SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: **Lead Development Management Planner (Interim) - BBC & SHDC**

To: **Planning Committee - 07 January 2026**

(Author: **Mark Niland - Planning Officer)**

Purpose: **To consider Planning Application H05-0439-25**

Application Number:	H05-0439-25	**Date Received:**	07 May 2025
Application Type:	FULL		
Description:	Use of site to construct new primary substation		
Location:	Land West of Branches Lane Holbeach Spalding		
Applicant:	National Grid Electricity Distribution	**Agent:**	Dalcour Maclaren
Ward:	Fleet	**Ward Councillors:**	Cllr P S Barnes

You can view this application on the Council's web site at
http://planning.sholland.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/planningDetails?reference=H05-0439-25

1.0 REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

1.1 This application was discussed at Chairman's Panel on the 28th November 2025, following a request from Cllr P Barnes.

1.2 It was resolved that the item be brought to Planning Committee for consideration.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 This is a full planning application for the construction and operation of a new primary substation on land to the west of Branches Lane, Holbeach.

2.2 The proposal is designed to enhance resilience and capacity of the electricity distribution network serving Holbeach and the surrounding area, in response to anticipated residential and commercial growth.

2.3 National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) is taking a proactive approach to ensure long-term reliability, flexibility, and future-proofing of the local electricity network. There is also a strategic requirement for this development, it will enable strategic infrastructure proposed by the plan to be realised.

2.4 The development involves a change of use of the land and comprises the following key components:

· Substation infrastructure: two transformers, one switchboard, and an 11kV switchroom building with associated hardstanding.
· Building dimensions: the switchroom building measures 24.14m, 6.75m, 6.7m. The roof is pitched and both walls and roof are to be clad in KS1000 RW cladding by Kingspan, in RAL

6009 Fir Green.
· Fencing and security: 2.4m high palisade fencing will enclose the transformers, with pedestrian and vehicular gates for controlled access. A 1.2m high post-and-rail fence will separate the substation compound from the surrounding agricultural land, with a double field gate marking the main entrance.
· Landscaping and biodiversity enhancements: the scheme includes the creation of a raingarden and swale, planting approximately 587m² of grassland, and the addition of three new trees. Hard and soft landscaping elements have been carefully designed to partially mitigate visual impact.

2.5 The proposed site layout and accompanying survey work illustrates the arrangement of these elements and their integration into the surrounding landscape.

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The application site is situated to the west of Branches Lane, Holbeach, at the corner with Pike Dam Lane. The nearest residential property is Oakwood Lodge, located to the north of the site. For planning purposes, the site lies within the countryside, outside any defined settlement boundary, and is therefore subject to the relevant South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) countryside policies.

3.2 Topographically, the site is relatively flat and currently comprises agricultural land. A line of trees and a drainage ditch runs along the southern boundary, with open agricultural fields beyond. The existing access is via an agricultural track from Branches Lane.

3.3 In terms of flood risk, the site is located within Flood Zone 3, according to Environment Agency mapping, and falls within areas classified as 'low hazard' and 'danger for some' on the South East Lincolnshire Flood Maps. These classifications have informed the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and surface water management strategy for the site.

3.4 **Application Background**

Due to the strategic nature of this planning application, it is important that the Planning Committee is aware of the background to this application and the strategic overview for this proposal, details of which have been provided by the Council's Strategic Growth Team.

3.5 Whilst Spalding and the west of the district has current capacity within the local electricity network, the same cannot be said for Holbeach and the east of the district - both in terms of 'headroom' capacity and network connectivity. As such, South Holland District Council has been working with consultants to ensure that the current and future power needs of Holbeach and the east of the district can be met. This work commenced following the adoption of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan in 2019, and has been ongoing ever since.

3.6 In a comprehensive report published by South Holland District Council in March 2021, it was identified and highlighted that there was insufficient capacity in the local electricity network to enable growth ambitions for the east of the district. This report primarily identified that both the housing and commercial developments proposed in both Holbeach and the wider surrounding area, would not be able to come forward unless the electrical infrastructure was significantly upgraded, thus acting as a constraint on delivery rates for the area. In addition, the limited capacity and network capabilities identified is also adversely affecting existing and established businesses looking to expand their operations. The result of this has been a weakened investment market for the area, meaning that opportunities for economic growth are currently being lost, despite acknowledged demand in the locality.

3.7 The 2021 report evidenced the need for a new primary sub-station to be developed to serve Holbeach, Long Sutton and beyond, to be located to the south or south west of the settlement. The estimated cost at the time was between £8 million and £12 million, with an anticipated lead-in time of 3-5 years. This time frame also stemmed from the date of commitment by the National Grid to deliver the new primary substation. However, there was no commitment at the time from the National Grid to deliver this much needed infrastructure, neither had a site been identified.

3.8 Since this time, South Holland District Council has submitted a bid to the National Grid (now NGED), to seek a commitment to secure a new sub-station to serve Holbeach and the east of the district. This bid was successfully promoted through the governments Green Recovery programme and has received approval from OFGEM, with NGED having made a commitment to provide the necessary upgrades to the electricity infrastructure network in the east of the district. In the preceding time, NGED has secured the current application site following an extensive search for a site which both meets the needs of the district but also satisfies the technical requirements necessary to upgrade the existing electricity supply network.

3.9 The current application and proposal, represents the culmination of over 6 years work by South Holland District Council to meet the needs of its residents and growth ambitions of the district, through the proposed enhancements to the local electricity network and infrastructure in this area.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

4.1 **The Development Plan**

If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended, states that the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2 In this case, the adopted South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036, adopted March 2019, forms the development plan for the District, and is the basis for decision making in South Holland.

4.3 South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, March 2019

Policy 1 - Spatial Strategy
Policy 2 - Development Management
Policy 3 - Design of New Development
Policy 4 - Approach to Flood Risk
Policy 28 - The Natural Environment
Policy 29 - The Historic Environment
Policy 30 - Pollution
Policy 36 - Vehicle and Cycle Parking
Appendix 6 - Parking Standards

4.4 **National Guidance**

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024

Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
Section 4 - Decision-Making
Section 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places
Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

4.5 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

5.1 H09-0387-94 - Erect 33,000 volt overhead line. Approved 15-06-94.

6.0 REPRESENTATIONS

6.1 **Consultation Responses**

6.2 Cllr Barnes

8-09-25 - There are concerns from residents regarding the location of this site and I request this application is taken to full committee unless refused by officers.

6.3 **Strategic Growth Team**

The Council's Strategic Growth - Programme Manager has confirmed that the medium and long-term benefits that the new primary substation will bring to the wider district cannot be over emphasised, as such the current application and proposal is welcomed. Furthermore, the current proposal is considered to be in general conformity with the provisions of the Local Plan.

The Switchroom building would be of an appearance which mirrors a significant number of similarly design modern agricultural buildings found within the wider district and most rural areas. The proposed design of the switching equipment and gear within a large green shed is welcomed for this reason, given it would be typical of the rural landscape. The appropriateness of this design (i.e. a barn-like building) is an appropriate design solution which would reduce the visual impact of the associated transformers.

Whilst there would be limited landscaping associated with the development, this would be in-keeping with most agricultural barn structures throughout the district that similarly are not subject to such screening. As such, it would be unreasonable to resist the current proposal on the grounds of insufficient landscaping.

In summary of the application it was confirmed that, 'The electricity infrastructure presently provided within this part of the district is inadequate to meet with existing or future needs/demand in terms of planned and expected growth. In this context, the proposed significant upgrading of the electricity network, in terms of capacity and connectivity, is wholeheartedly welcomed. The chosen site is appropriate in terms of the scale of the proposed buildings and structures. There is no discernible adverse impact on residential amenity and little adverse impact on the character and appearance of the immediate or wider landscape. Traffic generation is at a level that will have no adverse impact on the highways network. Taken as a whole, these proposals are supported from both a planning and a growth perspective.'

6.4 South Holland IDB

The applicant proposes to discharge surface water to a watercourse at a rate of 1 l/s. This is in excess of the greenfield rate for the impermeable area only, however I note that the proposed rate is the minimum possible to reduce the risk of blockages in the system. This proposal will require consent under Byelaw 3.

6.5 Environment Agency

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment dated 27 March 2025, ref: 'AEG0931_PE12_South_Holland_07', prepared by Aegaea and the following mitigation measures it details:

· All vulnerable equipment shall be raised a minimum 1.0 metre above the existing ground levels.

These mitigation measures shall be fully implemented and shall be retained throughout the lifetime of the development.

6.6 Historic Environment Officer

The proposed development comprises: 'Use of site to construct new primary substation'. The proposed development groundworks and any temporary works associated with the development will have a significant impact on any surviving archaeological remains, resulting in total or partial loss, if present. As mentioned above, there is potential for development on this site to have an impact on buried remains that should be recorded prior to their destruction - NPPF (paragraph 218).

We recommend that if permission is granted, there be an archaeological condition for a mitigation strategy to effectively deal with this site. This will comprise a phased approach of

archaeological investigation and mitigation work. This will initially comprise but may not be limited to a geophysical survey, geoarchaeological assessment and archaeological trial trench evaluation of the site which should aim to determine the presence, absence, significance, depth and character of any archaeological remains which could be impacted by the proposed development as noted above and to inform a programme of further archaeological mitigation work which may be required if archaeological remains are identified in the evaluation. This will enable any remaining archaeology which currently survives on this site to be properly assessed and recorded prior to their alteration or destruction. This should be secured by South Holland District Council's standard conditions AR01, 02 and 03 and is in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 207 and 218 and the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (Policy 29).

6.7 Highways & Suds Support

No objection, subject to:

Planning application for the use of the site for a new primary substation. The site is located to the west of Branches Lane, Holbeach. The land to the north of the site will accommodate a temporary compound for vehicle parking etc and this will be done under Permitted Development Rights.

The proposed vehicle movements associated with the construction of the sub-station is very low a maximum of 4 HGV movements a day, sometimes less. With the addition of staff movements a maximum of 10-12 car movements (total 20-24). The possibility of the heavy vehicles associated with the development meeting another vehicle is low due to the low frequency of the movements. A Construction Management Plan has been submitted along with a feasibility study of the possible two access routes to the site - both of these documents should form part of the list of approved documents attached to any planning approval. Banksmen will be utilised, and deliveries will be coordinated outside of traffic sensitive times on the network.

Route 1 A17-B1515-Branches Lane has been accepted as the most appropriate route to the site. A Section 59 Inspection under the Highways Act 1980 will be carried out prior to commencement and after completion to ensure that any damage caused to the public highway as a result of the construction will be remedied by the developer.

Appropriate signage will be erected to warn road users of the development. Highway improvements are required to the overrun area on the bend to the south of the access to formulise the construction here and install kerbing and renew/realign kerbing on the other side of the bend whilst constructing access points to both fields connected to this area.

These highway improvements and the access construction to the site can be done under a Section 278 Minor Works Agreement with Lincolnshire County Council. There is no precise definition of "severe" with regards to NPPF Paragraph 116, which 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."
Planning Inspector's decisions regarding severity are specific to the locations of each proposal, but have common considerations:

-The highway network is over-capacity, usually for period extending beyond the peak hours
-The level of provision of alternative transport modes
-Whether the level of queuing on the network causes safety issues

In view of these criteria, the Highways and Lead Local Flood Authority does not consider that this proposal would result in a severe impact with regard to NPPF. As Lead Local Flood Authority, Lincolnshire County Council is required to provide a statutory planning consultation response with regard to drainage and surface water flood risk on all Major applications. This application is classified as a Minor Application and it is therefore the duty of the Local Planning Authority to consider the surface water flood risk and drainage proposals for this planning application.

6.8 Designing Out Crime Officer

Lincolnshire Police do not have any objections to this development.

6.9 Lincs Fire and Rescue

1st Response

I refer to the planning application reference H05-0439-25. The Fire Authority object to the application on the grounds of inadequate water supply. It is the opinion of the Fire Authority that in order to remove the objection the following measures are required.

ACCESS

No comment.

WATER SUPPLY

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue requires the installation of one fire hydrant conforming to BS750-2012 within 90m of the premises entrance in respect of this planning application to be provided at the developer's expense. Fire hydrant acceptance testing will be carried out by a Hydrant Inspector on completion and a standard hydrant marker "H" plate will be fitted nearby. Following adoption, the Fire Service will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and repairs for the lifetime of the fire hydrant.

ENVIRONMENTAL

No comment.

Following the submission of a report by the applicant Lincs Fire & Rescue made comments on this report in an email dated 30th October, stating:

I've reviewed the compliance report. Regarding the transformers, they appear to be compliant and using the appropriate sections of the BESS guidance. However, under Building Regulations 2010 (Approved Document B - ADB), a fire hydrant should be located within 90 metres of a dwelling entrance.

While I understand there is no BESS on site meaning a hydrant is not legally required in that section - the site does include a building. Therefore, the current setup does not comply with ADB, as there is no hydrant within the required distance of the dwelling, and therefore the reason of the initial objection.

Further clarification from the same officer, by email that day reinforces that the objection is based upon the building regulation compliance (Approved Document B) to provide Hydrants.

6.10 **Officer Comments**

Approved document B stipulates that a hydrant is required if the building has a compartment with an area of more than 280sqm, or if the building is being erected more than 100m from the nearest existing fire hydrant.

Whilst the building is below that footprint threshold, it is not clear what the distance is from the nearest existing fire hydrant, and given the site location it is likely to be beyond the 100m. That said, this is a requirement set out under building regulations and secured by that legislation.

It is not good planning to duplicate mitigation (unnecessary and unreasonable). Therefore, given the fire report is acceptable, and that the objection is based upon building regulations compliance, it is acceptable in planning terms. The onus would be on the developer to find a solution for the hydrant, to satisfy building regulations.

6.11 Ecology

On protected species:

- The applicant has provided a detailed PEA and we can have confidence in its conclusions. We support all mitigation recommendations provided by the ecologist in the preliminary ecology report.
- Due to the proposed site being a suitable habitat for nesting birds, we request that the following wording be set as a condition on discharge:
- "Vegetation should be cleared outside of the main bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) where possible.

If works are justifiably required during the nesting season, then a nesting bird check/habitat inspection should be undertaken prior to work by an ecologists within 24 hours prior to clearance to ensure that there is not nest disturbance within the site. Any active nests discovered during inspections will be protected with a suitable exclusion buffer (of appropriate size to the species) to prevent disturbance and monitored until the nest is no longer active / all chicks have fledged, when the ecologist will provide a sign out for clearance work to continue."

On BNG

Overall, the biodiversity assessment and metric calculations appear a bit confused, therefore I wish to make some comments on this. It appears as though the on-site habitat creation tab in the statutory metric needs to be filled in correctly. The planting specification plan suggests there will be specially planted meadow mix sections of grassland to the west of the site and three new trees were planted to the south of the site. However, this habitat creation has not been addressed in the statutory metric. If the section to the west of the site was to be planted with a meadow grassland mix (estimated as poor target habitat condition of moderate grassland) and the three new trees (small trees with target habitat condition of poor) were used in the habitat creation for site it would achieve roughly -51.09% needing 0.8 off-site habitat units to be secured. Alternatively, if the target habitat condition of these proposed planting sections was to be moderate target condition then the applicant would only need to secure 0.57 offsite habitat units to achieve 10% net gain. However, if the metric provided is correct and there is to be no onsite habitat creation to improve biodiversity, then to achieve 10% biodiversity net gain for this site the applicant will need to secure a deficit of 1.12 habitat units offsite.

There has been sufficient evidence provided to determine this application, we will require an updated metric pre-commencement if the applicant decides to create habitats on site as per the planting specification. We will also require evidence that off-site biodiversity units have been secured pre-commencement.

6.12 Environmental Protection

No comments to make.

6.13 **Representations**

This application has been advertised in accordance with the Development Management Procedure Order 2015. The application has been subject to objections, which are summarised into the following points.

-No plans given for the routing of cables/how is power coming and going;
-Noise and disturbance during construction;
-Character Impacts;
-Highway Safety concerns;
-Light pollution;
-Landscaping not appropriate; and
-Amenity impacts for local residents.

7.0 CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Principle of Development

The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) sets out the settlement hierarchy in respect of delivering sustainable development that meets the social and economic needs of the area whilst protecting and enhancing the environment; in order to provide enough choice of land for housing to satisfy local housing need, whilst making more sustainable use of land and to minimise the loss of high-quality agricultural land by developing in sustainable locations and at appropriate densities.

7.2 Policy 1 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) sets out a spatial strategy for delivering sustainable development across South East Lincolnshire to 2036. Policy 1 (Spatial Strategy) expresses this sustainable framework of settlements, ranking the settlements deemed to be most sustainable in descending order.

7.3 The application site is located outside of any defined settlement boundary and within the open

countryside for policy purposes. The rest of the Local Plan area outside the defined settlement boundaries of the Sub-Regional Centres, Main Service Centres, Minor Service Centre and Other Service Centres and Settlements is designated as Countryside.

7.4 Policy 1 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019), which sets out the spatial strategy for the district, details the following in regard to these areas:

In the Countryside development will be permitted that is necessary to such a location and/or where it can be demonstrated that it meets the sustainable development needs of the area in terms of economic, community or environmental benefits."

7.5 As an expansion, paragraph 3.2.15 (within the policy justification) expands on countryside uses, stating that "Agriculture and forestry are clearly uses which must function in the Countryside but other uses which may diversify from agriculture and forestry, e.g. recreation and tourism, can meet the broad sustainable objectives of the Local Plan."

7.6 The applicant has provided a planning statement. This statement has also been reinforced by an email dated 10th October, both of which are key to assessing the principle of this development. Along with the email, the applicant has also provided a Network Development Report prepared by the National Grids East Midland's Team (May 2024). The email states (in part) that:

This report assessed all existing and future network constraints over a 0-10 year identified on the 33kV network fed from Spalding to South Holland BPS. As considered in Section 2, it was identified that several parts of the electricity network in the region are expected to face problems in the future. In 2028, transformers at Holbeach and Long Sutton substations could become overloaded if nearby equipment fails or is taken offline for maintenance, and low voltage issues may affect areas fed by South Holland. By 2034, further overloads are predicted on circuits and transformers at Holbeach, Long Sutton, and Spalding Park Road, especially during outages, which could strain the system and impact power reliability.

7.7 This position is further supported by the views of the Council's strategic officer, who has provided both the strategic context for this proposal, but also the significant role this development would make to the economic growth ambitions for the district and its residents. These comments reinforce the proposals significant economic and community benefits that would be delivered by the scheme, in accordance with the requirements of Policy 1 of the SELLP.

7.8 As part of the assessment, solutions were sought; some of the solutions included:

1. Uprating the transformers and circuits to Holbeach primary.
2. Installing a third transformer and circuit to Holbeach primary.
3. Building a new primary between Holbeach and Long Sutton.
4. Reviewing seasonal ratings.
5. Procuring flexibility under Holbeach primary.

7.9 Whilst the applicant does not provide a detailed methodology for discounting alternative sites, they confirm that Option 3 - the construction of a new primary substation - was determined to be the only feasible solution. This view is supported by the Council's Strategic Growth Team who have confirmed that an extensive search has been undertaken by National Grid (now NGED) to identify a site which both meets the needs of the district, but also satisfies the technical requirements necessary to achieve the much needed upgrade to the existing electricity infrastructure supply network.

7.10 The proposal constitutes essential infrastructure, and the development of a new primary substation is considered the only viable means of securing ongoing resilience for the electricity network in the area. The selected site, although arrived at without alternative locations being feasible, is inherently suited to a countryside setting. Primary substations must be physically isolated for reasons of public safety, security, operational control, and hazard mitigation. This requirement for separation from other uses is primarily dictated by UK health and safety legislation, specifically the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 (EAWR) and the Electrical Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002 (ESQCR).

7.11 In the context of Policy 1, it is clear that the proposal necessitates a countryside location. The chosen site is sufficiently distant from existing residential properties to provide operational security, yet close enough to serve the area it is intended to support. It is also accessible via the local highway network, ensuring practical connectivity for construction and maintenance purposes.

7.12 On this basis, the application has demonstrated that the site is locationally appropriate, and would deliver significant economic and community benefits to the district, the proposal is considered to sufficiently accord with the requirements of Policy 1 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019). Therefore, the principle of the proposed development is considered to be acceptable.

7.13 Character and Appearance

Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) specifically relates to 'Achieving well-designed places' and details that the "creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve" and as such, it is generally accepted that good design plays a key role towards sustainable development.

7.14 Paragraph 135, contained within Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024), states that new development should function well and add to the overall quality of the area (beyond the short term and over the lifetime of the development) and should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate landscaping. This goes on to establish that it is important that new development should be of the highest quality to enhance and reinforce good design characteristics, and that decisions must have regard towards the impact that the proposed development would have on local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting such as topography, street patterns, building lines, boundary treatment and through scale and massing.

7.15 Policy 2 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) states that design which is inappropriate to the local area, or which fails to maximise opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area, will not be acceptable.
Policy 2 point 1 states that proposals should meet with sustainable development considerations specifically in relation to 'size, scale, layout, density and impact on the amenity, trees, character and appearance of the area and the relationship to existing development and land uses'.

7.16 Policy 3 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) sets out the 'Design of new development' in part it states that "Design which is inappropriate to the local area, or which fails to maximise opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area, will not be acceptable".

7.17 Paragraph 187b of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) states that planning decisions should "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, and of trees and woodland".

7.18 In the case of the current proposal, the application site is not located within a landscape of any special designation, protection or sensitivity either locally or nationally. Whilst in a reasonably prominent location visually, it is considered that the application site makes a limited contribution to the character and value of the surrounding landscape by virtue of its small size/scale and the partial screening that is offered by the immediately adjacent band of mature trees.

7.19 Furthermore, due to its relatively isolated location, the proposed development would not restrict or adversely affect any important or significant views from any nearby settlement or dwellings to the surrounding countryside. With the exception of vehicles travelling along Branches Lane (an unclassified public highway), views of the proposed development from main public vantage points, would be generally medium to long ranging. In this regard, the visual impact is considered to be localised to the immediate and isolated locality. As such, the proposal would not in an overtly visually incongruous or dominant landscape within the wider locality, reducing the overall visual impact of the development. The proposal for a primary substation in this location would inevitably have a negative impact on the character of the open landscape. While a line of trees provides some screening along the southern boundary of the site, there is

currently no comparable protection to the north. The applicant has proposed a combination of hard and soft landscaping measures to help mitigate the visual impact. Soft landscaping includes the introduction of three new trees, a raingarden, a swale, and approximately 587m² of grassland, complementing the hardstanding and built elements of the substation.

7.20 The site lies within the Fens National Character Area, an area distinguished by its historic, human-influenced wetland landscape to the west of the Wash estuary. The Fens are characterised by a large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive, uninterrupted vistas to the horizon. In recognition of the sensitivity of this landscape, the applicant has submitted a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

7.21 The LVIA concludes that the site's visibility in the wider countryside is limited by landform, existing vegetation, and nearby development. However, the substation infrastructure would remain visible from Branches Lane in the immediate vicinity and from public footpath Fleet/2/1 to the north. The LVIA assesses these impacts as moderate adverse and demonstrates how further enhanced landscaping could be achieved which would soften the extent of the visual impact that would arise. The assessment further demonstrates that the development would be capable of being designed and built, akin to an agricultural barn (such as one existing in close proximity to the site), so as not to result in any significant or overtly harmful visual impacts to the character of the surrounding landscape, in accordance with Policy 2 (criterion 1 and 2) and Policy 3 (criterion 1 and 3) of the SELLP.

7.22 Given the operational requirements of the substation, certain planting and screening measures may be constrained, as the apparatus is sensitive and requires operational clearance. Nevertheless, in order to mitigate impacts on views from Branches Lane and the nearby public right of way, it is recommended that a Grampian-style condition be attached requiring the submission and approval of a detailed landscaping scheme prior to the facility becoming operational. This would ensure that landscaping is implemented effectively to soften visual impacts.

7.23 In addition, whilst the proposal includes the provision of security fencing, the applicant is also proposing the use of a post and rail fence around the site. Whilst this fencing would not ultimately screen the development, this feature would be in-keeping with the rural and agricultural nature of the site and would help to soften the visual impact of the development. Furthermore, it is proposed to control the colour of the metal fencing as green through the imposition of a condition. This would ensure that the fencing better harmonises with the surrounding vegetation and rural nature of the site, and would not appear as a visually incongruous feature viewed in stark contrast to the context and nature of the site.

7.24 While the fundamental nature of the substation means that it will never fully harmonise with the surrounding countryside, the need for operational isolation is an important material consideration. Consequently, although the proposal may not fully satisfy Policies 2 and 3 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019), the imposition of a condition securing an agreed landscaping scheme provides an appropriate level of mitigation and it is considered, on balance, to be acceptable in this regard. This is also reinforced by the appearance of the main building proposed, being largely similar to that of a large agricultural barn, which would be appropriate given the rural and agricultural context of the site. Such buildings are common place throughout the wider district and in rural areas more generally - with a similar such building already being located in near proximity to the site. As such, it is considered that the proposal would not appear as a visually incongruous feature in the local or wider surrounding landscape despite its size and the nature of its use.

7.25 Although it is considered reasonable to conclude that some degree of landscape harm would arise through the loss of an agricultural field and due to the size and nature of the development, the extent is considered not to be significantly adverse. The proposed development would not have a significantly adverse impact upon the character of the local landscape due to the agricultural design of the proposed development, the limited public views that would be affected and due to the relatively limited significance or importance that the site makes to the wider landscape or its setting.

7.26 Furthermore, it is considered that the extent of the harm that would be caused in this regard would be significantly outweighed by the substantial wider public benefits that the scheme would deliver in terms of achieving enhanced resilience and capacity within the local electricity

network to deliver strategic economic growth through employment provision and housing supply, when considered in the planning balance. This view is supported by the views of the Council's Strategic Growth Team who have provided considerable support for the development and outlined the significant benefits that the proposal would deliver to the area.

7.27 Overall, whilst it is acknowledged that considerations on design and landscape impacts are a largely subjective matter, in the opinion of officers the design approach proposed by the applicant is considered to be acceptable and of a suitable architectural appearance that would not result in significant or demonstrable harm being caused to the character of the area. As such, it is considered that the proposal can be considered to sufficiently accord with the requirements of Policies 2 (criterion 1 & 2) and 3 (criterion 1 & 3) of the SELLP and with Chapter 12 of the NPPF.

7.28 Environmental Issues/Amenity

Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) states that development should create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

7.29 Policy 2 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) sets out that residential amenity and the relationship to existing development and land uses is a main consideration when making planning decisions.

7.30 Policy 30 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) is concerned with pollution and places impacts in relation to noise, disturbance and air quality as important considerations when considering proposals for planning.

7.31 The proposal is located as to comprise a sufficient distance from all properties, not to give rise to an unacceptable amenity impact once operational. In terms of construction, there are likely to be impacts through noise and disturbance; however, the inclusion of a Construction Traffic Management Plan mitigates these impacts and this will be conditioned as part of any permission. Furthermore, it is noted that any adverse harm arising from the construction phase would only be for a temporary and controlled period of time, and would not continue during the operation phase of the development.

7.32 Objections have been received on the basis of noise and lighting, as well as disturbance from movements; however, with the addition of appropriate conditionality relating to construction movements, the proposal would accord with Policies 2 and 30 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019).

7.33 Overall, the proposal is considered to be such that there would be no significant or unacceptable impact on residential amenities or land users, when also taking account of the conditions recommended. There is also no evidence before the Local Planning Authority which suggests or demonstrates that unacceptable noise levels will be generated during the operation phase of the development which would impact upon the amenity of any residential dwelling, primarily due to the extent of the separation distances that would exist. As such, the proposal is considered to accord with the provisions of the Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024), and Policies 2, 3 and 30 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019).

7.34 Highway Safety

Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) specifically relates to 'Promoting sustainable transport'. Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) 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, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios".

7.35 Policy 2 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) details that proposals requiring

planning permission for development will be permitted provided that sustainable development considerations are met, specifically in relation to access and vehicle generation.

7.36 Policy 3 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) details that development proposals will demonstrate how accessibility by a choice of travel modes including the provision of public transport, public rights of way and cycle ways will be secured, where they are relevant to the proposal.

7.37 Policy 36 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) is concerned with Vehicle and Cycle Parking it states that "All new development, including change of use, should provide vehicle and cycle parking, in accordance with the minimum Parking Standards adopted by the Local Planning Authorities (in Appendix 6).

7.38 The land to the north of the site will accommodate a temporary compound for vehicle parking and related activities, utilising Permitted Development Rights. Vehicle movements associated with the construction of the substation are anticipated to be very low, with a maximum of 4 HGV movements per day. Staff movements are expected to add 10-12 car movements daily, resulting in a total of 20-24 movements per day.

7.39 A Construction Management Plan (CMP) has been submitted, alongside a feasibility study assessing two potential access routes to the site. Route 1 (A17-B1515-Branches Lane) has been identified as the most suitable route. Highways have confirmed that a Section 59 inspection under the Highways Act 1980 will be undertaken prior to commencement and upon completion of construction works to ensure that any damage to the public highway caused by construction activities will be remedied by the developer.

7.40 Highway improvements are required at the overrun area on the bend south of the site access. These works will formalise the construction access, install kerbing, and renew/realign kerbing on the opposite side of the bend, while also constructing access points to both fields connected to this area. These improvements, along with the site access construction, can be delivered under a Section 278 Minor Works Agreement with Lincolnshire County Council.

7.41 Highways have reviewed the proposals and recommended a series of conditions and informatives. Subject to the implementation of these measures, the development is considered acceptable in highway terms.

7.42 Overall, the applicant has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority, that the proposed access would be appropriate and would not result in harm or undermine the safety of users of the surrounding highway network, either during the construction phase or during the operation phase of the development. The applicant has also demonstrated that the likely number of vehicle movements that would be generated by the development could be accommodated and absorbed by the existing/surrounding highway network from a capacity perspective with no adverse harm arising.

7.43 Whilst this view is not shared by objectors to the application, such concerns are noted to be anecdotal, with no contradictory or tangible evidence or assessment having been presented by objectors which would cast doubt on this assessment or the views of the Highway Authority. Furthermore, it is important to note that an increase in vehicle movements itself does not equate to harm being caused, nor warrant the refusal of a planning application. The key consideration and planning test that must be made, is the extent and impact of any such increase, and whether this would result in demonstrable and severe harm to the highway network from either a safety or capacity perspective as confirmed within Paragraph 116 of the NPPF. There is no evidence to suggest that demonstrable or severe harm would arise as a result of the development.

7.44 Accordingly, the applicant has demonstrated that safe and appropriate access could be achieved to the application site. Furthermore, the applicant has demonstrated that capacity exists within the surrounding highway network to absorb and accommodate the likely number of vehicle movements that would be generated. In light of the lack of concern or objection from the Highway Authority, it would be unreasonable to conclude that the proposal would result in severe or adverse harm to the highway network from either a safety or capacity perspective. As such, officers are of the opinion that there is no justifiable reason for the application to be

refused on the grounds of highway safety.

7.45 Accordingly, with the recommended conditions in place, the proposal is considered to accord with Policies 2, 3 and 36 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019), as well as Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024).

7.46 Flood Risk and Drainage

In the case of the current application, it is acknowledged that the application site is located within a Flood Zone 3, being that with the highest risk of flooding and increased flood risk. However, it is noted that the majority of the District is similarly an area of increased flood risk vulnerability. Whilst this does not automatically preclude development proposals being approved, it does require a Local Planning Authority to undertake the necessary sequential test as part of the determination of any such planning application.

7.47 Policy 4 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) sets out the districts approach to flood risk, it states (in part) that Development proposed within an area at risk of flooding (Flood Zones 2 and 3 of the Environment Agency's flood map or at risk during a breach or overtopping scenario as shown on the flood hazard and depths maps in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment) will be permitted, where:

It can be demonstrated that there are no other sites available at a lower risk of flooding (i.e. that the sequential test is passed). The sequential test will be based on a Borough or District wide search area of alternative sites within the defined settlement boundaries, unless local circumstances relating to the catchment area for the development justify a reduced search area, i.e. there is a specific need for the development in that location. The sequential test is not required for sites allocated in the Local Plan, minor development1 or change of use (except for a change of use to a caravan, camping or chalet site, or to a mobile home or park home site). And:

The application is supported with a site-specific flood risk assessment, covering risk from all sources of flooding including the impacts of climate change.

7.48 *Sequential Test*

In terms of the sequential test the applicant has approached this matter within the FRA. The applicant states that "Under the NPPF all new planning applications should undergo a Sequential Test unless a Minor Development or a change of use application in accordance with paragraph 174 and footnotes 59 and 60." AND "The proposed development is for the siting of a primary substation and as such it is not feasible to locate the infrastructure elsewhere - this is given that the substation is to be constructed to serve the site locality. As such, the sequential test is understood to be unnecessary".

7.49 Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph 27) on Flood Risk and Coastal Change states that "The sequential test should be applied to 'Major' and 'Non-major' development proposed in areas at risk of flooding, as set out in paragraphs 173 to 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework". Paragraphs 175, 176 and 180 set out exemptions from the sequential test.

7.50 In applying paragraph 175 a proportionate approach should be taken. Where a Site-specific Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates clearly that the proposed layout, design, and mitigation measures would ensure that occupiers and users would remain safe from current and future surface water flood risk for the lifetime of the development (therefore addressing the risks identified e.g. by Environment Agency flood risk mapping), without increasing flood risk elsewhere, then the sequential test need not be applied".

7.51 Of relevance is also NPPF Para. 177 which states "Having applied the sequential test, if it is not possible for development to be located in areas with a lower risk of flooding (taking into account wider sustainable development objectives), the exception test may have to be applied. The need for the exception test will depend on the potential vulnerability of the site and of the development proposed, in line with the Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification set out in Annex 3."

7.52 The EA have made comment and have no objection to this development subject to a condition

that the development is carried out in accordance with the FRA, specifically that 'All vulnerable equipment shall be raised a minimum 1.0 metre above the existing ground levels'. Therefore following the proportional approach set out by Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraph 27, the sequential test is not applied.

7.53 The above considerations are also balanced in the context of the Council's need/requirements to provide strategic growth in terms of housing supply and employment provision to meet the needs of the District and its residents, which is also afforded significant weight in the planning balance.

7.54 Due to the wider public benefits that the scheme would deliver through housing provision and the lack of other reasonably available alternative sites at a similar or lower risk of flooding the LPA are comfortable that this development cannot be located elsewhere and so the proposal is considered to satisfy the sequential test.

7.55 In this regard the proposal can be considered to comply with the requirements of Policy 4 (criterion 1, 2 & 3) of the SELLP.

7.56 *Exceptions Test*

Following a successful sequential test it is then necessary to apply the exceptions test. The exceptions test, as set out in paragraph 178 of the NPPF which sets out:

'To pass the exception test it should be demonstrated that:

a) the development would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk; and
b) the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.'
There are two elements to the Exception Test which must be met before development can be considered appropriate;
· development that has to be in a flood risk area will provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk; and
· the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.

7.57 As regards the exceptions test the applicant has stated that the use of the electricity is to serve the local community, which in effect is the purpose of the proposal, whilst providing enhanced resilience and capacity within the local network to deliver strategic economic growth in terms of housing supply and employment provision, which would outweigh the flood risk and satisfy the first part of the exceptions test. It is therefore considered that the development will provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk. Secondly the FRA is a robust submission and considers the vulnerability of its users, the impact upon flood risk displacement and the reduction of overall flood risk. The EA and LLFA through not having objections have considered the second part of the exceptions test passed.

7.58 Therefore, as regards the principle of flood risk, the proposal is considered acceptable.

7.59 *Drainage*

The applicant has provided a surface water drainage strategy, it states that due to the rural nature of the site it is understood that there is no public or private sewerage assets currently serving the address. The solution is to divert the surface water captured (from impermeable areas). However, the run off rates cause an issue for the developer, the FRA states that "Given the low greenfield rates (0.14l/s), it is not possible to discharge runoff at this rate due to the increased risk of blockage associated with small diameter flow restriction devices which would be required. Instead, runoff has been restricted to as low as practical, 1.0l/s maximum."

7.60 The IDB, who would be accepting the flows (albeit through a riparian network) have confirmed that consent is required and have stated that:

"The applicant proposes to discharge surface water to a watercourse at a rate of 1l/s. This is in excess of the greenfield rate for the impermeable area only, however I note that the proposed

rate is the minimum possible to reduce the risk of blockages in the system. This proposal will require consent under Byelaw 3. Please note that we recommend that any discharge is in line with the Non-Statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), therefore the Board is unlikely to grant consent for discharges in excess of greenfield rate. A surface water development contribution is likely to be payable as a condition of any consent granted under Byelaw 3 in line with the WMA's Development Control Charges and Fees."

7.61 On this basis, the surface water strategy will be controlled through planning conditions. Whilst the IDB state they may not take rates above greenfield, the proposed rate only relates to the impermeable area, much of the site is permeable. Furthermore, should it be required there maybe scope for attenuation to aid flow restriction. On this basis the LPA consider that a strategy could be achieved, and therefore would seek to attach a planning condition.

7.62 On this basis it is considered that the wider substantiality benefits to the community brought about by the proposal would not outweigh the risk from flooding. The proposal is therefore in accordance to the aims of Policy 4 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019), as well as Paragraph 178a of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024).

7.63 Ecology & BNG

Policy 28 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) is concerned with the Natural Environment points 2 and 3 are relevant to this assessment, point 2 is concerned with Nationally or locally designated sites and protected or priority habitats and species and point 3 with addressing gaps in the ecological network.

7.64 The applicant has submitted comprehensive ecological surveys to ensure that any potential impacts on protected species and habitats are fully assessed. These surveys have identified potential ecological constraints and have proposed a series of best practice measures and mitigation strategies to be implemented during both the construction and operational phases of the development. The implementation of these measures will be secured through planning conditions tied to the approved plans, ensuring that ecological considerations are effectively managed throughout the lifecycle of the project.

7.65 The surveys and associated mitigation proposals have been reviewed and considered acceptable by the LPAs ecologist, who has confirmed that the measures outlined within the reports are adequate to address potential impacts on protected species and their habitats. The ecologist's support provides additional assurance that the development can be carried out without causing unacceptable harm to the natural environment.

7.66 In terms of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the applicant has confirmed that the proposed development will achieve a minimum of 10% net gain, to be delivered off-site through the purchase of 1.12 biodiversity units from the Environment Bank. The appointed ecologist has noted that, while there may have been scope for minor refinements within the BNG calculations that could reduce the extent of off-site requirements, the proposed approach is acceptable. The delivery of BNG will be secured through pre-commencement planning conditions, ensuring that the ecological benefits are realised prior to the operational use of the substation.

7.67 In addition, the proposed Grampian condition to secure additional landscape plantings to help soften the visual impact of the development if approved, would also add further BNG gains to the proposal once implemented.
On this basis, and taking into account the mitigation measures and off-site BNG provisions, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy 28 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019), which seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment, safeguard designated sites, and secure gains for biodiversity where development is permitted.

7.68 Archaeology

Policy 29 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) seeks to ensure that development proposals conserve, enhance, and where appropriate, investigate and record heritage assets, including sites of archaeological interest. The policy states that development will only be permitted where it safeguards heritage assets and, where impacts are unavoidable, ensures appropriate mitigation is secured.

7.69 The application site lies in an area with potential for the presence of buried archaeological remains. The Historic Environment Officer (Historic Places Team) has highlighted that the proposed groundworks associated with the construction of the primary substation could result in the total or partial loss of any surviving archaeological deposits.

7.70 In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (paragraphs 207 and 218), and Policy 29 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019), it is considered necessary to understand and record any heritage assets before they are altered or destroyed.

7.71 To ensure that any archaeological remains are properly assessed and preserved where possible, or appropriately recorded where preservation in situ is not feasible, a phased archaeological mitigation strategy will be required. This will include, but not be limited to:

·A geophysical survey and geoarchaeological assessment of the site;
·Archaeological trial trench evaluation to determine the presence, significance, depth, and character of any remains;
·Implementation of a programme of further archaeological mitigation and recording if remains are identified.

7.72 This requirement will be secured through the attachment of a planning condition, in line with the Historic Places Team's standard conditions (AR01, AR02, and AR03), ensuring that all archaeological work is undertaken prior to or during development, as appropriate.

7.73 On this basis, the proposal is considered to comply with Policy 29 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019), and the imposition of the condition will safeguard the district's archaeological heritage in accordance with national and local planning policy.

7.74 **Planning Balance**

As detailed above, Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended, requires that the Local Planning Authority makes decisions in accordance with the adopted Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.75 The proposal seeks full planning permission for the construction of a new strategic primary substation to support and improve the electricity distribution network serving Holbeach and the surrounding area, which presently does not have sufficient capacity to support existing business growth, or to deliver economic and housing delivery growth for the area and its residents. The development is promoted by National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) in response to identified constraints and forecasted demand on the existing infrastructure, which has been evidenced by South Holland District Council and confirmed by the Strategic Growth Team.

7.76 The Network Development Report confirms that without intervention, the existing substations at Holbeach and Long Sutton would be at risk of overloading by 2028, with further network strain predicted by 2034. The proposal therefore represents essential utility infrastructure, directly supporting the area's residential, commercial and employment growth objectives. This position is confirmed by the Councils Officers.

7.77 The development is located within the open countryside where new development is typically restricted. However, Policy 1 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) allows for proposals that are necessary in such locations and that meet the area's sustainable development needs. As demonstrated, a countryside location is functionally and operationally essential for this type of infrastructure, having regard to safety, isolation, and network connectivity requirements. The site has been selected following an extensive site search by the National Grid (now NGED). Furthermore, the proposal would deliver significant economic and community benefits through this enhance infrastructure. The principle of development is therefore supported and in accordance with the requirements of the local plan.

7.78 In landscape and visual terms, the proposal would inevitably introduce built form and associated infrastructure into an open rural setting. However, the design of the proposed building would largely mirror that of a modern agricultural barn, which is a common feature throughout the district and is visually appropriate in a rural location. The LVIA identifies moderate adverse effects from certain viewpoints, notably from Branches Lane and the nearby public footpath.

Whilst some visual harm will occur, this is localised and mitigated through the proposed landscaping, including new planting, a swale and raingarden. Further mitigation can be secured by condition requiring a detailed landscaping scheme prior to operation. Given the functional nature of the use, its siting within an established utility corridor, and the application site not within a specially designated or protected landscape, the overall landscape effects are considered acceptable and would not result in significant harm to the character or visual appearance of the wider area.

7.79 Residential amenity impacts are limited. The substation will operate without regular staff presence and with low noise output once operational. Construction impacts can be managed through the submitted Construction Traffic Management Plan and controls over working hours. Subject to conditions, the development would not give rise to unacceptable impacts upon nearby occupiers, consistent with Policies 2 and 30 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019).

7.80 Highway impacts have been fully assessed by Lincolnshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority, which raises no objection to the proposal. The proposed access arrangements, routing strategy and low level of HGV movements are considered acceptable. Necessary highway improvements and a Section 278 agreement will ensure the local network is appropriately safeguarded. On this basis, no severe residual cumulative impacts are identified, and the proposal accords with Policies 2, 3 and 36 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) and paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024).

7.81 In flood risk terms, the site lies within Flood Zone 3; however, the Environment Agency has confirmed that the development is acceptable subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment, including elevating vulnerable equipment. The nature of the proposal is such that its siting is functionally fixed to serve a defined catchment. Applying the proportionate approach in Planning Practice Guidance paragraph 27, the sequential test need not be applied. The exceptions test is satisfied as the scheme provides clear public and sustainability benefits, including network resilience and future capacity for local growth, and the development will be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

7.82 Ecological assessments confirm no significant harm to protected species or habitats, with mitigation secured by condition. The applicant has committed to securing at least 10% biodiversity net gain through the purchase of off-site units via the Environment Bank. Subject to the relevant pre-commencement conditions, the proposal complies with Policy 28 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019).

7.83 Taking the above together, while the proposal would result in some localised visual impact and development within the open countryside, these impacts are limited in extent and can be satisfactorily mitigated. The proposal would deliver substantial public benefits through the provision of critical energy infrastructure necessary to support sustainable growth and maintain reliable power distribution across Holbeach and the surrounding settlements.

7.84 In applying the planning balance required by paragraph 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the limited harm identified is clearly outweighed by the significant social, economic and environmental benefits of the development. The proposal therefore represents sustainable development in accordance with the Framework and the development plan when read as a whole.

7.85 **Additional Considerations**

Public Sector Equality Duty

In making this decision the Authority must have regard to the public sector equality duty (PSED) under s.149 of the Equalities Act. This means that the Council must have due regard to the need (in discharging its functions) to:
A. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
B. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This may include removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; taking

steps to meet the special needs of those with a protected characteristic; encouraging participation in public life (or other areas where they are underrepresented) of people with a protected characteristic(s).
C. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The PSED must be considered as a relevant factor in making this decision but does not impose a duty to achieve the outcomes in s.149. It is only one factor that needs to be considered, and may be balanced against other relevant factors.

It is not considered that the recommendation in this case will have a disproportionately adverse impact on a protected characteristic.

7.86 Human Rights

In making a decision, the Authority should be aware of and take into account any implications that may arise from the Human Rights Act 1998. Under the Act, it is unlawful for a public authority such as South Holland District Council to act in a manner that is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. The Authority is referred specifically to Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property).

It is not considered that the recommendation in this case interferes with local residents' right to respect for their private and family life, home and correspondence, except insofar as it is necessary to protect the rights and freedoms of others (in this case, the rights of the applicant). The Council is also permitted to control the use of property in accordance with the general public interest and the recommendation is considered to be a proportionate response to the submitted application based on the considerations set out in this report.

7.87 **Conclusion**

Taking the above into account, the proposal would accord with Policies 1, 2, 3, 4, 28, 29, 30 and 36 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019), and the corresponding provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024). In this instance a balanced decision has been arrived at, and notwithstanding the landscape impacts of the development, the broader public benefits of this scheme result in the recommendation to approve the development.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The recommendation is to approve the application subject to planning conditions.

9.0 CONDITIONS

1. The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: As required by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and/or documents:

B-24-0043/006 Rev A - Temporary Compound Swept Path Analysis
B-24-0043/010 - Access Road to Temporary Construction Compound
22007610_PLN_LOC_5.1_B - Location Plan
22007610_PLN_SI_6.1_D - Proposed Site Layout Plan
B-24-0043-COTMP-01 - Construction & Operational Traffic Management Plan
LN113_12_0003 Rev C - Proposed Site Elevations
LN113_12_0004 Rev A - Proposed 11KV Building Plan & Elevations
B-24-0043/001 Rev C - Site Access Arrangement
B-24-0043/004 Rev B - General Access Arrangement OS & Satellite Overlay
B-24-0043-TN-01 - Construction Traffic Route Review (07 July 2025)
June 2023 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
August 2023 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Method Statement
AEG0931_PE12_South_Holland_07 - Flood Risk Assessment & Surface Water Drainage Strategy
April 2025 - Biodiversity Assessment
MH8811 Holbeach LVIA
MH8811 Holbeach LVIA - Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) - October 2024
B-24-0043-TN-01 - Construction Traffic Route Review
Issue 1 - October 2025 - National Fire Chiefs Council Planning Guidance Compliance Report - Holbeach Electrical SubStation

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment dated 27 March 2025, ref: 'AEG0931_PE12_South_Holland_07', prepared by Aegaea and the following mitigation measures it details:

- All vulnerable equipment shall be raised a minimum 1.0 metre above the existing ground levels.

These mitigation measures shall be fully implemented and shall be retained throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development.
This condition is imposed in accordance with Policy 4 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019

4. No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied before the works to improve the public highway, by means of formulising the overrun area to the south of the site on the bend, inclusive of the two access points to the fields and kerbing, realignment and installation of new kerbs on the other side of the bend and the access construction to the site, have been certified complete by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the provision of safe and adequate means of access to the permitted development.
This condition is imposed in accordance with Policies 2 and 3 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019

5. Prior to the commencement of any part of the development hereby permitted, the condition of the parts of Branches Lane, that will be used by vehicles making deliveries of materials and components to the permitted development, shall be recorded by written notes, still and representatives, in the company of an officer of the Local Highway Authority. Those public roads shall be maintained, at the cost of the Applicants, in a safe and suitable condition throughout the construction phase of the permitted development and shall be reinstated to no less than the standard of their pre-commencement condition following completion of the construction phase.

Reason: To ensure the provision of safe and adequate means of access.
This condition is imposed in accordance with Policies 2 and 3 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019

6. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in complete accordance with the Construction & Operational Traffic Management Plan (B-24-0043-COTMP-01).

Reason: To ensure the safety of existing and future users of the highway and in the interest of amenity.
This condition is imposed in accordance with Policies 2 and 3 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019.

7. No development shall take place until a written scheme of archaeological investigation (WSI), for the archaeological evaluation phase, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

This scheme should include the following and should be in accordance with the archaeological brief supplied by the Lincolnshire County Council Historic Environment advisor on behalf of the Local Planning Authority:

1. An assessment of significance and proposed strategy for evaluation
2. A methodology and timetable of site investigation and recording
3. Provision for site analysis
4. Provision for publication and dissemination of analysis and records
5. Provision for archive deposition
6. Nomination of a competent person/organisation to undertake the work
7. The scheme to be in accordance with the Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook.

The archaeological site work shall only be undertaken in accordance with the approved written scheme of archaeological investigation (WSI).

Note: This WSI applies solely to the evaluation phase.

Reason: To ensure and secure the appropriate preparation and archaeological evaluation, prior to development, in compliance with Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024. This issue is integral to the development and therefore full details need to be finalised prior to the commencement of works.
This Condition is imposed in accordance with Policy 29 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024.

8. The applicant shall notify the Lincolnshire County Council Historic Environment Department in writing of the intention to commence at least fourteen days before the start of archaeological work required in connection with Condition 7 above in order to facilitate adequate monitoring arrangements.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory archaeological investigation and retrieval of archaeological finds in compliance with Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024.
This Condition is imposed in accordance with Policy 29 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024.

9. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied or first brought into use, until a copy of the final report required in connection with the approved written scheme of investigation, as required by Condition 7, is submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This final report shall also be submitted to the Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record within three months of completion of the work.

The material and paper archive required as part of the written scheme of investigation shall be deposited with an appropriate archive in accordance with guidelines published in The Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory arrangements are made for the recording and archiving of possible archaeological remains in compliance with Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024.
This Condition is imposed in accordance with Policy 29 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024.

10. No development hereby permitted shall be carried out, other than those works detailed in accordance with the written scheme of investigation approved under Condition 7, until a separate Archaeological Mitigation Strategy for the mitigation phase, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; unless the evaluation undertaken under Condition 7 explicitly demonstrates that archaeological mitigation is not required.

The Archaeological Mitigation Strategy shall set out:

1. The scope and methodology of the mitigation (e.g. strip, map and record, excavation, monitoring)
2. Provision for analysis, reporting, publication and dissemination
3. Provision for archive deposition
4. Nomination of a competent organisation to undertake the work
5. Compliance with the Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook

The archaeological mitigation shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved Archaeological Mitigation Strategy, and shall be completed in its entirety prior to the first occupation or use of the development hereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure that any archaeological remains are appropriately mitigated in compliance with Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) and Policy 29 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019.
This condition is imposed in accordance with Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024 and Policy 29 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019).

11. The development hereby permitted shall not commence until a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to and approved in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the details as approved.

Reason: To comply with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990, as amended).

This Condition is imposed in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990, as amended) and Policy 28 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019.

12. Prior to any vegetation clearance (defined as the deliberate removal of any semi-natural vegetative habitat e.g., grassland, trees, and native shrubs); or prior to the commencement of any development hereby permitted (whichever comes first); a written 30-year Habitat Management and Maintenance Plan (HMMP) for the Site in question shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The approved HMMP shall be strictly adhered to and implemented in full for its duration and shall contain:

A) Aims, objectives and targets for management, including habitat target conditions matching the Statutory Biodiversity Metric submitted with the application.

B) Details of the phasing and implementation of the habitats

C) Details of the management operations necessary to achieving aims and objectives.

D) Preparation of a works schedule, including timescales for habitat clearance and habitat creation and/or enhancement.

E) Details of the monitoring needed to measure the effectiveness of management and details of an assessment as to whether the target condition is achieved within the time to target period specified within the approved metric.

F) Details of the persons responsible for the implementation and monitoring.

G) Mechanisms of adaptive management and remedial measures to account for changes in the work schedule to achieve required targets.

H) Reporting on the delivery of on-site gains on years 1, 2, 5, 10, 20 and 30 following the implementation of the habitats in accordance with the above details.

Reason: To meet the requirements in delivering the Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain and to ensure net gain in biodiversity is provided on site.
This Condition is imposed in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990, as amended) and Policy 28 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019.

13. Before the first use of the development hereby permitted, full details of the means of surface water disposal shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details so approved shall be implemented in full before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use.

Reason: To ensure that the site is adequately drained, to avoid pollution, and to prevent increased risk of flooding.
This Condition is imposed in accordance with Policies 2, 3 and 30 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019 and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024.

14. Before the first use of the development hereby permitted, the approval of the Local Planning Authority is required to a scheme of landscaping and tree planting for the site (including screening of bin collection points) indicating, inter alia, the number, species, heights on planting and positions of all the trees, together with details of post-planting maintenance.

Such scheme as is approved by the Local Planning Authority shall be carried out and completed in its entirety during the first planting season following practical completion of the development. All trees, shrubs and bushes shall be maintained by the owner or owners of the land on which they are situated for the period of five years beginning with the date of completion of the scheme and during that period all losses, in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, shall be made good as and when necessary.

NOTE: The submitted landscaping proposals shall demonstrate that Biodiversity Net Gain will be achieved on site, using the Biodiversity Metric 3.1 (or any successor).

Reason: To ensure that the development is adequately landscaped, in the interests of its visual amenity and that of the area in which it is set, and that Biodiversity Net Gain will be achieved.
This Condition is imposed in accordance with Policies 2, 3 and 28 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019 and the Environment Act 2021.

15. Prior to the first use, details of the proposed boundary treatments, other than those permitted by this development, including a schedule of fencing levels, heights and materials, and details of the size and species of any hedging, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the details so approved shall be implemented in full before the development is first brought into use and retained thereafter.

Note: Where levels are raised above existing ground levels, the submission shall be supported by cross-sectional drawings showing the relationship with adjoining uses and buildings to enable the Local Planning Authority to be satisfied that sufficient mitigation measures will be in place.

Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of the development and the amenity of the area in which it is set including the amenity of nearby occupiers.
This Condition is imposed in accordance with Policies 2 and 3 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019.

16. The applicant is reminded that it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) to kill, injure, or take (handle) any protected species occupying a place of shelter or protection and also to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built. If evidence of bats is found before or whilst the work is carried out you are advised to contact Natural England at their Lincoln office (telephone 03000 603900).

17. **Biodiversity Net Gain**

The applicant's attention is drawn to the following Biodiversity Net Gain requirement.

The effect of Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the "biodiversity gain condition". The effect of this "biodiversity gain condition" is that development granted by this notice must not begin unless:

(a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and

(b) the planning authority has approved the plan, or

(c) the development is exempt from the biodiversity gain condition.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be South Holland District Council.

This permission will require the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP before development is begun). This is over and above the information submitted and considered as part of this application, and will be required before development is begun, because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements listed below are considered to apply.

For guidance on the contents, in respect of the details that must be submitted and agreed by the Local Planning Authority, prior to the commencement of the consented development, please see the GOV.uk website and Planning Practice Guidance.

Statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. These can be found at Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 74-003-20240214 of the Planning Practice Guidance, which can be found at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain.

For clarity, the Local Planning Authority do not consider that any of the exemptions apply in this case. As such, the development hereby permitted will be subject to the biodiversity gain condition.

Irreplaceable habitat

If the onsite habitat includes irreplaceable habitat (within the meaning of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) there are additional requirements for the content and approval of Biodiversity Gain Plans.

For clarity the LPA do not consider that irreplaceable habitats are present at this site.

The Biodiversity Gain Plan must include, in addition to information about steps taken or to be taken to minimise any adverse effect of the development on the habitat, information on arrangements for compensation for any impact the development has on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat.

The planning authority can only approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if satisfied that the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat is minimised and appropriate arrangements have been made for the purpose of compensating for any impact which do not include the use of biodiversity credits.

Effect of Section 73(2D) of the 1990 Act

Under Section 73(2D) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) where

(a) a biodiversity gain plan was approved in relation to the previous planning permission ("the earlier biodiversity gain plan"), and

(b) the conditions subject to which the planning permission is granted:

(i) do not affect the post-development value of the onsite habitat as specified in the earlier biodiversity gain plan, and

(ii) in the case of planning permission for a development where all or any part of the onsite habitat is irreplaceable habitat within the meaning of regulations made under paragraph 18 of Schedule 7A, do not change the effect of the development on the biodiversity of that onsite habitat (including any arrangements made to compensate for any such effect) as specified in the earlier biodiversity gain plan.

- the earlier biodiversity gain plan is regarded as approved for the purposes of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) in relation to the planning permission.

18. In accordance with Section 59 of the Highways Act 1980, please be considerate of causing damage to the existing highway during construction and implement mitigation measures as necessary. Should extraordinary expenses be incurred by the Highway Authority in maintaining the highway by reason of damage caused by construction traffic, the Highway Authority may seek to recover these expenses from the developer.

19. Please contact the Lincolnshire County Council Streetworks and Permitting Team on 01522 782070 to discuss any proposed statutory utility connections and any other works which will be required within the public highway in association with the development permitted under this Consent. This will enable Lincolnshire County Council to assist in the coordination and timings of these works.

For further guidance please visit:
Traffic Management - https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/traffic-management
Licences and Permits - https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/licences-permits

20. The highway improvement works referred to in Condition 4 are required to be carried out by means of a legal agreement between the landowner and the County Council, as the Local Highway Authority.

21. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing it against all material considerations, including national guidance, planning policies and representations that have been received during the public consultation exercise, and by identifying matters of concern within the application and negotiating, with the Applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal.

This decision notice, the relevant accompanying report and the determined plans can be viewed online at http://planning.sholland.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/planningSearch

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Background papers:- Planning Application Working File

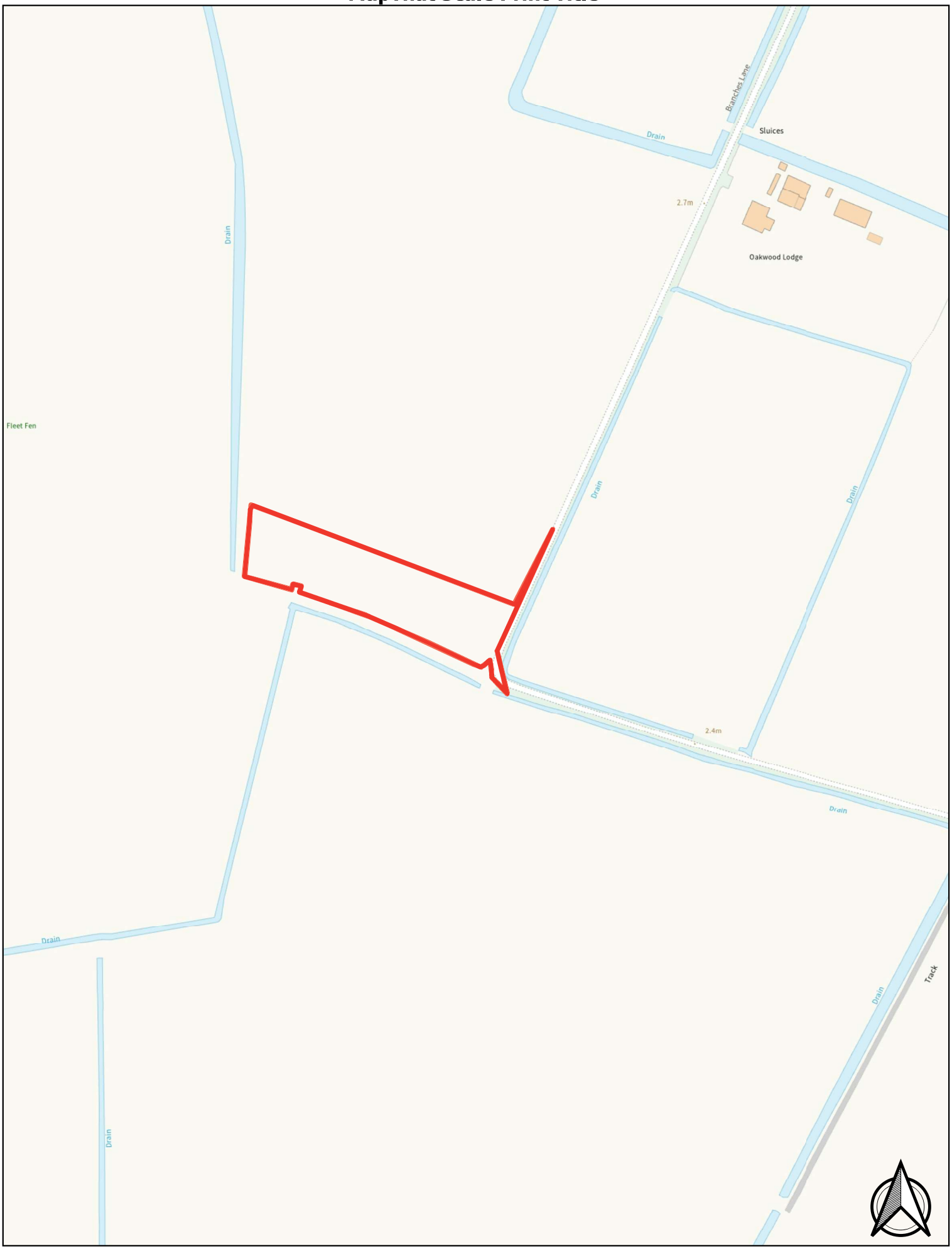
Lead Contact Officer

Name and Post:	Nick Atkinson , Lead Development Management Planner (Interim) - BBC & SHDC
Telephone Number:	
Email	nick.atkinson@sholland.gov.uk

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A Plan A

MapThat Scale Print Title



SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

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MAP SCALE 1:2500
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