

in partnership with



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

Miss Honor Whitfield
Planner
Planning Policy Business Unit,
Newark and Sherwood District Council,
Castle House,
Great North Road,
Newark,
Nottinghamshire,
NG24 1BY

Your ref: 20/01242/FULM
My ref: TP20250708
Date: 26th January 2021

Dear Honor,

Re: Planning Application Reference – 20/01242/FULM

Location – Land north of Halloughton, Southwell, Nottinghamshire

Proposal - Construction of a solar farm and battery stations together with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure.

Applicant – JBM Solar Projects 6 Limited

1.Introduction

The following comments have been prepared by Helen Jones of Via East Midlands Limited, acting as a landscape consultant to Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC). These comments have been formulated on the basis of the additional submitted information detailed below. A site visit was made to the study area and representative viewpoints by Helen Jones on 26th August 2020.

The Environmental Management and Design (EMD) Team have examined the following additional information submitted by the applicant to make these comments (only information that is relevant to Landscape and Visual Impact is listed below) following previous comments provided by the EMD Team on 18th September 2020. These comments follow the sequence of our original comments, information provided by Pegasus Group is shown in red font, and additional VIA East Midlands comments and discussion are in blue font.

Documents

- Covering Letter JOW/P18-2917 18th December 2020 to Honor Whitfield NSDC
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment addendum – (including the winter viewpoints) - Pegasus Group - December 2020 / CR / P18-2917
- Winter photomontages – Pegasus Group – December 2020
- Agricultural Land Classification Report issue 2 – Amet Property – November 2020
- Site access note - JOW P18 2917 - Pegasus Group – December 2020

- Report of an Archaeological Evaluation ref: R14340 prepared by PreConstruct Archaeology – December 2020
- Planting note – Pegasus Group – 21st January 2021 – Caroline Roe
- Site Selection Report – JOW P18 -2917 – Pegasus Group – January 2021

Drawings

- Updated Site Location Plan No. P18-2917_02 Rev E – Pegasus Environment
- Updated Site Layout and Planting Proposals plan No. P18- 2917_12 Rev J. - Pegasus Environment
- Superseded revised site location plan No. P18-2917_02 Rev D – Pegasus Environment
- Superseded revised site layout plan No. P18- 2917_12 Rev H - Pegasus Environment
- Tree Protection Plan – Highways Access No. BHA_665_03
- Swept Path Analysis: Proposed Site Access 15.4m Articulated Vehicle No. P18-2917 FIGURE 2 Rev A
- Proposed Site Access Visibility Splays Plan No. P18-2917 FIGURE 1 Rev A

Comments submitted by other consultees

- Conservation advice – NSDC Oliver Scott – NSDC Honor Whitfield – dated 24th September 2020
- Tree consultant – Graham Wilson North Kesteven District Council to NSDC Honor Whitfield – 18th December 2020
- NCC Rights of Way – NCC Sue Jarczewski to NSDC Honor Whitfield – dated 18th December 2020
- NCC Highways – NCC David Albans to NSDC Honor Whitfield – dated 11th January 2021
- Neighbour or public comments – various dates

Summary of comments of 18th September 2020 provided by Via East Midlands Ltd

- The LVIA has been carried out to the accepted best practice which is the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLIVA3) Third Edition published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Managers and Assessment (April 2013), and the photography practice note – Landscape Institute 2019 Visual Representation of Development Proposals. Technical Guidance Note 06/19, with the exception of the issue noted below concerning the lack of viewpoint photographs when trees and hedgerow are not in leaf.

No response required

- The landscape assessment has referred to national, regional and local landscape character assessments. Only negligible landscape impacts have been identified on the national and regional landscape character types, which is agreed by the EMD Team.

No response required

- A section of the southern part of the proposed site is within the Mid Nottinghamshire Farmlands Landscape Character Area - Policy Zone 39 –Thurgaton Village Farmlands with Ancient woodlands, information about PZ 39 should be added to this section of the LVIA.

Information about MN PZ 39 has now been added into the LVIA document (Paragraphs 3.3 - 3.8 LVIA addendum Pegasus Group - December 2020 / CR / P18-2917)

To summarise the contents of the NSDC Landscape Character Assessment:-

MN PZ 37 has **very good** landscape condition, and a **high** landscape sensitivity – approximately 50% of the site area. The policy action is **Conserve**.

MN PZ 38 has **good** landscape condition, and a **moderate** landscape sensitivity – approximately 40% of the site area. The policy action is **Conserve and Reinforce**.

MN PZ 39 has **very good** landscape condition, and a **high** landscape sensitivity – approximately 10% of the site area. The policy action is **Conserve**.

- The location and size of the temporary construction compound should be clarified by the applicant, as this is shown on the key of the layout drawing but not shown clearly on the drawing itself.

The location and size of the temporary construction compounds is clarified on the updated Site Layout and Planting Proposals plan No. P18- 2917_12 Rev J - Pegasus Environment.

Additional information is also provided in the LVIA addendum in paragraph 3.32, which explains that there are two compounds of size 0.18 ha. One is located in the northern half of the site and is positioned near an existing field boundary and two blocks of woodland, and one is in the southern half adjacent to the substation connection to the grid and would be seen in the context of the existing large scale pylon on the site, and located near two dense blocks of woodland and a length of hedgerow.

The EMD Team consider that this is sufficient information to show that the location of the temporary construction compounds has been properly considered, and no additional information is required.

- The NCC Highway comments indicate that a mature Poplar at the entrance to Halloughton village will need to be removed, the applicant should confirm whether this tree needs to be removed or not.

This issue had been clarified in the submitted information, and the mature Poplar Tree was to be retained as confirmed on the Tree Protection Plan – Highways Access No. BHA_665_03 – Barton Hyett Arboricultural Consultants – December 2020.

However, an application has been made to NCC Highways Development Control by the Via East Midlands Senior Forestry Officer to fell the tree in respect of its safety and this application is due to be approved. (NCC Highways – NCC David Albans to NSDC Honor Whitfield – dated 11th January 2021). This is a separate application and does not form part of any contract for advanced works for the solar farm.

- Landscape impact - The EMD Team do not agree with the assessment that there is a minor beneficial change in landcover throughout the site. This assessment has focussed on the biodiversity aspects of the change and not on the perception of the change in the landscape. The applicant should review and revise this assessment to encompass perceived change as part of the overall evaluation and provide an updated revision on this issue.

The landscape impact on the **elements of the site** is covered in Paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10 (LVIA addendum Pegasus Group - December 2020 / CR / P18-2917)

The previous assessments by the applicant are summarised as follows:-

Topography – negligible scale of effect – this is agreed by the EMD Team because there are no changes to topography as a result of the proposed works.

Hedgerows and Trees – minor-moderate scale of effect – this is agreed by the EMD Team because there is no major removal of trees and hedgerows required as a result of the proposed works.

Landcover – this was assessed by the applicant as having low value and low susceptibility which leads to a low sensitivity. The applicant says the magnitude of change is high but that this is offset by biodiversity inputs. The EMD Team do not agree that a low sensitivity x high magnitude of change leads to a minor beneficial effect and asked the applicant to reassess this, which they did. The applicant now accepts that there is a **moderate adverse scale of effect** on landcover as opposed to a minor beneficial impact, during the 40 year lifetime of the scheme.

Paragraph 3.10 of the LVIA addendum reads as follows:-

*'The assessment of land cover has been revised to focus on the perception of change to the landscape, rather than the biodiversity benefits provided by the proposed species rich meadow grassland around the field margins. The Magnitude of Change is assessed as High, which, when combined with a Low Sensitivity, results in a **Moderate Adverse Scale of Effect**. The High Magnitude is a reflection of the introduction of the built elements (principally the solar panels), which would obscure views of areas of the grassland beneath the panels. However, the Proposed Development can be described as long term in nature but temporary, allowing the land to be effectively returned to its previous condition and use following decommissioning.'*

Effect on the landscape character of the policy zones

Paragraph 3.13 of the LVIA addendum reads as follows:-

*'It is considered that the Proposed Development would bring forward landscape enhancements such as lengths of new hedgerows and infilling of field boundaries, which would undoubtedly strengthen the landscape framework across the Site. The proposals would introduce built form into an area which currently contains a high proportion of agricultural fields. The Magnitude of Change is therefore assessed as High, which translates into **Major Effects upon Policy Zones 37,38, and 39**. However, it should be noted that these effects would diminish to Negligible rapidly beyond the boundaries of the Site, as a result of the combination of intervening landform and well-established vegetation across the surrounding landscape.'*

In summary, there would be a major adverse scale of effect on Policy Zones 37.38 and 39 for the 40 year lifetime of scheme. It is accepted that these impacts are localised to the site area and will diminish rapidly with distance for the proposed site, but nevertheless a substantial change to the landscape character of these policy zones within the site area is accepted by the applicant.

The construction impact on the landscape character of the policy zones

Paragraph 3.15 of the LVIA addendum reads as follows:-

*'The nature of the construction works would introduce movement, temporary structures, facilities and a change of land use; however changes to the landscape character would be localised. It is expected that the short term, localised, construction and decommissioning period would cause a **Medium Magnitude of Change** to the defining characteristics of the Policy Zones 37,38 and 39.'*

The applicant does not spell out the scale of effect at the construction stage on the character of the landscape policy zones. If this is extrapolated from the information above – a medium magnitude of change x a moderate to high sensitivity site (if the NSDC Landscape character assessment sensitivity is used) would lead to at least a medium to high adverse scale of effect on the policy zones at the construction stage. It is accepted that these impacts are localised to the site area and will diminish rapidly with distance for the proposed site, but nevertheless a substantial change to the landscape character of these policy zones within the site area can be extrapolated from the information provided.