

Project Name: Longhedge Solar Farm

Report Name: Amended Scheme Statement – Response to Inspector’s Query Note

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Checked/Approved by: NC

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This note has been prepared in order to provide a response to the queries raised by Inspector Woolcock and set out in an email from PINS dated Friday 10th May 2024.
- 1.2 The responses set out below should assist any further discussion in relation to proceeding with the appeal on the basis of an amended scheme having regard to the Wheatcroft and Holborn judgments.
- 1.3 In summary, the changes made to the scheme between the original application include the removal of a small area of panels to the north of Hawksworth, removing these approximately 150m further north from the northern edge of Hawksworth, with the realignment of the hedgerow along the new fenceline to form the new southern boundary of the scheme in this location. This hedgerow also more closely reflects the historic field patterns in this location. A further change in the northeastern portion of the site is the removal of an area of proposed woodland planting located south of the PRow, north of the panels, replacing this with an area of wildflower meadow, and the realignment of the more sinuous, curving hedgerow proposed on the application scheme with a more linear hedgerow to mirror an historic field boundary in close proximity to this location.
- 1.4 The note addresses the Inspector's following queries.

2. A plan showing the differences between the scheme that was before the Council when it determined the application and the proposed amended scheme.

- 2.1 In order to clearly set out the amendments which have been made to the scheme, drawing no P24-0105_EN_16 has been prepared. This illustrates the comparison between Scheme A – the scheme before the Council at the point of determination, and Scheme B – the current appeal scheme. The plan is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The text below sets out in chronological order when the amendments to the scheme have taken place and the corresponding drawing references.

Application – December 2022 (Scheme A)

- 2.3 As part of the planning application that was submitted in December 2022 a planting plan (CD1.21.12) was prepared by Neo Environmental; this planting plan is referred to as a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) Revision D (Drawing number NEO00782_023I_D) and comprises a series of four drawings. This version of the proposals is hereafter referred to as **Scheme A**. It should be noted that the Pegasus Landscape Masterplan (P24-0105_EN_01_D) presented within Appendix 1 of this note exactly replicates the Neo LEMP, Revision D.

Appeal – September 2023

- 2.4 As part of the material that was prepared in September 2023 for the Written Representation appeal submission by Neo Environmental, the LEMP was amended to remove solar infrastructure north of Hawksworth village in field 1 as a result of feedback from statutory consultees and the community. The proposed permissive path and alignment of the proposed hedgerow were amended to follow the reduced extent of the proposed built form in this field. This amendment to the hedgerow also more

closely reflects the historic hedgerow alignment in this part of the site. This iteration of the LEMP prepared by Neo Environmental is referred to as Revision F (Drawing number NE000782_023I_F).

Appeal –April 2024 (Scheme B)

- 2.5 The Landscape Masterplan – Appeal (P24-0105_EN_02_E) prepared by Pegasus Group reflects the amendments illustrated in Revision F of the Neo Environmental LEMP (submitted as part of the September 2023 appeal) but also takes the opportunity to realign a section of the proposed hedgerow in field 5 to closer reflect historic field patterns in this part of the site. This version of the proposals is hereafter referred to as **Scheme B** (Landscape Masterplan – Appeal, Revision E) and has been subject to public consultation and forms part of the Appellant’s Landscape Proof of Evidence at Appendix 2 of that evidence.
- 2.6 The numbers below correspond to the annotations on Scheme A and B (shown on Appendix 1) illustrating the amendments set out above:

Scheme A

- 1 – Original location of the proposed hedgerow, solar infrastructure and route of the proposed permissive path
- 2 – Original location of the proposed hedgerow and tree planting

Scheme B

- 1 – Amended route of the proposed permissive path and realigned hedgerow to more closely reflect historic hedgerow patterns in this part of the site. Solar infrastructure removed from the southern part of the field 1, nearest to Hawksworth village (revision also shown on the Neo LEMP, revision F)
- 2 – Proposed hedgerow realigned to more closely reflect historic hedgerow patterns in this part of the site.

3. Details about when and how notification was given to the other parties about each of the proposed changes to the refused scheme

- 3.1 Notification on the proposed change to the scheme in relation to the points made at bullet points 1 above, relating to removal of the proposed infrastructure in field 1 to the north of Hawksworth were provided within the Appellant’s Statement of Case submitted with the planning appeal in September 2023.
- 3.2 Notification of the proposed amendment to the hedgerow to the east of the site was provided to the local community, including the Clients of Helen Hamilton as the Rule 6 Party which Ms Hamilton confirmed during the CMC, per the Example Letter at Appendix 3. The revised landscape masterplan (P24-0105_EN_02_E - attached as Appendix 2) and the updated site plan (attached as Appendix 4) accompanied the letter. Addresses were taken from the Rushcliffe BC Appeal Notification List, at Appendix 5, with some small

amendments made where multiple or erroneous entries were noted, or postal addresses were not available for some individuals. The material was also published on the Longhedge Solar Farm public website.

- 3.3 The Council were advised by Ms Tafur during the CMC (23rd April 2024) of the amendments to hedgerows to the east of the site, including visually via shared screen, and raised no concerns.

4. A description of the effects of the amendments, including on renewable energy generation, biodiversity, landscape, heritage assets, agricultural land, along with any other implications of the proposed changes

- 4.1 A description of the effects made of the amendments are explained within evidence exchanged on behalf of the appellant on Tuesday 14th May. In summary:

Renewable Energy Generation

- 4.2 The effect of the changes made to the scheme are explained in the Appellant's "Capacity Note", provided on the 16th of April in response to an earlier query raised by the Inspector. A further Technical Report has also been submitted as Appendix 4 of the Appellant's Planning Proof of Evidence.

- 4.3 The Technical Report at Appendix 4 to the Planning Proof of Evidence includes at Appendix A the comparison between the Original Layout (scheme A) and the Current Layout (scheme B). This provides a range of data comparisons between the two designs, including that the design proposed in Scheme B would result in a reduction of 2.9% of the yearly production of generation but does not alter the maximum export capacity of 49.9MWac.

Biodiversity

- 4.4 A revised biodiversity net gain assessment has been prepared and is submitted with Appendix 6.1 of the Appellant's Planning Proof of Evidence. This utilises the latest Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain Metric and relates to the revised scheme. This confirms that habitat units will increase from 197.22 to 567.21, an increase of 187.60% compared to the original 187.13%, hedgerow units will increase from 21.19 to 38.78, an increase of 83.04% compared to the original 24.68%, and watercourse units will increase from 8.88 to 9.93, an increase of 11.85%. (No change in watercourse units was identified by the original scheme biodiversity net gain assessment.).

Landscape

- 4.5 There would be no material difference between the effects on the landscape elements, landscape character or visual impacts.
- 4.6 For Scheme A, the panels would be slightly closer to the location of Viewpoint 4 than in Scheme B, however the glimpsed, transient nature of the view would mean that the assessed magnitude of change would be assessed as medium for both schemes, resulting in a moderate adverse effect. For both Schemes A and B at year 10 the effects would be negligible as a result of the mitigation planting.
- 4.7 For residential receptors on the northern edge of Hawksworth, Scheme B would take the solar infrastructure further away from visual receptors, in comparison to Scheme A and so potentially result in a minor reduction in impacts.

Heritage assets

- 4.8 The removal of the panels in the area north of Hawksworth has slightly reduced the level of harm which was identified to the significance of the Hawksworth Conservation Area. Specifically, the removal of this field has shifted panels away from the view identified within the Hawksworth Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (HCAAMP) 2022 as Figure 15. This is a view from private land, which is not publicly accessible. The view looks east from the private access road to Stubbs Engineering Works. The application scheme included panels more prominently within this view, within the field directly in the foreground (though slightly set back), extending to the line of trees in the middle foreground. The amended scheme has removed the panels from the field in the foreground of this view – the portion of the field within this view, as it extends to the line of trees in the middle foreground will not contain any panels. This has the effect of removing this element of harm – the change in that identified key view within the HCAAMP – to the significance of the Hawksworth Conservation Area. This reduces the overall level of harm to the significance of the Hawksworth Conservation Area.
- 4.9 The removal of the panels north of Hawksworth has not had any effect on the assessment of any other heritage assets considered under this Appeal.
- 4.10 In consideration of the changes to the landscape mitigation, specifically the introduction of the new hedgerow at the amended southern boundary north of Hawksworth and the new/realigned hedgerow in the northeastern portion of the site, south of the PRow, these are considered to be beneficial. The hedgerows now follow the alignment of historic hedgerows as shown on 19th century mapping. These reinstate historic boundaries and go some way in helping to restore the former landscape features which once existed within the land of the site which has been shown via historic map analysis to have once been far more enclosed, with smaller field parcels and a greater number of internal boundaries. The ‘openness’ of the current site is a modern creation.

Agricultural land

- 4.11 An assessment of the amendment of the scheme is referenced in the Appellant’s Planning Proof of Evidence. It is noted that almost all of the land to the north of Hawksworth where the panels have been removed is classified as Grade 3a agricultural land and as a result of the amended appeal scheme, the proportions of agricultural grade land within the site within the developable area are as follows:
- Grade 2 – 2%
 - Grade 3a – 34% (Previously 36%)
 - Grade 3b – 60% (previously 58%)
 - OTHER (tracks, watercourses, woodland) – 4%
- 4.12 Overall, there is a reduction in the proportion of BMV agricultural land affected by the solar panels as a result of the amendment to the scheme.

Other implications of the proposed changes

- 4.13 There are no other significant implications of the proposed changes. There are no effects on the other matters such as highways/transportation, drainage, or noise.

5. Details about the consultation exercise undertaken for the amended scheme, including all relevant dates and correspondence.

- 5.1 A consultation was undertaken by the appellant. This included issuing a letter (Appendix 3 – Example letter) to parties who had been advised of the planning appeal (Appendix 5 – Rushcliffe BC Appeal Notification List). The interested parties were also sent two plans which showed the removal of panels to the north of Hawksworth and the amendments to the hedgerows and planting proposals.
- Longhedge Solar Farm – Landscape Masterplan – Appeal P24-0105_EN_02_E (Appendix 2)
 - Longhedge Solar Farm Updated Site Plan – (Appendix 4)
- 5.2 The letter advised any party wishing to comment to do so direct to the Planning Inspectorate by Monday 15th April 2024, quoting the appeal reference.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The considerations set out above confirm that the changes have either beneficial or no effect. The proposals do not involve a “substantial difference” or a “fundamental change” to the application. In addition, the consultation and notification undertaken, as outlined above, ensure that there has been no procedural unfairness to anyone involved in the appeal.
- 6.2 Consequently, it is considered that it is appropriate for the revisions to be considered as acceptable for the appeal to progress on the basis of the amended scheme (Scheme B) forming the proposal at appeal.