

The Drovers Solar Farm

Chapter 3: Order Limits and Context (Clean)

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3 Order limits and Context

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1 This chapter provides a description of the Order limits within which the Scheme will be located, and a description of the surrounding area for context.

3.1.2 This chapter is supported by the following figures contained in Volume 3 of the ES:

- Figure 3.1: Scheme Location [APP/6.3]
- Figure 3.2: The Order limits [APP/6.3]
- Figure 3.3: Field Numbering Plan [APP/6.3]
- Figure 3.4: Definitive Rights of Way within the Order limits [APP/6.3]

3.1.3 This document has been updated at Deadline 1 to include references to surface water flooding. The document references have not been updated from the original submission. Please refer to the **Guide to the Application** [APP/1.3.2] for the list of current versions of documents.

3.2. The Order limits

3.2.1 The total area extent of the Order limits is 838.77 hectares (ha) of land located within the administrative boundaries of Breckland Council (BC) and Norfolk County Council (NCC), who are the host authorities. The Order limits lie adjacent to the administrative boundary of the Borough Council of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk (BCKLWN).

3.2.2 The Order limits are situated to the north of Swaffham, to the south east of King's Lynn, and to the south of the settlements of Castle Acre, South Acre, and West Acre, in the county of Norfolk.

3.2.3 The total area forming the Order limits is shown in **Figure 3-2: The Order limits** [APP/6.3]. The Order limits contain land proposed to include:

- The Solar PV Site
- Grid Connection Infrastructure
- Customer Substation
- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)
- National Grid Substation
- Highway Works
- Mitigation and enhancement areas / Green Infrastructure, new areas of planting and Advanced Planting



- Skylark Mitigation Land
- Curlew Mitigation Land
- Access
- Permissive Paths
- Ancillary Infrastructure and Associated Development

3.2.4 Further details of the components of the Scheme are set out in **ES Chapter 5: The Scheme [APP/6.1]**.

3.2.5 The main highway routes in the vicinity of the Order limits are the A1065 and A47, (the latter being a dual carriageway road), River Road, South Acre Road, Low Road and Narford Lane (merging with West Acre Road). River Road, South Acre Road, Low Road and Narford Lane are predominantly rural single carriageway roads.

Site Description

3.2.6 The land within the Order limits is predominantly in agricultural use, being utilised in part for pig farming, chickens, sheep and other livestock, and in part for arable crop production across agricultural fields. Fields within the Site are bounded by grassland margins, hedgerows, tree belts and agricultural tracks. Single trees, copses and Marl Pits (former pits for clay extraction) are located within the Order limits. Several woodlands are present, but these are excluded from the Order limits.

3.2.7 Existing agricultural tracks and a series of three Drovers, namely Fincham Drove, Petticoat Drove and Washpit Drove, (former routes for movement and driving of agricultural livestock) extend within the Site.

3.2.8 An existing 400kV overhead line (OHL) (the Necton to Walpole line) and several existing pylons route east-west through the centre of the north east portion of the Site, with additional below and above ground utilities within the Order limits.

Surrounding Settlements

3.2.9 The Site's immediate surrounds are characterised by a settlement pattern of rural villages and scattered properties linked by rural lanes. The village of South Acre is adjacent to the north, the village of Castle Acre is 1.2km north, and the village of West Acre is 1.7km north west.

3.2.10 Residential dwellings of Finger Hill Cabin, twin dwellings along South Acre Road, along Narford Lane, and Hall Farm and Nar Valley Farm are located (at the closest dwelling) approximately 120m from the Site.

3.2.11 The area identified for Highways Works, as shown on **Figure 3-2: The Order limits [APP/6.3]**, lies directly adjacent to a Managed Traveller site (The Splashes), and in nearby proximity but separated from the Site, residential dwellings off New Sporle Road and Castle Acre Road, primarily associated with Swaffham.



Road Network

- 3.2.12 The Site is accessible across existing agricultural accesses taken from the Strategic Highway Network.
- 3.2.13 River Road bisects the Site, routing in a general south-northwest direction.
- 3.2.14 West Acre Road and Narford Lane border the Site along the southern and south-western boundary. The Site's far north-eastern boundary routes parallel to the south of South Acre Road to the junction with the A1065, whereby the Site boundary crosses the A-road and routes parallel to the north of South Acre Road.
- 3.2.15 Castle Acre Road (merging into the A1065) runs in a general north-south direction, routing parallel along the eastern boundary of the Site, as shown at Volume II, Figure 2.2. The A1065 is a major road connection in the west and north of Norfolk, routing from near Mildenhall north to the outskirts of Fakenham. The A1065 connects at major junctions to the A11, A1101, A134, A47 and A148, with the southern-most kilometres being in Suffolk.
- 3.2.16 The A47 Strategic Road Network, a strategic all-purpose highway linking Leicester to Lowestoft, routes between the Highways Works area in a general east-west direction.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and Trails

- 3.2.17 There are Public Rights of Way (PRoW), national trails, promoted routes and local routes passing through the Site. PRoW largely but not exclusively track along the routes of the Drovers on the Site. Restricted Byways and Footpaths on the Site include:
- Swaffham RB1 (tracks along Fincham Drove)
 - South Acre RB6 (tracks along Fincham Drove)
 - South Acre RB1 (tracks along Petticoat Drove)
 - South Acre RB2 (tracks along Washpit Drove)
 - South Acre RB5
 - Swaffham FP64b (within the Highways Works; and
 - South Acre RB7.
- 3.2.18 Castle Acre Circular Walk is a 10km local circular route that partially routes through the north of the Site and in general incorporates local PRoW, Washpit Drove, Petticoat Drove and Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail.
- 3.2.19 The Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail routes off-Site along South Acre Road at Bartholomew's Hills, parallel to the northeastern Site boundary, continuing north through South Acre.
- 3.2.20 The Nar Valley Way Long Distance Trail routes off-Site in a general east-west direction beyond to the north of the Site.



3.2.21 The Rebellion Way, a 373km cycling adventure route, routes through the centre of the Site, incorporating Fincham Drove, an existing agricultural track and along River Road, passing through surrounding settlements including Swaffham, South Acre and Castle Acre.

Airfields

3.2.22 No airfields border the Site. Great Friars Thornes Farm Airstrip is located approximately 1.3km southwest of the Site, and Royal Air Force (RAF) Marham is located approximately 5.1km southwest of the Site.

Rivers

3.2.23 There are no Environmental Agency (EA) Main Rivers within the Site. The nearest EA Main Rivers are the River Nar and the River Wissey, located approximately 3.2km west and approximately 5.4km south-east, respectively, of the Site. The River Nar, a tributary of the River Great Ouse, is also located to the north of the Site routing in a general west – east alignment from the Site. The River Nar rises near the village of Mileham before flowing approximately 41km through Castle Acre and Narborough, joining the Ouse at King's Lynn. The River Wissey rises near Bradenham, flowing to meet the River Great Ouse at Fordham.

Historic Designations

3.2.24 There are no statutory designated heritage assets located within the Site.

3.2.25 There is one Registered Historic Park and Garden; Narford Hall (Ref:1000337), located approximately 380m west of the Site.

Conservation Areas

3.2.26 There are no Conservation Areas within the Site.

3.2.27 South Acre Conservation Area is located approximately 146m north of the Site. Beyond, there are four Conservation areas within approximately 3km of the Site, these being;

- Swaffham Conservation Area located approximately 648m south
- Castle Acre Conservation Area approximately 767m north
- Narborough Conservation Area approximately 2.5km west; and
- Pentney/Narborough Conservation Area approximately 2.6km west.

Listed Buildings

3.2.28 Listed Buildings are generally clustered around the settlements of Swaffham (nearest Listed Building being the Grade II Baptist Chapel And Hall (Reference:1269549) 686m south), Castle Acre (nearest Listed Building being the Grade I Remains Of Cluniac Benedictine Priory Of St Mary And St Peter And St Paul (Reference:1342389) approximately 945m north), South Acre and West Acre (nearest Listed Building being the Grade II St Thomas A Becket's Chapel (Reference:1077663) approximately 1km north) and Narford Hall (nearest Listed



Building being the Grade II Sundial Approximately 5 Metres South Of South East Quoin Of Narford Hall (Refence:1077307) approximately 1.6km west).

3.2.29 The nearest Listed Building to the Site is the Grade I Church of St George (Reference: 1306357) located approximately 316m north of the Site.

Archaeological Features

3.2.30 The Double moated site of Old Hall, 250m north west of Church Farm Scheduled Monument (Reference: 1015269) is located approximately 576m north of the Site, Castle Acre Priory Scheduled Monument (Reference:1015870) is located approximately 756m north of the Site, Castle Acre Castle, town defences and Bailey Gate Scheduled Monument (Reference: 1017909) is located approximately 1.2km north-east of the Site and Deserted medieval village, Great Palgrave Scheduled Monument (Reference: 1002894) is located approximately 643m southeast of the Site.

Landscape Designations

3.2.31 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within the Site.

3.2.32 Narford Hall (Ref:1000337) is the nearest Registered Historic Park and Garden; located approximately 380m west of the Site.

3.2.33 The Site is not within a National Landscape (formally known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or within The Broads National Park.

3.2.34 No Ancient Woodland is present within the Site. The nearest block of Ancient Woodland is Sporle Wood (Ancient Replanted Woodland), located approximately 3.4km east of the Site.

3.2.35 The Site is located within the National Character Area (NCAs) as defined by Natural England as NCA Profile: 85 The Brecks (NCA85).

3.2.36 At the regional level, the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks Landscape Character Assessment (2013) describes the region of The Brecks as “*a unique landscape of heaths, conifer plantations and farmland on part of the chalk plateau in south-west Norfolk and north-west Suffolk*”. The Site is situated within an area characterised as ‘Rolling Clay Farmland’, which encompasses land to the north, northeast and south of Swaffham.

3.2.37 The Site is situated across two Landscape Character Types (LCT): (D) The Brecks – Heathland with Plantation and (E) Plateau Farmland as defined by Breckland Landscape Character Assessment (2007).

3.2.38 The aforementioned LCTs are divided into more area specific Landscape Character Areas (LCA) to which the Site is largely situated within parts of both (D1) Swaffham Heath and (E6) North Pickenham Plateau. A very small part of the north-eastern site area is situated within the (B7) River Nar Tributary Farmland.



3.2.39 There is existing renewable energy generating infrastructure near the Site, including existing solar development approximately 608m to the southwest (named on Ordnance Survey mapping as Burntstalks Solar Farm) and an Anaerobic Digestion (AD) biogas plant (Future Biogas) approximately 1.3km south from the Site. Singular wind turbines are located south-east of the Site north of Swaffham. Existing utilities cross the Site, further details of utilities identified at this stage are detailed in **ES Chapter 16: Other Environmental Matters [APP/6.2]**.

Ecology: On-Site Habitats

3.2.40 The Site comprises predominantly mixed arable agricultural land, being utilised in part for pig farming, chickens and other livestock, and in part for arable crop production across agricultural fields. Field boundary features include hedgerows, tree lines and scattered trees, along with a number of additional habitats.

Ecological Designations

International and National Statutory Designated Sites

3.2.41 The Site does not contain, nor is located immediately adjacent to, any statutory ecological designations. The closest statutory designation is the River Nar Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is located approximately 0.5km north of the Site.

3.2.42 There are 14, including those listed above, statutory ecological designations located within 25km of the Site.

Locally Designated Sites

3.2.43 A single Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR, ref U33086) is located along River Road within the Order limits. A further RNR is located along River Road, approximately 0.05km north of the Order limits, whilst all other identified ecological designations are situated over 0.2km from the Order limits.

3.2.44 There are 15, including those listed above, non-statutory ecological designations located within 2km of the Site.

Flood Risk and Watercourses

3.2.45 The entirety of the Site is located in Flood Zone 1, with the exception of a small area of land within the north eastern extent of the Order limits, which is Flood Zones 2 and 3. This part of the Order limits is allocated for Skylark Mitigation only.

3.2.46 The EA Surface Water Flood Map shows that the risk of surface water flooding across the Site is generally low (as detailed in **ES Appendix 12.2: Flood Risk Assessment [AS-053]**). The only areas with potential flooding during a major rainfall event (with a 1% chance of occurring in any given year) are localised, confined only to a small topographical depression in the northern part of the Site (Fields 29 and 30) and an area near Fincham Drive.



3.2.47 There are no natural watercourses within the Site.

Air Quality

3.2.48 The Site is not located within a Local Authority with designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) or an AQMA boundary.

Ground Conditions

3.2.49 Soilsmap dataset indicates that superficial cover across the majority of the Site is classed as 'freely draining sandy Breckland soils' (Soilsmap Reference 11). The minority of the remaining Site to the north and southwest is classed as a mix of shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone (Soilsmap Reference 3) freely draining slightly acid sandy soils (Soilsmap Reference 10) either exclusively or inclusive of both types.

3.2.50 The majority of the Site is underlain by chalk of the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation, with the western extent of the Site underlain by chalk of the Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation.

3.2.51 Superficial deposits, including sensitive receptors (e.g. peatland), are mapped largely absent across the Site, with the exception of minor extents of till (Diamicton) and sand and gravels from the Lowestoft Formation in the northern and southern extents of the Site.

3.2.52 The majority of the Site is located within a Drinking Water Protected Areas (Surface Water). The Site is also located within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zones (Surface Water).

3.2.53 The Site is underlain by a Principal Aquifer (Bedrock). The Site in areas is underlain by Secondary (undifferentiated) and Secondary A Superficial Aquifers.

3.2.54 The majority of the Site is located within Source Protection ('SPZ') Zone II (Outer Protection) with the far western extent of the Site located within Zone I (Inner Protection Zone). The Site is surrounded by SPZ in all directions.

3.2.55 The Site is located within the Norfolk Bradenham Water Resource Zone ('WRZ'), where water is supplied from groundwater abstractions from the Norfolk Chalk aquifer.



THE DROVES
SOLAR FARM