water directed to public sewer systems should be fully assessed in the FRA and the proposed SuDS should be consulted on and agreed with Anglian Water and the LLFA. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response received from Anglian Water (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on this matter.
3.8.6	Paragraph 13.3.9	Impacts to groundwater quality	The Inspectorate does not have sufficient information about construction and decommissioning activities and whether these could lead to creation of contamination pathways, e.g. from piling or trenching. The ES should assess impacts to groundwater during all phases of the Proposed Development where significant effects are likely to occur or demonstrate absence of any likely significant effects, with evidence of agreement to the approach from statutory consultation bodies. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation responses received from Anglian Water and the Environment Agency (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on water resources and potential impacts. Any proposed mitigation should be described in the ES, together with confirmation of how measures would be secured through the DCO.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.8.7	Tables 17.5 and 19.1	Water pollution – BESS and Substation	Details on how contaminated water produced through fire management procedures or routine runoff at the BESS should be provided in the ES with an assessment of likely significant effects from pollution of surface or groundwater. Detailed information should be provided on how contaminated water will be managed and contained at the BESS and the Substation. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response received from the Environment Agency (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on this matter.
3.8.8	N/A	Water resources – consumption	The consumption of water during the construction, operation or decommissioning phases should be considered in the assessment. The ES should provide details relating to water supply and demand requirements during construction, operation (in the context of BESS fire risk for example) and decommissioning as necessary. The Inspectorate considers that water resources should be classed as a receptor in the ES where significant effects are likely to occur. Water use and impacts on sources of supply should be scoped into the assessment to determine if any significant effects are likely and if mitigation is necessary. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation responses received from Anglian Water and the Environment Agency (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on this matter.

3.9 Climate Change

(Scoping Report Section 14)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.9.1	Paragraph 14.9.1 and Table 14.7	Sea level rise	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out sea level rise from the In-combination Climate Change Impact Assessment and Climate Change Resilience Assessment on the basis that the Proposed Development is approximately 25km from the coast. On this basis, the Inspectorate agrees that significant effects from sea level rise are not likely to occur and this matter can be scoped out of the ES.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.9.2			

3.10 Glint and Glare

(Scoping Report Section 15)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.10.1	Paragraph 15.8.1	Glint and glare ES chapter	The Scoping Report states that a specific glint and glare chapter will not be required in the ES and that glint and glare effects in respect of those matters that are scoped in will be covered in Chapter 18 (Other Environmental Matters) of the ES for receptors identified in Appendix 15.1 of the Scoping Report. A technical appendix which considers glint and glare impacts will also support the assessment provided in Chapter 18 of the ES. The Inspectorate is content that a specific Glint and Glare chapter of the ES is scoped out on this basis.
3.10.2	Paragraph 15.8.1	Glint and glare effects towards receptors outside of the relevant Study Areas	The Inspectorate is of the opinion that the study areas used should be based on potential for significant effects to occur rather than an arbitrary distance. The ES should explain how the study areas have been determined. Effort should be made to agree the sensitive receptors with relevant consultation bodies. The locations of the sensitive receptors should be shown on an accompanying plan.
3.10.3	Paragraphs 15.8.1 15.4.4	Local road users within the study area	The Scoping Report states that based on the methodology set out in Appendix 15.1, technical modelling traffic densities are likely to be relatively low on local roads and any solar reflections from the Proposed Development experienced by a road user along a local road would be considered 'minor adverse' in the worst case, in accordance with the guidance and industry best practice. The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out on this basis.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.10.4	Table 15.4	Construction and Decommissioning phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out these matters as not all of the proposed panels will be present simultaneously during the construction and decommissioning phases, and that the length and intensity of any glare will be less than or equal to the Operational Phase. The Scoping Report assumes that the worst-case scenario for glint and glare effects is therefore the Operational phase. The Inspectorate agrees that the worst-case scenario for glint and glare effects is likely to be during operation of the Proposed Development but considers that the ES should consider the potential for significant effects during construction and decommissioning, including cumulative effects.
3.10.5	Paragraph 15.2.6 Table 15.4	Rail infrastructure	No rail infrastructure is identified within the relevant Study Area. The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out of the assessment on this basis. Evidence should be provided in the ES which demonstrates that no significant adverse effects on railway receptors and infrastructure could occur, and no railway lines have been identified which pass through or near the Proposed Development.
3.10.6	Table 15.4	Viewpoints – Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) and Bridleways	The Scoping Report states that the effect on these receptors is considered to be at most 'Minor Adverse' as the potential effects on their safety and amenity is considered to be less than that of a road user or a dwelling, but PRoWs would be considered at a high-level without detailed modelling. The Inspectorate agrees that PRoWs and Bridleways can be assessed without detailed modelling on this basis.
3.10.7	Table 15.4	Aviation infrastructure outside of the 5km and 10km Study Areas:	The effect on these receptors will be at most 'Minor Adverse' because the effects will be no greater than 'low potential for temporary after image' on a pilot and/or will occur outside a pilots primary field of view (50 degrees either side of the direction) and no Air Traffic Control (ATC) Towers are present at these airfields, these airfields are proposed to be scoped out but will be considered at a high-level without detailed modelling.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
		East Winch Airfield and Great Massingham Airfield	The Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be assessed without detailed modelling on this basis.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.10.8	Paragraph 15.1.4	Glint and Glare assessment (GGA) – cross references	It is noted that a Glint and Glare Assessment (GGA) will form an Appendix to Chapter 18 (Other Environmental Matters) of the ES is proposed, and glint and glare impacts relevant to the consideration of other effects, such as landscape and visual amenity effects, will be considered in that chapter. The Inspectorate is content with this approach subject to cross references being made where appropriate to the relevant ES chapters such the LVIA.

3.11 Socio-Economics

(Scoping Report Section 16)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.11.1	Paragraph 16.7.6 Table 16.4	Employment - Operation	The Inspectorate agrees that Operational employment is unlikely to be significant. This matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.11.2	Paragraphs 16.7.7 – 16.7.9 Table 16.4	Loss of agricultural land – All phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope this matter out on the basis that the agricultural land on site represents a small percentage of the UKs total agricultural land area. The Inspectorate notes that the total land take for the site is approximately 1133ha and an ALC Survey is currently being undertaken. As the ALC grade for the site is not currently known, it is not possible to rule out significant effects at this stage and the Inspectorate does not agree to scope this matter out. The ES should either assess the impacts from the loss of agricultural land or, if the percentage of BMV land is found to be negligible, provide a statement, supported by the ALC grading of the site, explaining why the loss of agricultural land would not be significant.
3.11.3	Paragraphs 16.7.11 – 16.7.12 Table 16.4	Disruption to local businesses – All phases	The Inspectorate agrees that the Proposed Development is unlikely to have a significant effect on local businesses and this matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.11.4	Paragraph 16.7.6 Table 16.4	Changes in demand for temporary workers accommodation – Construction and decommissioning	The Scoping Report proposes to scope this matter out on the basis that the supply of construction workers in the local area far exceeds the demand created by the Proposed Development and the number of specialist workers that are located further afield would not be significant.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			Limited information has been provided on the accommodation capacity of the local area and the Inspectorate is therefore not in a position to scope this matter out.
3.11.5	Paragraph 16.7.13 Table 16.4	Changes in demand for health and social care – All phases	The Inspectorate agrees that the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in significant additional demand on health and social care services and this matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.11.6	Paragraphs 16.7.14 – 16.7.15 Table 16.4	Access to open space and Public Rights of Way (PRoW) – All Phases	The Scoping Report states that any PRoWs on site are located along access routes and are unlikely to be affected by the Proposed Development and that they are unlikely to see significant use. The Inspectorate notes that PRoW usage surveys have not been undertaken for the Proposed Development. Furthermore, it is not explicit within the report whether any PRoWS are proposed to be closed or re-directed during construction and decommissioning. As such, the Inspectorate is not in a position to scope this matter out and the ES should assess the impact on PRoWs and access to open space during construction and decommissioning phases.
3.11.7	Paragraph 16.7.16 Table 16.4	Changes in crime and community safety – All Phases	The Inspectorate agrees that the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in significant effects on crime and community safety. This matter can be scoped out of the ES. However, the Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response from Norfolk Constabulary (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) in relation to the layout, environmental design and the physical security of buildings.
3.11.8	Paragraph 16.7.17 Table 16.4	Changes in commuting patterns – All phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope this matter out on the basis that the site is served by roads with a good level of transport capacity and traffic generated by the Proposed Development would be mitigated by the measures outlined in the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP). The Inspectorate notes that Driver Delay and other construction traffic impacts are scoped into the Transport and Access chapter (Paragraph 9.8.2). As such, the Inspectorate is not in a position to scope this

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			matter out and the ES should assess changes in commuting patterns during construction and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. The Inspectorate agrees however that the operation of the Proposed Development is not likely to result in significant changes to commuting patterns and this matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.11.9	Paragraph 16.7.27 Table 16.4	Spending generated by workers - Operation	The Scoping Report proposes to scope this matter out on the basis that there would not be significant amounts of staff required for the operational phase. On this basis, the Inspectorate agrees that there is unlikely to be significant amounts of spending generated by workers during the operational phase. This matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.11.10	Paragraph 16.7.29 – 16.7.31 Table 16.4	Impact to property value – All phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out an assessment of impacts to property value for all project phases on the basis that there is little evidence that property value is significantly affected by the development of solar farms. The Inspectorate agrees that significant effects are not likely in relation to property value and is content to scope these matters out.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.11.11	Paragraph 16.4.1	Guidance	The Scoping Report states that professional judgement will be used for the assessment, stating that there is a lack of procedural guidance. Whilst this is acceptable in principle, the ES should still point toward recognised good practice methods and guidance that have influenced the professional judgement to ensure a coherent assessment.
3.11.12	N/A	Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and Walking,	The Scoping Report states that there are numerous PRoW in proximity and within the site. Surveys should be undertaken to provide baseline data in relation to the use of the

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
		Cycling and Horse Riding (WCH) receptors	PRoWs affected by the Proposed Development. The ES should assess impacts to PRoW and on WCH receptors from the Proposed Development such as the need for temporary closures or diversions, where significant effects are likely to occur.

3.12 Health

(Scoping Report Section 17)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.12.1	Paragraph 17.1.4	Human health standalone assessment	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out a standalone human health assessment on the basis that health impacts related to socio-economics would be assessed in a combined socio-economics and human health chapter within the ES and in-combination physical environmental impacts to human health would be assessed in the in-combination chapter. The Inspectorate is content with this approach. The EIA Methodology ES chapter should provide clear cross-referencing to where the relevant impacts on human health are considered. Consideration should be given to direct and indirect impacts on human health receptors. The assessment should be informed by relevant guidance such as the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) 2022 guidance 'Determining Significance for Human Health in Environmental Impact Assessment'.
3.12.2	Table 17.5	Physical activity – All phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope this matter out on the basis that impacts to PRoWs would be limited and temporary. The Inspectorate notes that PRoW usage surveys have not been undertaken for the Proposed Development, and it is not explicit within the Scoping Report whether any PRoWS are proposed to be closed or re-directed during construction/decommissioning. The Inspectorate is therefore not in a position to scope this matter out and the ES should assess the health impacts associated with disruption to physical activity.
3.12.3	Table 17.5	Risk taking behaviour – All phases	The Inspectorate agrees that the Proposed Development is unlikely to significantly effect risk taking behaviours and this matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.12.4	Table 17.5	Diet and nutrition – All phases	On the basis that any impacts on BMV agricultural land are assessed in the Socio-economics ES chapter, the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.12.5	Table 17.5	Social Environment • Housing • Relocation • Open Space, Leisure and Play • Transport modes, access and connections. • Community Safety • Community, identity, culture, resilience and influence • Social participation, interaction and support – All Phases	The Applicant proposes to scope out an assessment of impacts on the social environment. The Scoping Report states that the Proposed Development will not result in the loss of any dwellings, and the majority of the operational workforce are expected to already be residents within the local area. It is stated that the Proposed Development does not involve any population displacement or relocation and would not require compulsory purchase of homes or community facilities. There is no open, leisure and play space within the Proposed Development site and PRoWs are not considered within this assessment. Traffic impacts will be mitigated by the measures set out in the CTMP. Security measures are proposed to be in place which would limit the potential for impacts on community safety, including from crime. These are proposed to be secured through a CEMP. Impacts to community identity would be mitigated through the employment of a community engagement officer, to be secured through the CEMP and the Proposed Development is unlikely to impact on any local community centres or meeting spaces. The Inspectorate agrees that these matters can be scoped out of further assessment on this basis.
3.12.6	Table 17.5	Employment and income – Operation	This matter is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that the operational phase of the Proposed Development is only likely to support a small amount of employment. On this basis, the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out.

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.12.7	Table 17.5	Climate change and adaption – Construction and decommissioning	The Scoping Report does not provide an estimation of the expected Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions during construction and decommissioning. As such, the Inspectorate considers that insufficient information has been provided to rule out significant effects. The Inspectorate is therefore not in a position to scope this matter out. The ES should provide an assessment of the impact of GHG emissions from the construction and decommissioning of the Proposed Development on human health.
3.12.8	Table 17.5	Bio-physical environment – Air quality – All phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out health effects resulting from changes to air quality during the construction and decommissioning phases, stating that dust emissions would be managed via a CEMP and are not expected to be significant. Insufficient information has been provided on the number of expected traffic movements to support this. As such, the Inspectorate is not in a position to scope this matter out and the ES should assess the health effects resulting from changes to air quality during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, or provide a statement, supported by information on expected vehicle movements, as to why effects would not be significant. The Inspectorate agrees that the number of vehicle trips generated by operation and maintenance of the Proposed Development are unlikely to result in significant effects and is content to scope this matter out for the operation/ maintenance phase.
3.12.9	Table 17.5	Bio-physical environment – Water Quality and availability – All phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope this matter out on the basis that it will be considered in Chapter 13 (Water Quality and Ground Conditions) of the ES, no potentially sensitive human health receptors have been identified and any potential impacts on water quality would be managed through the CEMP. On this basis, the Inspectorate agrees that this matter can be scoped out.
3.12.10	Table 17.5	Bio-physical environment – Land quality – All phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out health effects related to land quality, stating that the agricultural land quality or soil resource is unlikely to be significantly affected during any phase of the Proposed Development. On this basis and having regard to the

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			nature and characteristics of the Proposed Development, the Inspectorate is content that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment. Should significant adverse effects be identified in ES Chapter 13: Water Quality and Ground Conditions for any phase, the ES should assess impacts on health where significant effects are likely.
3.12.11	Table 17.5	Bio-physical environment – Noise and vibration – All phases	This matter is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that it will be assessed in the in-combination ES Chapter. The Inspectorate agrees that providing noise and vibration impacts on human health are assessed within the in-combination chapter, this matter can be scoped out of the human health chapter of the ES.
3.12.12	Table 17.5	Bio-physical environment – Radiation – All phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out health effects related to radiation for all phases of the Proposed Development on the basis that EMF emissions are predicted to be below the international Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection reference levels for magnetic fields and measures including minimum stand-off distances between receptors will be implemented to mitigate the risk to human health. The Inspectorate notes the intention to submit an EMF risk assessment setting out the routing and voltages of Low and High Voltage Cables up to 400kv. Providing the risks to human health are fully assessed within the risk assessment, the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of the ES.
3.12.13	Table 17.5	Institutional and built environment – Health and social care services and built environment – All phases	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out impacts to health and social care services on the basis that the demand for construction workers is temporary. Statistically, there are unlikely to be significant numbers of construction workers injured on site and best practice measures outlined in the CEMP will minimise the risk of injury. Operational employment is also expected to not be significant. The Inspectorate agrees that the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in significant pressure on health and social care services, and this matter can be scoped out of the ES. The Scoping Report proposes to scope out an assessment of the built environment health determinant for all phases, stating that construction would not significantly affect features of the built environment with respect to human health and provide positive land

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
			use effects during operation. On this basis, the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out.
3.12.14	Table 17.5	Wider societal infrastructure and resources – All phases	This matter is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that the benefits of the Proposed Development will be addressed in the Planning Statement and benefits on employment and income assessed within ES Chapter 16: Socio-economics. On this basis, the Inspectorate is content to scope this matter out of the ES.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.12.15	N/A	Mental health and wellbeing	Mental health impacts of the Proposed Development should be included in the assessment of health effects within the ES. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response received from Norfolk County Council (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) with respect to this matter.

3.13 Electromagnetic Fields (EMF)

(Scoping Report Section 18.2)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.13.1	Paragraph 18.2.27	EMF assessment	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out an assessment of EMF from the ES on the basis that any potentially significant effects can be avoided through design measures and an EMF risk assessment, setting out the routing and voltages of Low and High Voltage Cables up to 400kv, will accompany the ES in a technical appendix. The Inspectorate is content with this approach.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.13.2			

3.14 Major Accidents and Disasters

(Scoping Report Section 18.3)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.14.1	Paragraph 18.3.17 and 18.3.18	Major Accidents and Disasters (MA&D)	The Scoping Report proposes to scope out an assessment of Major Accidents and Disasters on the basis that there is no statutory basis relating to the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to MA&D and where relevant, the potential impacts from MA&D on sensitive receptors will be assessed in other technical chapters within the ES. The Inspectorate has considered the characteristics of the Proposed Development and agrees with this approach. On the basis that potential impacts from MA&D will be considered in technical aspect chapters, where relevant, this matter can be scoped out of the ES.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.14.2			

3.15 Telecommunications, Utilities and Television Receptors

(Scoping Report Section 18.4)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.15.1	Paragraph 18.4.3	Impacts to above ground telecommunications, utilities and television infrastructure – All phases	This matter is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that the low maximum heights associated with the Proposed Development means there would be limited potential for likely significant effects on above ground infrastructure. The Inspectorate agrees that the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in significant effects on any above ground infrastructure in proximity and this matter can be scoped out of the ES.
3.15.2	Paragraph 18.4.4	Impacts to below ground infrastructure – All phases	This matter is proposed to be scoped out on the basis that discussions and negotiations will be carried out with relevant stakeholders to establish safeguarding distances and measures for working in proximity to be incorporated into the Proposed Development parameters, prior to the submission of the DCO. Insufficient information has been provided on the location of potential below ground infrastructure and utilities to rule out significant effects on them. As such the Inspectorate is currently not in a position to scope this matter out entirely. The ES should either assess the impacts to below ground infrastructure or provide a statement, supported with the locations of below ground utilities and evidence of agreement with the relevant stakeholders, as to why significant effects are not likely to occur.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments

3.16 Waste

(Scoping Report Section 18.5)

ID	Ref	Applicant's proposed matters to scope out	Inspectorate's comments
3.16.1	Paragraphs 18.5.10 – 18.5.23	Waste	The Scoping Report states that a separate waste chapter for the ES has been scoped out of the EIA as no likely significant effects are predicted during all phases of the Proposed Development. The Inspectorate agrees that a standalone chapter on waste is not required within the ES. However, the Inspectorate is not content to scope this aspect out. The ES should however still contain a description of the potential waste streams of construction and decommissioning, and include estimated volumes, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions and quantities and types of waste produced, including, and an assessment of the likely significant effects. If off-site disposal is required, an assessment of likely significant effects including cumulative effects should be included within the ES. The ES should describe any measures implemented to minimise waste and state whether the waste hierarchy will be utilised. The Applicant's attention is drawn to the consultation response received from Norfolk County Council (Appendix 2 of this Opinion) on this matter.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
3.16.2	Paragraphs 18.5.10 – 18.5.21	Potential effects – all phases	The ES should include an assessment of the likely impact of component replacement (e.g. batteries and panels) and outline what measures, if any, are in place to ensure that these components are able to be diverted from the waste chain. The ES should assess the likely significant effects from waste at decommissioning to the extent possible at this time.

ID	Ref	Description	Inspectorate's comments
			The ES should assess any impacts from off-site transport and disposal of waste generated during construction and decommissioning which are likely to result in significant effects. Any assumptions made, such as with regard to quantities of contaminated material, should be clearly set out and justified in the ES.
3.16.3	N/A	Decommissioning Plan	The ES should clearly set out how decommissioning is to be assessed and any components which may remain following decommissioning. A Decommissioning Plan should be agreed with the local planning authority and the Inspectorate would expect to see this secured through the inclusion of an Outline Decommissioning Plan or similar with the Application.

APPENDIX 1: CONSULTATION BODIES FORMALLY CONSULTED

TABLE A1: PRESCRIBED CONSULTATION BODIES

Bodies prescribed in Schedule 1 of The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 (as amended) (the 'APFP Regulations (as amended)')

SCHEDULE 1 DESCRIPTION	ORGANISATION
The relevant parish council(s) or, where the application relates to land [in] Wales or Scotland, the relevant community council	Pentney Parish Council
	Gayton Parish Council
	West Acre Parish Council
	Great Massingham Parish Council
	Castle Acre Parish Council
	Cockley Cley Parish Council
	Beachamwell Parish Council
	Swaffham Town Council
	Necton Parish Council
	Narborough Parish Council
	Sporle with Palgrave Parish Council
	North Pickenham Parish Council
	Holme Hale Parish Council
	Little Dunham Parish Council
The Environment Agency	Environment Agency
Natural England	Natural England
The Forestry Commission	Forestry Commission - East and East Midlands
The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for	Historic England

SCHEDULE 1 DESCRIPTION	ORGANISATION
England (known as Historic England)	
The relevant internal drainage board	East of the Ouse Polver and Nar Internal Drainage Board
	Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board
The relevant Highways Authority	Norfolk County Council Highways Department
	Breckland District Council Highways Department
	King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council Highways Department
	National Highways
The Civil Aviation Authority	Civil Aviation Authority
The Health and Safety Executive	Health and Safety Executive
NHS England	NHS England
Relevant statutory undertakers	See Table 2 below
The Crown Estate Commissioners	The Crown Estate
The relevant police authority	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk
The relevant ambulance service	East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust
The relevant fire and rescue authority	Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service

TABLE A2: RELEVANT STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS

‘Statutory Undertaker’ is defined in the APFP Regulations (as amended) as having the same meaning as in Section 127 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008)

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
The relevant Integrated Care Board	NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board
NHS England	NHS England
The relevant NHS Trust	Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust
	East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Railways	National Highways Historical Railways Estate
Civil Aviation Authority	Civil Aviation Authority
Licence Holder (Chapter 1 Of Part 1 Of Transport Act 2000)	NATS En-Route Safeguarding
Universal Service Provider	Royal Mail Group
Homes and Communities Agency	Homes England
The relevant Environment Agency	Environment Agency
The relevant water and sewage undertaker	Anglian Water
The relevant public gas transporter	Cadent Gas Limited
	Northern Gas Networks Limited
	Scotland Gas Networks Plc
	Southern Gas Networks Plc
	CNG Services Ltd
	Energy Assets Pipelines Limited
	ES Pipelines Ltd
	ESP Connections Ltd
	ESP Networks Ltd
	ESP Pipelines Ltd

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
	Fulcrum Pipelines Limited
	GTC Pipelines Limited
	Harlaxton Gas Networks Limited
	Independent Pipelines Limited
	Indigo Pipelines Limited
	Inovyn Enterprises Ltd
	Last Mile Gas Ltd
	Leep Gas Networks Limited
	Mua Gas Limited
	Quadrant Pipelines Limited
	Stark Works
	National Gas
The relevant electricity distributor with CPO Powers	Advanced Electricity Networks Ltd
	Aidien Ltd
	Aurora Utilities Ltd
	Eclipse Power Network Limited
	Energy Assets Networks Limited
	ESP Electricity Limited
	Fulcrum Electricity Assets Limited
	Green Generation Energy Networks Cymru Ltd
	Harlaxton Energy Networks Limited
	Independent Distribution Connection Specialists Ltd
	Independent Power Networks Limited
	Indigo Power Limited

STATUTORY UNDERTAKER	ORGANISATION
	Last Mile Electricity Ltd
	Leep Electricity Networks Limited
	Mua Electricity Limited
	Optimal Power Networks Limited
	Stark Infra-Electricity Ltd
	The Electricity Network Company Limited
	UK Power Distribution Limited
	Utility Assets Limited
	Vattenfall Networks Limited
	UK Power Networks Limited
The relevant electricity transmitter with CPO Powers	National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc
	National Grid Electricity System Operation Limited

TABLE A3: LOCAL AUTHORITIES AS DEFINED IN SECTION 43(3) OF THE PA2008

LOCAL AUTHORITY
Breckland District Council
Broadland District Council
Cambridgeshire County Council
East Cambridgeshire District Council
Fenland District Council
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
Lincolnshire County Council
Mid Suffolk District Council
Norfolk County Council

LOCAL AUTHORITY
North Norfolk District Council
South Holland District Council
South Norfolk District Council
Suffolk County Council
The Broads National Park
West Suffolk Council

APPENDIX 2: RESPONDENTS TO CONSULTATION AND COPIES OF REPLIES

CONSULTATION BODIES WHO REPLIED BY THE STATUTORY DEADLINE:
Anglian Water
Breckland Council
Castle Acre Parish Council
Environment Agency
Fenland District Council
Forestry Commission
Health and Safety Executive
Historic England
Holme Hale Parish Council
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Council
Little Dunham Parish Council
National Gas Transmission
National Grid Electricity Transmission PLC
National Highways
NATS Safeguarding
Natural England
Norfolk Constabulary
Norfolk Fire and Rescue
Norfolk County Council
Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board
South Norfolk Council and Broadland District Council
The Broads Authority

Anglian Water Services
Lancaster House, Lancaster Way,
Ermine Business Park, Huntingdon,
Cambridgeshire. PE29 6XU

www.anglianwater.co.uk
strategicgrowth@anglianwater.co.uk

Our ref: The Droves/Scoping

By email:
Planning Inspectorate
thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

4 December 2024

Dear Mr Wallis,

Application by The Droves Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for The Droves Solar Farm (the Proposed Development) - Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping consultation

Thank you for seeking our advice on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report for The Droves Solar Farm which is located within the Breckland district of Norfolk.

Anglian Water Services (AWS) is the appointed water and sewerage undertaker for all of the project area shown in Figures 2.1 and 2.2. The following response is submitted on behalf of AWS in its statutory capacity regarding water resources, water supply network, water recycling centres (WRC), water recycling assets and the sewer network, as well as the related role of surface water drainage.

AWS works to support the construction and operation of national infrastructure projects that are conducted in accordance with the Water Industry Act 1991. We would expect the EIA to include reference to any existing infrastructure managed by AWS and the provision of replacement infrastructure and the requirements for new infrastructure.

AWS works with developers, including those constructing projects under the 2008 Planning Act, to ensure requests for alteration of sewers, wastewater and water supply infrastructure are planned to be undertaken with the minimum of disruption to the project and customers. We would encourage on-going engagement to ensure that AWS and the Applicant have reached agreement on the approach to assets and connections in order that these matters are not drawn out during the Examination stage.

The Scheme - existing and proposed infrastructure

Reference is made within the Scoping Report to the potential construction of the impacts on existing utility infrastructure and services (Table 18.2 Relevant Major Accidents and Disasters for Consideration, and section 18.4 Telecommunications,

Utilities and Television Receptors). Given the potential location and extent of the proposed development area (including proposed highway improvements at the Swaffham A47 junction), there will be existing AWS assets below ground, which serve the surrounding businesses and community. For instance, there are existing AWS assets including water mains and rising mains within the project area such as within the highway or its verges which link to surrounding settlements.

Utilities searches should, therefore, be undertaken to establish the extent of AWS's assets within the scheme's application boundary. These should be mapped to establish interactions with assets and the scheme designed to avoid impacts upon those assets. AWS would want to ensure the location and nature of our assets serving local communities and water supply infrastructure are identified and protected. To reduce the need for diversions and the associated carbon impacts of those works, ground investigations would enable the Applicant to design out these potential impacts and so also reduce the potential impact on services if construction works cause a pipe burst or damage to supporting infrastructure. **We do not support the proposed scoping out of impacts on below ground infrastructure until appropriate steps have been taken to understand the potential impacts on our infrastructure, and suitable measures put in place to mitigate these impacts, as described in paragraph 18.4.4**.

Maps of AWS's underground assets are available to view at the following link: http://www.digdat.co.uk/

We note that the applicant has already submitted land investigation questionnaires relating to AWS's above ground assets and formal easements, and no assets have been identified within the core site area (CSA).

Buffers will be required and will inform the construction and operation of the proposed scheme, and its layout and design, following necessary ground investigations. Suitable easements, separation distances and safe working practices will need to be agreed.

The Scoping Report refers to the use of both trenches and horizontal direct drilling (paragraph 3.2.29) methods for the cable circuits. AWS requires the following standoff distances are applied for working each side of the medial line of AWS pipes. This information is taken from our Protective Provisions template which will need to be agreed with AWS for the DCO submission.

a) 4 metres where the diameter of the pipe is less than 250 millimetres;
b) 5 metres where the diameter of the pipe is between 250 and 400 millimetres; and
c) A distance to be agreed on a case-by-case basis and before the submission of the plan under sub-paragraph (1) is submitted where the diameter of the of the pipe exceeds 400 millimetres.

Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) and Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (oCTMP)

The oCEMP and oCTMP listed under paragraphs 3.4.4, 3.4.5, 18.4.4 of the Scoping Report, should include steps to remove the risk of damage to AWS's assets from plant and machinery (compaction and vibration during the construction phase) including bellmouths, temporary construction compounds, and haul/access roads. We note vibration from construction traffic has been scoped out (section 11.9.1), however we consider that the ES should take account of potential effects of vibration from construction traffic on our underground assets which can be within roads/verges, and removal of topsoil for bellmouths, access roads can reduce the level of protection for our underground assets. Further advice on minimising and then relocating (where feasible) AWS existing assets can be obtained from: connections@anglianwater.co.uk

Scheme assessment, design, mitigation and connections

AWS notes the absence of any reference to AWS in the Scoping Report in terms of:

- If water recycling/ sewerage services are required for the construction or operation of the scheme; and
- If a water supply is required for the construction and operation of the scheme.

Water Resources

The Droves Solar Farm is located within the Norfolk Bradenham Water Resource Zone (WRZ) where water is supplied from groundwater abstractions from the Norfolk Chalk aquifer. The Anglian Water region is also identified as 'seriously water stressed' in the Environment Agency's 2021 classification of water stressed areas. In view of the potential impacts on water resources, the Applicant is advised to consider the published Water Resources East Regional Plan which sets out the collective water companies position, and our Water Resource Management Plan 2025-2050 (WRMP24), which is available on our website.

We note that the Scoping Report refers to the drinking water protected area, and source protection zones (SPZs) 1 and 2 in paragraph 13.2.37. Whilst the report refers to figure 13-3 to illustrate the project's interface with SPZ's 1 and 2, the figures for Chapter 13 do not indicate the areas of the SPZs to the core site area (CSA). We agree that the SPZ1 is associated with AWS's water abstraction at Marham, and we would ask that the ES considers potential impacts around chemical storage, including matters such as fire suppression, solar panel coatings (eg. PFAS). In addition, we would seek to engage on any proposed cable corridors within SPZ1 (eg. oil filled cables) and any extensive excavation works or piling.

The project's EIA will need to consider water resources and water efficiency through the preparation of a Water Resources Assessment (WRA). AWS recommends that the WRA is an integral part of Chapter 13 Water Resources and Ground Conditions. The WRMP should therefore be added to the information sources listed under 13.4.1.

As water may be used in the project construction and operation, this indicates that water resources should be assessed in the EIA. Whilst the Water Resources scoping

summary has scoped in all matters considered (Table 13.7), AWS does not consider that sufficient information has been provided to reach a conclusion on the project impacts regarding water supply. Impacts of climate change in terms of water availability for the construction, operation and decommissioning stages are also of relevance. In view of the guidance in the National Policy Statements we would have anticipated that the scoping would have included and then considered the approach to water supply and water resources.

AWS requests that these points are assessed early in the PEIR to set out how the project:

- will be supplied with water,
- manage any wastewater generated on site,
- protect water/wastewater assets serving residents and businesses,
- has included measures to reduce the need for new water infrastructure or the diversion of existing assets, and
- seeks to minimise its demand for water and records this in the WRA.

AWS has a statutory duty to supply water for domestic purposes. This means we are legally obliged to supply water to all household properties as well as any domestic requirements (e.g., drinking water, hand-basins, toilets and showers) of non-household properties. Non-domestic water demand refers to water use for industrial processes, (e.g., agri-food production or car washes), and there is no legal requirement for us to supply for this type of water usage where it might put at risk our ability to supply water for domestic purposes.

Although AWS does not have a statutory obligation to supply for non-domestic purposes in these circumstances, we factor this into our WRMP and we do everything we can to support businesses in the region, with the help of the water retail market.

AWS is currently in the unfortunate position that it needs to limit requests for additional water for process use to up to 20m^3/day per site – although this may be less in smaller WRZs, or availability is constrained due to cumulative requests. AWS advises through its Non-Domestic Water Requests Policy that new non-household water supply requests (construction and operational phases) may be declined as these could compromise our regulatory priority of supplying existing and planned domestic growth. The flows needed to fill water storage tanks for example (if the Applicant decides not to use rainwater harvesting on site to meet this non potable demand) will need to be assessed by AWS to advise whether a supply is feasible when assessed in terms of the potential to jeopardise domestic supply or at a significant financial or environmental cost.

To assess these requests, we would require a WRA to be submitted as part of our planning process setting out a daily demand for each stage of the project and whether this is for domestic or non-domestic uses.

AWS recommends that new water supply connections are not sought during the construction phase and that potable water supply for welfare facilities, for example, are served by tanker to reduce the embedded (capital) carbon from providing new connections. The Applicant should also confirm that there will be no temporary concrete

batching facilities (Section 3.4 Construction) with consequent water demands and would therefore be utilising existing concrete batching facilities so as not to require an on-site supply. Water requirements for fire suppression measures and construction traffic (dust suppression/ wheel washing areas) should also be explained in the WRA.

Further advice on water connections and options can be obtained by submitting a pre-development enquiry to the Pre-Development Team at: planningliaison@anglianwater.co.uk and on the InFlow webpages: InFlow | Development Services (anglianwater.co.uk)

Drainage and Surface Water

AWS welcomes the statement that the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will assess all applicable sources of flooding, taking climate change into account, and a commitment to install flood resilient infrastructure (section 13.3). We consider that this should help to avoid increased risk of ground water infiltration/surface water ingress to our wastewater networks that may lie in the vicinity of the proposed scheme.

The FRA as part of the ES, should consider any increased risk of surface water and groundwater flood risks arising from the scheme that could exacerbate sewer flooding risks due to infiltration/ingress to our networks, particularly in terms climate change impacts. The likelihood of more extreme weather events leading to higher-than-average rainfall and cumulative impacts of storm events, as recently experienced during Winter 2023/24, mean that infrastructure becomes increasingly vulnerable to flood risk. The project should aim to minimise any flood risks as far as possible by designing in measures to limit increased flood risks to utilities infrastructure.

It is noted that the Scoping Report (13.3.9) refers to the potential for an infiltration-based Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for the substation and BESS. It is considered that any potential embedded design measures such as SuDS to be utilised at permanent above ground installations to manage rainfall run-off and achieve sufficient attenuation to avoid increases in flood risk, and compensation flood storage at temporary site compounds to manage flood risk at these locations. AWS is responsible for management of the risks of flooding from surface water which are directed to public sewer systems. Whilst the Scoping Report refers to the next disposal solution in the drainage hierarchy being to AWS assets, we would refer the Applicant to our surface water drainage policy which states that we would not permit any discharge of surface water to our foul drainage network, and only in exceptional circumstances to a combined sewer. There is no suitable surface water sewer network in the vicinity of the CSA, except in the specific area of the Swaffham A47 junction.

Our preference would be for surface water run-off from above ground permanent buildings and impermeable surfacing to be managed by SuDS, with opportunities for water reuse considered first (e.g. for fire suppression), with any outfall to a watercourse, in accordance with the drainage hierarchy. The risk of sewer flooding and any required mitigation within the public sewerage network should form part of an FRA and drainage strategy. AWS would wish to be engaged on the preparation of a drainage strategy and consider that this should be required to demonstrate the appropriate management of run-off from the proposed onshore scheme.

Subject to confirmation that all surface water will be managed following the drainage hierarchy including SuDS, AWS would want to clarify that the DCO will have no connection to the public sewer network for construction or for operations. This would then negate the need for the draft DCO Order to provide for any connection and so require consequent Protective Provisions and Requirements to ensure any connections did not compromise the wastewater services of existing customers. AWS should therefore be identified as a consultee set out in Requirements for the approval of drainage strategies and surface water management plans.

Further advice relating to wastewater capacity and connection options can be obtained by contacting the Growth Planning Team at: planningliasion@anglianwater.co.uk

Cumulative Effects

AWS is pleased to note that potential cumulative effects that might be experienced from other nearby developments, including the High Grove Solar DCO, will be presented and assessed in the ES.

Engagement and next steps

We are pleased to see that Anglian Water are mentioned in respect of section 13.8 Consultation, as an organisation the Applicant will consult with prior to PEIR to request details of assets and groundwater abstraction within the Study Area. We suggest the matters raised above should also be included in any future engagement, in addition to utilising the suggested links for information such as the location of our underground assets.

AWS would welcome engagement with the Applicant throughout the remaining stages of the project to address and resolve issues prior to the submission of the DCO including Protective Provisions. The preparation of a Statement of Common Ground should document key issues and the status of whether issues have been resolved or remain under discussion, which helps to reduce the Examining Authority questions for statutory undertakers and removes the possible need for changes to the project during Examination.

We would recommend discussion on the following issues:

1. Impact of development on AWS's water and water recycling assets, and SPZ1.
2. The design of the project to minimise interaction with AWS assets/ critical infrastructure and specifically to avoid the need for mitigation works and diversions which have associated carbon costs.
3. Requirement for potable and raw water supplies (if any) and the inclusion of the WRA in the draft EIA.
4. Requirement for water recycling connections (if any).
5. Confirmation of the project's cumulative impacts (if any) with other projects.
6. The Draft Development Consent Order (DCO), including draft Protective Provisions and requirements specifically to ensure AWS's services are maintained during construction.

Advice on the form and content of suitable Protective Provisions for Anglian Water in the draft Development Consent Order should be sought. Please do not hesitate to contact us on these aspects or should you require clarification on the above response or during the pre- application to decision stages of the project.

Yours sincerely,

Tessa Saunders
Spatial and Strategic Planning Manager

From:	Collins, Rebecca
To:	Droves Solar Farm
Cc:	Wood, Simon
Subject:	Breckland Council's Comments to the Planning Inspectorate on the: Droves Solar – Scoping Opinion (November 2024)
Date:	05 December 2024 16:54:14

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Dear Ian,

Thank you for your letter dated 8 November 2024. Please note we have reviewed the documents submitted, pursuant to the Scoping Opinion by Droves Solar Farm limited and would like to make the following comments.

In general Breckland considers the Scope of the document sufficient to meet the requirements of the assessment of the project. However, regarding the individual chapters please note we have the following additional comments to make:

Landscape and Visual

A full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should be undertaken, including where necessary a Townscape Assessment. This should consider all potential impacts, both during construction and in-operation, and the cumulative impacts with other NSIPs where appropriate.

Where impacts cannot be avoided then mitigation measures will need to be identified. Whilst advanced planting and screening will not minimise all impacts, carefully planned incremental planting, close to a receptor, can be effective at minimising and softening the appearance of infrastructure in the landscape. Often layered planting starting some distance away can help to break up extensive views. This will be particularly important when considering the screening options for the substation, converter stations and integrated battery storage facility, where landscape and visual impacts have the potential to be significantly adverse. The massing, location and scale of the previous mentioned infrastructures should be considered to ensure both short distance and long-distance views are taken into account. In addition to layered planting consideration should be given to finishes, orientation of elements and siting of elements within the site to avoid continuous change on the horizon.

Impacts will need to be considered from PRoW and the EIA will need to demonstrate how these impacts will be minimised / mitigated. Account will also need to be taken of proximity to housing and the need to avoid any potential impacts in relation to visual amenity; and "glint and glare".

The document refers to formal consultation on this topic, which will be welcomed by the Breckland Council - Local Planning Authority.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Ecological Survey Requirements - The sites identified should be carefully refined, taking account of all relevant ecological impacts, including locally designated wildlife sites. It is also important that any desk study should include the collation of all relevant habitat and species data from the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS), including all Local Wildlife Site information. All surveys carried out will require to be up to date, therefore given the potential timescales involved with such a scheme, it may be necessary to carry out regular surveys throughout the course of the design stage to ensure all surveys are no more than 18 months old.

Ecological Reporting - The scheme will need to consider all ecological effects, both during construction and in-operation. The scheme should adhere to the ecological mitigation hierarchy and avoid impacts in the first instance. Where impacts cannot be avoided, mitigation measures will need to be identified, and compensation provided. Impacts to Irreplaceable Habitats (e.g. Ancient Woodland) should be fully avoided. In addition, (dependant on timeline) the development will be expected to deliver the mandatory minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (from late November 2025 for NSIPS) and contribute towards the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

Cumulative Impacts – given the proximity of other NSIPs in the area the EIA will need to address the cumulative impacts with these other projects and set out appropriate mitigation measures and indicate how this relates to BNG targets and to the LNRS.

The document refers to consultation throughout on this topic, which would be welcomed by the Breckland Council - Local Planning Authority. The Council have no other comments at this stage.

Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

Cumulative Impacts – given the proximity of other NSIPs in the area, will be an important consideration for the setting and significance of heritage assets.

Formal consultation on this topic will be welcomed by the Breckland Council - Local Planning Authority.

Transport and Access
Ongoing consultation with Norfolk County Council Highways is supported and Breckland Council are happy to rely on their expert opinion in this regard.

Air Quality
With regards to combustion emissions during operation the Council are concerned about the risk of fires with large combustible equipment and feel this should be properly considered before scoping this out.

As set out, consultation throughout on this topic, would be welcomed by the Breckland Council - Local Planning Authority and Environmental Health.

Noise and Vibration
Table 11.3 scopes out noise from traffic at decommissioning but not from construction – this doesn't seem right and should be scoped the same for both.

As set out, consultation throughout on this topic, would be welcomed by the Breckland Council - Local Planning Authority and Environmental Health.

Soils and Agriculture
Scope it largely agreed with. However, the Council considers this to be a largely rural District where a significant proportion is made up of farmland. This is considered to be an important economic resource for the locale and part of its overriding character. Therefore, economic land use effects for farm business and rural economy should be scoped in for Construction and Operation and the significant cumulative effects of this are considered relevant given the proximity of other NSIPs in the area (i.e. High Groves Solar Farm).

It is advised that consultation on this topic with Breckland Council - Local Planning Authority and Environmental Health should be ongoing as well as Natural England.

Water Resources and Ground Conditions
Ongoing consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority and Environment Agency is supported and Breckland Council are happy to rely on their expert opinion in this regard.

Climate Change
Formal consultation on this topic will be welcomed by the Breckland Council - Local Planning Authority.

Glint and Glare
No comments.

Socio-economics
Employment during operations has been scoped out – this should be scoped in and compared with that with loss of employment for agriculture.

Effect on land use and disruption to local business has also been scoped out – as above, the Council considers this to be a largely rural District where a significant proportion is made up of farmland, which then supports and supplies other local businesses. This is considered to be an important economic resource for the locale and part of its overriding character. Therefore, land use effects and disruption for local business should be scoped in for Construction and Operation, as well as the significant cumulative effects of this are considered relevant given the proximity of other NSIPs in the area (i.e. High Groves Solar Farm).

Consultation in this regard would be welcome by Breckland Council – Local Planning Authority.

Health
Fire risk from combustible equipment is a concern and the Council considers this should be properly considered before scoping this out.

Engagement as described in the documents would be welcome by Breckland Council – Local Planning Authority.

Other Environmental Matters
As above, Fire risk from combustible equipment is a concern and the Council considers this should be

properly considered before scoping this out from major accident/disaster.

Thank you for taking the time to review the Council's comments.

Kind regards

Rebecca Collins

Head of Development Management
Breckland Council

T: [redacted]
M: [redacted]

Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1EE

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CASTLE ACRE
PARISH COUNCIL

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5th December 2024

Re: Scoping Opinion - The Droves Solar Farm / Ref: EN0110013)

To The Planning Inspectorate. thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Castle Acre Parish Council (CAPC) respectfully submits this response to the Planning Inspectorate's scoping consultation for the Droves Solar Farm (Reference: EN0110013), due by 6th December 2024. This submission seeks to represent the interests of Castle Acre, a designated Conservation Area of unique historical and environmental significance.

We acknowledge the Government's commitment to achieving a 'Net Zero' energy infrastructure by 2030, an admirable and essential goal. However, we must also highlight the importance of balancing this with the UK's food security, particularly given current vulnerabilities. In 2024, the UK imported 42.2% of its energy and 60% of its food, underscoring the need for careful management of both resources. A critical question arises: can the drive for energy independence be achieved without jeopardising our nation's agricultural and food security?

Castle Acre, a historic Norman village, which is home to a Grade 1 listed Priory, Castle, Bailey Gate, and Church, as well as 19 other listed buildings, is situated on the northern side of the River Nar, it's self a Site of Special Scientific Interest, (SSSI), and a gateway to the Peddars Way, a Roman road of historic and recreational importance. Together, these features attract visitors who sustain the local tourist economy. The proposed solar farm will significantly impact this unique landscape and its associated cultural and economic benefits.

Key Concerns:

1. **Visual and Landscape Impact**: The industrial scale of the solar farm would dramatically alter the natural beauty and character of the countryside, detracting from scenic views and undermining Castle Acre's appeal as a historic tourist destination.
2. **Agricultural Land Use**: The development, risks displacing fertile farmland vital to local and national food production, threatening associated livelihoods and Norfolk's agricultural heritage.

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3. **Environmental Risks**: The sites proximity to the River Nar and other habitats raises concerns about potential disruption to wildlife, (including legally protected species), and the release of pollutants and leaks from battery storage systems. We urge the developers to commission independent ecological reviews and conduct surveys across all seasons to assess impacts on breeding and migratory patterns of key species. Furthermore, the wildlife corridors should be carefully assessed to ensure they will effectively connect habitats across the development site.
4. **Cumulative Impacts**: With three large-scale solar projects planned in the area (High Grove, East Pye, and The Droves), a collective loss of some 3,849 hectares of local farmland risks an unacceptable impact to agricultural activity, biodiversity, and community well-being.
5. **Heritage Assets:** The effects the proposed solar farm will have on the historic landscape of Castle Acre, which includes 198 sites with evidence of human occupation. Much of Castle Acre's archaeological heritage is still to be fully discovered, given the richness of the known designated assets, what Archaeological surveys consider and record, any/all hidden assets on the proposed site.
6. **Traffic & Safety Concerns**: We request a comprehensive traffic management plan that accounts for pedestrian, cyclist, and equestrian safety during both the construction and operational phases. The plan should include clear provisions for limiting heavy vehicle movement along local roads and preventing disruption to daily life.
7. **Battery & Fire Safety:** Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) could present noise pollution concerns, especially near residential areas. Moreover, the safety risks associated with the storage and potential combustion of large quantities of energy should be adequately addressed. An emergency response plan should be developed in consultation with local emergency, fire and rescue services.
8. **Aviation Safety:** We request a detailed study of glint and glare effects, particularly from the perspective of aviation safety and birdlife, as part of the final Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This should include consultations with local aviation authorities (RAF Marham) and ornithologists.
9. **Agricultural Land Use**: The development, risks displacing fertile farmland vital to local and national food production, threatening associated livelihoods and Norfolk's agricultural heritage.
10. **Socioeconomic Impact:** We request a detailed socioeconomic impact assessment, including binding commitments for local employment and training programs. The potential long-term effects on local food production and agriculture should also be thoroughly evaluated and addressed.

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Requests for the Environmental Statement:

We believe the Environmental Statement must provide robust analysis addressing the following:

- Full visual impact assessments, including direct and indirect changes to the landscape.
- A cumulative impact assessment considering all planned solar developments in North Norfolk and along the A47 corridor.
- Evaluation of impacts on heritage assets and tourism.
- Noise and light pollution studies, including effects on Castle Acre's Dark Skies Policy.
- Flood risk assessments to address concerns about runoff from solar arrays. Detailed flood management and water quality plans must be developed.
- Ecological appraisals focusing on habitat disruption and biodiversity loss.
- An Agricultural Land Classification to evaluate the long-term effects on farmland productivity.

We also urge inclusion of a Construction Environmental Management Plan, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Noise Impact Assessment, Transport Statement, and measures to minimise adverse effects, particularly those affecting heritage sites and protected landscapes.

Given these concerns, we respectfully request that the Planning Inspectorate ensures local community views along with the Castle Acre Neighbourhood Plan are given consideration. Furthermore, should the project proceed, CAPC would wish to explore local community benefit / annual legacy funding to identify and address community needs, including village amenities, public transport, affordable housing, employment opportunities, and community wellbeing.

CAPC welcomes the opportunity to consult on this NSIP and supports public involvement throughout the approval process. We invite you to visit Castle Acre to witness firsthand the landscape at risk and discuss these local concerns with our Council.

We appreciate your attention to these matters and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Castle Acre Parish Council

PARISH COUNCIL

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The Planning Inspectorate
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[Via Email:
thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk]

Our ref: XA/2024/100203/01-L01
Your ref: EN0110013

Date: 05 December 2024

Dear Ian Wallis

EIA SCOPING OPINION CONSULTATION: THE DROVES SOLAR FARM

Thank you for consulting us on the above Scoping Report dated November 2024, we have reviewed the associated documentation and have the following comments:

We broadly agree with the topics to be scoped in and out for further assessment within the Environmental Statement (ES). We have provided our advice on the topics within our remit below. These are in the order prescribed by the scoping report for ease of reference.

Key Areas:

- The entirety of the proposed order limits needs to be taken into consideration when addressing the constraints within and surrounding the site; within Chapter 7 the development footprint has been considered rather than the site boundary in some cases.
- Water demands are not identified in any phases of the project description and subsequently, water use and impacts on sources of supply have not been scoped in. We would expect to see this scoped in for further assessment.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Site Boundary

The report has scoped out some relevant designated sites within the locality of the proposed site due to distance and pathway for impact. The distance specified within chapter 7 considers the distance to the potential development footprint, this does not include the extents of the proposed order limits/red line boundary associated with this report. The proposed site boundary lies within 200m of the River Nar in certain areas as well as within 50m of County Wildlife Sites (CWS) including Mill House Lake CWS.

The EIA scoping report should consider all potential impacts within and adjacent to the Red Line Boundary or ‘site boundary’. Currently the ecological surveys are restricted to land within the potential development boundary (Figure 2.3), not the whole site boundary. Land within the site boundary but out-with the potential

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development area is labelled ‘potential mitigation and enhancement area’ (Figure 2.2, 2.3). This land also needs to be included in the scope of the Environmental Statement (ES) and appropriate ecological surveys must be carried out.

Without such a baseline, the potential mitigation and enhancement cannot be designed. Any proposals should take the entirety of the order limits into consideration. The site boundary should be that included in any proposals. The entirety of the site boundary will be considered in any Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) enhancements.

The Red Line Boundary should be used in the scoping exercise for all aspects of potential environmental impact. Therefore, we disagree with the scoping out of the River Nar Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the following CWS:

- Land Adjacent to the River Nar (895, 945, 902)
- Narford Lake
- Priory Meadow
- Land West of Castle Acre
- Mill HouseLake

Additionally, the site boundary lies within the SSSI impact zone for the River Nar SSSI, this will require further assessment and discussions with Natural England.

Breckland Forest SSSI is also scoped out from further assessment. However, Breckland Forest SSSI is a component SSSI of the Breckland SPA, so it should be included in the ES.

Protected Species and Biodiversity

Impact assessment on mammals using the site should include assessment of the fencing which will be used to enclose the site, and the impact this has on excluding mammals from their range.

Air Quality

Where development involves the use of any non-road going mobile machinery with a
net rated power of 37kW and up to 560kW, that is used during site preparation, construction, demolition, and/ or operation, at that site, we strongly recommend that the
machinery used shall meet or exceed the latest emissions standards set out in Regulation (EU) 2016/1628 (as amended). This shall apply to the point that the machinery arrives on site, regardless of it being hired or purchased, unless agreed in
writing with the Local Planning Authority.

This is particularly important for major residential, commercial, or industrial development
located in or within 2km of an Air Quality Management Area for oxides of Nitrogen (NOx), and or particulate matter that has an aerodynamic diameter of 10 or 2.5 microns
(PM10 and PM2.5). Use of low emission technology will improve or maintain air quality
and support LPAs and developers in improving and maintaining local air quality standards and support their net zero objectives.

We also advise, the item(s) of machinery must also be registered (where a register is
available) for inspection by the appropriate Competent Authority (CA), which is usually
the local authority.

The requirement to include this may already be required by a policy in the local plan or
strategic spatial strategy document. The Environment Agency can also require this same standard to be applied to sites which it regulates. To avoid dual regulation this
informative should only be applied to the site preparation, construction, and demolition
phases at sites that may require an environmental permit.

Non-Road Mobile Machinery includes items of plant such as bucket loaders, forklift trucks, excavators, 360 grab, mobile cranes, machine lifts, generators, static pumps,
piling rigs etc. The Applicant should be able to state or confirm the use of such machinery in their application to which this then can be applied.

Water Resources and Ground Conditions

Water Quality

We are pleased to see surface water quality will be considered for the Core Study Area (CSA) over all phases of the project, the cumulative water quality effects will be considered for the Wider Study Area (WSA), and the embedded mitigation measures will be included within the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP).

The majority of the CSA is located within a Drinking Water Protected Area (Nar upstream of Abbey Farm – EA ID GB105033047791). This should be included when determining the sensitivity of surface water receptors as presented in Table 13.4.

Water Framework Directive

Table 13.5 indicates that change in WFD status is proposed to be used as an indicator for the magnitude of an impact. Care should be taken when using this approach as it risks misrepresenting pollution impacts which can detrimentally affect local ecology without impacting the WFD status of the overall waterbody. This could be due to the duration of the change or the location of the impact in relation to the WFD monitoring location. Consideration should be given to the duration, extent and severity of any water quality impact when determining their magnitude.

Even though pollution pathways to the River Nar (WFD waterbody) are more likely to be groundwater based, the possibility of a WFD assessment should be considered in order to account for any potential surface water and sediment inputs to the Nar from ephemeral streams and runoff directed along roads situated in “dry” valleys, e.g. Fincham Drove.

Construction Runoff Dewatering

The applicant should note the discharge of silty construction water, including discharge to local farm ditches, is a water discharge activity, which requires a permit, under the Environment Permitting (England and Wales) Regulation (2016) (EPR),

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Groundwater dewatering may require a Risk Assessment for Specific Activity (H1 risk assessment) as part of the EPR application. Given the size of the development, it is unlikely that the Regulatory Position Statement on Temporary Dewatering from Excavations to Surface Water can be met and therefore a permit will likely be required to discharge dewatering effluent or surface water run-off generated from area of exposed soil during construction. Please note that the typical timescale to process an environmental permit application is 9-12 months. Given the timescale, we encourage the applicant to engage with the EA on permit requirements at the earliest possible stage.

Chalk Rivers

The proposed development is located 900 metres from the River Nar SSSI, which is a Chalk River habitat. The chalk streams are highly sensitive habitat whose ecology are known to be heavily impacted and negatively affected by sedimentation. It should be ensured that during all phases of development, but particularly during construction, a strong approach is taken to mitigate against the loss of sediment and to reduce runoff.

Pollution Prevention

Within the report the applicant confirms that an oCEMP will be included within the DCO application, which will provide embedded mitigation measures during the construction process. The EA recommends pollution prevention measures should be included in the oCEMP that could withstand significant heavy rainfall events to prevent potential pollution events caused by intense rainfall draining off the solar models. It could cause increased soil compaction and the formation of ruts and gullies during the temporary period between installation and vegetation establishment.

Too little information has been provided regarding mitigation to prevent surface water from causing pollution at the Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and the substation compound. We would expect to see how the applicant will ensure that routine runoff from the area is free of contaminants.

The applicant mentioned the use of a temporary construction compound. However, the scoping report does not identify the likely fate of sewage produced during construction. If disposal to public sewer, the applicant should consult with the local water company to ensure that adequate sewer capacity is available, and no adverse effects will occur because of the connection. If treatment and discharge at the site is required, the applicant should consider any potential impacts of this discharge and confirm that a water discharge activity permit will be sought. If road transport to an offside disposal facility is required, then the applicant should have regard for this within their waste management procedure.

We are pleased to see Table 19.1 indicates that a surface water drainage system to manage fire water run-off in the event of a fire will be included in the oCEMP. Failure to plan for the fate of firewater produced because of fire management procedure at the BESS could result in pollution of surface or groundwater. Detailed information should be provided on how firewater will be managed and contained at the BESS and the substation compound. The applicant should consider the impact to all environmental receptors during each phase of the development. The applicant should ensure that there are multiple ‘layers of protection’ to prevent the source-pathway-receptor pollution route occurring. Mitigations to contain and manage the impacts of firewater should align with relevant fire safety management plans to

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ensure that the application of firewater and firefighting agents will always be accompanied with appropriate containment.

Water Resources

The location of this development is in an area of serious water stress (as identified in our report Water stressed areas – 2021 classification (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-stressed-areas-2021-classification). Water companies in this region are unable to supply new non-domestic demands in targeted areas of East Anglia. We recommend that the availability of supply to any non-domestic activities be explicitly checked with the water company.

Water demands are not identified in any phases of the project description and subsequently, water use and impacts to sources of supply have not been scoped in.

Consumptive uses of water during the construction phases for projects of this scale often include (but are not limited to):

- Measures employed for dust suppression
- Domestic and potable water supply to welfare stations
- Wheel/machinery wash down
- Bentonite clay mixing and continuous supply of driving Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD)
- De-watering below ground excavation

If dewatering is required, it will require an abstraction licence if it doesn't meet the criteria for exemption in *The Water Abstraction and Impounding (Exemptions) Regulations 2017 Section 5: Small scale dewatering in the course of building or engineering works*. It may also require a discharge permit if it falls outside of our *regulatory position statement for de-watering discharges*.
New consumptive groundwater licences are not available and surface water is restricted to high flows only. New dewatering will need to demonstrate that it is non-consumptive to the local environment in order to obtain an abstraction licence.

Surface water abstraction subject to conditions which restrict access to water to periods of high flow may therefore need to consider on site storage to meet demand outside of these periods.

The development area includes a Source Protection Zone (SPZ). Sensitive areas such as these surrounding public water groundwater abstraction points must be kept free of any sources of contamination. This should be considered when evaluating risks to existing abstraction and mitigation measures which may be included as part of the CEMP.

We recommend that a basic water supply strategy be undertaken at the EIA stage to establish water demands and options for sources of supply. This can help to identify potential obstacles early on and may affect the design or construction process. Establishing what restrictions there are (more information can be found in the Abstraction licensing strategy) and evaluating the impacts to surface water and ground water bodies will also help to expedite the permitting process later on.

Flood Risk

The development is located completely within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. The Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) for the site should assess and mitigate all forms of flood risk. It should also include suitable

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assessments for climate change based on the vulnerability and planned lifetime of the development.

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework the project should take a sequential approach to the development layout, considering all sources of flood risk and, including allowances for climate change.

Figure 2-2: Site Boundary, submitted within Appendix 1.1 of the Scoping Report shows Solar PV infrastructure excluded from the north and north-western areas of the site boundary. This would provide setback from the watercourses and areas of Flood Zone to the north. Any works (either temporary or permanent) within 8m of a Main River would require a Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. Works affecting non-main rivers / ordinary watercourses may require the prior consent of the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

Flood Modelling Data

The applicant should note that whilst the Environment Agency's recorded flood outlines do not show the development area to have flooded previously this does not mean the area has not flooded. This just means that the Environment Agency do not hold any records of historic flooding in this area.

The applicant is proposing to use the higher central climate change uplift for fluvial flows of 33%. This reflects the higher central uplift for the 2080s epoch for the North West Norfolk management catchment. This is considered reasonable. Please note that as the development is classed as essential infrastructure it will also be important to understand the impact of an upper climate change scenario on the development site in line with guidance on climate change allowances for flood risk assessment available online at: Flood risk assessments: climate change allowances - GOV.UK. For the North West Norfolk management catchment the upper climate change allowance is 57%.

Section 13.3.7 notes that the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will use fluvial data and results from the Eastern Rivers Modelling report – Upper Nar flood study (2015). The applicant does not propose to model fluvial and tidal flooding based on the validity and acceptance of the existing published flood studies. As part of the Environment Agency's review of the EIA scoping report it is confirmed that most of the site falls within Flood Zone 1. The 0.1% (1 in 1000) annual exceedance probability (AEP) plus 25% climate change flood extent for the Upper Nar modelling (2015) shows that the development site boundary falls outside of this flood extent. Whilst the model outputs for the River Nar (2015) suggests that the proposed development site would not be impacted even in the 0.1% AEP plus 25% scenario, any third-party modelling data that is used to inform new development should be reviewed in line with guidance on undertaking modelling for FRAs to ensure that it is suitable. This guidance is available online at: Using modelling for flood risk assessments - GOV.UK . Of note is the age of the fluvial boundary conditions used in the existing Upper Nar hydraulic modelling. Whilst the rarer events modelled for the Upper Nar would suggest that updating the fluvial boundary conditions within the hydraulic model is not likely to result in increased flood extents at the development site it is important that sufficient justification as to why the Eastern Rivers (2015) model outputs are suitable and representative is provided within the FRA.

With regards to the Flood Zones to the east of the Core Study Area (CSA) at 581850, 313000 please note, these are based on strategic scale 2-dimensional modelling undertaken in 2004. These Flood Zones only just encroach in the CSA,

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however, it is important to bear in mind the limitations with the modelled data in this location. If infrastructure is being placed within the Flood Zones in this location, then detailed hydraulic modelling would need to be undertaken to determine the 1% (1 in 100) AEP plus higher central climate change water level.

We are satisfied that flood risk from fluvial, pluvial and groundwater sources have been scoped in for all stages of the project.

Ground Water and Contaminated Land

The list of key legislation and planning policy relevant to ground conditions is presented in Section 13.4. We recommend that this list includes EA Land Contamination Risk Management (LCRM).

Section 13.7 sets out the anticipated hydrological impacts from the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, with each proposed to be Scoped In:

- Chemical pollution;
- Erosion and sedimentation;
- Impediments to surface water flow;
- Changes in soil interflow patterns;
- Changes in groundwater flow;
- Compaction of soils;
- Increase in surface water run-off rates;
- Displacement of flood storage;
- Changes in quality or quantity of supply (private water supply and public water supply); and
- Migration of pollutants from contaminated land.

We assume that those items scoped in are also intended to incorporate hydrogeological impacts (as applicable) relating to all phases of the Proposed Development and agree with their inclusion. This list should be modified to clearly identify the potential for contaminative impacts on the underlying bedrock Principal Aquifer and superficial Secondary A Aquifer, Source Protection Zones (Zone 2 and Zone 1), springs and private and public water abstractions due to the introduction or mobilisation of pollution.

Our key areas of concern relate to the potential for contaminative impacts on aquifers, SPZ1 and 2 and groundwater abstractions from:

- Piling and other foundation works activities, particularly at the proposed BESS and substation sites;
- Horizontal direct drilling, particularly in superficial Secondary A aquifers or bedrock Principal aquifer, with the potential to impact groundwater quality in the Principal aquifer; and
- Risks from spills/leaks from BESS developments and substations, or from firefighting water in the event of a catastrophic fire event.

Site Surveys

Section 13.2.9 states that a desk-based survey was carried out in September 2024 to provide an overview of baseline conditions for water resources and ground conditions within the Core Study Area (Proposed Development Site boundary). Baseline hydrological and hydrogeological data are stated to have been derived using a 5km study area with respect to the Site boundary, with a smaller 1km study area proposed to be used for the assessment of private water supply and public water supply abstractions (Water Supplies Study Area). The Desk Study is not

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included in the Scoping Report appendices and no indication is provided in the Report of the sources of information which have been assessed to carry out the assessment of water resources and ground conditions risks and impacts. Confirmation of the information sources used in the production of this section of the report, and the search areas which have been considered, is requested. It is recommended that the Desk Study is provided as a supporting document with the ES. An informative about land quality ground investigation is provided at the end of this response. Should any potentially unacceptable risks to controlled waters be identified by the Preliminary Risk Assessment presented in the Desk Study, further intrusive investigations should be undertaken to quantify the risk and enable refinement of the Preliminary Conceptual Site Model.

We recommend that the site walkover (also referred to as Site Reconnaissance) is carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Environment Agency's LCRM guidance and BS10175:2011 A2:2017, in particular to establish the potential for infilled ground to be present associated with the former Marl pits.

Site Baseline Conditions

Section 13.2.14 states that there are no obvious natural watercourses or surface water pathways to the river Nar. However, the most recent Google Earth imagery reveals the presence of small fluvial 'gulleys' within the crops of Field 26 [Figure 7-2], running downslope towards the road. Given these features, it is possible that, in high groundwater conditions, old (persistently dry) watercourses may reactivate, especially during the winter, similar to other ephemeral chalk streams known as winterbournes. Also, the Fincham Drove appears to run down the course of a "dry" valley and this may be a potential pathway for surface runoff during high rainfall events – depending on the nature of the road surface and infiltration capacity.

BGS Mines and Quarries GIS dataset shows the presence of numerous former marl pits across the Site. Some of these may have been infilled with unknown materials following closure.

With the exception of reference to historic ground workings associated with Marl extraction and historic and licensed landfill sites, the report does not present a summary of the site history or a discussion of potentially contaminative land uses either on-site or within a defined study area.

The potential for groundwater to be present in superficial or bedrock aquifers within influencing distance of foundation works cannot be discounted at this stage given the River Nar, adjacent to the northern site boundary, is chalk-fed and as such in continuity with groundwater, and the presence of small pond features across the site.

The sensitive controlled water receptors which have been considered in the Scoping Report should be clearly stated and assigned sensitivity categories. This should include:

- Aquifers
- Source Protection Zones; and
- Private and public groundwater abstractions.

Contamination

Table 13.5 of the Scoping Report presents a framework for determining the magnitude of effects to water resources. This is similarly primarily focused on impacts to water quantity and hydrological conditions. This table should be updated

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to include the potential magnitude of impacts on groundwater quality, such as contamination of potable water abstraction by mobilisation of contamination or from spills and leaks.

Section 18.3.9 lists the potential for contamination to arise from fire and explosion hazards related to energy storage systems like batteries, inverters and substations. Table 18.2 identifies that an outline Battery Safety Management Plan (oBSMP) will be developed to specifically describe measures to ensure that all safety concerns around the BESS, including fire risk, are addressed as far as reasonably practicable. Table 19.1 includes a statement that there is the potential for the Scheme to include a surface water drainage system to manage fire water run-off in the event of a fire.

We would recommend objecting to a BESS in this development unless there is a sealed drainage system in place to adequately contain and manage any fire-fighting effluent or contaminated surface waters generated by a fire at the site, to ensure that there is no discharge of polluted water to ground or surface water bodies. Any BESS compound should furthermore be preferentially sited away from sensitive controlled water receptors, including areas of high groundwater vulnerability. The site is underlain by a Principal aquifer used to supply public water abstraction (with the entire site and surrounding area comprising SPZ 1 or 2). BGS mapping and borehole records indicate this to directly underlie the site or be covered by a thin superficial layer. Due to the high sensitivity of this receptor and the risk of contaminative impact by spills or leaks, or infiltration of fire water, we urge the applicant to position the BESS away from SPZ1 and preferably on the relatively low permeability Lowestoft Formation deposits present in the central part of the site. Confirmation is requested that the mitigation proposed to be implemented at the BESS would be sufficient to prevent impacts on groundwater quality in the reasonable worst-case event of a combined flood event and catastrophic BESS fire.

The National Fire Chief's Council has published detailed guidance on recommended fire protection measures for BESS sites. We recommend the applicant refers to this when designing the scheme: Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System planning – Guidance for FRS (nfcc.org.uk). This should satisfactorily demonstrate to the local planning authority that the risks to controlled waters have been fully understood and can be addressed through appropriate measures.

This information should include, but not be limited to:

- A detailed drainage plan which demonstrates, in the event of an emergency, that contaminated firewater can be adequately contained within the site to ensure that there is no discharge of polluted water to ground or surface water bodies.
- The scheme should include an impermeable base or layer beneath the battery unit compound to ensure infiltration beneath the site can be controlled.
- Any system for the storage of contaminated firewater should have sufficient capacity/headroom for the volumes expected in the event of a fire, even during periods of intense rainfall.

The system for containing firefighting effluent should be automatic with a backup system in place in case of power failure.

The Scoping Report does not clearly state the activities and proposed structures relating to the Proposed Development which could impact on water resources and ground conditions during the Construction, Operation and Decommissioning phases, such as disturbance of potentially contaminated soils and the creation of new contamination pathways as a result of foundation works or HDD activities, or spills,

leaks and generation of other fugitive emissions such as fire water in the event of a catastrophic fire. These should be clearly defined by the applicant.

We welcome the proposed production of a CEMP and embedded mitigation measures for the project and recommend that the CEMP should also incorporate the requirement for a Watching Brief for unexpected contamination, and a Discovery Protocol to establish the investigation and mitigation measures and notifications to be applied under such circumstances. We suggest that these documents should also outline the methods to be applied to prevent contamination and cross contamination of soils and surface and groundwater should any sources of pollution be identified.

Although not referenced as an embedded measure, we are pleased to see that an outline Battery Fire Safety Management Plan will also be produced. This should include design measures to avoid ground and groundwater contamination and enable containment of fire water runoff.

We also consider that the embedded measures should also include, as a minimum:

- an Operation Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) and Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) to ensure that environmental risks during the operation and decommissioning phases are adequately managed.
- Due to the high sensitivity of groundwater resources at the site, a Foundation Works Risk Assessment should be produced to ensure the use of piling methodology that minimises the likelihood of creating a pollution pathway to groundwater.
- A Hydrogeological Risk Assessment should be produced for any proposed HDD cable crossings.
- A Materials Management Plan or equivalent should be developed to ensure that the segregation, stockpiling and classifications of soil arisings is carried out appropriately, and under DoWCoP (Definition of Waste: Code of Practice).

Fluid Filled Cables

In accordance with Statement C5 of the Environment Agency's Approach to Groundwater Protection, the Environment Agency will normally object to pipelines or fluid-filled cables that transport pollutants, particularly hazardous substances that:

- Pass through SPZ1 or SPZ2 where this is avoidable.
- Are below the water table in principal or secondary aquifers.

Where there is an unavoidable need for pipelines or fluid-filled cables to pass through SPZ1 or SPZ2, operators are expected to adopt BAT and operate in accordance with the Energy Networks Association guidance.

The applicant should confirm whether underground fluid-filled cables are proposed as part of the design of the Proposed Development, and if so should demonstrate that the installation of such cables cannot be substituted. The development proposals are stated by the applicant to include the retention of below ground cables during the decommissioning phase. This would not be acceptable, as these would pose an ongoing and unmanaged potential source of contamination to the Principal aquifer, SPZ and associated public water supply abstraction. Note that the Environment Agency expects operators to carry out a site-specific risk assessment prior to the decommissioning of fluid-filled cables in SPZ1 and SPZ2, and will work with operators to agree the best available environmental option.

Section 3.2.9 states that the mounting structure for both types of PV panels (fixed and tracking) would be secured by metal posts driven or screwed to a maximum depth of 3.5m. This may result in the introduction of a preferential flow pathway for any mobile shallow contamination which may be present through lower permeability strata (where present) into the principal aquifer.

Dewatering

The Scoping Report makes no mention of dewatering excavations. The EIA should fully assess whether any de-watering will be required in order to lay subsurface infrastructure/ foundations. If de-watering may be required, the amount (rates and duration) of dewatering required for EACH associated infrastructure (or specified length of infrastructure) should be assessed. Methods of de-watering to lay infrastructure should also be detailed. It should then be assessed as to whether the de-watering for the construction of the infrastructure will require an abstraction licence (as per water Act 2005) or whether it will be covered by the construction de-watering exemption regulations (2017). This should be assessed at the EIA stage to avoid issues further down the line and bearing in mind the process to gain any abstraction licence required for construction de-watering can be lengthy. A twin tracked approach between planning and permitting is recommended. If de-watering is or may be required than a Hydrogeological impact assessment should be produced as part of the EIA to show the potential impact on identified water features and protected rights (including licenced and unlicenced abstractions). Information about dewatering and abstraction licenses, should this be required, is provided at the end of the response.

Horizontal Directional Drilling

Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) may be locally applied at key crossing points. This work could involve the use of drilling muds, and their use may require risk assessment to ensure they do not pose a risk to controlled waters. If HDD is proposed to be used to cross watercourses the Applicant would need to assess whether this would affect local licensed or unlicenced abstractions by carrying out a water feature survey. We therefore consider that the EIA should include potential impacts from directional drilling and any foundation works that may be required and any other elements of the construction may have the potential to cause or mobilise contamination. Due to the anticipated presence of Principal aquifer immediately underlying the site, or at shallow depth, and the use of this resource to support public water supply abstraction, we consider that a Hydrogeological Risk Assessment should be produced to support any proposed HDD works.

Sustainable Drainage Systems

The Government's expectation is that sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) will be provided in new developments wherever this is appropriate. The Environment Agency supports this expectation. Where infiltration SuDS are to be used for surface run-off from roads, car parking and public or amenity areas, they should:

- be suitably designed
- meet Governments non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems – these standards should be used in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance
- use a SuDS management treatment train – that is, use drainage components in series to achieve a robust surface water management system that does not pose an unacceptable risk of pollution to groundwater

Where infiltration SuDS are proposed for anything other than clean roof drainage in a SPZ1, a hydrogeological risk assessment should be undertaken, to ensure that the system does not pose an unacceptable risk to the source of supply. See the Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection, position statement G13: Groundwater protection position statements - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Climate Change

Whatever final design or location is chosen the likely life span of the site will mean that it will need to operate within a changing climate. Therefore, a robust design and sensitive final location selection to accommodate future climate change impacts should be pursued. This will need to consider issues such as flood risk, increased heat, and
drought, all of which could impact on the efficient running of the site. Climate change
impact risk assessment and adaptation measures should include the potential impact of a changing climate for the expected duration of site operations.

Other Environmental Matters

Waste

Waste on site

Excavated materials that are recovered via a treatment operation can be re-used on-site under the CL:AIRE Definition of Waste: Development Industry Code of Practice. This voluntary Code of Practice provides a framework for determining whether excavated material arising from site during remediation or land development works are waste.

Developers should ensure that all contaminated materials are adequately characterised both chemically and physically, and that the permitting status of any proposed on-site operations are clear. If in doubt, the Environment Agency should be contacted for advice at an early stage to avoid any delays.

The Environment Agency recommends that developers should refer to:

- Position statement on the Definition of Waste: Development Industry Code of Practice
- Our website at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency

Waste to be taken off site

Contaminated soil that is, or must be disposed of, is waste. Therefore, its handling, transport, treatment and disposal is subject to waste management legislation, which includes:

- Duty of Care Regulations 1991
- Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2005
- Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010
- The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011

Developers should ensure that all contaminated materials are adequately characterised both chemically and physically in line with British Standards BS EN 14899:2005 'Characterisation of Waste - Sampling of Waste Materials - Framework for the Preparation and Application of a Sampling Plan' and that the permitting status

of any proposed treatment or disposal activity is clear. If in doubt, the Environment Agency should be contacted for advice at an early stage to avoid any delays.

If the total quantity of waste material to be produced at or taken off site is hazardous waste and is 500kg or greater in any 12-month period, the developer will need to register with us as a hazardous waste producer. Refer to our website at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency for more information.

Environmental Permitting Regulations

If dewatering is required, the applicant may require an abstraction licence if it doesn't meet the exemption in The Water Abstraction and Impounding (Exemptions) Regulations 2017 Section 5: Small scale dewatering in the course of building or engineering works.

If the applicant does not meet the exemption and requires a full abstraction licence, they should be aware that some aquifer units may be closed for new consumptive abstractions in this area. More information can be found on our website: Abstraction licensing strategies (CAMS process) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and Apply for a water abstraction or impounding licence - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Please note that the typical timescale to process a licence application is 9-12 months. The applicant may wish to consider whether a scheme-wide dewatering application rather than individual applications would be beneficial. We suggest talking to our National Permitting Service early in the project planning.

Temporary dewatering of wholly or mainly rainwater that has accumulated in an excavation may be exempt from an Environmental Permit for a Water Discharge Activity. More information can be found on our website: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/temporary-dewatering-from-excavations-to-surface-water. Note that this does not permit discharge of groundwater from a passive or active dewatering activity, or permit the abstraction of groundwater.

The applicant may also need to consider discharge of groundwater, especially if it is contaminated. More information can be found on our website: Discharges to surface water and groundwater: environmental permits - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
The use of drilling muds for any necessary directional drilling may require a groundwater activity permit unless the 'de minimis' exemption applies. Early discussion about this is also recommended.

We trust this advice is useful.

Yours faithfully

Mr. James Cordell
National Infrastructure Team – Planning Advisor

Direct e-mail: NIteam@environment-agency.gov.uk

End

Contact: Danielle Brooke
Development Services
Direct Dial Tel: 01354 622346
E-mail: [redacted]@fenland.gov.uk

The Planning Inspectorate
Environmental Services
Operations Group 3
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol
BS1 6PN

12 November 2024

Our ref: F/YR24/4051/LACON
Your ref: EN0110013

Dear Sir/Madam

Application by The Droves Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for The Droves Solar Farm (the Proposed Development) - Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) - Regulations 10 and 11 at 800m north of Swaffham and 800m south west of Castle Acre, West Norfolk

In response to the consultation received 08 November 2024 the Local Planning Authority have no observations to make.

Yours sincerely

D.M. Brooke

Danielle Brooke [redacted]
Senior Development Officer

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From: Squire, Sandra
To: Droves Solar Farm
Subject: The Droves Solar Farm - EN0110013 - EIA Scoping Consultation
Date: 05 December 2024 11:24:41
Attachments: image001.jpg

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Thank you for consulting the Forestry Commission on this application.

As a Non-Ministerial Government Department, the Forestry Commission provide no opinion supporting or objecting to an application. Rather we provide advice on the potential impact that the proposed development could have on trees and woodland including ancient woodland.

We note there are no ancient woodlands within the proposed order limits, however the scoping document and the Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory identifies veteran trees within the proposed order limits, particularly along field boundaries. There may also be more within the order limit that are as yet unidentified by the Ancient Tree Inventory.

Veteran Trees

Veteran trees are irreplaceable habitats.

Section 5.4.32 of EN-1 – The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy states:

"*Applicants should include measures to mitigate fully the direct and indirect effects of development on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees or other irreplaceable habitats during both the construction and operational phases"*

Section 5.4.53 goes on to state:

"*The Secretary of State should not grant development consent for any development that would result in the loss or deterioration of any irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland, and ancient and veteran trees unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists"*
We would particularly refer you to further technical information set out in Natural England and Forestry Commission's Standing Advice on Ancient Woodland – plus supporting Assessment Guide and "Keepers of Time" – Ancient and Native Woodland and Trees Policy in England.

The Standing Advice states that proposals should have a buffer zone of **at least** 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree. The buffer zone should be 5 metres from the edge of the tree's canopy if that area is larger than 15 times the tree's diameter. This will create a minimum root protection area.
Mixed Deciduous Woodland
There are several areas of mixed deciduous woodland within the site boundary and adjacent to it.
Mixed Deciduous woodlands are on the National Forest Inventory and the Priority Habitat Inventory (England).
They were recognized under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan as being the most threatened, requiring conservation action. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan has now been superseded but this priority status remains under the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006. (NERC) Sect 40 "Duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity" and Sect 41 – "List of habitats and species of principle importance in England".

Fragmentation is one of the greatest threats to lowland mixed deciduous woodland. Woodlands can suffer loss or deterioration from nearby development through damage to soils, roots and vegetation and changes to drainage and air pollution from an increase in traffic or dust, particularly during the construction phase of a development.

Section 5.11.27 of EN-1 – The Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy states:

"*Existing trees and woodlands should be retained wherever possible. In the EIP (Environmental Improvement Plan), the Government committed to increase the tree canopy and woodland cover to 16.5% of total land area of England by 2050. The applicant should assess the impacts on, and loss of, all trees and woodlands within the project boundary and develop mitigation measures to minimise adverse impacts and any risk of net deforestation as a result of the scheme. Mitigation may include, but is not limited to, the use of buffers to enhance resilience, improvements to connectivity and improved woodland management. Where woodland loss is unavoidable, compensation schemes will be required, and the long term management and maintenance of newly planted trees should be secured"*

For any woodland within the development boundary, land required for temporary use or land where rights are required for the diversion of utilities, the Root Protection Zone must be taken into consideration. The Root Protection Zone (as specified in British Standard 5837) is there to protect the roots of trees, which often spread out further than the tree canopy.

Protection measures include taking care not to cut tree roots (e.g., by trenching) or causing soil compaction around trees (e.g., through vehicle movements or stacking heavy equipment) or contamination from poisons (e.g., site stored fuel or chemicals) and fencing off these areas to prevent unintended incursions into the root protection zone.

Net Deforestation and Tree Planting

It is expected that there will be a thorough assessment of any loss of all trees within the project boundary and the development of mitigation measures to minimise any risk of net deforestation because of the scheme.

Hedgerows, individual trees and woodlands within a development site should also be considered in terms of their overall connectivity between woodlands affected by the development. Perhaps with the creation of some larger woodland blocks and hedgerow/hedgerow trees possibly between the existing woodland blocks on site, to link them and ensure maximum gains to increase habitat connectivity and to benefit biodiversity across the whole site, not solely in specific areas or just to be used as screening.

With the Government aspiration to increase tree and canopy cover to 16.5% of land area in England by 2050, The Forestry Commission is seeking to ensure that tree planting is a consideration in <u>every</u> development not just as compensation for loss. However, there are a number of issues that need to be considered when proposing significant planting schemes:

- Biosecurity of all planting stock needs to be considered.
- Woodlands need to be climate, pest and disease resilient.
- Maximise the ecosystem services benefits of all new woodland wherever possible (flood reduction)
- Planting contributes to a 'resilient treescape' by maximising connectivity

across the landscape.

- Plans are in place to ensure long term management and maintenance of woodland.

We hope these comments have been useful to you. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Best wishes

Sandra

Sandra Squire

Local Partnership Advisor
East & East Midlands

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Historic England

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BS1 6PN

Direct Dial: 01223 582781

Our ref: PL00797458

(by email to thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

5 December 2024

Dear Mr Jones

EN0110013 - The Droves Solar Farm Norfolk - EIA Scoping and Consultation and Regulation 11 Notification

Thank you for consulting with Historic England on the EIA Scoping for The Droves Solar Farm. We have reviewed The Droves Solar Farm EIA Scoping Report and offer the following advice on this EIA Scoping response

Historic England Advice

We agree with the findings of The Droves Solar Farm EIA Scoping Report that there are no designated heritage assets within the boundary of the proposed development.

The EIA Scoping Report has also identified that the proposed development site lies in a landscape which contains a large number of designated heritage assets including scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas and a registered park and garden.

Historic England is broadly in agreement with the proposed scope and methodology for the assessment of the cultural heritage impacts of the proposed development that are set out in the EIA Scoping Report. However, we offer the following specific comments on the Report;

Chapter 3 – Scheme Description

3.2.1 – This paragraph outlines the elements needed for the proposed development. We note that a number of the elements would require ground disturbance and could have direct adverse impacts on below-ground archaeology.

No details have been provided in the document about the below ground footprint of the various elements of the proposed scheme. This information is necessary in order to understand the degree and nature of potential impacts on the historic environment.

3.2.6 – This paragraph states that the metal mounting frames will be pile driven or screw mounted into the ground to a maximum depth of 3.5m. We recommend that

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the Historic England document '*Piling and Archaeology*' (2019) is referred to and the impact that the piles may have on archaeological remains and deposits is considered: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/piling-and-archaeology/.

3.2.29 - It is stated that horizontal directional-drilling may be required to install cables in parts of the proposed scheme area. We recommend that the potential impacts of issues such as bentonite slurry outbreak on archaeological remains is considered. For example, bentonite slurry outbreak could result in physical damage to archaeological remains or it could result in a change in the conditions of an archaeological site that may result in the degradation of fragile remains.

Chapter 6 – Landscape and Visual

As set out in 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3. The Setting of Heritage Assets' (Second Edition 2017) changes to the settings of heritage assets can cause harm to their significance.

As noted in Chapter 6, there is potential that the proposed development would be visible in views from designated heritage assets located within its vicinity. The inclusion of modern infrastructure in the form of solar panels into the existing rural landscape of the surrounding designated heritage assets could adversely affect the manner in which they are appreciated and result in harm to their significance.

It is not only views from designated heritage assets that form part of their settings, but potentially also wider landscape views that would incorporate both the heritage asset and the proposed development in the same vista.

Potential may also exist for the proposed development to adversely affect the settings of non-designated heritage assets in Cultural Heritage study area.

It is important that the LVIA is undertaken in tandem with the Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Assessment and that viewpoints are selected to achieve a clear understanding of the potential visual impacts.

6.3.20 - We note that Castle Acre Castle and Castle Acre Priory are included in the Preliminary LVIA Viewpoints listed in Table 6.1. However, we consider that it is likely to be necessary to include views from or of other designated as identified in Chapter 6 in order to demonstrate the level of setting impact of the proposed development.

Chapter 8 – Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

8.2.2 – We are in agreement with the proposed extent of the Cultural Heritage Study Area and that provision is in place to review it during the assessment process.

8.3.1 – We welcome the use of the Regional Archaeological Research Framework to inform the archaeological assessment. However, the reference cited in the Scoping Report is an older version. The current version of the Research

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Framework was released in 2021 and can be found at https://researchframeworks.org/eoe/.

We recommend that the potential value of BGS borehole data (available through the GeoIndex resource: https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/geoindex-onshore/) is considered for the baseline assessments. The borehole data can contribute to the development of a preliminary deposit model that helps to characterise the deposits present, their archaeological potential and the likely impacts of the proposed scheme.

8.3.2 - states that LiDAR will be used to understand the baseline conditions. The resolution of the gridded data is important because it limits the size of the features that can be seen and recorded; 2m resolution data are generally inadequate for recording many archaeological features; 1m resolution is the basic minimum but where greater detail is required higher resolution data are preferable. We therefore recommend that the Historic England document *'Using Airborne Lidar In Archaeological Survey*' (2018) is referred to: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/using-airborne-lidar-in-archaeological-survey/.

8.3.3 – We agree that there are no designated heritage assets within the proposed development site boundary.

8.3.4 – 8.3.11 – We agree with the identification of the designated heritage assets discussed in these paragraphs and listed in Appendix 8.1 as being appropriate for consideration in the cultural heritage assessment.

8.3.12 – Non-designated heritage assets are not restricted solely to built-heritage that may appear on local planning authority's local lists. Non-designated heritage assets also include archaeological remains that will be included on the Norfolk Historic Environment Record. Whilst we acknowledge that the Scoping Report states that HER data will be incorporated into the cultural heritage assessment, we feel that this paragraph could be clearer that Norfolk HER and Norfolk County Council Environment Team (as archaeological advisors to the local planning authorities) will be consulted in the assessment of non-designated heritage assets.

8.3.13 – It is interesting that the Norfolk HER contains only nine event records within the 1km of the site boundary. This suggests that gaps in the recorded sites and findspots both within and immediately surrounding the proposed development site may reflect a lack of previous archaeological investigations rather than a genuine absence of any archaeological remains in this area.

8.3.21 – We accept that the information presented on the geophysical survey undertaken so far is just an interim statement. However, the geophysical survey technique used is not stated in this paragraph.

The field numbering on the two figures provided in 'Appendix 8.3 Geophysical Survey Interim Results' differs from that shown on 'Figure 2-3 Field Numbering'

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and appears to be incorrect. The field numbers associated with the descriptions of the probable archaeological anomalies described in Paragraph 8.3.21 appears to correspond to the correct field numbering shown on Figure 2-3.

8.3.22 – Whilst probably of prehistoric or Roman date, the identification of Fincham Drove as a Roman road, and particularly as an extension of the 'Fen Causeway', has been drawn into question. The dating of the rectilinear enclosures in Field 9 which appear to respect the line of Fincham Drove and the enclosures in Fields 9, 15 and 23 which appear to be bisected by it, has important potential to provide a date for this routeway.

8.3.25 – 8.3.32 – Historic England is in broad agreement with the assessment methodology set out in these paragraphs.

8.4.11 – In addition to the professional guidance cited, we recommend that reference is also made to Norfolk County Council's 'Standards for Development-Led Archaeological Projects in Norfolk' (NCC 2018).

8.5.1 – 8.5.10 – Historic England is in broad agreement with the assessment of receptor sensitivity set out in these paragraphs. We note that it is acknowledged in paragraph 8.5.1 that the designated heritage assets referred to in this section is not an exhaustive list and may be added to during the assessment.

8.6.1 – Historic England agrees with the identification of both direct impacts and indirect impacts as potential likely significant effects of the proposed scheme on the historic environment. However, we would add that there may also be potential for indirect impacts on non-designated heritage assets through changes to their settings.

8.6.2 - It is noted that embedded mitigation will be used to mitigate impact upon buried archaeology through the use of concrete blocks as ballast, avoiding the need for piles and minimising the ground disturbance. We recommend that issues such as compaction are considered as this could result in physical damage to vulnerable archaeological remains, or changes to the preservation of an archaeological site.

8.6.3 – We welcome the 'scoping-in' of an assessment of the scheme's potential impact on buried archaeological remains and built heritage during construction and operation, including a consideration of cumulative and in-combination effects.

8.6.4 – It is stated that suitable mitigation measures will be embedded into the design of the Scheme. We look forward to seeing a draft of the proposed mitigation strategy.

8.6.5 – Whilst we agree that construction phase impacts on the settings of designated heritage assets would be temporary, consideration should be given to highway access routes that would avoid harm to their settings through noise and vibration.

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8.6.6 – We are in agreement with the range of potential impacts on the settings of designated heritage assets during the operational phase. However, as noted in relation paragraph 8.6.1 above, there may be potential for operational impacts to also affect the setting of non-designated heritage assets.

8.6.9 – We welcome the inclusion of embedded mitigation in the outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan to ensure that heritage assets are not subject to additional impact during this phase. We look forward to reviewing a draft of this document when available.

8.6.10 – 8.6.11 – We welcome the consideration of cumulative and in-combination effects particularly in relation to the adjacent High Grove Solar Farm DCO scheme.

8.7.1 - Table 8.4 outlines the aspects that will be scoped into the assessments and the surveys that will be required. We are pleased to see that the potential need for trial trench evaluation has been considered. It will be important to ground truth the results of the geophysical survey as there is the potential that some features/remains may not have been identified. Some features and remains may not be visible to certain geophysical techniques or issues with the geology may mask the archaeological anomalies.

8.8.2 – Historic England welcomes the opportunity to engage in further consultation on the scheme both as part of our Enhanced Advisory Service and as a Statutory Consultee as appropriate at different stages of the pre-application and application process.

Chapter 13 Water Resources and Ground Conditions

Information presented in Chapter 13 is of value to aid the understanding and assessment of the archaeological potential of an area. This information will aid the assessment of the potential for archaeology to be present in areas of the proposed development, such as the geological information obtained from BGS core data. The way that geological data is interpreted for archaeological purposes is different compared to assessments for engineering purposes. We therefore recommend that a geoarchaeologist is given access to the information presented in this chapter and allowed to liaise with geotechnical specialists if ground investigation works will be carried out. This would ensure that locations for cores can be targeted so that they will be beneficial for both disciplines, and to ensure that the archaeological relevance is not missed.

In addition, information in Chapter 13 also provides information about issues such as chemical pollution (para. 13.7.2). It should be noted that pollution of an archaeological site could impact the ability of materials to be assessed using techniques such as radiocarbon dating or the study of ancient DNA. In addition, contamination may make sites inaccessible due to health and safety issues which may rule out any further archaeological assessments. We recommend that the Historic England document '*Land Contamination and Archaeology*' (2017) is referred to: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/land-contamination-and-archaeology/.

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Issues such as changes to ground water flow and compaction of soils have also been discussed within paragraph 13.7.2. It should be noted that changes to groundwater levels or compaction of archaeological deposits may result in physical damage or changes to the preservation of an archaeological site. This could result in the degradation and/or loss of vulnerable remains, particularly organic remains that may be preserved through waterlogging. We recommend that the Historic England document '*Preserving Archaeological Remains*' (2016) is referred to, and the impacts that this issue may have on archaeological remains are considered: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/preserving-archaeological-remains/.

Next Steps

Historic England considers that the proposed development has potential to have indirect impacts on designated heritage assets in the surrounding landscape through changes to their settings and direct impacts on non-designated buried archaeological remains within the site boundary.

We support the inclusion of a Cultural Heritage and Archaeology chapter within the EIA. Subject to the advice given in this letter, we are in broad agreement with the proposed scope and methodology of the Cultural Heritage and Archaeology assessment.

Historic England would welcome the opportunity to engage in further detailed discussions regarding the proposed development.

We also recommend that you consult Norfolk County Council Environment Service (who act as archaeological advisors to Breckland Council and the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk) and obtain pre-application advice from them in relation to the specific requirements for assessing and evaluating the non-designated heritage assets at the proposed development site.

If you have any questions or we can be of further assistance at this stage, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Dr James Albone MCIfA
Inspector of Ancient Monuments (Cambridgeshire & Norfolk)
Tel: [redacted]
Mob: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@HistoricEngland.org.uk

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From: holmehaleparishcouncil@gmail.com
To: Droves Solar Farm
Subject: Application by The Droves Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting
Date: 29 November 2024 08:57:32

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Dear Team

I refer to the above mentioned application and would be grateful if you accept the following as the response from Holme Hale Parish Council:

Holme Hale Parish Council are concerned about the cumulative development of solar farms, particularly in relation to the impact on the local area and ask that this be included within the application.

We also request that Holme Hale Parish Council continues to be included within the consultation process.

Many thanks.
Sheryl

Sheryl Irving
Parish Clerk
Holme Hale Parish Council
[redacted]
www.holmehaleparishcouncil.norfolkparishes.gov.uk

Health and Safety Executive

CEMHD Policy - Land Use Planning,
NSIP Consultations,
Building 1.2,
Redgrave Court,
Merton Road,
Bootle, Merseyside
L20 7HS.

HSE email: NSIP.applications@hse.gov.uk

Email: thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Mr Jones

Date: 14 November 2024

PROPOSED THE DROVES SOLAR FARM (the project)
PROPOSAL BY THE DROVES SOLAR FARM LIMITED (the applicant)
INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (ENVIROMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017 (as amended) REGULATIONS 10 and 11

Thank you for your letter of 8 November 2024 regarding the information to be provided in an environmental statement relating to the above project. HSE does not comment on EIA Scoping Reports but the following information is likely to be useful to the applicant.

HSE's land use planning advice

Will the proposed development fall within any of HSE's consultation distances?

From the information provided, it can be determined that the Applicant's site will not fall within the consultation zones for any major hazards sites or pipelines. We would therefore not advise against the proposed development.

Hazardous Substance Consent

The information provided does not indicate that operations at the Applicant's site would be of a kind that would require Hazardous Substances Consent (HSC), however the Applicant should be advised to seek information from the relevant Hazardous Substances Authority should this not be the case.

Explosives sites

HSE has no comment to make as there are no licensed explosives sites in the vicinity of the proposed development.

Electrical Safety

No comment from a planning perspective.

At this time, please send any further communication on this project directly to the HSE's designated e-mail account for NSIP applications at nsip.applications@hse.gov.uk . We are currently unable to accept hard copies, as our offices have limited access.

Yours sincerely

Pp Shirley Rance

Cathy Williams
CEMHD4 NSIP Consultation Team

Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING
King's Court, Chapel Street
King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 1EX

Tel: (01553) 616200
Fax: (01553) 616652
DX: 57825 KING'S LYNN
e-mail: borough.planning@west-norfolk.gov.uk

Via email:
thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Our Ref No: 24/01697/NSIPCO

Your Ref: EN0110013

Application Registered: 11 November 2024

Details: **NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT (CONSULTEE ONLY) Application by The Droves Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for The Droves Solar Farm (the Proposed Development) – SCOPING CONSULTATION**

Further to your Consultation on the above scoping request, the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk respond as follows:

Please note that these comments are made without prejudice and this response does not seek to discuss matters relating to archaeology, planning for minerals and waste, broader strategic highway considerations, strategic public health, strategic flood risk and surface water management or impacts upon schools and playing fields as these matters are within the purview of Norfolk County Council.

Whilst parts of the red line boundary currently proposed coincide with the Borough Council's boundary, as the application site itself is outside the jurisdiction of the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, this response will not seek to comment on the principle of development and instead refers only to matters of detail which we would expect to see come forward as part of the Environmental Statement. An assessment of the adequacy of information contained within the ES will be submitted at a later stage.

Internal consultation responses:

Conservation Officer

'While a small area of our district is affected by this proposal, it is a sensitive area and needs careful consideration.

The area of the proposed solar farm lies on higher ground than the villages which surround it. This means the potential for the solar farm being visible from longer distances is increased. The main heritage assets affected by the proposal are ones which rely upon a landscape setting for a part of their significance. Castle Acre Castle and Priory, a scheduled monument and listed building, was situated in this location to command the landscape around it and in the present day it still does this. While it is not visible from the proposed site, the open and undeveloped landscape is visible from the monument, the effect of development within this setting, at all phases of the development needs to be scoped in and properly considered.

When considering the landscape impact of the scheme, the applicant also needs to consider the setting of some of the larger heritage assets – for example, the Temple at Narford Hall which sits outside of the Registered Park and Garden but has a direct line of vision both to the Hall and the landscape beyond. As the landscape rises up, the other side of the hall, what is the impact upon the setting and overall purpose of the temple.

The applicant should also be aware of the Landscape Character Assessment produced by West Norfolk Council. On page 120 the document states under the heading "Landscape Planning Guidelines";

Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

The EIA Scoping should therefore show how the scheme will not affect this sense of remoteness and tranquillity. The applicant should also demonstrate how mitigation, in the form of planting, will not impact upon this identified sensitive area and the landscape quality that it possesses. The open farmland with small plantations are identified as its character and mitigation planting should be done with long term character, not merely screening a solar farm, in mind.

While it is true that the Borough Council have no published list of non-designated heritage assets, the Historic Environment Record does record a number of buildings of interest, particularly within Castle Acre. For example;

- Record 30918 – Cuckstool Cottage
- Record 5268 – Tudor House or Lodgings
- Record 30915 – 59 Pales Green; and
- Record 42011 – Marcon House, Bailey Street

These records would be considered when looking at planning applications and their presence on the HER would be enough to consider them as non-designated heritage assets. The applicant should look at the HER to consider the non-designated heritage assets within the area.

The Castle Acre Neighbourhood Plan also mentions a list of sites considered as non-designated heritage assets and maps them in figure HE.1 (page 26). Figure HE.4 contains a map of key views across the landscape which should also be considered (page 35).

A further small point to note is the Scoping report does not list any West Norfolk planning policies in relation to the Historic Environment. In paragraph 8.4.8 mention should be made of policies DM15 and CS12.'

Community Safety & Neighbourhood Nuisance Team

'Section 11, Noise and Vibration, of the EIA Scoping Report is most applicable to this team, albeit that the proposed development site is within Breckland rather than this borough. Castle Acre and West Acre are the closest villages (in our borough) to this proposal – it is noted that there will be mitigation zones to the northern-most areas of the development site, creating separation buffers from these settlements.

Noise and vibration could cause significant effects on receptors during the construction and operational phases, from works on the access, associated development of the BESS, customer substation and National Grid substation, and from the electrical and mechanical plant located within the operational site. We welcome that operational traffic noise impacts are scoped in to the EIA, and that where significant effects are identified, mitigation/management measures will be implemented in the OEMP (section 11.7.14 refers).

It is pleasing to note in section 11.2.1 that the 500m Study Area often used for similar developments has been extended to 1000m, due to the inclusion of the BESS and substations,

and that this will also apply to the construction noise impacts due to the potential for night-time works (section 11.2.2 refers). We welcome that noise sensitive receptors located along the construction traffic route/s will also be considered (section 11.2.4 refers). We welcome that section 11.7.6 states that "where likely significant effects are identified, suitable additional mitigation and management measures may be implemented as part of the Construction Traffic Management Plan" (CTMP), and that this is repeated in section 11.7.11 with respect to the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

We agree the issues to be scoped in stated in section 11.8.1 – construction traffic noise, construction noise and vibration, operational traffic noise and operational noise and vibration. We acknowledge that vibration from construction traffic and site plant will be scoped out – this is not of concern. We agree with the Summary of Scope in section 11.10.1 and Table 11.3 'Noise and Vibration scoping summary.'

Arboricultural Officer

'The scale and significance of this NSIP means that potential impacts on trees, landscape, the historic village of Castle Acre, and biodiversity and habitats need to be comprehensively assessed and appropriately mitigated. I'm also sure that my comments may dovetail or be the same as comments made by others during this early consultation, and that much of the points mentioned here will already be included in assessment proposals.

Such an EIA should include consideration of the following in regards to trees:

Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA):

A full tree survey in accordance with BS5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations, covering all trees within and immediately adjacent to the site.
Assessment of direct and indirect impacts of construction, installation of solar infrastructure, and long-term operation on trees and the landscape.

Identification of trees to be retained and removed, with justifications and mitigation strategies.

Tree Protection Plan (TPP):

Clear proposals for protecting retained trees during construction, including fencing, ground protection, and restrictions on construction activities within RPAs.
Impact on Veteran and Ancient Trees:

Specific identification and protection measures for any veteran or ancient trees on-site or nearby, including buffer zones and measures to avoid damage to their root systems, soil structure, and microhabitat.

Hedgerow Assessment:

Assessment of existing hedgerows, including their condition, species composition, and ecological value. Proposals for retention, enhancement, and connectivity of hedgerows, with a focus on biodiversity benefits and landscape integration.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment:

Detailed analysis of the visual and character impacts of the solar farm on the surrounding landscape utilising local landscape character assessment and not only national ones, local views, and public rights of way. Photomontages and visualisations from key viewpoints to illustrate the impact of the development. Specific consideration of views from the historic village of Castle Acre, including its Conservation Area, Scheduled Monuments, and listed buildings. Analysis of how the proposal will affect the setting and appreciation of Castle Acre, which is of significant cultural and historical value. Mitigation proposals, including screen planting, use of native species, and long-term maintenance to minimise visual intrusion.

Impacts on Soil and Hydrology:

Assessment of changes to soil structure and water availability within RPAs and surrounding areas that may affect tree health and growth.

Proposals to manage surface water runoff and maintain natural hydrological patterns, with particular attention to potential effects on the watercourses and landscape features associated with Castle Acre.

Compensatory Planting and Biodiversity Net Gain:

Detailed proposals for compensatory planting where tree or hedgerow loss is unavoidable. Demonstration of how the project will achieve biodiversity net gain through tree planting, habitat creation, and landscape enhancements. Specific focus on ensuring that compensatory measures enhance the historic and natural character of the area surrounding Castle Acre.

Ecologist

'Section 7.3.3 identifies that important ecological features present on site include areas of lowland woodland, hedgerow, tree line, ponds, and mature and veteran trees. Though the reporting goes on to state that the impacts are largely within the boundary of the fields. I would highlight that veteran trees are irreplaceable habitat and any loss should be avoid. Bespoke mitigation must be agreed with the LPA where irreplaceable habitats impacted by development.

Table 7.3 details a proposed schedule of Phase II surveys which I am largely in agreement with. However, I have a few comments to make on the survey schedule. Any birds surveys should take particular note of any presence of Breckland SPA species given the predominantly arable character of the site. Suitable methodology should be used to allow these species to be identified should they be present. If SPA features are identified using the site area then loss of habitat will also need to be considered under a Habitats Regulations Assessment. I would also highlight that air quality can also impact Habitat Sites with receptors that are vulnerable to air pollutants.

The habitat survey identified the presence of veteran trees which could have the potential to support roosting bats. A Preliminary Roost Assessment should be undertaken of any tree that will be impacted by the development.

Great crested Newt eDNA surveys of all ponds within the site boundary and 250m of the site have already been undertaken. All ponds returned a negative result indicating likely absence of the species.'

Matters of Detail:

Landscape and Heritage Impacts

The landscape character assessment undertaken by The Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk puts this landscape as Rolling Open Farmland (I9). Caste Acre and West Acre and the surrounding villages benefit from their intensely rural locations, sited on steep valley sides and providing extensive views across the surrounding countryside and as such landscape impacts must be taken into account. As noted by the Arboricultural Officer, these impacts should take into account and harm arising from impacts to existing trees or boundary features.

West Acre contains 14 Listed Buildings & Castle Acre has a large range of historic buildings including the nationally important Grade 1 listed Priory, Castle, Bailey Gate and the Gatehouse of Cluniac Benedictine Priory. There are a further 19 listed buildings across the village that contribute to a rich architectural heritage which has led to the designation of the Castle Acre Conservation Area, the boundary to which aligns with the River Nar approximately 300-400m north of the proposal site. The Castle Acre Neighbourhood Plan sets out its own list of non-designated heritage assets (both buildings and sites).

The impact on the historic environment is a key concern for the Borough Council and as noted by the Conservation Officer, the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and its strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity should be conserved, especially where it contributes to the historic environment.

The EIA Screening will therefore need to demonstrate how the scheme will not affect the overall sense of remoteness and tranquillity. This will need to include the use of appropriate planting – as inappropriately sited planting belts or screening could equally impact on the identified sensitive areas and the landscape quality that those areas possess and benefit from. The open farmland with small plantations are identified as its character and mitigation planting should be done with long term character, not merely screening a solar farm, in mind.

Wider Environmental Impacts

It is to be noted that there are many other classified designations across the borough which will need to be considered more widely. The sites boundary is adjacent to the River Nar SSSI.

Noise and Vibration Impacts

The noise and vibration issues to be scoped in (construction traffic noise, construction noise and vibration, operational traffic noise and operational noise and vibration) are agreed in principle by the Borough Council. It is acknowledged that at this stage, vibration from construction traffic and site plant will be scoped out – this is also agreed.

Highway Impacts to the Borough

Careful consideration and consultation would be required to mitigate as far as possible the impacts during preparation and construction works on the road network within Norfolk, and within this borough in particular. There would need to be detailed submissions of construction management plans, including routing agreements, that recognise the need to minimise disturbance to the road network travelling though the Borough, during preparation, construction and maintenance works.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Stuart Ashworth
Assistant Director Environment and Planning

King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 1EX
Tel: (01553) 616200

Chief Executive – **Kate Blakemore**

From:	littledunhamparishcouncil@gmail.com
To:	Droves Solar Farm
Subject:	Application by The Droves Solar Faram Limited for an Order granting Development Consent for the Droves Solar Farm
Date:	18 November 2024 09:45:04

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Dear Team

I refer to the above scoping consultation in respect of the above application and the following is the response from Little Dunham Parish Council.

We request that the Environmental statement must include a substantial section on the cumulative impacts of the proposed developments on the immediate local area, to include:

1. the existing wind turbines at South Pickenham and Swaffham;
2. the two major substations for Dudgeon and the Norfolk Wind Zone at Necton;
3. the location of the five proposed substations;
4. to connect the different sectors of the solar farm and the 5th to connect to the 400kV grid; and
5. the proposed size and location of the battery units and the impacts on communities, water courses (surface and aquifers), flora and fauna in the event of a fire.

The environmental impact should also take into account the effects on the wider landscape of a near continuous ribbon development of solar farms beneath the 400kV grid network in Breckland and south Norfolk.

Furthermore, recent court judgements have forced development of hydrocarbon resources to cease because the environmental impact statements did not take into account the downstream effects of CO2 release from the produced hydrocarbons. Thus, we believe it is important that the environmental statement also looks at the impact of solar panel manufacture on CO2 emissions. There are a growing number of peer reviewed studies that show the energy produced by solar panels over a 25 year life time is actually LESS than the energy required to manufacture and install them. The manufacture process relies heavily on coal - production of photovoltaic grade silicon of ultra high purity is very energy intensive. Thus, the installation of solar panels results in higher global CO2 emissions than were we to rely on gas fired power stations.

Regards
Sheryl

Sheryl Irving
Parish Clerk
Little Dunham Parish Council
[redacted]

https://www.littledunham-pc.gov.uk/

From: box.assetprotection
To: Droves Solar Farm
Subject: FW: EN0110013 - The Droves Solar Farm - EIA Scoping and Consultation and Regulation 11 Notification
Date: 11 November 2024 09:55:37
Attachments: image001.png
image002.png
image003.png
image004.png
image005.png
image006.png
The Droves Solar Farm - Letter to stat cons_Scoping & Reg 11 Notification.pdf

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Good Morning,

Thank you for your email.

Regarding EIA Scoping and Consultation and Regulation 11 Notification for 'The Droves Solar Farm' there are no National Gas assets affected in this area.

If you would like to view if there are any other affected assets in this area, please raise an enquiry with www.lsbud.co.uk. Additionally, if the location or works type changes, please raise an enquiry.

Kind regards

Hayley White
Asset Protection Assistant

[redacted]@nationalgas.com

National Gas Transmission, Warwick Technology Park, Gallows Hill, Warwick, CV34 6DA
nationalgas.com I **Twitter** I **LinkedIn**

Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: Droves Solar Farm <thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Sent: 08 November 2024 13:34
Subject: EN0110013 - The Droves Solar Farm - EIA Scoping and Consultation and Regulation 11 Notification

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Dear Sir/Madam

Please see attached correspondence on the proposed The Droves Solar Farm.

The Applicant for the Proposed Development intends to make an application for Development

Consent under the Planning Act 2008. The Applicant has sought a Scoping Opinion from the Planning Inspectorate, on behalf of the Secretary of State, as to the scope and level of detail of the information to be provided within the Environmental Statement that will accompany its future application.

The Planning Inspectorate has identified you as a consultation body to inform the Scoping Opinion and is therefore inviting you to submit comments by 06 December 2024. The deadline is a statutory requirement that cannot be extended.

Further information is included within the attached letter.

Kind regards

Joseph Jones
EIA Advisor
The Planning Inspectorate
T 0303 444 5028

@PINSgov The Planning Inspectorate planninginspectorate.gov.uk

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You may report the matter by contacting us via our National Gas Transmission Contacts Page.

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For the registered information on National Gas Transmission please use the attached link: https://nationalgas.com/about-us/corporate-registrations.

National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill, Warwick
CV34 6DA

Tiffany Bate
Development Liaison Officer
UK Land and Property
[redacted]@nationalgrid.com
[redacted]

www.nationalgrid.com

SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY:
thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

05 December 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION BY THE DROVES SOLAR FARM LIMITED (THE APPLICANT) FOR AN ORDER GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR THE DROVES SOLAR FARM (THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT)

SCOPING CONSULTATION RESPONSE

I refer to your letter dated 8th November 2024 in relation to the above proposed application. This is a response on behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission PLC (NGET).

Having reviewed the scoping report, I would like to make the following comments regarding NGET existing or future infrastructure within or in close proximity to the current red line boundary.

NGET has high voltage electricity overhead transmission lines within the scoping area. The overhead lines forms an essential part of the electricity transmission network in England and Wales.

Existing Infrastructure

Overhead Lines

4VV 400kV OHL	NORWICH MAIN - WALPOLE 1
	NORWICH MAIN - WALPOLE 2

I enclose a plan showing the location of NGET's apparatus in the scoping area.

New infrastructure

Please refer to the Holistic Network Design (HND) and the National Grid ESO website to view the strategic vision for the UK's ever growing electricity transmission network. https://www.nationalgrideso.com/future-energy/the-pathway-2030-holistic-network-design/hnd'

National Grid is a trading name for:
National Grid Electricity Transmission plc
Registered Office: 1-3 Strand, London WC2N 5EH
Registered in England and Wales, No 2366977

National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill, Warwick
CV34 6DA

Onshore Infrastructure

A new substation will be required to facilitate customer connections along the Norwich to Walpole 400 kV Overhead Line. The location of the new substation is still to be confirmed.

NGET wish to lodge a holding objection to this proposed application and NGET should be engaged to fully explore the feasibility of this option without comprise to proposed NGET works.

NGET requests that all existing and future assets are given due consideration given their criticality to distribution of energy across the UK. We remain committed to working with the promoter in a proactive manner, enabling both parties to deliver successful projects wherever reasonably possible. As such we encourage that ongoing discussion and consultation between both parties is maintained on interactions with existing or future assets, land interests, connections or consents and any other NGET interests which have the potential to be impacted prior to submission of the Proposed DCO.

The Great Grid Upgrade is the largest overhaul of the electricity grid in generations, we are in the middle of a transformation, with the energy we use increasingly coming from cleaner greener sources. Our infrastructure projects across England and Wales are helping to connect more renewable energy to homes and businesses. To find out more about our current projects please refer to our network and infrastructure webpage. https://www.nationalgrid.com/electricity-transmission/network-and-infrastructure/infrastructure-projects. Where it has been identified that your project interacts with or is in close proximity to one of NGET's infrastructure projects, we would welcome further discussion at the earliest opportunity.

These projects are all essential to increase the overall network capability to connect the numerous new offshore wind farms that are being developed, and transport new clean green energy to the homes and businesses where it is needed.

National Grid is a trading name for:
National Grid Electricity Transmission plc
Registered Office: 1-3 Strand, London WC2N 5EH
Registered in England and Wales, No 2366977

National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill, Warwick
CV34 6DA

Specific Comments – Electricity Infrastructure:

- NGET's Overhead Line/s is protected by a Deed of Easement/Wayleave Agreement which provides full right of access to retain, maintain, repair and inspect our asset

- Statutory electrical safety clearances must be maintained at all times. Any proposed buildings must not be closer than 5.3m to the lowest conductor. NGET recommends that no permanent structures are built directly beneath overhead lines. These distances are set out in EN 43 – 8 Technical Specification for "overhead line clearances Issue 5 (2019)".

- If any changes in ground levels are proposed either beneath or in close proximity to our existing overhead lines then this would serve to reduce the safety clearances for such overhead lines. Safe clearances for existing overhead lines must be maintained in all circumstances.

- The relevant guidance in relation to working safely near to existing overhead lines is contained within the Health and Safety Executive's (www.hse.gov.uk) Guidance Note GS 6 "Avoidance of Danger from Overhead Electric Lines" and all relevant site staff should make sure that they are both aware of and understand this guidance.

- Plant, machinery, equipment, buildings or scaffolding should not encroach within 5.3 metres of any of our high voltage conductors when those conductors are under their worse conditions of maximum "sag" and "swing" and overhead line profile (maximum "sag" and "swing") drawings should be obtained using the contact details above.

- If a landscaping scheme is proposed as part of the proposal, we request that only slow and low growing species of trees and shrubs are planted beneath and adjacent to the existing overhead line to reduce the risk of growth to a height which compromises statutory safety clearances.

- Drilling or excavation works should not be undertaken if they have the potential to disturb or adversely affect the foundations or "pillars of support" of any existing tower. These foundations always extend beyond the base area of the existing tower and foundation ("pillar of support") drawings can be obtained using the contact details above.

- NGET high voltage underground cables are protected by a Deed of Grant; Easement; Wayleave Agreement or the provisions of the New Roads and Street Works Act. These provisions provide NGET full right of access to retain, maintain, repair and inspect our assets. Hence we require that no permanent / temporary structures are to be built over our cables or within the easement strip. Any such proposals should be discussed and agreed with NGET prior to any works taking place.

- Ground levels above our cables must not be altered in any way. Any alterations to the depth of our cables will subsequently alter the rating of the circuit and can compromise the reliability, efficiency and safety of our electricity network and requires consultation with National Grid prior to any such changes in both level and construction being implemented.

National Grid is a trading name for:
National Grid Electricity Transmission plc
Registered Office: 1-3 Strand, London WC2N 5EH
Registered in England and Wales, No 2366977

National Grid House
Warwick Technology Park
Gallows Hill, Warwick
CV34 6DA

To download a copy of the HSE Guidance HS(G)47, please use the following link:
http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg47.htm

Further Advice

We would request that the potential impact of the proposed scheme on NGET's existing and future assets as set out above and including any proposed diversions is considered in any subsequent reports, including in the Environmental Statement, and as part of any subsequent application.

Where any diversion of apparatus may be required to facilitate a scheme, NGET is unable to give any certainty with the regard to diversions until such time as adequate conceptual design studies have been undertaken by NGET. Further information relating to this can be obtained by contacting the email address below.

Where the promoter intends to acquire land, extinguish rights, or interfere with any of NGET apparatus, protective provisions will be required in a form acceptable to it to be included within the DCO.

NGET requests to be consulted at the earliest stages to ensure that the most appropriate protective provisions are included within the DCO application to safeguard the integrity of our apparatus and to remove the requirement for objection. All consultations should be sent to the following email address: **box.landandacquisitions@nationalgrid.com**

I hope the above information is useful. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

The information in this letter is provided not withstanding any discussions taking place in relation to connections with electricity customer services.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

Tiffany Bate
Development Liaison Officer
Commercial and Customer Connections
Electricity Transmission Property Land and Property

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Registered in England and Wales, No 2366977

nationalgrid | National Grid Web Map

Legend

Fibre Cable

Fibre Cable Commissioned

Towers

Towers Commissioned

OHL 400Kv

OHL 400Kv Commissioned

Notes

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 km

OS Disclaimer: Background Mapping information has been reproduced from the Ordnance Survey map by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office. ©Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey National Grid Electricity Transmission (100024241) & National Gas Transmission (100024886)

Date: 11/21/2024
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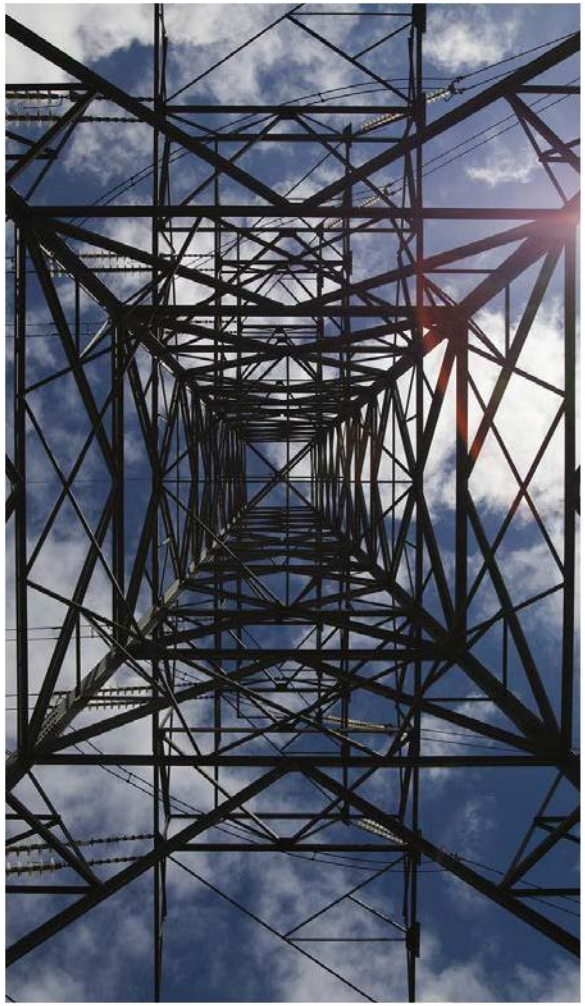
NG Disclaimer: National Grid UK Transmission. The asset position information represented on this map is the intellectual property of National Grid PLC (Warwick Technology Park, Warwick, CV346DA) and should not be used without prior authority of National Grid.
Note: Any sketches on the map are approximate and not captured to any particular level of precision.

Technical Guidance Note 287

Third-party guidance for working near National Grid Electricity Transmission equipment



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Purpose and scope

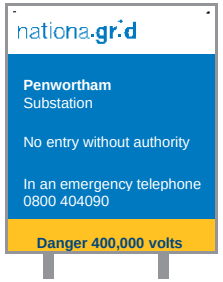
The purpose of this document is to give guidance and information to third parties who are proposing, scheduling or designing developments close to National Grid Electricity Transmission assets.

The scope of the report covers information on basic safety and the location of our assets – and also highlights key issues around particular types of development and risk areas.

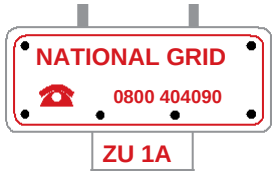
In the case of electrical assets, National Grid does not authorise or agree safe systems of work with developers and contractors. However, we will advise on issues such as electrical safety clearances and the location of towers and cables. We also work with developers to minimise the impact of any National Grid assets that are nearby.

How to identify specific National Grid sites

Substations
The name of the Substation and emergency contact number will be on the site sign.



Overhead Lines
The reference number of the tower and the emergency contact number will be on this type of sign.



Contact National Grid

Plant protection

For routine enquiries regarding planned or scheduled works, contact the Asset Protection team online, by email or phone.

www.lsbud.co.uk

Email: assetprotection@nationalgrid.com

Phone: 0800 001 4282

Emergencies

In the event of occurrences such as a cable strike, coming into contact with an overhead line conductor or identifying any hazards or problems with National Grid's equipment, phone our emergency number 0800 404 090 (option 1).

If you have apparatus within 30m of a National Grid asset, please ensure that the emergency number is included in your site's emergency procedures.

Consider safety

Consider the hazards identified in this document when working near electrical equipment

Part 1

Electricity transmission infrastructure

National Grid owns and maintains the high-voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales (Scotland has its own networks). It's responsible for balancing supply with demand on a minute-by-minute basis across the network.

Overhead lines

Overhead lines consist of two main parts – pylons (also called towers) and conductors (or wires). Pylons are typically steel lattice structures mounted on concrete foundations. A pylon's design can vary due to factors such as voltage, conductor type and the strength of structure required.

Conductors, which are the 'live' part of the overhead line, hang from pylons on insulators. Conductors come in several different designs depending on the amount of power that is transmitted on the circuit.

In addition to the two main components, some Overhead Line Routes carry a Fibre Optic cable between the towers with an final underground connection to the Substations.

In most cases, National Grid's overhead lines operate at 275kV or 400kV.

Underground cables

Underground cables are a growing feature of National Grid's network. They consist of a conducting core surrounded by layers of insulation and armour. Cables can be laid in the road, across open land or in tunnels. They operate at a range of voltages, up to 400kV.

Substations

Substations are found at points on the network where circuits come together or where a rise or fall in voltage is required. Transmission substations tend to be large facilities containing equipment such as power transformers, circuit breakers, reactors and capacitors. In addition Diesel generators and compressed air systems can be located there.

Part 2

Statutory requirements for working near high-voltage electricity

The legal framework that regulates electrical safety in the UK is *The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (ESQCR) 2002*. This also details the minimum electrical safety clearances, which are used as a basis for the Energy Networks Association (ENA) TS 43-8. These standards have been agreed by CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation) and also form part of the *British Standard BS EN 50341-1:2012 Overhead Electrical Lines exceeding AC 1kV*. All electricity companies are bound by these rules, standards and technical specifications. They are required to uphold them by their operator's licence.

Electrical safety clearances

It is essential that a safe distance is kept between the exposed conductors and people and objects when working near National Grid's electrical assets. A person does not have to touch an exposed conductor to get a life-threatening electric shock. At the voltages National Grid operates at, it is possible for electricity to jump up to several metres from an exposed conductor and kill or cause serious injury to anyone who is nearby. For this reason, there are several legal requirements and safety standards that must be met.

Any breach of legal safety clearances will be enforced in the courts. This can and has resulted in the removal of an infringement, which is normally at the cost of the developer or whoever caused it to be there. Breaching safety clearances, even temporarily, risks a serious incident that could cause serious injury or death.

National Grid will, on request, advise planning authorities, developers or third parties on any safety clearances and associated issues. We can supply detailed drawings of all our overhead line assets marked up with relevant safe areas.

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Your Responsibilities - Overhead lines

Work which takes place near overhead power lines carries a significant risk of coming into proximity with the wires. If any person, object or material gets too close to the wires, electricity could ‘flashover’ and be conducted to earth, causing death or serious injury. You do not need to touch the wires for this to happen. The law requires that work is carried out in close proximity to live overhead power lines only when there is no alternative, and only when the risks are acceptable and can be properly controlled. Statutory clearances exist which must be maintained, as prescribed by the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002.

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, you are responsible for preparing a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and safe systems of work, to ensure that risks are managed properly and the safety of your workforce and others is maintained. Your risk assessment must consider and manage all of the significant risks and put in place suitable precautions/controls in order to manage the work safely. You are also responsible for ensuring that the precautions identified are properly implemented and stay in place throughout the work.

Work near overhead power lines must always be conducted in accordance with GS6, ‘avoiding danger from overhead power lines’, and any legislation which is relevant to the work you are completing.

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What National Grid will provide

National Grid can supply profile drawings in PDF and CAD format showing tower locations and relevant clearances to assist you in the risk assessment process.

What National Grid will not provide

National Grid will not approve safe systems of work or approve design proposals

Part 3

What National Grid will do for you and your development

Provision of information

National Grid should be notified during the planning stage of any works or developments taking place near our electrical assets, ideally a minimum notification period of 8 weeks to allow National Grid to provide the following services:

Drawings

National Grid will provide relevant drawings of overhead lines or underground cables to make sure the presence and location of our services are known. Once a third party or developer has contacted us, we will supply the drawings for free.

Risk or impact identification

National Grid can help identify any hazards or risks that the presence of our assets might bring to any works or developments. This includes both the risk to safety from high-voltage electricity and longer-term issues, such as induced currents, noise and maintenance access that may affect the outcome of the development. National Grid will not authorise specific working procedures, but we can provide advice on best practice.

400kV

The maximum nominal voltage of the underground cables in National Grid's network

Risks or hazards to be aware of

This section includes a brief description of some of the hazards and issues that a third party or developer might face when working or developing close to our electrical infrastructure.

Land and access

National Grid has land rights in place with landowners and occupiers, which cover our existing overhead lines and underground cable network. These agreements, together with legislation set out under the *Electricity Act 1989*, allow us to access our assets to maintain, repair and renew them. The agreements also lay down restrictions and covenants to protect the integrity of our assets and meet safety regulations. Anyone proposing a development close to our assets should carefully examine these agreements.

Our agreements often affect land both inside and outside the immediate vicinity of an asset. Rights will include the provision of access, along with restrictions that ban the development of land through building, changing levels, planting and other operations. Anyone looking to develop close to our assets must consult with National Grid first.

For further information, contact Asset Protection:

Email: assetprotection@nationalgrid.com
Phone: 0800 001 4282

Electrical clearance from overhead lines

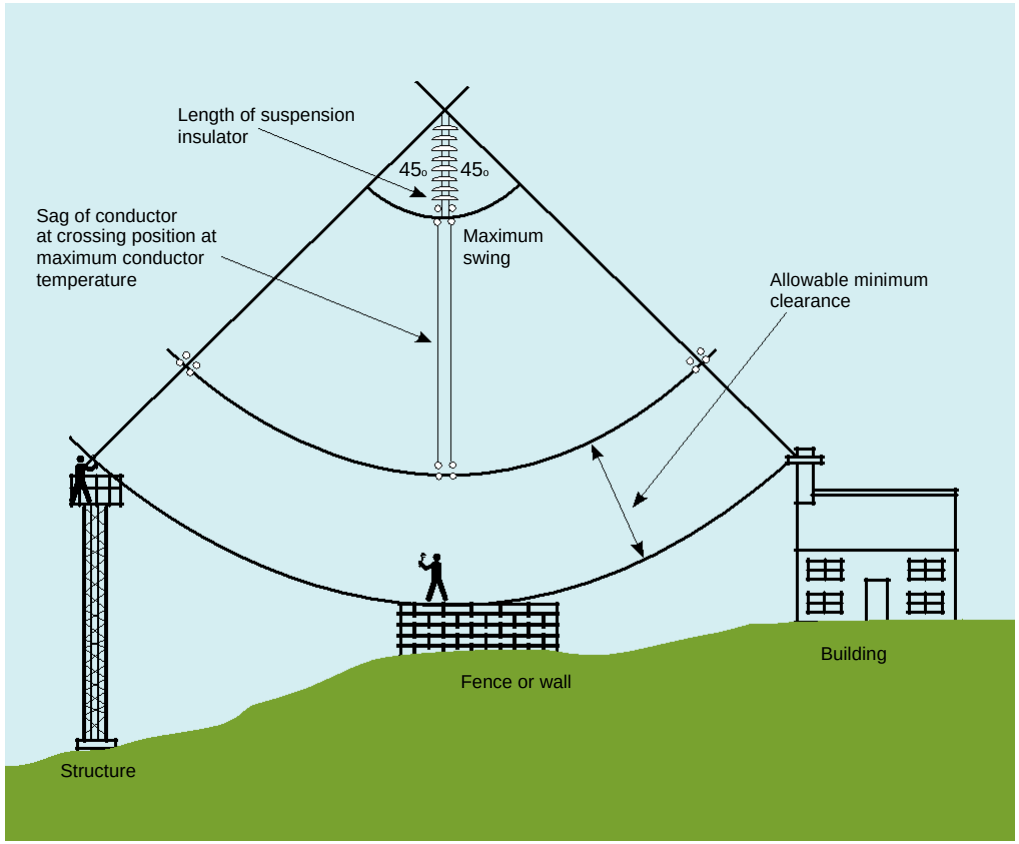
The clearance distances referred to in this section are specific to 400kV overhead lines. National Grid can advise on the distances required around different voltages i.e. 132kV and 275kV.

As we explained earlier, *Electrical Networks Association TS 43-8* details the legal clearances to our overhead lines. The minimum clearance between the conductors of an overhead line and the ground is 7.3m at maximum sag. The sag is the vertical distance between the wire's highest and lowest point. Certain conditions, such as power flow, wind speed and air temperature can cause conductors to move and allowances should be made for this.

The required clearance from the point where a person can stand to the conductors is 5.3m. To be clear, this means there should be at least 5.3m from where someone could stand on any structure (i.e. mobile and construction equipment) to the conductors. Available clearances will be assessed by National Grid on an individual basis.

National Grid expects third parties to implement a safe system of work whenever they are near Overhead Lines.

Diagram not to scale



There should be at least 5.3m between the conductors and any structure someone could stand on

We recommend that guidance such as *HSE Guidance Note GS6 (Avoiding Danger from Overhead Power Lines)* is followed, which provides advice on how to avoid danger from all overhead lines, at all voltages. If you are carrying out work near overhead lines you must contact National Grid, who will provide the relevant profile drawings.

7.3m

The required minimum clearance between the conductors of an overhead line, at maximum sag, and the ground

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The undergrounding of electricity cables at Ross-on-Wye

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Underground cables Underground cables operating at up to 400kV are a significant part of the National Grid Electricity Transmission network. When your works will involve any ground disturbance it is expected that a safe system of work is put in place and that you follow guidance such as *HSG 47 (Avoiding Danger from Underground Services)*.

You must contact National Grid to find out if there are any underground cables near your proposed works. If there are, we will provide cable profiles and location drawings and, if required, on-site supervision of the works. Cables can be laid under roads or across industrial or agricultural land. They can even be layed in canal towpaths and other areas that you would not expect.

Cables crossing any National Grid high-voltage (HV) cables directly buried in the ground are required to maintain a minimum seperation that will be determined by National Grid on a case-by-case basis. National Grid will need to do a rating study on the existing cable to work out if there are any adverse effects on either cable rating. We will only allow a cable to cross such an area once we know the results of the re-rating. As a result, the clearance distance may need to be increased or alternative methods of crossing found.

For other cables and services crossing the path of our HV cables, National Grid will need confirmation that published standards and clearances are met.

Impressed voltage

Any conducting materials installed near high-voltage equipment could be raised to an elevated voltage compared to the local earth, even when there is no direct contact with the high-voltage equipment. These impressed voltages are caused by inductive or capacitive coupling between the high-voltage equipment and nearby conducting materials and can occur at distances of several metres away from the equipment. Impressed voltages may damage your equipment and could potentially injure people and animals, depending on their severity. Third parties should take impressed voltages into account during the early stages and initial design of any development, ensuring that all structures and equipment are adequately earthed at all times.

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Earth potential rise

Under certain system fault conditions – and during lightning storms – a rise in the earth potential from the base of an overhead line tower or substation is possible. This is a rare phenomenon that occurs when large amounts of electricity enter the earth. This can pose a serious hazard to people or equipment that are close by.

We advise that developments and works are not carried out close to our tower bases, particularly during lightning storms.

Noise

Noise is a by-product of National Grid's operations and is carefully assessed during the planning and construction of any of our equipment. Developers should consider the noise emitted from National Grid's sites or overhead lines when planning any developments, particularly housing. Low-frequency hum from substations can, in some circumstances, be heard up to 1km or more from the site, so it is essential that developers find adequate solutions for this in their design. Further information about likely noise levels can be provided by National Grid.

Maintenance access

National Grid needs to have safe access for vehicles around its assets and work that restricts this will not be allowed.
In terms of our overhead lines, we wouldn't want to see any excavations made, or permanent structures built, that might affect the foundations of our towers. The size of the foundations around a tower base depends on the type of tower that is built there. If you wish to carry out works within 30m of the tower base, contact National Grid for more information. Our business has to maintain access routes to tower bases with land owners. For that reason, a route wide enough for an HGV must be permanently available. We may need to access our sites, towers, conductors and underground cables at short notice.

30m

If you wish to carry out work within this distance of the tower base, you must contact National Grid for more information

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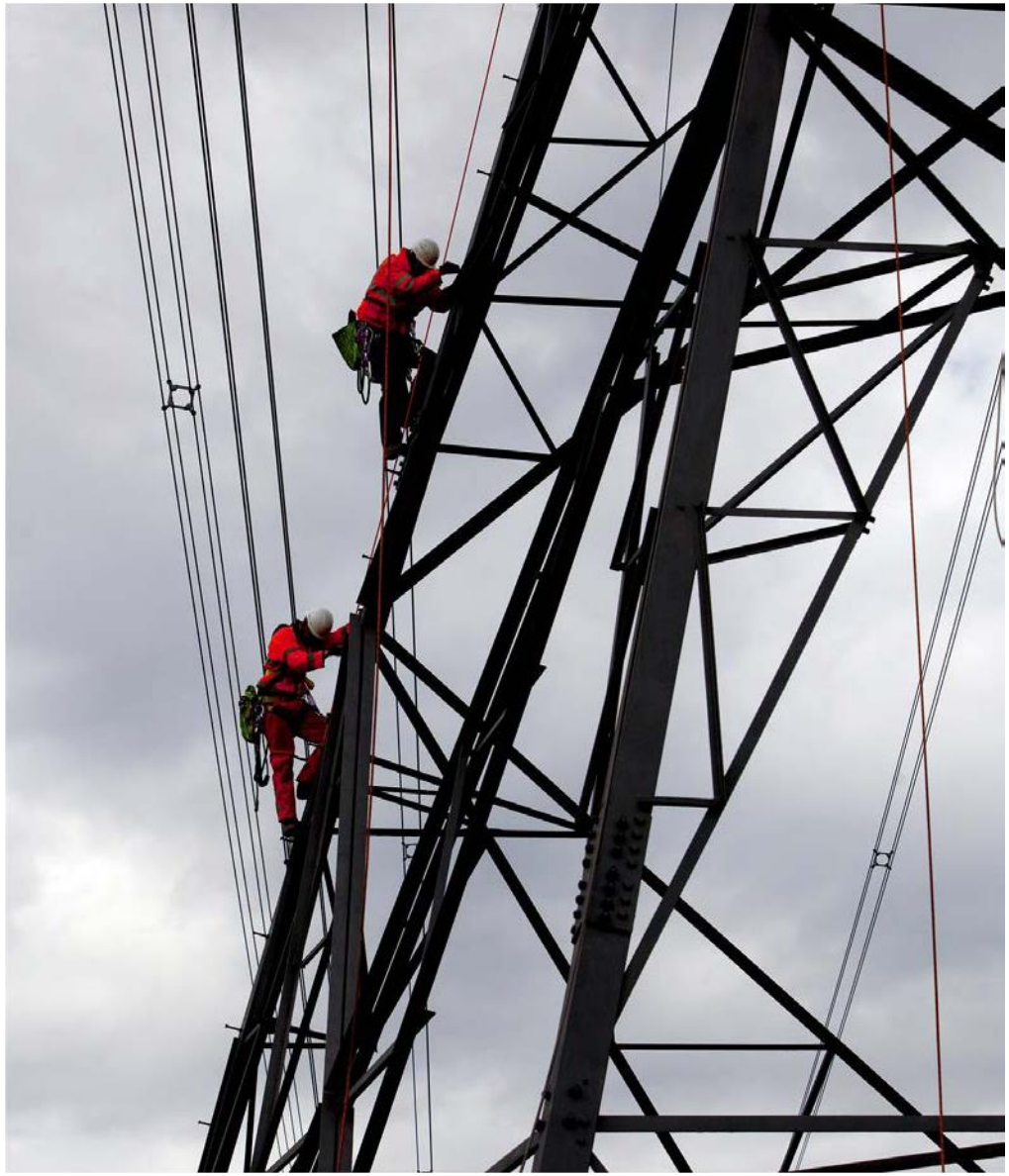

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Fires and firefighting

National Grid does not recommend that any type of flammable material is stored under overhead lines. Developers should be aware that in certain cases the local fire authority will not use water hoses to put out a fire if there are live, high-voltage conductors within 30m of the seat of the fire *(as outlined in ENA TS 43-8)*.

In these situations, National Grid would have to be notified and reconfigure the system – to allow staff to switch out the overhead line – before any firefighting could take place. This could take several hours.

We recommend that any site which has a specific hazard relating to fire or flammable material should include National Grid's emergency contact details (found at the beginning and end of this document) in its fire plan information, so any incidents can be reported.

Developers should also make sure their insurance cover takes into account the challenge of putting out fires near our overhead lines.

Excavations, piling or tunnelling

You must inform National Grid of any works that have the potential to disturb the foundations of our substations or overhead line towers. This will have to be assessed by National Grid engineers before any work begins.

BS ISO 4866:2010 states that a minimum distance of 200m should be maintained when carrying out quarry blasting near our assets. However, this can be reduced with specific site surveys and changes to the maximum instantaneous charge (the amount of explosive detonated at a particular time).

All activities should observe guidance layed out in *BS 5228-2:2009*.

Microshocks

High-voltage overhead power lines produce an electric field. Any person or object inside this field that isn't earthed picks up an electrical charge. When two conducting objects – one that is grounded and one that isn't – touch, the charge can equalise and cause a small shock, known as a microshock. While they are not harmful, they can be disturbing for the person or animal that suffers the shock.

For these reasons, metal-framed and metal-clad buildings which are close to existing overhead lines should be earthed to minimise the risk of microshocks. Anything that isn't earthed, is conductive and sits close to the lines is likely to pick up a charge. Items such as deer fences, metal palisade fencing, chain-link fences and metal gates underneath overhead lines all need to be earthed.

For further information on microshocks please visit **www.emfs.info.**

200m

The minimum distance that should be maintained from National Grid assets when quarry blasting

Specific development guidance

Wind farms

National Grid's policy towards wind farm development is closely connected to the *Electricity Networks Association Engineering Recommendation L44 Separation between Wind Turbines and Overhead Lines, Principles of Good Practice.* The advice is based on national guidelines and global research. It may be adjusted to suit specific local applications.

There are two main criteria in the document:

(i) The turbine shall be far enough away to avoid the possibility of toppling onto the overhead line

(ii) The turbine shall be far enough away to avoid damage to the overhead line from downward wake effects, also known as turbulence

The toppling distance is the minimum horizontal distance between the worst-case pivot point of the wind turbine and the conductors hanging in still air. It is the greater of:

- the tip height of the turbine plus 10%
- or, the tip height of the turbine plus the electrical safety distance that applies to the voltage of the overhead line.

To minimise the downward wake effect on an overhead line, the wind turbine should be three times the rotor distance away from the centre of the overhead line.

Wake effects can prematurely age conductors and fittings, significantly reducing the life of the asset. For that reason, careful consideration should be taken if a wind turbine needs to be sited within the above limits. Agreement from National Grid will be required.

Commercial and housing developments

National Grid has developed a document called *Design guidelines for development near pylons and HVO power lines*, which gives advice to anyone involved in planning or designing large-scale developments that are crossed by, or close to, overhead lines.

The document focuses on existing 275kV and 400kV overhead lines on steel lattice towers, but can equally apply to 132kV and below. The document explains how to design large-scale developments close to high-voltage lines, while respecting clearances and the development's visual and environmental impact.

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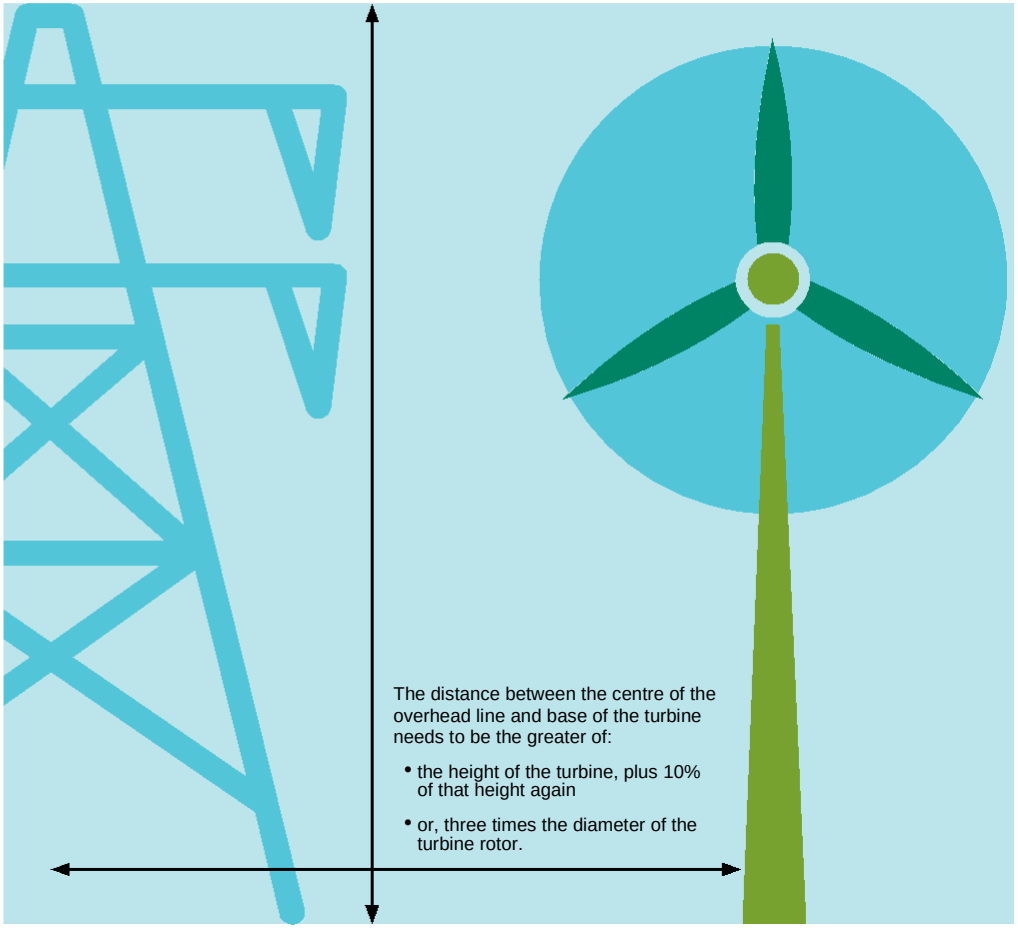
Diagram not to scale



Turbines should be far enough away to avoid the possibility of toppling onto the overhead line

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The advice is intended for developers, designers, landowners, local authorities and communities, but is not limited to those organisations.

Overall, developers should be aware of all the hazards and issues relating to the electrical equipment that we have discussed when designing new housing.

As we explored earlier, National Grid's assets have the potential to create noise. This can be low frequency and tonal, which makes it quite noticeable. It is the responsibility of developers to take this into account during the design stage and find an appropriate solution.

Solar farms

While there is limited research and recommendations available, there are several key factors to consider when designing Solar Farms in the vicinity of Overhead Power Lines.

Developers may be looking to build on arable land close to National Grid's assets. In keeping with the safety clearance limits that we outlined earlier for solar panels directly underneath overhead line conductors, the highest point on the solar panels must be no more than 5.3m from the lowest conductors.

This means that the maximum height of any structure will need to be determined to make sure safety clearance limits aren't breached. This could be as low as 2m. National Grid will supply profile drawings to aid the planning of solar farms and determine the maximum height of panels and equipment.

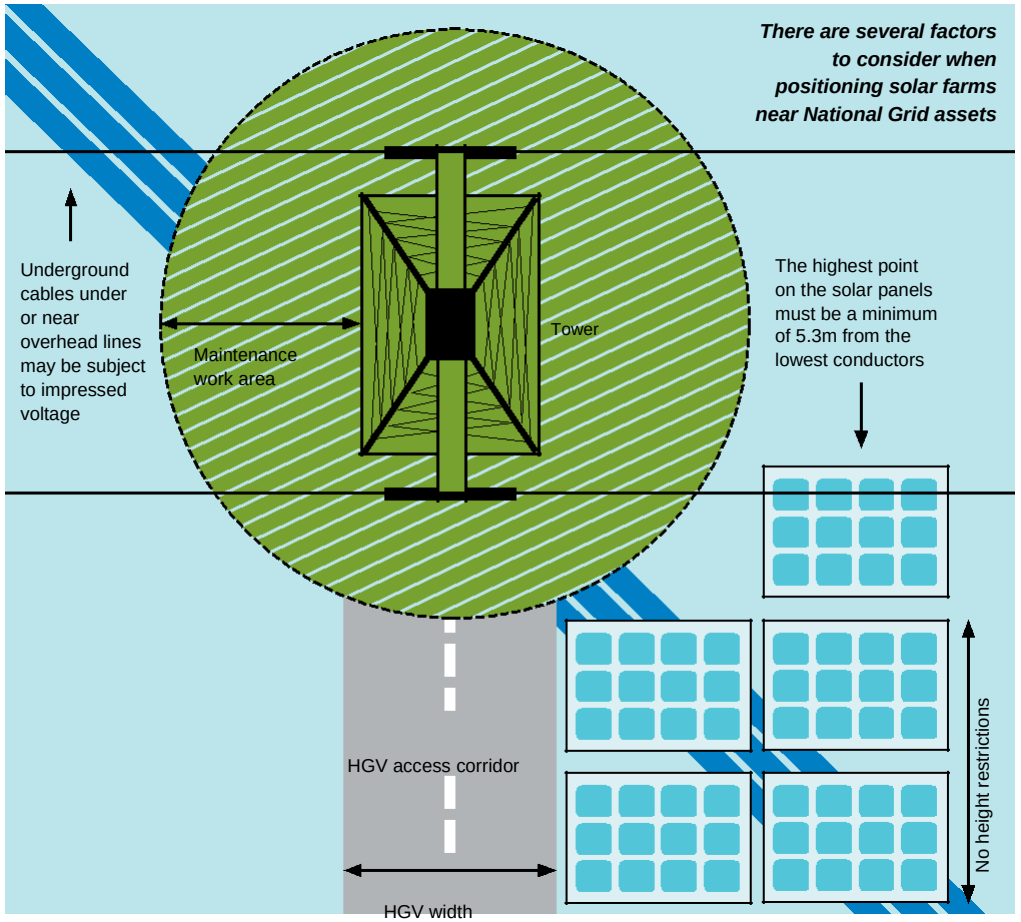
Solar panels that are directly underneath power lines risk being damaged on the rare occasion that a conductor or fitting falls to the ground. A more likely risk is ice falling from conductors or towers in winter and damaging solar panels.

There is also a risk of damage during adverse weather conditions, such as lightning storms, and system faults. As all our towers are earthed, a weather event such as lightning can cause a rise in the earth potential around the base of a tower. Solar panel support structures and supply cables should be adequately earthed and bonded together to minimise the effects of this temporary rise in earth potential.

Any metallic fencing that is located under an overhead line will pick up an electrical charge. For this reason, it will need to be adequately earthed to minimise microshocks to the public.

For normal, routine maintenance and in an emergency National Grid requires unrestricted access to its assets. So if a tower is enclosed in a solar farm compound, we will need full access for our vehicles, including access through any compound gates. During maintenance – and especially re-conductoring – National Grid would need enough space near our towers for winches and cable drums. If enough space is not available, we would require solar panels to be temporarily removed.

Diagram not to scale



Asset protection agreements

In some cases, where there is a risk that development will impact on National Grid's assets, we will insist on an asset protection agreement being put in place. The cost of this will be the responsibility of the developer or third party.

Contact details

Emergency situations

If you spot a potential hazard on or near an overhead electricity line, do not approach it, even at ground level. Keep as far away as possible and follow the six steps below:

- Warn anyone close by to evacuate the area
- Call our 24-hour electricity emergency number: 0800 404 090 (Option 1)[1]
- Give your name and contact phone number
- Explain the nature of the issue or hazard
- Give as much information as possible so we can identify the location – i.e. the name of the town or village, numbers of nearby roads, postcode and (ONLY if it can be observed without putting you or others in danger) the tower number of an adjacent pylon
- Await further contact from a National Grid engineer

[1] It is critically important that you don't use this phone number for any other purpose. If you need to contact National Grid for another reason please use our Contact Centre at www2.nationalgrid.com/contact-us to find the appropriate information or call 0800 0014282.

Routine enquiries

Email:
assetprotection@nationalgrid.com

Call Asset Protection on:
0800 0014282

Opening hours:
Monday to Friday 08:00-16:00

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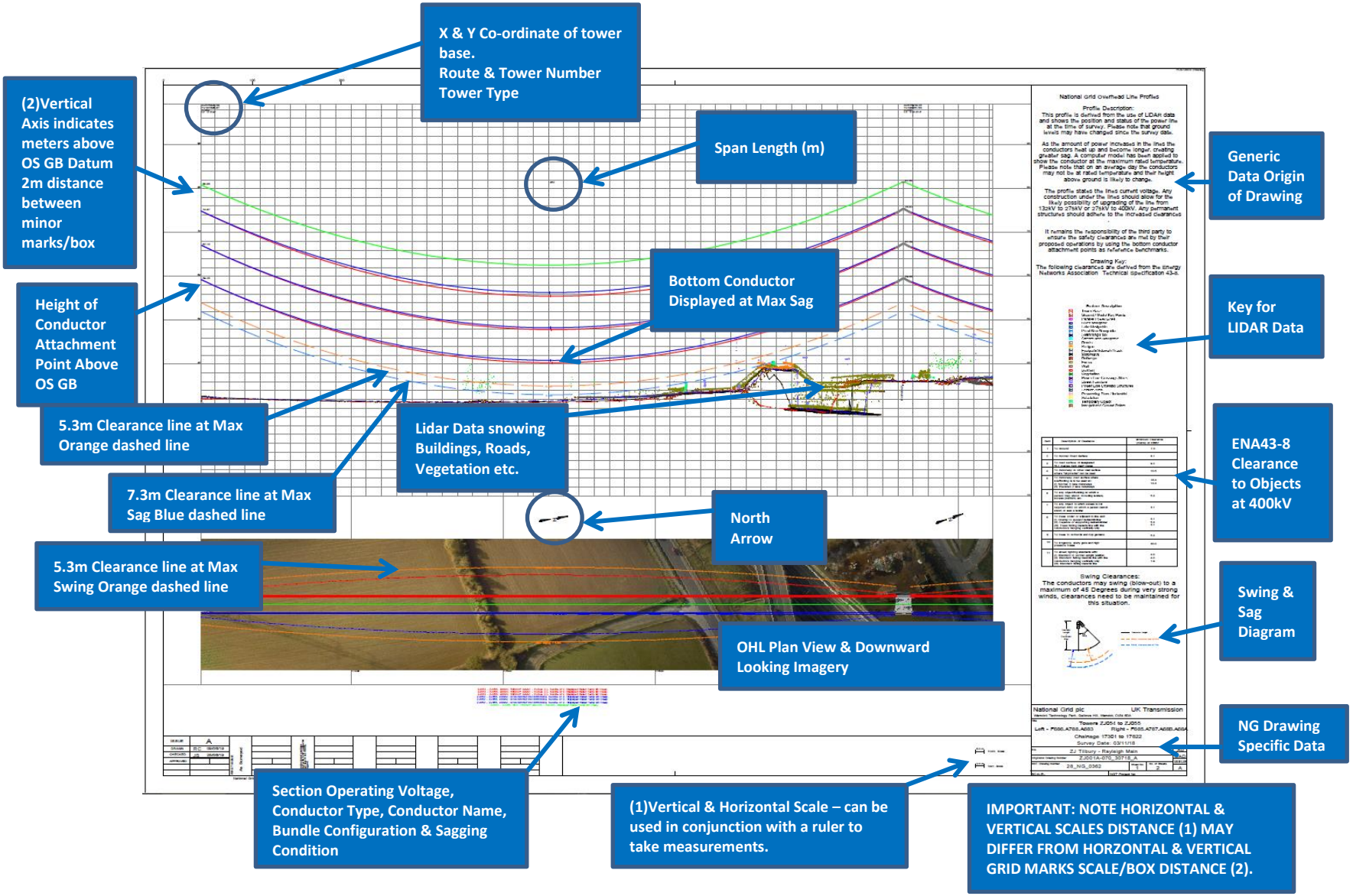
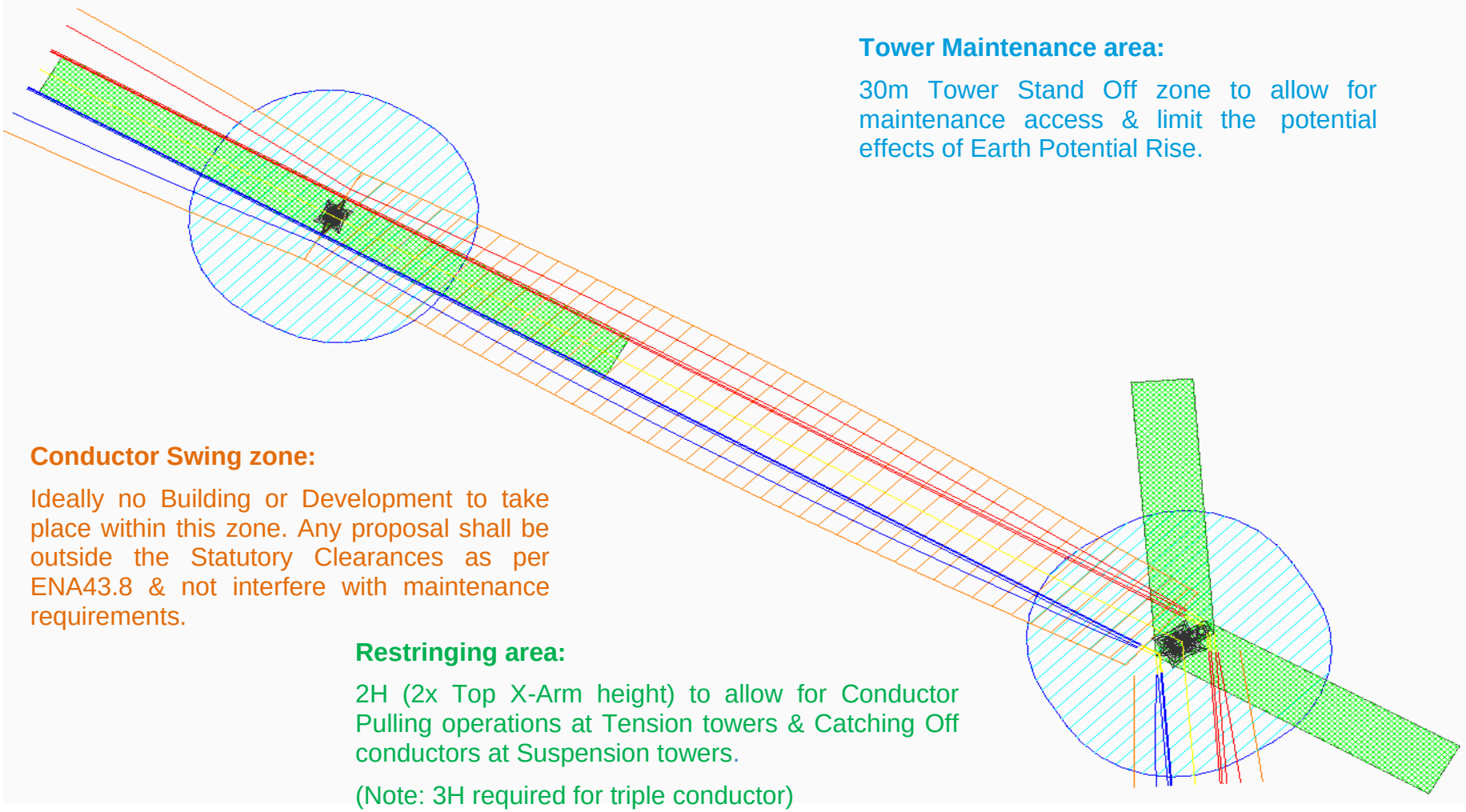
14 APPENDIX A

OHL Profile Drawing Guide



15 APPENDIX B

OHL Tower Stand Off & Reconductoring Area



Tower Maintenance area:

30m Tower Stand Off zone to allow for maintenance access & limit the potential effects of Earth Potential Rise.

Conductor Swing zone:

Ideally no Building or Development to take place within this zone. Any proposal shall be outside the Statutory Clearances as per ENA43.8 & not interfere with maintenance requirements.

Restringing area:

2H (2x Top X-Arm height) to allow for Conductor Pulling operations at Tension towers & Catching Off conductors at Suspension towers.

(Note: 3H required for triple conductor)

From:	Alice Lawman
To:	Droves Solar Farm
Subject:	EN0110013 - The Droves Solar Farm - EIA Scoping and Consultation
Date:	22 November 2024 16:16:25

You don't often get email from [redacted]@nationalhighways.co.uk. Learn why this is important

National Highways Scoping Opinion Consultation Response

National Highways welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation for a Scoping Opinion for the application for Development Consent for The Droves Solar Farm project.

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport, National Highways is responsible for managing and operating a safe and efficient Strategic Road Network (SRN) under the provisions of the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is the highway authority for the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The Department for Transport (DfT) Circular 01/2022 (Strategic road network and the delivery of sustainable development) sets out how National Highways will work with developers to ensure that specific tests are met when promoting a scheme. This includes ensuring the transport impact is understood, any mitigation (or other infrastructure) is designed in accordance with the relevant standards and that environmental impacts are appraised and mitigated accordingly. In addition, National Highways are responsible for ensuring the SRN serves its purpose as a part of a national system for through traffic in accordance with Section 10 of the Highways Act 1980, and to satisfy the reasonable requirements of road safety.

National Highways have reviewed the Scoping Reports and would require the following information to be included within the Environmental Statement:

- a vision as per the Circular 01/2022,
- outline relevant National and Local Policies;
- summarise existing baseline conditions;
- provide details of the Proposed Project;
- sets out the distribution of the construction and operational traffic;
- details the construction and operational trip generation;
- identify any necessary mitigation;
- assesses the impact of local committed developments;
- Carryout a cumulative assessment for the other NSIPs and committed development that are coming through around the project area; and
- summarises the findings and provide an overall conclusion.

National Highways suggest the following documents are referenced within the policy review for the project:

- Relevant National Policy Statements;
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023);
- Department for Transport Planning Policy Paper (DfT Circular 01/2022);
- National Highways 'The Strategic Road Network: Planning for the Future Guide' (2015);

In addition to the above, National Highways have the following comments to make.

National Highways consider AIL's would need to be scoped in and considered at EIA stage. National Highways would advise that the Applicant directly discusses any matters pertaining to AIL movements with the National Highways Abnormal Indivisible Loads team (AbnormalIndivisibleLoadsTeam@nationalhighways.co.uk). Increased congestion and increased journey times/distance due to road closures or diversions for abnormal load access on the receptor 'Road user' would need to be scoped in due to the cumulative impact of other developments on the SRN.

National Highways advises consideration of any committed development and their cumulative impact within the project area are outlined within the Environmental Statement and Transport Assessment.

National Highways agree with the inclusion of SRN junctions within the Study Area. Further to this, we request the Applicant to provides information on the trip distribution, providing flow diagrams which include the junctions with the SRN in the vicinity of the proposed development. If the proposed development proposes to generate an increase of 30 two-way movements or more on any junctions on the Strategic Road Network within a peak period (AM or PM), we expect a capacity assessment to be undertaken to assess the impact of the proposed trips on the affected junctions and provide mitigations, if required. Where a junction capacity assessment could potentially be required, and we ask that National Highways are consulted early during the TA scoping process to ensure impacts to the SRN (and LRN) are appropriately assessed. This will enable us to determine the severity of traffic from this development on the operation and safety of the SRN.

National Highways trusts its response provides clarification of its concerns and identify other matters which National Highways considers need to be addressed at this stage of the project. However, if you have any questions or comments regarding the contents of the letter then please do not hesitate to contact me on the details provided. National Highways looks forward to continuing positive engagement with The Droves Soar Farm Limited as the project progresses.

Kind regards
Alice

Alice Lawman MRTPI

Spatial Planner
Operations (East) | National Highways
Woodlands | Manton Lane | Bedford | MK41 7LW
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For any planning related matters please email PlanningEE@nationalhighways.co.uk

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National Highways Limited | General enquiries: 0300 123 5000 |National Traffic Operations Centre, 3 Ridgeway, Quinton Business Park, Birmingham B32 1AF | https://nationalhighways.co.uk | info@nationalhighways.co.uk

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From:	NATS Safeguarding
To:	Droves Solar Farm
Subject:	RE: EN0110013 - The Droves Solar Farm - EIA Scoping and Consultation and Regulation 11 Notification [SG38427]
Date:	14 November 2024 08:53:20
Attachments:	~WRD0000.jpg image006.png image007.png image008.png image009.png image010.png image011.png image012.png image013.png image014.png image015.png image016.png

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Our Ref: SG38427

Dear Sir/Madam

The proposed development has been examined from a technical safeguarding aspect and does not conflict with our safeguarding criteria. Accordingly, NATS (En Route) Public Limited Company ("NERL") has no safeguarding objection to the proposal.

However, please be aware that this response applies specifically to the above consultation and only reflects the position of NATS (that is responsible for the management of en route air traffic) based on the information supplied at the time of this application. This letter does not provide any indication of the position of any other party, whether they be an airport, airspace user or otherwise. It remains your responsibility to ensure that all the appropriate consultees are properly consulted.

If any changes are proposed to the information supplied to NATS in regard to this application which become the basis of a revised, amended or further application for approval, then as a statutory consultee NERL requires that it be further consulted on any such changes prior to any planning permission or any consent being granted.

Yours faithfully

NATS Safeguarding

E: natssafeguarding@nats.co.uk

4000 Parkway, Whiteley,
Fareham, Hants PO15 7FL
www.nats.co.uk

NATS Internal

From: Droves Solar Farm <thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Sent: Friday, November 8, 2024 1:34 PM
Subject: EN0110013 - The Droves Solar Farm - EIA Scoping and Consultation and Regulation 11 Notification

Your attachments have been security checked by Mimecast Attachment Protection. Files where no threat or malware was detected are attached.

Dear Sir/Madam

Please see attached correspondence on the proposed The Droves Solar Farm.

The Applicant for the Proposed Development intends to make an application for Development Consent under the Planning Act 2008. The Applicant has sought a Scoping Opinion from the Planning Inspectorate, on behalf of the Secretary of State, as to the scope and level of detail of the information to be provided within the Environmental Statement that will accompany its future application.

The Planning Inspectorate has identified you as a consultation body to inform the Scoping Opinion and is therefore inviting you to submit comments by 06 December 2024. The deadline is a statutory requirement that cannot be extended.

Further information is included within the attached letter.

Kind regards

Joseph Jones
EIA Advisor
The Planning Inspectorate
T 0303 444 5028

@PINSgov The Planning Inspectorate planninginspectorate.gov.uk

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Date: 03 December 2024
Our ref: 493290
Your ref: EN0110013

Consultations
Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
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T 0300 060 900

The Planning Inspectorate
Environmental Services
Operations Group 3
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Mr Wallis

Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Consultation under Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11

Proposal: The Droves Solar Farm
Location: Land north of Swaffham and south of Castle Acre, West Norfolk

Thank you for seeking our advice on the scope of the Environmental Statement (ES) in the consultation dated 08 November 2024, received on the same date.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

A robust assessment of environmental impacts and opportunities, based on relevant and up to date environmental information, should be undertaken prior to an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO). Annex A to this letter provides Natural England's advice on the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed development.

For this development, in particular, Natural England highlights that the following issues require consideration within the EIA:

- Impacts of the proposed development on: Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA), River Nar Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and Breckland Forest SSSI (see sections 5 and 6 of Annex A for more detailed advice).
- Impacts of air pollution from construction traffic on designated sites (see section 15 of Annex A).
- Impacts of the development on best and most versatile soil (see section 14 of Annex A).

To date, the Applicant has not engaged with Natural England through our discretionary advice service (DAS).

For any further advice on this consultation please contact the case officer

[redacted]@naturalengland.org.uk and copy to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Emma Hurrell
Higher Officer, Norfolk and Suffolk Sustainable Development Team

Annex A – Natural England's Advice on EIA Scoping

1. General principles

1.1. We advise that the Regulation 11 of the Infrastructure Planning Regulations 2017 - (The EIA Regulations) sets out the information that should be included in an ES to assess impacts on the natural environment. This includes:

- A description of the development – including physical characteristics and the full land use requirements of the site during construction and operational phases
- Appropriately scaled and referenced plans which clearly show the information and features associated with the development
- An assessment of alternatives and clear reasoning as to why the preferred option has been chosen
- A description of the aspects and matters requested to be scoped out of further assessment with adequate justification provided[1].
- Expected residues and emissions (water, air and soil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation etc.) resulting from the operation of the proposed development
- A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development including biodiversity (for example fauna and flora), land, including land take, soil, water, air, climate (for example greenhouse gas emissions, impacts relevant to adaptation), cultural heritage and landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors
- A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment – this should cover direct effects but also any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium, and long term, permanent and temporary, positive, and negative effects. Effects should relate to the existence of the development, the use of natural resources (in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity) and the emissions from pollutants. This should also include a description of the forecasting methods to predict the likely effects on the environment
- A description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment
- An outline of the structure of the proposed ES

2. Cumulative and in-combination effects

2.1. The ES should fully consider the implications of the whole development proposal. This should include an assessment of all supporting infrastructure.

2.2. An impact assessment should identify, describe, and evaluate the effects that are likely to result from the project in combination with other projects and activities that are being, have been or will be carried out. The following types of projects should be included in such an assessment (subject to available information):

a. existing completed projects
b. approved but uncompleted projects
c. ongoing activities
d. plans or projects for which an application has been made and which are under consideration by the consenting authorities; and
e. plans and projects which are reasonably foreseeable, i.e. projects for which an

[1] National Infrastructure Planning Advice Note Seven, Environmental Impact Assessment, Process, Preliminary Environmental Information and Environmental Statements (see Insert 2 – information to be provided with a scoping request)

application has not yet been submitted, but which are likely to progress before completion of the development and for which sufficient information is available to assess the likelihood of cumulative and in-combination effects.

Table 1: Plans or projects that Natural England is aware of that might need to be considered in the ES	
Project/Plan	Status
High Grove Solar Farm	Pre-Application
Norfolk Boreas Offshore Wind Farm (terrestrial elements)	Approved but uncompleted project
Norfolk Vanguard Offshore Wind Farm (terrestrial elements)	Approved but uncompleted project

3. Environmental data

3.1. Natural England is required to make available information it holds where requested to do so. National datasets held by Natural England are available at http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/data/default.aspx.

3.2. Detailed information on the natural environment is available at www.magic.gov.uk. This includes Marine Conservation Zone GIS shapefiles.

3.3. Natural England's SSSI Impact Risk Zones are a GIS dataset which can be used to help identify the potential for the development to impact on a SSSI. The dataset and user guidance can be accessed from the Natural England Open Data Geoportal.

3.4. Natural England does not hold local information on local sites, local landscape character, priority habitats and species or protected species. Local environmental data should be obtained from the appropriate local bodies. This may include the local environmental records centre, the local Wildlife Trust, local geo-conservation group or other recording society.

4. Biodiversity and geodiversity

4.1. The assessment will need to include potential impacts of the proposal upon sites and features of nature conservation interest as well as opportunities for nature recovery through biodiversity net gain (BNG). There might also be strategic approaches to take into account.

4.2. Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) is the process of identifying, quantifying, and evaluating the potential impacts of defined actions on ecosystems or their components. EcIA may be carried out as part of the EIA process or to support other forms of environmental assessment or appraisal. Guidelines and an EcIA checklist have been developed by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

5. Designated nature conservation sites

International and European sites

5.1. The development site is within or may impact on the following **European/internationally designated nature conservation site(s):** Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA).

5.2. The ES should thoroughly assess the potential for the proposal to affect internationally designated sites of nature conservation importance / European sites, including marine sites where relevant. This includes Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), listed Ramsar sites, candidate SAC and proposed SPA.

5.3. Article 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive requires an appropriate assessment where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect upon a European Site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

5.4. Natural England always advise that our SSSI Impact Risk Zones are used to inform the scoping of potential impacts to SSSIs from development, as well as professional judgement. In addition, we would advise that application of standard threshold distances for assessment may not be suitable, especially when sites support mobile/migratory bird species and/or may be impacted via a pathway originating further than the threshold used.

5.5. For the purposes of the Scoping exercise, we have provided below a table of the relevant internationally designated sites that we consider should be scoped in for further assessment in the ES (Table 2). There is a similar table in the following section, 'Nationally Designated Sites', (Table 3).

Table 2: Potential risk to international designated sites: the development is within or may impact on the following sites

Site name with link to conservation objective	**Features which the ES will need to consider**	**Potential impact pathways where further information/assessment is required**
Breckland SPA	Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) and Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), Stone curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus)*	The structure and function of the habitats that support these features may be sensitive to changes in air quality. Natural England advise air quality impacts from construction traffic are further assessed. Please refer to section 15 for further details.

6. Nationally designated sites

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

6.1. The EIA Scoping Report has identified 14 SSSIs within 10km of the draft order limits. Natural England advise that the development site is within or may impact on the following **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):** Breckland Forest SSSI and River Nar SSSI.

6.2. The ES should include a full assessment of the direct and indirect effects of the development on the features of special interest within any nearby SSSIs and identify appropriate mitigation measures to avoid, minimise or reduce any adverse significant effects.

6.3. Natural England's SSSI Impact Risk Zones can be used to help identify the potential for the development to impact on a SSSI. The dataset and user guidance can be accessed from the Natural England Open Data Geoportal.

6.4. In particular, we note that the EIA scoping report scoped in Breckland SPA but not the underlying SSSIs (Breckland Forest and Breckland Farmland). The reasoning behind this is unclear and further justification should be given.

6.5. We have provided below a table of the relevant nationally designated sites that we consider should be scoped in for further assessment in the ES (Table 3).

Table 3: Potential risks to nationally designated sites: the development is within or may impact on the following sites

Site name with link to citation	**Features which the ES will need to consider**	**Potential impact pathways where further information/assessment is required**
Breckland Forest SSSI	Breeding birds - Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) and Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*) also features of the Breckland SPA designation. Invertebrate assemblages and vascular plant assemblages will also need to be considered.	The vascular plant assemblages and the structure and function of the habitats that support the invertebrate assemblages may be sensitive to changes in air quality. Natural England advise air quality impacts from construction traffic are further assessed. Please refer to section 15 for further details.
River Nar SSSI	Chalk stream and East Anglian fen river together with adjacent terrestrial habitats and flood plain.	The notified habitats at this site may be sensitive to changes in air quality and water quality. An assessment of air quality impacts from construction traffic should be scoped into the ES. Further detail is provided in section 15. As identified in paragraph 2.2.17. of the EIA Scoping document, "*There are several small water features located within the Site."* An assessment of a hydrological connection to the SSSI site should be scoped into the ES. Please refer to section 16 for further detail.

7. Regionally and Locally Important Sites

7.1. The ES should consider any impacts upon local wildlife and geological sites, including local nature reserves. Local Sites are identified by the local wildlife trust, geo-conservation group or other local group and protected under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paragraph 180). The ES should set out proposals for mitigation of any impacts and if appropriate, compensation measures and opportunities for enhancement and improving connectivity with wider ecological networks. We advise the Applicant to contact the relevant local body for further information.

8. Protected species

8.1. The ES should assess the impact of all phases of the proposal on protected species (including, for example, great crested newts, reptiles, birds, water voles, badgers and bats). Natural England does not hold comprehensive information regarding the locations of species protected by law. Records of protected species should be obtained from appropriate local biological record centres, nature conservation organisations and local groups. Consideration should be given to the wider context of the site, for example in terms of habitat linkages and protected species populations in the wider area.

8.2. The area likely to be affected by the development should be thoroughly surveyed by competent ecologists at appropriate times of year for relevant species and the survey results, impact assessments and appropriate accompanying mitigation strategies included as part of the ES. Surveys should always be carried out in optimal survey time periods and to current guidance by suitably qualified and, where necessary, licensed, consultants.

8.3. Natural England has adopted standing advice for protected species, which includes guidance on survey and mitigation measures. A separate protected species licence from Natural England or Defra may also be required. Applicants should check to see if a mitigation licence is required using Natural England guidance on licensing Natural England wildlife licences.

8.4. Where licence need is identified, applicants should make use of Natural England's Pre-Submission Screening Service for a review of a draft wildlife licence application. Through this service Natural England will review a full draft licence application to issue a Letter of No Impediment (LONI) which explains that based on the information reviewed to date, that it sees no impediment to a licence being granted in the future should the Development Consent Order (DCO) be issued. This is done to give the Planning Inspectorate confidence to make a recommendation to the relevant Secretary of State in granting a DCO. See Advice Note Eleven, Annex C – Natural England and the Planning Inspectorate | National Infrastructure Planning for details of the LONI process.

9. Priority Habitats and Species

9.1. Priority Habitats and Species are of particular importance for nature conservation and included in the England Biodiversity List published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Most priority habitats will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. Lists of priority habitats and species can be found here. Natural England does not routinely hold species data. Such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or species are considered likely.

9.2. Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land. Sites can be checked against the (draft) national Open Mosaic Habitat (OMH) inventory published by Natural England and freely available to download. Further information is also available here.

9.3. An appropriate level habitat survey should be carried out on the site, to identify any important habitats present. In addition, ornithological, botanical, and invertebrate surveys should be carried out at appropriate times in the year, to establish whether any scarce or priority species are present.

9.4. The ES should include details of:

- Any historical data for the site affected by the proposal (e.g. from previous surveys)
- Additional surveys carried out as part of this proposal
- The habitats and species present
- The status of these habitats and species (e.g. whether priority species or habitat)
- The direct and indirect effects of the development upon those habitats and species
- Full details of any mitigation or compensation measures
- Opportunities for biodiversity net gain or other environmental enhancement

10. Ancient Woodland, ancient and veteran trees

10.1. The EIA Scoping Report (dated November 2024) states that there is no ancient woodland within the site (paragraph 2.2.25) but there are several veteran trees present (paragraph 7.3.11).

10.2. The ES should assess the impacts of the proposal on the ancient woodland and any ancient and veteran trees, and the scope to avoid and mitigate for adverse impacts. It should also consider opportunities for enhancement.

10.3. Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat of great importance for its wildlife, its history, and the contribution it makes to our diverse landscapes. Paragraph 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the highest level of protection for irreplaceable habitats and development should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

10.4. Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland Inventory which can help identify ancient woodland. The wood pasture and parkland inventorysets out information on wood pasture and parkland.

10.5. The ancient tree inventory provides information on the location of ancient and veteran trees.

10.6. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have prepared standing advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees.

11. Biodiversity net gain

11.1. The Environment Act 2021 includes NSIPs in the requirement for BNG, with the biodiversity gain objective for NSIPs defined as at least a 10% increase in the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat. It is the intention that BNG should apply to all terrestrial NSIPs accepted for examination from November 2025.

11.2. The EIA Scoping Report does reference the biodiversity net gain (paragraph 1.7.8.). However, there is no commitment to an increase value (i.e. 10%). Natural England would encourage the Applicant to commit to at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain across habitat, river and hedgerow units, illustrated via the use of the statutory biodiversity metric.

11.3. In order to maximise nature recovery and target habitat enhancement where it will have the greatest local benefit it is recommended that locally identified opportunities should be acknowledged and incorporated into the design of BNG (both on and off-site). This should include any locally mapped ecological networks and priority habitats identified within and close to the development site. Natural England also recommend consultation with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, and any other local bodies, who may be able to provide invaluable local knowledge to help steer the mitigation and enhancement proposed by the project.

11.4. In addition, Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are a new mandatory system of spatial strategies for nature established by the Environment Act 2021 which will contribute to the national Nature Recovery Network (NRN). Work is currently underway to develop these strategies, which will identify strategic priorities for nature protection, recovery, and enhancement. The proposed project could provide opportunity not only for enhancing biodiversity in the locality, but also to create and enhance ecological connectivity in the area, contributing to the Nature Recovery Network and climate change resilience. The ES should make clear the project's contribution to ecological connectivity in the area, the Nature Recovery Network and climate change resilience.

12. Landscape

Nationally designated landscapes

12.1. The development site is not within, or within proximity to, any nationally designated landscapes.

Landscape and visual impacts

12.2. The environmental assessment should refer to the relevant National Character Areas. Character area profiles set out descriptions of each landscape area and statements of environmental opportunity.

12.3. Whilst Natural England will not usually make comments on local landscape impacts, the EIA should include a full assessment of the potential impacts of the development on local landscape character using landscape assessment methodologies. We encourage the use of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), based on the good practice guidelines produced jointly by the Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) in 2013. LCA provides a sound basis for guiding, informing, and understanding the ability of any location to accommodate change and to make positive proposals for conserving, enhancing or regenerating character.

12.4. A landscape and visual impact assessment should also be carried out for the proposed development and surrounding area. Natural England recommends use of the methodology set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2013 (3rd edition) produced by the LI and IEMA. For National Parks and National Landscapes, we advise that the assessment also includes effects on the 'special qualities' of the designated landscape, as set out in the statutory management plan for the area. These identify the particular landscape and related characteristics which underpin the natural beauty of the area and its designation status.

12.5. The assessment should also include the cumulative effect of the development with other relevant existing or proposed developments in the area. This should include an assessment of the impacts of other proposals currently at scoping stage.

12.6. To ensure high quality development that responds to and enhances local landscape character and distinctiveness, the siting and design of the proposed development should reflect local characteristics and, wherever possible, use local materials. Account should be taken of local design policies, design codes and guides as well as guidance in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code. The ES should set out the measures to be taken to ensure the development will deliver high standards of design and green infrastructure. It should also set out detail of layout alternatives, where appropriate, with a justification of the selected option in terms of landscape impact and benefit.

12.7. The National Infrastructure Commission has also produced Design Principles for National Infrastructure - NIC endorsed by Government in the National Infrastructure Strategy.

13. Connecting people with nature

13.1. As detailed in table 17.5 of the EIA Scoping Report, the Applicant has scoped out impacts to open space access and public rights of ways (PRoW). Natural England does not concur with this conclusion and advise they are scoped into the EIA.

13.2. The ES should consider potential impacts on access land, common land, public rights of way and, where appropriate, the England Coast Path and coastal access routes and coastal margin in the vicinity of the development, in line with NPPF paragraph 104 and there will be reference in the relevant National Policy Statement. It should assess the scope to mitigate for any adverse impacts. Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP) can be used to identify public rights of way within or adjacent to the proposed site that should be maintained or enhanced.

13.3. Measures to help people to better access the countryside for quiet enjoyment and opportunities to connect with nature should be considered. Such measures could include reinstating existing footpaths or the creation of new footpaths, cycleways, and bridleways. Links to other green networks and, where appropriate, urban fringe areas should also be explored to help promote the creation of wider green infrastructure. Access to nature within the development site should also be considered, including the role that natural links have in connecting habitats and providing potential pathways for movements of species.

13.4. Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be incorporated where appropriate.

14. Soils and agricultural land quality

14.1. Natural England concurs with the Applicant's decision to scope soils into their EIA. We also welcome their engagement with the adjacent development proposal, High Grove Solar. Soils are a valuable, finite natural resource and should also be considered for the ecosystem services they provide, including for food production, water storage and flood mitigation, as a carbon store, reservoir of biodiversity and buffer against pollution. It is therefore important that the soil resources are protected and sustainably managed. Impacts from the

development on soils and best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land should be considered. Further guidance is set out in the Natural England Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land.

14.2. The following issues should be considered and, where appropriate, included as part of the ES:

- The degree to which soils would be disturbed or damaged as part of the development.
- The extent to which agricultural land would be disturbed or lost as part of this development, including whether any BMV agricultural land would be impacted.

14.3. This may require a detailed Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey if one is not already available. For information on the availability of existing ALC information see www.magic.gov.uk.

- Where an ALC and soil survey of the land is required, this should normally be at a detailed level, e.g. one auger boring per hectare, (or more detailed for a small site) supported by pits dug in each main soil type to confirm the physical characteristics of the full depth of the soil resource, i.e. 1.2 metres. The survey data can inform suitable soil handling methods and appropriate reuse of the soil resource where required (e.g. agricultural reinstatement, habitat creation, landscaping, allotments and public open space).
- The ES should set out details of how any adverse impacts on BMV agricultural land can be minimised through site design/masterplan.
- The ES should set out details of how any adverse impacts on soils can be avoided or minimised and demonstrate how soils will be sustainably used and managed, including consideration in site design and master planning, and areas for green infrastructure or biodiversity net gain. The aim will be to minimise soil handling and maximise the sustainable use and management of the available soil to achieve successful after-uses and minimise off-site impacts.

14.4. Further information is available in the Defra Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soil on Development Sites and The British Society of Soil Science Guidance Note Benefitting from Soil Management in Development and Construction.

15. Air quality

15.1. The EIA Scoping Report has scoped out the effects on air quality from further assessment. Natural England **does not concur** with this conclusion. Natural England advise that the EIA Scoping Report does not provide enough information on the expected traffic flows and extended traffic routes to reach this conclusion. Figure 9.1 currently indicates 3 proposed access routes. This includes the A1065, which runs adjacent to Breckland Forest SSSI and Breckland SPA as well as Narford, Road, Low Road and South Acre Road, which are in close proximity to the River Nar SSSI. Natural England, therefore, advises that impacts of increased air pollution from construction traffic on nationally and internationally designated sites are scoped into the EIA.

15.2. Natural England advise that any site within 200m of a road experiencing an increase of 1000AADT (or 200AADT for HDVs) is scoped in for consideration

within the ES. For further advice on assessing the impacts of traffic on designated sites, we refer you to Natural England's approach to advising competent authorities on the assessment of road traffic emissions under the Habitats Regulations – NEA001. While this relates specifically to internationally designated sites, the same principles can be applied for nationally designated sites.

15.3. Air quality in the UK has improved over recent decades but air pollution remains a significant issue. For example, approximately 85% of protected nature conservation sites are currently in exceedance of nitrogen levels where harm is expected (critical load) and approximately 87% of sites exceed the level of ammonia where harm is expected for lower plants (critical level of 1µg)[1]. A priority action in the England Biodiversity Strategy is to reduce air pollution impacts on biodiversity. The Government's Clean Air Strategy also has a number of targets to reduce emissions including to reduce damaging deposition of reactive forms of nitrogen by 17% over England's protected priority sensitive habitats by 2030, to reduce emissions of ammonia against the 2005 baseline by 16% by 2030 and to reduce emissions of NOx and SO_2 against a 2005 baseline of 73% and 88% respectively by 2030. Shared Nitrogen Action Plans (SNAPs) have also been identified as a tool to reduce environmental damage from air pollution.

15.4. The planning system plays a key role in determining the location of developments which may give rise to pollution, either directly, or from traffic generation, and hence planning decisions can have a significant impact on the quality of air, water and land. The ES should take account of the risks of air pollution and how these can be managed or reduced. This should include taking account of any strategic solutions or SNAPs, which may be being developed or implemented to mitigate the impacts of air quality. **Natural England advise that the proposed development does fall within the Breckland SNAP area**. Further information on air pollution impacts and the sensitivity of different habitats/designated sites can be found on the Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk).

15.5. Information on air pollution modelling, screening and assessment can be found on the following websites:

- SCAIL Combustion and SCAIL Agriculture - http://www.scail.ceh.ac.uk/
- Ammonia assessment for agricultural development https://www.gov.uk/guidance/intensive-farming-risk-assessment-for-your-environmental-permit
- Environment Agency Screening Tool for industrial emissions https://www.gov.uk/guidance/air-emissions-risk-assessment-for-your-environmental-permit
- Defra Local Air Quality Management Area Tool (Industrial Emission Screening Tool) – England http://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/laqm

16. Water quality

16.1. Section 13 of the EIA Scoping Report assesses water resources and ground conditions. Paragraph 13.2.14 states that there are no natural watercourses across the proposed site. However, paragraph 2.2.17 identifies there are several small water features within the site. Due to the close proximity of the River Nar,

[1] Report: Trends Report 2020: Trends in critical load and critical level exceedances in the UK - Defra, UK

which is designated as a SSSI, the ES should determine if the proposed site is hydrologically linked to the River Nar SSSI and identify any potential impact pathways.

16.2. NSIPs can occur in areas where strategic solutions are being determined for water pollution issues and they may not have been factored into the local planning system as they are delivered through National Policy Statements.

16.3. The planning system plays a key role in determining the location of developments which may give rise to water pollution, and hence planning decisions can have a significant impact on water quality, and land. The assessment should take account of the risks of water pollution and how these can be managed or reduced. A number of water dependent protected nature conservation sites have been identified as failing condition due to elevated nutrient levels and nutrient neutrality is consequently required to enable development to proceed without causing further damage to these sites. The ES needs to take account of any strategic solutions for nutrient neutrality or Diffuse Water Pollution Plans, which may be being developed or implemented to mitigate and address the impacts of elevated nutrient levels.

17. Climate change

17.1. The ES should identify how the development affects the ability of the natural environment (including habitats, species, and natural processes) to adapt to climate change, including its ability to provide adaptation for people. This should include impacts on the vulnerability or resilience of a natural feature (i.e. what's already there and affected) as well as impacts on how the environment can accommodate change for both nature and people.

17.2. Part 2 of EN-1 covers the government's energy and climate change strategy, including policies for mitigating climate change. Section 4.10 sets out generic considerations that applicants and the Secretary of State should take into account to help ensure that energy infrastructure is safe and resilient to climate change. This section further advises that the resilience of the project to climate change should be assessed in the ES accompanying an application.

17.3. EN-1 sets out strong support for the use of Nature-based Solutions and nature inclusive design, for example:

- In preparing measures to support climate change adaptation applicants should take reasonable steps to maximise the use of Nature-based Solutions alongside other conventional techniques (4.10.5).
- In addition to avoiding further GHG emissions when compared with more traditional adaptation approaches, Nature-based Solutions can also result in biodiversity benefits and net gain, as well as increasing absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (4.10.7).
- Applicants should look for opportunities within the proposed development to embed nature-based or technological solutions to mitigate or offset the emissions of construction and decommissioning (5.3.6).
- Steps taken to minimise and offset emissions should be set out in a GHG Reduction Strategy, secured under the Development Consent Order. The GHG Reduction Strategy should consider the creation and preservation of carbon stores and sinks including through woodland creation, hedgerow creation and restoration, peatland restoration and through other natural habitats (5.3.7).

- The design process should embed opportunities for nature inclusive design (5.4.21).
- Applicants should consider any reasonable opportunities to maximise the restoration, creation, and enhancement of wider biodiversity, and the protection and restoration of the ability of habitats to store or sequester carbon (5.4.33).
- In addition to delivering biodiversity net gain, developments may also deliver wider environmental gains and benefits to communities relevant to the local area, and to national policy priorities, such as:
    - reductions in GHG emissions
    - reduced flood risk
    - improvements to air or water quality
    - climate adaptation
    - landscape enhancement
    - increased access to natural greenspace, or
    - the enhancement, expansion or provision of trees and woodlands.
- The scope of potential gains will be dependent on the type, scale, and location of specific projects. Applicants should look for a holistic approach to delivering wider environmental gains and benefits through the use of Nature-based Solutions and Green Infrastructure (4.6.13).

17.4. Key Natural England resources that you may find useful include:

- Carbon storage and sequestration by habitat: a review of the evidence (second edition)
- Climate Change Adaptation Manual: Evidence to support nature conservation in a changing climate -This contains the Landscape Scale Climate Change Assessment Methodology
- Nature Networks Evidence Handbook

The Planning Inspectorate

via email

Norfolk Constabulary

Community Safety
King's Lynn
Norfolk

Tel: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]@norfolk.police.uk

www.norfolk.police.uk
Non-Emergency Tel: 101

Date: 11th November 2024

Dear Mr. Joseph Jones,

EIA Scoping and Consultation and Regulation 11 Notification.
The Droves Solar Farm.
Norfolk.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above matter.

For security reasons can you record the Constabulary response but restrict its content to yourself and the applicant?

As a Designing Out Crime Officer my role within the planning process is to give advice on behalf of Norfolk Constabulary in relation to the layout, environmental design and the physical security of buildings, based upon the established principles of 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design'.

I would encourage the agent to liaise with their client and consider incorporating the Police Crime Prevention Initiative principles (Secured by Design) into this proposal.

This report should be considered in addition to any existing security measures.

The rate of thefts from such facilities has been increasing in recent years. The combination of the rise in the value of scrap metal and the remote locations of such venues in rural areas means that security needs to be appropriately considered. Surely to be truly "sustainable" it cannot make sense to position valuable assets in rural locations without countering the risk with appropriate robust security measures.

Interestingly, there is a Commercial Developments Design Guide available from www.securedbydesign.com which explains all of the crime reduction elements of the scheme. For the first time, the Secured by Design Commercial Guide is divided into Gold, Silver, and Bronze Award gradations.

All the detailed design and layout information is displayed in a visual "walk through" style in the interactive design guides, which are very good and self-explanatory tools.

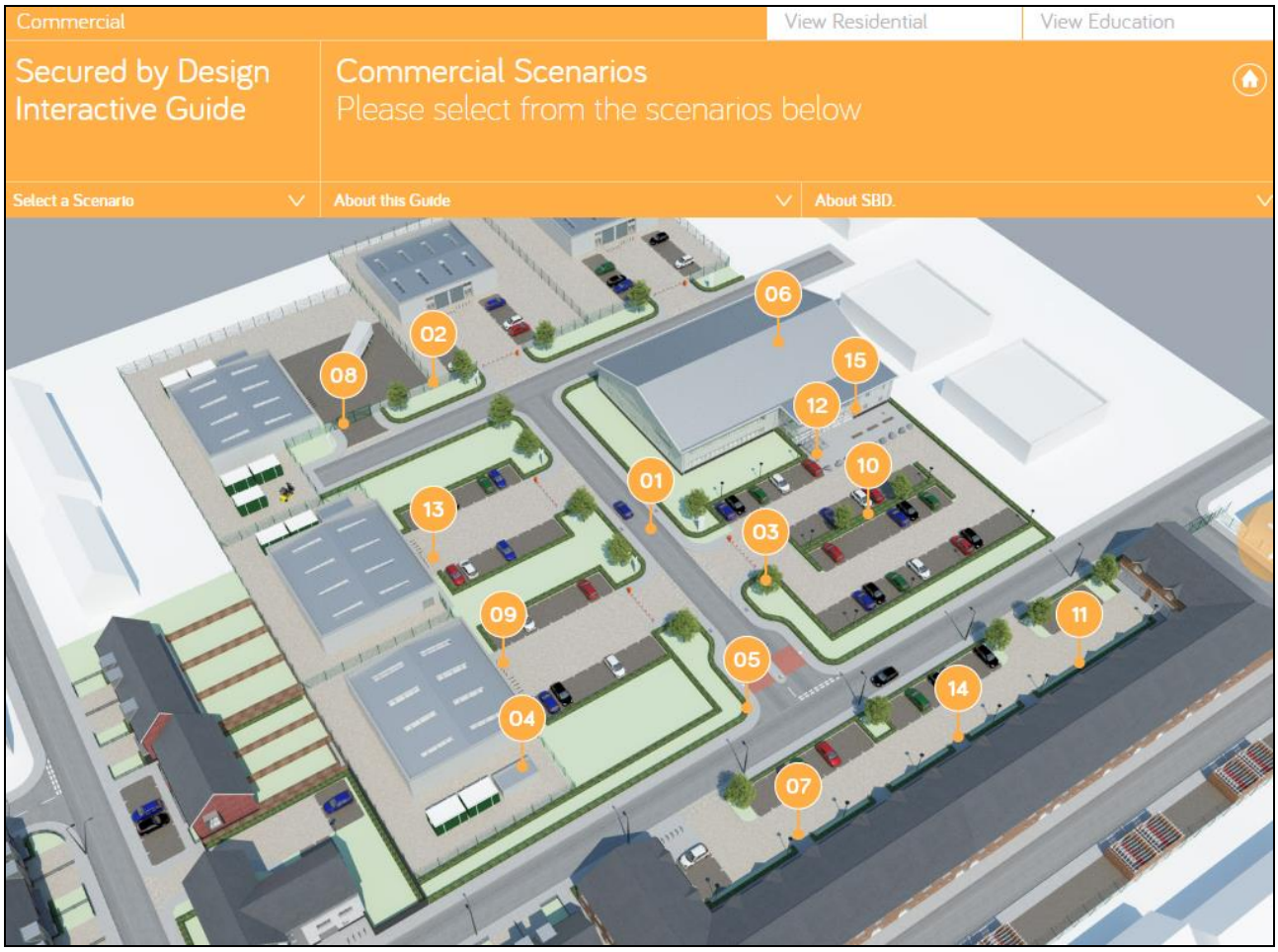
Secured by Design

CONSTRUCTION_SITE_SECURITY_GUIDE

COMMERCIAL_GUIDE_23.pdf

Secured by Design aims to achieve a good standard of security for buildings and the immediate environment. It attempts to deter criminal and anti-social behaviour within developments by introducing appropriate design features that enable Natural Surveillance and create a sense of ownership and responsibility for every part of the development.

https://www.securedbydesign.com/interactiveguide/commercial



These features include secure vehicle parking, adequate lighting of common areas, defensible space and a landscaping and lighting scheme which when combined, enhances Natural Surveillance and safety.

The police service places great importance upon the need to build sustainable and inclusive communities and to raise awareness of the significant impact that low crime makes to the ongoing and long-term sustainability of good business and commerce.

Constructing well designed places, buildings and communities that promote both sustainable communities and health and wellbeing is an objective that the Secured by Design Initiative widely supports; however, it is imperative that they must also be safe, secure, and accessible. Mitigating the opportunities for crime is not only about reducing and preventing injury and crime, but it is also about building strong, cohesive, vibrant, and participatory communities.

Secured by Design

SBD

Crime, the fear of crime and the unhappiness and disorder they create significantly damages communities. It is a reasonable expectation that all those with some responsibility for the built environment from local authorities and the police to architects, builders, and developers, include crime prevention measures in their work; creating environments that reduce opportunities to commit crime with design led solutions is a cost effective, resource efficient and highly impactive means of improving the quality of life.

The way Secured by Design works is to deter criminal and anti-social behaviour through the design, layout and specification of buildings and the spaces around and between them, that serve to reduce easy opportunities for crime.

It is argued that more crimes are committed where a criminal feels more comfortable committing them, for instance where a physical environment offers easy unrestricted or at least uncontrolled access, where clear messages of ownership are absent, where either natural and formal surveillance are absent or where wrong doers feel free to move within an area assured of their anonymity.

Design-led solutions to prevent crime will include ample opportunity for natural surveillance, high quality public lighting, clearly defined and well overlooked defensible spaces, the eradication of unnecessary foot routes and see these routes concentrated together with busier traffic routes, the sensible and sensitive positioning of play and leisure areas, the provision of clear and appropriate boundary treatments and the careful removal of any chances to hide unseen to create ambush points.

An obvious advantage of creating spaces with clear sight lines across and around them that do not provide places where anyone can hide, is the fact that people can see for themselves that they're safe moving through an area that reassures them.

Experience shows that incorporating security measures during a new build or refurbishment reduces crime, fear of crime and disorder. The aim of the Police Service is to assist in the Design process to achieve a safe and secure environment for staff and visitors without creating a "fortress environment".

This proposal should progree to provide a venue that makes the most from the proven crime reduction methodologies of Secured by Design gained from over thirty five years policing experience and which is supported by independent academic research.

The Government has reiterated that designing out crime and designing in community safety should be central to the planning and delivery of new development. Specifically, the Planning Practice Guidance on Design reminds practitioners that local authorities are duty bound to adhere to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and exercise their functions with due regard to their likely effect on crime and disorder, and do all that they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder.

The National Planning Policy Framework July 2021 also requires that:***"Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which… are safe and accessible so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion….***

The proposed layout will need to appropriately demonstrate that Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design features have been carefully considered and incorporated into the proposal.

I would be pleased to work with the agent or developer to ensure that this approach takes place. This is by far the most efficient way in which to proceed with new developments and is a partnership approach to reduce criminal opportunity. **In the interim period the following points will be of interest:**

The main entrance to the development will need to have an obvious “symbolic barrier” to give the impression that the area beyond is Private to the general community and deter casual intrusion. This should be reinforced with clear signage; an often forgotten measure but should assist in establishing “Rule Setting” a key principle of crime reduction methodology.

Defensible space has the simple aim of designing the physical environment in a way which enables the occupants to control the areas around their business. This is achieved by organising all space in such a way that employees may exercise a degree of control over the activities that take place there. Creating a sense of place where businesses and legitimate business users can go about their daily routine, without undue fear of crime or insecurity is a key element of the Secured by Design initiative. A key principle of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is to restrict acess to unobserved areas putting all visitors to the on view areas.

I would recommend that fencing should meet **BS1722** standards and there are government security standards for such establishments which should meet SEAP (Security Equipment Approval Panel) **class 1-3**, preferably at least class 2. **Not stock deer fencing.**

I would recommend that a boundary provides a **Perimeter Detection System** that provides an early alert of an attack. All gates installed within a secure fencing system as described above must be suitable for the fencing specification or certified to the same standard as the adjoining certified fencing and be of the same height and similar style. It should not be possible to lift the gate from its hinges, and the hinges and lock cylinder should be protected in such a way as to prevent their use as climbing aids. Care should also be taken in the design to ensure that cross sections do not inadvertently aid climbing. It should not be possible to pass under the gate when in the closed position.

Where crime risks dictate that there is a realistic chance of a ram raid type attack, with the intent to aide theft of the contents, or a vehicular borne attack to enter the premises or penetrate the shell of the building, to carry out an act of terrorism, the following standards for secure bollards that will prevent such an attack should be specified:

Fixed bollards should have been successfully tested to **PAS 68-1:2013** Performance specifications for vehicle security barriers – fixed bollards. Rising Bollards should have been successfully tested to **PAS 68-2:2013** Performance Specification for vehicle security barriers – rise and fall bollards.

In such a rural setting it can be appropriate to support a perimeter by using a series of defensive hedging. Hedging can take a while to establish so it is essential that it is planted at the earliest opportunity and cared for to give the best chances of becoming a realistic boundary treatment. A wide range of specimens can be planted along the boundary of a venue, which offer attractive planting characteristics of colour and form, whilst containing sharp thorns to dissuade intruders.

The benefit of having a Capable Guardian within sight and sound of the development is a good common-sense approach to the Management of the Facility. I appreciate that this is usually the case but during any periods that the venue is unattended an alternative solution must be implemented.

I would recommend that the applicant installs **CCTV** alongwith other monitorring systems for the care and protection of the facility.

Secured by Design

sbd-security-leaflet-hedges-plants-hr.pd

Although Closed Circuit Television is not a universal solution to security problems. It can help deter crime and assist in the management of a venue if it is monitored continuously and appropriately recorded.

The provision of CCTV is most effective when it forms part of an overall security plan. It is essential that developers are very clear about the objectives they wish to meet and establish a policy for its use and operation before it is installed. The systems should provide the Response element required to deter an attack and ideally should be supported by a voice box system to warn intruders at the time that their presence has been detected.

It is always the combination of robust physical security combined with detection systems that provide the best protection for assets. The disruption caused to a business by ignoring these principles can be dramatic.

It is important to seek independent advice before approaching an installer and to develop a comprehensive **Operational Requirement** for the system, which can be supplied to installers during the tendering process. An operational requirement will be used for the design, performance specification and functionality of the CCTV system. In effect, it is a statement of problems, not solutions and will highlight the areas that must be observed by the system and the times and description of activities giving cause for concern.

The recommended standards for the surveillance camera industry can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/recommended-standards-for-the-cctv-industry

CCTV systems must be installed to **BS EN 50132-7**: CCTV surveillance systems for use in security applications. For guidance on the use of CCTV images as legal evidence, see BS 7958:2015 Closed circuit television (CCTV). Management and operation. Code of practice. This document provides guidance and recommendations for the operation and management of CCTV within a controlled environment where data that may be offered as evidence is received, stored, reviewed, or analysed.

It assists owners of CCTV systems to follow best practice when gathering information of evidential quality. Remotely monitored detector activated CCTV systems must be installed in accordance with **BS 8418:2021** Design, Installation, Commissioning and Maintenance of Detection-Activated Video Surveillance Systems (VSS). Code of practice.

Specifiers are reminded that there will be a requirement for a data controller to ensure compliance with the GDPR. The data controller must ensure that all CCTV images that can be used to identify individuals are used, stored and disclosed in line with the GDPR principles.

To work in harmony with high levels of Surveillance, a carefully designed Lighting plan to cover all vulnerable areas should be in place. This will help to deter and reveal potential offenders and a uniform spread of white light to meet the updated British Standard **BS5489-1:2020** is required.

Should a movement activated Lighting Design be required; it should be coordinated with a CCTV installation (when specified) and the landscaping designed to avoid any conflicts, and to ensure that the lighting is sufficient to support the CCTV system.

A lighting scheme should provide uniformed lighting levels with good colour rendition and be sufficient to cater for lawful after dark activity around the site. It should not cause glare or light pollution and should support both formal and informal surveillance of the site. External illumination when the venue is unoccupied is recommended for entrance gates and routes to the main entrance and doors and observable building elevations.

Secured by Design

Attention to position and location of lighting to improve illuminance at ground level can avoid user casting shadows onto the surface whilst minimising light pollution. The use of bollard lights may be useful for way finding; however, bollard lights fail to properly model the facial features of pedestrians and are vulnerable to vandalism and vehicle collision. Therefore, their use for security purposes is discouraged.

A good lighting system is one designed to distribute an appropriate amount of light evenly with Uniformity Values of between 0.25 and 0.40 using lamps with a rating of at least 60 on the Colour Rendering Index. A Uo value of 0.4 or 40% is recommended to ensure that lighting installations do not create dark patches next to lighter patches where our eyes would have difficulty in adjusting quickly enough for us to see that it was safe to proceed along any route.

It is recognised that some local authorities have '**dark sky'** policies and deliberately light some of their rural, low crime areas to very low levels of illumination. Some are currently experimenting with switching off streetlamps in low crime areas between certain hours of the night to save energy costs and reduce CO2 emissions. If such policies exist, then these must be brought to the attention of the DOCO at the time of application.

It is important to consider that offenders prefer to remain out of Public Gaze as they select their targets and often putting them on view can deter their activity. Where appropriate the internal landscaping of the venue should be carefully considered to provide a clear field of vision around the structures.

Ideally within the site all specified shrubs and planting should have a maximum growth height of 1 metre with any internal trees being pruned up to a 2-metre level providing single stems. This will increase the Natural Surveillance present and provide a see and be seen feel to the venue which can reduce the Fear of Crime. Privacy is not always Security.

Temporary buildings, such as portable buildings, are notoriously difficult to secure. As such Temporary buildings should not be used for the storage of high value equipment. SBD is currently working with interested parties to develop temporary buildings certificated to the Loss Prevention Certification Board's standard **LPS 1175 Security Rating 2**.

A suitably designed, fit for purpose, monitored intruder alarm system must be installed to all vulnerable storage buildings. Extra care will need to be taken during the construction stage of the proposal. This is a period when valuable materials are more easily transportable and hence easier to steal. Appropriate guarding of the site will be essential during this phase.

To provide the essential Police Response, the system must comply with the requirements of the Security Systems policy, which can be found at www.securedbydesign.com

All security work should be carried out by a competent installer who is accredited and approved by a recognised industry licensing body such as:

- Secured by Design (SBD);
- The Master Locksmith Association (MLA);
- The National Security Inspectorate (NSI);
- The Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB);
- The Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP).

The installer should have the professional technical competence to assess the level of security required. Security standards are always specified according to risk.

Secured by Design

SBD

The method is to install security products that provide a level of robustness that slow down a determined offender.

With regard to the management of the venue; It is essential that regular staff training, and security briefings take place. This keeps security in the forefront of their minds and avoids complacency.

If you should wish to discuss any of my comments, or require some assistance with a Secured by Design application, then please do not hesitate to contact me. I am very keen to help in any way I can to provide a future development that reduces the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime, creating a safer more secure and sustainable environment for the future.

This being a perfect partner for a solar energy development as Research conservatively estimates the carbon cost of crime within the UK to be in the region of 6,000,000 tonnes of CO2 per annum. This is roughly equivalent to the total CO2 output of 6 million UK homes.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Steve Gower
Designing Out Crime Officer
Norfolk Constabulary

https://www.bre.co.uk/filelibrary/pdf/other_pdfs/KN5524_Planning_Guidance_reduced.pdf

Secured by Design

NORFOLK FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
Group Manager Southern
Norwich Road
THETFORD
IP24 2HT
Tel: 0300 123 1669

Website: www.norfolk.gov.uk/safety/norfolk-fire-and-rescue-service

Planning Inspectorate
Environmental Services Operations
Group 3
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

Please ask for: Gideon Weigelt-Holmes

Direct Dial: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]@norfolk.gov.uk

My Ref: 00050591

Your Ref: EN0110013

12 November 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

Premises: The Droves Solar Farm, Land 800m north of Swaffham and 800m southwest of Castle Acre, West Norfolk

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11

Application by The Droves Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for The Droves Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

Scoping consultation and notification of the Applicant's contact details and duty to make available information to the Applicant if requested

Please see the combined comments below raised by NFRS in respect to this Non-statutory Consultation:

Risk control recommendations for all Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) installations should be subject to a suitable fire risk assessment and the development and production (amongst other aspects) should include the following strategies and plans:

1. A risk reduction and mitigation strategy that covers the design, construction, installation, operation and decommissioning phases of the project to minimise the impact of an incident.

2. An emergency response plan produced in consultation with Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service, which details site specific information regarding local hazards, the locations of hydrants, the locations of electrical isolators, measures to be taken during an incident and responses required post incident. This cooperation and coordination should also include regular onsite training and familiarisation for operational fire service personnel.

3. An environmental impact and risk assessment must be completed. This must include consideration of firefighting water run-off and measures for effective containment and treatment. Air pollution must also be considered.

4. A transport strategy to minimise the impact of additional vehicle movements and prevent an increase in the potential number of traffic incidents, especially in largely rural settings.

Where appropriate, these plans should be supported by data from specific fire tests. Property insurers should be involved at an early stage in discussions to agree on a suitable fire strategy for BESS installations. The potential for both property loss and business interruption should be considered. The fire protection and mitigation strategy should be determined on a case-by-case basis, based upon factors such as battery type, BESS location, site layout, compartment construction, system criticality, and other relevant factors. This process should be multilayered and should include a combination of factors such as good design, thermal runaway avoidance, early detection, and automatic fire suppression. Manual fire control provision and planning, including water supplies, should be commensurate with BESS and other site fire hazards.

Specific risk control measures to help minimise the risk or consequence of BESS fires include:

1. BESS rooms and buildings shall be of dedicated use, i.e. not used for any other purpose. BESS rooms shall be accessible only by those qualified and necessary to operate, maintain, test, or inspect the BESS equipment.

2. Location of BESS systems within non-combustible containers or enclosures sited at least 3 metres from other equipment, buildings, structures, and storage. This distance shall only be reduced when: a) a suitable fire-barrier (minimum 1-hour fire rated) is installed between the BESS unit and exposed buildings/structures, b) exposed surfaces (typically exposed walls) are fire-resisting and blank (i.e. no openings), or c) BESS enclosures are constructed with fire-resisting blank walls and roofs.

3. Walk-in containers and other enclosures used to house BESS equipment should not exceed the dimensions of long “high cube” shipping containers, i.e. maximum dimensions, 16.2m long, 2.6m wide and 2.9m high.

4. BESS systems should be at least 15 metres from building HVAC air inlets.

5. Where installation of BESS equipment within rooms forming part of buildings with other occupancy types cannot be avoided, these should be separated from other areas by a minimum of 2-hour fire rated construction.

6. The Battery Management System (BMS) should be configured to monitor potential failure conditions that could lead to thermal runaway and shut down and isolate BESS units where any such conditions are detected.

7. For critical and significant BESS installations, include early detection of off-gassing/electrolyte-vapours from thermal runaway events which are interlocked to shut down and disconnect the BESS. This may be combined with deployment of an extinguishing agent flooding system (based on the fire control strategy).

8. Provide smoke detection systems for all rooms and compartments which contain BESS equipment which are interlocked to shut down and disconnect the BESS. This may be combined with deployment of an extinguishing agent flooding system (based on the fire control strategy).

9. BESS areas within sprinklered buildings and all BESS installations where sprinkler protection forms part of the fire strategy, should be provided with sprinkler protection, designed to provide a minimum density of discharge of 12.2mm/min over an assumed fire area of 230m2 (or area of room if smaller).

10. BESS rooms and enclosures should be provided with suitably designed explosion overpressure venting.

11. Suitable procedures shall be implemented to routinely inspect and test BESS thermal runaway and fire mitigation alarms and systems. Greater separation distances may be appropriate from critical buildings and installations and to meet specified strategic spatial fire separation expectations. Note: Whilst automatic fire suppression is unlikely to extinguish fire in individual battery cells that are undergoing thermal runaway, fire suppression can reduce fire intensity and assist in slowing and limiting fire propagation across battery modules and racks. It may be acceptable to reduce some of the above risk control measures where large scale testing, such as testing to UL9540A or equivalent, demonstrates that adjusted mitigation measures are adequate.

12. Ensure that sufficient water is available for manual firefighting. An external fire hydrant should be in close proximity of the BESS containers. The water supply should be able to provide a minimum of 1,900 l/min for at least 2 hours (dependent upon the design). Further hydrants should be strategically located across the development. These should be tested and regularly serviced by the operator.

13. The site design should include a safe access route for fire appliances to manoeuvre within the site (including turning circles). An alternative access point and approach route should be provided and maintained to enable appliances to approach from an up-wind direction.

14. The emergency response plan should be maintained and regularly reviewed by the occupier and any material changes notified to NFRS.

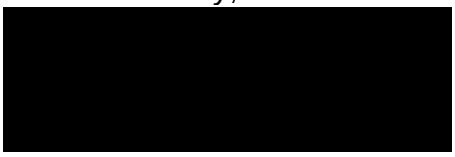
15. Relevant Health & Safety signage must be provided which offers warning of any hazards and risks at the site.

Where plans make use of photovoltaic panels across multiple sites, the design of the development should consider ways to contain and restrict the spread of fire by ensuring adequate separation between the panels. Plans should include safe access and egress

routes for fire appliances to be able to reach the structures. Ideally an alternative access point and approach route should be provided to account for any prevailing winds that may hamper firefighting operations. Its design should meet the latest required standards in electrical safety and consider at all times any design developments in electrical safety such as failure cut-out and safety switches at the location of the panels and any interconnecting equipment to other sites, substations and energy storage sites. There should be a regime of regular maintenance of the panels to reduce the risk of fire, such as regular inspection, cleaning and temperature checks which may give early warning of failure to a panel. Should there be areas of vegetation surrounding the panels, these should be well controlled and not left to overgrow, which could increase the chances of fire spread should a fire occur.

Should any of these recommendations be omitted from the design of the development, without explaining the reasoning or with no reasonable effort made to meet the recommendations by alternative measures to minimise any impacts during an emergency situation, the emergency response expected from Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service may not go as expected which could lead to a detrimental outcome at the development and for its surrounding areas.

Yours faithfully,



FIRE SAFETY OFFICER
Southern District
Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service

Sent via email to: thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Norfolk County Council's Comments to the Planning Inspectorate on the:

Droves Solar – Scoping Opinion

November 2024

1. Introduction

1.1 The County Council welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the above Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion/Report. The comments below are made on a without prejudice basis and the County Council reserves the right to make further additional comments on the Development Consent Order (DCO) application during the statutory consultation periods; and at the Public Examination stage.

1.2 The County Council would expect to see the following items addressed in the EIA:

1.3 The County Council have initial concerns they would expect to see addressed through the EIA. These are the lack of detail around the proposal in terms of: exacting siting and location, including grid connection location; design and scale; and concern with cumulative impact on local communities, businesses and the environment.

- Impact to landscape needs to be minimised
- Addressing Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain
- Quantifying agricultural land loss and safeguarding high quality land
- Habitat Loss and mediation plan
- Consideration regarding the disposal of the panels once decommissioned
- Supply chains as to where the panels will be produced

2. Socio-Economic

(a) Community Benefit Funds

2.1 The County Council would expect Island Green Power (IGP) to fully engage with those local communities affected by this development; and for the EIA and Environmental Statement (ES) to reflect that engagement. Whether through the formal DCO process or post DCO, there would be an expectation that IGP will provide and take forward a Community Benefit Fund. Reference to a community benefit fund specifically designed to mitigate and compensate for any local impacts to residents and businesses should be scoped into the ES as part of any wider consideration of impacts on business.

(b) Skills and Employment

2.2 The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) / Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) will need to assess the wider economic benefits arising from the above development both in terms of the scheme coming forward on its own and in combination with other major energy projects in the area, particularly the High Grove Solar project being taken forward by RWE given the projects close proximity to each other. The EIA will need to indicate:

- Likely number of jobs created on this project
- Jobs likely to be generated locally (i.e. within Norfolk) – including indirectly
- An indication of the type of jobs created e.g. construction; engineering; and opportunities for training should be scoped into the ES. The County Council would expect the applicant to prepare a skills and employment plan/strategy as part of the DCO process and reference to this should be scoped into the ES;
- Likely duration of any construction work
- Potential to use local supply chains and preparation of a Supply Chain Strategy as part of the DCO process.

(c) Compensation

2.3 IGP will need to consider appropriate mitigation and compensation packages for those homes and businesses directly affected by the construction works, and any longer-term impacts. The location of the solar panels and ancillary supporting infrastructure will need to avoid any direct impacts on homes and business. Suitable mitigation will be required – see environmental comments below.

(d) Agricultural Land

2.4 In the absence of any detailed assessment of the agricultural land values being taken up across the 1,100 Ha of solar panels there is concern at the potential loss of the Grades 1,2 and 3a agricultural land. The County Council would expect the applicant through the application process to undertaken an Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) assessment/survey. In addition the applicant should design into the scheme opportunities for alternative agricultural practices, such as grazing or more innovative agrivoltaics to ensure that agricultural land is not lost. There will need to be a requirement in the DCO to safeguard / promote alternative agricultural practices.

2.5 Should you have any queries with the above comments please contact: Stephen Faulkner [redacted]@norfolk.gov.uk

3. Energy Statement

3.1 The County Council would expect IGP to produce an Energy Statement post consent, secured through a Planning Requirement / Condition attached to the DCO, in the same way the County Council expects an Employment and Skills Strategy and a Supply Chain Strategy. This should be scoped into the EIA/ES.

3.2 Energy Statements will need to address / cover-off the following issues:

- Demonstrate how the proposal will provide a secure and resilience supply of electricity within the County – avoiding any potential power outages/shortages/interruption of supply;
- Demonstrate how the project aligns with the County Council's approved Climate Strategy; and emerging Energy Plan;
- Opportunities for delivering power locally using the local 132kV network (UKPN). There will need to be evidence that the developer has engaged, or will be engaging, with the local Distribution Network Operator (DNO) to explore distributing electricity generated locally;
- Exploring opportunities to deliver electricity to those areas of the County where there are demonstrable deficits in energy which is known to be holding back development; or causing local problems;
- Consider wider opportunities for decarbonising the grid within the County to deliver:
  (a) planned housing and employment growth; and/or
  (b) Local Projects - including self-build in rural areas;
- Consideration of delivering wider sustainable projects including:
  (a) Electric Vehicle (EV) charging hubs
  (b) Commercial EV charging hubs including for buses;
  (c) Providing / unlocking additional power to local businesses and proposed growth in commercial sector – such as Lotus at Hethel.
  (d) Localised off-grid energy solutions for housing and commercial Projects

3.3 Should you have any queries with the above comments please contact: Stephen Faulkner [redacted]@norfolk.gov.uk

4. Highway Authority

4.1 The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping report states that the precise alignment of the project, location of construction compounds and the haul roads are not yet known and are still under development. Accordingly, there is insufficient detail at present to enable the Local Highway Authority to provide a full assessment of the project and the highway comments below are therefore of a general nature.

4.2 Works within Norfolk are identified as a solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating station, and associated development including Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), Ancillary Infrastructure, a Customer Substation and Grid Connection Infrastructure (including a new National Grid Substation). Panel areas made up of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, on-site energy storage (BESS), underground cables, associated infrastructure including substations and other supporting infrastructure, as well as mitigation measures such as biodiversity net gain and landscape design.

4.3 The Highway Authority asks that specific regard to the ,Norfolk Vanguard; and Norfolk Boreas NSIPs that will have infrastructure and accumulated traffic in and around the Necton substations. In addition the High Grove solar farm proposal whose five sites are potentially located in and around the Droves site and will therefore need to be taken into account as part of any Transport Assessment.

4.4 As part of our initial discussion with the applicant the Highway Authority have asked that the formal DCO application be accompanied by a Transport Assessment (TA) and an Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (OCTMP). It is noted that the volume of construction traffic is not yet known but that a commitment is provided within the EIA scoping report to provide a TA and OCTMP. The TA needs to assess the effects of the anticipated traffic upon driver delay; severance; pedestrian delay; pedestrian amenity; accidents; road safety; and impact from abnormal indivisible loads (AILs).

4.5 As a general point, the overall thrust of the EIA scope relates to examining increases in traffic volumes (in particular represented as a percentage figure) and the Highway Authority want to point out that a number of the public highways leading to the site are narrow minor rural lanes. Accordingly, even a small volume of traffic on these routes can have a significant impact if vehicles are unable to physically pass each other and this point needs to be considered within the CTMP.

4.6 A particular issue arising from solar farms is their potential for glint and glare. It is noted that the proposed Solar Farm site is close / adjacent to the A1065. The applicant through the EIA process will need to clearly demonstrate that the solar panels will not give rise to any highway safety concerns.

4.7 The Environmental Statement will need to consider emergency access (to blue light services) associated with any temporary road closures; and/or temporary roadworks.

4.8 For further Information on highway related matters please contact John Curtis (Engineer Major and Estate Development - NSIP) Email: [redacted]@norfolk.gov.uk

5. Public Rights of Way

5.1 At this stage the County Council would recommend that the applicant takes the following into account in the ES:

- Impacts during construction- If any Public Rights of Way need to be crossed; or are impacted by any construction of supporting infrastructure; or will require

a temporary closure, then this would require consultation in advance to the Highway Authority;

- Impacts during operation- If any Public Right of Way will be impacted during the operation and servicing of the project then details should be provided in advance and any proposed mitigation measures be put in place.

5.2 The DCO will likely need a Planning Requirement to address the above matters along the lines:

Public Rights of Way Strategy.—(1) No phase of the works that would affect a public right of way specified in Schedule 4 (public rights of way to be temporarily stopped up) is to be undertaken until a public right of way strategy in respect of that phase and in accordance with the outline public rights of way strategy, including the specification for making up of an alternative right of way (where appropriate) has been submitted to and approved by the relevant highway authority in consultation with the relevant planning authority.

(2) Any alternative public rights of way must be implemented in accordance with the approved public rights of way strategy.

5.3 Should you have any queries with the above comments please contact: Natural Environment Team NETI@norfolk.gov.uk

6. Historic Environment

6.1 An archaeological desk-based assessment has been undertaken. Geophysical survey and assessment of aerial imagery sources are underway or near complete. The Historic Environment team are in discussions with the applicants archaeological consultants regarding trial trenching.

6.2 The Historic Environment team note that impacts on below-ground archaeology have been scoped in and have no further comments to make at this stage.

6.3 Should you have any queries with the above comments please contact John Percival (Historic Environment Senior Officer) [redacted]@norfolk.gov.uk

7. Public Health

7.1 Public Health Norfolk welcomes the references to appropriate guidance (17.5.7), and particularly recommends the use of IEMA's *Effective Scoping of Human Health in Environmental Impact Assessment* and *Determining Significance for Human Health in Environmental Impact Assessment* (both published in November 2022). Public Health also commends the proposed use of the wider determinants of health in the assessment (17.7.1).

7.2 Given the scale of the project, Public Health Norfolk strongly recommends that the ES includes a dedicated chapter on human health. Whilst the scoping report concludes that such a chapter is unnecessary due to potential impacts being scoped out or assessed elsewhere, a chapter summarising the project's health related impacts, regardless of their significance, should be included to ensure clarity for stakeholders. The chapter should address the direct health impacts (e.g., air quality and noise) and should consider the wider determinants of health, including potential effects on mental wellbeing. It is appropriate that potential impacts are assessed in their own chapters, but a health chapter should be included to summarise these impacts whilst also considering potential synergistic effects, which may exacerbate health impacts when considered together. If significant health impacts are identified, appropriate mitigation strategies should be detailed.

7.3 One omission from the scoping report is mention of the project's impact on mental health and wellbeing. While certain physical impacts may be deemed insignificant, perceived impacts – particularly in relation to visual amenity impacts and concerns surrounding electromagnetic fields (EMFs) – can contribute to stress and anxiety in local communities. As outlined in IEMA's *Effective Scoping of Human Health in Environmental Impact Assessment*, perceived impacts can have real effects on mental health and should be considered appropriately. This is especially important given the project's proximity to the adjacent High Grove Solar scheme. As such Public Health Norfolk requests that the mental health impacts of the project are scoped into the assessment and an appropriate mental health assessment is undertaken. Norfolk Public Health would welcome further conversations about the project's impact on mental health and wellbeing in the local area.

7.4 In regard to EMFs, the UK Health Security Agency is the lead agency with responsibility for health threats from radiation in the UK and is a statutory consultee for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. It should be consulted regarding the appropriateness of scoping out of the impacts of EMF from the Environmental Statement as stated in table 17.5.

7.5 Public Health Norfolk questions the decision to scope out air quality impacts in the assessment, particularly during the construction phase. Whilst the development of an outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) is commended, Public Health Norfolk would expect to see this include a construction phase dust assessment in accordance with Institute of Air Quality Management guidance to ensure that residual impacts, particularly on vulnerable populations, are insignificant. It would be expected that the impacts on air quality and human health, regardless of their significance, are summarised in a specific human health chapter.

7.6 Given the project's proximity to the adjacent High Grove Solar scheme, Public Health Norfolk welcomes the commitment to undertaking a cumulative effects assessment, and would suggest that particular attention should be given to the potential cumulative impacts on local communities' mental health and wellbeing, as highlighted above.

7.7 Should you have any queries with the above comments please contact Ben Spratling – Advanced Public Health Officer – Prevention [redacted]@norfolk.gov.uk).

8. Minerals and Waste

8.1 The proposed development is for a solar farm and associated battery storage located on a roughly triangular shaped piece of land between Narford Lane (C73) and Castle Acre Road (A1065) running north-westerly from Swaffham.

8.2 A map has been included in this response which shows the safeguarded mineral resources and safeguarded existing mineral and waste facilities in proximity to the area covered by the draft Order Limits.

8.3 **Mineral resource safeguarding**

Despite the large area covered by the draft order limits, the area underlain by safeguarded mineral resources is limited to the following areas:

- an area (9.28 hectares) at the southern end of the site
- six areas in the northern section totalling approximately 28 hectares, the majority of which is within the potential mitigation and enhancement area, and;
- a small area (2ha) in the north-western part of the site; within the potential mitigation and enhancement area.

8.4 The proposed development is designed to have a limited lifetime of 60 years, after which decommissioning would take place to remove the panels and associated infrastructure. Given that it is proposed that the mounting structure of the panels would utilise steel poles driven into the ground as 'no dig' form of foundation then these would not permanently sterilise the limited amount of mineral resource within the panel areas. It is proposed that the inverters, transformers and battery storage would be placed on a concrete foundation slab or piling, which would be removed as part of the decommissioning process. Therefore, these would not result in any permanent sterilisation of the limited amount of mineral resource within these areas.

8.5 Given the above information, the Mineral Planning Authority does not consider that the proposed development would result in the needless sterilisation of

safeguarded mineral resources, and although mineral resource safeguarding is not mentioned as a topic within the Scoping Report, mineral resource safeguarding issues can be scoped out of the assessment.

8.6 **Mineral and Waste facility safeguarding**
There are no safeguarded existing mineral or waste facilities within the draft Order Limits, nor does it coincide with the consultation areas surrounding such sites. The Scoping Report does not refer to mineral and waste facility safeguarding and the potential for impacts. It is the view of Norfolk County Council, in its capacity as the Mineral and Waste Planning Authority for Norfolk, that this topic can be scoped out of the assessment.

8.7 **Waste Management**
The Scoping Report does refer to the management of waste arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development. The application should assess the potential for impacts on waste management facilities to deal with this waste, with particular reference to the sites within Norfolk, following the proximity principle to deal with waste as close to its source, where practicable. This should be included within the outline Site Waste Management Plan (oSWMP) included in the application.

8.8 Should you have any queries regarding the above comments please contact Richard Drake (Senior Planner) at [redacted]@norfolk.gov.uk

9. Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)

9.1 In section 1.7.56, the LLFA acknowledges the reference to section 14 of NPPF and takes the opportunity to point out that, as states in section 14 “taking full account of flood risk and coastal change”, will mean the applicant must prepare a Flood risk assessment and Drainage Strategy to support the proposed development due to it being a major development and over 1 hectare in size. As yet, there has been no commitment to preparing these assessments.

9.2 In section 3.2.9, the applicant indicates that “The option to install concrete blocks as ballast may also be considered, avoiding the need for driven and screw anchored installation”. The LLFA notes that the use of concrete blocks would be considered as an impermeable area with an associated increase in surface water runoff. Therefore, a suitable surface water management system where flows would be attenuated to greenfield runoff rates would be required to support this type of mounting structure.

9.3 There are a number of associated infrastructure elements that are required to facilitate the connection of the solar arrays to the wider grid along with the BESS elements, such as inverters, transformers, switchgears, substations, ancillary buildings, etc. These components will have an associated impermeable area that will require surface water management measures to support this infrastructure.

9.4 There is no indication of what drainage solution would be provided and how much space would be required. Therefore, it would not be possible to ascertain whether there would be an increase in flood risk or not due to the proposed development. An outline drainage design for the operational and construction phases will be required to support the development consent.

9.5 In section 3.4.1, the applicant identifies that “temporary construction compound(s)” and “the upgrade of existing tracks and construction of new Access Tracks” would be provided to facilitate the proposed development. The LLFA reminds the applicant that compacted material is considered impermeable and sustainable surface water management will be required for these temporary compound areas and new or improved temporary and permanent access track.

9.6 As this development covers a large area, a phasing plan supported by a construction phase surface water drainage plan will also be required to demonstrate there is no increase in flood risk in the construction phase (further information is provided in the LLFA's Developer Guidance). Otherwise, the proposed development could be considered not in accordance with the principles of NPPF and sustainable drainage.

9.7 Please note, if there are any works proposed as part of this application that are likely to affect flows in a river or watercourse, then the applicant is likely to need the approval of either Norfolk County Council, the Environment Agency or the local Internal Drainage Board. In line with good practice, these organisations seek to avoid culverting where possible. For Norfolk County Council, the consent for such works will not normally be granted except as a means of access. It should be noted that this approval is separate from planning.

9.8 The LLFA notes the requirement for construction compounds however, there is no indication of the approximate location and number of them to support the development of the proposed site. Furthermore, the LLFA notes that as the site is to have a lifespan of 60 years, yet the design life of the PV panels is approximately 25-40 years and the batteries are 15 to 20 years, these structures are likely to be replaced at least once but more likely twice during the scheme’s lifetime. The LLFA queries whether the permanent maintenance compounds to facilitate these maintenance activities will be provided with an

associated impermeable area. The LLFA will require clarification on the location, duration and the surface water drainage arrangements for each of these construction compounds is requested to be included in the submission.

9.9 The LLFA notes that in section 3.6 on the decommissioning of the site, the applicant has indicated the decommissioning of the site would only be partial decommissioning as the substation would not be under the control of the applicant at the time of decommissioning. The proposed access tracks may or may not be retained. This adds further uncertainty to the proposed lifetime of the development as at present the decommissioning appears to only relate to the removal of the solar panels and some of the local cables. Further clarification of the proposed development lifetime for the various assets in the different locations will be necessary to support the application. In addition, the decommissioning will need to confirm whether the site will be returned to its previous use and condition as it is not clear in the current information. The potential retention of access tracks beyond the existing proposed lifetime would increase the design requirement of the surface water management.

9.10 The Commitment Register shows that ponds will have a buffer of 10m and ditches will have a buffer of 6m. The LLFA would suggest that the buffer for ditches should be 10m to match the ponds commitment.

9.11 In section 13.3.6, the LLFA notes that “an assessment of the introduction of new hardstanding and impermeable ground areas on the greenfield run-off rates using InfoDrainage software”. The LLFA considers this work to contribute towards the surface water drainage strategy and design. The LLFA confirms that a drainage strategy and FRA for the proposed development will be required.

9.12 The LLFA notes that chapter numbers listed in section 5.1.2 appear to not reflect the actual chapter numbers. For example, the Water resources in section 5 is shown as Chapter 12.

9.13 The LLFA notes the LLFA's developer guidance has been mentioned in this section of the report. This guidance provides the LLFA's developer advice in accordance with Paragraph 175a of NPPF. The LLFA recommend that should any clarification be required, the LLFA is able to provide advice as part of the LLFA Paid Advice Service. The guidance should be considered and used in the preparation of the supporting evidence base for this scheme.

9.14 The current version of NPPF includes the requirement for all sources of flood risk to be fully assessed. In addition, NPPF requires the application of the sequential test for all sources of flood risk rather than relying upon only the flood zones. While the LLFA acknowledge the flood risk identified so far

affecting the site, the LLFA takes the opportunity to remind the applicant that the LLFA expects all sources of flood risk (including surface water (pluvial) and groundwater) to be fully assessed in the FRA and the sequential test for this scheme.

9.15 The LLFA reminds the applicant to obtain the sewer records to ensure that all sources of flood risk are considered.

9.16 The LLFA strongly recommend that any EIA includes, or any planning application for development is accompanied by an FRA and a surface water drainage strategy to address:

- All sources of flood risk, including those from ordinary watercourses, surface water and groundwater to the development.
- How surface water drainage from the development will be managed on-site and show compliance with the written Ministerial Statement HCWS 161 by ensuring that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are put in place.
- How any phasing of the development will affect the overall drainage strategy and what arrangements, temporary or otherwise, will need to be in place at each stage of the development in order to ensure the satisfactory performance of the overall surface water drainage system for the entirety of the development.

9.17 This supporting information would assess the potential for the development to increase the risk of flooding from the proposal or how surface water runoff through the addition of hard surfaces will be managed. It will show how this will be managed to ensure that the development does not increase flood risk on the site or elsewhere, in line with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Paragraph 173 and 175) and the subsequent EN-1 and EN-5.

In this particular case this would include appropriate information on:

- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) proposals in accordance with appropriate guidance including “non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems” March 2015 by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- Appropriate assessment and mitigation of all sources of surface water flooding onsite/originating from offsite that may affect the development, in addition to risk of groundwater flooding.
- Provision of surface water modelling of overland flow routes and mitigation provided to show how flood risk will not be increased elsewhere. This may include temporary culverts sized for the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) plus climate change allowance.

- At least one feasible proposal for the disposal of surface water drainage should be demonstrated and in many cases supported by the inclusion of appropriate information. It is important that the SuDs principles and hierarchies have been followed in terms of:
    - surface water disposal location, prioritised in the following order: disposal of water to shallow infiltration, to a watercourse, to a surface water sewer, combined sewer / deep infiltration (generally greater than 2m below ground level).
    - the SuDs components used within the management train (source, site and regional control) in relation to water quality and quantity.
    - identifying multifunctional benefits including amenity and biodiversity.
    - Onsite, infiltration testing, in accordance with BRE365 or equivalent should be undertaken to find out if infiltration is viable across the site and at the depth and location of any infiltration drainage feature. Infiltration testing should be undertaken 3 times in quick succession at each location.

9.18 A surface water drainage system must be provided for the construction, operation and decommissioning of the project, including any temporary construction works.

9.19 The drainage strategy should also contain a maintenance and management plan detailing the activities required and details of who will adopt and maintain all the surface water drainage features for the lifetime of the development.

9.20 Further guidance for developers can be found on our website at https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-planning/flood-and-water-management/information-for-developers

9.21 Should you have any queries with any of the above LLFA comments please contact the LLFA – LLFA@norfolk.gov.uk

10. Norfolk Fire and Rescue (NFRS)

10.1 It is recognised that early (preplanning) discussions with Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) will ensure the latest technology, information, operational and environmental excellence can be integrated into plans and deployed across new BESS sites. NFRS would like engagement at local and strategic level throughout the development to create a positive and open collaborative approach. This would include supporting NFRS to obtain and gather Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) as required under Section 7iid of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

10.2 NFRS would expect the applicant to prepare Fire and Environmental Risk Assessments, Emergency Response Plans plus Outline and Detailed Battery Safety Management Plans (BSMP); and this should be set out as a Planning Requirement.

10.3 Norfolk Fire & Rescue (NFRS) Service would like the following points confirmed as part of the scoping and also as requirements under any Planning Requirement for this DCO application, in line with the National Fire Chiefs Council guidance and the new Health and Safety Guidance for Grid Scale BESS.

10.4 Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) rooms and buildings shall be dedicated use, i.e. not used for any other purpose and accessible only by those required to operate, maintain, test, or inspect the BESS equipment.

10.5 Locate BESS systems in non-combustible containers or enclosures at least 3 metres from other equipment, buildings, structures, and storage. This distance shall only be reduced when: a) a suitable fire-barrier (minimum 1-hour fire rated) is installed between the BESS unit and exposed buildings/ structures, b) exposed surfaces (typically exposed walls) are fire-resisting and blank (i.e. no openings), or c) BESS enclosures are constructed with fire-resisting blank walls and roofs.

10.6 Walk-in containers and other enclosures used to house BESS equipment should not exceed the dimensions of long “high cube” shipping containers, i.e. maximum dimensions, 16.2m long, 2.6m wide, 2.9m high.

10.7 BESS systems should be at least 15 metres from building High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) air inlets.

10.8 Where installation of BESS equipment in rooms forming part of buildings with other occupancy types cannot be avoided, these should be separated from other areas by minimum 2-hour fire rated construction.

10.9 The Battery Management Storage (BMS) should be configured to monitor potential failure conditions that could lead to a thermal runaway and shut down and isolate BESS units where any such conditions are detected.

10.10 For critical and significant BESS installations, install early detection of off-gases/electrolyte-vapour from thermal runaway events, interlocked to shut down and disconnect the BESS. This may be combined with deployment of an extinguishing agent flooding system (based on the fire control strategy).

10.11 Provide smoke detection systems for all BESS equipment rooms and compartments, interlocked to shut down and disconnect the BESS. This may

be combined with deployment of an extinguishing agent flooding system (based on the fire control strategy).

10.12 BESS areas within sprinklered buildings and all BESS installations where sprinkler protection forms part of the fire strategy, should be provided with sprinkler protection, designed to provide a minimum density of discharge of 12.2mm/min over an assumed fire area of 230m2 (or area of room if smaller).

10.13 BESS rooms and enclosures should be provided with suitably designed explosion overpressure venting.

10.14 Suitable procedures shall be implemented to routinely inspect and test BESS thermal runaway and fire mitigation alarms and systems. Greater separation distances may be appropriate from critical buildings and installations and to meet specified strategic spatial fire separation expectations. Note: Whilst automatic fire suppression is unlikely to extinguish fire in individual battery cells that are undergoing thermal runaway, fire suppression can reduce fire intensity and assist in slowing and limiting fire propagation across battery modules and racks. It may be acceptable to reduce some of the above risk control measures where large-scale testing, such as testing to UL9540A or equivalent, demonstrates that adjusted mitigation measures are adequate.

10.15 Ensure that sufficient water is available for manual firefighting. An external fire hydrant should be in close proximity of the BESS containers. − The water supply should be able to provide a minimum of 1,900 l/min for at least 2 hours. Further hydrants should be strategically located across the development. These should be tested and regularly serviced by the operator.

10.16 The site design should include a safe access route for fire appliances to manoeuvre within the site (including turning circles). An alternative access point and approach route should be provided and maintained to enable appliances to approach from an up-wind direction.

10.17 The emergency response plan should be maintained and regularly reviewed by the occupier and any material changes notified to NFRS.

10.18 Environmental impact and risk assessment must be completed. This must include firefighting water run-off and potential containment and treatment. Air pollution must also be considered.

10.19 Should you have any queries with the above comments please contact: Jennie Schamp, Group Manager [redacted]@norfolk.gov.uk

11. Natural Environment

11.1 Ecology

Ecological Survey Requirements - The sites identified should be carefully refined, taking account of all relevant ecological impacts, including locally designated wildlife sites. It is also important that any desk study should include the collation of all relevant habitat and species data from the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS), including all Local Wildlife Site information. All surveys carried out will require to be up to date, therefore given the potential timescales involved with such a scheme, it may be necessary to carry out regular surveys throughout the course of the design stage to ensure all surveys are no more than 18 months old.

Ecological Reporting - The scheme will need to consider all ecological effects, both during construction and in-operation. The scheme should adhere to the ecological mitigation hierarchy and avoid impacts in the first instance. Where impacts cannot be avoided, mitigation measures will need to be identified, and compensation provided. Impacts to Irreplaceable Habitats (e.g. Ancient Woodland) should be fully avoided. In addition, (dependant on timeline) the development will be expected to deliver the mandatory minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (from late November 2025 for NSIPS) and contribute towards the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

Cumulative Impacts – given the proximity of other NSIPs in the area the EIA will need to address the cumulative impacts with these other projects and set out appropriate mitigation measures and indicate how this relates to BNG targets and to the LNRS.

11.2 Landscape

A full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment should be undertaken, including where necessary a Townscape Assessment. This should consider all potential impacts, both during construction and in-operation, and the cumulative impacts with other NSIPs where appropriate.

Where impacts cannot be avoided then **mitigation measures** will need to be identified. Whilst advanced planting and screening will not minimise all impacts, carefully planned incremental planting can be effective at minimising and softening the appearance of infrastructure in the landscape. Often layered planting starting some distance away can help to break up extensive views. This will be particularly important when considering the screening options for the substation, converter stations and integrated battery storage facility, where landscape and visual impacts have the potential to be significantly adverse. The massing, location and scale of the previous mentioned infrastructures should be considered to ensure both short distance and long-distance views are taken into account. In addition to layered planting consideration should be

given to finishes, orientation of elements and siting of elements within the site to avoid continuous change on the horizon.

Impacts will ned to be considered from PRoW and the EIA will need to demonstrate how these impacts will be minimised / mitigated. Account will also need to be taken of proximity to housing and the need to avoid any potential impacts in relation to visual amenity; and “glint and glare”.

11.3 Should you have any queries with the above Natural Environment comments please contact the Natural Environment Team at neti@norfolk.gov.uk

Legend

- The Droves Solar Farm boundary
- Safeguarded Existing Key Water Recycling Centres
- Safeguarded Existing Mineral Extraction Sites
- Consultation area for safeguarded key WRCs-existing
- Consultation area for safeguarded mineral extraction sites-existing
- Mineral Safeguarding Area (Carstone)
- Mineral Safeguarding Area (Silica sand)
- Mineral Safeguarded Area (Sand and Gravel) revised 04 18

0 1,250 2,500 5,000 Meters

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Norfolk County Council
7 November 2024

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Ian Wallis
Planning Inspectorate

thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

BY EMAIL ONLY

6th December 2024

Dear Mr Wallis,

Application by The Droves Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for The Droves Solar Farm (the Proposed Development) – Scoping Consultation

Response from Water Management Alliance on behalf of Norfolk Rivers Internal Drainage Board (IDB)

Thank you for consulting the Internal Drainage Boards (IDB) on the Environmental Scoping report for this project. I am providing this response on behalf of Norfolk Rivers IDB, which is a member of the Water Management Alliance (WMA) consortium of IDBs.

An Internal Drainage Board (IDB) is a public body that manages water levels in an area, known as an Internal Drainage District (IDD), where there is a special need for drainage. The Boards comment on planning applications and national infrastructure projects to promote sustainable development and reduce the potential for conflict between the planning process and the Boards' regulatory regime. Further information on the Boards' involvement in the planning process can be found within the WMA's Planning and Byelaw Strategy here: https://www.wlma.org.uk/uploads/WMA_Planning_and_Byelaw_Policy.pdf.

Whilst the proposed project is not located within the District of Norfolk Rivers IDB, it is located within the watershed catchment of the Board. There is potential that the Board's district could be affected by the proposed project. The Board would therefore wish to be consulted on the proposed Outline Drainage Strategy, which the applicant has stated will be undertaken to accompany the Development Consent Order.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Stoutt
National Infrastructure Officer
Water Management Alliance

From: Claire Curtis
To: Droves Solar Farm
Subject: EN0110013 - The Droves Solar Farm - EIA Scoping and Consultation and Regulation 11 Notification
Date: 20 November 2024 10:50:27
Attachments: image001.png
image002.png
image003.png
image004.png
image005.png
image014.jpg
image006.png
image007.jpg
image008.jpg
image010.jpg
image011.jpg
image012.jpg
The Droves Solar Farm - Letter to stat cons Scoping & Reg 11 Notification.pdf

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Dear Sir/Madam

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) – Regulations 10 and 11. Application by The Droves Solar Farm Limited (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for The Droves Solar Farm (the Proposed Development)

Environmental Statement (ES) Scoping Opinion

Thank you for consulting South Norfolk Council and Broadland District Council regarding the scoping opinion for The Droves Solar NSIP project. I can confirm that we will not be commenting and wish to defer to the Host Local Authority, Breckland Council.

Yours faithfully

Claire Curtis

Claire Curtis (Mrs)
Area Planning Manager and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) Lead Officer
t [redacted] e [redacted]@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

One Team Beyond the Horizon logo | South Norfolk Council Logo | Ukraine Flag Logo

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From: Droves Solar Farm <thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Sent: Friday, November 8, 2024 2:05 PM
Subject: FW: EN0110013 - The Droves Solar Farm - EIA Scoping and Consultation and Regulation 11 Notification

Dear Sir/Madam,

Regarding my previous email, there is a discrepancy with the deadline for comments. The deadline provided in the cover email of 05 December 2024 is incorrect. The actual deadline for comments is 06 December 2024, as stated within the attached letter. Apologies for any confusion caused.

Kind regards,

Joseph Jones

Joseph Jones
EIA Advisor
The Planning Inspectorate
T 0303 444 5028

@PINSgov | The Planning Inspectorate | planninginspectorate.gov.uk

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From: Droves Solar Farm
Sent: Friday, November 8, 2024 1:38 PM
Subject: EN0110013 - The Droves Solar Farm - EIA Scoping and Consultation and Regulation 11 Notification

FAO Head of Planning

Dear Sir/Madam

Please see attached correspondence on the proposed The Droves Solar Farm.

The Applicant for the Proposed Development intends to make an application for Development Consent under the Planning Act 2008. The Applicant has sought a Scoping Opinion from the Planning Inspectorate, on behalf of the Secretary of State, as to the scope and level of detail of the information to be provided within the Environmental Statement that will accompany its future application.

The Planning Inspectorate has identified you as a consultation body to inform the Scoping Opinion and is therefore inviting you to submit comments by 05 December 2024. The deadline is a statutory requirement that cannot be extended.

Further information is included within the attached letter.

Kind regards

Joseph Jones
EIA Advisor
The Planning Inspectorate
T 0303 444 5028

@PINSgov The Planning Inspectorate planninginspectorate.gov.uk

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DPC:76616c646f72

From: Steve Kenny
To: Droves Solar Farm
Subject: EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation - The Droves Solar Farm - EN0110013
Date: 11 November 2024 14:30:06
Attachments: image001.jpg

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thedrovessolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk
Environmental Services
Operations Group 3
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

Date: 11 November 2024 Our ref: BA/2024/00403/SCOCON Your ref: EN0110013

Dear Ian Wallis,

Application No : **BA/2024/0403/SCOCON**
Proposal : **EIA Scoping Notification and Consultation - The Droves Solar Farm**
Address : **The Droves Solar Farm**
Applicant : **The Droves Solar Farm Limited**

I write further to the above proposal. I can confirm that the Broads Authority does not have any comments to make at this stage.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Kenny
Development Manager
T: [redacted]
E: [redacted]@broads-authority.gov.uk

Broads Authority
Yare House, 62-64 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RY

The Planning Team has an agile working pattern so are not present in the office at all times. We would recommend that you contact us by email and phone for correspondence as this will enable your enquiry to be dealt with more quickly.

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