



February 2026

The Planning Inspectorate by email

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT)
REGULATIONS, 2017: ECOPOWER SUFFOLK SOLAR FARM SCOPING REPORT

This document sets out the response of Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) to the Scoping Report consultation received 26th January 2026 in respect of the proposed EcoPower Suffolk Solar Farm NSIP.

In commenting upon the content of the Scoping Report MSDC recognise the early stage of the project and the limitations of the report in respect of the indicative siting and layout.

These comments are therefore not exhaustive and MSDC reserve the right to provide additional comments later in the engagement process.

It should also be noted any comments made here do not infer agreement with or acceptance of any or all of the supporting documents referred to in the Scoping Report.

Introduction

Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) is part of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership (SCCP) and declared a climate emergency in 2019. This proposal is one of many renewable and low carbon energy development projects coming forward in the District, providing a source of energy that is less harmful than fossil fuels and contributing to the UK's clean power and net zero objectives. There are clearly wider environmental and social benefits of providing energy security but there are also challenges when considering these types of developments, including impacts on communities, landscapes and agricultural land.

Project description

The description of the proposal is generally acceptable. However, the description of the BESS element should be clear in relation to the type of battery technology and equipment proposed as this has a material impact on the effects of the development, in particular with regard to safety, noise, visual and any need for hazardous substances consent.

EIA approach and method



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MSDC have concerns that the recent proliferation of large-scale projects within the region and the expectation of further delivery of sites, including NSIPs and development sites identified in the BMSDC Joint Local Plan, have the potential to have significant effects when considered together and cumulatively with this proposal. Areas of concern include, but are not limited to, the timing of construction, impacts on highway networks, impacts on commercial operations, amenity, skills, and tourism.

MSDC welcome discussions to agree appropriate study areas for the consideration of effects, including cumulative effects and the identification of a long list of other reasonably foreseeable development.

Main Alternatives Considered

MSDC expect consideration of alternatives to extend to the point of connection and how this might deliver both the project objectives and the best outcome for strategic network design, enabling future development and the council's objectives for growth and decarbonisation.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

Please refer to comments from the MSDC landscape adviser (Place Services) at appendix 1.

Biodiversity and Ecology

Please refer to comments from the MSDC ecology adviser (Place Services) at appendix 1.

Cultural Heritage

Please refer to comments from the MSDC heritage adviser (Place Services) at appendix 1.

BMSDC also recognise the comments submitted by Suffolk County Council regarding archaeology.

Ground Conditions

Please refer to full comments from the MSDC Environmental Health officer at appendix 1.

MSDC also refer to any comments submitted by the Environment Agency, Suffolk County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority, and the Internal Drainage Board on this topic.

Socio-economics

MSDC welcome the scoping on of socio-economic effects and have particular concerns regarding the effects of workforce accommodation and social integration on the local housing market and communities.

MSDC also recognise the comments of SCC.

Traffic and Transport

Much of the scoping boundary area is characterised by minor roads and lanes that are not suitable for large volumes of construction traffic. The A140 highway is single carriageway and



the main north/south spine route through the district, connecting to the wider regional major highway network. As such the route is heavily trafficked.

Working with other stakeholders, the developer should ensure the scheme design includes an appropriate permanent resolution of the access to the National Grid Yaxley substation and ensure that construction, operation and decommissioning activities do not rely on access via Leys Lane which is a narrow lane leading to a right of way and private property that is not suitable for additional traffic.

The ES should include adequate information to enable assessment of the effects of the development on the local area in respect of traffic and transport issues, including the effects of abnormal indivisible loads and cumulative traffic impacts.

Consideration should be given to alternative construction techniques such as, haul route, partial road closure and horizontal directional drilling to minimise disruption to the local road network and the businesses and communities that rely on it.

MSDC defer to the advice of SCC as highway authority.

Noise and Vibration

MSDC welcome the scoping in of noise and vibration effects at all stages and recognise the concerns raised by local residents and community groups during the non-statutory consultation.

Given the proximity of the proposal to noise sensitive receptors and other industrial scale developments, MSDC expect to see appropriate assessment of cumulative noise effects.

Vibration effects on heritage assets should also be appropriately assessed.

Air Quality and Greenhouse gases

Air quality assessments should be included to inform appropriate mitigation and should include the potential for air pollution arising from a thermal runaway or other fire incident at the BESS, including the potential for hazardous substances.

Agriculture

The ES should include an assessment of impacts on agricultural operations, including severance and sterilisation of land, the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, the potential for any concurrent agricultural use with the development, soil management throughout the construction, operation and decommissioning and methods for reinstatement of land to pre-development soil quality.

Flood and water resources

This part of Mid Suffolk has known flood issues, particularly from pluvial flooding. The ES must include assessment of flood risk effects, taking account of all sources of flooding



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including an allowance for climate change on all events to ensure the safety of the development for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The ES should include the applicants position on the sequential test.

The developments lies within the Hartismere Water Resource Zone where there is currently a moratorium on new non-domestic connections. The ES should demonstrate how water for fire fighting would be made available within the site and how washdown water from an incident would be contained and treated / removed in order to prevent groundwater pollution.

Public health and Safety

MSDC have concerns regarding major accidents and disasters being scoped out of the EIA, especially having regard to the potential for cumulative effects of the development in combination with other consented / permitted and reasonably foreseeable developments in the area, and the potential for significant effects on the continuing safe operation and resilience of critical national infrastructure including the National Grid Yaxley substation, the National Gas compressor station and the Progress Power power station. The health and safety of local communities and the surrounding area is paramount.

The development proposal should include a full and thorough assessment of battery safety, and emergency response, following the latest NFCC or other government guidance and include an explanation of embedded design and mitigation and appropriate consideration of interrelationships with other developments and operations such as, not limited to those cited above, and including schools, residential and commercial areas and the highway network.

The developer should further commit to ensuring the latest safety standards and regulations are adhered to throughout the lifetime of the development, including construction, operation and decommissioning.

Glint and Glare

Where glint and glare is experienced it can have a significant effect on safety and amenity. MSDC are therefore concerned at the proposal to scope out glint and glare effects given the scale of the development areas and proximity to sensitive receptors. MSDC therefore consider that appropriate assessment, avoidance and mitigation should be included in the ES.

Rights of Way

There is an extensive rights of way network within the order limits, including bridleways, that are highly valued for recreation, health and wellbeing. Consideration should be given to how users of Rights of Way, including horses, may be susceptible to harm from the impacts of the development in different ways.



Cumulative Effects

As highlighted above, the potential for significant cumulative effects in all areas of the impacts of the development are such that MSDC consider cumulative effects should be clearly identified and assessed within the ES following the agreement of reasonably foreseeable developments that should be included.

APPENDICIES

1. Comments from technical officers

Kind regards,


Director of Place
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