

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

2 July 2014

AUTHOR/S: Planning and New Communities Director

Application Number:	S/2293/13/FL
Parish(es):	Croydon
Proposal:	Change of use of land from (1) agriculture to (2) mixed use for agriculture and use for the generation of renewable energy (solar)
Site address:	Land to the north of Manor Farm, Church Lane, Croydon
Applicant(s):	Push Energy Ltd
Recommendation:	Delegated approval
Key material considerations:	Principle of development; Impact upon the landscape character; Loss of Agricultural Land, Highway Safety, Ecology; Flood Risk; Highway Issues; Impact upon Residential Amenity; Archaeology; Landscaping;; and Other Considerations
Committee Site Visit:	Yes
Departure Application:	No
Presenting Officer:	Paul Sexton
Application brought to Committee because:	The officer recommendation of delegated approval is contrary to the recommendations of refusal from Croydon and Arrington Parish Councils
Date by which decision due:	20 August 2014

Planning History

1. No relevant planning history.

Planning Policies

2. National Planning Policy Framework
3. DCLG Publication: Planning Practice Guide for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

4. Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government 'Local Planning and Renewable Energy Developments'

5. ***Adopted Local Development Framework, Development Control Policies***

DP/1 Sustainable Development
DP/2 Design of New Development
DP/3 Development Criteria
DP/7 Development Frameworks
NE/2 Renewable Energy
NE/4 Landscape Character Areas
NE/6 Biodiversity
NE/11 Flood Risk
NE/14 Lighting Proposals
NE/15 Noise Pollution
NE/16 Emissions
NE/17 Protecting High Quality Agricultural Land
CH/1 Historic Landscapes
CH/2 Archaeological Sites
CH/3 Historic Buildings
NE/17 Protecting High Quality Agricultural Land
TR/3 Mitigating Travel Impact

6. ***Draft Local Plan***

S/3 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
S/7 Development Frameworks
CC/1 Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change
CC/2 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation
CC/8 Sustainable Drainage Systems
CC/9 Managing Flood Risk
NH/2 Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character
NH/3 Protecting Agricultural Land
NH/4 Biodiversity
TI/2 Planning for Sustainable Transport

7. ***Supplementary Planning Documents***

Trees & Development Sites SPD - Adopted January 2009
Landscape in New Developments SPD - Adopted March 2010
Biodiversity SPD - Adopted July 2009

Consultations

8. **Croydon Parish Council** – Recommends refusal:
9. 'The public consultation meeting was held in Arrington, and was for a much smaller development of 12.8Mw. The meeting was held with little notice. Questionnaires available at the meeting had to be returned before leaving. There were only 10 responses.
10. The current proposal is for a much larger site, estimated at 21.6Mw. There has been no public consultation on this larger proposal.

11. No mention of noise levels from the invertors – application states “minimal noise”. The Council would like to see a projected noise pattern plan. Suggest the substation on site could be moved.
12. Views from the footpaths around the area would be seriously spoiled by this development.
13. Traffic movements – proposed amount of traffic is far too much for the narrow road between Casa Mia and the war memorial. The war memorial could be in danger of damage from large vehicles.
14. Church Lane is already in a terrible state of disrepair and the Council has been trying to get it resurfaced – an alternative route for construction traffic?
15. All Saints’ church could be in danger from vibrations caused by heavy traffic
16. No mention of security lighting. Croydon has very little light pollution and would not appreciate a high level of security lighting on the site.
17. There is scope to enlarge the site even further – in the case of the application being successful, a caveat to prevent this is needed.
18. There was strong feeling from the public at a meeting that the countryside should not be covered in metal structures, especially when the time of maximum energy need is the time when there is least sunlight.’
19. **Arrington Parish Council** – recommends refusal, commenting that there is not enough information regarding buildings.
20. **Hatley Parish Council** – No recommendation – ‘this application was brought to our attention due to the proposed volume of heavy goods traffic that will require access to the development using the main road that runs between Hatley and the A603. Whilst it makes no recommendation it states that it wishes to be informed of any significant changes to the application which may impact on, or be of interest to the residents of Hatley.
21. **Landscapes Officer** – ‘the application site lies approximately 400m to the north of Croydon. The site lies within the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands Landscape Character Area, and is also considerably influenced by the East Anglian Chalk Landscape Character Area which lies directly to the south. There are extensive views of the chalklands from the site.
22. Locally the landscape character is determined by a steep south facing ridge running from Arrington in the east, to Gamlingay in the west, rising some 60 metres above the valley of the River Rhee to the south. This is a relatively detailed and complex landscape with the ridge divided by a series of south and south west facing valleys cut by streams flowing towards the Rhee.
23. The valley of the River Rhee marks the transition of the East Anglian Chalk Landscape to the south, and is itself a detailed landscape of fields, meadows, and woodlands, contrasting with the more rolling and open chalk hills beyond.
24. This area of South Cambridgeshire is sparsely populated and rural and local villages are small with a limited scale of development. It is a tranquil area with a deeply rural

character. Apart from the junction of the A1198/A603 2km to the west the nearest major transport links are the main Cambridge-Kings Cross railway and A 505 are 10km to the south.

25. A number of footpaths and a Bridleway pass close to the site including the long-distance Clopton Way Footpath which runs along the southern boundary of the site. Connecting the site with Croydon village 400m to the south and the network of public rights of way running principally to the west, east and north.
26. As noted in the preliminary Landscape and Visual appraisal, mid-distance views to the site will be limited. Long distance views to the site will be possible, although with a limited impact due to the low height of the arrays and of the distances involved.
27. There will however be local impacts both visually - views from footpaths and bridleways - and on the local landscape due to the scale and layout of the development.
28. Landscape effects would be to introduce a significant area of development which is of a semi-industrial character into an area or (for Cambridgeshire) remote and deeply rural countryside.
29. Several other solar developments are at various stages in the planning process (eg at lower road and at Shingay cum Wendy) and could possibly produce successive cumulative landscape effects in this area.
30. Visual impacts will be particularly evident on the approaches to Croydon from east, and to a more limited extent from the east. Heading south on the PROW from the proposed development, views of other potential solar developments will be possible.
31. However, it should be possible to limit the landscape and visual effects with a suitable planting scheme and minor amendments to the layout.
32. Suggest that the existing hedge and tree boundaries are reinforced and replanted where they have become 'gappy' or are in poor condition.
33. The main landscape and visual impacts will be on the Clopton way which follows the southern boundary of the development for 400m. Suggest that the site boundary is pulled back from the path to allow clear views east and west, and to enable some tree planting without over-shadowing.
34. A further group of trees would be useful at the junction of Church Lane and the Clopton Way, to the south of the path, and at the south east corner of the development to give visual destinations and lessening the perception of the development to the north.'
35. Comments on the amended scheme which include further mitigation measures will be reported
36. **Trees Officer-** No objection.
37. **Local Highway Authority** – recommends refusal as originally submitted, as it has serious concerns with regards the location of the site.

It confirms that the proposed route is not within the remit of the public highway, and therefore the applicant appears to have an access problem as no documentation has been provided to show that there is a right of way over the track.

38. The war memorial is unprotected at present, at a tight junction, and therefore damage may occur. This was raised as a concern that the pre-application stage but has not been addressed in the application submission.
39. The County Rights of Way and Archaeology teams should be consulted.
40. The revised access details show construction access from Croydon Hill. Although formal comments are awaited this option is likely to be supported by the Highway Authority.
41. **Cambridgeshire Definitive Map and Records Unit** – Public Bridleway No.08 Croydon and Public Footpath No.07 run to the west and south of the site. Church Lane shares some of the route of both these rights of way. There is extreme concern about the impact of the level of construction traffic on users of the rights of way and on the footpath surface.
42. The cabling to take power from the site also crosses Bridleway No.08 but impact is minimal.
43. There is a slight obstruction of the line of the footpath at two points in the south west corner of the site.
44. **Cambridgeshire Archaeology** – strongly recommends, in comments received on 28 May 2014, that the site is subject to an archaeological evaluation, to be commissioned and undertaken at the expense of the developer, and carried out to the granting of planning permission. The evaluation results should allow for the fuller consideration of the presence/absence, nature, extent, quality and survival of archaeological remains within the development area. An informed judgement can then be made as to whether any planning consent will need to include provisions for the recording and, more importantly, the preservation of important archaeological remains *in situ*. It is standard practice for this office to provide a design brief for such an evaluation.
45. **Conservation Officer** – has no objection. There will be no immediate effect on the setting of any listed building or conservation areas, but there will be long distance effects on the setting of the listed Church at Croydon. However, the effect would be possibly from only two relatively narrow vistas and it is considered that in view of the low reflectivity which is promised, and the mitigation of additional tree screening, the effects in this regard will not be significant. Nevertheless, there would be a less definable detrimental effect in respect of the general environs of the historic group around the Church, which would be evident to walkers in the area confronted by the incongruous array of panels as they pass towards or away from the Church. The point could be reached where in combination with future solar farms, this could be detrimental to the setting of heritage assets, but this is not the case at the present time.
46. **Environment Agency** – no objection. However, it wishes to see a precautionary approach to surface water drainage as no porosity tests appear to have been undertaken. In general a field with impermeable panels is going to behave differently to an agricultural field without panels. As this type of proposal is in its infancy it is not

known what may happen over time to the ground surface and any existing field drainage system.

47. It is believed that the soils here are clayey. On an empty ploughed field there will be some infiltration up to a certain cut-off point when sheet runoff may occur, due to the soils' moisture content becoming too high, or the intensity of the rainfall being greater than the infiltration rate. When panels are installed the runoff will concentrate into rows between the panels so that the intensity will be greater on the more open areas, and that cut-off point is likely to be lower. Rivulets could form, but the main risk would be that the hill would not hold as much water for the same period as the original field.
48. It would appear that the soils in the area are predominantly labelled Hanslope, which lead to slowly permeable calcareous clayey soils, especially on slopes. This can also cause seasonal waterlogging, particularly on lower ground levels around the valleys of the watercourses. Croydon borders the solid bedrocks of Gault and Lower Chalk so the till can be a mixture.
49. The proposed scale of development could present risks of flooding on-site and/or elsewhere if surface water run-off is not effectively managed. Beneath the original plough layer the soils are compacted and from a boundary which water runs down. Local springs can form, but where there is disturbance to the underlying layers during the construction phase there could be a 'welling-up' process.
50. It is therefore recommended that a 'living' or dynamic surface water drainage strategy should be provided to identify the surface water regime for the site 'post installation' over a period of time. The initial installation should have scope to adjust, if required, to provide swales or gravel cut-off trenches for instance.
51. A condition is therefore requested for a surface water drainage strategy.
52. **Environmental Health** – The application contains the potential to import quantities of soil onto the site. Recommend a condition requiring a chain of evidence be provided for all imported material.
53. **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CPRE** – The site lies in an area of very lovely countryside, with a wonderful view from the top, looking south, over an extremely wide area. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal cites six 'potentially notable visual receptors' i.e. the Clopton Way footpath and other footpaths, and a bridleway. These rights of way are well used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. It is strongly believed that the users will be disappointed that their experience of the countryside is marred by sheets of solar panels, more reminiscent a factory landscape than a rural one. There is concern that agricultural land will be taken out of crop production, despite it having value in sheep grazing land.
54. It is noted that the Appraisal proposes a number of mitigation measures by way of establishment of new field boundary hedges, and this should be secured by condition if the Local Authority is minded to grant permission.
55. Comments on the revised details will be reported.

Representations

56. 7 letters of representation have been received to the original scheme opposing the application for the following reasons;

- a) Concern about impact of construction traffic along Church Lane – impact on fragile structure of the Church itself due to vibration from HGV's. – the junction at the war memorial is dangerous and there could be damage to the memorial itself. The Clopton Way runs along the lane and there is a dangerous blind summit where there has been a fatal accident in the past.
- b) Manor Farm has recently been constructing an access to the west onto the Hatley Road to avoid dangers associated with travelling through Croydon.
- c) Negative impacts on Grade 1 and other listed buildings and parkland. Site will be visible from part of the A1198 and from the Cambridge Road near to Wimpole Avenue
- d) No archaeological heritage statement in the application documents. No information as to how deep the posts are to be driven into the ground.
- e) Inappropriate scale. Not in keeping with the rural landscape
- f) No noise assessment of the operating solar installation
- g) No noise and vibration assessment during the construction process
- h) Lack of research into ecological disturbance
- i) Disruption to communities of Croydon and Arrington
- j) There are very low light pollution levels in the area, with an absence of street lighting. Security lighting would be highly objectionable in this location.
- k) Concern about possible noise pollution from the invertors and possible increased hum from the higher loading at the sub-station which is very close to the centre of the village
- l) Loss of agricultural land, which if farmed properly would be a high yielding as the nearby fields. The idea of panels was for them to be placed on less favourable growing land, rather than good ploughable land as in Cambridgeshire.
- m) Incorrectly referred to in application documents as Church Farm.
- n) Unfortunate that initial meeting with developer took place out of village.
- o) Important area for conservation and wildlife. An area along the ancient leafy grass stretch along 'the Dean' has been dug up and brick rubble put down. The existing farmer has removed hedges and trees. Previously the site area grew 60 acres of rye grass and clover to help enhance and encourage the habitat of Church Farm, for which farm subsidies are available.
- p) The development is right up against two long distance footpaths. Clopton Way runs through Croydon and is one of the best parts of the 11 mile walk. Walking along this ridge looking south, walkers look into the sky as if walking in a dip and the natural look would be changed by looking north over the proposed panels. The panels being very close to the edge of the paths means that it does not pay due regard to the amenity value of the area. There should be a 75m clearance from the footpaths to allow for full landscaping to take place.

- q) Would also impact on National Trust visitors who walk this route. Impact on horse riders using the bridleway
- r) The steep south facing scarp slope, with its long interrupted views to the south, coupled with the relatively high altitude plateau to the north, offers a virtually unique landscape and sense of remoteness in South Cambridgeshire.
- s) Wheat can be grown, the straw baled and sent to Ely Power Station to process through burning to generate electricity, allowing the valuable countryside habitat to be retained. The land owned by these farmers in total could produce 10,000T of straw. They could also put panels on commercial/barn roofs
- t) In a short space of time the proposal has grown from 60 – 85 acres. This may be extended in the future as at Bourn.
- u) Are the sunlight hours for this area enough to generate power for solar panels?
- v) There is no mention of the numerous airfields in the area, and the potential for glare from the panels. Has any study of this impact been undertaken?
- w) As there is currently no technology to store generated electricity in significant quantities, the panels will make close to zero difference to the amount of electricity generation needed for peak consumption
- x) Lack of local consultation by developer. This was in respect of a smaller scheme anyway.

57. Comments on the revised details will be reported.

Material Planning Considerations

Site and Proposal

- 58. The 34.6ha site is located outside of any village framework and within the countryside. The site itself is in the Parish of Croydon, but the north east boundary abuts Arrington Parish. It comprises 3 contiguous, but visually separate, arable fields to the north and north east of Manor Farm, which are mostly enclosed by tall field hedges and tree lines, except for a section of the south east edges of the central and north east fields, and the outer edges of the field to the north west. The land is undulating but in general rises to the north. The central and north east fields overlook the Cam river valley to the south, with rising land on the north edge of Hertfordshire beyond.
- 58. Church Lane, which leads up to the site from Croydon village to the south, is a narrow rural lane, and is also the route of Bridleway No.6 Croydon and Footpath No.7 Croydon. The bridleway then continues north through Manor Farm and along the south west boundary of site, before stretching beyond the site to the north west. Footpath No.7 carries on north to the south east boundary of the site, before turning north east towards the A1198, along the south east boundary of the site as part of the Clopton Way.

59. An originally submitted access, both during the construction period and beyond, was proposed by Church Lane, leading past the Church, which joins High Street at the War Memorial. As amended, access to the site will be from Croydon Hill, to the west of the site and along a route already used by the existing farm. A section of roadway from Croydon Hill into the site has recently been upgraded.
60. The closest residential properties are Manor Farmhouse, Orchard House and Manor Fields, which are located within the grouping of residential and agricultural buildings that comprise Manor Farm, immediately south west of the site. The nearest of these is within 100m of the site boundary. Winter Wells, a single dwelling barn conversion 440m to the east, with properties along the Croydon - Arrington Road 460m to the south. Residential properties in the main part of Croydon village are 400m from the site.
61. This full planning application, as amended, proposes the installation of a 21.6MW solar photovoltaic farm along with 18 inverters, 9 transformers, a grid connection cabinet, a comms cabinet and a substation' for a temporary period of 25 years. There will be a 1.5m high wire stock security fencing, although a 1.8m high metal palisade security fence will be paced locally around high voltage plant. Low level CCTV cameras will be mounted on the transformer/inverter housings and support framework of the PV arrays.
62. The photovoltaic panels would be mounted on steel frames that are angled to face south. There would be 1,728 mounting racks (approx. 82,944 panels), running east to west across the site that measure up to 330m in length. Each panel would measure approximately 1.65m x 0.94m, and have a maximum height of 2.0m, angled at 20 degrees. The panels would be composed of modules with a dark blue/grey appearance, the face of which will be treated with a non-reflective coating, which will reduce glare to a minimum.
63. The inverters/transformers will be located away from the outer boundaries of the site. The grid connection/comms cabinets will be located towards the south west corner of the site. These have a maximum height of 2.5m, with the substation/control room occupying the biggest footprint at 40m². An underground route for the cable that connects the panels to the National Grid power line will run from the south west corner of the north west field for 200m site, to connect to an existing overhead line.. The construction period is anticipated to be a total of 14 -16 weeks, split into 2 phases.
64. The application states that the proposed installation will generate enough electricity to power approximately 4,860 homes.
65. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, Landscape and Visual Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment, Transport Statement, Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, Statement of Community Involvement, Ecological Appraisal and a Construction Management Plan.

Key Considerations

66. The key issues to consider in the determination of this application are whether the principle of development is acceptable in the countryside and impact of the development upon the character and appearance of the area, archaeology, biodiversity, flood risk, highway safety or other matters.

Principle of Development in the Countryside

67. The proposal represents a major development for the generation of renewable energy and as such receives considerable support from national and local planning policy.
68. Nationally the NPPF has as one of its 12 core principles the requirement to support renewable resources. Reference is made throughout the NPPF to the support of sustainable development and renewable energy whilst paragraph 98 clarifies that applications for energy development ought not to be required to demonstrate the need for renewable energy.
69. The Government's commitment to electricity generation by renewable sources is set out in the Renewable Energy Strategy, and in particular the target that 15% of national electricity production should be derived from renewable sources by 2020. This target has been maintained under the Coalition Government.
70. Locally the development plan comprises the adopted Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD. The Core Strategy has as two of its four objectives the effective protection and enhancement of the environment, and the prudent use of natural resources. Policy DP/7 of the Development Control Policies DPD states that outside village frameworks, only development for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses that need to be located in the countryside will be permitted. Policy NE/2 relates to renewable energy and advises the district council will support proposals to generate energy from renewable sources subject to compliance with general sustainable development principles and additionally be able to connect efficiently to existing infrastructure and for provision to be made for the removal of facilities from site should the facility cease to be operational.
71. The site is located within the countryside. The installation of a solar farm is considered to represent appropriate development within the countryside providing given that there are no suitable brownfield sites available in the area of the scale required and the proposal would allow the land to continue to be used for agricultural purposes through grazing.

Character and Appearance of the Area (including cumulative impact)

72. The comments of the Landscapes Officer and Historic Buildings Officer above outline the concerns about possible visual impact on this attractive area of countryside, which is crossed by a number of well used public rights of way. However, both conclude that with suitable landscaping mitigation, in the form of new planting, the impact will be acceptable.
73. Although the site is set well above the level of Croydon village views from the south will be limited until the last 100m of the footpath along Church Lane. Any long distance views of the site from the south will also be limited as the site in the main sits just beyond the horizon.
74. The site will be most perceived from the public rights of way network which pass along the south and east boundaries. Due to the site comprising 3 contiguous fields, with good planting between, any views will not be of the site as a whole, which reduces impact. The panels have been set back from the south boundary to allow for additional planting. The introduction of large arrays of solar panels and buildings would significantly change the character and appearance of the landscape from being open and rural in character to being semi-industrialised in character. However officers

are of the view that this impact can be sufficiently mitigated by appropriate landscaping.

75. In respect of cumulative impact, planning consent exists for a 33ha solar farm installation at Hoback Farm, south of the A603, to the east of the A1198 (Ref S/0155/13/FL). Officers are of the view that this development, which is 3.3km away, will not be viewed from the current application site. The Council has recently issued an EIA screening opinion in respect of a possible extension to the Hoback Farm site, but this will not alter any impact on Croydon site.
76. An application for a 100ha solar farm development is currently being considered at Vine Farm Shingay (ref S/1067/14/FL). This development would sit in the valley 2.5km south of the Croydon site, south of the road through Shingay village. There will be views of the Shingay site to the south from the road between Croydon and Arrington, although the current application site will not be viewed to the north due to it being just over a ridge. When looking south from the Croydon site, there may be distant views of the Shingay site at certain times of the year, however at the present time, when the field to the south of the site is in crop, any views to the south are limited to the rising land in the distance in Hertfordshire. It will be possible to gain views of both sites from the top 100m section of the bridleway leading from Church Lane to the application site, when looking due north or due south.
77. Officers are of the view that with suitable landscaping of the south boundary of the Croydon site in particular, any cumulative visual impact will not be significant.

Loss of Agricultural Land

78. The site covers 34.6 hectares of Grade 2 arable land. The proposal is not considered to result in the irreversible loss of this land given that it could be returned to its original agricultural use when there is no further need for the development. The land would be laid to grass on the site and although it is noted that it would not be cropped, there will be the opportunity to use the land for sheep grazing or biodiversity gain.

Highway Issues

79. The applicant has revised the application to include a proposal for a new access to be formed from Croydon Hill. This revision has followed discussion with the Local Highway Authority in an attempt to address its, and local concerns, about the unsuitability of Church Lane for construction traffic.
80. The access to Croydon Hill is unable to provide the 215m visibility splay that would normally be required for accesses where a road is subject to the national speed limit, with a maximum of 160m being achievable to the south. A traffic survey has been carried out and officers anticipate that the Highway Authority will not object to the proposal, subject to mitigation measures, possibly in the form of warning signage.
81. The construction period is expected to last 14-16 weeks over two periods with approximately 100 HGV deliveries during that period. Following completion of construction work, access for the ongoing servicing of the site would be from Church Lane.

Residential Amenity

82. The closest residential properties to the site are those associated Manor Farm itself, and these are well screened in the main from the proposed panels by existing planting and agricultural buildings. Winter Wells to the east sits well below the level of the site, with only its roof being visible from the south east corner of the site.
83. The applicant has produced additional noise information, and any comment of the Environmental Health Officer will be reported at the meeting.
84. Any unreasonable impact on residential amenity from construction traffic has been addressed by the new access route.
85. A condition will be required in relation to power operated plant and machinery and noisy works given the relatively close proximity of the site to residential properties.

Heritage Assets (including archaeology)

86. The Historic Buildings Officer has concluded that there will be no significant effects on heritage assets, although cumulative effect is a matter which is considered under the section on landscaping above.
87. Although a request for a pre-determination archaeological investigation has been received, this was not made until 4 months after receipt of the application and therefore officers are of the view that it would be unreasonable for the consideration of the application to be delayed at this late stage in the process.
88. Officers are of the view that the matters raised by the County Council's Historic Environment Team can be addressed by a condition requiring further archaeological investigation work prior to the commencement of development. If areas within the site are found to be of high archaeological significance then suitable mitigation measures can be agreed, which could include the installation of panels on concrete shoes in order to minimise ground works.

Biodiversity

89. The development is not considered to result in significant ecological impacts and would provide biodiversity gain. However, a condition requiring appropriate measures to secure ecological enhancement would be attached to any consent.

Flood Risk

90. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 (low risk). The submitted Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates that the development would be unlikely to increase the risk of flooding to the site and the surrounding area. However, a surface water drainage condition should be attached to any consent to ensure that there is an adequate surface water strategy at the site to deal with any issues during intense rainfall. The scheme should include reference to the checklist by the Environment Agency to monitor possible longer term effects.

Other Material Considerations

91. The applicant has commented on the issue of glare and possible impact on aviation, stating that the glass used in the production of PV panels is specifically designed to absorb as much daylight as possible. Whilst there is potential for any minimal diffused glare to be reflected skyward, he states that this would not be visible and does not create a safety hazard for planes.

Conclusions

92. The development is of a kind that receives very considerable support in national and local planning policy and that, following the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework there must be a strong presumption in favour of it.
93. The proposal would have an impact on the landscape, but officers are of the view that this can be mitigated by additional landscaping.
94. There is no outstanding amenity issue. Conditionally there are no outstanding highways (subject to Highway Authority comments), flood risk, nature conservation or historic environment issues.
95. With the conditions recommended below, it is concluded that on balance the benefits of the scheme in respect of renewable energy production, outweigh the harm over the temporary 'loss' of agriculture productivity.

Recommendation

96. Subject to consideration of any comments on the revised details that delegated approval is given subject to the following conditions –
 1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.
(Reason - To ensure that consideration of any future application for development in the area will not be prejudiced by permissions for development, which have not been acted upon.)
 2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawing numbers to be listed
(Reason - To facilitate any future application to the Local Planning Authority under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.)
 3. The development, hereby permitted, shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition or to a condition to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority on or before 25 years of the date of this permission in accordance with a scheme of work submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason - Approval of the proposal on a permanent basis would be contrary to Policy NE/2 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007 and the land should be reinstated to facilitate future beneficial use.)
 4. All development must be removed from site within 6 months of the solar farm ceasing to be operational.
(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 the provisions of the NPPF and policy NE/2 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)
 5. No development shall take place until details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the buildings hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

(Reason - To ensure the appearance of the development is satisfactory in accordance with Policy DP/2 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

6. No development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development. The details shall also include specification of all proposed trees, hedges and shrub planting, which shall include details of species, density and size of stock.
(Reason - To ensure the development is satisfactorily assimilated into the area and enhances biodiversity in accordance with Policies DP/2 and NE/6 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

7. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. If within a period of five years from the date of the planting, or replacement planting, any tree or plant is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree or plant of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.
(Reason - To ensure the development is satisfactorily assimilated into the area and enhances biodiversity in accordance with Policies DP/2 and NE/6 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

8. In this condition "retained tree" means an existing tree which is to be retained in accordance with the approved plans and particulars; and paragraphs (a) and (b) below shall have effect until the expiration of 5 years from [the date of the first occupation of the dwellings hereby approved].

(a) No retained tree shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars, without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. Any topping or lopping approved shall be carried out in accordance with the relevant British Standard.

(b) If any retained tree is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree shall be planted at the same place and that tree shall be of such size and species, and shall be planted at such time, as may be specified in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

(c) The erection of fencing for the protection of any retained tree shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved plans and particulars before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought on to the site for the purposes of the development, and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area fenced in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made, without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

(Reason - To protect trees which are to be retained in order to enhance the development, biodiversity and the visual amenities of the area in accordance

with Policies DP/1 and NE/6 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)

9. Prior to the commencement of any development, a scheme for the provision and implementation of surface water drainage including monitoring arrangements shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the approved plans prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with the implementation programme agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason - To ensure a satisfactory method of surface water drainage and to prevent the increased risk of flooding in accordance with Policies DP/1 and NE/11 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)
10. No development shall commence until a detailed scheme for the importation of any soil onto the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.
(Reason – To ensure the development is satisfactorily assimilated into the area and enhances biodiversity in accordance with Policies DP/2 and NE/6 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)
11. No external lighting shall be provided or installed within the site other than in accordance with a scheme which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason -To minimise the effects of light pollution on the surrounding area in accordance with Policy NE/14 of the adopted Local Development Framework 2007.)
12. Scheme of ecological mitigation.
13. Restriction on hours of working during the construction phase
14. Implementation of Traffic Management Plan
15. Archaeological investigation

Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The following list contains links to the documents on the Council's website or elsewhere at which copies can be inspected.

- Nation Planning Policy Framework
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- Local Development Framework, Development Control Policies, Adopted July 2007

- <http://www.scambs.gov.uk/content/local-development-framework>
South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, Proposed Submission July 2013
<http://www.scambs.gov.uk/localplan>

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