

PROPOSED SOLAR PARK ON LAND AT THE THORPE ESTATE, CLIFTON LANE, TAMWORTH

Planning and Sustainability Statement



JPW 1425
Proposed Solar PV Park at
Thorpe Estate
V2
December 2021

REPORT

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 RPS Planning and Development Ltd (RPS) have been instructed by Elgin Energy Esco Ltd (the Applicant) to submit a full planning application to Lichfield District Council (the Council) for the the installation of ground mounted solar photovoltaic park and ancillary development at land at th ethorpe Estate on Clifton Lane in Tamworth.
- 1.2 This Planning Statement supports a full planning application made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (the 1990 Act) and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) (together the Planning Acts), as amended.
- 1.3 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the other documents and drawings accompanying the application submission, which comprise the following:
- Planning and Sustainability Statement
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Heritage Impact Assessment
 - Arboricultural Surveys/Impact Assessments
 - Full Ecology Surveys and Biodiversity Metric (BNG)
 - Agricultural Land Assessment
 - Transport Construction Traffic management Plan
 - Glint and Glare Assessment
 - Flood Risk Assessment
 - RIVER MEASE SAC Impact and Mitigation Statement (Appendix E of the Ecological Impact Assessment)
 - Completed application forms and signed certificates;
 - Application plans and elevations;
 - Design and Access Statement;
 - Statement of Community Involvement (included within this Planning Statement);
- 1.4 These documents are submitted in accordance with the National and Local validation lists. A copy of the pre-application advice can be seen in Appendix A.

Elgin Energy EsCo Ltd

- 1.5 The Applicant has a proven track record for developing solar parks sympathetically within the countryside across the UK and Ireland and are dedicated to maintaining the highest standards both during and after construction of their projects. Their portfolio includes some of the largest operational solar parks to date in the UK.

2 THE PROJECT

Site Description

- 2.1 The site is located near Highfields Farm, either side of Clifton Lane, on land within the Thorpe Estate, situated to the west of Thorpe Constantine. The site comprises approximately 71.6 hectares of agricultural land enclosed by mature hedgerows, crossed by an overhead electricity lines and pylons surrounding but excluding the building complex associated with Highfields Farm, which is grade II listed as illustrated in Site Location plan reference: JPW1425-007RevC.

Planning History

- 2.2 The site does not have any planning history relevant to the proposed development, nor does there appear to be any relevant planning history on land in the vicinity of the site.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 committed the UK to an 80% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050. However, more recently on 1 May 2019, the United Kingdom (“UK”) Parliament declared a climate change emergency and on 27 June 2019 the UK became the first major economy in the world to legislate a legally binding target of net zero emissions by 2050 (“net zero”).
- 3.2 In order to achieve “net zero” National Grid (in its “Future Energy Scenarios July 2019”) has confirmed that the UK’s electricity system will need to operate using only zero carbon generation (together with carbon capture) and estimates there will be 35 million electric vehicles in the UK by 2050. Solar energy generation combined with “smart charging” electric vehicles will be a key component of achieving the 2050 target. National Grid anticipates annual demand for electricity could increase from 285 TWh in 2018 to up to 422 TWh (48% increase) in 2050 while peak electricity demand could increase from 60 GW in 2018 to up to 82.5 (21% increase) in 2050.
- 3.3 Solar energy is the most abundant energy source on Earth with enough energy reaching the planet in an hour and 30 minutes to power the worlds” electricity needs for a year.
- 3.4 Since the withdrawal of government subsidies in late 2015, the cost of solar cells has decreased, and the efficiency of the technology improved significantly to enable solar parks to produce electricity cost effectively based on electricity generation revenue alone.
- 3.5 Solar parks have a lifespan of approximately 40 to 50 years and are easily reversible, meaning impacts are temporary and land can easily be returned to agricultural use and/or any mineral deposits beneath the site are not sterilised permanently.
- 3.6 In addition to displacing carbon emissions, solar energy offers other benefits, including biodiversity. BRE (2014) Biodiversity Guidance for Solar Developments (Page 1) states:
- 3.7 “Solar farms present an excellent opportunity for biodiversity. In most solar farms panels are set on piles and there is minimal disturbance to the ground. The panels generally have no moving parts and the infrastructure typically disturbs less than 5% of the ground. The posts upon which the panels are mounted take up less than 1% of the land area. Normally only 25-40% of the surface is over-sailed by panels. Because panels are raised above the ground on posts greater than 95% of a field utilised for solar farm development is still accessible for plant growth and potentially for wildlife enhancements and complementary agricultural activities such as conservation grazing.”
- 3.8 The major benefit solar parks have over other electricity generation technologies is that a solar installation can be developed and generating electricity in a matter of months. Whereas, other technologies take several years before they can commence electricity generation.

4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The proposed project covers approximately 176 acres and will accommodate approximately 49.9 megawatts (MW) of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels. A project lifetime of 40 years is proposed.
- 4.2 The proposed solar farm will generate approximately 49,900,00 kilowatt hours (kWh) per annum powering 14,000 homes or 17,000 electric vehicles (EV's) every year. This is enough energy to supply all the homes in Lichfield City or 30% of all households in Lichfield District. This project will support progress towards both the national and local target of net zero by 2050.
- 4.3 The proposed development will comprise the installation of free-standing, static solar photovoltaic ("PV") panels for the purposes of generating electricity for connection to the local network. The proposed solar park comprises three separate elements as follows:
- Solar panel modules;
 - Inverters; and
 - Substation.
- 4.4 Overhead electricity lines cross the site and would be the point of connection to the electricity network.
- 4.5 The proposed layout for the development can be seen on Draft Solar PV Layout reference: JPW1425-003RevO enclosed.

Solar Panel Modules

- 4.6 The proposed solar park will be made up, principally, of dark blue or black solar panels of 2.2m x 1.3m, consisting of crystalline cells of silicon wafers and semi-conducting materials applied to a glass plate. When sunlight hits the solar cells, a voltage develops between the treated silicone and the semi-conductor material and direct current (DC) is generated.
- 4.7 These will be mounted on two levels (portrait orientation) or four in landscape orientation in frame tables at an inclination of between 10 and 25 degrees depending upon localised topography. Each frame table will incorporate either 48 or 24 panels and will be supported on steel/aluminium posts/frames that will be pushed or screwed into the ground. The front bottom edge of the panels will be typically 0.8m above existing ground level and within a range of 500mm to 1.2m, again depending on local topography. Overall panel heights from ground level will typically be 3m. The spacing between the arrays will vary between 2-6 meters. All panels placed on the site will be orientated to face south and are fixed in place. They do not move to follow the path of the sun. Panels are opaque in nature and are designed specifically to absorb rather than reflect the sun's rays.
- 4.8 Each frame table will be supported on aluminium and steel posts/frames. Where posts are pushed into the ground this is via typical agricultural methods routinely used to erect fence posts on farms and in the rural area. Depending on ground conditions frames will be fixed to the ground by either:
- Option 1 - Single post ground fixture, which as suggested will be a single aluminium/steel frame driven into the ground (Figure 1);
 - Option 2 - Table post ground fixtures - where frames will be fixed on dual posts driven into the ground as illustrated in Option 1 above. An indicative cross section is also included in Figure 1 below; or
 - Option 3 - In cases where it is required to safeguard potential archaeological assets frames can be mounted using a shallow concrete 'shoe' which sits at a maximum of 400mm above ground level. An indicative cross section is included in Figure 2 below.

- 4.9 Option 3 is typically employed where constraints are identified by archaeologists during the post planning monitoring of construction activities as part of an archaeological programme of works proposed which are typically required through applied planning conditions. This solution can also be applied where rock is encountered across the site which may prohibit the erection of the mounting system via options 1 and 2 above. Where concrete shoes are required, these will be pre-cast and brought to site already made.
- 4.10 All 3 options for construction of the mounting system involve a small track machine with a ram/screw attached. This machine tracks up and down in rows installing as it goes.

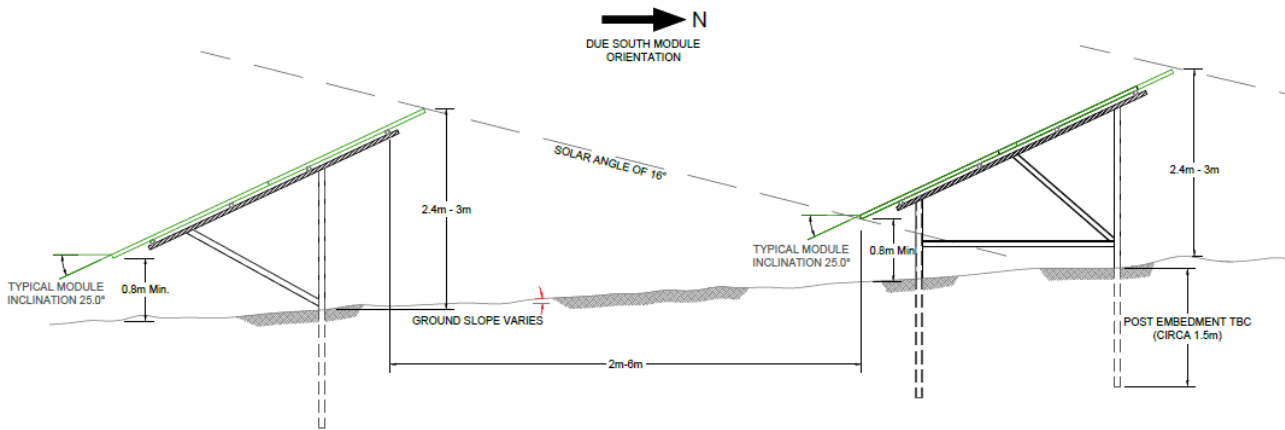


Figure 1: Typical Cross Sections - Single Post and Table Post Ground Mounting Systems

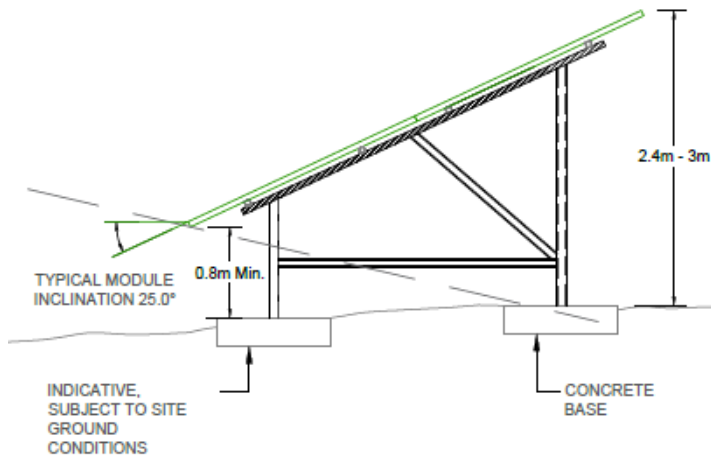


Figure 2: Typical Cross Section - Shallow Concrete Base Mounting System

- 4.11 The panels will generate electricity every day for duration of the project lifespan. However, at the end of its lifespan, the project would be fully reversible so that any impacts associated with it would be temporary in nature only, with the land being able to be returned to its former agricultural use following relatively minor decommissioning works.

Inverters

- 4.12 Inverter Stations will be located throughout the development area. These are small cabin-like buildings constructed on a concrete base with footprint dimensions of 7m x 2.5m, rising to a height of 3m. These stations are connected to the panels by cabling which has been buried underground. The stations convert the Direct Current electricity generated by the solar panels into Alternating Current (AC) electricity before being fed into the primary substation and then onward to the local electricity grid network.

Substation and Grid Connection

- 4.13 The DNO substation with Point of Connection (POC) mast will be located next to existing DNO infrastructure Pylon within the north eastern part of the site. The POC will enable the solar farm to connect into the 132 kV overhead line that crosses the site. To facilitate the connection into the grid a DNO primary substation control building with transmission masts is proposed. The substation compound would be a permanent DNO asset, most likely built in brick or similar. POC masts are an external transformer adjacent to the substation building and existing pylon. This element of the Proposed Development would be built by an Independent Connection Provider (IPC) on behalf of the DNO to their required specification. Once completed this would be an adopted DNO asset and thereafter part of their upgraded infrastructure network for the benefit of more than just the solar farm.

Access

- 4.14 The proposed development will be accessed via three separate access points off Clifton Lane. Clifton Lane routes from the crossroads with Smithy Lane and Chestnut Lane in the north to the priority junction with the B5493 in the south. It bisects the site, forming the western boundary of the southern and north-eastern sections and forming the eastern boundary of the north-western section of the site. The B5493 connects to the wider highway network through its junction with the M42, which also connects the site to the A42 and A444.

Internal Access Tracks

- 4.15 Three existing field entrances from Clifton Lane will be suitably improved to allow for HGV movements. Internal access tracks will be required during the construction phase. The tracks will be constructed using compacted gravel or EVE TUFF track temporary road system.
- 4.16 The construction compound area will be accessed via the internal access road. There will be a construction compound area located in each of the three sections of the site. The compound will provide an area for loading and unloading of vehicles and will provide a turning area to allow vehicles to exit the site in forward gear. All delivery drivers and construction workers will be advised of the construction route prior to making their delivery or commencing work.

Fencing & Other Security

- 4.17 A security fence will be constructed around the site prior to any significant construction works taking place. The security fence will be erected on the inside of any hedgerows, so that it will be screened by any such hedgerow in views from the surrounding area, further mitigating any visual impact.
- 4.18 The fencing of the site will protect members of the public from the ongoing construction works as well as preventing unauthorised personnel accessing the site. The fencing will also ensure that construction vehicles do not enter any root protection areas.
- 4.19 The fencing of the site will also have environmental benefits in terms of reducing the impact of dust generated on the surrounding environment and reducing noise pollution from the site. Mandatory

safety signage will be displayed for construction staff entering the site along with contact details for the Site Manager. The fencing will be kept clean and tidy at all times.

Underground Cabling

- 4.20 The proposed development will include underground electrical cabling connecting the arrays with the inverters and substation

Construction

- 4.21 A Construction Traffic Management Plan has been produced for the proposed development. The construction period is anticipated to last for up to 6 months. A temporary construction compound located within the site to hold temporary portacabin structures during the construction phase. All materials and plant associated with the development process will be stored within the temporary construction compound to be provided at the Application Site.

Vehicle Movements

- 4.22 The scale and volume of vehicle movements associated with the development construction period is not considered to have any significant impacts on the operation of the local highway network. It is anticipated that the majority of deliveries will be made via articulated low loaders and rigid HGVs. It is anticipated that there will be an average 6 HGV movements per day.
- 4.23 The construction access design allows for two-way vehicle movements of these vehicle types.
- 4.24 The appointed Construction Contractor will strive to procure local contractors for the project, thereby minimising transport costs and impact on the local environment. The use of the booking system for deliveries will also help to ensure that the construction site is serviced in an efficient manner which will help to minimise the number of vehicle movements that would be generated.

Trip Generation Staff

- 4.25 The number of construction staff on site will vary over the construction period depending on the activity that is taking place. It is estimated that at peak times there could be up to 100 staff on site. These 100 staff would car share and as such it is estimated that there would be less than 50 cars on site at peak times.
- 4.26 This will be achieved through management of staff travel patterns and actively encouraging car sharing. As such the Site Manager will actively promote the use of car sharing as the primary method for construction workers to access the Application Site. Car parking will be provided within the Application Site.

Operation

- 4.27 Once operational, the proposed Development will not require significant maintenance, with the exception of occasional visits made by 4x4 vehicles or panel van vehicles.
- 4.28 The impact of maintenance vehicles is considered to be negligible given the infrequent nature of maintenance visits. The site is currently an agricultural field generating associated vehicle movements throughout the year. There will therefore not be an intensification of use on the site during its operational period.

Decommissioning

- 4.29 The proposed use is temporary and reversible, and the land will be restored to agriculture at the end of the park's life which is estimated to be 40 years. After the expected life of the project, the park can be dismantled, and the components recycled. The site can be reclaimed and returned to its original state.
- 4.30 The decommissioning of the proposed development will be expected to generate a similar (or fewer) number of trips as the construction phase, since there is not the same requirement to transport the material separately. The traffic associated with the decommissioning phase will be discussed with the Highway Authority prior to commencement, and appropriate measures will be agreed as necessary at that time.
- 4.31 The decommissioning phase is expected to take less time than the construction and will consist of the exact opposite construction sequence: starting with disconnecting the plant from the grid, removing the substations, inverters, opening of trenches to remove DC and / or AC cables, disconnecting all solar modules, and dismantling the modules and supporting structure.

European Union Renewable Energy Directive

- 4.32 In December 2018, the recast Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001/EU entered into force, as part of the Clean energy for all Europeans package, aimed at keeping the EU a global leader in renewables and, more broadly, helping the EU to meet its emissions reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement.
- 4.33 The recast directive moves the legal framework to 2030 and sets a new binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of at least 32%, with a clause for a possible upwards revision by 2023, and comprises measures for the different sectors to make it happen. This includes new provisions for enabling self-consumption of renewable energy, an increased 14 % target for the share of renewable fu Under the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (EU) 2018/1999, EU countries are required to draft national energy and climate plans (NECPs) for 2021-2030, outlining how they will meet the new 2030 targets for renewable energy and for energy efficiency.
- 4.34 The aim of this revision is to ensure that renewable energy fully contributes to achieving the higher EU climate ambition for 2030, in line with the 2030 Climate Target Plan, and to support the implementation of the vision outlined in the energy system integration and hydrogen strategies, adopted on 8 July 2020.
- 4.35 The targets and measures set in the directive should be ambitious enough to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% in in 2030. This includes both the overall renewables target but also sectoral targets in transport or heating and cooling. The Commission is also aiming at a more energy efficient and circular energy system that facilitates renewables-based electrification, and promotes the use of renewable and low-carbon fuels including hydrogen in those sectors where electrification is not yet a viable option, such as transport.
- 4.36 As a first step in the process of reviewing the Renewable Energy Directive, on 3 August 2020 the Commission published a roadmap and opened a 7 week period for public feedback on the concept. The feedback will feed in to the Commission's preparatory work for the review. A public consultation to review the renewable energy rules was launched in November 2020 and it was open for input until 9 February 2021. In addition, a stakeholder meeting was organised on 11 December to gather first input from stakeholders on the public consultation. A second stakeholder event is scheduled for the 22 March 2021.
- 4.37 The United Kingdom withdrew from the European Union as of 1 February 2020. The Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and European Atomic Energy Community (OJ C 384I, 12.11.2019, p. 1) entered into force on the same date.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): The Paris Agreement (2015)

- 4.38 The central aim of the Paris Agreement is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- 4.39 Additionally, the agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change. To reach these ambitious goals, appropriate financial flows, a new technology framework and an enhanced capacity building framework will be put in place, thus supporting action by developing countries and the most vulnerable countries, in line with their own national objectives. The Agreement also provides for enhanced transparency of action and support through a more robust transparency framework.

Committee on Climate Change: 2017 Report to Parliament – Meeting Carbon Budgets: Closing the Policy Gap (June 2017)

- 4.40 This report assesses recent progress in meeting the Carbon Budgets and identifies areas where new policies are needed to meet future Budgets. In summary:
- The UK “urgently needs new policies” to cut greenhouse gas emissions; no significant new policy plans have been published since the fifth carbon budget was set.
 - Climate change “will not wait while other priorities are addressed”. Plans must be published “without delay”; setting out how the Government intends to deliver a 57% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 to 2030.
 - Recent reductions in emissions should not detract from the urgent need for new policies to bring confidence to investors and to enable future targets to be met. Although UK emissions fell 6% in 2016 and are down 19% since 2012, progress has been dominated by the power sector.
 - Despite promising advances in low-carbon technologies like electric cars and renewable power generation, emissions “will not continue to fall without new and strengthened policies”.
 - Wind and solar power are now the cheapest forms of electricity in many markets, with the potential to deliver low-carbon power without subsidy in the UK if they are allowed to compete for long-term contracts.

Climate Change Act (2008)

- 4.41 The Climate Change Act (2008) established a legal requirement for the UK to achieve an 80% cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, with a 34% cut by 2020, against the 1990 baseline. The 80% target was based on advice from the Committee on Climate Change report, “Building a low carbon economy” from 2008. In addition, the Act requires the Government to assess the risks and opportunities from climate change for the UK.
- 4.42 In 2017, the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions were 43% below 1990 baseline, while the economy grew by two-thirds over the same period. Despite this progress, “intensive action” is required if the UK is to meet its carbon targets into the 2020s and 2030s.

The Clean Growth Strategy: Leading the way to a low carbon future (2017)

- 4.43 On 12 October 2017 the Government published the Clean Growth Strategy which sets out how the UK will grow the economy while cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The energy system plays a key role

in achieving clean growth, and the government sees the diversification of the electricity system as a fundamental requirement to provide homes and businesses with secure, affordable and clean power.

UK Solar PV Strategy Part 1: Roadmap to a Brighter Future (2013)

- 4.44 The “Roadmap to a Brighter Future” prepared by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC, now part of BEIS) sets out a framework of principles and provides a future policy direction for Solar PV development in the UK. The Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change contended that the UK is likely to reach 10GW of Solar PV generation by 2020, and that “20GW of deployed solar is not only desirable but also potentially achievable within a decade” (i.e. 2020- 2030)
- 4.45 The strategy sets out that the extensive deployment of solar PV across the UK has become increasingly visible to the public at all scales and is among the most popular renewable energy technologies. Recently solar received the highest public approval rating of all renewable energy technologies at 85 per cent (DECC, 2013 Public Attitudes Tracker Wave 5).
- 4.46 The report summarises “All these factors mean that the time is right for the Government to set out its vision of the strategic direction for solar PV in the UK – making sure that our policies support the appropriate deployment in a sustainable, cost-effective way. We need to provide certainty to investors, solar developers, and the households, communities and businesses affected by solar PV”.

UK Solar PV Strategy Part 2: Delivering a Brighter Future

- 4.47 The strategy sets out that “Solar PV is an important part of the UK’s energy mix. The sector has seen very strong growth... with the industry maintaining strong levels of deployment at both domestic and large-scale”.
- 4.48 The strategy sets out that the development of larger, usually ground-mounted, utility scale solar PV has greatly increased in terms of both the installed capacity and the number of installations. It states that decisions on granting of approval for large-scale solar PV installations (less than 50 MWp) will continue to be taken through local planning processes in accordance with Local Plans and any relevant material considerations, including national planning policy and practice guidance.

A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment

- 4.49 This document sets out the Government’s goals for improving the environment, within a generation, and “leaving it in a better state than we found it”. It details how the Government will work with communities and businesses, and sits alongside the Industrial Strategy and the Clean Growth Strategy. As well as protecting the natural environment, the document promotes, *inter alia*, the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and the development of cleaner, sustainable energy.

Industrial Strategy: Building A Britain Fit For The Future

- 4.50 This white paper sets out a long-term plan to boost the productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK. The strategy sets out how the Government will help businesses create better, higher-paying jobs with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure. “Clean Growth” is identified as one of the four “Grand Challenges” set out in the white paper; the Government is seeking to “lead the world in the development, manufacture and use of low carbon technologies, systems and services that cost less than high carbon alternatives.

UK Government Net Zero 2050

- 4.51 On 27 June 2019, the UK became the first major economy in the world to pass laws to end its contribution to global warming by 2050. The target will require the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to ‘net zero’ by 2050, compared with the previous target set within the Climate Change Act (2008) of at least an 80% reduction of emissions by 2050 (against the 1990 baseline). In support of this target, the Energy white paper: Powering out net zero future (DBEIS, 2020a) was published, setting out the pathway to achieving net zero through the greater reliance on solar and wind energy.

- 4.52 Net Zero 2050 – A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector (International Energy Agency (IEA), 2021) outlines the essential conditions for the global energy sector to reach net-zero carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 2050. The Roadmap calls for scaling up solar and wind technologies during the 2020s, reaching up to 630 gigawatts (GW) of solar and 390 GW of wind by 2030, four times the set record levels in 2020. The Roadmap stresses that for solar, this equates to installing the world’s current largest solar farm roughly every day

National Grid Future Energy Scenarios (July 2021)

- 4.53 ‘Future Energy Scenarios’ (FES) (National Grid, 2021) outlines different credible pathways for the future of energy for the next 30 years and beyond. The document considers how much energy is needed and where the energy could come from. In all scenarios, the demand for electricity increases; this is brought about by shifting away from high carbon fuels to hit the Government’s net-zero emissions target by 2050 and the predicted increase in electric vehicles ahead of the 2040 ban on petrol/diesel driven vehicles.
- 4.54 For electricity supply, in all scenarios, there are significant increases in renewable energy generation. The ‘key messages’ of the FES report, with regards to the Proposed Development, include:
- Significant investment in low carbon electricity generation will be required across all net zero pathways;
 - Between 34 GW and 77 GW of new wind and solar generation could be required to meet demand in 2030.
- 4.55 National Grid anticipates annual electricity demand in the UK could more than double from 294 TWh in 2020 to up to 702 TWh by 2050. Similarly, peak demand in 2020 of 58 GW could almost double to up to 113 GW over the same period. There is therefore an urgent need to increase electricity capacity in the UK to ensure a secure and stable supply in the future and achieve renewable energy and net zero targets.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C

- 4.56 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report was prepared discussing the potential impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty.
- 4.57 The report sets out that the pathways limiting global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot would require rapid and far-reaching transitions in, inter alia, energy, land and infrastructure, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors. A ‘wide portfolio’ of mitigation options and a significant upscaling of investments in those mitigation options is needed.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – Climate Change 2021 : the Physical Science Basis

- 4.58 The IPCC is now in its sixth assessment cycle and has recently, August 2021, published The Working Group I report – Climate Change 2021: the Physical Science Basis and is the first installment of the IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), which will be completed in 2022.
- 4.59 The report provides new estimates of the chances of crossing the global warming level of 1.5°C in the next decades, and finds that unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach
- 4.60 The report shows that emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities are responsible for approximately 1.1°C of warming since 1850-1900, and finds that averaged over the next 20 years, global temperature is expected to reach or exceed 1.5°C of warming. This assessment is based on

improved observational datasets to assess historical warming, as well progress in scientific understanding of the response of the climate system to human-caused greenhouse gas emissions.

5 SITE SELECTION PROCESS

- 5.1 The UK electricity network faces exceptional challenges to meet the government's target of reducing carbon emissions. This will largely be achieved through decommissioning carbon intensive plants (all existing coal-fired power stations in the UK will be decommissioned by 2025) and increasing low carbon generation such as wind and solar. Elgin Energy has undertaken a robust and effective site selection exercise to identify suitable areas for solar development to meet the electricity demand within this network area. This section of the report outlines the site selection process that the Applicant has undertaken in refining the proposals.
- 5.2 This extensive site selection exercise considered several planning policy, environmental and technical criteria including:
- The availability of utilities and viability of a grid connection;
 - Land availability;
 - Compatibility with national and local planning policy;
 - Preference for previously developed land or industrial settings;
 - Visual impact, and
 - Proximity to community sensitive locations and areas of designated environmental significance.
- 5.3 The applicant has committed to this exercise to satisfy the Council in this regard; it is proportionate to the scale of the proposed development.

Correspondence with the Distribution Network Operator

- 5.4 Elgin has carried out feasibility with the district network operator (DNO) - Western Power Distribution (WPD) to ascertain grid connection requirements (at the closest feasible location to the site). WPD has indicated that a connection is possible on site via an existing pylon.

National Planning Policy and the Development Plan

- 5.5 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraphs 148-169 states the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.
- 5.6 Neither the emerging or the extant Local Plan (saved in part from 2006) identify suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy development.

Requirements for Solar PV Farm Development

- 5.7 The following bullet points set out the principal requirements for Solar PV park development.
- Grid Capacity – identify any local substations or points of connection that have capacity to accept additional generation capacity and secure a Grid Offer. This is essential to any energy project;
 - High Level Planning Appraisal – review of high level planning constraints and site suitability before proceeding to progress the site further, identifying suitable broad areas from a desktop perspective;
 - Willing Landowner – approach landowners within the identified search area from the point of connection to discuss availability of land for the potential Solar PV Farm;

- Planning Suitability – detailed assessment of land available for the proposed project which must be suitable and achievable from a planning perspective.

Site Selection

- 5.8 Through discussions with the District Network Operator (DNO), demand for additional energy generating capacity was identified. As a starting point, all non-agricultural, urban and previously developed land (or “brownfield land”) was identified. However, due to the scale of the proposed Solar PV farm, no such land was considered to be suitable or available to accommodate the project.
- 5.9 The next stage of the site selection exercise was to discount any statutorily designated land such as Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National and International Habitats sites, designated Heritage Assets etc. and land allocated for development within the extant and emerging Plans. The site was therefore deemed as appropriate for a solar development as it is located outside of any sensitive designations and is supported by national and local planning policy in principle.
- 5.10 In seeking to refine their search further and noting that a majority of the land within the search area is rural and agricultural in nature, the applicant consulted the Regional Agricultural Land Classification maps to identify agricultural land graded as “3 Good to Moderate”, “4 Poor” or “5 Very Poor”.
- 5.11 It should be noted that the proposed site would not take the fields out of agricultural use as the landowner would be able to graze sheep on the land underneath the panels. If planning permission is granted, it would make the site dual-use and represent an efficient use of land in spatial and environmental terms. Furthermore, the proposed site is completely reversible, and the site can be reinstated to its current nature following decommissioning. It was decided to proceed with the Proposals at the site as there is appropriate separation from residential properties and protected buildings/landscapes, there are good access links, there is a viable grid connection.
- 5.12 Taking all of the above into account, the decision was made to pursue the development proposal on the site.

On-site Constraints

- 5.13 Once the landowner had been engaged and various parcels of land had been identified, a high level planning constraints exercise was undertaken to determine whether the parcels of land available would be suitable for a Solar PV farm from an environmental and planning perspective. This would allow the Applicant to decide whether to take the site forward to the pre-application process with the Council.
- 5.14 The on-site constraints exercise identified the following additional site-specific features as opportunities and constraints:
- The proposed site boundary;
 - Established field boundaries and hedgerows;
 - No Listed Buildings;
 - Not within close proximity to residential areas;
 - The site lies outside any village confines and as such is an area allocated as open countryside;
- 5.15 Following this constraints exercise, adjustments were made to the location of the solar panels within the site location boundary. The land selected to host the solar panels is not, therefore, within the “best and most versatile” classification. In any case, the sites existing agricultural function would be maintained through the grazing of sheep, albeit at a reduced intensity.

6 PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 6.1 Both the Development Plan and NPPF promote the use of pre-application process. NPPF paragraph 39 states that early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.
- 6.2 Throughout the project's inception and evolution the Applicant has sought to engage fully with the Local Planning Authority and the community.

Pre-Application Advice

- 6.3 Pre-application advice was sought from Lichfield District Council and a written response received from Hannah Hayes, Development Management on 23rd December 2019 under reference **19/01310/PREAPP** and is attached in Appendix A. It should be noted that the size and scale of the development at pre-application stage was considerably larger than that which has been submitted as part of this application.
- 6.4 The advice focussed on the principle of the development, measured against the NPPF and the Lichfield District Council Local Plan (policies specific to the countryside and sustainable development).
- 6.5 From an environmental perspective, the advice assessed the impact on heritage, landscape biodiversity, conservation and arboriculture. The impact of the proposal on the existing highway network and residential amenity was also assessed.
- 6.6 The advice recognised the site's proximity to a listed building and concluded that the overall harm to the Designated Heritage Assets and its setting cannot be outweighed by the benefits of the scheme.
- 6.7 It was also considered that the scheme is likely to be harmful to the character and appearance of the rural area and visual amenity. The proposal would also cause material harm to the nearby public rights of way, therefore negatively impacted their users.
- 6.8 Therefore, the advice made the following requests for the planning submission:
- A Heritage Impact Assessment, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and a Glint and Glare Assessment;
 - Strongly recommended that you submit a request for a screening opinion to enable the Local Planning Authority to determine whether the proposed development is EIA development.

Community Involvement

- 6.9 During the pre-application stage, the applicant engaged with the local community through a public consultation process, as is the applicant's strategy for a planning application of this scale. Set out below are the key elements that were undertaken as part of the Community Involvement/Consultation exercise.

Public Consultation Event

- 6.10 Due to COVID restrictions it was not possible to hold an in-person public consultation event. Therefore, a leaflet was produced (**Appendix B**) which detailed the site and the solar park proposals. This was sent out to 38 interested parties within the vicinity of the site on the 15th September 2021, inviting them to view the details of the solar park on a dedicated website. www.thorpestatesolarfarm.co.uk A notice was also posted within the Tamworth Herald on Thursday 16th September (**Appendix C**). The consultation ran until 3rd October 2021.

- 6.11 Unfortunately the applicant did not have any response and as such a further letter was sent out on the 8th October 2021 this time by recorded delivery and the website remained open for comment until 2nd November 2021.
- 6.12 From this second round of consultation the applicant only had 5 responses. These responses are included within **Appendix D**.
- 6.13 The following summary feedback was received.
- When asked to rate their feelings towards the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm, one was very supportive, two undecided and two opposed.
 - When asked are you concerned about climate change, three said yes while two were undecided.
 - When asked do you support the use of solar energy to combat climate change, three said yes while two were undecided.
 - When asked do you support the principle of developing new solar energy projects, three said yes while two were undecided.
 - When asked to select their concerns regarding the development, of the 5 respondents, 4 said Landscape and visual, 2 said traffic during the installation stage, 3 the effect on land use and 4 said the effect on local biodiversity and ecology.
- 6.14 **Appendix D** and the summary above shows that whilst most people supported the principles of renewable energy and the use of solar, there was not a clear indication of whether they favoured it at the application site. It is unfortunate that the response level was so low and most of the negative responses related to landscape and visual impact, the loss of agricultural land for food production and traffic. These matters have been duly addressed in the final proposal to their relative degrees of impact.

7 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.2 The following section identifies the Development Plan policies and material considerations relevant to this application. An assessment of the proposed development against the relevant policies is set out in Section 7.
- 7.3 Nationally material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, February 2019, also known as the “Framework”) and the Planning Practice Guidance.

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

- 7.4 The NPPF was revised in July 2021 and sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It replaces the first NPPF published in March 2012 and the updated July 2018 and February 2019 versions.
- 7.5 NPPF paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 7.6 Paragraph 8 sets out the three overarching objectives of achieving sustainable development through the planning system:
- **An economic objective** - to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that enough land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - **A social objective** - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that an enough and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - **An environmental objective** - to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 7.7 NPPF paragraph 11 sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which for decision-taking means the following:
- c) *approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
 - d) *where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - i. *the application of policies in this Framework that protects areas or assets of importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - ii. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken.”*
- 7.8 Paragraph 38 states that LPAs should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will

improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision makes at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

- 7.9 Paragraphs 39 to 46 promote the use and effectiveness of the pre-application process. It is considered that good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community. LPAs have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage.
- 7.10 Paragraph 47 states that planning requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 48 sets out that LPAs may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to the stage.
- 7.11 Paragraph 48 outlines the three criteria against which LPAs may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans:
1. the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
 2. the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant and unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
 3. the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 7.12 NPPF Section 6 “Building a strong, competitive economy” seeks to support a prosperous rural economy.
- 7.13 NPPF Section 14 “Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change” addresses planning for climate change. Paragraph 148 states that the planning system should **support the transition to a low carbon future** in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that **contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions**, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and **support renewable and low carbon energy** and associated infrastructure (**our emphasis**).
- 7.14 Paragraph 155 states:
- “To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:
- a) *provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);*
 - b) *consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and*
 - c) *identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.*
- 7.15 Paragraph 158 states that, when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, LPAs should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.
- 7.16 Paragraph 174 highlights that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, inter alia, minimising impacts on and seeking net gains for biodiversity.

Planning Practice Guidance: Renewable and low carbon energy

- 7.17 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) paragraph: 010 (reference ID: 5-010-20140306) states renewable energy developments should be acceptable for their proposed location. In addition to the factors that should be considered regarding the acceptability of a location for any form of renewable energy development there are considerations for each technology. Also, LPAs may wish to consider how planning conditions or planning obligations can mitigate the impacts described.
- 7.18 PPG paragraph: 013 states that the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar park can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively. Factors to consider include:
- Encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar parks on previously developed and non-agricultural land, if it is not of high environmental value;
 - Where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether
 - the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and
 - the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays;
 - That solar parks are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use;
 - The proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;
 - The extent to which there may be additional impacts if solar arrays follow the daily movement of the sun;
 - The need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing;
 - Great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large-scale solar parks on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large-scale solar park within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset;
 - The potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges;
 - The energy generating potential, which can vary for several reasons including, latitude and aspect.
- 7.19 The approach to assessing cumulative landscape and visual impact of large-scale solar parks is likely to be the same as assessing the impact of wind turbines. However, in the case of ground mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography the area of a zone of visual influence could be zero.

Development Plan Policy

Lichfield District Council Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029 (Adopted February 2015)

- 7.20 The Local Plan Strategy 2008-2029 was adopted on the 17th February 2015. Lichfield District Council is reviewing its local plan with the aim to create a new local plan which will provide the planning framework for the district up to 2040. Once adopted, the new local plan will replace the current local plan strategy which was adopted in 2015 and local plan allocations which was adopted in July 2019.
- 7.21 As the 2008-2029 plan is yet to be formally replaced, it is still the most appropriate plan to review for this application. The plan states that the district cares for its *“built and natural environment, its commitment to addressing issues of climate change, and the range of facilities that it offers”* and that *“Sustainable development will also help protect the biodiversity, cultural and amenity value of the countryside and will minimise use of scarce natural and historic resources, contributing to mitigating and adapting to the adverse effects of climate change”*.
- 7.22 There are a number of Strategic Priorities relevant to this proposal:
- Strategic Priority 1: Sustainable Communities
 - Strategic Priority 2: Rural Communities
 - Strategic Priority 3: Climate Change
 - Strategic Priority 4: Infrastructure
 - Strategic Priority 7: Economic Prosperity
 - Strategic Priority 11: Healthy and Safe Lifestyles
 - Strategic Priority 12: Countryside Character
 - Strategic Priority 13: Natural Resources
 - Strategic Priority 14: Built Environment
 - Strategic Priority 15: High Quality Development
- 7.23 The General Policies section of the plan contains broad policies, known as Core Policies, for steering and shaping development as well as defining areas where development should be limited. Core Policy 2 ‘Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development’ states that *“When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area”*.
- 7.24 Core Policy 3 ‘Delivering Sustainable Development’ encourages opportunities for renewable energy and minimise any environmental impact. The policy addresses the importance of preventing development having a negative impact on the local environment or residential amenity by seeking to protect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the district of Lichfield and its settlements.
- 7.25 Core Policy 7 ‘Employment & Economic Development’ states that *“within the District, high-value jobs in business, education and research, those supporting a low carbon economy and other key growth sectors will be encouraged in sustainable locations...these jobs will retain and enhance local skills; and developers will be encouraged to work with local economic partnerships in promoting opportunities for employing local people and supporting the development of skills in the District”*. The policy further

states that “proposals for economic development and diversification of the rural economy will be supported where they do not conflict with other Local Plan Policies”. The policy recognises that employment and growth in rural areas is low but acknowledges that they form an important part of the rural economy and therefore employment opportunities are to be supported.

- 7.26 Core Policy 13 ‘Our Natural Resources’ acknowledges the importance of designated sites and non-designated priority habitats, together with historic landscapes and townscapes, to be protected from damage as a result of development or poor management, and enhanced where appropriate. Opportunities for the interpretation of natural resources will also be supported and encouraged.
- 7.27 Core Policy 14: Our Built & Historic Environment focuses on the protection and improvement of the built environment and states the Council will have special regard for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. The highest level of protection will be awarded to the significance of designated heritage assets including nationally protected listed buildings and their settings, ancient monuments, archaeological sites and conservation areas and their settings. Landscapes that help form the settings will also be conserved and enhanced. The main focus of CP14 is to protect and improve the heritage assets through measures such as tree planting and landscaping amongst others for built fabric and health and welling.
- 7.28 Policy SC2 (Renewable Energy) states that opportunities for renewable energy developments will be of the landscape or townscape to accommodate the development; assessed on the following basis:
- the degree to which the scale and nature of the proposal reflects the capacity and sensitivity
 - the impact on local amenity, including residential amenity;
 - the impact of the proposal on sites of biodiversity value, ancient woodland and veteran trees;
 - the impact on the historic environment, including the effect on the significance of heritage assets and their setting and important views associated with valued landscapes and townscapes;
 - and the proximity to, and impact on, transport infrastructure and the local highway network.
- 7.29 Policy SC2 states that the provision should be made for renewable energy generation within Lichfield District to maximise environmental and economic benefits whilst minimising any adverse local impacts. The District should strive to meet a minimum of 10% of its energy demand through renewable energy sources by 2020 through a variety of technologies, including solar, hydro, energy from waste, energy crops, biomass, renewable transport fuels, landfill and sewage gases, wind and geothermal. Opportunities for renewable energy developments will be assessed on the following basis:
- “the degree to which the scale and nature of the proposal reflects the capacity and sensitivity of the landscape or townscape to accommodate the development;
 - the impact on local amenity, including residential amenity;
 - the impact of the proposal on sites of biodiversity value, ancient woodland and veteran trees; the impact on the historic environment, including the effect on the significance of heritage assets and their setting and important views associated with valued landscapes and townscapes; and
 - the proximity to, and impact on, transport infrastructure and the local highway network”.
- 7.30 Policy NR1: Countryside Management states “The countryside of Lichfield District is valued as an asset in its own right and will be protected. The District Council recognises the important economic role of the countryside and wealth of resources it provides”. Development proposals will be supported which:
- Assist in delivering diverse and sustainable farming enterprises;

- Deliver / assist in delivering other countryside-based enterprises and activities, including those which promote the recreation and enjoyment of the countryside...
- Provide for the sensitive use of renewable energy resources.

7.31 Policy NR3: Biodiversity, Protected Species and their Habitats states that “*development will only be permitted where it*”:

- Protects, enhances, restores and implements appropriate conservation management of the biodiversity and / or geodiversity value of the land and buildings;
- Minimises fragmentation and maximise opportunities for restoration, enhancements and connection of natural habitats
- Incorporates beneficial biodiversity and / or geodiversity conservation features, including features that will help wildlife to adapt to climate change where appropriate
- Delivers net gain for biodiversity and / or geodiversity in the district

The policy also states that “development proposals where the principal objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity or geodiversity and deliver a net gain for such objectives will be supported in principle where this accords with other policies in the Local Plan”.

7.32 Policy NR4: Trees, Woodland & Hedgerows details the importance of the District’s trees, woodland and hedgerows and that they are an ecological asset. It details how there will be resistance to the removal of mature and veteran trees and that sufficient space within developments must be retained for planting and sustainable growth.

7.33 Policy NR5: Natural & Historic Landscapes details how development will be permitted where there are not negative impacts on the geological, archaeological and historic assets and landscapes within the District.

7.34 Policy NR6: Linked Habitat Corridors & Multi-functional Greenspaces states that “new habitats and links between habitats should be created to enhance biodiversity and to mitigate against climate change by providing opportunities for species to move or migrate. Rural and urban proposals will be expected to create and link green infrastructure providing new and enhancing existing green and river corridors in line with Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping evidence. These corridors should form part of multi-functional green spaces...”

7.35 Policy NR8/NR9 identifies that development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it will not be likely to lead directly or indirectly to an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Mease Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

7.36 Policy NR9 indicates that development will be permitted where proposals do not have a negative impact on water quality, either directly through pollution of surface or ground water or indirectly through the treatment of waste water by whatever means.

7.37 Policy BE1: High Quality Development states that “All development proposals should ensure that a high quality sustainable built environment can be achieved. Development will be permitted where it can be clearly and convincingly demonstrated that it will have a positive impact on”:

- The significance of the historic environment, such as archaeological sites, sites of historic landscape value, listed buildings, conservation areas, locally listed buildings and skylines containing important historic, built and natural features;
- Reducing carbon emissions, by appropriate use of sustainable design and renewable energy schemes;

- The built vernacular. New development, including extensions and alterations to existing buildings, should carefully respect the character of the surrounding area and development in terms of layout, size, scale, architectural design and public views;
- Public safety, health and reducing inequality, including the latest “designing out crime” principles;
- Amenity, by avoiding development which causes disturbance through unreasonable traffic generation, noise, light, dust, fumes or other disturbance;
- The natural environment. Effective hard and soft landscaping including tree planting will be required and should be implemented in an integrated manner, making use of green corridors for movement of people as well as for biodiversity; and
- Sustainable transport. New development should be located in areas which have good safe access to public transport to reduce the need to travel by private car and should optimise choice of sustainable travel, particularly walking, cycling and public transport, creating new public transport nodes where necessary.

7.38 The policy finishes by stating that “new development will have a positive impact on the public realm and ensure high quality, inclusive design. This will be achieved by an appreciation of context, as well as plan, scale, proportion and detail”.

Supplementary Planning Documents and Technical Notes

7.39 Supplementary planning documents or other guidance covering the Lichfield District area applicable to this proposal have been referenced elsewhere within the relevant sections and separate assessments.

Staffordshire Climate Change Emergency Declaration

7.40 Staffordshire made its own Climate Change Emergency Declaration in July 2019 and published a Climate Change Action Plan for 2020-2021 which contains “year one” actions. The Climate Change Action Plan covers five key areas: organisation carbon reduction, air quality, natural environment, waste and behaviour change.

7.41 The key elements of the Climate Change Action Plan relevant to this proposal are:

- **NE0320 – Natural Environment** – Begin to increase tree cover to level required for Government 2050 net zero target in Staffordshire.
- **BC0220 – Behaviour Change** – Work with local businesses to improve their impact on climate change
- **BC0240 – Behaviour Change** – Staffordshire County Council (SCC) Policies and reports to include a Climate Change Impact Assessment
- **BC0520 – Behaviour Change** – Climate Change Strategy

7.42 In October 2020, AECOM published a Baseline Report for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Report for SCC. The report provides technical support to develop an evidence base for new energy and sustainability policies being considered by SCC and the Local Authorities.

7.43 The report highlights that Staffordshire is exposed to climate change risks with the biggest risk being flooding which is likely to be exacerbated by severe weather events. The Environment Agency published the River Trent Catchment Flood Management Plan Summary Report in December 2010 which also discusses managing flood risk and the potential impacts of climate change on the river and district.

- 7.44 The report presents a range of information which includes topics such as current fuel consumption and GHG Emissions, potential CO2 emissions trajectories and low and zero carbon energy technologies.
- 7.45 The report provides details of the total number and type of electricity-generating LZC technologies within Staffordshire as recorded by the Renewable energy by Local Authority by BEIS (September 2019) and the Renewable Energy Planning Database (REPD). As at the end of 2018, the report states that there was an installed capacity of 9.5MW of solar PV in Lichfield generating approximately 9,237 MWh per year. The report further states that *“PV is by far the most common technology in terms of the number of installations, but the majority of these are small-scale, domestic, roof-mounted systems of around 2-4kWp capacity each. Around half of the PV capacity and renewable electricity generation in Staffordshire came from the 14 ground-mounted PV farms”* (AECOM, p.24).
- 7.46 According to the report, there are a total of 1,424 photovoltaics, which are estimated to account for 57.5% of the low and zero carbon technologies in Lichfield.

Mineral Safeguarding Area

- 7.47 Although the proposed development does not lie within, the site lies adjacent to a mineral safeguarding area. The Minerals Local Plan for Staffordshire 2015-2030 was adopted 16th February 2017 and provides the statutory policy to plan for mineral needs in the area up to 2030 and how the council intend to achieve sustainable economic development of minerals in Staffordshire. The plan is stated as being a living document and that review will take place on an ongoing basis.
- 7.48 The vision of the Local Plan states “by 2030 Staffordshire will be producing minerals to support sustainable economic development from sites that are”:
- Located where their impact on local communities and the environment has been minimised or mitigated;
 - Operating to high environmental standards; and
 - Later restored and subject to aftercare to enhance local amenity and the environment” (Minerals Local Plan, 2015- 2030).
- 7.49 Staffordshire has significant mineral resources and there has been significant quarrying and mining within the county which has contributed to West Midlands and UK wide sources.
- 7.50 The Minerals Local Plan seeks to reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development. While the government recognises the need to recycle mineral resources, some extraction of primary resources will still be required. Minerals only exist in certain geographic locations and therefore this determines where mineral extraction occurs. One of the key considerations of the Minerals Local Plan for this development is whether the proposals would result in the sterilisation of significant minerals within the plan area (Minerals Strategy, 2014, p.14).
- 7.51 The Minerals Local Plan has developed a number of strategic objectives and policies to ensure the realisation of the vision.
- Strategic Objective 1: the provision of minerals to support economic development
 - Strategic Objective 2: Acceptable locations for mineral sites
 - Strategic Objective 3: Operating to high environmental standards
 - Strategic Objective 4: restoration that enhances local amenity and the environment
- 7.52 As the Mineral Authority, Staffordshire County Council will take the lead role in implementing the objectives outlined above and the policies listed within the document.

8 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 This section provides a planning assessment of the proposed solar PV farm. It discusses the key issues in terms of:
- The principle of development.
 - The following topic specific matters:
 - Agricultural Land Classification;
 - Landscape and Visual impact;
 - Glint and Glare
 - Ecology;
 - Flood Risk;
 - Heritage; and
 - Transport.
- 8.2 Under “other matters”, air quality, noise and vibration, public rights of way , risk of major accidents and/or disasters as well as inter-relationships and cumulative impact considerations are discussed.

Principle of Development

- 8.3 As highlighted in the previous section, legislative, national and local planning policy context is overwhelmingly supportive of renewable energy developments and therefore a presumption in favour of the proposals, subject to the provision of detailed assessments.
- 8.4 Solar power has an important role to play as part of the renewable energy sources required to meet national energy targets. Due to its scale, the application scheme has the potential to significantly contribute towards these targets and to make a considerable difference in reducing national CO² emissions.

Agricultural Land Classification

- 8.5 The NPPF states that Local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.
- 8.6 Best and Most versatile agricultural land is defined as “land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.
- 8.7 An ALC was undertaken for 158.5 ha of land located on the west of Thorpe Estate, Tamworth on 20th and 21st May 2019. The survey identified three general soil types for the purposes of ALC grading;
1. Silty clay loams over silty clay to depth (Type 1)
 2. Clay loam over clay to depth (Type 2)
 3. Clay loam over clay to depth (Type 3)
- Type 1, 2 and 3 soils are limited to ALC Grade 3b due to wetness limitations.

- 8.8 The agricultural land is of Low sensitivity, and therefore, considered negligible for the site.
- 8.9 Soil resources on the site will be adequately managed in line with a Soil Management Strategy. The residual effect on soil resources during the operation phase is therefore Negligible (Table 5.). Soil function is expected to be fully retained or retained with some minor degradation which is easily redressed and hence the receptor sensitivity is classified as Negligible (Table 5.).
- 8.10 On the basis of the implementation of a Soil Management Strategy and less than 4 ha of land will be irreversibly lost it is concluded that the impacts on agricultural land can be classified as Negligible for Grade 3b land, with the impact on soil resources can be classified as negligible.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 8.11 A full landscape and visual appraisal has been undertaken for the proposed development. The assessment concludes that the gently undulating nature of the landform of the study area and the existence of the mature field boundary hedgerows with trees, and localised woodland copses combine to limit views towards much of the Application Site from the wider study area. These local characteristics limit the potential influence that the proposed development is able to exert over the wider rural landscape.
- 8.12 The solar farm scheme would change the character of the arable farmland within the Application Site however, the mostly low level and relatively low-key nature of the energy infrastructure would limit conflict in terms of the character of development in this particular agricultural location.
- 8.13 Although there would be a loss of openness and change in character within the nine field parcels following development, the retention of the existing hedgerows, trees and woodland copse's around the edges, and additional new boundary hedgerows and management of hedgerows and trees would enable views to be directed over the new development whilst views to the surrounding landscape would be largely retained, limiting change to the perceived character of the rural landscape.
- 8.14 The change from arable use to solar panels with pastoral use would expand and enhance elements of the local character and ecological value of the location. The additional hedgerow and tree planting would slightly enhance site conditions in the long term, resulting in some beneficial effects that would help to partly offset the adverse effects on landscape character.
- 8.15 The relatively well contained nature of the proposal in views from the west, south and east, within a landscape structure provided by hedgerows and trees, infilled where required and suitably managed long term, would limit the effects on the wider landscape. It is considered that there would be no significant effects on the landscape resource within the 5 km radius study area.
- 8.16 The mitigation planting implemented as part of the scheme, would achieve its designed intention by summer Year 10 and together with improved hedgerow and tree management would provide beneficial effects and help to reduce the perception of change within the local landscape and wider study area.

Glint and Glare

- 8.17 A Glint and Glare assessment has been undertaken by Pager Power, the overall conclusions are that no significant impacts are predicted on roads or dwellings in the surrounding area and therefore no mitigation requirement has been identified in terms of glint and glare. The assessment also concluded that no significant impacts are predicted on aviation activity at Catton Airfield , Grangewood Airfield, Twycross Airfield and as such no mitigation requirements have been identified.

Ecology

- 8.18 The site largely comprises arable farmland and two improved grassland fields bounded by narrow field margins and hedgerows. Mature oak and ash trees are present within the hedgerows and fields. Five small ponds and a wet drainage ditch are located throughout the landholding. Adjoining the boundaries are arable fields, a small block of plantation woodland and two streams.

- 8.19 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken for the site and represents the ecological baseline for the site. The PEA also recommended a number of Phase 2 surveys which have now been undertaken.
- 8.20 The proposed development of the site as a solar energy farm is anticipated to result in the loss of low value habitat, primarily arable farmland and a species-poor improved grassland field.
- 8.21 The development will be designed to avoid adverse impacts on hedgerows, the drainage ditch, streams and mature trees within the site.
- 8.22 Best practice measures will be employed to protect habitats adjoining the survey area including the woodland and streams.
- 8.23 All statutory and non-statutory designated sites are over 1km from the proposed development. The nearest statutory site is the River Mease SAC/SSSI located over 3km downstream but 1.6km from the site at its closest point. An assessment of the potential for the development proposal to result in adverse effects on the SAC and any of the qualifying features is provided in the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening taking into account the site layout and in-built protection measures (separate from commitments relating to the implementation of good environmental practice).
- 8.24 A substantial 20m buffer has been created between the boundary watercourse and the perimeter fence within in the site layout. The section of stream channel adjoining the site is narrow (c1m wide) with very shallow flowing water due to its proximity to its source. Based on the nature of the solar park development, protection of the adjoining stream and its distance from the SAC the HRA screening concluded that there are no Likely Significant Effects on the River Mease SAC/SSSI or any of the qualifying features.
- 8.25 The following species have the potential to utilise habitats within solar energy park, which will be retained to avoid impact on the species within the site or in the wider landscape:
- Bats (roosting, flight lines and foraging)
 - Dormouse
 - Badgers
 - Otter
 - Water vole
 - Brown hare
 - Hedgehog
 - Hedgerow and woodland bird species
- 8.26 The badger sett will be maintained with a suitable stand-off to avoid damage to or disturbance of the sett. Perimeter fencing will incorporate openings to maintain sett access and ease of movement for badgers through the site.
- 8.27 The proposed development of the site as a solar energy farm would result in the loss of low value habitat, primarily arable farmland and very small areas species-poor grassland on the field margins. The conversion of this habitat to grazing pasture with neutral grassland buffers on the boundaries will provide a significant extent of new habitat for a range of wildlife.
- 8.28 The development will retain and protect the higher value habitat within the site including the ponds, scrub, hedgerow network and the majority of the grassland.

- 8.29 A Habitat Suitability Index (HIS) Assessment was undertaken of all ponds within 250m of the site where survey access was granted. In addition, an Environmental DNA (eDNA) survey was undertaken on four ponds together with a population survey on one pond. The results found that one pond supports a small breeding population of GCN with this species found to be absent from the other surveyed ponds within and adjoining the site. With very few records of GCN in the local area, the confirmed small breeding population has importance in a local context.
- 8.30 As detailed in the accompanying ecological reports, Unless otherwise agreed, an EPS mitigation licence for GCN will be applied for from Natural England to cover the enabling works and construction of the solar park.
- 8.31 A very short section of annually flailed roadside hedgerow (up to 10m) will be removed at the outset of construction to widen the access for vehicles transporting the solar park infrastructure onto the site. The precautionary working will be undertaken following a non-licence method statement with the presumed presence of dormice in the local network of hedgerows. Sensitive working would involve checks for dormice nests in the section affected followed by the gradual removal of hedgerow overseen by an ECoW. A replacement section of hedge will be replanted with native species following the completion of construction.
- 8.32 A breeding bird survey was undertaken on site between April and June 2021. The results found that the retention of the hedgerow network and mature trees and the protection of the offsite woodland will protect the nesting habitats of all species with the exception of skylark nesting on the ground in arable fields. As such it is proposed that the installation of solar arrays are carried out between September and February inclusive would avoid impacts on any nesting birds. The two fields (where the three skylark pairs were recorded nesting with the arable crop in 2021) will be managed as grassland for nesting skylark through a much reduced grazing intensity by sheep. Within the skylark territories were recorded in close proximity to each other in several fields and with optimal grassland structure the two fields will have the potential to support up to 6 pairs.
- 8.33 A wintering bird survey was undertaken at the site between January and March 2020. The survey comprised three monthly visits over this period during which the survey area was walked and notes made of all the species and activities encountered. The results found that Winter food availability is expected to be a key factor in the continued use of the site by wintering populations of farmland birds.
- 8.34 A 0.44ha area of winter cover crops (wild bird seed mix including quinoa and kale) will be established on the southern boundary of the northern area of the site and will contribute to the sources of food available in the operational site over winter. Based on the incorporation of foraging habitat, a substantial change in the wintering bird population within the site is not expected.
- 8.35 A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has also been completed for the site. In summary the baseline site achieves the following scores:
- Score of 30.95 Habitat units
 - Score of 48.29 Hedgerow units
 - Score of 4.52 River units (relating to ditches with shallow open water)
- 8.36 The post-development site achieves the following scores:
- Score of 41.26 Habitat units
 - Score of 53.03 Hedgerow units
 - Score of 5.23 River units
- 8.37 The proposed development would result in a biodiversity gain for habitats of 33.33%. There will be a biodiversity net gain for hedgerow units of 9.83%. There will be net gain for river units of 15.79%.

Flood Risk

- 8.38 EA Mapping shows that site is entirely located in Flood Zone 1, low probability of flooding.
- 8.39 EA surface water flood mapping indicates that the majority of the site is at very low risk of surface water flooding. Localised areas associated with ordinary watercourses and low-lying land are assessed at low to high risk.
- 8.40 The susceptibility to groundwater flooding is low and the risk of flooding from reservoir failure has been assessed as low.
- 8.41 The percentage increase in impermeable area is negligible and does not require any surface water management scheme.
- 8.42 The Solar Farm design, as well as surface water and soil management measures outlined will ensure that there is negligible alteration to local drainage patterns and flow directions and manage suspended sediments from entering the drainage channels.
- 8.43 It is likely that temporary drainage measures will be required to ensure that there is no increase in surface water run-off from the temporary construction compound. It is recommended that appropriate pollution control measures are incorporated into the temporary construction compound to ensure there is no degradation of downstream water quality. This will be provided through CEMP prior to commencement.
- 8.44 Where construction has resulted in soil compaction, the areas between panel rows would be tilled /scarified to an appropriate depth and then re-seeded with an appropriate vegetation cover.
- 8.45 All areas of the application area, where appropriate, will have vegetation cover at all times.
- 8.46 Any existing field or tile drainage system will be restored, where affected by construction will be maintained by the operator for the life of the development.
- 8.47 Tracks and access road will be constructed out of permeable materials (gravels or reinforced grass).
- 8.48 The FRA and supporting documentation illustrate that the application area is at low risk of flooding, and meets the requirements of the NPPF and PPG ID7.

Heritage

- 8.49 A Built Heritage Statement has been prepared in order to assess the potential impact on the historic built environment arising from the proposed development of a solar farm on land at Thorpe Estate, Clifton Lane, Tamworth ("the Site") in line with primary legislation (The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990), the relevant requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, and local policy. It identifies potentially affected built heritage assets; assesses their significance, including the contribution made by their setting; and the likely impact on their significance arising from the proposed development.
- 8.50 The report has identified that the proposals will result in change to the wider settings of the following built heritage assets:
- *Highfields Farmhouse* (Grade II, NHLE:1038807);
 - *Thorpe Hall* (Grade II, NHLE:1374310);
 - *Church of St Constantine, Thorpe Constantine* (Grade II, NHLE:1294695);
 - *Church of St Andrew, Clifton Campville* (Grade I, NHLE:1038808);
 - *Church of All Saints, Lullington* (Grade II*, NHLE:1159003),
 - *Church of All Saints, Seckington* (Grade II*, NHLE:1252599); and,
 - *Clifton Campville Conservation Area*.

- 8.51 However, it is demonstrated that, of these assets, the proposals will have no material impact on the significance of Thorpe Hall, the Church of St Constantine, the Church of All Saints (Lullington), the Church of All Saints (Seckington), or Clifton Campville Conservation Area.
- 8.52 It is also demonstrated that the proposals will result in a negligible level of less than substantial harm to the Church of St Andrew, and no more than a low-moderate level of less than substantial harm to Highfields Farmhouse. This reflects the well-considered design of the proposal development, which incorporates a number of measures that mitigate the impact of the proposals on Highfields Farmhouse, and the solar farm's temporary and fully reversible nature. An assessment of impact to the historic landscape is included within the archaeological desk based assessment (RPS, 2021) included as part of this application.
- 8.53 Any less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets engages Paragraph 196 of the NPPF, requiring the harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development – set out within other technical documents accompanying the application - having special regard to the desirability of preserving the assets.
- 8.54 The Built Heritage Statement meets the requirements of the NPPF and local planning policy. It provides sufficient information to inform the Local Planning Authority in respect of impacts on built heritage assets arising from the proposed solar farm development on land near Highfields Farm, Thorpe Estate, Clifton Lane, Tamworth.

Transport

- 8.55 Traffic and transportation impacts will be local and limited to the construction period only.
- 8.56 Regarding the nature of the impact, most of the traffic associated with the proposal will be experienced during the construction phase. During the construction period, which is estimated to take around 16 weeks, delivery vehicles and construction staff will make vehicular trips to the site. Most of deliveries will be by HGV.
- 8.57 It is expected that construction hours will be between 0700 and 1830 hours Monday to Friday and 0700 to 1300 hours on Saturday. During the other busiest periods (weeks 4 to 7), only approximately 3 HGVs will visit the site per day. Expected HGV volumes are an estimate based on experience of other similar sites in the UK.
- 8.58 A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been prepared in support of the planning application. The principal aim of the CTMP is to ensure that the construction works are organised and delivered in a manner that safeguards the highway impact, highway safety and amenity of the area surrounding the site. The CTMP states that the construction process will be managed by the appointed Site Manager employed by the contractor. The Site Manager's responsibilities will include acting as a point of contact for the local authority, stakeholders and members of the public. The Site Manager will be responsible for delivery scheduling (including potentially avoiding deliveries arriving at or departing the site during peak school pick-up and drop-off hours), construction route compliance and managing other contractors employed on-site.
- 8.59 The CTMP concludes that the scale and volume of vehicle movements associated with the development construction period is not considered to have any significant impacts on the operation of the local highway network. It is anticipated that the majority of deliveries will be made via articulated low loaders and rigid HGVs.

Other Matters

Air Quality

- 8.60 The site is not located within or adjoining an Air Quality Management Area and is considered to have a positive impact through potentially abating over 520,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide over the lifetime of the project.

Noise and Vibration

- 8.61 The proposed development does not generate any significant noise or vibration.

Public Rights of Way

- 8.62 There are a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW's) within the study area. Clifton Campville 0.338 footpath is located adjacent to the Application Site, where it heads north-west to Clifton Lane where it ends. Thorpe Constantine 2 and Clifton Campville 5 are both bridleways that run in close proximity to the southern site boundary. In addition, footpaths Thorpe Constantine 0.461 and 0.462 are located to the south-east of the site and run from the B5493, northwards. Located adjacent to part of the western site boundary is bridleway Clifton Campville 33. Further west are footpaths Thorpe Constantine 0.463 and Harlaston 8. To the south-west are footpaths Thorpe Constantine 0.464 and 0.463.
- 8.63 To the north of the site are footpaths Clifton Campville 34, 30 and 31. To the north-east are footpaths Clifton Campville 32 and Thorpe Constantine 0.457.
- 8.64 The proposed development has been carefully designed with large offset buffers from the PRoW with proposed hedgerow, tree and shrub planting to further screen the development as well as the better management of existing vegetation to enhance the screening function in views from local PRoW.

Risk of major accidents and/or disasters

- 8.65 The proposed development represents a very low risk of major accidents and/or disasters.

9 PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The proposed solar park has been designed and anticipated to generate 49,900,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity per annum, the equivalent average consumption of 14,000 homes. The proposal, in combination with other renewable and low carbon energy projects, would assist in tackling climate change and provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. It would make a substantial contribution towards the Government's renewable energy targets and is supported by the NPPF and aligns with the strategic priorities and policies within the Local Plan together with the Councils Climate Change Action Plan.
- 9.2 The development would also assist in increasing the security of electricity supply and would further diversify and strengthen the local rural economy, including allowing for ongoing grazing across the site. These are benefits which carry a great deal of weight in favour of the proposed development.
- 9.3 The pond habitat enhancement, grassland habitat creation and species protection measures that would be implemented during construction will maintain, and potentially improve, the conservation status of the local GCN population.
- 9.4 The site design, landscape proposals and ongoing management have been designed to maintain the assemblages of species breeding and overwintering in the existing arable farmland. Nest boxes will be provided for tree sparrow to increase opportunities for this breeding and wintering species.
- 9.5 Hedgerow retention with minimum 5m wide stand off, the incorporation of wide strips of new field boundary grassland, the provision of winter cover crops each year and implementing sensitive hedgerow management will also help to provide nesting sites and food resources throughout the year.
- 9.6 The longterm management and targeted monitoring are designed to deliver benefits for habitats and species. Overall, the solar park will develop higher value for biodiversity than is provided by the existing arable fields.
- 9.7 As set out within the Ecological Appraisal, the proposal would include net biodiversity enhancements across the site.
- 9.8 The proposed development has demonstrated that the proposals will result in a negligible level of less than substantial harm to the Church of St. Andrew, and no more than low-moderate level of less than substantial harm to Highfields Farmhouse. This reflects the well-considered design of the proposed development, which incorporates a number of measures that mitigate the impact of the proposals on Highfields Farmhouse, and the solar farms temporary and fully reversible nature.
- 9.9 The proposed development would not result in the loss of one of the district's areas of high-quality best and most versatile agricultural land.
- 9.10 In terms of landscape the proposed mitigation proposed would slightly enhance site conditions in the long term, resulting in some beneficial effects that would help to partly offset the adverse effects on landscape character. It is also considered that there would be no significant effects on the landscape resource within 5km.
- 9.11 The totality of the above environmental, economic and social benefits must be given substantial weight in the overall planning balance.
- 9.12 Placing all of this in the balance, it is considered that the benefits of the proposed development would be substantial and sufficiently outweigh any harm and as such, planning permission should be granted.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Your ref
Our ref 19/01310/PREAPP
Ask for Hannah Hayes
Email hannah.hayes@lichfielddc.gov.uk



**District Council House, Frog Lane
Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6YZ**

Direct Line 01543 308211
Customer Services 01543 308174

Elgin Energy EsCo Limited
C/O RPS Consulting UK
Park House
Greyfriars Road
Cardiff
CF10 3AF

23 December 2019

Dear Sir,

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
Proposed development of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic park and ancillary development
Highfields Farm, Clifton Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire**

I refer to your correspondence received 4 November 2019 in connection with the above. Having had the opportunity to consider the details submitted, I can advise as follows:

Principle of Development

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Framework details core land use principles which are overarching roles that the planning system ought to play. The NPPF encourages that new development should assist towards a low carbon future. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.

The NPPF also states that the use of renewable resources should be encouraged (for example, by the development of renewable energy). In addition there are core land use principles which include taking into account the different roles and character of different areas....recognising the character and beauty of the countryside, contributing to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and conserving heritage assets.

The National Planning Policy Guidance advises that Active solar technology, (photovoltaic and solar water heating) the followings factors should be taken into consideration:

- the importance of siting systems in situations where they can collect the most energy from the sun;
- need for sufficient area of solar modules to produce the required energy output from the system;
- the effect on a protected area such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or other designated areas;
- the colour and appearance of the modules, particularly if not a standard design.

Furthermore the guidance states the deployment of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes. However, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)

Proposed development of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic park and ancillary development

Highfields Farm, Clifton Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire

The Countryside

The site to which this enquiry relates lies within the rural countryside whereby Policy NR1 states that the countryside of the District is valued as an asset in its own right and will be protected, but does seek to support proposals which provide the sensitive use of renewable energy resources (in conjunction with Core Policy 3 and Development Management Policies SC1 & SC2). The countryside should be protected from inappropriate development which could cause environmental harm, which includes visual impact, in order to protect the countryside's intrinsic character and beauty.

Sustainable Development

As you are already aware, Policy SC2 seeks to ensure provision should be made for renewable energy generation with the district to maximise environmental and economic benefits whilst minimising and adverse local impacts. Opportunities for renewable energy developments will be assessed on the following basis:

- The degree to which the scale and nature of the proposal reflects the capacity and sensitivity of the landscape to accommodate the development;
- The impact on local amenity;
- The impact of the proposal on the sites biodiversity value, ancient woodland and veteran trees;
- The impact on the historic environment, including the effect on the significance of heritage assets and their setting and important views associated with valued landscapes; and
- The proximity to, and impact on, transport infrastructure and local highway network.

Whilst it is appreciated that the proposal seeks to make a contribution to meeting the Councils target for energy production from renewable sources, there are other policies within the adopted Local Plan which support each of the criteria.

Impact upon Heritage Assets

Policy BE1 of the Local Plan states that all development should ensure that a high quality sustainable built environment can be achieved. New development should carefully respect the character of the surrounding area and development. Core Policy 3 seeks to protect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of Lichfield District. The site surrounds Highfield Farm House, which would be considerably affected by the proposed development.

The significance of a farmstead such as Highfields is derived in part from its setting and its connection to the farmland that it is associated with. To develop such a huge area of land surrounding the farmstead on all sides would be considered to greatly harm the setting of the listed building and to harm its significance. The extent of harm to its significance would be considerable and it is unclear at this stage whether this would tip over into substantial harm. Even if it is considered to be less than substantial harm, it would be at the higher end of the spectrum so considerable public benefits would be needed to begin to balance this harm.

In terms of the hierarchy of Heritage Assets the proposed development has the potential to affect some of the most important. This includes a Scheduled Monument at Seckington which is within Warwickshire. Both the relevant LPA and Historic England should be consulted about any potential impact on this important heritage asset. I would presume that views from the top of the Motte will be a key consideration for HE.



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)

Proposed development of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic park and ancillary development Highfields Farm, Clifton Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire

There are a number of other Listed Buildings that could be affected by the proposed development, these include, but are not limited to;

- Thorpe Hall, (GII) plus the garden walls (GII) and the Church of St Constantine (GII)
- Statfold Hall (GII) and All Saints Church at Statfold Hall (GII*)
- Thorpegorse Cottages (GII)
- Syerscote Manor Farmhouse (GII)

Further to the above, there are also a number of sites on the Historic Environment Record (HER). Therefore it is advised that you consult the Staffordshire County Council's Historic Environment Team prior to submitting a full application. This is to ensure that all the relevant heritage assets are taken into account and that they include archaeological assets.

Should you wish to proceed with a full planning application for the site then a full Heritage Impact Assessment will need to be carried out on all designated and non-designated heritage assets that could be affected by the proposed development. A Zone of Theoretical visibility should be used to inform which heritage assets may be affected. While inter-visibility is not the defining feature of whether or not the setting of a heritage assets a development will be affected by a development, it is a good indicator of the likelihood of the asset being affected. The Heritage Statement should be written in accordance with the Historic England Good Advice in Planning Note 3.

Overall, the Council is of the view that Highfield Farm House would be considerably affected by the proposed development and from the information provided this could only be considered as harmful. Any harm to the significance of a Designated Heritage Asset has to be given great weight in the planning balance and public benefits can be used to balance this harm. Any heritage related public benefits would have to be clearly demonstrated as part of any application.

Impact on Landscape

Consideration will also need to be had as to whether the proposed development would have an adverse impact upon the existing landscape. The application should be supported by a full detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to quantify and qualify the degree of harm that the development would have on the landscape. Clearly, a development of this scale and nature would result in change to the landscape and has the potential to cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the countryside.

A number of bridleways which bound the overall site and a public footpath which intersects the landscape. The introduction of the proposed solar panels, facing towards these paths, the transformer kiosks, substation, 2.4m high security fencing and CCTV cameras would all combine to give the 13 fields a semi-industrial feel, at odds with the character of the surrounding undulating landscape, and adversely affecting the attractive views from the footpaths. In particular the public footpath would pass through a corridor between solar panels on both sides for some 800m. The visual experience for users of this footpath would be considered unsatisfactory.

Impact on Biodiversity

Policy NR3 confirms that development should protect, enhance, restore and implement appropriate conservation management of biodiversity, and that development should deliver a net gain of biodiversity. Based on the sites location, the habitats apparently there present or adjacent and due to the high amount of protect/priority species records with 2km (as shown by SER) it will be required that should you wish to proceed with a formal planning application that a Full Ecological Assessment (extended phase 1 habitat survey) for the site will be required to support any application.



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Furthermore, it is suggested that the development provides a net gain in biodiversity. Consideration of the Biodiversity and Development Supplementary Planning Document will also be relevant.

River Mease Special Area of Conservation:

The proposed development falls within the River Mease SAC water catchment as identified on Local Plan Strategy Policies Map. Policy NR8: River Mease Special Area of Conservation requires that development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it will not be likely to lead directly or indirectly to an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Mease SAC. It states that the effective avoidance and / or mitigation of any identified adverse effects must be demonstrated and secured prior to approval of development and on-going monitoring of impact on the SAC will be required.

Arboriculture

The site is not within any designated conservation area, and there does not appear to be any restrictions caused by TPO'd trees. Whilst there are a number of trees on the site it is not possible at this stage to ascertain whether these are affected or not by the proposal as the details of the exact location are not available. It is also not clear whether any important hedgerows would be affected by the proposed development. Any application should demonstrate the degree to which existing vegetation is impacted and include evidence on whether existing hedgerows are classified as "important" hedgerows.

However, on the assumption that the proposed PV park is on the agricultural area not impacting the trees we would have no grounds for any objections on arboricultural grounds.

Highways

Approval from the Highways Department with regard to highway safety will be sought should any application be submitted. The County Council Highways department will be consulted should a full planning application be submitted, however they are not consulted on pre-application advice. The Highways department have a separate charge for pre-application advice, should you require further advice please contact them directly. Further information is available at:

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/transport/staffshighways/highwayscontrol/HighwaysPre-ApplicationAdvice.aspx>

The Amenities of residents of Highfield House Farm

Highfield House Farm is a residential property and the only such property that adjoins the site. Access into the property is through the wider site. From the driveway/access into Highfield Farm House, which is likely to be used by residents on a daily basis, there would be views of the ends of the panels and of the gaps between the panels but also oblique views that would be of an uninterrupted band of panels between 0.8m and 2.4m in height. The closest panels would be about 15m from the driveway. The solar panels would be visually intrusive from within the property and the current open outlook across the site would be obscured.

Notwithstanding the above, it is probable that the development would be visible from other properties at further vantage points from the site. Any LVIA will need to demonstrate the degree of change that would arise from these properties.



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)

Proposed development of a ground mounted solar photovoltaic park and ancillary development Highfields Farm, Clifton Lane, Tamworth, Staffordshire

Conclusion

In conclusion, the site is located within the rural area, surrounding a Listed Building, whilst the sustainable energy benefits of such a scheme are fully taken into account it is not considered the overall harm to the Designated Heritage Assets and its setting can be outweighed by the benefits of the scheme. Furthermore it is considered the scheme due to the overall scale is likely to be harmful to the character and appearance of the rural area, and visual amenity contrary to policy. The proposal would also cause material harm to the enjoyment of the users of the public rights of way identified above. It is likely that the proposal would represent inappropriate development and could not be supported by the LPA.

Notwithstanding the above, should you wish to still proceed with a planning application then it is strongly recommended that you submit a request for a screening opinion to enable the Local Planning Authority to determine whether the proposed development is EIA development.

Also, please note that the Council's validation requirements for full planning applications are available online and you are advised to review these prior to submitting a full application:

<https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/Council/Planning/Planning-guidance/Apply-for-planning-permission.aspx>

It is considered that this application will need to be supported by:

- Planning Statement
- Sustainability Statement
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Arboricultural Surveys/Impact Assessments
- Full Ecology Surveys and Biodiversity Metric
- Agricultural Land Statement
- Transport Statement (detailing how the development will be delivered during construction phase and during operation)
- Glint and Glare Statement
- Flood Risk Assessment
- RIVER MEASE SAC Impact and Mitigation Statement

You will appreciate that this advice is an **informal opinion**, based on the information provided by you, made without the benefit of a site visit. An application is assessed on its own merits having regard to relevant development plan policies contained in the Lichfield Local Plan Strategy (2015) and Lichfield Local Plan Allocations (2019), any relevant Neighbourhood Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

I trust the above is of assistance to you however if you have any queries please contact Hannah Hayes on the above contact details.

Yours sincerely,



Development Management



APPENDIX B – PUBLIC CONSULTATION LEAFLET



THORPE
ESTATE

PROPOSED SOLAR PV FARM

Thorpe Estate Solar Farm

Tamworth, Staffordshire

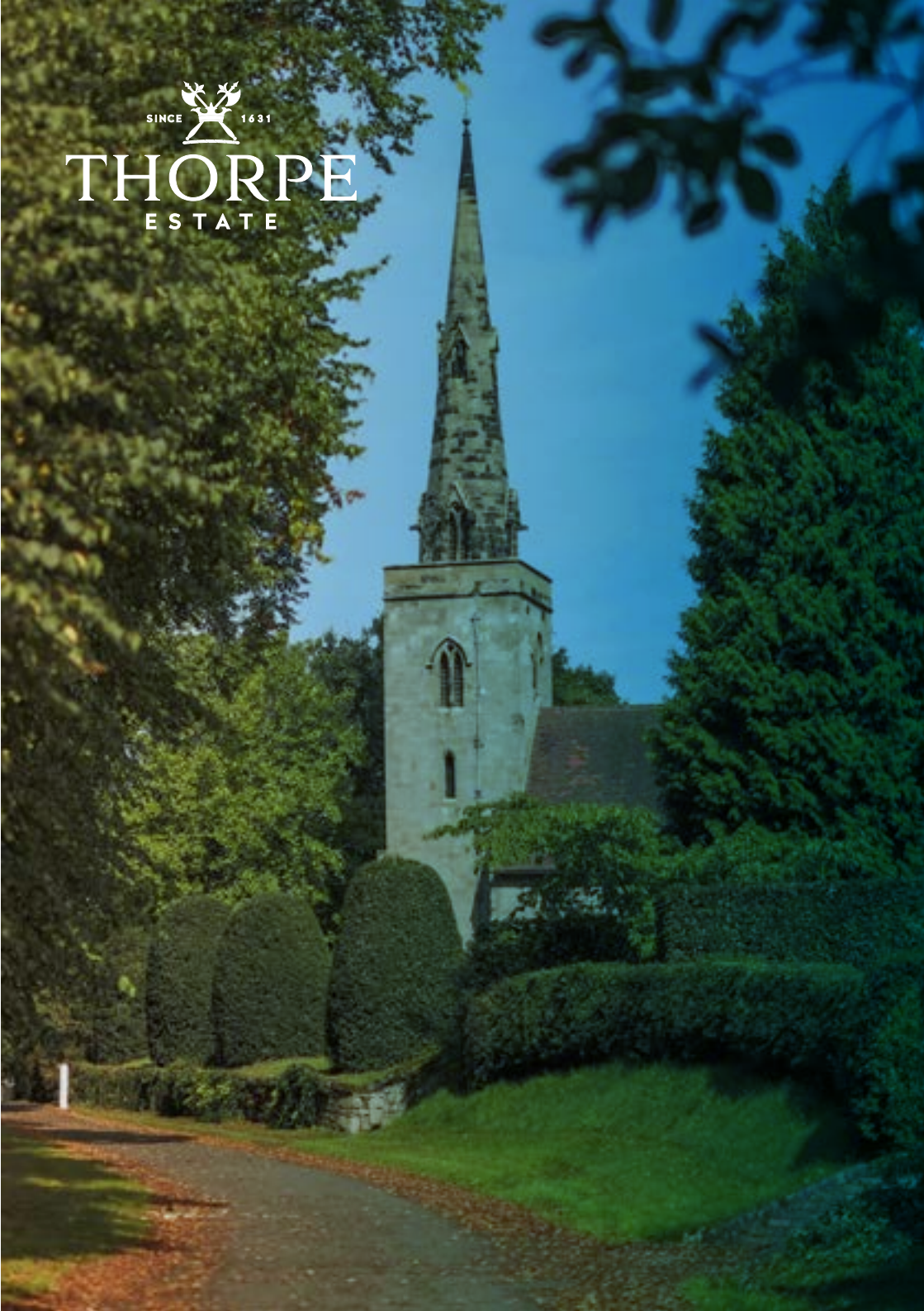
"Solar farms typically take up less than 5% of the ground they occupy, leaving huge scope for biodiversity enhancements in a protected space"

BRE National Solar Centre Biodiversity Best Practice Guidelines 2014



THORPE

ESTATE



Introduction

Thorpe Estate in partnership with solar developer, Elgin Energy, is seeking to develop a ground mounted Solar PV farm on lands at Thorpe Estate, Thorpe Constantine, Tamworth, Staffordshire, B79 0AH. We are seeking your views on this proposal ahead of submitting a planning application to Lichfield District Council. The red line on the map below indicates the site boundary.

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, we are unable to hold a public consultation event. As an alternative, we have created a website to share project information. Please visit www.thorpeestatesolarfarm.co.uk to learn more.

Partaking in this process does not affect your statutory rights to make representations to Lichfield District Council in respect of the planning application when submitted.

▲ NORTH



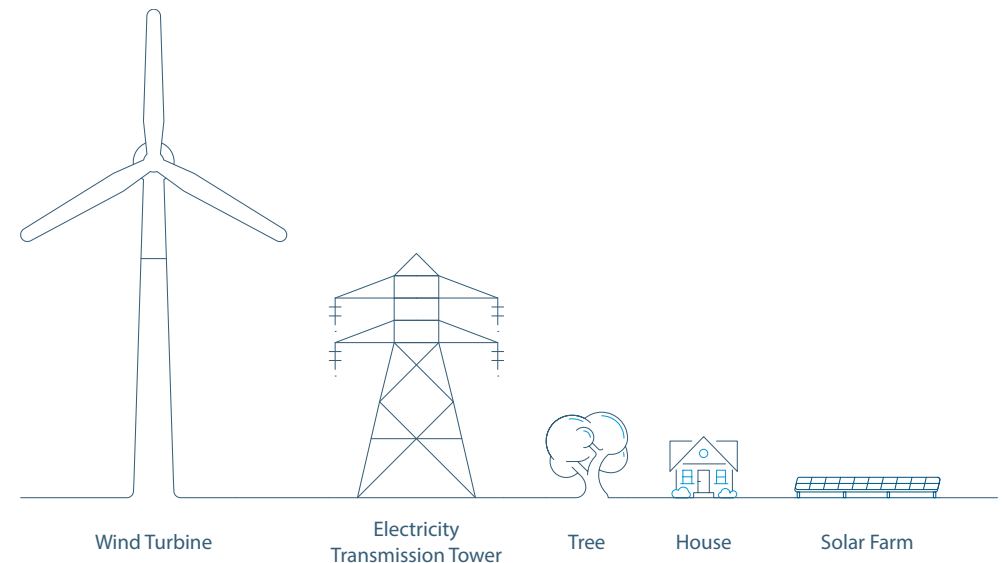
Project overview

The proposed site is located in the east corner of Lichfield District approximately 1.5 kilometres south west of Clifton Campville. Access to the site will be from Clifton Lane.

The proposed project covers approximately 176 acres and will accommodate approximately 49.9 megawatts (MW) of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels. A project lifetime of 40 years is proposed.

The proposed solar farm will generate approximately 49,900,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) per annum powering 14,000 homes or 17,000 electric vehicles (EVs) every year. This is enough energy to supply all the homes in Lichfield City or 30% of all households in Lichfield District.

This project will support progress towards both the national and local target of net zero by 2050. Lichfield District Council established a target of 9,500 kW of solar by 2020 to assist in meeting this target. The national target requires an estimated 85 GW of solar.



Biodiversity enhancements

Solar farms provide many opportunities to improve local biodiversity and maximise the environmental benefits of the project. They are low impact installations that are easily removed at the end of the project lifetime. Once installed, the land is removed from intensive agricultural use allowing the soil to regenerate. This process combined with biodiversity enhancements result in a net positive gain for local biodiversity. It is also possible for sheep grazing to take place once operational. These enhancements expedite integration of the project into its local environment, and can reduce any potential visual impacts on the local area by way of natural screening with trees and hedgerows.

A Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) will be included as part of the planning application to ensure proposed biodiversity enhancements are localised and appropriate. The following biodiversity enhancements are proposed for Thorpe Solar Farm:

- Introduction of trees and hedgerows;
- Designated 10 metre wide winter bird food seed mix areas;
- Removal of land from intensive agricultural use;
- Wildflower planting;
- Wide ecological corridors;
- Introduction of beehives and bat boxes.

Local engagement

Thorpe Estate and Elgin Energy are seeking to engage the local community to identify local initiatives that we can support through a community benefit fund. Please get in touch with the estate or Elgin Energy to share any information you have in this regard.

Local contractors and businesses will be engaged as far as possible during the installation phase. It is estimated that installation will take approximately 16 weeks. For the operational phase it is envisaged that local contractors and service providers will be engaged to maintain the solar farm.

If you would like to obtain further information about a community benefit fund or enquire about providing services for this project, please get in touch with us today.

Pre-planning process

A number of assessments are being conducted to establish any potential affects of the proposed development on the site and surrounding lands. These reports include ecology, archaeology & cultural heritage, construction access & traffic and flood risk. In addition, a landscape and visual impact assessment will be undertaken to determine any potential impacts on nearby viewpoints. A glint & glare assessment will also be carried out although glint & glare effects from PV panels are rare as they are designed to absorb, not reflect, sunlight. This is evidenced by the installation of PV panels adjacent to the runways at Gatwick airport.

Existing field boundaries, trees and hedgerows will be retained as far as possible. It is intended that ecology and biodiversity will be mitigated and improved where possible over the 40-year operational period.





Physical elements of a solar farm

The following components are proposed for this solar farm:

- Solar panels arranged in rows of 24-48 panels facing southwards at an inclination no greater than 25 degrees. The rows will be separated up to 8m from each other.
- Panel height will typically be 2.4m–3.2m at the highest point and 0.8m at the lowest.
- Mounting system comprising upright galvanised steel posts which are screwed or pushed into the ground and an aluminium support frame which is bolted together.
- Inverters convert the DC electricity produced by the panels into grid-compatible AC current. Measuring approximately 7m x 2.5m x 3m high, they will be located throughout the site.
- Substation.
- Underground cabling from the panels/inverters to the substation.
- Several permeable stone tracks to facilitate access to the inverters.
- Rural 'timber & post' deer fence measuring 2 - 2.4m in height will enclose the site. A gap of 10cm at ground level will allow ecology to freely enter and exit.
- 3m high pole-mounted CCTV cameras inside the site to monitor the solar farm.

The solar farm requires no concrete foundations apart from the substation base. It is designed to be reversible and leave no trace when removed.

About Thorpe Estate

At the centre of Thorpe Estate lies the Home Farm, which is managed by James Daw and his family, producing potatoes for McCain, Walkers & McDonalds, wheat for Warburtons, oats for Quaker, and beef for Waitrose.

James has been spearheading conservation efforts and pioneering innovative farming techniques for over 20 years. In partnership with Cambridge University Farms and the Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board, James has delivered open days on the farm to evaluate agricultural innovation, and the Estate has also been used by leading machinery manufacturers to launch their new product lines.

Recently, James and his son Sam won the McDonald's Farm Innovation Award for new practices and the Golden Loaf for Warburton's best UK milling wheat.

For over a decade the family have invested in renewable energy systems to reduce the use of fossil fuels on the Estate. They believe climate change presents clear challenges to both rural and urban environments and are mindful of safeguarding the planet for future generations.

To learn more about Thorpe Estate and the work they do, please visit their website www.thorpeestate.com.



About Elgin Energy

Elgin Energy is a leading solar development platform with operations in the UK, Ireland, and Australia. To date, they have delivered 21 projects / 230 megawatts (MW) including the largest operational solar farms in Scotland (13MW) and Northern Ireland (46MW).

The company's initial development began in the UK in 2011, followed by Ireland in 2015 and Australian offices were opened in 2018.

Elgin Energy is committed to creating a sustainable future and is working towards this goal with their projects.

To learn more about Elgin Energy and the work they do, please visit their website.

Thorpe Estate

Thorpe Constantine
Tamworth, Staffordshire
B79 0LH

T: 1827 830 587
E: alison@thorpeestate.com
W: www.thorpeestate.com

Elgin Energy

3rd Floor, Audley House
9 North Audley Street
London, W1K 6ZD

T: 0208 068 4240
E: office@elgin-energy.com
W: www.elgin-energy.com



www.thorpestatesolarfarm.co.uk



www.thorpestatesolarfarm.co.uk

APPENDIX C – TAMWORTH HERALD NOTICE

Public Notices

Public Notices

Virtual Annual Members Meeting

Join us live to find out more about your hospitals restoration and recovery, with updates of what's been happening at the Trust in 2020/2021.

Thursday 30 September 2021
from 17:30 - 19:00

To receive your invite call **01332 785 440** or email uhdb.membership@nhs.net

via Microsoft Teams

DID YOU KNOW?

You can now book your **PUBLIC NOTICE** by visiting bookanad.com

For help booking online call our team on **01227 907972** 9am-5pm Mon-Fri

Self-Serve Online

ALAN RONALD HILL (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the above named, late of 7 Osprey Winecote Tamworth Staffordshire B77 5NJ, who died on 02/07/2020, are required to send written particulars thereof to the undersigned on or before 17/11/2021, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to the claims and interests of which they have had notice.

Glover Priest Solicitors
43 Albert Road Tamworth Staffordshire B79 7JS

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ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 - SECTION 14(1)(a)
THE M42 MOTORWAY (JUNCTION 10) (TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF TRAFFIC) ORDER 2021

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Highways England Company Limited (Company No. 9346363) has made an order on the M42 Motorway, in the County of Warwickshire, to allow survey works to be carried out.

The effect of the Order will be to close –

- the exit slip road leading from the northbound carriageway of the M42 at Junction 10; and
- the exit slip road leading from the southbound carriageway of the M42 at Junction 10.

The works will be carried out overnight between 20:00 hours and 06:00 hours, and is expected to start on Monday 27 September 2021 and continue for 2 nights. The Order will come into force on 20 September 2021.

Vehicles being used for police, fire and rescue authority, ambulance or traffic officer purposes and vehicles being used in connection with the works or for winter maintenance purposes will be exempt from the closures.

Diversion routes via the M42 Junction 11 and the M42 Junction 9 will be signed.

For further information please contact Sam Green on 07540 100 216.

Karen Eustace, an officer in Highways England Company Limited.

Highways England Company Limited (Company No. 9346363) registered office: Bridge House, Walnut Tree Close, Guildford, GU1 4LZ. A company registered in England and Wales.

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984
Warwickshire County Council has made the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

COLESHILL ROAD, MAXSTOKE
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To enable the installation of a new water connection.
Order Commences: 21 September 2021 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 23 September 2021.
Access & Diversion: Castle Lane, Church Lane, Church Road, Colleshill Road, Green End Road, Meriden Road, New End Road, Nuneaton Road, Station Hill, Tamworth Road and vice versa.
Contractor: For Severn Trent Water, Gallagher's, Tel: 07880 034 069.

Warwickshire County Council proposes to make the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

COVENTRY ROAD, COLESHILL
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To enable maintenance works on flow monitoring equipment, overnight 23.00hrs-06.00hrs.
Order Commences: 5 October 2021 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 7 October 2021.
Access & Diversion: Coventry Road, Parkfield Road, Park Road, Birmingham Road, Lichfield Road, Stonebridge Road and vice versa.
Contractor: For Severn Trent Water, Crusader Traffic Ltd, Tel: 01406 490 011.

WARTON LANE, AUSTREY
Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from a point adjacent to property number 4.
Reason for Order: To enable works for the provision of a new power supply.
Order Commences: 5 October 2021 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 7 October 2021.
Access & Diversion: Warton Lane, No Mans Heath Lane, Newton Lane and vice versa.
Contractor: For Western Power Distribution, Kier, Tel: 01332 827 637.

For all of the above temporary orders, pedestrian access to and egress from properties and land situated adjacent to the length of road to be closed will be maintained at all times. Vehicular access will be maintained where possible.

To report any problems with these works or for further details of our current & planned roadworks visit our website warwickshire.gov.uk/roadworksmap or call us 01926 412515.
S Duxbury, Assistant Director of Governance & Policy, Shire Hall, Warwick, CV34 4RL Date 16 Sep 2021

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 – TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF TRAFFIC AND TEMPORARY 10 MPH SPEED RESTRICTION

Various Roads in Staffordshire Notice is hereby given that Staffordshire County Council intend not less than seven days from the date of this notice to make an Order the effect of which is to prohibit any vehicle from proceeding and travelling above 10 mph on the following roads listed in Schedule 1. The Order will come into operation on 4 October 2021 and the said works will commence on or as near as practicable to that date taking place between the hours of 07:00hrs and 18:00hrs or 18:00hrs and 06:00hrs as site requirements dictate. It is anticipated the works will be completed by 31 May 2022. The Order will remain in force for a period of 18 months or until the preventative carriageway treatment works, which it is proposed to carry out on or near the roads have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

Schedule 1 – Borough of Tamworth
Longlands Drive, Sheepcote Lane, Shuttington Road, Tamworth Road, Amington; Angelica, Beechwood Crescent, Davis Road, Hanbury Road, Kenilworth Road, Lavender Road, Linden Close, Rosemary Road, Scott Road, St Marys Way, Tudor Crescent (2No.), Warwick Road, Wesley Way, Woodhurst Close, **Bolehall**; Rookery Lane, School Lane, **Hints**; B5404 Plantation Lane; **Hopwas**; A453 Sutton Road, **Mile Oak**; Grange Close, Kennedy Close, Mount Pleasant, New Street, Two Gates, Park Farm Road, Parkfield Avenue, Parkfield Close, Parkfield Crescent, **Mount Pleasant**; Browns Lane, Gillway Lane, Wigginton Road/Main Road, **Perry Crofts**; A453 Bonehill Road, A513 Comberford Road, A51 Peellers Way, **Tamworth**; Hungry Lane/Church Hill, **Weeford**; Syerscote Lane, **Wigginton**.

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984 – DIVERSION OF VEHICULAR TRAFFIC

Notice is hereby given that Staffordshire County Council intend not less than seven days from the date of this notice to make an Order the effect of which is to prohibit any vehicle from proceeding along:

Scotland Lane, Harlaston. For more information regarding access arrangements, timings and diversion routes please visit <https://one.network/?tm=123027160>. The Order will come into operation on 7th October 2021 and the said works will commence on or as near as practicable to that date. It is anticipated the works will be completed on the same day. The Order will remain in force for a period of 18 months or until the renew/repair damaged box works, which it is proposed to carry out on or near the road have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

Hospital Street, Tamworth For more information regarding access arrangements, timings and diversion routes please visit <https://one.network/?tm=122619465>. The Order will come into operation on 4th October 2021 and the said works will commence on or as near as practicable to that date. It is anticipated the works will be completed by 6th December 2021. The Order will remain in force for a period of 18 months or until the manhole repair works, which it is proposed to carry out on or near the road have been completed, whichever is the earlier.

PUBLIC NOTICE
ONLINE PUBLIC CONSULTATION
PROPOSED SOLAR PV FARM ON LANDS AT THORPE ESTATE, THORPE CONSTANTINE, TAMWORTH, STAFFORDSHIRE, B79 0AH

Elgin Energy is conducting a public consultation in relation to the above proposals. As an alternative to a public event during the ongoing pandemic, a dedicated project website has been created to share information and facilitate feedback.

www.thorpeestatesolarfarm.co.uk/

Please take this opportunity to share your views on the proposals before Sunday 3rd October 2021.

If you require further information, please contact us on:
E: office@elgin-energy.com
T: 0208 068 4240

Please note that partaking in this process does not affect your statutory rights to make representations to the Consenting Authority (Lichfield District Council) in respect of the planning application when submitted.

LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Applications for Listed Building Consent/ Planning permission within a Conservation Area have been submitted for:

21/01490/FUH - Erection of detached double garage at Percival House, School Lane, Hopwas, Tamworth.

21/01525/FUL - Section 73 Application to vary condition 2 (approved plans and specification) of permission 18/00435/FUL to allow the implementation of technical developments and further design refinement of the house in its construction at The Woodlands, The Shrubbery, Elford, Tamworth.

The above application(s) are available for inspection on the Lichfield District Council website <https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/planning>. Representations should be made via either the website or email to Neighbour.Responses@lichfielddc.gov.uk, within 21 days of this notice. The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 requires that any representations received must be available for inspection and may be copied. The General Data Protection Regulations gives you rights about how your personal data is obtained and used by the Council. Please refer to the website for further information.

Estimated Publication Date: 16 September 2021

General Announcements

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Susan Petford & Carl Petford trading as C T Petford of Bangley Lodge Farm, Watling Street, Hints, Staffordshire, B78 3DE is applying for a licence to use Bangley Lodge Farm, Watling Street, Hints, Staffordshire, B78 3DE as an operating centre for 1 goods vehicles and 0 trailers.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's Office.

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Steven P Doherty trading as C E Walton & Co Ltd of Unit 5 Ninian Park, Ninian Way, Winecote, Tamworth B77 5ES is applying for a licence to use Unit 5 Ninian Park, Ninian Way, Winecote, Tamworth B77 5ES as an operating centre for 2 goods vehicles and 0 trailers.

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's Office.

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

JPR Logistics of 11 Lillingstone Avenue Tamworth England B79 8FD Staffordshire is Applying to change an existing licence as follows To keep an extra 2 vehicles and 4 trailers at operating centre at Langley Brook Business Park London Road Middleton Tamworth Staffordshire B78 2BP GB

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's Office.

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Ale Construction Ltd trading as Ale Piling of Blabers Hall Farm, Green End Rd, Fillongley, CV7-8EP is applying for a licence to use Blabers Hall Farm, Green End Rd, Fillongley, CV7-8EP as an operating centre for 5 goods vehicles and 5 trailers

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 6NF stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's Office.

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL
Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Town & Country Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Publication: 16 September 2021: -The following applications have been received by the Council:
Applicant: SaLaBe Ltd - Ref: PAP/2021/0265
The Homestead, 82 Main Road, Austrey - Listed Building consent for dismantling of existing barn and construction of two dwellings and parking. - Reason: Listed Building.
View applications via the Planning Application Search on www.northwarks.gov.uk. Representations must be made in writing to Head of Development Control, The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire, CV9 1DE or by email to planappconsult@northwarks.gov.uk before 10 October 2021.

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APPENDIX D – CONSULTATION INFORMATION RECEIVED

Response 1

| | |
|--|---|
| Date Submitted | 10/16/2021 |
| First Name | Daz |
| Last Name | Parker |
| Email | parkerd@sky.com |
| I am engaging in this consultation because: | No answer given |
| Please rate your feelings towards the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | Opposed |
| Are you concerned about the effects of climate change? | Yes |
| Do you support the use of solar energy to combat climate change? | undecided |
| Do you support the principle of developing new solar energy projects? | undecided |
| In your opinion, what are the main benefits of the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm? | No answer given |
| If you do not think there would be any benefits from the project, please state why: | The pros gained from implementing 176 acres of solar panels is going to be far outweighed by the production, construction, transport and environmental impact caused by the project. In my opinion a lot of impact with not a lot of benefit gained. |
| Please select any concerns you have in relation to the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | landscape-and-visual-impact,traffic-during-the-installation-phase |
| Do you have any concerns about how our proposed plans for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm will affect you or the existing environment? | Rural living is being destroyed wether by construction companies building houses, warehouses and industrial sites to companies using climate change to destroy and tarnish landscapes with solar panels or wind turbines. |
| What do you consider to be the main impacts of solar farms, if any? | Eyesore, massively increased traffic, yet more green belt destroyed. |
| Is there anything you would change about the proposal? If so, please outline below: | Apart from not installing it in the first place Vastly reduce the size of the whole project. |
| Please provide suggestions for local community benefit fund initiatives. | No answer given |
| If you are seeking further project information, please outline your queries below and our team will get in touch with you. | Where is the construction traffic going? Clifton lane is a single track lane in parts. Traffic and farm vehicles already travel far to fast. Add to that construction traffic and it's an accident waiting to happen. |
| Please let us know how you heard about the proposals for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | Social Media |
| How they heard about consultation - Other: | Although we live in Thorpe Constantine we've received no prior information regarding this project. We found out through Facebook! |
| Do you feel this online consultation process has helped you to understand the project proposal? | No |
| Would you like to be kept informed of our proposals for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm? | Yes |

Response 2

| | |
|--|---|
| Date Submitted | 10/16/2021 |
| First Name | John & Eve |
| Last Name | Bainbridge |
| Email | jbainbr944@aol.com |
| I am engaging in this consultation because: | I live within 5km of project |
| Please rate your feelings towards the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | Undecided |
| Are you concerned about the effects of climate change? | undecided |
| Do you support the use of solar energy to combat climate change? | Yes |
| Do you support the principle of developing new solar energy projects? | Yes |
| In your opinion, what are the main benefits of the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm? | No answer given |
| If you do not think there would be any benefits from the project, please state why: | We believe that this development is in the wrong place. There has been no development on Clifton Lane for over 100 years and valuable agricultural land will be lost for the production of human and animal food. At a time when the country strives to be more self-sufficient this is a retrograde step. Much of the proposed site is north facing and sloping and not ideal for this kind of development. |
| Please select any concerns you have in relation to the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | landscape-and-visual-impact, effects-on-land-use, effects-on-local-biodiversity-and-ecology |
| Do you have any concerns about how our proposed plans for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm will affect you or the existing environment? | We fear that this kind of development will have a negative impact on the value of our home which we have enjoyed for 45 years. We have a great deal of wild life, such as badgers, which will have their centuries-old routes interrupted by high fences surrounding the fields. Clifton Lane is very narrow and bendy. In recent years there have been several accidents where vehicles have left the road and gone through hedges. We believe the panels are too close to the road - drivers may be dazzled by the panels, especially at night. |
| What do you consider to be the main impacts of solar farms, if any? | Solar farms are very unpleasant to look at. |
| Is there anything you would change about the proposal? If so, please outline below: | Find a more suitable location - brown field sites should be the first choice for solar panels, not productive agricultural land. |
| Please provide suggestions for local community benefit fund initiatives. | No answer given |
| If you are seeking further project information, please outline your queries below and our team will get in touch with you. | Does the fact that much of the proposed site is north facing and sloping mean that the panels at the bottom of the hills will have to be higher than that stated? |
| Please let us know how you heard about the proposals for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | No answer given |
| How they heard about consultation - Other: | You sent two copies of a letter and booklet to our home address. |
| Do you feel this online consultation process has helped you to understand the project proposal? | No |
| Would you like to be kept informed of our proposals for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm? | Yes |

Response 3

| | |
|--|---|
| Date Submitted | 10/15/2021 |
| First Name | Josephine |
| Last Name | Jewell |
| Email | jrb.jewell@btinternet.com |
| I am engaging in this consultation because: | I can see the project from my property |
| Please rate your feelings towards the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | Undecided |
| Are you concerned about the effects of climate change? | undecided |
| Do you support the use of solar energy to combat climate change? | undecided |
| Do you support the principle of developing new solar energy projects? | undecided |
| In your opinion, what are the main benefits of the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm? | No answer given |
| If you do not think there would be any benefits from the project, please state why: | undecided |
| Please select any concerns you have in relation to the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | landscape-and-visual-impact,effects-on-land-use,effects-on-local-biodiversity-and-ecology,traffic-during-the-installation-phase |
| Do you have any concerns about how our proposed plans for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm will affect you or the existing environment? | Yes |
| What do you consider to be the main impacts of solar farms, if any? | No answer given |
| Is there anything you would change about the proposal? If so, please outline below: | No answer given |
| Please provide suggestions for local community benefit fund initiatives. | No answer given |
| If you are seeking further project information, please outline your queries below and our team will get in touch with you. | No answer given |
| Please let us know how you heard about the proposals for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | Word of mouth |
| How they heard about consultation - Other: | |
| Do you feel this online consultation process has helped you to understand the project proposal? | No |
| Would you like to be kept informed of our proposals for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm? | Yes |

Response 4

| | |
|--|--|
| Date Submitted | 10/14/2021 |
| First Name | Helen |
| Last Name | Dempsey |
| Email | helen.dempsey@live.co.uk |
| I am engaging in this consultation because: | I live further than 5km from the project |
| Please rate your feelings towards the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | Very supportive |
| Are you concerned about the effects of climate change? | Yes |
| Do you support the use of solar energy to combat climate change? | Yes |
| Do you support the principle of developing new solar energy projects? | Yes |
| In your opinion, what are the main benefits of the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm? | It will produce a clean and safe supply of energy,it-will-provide-local-employment-opportunities,the-project-will-require-little-maintenance-and-create-very-little-noise,relatively-low-visual-impact |
| If you do not think there would be any benefits from the project, please state why: | No answer given |
| Please select any concerns you have in relation to the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | traffic-during-the-installation-phase,effects-on-local-biodiversity-and-ecology |
| Do you have any concerns about how our proposed plans for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm will affect you or the existing environment? | No answer given |
| What do you consider to be the main impacts of solar farms, if any? | No answer given |
| Is there anything you would change about the proposal? If so, please outline below: | No answer given |
| Please provide suggestions for local community benefit fund initiatives. | No answer given |
| If you are seeking further project information, please outline your queries below and our team will get in touch with you. | No answer given |
| Please let us know how you heard about the proposals for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | Social Media |
| How they heard about consultation - Other: | |
| Do you feel this online consultation process has helped you to understand the project proposal? | Yes |
| Would you like to be kept informed of our proposals for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm? | No |

Response 5

| | |
|--|--|
| Date Submitted | 10/12/2021 |
| First Name | Jerry |
| Last Name | Greatorex |
| Email | jerrygreatorex@gmail.com |
| I am engaging in this consultation because: | I can see the project from my property |
| Please rate your feelings towards the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | Opposed |
| Are you concerned about the effects of climate change? | Yes |
| Do you support the use of solar energy to combat climate change? | Yes |
| Do you support the principle of developing new solar energy projects? | Yes |
| In your opinion, what are the main benefits of the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm? | No answer given |
| If you do not think there would be any benefits from the project, please state why: | No answer given |
| Please select any concerns you have in relation to the proposed Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | landscape-and-visual-impact, effects-on-land-use, effects-on-local-biodiversity-and-ecology |
| Do you have any concerns about how our proposed plans for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm will affect you or the existing environment? | I do have concerns about the biodiversity impacts, particularly the fragmentation of important wildlife habitats and associated migration corridors through use of fences, as well as the significant landscape alteration. |
| What do you consider to be the main impacts of solar farms, if any? | <p>I'm concerned about the loss of valuable food production in a time of significant supply chain insecurity. In addition, as the marketing leaflet provided by Thorpe outlines, under the stewardship of James Dawe the estate has benefitted from award winning farming innovation; it would be a shame to lose the opportunity of farming advancement by reducing the land available to drive progressive farming opportunities.</p> <p>I'm also concerned about the considerable negative visual impact on the local countryside, specifically the near virtual encircling of Highfields Farm and Highfields Cottage with solar panels and infrastructure. The implementation of the scheme would irreversibly destroy the traditional landscape in the area and would significantly negatively affect the lives of those living in close proximity to the scheme owing to the visual impact. The location of the substation and other infrastructure including CCTV posts, security fencing and other physical infrastructure such as inverters will also have a significant visual impact on the residents in the immediate vicinity</p> |
| Is there anything you would change about the proposal? If so, please outline below: | We are not against the entire scheme, but the schemes layout almost entirely surrounding Highfields Farm is especially unreasonable and unsympathetic to the heritage elements of the area. Specifically, the positioning of panels in the fields on Clifton Lane (representative viewpoint 1) would cause a significant negative visual impact to the property and its residents. The positioning of panels on the steep hillside directly adjacent to Highfields Farm will dramatically change the desirability of the property. The layout of the scheme disproportionately negatively effects the residents of Highfields farm & Highfields Cottage by encroaching significantly on the landscape surrounding the homes |
| Please provide suggestions for local community benefit fund initiatives. | No answer given |
| If you are seeking further project information, please outline your queries below and our team will get in touch with you. | I would like to understand better the economic viability of the scheme, and how the operator intends to mitigate the considerable visual impact on the residents directly affected. |
| Please let us know how you heard about the proposals for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm: | Word of mouth |
| How they heard about consultation - Other: | No answer given |
| Do you feel this online consultation process has helped you to understand the project proposal? | No |
| Would you like to be kept informed of our proposals for Thorpe Estate Solar Farm? | Yes |