

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	Full Planning Committee - 07/04/2015	Item No: 5.4
Report Originator	Rebecca Collins Development Team Leader	Application No: KET/2014/0863
Wards Affected	Burton Latimer	
Location	Burton Wold Farm, Wold Road, Burton Latimer	
Proposal	Full Application with EIA: Solar photovoltaic farm and ancillary infrastructure	
Applicant	Mr T Watkins First Renewable Developments Ltd,	

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 5 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 solar 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 siting, design, foundations 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 siting, design, foundations 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 replacement, repair or 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. If the operation of the solar farm is to cease, then a scheme shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority to include details for the restoration of the site. The scheme for either replacement, repair or decommissioning and removal of the panels and any other ancillary equipment shall be implemented within 18 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:

- Ecological/biodiversity retention, protection, enhancement measures and future management inputs outlined in Chapter 4 of the 'Burton Wold Solar Farm - Site C : Environmental Statement', dated October 2014, especially Section 4.1, 'Summary' and Section 4.7 'Impact Assessment' parts;

- Recommendations in respect of Reptiles outlined in Paragraphs 4.5.15 / 4.5.16 and 4.7.55 and Paragraphs 4.6.31 and 4.7.43 / 4.7.44 / 4.7.45 in respect of badgers, of the Environmental Statement dated October 2014;
- Section 4.8 headed 'Ecological Enhancement Opportunities' of the Environmental Statement;
- Development shall not take place on land shown on approved Plan reference FR1005/17/07 1 sown with a species-rich native grassland mix, to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, to provide further floral biodiversity and foraging opportunities for wildlife; and
- A comprehensive Ecological Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing prior to the commencement of development.

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 including a geophysical survey and trial trenching, 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 08.00 - 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 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. Prior to the installation of the solar panels or any of the associated equipment a scheme for the sowing of the grassland, mix and management shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To sustain and enhance biodiversity in accordance with Policy 11 of the NPPF and the guidance outlined in the NPPG.

19. 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.

20. Prior to construction a phasing programme for the development of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved phasing programme.

REASON: In the interests of achieving a well laid out development Policy 13 of the CSS for North Northamptonshire.

21. No development shall take place until a surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To prevent the increased risk of flooding, both on and off site in accordance with the NPPF and Policy 13(q) of the Core Strategy for North Northamptonshire.

Officers Report for KET/2014/0863

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

3.0 Information

Relevant Planning History

Application Site

KET/2014/0215 – Screening Burton Wold Solar Farm – EIA Required

KET/2014/216 – Scoping Burton Wold Solar Farm – EIA Required on grounds of Landscape and Visual Impact

Wider Site

KET/2011/0506, 5 wind turbines (100m height to tip), control building and substation within a secure compound, underground electrical cables connecting the turbines to the substation, alterations to existing site access, access tracks and crane hardstandings, temporary construction compound and anemometry mast 65m height (Approved).

KET/2003/0559, 10 wind turbines, generators, anemometry mast, substation and associated infrastructure. (Approved)

KET/2005/1012, Modify existing junction. (Approved)

KET/2006/1008, Erection of 50m guyed anemometer mast for 12 month period to measure wind speed and direction. (Approved)

KET/2007/0054, Scoping Opinion - Extension to wind farm.

KET/2007/1033, Wind farm consisting of 7no. wind turbines (100m tip height). (Approved)

KET/2010/0755, Anemometry mast. (Approved)

KET/2012/0075, Scoping Opinion - Revision to Burton Wold wind farm northern extension.

KET/2012/0249, Lawful Development Certificate - Commencement of planning permission reference KET/2007/1033 by the marking out of the access tracks and hedge removal positions. (Deemed a lawful commencement of planning permission).

KET/2014/0479 – Scoping Opinion Burton Wold Wind Farm Southern Extension

KET/2014/0540 – Burton Wold Solar Farm Southern Site (Approved)

KET/2014/0861 – Burton Wold Wind Farm Southern Extension consisting of 3 Turbines, 136.5m to the tip (Approved)

Site Description

Officer's site inspection was carried out on 18th March 2015.

The application site lies to the north of the existing, Burton Wold Wind Farm that consists of 10 turbines, 100m to the tip and 9 turbines 125m to the tip. There is a further permission for 3 turbines to the south of the existing (and to the south-west of the application site), 136.5m to the tip. Planning consent has also been granted for 34 hectares of solar farm (Site B) to the south of the existing site.

The site lies adjacent to A14, running along its northern boundary. The village of Cranford with significant planting to the south of Cranford in between the village and the A14 also lies to the north of the application site. To the west of the application site is the A6 and Burton Latimer. To the east of the site is A510, which leads to Finedon to the South of the application site. This site is approximately 300m from Cranford and 2km from Burton Latimer and lies on the boundary of Kettering Borough with neighbouring Authority East Northamptonshire Council.

The site area is approximately 15 hectares, which is currently a pastoral field, a former quarry. The nearest residential dwellings to the proposed panel area are the properties along the High Street of Cranford St John, approximately 200m to the north, on the opposite side of the A14. Properties to the south include Wold Lodge, approximately 1.2km to the south and Windmill Cottages approximately 1.7km to the west. On the opposite side of A510 and opposite the existing access to the wind farm is The Roundhouse (Grade II Listed Building). A Public Right of Way (PRoW) runs to the north of the site, separated from the site by a fence.

The ground levels in this location are raised up from the A14 meeting a ridge running across the centre of the site with a gradual decrease in land levels to the south. There is a strong boundary hedge at the top of a graded bank adjacent to the A14 between 1.5/2metres in height. A public right of way runs along the inside southern edge of this hedge along the northern boundary of the application site. There is intermittent hedging and a post and rail fence along the northern boundary of the application site. To the north-west of the

application site, the ground levels slope significantly back towards the A14. Turbines are located to the south and west of the application site. These fields are largely grassed/grazing land with strong well managed boundary hedgerows. There are earthworks abutting the eastern boundary of the site.

There is a designated SSSI and wildlife site running along the western edge of the site, forming part of a steep bank adjacent to the site. There is a potential wildlife site over Cranford Landfill and a separate site to the north of the application site covering a small pond.

Proposed Development

The proposal is for Solar Photovoltaic farm running east-west across the site and ancillary infrastructure. The site will have a potential to generate an estimated electrical output of approximately 11,037MWh, enough to power approximately 2,659 homes per year.

The Solar Farm will comprise the following:

- Panels and associated supporting frames and ground mounting
- Inverters and transformers
- A substation
- Underground cabling
- Fencing and CCTV

Any Constraints Affecting the Site

A14 (Trunk Roads)

Public Right of Way (150)

Cranford St John Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

LWT Prime Site/Potential LWT – Cranford St John Quarry

Next to Historic Waste site

Outside the designated settlement boundary

Subject to an Environmental Statement

4.0 Consultation and Customer Impact

Cranford Parish Council

At the time of writing it is known that Cranford Parish Council is due to meet with the applicants on 2nd April 2015, and it is expected that their comments will be submitted before the Committee consider this application. Any responses received will therefore be included in the Update.

Burton Latimer Town Council

26th February 2015 – Object to the proposal on the grounds of loss of the open aspect of Burton Wold; disruption of wildlife; misrepresentation of drawings in the area i.e. the plan is not up to date; solar panels should be located on

buildings and not on arable land.

Finedon Parish Council

19th February 2015 – Object to the proposal on the grounds that it would be ruining the countryside as it is an industrial intrusion of the countryside.

Highways Agency

25th February 2015 - The development is not expected to have a material impact on the A14.

Highway Authority

Information if received as anticipated will be given at Committee. However, informally KBC officers understand that there are unlikely to be any significant Highways issues that haven't been addressed or cannot be addressed via conditions if necessary.

English Heritage

2nd March 2015 – Disagree with the suggestion within the application that the proposed watching brief for works in this area would constitute a suitable level of archaeological supervision. Therefore, the Local Planning Authority should consider whether they have sufficient information regarding the significance of archaeological remains.

NCC – Archaeology

4th March 2015 - The submitted desk based assessment identifies the potential for archaeological remains at the northern part of the site but suggests these may have been disturbed during local quarrying. The County Historic Environment Record indicates that the whole area may have previously been extracted. One would expect a more comprehensive assessment of the extractive industry within this area. It is therefore vital that the archaeological potential of the area is established before any impacts on archaeological remains can be established.

Environment Agency

4th March 2015 - No objection subject to a condition with regards to surface water drainage.

Natural England

17th March 2015 - This application is in close proximity to Cranford St John Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The proposed development boundary is immediately adjacent to but does not overlap with the SSSI. This geological SSSI is not sensitive to adjacent land uses and the geological exposures would be fully maintained. Natural England is satisfied that the proposed

development being carried out in strict accordance with the details of the application, as submitted, will not damage or destroy the interest features for which the site has been notified. We therefore advise that this SSSI does not represent a constraint in determining this application.

If approved, the proposal would require a grid connection through a separate permitting process. No details are given for this but it would be essential for the grid connection to also avoid the SSSI, potentially by using the same access point to the site proposed for the solar park construction.

The application is subject to Natural England's Standing Advice.

Wildlife Trust

16th March 2015 - The scope and content of the supporting ecological information submitted with this application is considered acceptable and satisfactory but the Applicant has failed to provide sufficient/adequate amount of mitigation measures. A less than adequate mitigation package has been offered by the applicant, as such a small quantum of nett planning gain for biodiversity aspects is not, in fact, an acceptable proposition for a proposed development scheme of this type and size, and in this location. In order to boost the overall offer here, for a suitable nett planning gain for biodiversity, instead of the 4 metre-wide grassland margins to be created around the perimeter of the Application Site footprint, these new buffer zone areas should be provided for at a minimum width of at least 10 metres.

The WT also recommends the various recommendations, for ecological / biodiversity retention, protection, enhancement measures and future management inputs, that have been made by the Applicant's own ecologists, throughout the relevant parts of Chapter 4 of the 'Burton Wold Solar Farm – Site C : Environmental Statement', dated October 2014 should be conditioned. Also, a comprehensive **Ecological** Management Plan should be required by condition.

The red-line footprint for this particular Application Site, Site C, does **not** lie inside, or even that 'close' to, any part of the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (NIA) zone, however, the majority of it (the 'northern 75%') does indeed lie inside an existing Local Green Infrastructure (GI) Corridor route.

Environmental Health

10th March 2015 - The noise emanating from the approved scheme, shall be at least below 5 dB the measured background noise level at any time at the curtilage of any noise sensitive premises lawfully existing at the time of the consent.

A working hour's condition is also required.

Northamptonshire Police

18th February 2015 – The applicant should follow security guidance with regards to solar panels.

Northants Badger Group

17th February 2015 – No comments to make.

The Borough Council of Wellingborough

No objection, subject to Kettering Borough Council satisfying themselves that the following matters have been satisfactorily accessed:

- Landscape visual amenity impacts;
- Noise impacts;
- Shadow flicker impacts;
- Access and Highway Safety impacts;
- Land use considerations;
- Cumulative visual impact;
- Ecology and Nature Conservation impacts;
- Historic Environment impacts;
- TV Interferences;
- Socio-economic impacts;
- Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology impacts; and
- Air Traffic Control impacts.

Neighbours

One objection has been received from number 27 Newman Street, Burton Latimer. It raises concerns about the productivity of the solar panels.

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

The Energy Park

The Site Specific Proposals LDD – Option Paper identified Burton Wold Wind Farm and the wider site area as providing ‘a focus for the Borough’s renewable energy production’. It went on to say that the site is ‘well located and provides the opportunity for an intensification of renewable energy technologies and the provision of strategic facilities that could provide energy to support the existing and growing needs of the community’.

Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy, Emerging Policy 26 states that proposals for renewable and low carbon energy generation will be supported where they meet a set of criteria. Land at Burton Wold has also been identified as an Area of Opportunity for an Energy Park to build on the range of renewable energy technologies already present. The development will link the energy production to high tech employment opportunities, new development at East Kettering and strategic development at Junction 10 of the A14.

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. Impact on Ecology
5. Use of Agricultural Land
6. Amenity
7. Impact on Historic Assets
8. Highways and Access
9. Flood Risk
10. Other Matters

1. Principle

The proposed application site is located to south of Cranford on the opposite side of the A14 to this Village. The site is located outside of any designated settlement boundary within open countryside, where new development is 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 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.

The Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy emerging policy 26 outlines a number of criteria for renewable energy at this site, including ensuring the most appropriate technology is selected for the site; the development links to a decentralised energy network or where this is not possible, to the National Grid; avoid substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset and its setting; landscape impacts are minimised and mitigated against; the siting of development does not create a significant noise or odour intrusion; not result in an adverse impact on the highways network; includes a managed programme of measures to mitigate against any adverse impacts; not create an overbearing cumulative noise or visual impact. Furthermore proposals at the Energy Park should be subject to a comprehensive masterplan; make provision for on-site research facilities; demonstrate how the proposal will contribute towards meeting energy needs; retain and enhance onsite

biodiversity; create a model for zero carbon energy; be of a high quality design to mitigate landscape impact.

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. However, with the gently undulating nature of the site and its landscaping, it is considered that the choice of site is in line with the NPPG. Furthermore, 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.

2. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The applicants have previously submitted Screening and Scoping Opinions for Solar Farm development across an area of land including this site. This application makes reference to the other areas within this wider site and the potential cumulative impacts of these developments on the wider area and landscape character. The application has been submitted with an EIA, which covers the potential landscape and visual impacts and ecology impacts, as requested by the LPA. The application does contain further detailed information with regards to noise, land use, historic assets, flood risk and highways but, as requested these do not form part of the EIA. The LPA is satisfied that the application as submitted complies with the request for submission of an EIA which adequately addresses any significant environment impacts. As the proposal site is much smaller than what was submitted with the Screening and Scoping Opinions and that no further significant environmental impacts have been raised to warrant a request for EIA on any further grounds.

3. 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 site lies within two National Character Areas 'NCA 89 Northamptonshire Vales' and 'NCA 92 Rockingham Forest' and is identified at a local level by the Northamptonshire Landscape Character Assessment as being located within 4g 'Irthlingborough Slopes'. The application site does not fall within any National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or area designated for its landscape character.

The submitted Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) considers that the

overall sensitivity of the site's landscape to change is low and that the landscape can accommodate the development proposed without undue effects upon landscape character. The LVIA concludes that the solar farm would not be widely visible from the surrounding landscape due to the scale of the development, existing landform and screening and distance from sensitive receptors.

No significant effects are concluded for residential properties, key transport or recreational routes and most viewpoint locations as outlined in the LVIA. The only viewpoint location concluded to experience a 'significant' effect is from the public footpath immediately to the north of the site. Mitigation planting along the northern boundary of the site is proposed to screen this view. The submitted assessment concludes that it is likely to take up to 5 years for the new vegetation to mature, after which the site would be screened and any effects reduced. Provided the planting takes place at the same time or before construction of the turbines, which can be secured by condition, and that this planting will only provide screening for users of the footpath and the A14 and it not necessary to prevent impacts on any local residential properties, then it is considered that the wider landscape impacts of this development are acceptable on this basis.

The proposal includes a landscaping scheme which will enhance the planting and biodiversity on the site. No trees or woodland will be lost/impacted as a result of the development and new trees are proposed as part of additional hedgerow planting.

Cumulative Impacts

The submitted Environment Statement states that there are no other solar farm schemes within 5km of the application site, other than those at Burton Wold. The submitted cumulative assessment considers the three solar farm schemes, previously the subject of Scoping and Screening Opinions at Burton Wold, subject to separate applications (Sites A, B and this application Site C).

The submitted Cumulative Zone of Theoretical Visibility establishes areas where there is the potential for cumulative visibility and thus cumulative landscape effects. It shows that there is theoretical visibility to Site A and Site B from within the Site C area, but not from the footpath beyond the northern boundary, where visibility would only be to Site C. The closest settlement to Site C, Cranford St John, including the non-designated parkland areas to the north, is illustrated to only have limited visibility to Site C, in reality this would be screened by intermediate mature vegetation and buildings in the vicinity of the village. Areas to the north of the village, the rolling wooded agricultural fields (of the Ironstone Valley Slopes and Wooded Clay Plateau), are shown to

have visibility to all three sites, but considering the intervening distances and vegetation within the local area, in reality at ground level there would be no visibility to any of the sites.

The northern areas of Burton Wold are shown to experience visibility to all three sites; this area is sparsely populated with only a limited number of individual properties, all linked to the application site landowner, and limited public access. Considering the intervening distances between all three sites, the localised setting of Site C and intervening blocks of vegetation, it is considered that there would be no cumulative visibility to Site C in addition to Site A and B. Distant cumulative visibility is shown to all three sites from arable fields bordering Barton Seagrave, less than 3km to the west of Site C, however, given the separation distances and features between Site C and the cumulative sites there would, in reality, be no visibility to the cumulative sites, and no potential for cumulative landscape effects.

The northern area of Site B is illustrated to have visibility to Site C, beyond this cumulative visibility is generally focussed to the sparsely populated Wold area and Burton Latimer to the west of the site. Distant cumulative visibility is illustrated to the landscape areas to the north of Cranford St John and Woodland Clay Plateau areas. Distant cumulative visibility is also illustrated to the undulating landscape to the west of Burton Latimer. However, again, considering the separation distances and landscape features it is considered that there would be no potential for cumulative landscape effects from any of these receptors.

Within the Irthlingborough Slopes and Burton Wold area, due to the separation distances between Site C and the cumulative Site's A and B and also considering the scale of the solar farm proposals (max 3m high panel arrays) and the localised discreet setting of the site, the actual inter visibility at a local level would be restricted.

Given the small scale nature of the development in height (up to 3m) and the ability for intervening screening, including proposed enhancements and given that the proposal is within a wider area already characterised by renewable energy development, then subject to conditions with regarding landscaping and mitigation in accordance with the proposed scheme then the development is considered in accordance with Policy 11 of the NPPF and Policy 13 (h) of the CSS and would have an acceptable impact on landscape and landscape character.

4. 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.

A phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken as part of the Environmental Statement. The survey methodology incorporated an assessment of habitat suitability for protected species including badgers, bats and great crested newts (GCN). All waterbodies within 500m of the Application Site surveyed for evidence of GCN. These comprised three ponds and a ditch/shallow seasonal pond. A medium GCN population was identified present within four waterbodies. No destruction, modification or disturbance of any pond or immediately adjacent habitats is proposed as part of this application.

The application site (Site C) comprises two large improved grassland fields managed for hay production. The landfill sites Cranford Meadow and field are listed as Potential Local Wildlife Sites (pLWSs). The western site boundary is bounded by Cranford St John Quarry SSSI and LWS. Although, designated as a SSSI primarily on geological grounds, this feature also supports calcareous and neutral grassland and is designated as a LWS. Quarry End Cranford SSSI, also a statutory site of geological importance and lies approximately 0.2km to the north, on the opposite side of the A14. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Ramsar/SPA lies approximately 4.0km to east.

Four locally designated Local Wildlife Site's and eight potential Local Wildlife Site's occur within 1km of the Application Site. A further five LWSs and three pLWSs lie between 1km and 2km from the Application Site. No significant impacts are predicted on any of the above sites.

The layout of the proposed development has been designed to avoid negative impacts to habitat features and species of notable ecological importance. Direct impacts to habitats present within Site C would be confined to improved grassland habitat.

Field boundary hedgerows and associated field perimeter trees, and adjacent offsite grassland, ponds and scrub provide limited, though moderate quality, foraging and commuting habitat for bats and other species. No potential bat roosts were identified present within Site C during the habitat survey, and no features suitable to support a bat roosts will be modified as part of the proposed works.

There was no presence of badgers found within 250metres of the application site. Precautionary working procedures such as providing ramps for excavations and badger gates within perimeter fencing will be conditioned to protect badgers.

Working methods are also proposed to avoid disturbance to foraging/commuting bats by artificial lighting during the construction and site decommissioning phases and no lighting is proposed during the operational phase of the solar farm. These measures are also to be secured by condition. No works are proposed within 50m of any identified pond. To minimise the risk of on-site spillages or sediment/dust from construction activities polluting neighbouring watercourses and ponds, good management practices will be adopted and standard pollution control mechanisms will be implemented including strict adherence to the Environment Agency's Pollution Prevention Guidelines throughout the construction and decommissioning phases. Further mitigation measures include appropriate timing of works and precautionary working practices in respect of works to habitats with potential to effect nesting birds or reptiles.

Areas between the solar panels will be sown with a suitable shade-tolerant native grassland seed mix and managed for biodiversity over the operational lifetime of the solar farm to provide enhanced foraging opportunities for wildlife including invertebrates, bats and birds. In addition a 4m wide grassland margin will be maintained around the perimeter of the solar farm to buffer adjacent hedgerows. This margin will be sown with a similar species-rich native grassland mix to provide further floral biodiversity and foraging opportunities for wildlife. A wader scrape area is to be created along the southern boundary, adjacent to Cranford St John Quarry as part of a wider mitigation strategy for an adjacent consented wind farm development.

Following comments from the Wildlife Trust a revised plan has been submitted setting aside additional land adjacent to SSSI to be sown with a similar species-rich native grassland mix to provide further floral biodiversity and foraging opportunities for wildlife. The originally proposed 4 metre wide grassland margin will be maintained around the perimeter of the solar farm to buffer adjacent hedgerows. In addition to this, the panels will be located at least 4m away from the proposed fencing, so there will be in essence an 8m buffer zone around the entire site (albeit with the perimeter fencing in between for security reasons). On this basis the proposal is considered acceptable, subject to this additional land being set aside for ecology, this can be secured via condition.

Subject to the conditioning of measures as outlined above the proposal is not expected to have any significant negative impacts during the construction, operation or decommissioning phases of the Development in ecology terms. Although, the Wildlife Trust previously raised concerns about the potential for additional mitigation measures to enhance biodiversity, the applicants have

proposed further land to be set aside and grassed adjacent to the SSSI, to protect and enhance this feature. This is considered to be an acceptable approach to enhancing biodiversity in this location in accordance with policy 11 of the NPPF and policy 13 (o) of the CSS.

Cumulative Impacts

The submitted Environmental Statement looks at the ecological cumulative impacts of existing, proposed or permitted developments in the vicinity of Site C. These include two applications for similar sized solar farm installations on land to the southeast of Kettering, within the same landowner's property, the existing Burton Latimer wind farm, a consented wind farm extension to the north, and consented extension to the south.

The two other solar farm applications comprise arable field compartments bounded by native species hedgerows. The proposed development scheme for each site seeks to minimise losses of habitats of ecological importance, and will provide new areas of similar species-rich grassland, which will be maintained for at least the operational lifetime of the solar farm. Both schemes are therefore anticipated to result in a minor positive impact on wildlife generally.

The two wind farm extension developments have committed to provide their own mitigation to reduce any negative impacts to local habitats and fauna to an acceptable level. The Environmental Statement submitted as part of the southern wind farm extension application states that the development would have a slightly negative impact on habitats and bats (and breeding birds) as a result of the permanent land take and operation of the turbines. Similarly the application for the northern extension concluded there would be a minor negative cumulative negative impact on local bat populations.

It considered that the solar farm development proposed within this application would provide a negligible-minor positive benefit to wildlife, therefore will not result in any adverse impacts across the wider area or possible cumulative impacts to local receptors of ecological importance.

5. Use of Agricultural Land

The site has been assessed as agricultural Grade 3 agricultural land. The NPPG states that large scale solar farms 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, currently grassed pastoral field. The applicants have stated that the remaining land will be grassed over and managed for biodiversity over the operational lifetime of the solar farm to provide enhanced foraging opportunities for wildlife, which is supported by the NPPG. A condition could be applied to any subsequent approval to ensure the site is adequately managed for these purposes.

Given the identification of the site in the Emerging Pre-Submission Joint Core Strategy and the Site Specific Proposals LDD as a potential site for further intensification of renewable energy technologies and the obvious positive benefits of renewable energy generation then use of this site is considered acceptable on this basis.

6. 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 Noise Assessment, submitted as part of the planning application used BS5228-1:2009 calculation methods to estimate the highest likely generated noise during peak noise operations of the construction phase and BS4142:1997 calculation methods to estimate the noise during the operational phase. The methodology takes into account source position and distance to the nearest sensitive receptors. The noise modelling assumes that all inverters (including extractor fans) and transformers are in operation continuously at full capacity and therefore the noise predictions provide an indication of the highest likely noise level.

The Noise Assessment concludes that the predicted noise levels at each sensitive receptor location as a consequence of the operation of the solar farm would be masked by the existing noise environment found at the neighbouring dwellings and are significantly less than the guideline sound levels for the protection of residential amenity.

The anticipated noise generation from the construction phase will not be unlike some modern agricultural practices and will be temporary in nature. Also, with the abutting A14 noise levels are constant in this location and could be masked by traffic noise.

Subject to conditions regarding noise levels at the boundaries of the site and for key residential receptors as well as working hours and a construction management plan, it is not considered that the proposal would have an

unacceptable impact on amenity through noise.

Vibration is considered not to be an issue for the proposed development due to the low impact nature of the groundworks, i.e. no piling or significant earthworks are required. Trenching for the cabling will be undertaken by back actor over a temporary period of time. The frames to which the panels will be attached are driven (screwed) into the ground to a depth of between 1.2 to 2m by using a mechanical auger.

There is no lighting proposed during the operational phase of the development but a condition is proposed to control lighting for the benefit of local residents. 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. Also, the panels are sufficiently distanced from neighbouring properties. However, a condition is proposed to prevent any potentially negative effects caused by glint or glare. The proposal is therefore considered in accordance with policy 13 (l) of the CSS.

7. Impact on Heritage Assets

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'.

Within the submitted Historical and Archaeological Report the applicants state that within 2km of the site there are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments or Registered Parks or Gardens.

Cranford Conservation Area lies approximately 0.5km to the north of the application site. In accordance with Section 72 of the 1990 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act special regard must be paid to the character and appearance of the this heritage asset. Characteristic of the Conservation Area are the broad tracts of meadow or pasture land in the bowl through which flows the Alledge Brook. Consideration has been given to any possible or perceived impact on the rural character of the CA, arising from the proximity of the proposals.

The closest part of Cranford and indeed the Conservation Area lies within a dip on the opposite side of the A14, with intervening screening on both sides of the A14. Adjacent to the site is an existing hedgerow of approximately 1.5/2

metres at the top of the bank adjacent to the A14. The proposal also proposes to fill gaps in another hedgerow directly adjacent to the northern boundary of the site. Given the limited height of the proposed panels (3 metres), it is unlikely views to the solar panels will be available from the majority of properties within Cranford and the Conservation Area. Glimpse views may be available to the backs of panels and security fencing while additional hedgerow planting becomes established.

There are a number of Listed Buildings located within the Cranford Conservation Area. However, given the intervening A14 and planting and the temporary nature of the solar farm permission (i.e. 25 years) then the proposal is unlikely to have a significant impact on the setting of these buildings. If glimpse views are available from the Cranford Conservation Area to the application site then these are likely only to be seasonable and/or temporary while additional planting becomes established. Given this and the intervening A14, the Solar Farm is likely to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

There are two other Listed Buildings noted within the submitted heritage impact assessment including The Roundhouse (1.8km to the southeast of the site) and Woodford House (1.7km to the east), both Grade II Listed. Dense woodland adjacent to Woodford House will prevent the setting of this property being unduly impacted by the proposal. It may be possible to view the top line of the proposed solar farm site from The Roundhouse, it is likely due to the distance and intervening screening that any views would be intermittent and sufficiently distanced so as not to affect the setting of this Listed Building.

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'.

The proposed Solar Farm development would, if permitted, be granted a temporary permission for 25 years. Any changes to the settings of listed buildings within the scheme can be fully reversed after the site has been decommissioned and remedial work can be carried out promptly within an agreed methodology, to be conditioned as part of any subsequent permission.

Taking into consideration the temporary nature of the development and that any impacts on these historic assets are reversible, which is a material planning consideration and that the proposed landscaping would, after a short period time help to mitigate any negative impacts. Then the proposed development is considered to have less than substantial harm, outweighed by the benefits of renewable energy production, as proposed. English Heritage raises no concerns about the impacts of the proposed Solar Farm on any local historic asset. The proposal is therefore considered in accordance with Policy 12 of the NPPF and 13 (h) and (o) of the CSS.

Archaeology

The applicant has submitted a Desk Based Archaeological Assessment, which identifies the potential for archaeological remains within the application site. The applicant has suggested a condition be applied to any subsequent application requiring further archaeological works including a geophysical survey followed by a watching brief.

English Heritage and NCC Archaeology have raised concerns that a more comprehensive assessment of the extractive industry within this area is required to establish any impacts on archaeological remains. Despite this it is considered that the nature of the development would allow suitable alterations to the scheme, if permitted, for necessary changes to be made if archaeological remains are found.

The exact location of the panels and associated equipment is not fixed. This can be dealt with via condition so if any archaeological remains are discovered and need to be kept in-situ the exact locations of the equipment could be relocated. Also, all impacts on archaeology could be avoided by 'floating' the panel foundations and re-routing cable trenches and locating invertors to avoid any sensitive areas identified during further investigation works. Furthermore, the ground works required to lay concrete bases for the invertors and substation and the works for the access tracks would not be to a depth that would be likely to encounter any archaeology given the previous quarrying of the site. These could be constructed through scraping off the only the very top layer of soil prior to the pouring of the concrete base or the laying of crushed aggregate. These matters could, if necessary, be controlled via conditions.

English Heritage and NCC Archaeology refer to paragraph 128 of the NPPF, which states "Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation". The results of

the submitted desk-based assessment conclude that in this instance a field evaluation is not necessary.

The imposition of a condition to ensure a development is acceptable and in accordance with the NPPF is at the discretion of the Local Planning Authority. The NPPF, paragraph 203 states that “Local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations”. The approved site to the south of this at Burton Wold and the Gaultney Farm Solar Farm application was approved with a similar condition applied. The Gaultney Farm Solar Farm had the support of NCC Archaeology. It is not considered necessary to require the archaeological works in advance of a decision being made on the application for the reasons outlined above, therefore the proposal is considered acceptable and in accordance with Policy 12 of the NPPF.

8. Highways

The site is currently accessed via Wold Road, a private un-adopted road. It is proposed to continue to utilise this site entrance point which has been used for the construction of the existing Burton Wold Wind Farm and the Northern Extension and does not require any upgrades works.

A public right of way runs adjacent to the north of the site and is separated by an existing fence. The public right of way will remain unaffected by the proposed development.

The construction of this solar farm site (Site C) would result in the temporary generation of construction and staff-related traffic. During this period, there will be approximately 351 deliveries to site, or 702 vehicle movements. Should Site C be developed in one phase it is anticipated that the vehicle movements would be condensed into a 4 month period, with month 1 experiencing the highest number of deliveries to site at 133 deliveries, spread out over a 4 week period there would be an average of 6 HGV deliveries per day. As all deliveries will result in a return journey for the vehicle, there will be an average of 12 vehicle movements per working day. A Construction Traffic Management Statement could be conditioned to regulate traffic movements and any impacts on the surrounding highway network.

The development will not generate any increase in traffic during the operational phase, except for adhoc maintenance visits. Thus, the development would not have any permanent effects on highway capacity during this time.

Planning permission is sought for the Solar PV Farm for an operational period

of 25 years. After which the site would be decommissioned with all equipment and service roads removed from the site and it returned to its former use. During the decommissioning stage it is anticipated that the same route to site would be utilised as that proposed for the construction vehicles. Should the road layout have changed during the operational period, a revised route would have to be agreed with the LPA, through the conditioned decommissioning statement.

It is anticipated that vehicles required to dismantle and remove the site equipment would be similar in magnitude to those required during the construction phase therefore the level of impact on wider highway network would be minimal. Traffic management measures proposed for the construction phase will be implemented during the decommissioning phase to ensure safe access/egress from the Wold Road/A510 junction and the safety of users of the public right of way along Wold Road.

The Highways Authority have to date raised no objection to the development in highway capacity or safety terms. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in highway safety terms and in accordance with policy 13 (d) and (n) of the CSS.

9. Flood Risk

The site is located outside of an area which has been modelled by the Environment Agency to be susceptible to flooding from rivers and the sea. BGS Flood data maps indicate that the site has no potential for groundwater flooding to occur. Whilst the Risk Management System Flood data indicates that the south-western boundary of the application site could be susceptible to flooding during a 75, 100 and 1000 year return flood, the depths of the flood water associated with these events are not considered to be significant, and the solar panel and associated infrastructure deployment area has been sited to avoid these areas. Also, following comments from the Wildlife Trust an additional area at this part of the site is to be set aside for ecology mitigation reasons.

Whilst the panels themselves will be impermeable surfaces, the permeability of the soil underneath will largely be unaltered. As such, it is considered that rain water will effectively run off the solar panels onto the soil and will therefore not increase water run-off rates at any level of significance. A small area of impermeable surface (c.0.4%/628m²) of the site will be created as part of the proposed development, so flood risk elsewhere would not be increased as a result of the proposed development.

The Environment Agency have no objection subject to a condition. The

proposal is therefore considered in accordance with policy 10 of the NPPF.

10. 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.

Energy Park

As outlined above the Site Specific Proposals LDD – Options Paper identified this area as having the potential for further renewable energy technologies and this site has been identified in the Emerging Joint Core Strategy. Paragraph 216 of the NPPF states that from the day of publication, decision takers may also give weight to relevant policies within emerging plans, according to its stage of preparation; the extent to which there are unresolved objections; and its degree of consistency with the NPPF. At this time, these emerging policies can only be afforded limited weight. It is therefore; only appropriate to consider the application(s) as they are submitted. This application has been determined on its own merits and recommendations have been made on this basis.

Plans

Burton Latimer Parish Council have commented that “misrepresentation of drawings in the area (as) plan (is) not up to date” Clarification on their concerns will be included and responded to at the Committee meeting.

Public consultation

Two public exhibitions were held in Cranford and Burton Latimer, which were advertised via an email to Parish Clerks, and Local Councillors, 2300 leaflets were distributed in the local area and a public notice advertising the exhibitions was placed in the ET. The exhibitions were attended by 120 members of the public, 28 comment forms were completed. The following concerns were raised; loss of agricultural land; impact on the public footpath; landscape and visual impact; the vehicular access to the site and a lack of financial gain for the local community.

The planning application was advertised in accordance with relevant Planning and EIA Regulations and in accordance with the adopted North Northamptonshire Statement of Community Involvement (November 2013).

Grid Connection

The Local Planning Authority has 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. The applicants state they have a grid connection available.

Community Benefits

Though not a material planning consideration, the applicant has made clear that they are willing to enter into a Community Benefits Fund agreement to ensure that communities in the Borough benefit from the development. This will be dealt with in line with the Borough-wide Renewables fund policy being developed by The Council.

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. Other relevant policies of the NPPF including those in section 12 (Heritage) have been considered.

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:

Rebecca Collins, Development Team Leader on 01536
534316

Previous Reports/Minutes

Ref:

Date: