



13 April 2022

Report to: South Cambridgeshire District
Council Planning Committee

Lead Officer: Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development

21/02173/FUL– Land To The North-East Of Childerley Farm, Childerley Estate, Childerley

Proposal: Installation of a renewable energy led generating station comprising of ground-mounted solar arrays, associated electricity generation infrastructure and other ancillary infrastructure comprising of storage containers, access tracks, fencing, gates and CCTV together with the creation of a woodland, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.

Applicant: Mr Hawkins (Solarcentury Limited)

Key material considerations:

- Principle of Development - Renewable Energy
- Heritage Assets
- Natural Assets
- Agricultural Land
- Character and Appearance of the Countryside
- Landscape Character
- Cumulative impact with other developments
- Residential Amenity
- Highway/PROW safety
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Other Matters

Date of Member site visit: N/A

Is it a Departure Application?: No

Decision due by: Extension of Time agreed until 15th April 2022

Application brought to Committee because: Local interest and policy considerations

Officer Recommendation: Approval

Presenting officer: Tom Gray, Senior Planning Officer

Executive Summary

1. This proposal is for a solar farm with associated infrastructure, which would generate and store up to 50 MW of renewable energy, equivalent of 14,200 homes. The development would consist of a series of south-facing solar panel arrays and additional ancillary structures, covering an area of approximately 80 hectares of grades 2, 3a and 3b agricultural land located to the east of Battlegate Road and north of Childerley Hall. The applicant seeks temporary planning consent for a 37-year period, after which the land will be fully decommissioned, and the site returned to arable agricultural use.
2. The proposal would result in some limited visual impacts which would be satisfactorily mitigated by soft landscaping, and some temporary landscape character impacts, whilst there would be some minor harm upon the setting of heritage assets during both construction and operation. This is given moderate weight.
3. Whilst the proposal would result in a loss of the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMVAL), alternative sites on both developed land and poorer quality agricultural land have been considered and the sequential analysis successfully demonstrates that there would be no better alternative sites close to the grid connection, therefore meeting the compelling evidence test. This attracts significant weight.
4. In addition, the proposed development would provide renewable energy for a considerable number of homes which would make an important contribution towards climate change objectives and attracts significant weight. It would also provide some agricultural grazing use and would enhance biodiversity which can be given moderate weight.
5. Therefore, on balance, the significant public benefits of the scheme in addition to other benefits are considered to outweigh the identified adverse impacts of the development. Members are therefore recommended to approve the application subject to conditions.

Relevant planning history

6. S/1714/15/FL – Solar Farm and Associated Development – Refused
7. 20/04419/SCRE – EIA Screening opinion for a solar farm – EIA Screening Not Required
8. 20/04184/PRI06A – Prior approval for the formation of a private way for agricultural use – Prior approval not required
9. 20/04185/PRI06A - Prior approval for the formation of a private way for agricultural use Prior approval not required

Planning policies

10. National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – July 2021
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
National Design Guide (NDG)

11. South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018

S/1 Vision
S/2 Objectives of the Local Plan
S/3 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
S/7 Development Frameworks
CC/2 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation
CC/7 Water Quality
CC/8 Sustainable Drainage Systems
CC/9 Managing Flood Risk
E/18 Farm Diversification
HQ/1 Design Principles
NH/2 Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character
NH/3 Protecting Agricultural Land
NH/4 Biodiversity
NH/5 Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance
NH/7 Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees
NH/14 Heritage Assets
SC/9 Lighting Proposals
SC/10 Noise Pollution
SC/12 Air Quality
TI/2 Planning for Sustainable Travel
TI/3 Parking Provision

12. South Cambridgeshire Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction - Adopted January 2020
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water - Adopted November 2016
District Design Guide - Adopted March 2010
Landscape in New Developments - Adopted March 2010
Biodiversity - Adopted February 2022
Trees and Development Sites - Adopted January 2009

Consultations

13. **Dry Drayton Parish Council** – Support the application. Request that a condition be applied to limit development as what is actually proposed. Concern about the potential for development to get larger in the future.

No further comments on amendments.

14. **Bar Hill Parish Council** – No recommendation but support Dry Drayton Parish Council regarding limiting development to proposed plan.
15. **Childerley Parish Council** – No comments received (out of time).
16. **Boxworth Parish Council** – Support the application. Objections raised concerning use of agricultural land.
17. **Lolworth Parish Council** – No comments received (out of time).
18. **County Council's Local Highways Authority** – No objection subject to conditions. Requires Battlegate Road not be used to access the site during the construction, maintenance and decommissioning of the Solar Farm as detailed in the submitted Traffic Management Plan (TMP). Request that the routing of all vehicles accessing the site be in accordance with submitted TMP and conditioned.
19. **County Council Transport Assessment Team** – No objections. Low trip generation once built (10-20 visits per year).
20. **County Council's Asset Information Definitive Map Officer** – No objection to the principle of this proposal. However, the glint and glare assessment does not appear to have made any assessment of the impact upon PROW users, especially any impact on equestrians. High volume of routes around perimeter of the site so assessment is required.

Temporary diversions of footpaths may be required and should be applied for.

Grazing of animals – applicant should provide details of any other vehicle access requirements including frequency and site access e.g. farm or from Battlegate.

More formal surface water management arrangement to mitigate impacts upon PROW network via surface run-off.
PROW must remain open at all times and building materials/contractor parking should not be parked on it.

Recommends informatives.

21. **Highways England** – No objection. Short-term nature of construction works associated with the development are unlikely to have a long-term impact on the strategic road network.
22. **Council's Sustainable Drainage Engineer** – Development is acceptable subject to scheme of surface water drainage condition. Recommends informatives.
23. **Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)** – Comments made on 29th June 2021 – Objection. Surface water drainage strategy required.

Comments following amendments made on 9th November 2021 – Maintain objection. Management of water from maintenance tracks and battery storage areas and discharge points/rates required.

Comments following amendments made on 15th November 2021 – No objection. Managed through the use of filter drains being installed which will be discharged to surrounding ditch network. General concept is acceptable subject to details regarding the wider surface water management across the whole site including access tracks and compound areas. Recommend conditions regarding detailed design of surface water drainage of the site and measures during construction works. Informatives.

24. **Anglian Water** – No comments to make.
25. **Environment Agency** – No objection in principle. LLFA should be consulted.
Recommend ensuring that space be left between the panels to ensure access to drainage ditches for maintenance purposes. Clarification should be sought with regards necessity for foul water drainage provision. Recommends informatives on any planning consent granted.
26. **Council's Trees Officer** – No objection subject to conditions. Hedgerows likely to qualify as important hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and would therefore have statutory protection. Please ensure that cable route plans states that directional drilling will be used around trees and hedgerows even outside the red line boundary. Recommends pre-commencement detailed arboricultural method statement and tree protection strategy condition.
27. **Council's Ecology Officer** – No objection subject to conditions. Site is situated approximately 870m from the Overhall Grove SSSI cited for its ancient woodland. No non-statutory protected areas in the vicinity that are likely to be impacted by this application. Species data shows great crested newt, barn owl and other breeding birds, flowering plants, invertebrates, reptile, brown hare, badger, and otter have all been recorded locally.

The application is supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (Riverdale Ecology, March 2021). The report has highlighted badgers, breeding and wintering birds, great crested newts, and commuting and foraging bats as potential constraints to works.

No potential bat roost sites are to be removed and no external lighting installed and therefore no further bat surveys are required at this time.

Two nearby ponds shown potential as great crested newt breeding ponds and suitable terrestrial habitat around them. However, much of application site is cropland and does not provide a suitable terrestrial habitat for foraging great crested newts, but improved field margins may as part of mitigation plan. Movement barriers suggested to prevent great crested newts from accessing

the main site during construction is acceptable, but full method statement required for the construction of the arrays, enhancement of the margins and hedgerows and ongoing management of new and enhanced habitats. Licensing may be required in the future.

Recommends Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcMP) and Landscape and Ecological Management Plan conditions.

28. **Council's Landscape Officer** – Original comments made on 12th August 2021 – Revised red line required. Change to the local landscape character is inevitable. Concerns regarding 3 metre high hedgerow proposed. Mitigation measures are acceptable but views would still be possible due to undulating topology and via new access gates. Hedgerow trees along field boundary with Battlegate Road are not enforceable due to being outside of the red line boundary and also not consistent with managed hedgerows of local landscape character. The panels and CCTV columns would be visible and incongruous with the rural countryside, contrary to policies S/2, CC/2, HQ/1 and NH/2. No landscaping details regarding reinstatement of arable fields. To be conditioned.
No cabling route details.
Suggest alternative hedgerow trees. Boundary treatments (deer fencing) to be conditioned.

Comments following amendments made on 9th November 2021 – Revised red line boundary indicating construction and maintenance access, farm track and existing hedgerow and cabling route required.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – solar panels moved further northwards on southern boundary, and access gate moved to be more discrete. These are acceptable, however, revised landscape drawing inclusive of small wooded area and increased vegetation on southern boundary is required.

Works would be temporary and the site will be returned to arable.

3 metre high hedgerows are typical in local landscape and with additional landscape mitigation works/relocation of access gate, there is no objection with regards effect on the local landscape character and views. Subject to a revised landscape drawing, would have a limited effect on local landscape character, views and visual amenity and would comply with Policies CC/2 and NH/2

Decommissioning – previous comments apply.

Construction traffic management plan – new access track would require tree removals. Tree survey, arboricultural implications assessment, method statement and tree protection plan to be conditioned.

Proposed cabling route would require tree survey, arboricultural implications assessment, method statement and tree protection plan to be conditioned.

Soft landscaping details required. Hard landscaping is acceptable. Boundary treatment details to be conditioned.

Comments following amendments made on 17th November 2021 –

Landscaping concerns addressed subject to tree survey for construction route and cabling.

29. **Natural England** – No objection. Not considered to have significant adverse impacts on statutory protected nature conservation sites or landscapes. Development does not appear to lead to a loss of over 20 ha ‘best and most versatile’ agricultural land (paragraph 170 and 171 of the NPPF) and therefore do not propose to make any detailed comments in relation to agricultural land quality and soils. Recommends generic advice.
30. **Council’s Urban Design Officer** – No objection in urban design terms. However, potential adverse visual impacts upon the existing setting and in relation to the public footpaths are likely. Screening of existing vegetation and addition vegetation around the site may help mitigate the visual impact once these vegetations are fully grown. Consultation with the Landscape Officer is essential.
31. **Council’s Conservation Officer** – Original comments made on 24th June 2021 – Less than substantial harm during construction and operational phases.

Abuts the boundary of Childerley Park, which is a Grade II* listed park/garden. The park contains a number of listed buildings, including the Grade II* listed Hall and the Grade II* listed chapel.

Solar array would be screened from all but very small areas of the park by trees and large modern farm buildings. It would have an impact on the setting of the listed park as it would erode the agricultural landscape setting within which the park sits, although this would generally not be evident from within the park itself.

The proposed route for construction traffic for the project lies through the centre of the listed park. Various amendments are proposed to existing driveways through the park, including the creation of a new section of access track through an area which is currently wooded, to the north-west of the Hall. South of this point, the access track would pass immediately alongside the whole west wall of one of the barns in the listed Upper Farm complex.

The application details make it clear that very large vehicles would be employed during the construction process, and that many hundreds of such movements would be required during the six months of construction. Swept path diagrams are included to demonstrate how such vehicles would pass along the relatively restricted access drive. These show that much of the route would be single-file, and that in a number of places, including close to the listed barns, vehicles would have to stray beyond the confines of the existing

tracks. There is clearly potential for harm to the character of the park through erosion of the existing route margins, damage to vegetation, including trees, and also the fabric of the listed barns themselves.

The operational phase of this proposal would cause 'less-than-substantial' harm to the significance of the listed park and garden, because it would deprive it of part of its historical agricultural setting. Given that this part of the setting would be largely hidden from the park and Hall by trees and buildings, it is accepted that this harm would be at the lower end of the 'less-than-substantial' range. It is for the decision-maker to weigh this level of harm against the sustainability merits of the proposal, and consider whether these override the conflict with policy NH/14 of the local plan and paragraphs 193, 194 and 196 of the Framework.

The construction phase of the proposal has the potential to cause more significant harm to the listed park and the listed buildings within it. The construction phase would be temporary, but the damage to the landscape of the park would be longer-lasting, and accidental damage to trees and buildings might be irreparable. The applicant's heritage statement does not seem to give proper attention to this issue, and the details of how construction traffic would be managed seem to focus only on the impact on the highway network, rather than potential harm inside the estate. Although a decommissioning strategy is included, it does not appear to cover any arrangements for restoring the surfaces inside the estate to their previous condition. Furthermore, although the application states that the access from the south is the 'preferred route' it does not explain why, or how the possible benefits of other access routes have been weighed.

If a proper assessment of all possible access routes has concluded that the preferred route must be used, it should be explained. If this route has to be used, a clearer strategy to minimise damage during the construction phase (including the laying of additional material on the access route) must be provided, and a proper plan for restoring track surfaces and landscaping after the construction phase must be submitted.

The proposed development has the potential to cause 'less-than-substantial' harm to the significance of the listed park and garden and the listed buildings within it during construction. The harm is difficult to predict, but in the worst circumstances it could reach into the upper half of the 'less-than-substantial' range. It may be possible to address the concerns indicated above regarding the construction phase through conditions, but unless additional information is provided, and mitigating measures are specified and adhered to, the proposal would be contrary to policy NH/14 of the local plan, and to paragraphs 193, 194 and 196 of the Framework.

Comments following amendments made on 13th September 2021 – The revisions made to this CTMP address the concerns I raised previously. I think it needs a compliance condition to ensure they adhere to the provisions, especially those in the new Section 7.

32. **Historic England** – No objection.

Solar panels would cover approximately 29% of the developed site, arranged in rows spaced 3.5-5.5 metres apart with a height of no more than 3 metres above ground level. Associated infrastructure would include 16 battery containers, substations, outdoor PCS units, transformers a, cabling, fencing, CCTV equipment and vehicle access.

Fields would be seeded alongside new native hedgerows and tree belts. After the intended 37-year operational life, the solar array will be decommissioned and removed, with fields restored to agricultural use.

New built form would be introduced into open agricultural land adjoining Childerley Hall to the north, considerably altering the physical appearance and character of part of its immediate setting. Generally, the proposed development will be well-screened in views from within the registered park and garden and from its associated assets – although there may be filtered views from parts of Black Park during winter when leaves are off trees. Impacts to the setting of highly graded designated heritage assets within 2km will be considerably more limited, if not negligible.

No objections raised on heritage grounds on previous proposed larger solar farm under S/1714/15/FL.

Satisfied that the significance of the registered park and garden at Childerley Hall and its associated assets would not be harmed as a result of the level of impact of the solar farm on their setting. This would also be true for the other highly graded designated heritage assets within a 2km radius of the application site. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework.

33. **County Council's Archaeological Officer** – Original comments made on 7th September 2021 – Objection. Archaeological evaluation required.

Comments following amendments made on 24th November 2021 – Objection. Modified layout plan and requisite archaeological mitigation strategy are welcomed, however, further information/amended AMS required.

Comments following amendments made on 24th January 2022 – Objection. Mitigation strategy that focuses on the specific issues of this proposal is required.

Comments following amendments made on 8th February 2022 – No objection. Updated archaeological mitigation strategy is acceptable. Allows for pre-construction evaluation to occur across this large development area, should the scheme gain planning consent (6.11). A range of options is then provided at 6.12 that will allow of the mitigation of archaeological remains in situ:

- by avoidance and modification of the scheme's design, or
- by limiting ground impacts by mounting the PV panels on concrete ballast foundations and rerouting cables away from archaeologically sensitive areas

- by excavation
- by selected area monitoring and recording brief.

The aim of this office is to ensure that in situ preservation of archaeological remains is maximised, avoiding the need for excavation where possible.

Any planning consent should show a planning condition for archaeology.

34. **Council's Air Quality Officer** – No objections.
35. **Council's Environmental Health Officer** – No objection. Noise assessment indicates that complaints, arising from noise, are unlikely.
36. **Council's Scientific Officer (Contaminated Land)** – No objection.
37. **Public Health England** – No comments to make.
38. **Cambridge City Airport** – No objection from an aerodrome safeguarding perspective.
39. **London Stansted Airport** – No objection from an aerodrome safeguarding perspective.

Representations from members of the public

40. Several representations have been received from third parties (No.3 High Barns, Battlegate Rd; Summerleas, Scotland Rd, Dry Drayton; No.3 and No.8 Segraves, Boxworth). These are summarised as follows:

Support

- Societal gain outweighs temporary loss of agricultural production.

Object

- Such developments should not occur on BMV agricultural land.
- Destroy green belt policy.
- Greatly impact amenity value of this land regularly used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders on adjacent bridleways/footpaths.
- 25 years is not temporary.
- No exceptional circumstances provided to seriously outweigh the loss of agricultural output.
- Ground level heat increase
- Could develop into possibly the biggest in the UK.
- Low decibel noise impacts upon neighbours.
- Growth of the solar farm should be very strictly restricted to avoid further expansionary applications.
- Significant industrialisation of the site compared to the previous scheme.
- Refusal of previous scheme means a high hurdle to overcome.
- Protecting the global environment is not an excuse to trash the local environment.

- Should focus efforts on making effective use of previously developed land and where a proposal involves agricultural land, being quite clear this necessary and that poorer quality land is to be used in preference to land of higher quality.
- Applicant needs to provide the most compelling evidence. If a smaller scheme has been proposed, then other transmission lines could have been considered. Other alternative sites in the UK, East Anglia and Cambridgeshire that do not use BMV land. Need for renewable energy is less now than when the previous scheme was refused. The planning hurdle requiring compelling evidence as to why this site should be used is very high and the applicant has shown nothing specific to this site that justifies going against national policy. The applicant's arguments could apply to any site in Cambridgeshire and the other decisions concerning best and most versatile land can be given no weight as each site is unique and has to be judged on its own merits. Could set a precedent for other future approvals.

The site and its surroundings

41. The application site is located outside of any Development Framework and in the countryside. It measures approximately 80 hectares in area and consists of two arable fields and a farm track. The majority of the fields are separated and surrounded by hedges. A bridleway runs to the east of the application site, whilst there are public footpaths to the north and south. There is a small woodland immediately to the south of the site which forms part of the Grade II* Historic Park of Childerley Hall. The nearest settlements are Boxworth 1.1km to the north west, Lolworth 1.2km to the north east, Bar Hill 1.3km to the north east, Dry Drayton 1.8km to the east and Knapwell 1.5km to the west.
42. The site is situated within the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands Landscape Character Area on Grade 2 (very good), Grade 3a (very good to moderate) and Grade 3b (moderate) agricultural land.
43. It lies to the north of Childerley Hall Registered Grade II* Historic Park and Garden that comprises a number of listed buildings including the Grade II* Childerley Hall, Grade II* chapel, Grade II Upper Farm and Grade II Lower Farm. It is also situated 1km to the south-east of the Overhall Grove Moated Site Scheduled Ancient Monument.
44. The site is situated approximately 900 metres to the east of the Overhaul Grove Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 1.7 km to the east of the Knapwell Road Side Verges County Wildlife Site and 2.2 km to the north east of the Knapwell Wood County Wildlife Site.
45. It lies within Flood Zone 1 (low risk). Electricity pylons run across the site east to west.

The proposal

46. The application seeks planning permission for the installation of a renewable

energy led generating station comprising ground-mounted solar arrays, associated electricity generation infrastructure and other ancillary infrastructure consisting of storage containers, access tracks, fencing, gates and CCTV together with the creation of a woodland, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.

47. The proposed development would generate and store up to 50 megawatt (MW) of renewable energy that would be exported to the Grid, equivalent of approximately 14,200 homes. According to the planning statement, the formal grid offer for generation and storage proposed has been accepted and secured with the Distribution Network Operator (DNO).
48. The development would comprise a series of south-facing solar panel arrays, mounted on frames and would be no more than 3 metres in height. The distance between each row of solar array ranges from 3.5-5.5 metres with approximately 29% of the total developed site area utilised for the solar array. The associated infrastructure would include energy storage (16 battery containers measuring 3 metres in height, 2.4 metres in width and 12 metre in length), a 132/33kV substation situated on the western boundary, 7 sub stations containing switchgear and communication equipment, 42 outdoor PCS units, 16 transformers, AC combiners and underground cabling, storage containers, CCTV monitoring system (22 pole-mounted at 5 metres height), perimeter fencing and gates measuring between 2 and 2.4 metres in height, vehicle access tracks and a temporary construction compound on the southern boundary of the site along the farm track which will exist for the duration of the construction period.
49. Once construction has ended, the construction compound would be fully decommissioned and area planted as a small woodland.
50. The site access would be from the south via the Childerley Estate. The existing farm track would be upgraded to make this suitable for construction traffic including HGVs. This access track will also be used during operation of the solar farm and is very similar to that approved under applications 20/04184/PRI06A and 20/04185/PRI06A.
51. The solar energy farm would connect to the local distribution network via the substation and underground cable with its final connection to a wooden pole running under Battlegate Road for part of its length. This indicative route is shown on the submitted plans and would be subject to a separate planning application. The cable would be laid on land in the ownership of the relevant landowner.
52. There is a strong potential for sheep grazing on a rotational basis for between 100-150 sheep at the solar farm during the dry months of the year (May to October) and after 2-3 growing seasons. Farm access is currently available to the south of the solar farm via the Childerley Estate and from Battlegate Road to the west.
53. Extensive landscape mitigation and enhancements are proposed, located on

the edges of the proposed solar farm to reduce impacts upon the available views from PROWs.

54. According to the supporting information, due to technological developments including longer equipment life, the operational duration for the proposed solar farm is 37 years, after which, the development would be fully decommissioned, and the site returned to arable agricultural use.

Planning Assessment

Planning History

55. A previous planning application for a solar farm and associated infrastructure on the site was submitted in 2015 (application reference S/1714/15/FL). This was recommended by the case officer for conditional approval but was subsequently unanimously refused by Planning Committee for the following reasons:
- Excessive size and scale of the development resulting in unacceptable adverse visual impact causing significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and encroachment into the countryside.
 - Adverse impact on the amenity of neighbours and users of the public rights of way.
56. The refusal decision notice for S/1714/15/FL reads:
- The proposed development, by virtue of its scale and size, would create an unreasonable impact upon the amenity of the landscape particularly in relation to the public footpaths. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy DP/3 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007 that states planning permission will not be granted where the proposed development would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the countryside and landscape character and Policy NE/4 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD 2007 that states development will only be permitted where it respects and retains or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the individual Landscape Character Area in which is it located.
 - The proposed development fails to meet the test of the Ministerial Statement 2015 and NPPF 2012 in terms of providing the most compelling evidence.
57. In addition to changes to the national and local planning policy contexts, the current application seeks to address the above reasons for refusal and differences between the current and previous proposals are referred to in the following planning assessment.

Key Issues

58. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are the

principle of renewable energy development, the impact upon heritage assets and their setting, natural assets, agricultural land, character and appearance of the countryside and landscape character, residential amenity impacts, cumulative impact with other developments, highway/PROW safety impacts, flood risk and drainage and other matters.

Principle of Development – Renewable Energy

National and Local Planning Policy Context

59. The Climate Change Act 2008 sets out UK's committed targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing energy generation from renewable sources. These are:
 - i) an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (from 1990 levels);
 - ii) a 26% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2020 (from 1990 levels);
 - and
 - iii) sourcing 15% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020 (in 2010 3.3% of UK energy came from renewable sources).
60. The 2008 Act was amended in June 2019 to set a target of net zero Greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
61. The recent UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) was to generate action to secure global net zero carbon by 2050 and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees in order to tackle climate change. The countries were asked to come forward with ambitious 2030 emissions reductions through the following measures:
 - i) accelerate the phase-out of coal;
 - ii) curtail deforestation
 - iii) speed up the switch to electric vehicles
 - iv) encourage investment in renewables.
62. Paragraph 152 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
63. Paragraph 158 states that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:
 - a) 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
 - b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.
64. Paragraph 174 (b) states that planning policies and decisions should

contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

65. Footnote 58 of the NPPF states that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.
66. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) sets out the particular planning considerations that relate to large scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic farms. It states that 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.
67. The NPPG states that particular factors a local planning authority will need to consider include:
 - i) encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of High environmental value;
 - ii) where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) 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 (ii) the proposal Allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages Biodiversity improvements around arrays. See also a speech by the Minister for Energy and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP, to the solar PV industry on 25 April 2013 and written ministerial statement on solar energy: protecting the local and global environment made on 25 March 2015.
 - iii) that solar farms 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.
 - iv) the proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare (see guidance on landscape assessment) and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;
 - v) the extent to which there may be additional impacts if solar arrays follow the daily movement of the sun.
 - vi) the need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing.
 - vii) 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 farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset;
 - viii) the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges;
 - ix) the energy generating potential, which can vary for a number of reasons

including, latitude and aspect.

68. The Written Ministerial Statement dated 25 March 2015 states the following: - The National Planning Policy Framework includes strong protections for the natural and historic environment and is quite clear that local councils when considering development proposals should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Yet, some local communities have genuine concerns that when it comes to solar farms insufficient weight has been given to these protections and the benefits of high quality agricultural land. As the solar strategy noted, public acceptability for solar energy is being eroded by the public response to large-scale solar farms which have sometimes been sited insensitively. Meeting our energy goals should not be used to justify the wrong development in the wrong location and this includes the unnecessary use of high quality agricultural land. Protecting the global environment is not an excuse to trash the local environment. When we published our new planning guidance in support of the Framework, we set out the particular factors relating to large scale ground mounted solar photovoltaic farms that a local council will need to consider. These include making effective use of previously developed land and, where a proposal involves agricultural land, being quite clear this is necessary, and that poorer quality land is to be used in preference to land of a higher quality. We are encouraged by the impact the guidance is having but do appreciate the continuing concerns, not least those raised in this House, about the unjustified use of high quality agricultural land. In light of these concerns we want it to be clear that any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence. Of course, planning is a quasi-judicial process, and every application needs to be considered on its individual merits, with due process, in light of the relevant material considerations.
69. Policy S/7 of the Local Plan states that outside development frameworks, only allocations within Neighbourhood Plans that have come into force and development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside or where supported by other policies in this plan will be permitted.
70. Policy CC/2 of the Local Plan states that planning permission for proposals to generate energy from renewable and low carbon sources, with the exception of proposals for wind turbines, will be permitted provided that: a. The development, and any associated infrastructure, either individually or cumulatively with other developments, does not have unacceptable adverse impacts on heritage assets (including their settings), natural assets, high quality agricultural land, the landscape, or the amenity of nearby residents (visual impact, noise, shadow flicker, odour, fumes, traffic); b. The development can be connected efficiently to existing national energy infrastructure, or by direct connection to an associated development or community project, or the energy generated would be used for on-site needs only; c. Provision is made for decommissioning once the operation has ceased, including the removal of the facilities and the restoration of the site;

and d. Developers have engaged effectively with the local community and local authority.

71. The site is located outside the development framework and in the countryside.
72. The solar farm would produce 50 megawatt of energy that would power approximately 14,200 homes and therefore would provide a meaningful contribution to the low carbon energy generation in this instance. Subsequently, the development is supported in policy terms within the countryside provided that the scheme would comply with the criteria in Policy CC/2 above and any other material considerations.
73. With reference to criteria (a) of Policy CC/2, the proposed development's impact upon heritage assets and their settings, natural assets, agricultural land, the landscape and nearby residents will be discussed later within this planning assessment.

Grid Connection

74. Criteria (b) of Policy CC/2 states that the development will be permitted provided that the development can be connected efficiently to existing national energy infrastructure, or by direct connection to an associated development or community project, or the energy generated would be used for on-site needs only.
75. According to the supporting information, since 2012, the consequence of more renewable embedded generation being connected to the national grid has resulted in major challenges to find grid capacity in locations where land is available and connection to the grid is economically viable. Moreover, the economic picture of solar energy generation has changed since 2015 and connection options 7km from a solar generation site are no longer economically viable.
76. In addition to electricity generation, the proposal incorporates energy storage infrastructure which allows both exporting and importing from the grid when required.
77. The supporting information has analysed the grid connection options and concluded that the most efficient option for this particular site is connection to the Barford Grid as the other two alternative sites would require significant infrastructure to facilitate a grid connection.
78. In this instance, the grid connection is situated approximately 0.7km due west of the application site and subject to a separate planning application, provides the only feasible point of connection. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would be connected efficiently to the existing national energy infrastructure in accordance with Policy CC/2 (b) of the Local Plan 2018.

Decommissioning

79. The proposed solar farm would be for a 37-year period. The site would then be decommissioned unless planning permission is granted for the use beyond this period. A condition for this temporary 37-year period will be attached on any planning consent granted to ensure it is decommissioned, the facilities removed, and the land reinstated to its former sole agricultural use.
80. A decommissioning and restoration plan has been submitted as part of this planning application and estimates that it will take approximately 12 months to complete. A decommissioning environmental management plan and traffic management plan will be conditioned on any planning consent granted to ensure that transport, noise, and pollution considerations are considered at the time of its decommissioning.
81. Taking all this into account, it is considered that provision is made for decommissioning once the operation has ceased, including the removal of the facilities and the restoration of the site in accordance with Policy CC/2 (c) of the Local Plan 2018.

Community Engagement

82. Community engagement has taken place with key stakeholders including Parish Councils. A Statement of Community Involvement has been submitted. In addition, local Parish Councils have noted their support for the proposed development. Therefore, it is demonstrated that the proposal complies with Policy CC/2 (d) of the Local Plan 2018.

Impact upon Heritage Assets and their setting

83. The application site is situated immediately north of a Grade II* listed park/garden, Childerley Park. The historic park contains a number of listed buildings, including the Grade II* listed Hall and the Grade II* listed chapel.
84. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
85. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
86. Paragraph 200 of the NPPF 2021 states that any harm to, or loss of, the

significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

87. Paragraph 202 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Heritage impacts during construction

88. The proposed access route for construction traffic would be situated to the west of the Grade II Listed Building of Upper Farm and would extend through the centre of the Grade II* Listed Park. This would involve the widening of the access track at various places to provide sufficient space for the manoeuvring of HGVs and the temporary widening of some parts of the track to facilitate a 30 metre truck and trailer required for the delivery of the transformer. It would also involve the creation of a new section of access track through the edge of woodland to the south of the application site.
89. Following a formal consultation with the Council's Conservation Officer, initial concerns were raised with regards the potential harm to the character of the park through the erosion of existing route margins, damage and removal of vegetation including trees and possible impacts upon the fabric of the listed barns themselves.
90. The proposed route will allow two way traffic around the existing farm buildings and is the preferred route over the Battlegate Road option. Subsequent information has been submitted as part of the Construction Traffic Management Plan. Following consultation with the Council's Conservation Officer, it is considered that this provides a clear strategy to ensure that the fabric of the buildings is protected. This information will be conditioned on any planning consent granted to ensure acceptable mitigation upon the historic park itself including arrangements for restoring track surfaces where temporary widening is proposed.
91. Whilst the loss of trees would have some impact upon the Listed Park itself, these trees have no statutory protection, and it is considered that any potential damage to remaining trees can be mitigated by conditioning a tree protection strategy and plan on any planning consent granted.
92. The Conservation Officer's comments with regards a decommissioning strategy is acknowledged, and details including a construction traffic management plan will be conditioned on any planning consent granted to ensure that any harm upon the Listed Park and Buildings is mitigated.
93. Notwithstanding the proposed mitigation, as acknowledged by the Conservation Officer, the proposed construction phase is likely to result in 'less than substantial' harm upon the Listed Park and Garden through the erosion of track margins through the creation of new and wider access tracks,

and permanent loss of vegetation. This is considered to be of lower end of this scale due to the mitigation proposed and the largely temporary nature.

94. Therefore, Paragraph 202 of the NPPF 2021 is engaged and the public benefits of the proposal should be weighed against any harm to the Grade II* Historic Park and Garden
95. In this instance, and in relation to heritage related construction impacts, whilst some harm would arise, the nature of the harm would be mainly temporary, can be mitigated and is in any event outweighed by public benefits including the economic benefits generated through job creation, Therefore, the proposal is compliant with Policy NH/14 and CC/2 (a) of the Local Plan 2018 and the NPPF 2021.

Heritage impacts during operation

96. The proposed development would introduce a new built form into open agricultural land adjoining Childerley Hall and Park to the north. Following a formal consultation with the Council's Conservation Officer and Historic England, it is acknowledged that although the physical appearance and character of this agricultural landscape in which the Historic Park currently sits would be eroded, the proposed solar arrays would be well screened by existing woodland immediately to the south of the application site, bordering the Grade II* Listed Park and Garden.
97. Following amendments to the submitted plans, these solar arrays would be situated further northwards and additional woodland planting proposed along part of the southern section of the site.
98. Whilst consultee comments are acknowledged, and some glimpse views from the Grade II* Listed Park may be possible in the winter months, any visual impact upon the setting of this heritage asset is considered to be negligible and given the considerable distances and intervening vegetation, it would not harm the setting of other heritage assets within the vicinity of the application site.
99. Nevertheless, by virtue of the loss of agricultural landscape to solar arrays and associated infrastructure, part of the agricultural setting of the Grade II* Historic Park would be lost and therefore the proposed development is considered to result in 'less than substantial' harm upon this heritage asset's setting and Paragraph 202 of the NPPF 2021 is engaged. It is accepted that this would be at the lower end of this range.
100. In this instance, the public benefits including the economic benefits generated through job creation, and environmental benefits including the security and diversity of renewable and sustainable electricity supply are considered to outweigh the harm upon the setting of the Listed Park in this instance. Moreover, given the temporary nature of the proposed development, any permanent harm by virtue of the loss of its agricultural setting would be avoided by the proposed decommissioning and restoration of arable fields.

Therefore, the proposal is compliant with Policy NH/14 and CC/2 (a) of the Local Plan 2018 and the NPPF 2021.

Archaeological impacts

101. The site is located within an area of high archaeological potential. Following a formal consultation with the Archaeological Officer and updated mitigation strategy, it is considered that the proposed strategy is acceptable in terms of ensuring the preservation of archaeological remains are maximised and avoiding the need for excavation. This is subject to a pre-commencement condition requiring the implementation of a programme of works that follows the principles of the approved document. This has been agreed in writing with the applicant.
102. Subject to the above recommended condition, the proposal is in accordance with Policy NH/14 and CC/2 (a) of the Local Plan 2018.

Natural Assets

103. The site comprises two arable fields with important hedgerows on the boundaries and small areas of woodland and individual trees. It is located approximately 870 metres from the closest SSSI (Overhall Grove).
104. An ecology report has been submitted with the application. Following a formal consultation with the Council's Ecology Officer, great crested newts, barn owls and other breeding birds, flowering plants, invertebrates, reptiles, brown hare, badger, and otters have all been recorded locally whilst the submitted report highlights badgers, breeding and wintering birds, great crested newts, and commuting and foraging bats as potential constraints to the proposed works.
105. The proposed development would retain all existing hedgerows and no trees would be lost within the site itself. Therefore, it is not considered that any potential bat roost sites are to be removed and no external lighting installed and therefore no further bat surveys are required at this time.
106. Following a formal consultation with the Council's Trees Officer, the hedgerows bordering the arable fields are likely to be regarded as important hedgerows. Therefore, it is considered that a hedgerow and tree protection plan and methodology is reasonable and necessary and will be conditioned on any planning consent granted. This pre-commencement condition has been agreed in writing with the applicant.
107. It is noted that two nearby ponds have the potential to support great crested newts, however, movement barriers to prevent these from accessing the main site would be required and a full method statement for the construction of arrays, enhancement of the field margins and hedgerows and ongoing management of new and enhanced habitats would be necessary and reasonable and can be conditioned. Therefore, a construction ecological

management plan (CEcMP) and landscape and ecological management plan (LEMP) will be conditioned on any consent granted.

108. It is noted that a private means of access is proposed to the west of Childerley Hall barns. This would involve the loss of some mature trees and vegetation and whilst following discussion with the Ecology, Landscape and Trees Officers, more information could be requested with regards biodiversity and arboricultural issues associated with this new track, regard has also been made with the prior approval consents granted for a private means of access in a very similar location to that proposed under this current application.
109. Although at points, the proposed access would slightly differ in width and location to that already approved, given the permitted development fall-back position and the high likelihood of any subsequent application under the prior approval process for alterations to this private means of access being approved without regard to biodiversity or arboricultural implications under the General Permitted Development Order, it is considered that it would not be reasonable to request additional tree and ecology information within the current application in this particular instance nor require it as part of a condition. Notwithstanding this, any proposed means of access is not likely to have any materially greater impact in terms of arboricultural and biodiversity impacts than what has already been approved consent.
110. Significant landscaping enhancements are proposed which according to the supporting information is likely to achieve a net biodiversity gain of 141% above baseline. This would include a number of native hedgerows, broadleaf woodland, species rich grassland and wildflower meadows around the solar arrays.
111. Taking all this into account, subject to conditions, it is considered that the proposal would successfully mitigate, compensate and enhance biodiversity within the application site in accordance with Policy NH/4 of the Local Plan 2018 and the Biodiversity SPD 2022.

Agricultural Land

112. Policy NH/3 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will not be granted for development which would lead to the irreversible loss of Grades 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land unless:
 - 1a). Land is allocated for development in the Local Plan;
 - 1b). Sustainability considerations and the need for the development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of the land.
2. Uses not involving substantial built development but which take agricultural land will be regarded as permanent unless restricted specifically by condition.
3. When considering proposals for the change of use or diversification of farmland, particular consideration shall be given to the potential for impact upon Priority Species and Habitats.

113. The NPPG encourages the effective use of land by focussing large scale Solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value and 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.
114. The Written Ministerial Statement 2015 set out that any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence.
115. The development would provide 50 megawatt of energy that would power 14,200 homes. It is not disputed that there is a significant need for renewable energy to contribute towards climate change targets.
116. The land subject of this application is not allocated for development in the Local Plan 2018 and therefore is compliant with Policy NH/3 criteria 1a of the Local Plan.
117. Grade 1 to Subgrade 3a agricultural land categories comprise the 'best and most versatile agricultural land' (BMVAL). In this instance, the application site comprises a mix of Grade 2 (very good quality), Subgrade 3a (good quality) and Subgrade 3b (moderate quality), with 83% of the land classed as BMVAL. No Grade 1 (highest grade – excellent quality) would be utilised.
118. It is important to note that the proposed development would not result in an irreversible loss of BMVAL given that any planning consent granted would be restricted to a 37-year period, after which, decommissioning and the restoration of arable land would take place.
119. In addition, the submitted soil report concludes that the whilst the site has reasonable quality soil, it's productivity and crop yield are considered as being below average for its grade. Some agricultural use of the site would continue in the form of sheep grazing and it is suggested by the applicant that the long-term break from arable farming would improve soil health, structure, and productive capacity with higher yields possible in the future.
120. Moreover, it is understood that the farming regime and crop choice would largely be determined by the potential of the poorest quality land on the site i.e. Subgrade 3b (17% of the land).
121. Notwithstanding this, it is important to consider whether 1) the use of agricultural land is necessary, and any exercise should consider that no suitable brownfield land or non-agricultural land is available within a reasonable search area, and 2) any sequential analysis should demonstrate that if agricultural land has to be used, that poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land.

122. A sequential analysis has been provided based on the alternative sites on previously developed land, which has also considered additional alternative sites considered in an addendum to this report within areas of agricultural land.
123. Whilst third party comments concerning the use of BMV land and loss of agricultural output are acknowledged, the threshold test as identified in the Written Ministerial Statement 2015 is to ask whether the proposal is justified by the most compelling evidence with each case determined on its own merits.
124. As discussed previously, the economic picture for solar energy generation has changed over recent years and the 7km search area from the grid line as used in the 2015 application is no longer economically viable. Instead, a grid connection needs to be within 1km of a grid connection point and where a large solar farm is proposed (e.g. over 50 MW), the point of connection can be up to 2km away.

Previously developed land

125. The report identifies a total of six previously developed land sites shortlisted for further assessment either within Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire or Cambridge, all of which have been allocated for other purposes under the relevant Council's Local Plans and are all of insufficient size to be economically viable. Therefore, on this basis, it is considered that there are no suitable brownfield land or non-agricultural land available within a reasonable search area.
126. Although there are options for commercial rooftops to contribute towards solar electricity generation, the report suggests that approximately 2.5ha of land would currently be required to generate 1 megawatt of energy. Therefore, on this basis, there are no commercial rooftop spaces that could offer solar PV development on the scale proposed by this application and is not economically viable in this instance.

Poorer quality agricultural land

127. The DEFRA Agricultural Land Classification map has been consulted as part of this application. This shows that the district of South Cambridgeshire has a mix of grade 2 (very good) and grade 3 (good to moderate) quality agricultural land. There is a very small amount of grade 4 (poor agricultural land). This therefore limits the potential to find poorer quality agricultural land within the district itself.
128. The 2015 report determined that there were three shortlisted sites on poorer quality agricultural land that should be assessed in more detail. Following a review of the DEFRA Agricultural Land Classification map, and subsequent additional information from the applicant, seven other alternative sites have been investigated.
129. Due to site constraints including a number of Listed Buildings, County Wildlife

Sites and Scheduled Ancient Monument in addition to the unacceptable distances from the nearest point of grid connection, insufficient size of land, commercial competition with other development types, and clearer public visibility means that these suggested sites are either or both unsuitable or economically unviable for solar development.

130. On the basis of the sequential analysis evidence, it is considered that it has successfully demonstrated that there are no areas of lower grade agricultural land within a relatively wide search area, covering several districts, which are suitable for solar farm developments. It is therefore concluded that it meets the tests of the Ministerial Statement 2015 in justifying the development with the most compelling evidence and the guidance contained within the NPPG.
131. Third party comments concerning the lack of evidence demonstrating that if a smaller scheme was proposed, other transmission lines could be considered, are acknowledged. However, as discussed, the economic picture in the UK has changed somewhat over recent years and as described in the supporting information, for a smaller solar farm to be economically viable, any proposal would need to be located within 1km of a transmission line. Given that there are severe limitations within the district with regards the availability of poorer quality agricultural land and from an economic viability perspective, larger solar farms are preferred, it is considered that in this instance, sufficient and reasonably extensive evidence has been provided to demonstrate that alternative sites have been considered.
132. Third party comments regarding the high hurdle to overcome due to the previous refusal and the concern regarding future precedent are acknowledged. However, each case is judged on its own planning merits, and it is considered that in this instance, the applicant has met the test of providing compelling evidence and therefore addressed this reason for refusal of the previous scheme.

Impact upon the agricultural land

133. Although by virtue of the long-term temporary loss of arable food production, the proposed development would have an adverse impact upon the farm's food production, it is noted that the two fields comprise approximately 5% of the total arable land of Childerley Farm. Moreover, the BMVAL of the land and the potential for certain crops to be grown is determined by the lowest quality land, in this case Subgrade 3b.
134. As discussed, the soil quality is below average for the agricultural land Grades which further inhibits high yields.
135. Moreover, in comparison to the 2015 planning application, the current proposal would seek to use less Grade 2 agricultural land, defined as having minor limitations that affect crop yield, cultivations or harvesting where a wide range of agricultural and horticultural crops can usually be grown.

136. Nevertheless, food security is an important consideration to be weighed in the planning balance.
137. In this instance, the applicant proposes to improve the biodiversity potential of the application site with the introduction of wildflowers on the field margins, new trees, hedges, and grassland. This grassland has the strong potential to be used for the grazing of sheep and supporting information has been provided to demonstrate that this would be viable in tandem with solar energy production on the application site. A condition will be attached on any planning consent granted to ensure that this is implemented in line with a grazing management plan, in accordance with Policy NH/3 and CC/2 of the Local Plan 2018.
138. Taking the above into account, whilst it is considered that the proposed development would have a negative impact in terms of food production, the benefits of the scheme, namely being of a large scale and contributing greatly to the renewable energy targets in addition to the biodiversity enhancements would outweigh the minor impact in terms of food security issues associated with the loss of arable food production of the two fields. Therefore, in this instance, the sustainability considerations and the need for the development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of the land in this particular instance in accordance with Policy CC/2 and NH/3 of the Local Plan 2018.

Character and Appearance of the Countryside and Landscape Character

139. The site is located within the open countryside and whilst it would not be visible from public roads, the proposed solar farm borders a bridleway to the east and footpaths to the south and north.
140. Policy NH/2 of the Local Plan 2018 states that development will only be permitted where it respects and retains, or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and of the individual National Character Area in which it is located.
141. The application site is situated within the Western Claylands character area, characterised by gently undulating arable farmland, scattered woodlands and fields bounded by closely trimmed hedges and hedgerow trees.
142. The application is supported by a landscape visual impact assessment (LVIA). This highlights that the landscape effects would be low adverse upon completion and low beneficial after 10 years once plants have matured.
143. With regards the visual impacts of the development, the Council's Urban Design Officer's comments concerning the potential adverse visual impacts upon the existing setting and public footpaths and the need for vegetation mitigation are acknowledged. The submitted LVIA concludes that whilst the views close to site would experience moderate to high adverse impacts, once vegetation has matured, the majority of views would experience no adverse effects.

144. Despite the landscape mitigation proposed, following a formal consultation with the Council's Landscape Officer, initial concerns were raised with regards views being possible from adjacent footpaths, particularly to the south and west of the solar arrays and associated substations due in particular to the gentle undulating topology and gaps possible through the new access gates. Third party comments concerning the impact upon the amenity value of the land for users are also acknowledged.
145. Following this feedback, amended plans showing additional hedgerow and tree/shrub planting along the southern and western boundaries of the solar arrays to reduce the visibility from the adjacent PROW have been submitted. In addition, solar panels have been moved northwards from the southern-most boundary and the southern access gate's location amended to make this more discrete.
146. This application follows the refusal of planning application S/1714/15/FL which considered that the size and scale of the proposed development would create an unreasonable impact upon the amenity of the landscape particularly in relation to the public footpaths.
147. In response to this previous refusal, the scale of the solar farm has been reduced in size, with the total overall area developed approximately 60% less than the previous application. In addition, the proximity of the solar arrays to the northern boundaries and adjacent PROW have been revised to increase the buffer with substantial areas of woodland enhancements also indicated. To the south, denser hedging and woodland planting is also proposed with greater setbacks of the solar arrays from the footpaths and bridleway.
148. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed landscape mitigation will take some time to become established and some impacts upon the public views would be possible in first few years, following the amended plans and re-consultation with the Council's Landscape Officer, it is considered that subject to implementation of the landscaping proposals and details of boundary treatments, any adverse impacts upon the surrounding landscape and upon users of the PROWs would be very limited.
149. Third party comments concerning the industrialisation of this rural area are acknowledged with the introduction of associated infrastructure for the storage of energy via on-site batteries and other associated equipment. This includes 16 battery containers, an edge of park substation, 42 power conditioning system (PCS) units, 19 storage containers, 16 transformers and AC combiners. These would be situated a considerable distance from the closest PROW to the north of the application site and surrounded by woodland and hedgerow planting.
150. The edge of park substation and associated storage containers would measure approximately 3 metres in height, 12 metres in length and 2.4 metres in depth. The outdoor PCS units would be similar in height and minimal in depth and width, whilst the AC combiners would be small in scale.

151. The transformers and high voltage (HV) switchgears would be situated within the centre of this compound whilst the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) and Customers compound would be located to the south of this and whilst elements of this including the transformer would be relatively high (approximately 4-6.75 metres in height), given the substantial distances from the north PROW of approximately 200 metres and south PROWs of approximately 350 metres and intervening landscape enhancements and mitigation proposed, any visual impacts are considered to be largely screened or such a considerable distance to not result in harm.
152. Whilst the introduction of these associated infrastructure within the site would have some impact upon the landscape itself, this would be confined to a relatively small area, and compared to the previous planning application S/1714/15/FL, the HV compound would not need to be located close to residential properties on the opposite side of Battlegate Road nor would the collecting station be located immediately adjacent to the southern PROW as proposed in this previous application.
153. Moreover, whilst the proposed development would have some slight adverse impacts upon the landscape itself, the LVIA identifies that after 10 years, the impact upon the landscape would be slight beneficial. As discussed, following an amended and improved landscape mitigation scheme, this would have an improved visual impact upon the landscape character.
154. It is noted that a construction compound located adjacent to the existing farm track which would accommodate construction staff facilities such as offices and storage. This would be of a temporary nature and only exist for the duration of the construction period. To ensure that this is removed from the land upon completion of the solar farm, a condition will be attached on any planning consent granted.
155. Taking all this into account and following a formal consultation with the Council's Landscape Officer, on balance, it is considered that the applicant has successfully addressed these previous reasons for refusal and whilst there would be slight visual and landscape character harm in the short term, following the maturing of the soft landscaping, it is not considered that the proposal would result in adverse impacts upon the character and appearance of the rural landscape nor users of the surrounding PROWs. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development is compliant with Policy CC/2, HQ/1 and NH/2 of the Local Plan 2018.
156. Whilst a condition requesting details of the cabling route are acknowledged, as this would be situated outside the red line of the application site and would require a separate planning application, any landscaping implications will be considered separately subject to planning consent being granted for the solar farm.

Residential Amenity Impacts

157. The closest residential property (south of the application site) would be situated approximately 250 metres from the solar arrays. Other nearby residential properties to the west of the application site would be situated approximately 400 metres away. Given the considerable distances, it is not considered that the proposal would have any significant impact on account of visual amenity impacts including glint and glare impacts from the solar arrays in accordance with Policy HQ/1 and CC/2 of the Local Plan 2018.
158. Whilst third party comments concerning noise implications during operation are acknowledged, following submission of a noise impact assessment and subsequent formal consultation with the Council's Environmental Health Officer, given the considerable distances to the nearest sensitive noise receptors and intervening vegetation, it is not considered that any noise complaints that would arise from the development are likely to be significant in this instance in accordance with Policy SC/10, HQ/1 and CC/2 of the Local Plan 2018.
159. Notwithstanding this, to ensure that nearby residential amenities within the Childerley Estate are not detrimentally affected by noise emitted from construction activities and traffic, it is considered that these hours will be restricted in accordance with Policy CC/2 and CC/6 of the Local Plan 2018.
160. No objections from the Council's Air Quality Officer have been received concerning air quality impacts.
161. Whilst some light would be generated from the temporary construction compound, this would be temporary and given the considerable distances would not have an impact upon residential amenities nor the quality of the environment in accordance with Policy SC/9, SC/12 and CC/2 of the Local Plan 2018.

Cumulative impact with other developments

162. The nearest solar farm to the site where the cumulative impact of the development needs to be taken into consideration is at Bourn at a distance of approximately 4.5km away. The existing Bourn solar farm and the proposed solar farm would not be visible from the same viewpoints or sequentially along the same public rights of way or roads within close proximity of each other. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposed development along with other solar farm developments would result in adverse cumulative impacts on account of heritage assets and their settings, natural assets, high quality agricultural land, landscape, nor amenity of nearby residents.

Summary

163. Taking all this into account, subject to conditions, it is not considered that the development, and any associated infrastructure, either individually or cumulatively with other developments, has any unacceptable adverse impacts on heritage assets (including their settings), natural assets, high quality

agricultural land, character and appearance of the countryside and landscape character, or the amenity of nearby residents. Therefore, the proposal is in accordance with Policy CC/2, NH/2, NH/3, NH/4 of the Local Plan 2018.

Highway/PROW Safety Impacts

164. The proposed access to the site during construction and decommissioning would be via the existing access to the south of Childerley Hall off St Neots Road (former A428). This is a through road leading from Hardwick to Cambourne and has a speed limit of 60 mph.
165. The Construction Traffic Management Plan shows the access route to the site during construction and demonstrates that vehicles would access the site via St Neots Road. During the 24-week construction period, the HGV/LGV traffic generation is estimated at an average number of 16 deliveries per day. There would also be movements from site personnel that would be on average 10 trips per day.
166. It is proposed that the internal estate road and farm track is widened to enable two-way vehicle movements as demonstrated by the swept path analysis submitted.
167. A maximum of 50 staff would be employed on the site during construction at one time.
168. Decommissioning is expected to take approximately 12 months to achieve and would have no greater impact in terms of traffic movements than during the construction phase. A condition will be included in any planning consent granted to require the developer to submit a construction traffic management plan for the decommissioning of the solar farm.
169. Following a formal consultation with the Local Highways Authority, the County Transport Assessment Team and Highways England, the point of access is considered acceptable and due to its low trip generation during the operation phase would not have a material impact in terms of highway safety. Therefore, subject to conditioning the construction management plan, it is not considered that the proposed development would be detrimental to highway safety nor the highway transport network in accordance with Policy TI/2 and CC/6 of the Local Plan 2018 and the NPPF 2021.
170. There would be a minimal requirement for servicing and maintenance of the solar farm during site operation. Provision will be made within the site for some informal parking areas for 4x4s accessing the site for this purpose. Therefore, the proposal is in accordance with Policy TI/3 of the Local Plan 2018.
171. Following a formal consultation with the Asset Information Definitive Map Officer, there is no objection to the principle of development. However, it is noted that temporary diversions may be required and therefore the recommended informatives will be included on any planning consent granted

to make the developer aware of their responsibilities in terms of obstruction of the PROW and temporary diversions.

Flood Risk and Drainage

172. The application site is situated within Flood Zone 1. There are drainage ditches running within and on the boundary of the site.
173. Following amended documentation demonstrating a surface water drainage strategy and a formal consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) it is considered that the principle of the strategy, managed through the use of filter drains being installed which will be discharged to the surrounding ditch network is acceptable. The detailed design and long-term maintenance of such will be conditioned on any planning consent granted in accordance with Policy CC/7, CC/8 and CC/9 of the Local Plan 2018.
174. Whilst the Environment Agency's comments concerning the presence of welfare facilities on site are acknowledged, these would be of a temporary nature during the construction phase and therefore no further details are required.
175. Whilst the Asset Information Definitive Map Officer's comments concerning

The potential for surface water run-off upon the PROW network is acknowledged, it is considered that the principle of the drainage strategy has demonstrated adequate provision to avoid impacts upon the farm tracks, footpaths and the bridleway.

Other Matters

176. Whilst the Asset Information Definitive Map Officer's comments concerning possible impact from glint and glare upon PROW users is acknowledged, given the extensive screening proposed and the existing avenue of trees along the bridleway being retained, it is not considered that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact upon users of the surrounding rights of way. Moreover, whilst there is a high number of PROWs bordering the application site, given its rural location, any adverse impacts would be of a transient nature given that pedestrians and horse riders would move beyond the solar reflection zone fairly quickly. Taking all this into account, it is considered that the impact upon the PROW users would be low in this instance.
177. Whilst the Asset Information Definitive Map Officer's comments requesting information with regards site access for the grazing of animals is acknowledged, given that the farm already has multiple points of entry which could be utilised for farming purposes, it would not be reasonable to restrict the applicant to managing the grazing to one point of access.
178. The proposed development would contribute to the income diversification of the existing farm with reference to Policy E/18 of the Local Plan 2018.

179. Comments concerning green belt impacts, whilst acknowledged, is not relevant to this application site as it is located outside the Green Belt.
180. Several third party and Parish Council comments have stated concerns regarding the potential growth of the solar farm in the future. It is understood that any proposal is restricted by the available grid import and export capacity. Notwithstanding this, each case is determined on its own merits and any proposed expansion of a solar farm over that which is permitted would require a new planning application and compelling evidence provided to justify this with reference to national and local plan policies.
181. Whilst third party comments concerning the possible increase in ground surface temperatures are acknowledged, given that the land would be covered by solar arrays in addition to biodiversity enhancements, it is likely that ground temperatures would be less in this instance.
182. There is not considered to be any aircraft safety issues associated with the proposed development.
183. Due to the current Covid-19 restrictions a site visit by the Planning Committee Members has not been undertaken.

Planning balance and conclusion

184. The proposed solar arrays and associated development would result in some limited visual impacts and some temporary adverse landscape character impacts. In addition, the proposal would result in 'minor less than substantial' harm to the setting of heritage assets during construction and operation. These attract moderate weight. Section 66(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and national policy relating to applications affecting heritage assets advise that there should be a strong presumption to refuse planning permission unless there are public benefits which outweigh the level of harm identified. The public benefits which officers consider outweigh the level of harm to the heritage assets identified include the economic and environmental benefits the proposal would bring about. Officers are of the view that the level of public benefit provides justification to accept the level of harm 'less than substantial' that would arise.
185. Whilst the proposed development would result in a loss of some BMV agricultural land (Grade 2-3a) and therefore food production, alternative sites on developed land and poorer quality agricultural land have been considered and the sequential analysis successfully demonstrates that there would be no better alternative sites close to the grid connection, therefore meeting the compelling evidence test. This attracts significant weight.
186. The proposed development would provide renewable energy for 14,200 homes. This would make an important contribution towards climate change objectives and attracts significant weight. The proposal would also involve

some agricultural grazing and enhance biodiversity within the site, and this is given moderate weight in the planning balance.

187. Therefore, on balance, it is considered that the benefits of the scheme, namely, the contribution towards climate change objectives, the continuation of part-agricultural use and biodiversity improvements would outweigh any harm to the loss of BMV agricultural land and some minor harm to landscape character, visual impacts and the setting of heritage assets.
188. For the reasons set out in this report, officers consider the planning application to be acceptable in accordance with relevant national and local planning policies, and having taken all relevant material considerations into account, it is considered that planning permission should be granted in this instance.

Recommendation

189. Officers recommend that the Planning Committee approve the application, subject to the following conditions:
1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
Reason: In accordance with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
 2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans as listed on this decision notice.
Reason: In the interests of good planning, for the avoidance of doubt and to facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
 3. The local planning authority shall be notified in writing within 14 days of the date of first operational use of the development. The development, hereby permitted, shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition or to a condition to be specified and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority on or before 37 years from the date of the first operational use of the development or in accordance with an alternative phasing plan agreed in writing by the local planning authority but in any event no later than one year following the date on which the site has ceased to be in continuous use for energy generation.

Reason: Approval of the proposal on a permanent basis would be contrary to Policy CC/2 and NH/3 of the Local Plan 2018.
 4. Notwithstanding the submitted Outline Decommissioning and Restoration Plan (April 2021), no less than 1 year prior to the expiry of the temporary permission and the decommissioning of the development hereby approved, a detailed decommissioning plan shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. This shall detail how the equipment is to

be removed from the site, how the land is to be returned to its former condition and shall be accompanied by a construction traffic management plan and environmental/biodiversity mitigation measures. The decommissioning shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: The application site lies in the open countryside and it is important that once the development has ceased the site is brought back into a full agricultural use in accordance with Policy CC/2 and NH/3 of the Local Plan 2018.

5. Prior to first operational use of the solar farm hereby permitted, the construction compound hereby approved shall be fully removed from the site and the land replaced with woodland planting in accordance with the Proposed Mitigation, Landscape and Ecology Enhancements Drawing No. AW0106-PL-002 Rev B.

Reason: Approval of the compound on a more permanent basis would be contrary to Policy CC/2 and NH/2 of the Local Plan 2018.

6. No laying of services, creation of hard surfaces or erection of a building shall commence until a detailed design of the surface water drainage of the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Those elements of the surface water drainage system not adopted by a statutory undertaker shall thereafter be maintained and managed in accordance with the approved management and maintenance plan.

The scheme shall be based upon the principles within the agreed Filter Drain Elevation Detail prepared by Statkraft (ref: SKUKX-STARG-000-213.1B) dated 6 September 2021 and shall also include:

- a) Full calculations detailing the existing surface water runoff rates for the QBAR, 3.3% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) (1 in 30) and 1% AEP (1 in 100) storm events;
- b) Full results of the proposed drainage system modelling in the above-referenced storm events (as well as 1% AEP plus climate change), inclusive of all collection, conveyance, storage, flow control and disposal elements and including an allowance for urban creep, together with an assessment of system performance;
- c) Detailed drawings of the entire proposed surface water drainage system, attenuation and flow control measures, including levels, gradients, dimensions and pipe reference numbers, designed to accord with the CIRIA C753 SuDS Manual (or any equivalent guidance that may supersede or replace it);
- d) Full detail on SuDS proposals (including location, type, size, depths, side slopes and cross sections);
- e) Details of overland flood flow routes in the event of system exceedance, with demonstration that such flows can be appropriately managed on site without increasing flood risk to occupants;
- f) Demonstration that the surface water drainage of the site is in accordance with DEFRA nonstatutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems;

g) Full details of the maintenance/adoption of the surface water drainage system;

h) Permissions to connect to a receiving watercourse or sewer;

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development can be adequately drained and to ensure that there is no increased flood risk on or off site resulting from the proposed development in accordance with Policies CC/7, CC/8 and CC/9 of the Local Plan 2018.

7. No development, including preparatory works, shall commence until details of measures indicating how additional surface water run-off from the site will be avoided during the construction works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The applicant may be required to provide collection, balancing and/or settlement systems for these flows. The approved measures and systems shall be brought into operation before any works to create buildings or hard surfaces commence.

Reason: To ensure surface water is managed appropriately during the construction phase of the development, so as not to increase the flood risk to adjacent land/properties or occupied properties within the development itself; recognising that initial works to prepare the site could bring about unacceptable impacts, in accordance with Policies CC/7, CC/8 and CC/9 of the Local Plan 2018.

8. No development shall commence (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEcMP shall include the following:
- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
 - b) Identification of biodiversity protection zones.
 - c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
 - d) The location and timings of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
 - e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
 - f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
 - g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
 - h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs if applicable.

The approved CEcMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that before any development commences appropriate construction ecological management plan has been agreed to fully conserve and enhance ecological interests in accordance with Policy NH/4 the Local Plan 2018 and Biodiversity SPD 2022.

9. Prior to the installation of the solar arrays, a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to, and approved in writing

by, the local planning authority. The content of the LEMP shall include the following:

- a) Description and evaluation of features to be managed.
- b) Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management.
- c) Aims and objectives of management, including how a minimum of 10% in biodiversity net gain will be achieved.
- d) Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives.
- e) Prescriptions for management actions.
- f) Prescription of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over the operational lifetime of the development).
- g) Details of the body or organisation responsible for implementation of the plan.
- h) Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures.

The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To conserve and enhance protected species and habitats in accordance with Policy NH/4 of the South Cambs Local Plan 2018 and the Biodiversity SPD 2022.

10. The soft landscaping works shall be carried out in accordance with the Proposed Mitigation, Landscape and Ecology Enhancements Drawing No. AW0106-PL-002 Rev B. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out and maintained in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out prior to first operational use of the solar farm or in accordance with a programme agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. If within a period of five years from the date of the planting, or replacement planting, any tree or plant is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree or plant of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place as soon as is reasonably practicable, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the development is satisfactorily assimilated into the area and enhances biodiversity in accordance with Policies HQ/1 and NH/4 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018.

11. Notwithstanding the approved details, no PV panels shall be installed above ground level until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a plan indicating the positions, design, materials and type of boundary treatments to be erected. The boundary treatment shall be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first operational use of the solar farm and retained as approved thereafter.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate boundary treatment is implemented in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policies HQ/1 and NH/4 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018.

12. Before any works on site commence a detailed Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Authority, including details of timing of events, protective fencing and ground protection measures. This should comply with BS5837. The tree protection measures shall be installed in accordance with the approved tree protection strategy before any works commence on site. The tree protection measures shall remain in place throughout the construction period and may only be removed following completion of all construction works.

Reason: To ensure that protected hedgerows and important trees are protected during the course of construction in accordance with Policy NH/4 of the Local Plan 2018.

13. No construction or demolition work shall be carried out and no construction-related plant or power operated machinery operated other than between the following hours: 0800 hours and 1800 hours on Monday to Friday, 0800 hours and 1300 hours on Saturday and at no time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays, unless otherwise previously agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the amenity of the nearby residents in accordance with Policy CC/6 of the Local Plan 2018.

14. The routing of all construction and maintenance vehicles shall be from the Childerley Estate to the south of the application site as detailed within the submitted Construction Traffic Management Plan V7 and in Appendix F (Drawing SK04 and SK07).

Reason: To ensure that that the routing of vehicles have acceptable highway safety and operation impacts in accordance with TI/2 and CC/6 of the Local Plan 2018.

15. No development shall commence until the applicant has implemented a programme of archaeological work that follows the principles of the approved document Childerley Solar Farm Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (Headland Archaeology v1.9) and has been secured in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) that has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. For land that is included within the WSI, no development shall take place other than under the provisions of the agreed WSI, which shall include:
- a) The statement of archaeological significance and research objectives;
 - b) The programme, methodology and timetable of fieldwork and the nomination of a competent person(s) or organisation to undertake the agreed works;
 - c) Implementation of fieldwork;
 - d) A post-excavation assessment report to be submitted within six months of the completion of fieldwork;

- e) An analytical archive report to be completed within two years of the completion of fieldwork and submission of a draft publication report (as necessary);
- f) Preparation of the physical and digital archaeological archives for deposition at accredited stores approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Partial discharge of the condition can be applied for once the fieldwork at Part c) has been completed to enable the commencement of development and the continuation of the post-fieldwork components of the WSI. Part e) of the condition shall not be discharged until all elements have been fulfilled in accordance with the programme set out in the WSI.

Reason: To safeguard archaeological assets within the approved development boundary from impacts relating to any demolitions or groundworks associated with the development scheme and to ensure the proper and timely preservation and/or investigation, recording, reporting, archiving and presentation of archaeological assets affected by this development, in accordance with national policies contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2021) and Policy NH/14 of the Local Plan 2018.

16. Prior to any construction access alterations, the mitigation measures as detailed within Section 7 of the submitted Construction Traffic Management Plan V7 shall be implemented and retained as such during the construction phase.

Reason: To ensure that that the setting of the Listed Park and Buildings are not adversely impacted in accordance with Policy NH/14 of the Local Plan 2018.

17. Within one year of the first operational use of the solar farm, a Grazing Management Plan (GMP) shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. The GMP shall detail which parts of the site shall be used for the grazing of livestock, during which months of the year, and it shall set out details of how the grazing is to be managed. Any changes to the GMP during the lifetime of the permission shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval, and shall not be carried out except in accordance with that approval. Within three years of the first operational use of the solar farm, the grazing of livestock shall commence on the site in accordance with the GMP.

Reason: To ensure that part of the site remains in agricultural (grazing) use in accordance with Policy CC/2 and NH/3 of the Local Plan 2018.

Informatives

1. Constructions or alterations within an ordinary watercourse (temporary or permanent) require consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority under the Land Drainage Act 1991. Ordinary watercourses include every river, drain, stream, ditch, dyke, sewer (other than public sewer) and passage through which water flows that do not form part of Main Rivers (Main Rivers are

regulated by the Environment Agency). The applicant should refer to Cambridgeshire County Council's Culvert Policy for further guidance: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/water-minerals-and-waste/watercourse-management/> Please note the council does not regulate ordinary watercourses in Internal Drainage Board areas.

2. Surface water and groundwater bodies are highly vulnerable to pollution and the impact of construction activities. It is essential that the risk of pollution (particularly during the construction phase) is considered and mitigated appropriately. It is important to remember that flow within the watercourse is likely to vary by season and it could be dry at certain times throughout the year. Dry watercourses should not be overlooked as these watercourses may flow or even flood following heavy rainfall.
3. As part of the decommissioning of the photovoltaic arrays, all below ground cables should be removed as electrical cables contain insulation oils which, if left to degrade within the ground, could lead to localised contamination of soils and potential leaching to the local water environment.
4. We would encourage the inclusion of measures within the development to reduce the impact of channelised flows and promote the infiltration of water into the ground.
 - Siting solar arrays along ground contours (wherever possible) such that water flow between rows is dispersed evenly beneath them
 - Incorporating bunds, filter drains or other measures to interrupt flows of water between rows of solar arrays to disperse water flows over the surface and promote infiltration into the soils.
 - Incorporate wide grassed filter strips at the downstream side of blocks of solar arrays and maintain the grass at a long length to interrupt water flows and promote infiltration.
 - Incorporate gravel filled filter drains or swales to help infiltrate run-off (where ground conditions allow).Where parts of the site area are developed with impermeable surfaces, e.g. asphalt and concrete access roads and hardstanding, flows should be collected within a formalised drainage system, which may require attenuation with a controlled outflow before discharge to an identified discharge location or soakaway (where ground conditions allow). Alternatively, access roads could be constructed using permeable surfacing techniques (e.g. a proprietary grass paving system) which would not require additional formal drainage. Other areas accessed by machinery should be maintained to ensure rutting of the surface is managed and repaired where necessary. These ruts in themselves can collect water into channelised flow paths.
5. Public Rights of Way must remain open and unobstructed at all times. Building materials must not be stored on Public Rights of Way and contractors' vehicles must not be parked on it (it is an offence under s 137 of the Highways Act 1980 to obstruct a public Highway).

Landowners are reminded that it is their responsibility to maintain boundaries, including trees, hedges and fences adjacent to Public Rights of way, and that any transfer of land should account for any such boundaries (s154 Highways Act 1980).

The granting of planning permission does not entitle a developer to obstruct a Public Right of Way (Circular 1/09 para 7.1).

Background Papers

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website and / or an indication as to where hard copies can be inspected.

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)
- Planning File Reference: 21/02173/FUL

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