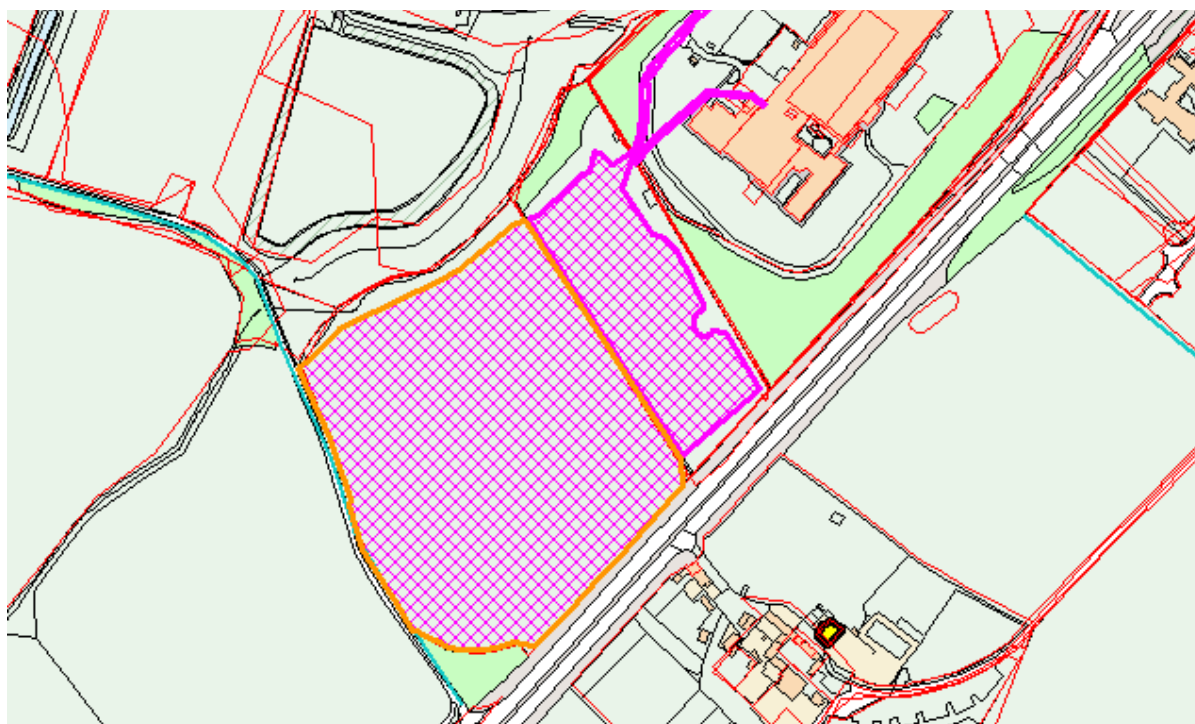




Northumberland
County Council
Strategic Planning Committee
7th November 2023

Application No:	22/03576/RENE		
Proposal:	Change of use of agricultural land and construction of solar PV panels, associated electrical infrastructure, small operational and battery energy storage buildings, security fencing, CCTV, access tracks, landscaping, and other ancillary works.		
Site Address	Land Southwest of Quotient Sciences, South of Taylor Drive, Alnwick, Northumberland NE66 2DH		
Applicant:	Mr. Barry Spall Northumberland Estates, Estates Office, Alnwick Castle, Alnwick NE66 1NQ	Agent:	Mr. Barry Spall Northumberland Estates, Estates Office, Alnwick Castle, Alnwick NE66 1NQ
Ward	Alnwick	Parish	Alnwick
Valid Date:	19 October 2022	Expiry Date:	10 November 2023
Case Officer Details:	Name: Mr. David Love Job Title: Specialist Senior Officer Tel No: 07517553360 Email: David.love@northumberland.gov.uk		

Recommendation: That this application be GRANTED permission subject to the conditions appended below and agreement from National Highways on additional condition considered necessary to address their concerns on trunk road safety.



1. Introduction

1.1 The application is a major scale renewable energy application and requires to be determined by the elected members of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC).

1.2 Officers are aware of comments from National Highways objecting to the proposal on grounds of safety. However, we believe that we have an agreed approach allowing the application to be determined subject to these matters being resolved prior to the committee meeting. The applicant has amended plans as per the National Highways consultee response dated 27th September 2023 and we are working together to agree a range of safeguarding conditions with the consultee.

2. Site and Description

2.1 The application site is located at the southern edge of Alnwick, to the south-west of the industrial building currently occupied by Quotient Sciences and comprises 6.64 hectares. To the east the site is bordered by A1, to the south is further agricultural land whilst to the west is a small burn followed by school playing fields. The site's current use is agricultural and grassland purposes.

2.2 This application is for the change of use of an area of agricultural land and installation of solar photo-voltaic panels and associated infrastructure capable of delivering up to 4MW of energy to local businesses. The proposed infrastructure includes operational and a single battery energy storage container, security fencing and CCTV, access tracks, landscaping, and other ancillary works. The energy generated would be used by the occupiers of the nearby industrial estate.

2.3 Access to the site for construction purposes will be through the Quotient Sciences site off Taylor Drive via Willowburn Road and the A1. Operational and maintenance requirements are minimal, and access will be achieved through both the Quotient Sciences site for Phase 1 and via agricultural tracks from the south for future phases. There is no access off the A1.

3. Planning History

There is no history relevant to this proposal.

4. Consultee Responses

County Archaeologist	No objection but suggested they may want a condition depending on the depth of excavations.
Alnwick Town Council	The TC support this application.
Climate Change Team	No response received.
Natural England	No objection
Countryside/ Rights of Way	I have no objection to the proposed development on the condition that Public Footpath No. 39 is protected throughout. No action should be taken to disturb the path surface, without prior consent from us as 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 Ecologist	No objection subject to conditions.
Public Protection	No objection
Northumbrian Water Ltd	No comments.
Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)	No objection subject to conditions.
National Highways (formerly Highways England) - on-going consultation	<p>National Highways originally objected to this proposal on grounds that the proposed glint and glare mitigation along the shared boundary of the A1. The initial mesh fencing proposal was not considered acceptable. The applicant then changed their design to a solid bund which could also be planted. This would provide a greener edge to the development. This was accepted in principle.</p> <p>In their most recent response, they have asked for the plans to be amended to remove any reference to the existing agricultural access off the A1 layby adjacent the site and to change the phasing plan.</p> <p>Discussions regarding compliance and safeguarding conditions are ongoing.</p>
Highways	HDM originally objected to the proposals as the information on access was not clear. However, the applicant has since submitted details demonstrating that access will be from the Quotient Sciences site. With this amendment there is no objection subject to conditions.
Building Conservation	Initial concerns raised over the potential impact on the setting of the wider designed landscape to the north of Alnwick. However, the applicant has amended the LVIA document to include this in their assessment. There has been no response to the re-consultation and the case officer has assessed the impact as being acceptable. This is covered in more detail in the assessment section.

5. Public Responses

Neighbour Notification

Number of Neighbours Notified	132
Number of Objections	1
Number of Support	0
Number of General Comments	0

Notices

Affecting LBC and PROW, 22nd November 2022

Northumberland Gazette 27th October 2022

Summary of Responses:

A single objection has been received raising the following concerns:

Concerns over lithium-ion batteries and electromagnetic electricity (emf), fire risk and potential impact of hydrogen fluoride gas in the event of a fire incident.

Comment: A single battery storage unit is proposed as part of the application and is complementary to the solar farm. It is not designed to store off-peak energy for re-sale at peak time (i.e., a virtual power station). This is a small element to the proposal and given the scale would meet the requirements of the recently released guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council. There is only a single unit and there is a plentiful supply of water nearby given the proximity to the industrial estate and Quotient Sciences. It will be for the applicant to satisfy themselves that they have taken the relevant safety precautions with respect to access to water, but this given the proximity to Alnwick this should not be insurmountable. A planning condition is proposed for a fire safety plan which is considered a pragmatic and reasonable approach given the small scale of the battery storage element.

Impact on birds who mistake the solar panels for water.

Comment: Although there this has been known to happen it is exceedingly rare. Following discussion with Ecology this is not considered to be material in the determination of this application. Solar panels form part of the Government's energy strategy to de-carbonise the economy.

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=RIZ8NNQSJZA00>

6. Planning Policy

6.1 Development Plan Policy

STP 1 - Spatial strategy (Strategic Policy)
STP 2 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development (Strategic Policy)
STP 3 - Principles of sustainable development (Strategic Policy)
STP 4 - Climate change mitigation and adaptation (Strategic Policy)
STP 5 - Health and wellbeing (Strategic Policy)
STP 6 - Green infrastructure (Strategic Policy)
ECN 1 - Planning strategy for the economy (Strategic Policy)
QOP 1 - Design principles (Strategic Policy)
QOP 4 - Landscaping and trees
TRA 1 - Promoting sustainable connections (Strategic Policy)
TRA 2 - The effects of development on the transport network
ENV 2 - Biodiversity and geodiversity
ENV 3 - Landscape
ENV 7 - Historic environment and heritage assets
WAT 3 - Flooding
POL 2 - Pollution and air, soil, and water quality
REN 1 - Renewable and low carbon energy and associated energy storage

6.2 National Planning Policy

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

NPPG - National Planning Practice Guidance (2021, as updated)

6.3 Neighbourhood Planning Policy

Alnwick & Denwick NP Policy ENV 10: Small scale renewable energy

Alnwick & Denwick NP Policy HD 1: Protecting landscape setting

6.4 Other Documents/Strategies

British Energy Security Strategy, 2023

UK Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order (2019)

Energy White Paper: Powering our net zero future (December 2020)

NCC's Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23

National Fire Chiefs Council letter: BESS, 22nd August 2023

7. Appraisal

7.1 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 comprises policies in the Northumberland Local Plan (March 2022).

7.2 It is considered that the main planning issues raised relate to:

- Principle of development
- Climate change
- Use of agricultural land and a greenfield site
- Landscape and visual impact
- Ecology including trees and hedgerows
- Highways Safety including Impact on the A1
- Historic Environment
- Fire safety
- Decommissioning

Principle of development

7.3 Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan is 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 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 would generate a significant amount of electricity from a clean, renewable source in a local context with power being sent to the nearby Quotient Sciences. The County has declared a climate emergency and are actively trying to off-set carbon emissions. 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 locally. This benefit of the scheme will be given significant weight in the planning balance.

7.9 The proposed development accords with Part 1 of Policy STP 4 of the Northumberland Local Plan regarding 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 predevelopment quality.

7.11 The loss of lower quality agricultural land for a period of 40 years is not considered to be significant in a local context.

7.12 The proposed solar farm will be a temporary installation to operate of a 40-year lifespan. A 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.

7.13 Although the development would temporarily remove a small 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.

Landscape and visual impact

7.14 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 essential elements of that character.

7.15 The site is level and characterised by agricultural activities. There is no landscape and visual assessment submitted with the application, but a Zone of Visual Influence has been provided which demonstrates distanced views but of such a scale as to be minimal. Key viewpoints will be obscured by topography and intervening vegetation. It is reasonable to assume that over the 40-year period as the mature vegetation across the area will change but not to such an extent as shown by the bare earth ZVI. Solar farms are low rise, and the small-scale nature of this proposal does not raise any significant concerns with respect to impact on key viewpoints such as rights of way.

7.16 Immediate views of the site will be limited by existing mature vegetation in control of the applicant. A planning condition will require security fencing and a landscape / boundary treatment to be submitted prior to the commencement of works.

7.17 The applicant intends to use a soil bund to restrict views and glint and glare onto the A1. This will be planted and maintained in perpetuity with a management plan secured by condition. This will significantly restrict close views of the development and limit them in totality from the A1. Longer distance views will be seen in the context of

retail park / Quotient Sciences and the settlement edge. This view in context will lessen the overall effects.

7.18 In conclusion, the proposed development has the potential for adverse effects on landscape character and visual impact in a worst-case scenario. However, the topography of the site, existing screening and the introduction of new tree and hedgerow planting would limit the adverse effects, which would be localised. Notwithstanding this, the proposal is consistent with policy ENV 3 with respect to landscape and visual impacts.

Ecology including trees and hedgerows

7.19 Policy ENV 2 seeks to ensure that proposals provide a net gain in biodiversity. This should not be confused with the forthcoming government requirement for 10% as a minimum. Planning policy seeks a gain, as opposed to a definitive volume.

7.20 The applicant has submitted a series of supporting documents including:

- ecological assessment,
- biodiversity net gain assessment,
- arboriculture
- and landscaping plans.

7.21 The proposed installation is in semi-improved grassland and arable fields with hedges adjacent to a small area of HPI deciduous woodland close to the A1.

7.22 The plans show that hedges and trees can be protected during the development and new species rich grassland around the PV panels will deliver a net gain for biodiversity. The County Ecologist commented that they welcome the scheme and consider it a good uplift in biodiversity for the site. A planning condition will ensure compliance with the submitted details.

7.23 The proposal is consistent with the provisions of policy ENV 2 and the relevant sections of the NPPF.

Highways Safety including Impact on the A1

7.24 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.

7.25 The council's Highways Development Management team has commented that the proposal seeks to access the site via the local road network via Quotient Sciences

and Taylor Drive. In respect to the height of surrounding vegetation, the Arboricultural Impact assessment report and plans indicate the minimum height of hedges to be 2.5m which is acceptable and given the distance of the local road network to the development, this should not pose a significant highway safety concern, subject to satisfactory planned screening in the form of boundary treatment; a condition is outlined below to secure this.

7.26 A glint assessment has been undertaken which indicates that glimpses of glint, if any, from public roads from the perspective of a motorist would be very weak and pass by very quickly, having no material impact, with the panels coated to aid the absorption of daylight.

7.27 Several conditions are recommended including to secure access via Taylor Drive U3155; the proposed development is then served by a private road and tracks, with the existing access from Taylor Drive tarmacked, and it is recommended condition surveys to be undertaken. These conditions are attached below.

7.28 As the proposal is adjacent the A1 National Highways (NH) have been consulted. As part of the determination process the applicant initially sought to install a mesh fence along the boundary with the A1. The applicant felt this would reduce glint and glare to an acceptable level. However, NH continued to object on the grounds of safety. There was also a chance that should the fence be damaged, it could be blown into the road. The case officer also expressed concern over this fence in the landscape context and the potential for it to appear incongruous in the wider setting. Following discussion, the applicant offered to change the fence for a soil bund. This could then be planted and maintained in perpetuity. Following further discussion with NH this was deemed acceptable in principle and addressed their primary concerns. At the time of writing this report the LPA, NH and the applicant are in discussions regarding planning conditions. This will limit the solar panels to the eastern field only until such time as the bund is in situ. Other conditions will limit the access to Taylor Drive only and ensure maintenance and management of the boundary treatments. These conditions will need to be discharged in discussion with NH.

7.29 Given the positive nature of the discussions with NH officers recommend that the application is consistent with policy TRA 2 assuming conditions can be agreed with NH and the applicant. The latter has been flexible with the wording, and we are confident that this issue will be resolved prior to the committee.

Historic Environment

7.30 Most sites around Alnwick raise the potential for historic environment interest. In this instance the proposal does not contain extensive excavations that would impact on below ground finds. The history of the site as an arable field would suggest that anything has already been disturbed. The county Archaeologist has not suggested any conditions or further works being required.

7.31 The proposal is in the setting of Greensfield Moor Farmhouse which is a grade 2 listed building. Initial concern was raised over the potential impact. However, the building will be seen in the context of the A1 and the settlement edge which is characterised by the Lionheart industrial estate and the school with associated infrastructure. The development will be bounded by soft landscaping thus reducing the impacts. Distance views of the farmhouse will be seen in the busy context.

7.32 The north of Alnwick contains a designed landscape designation around the castle. There are no views where the development and this designation will be seen. The development benefits from the busy urban edge which already sets a built baseline.

7.33 The proposal is considered to represent less than substantial harm, or even negligible. The public benefits are that the proposal will offset the electricity use of Quotient Sciences and assist, in a small way, the push towards decarbonising the economy. In this regard the proposal is consistent with policies ENV 1, ENV 7 and REN1 with respect to historic environment impacts.

Fire Safety

7.34 There is little in the way of guidance with respect to fire safety and lithium-ion batteries. The government's PPG (Planning Practice Guidance) advises that planning authorities may wish to consult the local fire service.

7.35 In August 2023, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) issued detailed guidelines on what they would expect a development to demonstrate. In order to avoid over-consultation and ensure a pragmatic approach to the determination process the Fire Service has not been consulted but the development has been assessed against the guidance. There is only a single battery unit, so separation distances are not an issue. There is an emergency access available off the A1 should it be needed. This is an agricultural access but can be used by emergency vehicles. Finally, the site is close to the public water supply. A planning condition is proposed for the applicant to provide a fire safety plan prior to the commencement of works. This will need to be considered by the Fire Service prior to discharge.

Decommissioning

7.36 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.

7.37 The application proposed that, except for 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.

7.38 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 if 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.

7.39 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

Equality Duty

7.40 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

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

Human Rights Act Implications

7.42 The Human Rights Act requires the County Council to consider 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.

7.43 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.

7.44 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, which includes the right of review by the High Court, complied with Article 6.

8. Conclusion

8.1 The proposal seeks to install a solar park to assist a local employer and reduce their carbon footprint. The associated BESS is small scale and will assist to make the installation more efficient and reduce energy loss during peak hours and allow Quotient Sciences to draw on renewable energy during cloudy days and dark hours.

8.2 It has been demonstrated that the proposal can meet the requirements and address concerns of consultees. Landscape and visual impacts are minimal given the urban edge of the settlement adjacent the site.

9. Recommendation

That this application be GRANTED permission subject to the following:

Conditions/Reason

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

02. The development to which this permission relates shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents referenced.

Approved Plans

Site Security, 1364-114 Rev D

PV Array (Option B: With BESS) 1364-113 Rev E

Proposed Planting Plan NT15295-016 Rev C

Sections 1364-131 Rev D

Elevations CCTV 1364-129 Rev C

Elevations Security Fencing 1364-128 Rev C

Existing Site Plan NT15292-015

Site Location – Aerial Imagery NT15292/002

Site Location – Ordnance Survey Background NT15292/001

Elevations Central Inverter 1364-122 Rev E

Elevations Private Substation 1364-124 Rev C

Elevations Aux Service Building 1364-125 Rev C

Elevations DNO Substation 1364-126 Rev C

Elevations Spares Store 1364-127 Rev D

Elevations Battery Container 1364-134 Rev B

Arboricultural Assessment

Arboricultural Method Statement for Trees on Land South of Arcinova Factory, Alnwick
Revision A, All About Trees, January 2023

Arboricultural Method Statement – Tree Protection Plan (AMS TPP Rev A)

Surface Water Management

Drawing Number NT15295-018 indicative surface water management plan Rev A
dated 24/08/2023 produced by Wardell Armstrong

Document number 0002 Rev 3 Proposed Solar Farm at Land South of Arcinova,
Alnwick Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy September 2023 by Wardell
Armstrong

Landscape Mitigation

Northumberland Estates, Proposed Solar Farm at Land South of Alnwick, Landscape
and Visual Appraisal, September 2023 – Wardell Armstrong

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning, and to
achieve a satisfactory form of development in accordance with the National Planning
Policy Framework and the Local Plan.

03. Ecology

The development will be carried out in full accordance with the details of the reports
and plans

Tree Protection Plan (All About Trees, 15.09.2022)

Proposed solar PV photovoltaic (PV) development on land south of Arcinova, Alnwick
Biodiversity Gain Assessment Report (BSG Ecology, February 2023)

Proposed solar PV photovoltaic (PV) development on land south of Arcinova, Alnwick Ecology Report (BSG Ecology, September 2022)
Proposed Planting Plan (Wardell Armstrong, September 2022)

Reason: to maintain and enhance the biodiversity value of the site in accordance with Policy ENV2 of the Northumberland Local Plan

04. Vegetation Erosion

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.

05. SuDS Maintenance

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.

06. Construction Method Statement (including Plan) (Amended)

Development shall not commence until a Construction Method Statement, 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:

- i. site contact details - name, telephone number etc;
- li. details of temporary traffic management measures, temporary access, routes, and vehicles;
- lii. vehicle timings, types, and vehicle cleaning facilities;
- lv. the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
- v. the loading and unloading of plant and materials;
- Vi. storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development.

Reason: To prevent nuisance in the interests of residential amenity and highway safety, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy TRA2 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

07. Boundary treatment (Amended)

Development shall not commence until details of the proposed boundary treatment have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall be implemented before the development is brought into use.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and highway safety, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy TRA1 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

08. Car Parking

The development shall not be brought into use until details of the car parking area have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and implemented in accordance with the approved details. Thereafter, the car parking area shall be retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy TRA4 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

09. Means of vehicular access from specified road

Means of vehicular access to the permitted development 'Change of use of agricultural land and construction of solar PV panels, associated electrical infrastructure, small operational and battery energy storage buildings, security fencing, CCTV, access tracks, landscaping and other ancillary works' shall be from the U3155 only.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy TRA2 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

10. Bespoke Deliveries and Servicing Management Strategy

The development shall not be brought into first use until a Deliveries and Servicing Management Strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Deliveries and Servicing Management Strategy shall be adhered to in perpetuity. This Deliveries and Servicing Management Strategy must include:

- i. details of the access, routes and vehicles associated with the site;
- ii. details of the timings for deliveries and servicing of the site;
- iii. details of the annual numbers of HGV's associated with the deliveries/servicing of the site;
- iv. a plan for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the Deliveries and Servicing Management Strategy, including details of management of decommissioning; and
- v. a scheme providing for a biennial monitoring report to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy TRA1 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

11. Lifespan

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

12. Operating Period

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 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.

13. Decommissioning

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.

14. Restoration

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.

15. Artificial Lighting

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

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 Policy Framework and Policy POL 2 and Policy REN 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan.

16. Construction Hours

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.

17. Fire Safety and Pollution Prevention Plan

Prior to the installation of the lithium-ion battery storage facility the applicant shall submit a fire safety and pollution prevention plan with a strategy in place in the event that the lithium-ion batteries catch fire. This plan should demonstrate consistency with the National Fire Chiefs Council's guidance titled Planning Policy Guidance: Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), 22nd August 2023. Once approved the development shall be managed as per the details of this document.

Reason: In the interests of safety, pollution prevent and ensure consistency with PPG and policy ENV 2 of the Local Plan.

Informative

Highway condition survey

You should note that a highway condition survey should be carried out before the commencement of demolition and construction vehicle movements from this site.

To arrange a survey, contact Highway Development Management at highwaysplanning@northumberland.gov.uk

Reminder to not store building material or equipment on the highway

Building materials or equipment shall not be stored on the highway unless otherwise agreed. You are advised to contact the StreetWorks team on 0345 600 6400 for Skips and Containers licences.

Reminder to not deposit mud/ debris/rubbish on the highway

In accordance with the Highways Act 1980 mud, debris or rubbish shall not be deposited on the highway.

Section 59 Agreement - Extraordinary Expenses

You are advised to contact the Council's Highway Development Management team at highwaysplanning@northumberland.gov.uk concerning the Section 59 Agreement of the Highway Act 1980 relating to extraordinary expenses

Date of Report: 20th October 2023

Background Papers: Planning application file(s) 22/03576/RENE