



Planning Committee Date	12 th July 2023
Report to	South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Committee
Lead Officer	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
Reference	22/00051/FUL
Site	Lords Bridge, Barton Road
Ward / Parish	Barton
Proposal	Installation of a 30,457 megawatt hours (MWh) per annum solar farm and associated infrastructure on land to the east of Lords Bridge, Barton for an operational lifespan of 40 years
Applicant	University of Cambridge
Presenting Officer	Charlotte Spencer
Reason Reported to Committee	Departure Application Application raises special planning policy or other considerations
Member Site Visit Date	11 July 2023
Key Issues	1. Principle – Renewable Energy 2. Principle – Loss of Agricultural Land 3. Principle – Inappropriate Development within the Green Belt 4. Biodiversity
Recommendation	APPROVE subject to conditions and referral to the Secretary of the State

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The application seeks planning permission for the installation of a 30,457 megawatt hours (MWh) per annum solar farm and associated infrastructure on land to the east of Lords Bridge, Barton for an operational lifespan of 40 years.
- 1.2 The proposal would result in the installation of solar panels on Grade 3a Agricultural Land. The applicants had submitted a sequential analysis to demonstrate that if agricultural land has to be used, that poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land. Due to the benefits of renewable energy and biodiversity net gain, it is considered that the benefits outweigh the limited harm of the loss of BMV agricultural land.
- 1.3 It is considered the proposal constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Very special circumstances have been put forward and officers consider that considerable weight should be afforded to the benefits and on balance, that these benefits outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.
- 1.4 Officers considered that the proposed development would be appropriately landscaped and whilst it would have a moderate level of impact on the character and appearance of the area, the harm is outweighed by the benefits. It is considered that the proposal would not result in a detrimental impact on the setting of the Grade II Listed Building.
- 1.5 Subject to conditions, officers consider that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on ecology, flood risk, highway safety and residential amenity.
- 1.6 Officers recommend that the Planning Committee approve the proposal subject to conditions.
- 1.7 Members are advised that if they are minded to approve, the application will be referred to the Secretary of State for confirmation that the application is not to be called-in for his consideration.

2.0 Site Description and Context

None relevant		Tree Preservation Order	
Conservation Area		Local Nature Reserve	
Listed Building	Adj	Flood Zone	2 and 3
Building of Local Interest		Green Belt	X
Historic Park and Garden		Protected Open Space	

Scheduled Ancient Monument		County Wildlife Site	X
Agricultural Land	3a	Article 4 Direction	

- 2.1 The site comprises 36.4 hectares of agricultural fields located to the west of Barton Road. It is located approximately 1500m south of Barton and 900m north of Haslingfield. To the east of the site lies the Lords Bridge Observatory and partially splits the application site into a northern and southern section. One of the observatory's telescopes lies within the application site and an access path cuts across the site.
- 2.2 The site is almost entirely open either only one small copse of trees with a short length of hedgerow present in the central part of the site and another adjacent to Barton Road. The land across the site is level.
- 2.3 A Public Right of Way (PROW) bridleway runs along the northern boundary behind a strong, mature hedge line. The eastern boundary is formed by Barton Road with a mixture of hedges. The hedges vary in size but there are some areas which are open allowing for wide views across the site.
- 2.4 A brook forms part of the southern boundary, beyond which lies an access track to Brook Farm, however, the remaining part of the boundary is entirely open as it cuts through a large field. The western edges are formed by a mixture of young woodland and thick hedges with some open areas.
- 2.5 Brook Farmhouse which is located in close proximity to the site, is a Grade II Listed Building. A small part of the western most part of the site lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3. The Lords Bridge Observatory to the west is a Country Wildlife Site.
- 2.6 The whole site falls within the Cambridge Green Belt and it is classified as Grade 3a Agricultural Land which is Good Quality and falls within the Best Most Versatile land.

3.0 The Proposal

- 3.1 The application is seeking planning permission for the installation of a 30,457 megawatt hours (MWh) per annum solar farm and associated infrastructure on land to the east of Lords Bridge, Barton for an operational lifespan of 40 years
- 3.2 Ground mounted solar panels with a maximum height of 2.67 metres would be installed across the site. A welfare area containing generators, stores, contractor facilities and parking would be created to the eastern part of the site adjacent to a new access from Barton Road. Five inverter stations would be installed throughout the site. New hedge planting is proposed on the southern and western boundaries and cutting through the

site. The electricity created would be supplied privately to the University. An application for a pipeline will be submitted separately.

- 3.3 During the determination process, further details regarding the proposed layout, details of the panels and inverters have been submitted. A Glint and Glare Assessment and District Licencing Payment Certificate has been submitted. A number of documents including the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) have been amended. The layout of the solar panels has been amended to reduce the number of panels around Brook Farm. In addition, the description has been changed to amend the predicted megawatt hours of the solar farm.

4.0 Relevant Site History

	Reference	Description	Outcome
	21/03798/SCRE	Screening Opinion for the development of a solar farm	EIA not required
4.1	Pre-application advice was provided for the proposed solar farm in 2019 (PRE/0026/19). The applicant was advised to demonstrate very special circumstances as it comprises inappropriate development within the Green Belt. They were also advised to submit a soil survey, LVIA and Flood Risk Assessment. Concerns were raised in regard to the impact on the landscape and the setting of the Listed Building.		

5.0 Policy

5.1 National

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

National Planning Practice Guidance

National Design Guide 2019

Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) Cycle Infrastructure Design

Circular 11/95 (Conditions, Annex A)

Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (2015)

EIA Directives and Regulations - European Union legislation with regard to environmental assessment and the UK's planning regime remains unchanged despite it leaving the European Union on 31 January 2020

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

Environment Act 2021

ODPM Circular 06/2005 – Protected Species

Equalities Act 2010

5.2 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018

S/1 – Vision

S/2 – Objectives of the Local Plan

S/4 – Cambridge Green Belt

S/7 – Development Frameworks

CC/1 – Mitigation and Adaption to Climate Change

CC/2 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation

CC/7 – Water Quality

CC/8 – Sustainable Drainage Systems

CC/9 – Managing Flood Risk

HQ/1 – Design Principles

NH/2 – Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character

NH/3 – Protecting Agricultural Land

NH/4 – Biodiversity

NH/6 – Green Infrastructure

NH/8 – Mitigating the Impact of Development in & adjoining the Green Belt

NH/14 – Heritage Assets

SC/9 – Lighting Proposals

SC/10 – Noise Pollution

TI/3 - Parking Provision

5.3 Supplementary Planning Documents

Biodiversity SPD – Adopted February 2022

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD – Adopted January 2020

Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD – Adopted November 2016

- 5.4 The following SPDs were adopted to provide guidance to support previously adopted Development Plan Documents that have now been superseded by the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018. These documents are still material considerations when making planning decisions, with the weight in decision making to be determined on a case-by-case basis:

Landscape in New Developments SPD – Adopted March 2010

District Design Guide SPD – Adopted March 2010

Listed Buildings SPD – Adopted 2009

6.0 Consultations

Haslingfield Parish Council – Object

14 March 2023

- 6.1 Proximity to the Listed Building, the scale is too large, the plan does not take into account the neighbours and their needs.

- 6.2 Support environmental projects in general but concern there is no information regarding how the electricity would get to the university.
- 6.3 Concern about access road to neighbours property and access off Barton Road. Concern about lack of communication.

17 February 2022

- 6.4 Objects. No glint and glare study, lack of engagement. The Parish Council does support solar farms in principle.

County Highways Development Management – No objection

23 March 2023

- 6.5 Paragraph 5.3 of the Supplementary Information states that the 'results of the analysis have shown that solar reflections from the proposed development are geometrically possible towards road users along approximately 600m of the A603 and 900m of Barton Road. Solar reflections predicted towards road users are screened by existing vegetation, therefore, no impact is predicted to be experienced and mitigation is not required'. However, in the event that the screening is subject to disease, die-back or removal for any reasons, the Highway Authority would require that a condition be imposed requiring suitable mitigation is implemented to prevent glare to the users of the public highway.

14 February 2022

- 6.6 The site has been through pre-application discussions with the Highway Authority. The applicant has incorporated all requirements. Satisfied that the development will have no significant adverse impact on the public highway.

County Transport Team – No objection

17 February 2022

- 6.7 The development has a low trip generation. No objections

Sustainable Drainage Officer – No objection

01 April 2023

- 6.8 The site is in Flood Zone 1 with surface water flood risk of predominantly low, some areas of medium and high risk. A Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Management have been submitted. No objection subject to conditions regarding surface water drainage schemes and construction drainage.

- 15 February 2022*
- 6.9 Acceptable subject to a scheme of surface water disposal. This can be dealt with by way of condition.

Lead Local Flood Authority – No objection

- 23 March 2023*
- 6.10 The submitted flood information has allowed the LLFA to remove objection. Request conditions regarding surface water drainage schemes.
- 21 February 2022*
- 6.11 Object.
- 6.12 Unable to support until a layout drawing on the site is provided illustrating the characteristics of all drainage features proposed to be included.
- 6.13 Due to the orientation of the proposed solar panels in the northern part of the site, rills may be formed causing erosion in the same layout as the panels. Due to this the LLFA requires that appropriate SuDS features are included within the design.
- 6.14 The layout proposed areas to house converter cabins and a transformer station. These will create an impermeable area that will require drainage infrastructure. The LLFA requires that the method of surface water management for these areas is clearly shown within the documents.

Environment Agency – No objection

- 17 February 2022*
- 6.15 No objection

Anglian Water – No objection

- 04 March 2023*
- 6.16 No comments. The applicant should check for any Anglian Water assets with cross or are within close proximity.

Conservation Officer – No objection

- 16 March 2023*
- 6.17 The size of the inverter is large, however, it is not located close to any heritage assets and therefore will have no impact. Conservation comments have not changed. It is considered that the proposal will not adversely affect the character and/or setting of the Listed Building.
- 24 February 2022*
- 6.18 The site is to the north of a Grade II Listed Building, Brook Farmhouse. The immediate setting of the listed building is a domestic garden to the south and west and a farmyard to the north and east. The main elevation is to the south and the site of the solar farm is to the north.

- 6.19 The setting for Brook Farmhouse would change, however, this is not considered enough to oppose the proposals. The character of farmland does change over time and this will not have any greater impact on the setting than other changes that have occurred. In addition, the panels use a form of installation which means that they are fully reversible.
- 6.20 The proposal will not adversely affect the setting of the Listed Building.

County Archaeology – No objection

03 March 2023

- 6.21 No alterations to original comments.

23 February 2022

- 6.22 Evidence indicates some potential for archaeological remains to be present within the area relating to Medieval occupation at the east end. Along Bourn Brook are a range of Iron Age and Roman settlements. Small signals of potential archaeological remains are present in the southwest and east sides of the proposal area and will require focused testing along with a general evaluation of the area. This work can be secured by a planning condition.

Senior Sustainability Officer – No objection

24 March 2023

- 6.23 No further comments

17 February 2022

- 6.24 Support the application as long as the UKPN can confirm capacity to transport any excess electricity generated back to the National Grid.

Landscape Officer

26 June 2023

- 6.25 Additional information has been provided to show sections through the site boundaries and verified views and years 1 and 15 of eight of the agreed viewpoints.
- 6.26 The verified views demonstrate that, from the footpaths and hills to the south, the solar farm will only be partially visible and will be largely screened by existing vegetation, landform and the proposed perimeter planting. From close viewpoints, the solar farm will initially be highly visible where there are gaps in existing vegetation but, over time, as the proposed perimeter planting establishes and grows the solar farm will be screened. Additional planting has also been added to the area north of Brook Farm which is welcomed.

19 April 2023

- 6.27 New and amended landscape information has been submitted. The additional thicket planting would help integrate the scheme into the surrounding landscape and it appears that the perimeter hedge would screen views.
- 6.28 Whilst agree with the conclusions of the LVIA, it is recommended that more supporting visual information should be provided. We suggest that views 7, 20 and 22 should be developed as type 4 verified views to show how the perimeter planting and fence line will screen the solar farm at installation and after 5 years.
- 6.29 Section drawings showing the arrangement and heights of the proposed and existing hedgerows, the fence line and solar panels at the north, east and southern edges should be included.

21 April 2022

- 6.30 The applicants have provided an LVIA. There are no specific landscape designations in the area and generally the site and surrounding open farmland has been assessed as medium quality. Views to the site are limited and in mitigation will be filtered and screened.
- 6.31 The landscape strategy for the site is limited. It is proposed to keep solar arrays are a minimum of 5 metres from existing ditches and streams. These are 'Award Watercourses' and more space should be allowed.
- 6.32 The development would still have a marked landscape and visual effects on the site itself and wider landscape.
- 6.33 It is a very large development and will introduce development with a semi-industrial character into the open landscape. Even where the solar arrays cannot be directly views, the scale will be apparent.
- 6.34 A wildflower meadow is proposed to boost landscape and biodiversity. However, this would require a very high standard of establishment and management.
- 6.35 The uniformity and apparent scale of the development should be addressed. A more diverse palate of planting forms should be introduced to break up the site. Planting should be provided within the site itself. The applicants should provide a robust plan to show how the proposed landscapes will be established and managed.

Ecology Officer – No objection

17 March 2023

- 6.36 The Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate submitted is welcome and provide the required evidence of participation in the Natural England District Level Licencing Scheme. The habitats due to be

created and enhanced will provide suitable terrestrial habitat for the local great crested newt population.

6.37 The Biodiversity Net Gain Plan submitted shows that a 183% and 81% new gain in habitat and hedgerow units respectively is possible which is welcome. There is concern about maintaining the wildflower grassland in a moderate condition considering the extend of the panels, however, regardless that would still be an 83% gain.

6.38 The buffers will encourage ground nesting birds. Management of those areas must take their presence into account. There is no management information, however, this can be conditioned.

21 February 2022

6.39 The applicant is required to submit the Impact Assessment and Conservation Payment Certificate prior to determination as with great crested newt surveys, this cannot be conditioned.

6.40 The submitted report has identified a negative impact to ground nesting birds which is unacceptable.

6.41 Retainment and enhancement of key habitats is welcomed. The replacement of arable cropland with wildflower grassland will inevitably increase biodiversity.

Natural England – No objection

20 March 2023

6.42 The proposed amendments to the original application are unlikely to have significantly different impacts on the natural environment than the original.

09 February 2022

6.43 The proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on designated sites and has no objection.

Environmental Health – No objection

20 March 2023

6.44 Previous comments still stand.

25 February 2023

6.45 No comments on behalf of Environmental Health.

Contaminated Land Officer – No objection

06 March 2023

6.46 No further comments

- 09 February 2022*
- 6.47 No immediately evident environmental concerns that would required assessment for potential contamination and the proposed use is not sensitive.

Designing Out Crime Officer - Comments

- 09 March 2023*
- 6.48 No further comments.

- 07 February 2022*
- 6.49 We have seen some cable thefts from similar locations across Cambridgeshire. Where possible I would recommend Weldmesh security fencing which would reduce the possibility of climbing or cutting and offers good surveillance. Would like to see any future proposals for lighting or CCTV should they be forthcoming.

Communities Team - Comments

- 14 February 2022*
- 6.50 The proposal is in line with what the Council encourages through its Zero Carbon Strategy.
- 6.51 With regard to community engagement the Council's policy requires that developers have engaged effectively with the local community and local authority. A letter was sent to residents on 14 June asking for views by the end of June. This is a short timescale and represents minimal consultation on a development of such significance to the local area. Local Members have expressed the view that they too would have expected to see more.
- 6.52 Whilst provision of community financial benefit is not a material considered, we would like to draw your attention to the many solar farms which provide community benefit funds to host communities.

NATS Safeguarding – No objection

- 6.53 No safeguarding objection.

Cambridge City Airport – No objection

- 6.54 Does not conflict with the safeguarding criteria for the airport.

7.0 Third Party Representations

- 7.1 During the original consultation (February 2022) three neighbour representations were received along with a representation from Cambridge Past, Present and Future.
- 7.2 Those in objection have raised the following issues:

- Loss of agricultural land;
- Lack of glint and glare report;
- Lack of consultation;
- Impact on Green Belt;
- Impact on the water courses and flood risk;
- Impact on highway;
- Impact on access to Brook Farm;
- Impact on the setting of the Listed Building;
- Impact on outlook
- Security Risk
- Do not agree with the supply of electricity to the University only;
- Lack of detail
- Impact on water supply to neighbours

7.3 Following the receipt of additional and amended information a reconsultation was sent out (March 2023). One neighbour representation was received along with a representation from Cambridge Past, Present and Future.

7.4 Those in objection have raised the following issues:

- Loss of agricultural land
- Lack of consultation;
- Lack of detail;
- Impact on Listed Building;
- Limitations of Glint and Glare study
- Development within the Green Belt
- Security risk
- Impact on water supply to neighbours
- Not considered loss of biodiversity when returning the site to agriculture

7.5 The above representations are a summary of the comments that have been received. Full details of the representations are available on the Council's website.

8.0 Assessment

Principle of Development – Renewable Energy

8.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 sets out UK's committed targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing energy generation from renewable sources. The Act was amended in June 2019 to set a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050.

8.2 Paragraph 152 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in changing climate and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

- 8.3 Paragraph 158 states that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:
- a. Not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and
 - b. Approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposal location meets the criteria in identifying suitable areas.
- 8.4 Paragraph 174 (b) states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.
- 8.5 Footnote 58 of the NPPF states that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.
- 8.6 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) sets out the particular planning considerations that relate to large scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic farms. It states that the deployment of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes. However, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively.
- 8.7 The NPPG states that particular factors a local planning authority will need to consider include:
- i) encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of High environmental value;
 - ii) where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages Biodiversity improvements around arrays. See also a speech by the Minister for Energy and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP, to the solar PV industry on 25 April 2013 and written ministerial statement on solar energy: protecting the local and global environment made on 25 March 2015.
 - iii) that solar farms are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use.

- iv) the proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare (see guidance on landscape assessment) and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;
 - v) the extent to which there may be additional impacts if solar arrays follow the daily movement of the sun.
 - vi) the need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing.
 - vii) great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large scale solar farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large-scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset;
 - viii) the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges;
 - ix) the energy generating potential, which can vary for a number of reasons including, latitude and aspect
- 8.8 Policy S/7 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) states that outside development frameworks, only allocations within Neighbourhood Plans that have come into force and development for agricultural, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses which need to be located in the countryside or where supported by other policies in this plan.
- 8.9 Policy CC/2 states that planning permission for proposals to generate energy from renewable and low carbon sources, with the exception of proposals for wind turbines, will be permitted provided that: a. The development, and any associated infrastructure, either individually or cumulatively with other developments, does not have unacceptable adverse impacts on heritage assets (including their settings), natural assets, high quality agricultural land, the landscape, or the amenity of nearby residents (visual impact, noise, shadow flicker, odour, fumes, traffic); b. The development can be connected efficiently to existing national energy infrastructure, or by direct connection to an associated development or community project, or the energy generated would be used for on-site needs only; c. Provision is made for decommissioning once the operation has ceased, including the removal of the facilities and the restoration of the site; and d. Developers have engaged effectively with the local community and local authority.
- 8.10 The site is located outside the development framework within the open countryside and Green Belt. The principle of development within the Green Belt will be discussed in more detail later within this planning assessment.
- 8.11 The solar farm would produce 30,457 megawatt hours and it is considered that this would provide a meaningful contribution to the low carbon energy generation in this instance. Subsequently, the development is supported in

policy terms within the countryside provided that the scheme would comply with the criteria in Policy CC/2 above and any other material considerations.

- 8.12 With reference to criteria (a) of the proposed development's impact upon heritage assets and their settings, natural assets, agricultural land, the landscape and nearby residents will be discussed later within this planning assessment.

Grid Connection

- 8.13 With reference to criteria (b) the proposal would benefit from a direct connection to the University's West Cambridge Site.

Decommissioning

- 8.14 With reference to criteria (c) the proposed solar farm would be for a 40-year period. The site would then be decommissioned. A condition for this temporary period will be attached on any planning consent granted to ensure it is decommissioned, the facilities removed and the land reinstated.
- 8.15 The Supplementary Information documents provides details regarding decommissioning. It states that it is expected to take approximately 12 months including the removal and disposal of the infrastructure associated and site restoration. An indicative decommissioning plan has been submitted, however, due to the length of time it would be installed for it is considered that these details are likely to be changed. As such, it is considered reasonable to request final details by way of condition.

Community Engagement

- 8.16 With reference to criteria (d), a Statement of Community Involvement has been submitted as part of the Planning Statement. Letters were distributed to local residents and site notices distributed to Barton, Haslingfield, Harlton and Comberton. In addition, a project website was created and an online survey distributed to local residents and stakeholders. The applicant considered that it was not possible to hold public consultation events in person due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- 8.17 Concerns have been raised about the lack of community engagement by the Parish Council and the Council's Community's Team. This is noted and whilst regrettable, public consultation is only encouraged and it would not be reasonable to refuse an application for this reason alone.

Principle – Loss of Agricultural Land

- 8.18 Policy NH/3 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will not be granted for development which would lead to the irreversible loss of Grade 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land unless:

- 1a). Land is allocated for development in the Local Plan;
 - 1b). Sustainability considerations and the need for development are sufficient to override the need to protect the agricultural value of the land.
 2. Uses not involving substantial built development but which take agricultural land will be regarded as permanent unless restricted specifically by condition.
 3. When considered proposed for the change of use or diversification of farmland, particular consideration shall be given to the potential for impact upon Priority Species and Habitats.
- 8.19 Grade 1 to Subgrade 3a agricultural land categories comprise the 'best and most versatile agricultural land' (BMVAL). An Agricultural Land Classification has been submitted. This concludes that the current ALC grade is 3a on 97.5% of the site, the remaining not being considered agricultural (woodland/buildings). Grade 3a land is described as 'Good quality agricultural land' capable of producing moderate to high yields of a narrow range of arable crops or moderate yields of a wider range of crops.
- 8.20 The land subject of this application is not allocated for development in the Local Plan and therefore not compliant with criteria 1a of Policy NH/3.
- 8.21 The NPPG encourages the effective use of land by focussing large scale Solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value and where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.
- 8.22 The Written Ministerial Statement 2015 set out that any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence.
- 8.23 The development would provide 30,457 MWh of electricity per annum. It is estimated that this would supply the University of Cambridge circa 26% of its annual electricity demand. It is not disputed that there is a significant need for renewable energy to contribute towards climate change targets.
- 8.24 It is important to note that the proposed development would not result in an irreversible loss of BMVAL given that any planning consent granted would be restricted to a 40 year period, after which, decommissioning and the restoration of arable land would take place.
- 8.25 Notwithstanding this, the land would be lost for agricultural use for a significant amount of time. Therefore, it is important to consider whether 1) the use of agricultural land is necessary, and any exercise should consider that no suitable brownfield land or non agricultural land is available within a reasonable search area, and 2) any sequential analysis should

demonstrate that if agricultural land has to be used, that poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land.

- 8.26 Whilst third party comments concerning the loss of BMVAL and loss of agricultural output are acknowledged, the threshold test as identified within the Written Ministerial Statement 2015 is to ask whether the proposal is justified by the most compelling evidence with each case determined on its own merits.
- 8.27 A sequential test has been submitted as part of the application. The test considers land within the ownership of the University of Cambridge within a suitable radius for a connection. Some sites such as Yarmouth Farm and the Madingley Estate (south of Dry Drayton Road) have a classification (ALC) of Grade 2 which is better quality than the application site. The sites with a similar ALC were considered unsuitable as they lie within Flood Zones 2 and 3, and/or would be too small to create the size of the solar farm sought or have other constraints such as rights of way which would make the development inefficient.
- 8.28 In addition, further information regarding Alternative Site Assessments have been submitted within the Supplementary Information Document dated 11 January 2023. In terms of using commercial, rooftop solar on the existing buildings, the applicant states that the University already installs solar PV on most new buildings and has a programme to retrospectively install solar PV onto existing buildings where appropriate. However, this would not provide all of the renewable energy needed. In terms of Brownfield sites, the University does not own any brownfield sites that could be used to accommodate a solar farm of the size required. Whilst the University has undeveloped land at Eddington, this site has outline planning permissions for housing, employment and local services.
- 8.29 Subsequently, it is considered that the proposal has successfully demonstrate that there are no areas of lower grade agricultural land available to the applicants which are suitable for a solar farm development which would create a similar level of electricity output. It is therefore concluded that it meets the tests in justifying the development.
- 8.30 Nevertheless, food security is an important consideration to be weighed in the planning balance. The loss of arable food production in three and a half fields would have a minor impact terms of food security issues. The applicant is proposing to greatly improve biodiversity and this along with the scheme contributing significantly to production of renewable energy, it is considered that the benefits of the development outweigh the harm in this instance. As such, it is considered that the proposal is compliant with Policies CC/2 and NH/3 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018).

Principle – Inappropriate Development within the Green Belt

- 8.31 The application site lies within the Cambridge Green Belt. The planning system attaches great importance to Green Belts and their fundamental aim is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.
- 8.32 Paragraph 138 of the NPPF 2021 states that the Green Belt serves five purposes: (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 8.33 Paragraph 147 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 8.34 Paragraph 148 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 8.35 Paragraph 149 states that new buildings are inappropriate unless listed as one of the exceptions. Solar panels are not listed within the exceptions within the para 149 and Paragraph 151 specifically states that 'When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increase production of energy from renewable sources'.
- 8.36 Policy S/4 of the Local Plan aligns with the NPPF and Policy NH/8 states that any development proposals within the Green Belt must be located and design so that they do not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.
- 8.37 The sequential test submitted as part of the Agricultural Land Classification demonstrates that only one of the potential sites available for the proposal lies outside of the Green Belt. However, this site, Yarmouth Farm, has a better quality of agricultural land than the proposed site. All of the other potential sites lie within the Green Belt.
- 8.38 It is first important to consider the level of harm that the proposal would have on the Green Belt.

- 8.39 The applicant argues that the proposal does not prejudice the five purposes of the Green Belt as per paragraph 138 of the NPPF. Due to the siting of the proposal it is considered that it would not result in unrestricted sprawl of built up areas, would not result in neighbouring towns merging into one another and would not impact the setting and special character of historic towns. Officers also note that there is insufficient availability of urban/ derelict land of a size needed for a solar farm of this scale.
- 8.40 However, the 3rd purpose of the Green Belt is to assist in the safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The site is flat, open agricultural land that the majority of which is devoid from buildings or structures. The solar panels would be sited in horizontal rows over 36 hectares of land, and whilst there would be breaks in the rows to allow for access roads, hedges and existing trees it would result in a large area of development. The applicant has argued that due to the existing and proposed screening, it would have limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt and this will be discussed in more detail below. However, whilst there is no specific definition of 'openness' within the NPPF, National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that openness can have both spatial and visual aspects.
- 8.41 In terms of spatial aspects, the size of the proposal would be similar to the size of local villages and it would introduce a significant area with a semi-industrial character into the open landscape. It is considered that even where the solar arrays cannot be directly viewed, the scale of the development would be apparent. As such, it is considered that introducing man-made structures into what is currently open fields would represent encroachment of development into the countryside contrary to one of the purposes of the Green Belt as per paragraph 138 of the NPPF and it would result in harm to the spatial openness.
- 8.42 In terms of visual harm, the site does not form part of a national or local landscape designation and there are no ecological designations. As such it is not a protected or valued landscape. A valued landscape must, in this context, refer to a landscape that is of greater than just open countryside.
- 8.43 The site and surrounding farmland has been assessed as being of medium quality (non-designated area, generally pleasant but with no distinctive features) landscape value, with medium sensitivity (reasonable ability to accommodate change but may lead to limited loss of some characteristics) to low level solar development. The majority of the site is occupied by large, level open agricultural fields. There is a dense mature hedge line along the northern boundary, a hedge line with a mixture of hedges with some gaps along the eastern boundary, some vegetation along the southern boundary although part of the southern boundary is fully open, and the western boundary has a mixture of vegetation and open views.
- 8.44 It is considered that clear views into and across the site are limited and the development would sit within existing field patterns, however, the

development would result in a marked landscape and visual effects on the site itself. The LVIA identifies this as substantial change with a moderate adverse impact at year 1 and moderate-slight adverse impact at year 15. Similar can be said for Brook Farm immediately to the south of the site, where a moderate level of change is identified with moderate adverse impacts at year 1 and slight adverse impacts at year 15. In terms of mitigation, a landscape strategy has been set out that would introduce new hedgerow planting which would reduce the visual effects over time. Whilst there would be some longer views from which the solar farm would be visible, given the limited scope of these views, any effects on the wider landscape character will be limited. To ensure that the proposed hedgerows are suitable and can be maintained for the life of the solar farm it is considered reasonable to add a landscaping condition to ensure the mitigation from the proposed landscaping strategy is achieved.

- 8.45 Subsequently, it is considered that there would be substantial harm to the spatial openness of Green Belt, however the harm in terms of visual openness would be moderate.
- 8.46 Whilst it is accepted that a solar farm is different from permanent buildings as the openness of the Green Belt could be restored after 40 years as it would be temporary. However, this is still a long period of time.
- 8.47 Subsequently, it is considered that the proposal is, by definition, inappropriate development within the Green Belt and as such, consideration needs to be given as to whether very special circumstances result in benefits that would outweigh the harm to the green belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm. The very special circumstances are assessed later in the report.

Visual Appearance and Landscape Impact

- 8.48 Policy HQ/1 'Design Principles' provides a comprehensive list of criteria by which development proposals must adhere to, requiring that all new development must be of high-quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context.
- 8.49 Policies NH/2, states that development will only be permitted where it respects and retains or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape. Policy NH/8 seeks to mitigate the impact of development in and adjoining the Green Belt.
- 8.50 The District Design Guide SPD (2010) and Landscape in New Developments SPD (2010) provide additional guidance. The NPPF provides advice on achieving well-designed places and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 8.51 The site forms part of the open countryside and the built form associated with the development would result in a visual intrusion which is

uncharacteristic of the existing landscape. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF refers to recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and specific reference is made to the protection of valued landscapes. As noted above, this is not the case here.

- 8.52 Nevertheless, the proposal would result in a substantial level of change to the character and appearance of the site, resulting in moderate-slight adverse impacts over time. However, these would be predominantly limited to the site itself and to a lesser extent, the immediate surrounding area. Impacts on the wider landscape are considered to be limited. As a substantial level of change would occur to the site resulting in moderate/slight adverse impacts, the proposal is contrary to Local Plan policy NH/2 which seeks to retain or enhance the distinctiveness of the local landscape.
- 8.53 In terms of more specific design features, a two metre high deer fence would be installed around the boundary for security. This is considered to be an acceptable way of securing the site and the landscaping would help visually shield the fence. Infrared security cameras would also be installed, however, the exact positioning has yet to be determined. It is considered that this can be dealt with by way of condition.
- 8.54 It is considered that the transformers would have an industrial appearance, however, they would be spread throughout the site and it is considered that they would not visually dominate the solar farm and would appear in keeping within the proposed works.
- 8.55 The welfare area would be located in close proximity to Barton Road, however, this would be located behind the security fence which in turn is located behind existing hedgerows which would be reinforced and managed at 3 metres according to the Landscape Strategy. As such, it is considered that this would not be overly visible from the public realm.
- 8.56 Overall, it is acknowledged the proposal would cause some harm to the landscape character however, this would be predominantly limited to the site itself and the immediate surrounding area. This harm would be reduced over time with the provision of additional landscaping throughout the site. Harm to landscape character will be considered as part of the case for very special circumstances in relation to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and in the overall planning balance.

Heritage Assets

- 8.57 The application is within the setting of the Brook Farmhouse which is a Grade II Listed Building.
- 8.58 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that development which affects a listed building or its setting, a local authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving

the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

- 8.59 Para. 199 of the NPPF set out that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Any harm to, or loss of, the significant of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.
- 8.60 Policy NH/14 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) requires development affecting heritage assets to sustain or enhance the character and distinctiveness of those assets. Policy HQ/1 states that all new development must be compatible with its location in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, material, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area.
- 8.61 The immediate setting of the Listed Building is a domestic garden to the south and west and a farmyard to the north and east. Within that there are lines of trees and shrubs which create informal boundaries. The main elevation of the house faces south and the solar farm is located to the north. It is acknowledged that the setting for Brook Farmhouse would change, however, the Conservation Officer has advised that the change would not adversely affect its setting. The character of farmland changes over time and it is considered that the proposed changes would not have any greater impact on the setting than other changes that have occurred in the past. In addition, the panels would be fully reversible which would allow the setting of the listed building back to one of open land.
- 8.62 Baseline evidence indicates some potential for archaeological remains to be present within the area including Medieval, late 18th/ early 19th century and Iron Age and Roman settlements. The application has been reviewed by the County Archaeologist who has states that the south west and east areas of the proposal will require a focused testing along with a general evaluation of the wider area. However, it is stated that this can be secured by way of condition.
- 8.63 It is considered that the proposal, would preserve the setting of the nearby listed building and is compliant with the provisions of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, the NPPF and Local Plan policy NH/14.

Biodiversity

- 8.64 The NPPF and the Councils' Biodiversity SPD (2022) require development proposals to deliver a net gain in biodiversity following a mitigation hierarchy which is focused on avoiding ecological harm over minimising, rectifying, reducing and then off-setting. This approach accords with policy NH/4 which outlines a primary objective for biodiversity to be conserved or enhanced and provides for the protection of Protected Species, Priority Species and Priority Habitat.

- 8.65 The application has been subject to formal consultation with the Council's Ecology Officer, who raises no objection to the proposal and recommends several conditions to ensure the protection of species and the estimated biodiversity net gain is delivered.
- 8.66 In consultation with the Council's Ecology Officer, subject to an appropriate condition, officers are satisfied that the proposed development complies with policy NH/14, the Biodiversity SPD 2022, the requirements of the Environment Act 2021 and 06/2005 Circular advice.

Water Management and Flood Risk

- 8.67 Policies CC/7, CC/8 and CC/9 of the Local Plan require developments to have appropriate sustainable foul and surface water drainage systems and minimise flood risk. Paras. 159 – 169 of the NPPF are relevant.
- 8.68 The site is in Flood Zone 1 and is therefore considered at low risk of flooding. There is a small area of site that falls within Flood Zones 2 and 3 to the western part of the site.
- 8.69 The applicants have submitted a Flood Risk Assessment.
- 8.70 The Council's Sustainable Drainage Engineer has advised that they have no objection to the proposal subject to conditions relating to sustainable drainage schemes and construction drainage schemes.
- 8.71 The Local Lead Flood Authority has advised the the proposed development can be managed through the use of bunds/channels and an attenuation basin restricting surface water discharge to 0.8l/s and this is supported. They have no objections subject to conditions relating to surface water drainage schemes including construction schemes.
- 8.72 Both the Drainage Officer and LLFA have requested similar conditions and so it is reasonable to only add these once.
- 8.73 The applicants have suitably addressed the issues of water management and flood risk, and subject to conditions the proposal is in accordance with Local Plan policies CC/7, CC/8 and CC/9 and NPPF advice.

Highway Safety and Transport Impacts

- 8.74 Policy HQ/1 states that proposals must provide safe and convenient access for all users and abilities to public buildings and spaces, including those with limited mobility or those with impairment such as sight or hearing.
- 8.75 Para. 111 of the NPPF advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an

unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

- 8.76 The application is supported by an Access Arrangement Drawing.
- 8.77 The Local Highways Authority have been consulted on the proposal. Both the Development Management Highway Team and the Transport Assessment Team agree that once built the development would have a very low trip generation and so would not cause any capacity issues on the Local Highway Network.
- 8.78 The Highways Authority have reviewed the Glint and Glare Assessment and are content that the impact from the solar arrays would be mitigated by the existing and proposed vegetation. However, to ensure that in the event that the vegetation is subject to disease, die-back or removal a condition has been requested requiring a replacement mitigation measure is implemented. This condition is considered reasonable to prevent glare to users of the public highway.
- 8.79 Subject to conditions the proposal accords with the objectives of policies HQ/1 and TI/2 of the Local Plan and is compliant with NPPF advice.

Cycle and Car Parking Provision

- 8.80 Policies HQ/1 and TI/3 set out that car and cycle parking provision should be provided through a design-led approach in accordance with the indicative standards set out in Figure 11 of the Local Plan. Cycle parking should be provided to at least the minimum standards.
- 8.81 There will be minimal requirement for servicing and maintenance of the solar farm during operation. Provision has been made within the site for some informal parking areas for vehicles accessing the site for this purpose adjacent to the welfare area. This is considered acceptable.

Amenity

- 8.82 Policy HQ/1 (n), sets out that proposals must protect the health and amenity of occupiers and surrounding uses from development that is overlooking, overbearing or results in a loss of daylight or development which would create unacceptable impacts such as noise, vibration, odour, emissions and dust.
- 8.83 The closest residential property would be located 7 metres to the south of the application site and 25 metres to the nearest solar panel. Due to the separation distance and limited height of the panels it is considered that it would not result in a loss of light, loss of outlook or sense of dominance.
- 8.84 The Environmental Health Officer has not raised any concerns in regard to noise.

- 8.85 A Glint and Glare Study has been submitted by the applicant. This identifies that there would be no solar reflections to dwelling houses further along Barton Road and those on the edge of Haslingfield. However, it does state that solar reflections are geometrically possible from the closest neighbour at Brook Farm. It is noted that the report states that it is mitigated by existing vegetation, however, the occupier of Brook Farm has submitted photographs showing that the existing vegetation is limited. The landscaping plan shows additional native hedges along the southern boundary near to the neighbour and the applicant has also removed some of the panels directly north of Brook Farm. As such, it is considered that the glint and glare can be mitigated by way of suitable landscaping. This can be secured by way of the landscaping condition.
- 8.86 Subsequently, it is considered that the proposal would, subject to conditions, have an acceptable level of impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers in compliance with Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018).

Third Party Representations

- 8.87 The remaining third-party representations not addressed in the preceding paragraphs are summarised and responded to in the table below:

Third Party Comment	Officer Response
Loss of Agricultural Land	Considered in paragraphs 8.21-8.33
Impact on Green Belt	Considered in paragraphs 8.35-8.70
Impact on Flood Risk	Considered in paragraphs 8.93-8.99
Impact on neighbour amenity	Considered in paragraphs 8.112-8.116
Impact on Listed Building	Considered in paragraphs 8.81-8.87
Lack of consultation	Considered in paragraph 8.19

Very Special Circumstances

- 8.88 The applicant has put forward a number of matters which they considered amount to very special circumstances to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm.

University of Cambridge Research Benefits

- 8.89 In 2019 the University of Cambridge became the first university in the world to adopt a Science Based Target for carbon reduction and commits it to reducing its energy-related carbon emissions to absolute zero by 2048.

- 8.90 The applicant argues that having a highly variable electricity source (such as a solar farm) will motivate the University to explore and put in place mechanisms to exploit and increase the dynamics of its electricity demand to be more in tune with the carbon intensity of the grid. This in turn would provide cost savings, decrease stress on national infrastructure and respond to the climate crisis.
- 8.91 The University aims to become zero carbon at least 10 years ahead of its target date as they intend to provide an example of what is achievable in terms of carbon reduction and opportunities for others to learn from its approach.
- 8.92 Cambridge Zero, the University's flagship climate change initiative has identified 'Decarbonising the Built Environment' as a Grand Challenge theme within its research portfolio and would bring together cross disciplinary expertise. Within this theme, there is a particular research interest in the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI), digital and sensing technologies to support the decarbonisation of the built environment. It is argued that the solar development within the University's ownership will provide an opportunity to develop green technology not only as a research opportunity but also as a teaching resource for students.
- 8.93 The University is in the position of offering educational services on climate change, net zero and sustainability. The applicant considers that the solar farm will have a far-reaching influence on its students who will take the same principles out into the world
- 8.94 Officers acknowledge that the University is a world class educational institute at the fore front of research, and if the solar farm can aid in developing research into green technology then it is considered that this can be given moderate weight.

Carbon Emissions

- 8.95 The proposed solar farm would generate in 30,457MWh per year which the applicant states is 26% of the University's electrical consumption (based on 2019 figures). As such, this would reduce the Applicant's carbon emissions by 14,860 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.
- 8.96 In December 2019 South Cambridgeshire District Council declared a climate emergency. It is considered that significant weight can be given to the reduction of carbon emissions as the solar farm would result in approximately a quarter of the electricity of the University. Whilst the solar farm would feed electricity into the University's West Cambridge Site which lies within Cambridge City Council, both Councils have declared a climate emergency.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 8.97 In July 2019 SCDC declared an ecological emergency and in February 2021 it created 'Doubling Nature' setting out the approach to increasing wildlife-rich habitats, tree canopy and access to spaces in South Cambridgeshire.
- 8.98 The NPPF contains provisions for the protection and improvement of the environment introducing biodiversity net gain. The Environment Act 2021 elevates the requirement of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to a statutory footing, although this is not yet in force.
- 8.99 A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has been submitted. The proposal would include biodiversity and ecological enhancements including: connections between isolated woodland and the County Wildlife Site; opportunities for roosting bats would be provided; two boxes to accommodate barn owls would be provided; meadow grassland would be established beneath the solar panels; hedgerow planting would be provided; enhancements to the woodland copse would be made.
- 8.100 The BNG Assessment has concluded that there would be a net gain of 184% with a net gain of 173 biodiversity units.
- 8.101 The ecology officer welcomes this approach, however does hold some scepticism over the maintenance of wildflower grassland in a moderate condition. However, it is accepted that if the grasslands only reach a poor condition there would still be a 83% gain in habitat units.
- 8.102 Subsequently, it is concluded that in the worse-case scenario there would be a significant increase in ecology and biodiversity on the site. It is considered that this is a clear benefit which carries moderate weight.

Economic Benefits

- 8.103 The proposal would result in the provision of jobs associated within the construction of the solar farm and the decommissioning of it. As this is only temporary, only limited weight can be given.

Other Harm

- 8.104 In terms of other harm identified, the proposal would result in the temporary loss of good quality agricultural land. Whilst it is temporary and therefore, reversible, the length of time for which the solar farm is to be commissioned is 40 years which is considerable. Nevertheless, it is considered that this would only have a minor impact upon food security. There would also be harm to landscape character which is limited to the site itself and the immediate surrounding area.
- 8.105 In summary, the proposed development would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and it would result in harm to the openness of the Green Belt and it would conflict with one of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. As such, the NPPF establishes that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very

Special Circumstances would not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm are clearly outweighed by other considerations. In this instance it is considered there are clear benefits which outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, landscape character and loss of agricultural land.

Planning Balance

- 8.106 Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise (section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38[6] of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Summary of harm

- 8.107 The proposal would result in the loss of BMV Agricultural Land, albeit this is an extended temporary period of time. It is considered to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and it would result in harm to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, albeit to the site and its immediate surrounds.

Summary of benefits

- 8.108 The benefits of the proposal include renewable energy, educational research benefits and biodiversity net gain which should be afforded considerable weight. Additional limited weight can be given to economic benefits.
- 8.109 Having taken into account the provisions of the development plan, NPPF and NPPG guidance, the statutory requirements of section 66(1) and section 72(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the views of statutory consultees and wider stakeholders, as well as all other material planning considerations, the proposed development is recommended for approval.

Recommendation

- 8.110 **Approve** subject to:

-The planning conditions as set out below with minor amendments to the conditions as drafted delegated to officers.

-Confirmation from the Secretary of State as to whether they wish for the application to be called-in for determination.

9.0 Planning Conditions

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

Reason: In accordance with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans as listed on this decision notice.

Reason: In the interests of good planning, for the avoidance of doubt and to facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

3. The local planning authority shall be notified in writing within 14 days of the date of first operational use of the development. The development, hereby permitted, shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition or to a condition to be specified and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority on or before 40 years from the date of the first operational use of the development or in accordance with an alternative phasing plan agreed in writing by the local planning authority but in any event no later than one year following the date on which the site has ceased to be in continuous use for energy generation.

Reason: Approval of the proposal on a permanent basis would be contrary to Policy CC/2 and NH/3 of the Local Plan 2018.

4. No less than 1 year prior to the expiry of the temporary permission and the decommissioning of the development hereby approved, a detailed decommissioning plan shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. This shall detail how the equipment is to be removed from the site, how the land is to be returned to its former condition and shall be accompanied by a construction traffic management plan and environmental/biodiversity mitigation measures. The decommissioning shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

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

5. No development above ground level, other than demolition, shall commence until details of a hard and soft landscaping scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include:
 - a) proposed finished levels or contours; car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas; hard surfacing materials; minor artefacts and structures (e.g. Street furniture, artwork, play

equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, CCTV installations and water features); proposed (these need to be coordinated with the landscape plans prior to being installed) and existing functional services above and below ground (e.g. drainage, power, communications cables, pipelines indicating lines, manholes, supports); retained historic landscape features and proposals for restoration, where relevant;

b) 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 and an implementation programme;

If within a period of five years from the date of the planting, or replacement planting, any tree or plant is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree or plant of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place as soon as is reasonably practicable, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

c) boundary treatments (including gaps for hedgehogs) indicating the type, positions, design, and materials of boundary treatments to be erected.

d) a landscape maintenance and management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas.

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

6. Suitable and permanent mitigation features are to be maintained for the lifetime of the development so as to prevent glare of users of the lengths of highway mentioned within the submitted documentation, specifically the 600m of the A603 and 900m of Barton Road highlighted within the submitted Glint & Glare Assessment.

Reason: in the interests of highway safety in accordance with paragraph 111 of the NPPF.

7. No development hereby permitted shall be commenced until a surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principle has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented and managed in accordance with the approved details.
The scheme shall be based upon the principles within the agreed Flood Risk Assessment, Cannon Consulting Engineers, Ref: CCE/ZD171/FRA-02, dated: November 2021 and Surface Water Management 01 -

Additional Information, Cannon Consulting Engineers, dated: 25 November 2022.

Details to be submitted shall include:

- a) Details of the existing surface water drainage arrangements including runoff rates for the QBAR, 3.3% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) (1 in 30) and 1% AEP (1 in 100) storm events;
- b) Full results of the proposed drainage system modelling in the above-referenced storm events (as well as 1% AEP plus climate change) , inclusive of all collection, conveyance, storage, flow control and disposal elements and including an allowance for urban creep, together with a schematic of how the system has been represented within the hydraulic model;
- c) Detailed drawings of the entire proposed surface water drainage system, including levels, gradients, dimensions and pipe reference numbers;
- d) A plan of the drained site area and which part of the proposed drainage system these will drain to;
- e) Full details of the proposed attenuation and flow control measures;
- f) Site Investigation and test results to confirm infiltration rates;
- g) Temporary storage facilities if the development is to be phased;
- h) A timetable for implementation if the development is to be phased;
- i) Details of overland flood flow routes in the event of system exceedance, with demonstration that such flows can be appropriately managed on site without increasing flood risk to occupants;
- j) Full details of the maintenance/adoption of the surface water drainage system;
- k) Measures taken to prevent pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface water
- l) Formal agreement from a third party if discharging into their system is proposed, including confirmation (and evidence where appropriate) that sufficient capacity is available.
- m) Confirmation of the Environment Agency of their acceptance to utilise infiltration SuDS across the site.

The drainage scheme must adhere to the hierarchy of drainage options as outlined in the NPPF PPG

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

8. No development hereby permitted shall be commenced details for the long term maintenance arrangements for the surface water drainage system (including all SuDS features) to be submitted to and approved in writing by

the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details should identify runoff sub-catchments, SuDS components, control structures, flow routes and outfalls. In addition, the plan must clarify the access that is required to each surface water management component for maintenance purposes. The maintenance plan shall be carried out in full thereafter.

Reason To ensure the satisfactory maintenance of drainage systems that are not publicly adopted, in accordance with the requirements of paragraphs 163 and 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

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

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

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

The approved CEcMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that before any development commences appropriate construction ecological management plan has been agreed to fully conserve and enhance ecological interests in accordance with Policies HQ/1 and NH/4 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018.

11. Prior to the commencement of operation a scheme of ecology enhancement shall be supplied to the local planning authority for its written approval. The scheme must include details of bat and bird box installation, hedgehog connectivity, and other enhancements as applicable and in line with the Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (2022). The approved scheme shall be fully implemented within an agreed timescale unless otherwise agreed in writing

Reason: To conserve and enhance ecological interests in accordance with Policies HQ/1 and NH/4 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018.

12. No development shall commence, apart from below ground works and demolition, until a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The BNG Plan shall target how a net gain in biodiversity will be achieved through a combination of on-site and / or off-site mitigation. The BNG Plan shall include:

- i) A hierarchical approach to BNG focussing first on maximising on-site BNG, second delivering off-site BNG at a site(s) of strategic biodiversity importance, and third delivering off-site BNG locally to the application site;
- ii) Full details of the respective on and off-site BNG requirements and proposals resulting from the loss of habitats on the development site utilising the latest appropriate DEFRA metric;
- iii) Identification of the existing habitats and their condition on-site and within receptor site(s);
- iv) Habitat enhancement and creation proposals on the application site and /or receptor site(s) utilising the latest appropriate DEFRA metric;
- v) An implementation, management and monitoring plan (including identified responsible bodies) for a period of 30 years for on and off-site proposals as appropriate.

The BNG Plan shall be implemented in full and subsequently managed and monitored in accordance with the approved details. Monitoring data as appropriate to criterion v) shall be submitted to the local planning authority in accordance with the latest DEFRA guidance and the approved monitoring period / intervals

Reason: To provide ecological enhancements in accordance with the NPPF 2021 para 174, South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 policy NH/4 and the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Biodiversity SPD 2022.

13. No demolition/development shall commence until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has implemented a programme of archaeological work, commencing with the evaluation of the application area, that has been secured in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) that has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing. For land that is included within the WSI, no demolition/development shall take place other than under the provisions of the agreed WSI, which shall include:
- a. The statement of significance and research objectives;
 - b. The programme and methodology of investigation and recording and the nomination of a competent person(s) or organisation to undertake the agreed works;
 - c. The timetable for the field investigation as part of the development programme;
 - d. The programme and timetable for the analysis, publication & dissemination, and deposition of resulting material and digital archives.

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

14. Prior to commencement of operation, final details of the security arrangement of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This should include scaled drawings demonstrating the location, type and size of security cameras and/or lighting.

Reason: To ensure that the site would be safe and secure and that the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018

Informatives

1. Surface water and groundwater bodies are highly vulnerable to pollution and the impact of construction activities. It is essential that the risk of pollution (particularly during the construction phase) is considered and mitigated appropriately. It is important to remember that flow within the

watercourse is likely to vary by season and it could be dry at certain times throughout the year. Dry watercourses should not be overlooked as these watercourses may flow or even flood following heavy rainfall.

2. Partial discharge of the archaeological condition (No.13) can be applied for once the fieldwork at Part c) has been completed to enable the commencement of development. Part d) of the condition shall not be discharged until all elements have been fulfilled in accordance with the programme set out in the WSI.