

EXECUTIVE

16th January 2025

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Report Title | Green Hill Solar Farm Development Consent Order Delegations |
| Lead Member | Councillor David Brackenbury – Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration |
| Report Author | Nicola Thompson, Senior Planning Officer, Development Management |

| | |
|--|---|
| Key Decision | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there public sector equality duty implications? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 | N/A |
| Which Corporate Plan priority does the report most closely align with? | Safe and thriving places |

List of Appendices

Appendix A – LPA Timetable

Appendix B – North Northamptonshire Council response to Scoping Request

Appendix C – North Northamptonshire Council Response to draft Statement of Community Consultation

Appendix D - The developers Consultation Information Booklet for the Statutory Consultation

Appendix E – The Planning Inspectorate Advice Note 2: The role of local authorities in the development consent process

Appendix F – Ward and Parish Council consultation list

Appendix G - Climate Change Impact Assessment (CCIA) tool

Appendix H – CCIA Report

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To advise the Executive of the proposed Green Hill Solar Farm development, the Development Consent Order planning process it is subject to; and to seek appropriate delegations to the Executive Director of Place and Economy in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, to

respond to consultations and engagement from the developer and the Planning Inspectorate.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Green Hill Solar Farm is a proposal for a solar farm including battery storage on land, located to the west and south of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, and north of Milton Keynes. It is proposed across nine sites which expand across approximately 1,200 hectares. The majority of the development is located within North Northamptonshire Council's administrative boundary. The developer is Island Green Power.
- 2.2. Due to the scale of the proposal, it is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) that would be subject to a Development Consent Order (DCO). This consenting regime is processed and determined by the Secretary of State (in conjunction with the Planning Inspectorate) with the Council, as local planning authority, acting in the capacity of a statutory consultee and 'Host Authority' in this process, as opposed to the decision-maker. The DCO process is administered by The Planning Inspectorate, with the final decision made by the relevant Secretary of State based on a recommendation by a panel of Planning Inspectors (known as Examiners of the Examining Authority) and active participation by Local Authorities is strongly encouraged.
- 2.3. This report seeks delegated powers for the Executive Director of Place and Economy, in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, to respond to consultations and engagement from the developer and the Planning Inspectorate (including the Examining Authority) during the DCO stages for Green Hill Solar Farm as identified in **Appendix A** to this report, except for:
 - the consultation response on the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping which was issued to the Planning Inspectorate on 22nd August 2024 (See **Appendix B** for the response);
 - the consultation response on the draft Statement of Community Consultation which was issued to the developer on 17th September 2024 (See **Appendix C** for the response); and
 - the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report and Statutory consultation and Targeted Statutory Consultation which requires a response to the developer by 19th December 2024 and will be issued to them on or shortly before that date (See **Appendix D** for the consultation response request).
- 2.4. It is in the interests of North Northamptonshire Council's residents that the Council fully engages with the Development Consent Order process to ensure that local knowledge of the sites and the interests of local communities are clearly presented, and considered, by the Secretary of State when determining the application. By engaging with the process, the Council is not determining whether the application is appropriate development in planning terms but is acting as a responsible and engaged consultee and representative of local communities and residents. During the process, the Council will also be seeking

to secure appropriate mitigations to address the impacts of the development should it be granted thus protecting its communities as far as possible.

- 2.5 If consent is granted by the Secretary of State for the Green Hill Solar Farm, approval is also sought to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Economy to determine post-decision matters, such as handling the discharge of 'Requirements' (akin to planning conditions), to respond to the Secretary of State on any amendments to the Development Consent Order requested by the developer and, lastly, enforcing the terms of the Development Consent Order, as these will become the responsibility of North Northamptonshire Council.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Executive:

- a) Endorse the Regulation 11 Notice to submit a draft statutory consultation response on the Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) in regard to the proposed Green Hill Solar Farm.
- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Economy, in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, to respond to consultations and engagement from the developer and the Planning Inspectorate (including the Examining Authority) during the following Development Consent Order stages: Pre-application; Acceptance; Pre-Examination; Examination; and Post-Examination.
- c) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Economy to deal with post-decision matters (if development consent is granted) including matters such as determination of applications under the Development Consent Order consenting regime and enforcement in respect of any Development Consent Order granted by the Secretary of State.

3.2 Reason for Recommendations –

- To adhere to the guidance set down by the Planning Inspectorate to ensure adequate delegations are in place to enable the Council to represent the interests of North Northamptonshire Council as 'Host Authority' and participate in the Development Consent Order stages within the tight formal timeframes.

3.3 Alternative Options Considered –

- It has been considered whether the authority of the Executive should be sought at each of the different stages of the Development Consent Order process. This has been rejected due to the need to meet statutory timescales and the risk that the impacts of the development on North Northamptonshire's local communities would not be fully considered.

- The Council could also decide not to respond further to the Development Consent Order process. This course of action is not recommended due to the risk that the impacts of the development on North Northamptonshire's local communities would not be fully considered and any opportunity to secure mitigation for the impacts would be lost should consent be granted. Furthermore, this option is likely to be reputationally damaging to the Council, especially given its status as a 'Statutory Consultee' and 'Host Authority'.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. The Planning Act 2008 introduced a new development consent regime for determining Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). NSIPs are projects of certain types, over a specified size, which are considered by the Government to be so big and nationally important that permission to build them needs to be given at a national level, by the relevant Secretary of State. Instead of applying for planning permission, the developer must apply to the Planning Inspectorate for a different permission called a Development Consent Order (DCO). The process for applying for a DCO is set out in the Planning Act 2008.
- 4.2. The purpose of the DCO is to simplify and speed up decision-making for nationally significant infrastructure projects. The Planning Act 2008 sets out the categories of projects and provides more detail about the types and scale of infrastructure development within these categories that are deemed to be nationally significant. In this context, the proposal is for the development of a Solar Farm which would generate electricity exceeding 50MW, with 50MW being the threshold for a DCO. In this case, the project could generate approximately 500MW.
- 4.3. The power to grant or refuse DCOs is with the relevant Secretary of State. The decision is based on recommendations made by the Planning Inspectorate, who appoint a panel of Inspectors who are known as the Examination Authority, following a detailed examination of the evidence.
- 4.4. The host and neighbouring Local Authorities have an important role in the DCO process. Whilst participation is not obligatory it is strongly advised, and Local Authorities are encouraged to discuss and work through issues raised by NSIP proposals and provide a local perspective. The local planning authority will also be responsible for post-decision matters associated with an NSIP in their area if the DCO is granted, such as discharging many of the Requirements (akin to planning conditions attached to planning permissions) and will also have a role in monitoring and enforcing the DCO provisions and the 'Requirements'.
- 4.5. The Development Consent Order process has six stages: Pre-application, Acceptance, Pre-examination, Examination, Decision and Post-decision. An overview of these stages is set out in **Appendix A** of this report.
- 4.6. There will be numerous deadlines for Local Authorities and other interested parties to submit representations during the DCO process. During the 'Pre-Examination' and 'Examination' stages, late submissions of important documents, such as the Local Impact Report or the Statement(s) of Common Ground may prejudice the ability of other interested parties to consider and

comment on its content, potentially disrupting the examination timetable and resulting in additional costs for other interested parties. There is also a risk that these documents may not be accepted for consideration as part of the process.

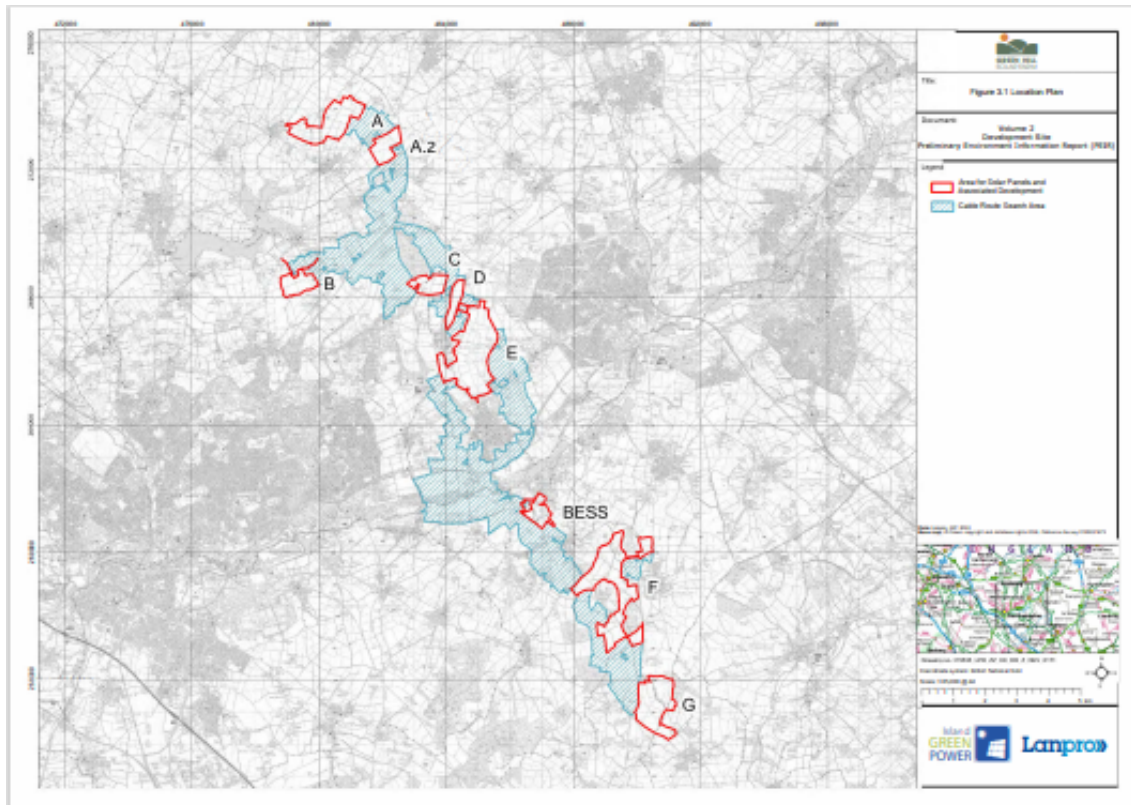
- 4.7. The Planning Inspectorate's guidance note for Local Authorities (see **Appendix E**) identifies the need for local planning authorities to ensure that they have adequate delegations in place; this is especially important at the Examination stage where there is unlikely to be time to seek Executive approval for representations to be made because this stage is a relatively fast-track process with several deadlines over a maximum period of 6 months.

5. Green Hill Solar Farm

The proposals

- 5.1. Green Hill Solar Farm, which includes battery storage, is classified as an NSIP because of the amount of electricity it would generate (approximately 500MW, which is over the 50MW threshold for determining energy generation schemes locally). The scheme is backed by Island Green Power as the developer. There is a link to the project website under the 'Background Papers' section of this report.
- 5.2. The Planning Inspectorate has dedicated project pages for each NSIP where you can find project updates and the document register, there is a link to this under the 'Background Papers' section of this report.
- 5.3. The site is located to the west and south of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, and north of Milton Keynes. It is proposed across nine sites (referred to as Green Hill A, A.2, B, C, D, E, F, G and Green Hill BESS (Battery Energy Storage System)). The sites expand across approximately 1,200 hectares. Sites C, D, E, F and BESS are within North Northamptonshire Council's administrative boundary.

Site Plan (red line areas are sites and blue shaded areas is the cable route search area)



- 5.4. Only half the site is proposed to be used for energy generation and storage, with the remainder being used during the construction period and/or for mitigation. It is proposed that the solar farm would connect to the existing Grendon substation in 2029, which would require a significant increase in capacity. It is claimed that by the developer that the Green Hill Solar Farm could power more than 115,000 homes, with a lifespan of 60 years.

Current progress of the proposal

- 5.5. North Northamptonshire Council is a 'host authority' as a significant proportion of the proposed development would be sited within the Council's administrative area.
- 5.6 The developer is currently in the 'Pre-application Stage' of the DCO process. See the LPA Timetable at **Appendix A** for further detail on the states of the DCO process and the Council's potential for involvement with this.
- 5.7 The pre-application stage is led by the developer. There are various stages of engagement comprising non-statutory and statutory consultation with interested parties that commenced in March 2024 and will continue until the DCO is submitted. The developer advises that this will be in February 2025. To date, due to tight timescales for critical responses, the following areas within the Pre-application Stage of the DCO process have been responded to:
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping – the Council were consulted on 25.07.2024 by the Planning Inspectorate. The Council in its capacity as local planning authority is a statutory consultee for the purposes of informing the scope of the EIA to be carried out by the developer. It had 28 days in which to respond to a consultation request from the Planning Inspectorate. A response was issued on 22.08.2024

under the Council's 's planning reference NW/24/00425/EXT (**Appendix B**). The Planning Inspectorate considered the Council's consultation response and made a final decision on the scope of the EIA. As part of the EIA process, the Council consulted several technical consultees, including but not limited to, highways, ecology, landscape, archaeology, environmental protection, built heritage, drainage etc. All feedback received was included in the Council's response to The Planning Inspectorate.

- Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) - the Council were consulted on 12.08.2024 by the developer. It had 6 weeks in which to provide feedback to the developer on the draft SoCC. Reviewing a draft SoCC is the Council's opportunity to shape the approach that the developer will take with the pre application consultation. The SoCC describes how the developer intends to consult with the public regarding its proposed scheme, including how the developer will publicise and consult on preliminary environmental information. The Council consulted internal departments (policy and media colleagues) and the appropriate Ward Councillors and Parish Councils as listed in **Appendix F**. All feedback received was included in the Council's response to the developer. A response was issued on 17.09.2024 under the Council's planning reference NW/24/00448/EXT (**Appendix C**).
- Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) and Statutory consultation – the Council, as local planning authority were consulted on 07.11.2024 by the developer (see **Appendix D** for the consultation request document). It has 6 weeks in which to provide feedback to the developer on the PEIR on the emerging preliminary environmental information, to inform the Environmental Impact Assessment which will be submitted by the developer with the DCO. The developer will use the feedback from interested parties to help develop the proposals. The Council consulted several technical consultees (similar to those mentioned in paragraph 5.7 bullet point 1), and their feedback will be included in the response. A PEIR and statutory consultation response from the Council will be issued to the developer on or before 19.12.2024.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The proposed development is currently in the pre-application stage, meaning that there is limited detailed information available, it is however envisaged that the proposal could potentially have significant impacts, amongst others, on North Northamptonshire in respect of the matters below (see 6.2) and this has been reflected in the EIA scoping response that was sent to The Planning Inspectorate (see **Appendix B**).
- 6.2.
- a. Landscape and Visual
 - b. Transport and Highways
 - c. Heritage and Archaeology
 - d. Ecology and Biodiversity
 - e. Air Quality
 - f. Noise and Vibration
 - g. Water

- h. Agriculture
- i. Cumulative Effects
- j. Climate Change
- k. Ground Conditions and Contamination
- l. Minerals
- m. Glint and Glare
- n. Electromagnetic Fields
- o. Socio-economics, Tourism and Recreation
- p. Human Health and Wellbeing
- q. Arboriculture
- r. Agricultural Circumstances
- s. Other Environmental Matters (Lighting, Waste, Utilities, Planning Obligations)

- 6.3. It is recommended that the Council engages appropriately in the DCO process to ensure that the range of potential impacts is understood and considered by the developer/Applicant and then subsequently the Examining Authority before the final decision is taken by the relevant Secretary of State. It is a frontloaded process so therefore effective and meaningful engagement during the whole 'Pre-application stage' is important.
- 6.4. A Planning Performance Agreement with the developer to cover the additional resource required to participate in the DCO process has already been secured.
- 6.5. Alternatively, the Council could decide not to actively engage in the DCO process. As set out above such a decision is not recommended as it would be likely to have reputational implications and could also mean that impacts on North Northamptonshire are not properly considered or addressed by the Examining Authority.
- 6.6. The legal requirements governing the determination of the DCO process are set out in the Planning Act 2008. As has been indicated in this report, the Development Consent Order process sets out response timescales. To meet these timescales, Local Authorities are encouraged to ensure appropriate delegations and resources are in place. It is therefore recommended that delegations to engage in the process are provided to the Executive Director of Place and Economy, in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, to respond to consultations and engagement from the developer and the Planning Inspectorate (including the Examining Authority) during the following Development Consent Order stages: Pre-application (part-retrospective); Acceptance; Pre-Examination; Examination; and Post-Examination. Also, to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Economy in respect of the powers to deal with post-decision matters (if development consent is granted) including matters such as determination of applications under the Development Consent Order consenting regime and enforcement in respect of any Development Consent Order granted by the Secretary of State.
- 6.7. By agreeing to this delegation of authority the Council will be in a position, where it can respond to the process in its role as a statutory consultee and Host Authority. The absence of delegations would limit the ability of the Council to actively engage in the DCO process and represent the interests of North Northamptonshire Council and its communities.

- 6.8 This report relates only to the decision-making arrangements for responding to Green Hill Solar Farm DCO.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1. The next stage in the process is the submission of the DCO and then The Planning Inspectorate inviting the Council to take part in the pre-examination stage. This is detailed below and the table set out at **Appendix A**.
- 7.2. The application for development consent is expected to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate early 2025. Once the DCO is submitted by the developer (they then become 'the Applicant'), the Planning Inspectorate has 28 days to decide whether to accept the application for examination. The Council will be invited to make an adequacy of consultation representation. This can make a difference as to whether an application for a DCO is accepted or rejected to take forward into Examination. The Council will have 14 days to do so from the date of the invitation. At the 'Acceptance Stage' the Planning Inspectorate will check the submission and seek the views of the Council as to whether the Applicant followed the regulations in respect of public engagement and consultation.
- 7.3 The next step is the 'Pre-Examination' Stage - Relevant Representation'. As a host authority, the Council is automatically an "Interested Party" for the purposes of the examination process and will be invited to submit a 'Relevant Representation' to assist the Examining Authority (who are a panel of inspectors from the Planning Inspectorate - 'the ExA') to identify the main issues for the Examination. During the 'Pre-Examination' Stage, the Council will be invited by the Planning Inspectorate to set out its initial case through a 'Relevant Representation'. This document will set out a summary of the points that the Council agrees with and/or disagrees with, highlighting for the ExA what the main issues and impacts are.
- 7.4 The Council may then be requested by the Planning Inspectorate to prepare and provide the ExA with a document setting out the Council's position on the key areas of disagreement. This is referred to as a Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statement ('PADSS').
- 7.5 Following this, the Council will be invited to attend the preliminary meeting and open floor hearings. These hearings are for the Council to comment to the ExA on the draft examination timetable and preliminary matters contained in what is known as the 'Rule 6' letter. Attendance at the preliminary and open floor meetings is recommended to inform the procedural arrangements and to explain the Council's main issues.
- 7.6 The Examination is a statutory period of 6 months (maximum). As mentioned above, the ExA on behalf of the Planning Inspectorate is responsible for setting the examination timetable. As the examination gets under way, the Council will be invited to submit the following documents:
- Local Impact Report; and
 - Written Representations on the application.

- 7.7 There will be also around 10 deadlines during the Examination in which the Council will be invited to address the following matters:
- Responses to the written representations of others;
 - Response to the Applicant's further submissions;
 - Responses to the Examining Authority's written questions and responses/comments on the responses of others;
 - Updated Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statement (where required);
 - Review of Statement of Common Ground (SOCG) and Statement of Commonality of SoCG;
 - Draft Development Consent Order document;
 - S106 legal agreements;
 - Other legal agreements;
 - Issue specific hearings;
 - Post hearing written submissions; and
 - Rule 17 submissions.

In addition, there may be other matters that the Council would respond to not specified in the list. For example, there may be accompanied site visits including commenting on itineraries for those inspections.

- 7.8 As mentioned, at the 'Examination Stage' of the DCO process, the Council will make several submissions including a Written Representation (WR). The WR will set out its position on the proposed development. In addition, the Council will have the opportunity to write a Local Impact Report (LIP) which is usually submitted alongside the WR but will specifically identify local impacts concerning the Council's Development Plan, local knowledge, and robust evidence of local issues, including the impacts and their importance. This stage of the DCO process is a largely written procedure, however, there will be Hearings to explore the main issues. This stage must finish within six months as this is a statutory requirement of the process. It is an intense period with relatively short deadlines to meet. Anything that is not agreed between the parties will be determined by the Examining Authority.
- 7.9 Following the close of the Examination, the Examining Authority has three months to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Energy, Security and Net Zero. The Secretary of State then has a further three months to decide whether to grant the DCO. During the recommendation, drafting, and the decision being considered/made by the Secretary of State, there can be, under exceptional circumstances, additional information submitted and for further consultation to be carried out.
- 7.10 The Secretary of State will either approve or refuse the application for development consent. If it is approved, then the process is like that for a planning application where matters secured by the condition of planning permission are submitted for approval (these are known as 'Requirements'), changes can be made and as the development is constructed it must be built by according to the terms of the DCO otherwise the Council, as local planning authority has the power to take enforcement action. Post-decision approvals and compliance would become the responsibility of North Northamptonshire Council for the sites within the Council's administrative boundary.

- 7.11 Post Examination - The statutory timescale for a decision on a DCO application is 6 months (3 months for the Examining Authority to issue its report and recommendation and 3 months for the Secretary of State's decision and statement of reasons). The Council may be required to respond to any requests arising following the close of Examination to a point the decision is issued. Assuming the DCO is made and implemented, the Council as local planning authority will have an ongoing responsibility for enforcing any breach relating to the Development Consent Order including the discharge, monitoring and enforcement of any Requirements and planning obligations secured through any Section 106 legal agreements. The Council will be consulted on any amendments made by the Applicants to the SoS (the SoS retains decision making powers for amendments).
- 7.12 Planning obligations may be required to mitigate the impact of the proposed development and these must be secured through a legal agreement entered into between relevant landowners and the local planning authority pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The function of determining the terms of any section 106 agreement to be entered into by the Council is not to be the responsibility of an executive of the Council under law and therefore these matters would need to be determined by the Council's Planning Committee or under a delegation from the aforesaid committee. There is an existing delegation to the Executive Director of Place and Economy, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into new or amended legal agreements in respect of proposed developments.
- 7.13 With each stage that requires a Council response, it will be published on the Council's website. With regards to the South Planning Committee and ward member involvement a report will be presented to the South Planning Committee prior to the DCO application being formally submitted by the developer for determination by the Secretary of State. The report to committee will note that the DCO is being submitted, what a DCO is, what the Council's involvement is and details of how representations can be made (i.e. to the developer and their details). The committee report will also be circulated to all ward members (the list as detailed in **Appendix F**) for information at the same time. Following the DCO application acceptance, it is proposed that a standing item is on the South Planning Committee agenda to update members on the progress of the DCO for information purposes and all ward members will duly be updated at the same time as the South Planning Committee agenda papers are circulated.
- 7.14. Delegated authority is sought from the Executive Director of Place and Economy, in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, to respond to consultations and engagement from the developer and the Planning Inspectorate (including the Examining Authority) to the consultation and engagement aspects of the Development Consent Order process under the relevant timescales.

8. Implications (including financial implications)

8.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 8.1.1 There is a cost implication of resourcing North Northamptonshire Council's involvement in the DCO. The Growth and Regeneration Service is not structured to manage the pressures of a major DCO within its existing resources or budget. This is because DCOs are infrequent, and the resourcing requirements are not continuous and fluctuate significantly during the process. Engagement as a statutory consultee in the process will place significant demands on resources.
- 8.1.2 A Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) has been secured to resource and cover officer involvement and time associated with the DCO. Through the PPA, the developer will make a financial contribution towards the Council's costs.
- 8.1.3 If the DCO consent is granted, it will attract business rate receipts. The developer may commit to a Community Benefit Fund; however, this would be exclusively between the developer and the local community. At this stage, there are no other known local financial considerations.
- 8.1.4 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the contents of this report.

8.2. Legal and Governance

- 8.2.1 The legal requirements governing the determination of the DCO process are set out in the Planning Act 2008.
- 8.2.2 As has been indicated in this report, the Development Consent Order process sets out response timescales and although these are not mandatory, nor is engagement from the local planning authority, the participation of the Council is strongly encouraged in the Planning Inspectorate Guidance (**Appendix E**). This guidance also makes it clear that local authorities are encouraged to ensure appropriate delegations and resources are in place. It is therefore recommended that delegations set out in this report be obtained to enable engagement in the DCO process in its role as a Statutory Consultee and Host Authority. The absence of delegations would limit the ability of the Council to actively engage in the DCO process and represent the interests of North Northamptonshire Council and its communities.
- 8.2.3 This report relates only to the decision-making arrangements for responding to Green Hill Solar Farm DCO.
- 8.2.4 Should the relevant Secretary of State grant the Development Consent Order this becomes a statutory instrument and the Council, as Local Planning Authority, would have ongoing responsibility for enforcement of the DCO and the requirements attached to it.

8.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

8.3.1 Underpinning the NSIP regime are National Policy Statements (NPS) produced by the central Government. NPSs are the strategic policy framework, which DCOs are considered and determined against. NPSs set out the national policy regarding the different categories of NSIP. NPSs undergo a process of public consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny before being designated (i.e., published). The National Planning Policy Framework and Local Policy are also relevant to this report and these will be fully considered and identified as a part of the DCO process.

8.4. Risk

8.4.1 Should the Council choose not to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Economy, in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, there is the risk that consultation responses to the Planning Inspectorate and developer are not made in a timely manner. Given the strict, tight deadlines there is the risk that the Council's comments and feedback on the proposals at various stages will not be taken into account.

8.5. Consultation

8.5.1 The Council is a consultee in the process. During each stage of the DCO, NNC will be consulted by either the developer or the Planning Inspectorate. The Council will consult technical consultees (internal and external) and where relevant, Ward Members and Parish Councils.

8.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

8.6.1 This report has not been considered by an Executive Advisory Panel (EAP).

8.7. Consideration by Scrutiny

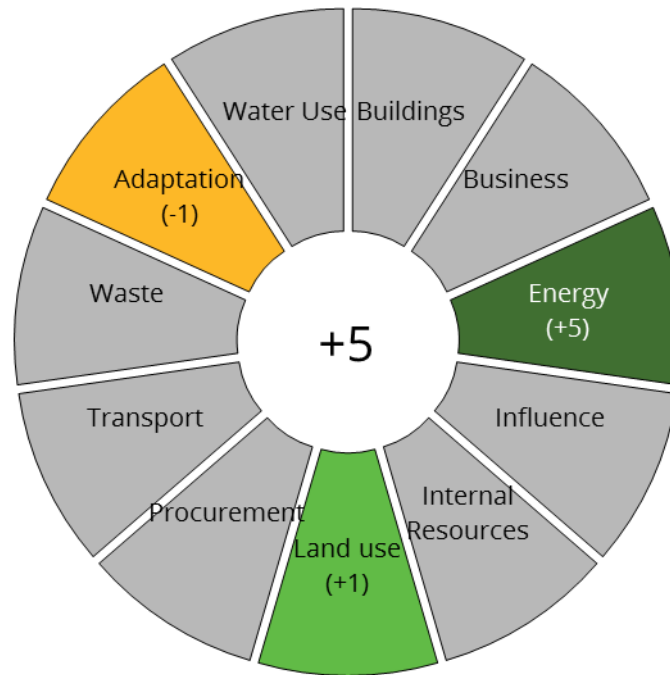
8.7.1 This report has not been considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

8.8. Equality Implications

8.8.1 In the review of the application documents submitted with the Development Consent Order due regard will be paid to equality matters relating to the protected characteristics. Equality will also be a matter to be considered by the Examining Authority.

8.9. Climate Impact

8.9.1 The Climate Change Impact Assessment (CCIA) tool (see **Appendix G and Appendix H**) has been run and has identifies a score of +5. This is due to the nature of the proposed development.



North Northamptonshire Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, 5 yrs & 0 mos away.

The infographic shows the relative costs and benefits of the decision on 11 different categories with respect to the climate: Buildings, no effect. Business, no effect. Energy, plus 5. Influence, no effect. Internal Resources, no effect. Land use, plus 1. Procurement, no effect. Transport, no effect. Waste, no effect. Adaptation, minus 1. Water Use, no effect.

8.9.2 Energy (score of +5). In regard to communication and engagement, given the scale of the proposals and the public interest, the proposal is increasing the awareness of climate change. Any impacts or trade-offs would be considered as part of the Development Consent Order process. The decision-maker is the Secretary of State (in conjunction with PINS – the Planning Inspectorate) with NNC as a consultee in the DCO process. The only control NNC would have is over Requirement discharge (i.e. the discharge of conditions attached to the DCO should it be granted), and enforcing the DCO decision. Working with communities is not directly relevant as NNC are consultees in the process. However, maintaining a good relationship with Members, Ward Councillors, Parish Councils, communities etc through usual public engagement consultation procedures will take place. In addition NNC will engage with their 'host authorities and work cross-boundary with MKC and WNDC.

8.9.3 Land use (score of +1). This project will result in a net increase in land carbon storage because the proposed mitigation for the solar farm includes extensive planting. It could also improve biodiversity adaptation; however this is to be determined as part of the DCO process. There will inevitably be some loss of habitats due to the building works on the 1200 hectare site; but there are also mitigation and improvements proposed to be secured on site. With regard to natural flood management, one of the options for the battery storage site is within flood zone 1. The flood Risk increase/decrease detail will be assessed and determined as part of the DCO process.

8.9.4 Adaptation (score of -1). In terms of drought vulnerability, the land could potentially still be used for agricultural with the solar panels on. If there is a drought this may not be possible, but this is no different to any other pasture fields. Regarding, flooding vulnerability, an option for the main substation/battery storage is Grendon where there is an existing substation. This is within Flood Zone 1 and could increase the risk of flooding if this option is progressed (again this will be assessed and determined as part of the DCO process). Considering heatwave vulnerability, if this does occur it would be good for the solar panels regarding conversion to energy, however the risk of fire for the panels is a concern. The DCO process will consider and assess fire risks and potential mitigation.

8.10. **Community Impact**

8.10.1 At this stage, the following wards have been identified as being most affected by the DCO proposals: Irchester, Earls Barton, Croyland and Swanspool, Finedon, Irthlingborough, Higham Ferrers, Rushden Pemberton, Hatton Park, Brickhill and Queensway, Rothwell and Mawsley and Burton and Broughton.

8.10.2 At this stage, the following town/parish councils have been identified as being most affected by the DCO proposals: Sywell, Mears Ashby, Wilby, Earls Barton, Grendon, Easton Maudit, Bozeat, Irchester, Little Harrowden, Hardwick, Wellingbrough, Great Doddington, Wollaston, Strixton, Ecton, Loddington, Mawsley, Great Cransley, Broughton, Pytchley and Orlingbury.

8.10.3 The Council's role in the DCO process is that of a statutory consultee and Host Authority. The developer, who is the scheme promoter, is responsible for consultation and stakeholder engagement. At the formal 'Pre-application' stage it is the responsibility of the developer to carry out the necessary consultation. It becomes the responsibility of the Planning Inspectorate to consult with statutory consultees/interested parties for certain matters during the 'Pre-application' stage and then at the 'Pre-Examination', 'Examination' and 'Post-Examination' stages. The Secretary of State can also consult on matters during the decision-making stage. It is however considered that the Council should help make the community aware of the DCO stages and how they can engage in the process. This will be done through targeted communication with Ward Members and impacted Town and Parish Councils. The Examining Authority will publish deadlines for the submission of appropriate technical documents and evidence.

8.10.4 Work will also be undertaken by the Council's designated planning officer to ensure that the Planning service engages positively with external stakeholders and seeks to maximise the gain from developer contributions to ensure that appropriate levels of infrastructure are provided to mitigate the impacts of new development upon local communities.

8.11. **Crime and Disorder Impact**

8.11.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications relating to this report. Further consideration will be given to crime and disorder as a part of the pre application and DCO process.

9. Background Papers

9.1 Links:

Project website for Green Hill Solar Farm: <https://greenhillsolar.co.uk/>

Green Hill Solar Farm - Project information (Planning Inspectorate):
<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010170>

Regulation 11 Notice:

<https://northnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1679>