Design and Access Statement

Derril Water Solar Farm

01/03/2021

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1. This Design and Access Statement ("DAS") has been prepared by Neo Environmental Limited, on behalf of RES Ltd ("the Applicant") to accompany the Planning Application submitted to Torridge District Council ("the Council") for a proposed solar farm with associated infrastructure (the "Proposed Development") on lands circa 1.2km southwest of the village of Pyworthy, Devon (the "Application Site").

1.2. The Proposed Development, which occupies a site area of approximately 66.33 hectares ("ha") will consist of the construction of photovoltaic ("PV") panels mounted on metal frames, new access tracks, underground cabling, perimeter fencing with CCTV cameras and access gates, 2 no. temporary construction compounds and all ancillary grid infrastructure and associated works.

1.3. Planning permission is sought for a period of 40 years, after which the equipment associated with the Proposed Development would be removed, with the Application Site reinstated. This coupled with the measures that are proposed to enhance the landscape and increase biodiversity of the Application Site will ensure that upon decommissioning, the Application Site can not only be restored to its current agricultural use, but will also have resulted in net beneficial gains for ecology and the local landscape fabric.

Development Description

1.4. The Proposed Development will consist of the construction of bi-facial solar photovoltaic (PV) panels mounted on metal frames, new access tracks, underground cabling, perimeter fencing with CCTV cameras and access gates, a temporary construction compound, substation and all ancillary grid infrastructure and associated works. The Proposed Development will result in the production of clean energy from a renewable energy resource (daylight) and will also involve additional landscaping including hedgerow planting and improved biodiversity management.

Role and Purpose of the Design and Access Statement

1.5. This DAS has been prepared in accordance with Article 9 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015[1] ("the DMPO") which sets out the detailed requirements of the content of a DAS in relation to planning permission. A

[1] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/595/article/9/made

DAS is required in this case as the Development would constitute 'major development', with the site area exceeding 1 hectare.

1.6. The requirements under Article 9 of the DMPO cover both design and access, allowing Applicants to demonstrate an integrated approach that will deliver inclusive design, and address a full range of access requirements throughout the design process. The DAS forms part of the planning application submission, which also comprises a Planning Statement and supporting technical appendices, planning drawings, planning application form, and the requisite planning fee.

1.7. The role and purpose of the DAS, in accordance with Article 9 of the DMPO, is to:

- Explain the design principles and rationale that have been applied to the Development;
- Demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the Development, and how the design of the Development takes that context into account;
- Explain the policy adopted as to access, and how policies relating to access in relevant local development documents have been taken into account;
- State what, if any, consultation has been undertaken on issues relating to access to the Development and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation; and
- Explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the Development have been addressed.

1.8. The DAS has also been prepared in accordance with guidance in the National Planning Practice Guidance ("the NPPG") section '*Making an application*' paragraph 31 '*What should be included in a Design and Access Statement accompanying a planning application?*'[2].

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance

DETAILED DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

1.9. This Section provides a detailed breakdown and description of the design and layout details of the Proposed Development. Please note that the proposed design is based on informed assumptions of the most likely option for the panels and their positioning. However, as with all technology, solar PV is continually advancing and becoming more efficient and whilst various infrastructure components are described in this application, it is proposed that the most efficient infrastructural specifications available at the time of construction will be used. These may vary slightly from the indicative details described in this report but this is not expected to result in a significant departure from the details specified.

1.10. In devising the proposed design and layout, RES Limited has employed specialist consultants to review their operational requirements and advise on any environmental effects and/or necessary mitigation measures. As a result, the proposed design balances clean energy production and all environmental and technical considerations.

1.11. The Proposed Development would consist of rows of bi-facial, south facing, ground mounted solar arrays running from east to west across the Application Site. The panels are composed of photovoltaic cells and are designed to maximise the absorbency of the sun's rays and minimise solar glare. As a consequence, they are dark in hue with an anti-reflectance coating and recessive in the landscape.

1.12. The panels will be mounted onto metal frames arranged in rows and fixed to pile driven galvanised steel posts to a depth of approximately 1.5m, without the need for excavation. Excavation would only be required if shallow concrete footings were to be installed. The requirement for this would be if geophysical survey of the Site identified potential archaeological anomalies. The use of such footing in localised areas would ensure no impact on potential archaeological features.

1.13. The solar panels will face south and will be inclined at an angle between 10 and 40 degrees in order to increase irradiation levels. The solar arrays are not anticipated to exceed 2.8m Above Ground Level (AGL). Typical elevations of the solar panels are shown on **Figure 8 of Volume 2: Planning Application Drawings**.

1.14. Associated infrastructure, detailed on **Figures 6 – 14 of Volume 2: Planning Application Drawings** includes the following, with approximate measurements:

- 2,920 module racks; 75,920 modules: 29,200 pile-driven poles at c. 0.008m^2 footprint each: **233.6m^2**
- 1 x Grid Substation, including hardstanding: (25m(L) x 24.1m(W)= **602.5m^2**)
- 14 x Inverter Substations (including transformer cabinet): 16.0m(L) x 6.0m(W) x 14 = **1,344m^2**

- 12 x Inverter Substation Hardstanding Areas: 16.0m(L) x 16.0m(W) x 12 = **3,072m²**
- 8.7km of deer fencing with 2,884 posts at 3m spacing, c. 0.03m² footprint each: **86.52m².** Fence is 2.4m high with a 0.1m gap at the bottom.
- 85 CCTV posts at c. 0.64m² footprint each: **54.4m²**
- Roads, c. 4m wide which will involve an average of 300mm depth of soil removed. Local widening will be employed at turns for access reasons. Occasionally geosynthetic reinforcement or soil stability will be used to reduce depth. Total road length of 3.1km (2km of new access track and 1.1km of existing access track). Roads are c. 4m wide: 12,400m² in total (4,400m² of which is upgraded; and **8000m²** of greenfield)
- Buried cables running from the solar farm to the substation. These cable runs will also contain communications cabling for the SCADA control and monitoring system which will consist of multicore copper or fibre optic cables. All on-site cabling will be located underground. Cable trenches will be excavated to 1m deep and up to 1m wide, approximately 5,000m length and estimated at **5,000m²** during construction and backfilled to prevent any visibility.
- 2 temporary construction compounds at c. 50m x 60m: **6,000m²**
- Structural landscape planting and ecological enhancement measures (See **Figure 1.14 of Technical Appendix 1 (LVA) within Volume 3: Technical Appendices**).

1.15. The Proposed Development will have a construction period of circa six months and an operational period of 40 years.

THE DESIGN STATEMENT

1.16. This Section will provide a brief summary on the design principles and rationale, the site context, and how the design of the Proposed Development has taken account of the context.

Site Selection

1.17. The purpose of the Proposed Development is to harness solar power to generate electricity from a low carbon source, however, the design of a development of this nature must also account for potential environmental impacts and effects.

1.18. The potential for installing the Proposed Development on the Application Site has been evaluated through both desk-based study and site surveys which assessed technical and environmental issues to inform and hence derive the most appropriate proposed scale, location, and infrastructure layout of the Proposed Development.

1.19. A range of technical, environmental, and economic factors are considered when assessing a site for a solar PV development, particularly of this scale. Key considerations include:

- Solar irradiation levels;
- Proximity to an available grid connection;
- Proximity to settlements and local population;
- Topography;
- Field size / shading (site capacity);
- Access to the site for construction;
- Agricultural Land Classification (ALC);
- Absence of landscape, archaeological and nature conservation designations;
- Absence of flood risk; and
- The potential for a commercial / land agreement with a landowner.

1.20. Following consideration of the above factors, as well as the largely benign nature of solar farm, limited disturbance to the existing environment is anticipated as a result of the implementation of the Proposed Development and the area in which the Proposed Development has been located was identified as having good potential for development.

Design Principles and Evolution

1.21. The design of a solar development is an iterative process, running in tandem with the identification of potential environmental effects. As environmental constraints and sensitivities have been identified, the layout of the Proposed Development has undergone a series of modifications to avoid and / or reduce potential environmental effects through careful design.

1.22. Following site surveys and identification of various environmental considerations, a constraints map was produced by Neo Environmental Ltd which was used to inform a series of design meetings.

1.23. Environmental factors considered in the final design of the Proposed Development are discussed further within the Technical Appendices that accompany the planning application (**Volume 3: Technical Appendices**). The final design and layout have been achieved through detailed assessments of the environmental effects and consideration of the identified spatial constraints, combined with consideration of the visual appearance of the Proposed Development from sensitive viewpoints and designated heritage assets. Key design principles are discussed below.

Solar Irradiation Levels

1.24. The Application Site is well located geographically for solar gain. The photovoltaic panels are oriented in a southwards direction and will be inclined at an angle between 10 and 40 degrees to maximise solar gain and will remain in a fixed position throughout the day and during the year (i.e. they will not rotate to track the movement of the sun).

Proximity to Available Grid Connection

1.25. The Application Site is optimally located for the available grid capacity at the existing Pyworthy Substation, avoiding the need for large lengths of cable route disturbance. At its closest point (Field 16), the Application Site is located circa 75m west of the substation (see **Figure 3 of Volume 2: Planning Application Drawings**).

Separation from Local Population and Topography

1.26. The local area is generally agricultural in nature, punctuated by individual properties and farmsteads, however the nearest residential areas are Hopworthy and Yeomaden, located c. 0.7km northeast and 0.7km southeast respectively. The nearest settlements include Pyworthy, located c. 1.2km northeast and Bridgerule, located c. 1.8km northwest of the Application Site.

1.27. Recreational Routes include two Public Rights of Way (PRoW); one which passes the south-eastern boundary of the Application Site (linking Crinacott Farm and Northmoor Farm, both

outside the Application Site) and another which passes east of the adjacent substation, located on the eastern boundary of the Application Site.

1.28. The visibility of the solar farm and associated structures will be largely contained by the mix of hedgerows and trees within the boundaries of the Application Site and surrounding farmland, along with screening by built elements and local topographical variations. Any such views of the Proposed Development will be limited to parts of the overall development. The potential changes to the existing views of these receptors have been determined and further discussed in the viewpoint assessment within the **Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA): Technical Appendix 1 of Volume 3.** In addition to this, the Proposed Development includes a landscaping plan which involves mitigation screen planting to further restrict views into the Application Site, ensuring that views are localised and intermittent. See **Figure 1.14 of Technical Appendix 1: Volume 3.**

1.29. During the design iteration process, the Application Site boundary changed according to discussions with nearby neighbours and as a result of site visits conducted by consultants of Neo Environmental Ltd, including a landscape architect; hydrology consultant; archaeology consultant and ecologist. The latter changes are discussed later under *'Absence of Landscape, Archaeological and Nature Conservation Designations'.*

1.30. The initial boundary of the Proposed Development was 79.4 hectares; however, it was then reduced to 69.5 hectares in order to accommodate buffer zones from nearby residents and other design measures such as buffer zones from watercourses; drains; hedgerows and areas of woodland in order to reduce potential impacts on local wildlife.

1.31. A letter was received by the Applicant from a near neighbour on the 17th January 2021 outlining concerns regarding the fields immediately east of their property, which at the time of receiving the letter had PV panels located within. They stated their reasons for concern, which can be found in **Appendix G** of the **Statement of Community Involvement: Volume 1** and noted "*we consider that it would demonstrate your commitment to being good neighbours if you could remove the panels entirely from that whole field next to our property*".

1.32. Following further discussions with the near neighbour and with the landowner of the fields directly adjacent to this property, the design was then amended to exclude the nearest field to the neighbour from the design and hence, remove all solar panels from this field, thereby reducing potential negative amenity impacts on the owners of the adjacent land. The final Application Site boundary has a total area of 66.33 hectares.

Site Capacity

1.33. The Proposed Development is in an area with an existing industrial presence, therefore the Proposed Development boundary has evolved over time to not only take into account environmental and social constraints, such as proximity to residences, but also technical constraints such as pylon lines and other solar developments in the locality.

1.34. Design principles adopted include:

- 5m drainage ditch buffer;
- 5m buffer from hedgerows;
- 100m visual buffer around dwellings minimum;
- 10m overhead line buffer;
- Tree Buffers;
- 10m Watercourse buffer;
- 10m Woodland buffer; and
- 1 x 30m Badger buffer.

1.35. Following the design iteration process, the final layout (**Figure 4 of Volume 2: Planning Application Drawings**) is of sufficient size to accommodate a viable solar PV array, capable of exporting sufficient electricity to meet the Applicant's requirements (42MW). A development of this size is capable of generating enough renewable energy for the equivalent of circa 12,100 homes and would displace c. 18,608 tonnes of CO_2 per annum, contributing to the UKs target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Access

1.36. The proposed haul route for the Proposed Development has been identified by considering the ability of the route to physically accommodate the required vehicles, in addition to the sensitivity of the routes to potential disruption by the movements of traffic to and from the Application Site.

1.37. The haulage route will likely be from the A386 to the east of the Application Site. The delivery vehicles will exit the A386 at Hatherleigh to join the A3072 and continue along the A3072 until joining the A388 at Holsworthy. From here they will travel north along the A388 into Holsworthy, turning left onto Bodmin Street, where they will follow this two-lane road out towards North Tamerton until they reach Thorndon Cross. Once there they will turn right onto this single lane road and follow this for approximately 1.3 miles to reach the Application Site.

1.38. Although it is proposed to utilise existing entrance points, they will all have to be upgraded so that the largest construction vehicles can manoeuvre into the Application Site. Initial swept path analysis was used in the design of the entrance points and therefore they are all suitable for the largest construction vehicles to access the Application Site once the upgrades have been completed.

1.39. A map showing the proposed local access route is presented in **Figure 5.1: Appendix 5A** of **Technical Appendix 5: Volume 3.**

Agricultural Land Classification

1.40. An Agricultural Land Classification survey was conducted on the Application Site in December 2020.

1.41. The ALC assessment confirms that the land within the Application Site is predominantly grade 3b and 4 (55.1%) which is not considered best and most versatile agricultural land and aligns with **Policy ST14**. 4% of the land was classed as non-agricultural and 39.8% is classified as 3a, however due to the temporary and reversible nature of the Proposed Development in addition to its very small ground level development footprint (<4%), this is not considered to be a significant issue in the way of development. 1.1% of land was not subject to survey due to the survey being conducted prior to the final design of the Proposed Development.

1.42. This is discussed further in the Planning Assessment section of the **Planning Statement** and in **Technical Appendix 9 of Volume 3.**

Absence of Landscape, Archaeological and Nature Conservation Designations

1.43. The Site is not subject to landscape, archaeological or nature conservation designations, however as environmental effects and sensitivities have been identified, the layout of the Proposed Development has undergone a series of modifications to avoid or reduce potential environmental effects through careful design.

1.44. No changes to the design of the solar farm were required in order to avoid or reduce potential effects on any landscape or archaeological designations.

1.45. The Application Site is not located within any nationally or locally designated landscapes, although the Cornwall Area of Natural Beauty (AONB) is located c. 9.4km northwest. It was stated in consultation by Natural England that potential effects on the special qualities resulting from the introduction of the Proposed Development of this AONB should be considered, however given the low heights of the proposed structures (c. 2.8m for the solar panels), the Proposed Development will be entirely screened by intervening landform vegetation and buildings and therefore, the introduction of the Proposed Development will not indirectly compromise the character and special qualities of the Cornwall AONB.

1.46. The locally designated Cornwall Council Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), Upper Tamar is located c. 1.2km to the south of the Proposed Development, however the LVA states in paragraph 1.326:

"…the introduction of the Proposed Development will indirectly affect a small eastern part of the Upper Tamar AGLV. During operation a very localised effect will range from ***Minor adverse***

*to **No change**. It is considered unlikely that the characteristics and qualities of the Upper Tamar AGLV will be compromised by the introduction of the Proposed Development."*

1.47. In terms of archaeology, as no designated or non-designated heritage assets were identified within the Application Site, no direct effects will occur on these resources as a result of the Proposed Development and as such, no mitigation measures are deemed to be necessary.

1.48. In terms of designated assets within the surrounding area, the **Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA), Technical Appendix 3 of Volume 3** concludes in paragraph 3.133:

*"Indirect effects upon the surrounding heritage assets have been assessed as **Low** in the worst-case. Therefore, no specific mitigation is considered to be required for the reduction of any visual impacts."*

1.49. Despite the above, various modifications were made to the original design of the Proposed Solar Farm to account for ecological sensitivities. Examples of these include:

- A 25m buffer between PV panels and Hopworthy County Wildlife Site ("CWS"), Lower Hopworthy County Wildlife Site and Monks Farm Unconfirmed Wildlife Site ("UWS").
- 35m buffers have been implemented between PV panels and Trelana UWS;
- Panels have been avoided in the Derril Water 2 UWS, with fencing restricted to less distinctive and lower-quality areas of culm grassland in the UWS.

1.50. In regard to Derril Water 2 UWS, paragraph 2.161 of the EcIA notes in regard to this:

"Security fence installation in and immediately adjacent to Derril Water 2 UWS will be supervised by a suitably experienced Ecological Clerk of Works ("ECoW"). Excavations connected with fence installation in this area will ensure that the material excavated is removed carefully, preserving vegetation and soil structure as far as possible. The material will be stored close to the fence installation trench, and carefully laid back either side of the fence to fill the trench as soon as possible."

1.51. Although not in relation to ecological designations, various other alterations were made to the design of the Proposed Development to accommodate other ecological sensitivities. Paragraph 2.185 of the EcIA states:

"As part the Proposed Development design, a 30m buffer zone has been incorporated around the badger sett. The buffer zone will be clearly demarcated on site and tool box talks will be given to all construction staff to ensure works and workers avoid this area. Hand digging will be permitted over 10m from setts and light machinery use permitted over 20m from setts, although these are not foreseen to be needed. Any works ultimately required within the 10m to 30m zone will only take place using handheld tools, avoiding significant ground disturbance."

1.52. Another example of a design measure implemented is in regard to Hazel Dormouse. Paragraph 2.190 of the EcIA states:

"As part of design measures, with the effect of avoiding impacts on dormice, all hedgerows within and adjacent to the Application Site will be retained and buffered from development by 5m, with the exception of small breaks of up to 1.5m for security fencing and four hedgerow breaks for road access and visibility. A 10m buffer has been applied to all suitable woodlands, with the exception of one area on the west of target note 103 (see ***Appendix 2A, Figure 2.2*** *and* ***Appendix 2.1: Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report****). However, in this area the fence will follow an existing fence line. No removal of woodland will therefore be required."*

1.53. Further information on integral design measures relating to ecology can be found in **Table 2-10 of the EcIA (Technical Appendix 2: Volume 3).**

Absence of flood risk

1.54. The Application Site is mostly contained within Flood Zone 1, an area described as having a "*Low probability*" of flooding. However, there is a small part of the Application Site within Flood Zone 2 and 3, towards the eastern boundary of Field 16 (See **Figure 3 of Volume 2: Planning Application Drawings** for field numbers).

1.55. Subsequently, the Proposed Development has avoided areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 and has sought to locate all infrastructure within the areas of Flood Zone 1 and particularly, all electrical infrastructure (e.g. inverters and substations) outside any areas at risk of surface water flooding. The Flood Risk Assessment states in paragraph 4.5:

"The only infrastructure which is located within the areas of surface water will be solar panels, which will be raised at least 0.6m Above Ground Level (AGL) and therefore, above the surface water level of approximately 0.3m with a suitable freeboard."

1.56. In addition to this, the Proposed Development has been designed in such a way to improve drainage across the Application Site. Paragraph 2.9 of the FRA notes:

"It is proposed to construct a series of filter drains / infiltration trenches and swales across the Application Site in order to maintain greenfield run off rates as well as reducing the risks of soil erosion and limiting any impacts on downstream receiving watercourses or agricultural land. The location of the filter drains / infiltration trenches and swales have been chosen within fields with the steeper gradients, near to the site boundaries, where overland flow will be directed. In total, there will be a storage volume of approximately 405.8m^3. This is greater than the volume of additional runoff generated as a result of the impermeable buildings (109.0m^3). It is therefore considered that this not only adequately mitigates the increase in flow rates as a result of the minor increase in impermeable area, but provides improvement."

1.57. For further information see **Technical Appendix 4 of Volume 3**.

The Site Context

Site Description

1.58. The Application Site is located in a rural setting, on lands circa 1.2km southwest of the village of Pyworthy and c. 1.8km southeast of Bridgerule in Torridge, Devon; the approximate centre point of which is Grid Reference E229936, N101914. Comprising 28 agricultural fields, the Application Site measures 66.33 hectares (ha) in total. See **Figure 1 of Volume 2: Planning Application Drawings** for details.

1.59. Land within the Application Site itself is gently undulating, ranging between 95 - 125m AOD and consists of fields typically of medium scale and generally well enclosed by a mixture of dense treelines, hedgerows and woodland shelter belt, limiting visibility for local settlements and receptors (See **Figure 3 of Volume 2: Planning Application Drawings** for field numbers).

1.60. The fields primarily consist of arable, semi-improved grassland. Small areas of wet woodland were recorded within and in close proximity to the Application Site, predominantly along the banks of the Derril Water as well as some of its tributaries and a large linear broadleaved plantation was recorded along the Derril Water in the southern part of the Application Site.

1.61. There are various overhead lines (OHL) dissecting the Application Site, including two which run through the northeastern fields (16, 19, 20, 21 and 24) in a general north to south direction and one which runs through fields 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 in a northeast to southwest direction. Additionally, an OHL passes through fields 8 and 9 in an east to west direction and another through field 5 in a north to south direction.

1.62. While there are a number of drains and water courses throughout the Application Site, it is mostly contained within Flood Zone 1, an area described as having a "*Low probability*" of flooding. The exception to this is a small part of the Application Site within Flood Zone 2 and 3, towards the eastern boundary of Field 16. These areas have been avoided within the Proposed Development footprint.

1.63. Additionally, the Application Site does not lie within or directly adjacent to any designated environmental, landscape or archaeological sites. However, the locally designated Cornwall Council Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), Upper Tamar is located c. 1.2km to the south of the Proposed Development. Other Cornwall AGLVs in closest proximity includes the Gooseham to Launcells AGLV, located c. 2.2km to the northeast and the Week St Mary AGLV, located within c. 2.5km to the southwest.

1.64. The Application Site will be accessed from four existing entrance points on the unnamed minor road which splits the site into northern and southern parcels. From the western boundary of the site, the road runs in a southwestern direction for c. 0.5km before turning in a general east-northeast direction through the eastern section of the Application Site. Other transport routes include the B3254, c. 2.4km to the west, and the A3072, c. 2.6km to the

north. A network of minor roads also provide access to a number of individual properties and farmsteads nearby.

Surrounding Land Use

1.65. Land surrounding the Application Site is generally agricultural in nature, punctuated by individual properties and farmsteads, with the nearest residential areas of Hopworthy and Yeomadon located 0.7km northeast and southeast respectively. The village of Bridgerule is located c. 1.8km northwest of the Application Site.

1.66. Recreational Routes include two Public Rights of Way (PRoW); one which passes the southeastern boundary of the Application Site (linking Crinacott Farm and Northmoor Farm, both outside the Application Site) and another which passes east of the adjacent substation.

1.67. The Application Site is in an area with existing electricity infrastructure, with a solar farm present c. 0.3km southeast and another c. 1.2km to the southwest. Additionally, the electrical Pyworthy Substation is located c. 75m from the Northern Parcel's eastern boundary, adjacent to Field 16, where the Proposed Development will connect (See **Figure 3 of Volume 2: Planning Application Drawings**).

1.68. The nearest properties consist of isolated houses and farms, including:

- Monks Farm, 0.15km east of Fields 10 and 0.09km west of Field 15;
- New Park, directly north of Field 18, across the unnamed minor road which splits the site;
- Trelana, 0.13km west of Field 18 and 0.06km west of Field 6;
- Westlake Cottage, 0.01km east of Field 2; and
- Bounds Farm, 70m west of Field 9.

1.69. It should be noted that Monks Farm, New Park, Trelana and Westlake Cottage all fall within the landowner boundary and are involved in the project.

1.70. A more detailed description of the site and its surroundings is included in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal in **Technical Appendix 1: Volume 3.**

How the Design has taken account of the Context

Use / Rationale of the Proposed Development

Proposed Solar Farm

1.71. The Proposed Solar Farm Development is intended to support Central Government's commitments to reduce emissions of greenhouse gas emissions to combat the effects of climate change.

1.72. The UK is party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Kyoto Protocol, adopted in December 1997 and put into force in February 2005, operationalises the UNFCCC by committing industrialised countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets. It only binds developed countries, and places a heavier burden on them, under the principle of "*common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities*", because it recognises that they are largely responsible for the current high levels of GHG emissions in the atmosphere.

1.73. The 2016 Paris Climate Agreement marked the latest step in the development of the UN regime with a central objective is to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and aims to limit the increase to 1.5°C. The UK formally ratified the agreement in December 2016, signalling major commitment to being part of a global effort to curb the effects of climate change.

1.74. The Climate Change Act 2008 established long term statutory targets for the UK to achieve an 80% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050 against a 1990 baseline. However, following the Government's declaration of an '*Environment and Climate Emergency*' in May 2019, they committed the UK to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) advised that to meet this new target, the UK will require substantial amounts of new, low carbon power sources to be built before 2050, up to four times that of today's levels.

1.75. The CCC published the Sixth Carbon Budget: The UK's Path to Net Zero[3] on 9th December 2020 which sets out, for the first time, what actions the UK will need to take to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

1.76. The CCC's recommended pathway, the Balanced Net Zero Pathway, pathway aims to decarbonise electricity generation by 2035, with action thereafter focused on meeting new demands in a low-carbon way. The pathway requires a 78% reduction in UK territorial emissions by 2035, a 63% reduction from 2019.

[3] The-Sixth-Carbon-Budget-The-UKs-path-to-Net-Zero.pdf

Amount

1.77. Different levels of intrusion and disturbance are anticipated for different construction elements of the proposed solar farm. As such, the potential for impacting upon sub-surface remains is dependent on the type and scale of each construction element. All construction elements involving topsoil stripping or deeper excavations are considered to be ground disturbance derived from infrastructure during the construction phase, while impacts resulting from the solar panels themselves, as well as the perimeter fencing, are considered to be ground disturbance derived from piling effects.

1.78. The majority of the Application Site area will be utilised for solar panels only, which comprises a 'pin-prick' effect considered to be fairly minimal in terms of potential direct impacts upon sub-surface archaeology. Construction involving topsoil stripping, i.e., temporary construction compound and access tracks, have in general a lower potential for impacting upon sub-surface remains below the archaeological horizon, but retains a similar potential for encountering archaeological remains as construction involving deeper excavation work. Deeper excavation work, including that required for cable trenches, inverter/transformer stations, substations, etc, have the potential to cause direct impacts of a greater magnitude.

1.79. Overall, the proposed footprint of the Proposed Development is expected to be less than 5% of the Application Site area (66.33ha), with the highest ground disturbance occurring from the proposed access tracks, temporary construction compounds and cable trenches. A lower area of ground disturbance will occur from excavations required for infrastructure such as the ancillary buildings. The cumulative 'pin-prick' ground disturbance occurring from the piling for the panels themselves will be less than 0.5% of the Application Site area. Specific details and areas of the construction elements expected to have potential to impact upon sub-surface remains are detailed below:

- 2,920 module racks; 75,920 modules: 29,200 pile-driven poles at c. 0.008m^2 footprint each: **233.6m^2**
- 1 x Grid Substation, including hardstanding: (25m(L) x 24.1m(W)= **602.5m^2**)
- 14 x Inverter Substations (including transformer cabinet): 16.0m(L) x 6.0m(W) x 14 = **1,344m^2**
- 12 x Inverter Substation Hardstanding Areas: 16.0m(L) x 16.0m(W) x 12 = **3,072m^2**
- 8.7km of deer fencing with 2,884 posts at 3m spacing, c. 0.03m^2 footprint each: **86.52m^2.** Fence is 2.4m high with a 0.1m gap at the bottom.
- 85 CCTV posts at c. 0.64m^2 footprint each: **54.4m^2**

- Total road length of 3.1km (2km of new access track and 1.1km of existing access track). Roads are c. 4m wide: 12,400m^2 in total (4,400m^2 of which is upgraded; and **8000m^2** of greenfield)
- Buried cables running from the solar farm to the substation. These cable runs will also contain communications cabling for the SCADA control and monitoring system which will consist of multicore copper or fibre optic cables. All on-site cabling will be located underground. Cable trenches will be excavated to 1m deep and up to 1m wide, approximately 5,000m length and estimated at **5,000m^2** during construction and backfilled to prevent any visibility.
- 2 temporary construction compounds at c. 50m x 60m: **6,000m^2**
- Structural landscape planting and ecological enhancement measures (See **Figure 1.14 of Technical Appendix 1 (LVA) within Volume 3: Technical Appendices**).

1.80. As such, the overall proposed footprint constitutes a relatively small percentage of the total area of the Application Site (66.33ha):

- 24,072.9m^2 for infrastructure (c. 3.63% of the Application Site area); and
- 320.12m^2 for piling (c. 0.05% of the Application Site area).

1.81. The total ground disturbance area resulting from the Proposed Development is therefore **24,393.02m^2** or c. **3.68%** of the Application Site area.

1.82. Whist the land will be taken out of crop production for the operational period of the Proposed Development, agricultural use will remain, in the form of light grazing. The Application Site will be altered from arable land to pasture and have a dual use; the production of renewable energy and agriculture.

1.83. Arable use of the land can be restored at the end of the 40-year operational period if this is deemed appropriate at the time. This coupled with the measures that are proposed to enhance the landscape and increase biodiversity of the Application Site will ensure that upon decommissioning, there will be net beneficial gains for ecology and the local landscape fabric. The wider environmental benefits and sustainability credentials associated with the generation of renewable energy represents a significant case in favour of the Proposed Development.

Layout

1.84. The layout has been informed by a number of factors through the site selection and iterative design process. These include:

- The avoidance of environmentally sensitive areas to reduce potential effects relating to ecological assets, such as implementing a minimum 10m buffer from the areas of nearby woodland and implementing a 30m buffer around the identified badger sett located on the southern boundary of the Application Site;
- Reducing potential impacts on the landscape character and fabric of the area and the visual amenity of local receptors by proposing a planting plan with mitigation screening;
- The avoidance of flood risk areas for any proposed infrastructure by implementing a 10m buffer from watercourses on site and 5m buffer from drainage ditches;
- The avoidance of existing electrical infrastructure including the overhead lines on the Application Site; and
- Achievement of optimum equipment efficiency and energy outputs through effective orientation and positioning.

1.85. The spacing between the rows of panels allows for maintenance access and prevents inter-panel overshadowing, and the 5m set back from the hedgerows allows for maintenance of these features.

Scale

1.86. The scale of the Proposed Development is governed by the equipment necessary to generate the intended capacity of 42MW using solar PV technology at the Application Site.

1.87. Throughout the design iteration process, the Application Site has reduced in size from 79.4 hectares at the EIA Screening stage to the current site area of 66.33 hectares. This was to accommodate buffers from nearby residential properties and to ensure that the Proposed Development fits sympathetically within the surrounding environment, reducing the potential for visual or cumulative landscape impacts.

1.88. All plant / buildings located within the Application Site boundary will have a maximum height of 4.0m, ensuring that they are not overly disruptive to the landscape character and fabric of the area.

1.89. This combined with the existing hedgerows and proposed landscape enhancements means that views of the Proposed Development will be very localised and unobtrusive in the wider, landscape. Further information on this can be found in Technical Appendix 1 of Volume 3.

Appearance

1.90. In terms of reflectance, photovoltaic solar panels are by no means a highly reflective surface. They are designed to absorb sunlight and not to reflect it. Nonetheless, photovoltaic panels have a flat polished surface, which omits 'specular' reflectance rather than a 'diffuse' reflectance, which would occur from a rough surface. Several studies have shown that photovoltaic panels (as opposed to Concentrated Solar Power) have similar reflectance characteristics to water, which is much lower than the likes of glass, steel, snow, and white concrete by comparison. Similar levels of reflectance can be found in rural environments from the likes of shed roofs and the lines of plastic mulch used in cropping

1.91. The surface of the panels will be finished with an anti-reflective coating. This means that the panels will not produce significant amounts of glint and glare that will affect visual receptors in the vicinity of the site.

1.92. Further information on this can be found in **Technical Appendix 7: Glint and Glare of Volume 3.**

Landscaping

1.93. Landscape enhancement measures are proposed to provide screening and increase biodiversity at the site. These include native hedgerow and tree planting and the introduction of native grasses and wildflowers throughout the Application Site, providing additional habitat and food resources for the local wildlife as well as providing mitigation screening for the Proposed Development, reducing the potential for inward views from nearby receptors.

1.94. These measures are shown in **Figure 1.14 of Technical Appendix 1: Volume 3.**

Construction

1.95. The construction and installation of the Proposed Development will take approximately 6 months.

1.96. A typical running order of the proposed works is as follows:

- Erection of security fencing;
- Construction of temporary site compounds and hardstanding;
- Delivery of components and materials;
- Reinstatement works and demobilisation from Application Site.
- Construction of the solar PV arrays, inverter substations, substation compound, underground cables etc;

- Cable works and grid connection;
- Testing and commissioning; and
- Site restoration and landscaping.

1.97. Most of these operations would be carried out concurrently to minimise the overall length of the construction programme. Site restoration would be programmed and carried out to allow restoration of disturbed areas as early as possible.

THE ACCESS STATEMENT

Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

1.98. The National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") was first published in March 2012 and has been revised twice since, with the most recent revision being in February 2019. The NPPF sets out Central Government's planning policies for England and how these are to be applied when submitting an application and assessed when making a planning decision. The following transport policies are relevant to the consideration of this proposal:

1.99. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[4] seeks to promote sustainable transport within all new developments. However, the Government recognises that different policies and measures will be required in different communities and opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas.

1.100. All developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment. Plans and decisions should take account of whether:

- the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been considered, depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure;
- safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people; and
- improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development.

1.101. It is noted that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are "*severe*".

1.102. Paragraph 102 indicates that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals to address the potential impacts on transport networks.

1.103. Paragraph 108 states that proposals should ensure that opportunities to ensure sustainable transport modes should be taken up, safe and suitable access can be achieved and any significant impacts from the development on the transport network or highway safety can be mitigated to an acceptable degree.

[4] Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, Feb 2019. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)[5] Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements in Decision Taking

1.104. This NPPG seeks to provide clarification on the issues raised within the NPPF in relation to Transport Statements and is a material consideration in the determination of applications.

1.105. The NPPG defines Transport Assessments and Statements as ways of '*assessing and mitigating the negative transport impacts of development in order to promote sustainable development'*. As set out within the guidance, this Transport Statement primarily focuses on evaluating the potential transport impacts of a development proposal and proposes mitigation measures where these are necessary to avoid unacceptable or "*severe*" impacts.

1.106. The guidance highlights a number of principles to be taken into account during the preparation of the Transport Statement, these include:

- Proportionality to the size and scope of the proposed development to which they relate and build on existing information wherever possible;
- Tailoring to particular local circumstances; and
- Works being brought forward through collaborative ongoing working between the Local Planning Authority/ Transport Authority, transport operators, Rail Network Operators, Highways Agency where there may be implications for the strategic road network and other relevant bodies.

1.107. NPPG identifies that the scope and level of detail in a Transport Assessment or Statement will be site specific and the following has been considered when setting the scope of the assessment:

- Information about the proposed development, site layout, (particularly proposed transport access and layout across all modes of transport);
- Information about neighbouring uses, amenity and character, existing functional classification of the nearby road network;
- Data about existing public transport provision, including provision/ frequency of services and proposed public transport changes;

[5] Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, National Planning Practice Guidance, Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements, March 2014. Available at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-plans-transport-assessments-and-statements

- An analysis of the injury accident records on the public highway in the vicinity of the site access for the most recent three-year period, or five-year period if the proposed site has been identified as within a high accident area; and
- A description of parking facilities in the area and the parking strategy of the development.

1.108. The trip generation from the operational phase of the Proposed Development will not reach a high enough level to be described as 'significant' as it will be limited to maintenance visits approximately once per month. As the guidance states a Transport Statement or Assessment is only necessary when the Proposed Development generates a 'significant' amount of movement, it was felt that a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) would be sufficient to support this application.

Local Planning Policy

North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011 - 2031

1.109. Chapter 4 of the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011 – 2031[6], 'Spatial Strategy – Transport Strategy', of the existing LP contains policies and objectives in relation to transport; with the below policies relating directly to this Proposed Development.

1.110. Policy ST10 states:

"Reduce the environmental and social impacts of transport by:

(a) reducing the need to travel by car and enabling alternative sustainable travel options as supported by the Local Transport Plan;

(b) improving transport connectivity between rural communities and the main towns where viable;

(c) requiring a Transport Assessment or a Transport Statement and a Travel Plan for developments that generate significant traffic movements;

(d) actively managing car parking provision through type, capacity and charging to influence demand patterns;

(e) developing traffic management schemes in the main towns;

[6] North Devon and Torridge Council. North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011 - 2031. Available at https://consult.torridge.gov.uk/portal/planning/localplan/adoption/interactive?pointId=5051463

(f) maximising safety on transport networks through improvements to physical infrastructure design whilst conserving historic environment assets;

(g) ensuring that access to new development is safe and appropriate; and

(h) protecting the landscape character and ecological interest along the main and minor route(s).”

1.111. Chapter 13 ‘Development Management Strategies – Highways’ also contains a policy on transport.

1.112. Policy DM05 states:

“(1) All development must ensure safe and well designed vehicular access and egress, adequate parking and layouts which consider the needs and accessibility of all highway users including cyclists and pedestrians.

(2) All development shall protect and enhance existing public rights of way, footways, cycleways and bridleways and facilitate improvements to existing or provide new connections to these routes where practical to do so.”

Consultation with Torridge District Council

1.113. A pre-application request was submitted to the Council on the 1st September 2020 and a response was received on the 10th November 2020. With regards to transport, the response stated:

“Policy ST10 sets out the transport strategy for the District which notes that the function and safety of the road network will be protected and enhanced. Policy DM05 states that all development must ensure safe and well designed vehicular access and egress, adequate parking and layouts which consider the needs and accessibility of all highway users including cyclists and pedestrians. Developments should also protect and enhance existing public rights of way.

No details of the proposed access points into the site, the construction management details or likely traffic routes for larger vehicles have been provided at this stage for comment, although all would be required within a Transport Statement to accompany any formal application of this nature.

Comments have been received from the County Council’s Highways Officer in relation to the proposed development.

***DCC Highways**:*

'We are unlikely to have an objection to a proposal such as this subject to adequate site entrance(s) being formed which is likely to require improved visibility splays and hardening of the site access to avoid mud being dragged onto the road. A compound within the site shall be required so that there is no parking or unloading on the highway. Creation of additional passing places on the application land might be required.'".

Policy Assessment

1.114. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been produced as part of the planning application and can be found in **Technical Appendix 5 of Volume 3.** The CTMP adheres to the above policies by outlining the overall framework for managing the movement of construction and delivery traffic to and from the proposed Derril Water Solar Farm. It identifies the number and type of vehicles used throughout all phases of the Proposed Development as well as assesses the existing conditions of the highways network and the potential impact of the Proposed Development. The CTMP proposes traffic management measures to be followed during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development and ensures that access to the Proposed Development takes the safest and most appropriate route.

1.115. The haulage route will likely be from the A386 to the east of the Application Site. The delivery vehicles will exit the A386 at Hatherleigh to join the A3072 and continue along the A3072 until joining the A388 at Holsworthy. From here they will travel north along the A388 into Holsworthy, turning left onto Bodmin Street, where they will follow this two-lane road out towards North Tamerton until they reach Thorndon Cross. Once there they will turn right onto this single lane road and follow this for approximately 1.3 miles to reach the Application Site.

1.116. The Application Site will be accessed from four existing farm access points off the unnamed road which dissects the Application Site. The speed limit on this unnamed road is likely to be 60mph, however no signs were noted on the site visit. It was observed that vehicles are highly likely to travel at speeds lower than the statutory speed limit due to it being a single carriageway with limited visibility and an ATC survey carried out on the road confirms this. This section of road (near the site entrance points) contains no carriageway edge or centre markings and is not lit by public lighting, with this road being approximately 3m wide. There are no pedestrian facilities along this section of road and the carriageway is in good condition.

1.117. An Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) survey took place on the unnamed road that the site is accessed from at three different points. These were within the vicinity of each of the site entrances and the survey equipment was set up on the 23rd January 2021 and was left in place for one week. The purpose was to collect real time data to determine the speed of road users at each point. Four visibility splays (See **Figures 5.5 – 5.8: Appendix 5A**) were created, one for each entrance. The survey concluded the following:

- The 85th percentile speed along the road at Route Analysis 1 (See **Figure 5.1: Appendix 5A**) averaged 42.2mph eastbound and 42.8mph westbound. As these speeds were similar, the worst-case westbound speed of 42.8mph was used in standard Stopping

Distance (SSD) calculations. This equates to a required visibility splay dimension of 115m in the 'y' direction and 2.4m in the 'x' direction. For this access point the hedgerow will require 26.7m to be trimmed back and 4.25m to be removed.

- The 85th percentile speed along the road at Route Analysis 2 (See **Figure 5.1: Appendix 5A**) was 37.4mph eastbound and 37.5mph westbound. As these speeds were similar, the worst-case westbound speed of 37.5mph was used in standard Stopping Distance (SSD) calculations. This equates to a required visibility splay dimension of 70m in the 'y' direction and 2.4m in the 'x' direction. For the entrance at Route Analysis point 2, 56.4m of hedgerow will need to be trimmed back and 2.5m to be removed to achieve the required visibility.

- The 85th percentile speed along the road at Route Analysis 3 and 4 (See **Figure 5.1: Appendix 5A**) averaged 36.8mph eastbound and 39.8mph westbound. Using standard Stopping Distance (SSD) calculations, this equates to a required visibility splay dimension of 65m in the 'y' direction for eastbound traffic and 105m in the 'y' direction for westbound traffic, and 2.4m in the 'x' direction for both. For the entrance at Route Analysis point 3, 89.3m of hedgerow need to be trimmed back and 3.4m to be removed to achieve the required visibility. For the entrance at Route Analysis point 4, 40.5m of hedgerow will need to be realigned to achieve the required visibility.

1.118. Although it is proposed to utilise existing entrance points, they will all have to be upgraded so that the largest construction vehicles can manoeuvre into the Application Site. Initial swept path analysis was used in the design of the entrance points and therefore they are all suitable for the largest construction vehicles to access the Application Site once the upgrades have been completed (see **Figures 5.2 – 5.4: Appendix 5A of Technical Appendix 5: CTMP)**.

1.119. The Applicant will conduct a pre- and post-construction condition survey of the unnamed local road that the site is accessed from, from the most western access point to the existing substation entrance point (approximately 1.1km), with the Applicant liable to repair any damage to the road attributed to the construction of the Proposed Development.

1.120. A dedicated person will be appointed for the management of the delivery booking system during the construction stage. Through discussions with hauliers, the Site Manager will ensure that that construction deliveries are managed in an efficient manner, with minimal disruption and delays.

1.121. It is proposed that temporary signage would be used to highlight the entrance to the Application Site and to direct construction traffic to the site via the public road network. The

Applicant will provide banksmen to assist with the manoeuvring of delivery vehicles to and from the site, as well as internal site movements.

1.122. All traffic movements will be carried out between the hours of 07.00 to 19.00 on Monday to Friday and 08.00 to 16.00 on Saturdays. Outside of these times works are limited to a) commissioning and testing and b) Works required in an emergency where there is the potential of harm or damage to personnel, plant, equipment, or the environment, provided the developer retrospectively notifies the Council of such works within 24 hours of their occurrence. Deliveries, where possible, will be scheduled to avoid peak times

1.123. Increased volumes of traffic will be generated by the Proposed Development during the construction period, however, the overall volumes of traffic generated during the construction period are considered to be quite low. During the anticipated six-month construction period, a total of 783 HGV deliveries will be made to the Application Site. During the peak construction period there will be an approximate maximum of 20 daily HGV deliveries.

1.124. The operational phase of the solar farm is anticipated to have negligible trip generation potential with approximately 10-15 Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs) expected every year for scheduled maintenance checks, with additional visits required to attend to remedial issues when necessary. Access during the operational phase will be from the same entrances used during the construction period. During the operational phase of the Development, no HGVs will be permitted to access the Site unless temporary traffic management measures are re-introduced.

1.125. The number of HGVs required for the decommissioning period will be slightly higher than the construction phase due to the materials not being as neatly packed as when shipped from factory conditions. Whilst the construction phase had a total of approximately 1566 movements, the decommissioning phase will have a total of circa 1722 movements (estimate includes a 10% increase on the construction stage). This increase is not considered to be significant.

1.126. Given the minor impact of the Proposed Development on the highways network and the traffic management measures to be implemented, the Proposed Development conforms to the policies and objectives of the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan, the NPPF and the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

CONCLUSION

1.127. This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in accordance with requirements of Article 9 of the DMPO and the NPPG. The DAS has established:

- The design principles and rationale that have been applied to the Proposed Development, including the various relevant environmental and technical criteria;
- The steps taken to appraise the context of the Application Site, and how the design of the Proposed Development takes that context into account, in respect of design iteration, the various relevant environmental and technical criteria, and each design component;
- The relevant planning policies in respect of access, and how these policies have been taken into account and are addressed; and
- That all relevant issues which might affect access to the Proposed Development have been addressed.

1.128. The DAS has thus established that the Applicant can demonstrate an integrated approach that will deliver inclusive design and address the full range of access requirements throughout the design process.

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