



Ralph Cox
Principal Planning Officer, Norfolk County Council
ralph.cox@norfolk.gov.uk
By Email Only

19th November 2021

Our Reference: 3757/Reg25
Your Reference: FUL/2021/0015

Dear Ralph,

Aldeby Solar Park – Response to Reg25 Letter

In response to the Reg 25 letter please find an interim update on a number of the matters:

Ecology

We note that Natural England comments are outstanding and may not be received. We will review the Council ecologist comments that have been provided and then look to issue an update or response as necessary within the timeframe you have provided.

If you could confirm regarding the requirement for HRA or if the Council Ecologist is able to screen out the requirement that would be appreciated.

Landscape

We have discussed with you previously our proposed changes to the design and are now able to present these. Enclosed with this letter is a revised Site Layout Plan, Landscape Mitigation Plan and also updated elevation drawing for the DNO switchroom. The main changes we have sought to make, in response to comments from The Broads Authority and members of the public (in respect to reducing visual impacts) include:

- Reduction in the extent of panels, which has resulted in a more compact Development with the loss of some generating capacity;
- Reduction in panel height from 2.6m above ground level to 2.0m;
- Cutting back panels from the west and from the north, and reduced height of panels, have brought the development down from the skyline;
- The above changes have allowed us to largely accommodate the landscaping set out in the restoration plan (with a slight realignment of the western hedgerow), as can be seen Landscape Mitigation Plan. In addition further trees are proposed on the southern boundary of the Site and panels have been set back from this boundary to ensure these trees don't shade the panels; and
- Located ancillary equipment within the solar park (in the west) and reduced the scale of and re-located the DNO switchroom. This is now sited adjacent to the existing CLM generating compound export location.

All the planting that overlaps with the restoration plan planting which is proposed around the perimeter of the Solar Park would be implemented as part of this Development, following construction of the solar park. Other restoration plan planting on the wider landfill would be delivered by FCC.

Given the design now fits largely within the approved restoration plan it is assumed that when the solar park is decommissioned and removed from site all vegetation that has established would remain (hedgerows around the perimeter and woodland in the northwest). The grassland beneath the solar panels would also remain and this is also as per the restoration plan.

In terms of the LVIA findings it is considered that the view of landscape sensitivity and impact is a difference of professional opinion between ourselves and The Broads Authority and County's Green Infrastructure & Landscape Officer. It is however hoped that the amended layout and design, and enhanced mitigation, will reduce the overall impact of the Development to an acceptable level for The Broads Authority and County's Green Infrastructure & Landscape Officer and we look forward to receipt of comments on the revised layout in due course.

One further piece of information that we are working on and will look to provide, in response to comments from the public, is a set of photomontages of the Development from a viewpoint on Angles Way to the south of the Site. These will also hopefully be helpful to The Broads Authority in presenting a representation of what the Development will look like post construction and also once landscaping measures become established. We will look to provide these in the coming weeks once they are completed.

There was a question raised in your letter regarding the consideration of siting the solar array in the northeast of the landfill. This was discussed in our meeting with the Parish Council and interested parties and we confirmed it had been considered but deemed not suitable given the much higher density of CLM infrastructure in this part of the landfill. This will have resulted in a much more fragmented layout extending over a larger area and possibly still encroaching on the south facing slopes.

Noise

Alongside this letter we provide the noise assessment that was requested by the South Norfolk EMO. You will see there are no noise issues arising from the Development, either during the day or at night, and no mitigation is required. You will note this is based on the revised layout that we have discussed above. The Noise Assessment is not part of the ES and so this isn't a Reg 25 request, but a request for information in support of the planning application.

Tree Protection Plan

We will look to clarify the situation with regards to the restoration plan planting to ensure that any trees/ hedgerows to be planted prior to the solar farm would be appropriately protected. We will therefore submit an updated Tree Protection Plan in due course. As with the above noise assessment we note the TPP did not form part of the ES and so this isn't a Reg 25 request, but a request for information in support of the planning application.

Other matters

In addition to the above we have been discussing the potential for using the haul road for construction traffic and you have provided advice in this regard, thank you. It is the Applicant's intention to progress discussions with the landowners/ their agents of the haul road. In the event that a commercial agreement can be reached, then through the anticipated Traffic Management Plan condition that would be attached to the Solar Park decision, we would seek to put forward the use of the haul route, acknowledging that it would be subject to a fresh planning application (given the timescale constraints attached to the planning permission for the haul road).

In the meantime the highways authority do not have any objection with the construction traffic using the public highway to the Site, subject to traffic management measures. We trust this approach therefore allows the current application to be determined whilst leaving open the opportunity of using the haul road, subject to agreement of commercial terms and approval of a separate planning application.

We trust that the above further information is helpful and should you wish to discuss anything further please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Mott PIEMA
Associate Director/Registered EIA Practitioner

Enclosed:

Revised Drawings/ Figures

Planning Drawing 2 - Site Layout Plan

Planning Drawing 3 - Racking and Solar Panel Elevation

Planning Drawing 4 - DNO Switchroom Elevation

Figure 4.9 - Landscape Mitigation Plan

Additional Reports

Noise Assessment Report