



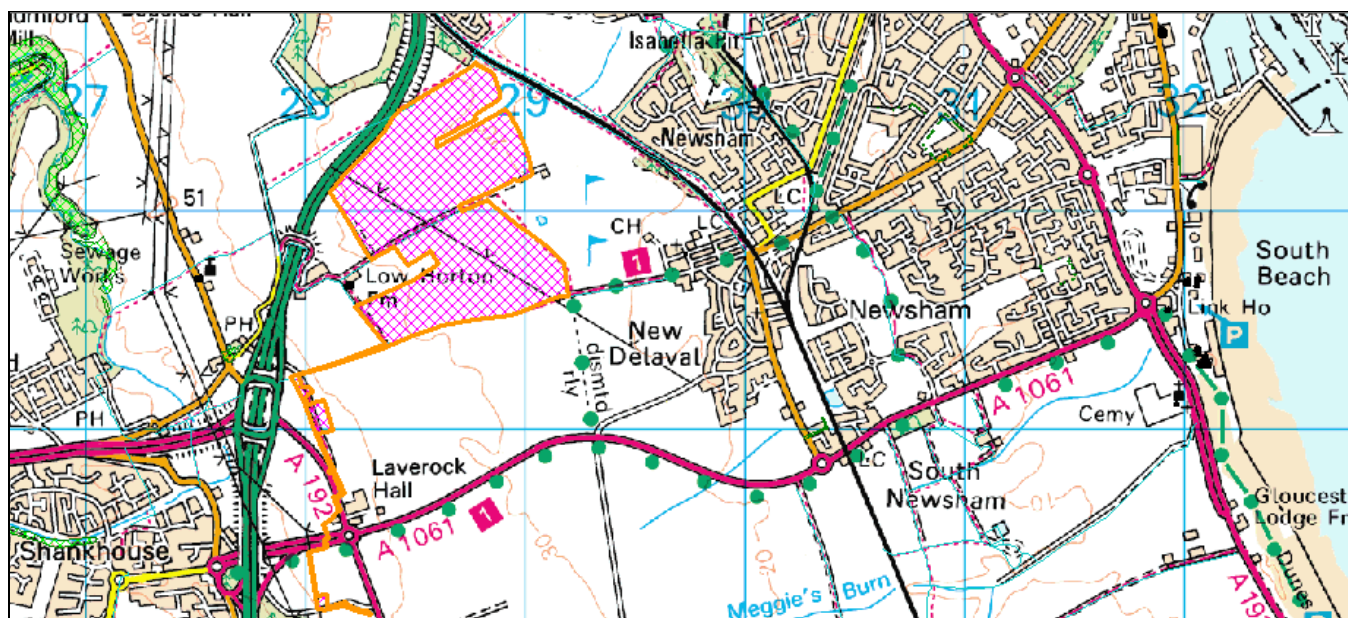
Northumberland

County Council

Strategic Planning Committee, 1 November 2022

Application No:	22/01153/RENE		
Proposal:	Construction of solar farm together with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure		
Site Address:	Land to the North East of Low Horton Farm, Blyth, Northumberland		
Applicant:	Mr Alan Connolly Bluefield Renewable Energy Developments Ltd.	Agent:	Mr Mark Herbert Pegasus Group Querns Business Centre, Whitworth Road Cirencester GL7 1RT
Ward:	Newsham	Parish:	Blyth
Valid Date:	22 April 2022	Expiry Date:	2 November 2022
Case Officer Details:	Name: Mr Kevin Tipple Job Title: Planning Officer Tel No: 01670 623631 Email: Kevin.Tipple@northumberland.gov.uk		

Recommendation: That this application be GRANTED permission



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This planning application represents a major development and therefore is to be considered by the Strategic Planning Committee.
- 1.2. The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 set out that Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are required for certain developments where the proposal is to have a likely significant effect on the environment. The development proposal was screened by the Local Planning Authority prior to submission with a Screening Request issued in October 2021 (reference 21/03767/SCREEN) which deemed that the proposed development is not likely to have significant effects on the environment and as such is not considered to be EIA development.

2. Description of the Proposals

- 2.1. Planning permission is sought for the construction, operation, management and decommissioning of a grid connected solar farm with associated infrastructure. The proposed development would generate electricity to be exported via the electricity distribution network and would have an export capacity of 49.99MW.
- 2.2. Planning permission is sought for a temporary period of 40 years from the date of first exportation of electricity from the site. At the end of this period, the solar panels and associated equipment would be removed, with the exception of the proposed distribution network operator (DNO) substation, which would remain as part of the local electricity distribution network.

Application Site

- 2.3. The proposed solar farm would cover an area of 77 hectares in the open countryside to the west of Blyth and to the east of Low Horton. The land is currently in agricultural use.
- 2.4. The proposals would occupy a series of fields which are currently used for arable farming. They comprise a northern parcel of land situated to the north of Footpath 300/040, a central parcel situated to the south of Footpath 300/400 and north of Bridleway 300/044 (Plessey Old Wagonway), and a western parcel which comprises a single field situated to the west of this central parcel and to the south of Low Horton Farm. The proposed distribution network operator substation would be located on an area of agricultural land to the south of the A1061, which is within the Green Belt. Construction and maintenance vehicles would use the existing access and track off the A192. The construction compound would be sited adjacent to the track, with the completed site accessible by a network of internal tracks.

Solar Arrays and Supporting Equipment

- 2.5. The proposed development would comprise arrays of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels which would have a maximum height of 2.8 metres above ground level and be set out in rows on an east-west orientation to face the south. The panels would be mounted on a simple metal framework, which would comprise upright, galvanised steel posts that are driven into the ground and

an aluminium support frame. The panels would be tilted at 15 to 25 degrees from the horizontal to optimise efficiency. There would be gaps of between 3.5 metres and 9.0 metres to avoid shadowing effects between the panels with localised topography dictating exact row spacing.

2.6. The associated infrastructure to support the development would comprise:

- Ten inverter stations located throughout the site. The inverters convert direct current (DC) electricity generated by the PV panels into alternating current (AC) for supply to the electricity network. The inverters would be housed in prefabricated metal containers that would have a length of approximately 12.2 metres, a height of 2.9 metres and a width of 2.4 metres. The metal containers would be positioned on a concrete block plinth approximately 5.0 metres in height, with the overall elevation of the containers measuring 3.4 metres above ground level as a result of being placed on the plinth.
- A customer substation building would be located in the south western corner of the western parcel of land to the south of Low Horton Farm. The building would consist of a prefabricated metal unit that would be 12.5 metres long, 4.0 metres wide and 3.3 metres high.
- A distribution network operator (DNO) substation would be located to the south of the A1061, between the A189 to the west and the A192 to the east and approximately 1.25 kilometres south of the main solar farm. The compound would cover an area measuring 56 metres by 38 metres. Within the substation there would be a control building (17.9 metres long, 5.1 metres wide and 6.12 metres high), a 25 metre high communications tower, a transformer (6.6 metres long, 4.8 metres wide and 5.6 metres high), grid connection equipment and a 25 metre point of connection mast to connect into the existing 66kV pylon and overhead cables adjacent.
- Insulated cables from the solar modules would be routed in channels fixed on the underside of the framework supporting the solar panels and then within shallow trenches to link to the inverter stations, the site (customer) substation and the proposed DNO substation.
- A 2.5 metre high deer stock fence with wooden posts and open steel mesh, with small mammal/badger access points, and gates to enclose the areas of solar panels. This would be for security purposes and would potentially allow sheep to graze within these areas.
- For the purposes of site security and monitoring, closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras would be mounted on 2.5 metre high poles positioned at regular intervals along the inside edge of the fencing.
- Internal tracks that would be constructed with crushed aggregate and would be between 4 and 5 metres in width to allow vehicular access for maintenance purposes.
- Landscape planting, biodiversity enhancements and surface water attenuation measures to assist with landscape mitigation, biodiversity net gain and flood control. A biodiversity enhancement area containing species-rich grassland would be created in the northern portion of the enclosure to the north of Blue House Farm Cottages.

2.9 In addition, a temporary construction compound would be sited adjacent to the track that leads from the A192 between the Three Horse Shoes Roundabout and the Laverock Hall roundabout. This compound would be

removed and the land restored following the completion of the construction phase.

- 2.10 Access for all construction and maintenance vehicles to the site would be provided from an existing access point off the A192 between the Three Horse Shoes Roundabout and the Laverock Hall Roundabout and the existing surfaced track used to access the agricultural land.
- 2.11 The point of connection for the export of the electricity that would be generated by the proposed development is via the existing 66kV pylon and overhead cables directly adjacent to the proposed distribution network operator substation.

3. Relevant Planning History

Reference Number: 21/03767/SCREEN

Description: Screening Opinion for proposed solar farm

Status: Environmental Impact Assessment not required

4. Consultee Responses

Blyth Town Council	No response received.
Highways	No objections, subject to the imposition of conditions to require the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and the submission and approval of a construction method statement.
Countryside/ Rights of Way	No objection on the condition that Public Rights of Way network is protected throughout. No action should be taken to disturb the path surface, without prior consent from the Highway Authority, obstruct the path or in any way prevent or deter public use without the necessary temporary closure or Diversion Order having been made, confirmed and an acceptable alternative route provided.
County Archaeologist	No objections, subject to the development being undertaken in accordance with the submitted construction method statement for archaeological mitigation.
Building Conservation	Objection. The application fails to preserve the setting and significance of the Grade II listed Low Horton Farmhouse. The degree of harm identified is 'less than substantial' requiring the harm to be weighed against public benefits which may arise from the proposals.
County Ecologist	No objection, subject to a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the Biodiversity Management Plan.
Natural England	Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on designated sites and has no objection.
Environment Agency	No response received.

Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)	No objection, subject to conditions relating to the development being carried out in accordance with the flood risk assessment, maintaining vegetation cover, grass filter strips and interception swales around the development, and locating any control equipment minimum of 300mm above ground level within 'low' and 'medium' areas of surface flood risk.
Public Protection	No objection, subject to conditions relating to working hours, construction delivery hours, noise, floodlighting and glint and glare
Newcastle International Airport	No objections. The proposed solar farm development is close to the western edge of the departure sway for a northern departure from the Airport from Runway 07. However, the aircraft will be in a nose up altitude and in the climb. A Glint and Glare Study was submitted in support of the proposal. This study identified that there would be no issues or significant impacts to the Air Traffic Control Tower or arriving aircraft to the airport. As a result of this, the Airport raises no objections to the proposals.
The Coal Authority	No objection, subject to the imposition of planning conditions to require the undertaking of intrusive site investigations to establish the risks posed to the development by past coal mining activity prior to the commencement of development, and the submission for approval in writing of a statement prepared by a suitably competent person confirming that the site is, or has been made, safe and stable for the development.

5. Public Responses

Neighbour Notification

Number of Neighbours Notified	193
Number of Objections	4
Number of Support	2
Number of General Comments	1

Notices

- 5.1 Site notices (affecting LBC and PROW) were posted at the site on 6 May 2022. A press notice was placed in the News Post Leader on 6 May 2022.

Summary of Responses

- 5.2 Four letters of objection have been received as a result of publicity on this application. They raise the following points:
- This is not the right place for a solar farm. The green fields and open spaces should be left as they are in this location. The proposal would

be better located on a brownfield site or beside the proposed battery factory in Cambois.

- Proposal would unnecessarily destroy valuable farmland and open spaces, when there are more suitable sites in Cambois.
- The area is well used for cyclists and walkers accessing greenspaces along the perimeter of our urban built-up town.
- The proposals will destroy wildlife, farmland, walks and views.

5.3 Two letters of support have been received. They make the following points:

- Proposal would increase the generation of green energy, improving the renewable energy credentials of Blyth.
- The proposals would maintain the most biodiverse areas of woodland, and primarily affects the monoculture farmland areas.
- Proposal will not impact on the usage of any of the footpaths.
- Land will return to pasture that can be used for sheep grazing and improving biodiversity, including green corridors around the site.

5.4 One letter providing general comments on behalf of the British Horse Society has also been received. This makes the following points:

- In relation to the bridleway diversion proposed during the construction phase, the suggestion of a banksman to control where the vehicles and riders would have to cross paths is supported.
- The replacement bridleway should be constructed in line with the requirements of Northumberland County Council, gates should have catches at a suitable height for a mounted rider to easily use and the use of self-closing gates is not supported.
- The applicant should allow access for the riders to the fenced tracks around the fields of solar panels as recompense for the disruption during construction.

5.5 The above is a summary of the comments. The full written text is available on our website at: <http://publicaccess.northumberland.gov.uk/online-applications//applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=R9IDXHQS0M800>

6. Planning Policy

6.1 In accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plan is the Northumberland Local Plan (NLP) adopted by Northumberland County Council on 31 March 2022. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) are material considerations in determining this application.

Development Plan Policy

6.2 The policies in the Northumberland Local Plan (March 2022) that are relevant to the consideration of the application include the following policies.

- Policy REN 1: Renewable and low carbon energy and associated energy storage
- Policy STP 1: Spatial strategy
- Policy STP 2: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Policy STP 3: Principles of sustainable development
- Policy STP 4: Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Policy STP 6: Green infrastructure
- Policy ECN 14: Farm/rural diversification
- Policy QOP 1: Design principles
- Policy QOP 2: Good design and amenity
- Policy QOP 4: Landscaping and trees
- Policy TRA 2: The effects of development on the transport network
- Policy TRA 7: Aerodrome safeguarding areas
- Policy ENV 1: Approaches to assessing the impact of development on the natural, historic and built environment
- Policy ENV 2: Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Policy ENV 3: Landscape
- Policy ENV 4: Tranquillity, dark skies and a sense of rurality
- Policy ENV 7: Historic environment and heritage assets
- Policy ENV 9: Conservation Areas
- Policy WAT 3: Flooding
- Policy WAT 4: Sustainable Drainage Systems
- Policy POL 2: Pollution and air, soil and water quality
- Policy POL 3: Agricultural land quality
- Policy MIN 4: Safeguarding mineral resources

National Planning Policy and Guidance

- National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)
- Planning Practice Guidance (2014, as updated)

7. Appraisal

7.1 Having regard to the requirements of Section 36(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the relevant development plan policies, relevant guidance and all other material planning consideration, including representations received, it is considered that the main planning issues raised relate to:

- Principle of solar development
- Climate change
- Use of agricultural land and a greenfield site
- Green Belt
- Landscape and visual impact
- Ecology
- Trees and hedgerows
- Land stability and coal mining legacy
- Noise
- Flooding and drainage
- Public rights of way

- Highways and vehicular access
- Impacts on the Historic Environment – Archaeology
- Impacts on the Historic Environment – Building conservation
- Glint and glare
- Decommissioning
- Mineral safeguarding
- Proposed Blyth Relief Road

- 7.2 In accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development comprises policies in the Northumberland Local Plan (March 2022). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) are material considerations in determining this application.

Principle of solar development

- 7.3 Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan is generally supportive of renewable energy such as solar photovoltaic developments, provided that the effects from the development are acceptable or can be made acceptable when considered against the criteria in this policy and the other policies in the development plan. The Local Plan does not allocate sites for solar photovoltaic developments with Policy REN 1 requiring an assessment of the likely effects of a proposal as described above.
- 7.4 The NPPF is also supportive of new renewable energy development. Paragraph 152 states the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Paragraph 158 (b) goes on to state when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable...”. The NPPF also does not provide specific locational requirements for solar photovoltaic developments.
- 7.5 It is therefore considered that solar photovoltaic development is supported in principle by Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan and Paragraph 152 of the NPPF. This support in principle is subject to the proposal being considered acceptable when assessed against the relevant policies in the development plan.

Climate Change

- 7.6 Both national legislation and international agreements set targets for the reduction of carbon emissions and the increase in renewable energy generation. In 2019 the Government amended the Climate Change Act 2008 by introducing a target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is known as the commitment to ‘net zero’. Paragraph 2 of the NPPF states planning decisions must reflect relevant international obligations, and the UK’s legally binding commitments to energy targets is also an important material consideration.

- 7.7 The Energy White Paper (Energy White Paper: Powering our net zero future, December 2020) was issued by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in December 2020 to address the transformation of the UK's energy system towards the 2050 target for net-zero emissions. The Energy White Paper sees the expansion of renewable technologies as a key contributor to achieving an affordable clean electricity system by 2050. It sets out that solar is one of the key building blocks of the future energy mix. In October 2021, the Government published the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener. Under 'Key Policies' for power it explains that subject to security of supply, the UK will be powered entirely by clean electricity through, amongst other things, the accelerated deployment of low-cost renewable generation such as solar.
- 7.8 The proposed development has a capacity of 49.9MW and would generate a significant amount of electricity from a clean, renewable source. This would provide for a reduction of approximately 12,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually and meet the energy needs of approximately 15,000 homes each year. The scheme could therefore make an important contribution to the objective of achieving the statutory Net Zero target set for 2050 and the commitment to reducing emissions by 78% compared with 1990 levels by 2035. This benefit of the scheme will be given significant weight in the planning balance.
- 7.9 It is also considered that the proposed development accords with Part 1 of Policy STP 4 of the Northumberland Local Plan with regard to contributing to meeting binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to mitigating climate change. The proposed development is also supported by Paragraph 158 (a) of the NPPF which states when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Use of agricultural land and a greenfield site

- 7.10 Paragraph 174 of the NPPF indicates that decisions should recognise the economic and other benefits of best and most versatile agricultural land, which it classes as land in Grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification. Policy POL 3 of the Northumberland Local Plan states that regard will be had, to the wider economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land when considering any irreversible loss in accordance with national policy. Where significant development of such land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of higher quality. Part 2 of Policy POL 3 goes on to state temporary or reversible development on best and most versatile agricultural land will be supported where the land would be reinstated to its pre-development quality.
- 7.11 The proposed development would occupy 75.8 hectares of agricultural land. The planning application is accompanied by an Agricultural Land Classification Report prepared by Patrick Stephenson Limited. This

demonstrates that 95% of the site would be classed as Grade 3b and 5% of the site area would be classed as Grade 3a best and most versatile land.

- 7.12 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) includes specific advice on large scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic farms (see Paragraph 013, Reference ID 5-013-20150327). In relation to the location of these developments, the PPG encourages the effective use of land by focussing large-scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value. Where a proposal involves greenfield land, consideration should be given to whether:
- the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and
 - the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.
- 7.13 The proposed site is located within open agricultural land, and the planning application is accompanied by an Agricultural Land Classification Report (ALC) prepared by Patrick Stephenson Limited. This demonstrates that approximately only 1.4% of the site area would be classed as being of 'best and most versatile' soils.
- 7.14 The proposed solar farm (excluding the substation) will be a temporary installation to operate of a 40 year lifespan. A suitably worded planning condition is recommended to be imposed to control this and to require the solar arrays and associated equipment to be removed, and the site restored following the cessation of this 40 year period. There would be no permanent or irreversible loss of agricultural land with a conversion from arable cropping to pasture grazing in between the solar panels. It can be anticipated that the soil quality would improve over this long fallow period, and the restored land whether used for arable or livestock farming will be more productive than at present. Conditions have also been recommended to ensure that the soil resource is protected during construction and restoration. This would be encapsulated within the Construction Management Plan and post-development restoration conditions.
- 7.15 Although the development would temporarily remove a significant portion of land from arable use it would still be available for low intensity grazing. The development would also fully reversible if the land were to be required for food production during the operational period. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not conflict with Policy POL 3 of the Northumberland Local Plan or Paragraph 174 of the NPPF.

Green Belt

- 7.16 The proposed distribution network operator sub-station and part of the proposed cabling route to the south of the A1061 is located within Green Belt as identified under Policy STP 7 of the Northumberland Local Plan. The A1061 provides the northern boundary of the Green Belt in this area. All other elements of the proposed development, which includes the site construction compound, the solar arrays, the inverter buildings and the substation buildings, are not located within Green Belt.

- 7.17 Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Paragraph 138 goes on to state that Green Belt serves five purposes: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 7.18 In relation to proposals affecting Green Belt, Paragraph 147 of the NPPF identifies that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 148 states, when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 7.19 Paragraph 151 states when located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.
- 7.20 The proposal would be harmful to the Green Belt by virtue of it being inappropriate development and it would result in some loss of openness. There would be views towards the sub-station from the A1061 southwards over a field and eastwards from the A192 resulting in some visual change and loss of openness. The proposed sub-station would also be viewed by users of an informal path that passes directly to the south of the proposed sub-station. The location is, however, of relatively low landscape sensitivity due to the presence of pylons and roads on two sides. Harm to openness and visual effects would be mitigated to some degree by the proposed hedgerow and tree planting around the perimeter of the substation.
- 7.21 In the application submission, the developer has explained it has been necessary to locate the proposed substation within the Green Belt for operational purposes as it is directly adjacent to the existing 66kV pylon and overhead cables, which are the point of connection for the export of the electricity that would be generated at the solar farm. The applicant also explains that a solar farm of this size, with an export capacity of 49.99 MW represents a significant renewable energy asset. The electricity generated is estimated to be enough to meet the electricity needs of around 15,000 homes each year and would mean a reduction of approximately 12,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually, making a tangible contribution to the legally binding national targets and international obligations relating to climate change.

- 7.22 In assessing whether there are very special circumstances in accordance with Paragraphs 147 and 151 of the NPPF, it will be necessary to assess whether the harm to the Green Belt, and any other harm resulting from the proposed development, is clearly outweighed by other considerations, including the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources. This balancing exercise will be carried out later in the report conclusions.

Landscape and visual impact

- 7.23 Part 3 (a) of Policy REN 1 states appropriate weight will be given to landscape character and sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors including landscapes and views demonstrated to be of value at the local community level in assessing whether applications for renewable energy development are acceptable or can be made acceptable. Part 1 (a) of Policy ENV 3 states proposals affecting the character of the landscape will be expected to conserve and enhance important elements of that character.
- 7.24 The application site is located within National Character Area 13: South East Northumberland Coastal Plain, which contains four Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and seven Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The site is located predominantly within LCT 39: Coalfield Farmland and LCA 39b Seaton Delaval (the host LCA), with the far north-eastern extent falling within LCA 42a Ashington, Blyth and Cramlington. LCA 39b is typical of coalfield farmland with 'large arable and pastoral fields with outgrown hedges....The surrounding settlement edges and main roads are key influences'. The solar farm site does not lie within an area covered by any national or local landscape designations, however the substation to the south of the A1061 is located in the Green Belt.
- 7.25 The site is gently sloping to the north east but appears visually flat, other than the elevated slope round Laverock Hall to the south west of the site. The key landscape features are the field hedgerows and trees. These are well established in places but are also gappy. The historic stone and brick buildings of Low Horton Farm provide features of historic architectural interest. There are isolated areas of pleasing rural character, within a wider urban fringe character, dominated by the road and rail infrastructure and pylons. Moving traffic on the busy A189 dual carriageway lessens tranquillity. The localised landscape value and sensitivity is variable between low to medium.
- 7.26 There are few direct effects on landscape features as no trees are proposed for removal, however some short lengths of hedge are proposed for removal for the sub-station and access points.
- 7.27 The effects of the proposed development on the character of the site itself would be locally transformative due to the scale of the proposed development, the introduction of a new form of development not currently present in this area, and the urbanising effects created from solar panels and the associated elements of the proposed development. This would bring about an adverse effect of high magnitude on a receptor of low to medium value, and therefore of broadly 'moderate to substantial' significance, albeit relatively contained in terms of intervisibility, and for a period of 40 years. Due to the

relatively flat topography, the proposed hedge and tree planting would provide good mitigation filtering from some aspects if carried out well and of sufficient quantity.

- 7.28 The effects on the character of the immediate local landscape in the round would be medium-high in the short-term, lessening to medium in the longer-term. The change in character will be evident in views from areas of elevation in the surroundings and particularly from the public rights of way network. The severity of effect on character would diminish over time with the development of the proposed hedge and tree planting. The effects on the character of the wider landscape would be adverse but of a low to negligible magnitude due to the relatively large size of those character areas, lack of intervisibility at a distance and because the development is of a temporary nature.
- 7.29 In terms of visual effects, the effects on users of the public rights of way are a key consideration. The routes within and around the application site are well used, providing immediate access to the countryside from the west side of Blyth, and the users would be high sensitivity receptors. Where paths run through fields with open views to the solar farm, unmitigated, the effects of the proposals would be transformative and would result in a more urbanised character and changes to wider views. The effects would be of high magnitude (and of substantial significance) but of relatively short duration in length of path affected in this way.
- 7.30 From the Plessey Old Wagonway (Bridleway 300/044), which runs east-west route along the southern boundary of the solar farm itself, views of the proposed development would be filtered by mature hedgerows. Bridleway 300/041, which runs north from the Plessey Old Wagonway to Low Horton Farm, would be exposed to views of the development, so are likely to experience the most severe visual effects at close proximity, albeit for a relatively short stretch of bridleway. Where Footpath 300/040 runs north from the Plessey Old Wagonway alongside the golf course users would also have views of the development, although these would be setback by one of the proposed biodiversity enhancement areas. These localised effects will be major/substantial and adverse for the life of the development.
- 7.31 The proposed sub-station will be seen by users of an informal path network linked to East Cramlington Nature Reserve. The landscape around the sub-station has an urban edge quality with manmade elements including roads, built form, pylons and turbines. Effects will be adverse due to the 3.4m e fence to the boundary, but the development would be limited in scale and effects would reduce over time due to proposed hedge and tree planting to the perimeter.
- 7.32 For residential receptors, the visual effects are reasonably limited due to the golf course and existing mature woodland planting at the western edge of Blyth. This existing vegetation would largely filter views of the proposed development, although views would be possible from some second and third floor windows of dwellings to the north east of the application site in places where vegetation and tree cover is thinner. There would be some loss of visual amenity for individual properties currently with farmland views, particularly from upper windows in the three storey properties. A biodiversity enhancement area included in the proposals would be located in this area of

the site and includes tree planting. This would provide mitigation for these identified visual effects. There are also some individual properties that would be affected, the closest being Low Horton Farm, which would have views south over the development from upper windows. The mitigation would be provided by a new hedgerow with hedgerow trees along the northern boundary of the solar arrays to the south, so visual effects would reduce over time as this feature matures. Laverock Hall is set in an elevated position and there would be overlooking views from the curtilage, but the house itself would not experience these views from windows. From Stickley Farm existing hedgerows and vegetation filter views northwards to the proposed sub-station, but there may be upper window views.

- 7.33 Road users on the A189 would have views from the slightly elevated trunk road overlooking the full northern extent of the proposed solar farm which forms a considerable proportion of the view over open countryside so the magnitude of change would be high. Forward views southwards from the A189 north of the site are restricted by a belt of existing trees, so the views would generally be seen obliquely from the west of the site, experienced over a distance of less than 1 kilometre both northbound and southbound. The baseline landscape does however include urban elements such as pylons, overhead power lines and a wind turbine. The proposed tree planting along the road edge would provide some mitigation. The receptors on the A189 are of low to medium sensitivity as the views are experienced while travelling at speed along a dual carriageway. However, the effects would be moderate to major and adverse due to the extent of development in views, reducing slightly over time as the proposed mitigation planting matures.
- 7.34 The proposed substation is located in Green Belt and lies south of the A1061. There will be views towards it southwards over a field and eastwards from the A192 resulting in some visual change. The location of the proposed sub-station is of relatively low landscape sensitivity due to the presence of pylons and roads on two sides. The proposed sub-station would bring about some minor deterioration in the views from the A1061 and A192, albeit these would be brief views seen at 90 degrees to the direction of travel. The visibility of the sub-station would lessen over time as the proposed mitigation planting mature.
- 7.35 In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed development would have some adverse landscape and visual impact effects. However, the topography of the site, existing screening and the proposed introduction of new tree and hedgerow planting would limit the adverse effects. The most significant adverse effects would be on the users of the public rights of way that cross the site who would view the site infrastructure in close proximity. It is considered that the adverse effects have been suitably mitigated in the proposals. Notwithstanding this, it is considered that the proposal would be in some conflict with Policy ENV 3 of the Northumberland and Part 15 of the NPPF due to the harm identified. In the planning balance consideration will be given as to whether the benefits of the proposed development outweigh the harm.

Ecology

- 7.36 The applicant has submitted an Ecological Assessment Report, Breeding Bird Survey and Biodiversity Management Plan. The application site primarily comprises arable land of low ecological value, bounded by species poor hedgerows and ditches, and small mixed plantation woodland at the north eastern boundary.
- 7.37 The application site does not form part of any statutory designated site for nature conservation. Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site is located around 3.1km to east of the application site. The Northumberland Shore SSSI is located approximately 1.6km north at its nearest point, New Hartley Ponds SSSI is located approximately 2.7km south east, Arcot Hall Grasslands and Ponds SSSI located approximately 3.8km south west and Holywell Pond SSSI located approximately 4.5km south east of the application site. The submitted assessments demonstrate that the proposed development would not result in any direct or indirect effects on habitats or qualifying interest species of any statutory designated sites, due to the separation distances involved and the nature of the proposed development. Natural England were consulted on the application because of its location within the Impact Risk Zone for the Northumbria Coast SPA and Ramsar site, and the Northumberland Shore SSSI. Natural England raised no objections in their response.
- 7.38 The submitted assessments demonstrate that are no significant harms to biodiversity as the result of the proposed development and the Council's ecologist has raised no concerns.
- 7.39 The proposals seek to achieve a net gain for biodiversity, and this has been quantified through the use of the Defra Metric 3.0. The proposed habitat enhancement measures proposed for the site include a more botanically diverse grassland sward mix would be sown and established beneath and surrounding the solar arrays and within the perimeter fencing, two specific 'Biodiversity Enhancement Areas' that will comprise a mix of diverse grassland with scrub and trees; and native tree and hedgerow planting, including infilling of existing hedge gaps. From the low baseline it has been possible to demonstrate a significant net gain (65.62% in Habitat Units, and 76.13% in Hedgerow Units) by the creation of permanent grassland. However, the area of wildflower meadow (Emorsgate EM2 mix) would be confined to a narrow strip outside of the areas beneath and around the solar panels. The Council's ecologist has advised that it is a missed opportunity in terms of biodiversity enhancement to not increase the diversification of grassland swards in this part of the site. However, there are no grounds to refuse planning permission on this basis as the proposed development provides Biodiversity Net Gain in accordance with the NPPF and Policy ENV 2 of the Northumberland Local Plan. The proposed enhancement measures would improve opportunities for wildlife over and above the current situation at the site.
- 7.40 The Biodiversity Management Plan sets out management practices that are proposed in order to enhance the site for the benefit of local wildlife. The Biodiversity Management Plan is a comprehensive document encapsulating the measures for avoidance of harm to wildlife during construction and the methods for habitat creation, management and monitoring. The Council's ecologist has recommended that a condition is imposed on the grant of

planning permission requiring the proposed development to be carried out in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Management Plan.

- 7.41 Subject to the proposed development being carried out in accordance with the submitted Biodiversity Management Plan, which encapsulates the measures for avoidance of harm to wildlife during construction and the methods for habitat creation, management and monitoring, the Council's ecologist does not object to the proposed development. It is considered that the proposal does not conflict with Policy ENV 2 and Part 3 (c) of Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan and Section 15 of the NPPF. It is recommended a condition is imposed to require the proposed development to be carried out in accordance with Biodiversity Management Plan.

Trees and hedgerows

- 7.42 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) report has been provided with the planning application. This reports that the proposed development would not require the removal of any significant trees, groups of trees or hedgerows. A short length of hedgerow would need to be removed adjacent to accommodate the access but mitigation planting is proposed around the proposed substation. The planting of additional trees and hedgerows within the site is also proposed as part of the proposed landscape mitigation.
- 7.43 The proposals are considered to be acceptable and would accord with Policy STP 6, Part 2 (d) of Policy QOP 2 and Policy QOP 4 of the Northumberland Local Plan. It is recommended that a planning condition is imposed to require the submission and approval of an arboriculture method statement prior to the commencement of development.

Land stability and coal mining legacy

- 7.44 The site is located within a 'Coalfield Development High Risk Area', which means there are coal mining features and hazards that need to be considered in determining this planning application. A coal mining risk assessment has been submitted in support of the planning application.
- 7.45 The Coal Authority advise that their records indicate that the application site is in an area of recorded and likely unrecorded coal mine workings at shallow depth. There is also a recorded mine entry and its zone of influence adjacent to the site and a recorded mine gas site within 50 metres of the site boundary. These features pose a potential risk to surface stability and public safety.
- 7.46 The Coal Authority has no objection to the proposed development subject to the imposition of planning conditions or conditions to require the undertaking of intrusive site investigations to establish the risks posed to the development by past coal mining activity prior to the commencement of development, and the submission for approval in writing of a statement prepared by a suitably competent person confirming that the site is, or has been made, safe and stable for the development. The Coal Authority considers the undertaking of intrusive site investigations, prior to the commencement of development, is considered to be necessary to ensure that adequate information pertaining to ground conditions and coal mining legacy is available to enable appropriate remedial and mitigatory measures to be identified and carried out before

works commence on site. This is in order to ensure the safety and stability of the development, in accordance with Paragraphs 183 and 184 of the National Planning Policy Framework and POL 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Noise

- 7.47 Policy POL 2 of the Northumberland Local Plan is relevant to the consideration of proposals for new development that could give rise to unacceptable adverse effects as a result of any noise generated. Paragraph 185 (a) of the NPPF seeks to ensure planning decisions mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development as well as avoiding noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life.
- 7.48 The solar photovoltaic panels do not emit noise during the process of converting solar radiation to electricity but noise would be generated by the 13 inverters and the two substations that form part of the proposed development. The main noise source from the inverters is from the cooling fans. These would be operational during daylight hours when the solar panels are generating electricity and the inverters need to be actively cooled. The operation of the two substations would generate low frequency noise, typically with peak frequencies of 100Hz and 200Hz. At close proximity to the substations, a hum would be generally noticeable.
- 7.49 During the construction phase, the proposed development has the potential to give rise to short term adverse effects upon noise sensitive receptors surrounding the application site. Appropriate mitigation and control measures would be adopted whilst plant was operating close to nearby residential properties to ensure that any potential adverse impacts are minimised.
- 7.50 The closest noise sensitive receptors are Low Horton Farm located to the west of the solar farm (100 metres from the site boundary and 200 metres from the closest inverter), the dwellings in Blyth located to north east of the site and on the eastern side of the railway line (75 metres from the site boundary and 330 metres from the closest inverter), Laverock Hall and Laverock Hall Cottages to the south (500 metres from the substation) and a primary school and residential dwellings at New Delaval to the south east (400 metres from the site boundary and 500 metres from the closest inverter). Existing noise levels within the surrounding area are principally influenced by road traffic noise associated with vehicles travelling along the A189 to the west of the application site and the A1061 to the south.
- 7.51 The noise assessment provided with the planning application concludes that the operation of the solar farm would generate very low noise levels at surrounding properties throughout the day. Assessing the noise levels against relevant standards and guidance concluded that the operation of the solar farm would result in a low impact. The impact is classified as 'No Observed Effects Level' in PPG and is this is the level of noise exposure below which no effect at all on health or quality of life can be detected. The assessment therefore considered that the development would not result in unacceptable levels of noise in accordance with Policy POL 2 and the NPPF.

- 7.52 Public Protection has been consulted on this application and raised no objections in respect to noise. It is recommended that planning conditions are imposed to ensure that the solar farm generates noise no greater than the existing prevailing background levels and control noise during the construction phase to prevent a loss of residential amenity during sensitive hours of the day.

Flooding and drainage

- 7.53 Policy WAT 2 of the Northumberland Local Plan requires development proposals to demonstrate how they will minimise flood risk to people, property and infrastructure from all potential sources. In line with Paragraph 159 of the NPPF, Policy WAT 2 states inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided and directs development away from areas at highest risk of flooding. Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Policy REN 1 also requires consideration of flood risk when considering planning applications for renewable energy development.
- 7.54 The application is accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment to assess flood risk to and from the proposed development.
- 7.55 The application is accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment to assess flood risk to and from the proposed development. The majority of the site application falls within Flood Zone 1 (low probability risk of flooding). The flood risk assessment considers the potential flood risk to the proposed development from all sources of flooding is low for the majority of the application site with areas of elevated risk associated with surface water runoff within the solar farm which could affect isolated low points and areas adjacent to ordinary watercourses which cross the site.
- 7.56 All sensitive equipment would be raised above ground level and the modelled surface water flood depth to avoid vulnerability to shallow surface water accumulations. The proposal would be able to continue to operate safely during flood conditions and would not impede flood flows.
- 7.57 To manage surface water run-off from the site it is proposed to provide a series of swales to intercept surface water run-off. It is considered that these swales would adequately mitigate any increase in run-off as a result of the small increase in the impermeable areas across the site as a result of the development. The extent of new impermeable areas within the proposed development site would be limited. The area beneath the solar panels would remain grassed, although the presence of the panels will change how the rainwater is shed onto the ground. It is only the panel supports that would be impermeable. The other impermeable elements of the proposed development include the inverter buildings, the customer substation and the distribution network operator substation. The Lead Local Flood Authority have been consulted on the application and have recommended that planning conditions are imposed to requiring the maintenance of vegetation cover, grass filter strips and interception swales around the proposed development. They also recommend a condition be imposed requiring the proposed development to be carried out in accordance with the flood risk assessment and the mitigation measures detailed within it.

- 7.58 In relation to flooding and drainage, it is considered that the proposal would accord with Policy WAT 2 and Policy WAT 4 of the Northumberland Local Plan and the NPPF.

Public Rights of Way

- 7.59 A number of Public Rights of Way are present within and around the application site:
- Footpath 300/040 runs in an east/north easterly direction from Low Horton Farm through the application site, before turning in a south easterly direction along the western boundary of the golf course and connects to Bridleway 300/044 (Plessey Old Wagonway).
 - Bridleway 300/044 (Plessey Old Wagonway) runs west to east along the southern boundary of the site, then past the site of the proposed construction compound to the A192.
 - Bridleway 300/041 runs along the western boundary of the western parcel from Bridleway 300/044 (Plessey Old Wagonway) to Low Horton Farm to the north
 - Footpath 300/013 runs along the northern boundary of the northern parcel of land within the application site, before it crosses the A189 to the north west.
 - To the northeast of the site, Footpath 300/022 which runs alongside the railway.
- 7.60 A temporary diversion of Bridleway 300/044 would be required during the construction phase of the solar farm between point 75 metre north from the A192 to the south west corner of the proposed solar farm at the junction with Bridleway 300/041. This is required to protect users of this bridleway during the construction phase and avoid safety issues from site construction vehicles. The proposed route of the diversion is shown on the submitted plans and would largely run adjacent to the existing bridleway. The diverted bridleway would have the same surface treatment as the existing bridleway. The bridleway would then be reinstated on its current defined route and condition following the completion of the construction.
- 7.61 The other Public Rights of Way referred to above would remain open for use during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of development. During the construction phase, there would be managed on Bridleway 300/044 and Footpath 300/040 where construction traffic would be required to cross these routes to access the different parts of the site.
- 7.62 The application additionally proposes a new permissive footpath between the point where Footpath 300/013 reaches the A189 and Footpath 300/040 at a point to the east of Low Horton Farm. An existing informal permissive footpath that runs between Footpath 300/040 and Footpath 300/013 along the western edge of the golf course would remain accessible.
- 7.63 The Council's Public Rights of Way team has been consulted on this application and have raised no objection.

- 7.64 The Rights of Way users would be 'visual receptors' and this is discussed separately in the landscape and visual impact sections of this report.

Highways and vehicular access

- 7.65 Policies TRA 2 and REN 1 (Part 3g) are relevant to the effects of new development on the transport network. Policy TRA 2 requires all developments affecting the transport network to:
- a. Provide effective and safe access and egress to the existing transport network;
 - b. Include appropriate measures to avoid, mitigate and manage any significant impacts on highway capacity, congestion or on highway safety including any contribution to cumulative impacts;
 - c. Minimise conflict between different modes of transport, including measures for network, traffic and parking management where necessary;
 - d. Facilitate the safe use of the network, including suitable crossing points, footways and dedicated provision for cyclists and equestrian users where necessary;
 - e. Suitably accommodate the delivery of goods and supplies, access for maintenance and refuse collection where necessary; and
 - f. Minimise any adverse impact on communities and the environment, including noise and air quality.
- 7.66 Vehicular access to the site would be via the existing access and track from the A192 between the Three Horse Shoes Roundabout and the Laverock Hall Road Roundabout. The construction compound would be sited adjacent to the track and the completed solar farm site would be accessible via a network of internal tracks. There is a secondary access point off Hathery Lane, which provides access to Low Horton Farm. This would be used as a back-up maintenance access only, and would not be used for construction traffic. The proposed new distribution network operator substation, which would be located to the south of the A1061, would be served from an existing access with the A192 south of the Laverock Hall Roundabout.
- 7.67 The construction period of the solar farm is anticipated to take up to 9 months. Construction hours would be between 08:00 and 18:00 Mondays to Fridays, and between 08:00 and 14:00 on Saturdays. During this period there will be trips associated with the arrival and departure of construction staff, and the delivery of parts and construction materials. Staff trips will mainly be made by cars, vans or minibuses, whilst deliveries of construction materials and equipment will mainly be made by HGVs.
- 7.68 The deliveries will be spaced across the construction period, with typically up to 8 deliveries daily over the construction period. During the first weeks of the construction period there would be initial deliveries to the site of machinery, temporary site welfare and office facilities, site security measures and aggregate to construct some internal access tracks. During the main construction of the solar farm, items such as the transformers/inverters, cabling, solar panels, solar panel support frames, and aggregate to construct the remaining internal access tracks would be delivered to the site. In total the

construction of the solar farm will result in approximately 1,380 deliveries to the site, spread over the construction period with typically 10 deliveries per day.

- 7.69 The number of construction staff on site will vary over the construction period depending on the activity that is taking place. The majority of staff will travel in minibuses or vans, which will park on site during the day. At the peak of activity, there could be in the order of 25 construction staff vehicles on the site. Parking for staff would be provided in the construction compound area.
- 7.70 During the construction phase of the development, a construction compound and HGV turning area would be provided and would remain for the duration of the construction period. The compound would be of a sufficient size to store materials for the construction of the solar farm, and for vehicles to park and safely manoeuvre.
- 7.71 The construction of the distribution network operator substation will take up to 4 months within the overall construction period. The number of associated HGV deliveries will be in the order of 65 (typically 2 deliveries per day), including a single abnormal load required to deliver a component for the substation.
- 7.72 Vehicle movements during the operational period of the solar farm would mainly associated with the monitoring, upkeep and cleaning of the site. These trips would typically be made by small vans with between 10 and 20 trips each year. Due to the low number of vehicular movements being made to and from the site during its operational period, the site is unlikely to have any significant impact to the local highway network once constructed and operational.
- 7.73 It is recommended a planning condition is imposed to require the submission and approval of a construction traffic management plan prior to development commencing to manage all vehicle movements associated with the construction of the solar farm.
- 7.74 The Highways Authority has been consulted on the planning application and raised no objections, subject to the imposition of relevant planning conditions. This included a review of a framework construction traffic management plan provided in support of this planning application, which has been considered to be acceptable by the Highways Authority.
- 7.75 It is concluded that the proposed development accords with Policy TRA 2 of the Northumberland Local Plan. It is therefore acceptable in highways terms subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions.

Impacts on the Historic Environment – Archaeology

- 7.76 The proposed development site is located within a landscape which retains known archaeological remains spanning the prehistoric to modern periods. Archaeological remains in the locality include, for example, early prehistoric flint scatters left by (Mesolithic) hunter-gathers and early (Neolithic) farmers, settlements, landscape boundaries and farmsteads of Iron Age / Romano-

British date, evidence of medieval settlement and agriculture, post-medieval industrial activity and modern mineral extraction.

- 7.77 The site has been subject to archaeological evaluation by the applicant and archaeological remains have been identified within the site. The features, associated finds and environmental samples have been interpreted as being remains of a Romano-British / Iron Age settlement or farmstead. The identified remains are of at least local significance such that a programme of archaeological mitigation will be required if planning permission were to be granted. The identified archaeological remains all constitute 'non-designated heritage assets' with archaeological interest in the context of the NPPF. Further archaeological features comprising the remains of medieval or post-medieval ploughing activity were recorded in a number of other evaluation trenches. These remain areas of local interest but are not uncommon in the wider area and the Council's archaeologist has advised that they will not require further recording or investigation.
- 7.78 The most significant archaeological remains were those of prehistoric date and these coincide with the area of the proposed temporary site construction compound. The applicant proposes that the potential for the proposed development to damage or destroy identified archaeological remains would be mitigated through a bespoke construction methodology based on raising the existing ground surface to protect the archaeological remains during the development. No archaeological mitigation is proposed for the remainder of the site.
- 7.79 The applicant has submitted a construction method statement which provides details of the proposed construction methodology to be used. The construction methodology set out in this document would reduce or eliminate the risk that the identified archaeological remains would be damaged or disturbed by the development works. Within the remainder of the site the solar arrays would be mounted on frames that are secured to the ground using a piling technique. Since the impacts associated with the piled mounting technique would be localised and the risk of significant unrecorded archaeological remains being present beyond the compound is low, the Council's archaeologist considers this to be an acceptable approach.
- 7.80 In summary, the Council's archaeologist has no objections to the proposed development subject to it being undertaken in accordance with the submitted construction method statement for archaeological mitigation. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is in accordance with Policy ENV 1 and Policy ENV 7 of the Northumberland Local Plan and the NPPF.

Impacts on the Historic Environment – Building Conservation

- 7.81 The proposed development is situated to the north east and south of the Grade II listed Low Horton Farmhouse and its associated farm buildings (Historic England listing reference 1041377) and lies to the south east of the Grade II listed Church of Saint Mary (Historic England Listing Reference No: 1303743). Given the nature, scale and location of the proposed development it is considered that it has the potential to impact the setting and significance of these heritage assets.

Summary of significance

Low Horton Farmhouse

- 7.82 Low Horton Farm is a traditional farmstead comprising mid-1700s Farmhouse and farm buildings arranged to form an internal yard. The Farmhouse is Grade II listed for its special architectural and historic interest.¹ Accessed from the north and west by Hathery Lane and the A189 overpass, and from the south by the Plessey Old Wagonway, the listed farmhouse is situated within agricultural land. This serves to reinforce its early agricultural beginnings and creating a soft rural frame which in part contributes to its setting.
- 7.83 Dating from the mid-18th century having c.1800 rear brick extension and later 19th and 20th century alterations, the two-storey 3 bay + kitchen bay Farmhouse is constructed in squared stone (and brick in garden wall bond) under double pitched Welsh slate roof with brick stacks. Orientated to face southeast, its principal elevation is symmetrical, with the addition of a 19th century canted bay. It is set within its own garden having extended views of the agricultural hinterland beyond. The listed building retains an assemblage of architectural features which illustrate its long architectural history. Its use of robust masonry and solid to void ratio, its surviving early brick and bonding pattern, and the form and sizing of its fenestration collectively contribute to its special architectural character and distinguishes it as a gentrified Farmhouse. This significance is not only formed by its evidential value but also historical value as the Farmhouse succeeded Horton Castle, the remains of which are situated to its west.

Church of Saint Mary

- 7.84 The Church of Saint Mary (also known as Saint Mary the Virgin) is located off Horton Road and enjoys an elevated position within the rural landscape. Situated within its own grounds it is surrounded by a large graveyard which drops away from the Church, declining to the eastern boundary. The Church and graveyard are bounded by coursed rubble and capped stone walls which on approach from the west through the entrance gates, provide a sense of enclosure.
- 7.85 Built on and occupying a medieval site, the Church was rebuilt c.1827 retaining a late 18th /early 19th century transept and remodelled 1903 by W.S. Hicks embracing a Gothic style and liturgical east and west. Constructed in squared stone with ashlar dressings under Welsh slate roof, it comprises west crenulated tower and north transept, a north-east vestry/organ chamber and 1903 porch south of the tower. The listed building is a majestic example of a Parish Church having an array of features which illustrate its history and architectural quality. These include, lancet windows, trefoiled and mullioned windows, a large basket arch window – facing east towards the rising sun, sundial, 16th century inscribed slab, hood mouldings and decorative tower finials. Within the graveyard are gravestones and markers which illustrate the site's history contributing to the listed building's setting and significance.
- 7.86 The special significance of the listed building is characterised by its architectural, historical, communal and aesthetic values. It remains in the use

it was originally built to perform, serving the community as a place of worship, internment and commemoration. Further the building's chronology and the passage of time has fortuitously contributed to the heritage asset's illustrative and sensory values of which its setting significantly contributes.

Assessment of proposed development

- 7.87 The planning application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and desk-based Heritage Assessment. The Heritage Assessment provides an archaeological assessment of the known and potential archaeological resource within the development site. This includes map chronology, consultation of the available historic environment records and a site walkover. It also includes a setting assessment. The submissions also include a Heritage Addendum (dated 18 August 2022) which provides design mitigation measures as a means of reducing development impact on heritage assets.
- 7.88 The planning application has been evaluated the Council's architectural heritage and design officer having regard to the legislative framework, and the form and impact of the proposals on the setting and significance of the identified heritage assets, and Historic England's advice on the approach to taking decisions on setting (Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 - Second Edition). The assessment by the Council's architectural heritage and design officer was also informed by site inspections, taking in views and prospects to and from the development site and the identified heritage assets.

Church of Saint Mary

- 7.89 While the development proposals would not result in a direct physical impact to the Church of Saint Mary, it is considered given the substantial scale, form and nature that it would result in a change to the rural hinterland to the listed building's east, thereby altering its setting. The heritage asset has an enclosed nature on approach from the west, its orientation, and its prominence on approach from the north and east (along the A189 and Hathery Lane). The presence of the major road separates the Church from the wider rural landscape in both the physical and perceptive sense and in particular the proposed development site. While there would be some opportunity for intervisibility with the development proposals when encountering the listed building from the north east, it is considered that this does not harmfully impact the ability to appreciate and understand the heritage significance of the Church as the undulating agricultural land (soft frame) to its immediate east and west of the A189, remains unaltered.

Low Horton Farmhouse and ancillary farm buildings

- 7.90 On approach to Low Horton Farm from the west (accessed from the overbridge) and along Hathery Lane, the listed building's double pitched roof and robust gable is encountered. From this aspect, the Farmhouse and its single storey farm ranges are discernible as a traditional farm group. Within closer proximity the building's chronology and architectural detailing is experienced. However, when the listed building is encountered from the southeast and south along the Plessey Old Wagonway, its principal elevation, its architectural and historic interest as a gentrified farmhouse and relationship

with the surrounding agricultural land is fully revealed. This arrangement, overlooking the farmland originally associated with the Farmhouse, would have been an intended design consideration when constructing and siting the building. The surrounding land is characterised by undulating open fields which gently decline away from the listed building. This juxtaposition of topography and openness results in the Farmhouse affording a prominent position within the landscape. This positively contributes to its significance and setting as defined within the NPPF as the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Historic England's Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' (2017, Page 4) states: "Settings of heritage assets which closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed or formed are likely to contribute particularly strongly to significance".

- 7.91 The development proposals are extensive in form and layout resulting in a significant change to the existing landscape. From the western approach towards the listed building there would be limited intervisibility with the development site. This is due to the building's orientation, the presence and arrangement of existing and established field boundaries, the undulating topography, and the manner in which the listed building is encountered. However, when approaching the listed building from the south and east along the Wagonway, the extensive form and layout of the proposed development would alter the visual dominance of the listed building which is reinforced by the 'soft frame' of agricultural land. This arrangement would be altered to such a degree that it would harm its setting.
- 7.92 The proposals seek to introduce screening in the form of a new hedgerow to the south of the listed building running in a west to east axis. This screening can only mitigate negative impacts, rather than removing impacts and cannot be regarded as a substitute for the harmful impact to the listed building's significance that has been identified.
- 7.93 It is therefore concluded that the proposed development would harm the setting and significance of the Grade II listed Low Horton Farmhouse.

Conclusion

- 7.94 In summary, the proposed development has been assessed having regard to Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 16 of the NPPF and the Northumberland Plan Policies ENV 1 and ENV 7. The purpose of these is to protect the setting and character of the County's heritage assets. It is concluded that, while the proposed development would preserve the setting and significance of the Grade II Church of Saint Mary, the proposals would fail to preserve the setting and significance of the Grade II listed Low Horton Farmhouse, thereby failing to accord with the requirements of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy ENV 7 of the Northumberland Local Plan, the purpose of which is to protect heritage assets and their setting.
- 7.95 In finding that the development proposals fail to preserve the setting and significance of Low Horton Farmhouse it has been identified that the degree of harm is 'less than substantial' in terms of Policy ENV 7 of the

Northumberland Local Plan and the NPPF. Policy ENV 7 and Paragraph 202 of the NPPF require this degree of harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

- 7.96 Planning Practice Guidance (Historic environment, Paragraph 020, Reference ID 18a-020-20190723) explains that public benefits could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the Paragraph 8 of the NPPF. Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit.
- 7.97 It is considered that the proposed development would deliver public benefits. In particular the supply of renewable energy in line with Section 14 of the NPPF and the biodiversity net gains that would arise from the proposals. Taking this into account, it is considered that the public benefits of the proposal would outweigh the identified less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets. The proposed development would therefore accord with Policies ENV 1 and ENV 7 of the Northumberland Local Plan and Section 16 of the NPPF. This conclusion has had regard to the duties imposed by section 66 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990. Great weight has also be given to the asset's conservation in accordance with Paragraph 199 of the NPPF.

Glint and Glare

- 7.98 Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph 013, Reference ID: 5-013-20150327) advises the potential for the effects of glint and glare on the landscape, neighbouring uses and aircraft safety should be given consideration for large-scale solar farms.
- 7.99 The definition of glint and glare is as follows:
- Glint – a momentary flash of bright light typically received by moving receptors or from moving reflectors;
 - Glare – a continuous source of bright light typically received by static receptors or from large reflective surfaces
- 7.100 To consider the impacts of glint and glare, the planning application is accompanied by a Glint and Glare Study to assess the possible effects of the proposed development on surrounding road users, dwellings, and aviation activity associated with Newcastle International Airport. This study indicates that whilst reflections are possible, the existing vegetation would mitigate the impacts to block views of reflective area and the distance between the observer and the closest reflecting panel area is such that the proportion of an observer's field of vision that is taken up by the reflecting area is significantly reduced. Furthermore the study indicates that the proposal would not adversely impact as the modelling indicates that no solar reflections are geometrically possible towards the air traffic control tower at Newcastle Airport and towards either of the 2-mile approach paths to the airport. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of glint and glare.
- 7.101 Newcastle International Airport has been consulted on the application and no objections have been raised. Highways also raise no highway safety concerns

with regard to glint and glare. Public Protection considers that the risk of glare to residential amenity is low due to the changing directionality of the sun and vegetative screening. The residual risk of glare is however present which could cause detriment to residential amenity and recommend a condition to control glare should it be identified post-construction. Subject to the imposition of a condition, it is considered that the proposal does not conflict with Policy POL 2, Policy TRA 7 and Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan in relation to the effects from glint and glare.

Decommissioning

- 7.102 Part 5 of Policy REN 1 in the Northumberland Local Plan requires, where relevant, applications to make appropriate provision for the decommissioning and removal of temporary operations once they have ceased.
- 7.103 The application proposed that, with the exception of the DNO sub-station, all equipment and below ground connections would be removed at the end of the 40-year operational lifespan of the solar farm. The landscape enhancement measures would remain.
- 7.104 In order to meet the requirements of Policy REN 1, it is recommended that a planning condition is imposed to require the submission of a scheme for the decommissioning of the solar farm and its ancillary equipment and restoration of the site to be submitted for approval by the Local Planning Authority no later than 39 years and six months from the date electricity is first exported from the site. It is also recommended a planning condition be imposed to require the submission of such a scheme for approval by the Local Planning Authority in the event that the development ceases to operate for a continuous period of 12 months. A further condition would be imposed to require the solar farm and its ancillary equipment to be dismantled and removed from the site and the land restored in accordance with the approved decommissioning and restoration scheme within a period of 40 years and 6 months following the first export date.
- 7.105 Subject to the imposition of conditions covering the matters outlined above, it is considered that the proposal accords with Part 5 of Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Mineral safeguarding

- 7.106 The Northumberland Local Plan identifies Mineral Safeguarding Areas to protect mineral resources from unnecessary sterilisation by non-mineral development. The proposed development is located within a Mineral Safeguarding Area for coal. Policy MIN 4 sets out policy criteria to assess proposals for new non-mineral development within these areas.
- 7.107 In accordance with Part 2 (a) of Policy MIN 4, the applicant has submitted an assessment of the effect of the proposed development on the mineral resource beneath and adjacent to the site of the proposed development. This assessment identifies that there may be a mineral resource present within and adjacent to the application site. The detailed assessment indicates that, while coal does exist beneath the site, it is they are not of strategic importance or

demonstrable economic value and therefore, the need for them to be safeguarded or worked in advance of the proposed site development is not warranted.

- 7.108 It is therefore considered that the proposed development can be supported within a MSA because the applicant can demonstrate that the mineral concerned is not of economic value in accordance with Part 3 (a) of Policy MIN 4. While the proposed development has a proposed operational lifespan of 40 years, it is both temporary and reversible in nature and as shown in the assessment the mineral is unlikely to be needed within a timescale in which the mineral is likely to be needed. The proposed development can therefore be supported in line with Part 3 (c) of Policy MIN 4. The requirements of Policy MIN 5 have also been considered and it is considered that there is no conflict.

Proposed Blyth Relief Road

- 7.109 Part 3 of Policy TRA 3 in the Northumberland Local Plan identifies a number of local road network improvement schemes. One of these schemes is the 'Blyth Relief Road' (Part 3, c of Policy TRA 3). Part 3 of Policy TRA 3 sets out that development which would potentially prejudice the progression of the identified schemes will not be supported.
- 7.110 The site of the proposed solar farm crosses the line of one of the route options ('Route 3') that has been considered by Northumberland County Council for the proposed Blyth Relief Road. However, the construction of houses on the route alignment to the east of the railway line means that Route 3 is not considered to be deliverable. An alternative route alignment (Route 5), which involves the realignment and dualling of the existing A1061 Laverock Hall Road between the Three Horse Shoes Roundabout and the A193 at South Beach, has now been identified as the preferred option and is being put forward for central Government construction and funding.
- 7.111 The proposed temporary site construction compound would be affected by the proposed alignment of Route 5. This compound would be required for a period of nine months while the construction of the solar farm to the north east takes place. It is likely that the construction of the solar farm would be complete prior to the construction of the road, but there could be some overlap. The nature of the site compound and the area surrounding its immediate location means that it would be feasible for it to be relocated to the north if there was conflict with the construction of the relief road, although this change may require a separate planning application and its acceptability confirmed following assessment.
- 7.112 It is therefore considered that the proposed development can be supported in the context of Policy TRA 3. The solar farm itself would not prejudice the progression of the proposed Blyth Relief Road. The potential prejudice that could result from the siting of the temporary construction compound for the site could be overcome and would not warrant grounds to refuse planning permission for this scheme on its own.

Other matters

Time limit within which the development must begin

- 7.113 If planning permission is granted for this proposed development, it would subject to a condition that sets the time limit within which the development must begin. It is normal for the time limit to be not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which the permission is granted, but the local planning authority may consider a longer or shorter time period where this would assist the delivery of the development. The applicant has requested a period of not later than the expiration of five years beginning with the date on which the permission is granted be conditioned in order to provide an appropriate period of time to allow works associated with grid connection to be agreed and programmed with the network operator.
- 7.114 It is considered that a period of five years is justified in these circumstances. As such it is recommended a condition is imposed to require that the development is commenced no later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which the permission is granted.

Equality Duty

- 7.115 The County Council has a duty to have regard to the impact of any proposal on those people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act. Officers have had due regard to Sec 149(1) (a) and (b) of the Equality Act 2010 and considered the information provided by the applicant, together with the responses from consultees and other parties, and determined that the proposal would have no material impact on individuals or identifiable groups with protected characteristics. Accordingly, no changes to the proposal were required to make it acceptable in this regard.

Crime and Disorder Act Implications

- 7.116 These proposals have no implications in relation to crime and disorder.

Human Rights Act Implications

- 7.117 The Human Rights Act requires the County Council to take into account the rights of the public under the European Convention on Human Rights and prevents the Council from acting in a manner which is incompatible with those rights. Article 8 of the Convention provides that there shall be respect for an individual's private life and home save for that interference which is in accordance with the law and necessary in a democratic society in the interests of (inter alia) public safety and the economic wellbeing of the country. Article 1 of protocol 1 provides that an individual's peaceful enjoyment of their property shall not be interfered with save as is necessary in the public interest.
- 7.118 For an interference with these rights to be justifiable the interference (and the means employed) needs to be proportionate to the aims sought to be realised. The main body of this report identifies the extent to which there is any identifiable interference with these rights. The Planning Considerations identified are also relevant in deciding whether any interference is proportionate. Case law has been decided which indicates that certain development does interfere with an individual's rights under Human Rights

legislation. This application has been considered in the light of statute and case law and the interference is not considered to be disproportionate.

- 7.119 Officers are also aware of Article 6, the focus of which (for the purpose of this decision) is the determination of an individual's civil rights and obligations. Article 6 provides that in the determination of these rights, an individual is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal. Article 6 has been subject to a great deal of case law. It has been decided that for planning matters the decision making process as a whole, which includes the right of review by the High Court, complied with Article 6.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposed development has a capacity of 49.9MW and would generate a significant amount of electricity from a clean, renewable source. The applicant states that this would provide for a reduction of approximately 12,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually and meet the energy needs of approximately 15,000 homes each year. The scheme could therefore make an important contribution to the objective of achieving the statutory net zero target set for 2050 and the commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 78% compared with 1990 levels by 2035.
- 8.2 Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan is supportive of solar energy development, provided the effects are acceptable or can be made acceptable. The assessment of the application has identified that the proposals would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II listed Low Horton Farmhouse, the siting of the DNO substation in the Green Belt would be harmful due to it constituting inappropriate development, and would also result in some localised landscape and visual harm. With regard to the other main planning matters assessed, it is considered that the effects are acceptable or can be made acceptable through appropriate mitigation and the imposition of planning conditions in accordance with the relevant policies in the Northumberland Local Plan and the NPPF.
- 8.3 In relation to harm to the Grade II listed Low Horton Farmhouse, Paragraph 202 of the NPPF advises where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case the public benefits include those associated with renewable energy generation and the significant biodiversity net gain (65.62% in Habitat Units, and 76.13% in Hedgerow Units). It is considered that the public benefits outweigh the less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage designated heritage asset.
- 8.4 In relation to the Green Belt, the proposed distribution network operator substation is located in the Green Belt and constitutes inappropriate development. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. In considering this application, substantial weight is given to the identified harm to the Green Belt in line with Paragraph 148 of the NPPF. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal,

is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The harm in this case is limited and the impact on the openness of the Green Belt is localised around the substation site. On balance it is considered that the identified harm to the Green Belt (and other harm) is clearly outweighed by the considerable public and wider environmental benefits arising from the proposed solar farm, including those associated with increased production of electricity from renewable sources and the biodiversity net gain that would be provided by the proposal. As a result it is considered that very special circumstances exist to support this element of the proposed development in the Green Belt.

- 8.5 Overall, whilst it is accepted that the proposed solar farm would have an impact on the landscape, the openness of the Green Belt and result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II listed Low Horton Farmhouse it is considered that the benefits of the proposed development in terms of the supply of renewable energy and biodiversity enhancement and would outweigh the identified harm. It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted for this proposed development, subject to the imposition of planning conditions.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That this application be GRANTED permission subject to the following:

Conditions/Reason

Time limit

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

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

Expiry of planning permission

2. The development hereby permitted shall be for a temporary period only to expire 40 years and 6 months after the first export date of the development. Written confirmation of the first export date shall be provided to the local planning authority within one month after the event.

Reason: The development is not considered suitable for permanent retention and to enable the impacts to be assessed as to the impacts on the landscape character and visual amenity in accordance with Policy ENV 3 and Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Decommissioning and site restoration

3. If the solar farm hereby permitted ceases to operate for a continuous period of 12 months, then a scheme for the decommissioning and removal of the solar farm and ancillary equipment together with the restoration of the site shall be

submitted within 6 months of the end of the cessation period to the Local Planning Authority for written approval. The scheme shall make provision for:

- a. the removal of the solar panels and associated above ground works approved under this permission;
- b. the management and timing of any works;
- c. a traffic management plan to address likely traffic impact issues during the decommissioning period;
- d. an environmental management plan to include details of measures to be taken during the decommissioning period to protect wildlife and habitats;
- e. details of site restoration; and
- f. an implementation timetable.

The decommissioning of the site shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To ensure that the decommissioning and restoration of the site is carried out in a managed approach that minimises the impacts on the natural, built and historic environment and upon highway safety in accordance with Policies REN 1, TRA 2 and ENV 1, ENV 2, ENV 3, ENV 4 and ENV 7 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

4. Within a period of 39 years and 6 months following the first export date, a scheme for the decommissioning of the solar farm and its ancillary equipment and restoration of the site, shall be submitted to written approval by the local Planning Authority (except in the event that Condition 4 has been triggered and decommissioning has been completed). The scheme shall incorporate the criteria set out within Condition 4 as a minimum. The decommissioning of the site shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To ensure that the decommissioning and restoration of the site is carried out in a managed approach that minimises the impacts on the natural, built and historic environment and upon highway safety in accordance with Policies REN 1, TRA 2 and ENV 1, ENV 2, ENV 3, ENV 4 and ENV 7 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

5. The solar farm and its ancillary equipment shall be dismantled and removed from the site and the land restored in accordance with the approved decommissioning and restoration scheme within a period of 40 years and 6 months following the first export date.

Reason: In the interests of natural, built and historic environment in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Approved plans

6. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:
 - Site Location Plan, Drawing Number P21-0062_01 (Rev C), Date 06/04/2022
 - Engineering Layout Plan, Drawing Number BF33C_F005_01, Date September 2022

- Master Site Layout Plan, Drawing Number P21-0062_12 (Rev D), Date 08/09/2022
- Detailed Landscape Proposals, Drawing Number P21-0062_04 (Rev H), Date 08/09/2022
- Access and Movement, Drawing Number P21-0062_10 (Rev D) , Date 08/09/2022
- Mounting System Details, Drawing Number LWH-DWG004, Date 14/02/2022
- Fencing Details, Drawing Number LWH-DWG005, Date 14/02/2022
- CCTV Layout, Drawing Number LWH-DWG006.1, Date 23/03/2022
- CCTV Details, Drawing Number LWH-DWG006.2, Date 14/02/2022
- Substation Layout, Drawing Number 10032-E-SP-01 (Revision E)
- Customer Compound Elevation, Drawing Number 10032/E-ELC-01 (Revision D)
- Substation Compound, Drawing Number 0031-E-SP-03 (Revision B)
- Transformer elevations, Drawing Number 10032-E-ELV-03 (Revision A)
- Control Room Layout and Elevation, Drawing Number 10032-E-ELV-02 (Revision C)
- NPG 25m Communications Tower, Drawing Number, 10032-E-ELV-04 (Revision B)
- NPG Approved 2.4m High Palisade Fencing (with electric fence), Drawing Number 10032-E-ELV-05 (Revision B)
- Elevations - 33kV Intake Switch Room, Drawing Number XXXXX-E-ELE-01 (Revision A)
- Inverter substation (floor and elevation plan), Drawing Number LWH-DWG007.3, Date 14/09/2022
- Ecological Assessment Report: Low Horton Farm Solar Farm, Avian Ecology Limited, Issue F1 dated 24/03/2022.
- Ecological Assessment Report: Low Horton Farm Solar Farm – Appendix 1: Bird Survey Report, Avian Ecology Limited, Issue F1 dated 24/03/2022.
- Ecological Assessment Report: Low Horton Farm Solar Farm – Appendix 5: Biodiversity Management Plan, Avian Ecology Limited, Issue F2 dated 07/07/2022.
- Low Horton Solar Farm Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan, PFA Consulting, July 2022
- Delivery Management Plan, Document Reference B764-FN01, July 2022
- Low Horton Farm Flood Risk Assessment, PFA Consulting, March 2022 (Document reference B764-DOC01, Issue 1, dated 24/03/2022)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment : Low Horton Farm Solar Farm, Barton Hyett Associates Limited, March 2022
- Low Horton Solar Farm, Construction Method Statement for Archaeological Mitigation, Bluefield Development, October 2022 (Document reference BF33C_F008_01)

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

7. Notwithstanding the approved plans, prior to the commencement of development, details of the proposed materials, colours and finishes of all solar panels, frames, buildings and equipment shall be submitted to and

approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details and be maintained as such for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: Details are required in the absence of accompanying the application and in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies REN 1, QOP 2 and ENV 3 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Trees and Landscaping

8. Prior to the commencement of development, an arboriculture method statement and tree protection plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved arboriculture method statement and tree protection plan.

Reason: To maintain and protect the landscape value of the area and to enhance the biodiversity value of the site amenity, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies REN 1, QOP 4 and ENV 3 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

9. The tree and hedgerow landscape planting proposals set out in the Detailed Landscape Proposals Plan (Drawing number P21-0062_04, Revision H, Date 08/09/2022) shall be fully implemented during the first full planting season (November to March inclusive) following the completion of the commencement of development. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years from the date of planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

Reason: To maintain and protect the landscape value of the area and to enhance the biodiversity value of the site, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies REN 1, QOP 4 and ENV 3 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Artificial lighting

10. No external lighting (other than low level lighting required on ancillary buildings during occasional maintenance and inspection visits) or Floodlighting is permitted to be installed, used or modified as part of the hereby approved development without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority. To apply for consent the operator must provide a detailed report of the proposed lighting which details:
 - a. The specific location of all external lighting units;
 - b. Design of all lighting units;
 - c. Details of beam orientation and lux levels; and
 - d. Any proposed measures such as motion sensors and timers that will be used on lighting units

Reason: To protect residential amenity and provide a commensurate level of protection against artificial light, in accordance with the National Planning

Flooding and Surface Water Drainage

11. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment (Low Horton Farm Flood Risk Assessment, PFA Consulting, March 2022). The mitigation measures detailed with the flood risk assessment shall be fully implemented prior to the solar becoming operational.

Reason: To reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future occupants and to ensure there is no increase of flood risk elsewhere as a result of this development in accordance with Policy WAT 4 of the Northumberland Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework

12. Prior to the first electrical export from the site, details for the long-term maintenance arrangements for the surface water drainage system shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include:
- a. Maintenance schedules for each drainage feature type and ownership.
 - b. Details of protection measures.

The development shall be carried out and thereafter maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the development is adequately managed in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy WAT 4 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

13. Vegetation cover under the solar panels shall be present and maintained throughout the lifetime of development. Any erosion shall be rectified and made right.

Reason: To minimise the risk of soil erosion and reduce runoff rates in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy WAT 4 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

14. Maintenance of grass filter strips and interception swales shall be undertaken throughout the lifetime of development.

Reason: To ensure that the scheme to dispose of surface water operates at its full potential throughout the development's lifetime in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy WAT 4 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

15. Any control equipment located within 'low' and 'medium' areas of surface flood risk shall be raised a minimum of 300mm above ground level.

Reason: To provide suitable protection from pluvial flooding in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy WAT 4 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Highways

16. Development shall not commence until a Construction Method Statement and Construction Traffic Management Plan, together with supporting plans have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Construction Method Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Construction Method Statement and plan shall, where applicable, include details of but not exclusive to:
- a. site contact details - name, telephone number etc.;
 - b. details of temporary traffic management measures, temporary access, routes and vehicles;
 - c. vehicle cleaning facilities;
 - d. the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
 - e. the loading and unloading of plant and materials;
 - f. storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
 - g. measures to control the emission of dust during construction; and
 - h. details of methods and means of noise reduction, or controlling noise impacts during construction;

Reason: To prevent nuisance in the interests of residential amenity and highway safety, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy TRA 2 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Noise

17. During the construction period, there should be no noisy activity, i.e. audible at the site boundary, on Sundays or Bank Holidays or outside the hours: Monday to Friday 0800 to 1800, and Saturday 0800 to 1300.

Reason: To protect residential amenity and provide a commensurate level of protection against noise, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy POL 2 and Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan

18. The rating level of sound emitted from any fixed plant and/or machinery associated with the development shall not exceed a rating level of 35 dB LAeq,15 minute at the nearest sound-sensitive premises. All measurements shall be made in accordance with the methodology of BS4142 (2014) (Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound) and/or its subsequent amendments. Where access to the nearest sound-sensitive property is not possible, measurements shall be undertaken at an appropriate location and corrected to establish the noise levels at the nearest sound sensitive property.

Reason: To protect residential amenity and provide a commensurate level of protection against noise, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy POL 2 and Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Construction hours

19. Deliveries to and collections from the construction and/or decommissioning phase of the development shall only be permitted between the hours:

- a. Monday to Friday - 08:00 to 18:00
- b. Saturday - 08:00 to 13:00

No deliveries or collections shall take place on a Sunday or Bank Holiday, unless agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect residential amenity and provide a commensurate level of protection against noise, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy POL 2 and Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Date of Report: 19 October 2022

Background Papers: Planning application file(s) 22/01153/RENE