

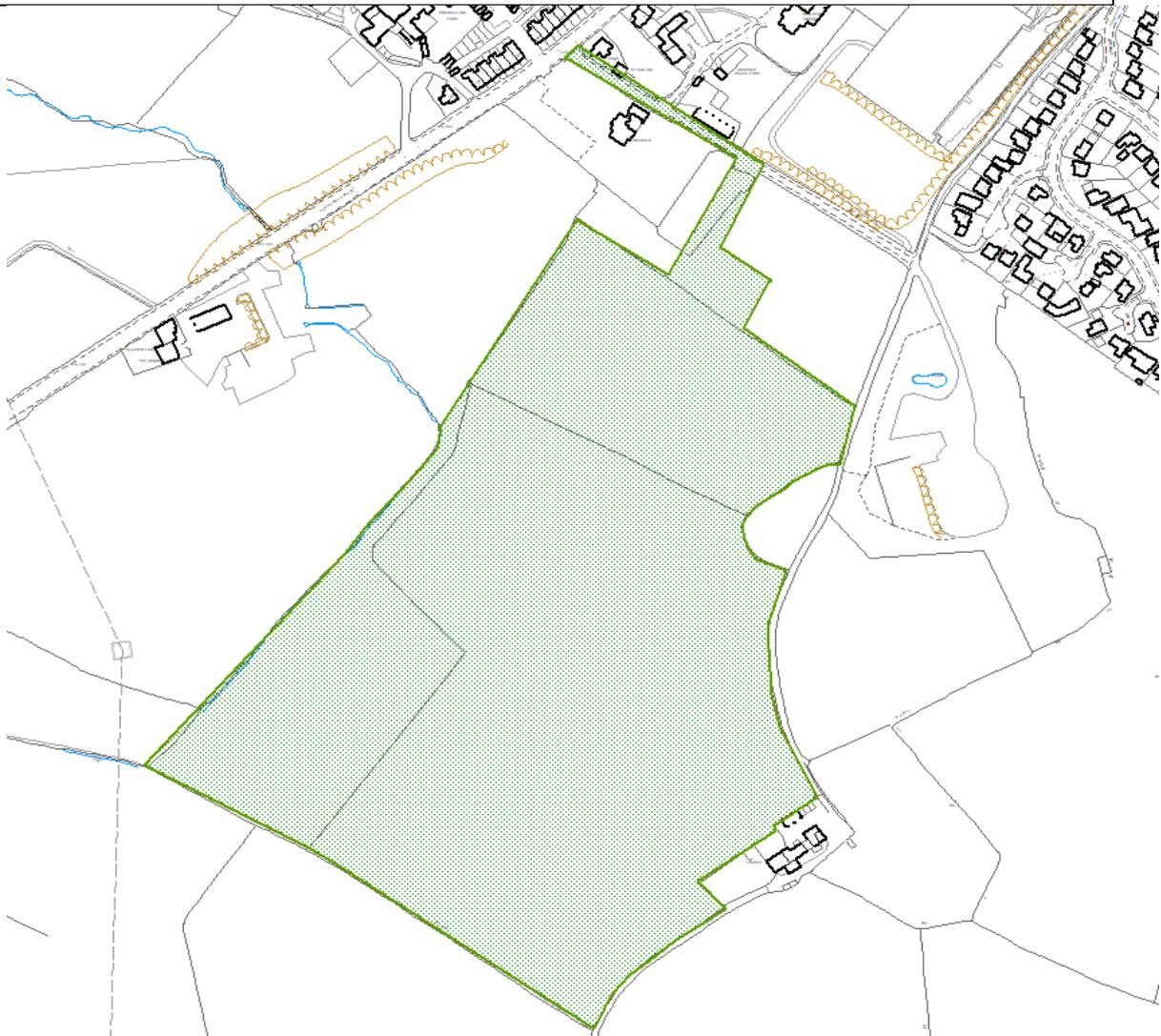
Report to Planning and Licensing Committee



Date of Meeting	6 th August 2020
Portfolio	Councillor Carol Wardle Cabinet Member for Planning, Development & Housing
Report Author	Samia Syeda
Public/Private Document	Public

Application: 20/00687/FUL	Township: Heywood	Ward: North Heywood
Applicant: Rochdale Development Agency	Agent: RINA	
Site Address: Chamber House Farm, Rochdale Road East, Heywood		
Proposal:	Solar farm with ancillary buildings, security fencing, CCTV, access tracks and landscape planting	

SITE LOCATION



DELEGATION

- 1.1 The application falls to be determined by the Planning and Licensing Committee as it comprises major development, represents a departure from the development plan and is an application submitted by the Council.

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the installation of 5.0MW solar farm with ancillary buildings, security fencing, CCTV, access tracks and landscaping

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Planning and Licensing Committee resolves it is minded to **GRANT permission** subject to the recommended conditions.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 The proposed solar farm would comprise inappropriate development in the green belt, which by definition is harmful to the Green Belt. The proposal would also impact on the openness of the Green Belt and surrounding area and would result in harm to the enjoyment of the nearby public rights of way. As a result, very special circumstances must therefore be demonstrated that would outweigh the harm caused. It is considered that the very special circumstances in this case comprise the valuable renewable energy resource that would make a significant contribution towards reducing carbon dioxide emissions (1,850 tonnes saved a year) and to meeting both national and local targets that seek to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change. It is also noted that the proposal would generate a small but valuable level of employment. Affording substantial weight to the harm to the green belt by reason of inappropriateness and the harm that would arise to its openness during the lifetime of the development, and affording considerable weight to the impact on the public rights of way, it is considered that the renewable energy generated by the development and the significant annual reduction in carbon dioxide emissions that would arise, constitute very special circumstances that would outweigh this harm, particularly following the implementation and maturing of the mitigation planting surrounding the site
- 4.2 Having regard to all material considerations, the proposal would not result in significant harm to the amenity of neighbouring residents and surrounding uses, the operation and safety of surrounding highway network, nor to any listed buildings. Subject to conditions, the proposals would provide satisfactory mitigation of the majority of the visual impacts, protected species and nature conservation interests, and any disturbance to the surrounding environment and operation of the surrounding highways network during the construction phase.

4.3 Therefore, considering all the merits of the proposed scheme, it is concluded that the proposal would represent a sustainable form of development and it is considered that the beneficial impacts would outweigh the adverse impacts of the proposed scheme. The proposal therefore comprises sustainable development and it is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

SITE

The application site relates to circa 10.8Ha of land currently comprising four agricultural fields one of which is used as pasture for grazing horses and for hay cropping to the south of Chamber House Farm. The site runs lengthways from northeast to the southwest, with the land sloping down from the northern end of the site flattening out in the southern half of the site. The site also includes an area of raised ground in the eastern part of the site which slopes upwards to the eastern boundary of the site. Hedgerows run along the west, south and east boundaries of the site, with a small cluster of trees within the site itself.

The site is located between the urban areas of Heywood and Rochdale to the southeast side of Rochdale Road East (A58). It is within the Green Belt and borders open fields to the south, east and west. The dwelling at Brooklyn is located within maturely landscaped garden immediately to the north of the site. The sports pitches and grounds of Mathew Moss High School are also located to the north. A mature woodland, protected by a Tree Preservation Order, is located to the east of the site. The residential areas of Castleton lie to the east of the site beyond the undulating topography and woodland. Francil Farm is located on raised ground immediately to the south of the site, with Mayfield Sports Centre and Carcraft car sales centre located beyond open fields further to the southeast. The Castle Hawk Golf Club is also located to the south beyond open fields. Harefield Hall is located on raised and wooded ground to the west. There are a number of residential properties located along Rochdale Road East to the north, northwest and west of the site. Ryecroft Farm, comprising a dwelling and plant storage facility is located beyond an open field to the northwest of the site,

Public footpaths including the Rochdale Way run immediately along the northeast, east and southwest boundaries of the site. Chadwick Lane runs further to the south of the site beyond open fields and gently raising land. The Grade II listed Church of All Souls is located approximately 360m to the west of the site, and the grade II* listed Crimble Mill is located within the Roch Valley 750m to the northwest of the site. It is also noted that a mast and power line pass within close proximity to the west of the application site.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks planning permission for the installation of a 5 Mega Watt (MW) photovoltaic (PV) solar farm on land to the southeast of Chamber House Farm, Rochdale. The proposed solar farm would generate 4,500MW hours of electricity annually, which is sufficient to power 1,250 households (UK average) equivalent to powering 1.4% of the Borough's households. The project would be phased with the first phase comprising 4MW and the second phase comprising 1MW. Permission is sought for the facility for 30 years after which the equipment would be removed from the site and land restored.

Each individual PV panel would measure 1.0m by 1.6m of glass construction and would be fitted into a metal frame. The PV panels would be erected in rows running east to west across the site with each row being circa 4.0m and 6.0m apart. The PV panels would be tilted at 25 degrees from horizontal facing due south and would be

set on a frame approximately 0.7m above ground extending up to 2.2m above ground.

In addition, inverters which are required to convert the direct current electricity to alternating current are mounted in small boxes on the panel supports underneath the back edge of the last PV panels in a row. There would be three transformer and switchgear substations set on concrete plinth measuring 3.0m by 2.0m.

A security fence comprising a 2.4 metre high galvanised fence would be sited around the perimeter of the solar panels set in at least 5 metres from the existing field boundaries and up to 40 metres from the eastern boundary of the site. A series of 11 pole mounted CCTV cameras up between 3.0m and 5.0 metres in height would be interspersed along the security fencing.

The solar farm would be accessed along Carriageway Drive joining on to the southern side of Rochdale Road East between Brooklyn and Chamber House Lodge. The proposal would utilise the existing track with a new access point being made in to the north corner of the site into the existing fields. The solar PV panels and associated cabins and equipment would be delivered on 15.4 metre long articulated vehicles which would access the site via the M62 entering on to the A627M at junction 20, before routing on to Edinburgh Way (A664) and then via the A58 (Manchester Road and Bolton Road).

A temporary laydown area approximately 80 metres long by 40 metres wide is proposed at the northern end of the site adjacent to the site access to allow for site construction.

BACKGROUND

Changes to government subsidy policies for renewable energy development in July 2015, resulted in a period of economic unviability in taking the project forward. The permission granted in 2015 (15/00595/FUL) therefore was not commenced and the Applicant has now submitted the scheme subject of this planning application.

Amendments to the scheme have been made since the 2015 permission which include:

- Relocation of the internal access roads to the eastern edge of the site
- Replacement of 5x inverter cabins, located centrally within the site, with string inverters and 3x transformer/switchgear cabins located on the eastern edge of the site
- Removal of the Distribution Network Operator cabin, the switchgear cabinet and the control room from the northeast corner of the site
- Addition of CCTV cameras around the site perimeter

The overall implication is that the new scheme would see an overall reduction in buildings and infrastructure to support the solar farm, due to improved technological advances, when compared to the 2015 permission.

Since 2015 there has been an increased level of interest at macro and micro levels. Nationally, the Government is still committed to reducing the risks associated with climate change which has at its heart the Climate Change Act 2008. The Act requires the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 34% by 2020 and 80% by 2050 (below the 1990 baseline) and setting and meeting five-yearly carbon budgets for the UK during that period.

In this context RMBC has declared a climate emergency and is working towards ensuring that the borough is carbon neutral by 2050 and aims to bring this agenda forward to 2038 by following the framework of the 5-Year Environment Plan for Greater Manchester 2019-2024 (EPGM)

One of six themes within the EPGM focuses on increasing local renewable electricity generation and increasing the diversity and flexibility of our supply. This is pertinent for Rochdale, which currently has only 13MW of renewable power.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – February 2019
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

- SP2 The Spatial Strategy for the borough
- SP3 The Spatial Strategy for the townships
- SD1 Delivering sustainable development
- DM1 General development requirements

SO1 Delivering a more prosperous economy

- E2 increasing jobs and prosperity
- E5 Encouraging the visitor economy
- E6 Supporting and diversifying the rural economy

SO3 Improving design, image and quality of place

- P1 Improving image
- P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
- P3 Improving design of new development

SO4 Promoting a greener environment

- G1 Tackling and adapting to climate change
- G2 Energy and new development
- G3 Renewable and low carbon energy developments
- G4 Protecting Green Belt
- G6 Enhancing green infrastructure
- G7 Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity
- G8 Managing water resources and flood risk
- G9 Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability
- G10 Managing mineral resources

SO5 Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport

T2 Improving accessibility

Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/2 Green Belt

EM/7 Development and Flood Risk

EM/8 Protection of Surface and Ground Water

RE/6 Recreational rights of way

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

Climate Change Adaptation SPD (June 2012)

Biodiversity and Development SPD (updated 2017)

National Energy Statements

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)

Other National and Regional Energy Policy and Guidance

Kyoto Protocol (1997)

UK Climate Change Programme (2008)

EU Renewables Directive (2001)

Energy White Paper (2003)

Energy White Paper (2007)

UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009)

UK Low Carbon Transition Plan (2009)

Northwest Sustainable Energy Strategy (2006)

Northwest Climate Change Action Plan (2010-2012)

5-Year Environment Plan for Greater Manchester 2019-2024

RELEVANT HISTORY

20/00436/AM Section 73 application for amendments to planning permission 15/00595/FUL including: phasing of development; relocation of internal access roads; amendments to inverter, transformer and switchgear cabin arrangements; removal of DNO, switchgear and control room structures; laying out of area for future battery storage; and addition of CCTV cameras to perimeter – Withdrawn April 2020

15/00595/FUL Installation of 5.0MW solar farm with ancillary buildings, security fencing, CCTV, access tracks and landscaping – Granted July 2015

CONSULTATION RESPONSES - SUMMARIES

Highways And Engineering – No objection. The proposal will be a low generator of traffic once it has been established. Access to the site is adequate and internally the layout poses no health and safety issues. Emergency access should not be required but is suitable if it is needed.

Env Health - Noise/Odours – No comments received to date

Env Health - Air Quality – No comments received to date

Greater Manchester Ecological Unit – The updated ecological report discovered no new ecological constraints, the only potential ecological issue being nesting birds potential which can be resolved by condition. There is no evidence of protected species and no further information or measures are required. The proposal includes the reseeded of the site associated with the solar panels with a wildflower mix and replanting of boundary hedges along what are now fence lines along with the provision of bird and bat boxes. Net biodiversity gain will be achieved and there is no objection to the layout plan. I would recommend some minor amendments to the tree and hedge planting plans as some of the species proposed are not locally native or typical of the local landscape. I recommend that a revised planting plan is provided via condition.

Conservation And Design – No objection. The site is located within proximity of All Souls Church, a grade II listed building. Given the nature of the site, the topography and a lack of direct historic association between the agricultural site and the listed building the site is not considered to attribute to the significance of the designated heritage asset. As such, its alteration will have a neutral impact on the setting of the designated heritage asset. Similarly, given the separation in terms of distance and topography the site is not appreciated within the same context as Crimble Mill and subsequently this development will have a neutral impact upon this designated heritage assets setting.

United Utilities – Confirm the proposals within the Flood Risk Assessment are acceptable in principle and request a surface water condition and a foul water condition.

Environment Agency – No comments received to date

Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service – No comments received to date

Lead Local Flood Authority/Drainage – The Flood Risk Assessment provides appropriate sustainable drainage suggestions, which include a long swale at the lowest elevation of the site and a permeable road. A surface water drainage scheme including surface water from the access road areas should be conditioned.

Rights Of Way Officer – No comments received to date

Landscaping Team – No comments received to date

Natural England (North West Planning) - No comments to make on the application

Highways England - Offer no objection

GTR Manchester Bird Recording Group – No comments received to date

Historic England – No comments to make on the application

Open Space - Environmental Management – No comments received to date

GM Fire Service – No comments received to date

Strategic Planning – No comments received to date

Natural England – No comments to make on the application

GMP Design for Security – A number of security measures are recommended including the fencing to be at least 2.4m high and former service yards to be secured with a secondary enclosure with access controlled gates. Other security measures include installation of an intruder alarm system, use of appropriate lighting and high quality CCTV and planting of appropriate landscaping to ensure unimpeded surveillance.

MEMBER REPRESENTATIONS

No representations have been received from Members.

PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of notification were sent by the LPA to surrounding neighbours, various notices displayed in the vicinity of the site and a notice placed in the local press.

Objection Reps	4	Support Reps	0	Neutral Reps	0
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Comments made in respect of the application are summarised as follows:

- Inappropriate development in green belt and countryside
- Land is a breeding area of endangered Lapwing birds and frequented by roe deer, herons, buzzards, kestrels and other birds of prey
- The development will have a detrimental effect on the public right of way which leads from Matthew Moss Land through to Chadwick Lane
- The scheme will be visible in all directions and will impact on views from residential properties

Officer Response: The consideration of these issues is considered in the relevant Analysis section below. Loss of views from residential properties is not a material consideration.

- Require details of the security fencing and the proposed CCTV security

Officer Response: A condition will be imposed requiring the full details

- Request the financial details of the project including details of proposed borrowings, agreements with energy providers, contracts registered or agreed and any other financial detail relevant to the project

Officer Response: The financial and business case of the project is not a material planning consideration

- Until confirmation of the responsibility of the access lane from Rochdale Road East to the site is established, we would like to submit an objection

Officer Response: It is noted that the proposed development would be accessed via an unadopted road along Carriageway Drive. The application has been supported by a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and a Construction Method Statement (CMS). The CTMP includes the carrying out of a survey of the condition of the local highway network before and after construction and the carrying out of any remedial works following completion of the development.

ANALYSIS

Principle of Development

1. There is support from the Government with regards to planning proposals for renewable energy and this is highlighted by the NPPF. At paragraph 148, the NPPF supports the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, including through encouraging the use of renewable resources and the development of renewable energy.
2. Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognises that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse emissions. If impacts are (or can be made) acceptable, permission should be granted.
3. Similarly, Policies G1, G2 and G3 of the Core Strategy provide the Council's adopted planning policy in regards to renewable energy development and establish that applications will be supported where the development would have no unacceptable impact on the local environment.

Weight of renewable energy provision

4. With regard to this application, the proposed solar farm would have the potential to generate a minimum of 5 MW peak of electricity and generate up to 4,500 MW hours of electricity per year which is sufficient to power 1,250 households (UK average) equivalent to powering 1.4% of the Borough's households. Furthermore, this would have the potential to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 1,850 tonnes a year that would otherwise be generated using fossil fuels.

5. It is clear under paragraph 154 of the NPPF that applicants for energy development are not required to demonstrate the overall need for renewable energy. However, the energy created by the panels would contribute to the Government targets on renewable energy and would assist in reducing carbon emissions, thereby contributing to improving air quality, addressing climate change, and delivering social and economic benefits. These factors must be given significant weight in the overall consideration of the application.
6. The NPPG guidance establishes that *'planning has an important role in the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in locations where the local environmental impact is acceptable'*. The NPPG is also clear on the fact that the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities.
7. In light of the above, it is necessary to balance these considerations with the need to provide renewable energy, while avoiding any unacceptable damage to the environment and its key assets. If, on the balance of considerations, any identified harm outweighs the benefits, having regard to all the material considerations, the development will not be acceptable. This balance of considerations is assessed below.

Impact on the Green Belt

8. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of the Green Belt are their openness and their permanence (paragraph 133 of the NPPF). The five purposes of Green Belt noted in paragraph 134 of the NPPF are:
 - to check unrestricted sprawl;
 - prevent neighbouring towns merging;
 - assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
 - assist in urban regeneration.
9. Policy G/D/2 of the UDP and Policy G4 of the Core Strategy are broadly in accordance with the NPPF and provide a presumption against certain forms of development in the Green Belt except in very special circumstances. The proposed solar farm and associated equipment are not one of the identified exceptions listed in paragraphs 145 and 146 of the NPPF, the UDP or the Core Strategy and the proposal therefore comprises inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Paragraph 147 of the NPPF reaffirms this but states that very special circumstances of renewable energy projects 'may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources'.
10. Paragraph 143 of the NPPF recognises that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 144 is clear that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

11. With regard to other impacts on the Green Belt, the addition of rows of solar panels and the associated cabins would impact on the openness of the Green Belt by siting new structures in existing open fields. However, due to the separation needed between the panels it is noted that approximately 70% of the site would remain open. In addition, that approximately 99.8% of the site would remain grassland or planted with wild flowers below the solar PV panels. It is also noted that as the PV panels would follow the contours of the ground the undulating character of the landscape would still remain evident.
12. It is noted that the additional CCTV poles and 2.4 metre high fencing would be sited around the boundaries of the application site. These would run along the existing field boundaries characterised by fences and hedgerows and that these would be screened by additional trees and hedgerows to be planted along the field boundaries. Given the design of the wire mesh type of fencing, views would be retained through and appropriate colour treatment would assist in blending into the surrounding landscape. The CCTV poles would be more apparent given they would be of up to 5m in height and whilst these would be of slender design and would be limited in number and spread sparsely across the site along the boundary lines created by the existing hedgerow and landscape features, they would be visible and would have an impact on openness.
13. Therefore, whilst impacting on the openness it is considered that the character of the pattern of fields, intervening hedgerows, and the undulating topography would be retained. It is also noted that given the reversible nature of the proposed scheme the proposal would not conflict with the intrinsic permanence of the Green Belt and the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt.
14. Nevertheless, the proposed development by definition remains inappropriate development within the Green Belt. In this respect, one of the main considerations in respect of this application is whether there are any material considerations sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm the development would cause to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, thereby justifying the application on the basis of very special circumstances.
15. Of particular relevance to the above, the Court of Appeal judgement in *Redhill Aerodrome Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* established that 'any other harm' in paragraph 144 of the NPPF (i.e. non-Green Belt harm) can be taken into account in the weighing exercise of the planning balance as to determining whether or not very special circumstances outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by inappropriateness or any other harm.
16. This Court of Appeal judgment is an important reminder that under paragraph 144 of the NPPF, when considering any planning application concerning proposed development in the Green Belt, local planning authorities should continue to ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will only be demonstrated in circumstances where the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
17. The 'very special circumstances' associated with this application relate to:

- The renewable energy that would be generated by the proposed solar farm at 4,500 MWh annually. The annual renewable energy produced by the proposal would make a significant contribution towards meeting local and regional renewable energy targets and also the national targets.
- There are limited opportunities for providing energy of such scale through renewable technologies and that the proposal would provide sufficient electricity to power approximately 1,250 households.
- The generation of energy through solar power would have the potential to substantially offset the emission of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and potentially displace approximately 1,850 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

18. In this regard, the Government attaches significant importance to the need to tackling climate change and the role that the exploitation of renewable energy technologies can make in this. This is set out in Part 14 of the NPPF (*Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change*) and in particular paragraph 154, that recognises even small scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Within this paragraph, it is also clear that local planning authorities should approve an application if its impacts are, or can be made, acceptable.

19. Paragraph 147 of the NPPF makes it clear that *“the wider environmental benefits associated with the increased production of energy through renewable sources”* may constitute very special circumstances.

20. In summary, the significant contribution towards achieving a sustainable future for the local area in light of the declaration of a climate emergency in the borough and reducing the impacts of climate change are considered to be very special circumstances, and the unique opportunities and potential gains would be sufficient to outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt by way of its inappropriateness and impact on openness. As a result, it is considered that the proposed development would accord with Policy G4 of the Core Strategy, Policy G/D/2 of the UDP, and the policies and objectives of the NPPF, which seek to deliver sustainable development. However, as noted above, it is necessary to assess whether the proposal would result in non-green belt harm, which must be taken into account in the weighing exercise of the planning balance in determining whether or not very special circumstances outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by inappropriateness and any other harm.

Landscape and Visual Impact

21. The site is located within the Greater Manchester Green Belt between the urban areas of Heywood and Rochdale. The site falls within National Character Area 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe, which describes the transitional zone between the moors of the Pennines and the lowlands to the south. The area to the north and south of the application site is predominantly characterised by undulating countryside comprising open fields with intervening hedgerows.

22. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been submitted with the application and assesses the landscape impacts and visual impacts of the proposed development. It includes photomontages showing the development

from various viewpoints in the surrounding area. The development would sit within a relatively flat and low lying section of land between the built form of Heywood and Castleton to the west and east respectively. Due to the surrounding topography, tree cover, and built form of the nearby urban areas of Heywood and Castleton, there would be few long distance views of the proposed solar farm.

23. The LVIA concludes that the proposal would result in a slight to moderate adverse effect on the surrounding landscape character and moderate impacts on the landscape character of the site. The slight and moderate landscape impacts would be limited to the lifetime of the development, which following decommissioning of the solar farm after 30 years and restoration of land to its former use there would be minor long-term benefits by way of the additional tree and hedgerow planting, enhancing the local landscape.
24. The proposed solar farm including its associated cabins and CCTV poles would be visible from public rights of way, bridleways and highways that run within the immediate surrounding area to the north, south, east and west of the site. The LVIA demonstrates that any significant visual impacts would be largely limited to the site and its immediate surrounding area up to a distance of approximately 1.1 kilometres away, where beyond this the proposal would assimilate into the surrounding landscape.
25. In order to mitigate the visual impacts in the immediate surrounding area, the proposed scheme includes various mitigation planting including the infilling of existing tree belts and hedgelines along the boundary edge. New hedgerow and tree belts will be planted where little or none currently exist to provide screening from receptors within close proximity to site, including dwellings to the north and the transport routes including Carriageway Drive and Rochdale Road East.
26. Public rights of way (PROW), which include Rochdale Way and Heywood footpath nos. 61, 63, 64, and 14 are in close proximity to the site and offer some of the most prominent views of the solar farm and its equipment. However, it is noted that the routes along the northeast, east and south eastern boundaries of the site are set at a higher level than the rows of PV panels and equipment, and there is either partial screening provided by hedgerows or in some parts complete screening provided by existing mature woodland planting. Existing hedgerows will be infilled and new hedgerows will be planted to screen the proposals from PROWs.
27. Boundary fences will be planted with native climbers and all hedgerows will be grown to a 3 metre winter height to provide adequate screening of the PV panels, albeit the CCTV equipment would remain visible. Local native grassland species will be planted under the panels to enhance the biodiversity of the landscape character of the site in the longer term.
28. As a result of the mitigation proposals, the moderate impacts from surrounding transport routes and public rights of way would be reduced to slight/moderate effects. As such it is noted that despite mitigation there would still be an impact on the open and rural character of the area and the proposed solar farm would be

noticeable within existing views and public footpaths. However, given the characteristics of the surrounding landscape and features within it and the sensitivity of the site, in this case it is considered that following the implementation of mitigation planting, the impact on the openness, character and appearance of the landscape alone would not be significant and nor would this outweigh the significant benefits associated with the generation of renewable energy. The proposal is considered to therefore accord with Policies P2, P3, G6, G7 and T2 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on Residential Amenity

29. The application has been accompanied by a LVIA which includes an assessment of the visual impacts on surrounding residential properties. Many of the residential properties assessed within the LVIA are at significant distances from the scheme located at least more than 200m from the boundary edges (and therefore at even greater distances to the PV panels). The implementation of the proposed planting would mitigate the visual impacts of the proposed development from the majority of residential properties, albeit some direct views would be afforded from Francil Farm and Harefield Hall, which are located on raised land above the site and therefore have views over the application site. It is therefore not possible to screen the proposed development from view of these dwellings and glimpsed views may be possible from certain views beyond the proposed mitigation. Whilst the proposed solar panels would therefore be visible in some views, including from these properties, given the intervening distance, the respective land levels and existing and proposed intervening hedgerow and tree planting, it is considered that the proposed PV panels and associated equipment would not appear overly obtrusive from the surrounding dwellings to the extent that they would unduly affect outlook. Notwithstanding this, the alteration of the residents' view would not be a material consideration as there is no impact regarding overbearing or overshadowing. In this respect, the proposed PV panels are themselves designed to absorb light and solar radiation in order to maximise energy generation rather than reflect light and create glare. Indeed the PV panels are designed with anti-reflective coating and their frames and coating are also designed to be anti-reflective to minimise glint and glare.
30. With regards to the implications in respect of noise and disturbance, it is noted that the operation of the solar farm would not generate any noticeable noise. Consultations have taken place with the Council's Environmental Health department, who have yet to provide detailed comments. However, it is worthwhile noting that the department had no objections to the previous proposals for a solar farm in respect of noise issues. The solar farm is a passive installation with minimal noise emission during its operation. Therefore noise considerations is limited to the construction activity which will take approximately three months. The CTMP and CMS which has been submitted with the application has considered the level of activity during construction, and has recommended a number of measures to ensure that the proposal would have no undue impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupants.
31. Therefore, subject to the inclusion of an appropriately condition to secure the detailed scheme of mitigation planting, and restricting construction hours, it is

considered that the application would be acceptable in the above regard and would accord with Policy G9 of the Core Strategy.

Trees and Hedgerows

32. The application site comprises open fields leftover to pasture and cropping with sections of hedgerows along the boundaries and small clusters of trees within the site. The site is not located within a Conservation Area and there are no protected trees within the site itself. There are a group of mature trees located immediately to the northeast of the site which are covered by Tree Preservation Order no. 76 forming a woodland of Beech, Elm, Laburnum, Lime, Mountain Ash, and Sycamore. Collectively these form a mature woodland and important landscape feature within the surrounding area.
33. The application has been supported by an Arboricultural Report, including a discussion of impacts and recommended mitigation measures. Whilst comments are awaited from the Council's Tree Officer, it is noted that the trees within the site are not of significant arboricultural quality and value, and that the proposed security fencing to be erected around the solar farm and internal 5 metre buffer to the PV panels would act as protection to the majority of trees and woodland around the site. The report recommends the provision of protective fencing to protect trees at the site access, in addition to restrictions on construction works beyond the protective fencing, and the carrying out of a schedule of arboricultural monitoring during construction.
34. In order to ensure that trees and hedgerows adjacent to the site are protected, a condition has been recommended requiring the implementation of the protection measures set out in Section 5 and 6 of the Arboriculture Report prior to the commencement of development.
35. The application proposes a significant amount of additional hedgerow, shrub and tree planting around the perimeter of the site. These would have significant value to nature conservation but would also help re-establish and support the existing intervening hedgerows that run along field boundaries. Therefore, subject to conditions it is considered that there would be no significant harm caused to any important trees and hedgerows. The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with the requirements of Core Strategy G6.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

36. The application has been accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a Habitat Enhancement and Biodiversity Management Plan. It is noted that the site does not form part of any statutorily designated nature conservation site. There are no Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or national nature reserves within 5 km of the site, and the nearest local nature reserve Hopwood Woods Nature Reserve is approximately 2.1 km to the south of the site. The nearest Special Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) the Rochdale Canal, which is also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is approximately 1 km from the site. The proposals would therefore cause no impact on these nationally important nature conservation sites. The nearest non-statutory designated local site is a meadow at Heywood cemetery approximately 300 metres from the site.

Given the low impact nature of the proposed development, it is not considered that there would be any significant harm caused by the proposals to this site.

37. With regards to Protected Sites the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes that none will be directly impacted on by the proposed development. The presence of Protected and Priority Species was assessed and the nature of the existing habitats are considered to limit badgers, water voles, otters and crayfish, and none of the floral species found are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act or considered to be rare locally or nationally.
38. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal did find evidence of bat foraging and potential for bird nesting habitats within and around the site. It also considered that the site was a suitable terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newts albeit as there are no ponds on site, it is unlikely to be found on site. Similarly, reptiles are unlikely to be found on the site due to the limited quantities of suitable habitat present. As such the report recommends the installation of five bat boxes and five small bird boxes on or adjacent to the site. The installation of four hibernacula is recommended for reptile and great crested newt habitat enhancement and it is proposed to cut and maintain short vegetation on and around the site until the start of works. As noted in the preceding section of this report, the application also proposes the provision of enhanced hedgerow, tree and grassland meadow planting. These proposals with the Habitat Enhancement and Biodiversity Management Plan, would provide a net enhancement and improvement of local biodiversity.
39. The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) has been consulted on the application and advises that the submitted information is satisfactory and proportionate and that no further information is required prior to the determination of the application. GMEU have raised no objections subject to conditions, including the prevention of any vegetation clearance in the bird nesting season without prior survey by an ecologist. Minor amendments to the tree and hedge planting has been requested by the GMEU to substitute some of the species to locally native species or those that are typical of the local landscape. As such, a condition is recommended requiring a revised planting plan to reflect GMEU comments.
40. Subject to conditions, it is considered that the proposed development would not cause any significant harm to local and transient bird populations and nature conservation interests and the proposals would provide for net enhancement of biodiversity through the creation of a series of different habitats for local species of flora and fauna. Having regard to the submitted ecological information and the comments of GMEU, it is considered that the proposals would be in accordance with the requirements of Core Strategy Policies G6 and G7 and the NPPF.

Highway Safety and Traffic Implications

41. The application has been supported by a CTMP and CMS. The proposed development itself would not involve any works to the existing highway network and would utilise the existing access along Carriageway Drive on to the A58, Rochdale Road East. It is noted that Carriageway Drive is an unadopted road, with uneven surface that serves residential properties and is subject to on-street parking.

42. Nevertheless, it is noted that the immediate highway network is subject to 30 mph speed restrictions and the site access is relatively straight and at approximately 5.3m wide reducing to between 2.7m and 4m wide near the access into the field, would accommodate the articulated vehicles and HGV traffic necessary to construct the solar farm.
43. With regards to the construction of the solar farm, it is noted that the construction programme is estimated to take 6 weeks (30 working days) during which a total of 90 deliveries would be made, equating to 3 deliveries a day (or 6 in and out movements). Of these it is envisaged that two deliveries per day (4 in and out movements) would be by the largest vehicles being 15.4 metre long articulated vehicles delivering the PV panels, framework and cabins. Further trips would be made by construction workers in small vehicles to and from the site each day. The Highways Authority have confirmed that given the low trip level and temporary 6 week construction period, the construction would not cause any unacceptable disruption to the highway network.
44. The site would be accessed by the existing highways infrastructure along Rochdale Road East, joining Manchester Road eastbound, then southwards along Edinburgh Way (A664) before using the A627(M) and accessing the M62 motorway at junction 20. It is noted that the vehicular infrastructure within this network has been designed to accommodate HGV vehicles. This has been developed through the CTMP and the CMS which includes other measures to be put in place to ensure the safe delivery of the PV panels and associated equipment, including temporary signage, ground matting to site access, personnel to manage access onto Rochdale Road East and portable wheel washing equipment. Accordingly a condition has been recommended requiring the associated measures within the CTMP and the CMS to be implemented prior to the commencement of development.
45. In terms of traffic generation during the operation of the solar farm, it is envisaged that there would only be limited vehicular trips made by small van or 4x4 type vehicles to the site each year (approximately 10 – 20 trips per year) to provide for necessary maintenance and monitoring.
46. The local Highway Authority has raised no objections to the proposed development. Having regard to the above, it is considered that subject to conditions, the proposed development would make satisfactory arrangements for vehicle access, manoeuvring and parking, and would facilitate safe access to and from the site. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would provide safe and secure access and would not result in any strategic highways implications, in accordance with the requirements of Core Strategy Policies T1, T2 and G3.

Implications on Heritage Assets and Archaeological Interests

47. It is noted that there are no scheduled monuments, registered parks or gardens, and registered battlefields within, immediately adjoining or within 3 km of the application site. Given these distances and the surrounding built and natural features that would screen the PV Panels from these heritage assets, it is not considered that there would be any significant harm caused to the historic importance of these heritage assets.

48. With regards to the impact on the surrounding listed buildings, it is noted that the nearest listed building is the Grade II Listed Church of All Souls, located approximately 360 metres to the northwest. The listed building is principally appreciated from Rochdale Road East and the immediate grounds and its curtilage around it. Given the distance and intervening planting the proposed PV panels, it is considered that the proposals would not detract from this appreciation. The top part of the church tower would be visible from views along the rights of way that run along the east and west of the site. The proposals would therefore be visible within the same context as part of the listed church tower. However, it is noted that views of the listed building would not be obstructed, that a significant distance would be retained between the proposed development and the church and its curtilage, and the existing open agricultural fields between the site and listed building would be unaltered. Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development would not result in harm to the wider setting of this grade II listed building given the context of the site.
49. It is noted that the Grade II* listed Crimble Mill is located approximately 750m to the northwest of the application site. The Mill complex is located within the valley bottom adjacent to the River Roch and the application site does not form part of this setting. It is also noted that the important and significant views and appreciation of the Mill are from the Roch Valley, and that the proposed solar farm would not be visible within these views and context. In addition, given the topography of the intervening land between the proposed solar farm and this nationally important heritage asset, the mature tree coverage, and the intervening A58 carriageway and its associated paraphernalia between the proposals and Crimble Mill, there are limited views of this from the application site, and therefore it is not considered that the proposed development would have any significant impact on the setting and importance of Crimble Mill.
50. With regards to the other heritage assets located within 2km of the proposals, it is noted that the proposed PV panels, and associated equipment and access tracks would not be visible from these or within the same context. Furthermore, it is noted that the Conservation and Historic England have raised no objections to the proposed development with respect to implications on heritage assets.
51. With regards to any potential implications on archaeology, it is noted that the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS) have advised that the proposal would not impact on any known or suspected archaeological interest and have accordingly not recommended any conditions in this regard. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal is unlikely to result in any harm to features of archaeological interest.
52. Therefore having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal would cause no harm to designated heritage assets and the proposal would therefore accord with Policies P2 and G3 of the Core Strategy and the policies within the NPPF.

Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage Implications:

53. The application has been supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). This identified that the site falls within flood zone 1 and is therefore at a low risk of

flooding (less than 1 in 1000 or 0.1% annual probability of river or sea flooding in any year). The proposed use of the site is classified as 'general industry' and is therefore considered to be less vulnerable as set out by Table 2 of the National Planning Practice Guidance: Flood Risk and Coastal Change. Therefore, the site is considered to be suitable in principle with regards to flood risk for the proposed development.

54. It is noted that the site is located within an undulating landscape with land levels sloping downwards into the site from the north and east position and that open agricultural fields surround the site to the south, east and west. The FRA notes that there is low risk of flooding from all sources and the recommendation within the FRA is to set the proposed switchgear and transformer points 150mm above surrounding ground levels.
55. With regards to surface water management, the proposals involve the siting of rows of PV panels on framework piled into the ground below, which as a result of being raised and angled would retain the greenfield and permeable qualities of the ground. The access tracks are proposed to be of permeable material which will allow rain and surface water to filter into the ground below. It is proposed to replace areas of pasture land with additional areas of hardstanding to site the 3 no. transformer and switchgear cabins.
56. The applicant has taken a precautionary approach in relation to the additional proposed hardstanding on the site and in accordance with the recommendations of the submitted FRA the proposed scheme includes the provision of a swale along the north western boundary of the site which would accommodate approximately 115 m³ of surface water. This has been designed to accommodate the potential additional surface water runoff caused by climate change.
57. Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development would not be at significant risk of flooding and subject to adequate on site attenuation measures being put in place, it is considered that the proposed development would cause no unacceptable risk of flooding elsewhere in accordance with the requirements of Core Strategy Policy G8 and the NPPF.

Implications on Quality and Availability of Agricultural Land

58. The NPPG states that *“where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) 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 (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.”*
59. This has been supported by the Written Ministerial Statement (HCWS488) of March 25th 2015 which states that any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence.
60. It is noted that the proposed solar farm would take up approximately 10.8Ha of agricultural land, one of which is currently in use as pasture for grazing and for hay cropping. The land has previously been classified by DEFRA as being Grade 3 (Good to moderate quality agricultural land) with a small area being within

grade 4 (poor quality agricultural land). A survey has been undertaken by the Applicants which has concluded that due to the soil texture and seasonal water logging that the land would constitute grade 3B (moderate quality) and 4 (poor quality). The land within the application site does not therefore comprise the best and most versatile agricultural land (3a and above).

61. Whilst it is noted that part of the site would utilise agricultural land classed as of moderate quality Grade 3B, it is noted that the land is to be sown with agricultural wildflower mix and from experiences drawn from other solar farm sites that the site could still be used for the grazing of animals with the development in situ. Given the above, the reversible nature of the proposed scheme and the necessary works, it is not considered that the proposals would have a significant detrimental impact on the agricultural quality of the land and the availability of the agricultural land in the surrounding area in both the short and long-term.

62. Mineral, Geological and Land Condition Implications

63. It is noted that the application site is located within a mineral safeguarding area for sand and gravel, for brick clay as identified within the Greater Manchester Joint Minerals Plan. Whilst no comments have yet been received from the GM Minerals and Waste Planning Unit, it is noted that in accordance with Policy 8 of the Joint Minerals Plan the proposed development would be for a limited period of time of 30 years and given the relatively minor intrusion and scale of works the proposals would therefore not prevent the extraction of minerals in the future.

64. The site has historically been used for agriculture and has most recently been used for grazing, hay cropping being largely leftover for pasture. The site is not located within any designated geological conservation areas, and whilst the site is located within a wider mining area there are no records of shafts or workings on the site. It is not proposed to carry out any significant ground excavations or land remodelling. Given the use of permeable materials for the access tracks and the cabins, which would each be placed on new hardstanding bases, the proposals would not require significant intrusion or excavation into the existing ground.

65. It is therefore considered that there would be no adverse harm caused by way of contamination or pollution and satisfactory ground conditions would be provide for the proposed solar farm in accordance with Policies G9 and G10 of the Core Strategy.

Other Material Considerations

66. It is noted that an electricity mast and power line runs within close proximity to the west of the application site. Given the siting, scale and nature of the proposals, it is not considered that there would be any significant disruption or harm caused to nearby power infrastructure. This was also the position in respect of the previous application.

67. The NPPF also sets out the other arms to sustainable development, it is noted that the proposed development would be likely to require the employment of a significant number of construction workers, along with a part-time maintenance engineer and a small number of service staff.

SUMMARY

68. The proposed development is a direct local response to a national, regional and local agenda which seeks to focus on the provision of renewable energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
69. The proposal would result in harm to the Green Belt by reason of being inappropriate development and its impact on openness. The scheme would also have a limited impact on landscape character and appearance and would be noticeable within existing views and public footpaths. This harm would be limited given the distances between receptors, the landscape character, including topography and features within it, and following the implementation of mitigation planting.
70. Subject to conditions, the proposals would provide satisfactory mitigation of the majority of the visual impacts, protected species and nature conservation interests, and any disturbance to the surrounding environment and operation of the surrounding highways network during the construction phase.
71. It is considered overall that the benefits in this case, comprising the valuable renewable energy resource and the significant annual reduction in carbon dioxide emissions that would arise, would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and all other harm that has been identified. The proposal therefore comprises sustainable development and it is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning and Licensing Committee resolves it is minded to **GRANT planning permission subject to the following conditions:**

- 1 The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 This permission relates to the following approved plans:
 - 00060-100 – Site Location Plan
 - 00060-100 Z – 1:2500 Site Boundary
 - 00060-106 – Figure 5 – Site Setting
 - 00060-107 – Figure 13: Site Access
 - 00060-108 – Figure 12: Road Access Map
 - 60618346-SHT-20-MAN-R-011 – Site Layout Plan
 - 60618346-SHT-20-MAN-R-016 – Foundations and Mounting systems
 - 60618346-SHT-20-MAN-R-017 – Substation and Security
 - 1192-01 – Planting Plan
 - CHF 090315 – Proposed Mitigation Planting

The development shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved drawings unless otherwise required by condition of this permission.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the policies contained within the Core Strategy, the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 3 The development hereby approved shall be undertaken at all times in complete accordance with the measures set out in the approved Construction Traffic Management Plan, prepared by TPA dated May 2015 and the Construction Method Statement, prepared by Elmya dated July 2016. The condition survey and any subsequent remediation measures to be undertaken shall include the extent of Carriageway Drive from the site access to its junction with Rochdale Road East.

Reason: in the interest of highway safety and in order to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to limit noise, nuisance and disturbance to the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings during the construction of the development in accordance with the requirements of Core Strategy Policies DM1, T2, G7, G8 and G9 and the National Planning Policy Framework

- 4 Notwithstanding the submitted details and the requirements of condition 2 of this permission, no above ground works shall take place until full details of the following have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- i. The siting, design, materials and construction of all access roads.
 - ii. The siting, size, design and construction of swales and or any other surface water attenuation measures to be provided including cross-sections.
 - iii. The siting, height, design and appearance of all security fencing, security gates, CCTV, poles and associated equipment.
 - iv. The external materials, colour treatment of all cabins and any ancillary equipment.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the first generation of electricity.

Reason: Further information of the exact siting and construction detail is required in the interests of the character and openness of the Green Belt in accordance with the requirements of Unitary Development Plan Policy D/4, Core Strategy Policies P2, P3 and G4 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 5 No later than 6 months prior to the expiry of the planning permission or within 6 months of the cessation of electricity generation by the solar PV facility, whichever is the sooner, a detailed site restoration scheme for the removal of the solar farm and associated development (including access tracks, laydown area, all cabins, CCTV equipment, and fencing) hereby permitted and for the restoration of the land to a condition suitable for exclusive agricultural use shall be submitted to the local planning authority for their approval in writing. The site restoration scheme shall include a timetable for the completion of restoration works and shall be implemented wholly in accordance with the agreed restoration details and timetable. The operator of the solar farm shall notify the local planning authority in writing no later than five working days following the cessation of electricity generation.

Reason: The proposed solar development has a limited life expectancy and will need to be decommissioned at the end of this period of use in the interests of the amenity of the Green Belt. Following removal of the solar farm and associated infrastructure, the land should be restored to its previous agricultural use in the interests of the visual amenity, openness and purposes of including land in the Green Belt in accordance with the requirements of Unitary Development Plan Policy D/4, Core Strategy Policy G4 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 6 No later than 6 months prior to the expiry of the planning permission or within 6 months of the cessation of electricity generation by the solar PV facility, whichever is the sooner, a detailed Decommissioning Statement (in accordance with the general principles of the Construction Method Statement for the site) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Decommissioning Statement shall include a timetable for the completion of decommissioning works and shall be implemented wholly in accordance with the agreed decommissioning details and timetable. The operator of the solar farm shall notify the local planning authority in writing no later than five working days following the cessation of electricity generation

Reason: To ensure appropriate measures are put in place to minimise detrimental effects to the neighbouring amenities, the area in general and the natural environment through the risks of pollution and dangers to highway safety, during the decommissioning phase in accordance with Policies DM1, P3, T2, G8 and G9 of the Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework

- 7 Within 3 months of the development hereby permitted being decommissioned in accordance with Condition 5, a restoration scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning

Authority, and the approved scheme shall be implemented within 6 months of the final generation of electricity. The Local Planning Authority must be notified of the cessation of electricity generation in writing no later than five working days after the event

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Unitary Development Plan Policy D/4, Core Strategy Policy G4 and the relevant advice of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 8 The landscaping works shown on the approved plans [1192-01 – Planting Plan] shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and in accordance with any timing / phasing arrangements approved or within the first planting season after the development is substantially completed, whichever is the sooner. Any trees or shrubs planted or retained in accordance with this condition which are removed, uprooted, destroyed, die or become severely damaged or become seriously diseased within 5 years of planting shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason: To ensure that the site is satisfactorily landscaped having regard to its location and the nature of the proposed development and in accordance with Policies P2, P3, G6 and G7 of the Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 9 No development, including clearance of trees and shrubs in preparation for or during the course of development, shall take place during the bird nesting season (March - July inclusive) unless an ecological survey has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which establishes that no part of the site is utilised for bird nesting. Should the survey reveal the presence of any nesting species, then no clearance of trees and shrubs shall take place until a methodology for protecting nest sites during the course of the development has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Nest site protection shall thereafter be provided in accordance with the duly approved methodology.

Reason: In order to prevent any habitat disturbance to nesting birds in accordance with Core Strategy Policies G6 and G7 and the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Reason for pre-commencement condition: Further investigation will be necessary prior to commencement of any works on site during the bird nesting season.

- 10 The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the measures and timescales set out in the Habitat Enhancement Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) prepared by Greenlight Environmental Consultancy, dated 25 March 2020.

Reason: In order to ensure adequate protection of existing landscape features of ecological value and to achieve appropriate landscape and biodiversity enhancements as part of the development in accordance with the requirements of Core Strategy Policies G6 and G7 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 11 The tree protection measures and method statement set out in sections 5 and 6 and the appendices of the Arboricultural Report prepared by Greenlight Environmental Consultancy, dated 16 April 2020, shall be implemented in full before development first takes place and shall thereafter be retained throughout the construction of the solar farm.

Reason: To ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are put in place to safeguard the health of trees located within the site and in close proximity to the proposed development in order to preserve their amenity value in accordance with the requirements of Core Strategy Policies P3, G6 and G7 of the Core strategy.

Reason for pre-commencement condition: Protection measures for retained trees are required to be in place prior to commencement of any works on site to ensure no damage is caused.

- 12 No external lighting shall be installed on the site unless a scheme for such lighting has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and retained as such thereafter unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason. To prevent habitat disturbance of protected species in accordance with Core Strategy Policies P3 and G7 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Notes for Applicant:

INFORMATIVES:

Bats: The applicant is reminded that under the Habitat Regulation it is an offence to disturb, harm or kill bats. If a bat is found all work should cease immediately and a suitably licensed bat worker employed to assess how best to safeguard the bat(s). Natural England should also be informed.

Great Crested Newts: The applicant is reminded that under the Habitat Regulation it is an offence to disturb, harm or kill great crested newts. If a great crested newt is found during the development all work should cease immediately and a suitably licensed amphibian ecologist employed to assess how best to safeguard the newt(s). Natural England should also be informed.

Reptiles: The applicant is reminded that reptiles are protected under schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to take or kill reptiles. If a reptile is found on or near the site during the development work should cease and a suitably experienced ecologist employed to how best to safeguard the reptile(s).