

The Drovers Solar Farm

outline Public Right of Way and Permissive Path Management Plan

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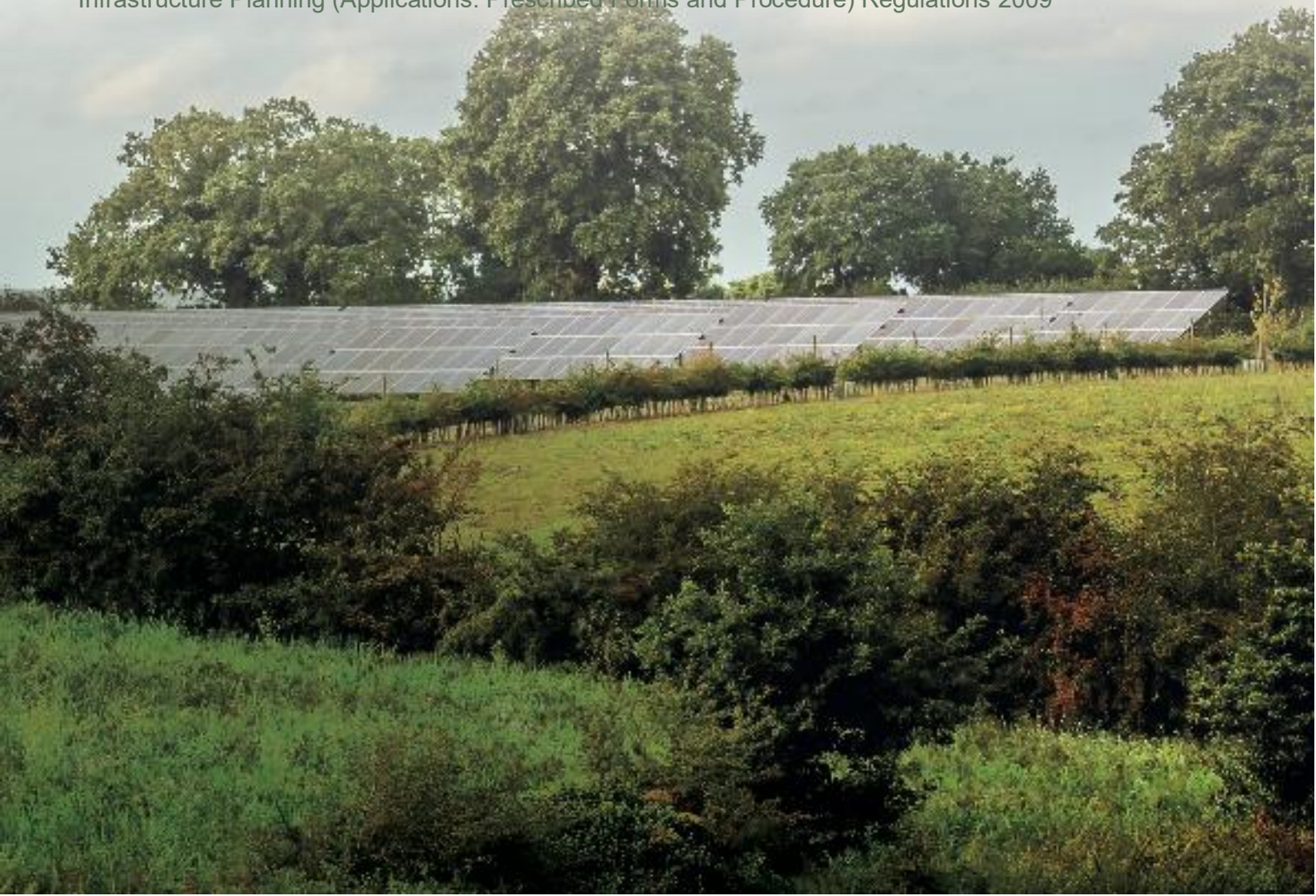
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1 Outline Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths Management Plan

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Outline Public Right of Way and Permissive Path Management Plan (oPRoWPPMP) has been prepared on behalf of The Drovers Solar Farm Limited (the 'Applicant') in relation to an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Drovers Solar Farm (hereafter referred to as the 'Scheme').
- 1.1.2 The Scheme lies wholly within the local administrative boundaries of Breckland Council (BC) and Norfolk County Council (NCC), who are the host authorities for the Scheme. NCC is also the local highways authority. The Scheme lies adjacent to the administrative boundary of the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.

The Scheme

- 1.1.3 The Scheme comprises the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating station and associated development comprising a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), a Customer Substation, and Grid Connection Infrastructure, including a new National Grid Substation. The Scheme would allow for the generation and export of over 50MW Alternating Current of renewable energy, connecting into the National Electricity Transmission System overhead line that passes through the Site.
- 1.1.4 As the Scheme has generating capacity in excess of 50MW, it is considered to be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under the Planning Act 2008.
- 1.1.5 The Scheme is located within the Order limits, also referred to as 'the Site'. The Order limits contain all elements of the Scheme comprising the Solar PV Site, the Customer Substation, the National Grid Substation, the BESS compound, Grid Connection Infrastructure, Mitigation and Enhancement Areas, and the Highway Works (shown in **Figure 3.2: The Order limits [APP/6.3]** and described further in **ES Chapter 3: Order limits and Context [APP/6.1]**).
- 1.1.6 Highway Works are sections of the highway network that contain localised improvements, such as improvements to road edge where it is deteriorated, or temporary highway and traffic works required to safely accommodate the Abnormal Indivisible Load deliveries. These areas support the movement of construction vehicles on narrower sections of the local highway network within parts of the construction vehicle routes to the Site (refer to **ES Chapter 9: Transport and Access [APP/6.2]**).



This Document

- 1.1.7 This oPRoWPPMP provides a framework for the management of routes throughout the Site. The key objective is to ensure that Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and permissive paths remain accessible and safe at all times throughout the construction, operational, and decommissioning phases of the Scheme.
- 1.1.8 This oPRoWPPMP is structured as follows:
- Section 2: Public Rights of Way within the Order limits
 - Section 3: Management of Public Rights of Way during Construction
 - Section 4: Management of Public Rights of Way during Operation and Maintenance; and
 - Section 5: Management of Public Rights of Way during Decommissioning.
- 1.1.9 It will be the responsibility of the developer to ensure that the appointed contractor complies with all statutory regulations and guidelines in relation to construction and movement activities.
- 1.1.10 This oPRoWPPMP should be read in conjunction with **ES Chapter 9: Transport and Access [APP/6.2]** and the **outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (oCTMP) [APP/7.7]**.

1.2 Proposed Works Areas

- 1.2.1 The Order Limits are shown in **ES Volume 2, Figure 3.2 The Order limits [APP/6.3]**
- 1.2.2 The Scheme is described in Schedule 1 of the **draft Development Consent Order [APP/3.1]**, where the 'authorised development' is divided into Works Areas. The Works Areas have been considered alongside the existing PRoW and permissive paths within the Site with regard to how they may or may not impact their baseline condition. The works numbers for the Work Areas are summarised below and referred to throughout this report. Note that the works package areas can and do overlap, as the Scheme components could fall within part of, or wholly within, each field.

Work No.1

- 1.2.3 The solar photovoltaic generating station contained within the Solar PV Site comprising an area of 608.1ha to include the Conversion Units / 33kV Sub-distribution Switch Rooms, and the Cabling between these elements and the Customer Substation.

Work No.2

- 1.2.4 The energy storage facility comprising the BESS compound contained within Fields 24 and 27, including access and Temporary Construction Compounds.



Work No.3

- 1.2.5 Works in connection with the Customer Substation located within Field 27, including access and Temporary Construction Compounds, and Cabling between Work No 3 and Work No 4.

Work No.4

- 1.2.6 Works in connection with the National Grid Substation located within Field 27, including access from the A1065, Temporary Construction Compounds and associated mitigation planting.

Work No.5

- 1.2.7 Grid Connection Infrastructure, including a diversion and potential decommissioning of the existing 400kV overhead line, removal of old pylons (if required) and installation of new pylons, including works to lay electrical cables, access, and temporary construction laydown areas for electrical cables.

Work No.6

- 1.2.8 Works associated with the Solar PV Site, including boundary treatment; security and monitoring equipment; landscaping and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures; internal Access Tracks and improvement, maintenance and use of existing private tracks; access arrangements; footpaths, and roads; temporary footpath diversions; signage and information boards; earthworks; drainage and irrigation infrastructure and improvements to existing drainage and irrigation systems; electricity and telecommunications connections; and the potential undergrounding of the existing 11kV overhead line in Fields 20, 21, 25 and 26.

Work No.7

- 1.2.9 Temporary construction and decommissioning compounds / laydown areas within the Solar PV Site and works associated with these comprising areas of hardstanding; car parking; site and welfare offices and workshops; security infrastructure, including cameras, perimeter fencing and lighting; area to store materials and equipment; site drainage and waste management infrastructure (including sewerage); and electricity, water, wastewater and telecommunications connections.

Work No.8

- 1.2.10 Works to facilitate both temporary construction access, and permanent access to the Order limits, including Highway Works.

Work No.9

- 1.2.11 Works to create and maintain habitat management areas.



Work No.10

1.2.12 Creation of permissive paths.

Work No. 11

1.2.13 Mitigation areas specifically for Skylark and Curlew, to allow continued agricultural use and associated access.

1.3 Public Rights of Way within the Order limits

1.3.1 Existing PRow run throughout the Order limits. These are shown on the **Access and Rights of Way Plan [APP/2.5]**. The PRow within the Order limits are described in Table 1.

Table 1: PRow within the Order limits

Public Right of Way	Type	Route
South Acre/RB7	Restricted Byway	This is a newly designated PRow (designated in April 2025) that runs north-south, connecting South Acre Road to Fincham Drove, running past the western edge of Bartholomew's Hills Plantation.
NK/South Acre/RB6 (also part of Fincham Drove)	Restricted Byway	This PRow runs diagonally through the centre from southwest to northeast.
NK/South Acre/RB1 (also part of Petticoat Drove)	Restricted Byway	This route runs north to south through the centre, connecting to Fincham Drove.
NK/South Acre/RB2	Restricted Byway	This PRow runs along a section of the northern boundary.
NK/South Acre/RB5	Restricted Byway	This is a short PRow running north-south from the boundary to the northwest, at River Road.
NK/Sporle Palgrave/FP11	with Footpath	This route runs alongside the Peddars Way and Norfolk Coastal Path, within the northeastern area of the Site,



Public Right of Way	Type	Route
		and also runs along South Acre Road.
Peddars Way and Norfolk Coastal Path National Trail	Footpath/National Trail	This National Trail runs within the northeastern area of the Site and also runs along South Acre Road.

1.4 Management of Public Rights of Way During Construction

- 1.4.1 The construction phase is anticipated to take place over up to 24 months. The final programme will be dependent on the detailed layout design and potential environmental constraints on the timing of construction activities. However, the Scheme is anticipated to energise in Q4 2033 or as early as National Grid can offer. Based on Q4 2033 energisation, it is anticipated that the earliest the construction phase will commence would be Q3 2031. There is likely to be a pre-construction phase preceding the construction phase of approximately six months (Q1 and Q2 2031) to allow site preparation works.
- 1.4.2 The construction phase will include the delivery of equipment to Construction Compounds on Site by Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs). Equipment will be transported throughout the Site via internal access tracks that connect to the Construction Compounds. For the most part, tractors and trailers will be used to distribute equipment around the Site. Only a small proportion of items, such as transformers, are likely to be taken directly to their position within the Site.
- 1.4.3 There are instances where the proposed internal access tracks will cross PRow within the Order limits. In these instances, public access to the PRow will be retained where practicable. However, the PRow will be managed throughout the construction phase, to ensure the safety of all users.

General Measures

- 1.4.4 There are seven PRow that cross the Site. Generally, these will remain open throughout the construction phase. Where vehicles are required to cross one of these PRow, the following measures will be implemented during the construction phase:
- The provision of banksmen to hold vehicles if a PRow user is present and advise PRow users of the potential presence of construction vehicles
 - Wider access tracks to be considered where possible to ensure vehicles can pass PRow users safely
 - Speeds to be limited to 5-10mph
 - Drivers will stop and give-way to any PRow user that they encounter



- Appropriate signage will be installed along the PRow to make PRow users aware of construction activity. This will include information on construction times and contact details for a Community Liaison Manager
- The PRow will be kept clear of construction vehicles and apparatus outside of permitted construction hours so far as is practicable to do so; and
- Any damage to the surface of the PRow will be repaired as soon as practicable. The surface will be returned to its original condition following completion of construction.

Diversions

- 1.4.5 It is not anticipated that any additional PRow diversions will be required for the construction of the Scheme.
- 1.4.6 In the unlikely event that such diversion is required, the Applicant will only exercise the power to temporarily close, restrict or divert a PRow in the event that management measures are considered insufficient to ensure PRow user safety and/or in the case of an emergency. Where a temporary closure, restriction or diversion is required this will only be put in place for as long as is reasonably necessary.

1.5 Management of Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths During Operation and Maintenance

Existing PRow

- 1.5.1 The alignment of existing PRow within the Site has been incorporated into the design of the Scheme. As such, the alignment of PRow will be unaffected by the Scheme during the operational phase of the Scheme.
- 1.5.2 All PRow will have a minimum 15m buffer to any infrastructure associated with the Scheme (including fencing).
- 1.5.3 The Applicant will consider the experience of people using the PRow and permissive paths at the detailed design stage and opportunities will be sought, where practicable, to exceed the minimum buffers to the PRows and permissive paths.
- 1.5.4 During the operation, other than in the context of a programme of replacing infrastructure, activity on the Solar PV Site would be restricted principally to vegetation management, equipment maintenance and servicing, ad hoc replacement and renewal of any components that fail or reach the end of their lifespan, periodic fence inspection, vegetation management along accesses, permissive paths and landscape ecological mitigation maintenance, and monitoring to ensure the continued effective operation of the Scheme.
- 1.5.5 With regard to Grid Connection Infrastructure and Work No.5, operational activity may consist of routine inspections and any reactive maintenance from National Grid.



- 1.5.6 The local highway authority, NCC, is responsible for maintaining and protecting PRoW. The Applicant also has specific duties, such as maintaining stiles and gates, keeping paths clear of obstructions, and ensuring hedgerow and aligning vegetation do not encroach on the PRoW. Members of the public are responsible for following the Countryside Code and ensuring their own safety.
- 1.5.7 Operation and maintenance vehicles may cross PRoW during visits on an infrequent basis. During operation, other than during the operational replacement of PV panels, there will be a small number of daily vehicle trips, with additional staff attending when required for maintenance and cleaning activities.
- 1.5.8 Those arriving to undertake general operational maintenance activities would generally be expected to travel by car, appropriate 4x4 type vehicle or light van. The frequency of maintenance visits would reasonably be expected to be up to five visits per month to the Solar PV Site. HGVs may be required for the ad-hoc replacement of BESS Units, Inverters and Transformers associated with the Customer Substation, National Grid Substation, and the BESS. These movements will not generate any material effect on PRoW; however, in the unlikely circumstance that there is damage to the surface of the PRoW, it will be repaired as soon as practicable and returned to its existing condition. Not all of these visits will require vehicles to cross a PRoW.

Permissive Paths

- 1.5.9 As part of the Scheme design, there are approximately 3.5km of permissive path proposed within the Order limits. Specific measures focus on the creation of permissive paths to the southeast of the Order limits, linking to off-Site permissive paths associated with High Grove Solar Farm to achieve a continuous permissive path referred to as the “Swaffham Link” between Swaffham, South Acre, the Nar Valley and surrounding villages.
- 1.5.10 The surface treatment of new permissive paths will be as per the existing surface treatment prior to construction phase. The permissive paths will contribute to the wider network of footpaths and bridleways in the area and facilitate greater public access to the countryside. Proposed permissive paths are shown on the **Appendix 1 – Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan** to the **outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (oLEMP) [APP/7.11]**.
- 1.5.11 Opportunities associated with the provision of new permissive paths are set out in the **oLEMP [APP/7.11]**. This document is, in turn secured by a requirement in the **Draft Development Consent Order [APP/3.1]**.
- 1.5.12 To safeguard the intended use of permissive paths and prevent access by motorcycles or other unauthorized vehicles, a range of control measures will be considered. These may include the installation of strategically placed barriers such as staggered gates or bollards, which allow pedestrian and wheelchair access while deterring motorised entry. Signage will also be installed to clearly indicate the permissive nature of the path and the restriction on vehicular use, ensuring the paths remain safe and accessible for walkers, cyclists, and other non-motorised users.



1.5.13 The following permissive paths are proposed for pedestrians within the Scheme's Order limits:

- Permissive path which connects Restricted Byway South Acre RB6 and proposed permissive paths within High Grove Solar Farm, at the southern edge of the Order limits between Fields 17 and 18. The permissive path is approximately 1.1km in length and runs in a north-south direction along the eastern boundaries of Fields 16 and 17;
- Permissive path which connects Restricted Byway South Acre RB6 and proposed permissive paths outside of the Order limits as part of the High Grove Scheme, at the edge of the Order limits south of Field 19. The permissive path is approximately 1.8km in length and runs in a north-south direction along the eastern boundaries of Fields 23 and 18; and
- Permissive path which connects the two proposed permissive paths outlined above, along the northern edge of Field 18. The permissive path is approximately 0.6km in length and runs in an east-west direction.

1.5.14 The management of permissive paths will align with that for the PRow.

1.6 Planned Replacement Period

1.6.1 The planned replacement of all PV panels will occur once during the Scheme's lifespan. The PV panels are anticipated to be replaced on a field-by-field basis. It is also expected that BESS Units could be replaced up to five times during the operational phase.

1.6.2 as set out in **ES Chapter 5: The Scheme [APP/6.1]**.

1.6.3 The planned replacement will not be as intensive as the construction phase in terms of vehicle movements. However, the principles and measures set out in **Section 1.5** of this oPRoWPPMP will be applied during the planned replacement periods.

1.7 Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO)

1.7.1 A review of Definitive Map Modification Orders (DMMO) has been undertaken. It is understood there are no applications for a DMMO within the Order limits.

1.8 Management of Public Rights of Way During Decommissioning

1.8.1 As at the date of decommissioning, as defined in the DCO, the requirement to provide the permissive paths will cease in order that the land can be returned to its current use. Permissive paths will be removed during decommissioning, with the precise timing to be determined by the contractor(s) and communicated to the relevant local authority in the Decommissioning Plan. The Decommissioning Plan may seek to maintain access to the permissive paths during the initial stages of decommissioning where this is reasonable



practicable, in which case the permissive paths will be managed in the same way as PRow. Signage will be put in place to notify users of the closure date for each permissive path.

- 1.8.2 The Scheme is anticipated to have a design life of approximately 60 years. At the end of the Scheme's operational life, some elements of the Scheme will be decommissioned. The National Grid Substation and Grid Connection Infrastructure will not be decommissioned and will remain in place.
- 1.8.3 An **outline Decommissioning Strategy (oDS) [APP/7.10]** has been prepared, and a detailed Decommissioning Strategy (DS) will be submitted to BC and NCC for approval prior to decommissioning. This is secured by a requirement within the DCO.
- 1.8.4 During the decommissioning phase, PRow will be managed in a similar way as the Construction phase, as set out in **ES Chapter 5: The Scheme [APP/6.1]**. The principles and measures set out in **Section 1.5** of this oPRowPPMP will be considered for inclusion during the planned decommissioning phase, and confirmed in the detailed DS.
- 1.8.5 There are likely to be instances where internal Access Tracks cross PRow. In these instances, public access to PRow will be retained so far as is practicable to do so. However, the PRow will be managed to ensure the safety of all users.



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