

UTT/19/1864/FUL - THAXTED
MAJOR

PROPOSAL: Construction and operation of a solar farm comprising arrays of solar photovoltaic panels and associated infrastructure (inverters and transformers, DNO building, customer switchgear/ control room, cabling, security fencing, cctv, access tracks and landscaping) on agricultural land off the B1051. The Development would have an operational lifespan of 40 years.

LOCATION: Terriers Farm , Boyton End, Thaxted, Dunmow, CM6 2RD

APPLICANT: Low Carbon UK Solar Investment Company Limited

AGENT: Mr Andrew Mott

EXPIRY DATE: 30th October 2019 – Extension of time 30 January 2020

CASE OFFICER: Madeleine Jones

1. NOTATION

- 1.1 Outside Development Limits
Within 100m of Local Wildlife Site (Alrey Wood 2 Little Sampford and Alrey Wood 1, Thaxted)
Within 250m of Ancient Woodland
Public Right of Way
Within 2km of SSSI
Important Woodland
Adjacent Grade II listed buildings - Terriers Farmhouse, Yew Tree Cottage and a Grade II listed historic barn

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

- 2.1 The application site is located to the south of the B1051 between Thaxted and Little Sampford, approximately 600m east of Thaxted. It covers an area of 52 ha of arable farmland. It is accessed via Terriers Farm private access from the B1051. To the west of the access is a residential dwelling.
- 2.2 There is a solar farm, adjacent to the site, located to the east, covering 29.96ha, at Spriggs Farm and a substation to the north of the site.
- 2.3 The site consists of fields that are bounded by a mixture of hedgerows and trees and are also dissected by public rights of way. There is also woodland to the south of the site and the Turpins Right of Way. There is a further woodland, adjacent to the site, situated south of the public right of way 49_25.

Public rights of way form three sides of the main area of the proposed solar farm and two sides of the separate field located to the north east of the site. The field to the north of the site has overhead power lines, running diagonally across the site

To the south of the site is an area that has recently been identified as a WW1 airfield.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal relates to the erection of a solar farm which would consist of rows of photovoltaic (PV) panels running east west across the site. The Development would have an operational lifespan of 40 years. The installed capacity of the development will be approximately 44MW peak which would generate enough electricity to power approximately 13,100 homes annually.
- 3.2 The development will comprise the following:
- 125,856 south facing PV panels (maximum height 3m, 0.8m above ground.)
 - Power inverter and transformer stations
 - Distribution Network Operator substation building
 - Customer switch gear/control room building
 - Security fencing and access gates
 - CCTV cameras
 - Landscaping
- 3.3 Each array will be mounted on a single metal framework which would have a maximum height of 3m above ground and be tilted at approximately 20 degrees. Each row would be separated by approximately 3.2m.
- 3.4 The perimeter fencing would be 2m in height with open sections at the bottom to allow for small mammals to pass through. CCTV cameras will be erected on the fencing at approximately every 50m or at change in fence line direction.
- 3.5 The inverter buildings would be approx. 12.2m long, 2.9m high and 2.5m deep. There would be eight inverter units located around the site. They would be coloured in dark green or grey

The switch gear/control room would be approx, 12.2m long, 4m high and 2.9m deep. A satellite dish would be erected to one of the corners. It would be located at the end of the access road. It would be coloured in dark green or grey.

The DNO substation would be approx. 5.1m long, 4.1m in height and 5m deep. It would be located near the existing grid substation.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 An application for a screening opinion for the above proposal under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) under Regulation 6 of the stated Regulations was submitted under application UTT/18/3035/SCO.

The 2017 Regulations provides guidance in regards to procedures which are required in establishing whether an EIA is required. This guidance requires the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to consider whether the proposed development is described in Schedule 1 or 2 of the Regulations. Schedule 2 identifies 13 different categories, of which Class 3 is 'Energy Industry' and a) relates to 'Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1)'. The proposal exceeds the thresholds. The proposal is not, however located in wholly or partly within a 'sensitive area' as defined by the Regulations.

It was concluded that the proposal does constitute a Schedule 2 form of development as defined by the Regulations. Under these circumstances it is necessary to establish whether or not the proposal is likely to give rise to 'significant effects' on the environment by virtue of its nature, size or location. Given the location of the proposals and taking into consideration the potential of cumulative impacts arising, it was considered that the proposals would not give rise to significant adverse effects. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required to be submitted with the application.

5. APPLICANT'S CASE

5.1 The application is submitted with the following documents:

- Design and Access Statement
- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan
- Ecology Report
- Agricultural Land Classification
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Transport Statement
- Suds Checklist
- Biodiversity Checklist

6. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

6.1 UTT/18/2097/SCO: Request for screening opinion (40 ha).

6.2 UTT/12/5601/FUL: Construction of 29.96 ha solar park at Land at sprigs Farm, Thaxted Road, Little Sampford.

6.3 UTT/13/1472/FUL: Variation of conditions 2 and 8 attached to UTT/12/5601/FUL.

6.4 UTT/18/3035/SCO: Request for screening opinion.(69ha)

7. POLICIES

Uttlesford Local Plan (2005)

ULP Policy S7 – The Countryside
ULP Policy ENV3 – Trees and Open Spaces
ULP Policy GEN1 – Access
ULP Policy GEN2 – Design
ULP Policy GEN3 – Flood Risk
ULP Policy GEN4 – Good neighbourliness
ULP Policy GEN7 – Natural Conservation
ULP Policy ENV15 – Renewable Energy
ULP Policy E4 – Farm diversification
ULP Policy ENV5 – Protection of Agricultural Land
ULP Policy GEN8 – Vehicle Parking Standards
ULP policy ENV2- Listed Buildings

National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan (made 21st February 2019)

8. PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

- 8.1 Resolved to strongly and unanimously object on the following grounds
- 8.2 Scale bulk and massing is far too great for a small community like Thaxted to absorb, it's an industrial block on the heritage landscape and the land will be rendered unsustainable for food production in the future. Vistas and the plateau will be highly disturbed irrevocably. The potential loss of public rights of way which hasn't been addressed, this is a historical site.
- 8.3 The impact of this development on the Thaxted landscape could be dramatic and the application requires very careful consideration. I've had a preliminary look at what has been submitted and there are many serious deficiencies and uncertainties which need to be highlighted. There is a danger that the Thaxted community could be lulled into a belief that green energy is good therefore let's not bother about the consequences which will only be realised after the thing is built.
- 8.4 Essentially it will occupy about 130 acres of Grade 2 agricultural land in a very sensitive landscape. It will involve 125,856 solar panels and a host of infrastructure, housings etc. No proper plans are provided with the application in relation to buildings or infrastructure.
- 8.5 The first issue is impact on footpaths. It will affect the amenity of PROWs 49-25; 49-27; 49-28; 49-29; 49-67; 38-32; and 38-36. Some footpaths will be altered out of all recognition. It is all very well to say that landscape screening will be put in place but we all know that that takes about 15 years to be of any use and in any case a narrow path running between two hedge lines is totally different to a path adjacent to an open field. It is therefore important that the Thaxted P3 have this brought to their attention if they are not already aware of it.
- 8.6 There is then the general impact on the landscape. The work done by Liz Lake for the NP does not quite go out that far because that study dealt with the Thaxted hinterland. The adjacent local landscape parcels (LPLCA 10 and 11) were however both classified as having a high sensitivity to change and a low or low-medium capacity for change. There is no reason why land just to the east should be any different. There is however, firmer evidence provided by the work done by Chris Blandford Associates for the local authorities in north-west Essex in 2006. In that study this area is identified as a part of the Thaxted Farmland Plateau, where it is stated that the landscape pattern is sensitive to potential large-scale development and has a relatively high sensitivity to change. The guidance is to conserve the open views.
- 8.7 The next point is with regard to land quality. The land will be taken out of agricultural production for 40 years. This is Grade 2 land, classified as best and most versatile. The use of Grade 1 and 2 land is in both Local Plan and NPPF terms essentially a last resort. A ministerial statement (HCWS 488, 2015) from

DCLG states Meeting our energy goals should not be used to justify the wrong development in the wrong location and this includes the use of high quality land. Protecting the global environment is not an excuse to trash the local environment. It goes on to say “any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence.” The fact is that the applicants have provided no compelling evidence. They say that they have done an options study (although this has not been submitted) and they say that there is no alternative site within a 2 km radius. They also complain that most of the land in Uttlesford is Grade 2. However, we would comment that this doesn't have to be in Uttlesford. There are masses of more suitable sites in Essex and hundreds of other sub-stations that they can connect into. No evidence has been provided of other options considered and why they have been dismissed. This is essential in the light of the ministerial statement. We request formally that this evidence is presented.

- 8.8 Another point is that landscape impact images have been provided but these do not illustrate the panels! They are just photos of the existing landscape with a line showing the extent of where they will be which provides no indication at all of how they would sit and the impact they will have.

9. CONSULTATIONS

Environmental Health

- 9.1 In principle I would support the development of renewable energy sources with the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, provided that other environmental health considerations are also satisfied.

- 9.2 Light
Solar panels are designed to face the midday sun and absorb as much radiation as possible. Any reflection from them would go back in the same direction and so not give rise to light nuisance or glare.
The design and access statement states that no lighting is proposed as part of the development. I recommend a condition to secure this.

- 9.3 Noise
The solar panels themselves would be quiet in operation. The proposals include power inverters which would be housed in containers and require mechanical cooling units. Both inverters and air conditioning units can produce sound but the housings would screen sound from the inverters and the plans show the nearest one at over 300m from the nearest residential premises. I would expect acceptable noise levels to be easily achievable, but as no acoustic details have been submitted I recommend a condition requiring submission and approval of acoustic details.

- 9.4 Construction impacts
The design and access statement estimates that construction of the farm would take approximately 16 weeks. The construction work and associated vehicle movements (including 10 HGVs per day) would have noise and possibly vibration impacts on neighbouring properties. I recommend a condition requiring submission and approval of a construction management plan to minimise these impacts.

ECC Highways

- 9.7 The Highway Authority has agreed in principle that temporary traffic management (TTM) can be used during the construction phase of the development to facilitate safe access to the site. It is anticipated the TTM to involve the use of traffic signals, reduced speed limit and appropriate signage.

From a highway and transportation perspective the impact of the proposal is acceptable to the Highway Authority, subject to conditions.

ECC Ecology

- 9.8 Following further information being submitted the holding objection has been withdrawn. They now have no objection subject to securing biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures

- 9.9 Summary:

We have reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (ARCUS, July 2019), the Landscape And Biodiversity Management Plan (ARCUS, July 2019) and the Ecological Management Plan (ARCUS, November 2019) relating to the likely impacts of development on designated sites, protected species and Priority species & habitats.

We are satisfied that there is sufficient ecological information available for determination.

This provides certainty for the LPA of the likely impacts on protected and Priority species/habitats and, with appropriate mitigation measures secured, the development can be made acceptable.

The mitigation measures identified the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (ARCUS, July 2019), the Landscape And Biodiversity Management Plan (ARCUS, July 2019) and the Ecological Management Plan (ARCUS, November 2019) should be secured by a condition of any consent and implemented in full. This is necessary to conserve and enhance Protected and Priority Species

We also support the proposed reasonable biodiversity enhancements included in the Landscape And Biodiversity Management Plan (ARCUS, July 2019), which have been recommended to secure measurable net gains for biodiversity, as outlined under Paragraph 170d of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019. The reasonable biodiversity enhancement measures should be outlined within a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy and should be secured prior to slab level.

This will enable LPA to demonstrate its compliance with its statutory duties including its biodiversity duty under s40 NERC Act 2006.

Lead Local flood Authority

- 9.10 No objections

London Stansted Airport

- 9.11 The Safeguarding Authority for Stansted Airport has assessed this proposal and its potential to conflict aerodrome Safeguarding criteria. This development has the potential to interfere with the safe operation of flight at Stansted Airport therefore we request a condition be imposed if planning permission is granted.

Anglian Water

- 9.12 The applicant has indicated on their application form that their method of foul and surface water drainage is not to an Anglian Water sewer.

UK Power Networks

- 9.13 Should your excavation affect our Extra High Voltage equipment (6.6 KV, 22 KV, 33 KV or 132 KV), please contact UK Power Network to obtain a copy of the primary route drawings and associated cross sections.

Specialist Archaeological Advice:

- 9.14 The historic environment record and the submitted desk based assessment shows the proposed development area contains potentially significant archaeological remains. Aerial photography has identified a number of historic field boundaries (EHER46593) with the remains of a historic farm, now surviving as below ground features, evident on the first and second edition Ordnance Survey maps. Evidence of prehistoric occupation was found during excavation work on the adjacent solar panel scheme and further occupation is likely to extend into this area. The northern boundary is formed by the route of a Roman road potentially leading to Stebbing or Braintree (EHER 46669) Within the heritage document submitted with the application a programme of geophysical survey followed by preservation in situ is recommended. This is only appropriate if the geophysical survey is successful and accurate, and this remains to be established. It is therefore recommended that a programme of archaeological mitigation is used to ensure that the heritage assets on the site are protected.
Recommendation; An archaeological programme of assessment followed by an open area excavation or preservation in situ.

Historic England

- 9.15 The historic environment is a finite and non-renewable environmental resource which includes designated heritage assets, non-designated archaeology and built heritage, historic landscapes and unidentified sites of historic and/or archaeological interest. It is a rich and diverse part of England's cultural heritage and makes a valuable contribution to our cultural, social and economic life. A solar farm in this location will potentially have an impact upon a number of designated heritage assets and their settings in and around the site. Designated assets within 1.5km of the site are the scheduled monument Terrier's Farm Moated site, 55m north of the application site, the grade I listed Church of St John the Baptist, the grade II* listed Goddards Farmhouse and 23 grade II listed buildings. The application site is adjacent to the existing Spriggs Hill Solar Farm.
- 9.16 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, (paragraph 192). It establishes that great weight should be given to an asset's conservation and the more important that asset, the greater that weight should be, paragraph 193. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Any harm to, or loss of significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification, (paragraph 194). Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against

the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (paragraph 196).

Setting is then defined in the Framework as 'the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset and may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral'. Further guidance (paragraph 13) of the Planning Practice Guidance states that local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change when assessing any application for development that may affect the setting of a heritage asset.

The proposals would include the installation of a total of 125,856 south-facing PV panels, lifted to a minimum of 0.8m off the ground and not exceeding 3m in height. The PV panels would be mounted on racks with the supporting poles piled to a depth of 1.5m. They would face south, tilted at approximately 20 degrees to utilise as much sunlight as possible. They would be arranged in rows with a distance of approximately 3.2 m between each string to avoid inter-panel shading. Having considered the documentation submitted with the application, including the *Design and Access Statement* produced by Flexygen Ltd and the *Landscape Visual Appraisal* produced by Viento Environmental, Historic England are satisfied that whilst a degree of harm would be caused to the significance of the setting of a number of the designated heritage assets within a 1.5km radius of the site as a result of the visual impact of the PV panels and ancillary infrastructure, the level of that harm would be acceptable. We would therefore have no objections should your authority be minded to approve the application.

Recommendation

Historic England have no objections to the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the application meets the requirements of the NPPF.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

ECC Conservation

- 9.17 The application is for the construction and operation of a solar farm comprising arrays of solar photovoltaic panels and associated infrastructure (inverters and transformers, DNO building, customer switchgear/ control room, cabling, security fencing, cctv, access tracks and landscaping) on agricultural land off the B1051. The Development would have an operational lifespan of 40 years.

The above concerns the setting of Terriers Farmhouse, a Grade II listed (HE Ref: 1112973) building, Yew Tree Cottage, a Grade II listed (HE Ref: 1112974) building, and a Grade II listed historic barn (HE Ref: 1317291).

Whilst the proposal could be improved with the reduction of the scale of development and the displacement of development away from the proximate setting of the designated heritage assets, the proposal presently contributes to severe cumulative change to the historically agricultural setting of the listed buildings together with the existing solar farm adjacent to the site, where the

current scheme exacerbates the harm already caused to the experience and appreciation of the listed buildings in their traditional setting, where a functional relationship between the farmland and farm buildings persisted for centuries. In accordance with Historic England's *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2017): *"Where the significance of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development affecting its setting, to accord with NPPF policies consideration still needs to be given to whether additional change will further detract from, or can enhance, the significance of the asset. Negative change could include severing the last link between an asset and its original setting; positive change could include the restoration of a building's original designed landscape or the removal of structures impairing key views of it."*

Additionally, with the diversion of an existing historic footpath, the manner in which the heritage assets are appreciated and experienced is further injured, with the setting losing accessibility and public views. At present, the proposed scheme is considered to cause "less than substantial harm" to the significance of a number of designated heritage assets as derived from their setting and as such paragraph 196 of the NPPF is relevant.

Landscape Officer

- 9.18 The site area is some 52ha extending over four arable fields, which are bounded by a mixture of hedgerows, tree belts and three woodlands bordering the west, east and south of the site with a further woodland situated some distance west of the site. The site is south facing with the land rising gently up from the southwest to the northwest by some 10m.

Adjacent to the application site is the existing Sprigg's Farm Solar Farm to the north-east boundary, and the Boyton End electricity grid sub-station next to the northern boundary. National Grid high voltage transmission lines and pylons transverse the landscape east to west to the north of Thaxted and are locally prominent.

The proposed development would have a significant adverse effect on the existing rural character of the site which will be evident from the network of public footpaths in the vicinity of the proposal site.

At the nearest point the site is some 0.6km distant from the north-eastern edge of Thaxted village. The spatial separation, topography, and existing vegetation between the village and the proposal site is such that the potential visibility of the development from the village is extremely limited. It is not considered that the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the bucolic setting of Thaxted village.

Historic England are "satisfied that whilst a degree of harm would be caused to the significance of the setting of a number of the designated heritage assets within a 1.5km radius of the site as a result of the visual impact of the PV panels and ancillary infrastructure, the level of harm would be acceptable. We would therefore have no objection should your authority be mindful to approve the application."

To mitigate the potential visual impact the scheme makes provision for the creation of some 2.5km of native species hedgerows, the gapping up of existing hedgerows, and the planting of native tree belts along the north western boundary of the site (The proposal would not result in the loss of any existing trees or hedgerows). Whilst these mitigation measures would reduce the visual impact of

the development from parts of the footpath network, and the Sampford Road, additional planting is considered necessary to further reduce the visual impact of parts of the proposed array from the footpath network. A south westward extension of the existing woodland situated at the centre of the landownership parcel, creating a new native species woodland of some 2.6ha, would break up the scale of the solar farm, reduce the visual impact of the array from sections of the surrounding public footpaths and provide a visually ameliorating backdrop to parts of the array.

Recommend that the proposed development is approved subject to conditions requiring the submission for approval of a detailed landscaping scheme, including the provision of new woodland planting, to reduce the detrimental visual impact of the development.

Further advice following :

- 9.19 The submitted provisional drawing indicates an additional 5m wide tree belt along a section of the western boundary of the site. This proposal is in response to the recommended south westward extension of the existing woodland. The proposed tree belt runs continuously for some 360m from the existing woodland to the southern boundary of the site. Whilst this provision would provide some additional level of screening, a linear tree belt is considered to be at odds with the existing pattern of vegetation in the landscape. The retention and provision of additional broad hedgerows along this edge of the site is considered to be more appropriate.

The previously recommended extension of the existing woodland is considered appropriate to provide a visual counterpoint and help to break up the scale of the solar farm, reduce the visual impact of the array from sections of the surrounding footpaths, and to create a backdrop to parts of the array.

10. REPRESENTATIONS

- 10.1 17 representations received. (2 are in support) This application has been advertised and site notices displayed. Expiry date 11th September 2019.

Summary of representations received as follows:

- 10.2 Objections:

- Loss of Grade II Agricultural land
- Government guidelines suggest planners should be "encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non- agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value". The land is the best and most versatile agricultural land and should not be used unless there is no alternative.
- There is nothing in the application to show the applicants have considered alternative sites.
- Cumulative impact with Spriggs Farm and 2 solar farms at Little Bardfield
- Provision of renewable energy should be part of a wider strategy
- Landscape has a high sensitivity to change
- Significant impacts on character of landscape and countryside
- Impacts on rights of way
- Solar farms do not need to be in Uttlesford
- Community consultation was so low-key with hardly any responses

- Another assault on the heritage and character of Thaxted and surrounding area
- Will not benefit Thaxted but go to National Grid
- Part of site used to be WWI airfield – memorial recently erected
- Will take most of the lifetime of the site for landscaping to be of benefit
- Already have to contend with eyesore of Spriggs Farm solar farm when walking
- Impacts on setting of ancient woodlands
- Would industrialise the area

10.3 Support;

- With a looming climate crisis it is imperative that electricity generation becomes more sustainable.
- This solar farm will be less impact than a wind farm which would be blocked by NATS in any case. Would the local residents perhaps prefer a gas fired plant?

11. APPRAISAL

The issues to consider in the determination of the application are:

- A Whether the use of the site for the purpose of a solar farm would be appropriate in terms of land use and impacts on the character of the area (NPPF, ULP policies S7, E4, ENV5, ENV8, ENV15,)
- B Impact on neighbours amenity (ULP policies GEN2, GEN4 and ENV11)
- C Access and highway safety (ULP policy GEN1)
- D Impact on biodiversity (ULP policy GEN7)
- E Whether the development would increase flood risk issues (NPPF, ULP policy GEN3)
- F Impact upon sites of local archaeological importance and listed buildings (NPPF and ULP policies ENV4 and ENV2; NPPF
- G Other material considerations Glint and Glare

A Whether the use of the site for the purpose of a solar farm would be appropriate in terms of land use and impacts on the character of the area (NPPF; ULP policies S7, E4, ENV5, ENV8 , ENV15)

11.1 The application site is located outside the Development Limits of Thaxted within Grade 2 agricultural land and is therefore located within the countryside where Policy S7 applies. This specifies that the countryside will be protected for its own sake and planning permission will only be given for development that needs to take place there or is appropriate to a rural area. Development will only be permitted if its appearance protects or enhances the particular character of the part of the countryside within which it is set or there are special reasons why the development in the form proposed needs to be there. A review of policy S7 for its compatibility with the NPPF has concluded that it is partially compatible but has a more protective rather than positive approach towards development in rural areas. The policy has moderate weight.

11.2 As stated above the land is currently grade 2 agricultural land. ULP policy E4 allows for alternative uses for agricultural land providing criteria set out in the policy are met. Policy ENV5 seeks to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land. It should be noted that the majority of agricultural land within the

Uttlesford District falls within Grade 2 or 3, meaning it is largely best and most versatile land.

- 11.3 The NPPF supports the diversification of agricultural land and the development of renewable energy installations. Representations refer to the Written Ministerial Statement of 2015 setting out a requirement to carry out a sequential test in respect of best and most versatile agricultural land. This is now included in the Planning Practice Guidance.
- 11.4 Policy ENV8 also seeks to protect landscape elements important for nature conservation such as hedgerows and linear tree belts. This policy is also partially consistent with the NPPF with the requirement for the benefits of the proposals to be balanced rather than need. The policy also has moderate weight.
- 11.5 Policy ENV15 states that small scale renewable energy development schemes to meet local needs will be permitted if they do not adversely affect the character of sensitive landscapes, nature conservation interests or residential and recreational amenity. There are no policies within the adopted local plan relating to large scale proposals other than that it is expected that acceptable schemes in the district would be relatively small scale. The emerging Regulation 19 plan states as an objective 3b to minimise demand for resources and mitigate and adapt to climate change by encouraging renewable energy production in appropriate locations.
- 11.6 Whilst the application site falls within the area covered by the Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan, there are no policies directly related to this site.
- 11.7 Planning has an important role in the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in locations where the local environmental impact is acceptable. Local planning authorities are responsible for renewable and low carbon energy development of 50 megawatts or less installed capacity (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) This development would generate up to 44mw of electricity to power approximately 13,100 homes annually and would therefore make a significant contribution towards the district and County's renewable energy production. These benefits need to be weighed against the impacts. The deployment of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes, however, the visual impact of a well-planned and well screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively.
- 11.8 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change published in October 2018 explores the benefits of aspiring to limit global warming to 1.5° C as recommended in the Paris Agreement as opposed to the lowest level target of 2° C. The report finds that a global warming of 1.5° C will be damaging, but is far less damaging than a 2° C increase in global temperature. It also highlights the importance of investing in renewable energy as part of the global effort to mitigate climate change.
- 11.9 The proposal relates to the installation of rows of solar panels which would be within fenced enclosures. Each of these enclosures would be within the existing field boundaries and would ensure that the existing hedge rows would remain. The hedgerows are patchy in some places and there are several public rights of way across the site and adjacent to it. Additionally the Turpins Trial runs along the boundary of the site, which is a walk associated with the birth, childhood and early career of the notorious highwayman Dick Turpin. From the numerous public right of ways there are views of the spire of the Grade one Thaxted church, however

these are limited. In view of the sensitiveness of the site, specialist landscape advice and also specialist heritage advice has been sought. Historic England raise no objections to the proposals and heritage issues will be considered in greater detail below.

- 11.10 The proposed development would have a significant adverse effect on the existing rural character of the site which will be evident from the network of public footpaths in the vicinity of the proposal site.
- 11.11 Specialist landscaping advice is that, "At the nearest point the site is some 0.6km distant from the north-eastern edge of Thaxted village. The spatial separation, topography, and existing vegetation between the village and the proposal site is such that the potential visibility of the development from the village is extremely limited. It is not considered that the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the bucolic setting of Thaxted village. To mitigate the potential visual impact the scheme makes provision for the creation of some 2.5km of native species hedgerows, the gapping up of existing hedgerows, and the planting of native tree belts along the north western boundary of the site (the proposal would not result in the loss of any existing trees or hedgerows). Whilst these mitigation measures would reduce the visual impact of the development from parts of the footpath network, and the Sampford Road, additional planting is considered necessary to further reduce the visual impact of parts of the proposed array from the footpath network. A south westward extension of the existing woodland situated at the centre of the landownership parcel, creating a new native species woodland of some 2.6ha, would break up the scale of the solar farm, reduce the visual impact of the array from sections of the surrounding public footpaths and provide a visually ameliorating backdrop to parts of the array."
- 11.12 The applicant has responded stating that the new woodland suggested would be outside of the red line of the site and therefore providing a new woodland in perpetuity would require the purchase of the land and would not be viable and may not be achievable. It also would not allow for the land to be returned for agricultural use in the future. They suggested the planting of a 5m wide tree belt along a section of the western boundary. However, specialist landscape advice is that whilst this provision would provide some additional level of screening, a linear tree belt is considered to be at odds with the existing pattern of vegetation in the landscape. The retention and provision of additional broad hedgerows along this edge is considered to be more appropriate.
- 11.13 As a compromise the applicant is agreeable to provide an additional tree belt planting approximately 180m in length and 5m width incorporated from the corner of the ancient woodland stretching west to where PROW 49-27 intersects. This tree belt would be infill to the existing field boundary vegetation to strengthen the screening of views to the south from this section of the footpath.
- 11.14 As stated above the proposal includes proposals for landscape and nature conservation (see below) enhancement. In addition to the additional tree belt, there would be hedgerow/infill planting along the western boundary, southern boundary of the larger field and tree planting to the northern boundary of the northern parcel of land.
- 11.15 It is not considered that the development would meet the requirements of Policy S7 of the Local Plan and that, as a consequence the proposal is contrary to that policy. It is considered with mitigation measures that the proposal would meet the aims of Policy ENV8.

- 11.16 With regards to the viability of the agricultural holding, the land can return to agricultural use and the proposal also would allow sheep grazing to take place under the panels without damaging the cells. The removal of arable production on BMV land is a factor against the scheme but this is more than compensated for by the use of the grass between the panels for sheep grazing together with the production of electrical energy. The Scheme would add a new income stream to the land holding. The use of the land for sheep grazing needs to be assured. This can be achieved by a condition that requires the approval of a solar farm grazing management plan. The proposal is considered to meet the aims of Policy E4.
- 11.17 The NPPF explains that all communities have a responsibility to help increase the use and supply of green energy, but this does not mean that the need for renewable energy automatically overrides environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities. The NPPF Paragraph 148 states that “The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 11.18 Paragraph 154 states that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local authorities should:
- a) Not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small –scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions and
 - b) Approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.

No specific sites have been identified for solar energy in the emerging local plan.

- 11.19 Solar farms are temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use. Government Planning guidance states that where a proposal involves greenfield land it is necessary to consider whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays. Several comments have also been received in respect as to whether other suitable sites have been considered. There are no alternative site locations within 2km of the point of connection on lower graded agricultural land. The vast majority of land in Uttlesford is grade 2 meaning options for renewable energy schemes of this nature on lower grade land are extremely limited. With the process of site selection being led by the ability to connect to a substation with available capacity, suitable locations for such a project are limited. The location of solar farms is heavily dictated by their proximity to a viable connection point.
- 11.20 In view of the above it is considered great weight should be given to the benefits of scale in this case, where a grid connection is assured and the generation capacity

significant. Historic England and the Landscape Officer have no objections to the proposals subject to appropriate mitigation being incorporated. The production of 44mw of energy which would generate enough electricity to power approximately 13,100 homes annually is of significant benefit. It is considered that the benefits of the scheme of the production of renewable energy would outweigh the rural harm caused and is therefore acceptable in principle.

B Impact on neighbours amenity (ULP policies GEN4 and ENV11)

- 11.21 The proposed development would be located approximately 110m from the nearest property. The access however would be located between two properties. The construction work and associated vehicle movements would have noise and possibly vibration impacts on the neighbouring properties to the access road. As such a construction management plan is required to minimise these impacts. In terms of impacts due to overshadowing, overbearing and loss of light, no such impact would arise from the development proposals. No lighting is proposed as part of the development.
- 11.22 The solar panels themselves would be quiet in operation. The proposals include power inverters which would be housed in containers and require mechanical cooling units. Both inverters and air conditioning units can produce sound but the housings would screen sound from the inverters and the plans show the nearest one at over 300m from the nearest residential premises. It is expected that acceptable noise levels are easily achievable, but as no acoustic details have been submitted a condition is recommended requiring submission and approval of acoustic details.
- 11.23 Environmental health have been consulted and they state that the solar panels would be quiet in operation. The inverters and air conditioning units can produce sound but eh housings would screen sound from the inverters. They would be over 300m from the nearest residential premises and therefore expect acceptable noise levels to be achievable.
- 11.24 The proposal subject to conditions would comply with ULP policies GEN4 and ENV11.

C Access and highway safety (ULP policy GEN1)

- 11.25 Policy GEN1 seeks to ensure development proposals would not adversely affect the local highway network.
- 11.26 The development would result in some impacts on the local road network, predominantly during the construction phase. It is envisaged that there would be approximately 10 HGV movements to and from the site per day over a period of 16 weeks. It is considered that the level of additional vehicle movements would be easily accommodated within the local road network and no adverse impacts are envisaged.
- 11.27 Essex County Council Highways Officers consider the proposal to be acceptable subject to temporary traffic management being in place during the construction phase of the development to facilitate safe access to the site. This can be achieved by a relevant condition. It is considered that subject to conditions that the proposal would comply with ULP Policy GEN1.

D Impact on biodiversity (ULP Policy GEN7)

- 11.28 Policy GEN7 seeks to protect biodiversity, protected species and habitats. The application is accompanied by a Preliminary appraisal report, an ecology report, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, and a completed biodiversity checklist. Integrated with the design are visual and ecological mitigation measures. Planting of new tree belts and hedging and infilling of existing hedging is proposed. Between the panel arrays will be seeded with grass mix for sheep grazing and bee keeping is also proposed.
- 11.29 The proposals are supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (ARCUS, July 2019), the Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan (ARCUS, July 2019), and the Ecological Management Plan (ARCUS, November 2019), there are no objections to the proposals.
- 11.30 Specialist ecology advice is that the Ecological Management Plan (ARCUS, November 2019) sufficiently identifies appropriate mitigation methods for protected species and habitats. They also support the proposed reasonable biodiversity enhancements included in the Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan (ARCUS, July 2019) which have been recommended to secure measureable net gains for biodiversity, as outlined under Paragraph 170d of the NPPF.
- 11.31 Impacts will be minimised and as such the proposal is acceptable subject to conditions.
- 11.32 In view of the above, it is not considered that the proposal would have any material detrimental impact in respect of protected species or biodiversity, subject to conditions, to warrant refusal of the proposal and accords with ULP policy GEN7.

E Whether the development would increase flood risk issues (NPPF, ULP policy GEN3)

- 11.33 The NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas of high risk flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The built form of the development proposed lies within Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding) as defined by the Environment Agency. The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment. The Lead Local Flood Authority, raises no objections to the proposals. As such the proposals comply with Policy GEN3 and the NPPF.

F Impact upon sites of local archaeological importance and listed buildings (NPPF and ULP policies ENV4 and ENV2)

- 11.34 A solar farm in this location will potentially have an impact upon a number of designated heritage assets and their settings in and around the site. Designated assets within 1.5km of the site are the scheduled monument Terrier's Farm Moated site, 55m north of the application site, the grade I listed Church of St John the Baptist, the grade II* listed Goddards Farmhouse and 23 grade II listed buildings. The application site is adjacent to the existing Spriggs Hill Solar Farm.
- 11.35 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, (paragraph 192). It establishes that

great weight should be given to an asset's conservation and the more important that asset, the greater that weight should be, paragraph 193. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Any harm to, or loss of significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification, (paragraph 194). Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (paragraph 196).

- 11.36 Setting is then defined in the Framework as 'the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset and may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral'. Further guidance (paragraph 13) of the Planning Practice Guidance states that local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change when assessing any application for development that may affect the setting of a heritage asset.
- 11.37 Policy ENV2 relating to Listed buildings states that "demolition of a listed building, or development proposals that adversely affect the setting and alterations that impair the special characteristics of a listed building will not be permitted." Additionally, Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 states that a planning authority shall "have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting..." and LPA's are required to apply this statutory advice when determining listed building applications. Specialist conservation advice has been sought and it is considered that this proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of the adjoining listed building, at the lower end of the spectrum. It is therefore necessary to determine if the tilted balance is applied in this instance. It is considered that the benefits of the scheme would outweigh the less than substantial harm to the heritage assets and as such the tilted balance is engaged.
- 11.38 The proposals would include the installation of a total of 125,856 south-facing PV panels, lifted to a minimum of 0.8m off the ground and not exceeding 3m in height. The PV panels would be mounted on racks with the supporting poles piled to a depth of 1.5m. They would face south, tilted at approximately 20 degrees to utilise as much sunlight as possible. They would be arranged in rows with a distance of approximately 3.2 m between each string to avoid inter-panel shading. Historic England state that having considered the documentation submitted with the application, including the *Design and Access Statement* produced by Flexygen Ltd and the *Landscape Visual Appraisal* produced by Viento Environmental, they are satisfied that whilst a degree of harm would be caused to the significance of the setting of a number of the designated heritage assets within a 1.5km radius of the site as a result of the visual impact of the PV panels and ancillary infrastructure, the level of that harm would be acceptable.
- 11.39 The development is therefore considered to be in accordance with s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the NPPF and ULP policy ENV2.
- 11.40 The historic environment record and the submitted desk based assessment shows the proposed development area contains potentially significant archaeological remains. Aerial photography has identified a number of historic field boundaries

(EHER46593) with the remains of a historic farm, now surviving as below ground features, evident on the first and second edition Ordnance Survey maps. Evidence of prehistoric occupation was found during excavation work on the adjacent solar panel scheme and further occupation is likely to extend into this area. The northern boundary is formed by the route of a Roman road potentially leading to Stebbing or Braintree (EHER 46669) As such an archaeological programme of mitigation is used to ensure that the heritage assets on the site are protected. This can be achieved by a suitably worded condition.

11.41 Several comments have been received in respect of the WW1 airfield that is located on the south of the site. There is location marker in memory of this historic landing strip adjacent to the site boundary. At present the airfield is used for agricultural use and therefore not visibly apparent from the rest of the field. The panels are not permanent and It is considered that the positioning of the solar panels above the site of the airfield would not be harmful enough to outweigh the benefits of the proposal.

11.42 The proposal would comply with ULP policies ENV2 and ENV4

G Other material considerations Glint and Glare

11.43 The Safeguarding Authority for Stansted Airport has assessed this proposal and its potential to conflict aerodrome Safeguarding criteria and they state that this development has the potential to interfere with the safe operation of flight at Stansted Airport. As such a condition for a glint and glare assessment is required if the proposal is approved

Conclusion:

- A** The proposal would lead to loss of 52 ha of Grade 2 arable agricultural land, however the nature of the proposal is such that the development would be temporary and reversible. There would be some adverse impacts on the local landscape and rural character of the area, especially those experienced by the users of the many adjacent public rights of way. The impact on the character of the area needs to be weighed against the benefits of the provision of renewable energy and in this instance the benefits outweigh the harm.
- B** The proposal subject to mitigation would not result in any material detrimental loss of residential amenity
- C** The impact on the local highway would be minimal, even during the construction phase given the limited number of vehicular movements.
- D** The proposals would not adversely affect protected species. There would be an opportunity to establish new hedgerows and other landscape features and the planting of new trees belts. It is not considered that the proposal would have any material detrimental impact in respect of protected species or biodiversity
- E** The proposals would not result in increased flooding.
- F** Whilst there would be some impacts on heritage assets it is considered that the benefits of the proposal outweigh the harm.
- G** Subject to conditions the proposal would not impact on airport safeguarding.

RECOMMENDATION – APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS

Conditions

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

REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. No development or preliminary groundworks can commence until a programme of assessment has been secured and undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, and approved by the planning authority prior to reserved matters applications being submitted.

A mitigation strategy detailing the excavation/preservation strategy shall be submitted to the local planning authority following the completion of this work.

REASON: To ensure heritage assets on the site are protected in accordance with ULP policy ENV4.

4. No development or preliminary groundworks can commence on those areas containing archaeological deposits until the satisfactory completion of fieldwork/or preservation, as detailed in the mitigation strategy, and which has been signed off by the local planning authority through its historic environment advisors.

REASON: To ensure heritage assets on the site are protected in accordance with ULP policy ENV4

5. The applicant or successor in title will submit to the local planning authority a post-excavation assessment (to be submitted within three months of the completion of fieldwork, unless otherwise agreed in advance with the Planning Authority). This will result in the completion of post-excavation analysis, preparation of a full site archive and report ready for deposition at the local museum, and submission of a publication report.

REASON: To ensure heritage assets on the site are protected in accordance with ULP policy ENV4

6. A landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before development, for its permitted use. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

REASON: In the interests of the appearance of the site and area in accordance with Policies GEN2 and GEN7 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

7. No development to take place until a Glint & Glare assessment has been submitted to the LPA for approval in consultation with the aerodrome safeguarding authority for Stansted Airport. The development shall then be carried out strictly in accordance with the details in the assessment and retained thereafter for the lifetime of the solar farm.

REASON: Solar PV can produce levels of glint and glare that can create an ocular hazard to pilots. A Glint & Glare assessment will establish the level of risk. The Glint & Glare Assessment must be carried out with the consideration of all aviation procedures at Stansted Airport.in accordance with ULP policy GEN2

8

All mitigation and enhancement measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (ARCUS, July 2019), the Landscape And Biodiversity Management Plan (ARCUS, July 2019) and the Ecological Management Plan (ARCUS, November 2019) as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the local planning authority prior to determination.

This may include the appointment of an appropriately competent person e.g. an ecological clerk of works (ECoW,) to provide on-site ecological expertise during construction. The appointed person shall undertake all activities, and works shall be carried out, in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To conserve and enhance Protected and Priority species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the UK Habitats Regulations, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats & species) In accordance with ULP policy GEN7.

9

No development shall take place, including any ground works or demolition, until a comprehensive Construction Traffic Management Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:

- i. An approved scheme of temporary traffic management for the B1051 to facilitate safe and suitable access to the site during the construction period.
- ii. Construction traffic routing.
- iii. Local highway before and after condition survey and reinstatement to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority.
- iv. the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors
- v. Turning area details for all vehicles associated with the site
- vi. loading and unloading of plant and materials
- vii. storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development
- viii. wheel and underbody washing facilities
- ix. appropriate signage scheme.
- x. The proposed management and protection of the PROW network across the site including a before and after condition survey, the identification and implementation of temporary works necessary to facilitate the passage of construction vehicles and upon completion of development the reinstatement of all PROWs to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority.

REASON: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Uttlesford Local Plan Policy GEN1.

10

Prior to the erection of the development hereby approved full details of both hard and soft landscape works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. These details shall include [for example]:-

- i. proposed finished levels or contours;
- ii. means of enclosure;
- iii. car parking layouts;
- iv. other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas;
- v. hard surfacing materials;
- vi. minor artefacts and structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, etc.);

- vii. proposed and existing functional services above and below ground (e.g. drainage power,
- viii. communications cables, pipelines etc. indicating lines, manholes, supports.);
- ix. retained historic landscape features and proposals for restoration, where relevant.

Soft landscape works shall include [planting plans; written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate; implementation programme].

REASON: The landscaping of this site is required in order to protect and enhance the existing visual character of the area and to reduce the visual and environmental impacts of the development hereby permitted, in accordance with Policies GEN2, GEN7, ENV3 and ENV8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

- 11 All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out before any part of the development is occupied or in accordance with the programme agreed with the local planning authority.

REASON: In the interests of the appearance of the site and area in accordance with Policies GEN2, GEN7, ENV3 and ENV8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

- 12 The permission hereby granted is for the proposed development to be retained for a period of not more than 40 years from the date that electricity from the development is first supplied to the grid, this date to be notified in writing to the Local Planning Authority. By the end of 40 year period the solar panels must be decommissioned. No later than 6 months after decommissioning, all related structures shall be removed and the site restored in accordance with a restoration scheme which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The restoration scheme shall be submitted to the Local Planning authority no less than 6 months prior to decommissioning and shall make provision for the dismantling and removal from the site of the solar PV panels, frames, inverter housings and all associated structures and fencing and the repairs of land drainage. The local Planning authority must be notified of the cessation of electricity generation in writing no later than five working days after the event.

REASON; to prevent the retention of development in the countryside that is not being used for its intended purpose in accordance with Uttlesford Local Plan policy S7 (adopted 2005)

- 13 No development shall take place until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The statement shall specify the provisions to be made for the control of noise vibration and dust emanating from the site and shall be consistent with BS 5228:2009 Code of Practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites, and the best practicable means as set out in the Uttlesford Code of Development Practice. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period.

REASON: In the interests of the amenity of surrounding locality residential/business premises in accordance with Policies GEN1, GEN2, and GEN4 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

- 14 No development shall take place until a solar Farm Grazing Management Plan has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall describe the methods by which grazing will be maintained by sheep throughout the period during which the development is operational. If for any reason grazing by sheep fails to occur for a period of more than 12 months then, unless agreed in writing with the Local Planning authority, the solar panels and the ancillary equipment relating to it shall be decommissioned and removed from the site in accordance with condition 12 above.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and protection of agricultural land in accordance with ULP policy ENV5

- 15 No external lighting shall be installed unless a detailed lighting scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To safeguard the character and appearance of the countryside, in accordance with ULP policy S7 (adopted 2005).