Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 3 November 2026

Site visit made on 4 November 2026

by Diane Cragg DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 November 2026

Appeal Ref: 6011988
Land at West Fen Farm, Whitemoor Road, March PE15 0AF

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Alex Ross of PACE Sunshine Energy Ltd against the decision of Fenland District Council.
- The application Ref is F/YR25/0413/F.
- The development proposed is Installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) farm with battery storage, substation and associated works including 3.0m high pole mounted CCTV cameras and 4.0m high acoustic fence.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) farm with battery storage, substation and associated works including 3.0m high pole mounted CCTV cameras and 4.0m high acoustic fence on land at West Fen Farm, March PE15 0AF in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref F/YR25/0413/F, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Applications for costs

2. At the hearing, an application for costs was made by PACE Sunshine Energy Ltd against Fenland District Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The site address on the application form refers to Middle Fen Farm. It was agreed at the hearing that the address in the banner heading above referring to West Fen Farm is correct.

4. Both main parties have had an opportunity to comment on the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) August 2026, and I have determined this appeal having regard to it.

Planning Policy Context

5. For the purposes of this appeal the relevant parts of the development plan comprise the Fenland Local Plan (May 2014) (FLP) and the March Neighbourhood Plan (2017).

6. The parties agree that with reference to Policies LP3 and LP12 of the FLP that the site lies outside any settlement, described as ‘elsewhere’ in Policy LP3, and is

within an area of countryside for development plan purposes. Policy LP14 of the FLP supports renewable energy proposals which will be considered in the context of sustainable development and climate change. Such developments will be assessed on their merits taking account of several factors.

7. The vision of March Neighbourhood Plan is to maximise the use of renewable energy but indicates that large scale solar farms should be resisted. Nevertheless, the Council accepts that there is no specific policy in the Neighbourhood Plan in respect of renewable technology and its commentary is at odds with the in principle supportive approach in Policy LP14.

8. Framework Policy S5 identifies acceptable forms of development outside settlement boundaries, supporting infrastructure development including energy proposals. Qualifying forms of development under Policy S5.1, including solar development, should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in the Framework. FLP Policy LP14 is broadly consistent with the Framework.

Main Issues

9. In accordance with the local and national policy context outlined above and as agreed at the hearing there is in principle national and local policy support for the proposed development in the countryside subject to an assessment of its specific impacts.

10. In this case, the main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:

- best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV agricultural land); and,
- the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

BMV agricultural land

11. The appeal site comprises approximately 109.4 ha of agricultural land currently in arable production. Although the appellant refers to the recently published predictive land classification document which identifies the site as grade 3a, it is agreed that in accordance with the appellant's site-specific agricultural land classification report approximately 76% of the land within the appeal site is grade 2 and 24% is grade 3a. Therefore, all the appeal site is BMV agricultural land.

12. Policy N2:1. b. of the Framework does not prohibit development of BMV land instead requiring agricultural land quality to be taken into account, setting out a preference for the use of poorer quality land where possible. The range of factors to be considered under FLP Policy LP14 includes high-quality agricultural land. The Council reference Framework Policy N2:1.e. in its evidence but it was agreed at the hearing that this part of the policy is not relevant to the consideration of BMV agricultural land in this case.

13. Policy W3 of the Framework establishes that there is no requirement to demonstrate the need for solar development. Nevertheless, the appellant's Site Justification Document October 2025 explains that the delivery of solar development depends on securing a point of connection with available grid

capacity. The overhead power line running through the appeal site and extending east towards March and broadly west towards Whittlesey provides a connection to the grid for the development. The appellant explains that the search area for suitable sites around the overhead line was limited to 1km due to the prohibitive costs of connection beyond that distance.

14. The Council is concerned that the confined search area fails to demonstrate that the use of BMV agricultural land is 'unavoidable'. However, Policy N2 of the Framework does not impose a test of strict unavoidability, rather it establishes a preference for using poorer quality land where it is available. The evidence before me indicates that the extent of the search area was informed by the practical and financial constraints associated with securing a viable grid connection. Within that search area, the appellant assessed potential sites having regard to agricultural land quality, site constraints, availability, and deliverability.

15. In addition, the parties agree that 94% of agricultural land in Fenland is BMV agricultural land and that no suitable brownfield, previously developed or lower-quality agricultural land within the identified search area could accommodate the proposed development. Taking these matters together, I am satisfied that the appellant has adequately demonstrated that poorer quality agricultural land is not reasonably available to accommodate the development.

16. I acknowledge the Council's view that a smaller scheme could be viable. However, there is no policy requirement to justify a scheme of 109 ha rather than a smaller alternative. Given the substantial national need for renewable energy generation, the fact that a smaller scheme may be viable does not indicate that generating capacity should be reduced where the grid connection can accommodate a larger development.

17. Turning to the Council's reason for refusal which is concerned with the loss of BMV agricultural land across the site for over 40 years. The appellant confirms that the physical disturbance of the soil would be limited to around 2.4 ha for tracks, planting and built infrastructure, and the sole permanent loss would be approximately 0.9 ha of woodland should the owner choose to retain it upon decommissioning.

18. Furthermore, because sheep gazing would be integrated across the site, and secured by condition, an agricultural use would continue throughout the operational period. Resting the soil from continuous arable cultivation and establishing grassland would also deliver long term benefits to soil structure, organic matter and biodiversity function ensuring the BMV soil resource would remain intact and in good condition at decommissioning. A Soil Management Plan condition could be imposed to safeguard the soil resource during construction.

19. While the proposal would remove the land from arable rotation during the operation of the solar farm, the appellant has confirmed that the farm would diversify from growing feed wheat for animal consumption and maize for anaerobic digestion, to sheep meat production. The evidence indicates that this would reduce chemical usage and improve soil health while producing food for human consumption rather than arable crops for other uses. I have no persuasive evidence before me to conclude that sheep grazing would not represent an effective use of the agricultural land during the operational life of the development. The suspension of arable cropping for the duration of the permission would temporarily reduce farming

flexibility across the site, but the land would remain in agricultural use through grazing. Combined with the reversibility of the development and the long-term benefits for soil structure and organic matter from taking the land out of intensive arable production, any adverse effect on the agricultural land resource through loss of flexibility would be temporary and limited.

20. Moreover, the appellant has analysed national, regional and local effects of the loss of arable production within the site concluding that the UK and worldwide food production looks stable and the contribution of the appeal site to arable production is negligible in a national and local context. The Council has provided no substantive evidence to demonstrate that the temporary change in agricultural practice would cause any notable harm to local, regional, or national food supplies or to the local or national agricultural economy. It must also be acknowledged that there is no requirement for agricultural land to be farmed, and the land could be returned to is former arable use at the end of the operational period of the solar farm.

21. In light of the above, I conclude that BMV agricultural land would not be lost and that as poorer quality land is not reasonably available and the land would remain in agricultural use with its long-term capability preserved, the proposal would not conflict with Policy LP14 of the FLP or the Framework.

Character and appearance

22. The appeal site lies within National Character Area (NCA) 46: the Fens. The landscape is characterised by its large-scale, flat, and open nature, which affords extensive views across a predominantly arable and sparsely settled countryside. A strong geometric pattern is created by rectilinear fields and the extensive drainage network, with few hedgerows interrupting views. Isolated properties, often enclosed by shelterbelt planting, punctuate the landscape. The area has a distinctly functional agricultural character, reinforced by straight, elevated roads and the absence of significant recreational influences. Overall, the landscape exhibits a strong sense of openness and scale.

23. The Framework's previous reference to valued landscape is replaced under Framework Policy N2: a. and d. with a requirement to consider environmental qualities such as landscape character and natural beauty of the countryside and identifying enhancement or conservation opportunities where possible.

24. However, landscape value assessment remains integral to determining sensitivity under the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment third edition (GLVIA3). In the absence of a published district-wide landscape character assessment, the evidence draws on the NCA, with the appellant's appeal statement drawing on a more detailed landscape assessment in the Wind Turbine Development Policy Guidance (2009) (Policy Guidance) prepared for the local plan evidence base. Neither party disputes the use of these sources.

25. I agree with the appellant that the appeal site does not comprise a discrete landscape receptor separate from its surroundings. Instead, it forms an integral part of the wider Fenland landscape, and the effects of the proposal on landscape character should therefore be assessed by reference to that broader landscape receptor as described in the NCA and further defined in the policy guidance rather than the site in isolation.

26. As part of the wider Fenland landscape, the appeal site displays many of the characteristics associated with that receptor, with no distinctive local features that would elevate its importance above the surrounding area. As an undesignated and unremarkable area of working farmland I afford it a medium-low value. Furthermore, although the landscape is generally open and flat with medium to large field sizes, the presence of agricultural and other human influences reduces its susceptibility to the type of change proposed and I agree that the susceptibility of the landscape receptor is medium and the sensitivity to be between medium and medium-low.

27. The proposed development would introduce industrial and engineered features into a largely open rural landscape. The solar arrays, together with the acoustic and perimeter fencing, compound area including battery energy storage system (BESS), transformers and internal access tracks, would alter the existing agricultural character and sense of place.

28. Nevertheless, the development would retain the rectilinear field pattern, existing track alignments and drainage ditches that are characteristic of the Fenland landscape. As a result, some of the area's underlying landscape characteristics would remain perceptible despite the change in land use.

29. Beyond the site boundary, the influence of the development on landscape character would diminish with distance. The large scale and openness of the Fenland landscape would mean that the relatively low-profile development would quickly become a minor part of the wider landscape. While the BESS compound would form a more concentrated area of built development visible across a somewhat wider area, the effect would be moderated by the siting adjacent to the existing pylon and within the solar arrays.

30. Over time, the proposed hedge planting would soften and screen the development. Although the introduction of hedgerows and trees would create some enclosure within an otherwise open Fenland landscape, these natural landscape features would sit more comfortably within the rural context than the solar infrastructure itself. Consequently, while a large-scale change in character would remain within the site, effects on the wider Fenland landscape would diminish over time, resulting in a minor adverse residual effect on landscape character.

31. Turning to the visual effects, the appellant suggests that the reason for refusal excludes visual effects. I see little reason that visual effects should not be considered as part of the scheme’s impact on the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the appellant has addressed such effects in any case.

32. At the closest viewpoint immediately outside the site, the road sits slightly higher than the adjoining farmland. Looking directly across the appeal site the solar panels, perimeter fencing, inverters, and CCTV poles would be seen at close quarters, replacing an open arable view with extensive built infrastructure. Although users of the road and cycle route would be of medium sensitivity, experiencing the site in passing, the sheer proximity and scale of the development would result in a significant adverse visual effect during the early years of the scheme.

33. Similarly, from the viewpoint on Whittlesey Road towards Turves and from the end of Whitemoor Road, in the initial phases of the development, the solar panels would be prominent and significantly adverse.

34. As the proposed landscaping establishes the visibility of the infrastructure would reduce with the hedging becoming the more prominent element of these closest views. The perimeter hedging would not be typical of open fenland fields. Nevertheless, the Council does not dispute that the visual effects of the development would reduce over time as this planting establishes and it is agreed that the proposed landscaping would screen the development. While the hedging, at the mature height proposed, would be visually prominent the natural form, movement and changes through the seasons associated with hedge planting would not be unappealing in a rural environment. Therefore, their use to screen the development would reduce the visual harm at the closest viewpoints from significant to moderate adverse.

35. The BESS and grid connection would be taller and bulkier than the solar panels. The grid connection would require a new vertical structure of a similar height to the existing electricity pylon, albeit with a slimmer profile. However, these elements would be tightly grouped on a small footprint directly alongside the existing pylon. Because the existing pylon already forms a prominent feature in the flat landscape the new connection structure would read in direct visual association with it rather than a new intrusion into an unspoilt skyline. Similarly, the BESS would appear as a compact cluster at the base of the pylon partially screened by boundary planting and the solar panels. Once the hedge planting has established the residual visual effect of the BESS and grid connection would be moderate adverse.

36. At the more distant viewpoints such as along Duncombe's Road, March Road, and at Holloways Bridge, where views would be experienced from marginally higher land with limited intervening cover in some places, the panels would be discernible across the flat terrain. However, the relatively limited height of the panels means that they would appear as a narrow low-lying band rather than a prominent or discordant feature. Similarly, from the footpaths broadly to the northeast and south of the site the panels would be viewed from some distance and would not be prominent features. When the hedging develops at these more distant views the panels would be largely screened. Accepting that the hedging would not be characteristic of the views toward the site, there would remain a low adverse visual effect for the life time of the development.

37. The scheme may theoretically be visible from further afield such as the layby on the A605, however, at these distances the solar panels would be seen as a tonal shift in the colour of the field that would take up a small fraction of the wider view. The CCTV and fencing would be indistinct and slight dips in the land, along with intervening farm buildings, domestic properties with landscaped boundaries would also limit views. As a result, for these distant viewpoints the visual change would be very small with a negligible or very low adverse visual effect.

38. Regarding properties near or adjacent to the appeal site, some of these properties have windows facing the site from where the development would be seen. Nevertheless, while the rural aspect of the views would be changed, such changes would not detract from the living conditions within these properties. On the whole, the visual effect of the development from the limited number of surrounding residential properties would be of a minor nature.

39. Overall, I find that the development would result in minor adverse residual effect on landscape character, and moderate adverse visual effects once the development is

established. Taken together, there would be moderate harm to the character and appearance of the area.

40. Because the scheme would cause moderate harm rather than enhancing it setting or reinforcing local distinctiveness, the proposed development would conflict with Policy LP16 (d) of the FLP. While the proposal aligns with the broader climate change objective of Policy LP14 the moderate harm to character and appearance results in some conflict with its requirement for visual and landscape impacts to be acceptable.

41. Furthermore, for similar reasons and given that the introduction of uncharacteristic hedging into an open Fenland setting there would be some conflict with Policy N2:1. a. and d. of the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance landscape character and the natural beauty of the countryside and use appropriate landscaping to integrate development.

Other Matters

Habitat Regulations Assessment

42. The appeal site lies within the wider geographic vicinity of Orton Pit Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Fenland SAC, Woodwalton Fen Ramsar Site, the Ouse Washes Special Protection Area (SPA)/SAC and Ramsar site and the Nene Washes SPA/SAC/Ramsar site, all of which have been considered for the purposes of this Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).

43. The Orton Pit SAC, Fenland SAC and Woodwalton Fen Ramsar site are considered too distant or too separated from the application site for any likely significant effects (LSE) to occur. Natural England (NE) does not raise any concerns with this assessment.

44. The Nene Washes SPA, SAC and Ramsar site is approximately 3km north of the appeal site. The SPA is classified for a range of qualifying bird interests, including internationally and nationally important numbers of wildfowl and wading birds: Bewick swan, Northern shoveler, Garganey, Gadwall, black-tailed godwit, pintail, and teal. The SAC's single qualifying feature is its population of spined loach and the Ramsar is an extensive area of seasonally flooding wet grassland of importance for national and international breeding and wintering waterbirds.

45. The Ouse Washes SPA, SAC and Ramsar is located approximately 17 km from the appeal site. The SPA is classified for a range of qualifying bird species and assemblages, including internationally important wintering population of migratory wildfowl specifically whooper swans, Bewick's swans, Wigeon, gadwall and pintail alongside an internationally important waterfowl assemblage and nationally important breeding wader assemblage including black tailed godwit, lapwing, snipe and redshank. The SAC's single qualifying species is its population of spined loach and the Ramsar is an extensive area of seasonally flooding wet grassland of importance for national and international breeding and wintering waterbirds.

46. At the screening stage, the Council's HRA considers that only the Nene Washes SPA/Ramsar site to have sufficient connectivity (an identifiable pathway) with the development site such that LSE could occur. Therefore, only the Nene Washes European site was 'screened in' to the Council's HRA.

47. However, the appellant's wintering bird surveys demonstrate that Whooper swans, a qualifying feature of the Ouse Washes SPA, use land adjacent to the appeal site as supporting foraging habitat. Consequently, notwithstanding the site's location outside the relevant Impact Risk Zone, a credible source/pathway/receptor relationship exists between the proposal and the Ouse Washes SPA/Ramsar Site. Likely significant effects cannot therefore be excluded, and I have screened the Ouse Washes SPA/Ramsar Site into the assessment. NE acknowledge that Ouse Washes was screened out at application stage, and that the potential for impacts on Whooper swans associated with the Ouse Washes should perhaps not have been excluded based on distance alone. However, NE confirm that they did not raise this in their consultation response to the Council as it was considered that the conclusions relating to the Nene Washes, and associated mitigation requirements for Bewick's swans, would also apply to Whooper swans.

48. Taking the precautionary approach and having screened the Ouse Washes SPA/Ramsar Site and Nene Washes SPA/Ramsar Site into the assessment, I have undertaken an Appropriate Assessment as the competent authority, having regard to their conservation objectives. NE has confirmed that the surveys and historical records provide a satisfactory evidence base when taking the site-specific factors into account. The wintering bird surveys demonstrate that while the appeal site is not functionally linked land, the land adjacent to the appeal site provides supporting foraging habitat for wintering Whooper swans and Bewick's swans. In the absence of mitigation, it is concluded that construction, and operational disturbance, including noise from the BESS, could adversely affect the use of that habitat by qualifying SPA and Ramsar bird interests.

49. NE has advised that the identified effects can be mitigated through measures secured by condition, including construction timing restrictions, temporary visual screening where necessary, and acoustic fencing associated with the BESS. Taking those measures into account, I can ascertain beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of the Nene Washes SPA/Ramsar Site or the Ouse Washes SPA/Ramsar Site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

50. In relation to the remaining SPA and Ramsar qualifying bird interests, the survey evidence demonstrates either the absence of suitable supporting habitat or the absence of any mechanism by which those qualifying interests could be adversely affected. Only a single SPA-cited breeding bird species, the gadwall, was present on the site, with a single breeding pair recorded in 2025. The habitat used by this species would be preserved in full, and an improvement in the water quality of the watercourse used is anticipated. There would be no adverse impact on the breeding prospects of this species or on the conservation objectives of the designated sites. Accordingly, I am satisfied, and NE agrees, that the proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of the Nene Washes SPA/Ramsar Site or the Ouse Washes SPA/Ramsar Site in respect of their remaining qualifying bird interests.

51. Regarding the Nene Washes SAC and the Ouse Washes SAC, the sole qualifying feature of each site is spined loach. The SACs' qualifying feature would not be adversely affected by the proposed development, its construction or its ongoing operations and there would be no effect on the aquatic habitats or ecological conditions upon which that species depends. Having regard to the conservation

objectives of the SACs, I conclude that the proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of either the Nene Washes SAC or the Ouse Washes SAC.

Biodiversity

52. The appellant's Ecological Impact Assessment is reasonable and proportionate for the nature of development proposed and includes mitigation measures that would ensure that Priority and Protected Species would not be harmed, including nesting birds, bats, badgers, and water voles. In addition, the biodiversity enhancements for the site may provide improvements to habitat for some of those species.

53. The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment and strategy confirms that the proposed development would deliver BNG of over 162% in relation to the habitat units, through the on-site delivery of biodiversity gain. The net gain delivered would be achieved through a combination of wildflower rich native grasslands, new species rich native hedgerows and native trees and shrubs. With smaller enhancements such as reseeding grass field margins and installation of hibernacula and nest boxes. The ongoing management and monitoring of the created and enhanced habitats would be an integral aspect of the delivery of the development. A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan condition would secure the provision of BNG in accordance with the appeal details.

Benefits

54. The appeal scheme would provide a generating capacity of 49.5 MW (AC) to the grid, and it is estimated that the development would meet the equivalent energy needs of approximately 36,266 homes and displace roughly 24,520 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum. The 30 MW BESS would allow energy storage during times of peak generation. These features ensure the development would be a cost-effective contributor to the UK's energy security and the transition to net zero.

55. The proposal would generate temporary jobs during the construction and decommissioning phases, alongside a small number of permanent positions once operational. The development would also contribute to the wider economy and provide business rates over its 40-year life span. There may also be benefits to the farm by diversifying the farm income. Furthermore, I conclude that there would be significant gains in biodiversity because of the development.

56. In accordance with the Framework the benefits of improving energy security, supporting economic development and/or the transition to a net zero future should be given substantial weight.

Conditions

57. I have considered the conditions discussed at the hearing against the tests in the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance and have amended them where necessary for clarity, precision, and consistency.

58. In addition to the standard time limit condition, in the interests of certainty a condition requiring the carrying out of the development in accordance with the approved plans is imposed. Conditions setting out the time limit for the operational period of the solar farm and its subsequent decommissioning and restoration, are necessary to safeguard agriculture and landscape character.

59. The surface water drainage condition is necessary to ensure the proper management of surface water. To safeguard cultural heritage, it is necessary to secure a scheme of archaeological investigation, mitigation, and recording. To protect the soil as a resource during construction and in the long-term a soil management plan is required.

60. Conditions to secure a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), CEMP for biodiversity, Biodiversity enhancements, protection for wintering birds, implementation of the access arrangements, landscaping, fencing, acoustic fencing, lighting, a habitat management and monitoring plan, fire strategy management plan, materials and unexpected contaminants are necessary and reasonable in the interests of the environment and protected species, the living conditions of residents, and the safe and efficient operation of the highway.

61. A security strategy is necessary to ensure that the development incorporates design measures for crime prevention. To secure the continuation of an agricultural use on the site alongside the generation of renewable energy in accordance with the evidence submitted a condition requiring a grazing management plan is reasonable and necessary.

62. The requirement for the solar development to be removed if grazing of the land ceases for a period of more than 12 months is not necessary as the condition requires that the development should operate in accordance with the grazing management plan for the development's operational life time. The BNG condition is required by schedule 7a of the Town and country Planning Act 1990 and does not need to be restated in this decision.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

63. Given the moderate harm to the character and appearance of the area the proposal would conflict with FLP Policies LP16(d) and Policy LP14 in respect of its effect on the character and appearance of the area. The proposal therefore conflicts with the development plan as a whole. I attach moderate weight to this conflict.

64. Against this, other material considerations weigh heavily in favour of the scheme. In particular, the scheme would make a valuable contribution to renewable energy generation, decarbonisation and energy security, benefits to which I attach substantial weight. Alongside these substantial benefits I give moderate weight to the biodiversity gain benefits and some limited weight to the economic benefits of the development.

65. Applying Policy S5(1) of the Framework, the moderate harm to character and appearance, and the resulting limited conflict with Policy N2:1 a. and d. clearly do not substantially outweigh the energy and other benefits of the development.

66. Moreover, the benefits of the scheme and the clear support of the Framework are material considerations that outweigh the conflict with the development plan indicating that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Consequently, for the reasons given above, the appeal is allowed.

Diane Cragg

INSPECTOR

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Peter Cruickshank	Legal Counsel, Number 5 Chambers
Callum Wright	PACE Planning Manager
Mark Kelly	PACE Development Director
Harry Coles	PACE Planning Associate
Tony Kernon	Kernon Countryside Consulting
Ruth Knight	Abseline
Mr Nigel Deacon	AWE

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Matthew Leigh	Fenland District Council
Danielle Brooke	Fenland District Council
Derek Richardson	Fenland District Council

Schedule of conditions

1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Approved Plans

2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:
UKH618_01 CCTV Elevations
UKH618_02 Battery Energy Storage
UKH618_03 PV Panel Elevations
UKH618_04a Solar Inverter Cabin Details
UKH618_04b Battery Inverter Cabin Details
UKH618_05 Double Gate Elevation
UKH618_11 Access Track Elevation
UKH618_09 Proposed Site Layout (Block plan) (revision V3)
UKH618_10 V3 Mitigation and Enhancement plan
FCL/654/SW01 Surface Water Management Plan (revision A - Issue 1)
UKH618_08 Location Plan
UKH618_09 Access Plan
FCL/654/SW01A Surface Water Management Plan (revision A Addendum)
UKH618_07 Substation Plan & Elevation (revision V0)

Temporary permission

3) Planning permission is hereby granted for a temporary period of 40 years from the date of the first commercial export of energy (the First Export Date). No later than 30 days after the First Export Date the applicant shall supply written notice to the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

Cessation

4) The LPA shall be notified in writing of the permanent cessation of export of the electricity to the grid from the site within 30 days of that event occurring.

5) Within 6 months of the cessation of the export of electricity, or within 39 years following the First Export Date (whichever is the soonest), a detailed Decommissioning Method Statement (DMS) shall be submitted to the LPA for its written approval. The DMS shall include:
    a) details of the removal of the panels, supports, inverters, cables, buildings and all associated structures and fencing from the site, and a timetable for their removal;
    b) a traffic management plan to address likely traffic impacts during the decommissioning period;
    c) an environmental management plan to include measures to be taken during the decommissioning period to protect wildlife and habitats;

d) full details of the proposed restoration of the site including a site wide restoration and aftercare scheme which details how and when the land will be restored to its former agricultural grade; and
e) Details of the recycling and disposal of the decommissioned elements.

The Site shall be decommissioned in accordance with the approved DMS within 12 months of the expiry of the 40-year period of planning permission.

Construction Drainage

6) No development, including preparatory works, shall commence until details of measures indicating how additional surface water run-off from the site will be avoided during the construction works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The approved measures and systems shall be brought into operation before any works to create buildings or hard surfaces commence.

Surface water drainage

7) The surface water drainage scheme shall be constructed in full accordance with the Surface Water Management Plan and Addendum as submitted (ref: FCL/654/SW01a) dated July 2025 prior to the First Export Date.

8) Details for the long-term maintenance arrangements (the Maintenance Plan) for the surface water drainage system (including all SuDS features) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA prior to the First Export Date. The submitted details shall identify runoff sub-catchments, SuDS components, flow routes, maintenance activities, and responsibilities. In addition, the Maintenance plan must clarify the access that is required to each surface water management component for maintenance purposes. The maintenance plan shall be carried out in full thereafter.

Archaeology

9) No development shall take place until:
An archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA;
And any necessary safeguarding measures to ensure the preservation in situ of important archaeological remains and/or further archaeological investigation and recording identified in the WSI have been undertaken in accordance with a specification and timetable that shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA.
The development should be carried out in full accordance with the approved details within the WSI.

Soil Management Plan

10) No development shall commence until a Soil Management Plan (SMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the LPA. The SMP shall include the following:

a) Measures to protect soils during development with reference to the guidance found in Defra's Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites;
b) A works programme showing how all soil handling and trafficking operations will be undertaken and which makes allowance for poor weather/ ground conditions stoppages;
c) Details of how construction activities will be managed across the site to minimise impact on soils; and
d) Details of appropriate equipment and methods for stockpiling, respreading, and ameliorating of soil compaction in accordance with good practice techniques to minimise the risk of soil compaction.

The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved Soil Management Plan.

CEMP

11) No development shall commence, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the LPA. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The CEMP shall provide for:
i. Routing of all construction vehicles.
ii. The parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors.
iii. Loading and unloading of plant and materials.
iv. Storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development.
v. The erection and maintenance of security hoarding.
vi. Displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate.
vii. Wheel washing facilities.
viii. Measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction.
ix. A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition.
x. Location(s) of construction works compound.
xi. Details of any lighting required for the period of construction (locations and levels/directions of luminance.
xii. Security measures during construction including contact details for site manager and site security personnel.

CEMP (Biodiversity)

12) No development shall commence, including vegetation clearance or any ground works, until a Construction Environmental Management Plan for Biodiversity (CEMPb) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the LPA. The CEMPb shall include the following:
a) updated badger survey which is no older than 6 months;
b) risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities;
c) identification of relevant biodiversity protection zones and buffer zones;
d) practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid, reduce or mitigate the impacts on important habitats, protected species, and breeding birds during construction;

e) the location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features;
f) the times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works;
g) responsible persons and lines of communication;
h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers, warning signs, and sensitive lighting; and
i) protected species licensing requirements (if any).

The approved CEMPb shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details.

13) Construction works shall be undertaken outside the optimum time of year for wintering birds (October to March inclusive). If construction works are necessary to be undertaken during the optimum time of year for wintering birds, temporary screening fencing shall first be installed in accordance with details that shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The fencing shall be retained for the duration of those construction works.

Biodiversity Enhancement

14) No development shall proceed above ground level, until a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the LPA. The BEP shall include details of all species enhancements including relevant scale plans and drawings showing the location, elevation, and type of features as appropriate. All enhancements shall be delivered prior to the First Export Date and retained thereafter in accordance with the approved details.

Landscaping

15) No development shall take place above ground level until a detailed landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The detailed landscaping scheme shall reflect the approved mitigation and enhancement plan UKH618_10 V3 - and shall include:

- Details of proposed schedules of species of trees and shrubs to be planted, planting layouts with stock sizes and planting numbers/densities.
- Details of the planting scheme implementation programme, including ground protection and preparation, weed clearance, stock sizes, seeding rates, planting methods, mulching, plant protection, staking and/or other support.
- Details of the aftercare and long-term maintenance (including re-planting where losses occur) programme.

The landscape scheme shall be carried out as approved within the first available planting season (October to March inclusive) following the First Export Date.

Fencing

16) Notwithstanding any plans submitted, no development shall proceed above ground until full details of the site boundary fencing and any associated access gates have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details

shall include mammal access points/squeezes, security specification, and external colour finishes.
The approved boundary treatments shall be erected prior to the First Export Date and shall thereafter be retained strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Acoustic Fencing (Pre-Energisation of the BESS)

17) Notwithstanding any plans submitted, the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) shall not be energised until full details of the acoustic fencing have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include the location, height, construction, noise performance specification, and external colour finishes. The approved acoustic fencing shall be installed prior to energisation of the BESS and shall thereafter be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

Materials

18) Prior to their erection on site, details of the proposed materials and finish, including colour, of all solar panels, frames, ancillary buildings, equipment, and enclosures shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the LPA. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and shall be maintained as such for the lifetime of the development hereby permitted.

Access delivery

19) No works involved in the preparation for and delivery of any solar photovoltaic panels, frames, battery storage, substation and associated works shall commence until the vehicular access at Whittlesey Road, including the passing bay, has been fully constructed in accordance with the details set out on UKH618_09 Access Plan. The approved access and associated visibility splays shall be retained for the duration of the development.

Fire Safety Management Plan

20) Prior to the delivery and siting of any batteries to the Site, a detailed Fire Safety Management Plan (FSMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The FSMP shall incorporate the following details:
    a) detailed risk reduction strategy covering the construction and decommissioning;
    b) details of battery units design and testing to inform provisions for containment, detection and monitoring, and any deflagration prevention and venting, and suppression systems;
    c) a Fire Emergency Response Strategy;
    d) design measures to mitigate fire spread;
    e) access arrangements including for emergency services;
    f) water supply;

g) a fire water management plan to include provision for fire water run-off to be contained within the Site, tested before release and removed from the Site to be treated;
h) a vegetation control management plan;
i) an assessment of hazards and risks not only at the Site, but also to the wider area and to the local community.

The FSMP shall be implemented in strict accordance with the approved details for the duration of the development.

Contaminated Land

21) If during development contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site, then no further development shall be carried out until a remediation strategy detailing how this contamination shall be dealt with has been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved, and a written verification report submitted thereafter to the LPA for approval in writing.

Security strategy

22) Prior to the installation of any solar panels or battery storage, details of a crime prevention strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The Development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved strategy prior to the First Export Date and shall thereafter be retained for the duration of the development.

Lighting

23) No external lighting shall be installed on the site (other than temporary construction lighting agreed via condition 11) or affixed to any buildings on the site unless the LPA has first approved in writing details of the position, height, design, beam orientation, measures to control light spillage and intensity of illumination, taking into account nearby residential properties and nocturnal fauna. The lighting details shall also include a "lighting design strategy for biodiversity" in accordance with ILP Publications' "Guidance Note 8 Bats and artificial lighting". The strategy shall:

a) Identify those areas /features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and other nocturnal wildlife that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and
b) Show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy.

Only the approved details shall be installed. Any lighting, which is so installed, shall thereafter be maintained and operated in accordance with the approved details.

Habitat Management and Monitoring

24) No development shall take place until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the LPA. The HMMP shall be prepared in broad accordance with the submitted Ecology Impact assessment dated September 2025 (Prepared by AWEcology) and the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment revised September 2025 and include the delivery of at least 162.38% habitat units. The content of the HMMP shall include:
a) a non-technical summary;
b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
e) Provision of a work schedule for all habitat management and monitoring works, including identification of timelines for the delivery of monitoring reports and other appropriate evidence to the LPA to demonstrate compliance with this condition.

Once approved by the LPA, the HMMP shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved details within 12 months of the date of first export date. The development shall thereafter be operated and managed in accordance with the HMMP.

Grazing

25) Prior to the First Export Date, a Grazing Management Plan (GMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The GMP shall detail the areas of the site to be used for livestock grazing, the type and number of livestock to be grazed, the periods during which grazing shall occur and how the grazing is to be managed.
The site shall thereafter be managed in full accordance with the approved GMP throughout the operational lifetime of the development.