

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	Full Planning Committee - 04/09/2014	Item No: 5.5
Report Originator	John Hill Development Officer	Application No: KET/2014/0391
Wards Affected	Desborough St. Giles	
Location	Gaultney Farm, Pipewell Road, Desborough	
Proposal	Full Application: Solar Farm to include inverter housing, substation, access tracks, security fencing and equipment	
Applicant	Gaultney Solar Park Limited	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To describe the above proposals
- To identify and report on the issues arising from it
- To state a recommendation on the application

2. RECOMMENDATION

THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MANAGER RECOMMENDS that this application be APPROVED subject to the following Condition(s):-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

2. The Local Planning Authority shall be notified in writing of the date when electricity from the development is first supplied to the grid and the development shall be removed from the site following the expiry of 25 years from that date: the solar panels shall be decommissioned and the panels and all related above-ground structures shall be removed from the site. Following the removal of the panels and structures, the land shall be re-instated in accordance with a Decommissioning Method Statement that shall first be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority at least 18 months before the date of the decommissioning of the wind farm. That method statement shall include details of the manner, management and timing of the re-instatement works to be undertaken and shall be accompanied by a Transport statement. The removal works and the reinstatement of the site shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved scheme.

REASON: In recognition of the expected life of the proposal and to prevent an unacceptable impact on the landscape and the surrounding environment in accordance with Policy 4 and 11 of the NPPF, and policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

3. Prior to the erection of the solar panels and any other associated equipment exact details of their location, design, specification and colour shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure the proposal does not have a detrimental impact on quality of life or the natural environment in accordance with policy 7 and 11 of the NPPF, and policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

4. Any lighting associated with the construction, operation or decommissioning of the solar farm shall only be installed and used in accordance with a scheme that has first been submitted to and approved in writing with the local planning authority before the commencement of development.

REASON: In the interests of protecting the natural environment and to minimise visual impact in accordance with policies 4 and 11 of the NPPF, and policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

5. All cabling shall be laid underground in accordance with a scheme to be first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to installation.

REASON: In the interests of protecting the natural environment and to minimise visual impact in accordance with policies 4 and 11 of the NPPF and policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

6. The substation buildings, hereby permitted, shall not be erected until details of the design and external materials for the building, and for any associated compound or parking area, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

7. The invertors including any housing equipment, hereby permitted, shall not be erected until details of the design and external materials, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of the visual amenities of the area in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

8. If the solar farm hereby permitted ceases to operate for a continuous period of 6 months then, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, a scheme for the decommissioning and removal of the panels and any other ancillary equipment, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority within 3 months of the end of the cessation period. The scheme shall include details for the restoration of the site. The scheme shall be implemented within 12 months of the date of its agreement by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In recognition of the expected life of the proposal and to prevent an unnecessary impact on the landscape and the surrounding environment in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

9. No electricity shall be exported to the local grid until details of a scheme, to limit and mitigate any negative impacts from glint and glare has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The panels shall not be operated other than in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of protecting residential amenity in the accordance with Policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

10. No development shall take place until a construction traffic management plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall include details of:

- (i) The timetable for works on site;
- (ii) The routing of vehicles to and from the site;
- (iii) Temporary warning signage;
- (iv) Expected levels and timings of development traffic;
- (v) Measures to control traffic, in and around the site;
- (vi) All loading and unloading areas which will be used for the delivery or despatch of materials related to the development;
- (vii) Measures to ensure that delivery vehicles and construction traffic will not park on the county highway for loading, unloading or waiting for site entry; and
- (viii) details of the location and composition of the onsite track layout.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Construction Traffic Management Plan, or in accordance with any subsequent variation to that plan which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety and in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

11. In the interests of protecting local species and ecology the works shall be carried out in accordance with the following:

- (a) the "Reasonable Avoidance Measures : Amphibians and Reptiles : Method Statement" Appendix 2 in the "Ecological Appraisal" report,
- (b) the "Construction Method Statement : Badgers" Annex 1 of the "Confidential; Badger Appendix",
- (c) the Pre-Construction Badger Survey, in Paragraphs 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, on Page 2, of the "Confidential; Badger Appendix" report.
- (d) The provision of artificial bird boxes set out in Paragraph 6.3.5, on Page 15, of the "Ecological Appraisal" report,

REASON: In the interests of protecting ecology and biodiversity in accordance with policy 11 of the NPPF and policy 13 of the CSS.

12. No development shall take place until details of investigative archaeological works, to be undertaken on the site, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Those works shall be carried out as approved and the findings, together with details of any measures designed to protect archaeological remains, shall be reported to the Local Planning Authority within 3 months of completion of the investigative works. No development shall take place until the Local Planning Authority has given its written approval to the report and to any protective measures that it identifies for archaeological remains of significance. Protective measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interest of the historic environment in accordance with Policy 12 of the NPPF and Policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

13. In relation to the construction of the development hereby permitted; no machinery shall be operated, no process shall be carried out and no construction traffic shall enter or leave the site outside the hours of 07.30 - 18.00 Monday to Friday, nor outside the hours of 09.00 - 12.00 on Saturdays, nor at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays unless approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of protecting the occupiers of nearby dwellings in accordance with Policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

14. No works to decommission the development shall commence until a scheme for the protection of nearby residential dwellings, both outside and within the development curtilage, from noise resulting from the decommissioning of the solar farm, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All works which form part of the scheme shall be completed before the commencement of the decommissioning of the solar farm.

REASON: In the interests of protecting the occupiers of nearby dwellings in accordance with Policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

15. No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a plan showing the existing landscaping to be retained and/or removed and a scheme of soft landscaping works which shall specify species, planting sizes, spacing and numbers of trees and shrubs to be planted, the layout, contouring and surfacing of open space. The works approved shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the erection of the first turbine hereby permitted. Any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the date of planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

REASON: To improve the appearance of the site in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policy 11 of the NPPF.

16. No development shall take place on site until a landscape management plan, including short and long term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas including landscaping to be retained, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

REASON: To ensure that due regard is paid to the continuing enhancement and maintenance of amenity afforded by landscape features in accordance with policy 11 of the NPPF.

17. No development shall take place on site until a scheme for boundary treatment has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not commence until the approved scheme has been fully implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: In the interests of the visual amenity of the local area in accordance with policy 11 of the NPPF and policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

18. Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme detailing the security measures/standards to be incorporated within the development at construction and operation stage with reference to secure standards have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with these approved details.

REASON: To reduce the potential for crime in accordance with policy 13 of the Core Spatial Strategy for North Northamptonshire.

19. Any gates to be provided at the points of vehicular access to the site shall be set back a distance of 15 metres from the edge of the vehicular carriageway of the adjoining highway and shall be hung so as to open inwards into the site only.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

20. The vehicular accesses into the application site shall be a minimum width of 4.5 metres to be constructed in accordance with a plan that shall first be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To provide satisfactory access in accordance with policy 13 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy.

21. Prior to the installation of the solar panels or any of the associated equipment a scheme for the continued agricultural use for the site shall be first submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme or an alternative scheme which shall first be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure the long-term agricultural use of the site in accordance with Policy 11 of the NPPF and the guidance outlined in the NPPG.

22. The Rating Level LArTr (to include the 5dB characteristic penalty) of the noise emanating from the approved scheme, shall be at least 5dB below the measured background noise level at any time at the curtilage of any noise sensitive premises lawfully existing at the time of the consent. The rating level (LArTr) and the background noise level (LA90) shall be determined in accordance with the guidance and methodology set out in BS4142: 1997.

REASON: To protect the neighbouring properties from the impacts of noise in accordance with policy 13 of the CSS.

Officers Report for KET/2014/0391

This application is reported for Committee decision because there are unresolved, material objections to the proposal.

3.0 Information

Relevant Planning History

KET/2014/0199 – Screening Opinion 18MW Solar Farm – No EIA required

Site Description

Officer's site inspection was carried out on 20th August 2014.

The site, some 13.7ha, is located some 220m north east of Desborough and approximately 1.6km south west of Pipewell. The land notably falls from its highest point in the north east corner (135mAOD) down to its lowest point in the south west (115mAOD). The closest residential property is Gaultney Farm (the landowners property) located outside of the site boundary immediately to the south west.

The northern boundary runs along Pipewell Road and comprises a large mature hedgerow with a small number of field accesses taken from this road. The majority of the southern boundary is defined by the large Gaultney Wood. The eastern boundary is defined by a further hedgerow but this has recently been trimmed to approximately 1.5 m in height and allows views into the eastern half of the site.

Internally the site comprises three large fields currently in arable agricultural use each bordered by mature and well established hedgerows. Within the site are two small wooded areas with a larger one in the most south-westerly field.

The site is located within a rural context where the prevailing land use is agricultural. Desborough is located approximately 220m to the south west and the main line railway is located approximately 50m to the south which acts as a buffer between the site and Desborough. New residential development is under construction extending the urban edge of Desborough along the north side of Pipewell Road to the west.

The site may be visible from the rear gardens of a few properties to the north of Desborough. However, views from the majority of properties will be blocked by existing trees and woodland or ground levels associated with the railway line cutting. There is a two-storey dwelling located to the North of Desborough clearly visible from within the application site.

The fields are classified as grade 3b stated to be as a result of the high clay content, poor drainage and shallow top soil within the eastern two thirds of the site. The remaining western end is stated as having a lower clay content and better drainage but has very high stone content which makes root cropping unviable.

Telegraph poles and wires run across the site.

Proposed Development

This application is a full application for a Solar Farm to include inverter housing, substation, access tracks, security fencing and other associated equipment.

In the submission the applicants state:

- ‘1. Our site at Gaultney Farm comprises poor quality agricultural land, formerly being consented for iron ore extraction, implemented and partially worked from 1957 to the 1970s.
2. The site is very well-contained, as explained in our landscape and visual impact assessment
3. We have a viable grid connection, where we have paid the deposit (£40,000) and are under contract with Western Power: i.e. several stages of commitment beyond an 'initial grid offer'. We can hold open this offer for 5 years or more, so there is no prospect of another local solar park using this connection.
4. There are important (indeed vital) farm diversification benefits, which will help to maintain West Lodge Rural Centre, a respected community, leisure, and employment asset. The acquisition (by the tenant) was necessary to preserve the integrity of the Rural Centre, given the (former owner's) plans to sell the land in the open market.
5. Our partner, ROC Energy, is a fast growing, employment generating local business, head quartered in Kettering. Our application is important to the continuing expansion of this business and will generate local employment in a high growth, sustainable business sector.’

The different aspects of the proposal are further explained below in detail:

Solar Panels and supporting ‘tables’

The proposed panels, or arrays as they are technically known, will primarily comprise of solar panel modules that convert sunlight and daylight directly into electricity. The panels would be arranged in rows on an east west alignment facing south to maximise sunlight exposure.

As mentioned above the site area is some 13.7ha and would comprise approximately 79,000 free standing panels with an export capacity of 18MW of electricity to feed directly into the local electrical grid network.

The solar panels proposed would be mounted on ‘tables’ with a front height of 800mm and a back panel height of up to 2.39m. The rows of panels would be set back from the site security fence to prevent overshadowing from adjacent vegetation. There would also be a separation of 4.4m between the closest parts of each row again to ensure that the panels are not overshadowed and which at the same time allows vegetation to grow.

The surface of each solar panel is constructed from toughened glass, beneath which is a non-reflective layer, electrical connections; silicon and a backing layer, all of which is set in an aluminium frame.

There are layers of silicon comprising primarily negative charged electrons, “n-type” and positively charged electron silicon “p-type”, contacting each other in the

solar panels. When exposed to the sunlight the sun's energy will push electrons from one layer to the other, resulting in electricity generation. Modern panels can comprise a number of different layers of silicon each designed to absorb different wavelengths of sunlight thereby maximising the efficiency of the panels. The concept of efficient solar power is to absorb as much light as possible while reflecting as little as possible, using 'high transmission low iron glass' which produce less glare and reflectance than standard window glass.

The solar panel tables are fixed i.e. they do not move to track the path of the sun, and are secured in position through piles driven approximately 1400mm into the ground at 7.5 metre intervals.

LV Kiosks and Compounds

Located at strategic locations throughout the site will be 16 small LV kiosks placed adjacent to the access tracks in easily accessible locations. The kiosks comprise prefabricated cabins approximately 2.2m long, 3m wide and 2.6m high.

The purpose of these cabins is to convert the direct current (DC) electric generated by the solar panels to alternating current (AC) electricity suitable for distribution into the local electrical grid network. Each kiosk would serve numerous strings of panels.

The kiosks are proposed to be green clad and located in 2.2m high welded mesh fenced compounds containing associated transformer and switch equipment.

The inverters produce a slight 'humming' noise when operational which varies depending on the amount of electricity generated. However, they are housed in acoustically insulated enclosures and the panels only operate in the daytime so there will no noise at night. During the day the noise levels will not exceed 35dB at the site boundaries.

Grid Connection and Metering Cabin

An electrical substation cabin, where the output from the array would be transferred to the local electrical network, would be erected to allow for monitoring of the electricity generated by the development, and to provide access to the switchgear. This is to be located at the District Network Operators (DNO) switch room at the far southern part of the site.

The DNO switch cabinet would be 4m in length, 3.2m in width and 3.2m in height and would be located in a fenced compound containing associated transformer and switch housing.

Site Access

There will be two site accesses available off Pipewell Road, utilising existing gaps in the hedgerow. Once operational the site will be accessed via security gates at these entrances. The security gates will comprise a double leaf wire mesh gate measuring 2m high by 4m wide.

Within the site, 4m wide access tracks comprising ground compact material would be established for vehicles to move through the array.

A proposed routing plan, to direct traffic from and to A6 off A14 Junction 3, ensuring any vehicles accessing the site avoid using roads through local settlements, for all construction and maintenance vehicles has been provided.

The solar panels, supporting tables and other components will be delivered to site by standard HGV articulated lorry. There is no requirement for special or abnormal loads. A predicted total of 252 HGV's over 50 days would be required to deliver the construction material and solar farm components. It is estimated that during construction there will be a maximum of 5 deliveries per day.

Security Measures

The application proposes 1.9 metre high deer fencing with 2 metre high poles to be set back from the site boundary, with the solar panels located 3-4 metres from the fence, to prevent overshadowing of the panels and to allow maintenance of hedgerows.

Security thermal imaging detection equipment will be provided at strategic intervals along the site boundary. The security equipment would incorporate passive infra red cameras which would preclude the need for site lighting. This is to be mounted on painted pillars measuring up to 4 metres in height adjacent to the security fence.

A Section 106 unilateral undertaking is being completed to secure community benefits (please see Officer comments).

Any Constraints Affecting the Site

C Road – Off Pipewell Road
LWT Prime Site
Pipelines
Outside town settlement boundary

4.0 Consultation and Customer Impact

Desborough Town Council

No objections, subject to conditions and measures to mitigate the following:

- Concerns about the loss of agricultural land – the continued use of the site for agricultural purposes should be conditioned.
- The economic and energy production case for solar is questionable. The renewable electricity generation for Kettering Borough has already been exceeded.
- The application is premature and should await determination in advance of the Joint Core Strategy review.
- There is potential for impacts on the highway through distraction of road users off Pipewell Road.
- The impacts on the following spaces have not been properly considered
 - Desborough Greenspace
 - Houses off Pipewell Road
 - New homes allocated as part of the Rothwell and Desborough AAP
 - Double decker buses carrying school children

- Noise and disturbance from inverters.
- Visual impact on the character of the area which will be seen over hedgerows
- Footpath links and viewing areas should be provided
- Community and social benefits are not identified. What are the benefits to local people – reduced electricity subsidies?
- Insufficient public consultation undertaken.
- The development must not impact other schemes within the Borough.

Rushton Parish Council – 9th July 2014

Object to the proposal on the grounds that the development would result in the further industrialisation of the area when combined with the Wind Farm just a short distance away.

Wilbarston Parish Council – 18th July 2014

No objections.

Highway Authority – 20th August 2014

No objections subject to conditions with regards to access tracks continuing 15 metres into the site to prevent mud from being transferred onto the carriageway; gates should be set back from the carriageway and open inwards to prevent blocking of the public highway; the access points shall be a minimum of 4.5 metres in width.

English Heritage – 26th August 2014

Impact of the proposals on the significance of Heritage Assets:

English Heritage is minded to consider that in this case the proposals are not likely to have a substantially harmful impact on any of the designated heritage assets in the surrounding area.

In explanation they comment:

Designated Heritage Assets

From a brief review of our own records, it is apparent that a series of designated heritage assets comprising Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings (all grades), a Registered Park and Garden and Conservation Areas are located within the town and villages surrounding the proposed development. Details of all designated heritage assets can be found on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE).

The Heritage Statement submitted in support of the application states that there are no designated cultural heritage assets located within 1km of the site that are predicted to have visibility of the proposed development and as such no specific assessment is required (Section 1.17).

English Heritage's published guidance on The Setting of Heritage Assets (2011), which is referenced in the Heritage Statement (Section 1.12), advises that setting is not defined exclusively in relation to direct static views between individual heritage assets. Setting comprises the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced and often extends beyond direct visual relationships to encompass functional, spatial and historic relationships. Any such relationships would usually be identified

during assessment of the significance and extent of the setting of designated heritage assets.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

We note that your expert advisor, the Assistant County Archaeological Advisor, has recommended the need for an archaeological field evaluation prior to determination in order to assess the significance of any non-designated archaeological remains within the site boundary.

The Heritage Assessment document indicates that there is evidence for quarrying in the south west part of the site. English Heritage has received no conclusive evidence that this quarrying extended across the entire site boundary. The document acknowledges there is also evidence from within the site boundary relating to possible enclosures, as yet undated. The evidence provided appears to indicate that these were largely identified during aerial survey conducted in 1984. If it is confirmed that this survey postdates the known quarrying activity on site, it would suggest in our opinion that all archaeological potential may not necessarily have been destroyed. We therefore do not consider the recommendations of the Assistant County Archaeological Advisor to carry out field evaluations prior to determination of the application to be either unreasonable or inconsistent with the usual approach, in line with the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Cumulative Effect

The cumulative effect of ground works associated with solar farm developments should not be underestimated. We would advise that regardless of whether the significance of any non-designated archaeological remains would be likely to preclude development, in our opinion the cumulative impacts of the number and type of supports for the photovoltaic panels, below ground disturbance and other works can result in significant physical impacts on archaeological remains.

Thus in determining the planning application, your authority should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets [NPPF 131]. Since significance can be harmed or lost through development within a heritage asset's setting [NPPF 132], any harm or loss to significance resulting from the proposals should therefore require clear and convincing justification [NPPF 132].

Natural England – 7th July 2014

No objections subject to referral to Natural England's standing advice.

Wildlife Trust – 21st August 2014

No objection subject to a number of conditions including the "Reasonable Avoidance Measures : Amphibians and Reptiles : Method Statement" that is included as Appendix 2 in the main / core "Ecological Appraisal" report document itself, and the "Construction Method Statement : Badgers" that is included as Annex 1 of the separate "Confidential; Badger Appendix" report document too.

In conjunction a Condition requiring further, follow-up, Pre-Construction Badger Survey effort, as set out by the Applicant's own ecologist in Paragraphs 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, on Page 2, of their separate "Confidential; Badger Appendix" report document.

The provision of some artificial bird boxes, referenced in Paragraph 6.3.5, on Page 15, of the main / core “Ecological Appraisal” report document itself and those recommendations for landscape planting, gapping-up of hedgerows, etc. should also be conditioned.

NNC Archaeology – 8th July 2014

Further information is required in the form of an archaeological field evaluation to be provided by the applicant before the determination of this application.

4th August 2014

Following further discussions with the application it has been agreed that a condition should be added to any subsequent approval to require the archaeological field evaluation. Should this identify any significant archaeological remains or indeed further investigation through carrying out a formal excavation, which impacts on the timing and/or actual delivery of this development, then this risk is acknowledged and any consequence is borne directly by the planning applicant.

Environment Agency

Comments to follow.

Northamptonshire Police – 11th July 2014

No formal objection subject to informative's.

National Grid – 8th July 2014

Apparatus has been identified in the vicinity of the application site. National Grid should be kept informed with regards to any decision made with regards to the planning application. The contractor should also contact National Grid before any works are undertaken.

Network Rail – 29th July 2014

No objection in principle subject to no public access being allowed to the site and subject to landscaping being sufficiently distanced from the Railway Line.

Environmental Health – 31st July 2014

No objection subject to a condition.

Neighbours

11 House Martin Close, Desborough

Supports Solar Farm applications but not the loss of agricultural land. If approved the applicant should be required to graze sheep on the land at all times. No site notice has been displayed.

35 Braybrooke Road, 2 Speedwell Road, 31 Ise View Road, Cedar Farm, Rushton Road, 14 Matclock Way, Desborough, 13 Main Street, Wilbarston, 30 Woodlands Avenue, Corby:

Support the application on the basis of sustainable energy production offering a good option for unproductive farmland. The panels are unobtrusive and the land can continue to be used for agriculture. The application will assist with keeping the local farm economical. The proposal would not hinder views or public footpaths.

5.0 Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

The overarching aim of the NPPF is to help to achieve sustainable development. Within the NPPF there are a number of planning policies which contain relevant planning considerations to this application:

Policy 1. Building a Strong; Competitive Economy

Policy 3. Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy

Policy 7. Requiring Good Design

Policy 10. Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

Policy 11. Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Policy 12. Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Development Plan Policies

North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy

Policy 1. Strengthening the Network of Settlements

Policy 5. Green Infrastructure

Policy 6. Infrastructure Delivery and Developer Contributions

Policy 9. Distribution and Location of Development

Policy 13. General Sustainable Development Principles

Policy 14. Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Construction

Local Plan

Policy 7. Open Countryside

Emerging Policies (Local Development Framework)

Joint Core Strategy

Site Specific Proposals LDD

SPGs

Sustainable Design SPD

6.0 Financial/Resource Implications

None

7.0 Planning Considerations

The key issues for consideration in this application are:-

1. Principle
2. Environmental Impact Assessment
3. Visual and Landscape Impact and Cumulative Effect
4. Use of Agricultural Land
5. Amenity
6. Impact on Historic Assets
7. Impact on Ecology
8. Highways and Access

9. Flood Risk
10. Other Matters

Principle

The proposed application site is located outside of any designated settlement boundary within open countryside, where new developments restricted by policies 1 and 9 of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) and policy 7 of the Local Plan for Kettering Borough.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports the transition to a low carbon future in changing climate and encouraging the re-use of renewable resources. Policy 10 states this is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Paragraph 97 of Policy 10 of the NPPF also aims to increase the use and supply of renewable energy through having a positive strategy; design policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy whilst ensuring the adverse impacts are addressed, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts; and to consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy.

Paragraph 98 states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy; and approve applications if they can be made acceptable.

The recently released National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG), contains guidance on the delivery of large scale solar farm development. It states that although large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively.

Particular factors a Local Planning Authority will need to consider include; encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non agricultural land. Where a proposal involves greenfield land, when (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.

The NPPG goes on to say that relevant considerations include:

- Solar farms are temporary features and installations, which are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use;
- The proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;
- The need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing;
- Great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting;
- The potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges;

- The energy generating potential;
- The approach to assessing cumulative landscape and visual impact of large scale solar farms. This is likely to be the same as assessing the impact of wind turbines. However, in the case of ground-mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography, the area of a zone of visual influence could be zero.

Policy 14 of the CSS requires all new development to meet the highest standards of resource and energy efficiency and a reduction in carbon emissions.

In August 2012 a draft version of the emerging Joint Core Strategy, was publically consulted upon, it included draft Policy 26 which relates to renewable energy. The emerging policy states:

- a) *The most appropriate technology is selected for the site having regard to site characteristics and the Regional Renewable Energy Study;***
- b) *The siting of development avoids substantial harm to the significance of a historic or heritage asset;***
- c) *The impact of the development on local landscape character is minimised and mitigated against;***
- d) *Ensure that the siting of development does not create a significant noise for residential dwellings;***
- e) *The development includes measures to mitigate against any adverse impacts on the built and natural environment;***
- f) *The development does not create an overbearing cumulative noise or visual impact when considered in conjunction with smaller developments and permitted proposals;***
- g) *Where appropriate, the development provides community benefits, including contributions to energy efficiency measures, which would outweigh any residual harm.***

Given the size and scale of the proposed Solar Farm then it is unlikely that this type of development could fall within a designated settlement boundary in accordance with policies 1 and 9 of the CSS and policy 7 of the Local Plan for Kettering Borough. Given the strong policy presumption in favour of sustainable and renewable energy outlined in policy 10 of the NPPF, it is considered that the principle of a solar farm is acceptable, subject to mitigation of any of its potential impacts, which are further discussed below.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The application has been submitted without an EIA. Previously, the applicants submitted a Screening Opinion requesting from the Local Planning Authority that they determine whether an EIA was required with any subsequent planning application. The Screening Opinion concluded that no EIA was required. There has been no significant change to the application from the Screening Opinion, to warrant a further request for an EIA in this instance, in fact the site area covered by the application is less than that shown in the Screening Opinion. On this basis no further screening of the proposal has been undertaken and no requests for EIA have

been made.

Visual and Landscape Impact and Cumulative Effect

Policy 11 of the NPPF and Policy 13 (h) of the CSS seek to conserve and enhance landscape character, the historic landscape and designated built environmental assets and their settings, and biodiversity of the environment.

The submitted landscape and visual assessment outlines the site as having medium to high susceptibility to change but medium to low landscape value with no nationally or locally designated landscapes. Overall the site has medium sensitivity to change. The submitted assessment states that the development will result in a large magnitude of change with a moderate to major impact on landscape character. There is potential for significant effects from certain isolated locations; however with the proposed perimeter planting, no residual significant effects on landscape character are predicted.

This assessment seeks to reinforce the landscape features within the site and reduce the potential for adverse impact. These measures include allowing the hedgerow on the north-eastern boundary of the site to grow to a height of 2-3 metres to restrict views of the panels from this direction. The infilling of gaps in the already established hedgerow adjacent to Pipewell Road on the north-western boundary of the site and the management of existing hedgerow to improve its condition at the boundaries of the site and for the wider landscape structure.

There may be possible views from the rear elevations and gardens of some properties located to the north of Desborough and the upper floor of a property at Hereford Close, which can be seen from within the application site. A limited number of properties at Rushton Road and on the northern edge of Rothwell may achieve long distance views towards the site. The magnitude of effect is likely to be small as properties are 2km distant and do not break the horizon.

The south-western boundary comprises of largely overgrown hedgerow and trees. However, the lower landform here allows some views into the site. In this location the boundary planting will be largely maintained.

The proposed solar arrays will replace the existing agricultural crop, the remaining land will become grassland and be grazed by sheep. This will assist with retaining the green/open countryside character of this area and maintain its continued use in agricultural. If the solar farm is approved, it would be granted a 25 year permission and at the end of the permission all equipment and associated infrastructure will be required to be permanently removed from the site and it returned to its previous agricultural use. As the installation of panels requires very little ground works and disturbance, the reinstatement of the land after this period will be relatively easy once all equipment is removed from the site.

Desborough Town Council has raised concerns with regards to the impact of the development on the Desborough Green Space. The submitted Landscape Assessment concludes that views of the solar farm are not anticipated when vegetation is in leaf, with a possible minor effect in winter months.

The development will involve the construction of a significant amount of boundary fence as well as high posts for the housing of security equipment. The solar panels themselves are reasonable low-lying but this other equipment is considered to be more intrusive and less sympathetic to the open countryside location. Fewer poles for security equipment would be preferable, especially if these could be concentrated at the entrances of the site. If permitted, a condition is recommended to check the details, numbers and positions of the poles and associated security equipment.

To help screen the development in the first year of commissioning and during the winter months an evergreen fast growing climber could be planted at the base of the proposed wire mesh boundary fencing to early green the development and help it blend with the wider landscape. This would also help to screen some of the more imposing elements of the scheme including the boundary fencing. The applicants should be asked to consider this as part of the proposed landscaping scheme to be required by condition.

Overall it is considered that the landscape and visual effects associated with this site can be adequately mitigated against through additional planting and existing hedgerow maintenance. Long distance views may be possible to the application site but the presence of panels from this distance is likely to 'colour' the existing landscape rather than significantly alter its character. Furthermore the installation of the panels is for a limited period of 25 years. On this basis the proposal is considered in accordance with policy 11 of the NPPF and 13 of the CSS.

Cumulative impacts

The applicants have been asked to provide a cumulative impact assessment taking into consideration other permitted or potential renewable energy projects within the local area. The applicants have stated that 'even their very widely drawn Zone of Theoretical Visibility contained within the Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, does not include any other proposed solar parks. The 'cumulative' effect is extremely weak as this proposal only has a localised effect and the 'impact' of this solar park has been assessed as acceptable at the site specific level. Unlike the proposals at Braybrooke and Eckland Lodge, which abut the A6, this scheme is very well contained from a landscape and visual point of view'.

The applicants go on to state that:

'in the absence of any spatial policies in the development plan for solar, each application, as a matter of planning law, must be determined on its merits. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that 'cumulative impact' ranks a very long way behind more typical planning decision making criteria such as landscape, previously worked land as a former minerals site, archaeology, biodiversity, employment and educational offers. In short, the 'cumulative impact' would have to be exceptionally severe. This is not the case, nor are the other proposals so nearby as to have any cumulative impact whatsoever; noting that Braybrooke and Eckland Lodge are demonstrably inferior sites (i.e. they have the potential to create visual impacts), and Burton Latimer is the other side of Kettering. In these circumstances, the correct response from Kettering is to scrutinise the other sites and to impose mitigation strategies to ensure that they are acceptable on their merits'.

It is accepted that the other solar farms mentioned here do not yet have planning permission, the Local Planning Authority consider it reasonable to request a comprehensive cumulative impact assessment to ascertain the combined impacts of these developments including the permitted Wind Farm at Rushton and the constructed turbines at Burton Wold. The NPPG supports the submission of a cumulative impact assessment for solar farms similar to that required for wind turbines. Furthermore, paragraph 97 of the NPPF requires that adverse impacts should be addressed, including cumulative impacts. In formulating the recommendation account has been taken of these impacts.

Use of Agricultural Land

The site has been assessed as agricultural Grade 3B, the applicant states that of the three fields that the solar farm would cover the agricultural productivity of the two northern fields is low due to high clay content and on the southern field high stone content prevents easy farming. The NPPG states that large scale solar farm's should be focused on previously developed and non-agricultural land. Any use of agricultural land should be shown to be necessary and on poorer quality land; and that the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.

The site has been demonstrated to be of poor grade agricultural land (grade 1, 2 and 3a land is usually considered to be the most versatile agricultural land). The applicants have stated that the remaining land will be grassed over for the grazing of sheep. It is recommended that a condition is applied to any subsequent permission to ensure the site remains in agricultural use. The use of agricultural land in this instance is considered acceptable for these reasons.

Amenity

Policy 13(l) of CSS states that new development should not result in an unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties or the wider area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, light or other pollution, loss of light or overlooking.

The closest residential properties, which are not in the ownership of the applicant are located to the north of Desborough and are approximately 225 metres away from the site and at the new housing development at Pipewell Road approximately 260 metres away. Views to the site are largely blocked by existing vegetation, the cutting created by the railway line and existing residential properties. There may be some views available from properties on the far northern edge of Desborough from first floor windows and rear gardens back to the solar farm. However, given the distances to the development, then it is unlikely that the development will have a significant impact on their amenity to warrant refusal of planning permission.

Conditions can be applied to any subsequent permission to prevent any unacceptable impacts from glint and glare, lighting or noise. The applicants state that although the inverters do make a small humming noise, they will be housed in acoustic boxes and noise limits will not be exceeded at the boundaries of the site. The noise from the generation of electricity and fans used to cool the inverters only occurs in the day, noise associated with the development at night is therefore

unlikely.

The submission also states that any effects from glint and glare are unlikely as the solar panels are designed to absorb sunlight to maximise energy generation, which has the additional benefit of minimising reflection and glare from the panels. A condition is proposed to prevent any negative impacts from glint and glare.

The application does not propose any lighting for the site and the proposed security equipment is passive infra red so as to avoid unnecessary lighting. A condition is therefore proposed restricting the use of lighting apart from in accordance with a scheme which has first been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in order to protect the amenity of neighbouring properties.

The emerging Site Specific Proposals LDD (SSP LDD) identifies a potential housing site, to the south of the application site adjacent to Pipewell Road and the railway line. There is no mention of this potential allocation in the applicant's submission and no viewpoint included within the submission to clearly understand the potential impact of this proposal on this emerging allocation. This allocation is considered to be a material planning consideration, although with limited weight as the SSP LDD is not an adopted document. However, the site has been endorsed by Members of the Planning Policy Committee as a potential allocated housing site to be included within the next version of the Plan – Proposed Submission. The applicants have been asked to provide additional detail with regards to any potential impact on future development on this site.

There is obviously further planned development to the north of the existing Grange development, as identified in the Desborough and Rothwell Urban Extension AAP. The application makes reference to this allocation and provides a viewpoint to demonstrate that the proposal will have minimal impact on this new housing development.

It is considered that given the distance of the proposal from neighbouring properties and the existing intervening vegetation, the impacts from the development are minimal and will be for a limited period only while additional planting and vegetation becomes established. The proposal is therefore considered in accordance with policy 13(l) of the CSS.

Impact on Heritage Assets

Policy 12 of the NPPF states that 'local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage asset, affected'. Furthermore, the advice of English Heritage and the County Archaeologist has been followed.

There are no designated historic assets within the application site. An assessment has been undertaken of the key receptors within 1km of the site, the applicant states that beyond 1km it is not considered that the proposal would offer any potential for adverse impacts on designated cultural heritage receptors.

The applicant's also state that the proposal would not have a negative impact on the Desborough Conservation Area or other historic assets within 1km of the application site as there is no visibility to the proposed development. They go on to state that

there would also be no visibility from St Giles Church, Desborough or Triangular Lodge, which is located some distance from the site and screened by the significant area of mature woodland associated with Gaultney Wood.

The NPPG states that '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'.

The applicants state that the site has no functional, historic or visual relationship with any designated cultural heritage receptors and therefore does not form part of the setting of any designated heritage asset.

Policy 12 of the NPPF states that in determining applications, the Local Planning Authority should require an application to describe the significance of any heritage asset affected. It was unclear from the submission what impact this development would have on the significance of local heritage assets including the Desborough Conservation Area, the locally Listed boot and shoe factory at 69-71 Rushton Road and the cluster of Listed Buildings within and around Desborough Town Centre. Also, there may be long distance views from Triangular Lodge and the Grade I Listed St Giles Church, Desborough, which do not appear to be fully investigated.

However, further information has been submitted which outlines the distances between the historic assets and the application site. It also goes on to say that 'as the site comprises a former quarry site that was in used until the 1970s it has no functional, historic, physical or visual relationship with any designated cultural heritage receptors and therefore does not form the setting of any designated heritage asset within the locality. In fact the site retains planning permission for quarrying despite its current agricultural use'.

With regards to the individual historic assets that applicants state that 'Both Desborough Church and Desborough Conservation Area are located within the historic core of Desborough at a distance of approximately 1km from the site and are separated from the site by intervening modern development including roads, modern industrial and commercial buildings, modern housing and the railway line. St Giles Church would appear to have been Listed for its historic architectural interest which, alongside its function as a church, would represent its greatest heritage significance. The proposed development would have no impact on either its architecture or function as a church and no part of the church can be seen from the application site.

Desborough Conservation Area appears to have been designated for its architectural form and historic townscape alongside its historic interest associated with the history of the town. The panels would be no higher than 2.5 metres, so they are completely obscured from view by the field boundaries and woodlands surrounding the site.

The Rushton Triangular Lodge has been Listed for its historic architectural interest and links with Thomas Tresham. Its significance is also associated with its function and relationship to Rushton Hall. Its setting is most closely associated with Rushton

and the adjacent historic garden. The Lodge would have no visibility of the proposed development at a distance of 2km and is separated by the large area of woodland known as Gaultney Wood. There is no functional, historic or physical relationship between Gaultney Farm and the Lodge’.

Policy 12 of the NPPF states ‘when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm . . . Local Planning Authorities should refuse consent. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal’.

Taking into consideration the above it should be noted that the solar panels are a temporary feature which can be removed from site returning it to its previous condition after the proposed permission period of 25 years. Therefore, any impacts on these historic assets are reversible and this is a material planning consideration, which could be considered to be less than substantial harm, outweighed by the benefits of renewable energy production, as proposed.

Although the impacts of the development on local historic assets may be as described above by the applicants, there appears to have been little assessment undertaken to substantiate their claims. However, given the distance of the development from these assets, the sites former quarry and current agricultural use and the fact that the panels are a temporary feature it is considered that the development would have less than substantial harm, outweighed by the positive renewable energy generation of the development. The proposal is therefore considered in accordance with Policy 12 of the NPPF and Policy 13(o) of the CSS.

Impact on Ecology

Policy 11 of the NPPF and policies 5 and 13(o) of the CSS require new development to conserve and enhance local biodiversity and deliver a net gain in green infrastructure.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken, it found the site to consist of a series of arable fields growing winter sown field beans or winter wheat at the time of the survey. A series of ditches and a small stream abuts the boundary of the application site. The fields are bounded by generally intact species poor hedgerow and a few young trees. Just beyond the southern boundary is a semi-natural broad-leaved woodland. There were 2 ponds within the application site at the time of the survey and no buildings.

Natural England guidance TIN101 (2011) states ‘like any type of development, solar parks have the potential to affect the landscape, natural habitats, soils and geological and archaeological features’. This note discusses the potential for damage as a result of the panels and highlights the potential for cumulative impacts to occur when parks are sited in close proximity. The guidance also notes that well located and designed solar parks can avoid negative environmental impacts and

deliver a net gain for biodiversity.

The application states that the 'site does not form part of any statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation. Six statutory sites were identified within 2km of the application site and 13 non-statutory sites were present within 2km radius. The majority of the application site comprises intensively managed arable land of limited and low ecological value. Areas of locally more valuable habitat such as hedgerows at the boundaries of the site will be retained and protected by appropriate buffer areas. All areas of woodland, hedgerow and trees will be protected during the construction phase of the development.

Existing hedgerows are to be reinforced to provide continued habitat and foraging for local species. The land will be reverted to grassland providing increased species and structural diversity for a range of different species'.

The applicant's submission concludes that there are 'no anticipated impacts on any statutory or non-statutory designated sites. With appropriate mitigation and sensitive design measures, it is considered that any impacts on species can be mitigated'. Natural England and The Wildlife Trust do not raise any objections to the proposal subject to habitat enhancement and mitigation conditions, as suggested, which will be applied to any subsequent approval. The applicants state that the proposed development is likely to provide benefit for a range of species including birds, terrestrial mammals, amphibians and reptiles.

The proposal is therefore considered in accordance with Policy 11 of the NPPF and policy 13 of the CSS.

Highways and Access

The proposal includes two vehicular accesses into the site utilising existing gaps in hedgerows, these accesses are considered acceptable subject to provision of a hard bound track for 15m into the site to prevent mud etc. from being transferred onto the carriageway. The access widths proposed need to be increased in width to 4.5 metres to comply with relevant highway standards and any gates to be provided shall open inwards and be set back from the carriageway to prevent vehicles from stopping and blocking local roads. Conditions with regards to hard-standing, access width and gates have been recommended to ensure that the development does not have an adverse impact on the highway network or highway safety in accordance with policy 13(n) of the CSS.

The majority of traffic movements will be associated with the commissioning and construction of the solar farm. A predicted total of 252 HGVs, spread over 50 days would be required to deliver the construction material and components, resulting in approximately 5 deliveries per day. Construction transport hours will be conditioned to reduce any impact on local residents and the highways. A transport routing plan will also be conditioned to direct traffic from and to A6 off A14 Junction 3, ensuring any vehicles accessing the site avoid using roads through local settlements.

During the operational phases of the development traffic movements would be associated with general maintenance activities once every 2-3 weeks comprising of a single van. Traffic movements during the decommission phase would be similar to

those during the construction phase as outlined within the planning application. A condition is required to regulate the decommissioning stage of the development. The Highways Authority has raised no concerns with regards to this.

The proposal may, when first constructed, be visible from the public highway, especially in the first year while new planting becomes established and therefore could cause a distraction to local highway users. However, the existing vegetation on the main Pipewell Road is high and dense and there are only limited gap views into the site, mainly at the two entrances to the site, which will remain. Users of the highway network will soon become use to the presence of the turbines and as stated the additional vegetation will take effect after the first year. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in highway safety terms and in accordance with policy 13 of the CSS.

Flood Risk

A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been undertaken which identified that the site is not at any direct risk of flooding. The development area is in Flood Zone 1 (low risk). The FRA shows that the impermeable area created by the development is very small, relative to the site area and as such will have a small impact on run-off rates from the site. The FRA proposes a SuDs scheme to reduce the runoff rate to less than the current rate as storage and infiltration will be improved. A swale and scrape system has been proposed to allow the interception, redistribution and infiltration of flows from across the site. These systems will be required by condition.

No response has been received from the Environment Agency with regards to Flood Risk but an appropriate response will be reported to Members of the Planning Committee at the meeting.

Other matters raised

The economic case for energy production

Policy 10 of the NPPF prevents Local Planning Authorities from questioning the need or productivity of Solar Farms.

The application is premature

The NPPG states that refusal of planning permission on grounds of prematurity will seldom be justified where a draft Local Plan has yet to be submitted for examination. Where planning permission is refused on grounds of prematurity, the local planning authority will need to indicate clearly how the grant of permission for the development concerned would prejudice the outcome of the plan-making process.

Footpath links and viewing areas should be provided

There are no existing footpaths within the application site and therefore it is considered unreasonable to require them as part of this permission. The applicant proposes to use the facility for private tours as an educational tool for schools and groups.

It is likely that the Solar Farm will be able to be viewed from the public highway if people are interested, especially in the first year of the development while planting takes time to establish.

Public consultation

The application outlines the public consultation undertaken by the applicant prior to the submission of planning permission. A project information drop-in session was held. The event was publicised through the town clerks of both Desborough and Rushton Councils and via public notices. Local and ward Councillors were invited. Posters advertising the consultation event were placed on the Parish and Town Council notice boards and outside the Desborough Library and Oak Tree Public House. The application reports that 18 people attended the session and response forms were completed. The response forms are not attached to the application. However, the applicants state that there was broad support for the proposal; the site was well chosen; and the use of land for grazing is a good idea.

Four site notices were posted on 2nd July 2014 around the site advertising the application when it was first received.

Grid Connection and Impact on other schemes within the Borough

The applicants state that there is limited Grid Capacity in this area and therefore the granting of permission here would restrict further development of this kind. The Local Planning Authority have contacted Western Power the District Network Operator for this area. Currently a renewable energy generating project needs to apply to make a connection to the Grid. If capacity is available an offer is made, if there is no capacity then the project will queue until capacity becomes available and an offer can be made. Capacity can become available if a previous offer expires or technical upgrades are made to the Grid. The capacity of the grid is dynamic and ever changing. Therefore, the permitting of this development would not necessarily prevent other renewable energy schemes in this area from coming forward as stated by the applicant.

Community Benefits

The applicant's willingness to support a community fund for energy efficiency measures is acknowledged. They are completing a Unilateral Undertaking (S106) for £40,000.00 towards local sustainable schemes. Whilst this offer is not a reason for granting planning permission, it is welcomed. The undertaking is expected to have been completed prior to the determination date for this application.

Conclusion

The proposal would serve to increase the use and supply of renewable energy, in accordance with Policy 10 of the NPPF. Generally it is considered that the landscape and visual impacts of the development can be largely mitigated against through additional planting and landscape management, as can any impacts on local wildlife and ecology in accordance with policy 11 of the NPPF.

Whilst there is limited information submitted with the application to assess in detail the impact of the proposal on historic assets, the report sets out the ways in which these issues have been or are to be addressed. Furthermore, given that the permission is for a temporary period and the location and distance of these historic assets then it may be reasonable to conclude the development would have a less than significant temporary impact on local historic assets and permission could be

granted on this basis.

The benefits and effects of the proposal have been weighed in accordance with National and Local Planning Policies and subject to conditions stated is recommended for approval.

Background Papers

Title of Document:

Date:

Contact Officer:

John Hill, Development Officer on 01536 534316

Previous Reports/Minutes

Ref:

Date: