STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Land north of Roman Bank and east of Middle Marsh Road at Red House Farm, Holbeach Bank, Spalding, PE12 8BY

Construction and operation of a 48MW solar farm comprising ground-mounted solar photovoltaic arrays together with associated infrastructure and landscaping

Introduction

This Statement demonstrates how the Applicant has consulted with the local community regarding the proposed development.

The National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') places continued emphasis on the importance of consulting with local communities on planning applications. Paragraph 132 of the NPPF sets out that applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourable than those that cannot.

We understand, through correspondence with South Holland District Council, that there is no specific guidance in regards to community consultations on proposed development such as the above.

We engaged with the community regarding the development of the site, via a letter, dated 5th September 2022, and an indicative proposed site layout, which were sent to properties in the local vicinity on 6th September 2022 and outlined to readers the proposals as well as the opportunity to provide feedback. Additional letters were sent via email to those who had not received the initial consultation letter. An example letter and indicative site layout are attached to this statement.

A letter, indicative proposed site layout and a draft design statement were also sent to the Parish Council, providing the opportunity to provide feedback. A meeting was held with Cllr Nick Worth on 14th December 2022 in which discussions were had in relation to proposed increase in crop yields nationally, agricultural land classification, residential amenity and biodiversity net gain. Discussions were also had in regards to the potential for a community benefit fund to be established by the developer, which would be separate to the planning process.

Feedback and Applicants Response

10 responses were received in response to the letter drop. A number of respondents simply stated their objection to the proposal with no further information or reason why the proposal should be refused. A number of concerns were raised which are not material considerations to the proposed development, and therefore have not been detailed. Concerns were also raised over the local consultation process, and additional letters were emailed to local residents who contacted AAH Consultants in this regard. A brief summary is provided below of the objections raised in regards to the development, which are considered to be material:

1. The site is located on Grade 1 agricultural land, which is more important for food production than the requirement for solar energy and concerns over the site once decommissioning has taken place.
2. Concerns over wildlife and environmental impacts
3. Concerns over the proposed landscaping, whether these could be increased to provide wildlife habitat and shield the development from local and private views
4. Queries over the construction period and what measures will be in place to reduce disturbance to residents, especially in regards to the passing of construction vehicles
5. Concerns in regards to noise generated by the proposed solar farm
6. Whether the proposed development would bring employment after the completion of the build
7. Concern over highway safety and the increase in the volume of traffic in the area travelling towards the site
8. Impact on public rights of way

The applicant's response to these points is set out below:

1. The application is supported by an Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Survey, which has graded the site as falling within Grade 2 of the ALC. It is recognised that Grade 2 falls within the Best and Most Versatile category (Grade 1-3a) but is not the highest grade. Recent appeal decisions for similar-sized sites in the area have considered that developments such as the proposed is unlikely to lead to significant long-term loss of best and most versatile land, as a resource for future generations, due to the limited soil disturbance during the development and the reversibility of the majority of the proposed works. There is also the potential for sheep grazing in and around the arrays. The proposed landscaping will also provide long-term ecological enhancements.
2. The application is supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), which has considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on ecology and nature conservation, including any necessary protected species surveys, and covers the methods used to assess the effects, baseline conditions currently found on site and the immediate surrounding area and any necessary mitigation measures and enhancement measures. The application is also supported by biodiversity net gain calculations, which demonstrates a significant net gain in biodiversity.
3. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal alongside a Landscape Masterplan supports the application and demonstrates that landscape and screening the development from public views has been a

consideration through the development of the proposals. Comments in regards to the landscape provided at the pre-application stage have also been taken into account, including setting back to the proposed development along the sites eastern edge. The landscape mitigation has also been considered in tandem with the ecological enhancements.

4. If approved, it is envisaged that the construction period for the proposed solar farm and associated works could take roughly take 6 - 12months, following the discharge of any necessary conditions. Relevant conditions such as Construction Management Plans can be conditioned and adhered to in order to minimise disturbance to nearby residents.
5. The pre-application advice received from South Holland District Council considered that during construction and decommissioning, a Construction Management Plan, which can be secured via a suitably worded condition, can be detailed how disturbance through noise, dust, vibration etc will be minimised. It also considered that during the operation phase, the disturbance is likely to be minimal as only low levels of noise will be generated by electrical systems such as transformers and the substation. Due to the solar panels only generating electricity during daylight hours, it is considered that there will be negligible noise in the evening, night and early morning.
6. As detailed in the Planning Support Statement, which supports the application and proposed development, there will be direct employment during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the proposed development.
7. The proposed development is supported by a Transport Statement, which has fully considered the highway impacts of the proposed solar farm on the local highway network as well as taking into account comments provided by the Highways Authority during the pre-application consultation. This has concluded that the proposals would not generate unacceptable impacts on highways safety or capacity and is in accordance with both the Development Plan and the NPPF.
8. No public rights of way will require to be diverted or extinguished for the proposed development, and any potential visual impact on any nearby public rights of way have been considered in the submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal.

Summary and Conclusion

The applicant has consulted the local community on the proposals. Some respondents did not outline why they objected to the proposed development. The concerns raised, which are considered to be material considerations to the proposed development have been summarised and addressed in brief in this statement. All material considerations which should be considered in regards to the proposed development have been considered in full in the supporting documentation which accompanies the full application.

16 February 2023

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Dear Sir or Madam,

PROPOSED 48MW SOLAR FARM AT LAND TO THE EAST OF MIDDLE MARSH ROAD, HOLBEACH, PE12 8BY

AAH Consultants intend to submit a planning application, on behalf of our client, to South Holland District Council for a solar farm and are seeking your comments on the proposal. The proposal involves the construction and operation of a solar installation that will connect to the local electricity network and will comprise solar arrays, solar inverters, a small substation, and associated works, including landscaping.

Attached to this letter is an indicative site plan. This outlines that there will be significant landscaping to screen the site from residential properties and minimise the impact on the surroundings. The solar farm would be set back from residential properties, which would further limit views of the development within the local area.

The planning application will be supported by a number of independent reports which will outline the impact of the development and how these can be mitigated against. This will include a Landscape and Visual Appraisal, an Ecological Appraisal and a Transport Assessment.

As part of the process, we are consulting the public and would like to hear your thoughts on the proposal. This letter has been prepared to provide local residents with some initial information about the proposal and to offer the opportunity to make comments or suggestions on the scheme before a planning application is submitted to the Council. If you wish to give your views, please respond with any comments to: admin@aahplanning.com by the 26th September.

Musa Choudhary

Principal Planning Consultant

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Revision	Description	Date	Drawn	Checked
A	Application Boudnary Amended	03.02.22	AS	-
B	Application Boundary Amended	14.02.22	AS	-
C	Application Boundary Amended	22.08.22	VB	-

- Planning Application Boundary
- Site Access
- PV Solar Panel Array
- DNO Sub-station & Grid Connection Point
- Access Track
- Existing Farm Access Track
- Existing Buildings
- Existing Planting
- Proposed Planting
- Existing Gardens
- Proposed Grassland Planting / Retained Agricultural Land
- Proposed Wildflower Meadow Planting
- Proposed Scrub

PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT

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Client
AUK PE12 LIMITED
Project
Boston Solar
Holbeach Bank, Holbeach
Drawing Title
Proposed Site Layout

First Issue Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
17.01.2022	1:2500@A0	AS	VB
Project No		Status	Revision
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Drawing No			
MP-06			

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