

Guildhall Gainsborough
Lincolnshire DN21 2NA
Tel: 01427 676676 Fax: 01427 675170

AGENDA

This meeting will be webcast live and the video archive published on our website

Prosperous Communities Committee
Tuesday, 15th July, 2025 at 6.30 pm
Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA

Members:

- Councillor Owen Bierley
- Councillor Frazer Brown
- Councillor Stephen Bunney
- Councillor Christopher Darcel
- Councillor Paul Lee
- Councillor Jeanette McGhee
- Councillor Lynda Mullally
- Councillor Roger Patterson
- Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
- Councillor Trevor Young

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Public Participation**
Up to 15 minutes are allowed for public participation. Participants are restricted to 3 minutes each.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (PAGES 3 - 8)
To confirm and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 3 June 2025
4. **Members' Declarations of Interest**
Members may make any declarations at this point but may also make them at any time during the course of the meeting.
5. **Matters Arising Schedule** (PAGES 9 - 10)
Setting out current position of previously agreed actions as at 7 July 2025

Agendas, Reports and Minutes will be provided upon request in the following formats:

Large Clear Print: Braille: Audio: Native Language

6. **Public Reports**

- i) Asylum Dispersal in West Lindsey (PAGES 11 - 20)
- ii) Temporary Excess Waste Update (Big Bin Clear Out BBCO) (PAGES 21 - 31)
- iii) One Earth Solar Farm - WLDC submissions (PAGES 32 - 161)
- iv) WLDC Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 (PAGES 162 - 220)
- v) Workplan (PAGES 221 - 222)

Bill Cullen
Interim Head of Paid Service
The Guildhall
Gainsborough

Monday, 7 July 2025

Prosperous Communities Committee – 3 June 2025
Subject to Call-in. Call-in will expire at 5pm on

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA on 3 June 2025 commencing at 6.30 pm.

Present: Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings (Chairman)
Councillor Emma Bailey (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Owen Bierley (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Frazer Brown
Councillor Stephen Bunney
Councillor Paul Lee
Councillor Jeanette McGhee
Councillor Peter Morris
Councillor Lynda Mullally
Councillor Trevor Young

Also Present: Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mandy Snee

In Attendance:
Ian Knowles Chief Executive
Sally Grindrod-Smith Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Alan Bowley Interim Director of Operational and Commercial Services
Nova Roberts Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services
Darren Mellors Performance & Programme Manager
James Makinson-Sanders Economic Growth Team Manager
Grant White Communities Manager
Ele Snow Senior Democratic and Civic Officer

Apologies: Councillor Roger Patterson

Membership: Councillor Peter Morris was appointed substitute for Councillor Roger Patterson

1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING/S

The Chairman explained there were two sets of minutes, both for approval.

Having been moved and seconded it was

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 18 March 2025 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

On taking the second set of minutes, and having been moved and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Concurrent Meeting of the Prosperous Communities and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees held on 13 February 2025 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 MATTERS ARISING SCHEDULE

With no comments, questions or requirement for a vote, the Matters Arising Schedule, setting out the current position of previously agreed actions as at 23 May 2025, was **DULY NOTED**.

5 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY QUARTER FOUR REPORT AND SUMMARY OF YEAR END PERFORMANCE 2024/25

Members gave consideration to the Progress and Delivery Quarter Four Report and Summary of Year End Performance for 2024/25, presented by the Performance and Programme Manager. He highlighted to Members there had been some updated figures since the report had been published, those being under Corporate Health:

- COF01 - Budget variance -£1.126m
- COF03 - Overall Council budget forecast outturn -6.68%

The changes came from £56k from minor variances (each under £10k) and £175k windfall government grants. However, both figures were still subject to final audit of statement of accounts.

Additionally, further to the report having been presented for the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee briefing, a requested amendment was for Saturday market data to be included in the performance improvement plan alongside the Tuesday figures.

It was explained that with regard to the overall performance for the quarter, 87% of KPIs were either exceeding or within the agreed tolerance and this was compared to 83% in Q4 of 2023/24 and 78% in the previous quarter.

Members heard that, with regard to the performance improvement plan, there were six measures included. Two measures related to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), those being the average number of working days from DFG application to completion of work, and the

percentage of DFG referrals completed within 120 working days. It was not expected the performance of those measures would change given the budget position. The third measure was HME07, the percentage of households spending more than 42 nights in bed and breakfast accommodation. This was also expected to remain in the performance improvement plan as the target was set at zero, in line with guidance and what was striven for, however, it was not achievable with the limited temporary accommodation available. Members heard the temporary accommodation project was now in motion which would provide eight additional units, with two of these being outside the Gainsborough area.

With regard to the measure for local land charges market share, it was explained that whilst it was reporting below target, it was accepted that this measure was outside the control of the council. As such, the approved measure sets for 2025/26 had it removed as a target data set, however the detail would remain as a visible statistic within the report. It was also confirmed that the team would continue to focus on maintaining high performance and service delivery.

In addition to markets figures being included in the performance improvement plan, the information had been updated to include updated stalls and layouts, which were due to be delivered in the summer, alongside the opening of the new cinema. A weekly breakdown of markets was included in the year-end report.

The final measure in the performance improvement plan was the Together24 savings delivered, which was an annual cumulative target which was being monitored against the current position.

Members were provided with the details of those measures which had been removed from the improvement plan, including the percentage of Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) completed in 20 days, which was now above target, and the percentage of food inspections completed which was within tolerance.

The Committee received details of the progress and delivery data broken down for each portfolio, highlighting those areas which had been covered within the performance improvement plan as well as those targets which were presenting above target. It was noted that where there had been turnaround in performance, such as council tax collection rates, significant work had been undertaken to achieve those improved results. Narrative summaries were included in the report to provide Members with additional background information.

The presentation was concluded with a summary of the year-end report, which showed that 84% of the Council's KPIs finished either within the agreed tolerance or exceeding their targets for the financial year. This was an increase on the previous year which reported at 81%. A total of 16 measures reported below the target at the end of the year, with six of those continuing to be monitored through the performance improvement plans.

A Member of the Committee raised several enquiries regarding staff absence case management, the average spend per head at the Trinity Arts Centre, the cumulative impact of grant funding for the recipients and associated communities, as well as the review process for targets and measure sets, in order to avoid complacency setting in. In response, Officers explained that information regarding case management processes could be requested alongside more specific information from the Trinity Arts Centre. The

Communities Manager advised the Committee there would be a publicly available community impact report exploring the benefits of the grant funding schemes which had been implemented. This would include case studies and would be shared with Members as well as being available on the website. Members were also advised that the measure sets were reviewed annually, with the focus being to strive for continued improvement.

In response to a question regarding the additional eight units of temporary housing which would be made available, and whether that would be sufficient to meet demand, it was explained that whilst the need had fundamentally changed since the business plan for those eight units had been put in place, it was anticipated that as work continued there would be opportunities to review additional options such as working with partner organisations.

The Committee also drew attention to the reduced levels of employee satisfaction reported within the figures. Members heard that there was now a regular report presented to the Management Team from the People Services Manager and there had been areas of improvement noted within the outcome of the peer review, such as improvement to staff training plans. It was also explained that exit interviews were being monitored, however the wider concerns across the public sector also had an impact on those working within it.

The percentage of abandoned telephone calls through customer services was commented on, with Members hearing that a new contact centre technology had been implemented which provided a fullness of data not previously available. There had been a higher demand through the customer services than anticipated, however there was a full review underway to ensure contingencies were in place to manage that demand. Members acknowledged that communication lines with all local authorities tended to be an area of frustration for residents, it was not only a West Lindsey District Council concern.

A Member of the Committee welcomed the retention of Saturday market figures in the performance improvement plan, noting the level of investment in the marketplace and the desire to continue the growth of the markets and associated local businesses.

In considering the data regarding DFGs contained within the improvement plan, it was enquired whether there could be a further breakdown of information for example the numbers of people on the list and how that impacted both the data sets but also the individuals involved. Additionally, it was suggested that information regarding the location of individuals awaiting DFGs would be useful in building a case for more funding, with the example of delayed hospital discharges or the need to use costly respite care being cited. In response, it was explained that whilst Officers could provide the real time data regarding how many people were on the waiting list, the wider picture often was not available to West Lindsey District Council as the data was held by other organisations such as Lincolnshire County Council. It was acknowledged that there had been membership changes at a county level and as such, it was timely to revisit the debate through the Housing, Health and Care Delivery Group, which oversaw the social elements of the DFGs. Whilst the concerns with DFGs had been a longstanding issue, it was recognised to be an opportunity to address the matter again at a county level.

Further debate regarding DFGs focused on the personal impact to those individuals on the waiting list, with a diminished quality of life being an almost unmeasurable impact, and whether case studies could be used to add weight to the approaches at a county level. It was confirmed that case studies had previously formed a significant part of the data shared

when seeking a funding review, however in recognising the changes at Lincolnshire County Council, this was something which could again be revisited.

With no further comments or questions, the Chairman read aloud the recommendations contained within the report. Having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the performance of the Council's services had been assessed through agreed performance measures and areas where improvements should be made had been indicated, having had regard to the remedial measures set out in the report; and
- b) the Progress and Delivery Performance Improvement Plan for Quarter Four (January-March) 2024/25 be approved; and
- c) the Progress and Delivery Year End 2024/25 Report be approved.

6 WLDC UKSPF/REPF 2025/26 PROGRAMME

The Committee gave consideration to a report presented by the Economic Growth Team Manager, seeking approval of the Council's programme for the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025/26 Programme.

It was explained that the council had been allocated both UK Shared Prosperity Funding and Rural England Prosperity Funding, which was seen as a transitional continuation of the previous 2022 – 2025 programme. Under the new arrangements for the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority, Members heard that North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) were the Accountable Body for this funding.

Additionally, it was highlighted that the Government had set a spend deadline of 31 March 2026, with any unspent funding being lost. The Accountable Body, NELC, would require the council to report on expenditure in September/October 2025 and January 2026. Any funding at risk of being unspent could be reallocated at those stages.

Members were advised that in line with the Council's constitution, the Prosperous Communities Committee was required to approve the investment themes and delegate signatory of the funding agreement. The Corporate Policy and Resources Committee was then required to approve the drawdown and expenditure of funds. It was further highlighted that the proposed investments had been shaped based upon local priorities alongside their fit with the Government's programme requirements, and Greater Lincolnshire priorities.

The Chairman thanked all those involved in the work and invited comments from the Committee. Members expressed their support and thanks for, not only the presented programme for 2025/26 but also for the work which had been previously undertaken.

A Member of the Committee noted his satisfaction that reserve funds were being used to enhance the programme, in particular relating to environmental sustainability, commenting

that it was an opportunity for smaller groups to access the funds to help local sustainability work. It was acknowledged that the Member Working Group for Climate Change, Environment and Sustainability had been instrumental in implementing in how those opportunities could be realised.

Members additionally expressed their support of the cost appraisal for bringing a key town centre building back into use in Gainsborough, as well as a trial of free car parking, with businesses and users having reacted positively to the news. In response to a question regarding the flagship community grant programme, it was explained that the exact timescales had not been confirmed, however the preparatory work was underway to ensure the scheme could be launched as soon as practicable. It was confirmed there would be a focus on communications across the district, and Members were encouraged to interact with the local community groups and to encourage them to apply for funding.

With further support voiced for the investment programme and associated works, the Chairman read aloud the recommendations as detailed within the report, and, having been proposed, seconded, and voted upon, it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

- a) the identified UKSPF/REPF 2025/26 programme be approved and authority delegated to the S151 officer to sign-off the funding agreement (in consultation with the Chair of this Committee); and
- b) the UKSPF/REPF 2025/26 programme be **RECOMMENDED** to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee for approval of the expenditure and monitoring arrangements as set out in para 2.5 of the report.

7 WORKPLAN

With no questions or comments, the work plan was **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 7.16 pm.

Chairman

Prosperous Communities Matters Arising Schedule

Purpose: To consider progress on the matters arising from previous Prosperous Communities Committee meetings.

Recommendation: That Members note progress on the matters arising and request corrective action if necessary.

Matters Arising Schedule

Status	Title	Action Required	Comments	Due Date	Allocated To
Black	Success Rate of Fixed Penalty Notices in Neighbouring Areas	To inform Members of the Prosperous Communities Committee of the success rate of FPNs in other areas of the County	<p>29.10.24 PC Cttee: Members enquired as to the success rate of FPNs in other areas. It was explained that this data was not routinely gathered or shared however Officers could make enquiries and feedback responses to the Committee.</p> <p>26.6.25 The level of FPNs issued for matters such as littering is not comparable realistically as a number of districts have external civil enforcement agencies so the volumes are significantly greater than those that don't such as WLDC. For fly-tipping offences the local comparison for the last 6 months is as follows: WLDC 9 fly-tipping and 6 duty of care; SKDC 3 duty of care; NKDC 2 fly-tipping and 4 duty of care.</p>	31/05/25	Andy Gray
Black	Breakdown of Environment & Sustainability Actions by Ward	A breakdown of Environment & Sustainability actions by Ward to be included in the State of the District report.	<p>12.11.24 Prosperous Communities Cttee: [it was requested] ... "that Members be provided with a breakdown of initiatives in their ward areas. It was confirmed that the State of the District report was being digitised and could include this breakdown of actions per area."</p> <p>update: Officers will provide requested information within the State of the District report, however, it will also be presented to Members within the Environment & Sustainability update report in quarter 3.</p>	31/05/25	Rachael Hughes
Green	Parking Strategy - Future Considerations AND	Following discussions at PC Cttee meeting 19 July 2022, considerations for the refresh of the Parking Strategy should include details on opportunities to "green" the strategy as well as reconsidering options for motorhome and caravan parking, in relation to the visitor economy. Further details in minutes of meeting.		31/07/25	Sally Grindrod-Smith

Green

**Value for Money
Review of Car Park
Enforcement**

PC Cttee 26/10/23: resolved that Officers carry out a value for money review of the existing car park enforcement contract and report the findings to the Prosperous Communities Committee by 31 May 2024.
Review to be undertaken & item to be added to the forward plan please.

Update: date extended pending further discussions regarding the review of the car parking strategy as a whole

Item has been discussed at Leaders' Panel with subsequent actions through Committee to be confirmed.



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

Tuesday, 15 July 2025

Subject: Asylum Dispersal in West Lindsey

Report by:	Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Contact Officer:	Sarah Elvin Homes & Health Team Manager sarah.elvin@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	Provide members with an update on the Asylum position in West Lindsey and gain approval for the spend of the Asylum Dispersal Grant funding

RECOMMENDATION(S):

Prosperous Communities Committee

1. Members approve the use of the community grants process to allocate funding to community groups delivering services which meet the requirements of the Asylum Dispersal Grant funding criteria.

For the Corporate Policy & Resource Committee

1. *Members approve the allocation of £125,295 from the Asylum Dispersal Grant to the Homelessness functions as detailed in table 1 for the financial years 2025/2026 and 2026/2027.*
2. *Members approve the allocation of the remaining Asylum Dispersal Grant funding £60,055 to be utilised for community activity supporting asylum seekers and refugees.*

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

Grant Funding Agreements will be in place for any grant awarded to community groups for delivery of services through this grant funding.

Financial : FIN/41/26/MT/MK

Current balance of Asylum Dispersal Grant is £185,350, the proposals contained within this report will utilise £125,295 over the financial years 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 for homelessness functions as set out in the table at section 5.7 of the report.

This will leave a balance of £60,055 which is proposed to be utilised for community grant funding to deliver the outcomes as set out in the Asylum Grant funding criteria.

	Amount
Total Funding Received	£185,350
2025/2026 spend	£62,304
2026/2027 spend	£62,991
Total spend	£125,295
Remaining	£60,055

Staffing :

All administration of this work will be undertaken within existing resources

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

None

Data Protection Implications :

Data protection will be built into the Grant Funding Agreement and any required information sharing agreements will be in place. We will keep data sharing to an absolute minimum during the reporting of the grant outcomes

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

None

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

None

Health Implications:

It is vital that we ensure all members of our West Lindsey community have access to safe and affordable housing alongside support where required to remain living independently. We have the opportunity through this asylum funding to ensure that all asylum seekers being placed within West Lindsey have safe and affordable accommodation for them to reside once they have received their asylum decision.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

None

Risk Assessment :

N/A

Call in and Urgency:**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

x

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Home Office introduced a new system for Asylum Dispersal implemented in 2023 which saw the interim housing of asylum seekers across England and Wales dispersed across the Country as oppose to certain areas taking all the burden.
- 1.2 When this new system was implemented, alongside these new arrangements, funding was provided to Local Authorities to ensure front line services were not impacted and Local Authorities could implement new services where required to assist with wellbeing, mental health and community cohesion.
- 1.3 The Home Office have partnered with different agencies across the country to deliver the dispersed accommodation, Serco are the provider in the East Midlands.
- 1.4 Currently, in West Lindsey, there are 41 bedspaces procured by Serco for Asylum seeker accommodation.
- 1.5 Funding is provided to Local Authorities for every bedspace that is procured and brought online in the area. West Lindey have received £185,350 of funding for this to date.
- 1.6 The funding has a set of criteria for spend on asylum and refugee related activities based on the outcomes as detailed in the Asylum Dispersal Grant funding criteria.
- 1.7 This paper sets out how this funding is proposed to be utilised through spending on front line services and offering grants to community organisations who are delivering services which meet the funding criteria.

2. Background

- 2.1 In April 2022 the Government announced the “new” Full Asylum Dispersal Model with plans for implementation from March 2023 onwards.
- 2.2 This model aims to shift from primarily using hotels to disperse asylum seekers more widely across the Country aiming to prevent any one area from being overburdened.
- 2.3 Serco was appointed as the housing procurement partner in the East Midlands and were set ambitious targets of the numbers of bed spaces they were to procure in each area.
- 2.4 Their procurement strategy required them to lease properties of a certain standard from private landlords at a higher than Local Housing Allowance rate for a minimum of 5 years taking on all repairs and maintenance liability for those properties.
- 2.5 Serco requested all Local Authorities were to undertake a full postcode review of their areas to either close, limit or leave open every postcode in the area for procurement from Serco.
- 2.6 West Lindsey undertook a full and comprehensive review of every postcode in the area, leaving the vast majority of West Lindsey open and only limiting or closing off areas with high ASB rates and the potential for hate crime. This closed off the North Ward and South West Ward of Gainsborough along with Scampton.
- 2.7 Serco did not take the postcode review into account when procuring properties even after numerous correspondence and meetings with officers and procured properties within the South West Ward of Gainsborough for asylum dispersal.
- 2.8 The Home office along with Serco agreed to not procure any properties in West Lindsey while the RAF Scampton site was still be considered as an Asylum Centre. This hold was removed from procurement once the decision was made to no longer utilise RAF Scampton for this purpose.

3. Asylum Dispersal in West Lindsey

- 3.1 A new model was released in 2024 with a new formula for determining the numbers of bedspaces that should be procured in each area.
- 3.2 Serco have stopped sharing data with all local Authorities about the location of those bedspaces, but we know from their last update on 12th June that there is the following currently in West Lindsey:

	HMO			Family			Total		
	Properties	Bedspaces	Active SU	Properties	Bedspaces	Active SU	Properties	Bedspaces	Active SU
West Lindsey	8	41	41	0	0	0	8	41	41

- 3.3 When a decision is made on the asylum application, if that decision is positive and they are granted leave to remain, wherever they are residing at the time of receiving that decision, be that in a hotel or in a dispersed bedspace, they have a local connection to that area.
- 3.4 The Home Office have recently changed their timeframes around evicting those who have been granted leave to remain due to push back from Local Authorities. Previously, they only provided 28 days' notice to vacate the accommodation, this has now been amended to be in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act and so now they are given 56 days to find alternative accommodation.
- 3.5 West Lindsey are notified when a positive asylum decision has been determined, and they have been granted leave to remain. Serco provide contact details of the refugee to the council after they have received their decision to make us aware of their status. There has been a steady stream of these coming through from Serco since the beginning of May, so we are expecting to see an increase in approaches to the Home Choices service in the coming weeks and months.
- 3.6 It is understood from some of the support agencies who have dealt with this cohort that it is unlikely they will want to remain in West Lindsey, instead choosing to settle in larger cities where the opportunities for employment are greater, and they have existing family, friends or communities they can receive support from.

4. Asylum Dispersal Grant funding

- 4.1 Local authorities in the UK receive funding from the government to support asylum seekers through the Asylum Dispersal Grant. This funding aims to help councils manage the financial and logistical challenges associated with providing housing, support services, and integration for these individuals.
- 4.2 The formula for which this grant is allocated has changed for 2025/2026 and prior to that, West Lindsey received £3500 per bedspace that was brought into use.
- 4.3 From March 2025 onwards, £1200 per bedspace will be allocated for every additional unit over the number that was in use on the 30th of March 2025. This is received quarterly in arrears.
- 4.4 £185,350 is held reserves which has been received from the Home Office for delivery of services in relation to the asylum seekers currently

residing in West Lindsey. The guidance document for this funding can be found via this link [Funding Instruction for Local Authorities: Asylum Grant 2025 - 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

- 4.5 Highlighted below are a few key points within that guidance.

Section 5 of the guidance attached states:

“Funding provided must not be used for any purpose other than achieving delivery of the outcomes detailed in this Instruction”

Detailed in this section of the guidance are also some examples of statutory and non-statutory functions that the funding can be utilised for.

- 4.6 If a decision is made to allocate funding to another organisation to deliver services, consent from the Home Office will be required.
- 4.7 The outcomes that are expected from the grant funding are detailed at section 7 and include:
- *Minimising public service pressures.*
 - *Recognising the role of wrap-around funding in supporting Asylum Seeker wellbeing, mental health and community cohesion; and*
 - *Enable the Authority to deliver the spending review financial objectives*

5. Asylum funding in West Lindsey

- 5.1 The funding must be utilised for the above purposes to achieve those outcomes, with that requirement, set out below is the proposal and rationale for the spend of the Asylum Grant Funding.
- 5.2 As a steady stream of asylum seekers are now receiving their decisions while residing in West Lindsey it is anticipated we will see an increase in the numbers approaching for housing advice and homelessness support. With one refugee placed in temporary accommodation to date (as of 6th June 2025) again, it is expected this number will increase with the turnover of service users in the bedspaces currently active.
- 5.3 Due to the above, it is proposed that a proportion of the funding we utilised for homelessness. Currently, 50% of one Homelessness Prevention Officer is funded through Homelessness reserves, it is proposed that this 50% is funded for 2025/2026 financial year from this funding. That will preserve the homelessness reserve for contingency in the future should funding in this area reduce.
- 5.4 Based on the likelihood of future requirement of temporary accommodation for this cohort, it is proposed that we forecast to have one refugee placed in temporary accommodation every night of the year during financial year 2025/2026 at an average cost of £75 per night. This is a generous estimate and will ensure that none of our Homelessness Prevention Grant will be utilised for this cohort.

- 5.5 Alongside that, we also offer to our homelessness households the benefit of rent in advance when accessing the private sector, because it is likely this cohort will access the private sector as appose to social housing, we are forecasting to assist 12 asylum seekers with rent in advance at £1000 per person this financial year.
- 5.6 There is no requirement to utilise all of the funding this financial year and due to the nature of the accommodation that has been procured, it is proposed to allocate funding over two financial years to mitigate the risk of less funding being received next financial year due to the amended funding formula and the demand for services increasing.
- 5.7 Monitoring of the use of this funding will be clear, and funding will only be drawn down from this reserve when evidence of the spend is provided. This will allow us to utilise the funding as best we can and ensure it is being used for the specific purpose as set out within the funding guidance.

Table 1

Total Funding received to date:	£185,350		
	Amount		Detail
	2025/26	2026/27	
Frontline Homelessness costs (temporary accommodation)	£27,375	£27,375	Based on £75 per night for 365 days of the year
Frontline Homelessness costs (rent in advance)	£12,000	£12,000	Based on £1000 rent in advance for 12 service users
Homelessness Staffing resource	£22,929	£23,616	Based on 50% of Homelessness Prevention officer salary for 2025/2026 and an increase of 3% on salary costs for 206/2027
Total	£62,304	£62,991	

Table 2

	Amount
Total Funding Received	£185,350
2025/2026 spend	£62,304
2026/2027 spend	£62,991
Total spend	£125,295
Remaining	£60,055

- 5.8 For the remaining funding and any further funding received, it is proposed to fund community groups who can offer advice, support and guidance to asylum seekers and refugees who are in our communities.
- 5.9 This type of support could mirror that provided to the Homes for Ukraine cohort and would look to ensure it was delivering on the second outcome of the funding guidance to recognise the role of wrap around funding in supporting wellbeing, mental health and community cohesion.
- 5.10 It would be preferred that this service is offered within the community and by the community as appose to being a service delivered by West Lindsey so as to not muddy the waters between the statutory services provided by the Council. It also offers an independent view to be able

to challenge services where needed without the added complication of affecting statutory requirements.

- 5.11 There remaining funding would be available as direct award grants with criteria relating to delivering on the required outcomes from the funding guidance.

6 Grant funding mechanism

- 6.1 Grant awards will be made utilising existing community grant processes used by the council. This includes the use of a grant application form, scoring and the Community Grants Panel which is a member working group.
- 6.2 Eligible organisations that offer services to asylum seekers and refugees will be invited to apply for funding. Grant funding can be awarded to support the delivery of existing or new services that meet the funding criteria.
- 6.3 Grant funding agreements shall be used for all grant awards in-line with our community grant processes. This will include any additional project conditions, monitoring and evaluation requirements.

7. Governance

- 7.1 To enable the spend of the funding as proposed above, Corporate Policy and Resource Committee are required to approve the spend of the funding on the proposed activity.
- 7.2 The Prosperous Communities Committee is required to approve the mechanism to utilise the community grants process to allocate funding to community groups who are delivering services that meet the requirements of the funding.

8. Recommendations

Prosperous Communities Committee

1. Members approve the use of the community grants process to allocate funding to community groups delivering services which meet the requirements of the Asylum Dispersal Grant funding criteria.

Corporate Policy & Resource Committee

1. Members approve the allocation of £125,295 from the Asylum Dispersal Grant to the Homelessness functions as detailed in table 1 for the financial years 2025/2026 and 2026/2027.
2. Members approve the allocation of the remaining Asylum Dispersal Grant funding £60,055 to be utilised for community activity supporting asylum seekers and refugees.



**Prosperous
Communities Committee**

Tuesday, 15 July 2025

Subject: Temporary Excess Waste Update (Big Bin Clear Out BBCO)

Report by:	Alan Bowley Interim Director of Operations & Commercial Services
Contact Officer:	Robert Gilliot Operational Services Manager robert.gilliot@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To consider the results of the trial of Big Bin Clear Out service and a decision on whether to continue.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

This paper is a follow up to the Big Bin Clear Out which was agreed at Prosperous Communities Committee on the 30th January 2024, and the recommendations at that committee also included the need to return after a full year of the service for a decision on whether to continue with the service or not, one of the following options will then be considered is required:

- a/ cease the big bin service, honouring those that we have outstanding or
- b/ continue the big bin service and for it to become a business-as-usual service offering

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

As a “waste collection authority” the Council has a duty to collect “household waste”, under section 45 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended (EPA 1990). Under the Act, the local authority may charge for the collection of specified types of household waste.

Financial : FIN/38/26/MT/SSc

This report is recommending the Big Bin service becomes a permanent service.

2024/25 Performance

As the initial service provision was for a trial period, the income wasn't budgeted for within the MTFS. The service provided £13.3k net income for the Council in 2024/25. See table below for more details:

	Forecast 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	Percentage Achieved
Number of Bin Hires	780	464	59%

Description	Forecast 2024/25 £	Actual 2024/25 £	Variance 2024/25 £
Income (464 hires)	(42,900)	(27,540)	15,360
Bins (Second Hand & New)	5,411	2,732	(2,679)
Big Bin stickers	200	425	225
Vehicle costs *	8,731	1,156	(7,575)
Staffing costs *	16,845	7,477	(9,368)
System Development **	1,450	0	(1,450)
Customer Services	7,500	2,419	(5,081)
Comms & Marketing **	400	0	(400)
Total	(2,363)	(13,331)	(10,968)

* based on 60% of an average cost per day for 49 weeks as started 16/04/24

** Unable to identify specific costs relate to these services for Big bins

Forecast Performance for 2025/26 to 2029/30

The bin hire forecast is shown below:

Description	2025/26 Forecast	2026/27 Forecast	2027/28 Forecast	2028/29 Forecast	2029/30 Forecast	Total
Number of Bin Hires 1100	471	495	520	546	573	2,605
Number of Bin Hires 660	29	30	32	34	36	161
Total	500	525	552	580	609	3,230

The table below shows the forecast income and expenditure for 2025/26 to 2029/30. The increased costs of continuing the service of c£13k pa are offset by the additional income of c£33k pa and is forecast to contribute towards the MTFS with a net increase in income of c£20 pa.

This will be additional income for 2025/26 and will be built into the MTFS through the 2026/27 budget setting process.

Description	2025/26 Estimated £	2026/27 Estimated £	2027/28 Estimated £	2028/29 Estimated £	2029/30 Estimated £	Total £
Income - Bin hires	(29,700)	(31,200)	(32,800)	(34,500)	(36,200)	(164,400)
Vehicle costs *	1,300	1,400	1,400	1,500	1,600	7,200
Staffing costs(include oncosts) **	8,400	8,700	8,900	9,100	9,400	44,500
Customer Services	2,600	2,700	2,800	2,900	3,000	14,000
System Development ***	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comms & Marketing ***	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Pressure/(Saving)	(17,400)	(18,400)	(19,700)	(21,000)	(22,200)	(98,700)
* increase in vehicle costs of 5% per year.						
** based on 60% of an average cost per day for a band 5 and band 3. Includes pay award 2025/26 3% and 2.5% for each of the following years						
*** Unable to identify specific costs relate to these services for Big bins						

Staffing :

Low level of demand for this service would have no staffing implications as it could be incorporated into the current Bulky Waste collection service, higher levels of demand which required additional staff would be covered using agency resources, with the level of charge been calculated to ensure cost recovery.

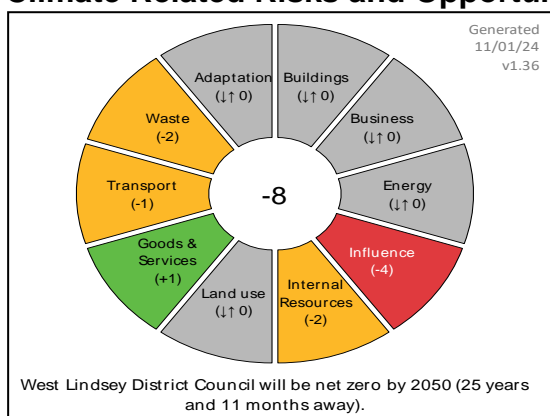
Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

All residents would have access to this service, therefore no Equality and Diversity implications resulting from the pilot service

Data Protection Implications :

All data collected throughout, would be processed in line with the Council's existing data protection policies and procedures.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:



It does promote an option at the bottom of the waste hierarchy and goes against a long running national trend to restrict residual waste to promote waste minimisation. That said, similar to the bulky waste service, users will be given advice about alternative, more environmentally friendly disposal options including the use of charity shops, reuse and recycling material before taking up the service.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

None relating to this report.

Health Implications:

None relating to this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

Risk Assessment :

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

☐

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

☐

No

☐

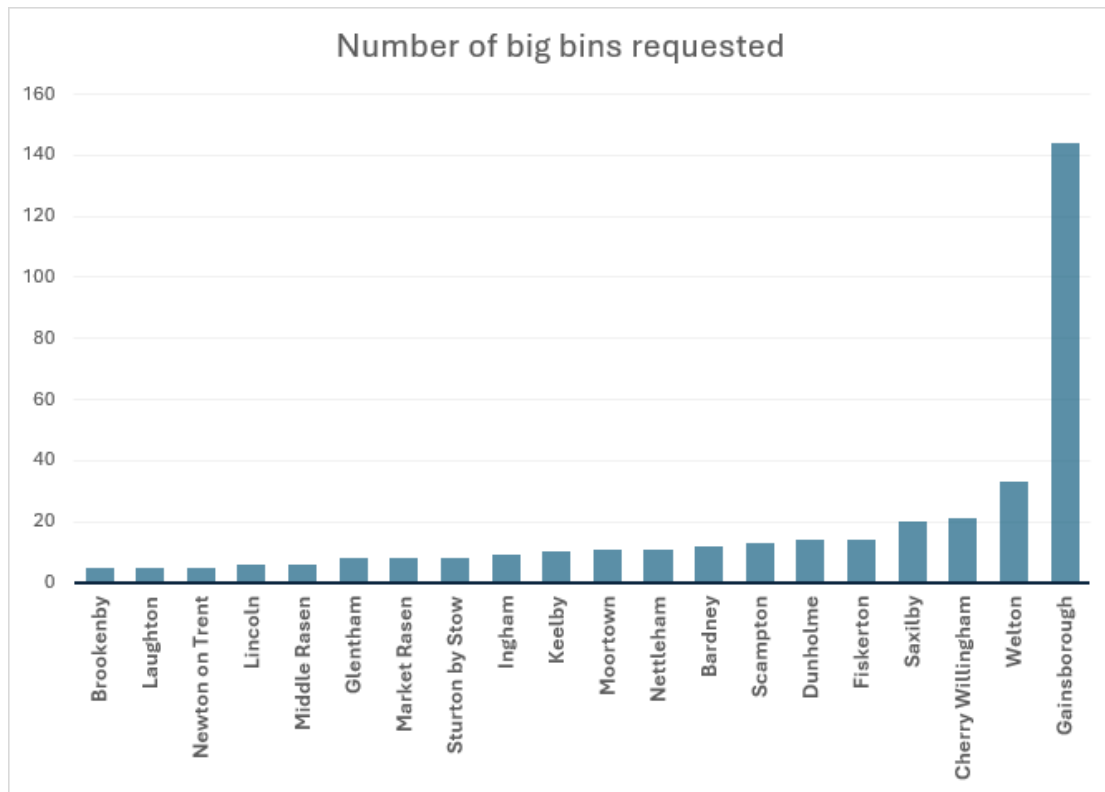
1 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper is a follow up to the Big Bin Clear Out which was agreed in Prosperous Communities Committee on the 30th of January 2024, and the recommendation at that committee to return after a full year of the service for a decision on whether to continue with the service or not
- 1.2 West Lindsey District Council offers award winning and innovative Operational Services including waste collection and street cleansing.
- 1.3 Part of the Council's innovative approach includes benchmarking performance against other authorities and scanning other authorities' offers to further improve the service delivered to our residents and businesses.
- 1.4 The current services work within the parameters of the Waste Hierarchy, which encourages re-use and recycling of material above disposal. This needs to be balanced against the need to provide a range of disposal options for residents to improve satisfaction and reduce fly-tipping wherever possible by offering a trusted alternative to rogue or unlicensed waste collectors.
- 1.5 In terms of residual household waste, the Council currently provides a 180 litre wheeled bin fortnightly residual waste collection service as standard to the majority of residents. For the more difficult to access and remote areas, a weekly sack collection service is offered.
- 1.6 In addition, a charged-for Bulky Waste collection service is available for large items.
- 1.7 House and outbuilding clearance services are also available, these are individually assessed and provided on a bespoke 'quote for work' basis, in order to achieve cost recovery.
- 1.8 A further alternative is the option to purchase additional blue sacks which are collected alongside wheeled bins on collection day.

2. The data from trial period (24/25 financial year)

- 2.1 Over the first year, 437 – 1100 ltr bins and 27 – 660ltr bins have been hired to residents
- 2.2 As shown in figure 1 below the deliveries are scattered across the district with the majority falling within the Gainsborough area, however this is due to several factors, the largest being that Thursdays drop off/collections are limited to 6 due to the size of the area covered (everything east of the A15).

Fig 1- Areas of big bin request (only areas of 5 or more bins utilised are shown in this graph)



2.3 Customer satisfaction is high with this service averaging 95% 4 or 5 star, a few comments below but please see appendix 1 for full list of comments

“You communicated well with me, and I knew exactly when and where you would provide the service. The guys who delivered the bins were really friendly efficient and courteous. Real credit to the council and I hope the positive feedback gets passed on to them. They were brilliant.”

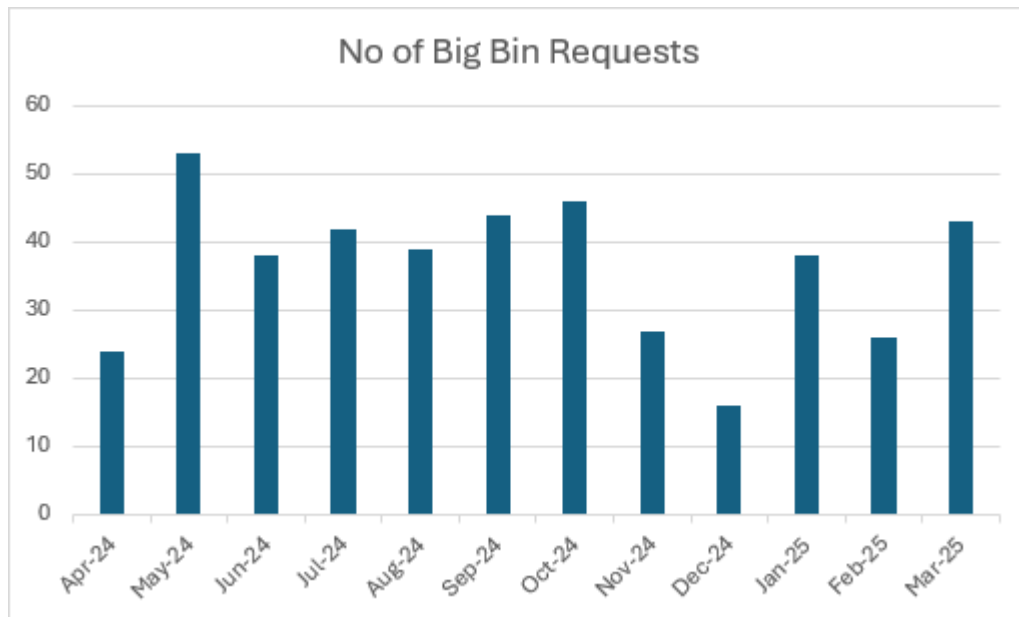
“Easy to order, prompt delivery and collection, good sized bin and good value for money.”

“Fantastic Service Delivered and collected on correct dates”

2.4 So far digital comm’s has been used to “sell” this service (as to not create too much of a demand and therefore Operational Services have not been overwhelmed with service requests) with various adverts used to highlight the service (as seen in appendix 2).

2.5 The graph below (fig 2) shows the monthly demand on the service with the average booking time for the Thursday collections being 7 days and no booking delays on the Tuesday/Wednesday collections.

Fig 2- bookings per month



3. Financials

3.1 As can be seen in the table below the original target has not been met however this figure was based a dedicated service/crew, the current service can be scaled up if required (which currently happens if demands exceed a set time period for waiting) and is currently delivered within existing resources to keep costs as low as possible, costs would increase drastically if additional resources were required on a constant basis.

Big bin costing as at 02/06/25

	Forecast 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	Percentage Achieved
Number of Bin Hires	780	464	59%

Description	Forecast 2024/25 £	Actual 2024/25 £	Variance 2024/25 £
Income (464 hires)	(42,900)	(27,540)	15,360
Bins (Second Hand & New)	5,411	2,732	(2,679)
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Total	(2,363)	(13,331)	(10,968)

* based on 60% of an average cost per day for 49 weeks as started 16/04/24

** Unable to identify specific costs relate to these services for Big bins

a/ cease the big bin service, honouring those that we have outstanding or
b/ continue the big bin service and for it to become business as usual

Due to customer satisfaction and income generation option b is recommended by officers

Waste Service – Big Bin Clear Out Service

April 2024 to March 2025

60 surveys completed for the service.

1 star	0
2 stars	0
3 stars	3
4 stars	7
5 stars	50

4 stars and 5 stars = satisfied or very satisfied.

Overall satisfaction for the service = 95%.

What could have been improved?

Deliver the bin to the correct address
False information on web site, misleading ref what can be disposed of in the bin.
I was disappointed i thought small electricals were included

What did we do well?

Bin arrived and collected on time
bin was delivered and collected at times stated
Communication excellent
Informed by telephone so knew delivery and pickup times
Delivery and collection
Just as it said delivered. Removed on time
Efficient service. Well managed. Great communication
Fantastic Service Delivered and collected on correct dates
The booking, delivery and collection process was very easy.
Communication
Delivery and collection
Delivered on time
Delivered at driveway on time
Prompt delivery nice clean bin
Online system easy to use and bin dropped off and collected when due, liked the email reminders and job done ones too
The customer service provided by your driver was exemplary. He was friendly, happy & very helpful. Put the bin exactly where I wanted. He was equally helpful when it was collected.
Arrived on time to drop and pick up
Easy to arrange and prompt service
Delivered early and placed in right area
Delivery collection

Easy to book. Delivery on time.
Excellent
Delivered and collected the bin when you said you would.
Very quick drop off and pick up the
Prompt delivery prompt collection and value for money
Everything
arrived on time as expected and collected as expected no hassle
Clear information as to when it would be delivered and collected
Everything
Delivered on time, collected on time
Came on time was pleased with size
You communicated well with me and I knew exactly when and where you would provide the service. The guys who delivered the bins were really friendly efficient and courteous. Real credit to the council and I hope the positive feedback gets passed on to them. They were brilliant.
I had no issues using the service
Kept us informed
From booking to retrieval all communications excellent
Perfect
Great communication, lovely staff!
Fast response
Delivery and pick up were perfect
Excellent service
All contact and prices
I ordered the wrong size and the person who brought it up was very good at sorting it out to get me a smaller one and my refund was quick all in the same day
Delivery and collection
Big bin service was really useful.
Delivery was early in the morning picked up early in morning
Service exactly as described
Delivery date as promised, good communication and easy to organise
Delivered on time, picked up on time
Very well
Delivery, availability. Price
Easy to order, prompt delivery and collection, good sized bin and good value for money.

Agenda Item 6c



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

Tuesday, 15 July 2025

Subject: One Earth Solar Farm - WLDC submissions

Report by:	Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Contact Officer:	Russell Clarkson Development Management Team Manager russell.clarkson@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To agree to the submission of a Local Impact Report (LIR) and Written Representations (WR) to the One Earth Solar Farm Development Consent Order (DCO) Examination

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To agree the submission of a Local Impact Report (LIR) to the One Earth Solar Farm DCO Examination. To delegate authority to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities following consultation with the Chair of this committee, to complete, finalise and submit the LIR to the Examination by the required deadline, having taken into consideration the committee's comments;
2. To agree the submission of accompanying Written Representations (WR) to the One Earth Solar Farm DCO Examination. To delegate authority to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities following consultation with the Chair of this committee, to complete, finalise and submit the WR to the Examination by the required deadline, having taken into consideration the committee's comments.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

At a meeting of this committee on 1st August 2023 the scheme of decision and delegation protocols for NSIP applications was approved. This report is aligned with the approved process.

[Prosperous Communities Committee - Tuesday, 1st August, 2023 6.30 pm](#)

Legal Services Lincolnshire have instructed a Barrister from Kings Chambers to provide legal oversight of the process.

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO

Financial : FIN/45/26/PC/SST

Resourcing of the NSIP process has been subject to a separate decision from this paper. Other NSIP projects have incurred costs of around £70k in fees.

WLDC has appointed Atkins Réalis to provide consultancy support and Counsel from Kings Chambers.

The Authority will seek to negotiate a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with the applicant. This is a voluntary legal agreement between the parties, where the developer may contribute towards costs incurred by the Authority in engaging with the application. However, this is subject to negotiation with the applicant, where any contributions will need to be agreed between the parties.

(N.B.) All committee reports MUST have a Fin Ref

Staffing :

Resourcing implications for the NSIP projects has been subject to a separate decision from this paper.

(N.B.) Where there are staffing implications the report MUST have a HR Ref

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

The Local Impact Report (LIR) seeks to identify all those members of the local community that may be impacted by the development of the One Earth Solar Farm.

Data Protection Implications :

None expected to arise from this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :

The proposed development is a renewable energy project comprising a 740MW installed capacity solar farm that will import electricity to the national grid. It also includes a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) to store solar energy and release it to the grid in periods of demand.

The developer anticipates the project will generate enough electricity to power more than 200,000 homes.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations :

The identification of any potential crime and disorder considerations will be addressed as part of the Local Impact Report.

Health Implications:

The identification of any anticipated health implications for the local community are considered as part of the Local Impact Report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice for Local authorities:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-advice-for-local-authorities>

National Infrastructure Page: One Earth Solar Farm

<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010159>

National Policy Statements for Energy Infrastructure:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-policy-statements-for-energy-infrastructure>

Prosperous Communities Committee 1st August 2023 Delegation of Responsibility for Participation in NSIP examinations

[Prosperous Communities Committee - Tuesday, 1st August, 2023 6.30 pm](#)

Risk Assessment :**Call in and Urgency:**

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

x

No

☐

Executive Summary

1. The One Earth Solar Farm (OESF) is an energy project comprising ground mounted solar photovoltaic arrays and on-site energy storage, along with associated development. It is stated to have an installed capacity of 740MW and would have its grid connection point at the decommissioned High Marnham power station site (Nottinghamshire). The development is being undertaken by Ørsted and PS Renewables.
2. The 1,409Ha site straddles the County boundary between Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. Approximately 206Ha would fall within Lincolnshire and the district of West Lindsey.
3. The site currently comprises arable fields to the south / south-east of Newton-on-Trent. The site's northern-most boundary is approximately 200 metres from the village.
4. Due to its scale (>50MW), the development qualifies as a 'nationally significant infrastructure project', or NSIP. NSIPs are subject to a separate consenting regime, overseen by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on the behalf of the Secretary of State.
5. The application was submitted to PINS in February 2025 and formally accepted on 27th March 2025. It will now be subject to a public examination, overseen by an Examining Authority (ExA), scheduled to run 8th July 2025 – 8th January 2026. Following closure of the examination, the ExA will make its recommendations to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, who will make the final decision as to whether to grant a Development Consent Order (DCO).
6. As part of the examination project, West Lindsey District Council, a Host Authority, is invited to submit both a Local Impact Report (LIR) and any further Written Representations (WR). The draft examination timetable sets out that this should be submitted by deadline 1 on Tuesday 29th July 2025.
7. It is recommended to the Committee that it agrees to the submission of both a LIR and WR to be made to the OESF Public Examination, by the required deadline.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The One Earth Solar Farm (OESF) is an energy project comprising ground mounted solar photovoltaic arrays and on-site energy storage, along with associated development. It is stated to have an installed capacity of 740MW and would have its grid connection point at the decommissioned High Marnham power station site (Nottinghamshire). The development is being undertaken by Ørsted and PS Renewables.
- 1.2 The Proposed Development encompasses approximately 1,409 hectares (ha) of land and falls across two county boundaries and three local authority boundaries.
- 1.3 Approximately 1,203Ha of the site would fall within the county of Nottinghamshire (within the Districts of Bassetlaw; and Newark and Sherwood). Approximately 206Ha would fall within Lincolnshire and the district of West Lindsey.
- 1.4 The development is within the south-western most corner of the district extending across the administrative boundaries into both Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood.
- 1.5 It is to be located on agricultural land – arable fields approximately 200 metres to the south and south-east of Newton on Trent.
- 1.6 This area does include some isolated farmsteads, poultry units, oil wells and Anglian Water facilities, which are excluded from the Order Limits (which define the application site), but are otherwise enclosed by them.
- 1.7 A copy of the site location plan showing the Order Limits, is provided at **appendix 1**.
- 1.8 The development is proposed to include the following elements:
 - > PV Modules;
 - > Mounting Structures;
 - > Power Conversion Stations (PCS);
 - > Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS);
 - > Onsite Substations and Ancillary Buildings;
 - > Low Voltage Distribution Cables;
 - > Grid Connection Cables;
 - > Fencing, security and ancillary infrastructure;
 - > Access Tracks; and
 - > Green Infrastructure (GI)

The application seeks consent for 60 years.

- 1.9 The Illustrative Masterplan (**appendix 2**) suggests that the area within West Lindsey would primarily accommodate solar PV panels (with power conversion stations and supporting infrastructure) and is also a proposed location for a substation and BESS site.

- 1.10 The proposed BESS site would be set approximately 400m to the east of the A1133, to the immediate south-east of the Anglian Water Hall Water Treatment Works. The BESS site would be approximately 900m to the south of Newton on Trent.
- 1.11 As an energy generating station that would have a capacity that exceeds 50 megawatts (MW), the development qualifies as a Nationally Significant infrastructure Project (NSIP). The Planning Act 2008 ('PA2008') introduced a process intended to "*streamline the decision-making process for major infrastructure projects*". An NSIP therefore follows a different process to those planning applications that are typically considered by West Lindsey District Council, in its role as the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.12 The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) are the Government Agency responsible for examining applications for NSIPs, and will appoint Inspectors, known as the Examining Authority (ExA). Following examination, the ExA will make a recommendation to the relevant Secretary of State (SoS) who will ultimately take the decision whether to grant a Development Consent Order (DCO). For an energy proposal such as the OESF, the relevant SoS will be the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (current role holder: The Rt Hon Ed Milliband MP).
- 1.13 The Local Authority does not therefore determine the application. However, local authorities are strongly encouraged to participate in the NSIP process and examination. The Government Guidance states:
- "Whilst the relevant Secretary of State will decide if development consent should be granted for a NSIP application it is in the local authority's interests to:*
- proactively engage with the applicant on their proposed scheme, particularly during the pre-application stage;*
 - take part in all the stages of the NSIP process"*
- 1.14 As land within West Lindsey is included within the development boundary – WLDC qualifies as a Host Local Authority and is a statutory consultee. Two of the key contributions a local authority may make to the process are through the submission of Written Representations (WR); and a Local Impact Report (LIR).

2 The Examination Process

- 2.1 The DCO consenting process is administered by the Planning Inspectorate, on the behalf of the Secretary of State.
- 2.2 There are six stages to the process:

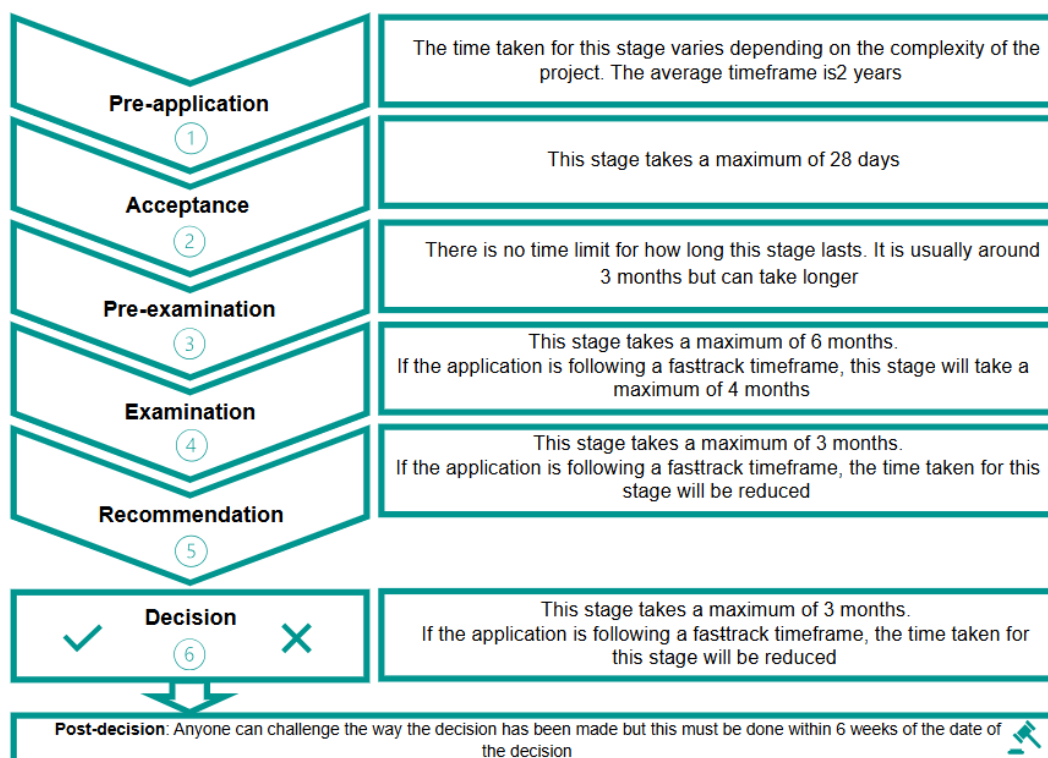


Figure 1: Stages of the NSIP Process (taken from Guidance: [‘Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say’](#))

- 2.3 The OESF project is, due to commence the six-month **examination stage** on Tuesday 8th July.
- 2.4 The application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 27th February 2025, and was formally accepted (stage 2) on the 27th March 2025.
- 2.5 On the 10th June 2025, the Examining Authority (ExA) published its “Rule 6” letter (The letter was updated and reissued on 17th June to allow for a venue change). This announces that a Preliminary meeting will be held on Tuesday 8th July 2025. The preliminary meeting is a procedural meeting run by the ExA to discuss the examination process and timescales. It marks the start of the 6-month examination process.
- 2.6 The ‘Rule 6’ letter (see **appendix 4**) contains a provisional timetable that anticipates the examination will run until Thursday 8th January 2025. It sets out 8 deadlines throughout the process.
- 2.7 Hearings are scheduled for 8th-10th July 2025, in Lincoln. This includes Open Floor Hearings where registered members of the public can speak directly to the Examining Authority. WLDC Officials continue to liaise with the “7000 Acres Group” a local pressure group who have actively participated in previous NSIP examinations and represent concerned residents. The timetable reserves a further two

weeks for the holding of public hearings, if required (w/c 1st September; w/c 3rd November 2025).

2.8 Deadline 1 on Tuesday 29th July is given as the deadline for local authorities to submit their Local Impact Report (LIR) and for interested parties (which includes local authorities) to submit their written representations (WR). Whilst the final timetable will only be published after the preliminary meeting is held, it is recommended that WLDC is prepared in order to submit its representations by the indicative date for deadline 1.

2.9 The '[Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice for Local Authorities](#)' advice note states that during the pre-examination period:

*“The local authority should begin to prepare their **LIR [Local Impact Report]**. Early preparation of this important technical document will help to ensure that it includes a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of the local impacts of the project...*

*Host and neighbouring local authorities may also wish to consider preparing a **written representation [WR]**. This should not repeat what has been included in other submissions such as the relevant representation or LIR. Local authorities may decide not to send a written representation. However, the written representation is an opportunity to provide further details on evidence that may not have been available before, or to expand on any issues already raised.”*

2.10 It is therefore recommended that the Committee resolves to now submit both a LIR and WR to the examination, with the intention of being prepared to submit by the anticipated deadline of 29th July.

3.0 Other Solar Projects

3.1 The OESF is now the fifth “nationally significant” solar project to be proposed within the District. Figure 2 below summarises the other projects.

Project Name	Approximate Solar Capacity (MW)	Approximate battery storage capacity	Extent of Order Limits(Ha)	Consent Process Stage
Gate Burton Solar Project	531MW	500MWh	824	DCO Granted (July 2024)
Cottam Solar Project	600MW	1357MWh/ 2773MWh	1,451	DCO Granted (September 2024)
West Burton Solar Project	480MW	159MWh	886.4	DCO Granted (January 2025)
Tillbridge Solar	500MW	tbc	1,345	Recommendation (decision due by October 2025)

One Earth Solar Farm	740MW	tbc	1,409 (1203Ha in Nottinghamshire; 206Ha in Lincolnshire)	Examination commences 8 th July 2025
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Figure 2: Summary of Solar NSIPs in West Lindsey and consenting stage

- 3.2 The diagram at **appendix 3** shows the site in context to other known major and nationally significant developments in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire.
- 3.3 The cumulative effects of development will need to be considered, as well as the effects of the development in solus.

4.0 Local Impact Report (LIR)

- 4.1 A LIR is defined in legislation as ‘*a report in writing giving details of the likely impact of the proposed development on the authority’s area (or any part of that area).*’ (Planning Act 2008 Section 60(3)).
- 4.2 It is not a requirement for West Lindsey DC to submit an LIR, and to do so is voluntary. However, where one is submitted, the SoS is placed under a statutory duty to have regard to any Local Impact Report when making his decision. The National Infrastructure Planning advice note states that “*Therefore, local authorities should not underestimate the importance of the report.*”
- 4.3 The Advice note states that “*The report should cover any topic the local authority consider is relevant to the impact of the project on their area and the local communities affected... The purpose of the LIR is to make the Examining Authority aware of the potential impacts of the project based on local knowledge. It is a technical evidence-based assessment of all the impacts. The LIR is therefore not the document where the local authority should set out its objections or support for the application*”
- 4.4 It further states “*The LIR should include a statement of positive, neutral and negative local impacts. However, it does not need to include a balancing exercise between positive and negative. The Examining Authority will carry out a balancing exercise of relevant impacts, including local impacts specifically reported in the LIR.*”
- 4.5 In preparation for the Examination, a draft LIR has been produced and is attached to these papers (**appendix 5**).
- 4.6 The LIR is structured to reflect the key environmental headlines in the applicant’s Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and has the following headlines:

Local Context

Providing key information regarding the characteristics of the West Lindsey District, including local landscape character and sensitivity.

Legislative and Policy Context

Setting out the relevant legislation and policy important to the examination and determination of the application. This includes an assessment of how the development applies to the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023.

Cumulative impacts

Explaining the key impacts of the OESF cumulatively with other NSIP projects in the West Lindsey District. Topics include:

- **Lifespan of the projects**

The impacts of the 60 year lifespan of all of the projects on the district and how they should be treated as ‘permanent’ for the purpose of decision making

- **Landscape and visual**

The cumulative impacts on landscape character and visual effects across the district.

- **Traffic and transport**

The amenity impacts of construction traffic in terms of the volume of traffic from multiple projects using local roads and disruption caused by traffic management over the cumulative construction period.

- **Tourism impacts**

Cumulative impact of all projects on tourism is terms of availability of tourist accommodation and impact on the attractiveness of the area for visitors.

- **Agricultural land**

The cumulative impact on the loss of land for the production of food.

- **Maintenance and replacement**

The cumulative impact of multiple projects carrying out maintenance and replacement of solar farm infrastructure throughout the lifespan of the projects. Impacts include noise, air quality, general disruption, traffic, environmental impacts and the approach to the management of waste/recycling.

Project specific impacts

Explaining the key impacts of the OESF in solus, in the West Lindsey District. Topics include:

- **Need case**

Overarching commentary recognising current Government policy with regard to the need for renewable energy generation.

- **Project design**

Views on the approach/methodology applied by the applicant in designing the project. Impacts will include the design decisions around site layout and the extent to which environmental constraints have been avoided.

- **Landscape and visual**

The impact on landscape character and the visual impacts experienced by communities and visitors.

- **Agricultural land**

The impacts of the loss of land currently available for food production, including the loss of Best and Most Versatile land ('BMV land').

- **Traffic and transport**

The impacts of construction traffic in terms of noise, disruption to communities due to traffic management, and the justification for all of the construction access points proposed.

- **Tourism**

The potential impact on tourism in terms of availability of tourist accommodation and negative impact on the attractiveness of the area for visitors.

- **Cultural Heritage**

The potential impacts on assets including the nearby Roman Fort and Royal Observer Corps monitoring post Scheduled Monument.

- **Maintenance and replacement**

The impact of carrying out maintenance and replacement of solar farm infrastructure throughout the lifespan of the projects. Impacts include noise, air quality, general disruption, traffic, environmental impacts and the approach to the management of waste/recycling

- **BESS & Fire Safety**

Recognising that the development will introduce a risk that will require mitigation and careful liaison with Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue.

- **Draft Development Consent Order (DCO)**

The process of securing the approval of 'requirements', including timescales for determination and application fees.

- 4.7 Each chapter follows best practice in setting out the local planning policy context, an assessment of anticipated local impacts (positive, neutral and negative), and any requirements that may mitigate any harm. A summary is provided at the back of the LIR, setting out where we identify positive, negative and neutral impacts.
- 4.8 The draft LIR identifies a number of local impacts that may arise from the development. It sets out that WLDC has significant concerns regarding the cumulative impact of the scheme with other NSIP solar generating station projects. The likely impacts experienced during construction, operation and decommissioning will have significant adverse impacts upon the natural environment, character and communities within the West Lindsey District. The OESF project on its own merits will also give rise to significant adverse impacts on the natural environment and the amenity and lives of communities living in the near and surrounding area to the scheme.
- 4.9 It anticipates that there will likely be significant local impacts as a result of the development (both cumulatively with other projects and individually) on such matters as:
- Project design;
 - Landscape and visual impacts;
 - Agricultural land impacts (BMV);
 - Traffic impacts;
 - Tourism impacts;
 - Cultural heritage;
 - Maintenance; and
 - The draft Development Consent Order.

It recognises that WLDC will continue to liaise with the applicant to seek to address the adverse impacts, where possible.

5.0 Written representations (WR)

- 5.1 Whilst only the host authorities may produce a Local Impact Report (LIR), all interested parties (including members of the public) are invited to make Written Representations (WR).
- 5.2 The Advice note states:

“The local authority may wish to submit a written representation to clarify their views on the application that were included in their relevant representation. The written representation should be supported by any data, methodology and assumptions.

If they decide to submit a written representation then the local authority should not duplicate information that has been submitted elsewhere, in the LIR or relevant representation for example. It is helpful if the written representation can cross reference application information, the [Local Impact Report] LIR, the [Statement of Common Ground] SOCG, the [Principal areas of Disagreement Summary Statements] PADSS and other relevant submissions. The written representation should be concise and avoid repetition.”

5.3 It is recommended that WLDC take the opportunity to submit written representations to the OESF examination.

5.4 In preparation of the examination, draft WR have been produced and are contained at **appendix 6**.

5.5 The draft WR proposes that the key impact of the scheme can be categorised, as follows:

(i) Decision making – legislative and policy context

(ii) Cumulative impacts

- *Project lifespan*
- *Landscape character*
- *Visual effects*
- *Traffic and transport*
- *Tourism*
- *Loss of land available for the production of food*
- *Approach to maintenance and replacement of infrastructure*

(iii) Project specific

- *Approach to design and avoiding key constraints*
- *Landscape character*
- *Visual effects*
- *Loss of land available for the production of food*
- *Traffic and transport*
- *Tourism*
- *Cultural heritage*
- *Approach to maintenance and replacement of infrastructure*
- *BESS & Fire Safety*

5.6 It concludes that the identified impacts, when assessed against policy, are such that WLDC raises significant objections to the project; key issues being the cumulative impact on the landscape and visual amenity and construction impacts, and the impact of the project in solus on landscape character and visual effects.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that both a Local Impact Report and accompanying Written Representations are submitted to the One Earth Solar Farm Public Examination.

- 6.2 It is recommended that the Committee review the draft LIR (**Appendix 5**) and WR (**appendix 6**) prepared for submission to the One Earth Solar Farm examination, and delegate authority to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities to complete, finalise and submit the final LIR and WR to the examination by the required deadline, taking into consideration the committee's comments, and having consulted with the Chair of this Committee.



One Earth Solar Farm

Volume 2.0: Plans [EN010159]

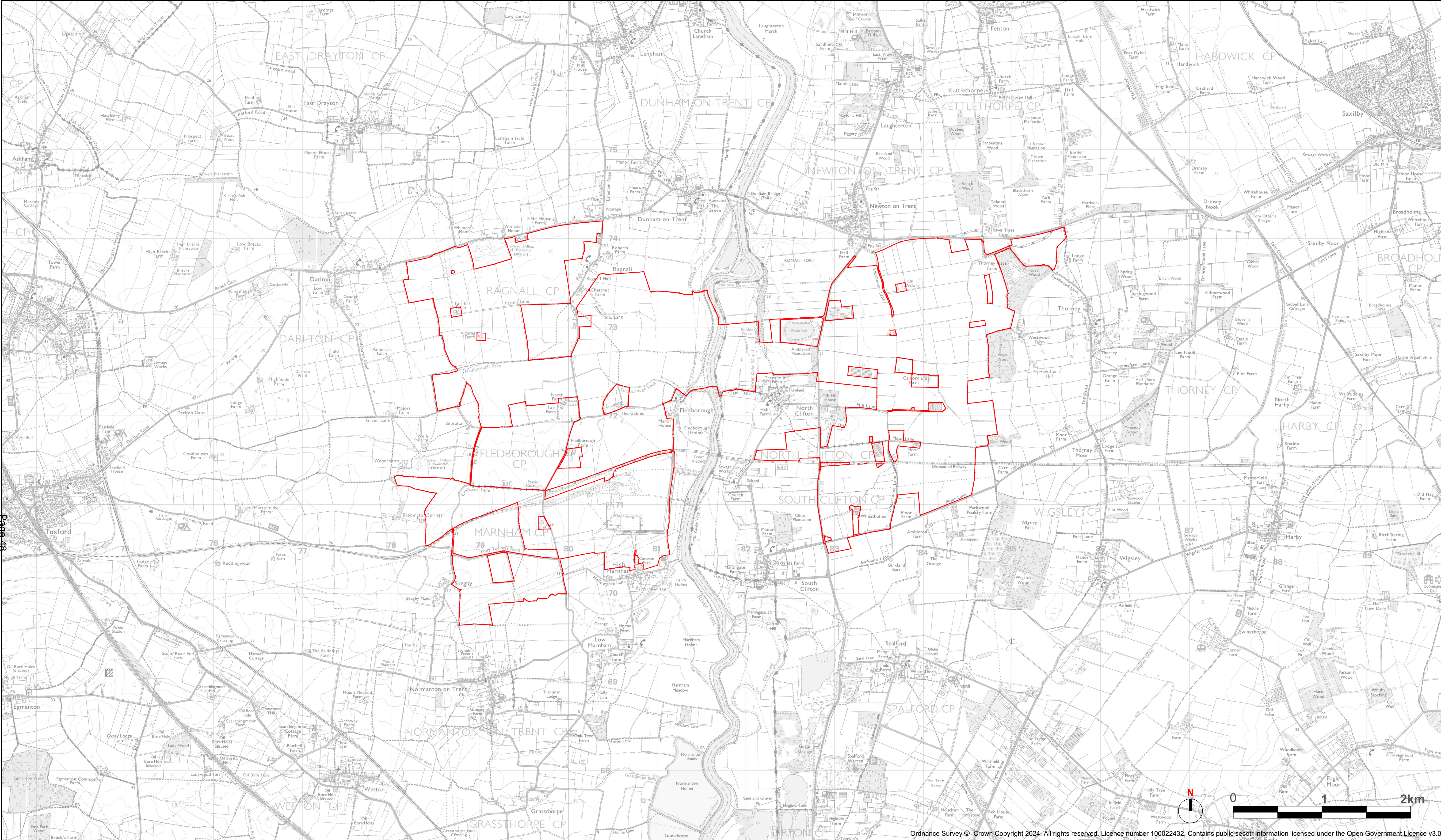
Location Plans

February 2025

Document Reference: EN010159/APP/2.1

Revision 01

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
- Reg 5 (2) (o)



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Client:
One Earth Solar Farm Ltd

Project:
One Earth Solar Farm

Planning Inspectorate Scheme Ref:EN010159

Volume 2

Drawing Title:
Location Plan

Document Reference Number:
EN010159/APP/2.1

Drawn: JG

Designed: JG

Approved: SG

Drawing Date:
2025-01-06

Scale:
1:20000 @ A1

Legend

 Order Limits



One Earth Solar Farm

Volume 2.0: Plans [EN010159]

Illustrative Masterplan

February 2025

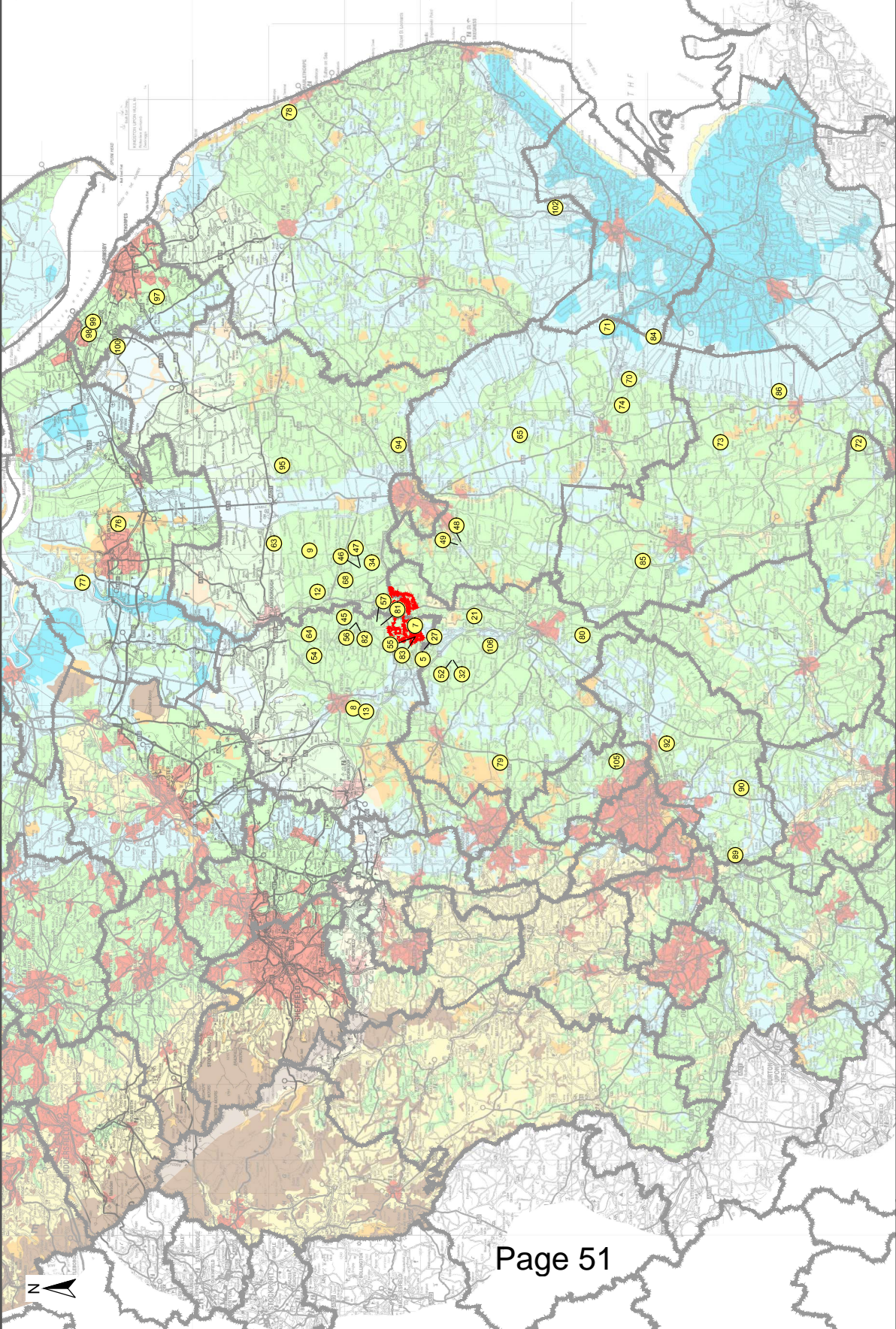
Document Reference: EN010159/APP/2.7

Revision 01

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
- Reg 5 (2) (o)

DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING

ID	Scheme
1	1) Lodd Road Solar Farm
2	2) Lodd Road Solar Farm
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6	6) Lodd Road Solar Farm
7	7) Lodd Road Solar Farm
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100	100) Lodd Road Solar Farm



Notes: Mapping showing provisional Agricultural Land Series Agricultural Land Classification, Natural England, 2010. Map references 10.11e, and 10.11c.

Legend:

Order Limits
 - Boundary of district borough unitary region
 - Other developments

Grading Description
 - Excellent
 - Very good
 - Good to moderate
 - Poor
 - Very poor

Non-Agricultural Land
 - Other and primarily in non-agricultural use
 - Land predominantly in urban use

<div> <div>Client</div> <div>One Earth Solar Farm Ltd</div> </div>	<div> <div>Drawing Title</div> <div>Figure 18.9 Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land and Other Developments</div> </div>	
	<div> <div>Drawing Number</div> <div>EN010159/APP/6.20/18.9</div> </div>	<div> <div>Revision</div> <div>C02</div> </div>
	<div> <div>Drawing Date</div> <div>10.02.2025</div> </div>	<div> <div>Planning Inspection Scheme Ref:EN010159</div> <div>Environmental Statement Volume-2</div> </div>



National Infrastructure
Planning
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

Customer
Services: 0303 444 5000
email: oneearthsolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

All interested parties, statutory parties and other
persons invited to the Preliminary Meeting

Our Ref: EN010159
Date: 17 June 2025

Dear Recipient

Following the issuing of the Rule 6 letter on 10 June, we are renotifying you of the subsequent hearings due to take place during the week of the 8 July 2025 due to a need to change the venue. All other matters in the original Rule 6 remain the same.

**Planning Act 2008 – section 88 and 89 and The Infrastructure Planning
(Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 – Rules 4, 6, 9 and 13**

**Application by One Earth Solar Farm Ltd for an order granting development
consent for the One Earth Solar Farm**

**Appointment of the Examining Authority, and invitation to the preliminary
meeting and notification of hearings.**

Following my appointment by the Secretary of State as the lead member of the Examining Authority (ExA) to carry out an examination of the above application I am writing to introduce myself and the other member of the ExA. My name is Edwin Maund and the other member of the ExA is Alex Jack. A copy of the appointment notice can be viewed under [documents](#) on the project webpage of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website ([project webpage](#)).

We would like to thank those of you who submitted relevant representations. These representations have assisted us when considering how we will examine this application.

Invitation to the Preliminary Meeting

As a recipient of this letter, you are invited to the preliminary meeting to discuss **the procedure** for the examination of the above application.

Date	Start time	Venue and joining details
Tuesday 8 July 2025	Registration and seating available at venue and virtual registration process from: 9.30am Hearing starts: 10.00am	Double Tree by Hilton, Brayford Wharf North, Lincoln, LN1 1YW. and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

The preliminary meeting should be completed before 1.00pm on 8 July 2025. However, a reserve period has been scheduled for 2.00pm on the same day to allow for the meeting to be resumed in exceptional circumstances, for example to account for a failure of technology. Normally the reserve period will not be required and confirmation of this will be provided by the ExA at the end of the preliminary meeting and subsequently notified on the [project webpage](#).

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by 1 July 2025 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting, then you do not need to register as you will be able to either:

1. watch a livestream of the event - a link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin
2. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished.

Alternatively, you can attend the physical event at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by **1 July 2025** using the [event participation form](#). It may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **1 July**.

If you attend the event either in person or online you are agreeing to be filmed for the purposes of the online livestream of the event and the recording of the event which will get published on the project page of our website. A limited number of seats will be available for observers who wish not to be filmed at the event. Please contact the case team to notify them if you prefer not to be filmed at the event. A transcript of the event will also be published on the project page of our website after the event.

Any request to participate in the preliminary meeting must include the following information:

- name and unique reference number (found at the top your letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate)
- email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- for blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person
- the agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points you wish to make.

Please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter if you require any support or assistance to attend the preliminary meeting, either virtually or in person.

Purpose of the preliminary meeting

The purpose of the preliminary meeting is to enable views to be put to us about how the application should be examined. The ExA will therefore limit the scope of the preliminary meeting to consideration of how the application will be examined. See **Annex B** to this letter and the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

The preliminary meeting is **not** an opportunity for you to give your views about what you like or don't like about the application. The merits or disadvantages of the application will only be considered once the examination starts, which is after the preliminary meeting has closed. All relevant and important matters will be taken into account when we make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for SoS for Energy Security and Net Zero, who will take the final decision in this case.

The agenda for the meeting is at **Annex A** to this letter. This has been set following our initial assessment of principal issues arising from our reading of the application documents and the relevant representations received. The initial assessment of principal issues is set out in **Annex C** to this letter.

Written submissions about how the application should be examined

The Planning Act 2008 establishes a principally written process for the examination of applications for development consent orders and **representations made in writing carry equal weight to oral representations at all stages of the process.**

We are now requesting written submissions from recipients of this letter about how the application should be examined. We particularly wish to hear from you if either:



1. you consider changes need to be made to the draft examination timetable set out at **Annex D** to this letter, and/or
2. wish to comment about the arrangements for future examination hearings, including the use of virtual methods.

You are invited to make a written submission about how the application is to be examined by **procedural deadline A** (1 July 2025 23.59) (see **Annex D** to this letter).

We request that all submissions are made using the '[Have your say](#)' page on the project webpage on or before **procedural deadline A. Annex H** to this letter provides further information about using the '[Have your say](#)' page.

Requests to participate at the preliminary meeting

You are not required to attend, or make written submissions to, the preliminary meeting in order to participate in the examination. If you are an interested party, you can make a written representation and comment on the written representations made by other interested parties during the examination. You will also be able to participate in any hearings that are arranged.

Format of examination events – preliminary meeting and hearings

The examination of the application will principally be a written process supplemented where necessary by various types of hearings. See the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

Both blended (part in-person and part virtual) and fully virtual events form part of the Planning Inspectorate's operating model. We remain flexible and will confirm the format of any hearings to be held during the examination stage when we provide formal notification of each hearing in advance of it taking place. However, and for this case, the ExA expects hearings will be blended.

As such we are providing formal notification that the Preliminary Meeting the Open Floor Hearings 1 and 2, and Issue Specific Hearing 1 will be blended events.

After the preliminary meeting

After the preliminary meeting we will issue a letter (known as the Rule 8 Letter) setting out the finalised examination timetable. A note of the meeting will also be published on the [project webpage](#).

Notification of initial hearings

The ExA provides notice of the following initial hearings that will take place:

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and joining details
Tuesday 8 July 2025	Open Floor Hearing 1	Registration and seating available at venue and virtual registration process from: 6.30pm Hearing starts: 7.00pm	Double Tree by Hilton, Brayford Wharf North, Lincoln, LN1 1YW. and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Wednesday 9 July 2025	Open Floor Hearing 2	Registration and seating available at venue and virtual registration process from: 9.30am Hearing starts: 10.00am	Double Tree by Hilton, Brayford Wharf North, Lincoln, LN1 1YW. and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Wednesday 9 July 2025	Issue Specific Hearing 1 on Environmental Matters and the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO)	Registration and seating available at venue and virtual registration process from: 1.30pm Hearing starts: 2.00pm	Double Tree by Hilton, Brayford Wharf North, Lincoln, LN1 1YW. and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Thursday 10 July 2025	Issue Specific Hearing 1	Registration and seating available at venue and	Double Tree by Hilton, Brayford Wharf North, Lincoln, LN1 1YW. and

	on Environmental Matters and the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) (This will only be held for any items not completed on 9 July 2025)	virtual registration process from: 9.30am Hearing starts: 10.00am	By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
--	--	--	--

Important information about these hearings is contained in **Annex E** to this letter, including what details need to be provided with a request to be heard at a hearing and the procedure that will be followed.

For issue specific hearing 1 the ExA will publish a detailed agenda on the project webpage at least five working days in advance of the hearing date. However, the actual agenda on the day of the hearing may be subject to change at the discretion of the ExA. For open floor hearings an agenda will not be published.

Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

We have made some further procedural decisions which are set out in detail at **Annex F** to this letter. They are summarised as follows:

- Request for additional submissions
- Updates to the Guide to the Application
- A request for statements of common ground with Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Services
- Request for suggested locations for an accompanied site inspection
- Acceptance of additional submissions into the examination – submissions by the applicant following s51 advice [AS-001 – AS-010] in the [Examination Library](#) and following the letter from the ExA of the 7 May 2025 received on the 14 May 2025, (Examination Library references will be available in due course.)

Changes to land interests

When the applicant becomes aware that there has been a change in ownership, or a new interest, in relevant land the applicant is requested to make the relevant person aware that they can make a request to the ExA to become an interested party under section 102A of the PA2008 by emailing the case team using the contact details at the top of this letter. The examination timetable includes various deadlines for the

submission of an updated book of reference and schedule of changes to the book of reference, which should include confirmation that relevant persons have been informed of their rights under section 102A.

Managing examination correspondence

Given the volume and frequency of letters the Planning Inspectorate needs to send to interested parties during an examination, we aim to communicate with people by email as electronic communication is more environmentally friendly and cost effective for the taxpayer. If you have received a letter but are able to receive communications by email, please inform the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter as soon as possible.

As the examination process makes substantial use of electronic documents, it will be useful for you to become familiar with the [project webpage](#).

A '[Have your say](#)' page is available on the website which provides a portal through which parties should make written submissions at relevant deadlines during the examination. Further information about the '[Have your say](#)' page is provided at **Annex H** to this letter.

There is also a function on the left-hand side of the project webpage called 'Get updates'. This provides you with an opportunity to register to receive automatic e-mail updates at key stages during the examination.

Your status in the examination

You have received this letter because you are a person or organisation who is involved in the NSIP process. See The Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: National Infrastructure Projects and the people and organisations involved in the process](#) for further details.

If, having read the advice, you are still unsure about how you are involved in the process please contact the Case Team using the details at the top of this letter.

Awards of costs

All parties will normally be expected to meet their own costs. Costs can be awarded against a party who has acted unreasonably and has caused the party applying for the award of costs to incur unnecessary or wasted expense during the examination. You should be aware of the relevant costs guidance [Awards of costs: examinations of applications for development consent orders](#).

Management of information

Information, including representations, submitted in respect of this examination (if accepted by the ExA) and a record of any advice which has been provided by The Planning Inspectorate is published on the [project webpage](#).

Please note that in the interest of facilitating an effective and fair examination, it is necessary to publish some personal information. To find out how we handle your personal information please view our [Privacy Notice](#).

We look forward to working with all parties in the examination of this application.

Yours faithfully

Edwin Maund

Lead Member of the Examining Authority

Annexes

- A** Agenda for the preliminary meeting
- B** Introduction to the preliminary meeting
- C** Initial assessment of principal issues
- D** Draft examination timetable
- E** Notification of initial hearings
- F** Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority
- G** Examination documents
- H** Information about the 'Have your say' page

This communication does not constitute legal advice.

Please view our [Privacy Notice](#) before sending information to The Planning Inspectorate.

Agenda for the preliminary meeting

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by 1 July 2025 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting, then you do not need to register as you will be able to either:

- 1.** watch a livestream of the event - a link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin
- 2.** watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished.

Alternatively, you can attend the physical event at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by **1 July 2025** using the [event participation form](#). It may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **1 July 2025**.

If you attend the event either in person or online you are agreeing to be filmed for the purposes of the online livestream of the event and the recording of the event which will get published on the project page of our website. A limited number of seats will be available for observers who wish not to be filmed at the event. Please contact the case team to notify them if you prefer not to be filmed at the event. A transcript of the event will also be published on the project page of our website after the event.

Date: **Tuesday 8 July 2025**

Registration process: **9.30am**

Meeting start time: **10.00am**

Venue: Blended event at Double Tree by Hilton, Brayford Wharf North, Lincoln, LN1 1YW, and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams.

Full instructions on how to join online or by phone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered

Attendees: **Invited parties who have pre-registered**

Agenda for the preliminary meeting	
9.30am	Registration and seating available at venue for in-person attendees
9.30am	<p>Virtual registration process</p> <p>Please arrive at 9.30am to enter the virtual lobby. From here you will be admitted to the virtual meeting by the Case Team, greeted and given further instructions.</p> <p>The registration process will commence at 9.30am. This will be hosted by the Case Team and cover the housekeeping arrangements for the preliminary meeting and allow for any questions to be asked about how to take part.</p>
10.00am Item 1	<p>Preliminary meeting</p> <p>The preliminary meeting will formally open at 10.00am. The Examining Authority will join, welcome participants and lead introductions.</p> <p>A public livestream of the meeting will be made available on the project webpage of the Find a National Infrastructure Project website shortly before the meeting is due to open.</p>
Item 2	The Examining Authority's remarks about the examination process
Item 3	Initial assessment of principal issues – Annex C to Rule 6 Letter
Item 4	Draft examination timetable – Annex D to Rule 6 Letter
Item 5	Procedural decisions
Item 6	Any other matters
Close of the preliminary meeting	

If you are participating using Microsoft Teams please join the virtual lobby promptly using the instructions that will be sent to you. The event will start at **10.00am** irrespective of any late arrivals, for whom access may not be possible.

It may take some time to admit participants from the virtual lobby, your patience whilst you are waiting is appreciated.

The agenda for the preliminary meeting is subject to change at the discretion of the Examining Authority, although in making changes the Examining Authority will be mindful of the need to provide opportunities for fair involvement to all invited parties.

Any request to participate in the preliminary meeting **must include** the following information and be made on the [event participation form](#):

- name and unique reference number (found at the top your letter or email from the Planning Inspectorate)
- email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- for blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person
- the agenda item on which you wish to speak and a list of the points you wish to make.

Observing the Preliminary Meeting - If you wish to observe the preliminary meeting in person and at the physical venue, you are still required to register by procedural deadline a, via the event participation form.

However, if you wish to observe virtually then you do not need to register. You will be able to: watch a livestream of the event via a weblink that will be made available on the project webpage shortly before the event is scheduled to begin; or watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished.

Introduction to the preliminary meeting

Background

The preliminary meeting (PM) will be a blended event with some participants attending in person and some taking part virtually using Microsoft Teams

The Examining Authority (ExA) is conscious of videoconferencing fatigue and will aim to keep the proceedings focussed and as efficient as possible. This Annex provides advance access to information that would usually be included in the ExA's introductory remarks. Please read this carefully. The ExA will only present a summary of the key points set out here in order to ensure that the time available for participants to speak is maximised.

The Examining Authority and the Case Team

The ExA will introduce themselves at the start of the PM.

The ExA will be supported by the Planning Inspectorate Case Team. During the registration process a member of the Case Team will welcome and admit participants from the virtual lobby, and will be available to answer questions by email before and after the PM. The contact email address is:

oneearthsolar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

The purpose of the preliminary meeting

The PM is being held to discuss the arrangements for the examination of the application for a development consent order (DCO) for the One Earth Solar Farm, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), and which will generally be referred to in the PM and examination as 'the proposed development'. The application has been made by One Earth Solar Farm Ltd, which will be referred to as 'the applicant'.

You will find information about the application and, in due course, documents produced for the examination on the project webpage of the Find National Infrastructure Project website ([project webpage](#)). The project webpage has links to the examination timetable, relevant representations and examination documents and examination procedure.

You are encouraged to look at the [project webpage](#) if you haven't already done so, because it will be used to communicate with you and to provide access to documents throughout the examination.

The main purpose of the PM is to discuss the arrangements for the examination of the application. It focuses on the process only, and it will not be looking at the substance of the proposals: Questions, discussions and representations about the merits or disadvantages of the proposed development are for the examination itself which will begin the day after the close of the PM.

The PM will be your opportunity to influence the process that the ExA intends to follow. The agenda for the PM is attached to this Rule 6 Letter at **Annex A**. It is important to have the letter and the agenda in front of you and to refer to them during the course of the PM. You may wish to print these in advance of the PM for reference.

Government guidance and policy

The application is a NSIP under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) as a consequence of sections 14(1)(a) and 15(2) of the PA2008 as it includes the construction, operation and maintenance of a solar farm with a generating capacity of over 50MW. The designated National Policy Statements (NPS) 'Overarching NPS for Energy' (NPS EN-1) and 'Renewable Energy Infrastructure' (NPS EN-3) and Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5) apply to this Examination and to decision-making relating to this application.

The ExA will consider the proposed development in accordance with the NPSs and any other applicable policy or considerations the ExA deem to be important and relevant. The PA2008 makes it clear that, in making a decision, the relevant Secretary of State (SoS) "*must decide the application in accordance with any relevant NPS*" (s104(3)), subject to certain provisos. Essentially, the provisos are that the application must not breach legal or treaty obligations, and that any adverse impact of the proposed development would not outweigh its benefits.

The SoS is entitled to disregard any representations that relate to the merits of the designated National Policy Statement (NPS). In practice, this means that the ExA will not spend time examining representations that challenge policy set out in NPSs, or the validity of NPSs themselves. The focus will be on the merits or disadvantages of the proposed development, tested to the appropriate extent using the tests set out in relevant designated NPSs that are in force.

Other important and relevant planning policies that the ExA may consider include policies in the relevant local authorities' development plans. However, if these conflict with policy in a NPS, then the NPS will take precedence.

In summary, the PM will establish the procedures and timetable for the examination of the Proposed Development. It will set a framework for the ExA to enable the SoS to consider and decide the application. In doing so, the ExA will have regard to:

- the positions and representations of all interested parties (IP)
- any local impact reports (LIR) prepared and provided by relevant local authorities
- other prescribed matters
- any other matters that appear to be both relevant and important to the relevant SoS's decision.

Preliminary meeting invitees

The applicant is invited to the PM and is generally given the opportunity to reply to any representations made.

Everyone who has made a valid relevant representation has been registered as an IP and has been invited to the PM. All IPs are entitled to involvement in the examination.

Each person or organisation with an interest in land or rights that are affected by a compulsory acquisition request in this application is an affected person (AP) and has been invited to the PM. In addition to a general entitlement to involvement in the examination, APs have a right to be heard in relation to any objection about the effects of compulsory acquisition on their interests in land, and a right to be notified of any compulsory acquisition hearing. All APs are IPs, whether or not they have made a valid relevant representation.

Certain bodies are statutory parties and they have been invited to the PM. Statutory parties can elect to become IPs without having made a valid relevant representation by notifying the ExA in writing.

The ExA has the power to involve people who are not IPs in the examination as though they are IPs, including by inviting them to the PM. However, this is only done in exceptional circumstances, for example if it was clear that the application would materially affect a person, they are not automatically an IP or eligible to elect to become an IP and they had been unable to take the necessary action to register as an IP.

The ExA has decided to invite the following other persons to the PM:

- Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service

Conduct of the preliminary meeting

The PM will start promptly at 10.00am on Tuesday 8 July 2025 (**Annex A**), and the ExA estimates that it will take between one and three hours to complete.

During the PM participants may have to make allowances and be patient if there are delays associated with the technology used. In recognition of the fatigue associated with on-screen communication, the ExA will provide breaks during the PM as appropriate.

A digital recording of the PM will be made available on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable following the close of the PM. The recording allows any member of the public who is interested in the application and the examination to find out what has been discussed at the PM. The making and publication of these recordings are a means by which the ExA meets the legal requirement to hold the PM (and any other hearings) in public. In this regard, **anyone speaking at the PM will need to introduce themselves each time they speak**, to ensure that someone listening to the recording after the event is clear who was speaking. A written note of the PM will be produced and published as soon as practicable following the close of the PM.

As the recordings are retained and published, they form a public record that can contain personal information to which the **UK General Data Protection Regulation** applies. Participants must do their best to avoid providing any information which should otherwise be kept private and confidential. If there is a need to refer to such information, it should be in written form. Although this will also be published, personal and private content can be redacted or removed before it is made publicly available. Any person who is unclear on this point should ask the Case Team for guidance before they place personal and private information into the public domain.

The Planning Inspectorate's practice is to publish the recordings and retain them for a period of five years from the SoS's decision on the DCO. If you actively participate in the PM, it is important that you understand that you will be recorded and that the recording will be made available in the public domain. Please see our [Privacy Notice](#) for more information about how we handle your data.

Following the ExA's introductions, each participant who has been registered to speak will be asked to introduce themselves, including any organisations or groups that they represent. The ExA will then conduct the meeting in accordance with the agenda. If you prefer not to have your image recorded, you can switch off your camera at any point.

The examination process

The examination of NSIPs follows different processes to those, for example, of a public inquiry into a planning appeal following the refusal of planning permission. The main differences are that the examination of NSIPs is primarily a written process, and hearings take on an inquisitorial approach as opposed to an adversarial one.

This means that the ExA will probe, test and assess the evidence primarily using written questions. While some hearings are held to provide supplementary evidence, questions to the applicant or to witnesses will come from the ExA. Questioning or cross-examination of witnesses by other parties will not generally be allowed.

In terms of opportunities to provide evidence in writing, the draft examination timetable makes provision for the following written processes:

- Local authorities can submit LIRs if they wish. Whilst these are voluntary, the PA2008 provides that if they are provided, they must be considered by the SoS in reaching a decision. Consequently, LIRs are a very important method for local authorities to communicate issues of concern to the ExA, the SoS and their residents
- IPs can make written representations (WR) and comment on WRs made by other parties
- IPs can respond to the ExA's written questions (ExQs) and comment on responses to these written questions provided by others
- IPs may be asked to contribute to the making of statements of common ground (SoCG) if it appears that there are matters on which they and the applicant

agrees, and if it would be useful for this to be clarified. SoCGs most usefully extend to catalogue matters that are not agreed or are outstanding.

The draft examination timetable includes a series of numbered deadlines for receipt of written submissions. Timely submissions received by the relevant deadline and that address its purpose will be accepted. **Documents received after the relevant deadline are only accepted at the discretion of the ExA and may not be accepted to ensure fairness to all parties.** Circumstances where documents are submitted late without good reason, causing inconvenience or delay to other parties can amount to unreasonable behaviour.

These written processes will be the principal means used by the ExA to gather information, evidence and views about the application. However, the examination will only be effective if all parties resolve to give timely, full, frank, clear and evidenced answers to every question that is relevant to their interests and to engage fully with any other related processes such as the completion of WRs and SoCGs.

There is no merit in withholding or delaying information, or in failing to co-operate, and should it occur, any unreasonable behaviour that caused another party to incur wasted expenditure could lead to an award of costs against the offending party.

The ExA has discretion to make amendments to the examination timetable for the wider benefit of the examination. If possible, events will be arranged for times when all relevant parties are available, but the ExA is under a duty to complete the examination by the end of the six-month period beginning with the day after the close of the PM. This requirement is set by legislation, and while the ExA will try to rearrange event dates to accommodate all relevant parties, in practice there will be limited scope to alter dates set out in the draft examination timetable.

The statutory time limit for the examination means that where there are matters that still need to be discussed and agreed between the applicant and IPs, it will be very helpful to the ExA if these could be progressed as early as possible.

Hearings

The draft examination timetable includes provision for hearings, at which the ExA takes oral evidence from the various parties.

Any registered IP may request an **open floor hearing** (OFH) to make oral representations about the application if they believe this to be preferable to relying on their written representation, though both carry equal weight. Oral submissions should be based on representations previously made in writing, but they should not simply repeat matters previously covered in the written submission. Rather, they should focus on specific detail and explanation to help inform the ExA. There should be no new or unexpected material in oral representations. A written summary note with any supporting evidence or references will be requested of each speaker following the hearing.

As with all examination events, OFHs are subject to the powers of control of the ExA, as set out in the PA2008 and supporting legislation. Participants must register in

advance by the deadline shown in the examination timetable and in accordance with the instructions. It is common practice for the ExA to set a time limit for each speaker and speakers with common points are asked to come together to nominate a spokesperson or representative speakers to cover specific topics, so as to avoid repetition. Speakers representing public authorities, community and membership organisations or multiple IPs are normally provided with an additional time allowance, recognising their representative role.

The applicant's draft DCO provides for the compulsory acquisition of land and rights, and the temporary possession of land. APs (meaning those whose land or rights over land are affected) have a right to request and be heard at a **compulsory acquisition hearing** (CAH). If one or more APs request to be heard, then a CAH must be held. Provisional dates for CAHs are included in the draft examination timetable along with deadlines by which requests to be heard must be submitted.

The ExA has the discretion to hold **issue specific hearings** (ISH) if it would aid in the examination and there is a specific reason this would be more helpful than reliance on written evidence only. The lack of an ISH on one or more topics does not suggest that that topic is less important than others which are subject to a hearing. Rather, it is an indication that the ExA is satisfied that the issues can be fully considered through written submissions and responses to its written questions and that each party has had a fair opportunity to put its case.

The draft examination timetable includes a number of dates reserved for ISHs and IPs may make suggestions for topics to be discussed at an ISH in their written or oral representations to the PM.

It may be necessary for the ExA to hold more than one ISH on the draft DCO. This is normal practice, and they are held on a without prejudice basis. Parties can suggest modifications and amendments to the draft DCO provided by the applicant with the application, without prejudicing their overall position on the application.

Holding such hearings does not imply that the ExA has reached any judgements on the merits of the application. Whatever the ultimate recommendation is, the ExA must make sure that the draft DCO is fit for purpose if the SoS decides to grant consent, as any consent will be subject to requirements (similar to planning conditions) set out in the draft DCO.

At hearings it will not normally be necessary for parties to make long and detailed submissions that require, for example, PowerPoint presentations. Any supporting detail/ information can be provided in writing following the event by the relevant deadline.

The draft examination timetable includes a deadline (**1 July 2025**) for participants to notify the ExA that they wish to speak at an OFH or a CAH.

Site inspections

As part of the examination process the ExA may undertake site inspections. These can be either unaccompanied or accompanied.

The purpose of these is for the ExA to see features of the proposals within the context of the evidence put forward. Notes of unaccompanied site inspections (USI) are published on the [project webpage](#).

Accompanied site inspections (ASI) will only be necessary to view land to which there is no public right of access, or with no clear view from nearby locations with open public access. The purpose of ASIs is familiarisation only and no discussion of the merits of the proposed development will be entertained during an ASI.

The ExA may decide to hold USIs to relevant nominated locations, supported by the submission of additional written, photographic, video or even drone material if this would be preferable to not visiting sites or holding ASIs in circumstances which could make them difficult and unduly time-consuming to conduct (for example if public health restrictions are in place). The ExA may also consider if it would be appropriate to make arrangements for access only to be provided to specific sites such that they could be inspected as part of a USI on an access required basis (ARSI).

The draft examination timetable includes a deadline for IPs to make submissions suggesting sites and locations that the ExA should visit. These will be used to inform further USIs and ARSIs, as well as possible ASIs. **Any nominations for any locations for an ASI must include the reason for the nomination and whether those sites can be seen from public land or whether they need to be seen from private land.**

The ExA undertook unaccompanied site inspections (USI) over four days between 19 and 22 May 2025. These are respectively referred to as USI1. A brief record of the USI to inform the applicant, interested parties and other parties of the actions taken by the ExA will be published on the project webpage. This note of USI1 has been assigned the reference OD-004.

Initial assessment of principal issues

This is the initial assessment of principal issues prepared as required under section 88(1) of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). It has been prepared by the Examining Authority (ExA) following its reading of:

- the application documents
- the relevant representations received in respect of the application
- its consideration of any other important and relevant matters

This initial assessment has guided the ExA in forming a provisional view as to how the application is to be examined. It is not a comprehensive or exclusive list of the issues that will be subject to examination and inevitably some issues will overlap or interrelate. The ExA will have regard to all important and relevant matters during the examination and when it writes its recommendation to The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero after the examination has concluded.

The order of the issues listed is alphabetic and does not imply any order of prioritisation or importance.

The policy and consenting requirements and documents associated with the PA2008 are an integral part of the examination and are therefore not listed as main issues.

It should also be noted that whilst the effects of the proposal in relation to human rights and equalities duties are not listed as main issues, the ExA will conduct all aspects of the examination with these in mind.

Principal Issue	Brief amplification. To include, but not necessarily limited to:
Assessment of Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development scenarios and the Rochdale Envelope, including the rationale of the preferred layout and the discounting of other potential layouts. • Selection of sites for the above ground installations substations and battery storage. • The need for this type of infrastructure.
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effects of the Proposed Development on heritage assets (Designated and Non-designated) and their visual and functional settings. • Effects upon known and unknown archaeology, and the quality and extent of investigation.
Ecology and HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect of EMF on the natural environment • Adequacy of survey, and assessment of effects on ecology and biodiversity.
Flood Risk, Hydrology and Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of the accuracy and quality of the presented Flood Risk Assessments, and whether the Proposed Development passes the sequential and exception tests.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drainage Strategy. • Contamination risks during construction, operation and decommissioning and whether there is sufficient information presented to ensure that the risk to the water environment as a result of the Proposed Development is effectively mitigated.
Geology and Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts on agricultural land, best and most versatile agricultural land and other land. • Impacts on agricultural businesses and enterprises. • Risks from discovery of contaminated soils/ ground water, including from adjoining sites and former uses, and securing appropriate mitigation.
Landscape and Visual Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities and constraints in elements of design. • Zone of Theoretical Influence - The impact of the Proposed Development on landscape and visual amenity. • Impacts on recreational routes and views within the local landscape. • Impacts on local communities.
Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect on human health of the Proposed Development taking into account, consultation, construction, scale and proximity to residential property.
Traffic and Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect on local road network from construction traffic. • Effect on residents from noise from traffic.

Draft examination timetable

The Examining Authority (ExA) is under a duty to **complete** the examination of the application by the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day after the close of the preliminary meeting.

The examination of the application primarily takes the form of the consideration of written submissions. The ExA will also consider any oral representations made at hearings.

All updated documents must be provided in two versions: one with tracked changes and the second clean, without tracks. Please provide a cover letter to summarise which documents have been amended.

Item	Matters	Date
1.	Procedural Deadline A For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments about how the application is to be examined, including the draft examination timetable and virtual methods • Requests to speak at or observe the Preliminary Meeting, or other hearings if held. • Requests to speak at any hearings held in wc 7 July 2025. • Suggested locations for site inspections (accompanied or unaccompanied), including justification, for consideration by the ExA¹ 	Tuesday 1 July 2025
2.	Preliminary meeting	Tuesday 8 July 2025
3.	Preliminary meeting, reserved time (if required)	Tuesday 8 July 2025
4.	Open floor hearing (OFH1)	Tuesday 8 July 2025
5.	Open floor hearing (OFH2)	Wednesday 9 July 2025
6.	Issue specific hearing (ISH1)	Wednesday 9 July 2025

¹ When suggesting locations, please have regard to the places already visited by the ExA on any unaccompanied site inspections (USI) it undertakes. Suggestions must explain why the location needs to be visited, information about whether the location can be accessed or seen using public rights of way or publicly accessible land, and what access arrangements would need to be made.

7.	Issue specific hearing (ISH1) continued if not completed on 9 July 2025	Thursday 10 July 2025
8.	Issue by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the examination timetable 	As soon as practicable following the Preliminary Meeting
9.	Deadline 1 For receipt by the ExA of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written representations (WR), and summaries of any WR which exceed 1500 words Written summaries of oral submissions given at the hearings during the week of 7 July 2025 Comments on relevant representations (RR) (registration comments) Requests to speak at a further open floor hearing (OFH) Requests to speak at a compulsory acquisition hearing (CAH) – Requests can be made by affected persons (defined in section 59(4) of the Planning Act 2008) to be heard at a CAH Requests to speak at further issue specific hearings (ISH) Comments on any updated or additional documents received from the applicant Post hearing submissions, requested by the ExA Comments on any additional submissions accepted by the ExA Responses to any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Examination Procedure Rules From local authorities only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Impact Reports (LIR) From the applicant only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft itinerary for an accompanied site inspection (ASI) Drafts of any DCO obligations (s106) if necessary Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) 	Tuesday 29 July 2025

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant's revised dDCO and schedule of changes to dDCO • Applicant's revised Explanatory Memorandum • Updated land and rights negotiations tracker • Schedule of statutory undertakers and progress on protective provisions 	
10.	Publication by the ExA of: Written questions (ExQ1), if required	Thursday 7 August 2025
11.	Deadline 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to ExQ1 • Responses to WRs • Comments on responses to RRs • Comments on applicant's draft itinerary for ASI • Comments on LIRs • Comments from affected persons on the applicant's updated land and rights negotiations tracker • Comments on any updated or additional applicant documents • Comments on any additional submissions received by D1 and accepted by the ExA • Responses to any further information request by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Examination Procedure Rules <p>From applicant only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress on SoCG • Updated outline control documents • Progress on securing other consents • Updated Policy Compliance document 	Thursday 21 August 2025
12.	Week reserved, if required, for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue Specific Hearing • Compulsory Acquisition Hearing • Further Open Floor Hearing • ASI 	W/C Monday 1 September 2025

13.	<p>Deadline 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on responses to ExQ1 • Comments on responses to LIRs • Comments on responses to WRs • Post hearing submissions • Comments on any additional submissions received by D2 and accepted by the ExA • Responses to any further information request by the ExA <p>From applicant only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised SoCG • Applicant's revised dDCO and schedule of changes to dDCO • Applicant's revised Explanatory Memorandum • Updated land and rights negotiations tracker 	<p>Tuesday 16 September 2025</p>
14.	<p>Publication by the ExA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second written questions (ExQ2), if required • Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES) • ExA's schedule of proposed changes to the dDCO 	<p>Tuesday 30 September 2025</p>
15.	<p>Deadline 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to ExQ2 • Responses to RIES • Responses to ExA's schedule of proposed changes to the dDCO • Comments on any revised SoCG • Comments on applicant's revised dDCO • Comments on any additional submissions received by D3 and accepted by the ExA • Responses to any further information request by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Examination Procedure Rules • Requests to speak at hearings scheduled for the week of 3 November 2025 <p>From the applicant only</p>	<p>Tuesday 14 October 2025</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised SoCG • Applicant's revised dDCO and schedule of changes to dDCO • Applicant's revised Explanatory Memorandum • Updated land and rights negotiations tracker • Updated BoR, schedule of changes to the BoR, Statement of Reasons and Land Plans • Updated outline control documents • Progress regarding protective provisions • Progress on securing other consents • Updated Policy Compliance document 	
16.	Week reserved, if required, for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue Specific Hearing • Further Compulsory Acquisition Hearing • Further Open Floor Hearing • Further ASI 	W/C Monday 3 November 2025
17.	Deadline 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post hearing submissions • Comments on responses to ExQ2, if required • Comments on responses to RIES • Comments on responses to ExA's schedule of proposed changes to the dDCO • Comments on any additional submissions received by D4 and accepted by the ExA • Responses to any further information request by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Examination Procedure Rules <p>From the applicant only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised SoCG • Applicant's revised dDCO and schedule of changes to dDCO • Applicant's revised Explanatory Memorandum • Updated land and rights negotiations tracker 	Wednesday 12 November 2025
18.	Deadline 6	Wednesday 3

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on any additional submissions received by D5 and accepted by the ExA • Responses to any further information request by the ExA 	December 2025
19.	<p>Deadline 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on responses to ExQ3, if required • Comments on responses to the ExA's proposed dDCO • Comments on any additional submissions received by D6 and accepted by the ExA • Responses to any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Examination Procedure Rules <p>From the applicant only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final navigation document or guide to the application • Applicant's final preferred dDCO and schedule of changes to dDCO. The applicant must provide the email notification from https://publishing.legislation.gov.uk/validation confirming the document has successfully passed validation, and the PDF version of the SI validation report obtained from the link in the notification email. The applicant should also provide a clean (all tracking removed) standalone MS Word version of the draft DCO, with no header or cover page • Final Explanatory Memorandum • Final SoCG • List of matters not agreed where SoCG could not be finalised • Final land and rights negotiations tracker • Final status of negotiations with statutory undertakers • Final BoR, schedule of changes to the BoR, Statement of Reasons and Land Plans • Final outline control documents • Final position of Protective Provisions • Final position on securing other consents • Final Policy Compliance document • Final signed and dated Section 106 agreements, if required 	Tuesday 16 December 2025

20.	Deadline 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on any documents submitted at D7 • Responses to any further information requested by the ExA under Rule 17 of the Examination Procedure Rules 	Monday 22 December 2025
21.	Close of examination The ExA is under a duty to complete the examination of the application by the end of the period of 6 months.	Thursday 8 January 2026

Submission times for deadlines

The time for submission of documents at any deadline in the timetable is 23:59 (11.59pm) on the relevant deadline date, unless instructed otherwise by the ExA.

Publication dates

All information received will be published on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable after the deadlines for submissions.

Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES)

Where an applicant has provided a No Significant Effects Report or a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Report with the application, the ExA may decide to issue a RIES during the examination. The RIES is a factual account of the information and evidence provided to the ExA on HRA matters during the examination up to the date of the publication of the RIES, for the purposes of enabling the Secretary of State, as competent authority, to undertake its HRA. It is not the ExA's opinion on HRA matters. Comments on the RIES will be invited by the ExA and any received will be taken into account as part of the ExA's recommendation to the Secretary of State. The ExA may also raise questions in the RIES to confirm or clarify matters that remain outstanding.

The Secretary of State may rely on the consultation on the RIES to meet its obligations under regulation 63(3) of The Habitats Regulations 2017 and/ or regulation 28 of The Offshore Marine Regulations.

Notification of initial hearings

The Examining Authority (ExA) provides notice of the following initial hearings:

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and Joining details
Tuesday 8 July 2025	Open Floor Hearing 1	Registration and seating available at venue and virtual registration process from: 6.30pm Hearing starts: 7.00pm	Double Tree by Hilton, Brayford Wharf North, Lincoln, LN1 1YW. and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Wednesday 9 July 2025	Open Floor Hearing 2	Registration and seating available at venue and virtual registration process from: 9.30am Hearing starts: 10.00am	Double Tree by Hilton, Brayford Wharf North, Lincoln, LN1 1YW. and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Wednesday 9 July 2025	Issue Specific Hearing 1 on Environmental Matters and the draft Development	Registration and seating available at venue and virtual registration process from: 1.30pm	Double Tree by Hilton, Brayford Wharf North, Lincoln, LN1 1YW. and

Date	Hearing	Start time	Venue and Joining details
	Consent Order (dDCO)	Hearing starts: 2.00pm	By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
Thursday 10 July 2025	Issue Specific Hearing 1 on Environmental Matters and the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) (This will only be held for any items not completed on 9 July 2025)	Registration and seating available at venue and virtual registration process from: 9.30am Hearing starts: 10.00am	Double Tree by Hilton, Brayford Wharf North, Lincoln, LN1 1YW. and By virtual means using Microsoft Teams Full instructions on how to join online or by telephone will be provided in advance to those who have pre-registered
If any of the above hearings are no longer required then notification that a particular date is no longer required will be published as soon as practicable on the project webpage , providing reasonable notice to interested parties of the decision to cancel them.			

You must register by completing the [event participation form](#) by Tuesday 1 July 2025 if you intend to participate in the preliminary meeting and provide all the information requested (see below).

If you simply wish to observe the preliminary meeting, then you do not need to register as you will be able to either:

1. watch a livestream of the event - a link to the livestream will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before the event is scheduled to begin
2. watch the recording of the event which will be published on the project webpage shortly after the event has finished.

Alternatively, you can attend the physical event at the venue to observe the proceedings; however, to ensure there is adequate seating capacity at the venue we request that you register your attendance to **observe only** by **1 July 2025** using the [event participation form](#). It may not be possible to participate on the day if you have not registered your wish to speak by **1 July 2025**.

If you attend the event either in person or online you are agreeing to be filmed for the purposes of the online livestream of the event and the recording of the event which will get published on the project page of our website. A limited number of seats will be available for observers who wish not to be filmed at the event. Please contact the case team to notify them if you prefer not to be filmed at the event. A transcript of the event will also be published on the project page of our website after the event.

Any request to participate in a hearing **must include** the following information:

- Name and unique reference number (found at the top of any letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate)
- Email address (if available) and contact telephone number
- Name and unique reference number of any person/ organisation that you are representing (if applicable)
- For blended events, confirmation of whether you will participate virtually or in-person
- Confirmation of the hearing(s) you wish to participate in, the agenda item(s) on which you wish to speak and/ or brief details of the topic(s) that you would like to raise
- For compulsory acquisition hearings, the plot number(s) of the relevant land provided in the [Book of Reference](#) and the [Land Plan](#)
- The [Examination Library](#) reference number (with paragraph/ page number where appropriate) of any documents you wish to refer to.

Requests to participate should be made using the [event participation form](#) on or before **procedural deadline A**.

Please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter if you require any support or assistance to attend any of the hearings, either virtually or in person.

Hearing agendas

The Issue Specific Hearing scheduled for 9 July 2025 will be to consider the scope of the draft Development Consent Order and to clarify strategic matters to ensure an agreed position on the Examination to follow. An agenda covering the principal topics will be published prior to the event, if not earlier.

For issue specific hearings and compulsory acquisition hearings the ExA will publish a detailed draft agenda on the project webpage in advance of the hearing date.

The ExA will publish a detailed agenda for the Open Floor Hearings, giving notification of the IPs listed to speak on each day, on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable following the close of **Procedural Deadline A, 1 July 2025**.

However, the actual agenda on the day of each hearing may be subject to change at the discretion of the ExA.

Procedure at hearings

The examination of the application will principally be a written process supplemented where necessary by various types of hearings. See the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: The stages of the NSIP process and how you can have your say](#) for more information.

The Planning Inspectorate's Advice for members of the public provides important information about hearing procedures:

- [What to expect at a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event](#)
- [Registering to speak at, or attend, a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event](#)

The procedure to be followed at hearings is set out in rule 14 of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010. The ExA is responsible for the oral questioning of a person giving evidence and the process affords very limited scope to allow cross-questioning between parties.

Hearing livestream and recording

A link to a livestream for each hearing will be made available on the [project webpage](#) shortly before any hearing is due to open. The livestream is available to anybody who wishes to observe a hearing in real time.

All hearings are recorded, and the recordings will be made available on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable after the close of the hearing. The recordings allow any member of the public who is interested in the application and the examination to find out what has been discussed.

Other procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority

The Examining Authority (ExA) has made the following procedural decisions:

1. Statements of common ground (SoCG)

In relation to some of the principal issues identified in **Annex C** to this letter, the ExA would be assisted by the preparation of SoCGs between the applicant and certain interested parties. The draft examination timetable at **Annex D** to this letter therefore establishes **deadline 1 (29 July 2025)** for submission of SoCGs.

The aim of a SoCG is to agree factual information and to inform the ExA and all other parties by identifying where there is agreement and where the differences lie at an early stage in the examination process. It should provide a focus and save time by identifying matters which are not in dispute or need not be the subject of further evidence. It can also usefully state where and why there may be disagreement about the interpretation and relevance of the information. Unless otherwise stated or agreed, the SoCG should be agreed between the applicant and the other relevant interested party or parties, and submitted **by the applicant**.

In addition to the SoCGs identified by the applicant within their application documents as:

- Lincolnshire County Council;
- Nottingham County Council;
- Newark and Sherwood District Council;
- Bassetlaw District Council;
- West Lindsey District Council;
- The Environment Agency;
- Natural England; and
- Historic England.

the ExA requests SoCGs to be prepared between the applicant and:

A. **Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service**, to include:

- Matters related to fire safety
- Emergency planning

B. **Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service**, to include:

- Matters related to fire safety
- Emergency planning

C. **National Grid**, to include:

- Agreement on and timing of connection
- The dDCO

- CA and temporary possession provisions

All of the SoCGs listed above should cover the articles and requirements in the draft Development Consent Order. Any interested party seeking that an article or requirement is reworded should provide the form of words which are being sought.

Where a particular SoCG cannot be agreed between the parties by **deadline 1**, or if any local authority position needs to be signed off at a higher level, draft versions of that SoCG are requested to be submitted by the **applicant to deadline 3**. The position of the relevant interested parties should then be confirmed in the course of the examination. The draft examination timetable makes provision for updated SoCGs to be submitted at various deadlines with final versions by **deadline 7**.

The content of SoCGs will help to inform the ExA about the need to hold any issue specific hearings during the examination, and to enable the ExA and the applicant to give reasonable notice of them taking place.

2. Accompanied site inspection – suggested locations

The draft examination timetable at **Annex D** to this letter includes dates reserved for an accompanied site inspection (ASI) on **1 September 2025** and **3 November 2025**.

The ExA requests that interested parties submit suggested locations for the ExA to visit as part of an ASI by **procedural deadline A (1 July 2025)**. The request must include:

- sufficient information to identify the location
- the issues to be observed at the location
- information on whether the site can be accessed via public land
- the reason why the location has been suggested.

Interested parties should be aware that ASIs are not an opportunity to make any oral representations to the ExA about the proposed development. However, participants may be invited by the ExA to indicate specific features or sites of interest.

The applicant is requested to prepare a draft itinerary for the ASI to be submitted by **deadline 1**. This should include:

- relevant locations referred to in the relevant representations received
- any other locations at which the applicant has predicted likely significant environmental effects
- the locations suggested by interested parties submitted by **procedural deadline A**

Comments by interested parties on the applicant's draft itinerary must be submitted by **deadline 2**.

The ExA will consider each suggested site location, including those provided in the applicant's draft itinerary, to determine if it could be viewed from public land on an unaccompanied basis or if it is necessary to view it on an accompanied basis. The ExA will also consider if it would be appropriate to make arrangements for access only to be provided to specific sites such that they could be inspected as part of an unaccompanied site inspection on an access required basis.

The ExA will publish its final itinerary before the date of the ASI.

3. Status of the applicant's examination documents

The ExA requests that the applicant provides, at each deadline, an updated 'Status of the applicant's examination documents' document which provides a list of the most up-to-date status of the documents submitted, including which copies have been superseded in whole or in part. A final version must be submitted before the close of the examination. All examination documents submitted should include a version number and date.

4. Additional submissions

In addition to the documentation submitted by **procedural deadline A** the ExA has exercised its discretion and made a procedural decision to accept the following additional submissions:

- Documents [AS-001 to AS-010] from the applicant in response to s51 advice following acceptance
- Response from the applicant to requests under Rule 17 for clarification on the Landscape and Visualisation Chapter of the ES, its supporting figures, as well as the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy [AS014 to AS-055].

Examination documents

The application documents and relevant representations can be inspected on the [project webpage](#).

How to stay up to date

All further documents submitted in the course of the examination will also be published under [documents](#) of the project webpage.

You can also sign up to get [email updates](#).

If you have any questions about the process, examination events or how to access the documents, you can email oneearth solar@planninginspectorate.gov.uk or contact us on 0303 444 5000.

The Examination Library

For ease of navigation, please refer to the [Examination Library](#) (EL) which is accessible through the [documents](#) page. The EL is updated regularly throughout the examination.

The EL records and provides a hyperlink to:

- each application document
- each representation made to the examination
- each procedural decision made by the Examining Authority

Each document is given a unique reference which will be fixed for the duration of the examination. **Please quote the unique reference number from the EL when referring to any examination documents in any future submissions that you make.**

Information about the 'Have your say' page

The "[Have your say](#)" page is available on the [project webpage](#).

You will need to enter your unique reference number ('Your ref' found at the top of your letter or email from The Planning Inspectorate). If you are making a submission on behalf of another person or organisation, and do not have your own unique reference number, then you should enter the unique reference number of the person or organisation you are representing. If you are not a registered interested party then it is at the discretion of the Examining Authority whether or not your submission is accepted.

Submissions will be published on the [project webpage](#) as soon as practicable following the close of the relevant deadline. For further information about publishing submissions please view our [Privacy Notice](#).

You will be able to submit a document (upload file), make a text representation or both. It is possible to upload multiple files for each individual submission item. Electronic attachments should be clearly labelled with the subject title and not exceed 50MB.

Submissions **must not include hyperlinks** to documents and evidence hosted on a third-party website (for example technical reports, media articles). See the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice for members of the public: Advice for submitting representations or comments](#) for important information about making written submissions. All submissions must be made in a format that can be viewed in full on the National Infrastructure Project website. Any submissions that exceed 1500 words should also be accompanied by a summary; this summary should not exceed 10% of the original text.

You should select the relevant deadline for your submission and then, on the next webpage, select the appropriate submission item as described in the examination timetable at **Annex D** to this letter. Please ensure you make a separate submission for each submission item and **do not duplicate your submission**. If you consider that your submission does not fit the description of any of the submission items then please select the submission item 'Other' and ensure that it is titled appropriately.

If you experience any issues when using the '[project webpage](#)' page please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter and they will assist.

One Earth Solar Farm

Local Impact Report

EN-010159

West Lindsey District Council

July 2025

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1. Executive Summary

1. One Earth Solar Farm Limited has applied for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the One Earth Solar Farm (OESF) project.
2. The application is for the construction, operation and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating facility, energy storage facility and export connection to the National Grid.
3. The application for the DCO has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, with the decision on the DCO being made by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (SoS) under the Planning Act 2008.
4. As part of the process, West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) are invited to submit a Local Impact Report (LIR). The LIR provides details of the likely impacts of the proposed development on the authority's area and is given statutory weight in the decision making process.
5. The proposed OESF project will have a range of environmental, socio-economic and amenity impacts during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the project. Such impacts will be experienced as a consequence of the scheme alone (in solus) and cumulatively with other similar scale solar generating station NSIP projects.
6. This report constitutes WLDC's LIR. It provides details of the likely impact of the proposed development on the district of West Lindsey and will be submitted to inform the examination of the OESF application by the Examining Authority (ExA) on behalf of the SoS.
7. WLDC has significant concerns regarding the cumulative impact of the scheme with other NSIP solar generating station projects. The likely impacts experienced during construction, operation and decommissioning will have significant adverse impacts upon the natural environment, character and communities within the West Lindsey District.
8. The OESF project on its own merits will also give rise to significant adverse impacts on the natural environment and the amenity and lives of communities living in the near and surrounding area to the scheme.
9. The key impacts identified and expanded upon in the LIR include:
 - Project design;
 - Landscape and visual impacts;
 - Agricultural land impacts (BMV);
 - Traffic impacts;
 - Tourism impacts;
 - Cultural heritage;
 - Maintenance; and
 - The draft Development Consent Order.
10. Some of the impacts relating to the above are able to be resolved through clarifications and/or the provision of further information by the applicant. More significant impacts may require more material amendments and/or the submission of further information to enable the project to be determined with all required information before the examination.

11. Having identified the local impacts, WLDC maintain a commitment to engage with the applicant to seek to address the adverse impacts, where possible. Matters of agreement and disagreement will be set out in a Statement of Common Ground between the parties.

2. Terms of Reference

Introduction

- 2.1. This report comprises the Local Impact Report (LIR) of West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) for the One Earth Solar Farm (OESF) (the 'Scheme') that has been submitted by One Earth Solar Farm Limited ('the Applicant').
- 2.2. WLDC have had regard to the purpose of LIRs as set out in s60(3) of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and the following government guidance:
- Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Examination Stage for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects guidance (30/04/2024);
 - Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice for Local Authorities (16/12/2024)
- 2.3. The 'Examination Stage' guidance sets out what a Local Impact Report (LIR) is and the role it has in the examination of an application. It states that, once an application has been accepted for examination, the local authority in whose area a proposed project is located will be invited by the Examining Authority to submit an LIR.
- 2.4. An LIR is defined as a written report submitted by an affected local authority detailing the likely impact of the proposed development on any part of the local authority's area and community.
- 2.5. An LIR is based on the local authority's existing body of local knowledge and robust evidence of local issues. This includes an appraisal of the proposed development's compliance local policy and guidance.
- 2.6. Special status is afforded to an LIR in the examination of an application. Section 104 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) obliges the Secretary of State (SoS) to have particular regard to an LIR in reaching a decision.
- 2.7. WLDC note that the application relates to development for which Environmental Impact Assessment must be carried-out and that an Environmental Statement has been submitted as part of that application in accordance with the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (EIA Regulations).

One Earth Solar Farm: Description

- 2.8. The scheme seeks development consent under the Planning Act 2008 for the construction and operation for a solar electricity generating station. The scheme falls within the definition an onshore generating station exceeding 50MW generating capacity as defined by the Planning Act 2008. The scheme consequently qualifies as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).
- 2.9. The applicant's submitted Planning Statement (APP-165) and Environmental Statement (Chapter 5) (APP-034) both provide description of the One Earth Solar Farm. The project described in those documents are summarised in section 3 below.

3. The One Earth Solar Farm project

- 3.1. The Scheme comprises the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array electricity generating station. The project includes:
- Solar PV panels;
 - Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS);
 - Onsite substations;
 - Associated grid connection to export electricity to the proposed National grid High Marnham Substation.
- 3.2. The applicant has secured a connection agreement with National Grid allowing the export and impact of up to 750 megawatts (MW) of electricity to the High Marnham Substation.
- 3.3. The lifetime of the Scheme is proposed to be for an operational period of 60 years.
- 3.4. The spatial extent of the Scheme is defined through the 'Order Limits', which represents the boundary within which the authorised development can be carried out (both temporary and permanent works). The Order Limits for the Scheme extend to approximately 1,414ha (3,494 acres).
- 3.5. The Order Limits span the administrative districts of Newark and Sherwood District Council, Bassetlaw District Council, as well as West Lindsey District Council. The Order Limits are also within Nottinghamshire County Council and Lincolnshire County Council administrative areas.
- 3.6. All land within the Order Limits is included in the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) and comprises the following:
- PV modules;
 - Mounting structures;
 - Power Conversion Stations (PCS);
 - Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS);
 - Onsite Substation and Ancillary Buildings;
 - Low Voltage Distribution Cables;
 - Grid Connection Cables;
 - Fencing, security and ancillary infrastructure;
 - Access Tracks; and
 - Green Infrastructure.
- 3.7. The above list of components are expressed in the dDCO as numbered 'Works' which form the 'authorised development' should the Scheme be granted development consent. The work numbers and the development to which they comprise are set out in turn below.

Work No.1: Solar PV Infrastructure

3.8. A ground mounted solar photovoltaic generating station with a gross electrical output of over 50 MW that include:

- a) Solar panels fitted to mounting structures
- b) Power conversion stations
- c) 'associated development'

Work No. 2: BESS

3.9. An energy storage facility comprising battery energy storage system compounds that include:

- a) Battery energy storage system (BESS) units each comprising an enclosure for BESS electro-chemical components and associated equipment, joined or close couples to each other, mounted on a concrete foundation slab;
- b) Transformers and associated bunding;
- c) Inverters, switch gear, power conversion systems and ancillary equipment;
- d) Containers or enclosures housing all or any of Work Nos. 2(a), (b) and (c) and ancillary equipment.
- e) Monitoring and control systems housed within the containers or enclosures comprised in Work Nos. 2(a) or (d) or located separately in its own container or enclosure;
- f) Heating, ventilation and air conditioning or liquid cooling systems either housed on or within each of the containers or enclosures comprised in Work Nos. 2(a), (d) and (d), integrated into or attached to the side or top of each of the containers or enclosures, or located separately to but near to each of the containers or enclosures;
- g) Fire safety infrastructure including water storage units, aerosol systems, automatic sprinklers and a shut-off valve for containment of fire water and hard standing to accommodate emergency vehicles;
- h) Containers or similar structures to house spare parts and materials required for the day to day operation of the BESS facility;
- i) Acoustic fencing; and
- j) Ancillary buildings including control room, office, welfare, storage, workshop and metering.

Work No. 3: Substations

3.10. Works in connection with onsite substation compounds that include:

- a) Substation including transformers, 400kV switchgear either housed within a building or gas insulated, 33kV switch room buildings and ancillary equipment including harmonic filters and reactive power units; and
- b) Ancillary buildings and structures including control buildings, metering equipment, office welfare, storage and workshop.

Work No. 4: Grid Connection Cable Route

3.11. Works to lay high voltage electrical cables and to facilitate the connection of the authorised development to the National Grid High Marnham Substation and access for the electrical cables, including:

- a) Works to lay up to 400 kilovolt electrical cables connecting Work No. 3 into the National Grid High Marnham Substation;
- b) Laying down of temporary construction areas and internal access tracks, ramps, means of access, footways, including the laying and construction of drainage infrastructure, signage and information boards; and
- c) Electrical engineering works in and around the National Grid High Marnham Substation.

Work No. 5: Ancillary Works

3.12. Works including:

- a) Electrical cables up to 132kV;
- b) Fencing, gates, and other boundary treatments;
- c) Security measures including CCTV columns, lighting columns, cameras, weather stations, and communication infrastructure;
- d) Landscape and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement including planting of new vegetation and seeding;
- e) Vegetation removal;
- f) Electrical, gas, water, foul water drainage and telecommunications infrastructure connections, diversions and works to, and works to alter the position of, such services and utilities connections;
- g) Laying down and creation of internal access tracks, ramps, means of access and footpaths and improvement of access tracks;
- h) Temporary footpath diversions;
- i) Earthworks;
- j) Tunnelling, boring and drilling works;
- k) Sustainable drainage system ponds and general drainage; and
- l) Laying down of permissive paths, signage and information boards.

Work No. 6: Construction and Decommissioning Compounds

3.13. Temporary construction and decommissioning compounds including:

- a) Work No. 6A – up to two primary temporary construction and decommissioning areas-
 - (i) Areas of hardstanding;
 - (ii) Car parking
 - (iii) Site and welfare offices, canteen and workshops;
 - (iv) Area to store materials and equipment;
 - (v) Storage and waste skips;
 - (vi) Area for download and turning;

- (vii) Security infrastructure, including cameras, perimeter fencing and lighting;
 - (viii) Site drainage and waste management infrastructure; and
 - (ix) Electricity, water, waste water and telecommunications connections; and
- b) Work No. 6B – up to ten secondary temporary construction and decommissioning areas-
- (i) Areas to store materials and equipment;
 - (ii) Storage and waste skips;
 - (iii) Are for downloading and turning;
 - (iv) Security infrastructure including cameras, lighting and fencing; and
 - (v) Site and welfare offices, canteens and workshops.

Work No. 7: Highway works

3.14. Works to facilitate access to Work Nos. 1 to 6 and 8 including:

- a) Creation of accesses from any street or highway;
- b) Creation of visibility splays;
- c) Works to alter the layout of any street or highway;
- d) Works to widen and surface any streets; and
- e) Making and maintaining passing places.

Work No. 8: Landscape and Ecology

3.15. Works to create, enhance and maintain green infrastructure and mitigation including:

- a) Landscape and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement areas;
- b) Habitat creation and management, including earthworks, landscaping, means of enclosure, and the laying and construction of drainage infrastructure; and
- c) Improvements to existing public rights of way, signage and information boards.

Associated development

3.16. In connection with Work Nos. 1 to 8 above, further associated development to be authorised within the Order Limits include:

- a) Fencing, gates, boundary treatment and other means of enclosure;
- b) Bunds, embankments, trenching and swales;
- c) Works to the existing irrigation system and works to alter the position and extent of such irrigation system;
- d) Surface water drainage systems, storm water attenuation systems including storage basins, oil water separators, including channelling and culverting and works to existing drainage networks;

- e) Electrical, gas, water foul water drainage and telecommunications infrastructure connections, diversions and works to, and works to alter the position of, such services and utilities connections;
- f) Works to alter the course of, or otherwise interfere with, non-navigable rivers, streams or watercourses;
- g) Works for the provision of security and monitoring measures such as CCTV columns, security cabins, lighting columns and lighting, cameras, lightning protection masts and weather stations;
- h) Improvement, maintenance, repair and use of existing streets, private tracks and access roads;
- i) Laying down, maintenance and repair of new internal access tracks, ramps, means of access, footpaths, permissive paths, cycle routes and roads, crossings of drainage ditches and watercourses, including signage and information boards;
- j) Temporary footpath diversions and closures;
- k) Noise, landscaping and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures including planting and acoustic barriers;
- l) Tunnelling, boring and drilling works;
- m) Earthworks, site establishments and preparation works including site clearance (including vegetation removal, demolition of existing buildings and structures); earthworks (including soil stripping and storage and site levelling) and excavations; the alteration of the position of services and utilities; and works for the protection of buildings and land;
- n) Other works to mitigate any adverse effects of the construction, maintenance, operation or decommissioning of the authorised development,

And further associated development comprising such other works or operations as may be necessary or expedient for the purposes of or in connection with the construction, operation and maintenance of the authorised development but only within the Order Limits and insofar as they are unlikely to give rise to any materially different environmental effects from those assessed in the environmental statement.

4. Local Context

Central Lincolnshire and the West Lindsey District

- 4.1. West Lindsey is a District Council located in central Lincolnshire. It is a collective area that encompasses the historic City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey. The West Lindsey District covers an area of over 115,700Ha (1,157km²) within the County of Lincolnshire.
- 4.2. Central Lincolnshire is characterised by a population living in a range of settlement that vary in size and character. Lincoln is the largest settlement with a population of approximately 110,000 living in the principal urban area. Lincoln functions as a service centre to a wide geographical area, with villages sourcing many services and employment opportunities in the city. This has the effect of extending its catchment to around 165,000 people.
- 4.3. West Lindsey borders North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire to the north; East Lindsey in the east, North Kesteven and the city of Lincoln in the south. The River Trent forms a natural boundary to the west where the district meets Newark and Sherwood District, Bassetlaw District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council.
- 4.4. The West Lindsey district hosts main towns such as Gainsborough, Caistor and Market Rasen, which serve the northern and southern parts of the wider Central Lincolnshire area. Gainsborough is a town that experienced significant growth during the 19th century as an industrial and engineering centre, with a transition to manufacturing in the 20th century. Gainsborough currently has a thriving manufacturing/engineering sector with national and international companies headquartered in the town.
- 4.5. West Lindsey is predominantly a rural district, interspersed with settlements across the area. The district is the thirteenth most sparsely populated areas in England with a population of 95,153 and a density of approximately 82 people per km² based on 2021 census data from the Office of National Statistics. The population has increased by 6% since the last census in 2011. Over 23% of the population of West Lindsey in the census are over the retirement age compared to 19% in the rest of the United Kingdom.
- 4.6. Collectively, the rural area accounts for over half of Central Lincolnshire's population. Functionally, the villages typically operate as clusters that share key services, with larger villages acting as local service centres upon which communities rely for basic facilities.
- 4.7. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has a strong historic presence in the West Lindsey District and the wider Central Lincolnshire area. The Royal Air Force (RAF) bases Waddington, Cranwell and Digby make a significant contribution to the area's demographic and economic make up. Former bases have been utilised to deliver new housing and employment development, with the Council. Following the closure of RAF Scampton and Home Office decision to end its plans to house asylum seekers, the Council has announced its plans to accelerate a £300 million regeneration plan, along with its development partner. Central Lincolnshire is home to the Red Arrows and its RAF heritage (including Lincolnshire's historic role as the centre of Bomber Command and the neighbouring base for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in East Lindsey) support the expansion for the area's existing visitor economy.

Landscape character

- 4.8. Central Lincolnshire's natural environment is varied and contrasting, but with strong key characteristics. Gentle chalk and limestone uplands with low lying fens and fenland define the area, with the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) fall partly in Central Lincolnshire, with its distinctive landscape of rolling hills and nestling villages.
- 4.9. The escarpment of the Jurassic Lincolnshire Limestone, known locally as the Lincoln Edge or 'Cliff', runs the full length of Central Lincolnshire, forming a unifying topographic feature that makes a strong contribution to the quality and character of Lincoln due to its historic influence on the origins and development of Lincoln.

- 4.10. The wider rural landscape of Central Lincolnshire is a highly valued asset, comprises a sweeping character with big skies, which make a significant contribution to local distinctiveness and attractiveness. West Lindsey itself is characterised by its large scale agricultural fields with intensive arable crops dominating the landscape character and culture. Reflective of this use, soils are typically fertile and of high quality and character.
- 4.11. West Lindsey and the wider Central Lincolnshire area hosts a wide range of natural habitats, including wetland, woodland, calcareous grassland and remnants of heathland fen, which together provide ecological networks and nodes of sufficient scale to support wildlife adaptation and environmental resilience to climate change.
- 4.12. Biodiversity in the area is experiencing pressure from factors including climate change, habitat fragmentation, development and large scale intensive agriculture. Major landscape-scale initiatives are proposed to restore and enhance the area's ecological networks and corridors.
- 4.13. The Order Limits are located across two landscape character areas as defined in the 'West Lindsey Landscape Character Assessment'¹; the 'Trent Valley' and the 'Till Vale'.

The 'Trent Valley'

Character

- 4.14. The 'Trent Valley' is characterised by:
- Low-lying, gently undulating landform with higher terrain to the east and south of Gainsborough.
 - Comprises significant blocks of deciduous woodland, good hedgerows and hedgerow trees that create a relatively enclosed landscape.
 - The River Trent and its adjacent washlands are enclosed by steep flood embankments.
 - Historic parklands are present, including a medieval deer park and landmarks including the ruins of Torksey Castle (some distance to the north of the Scheme).
 - Main roads are significant features in the landscape, with recent development concentrated along main roads, bypassing original village centres (e.g. Newton on Trent).
 - Views towards the west are dominated by the power stations situated along the River Trent.
- 4.15. The 'Trent Valley' character area ranges from Gainsborough to the southern district boundary south of Newton on Trent. The River Trent forms a western boundary with its flood defence bund, however the eastern boundary provides a more subtle transition between the Valley and the neighbouring 'Till Vale'.
- 4.16. The characterisation of an undulating landform and tree cover provides a sense of enclosure, with longer views generally experienced to the east of the A1133 spine roads.
- 4.17. In the southern part of the character area (within and adjacent to the Scheme), view to the west are dominated by power stations along the River Trent and the associated transmission lines.

Landscape sensitivity.

- 4.18. View in the area are typically contained by tall hedgerows, woodlands and tree groups, giving the landscape some capacity to accommodate change. The most sensitive parts of the landscape are located to the north of the Scheme around and to the south of Gainsborough, the Fosdyke, Torksey Castle and low lying land along the River Trent.

¹ "West Lindsey Landscape Character Assessment", West Lindsey District Council (1999)

Principles for landscape management

- 4.19. Priority should be given to new woodland, shelterbelt or hedgerow planting which is design to link existing woodlands. Local species such as field maple, hawthorn, ash and oak would be appropriate.
- 4.20. Hedgerow and hedgerow trees should be managed to retain the existing landscape pattern, screen settlements and contribute to local identity.
- 4.21. Due to the visually dominant roads, including the A1133 within the Scheme site, efforts to reduce their influence through tree planting, hedgerow management and signage would represent an appropriate landscape strategy. This should also take account of key views and the entrances to settlements which would benefit from distinctive planting schemes.

Principles for accommodating new development

- 4.22. Development on the low-lying land to the west of the A156/A1133 would be prominent and cannot easily be accommodated without detracting from the gentle transition to the open, flat farmland on the banks to the River Trent.

The 'Till Vale'

Character

- 4.23. The 'Till Vale' lies to the east of the 'Trent Valley' within which a large amount of proposed development within the West Lindsey administrative area is located. It is characterised by:
- An agricultural landscape with large flat open fields.
 - Low hawthorn hedges with few hedgerow trees define the fields.
 - An extensive network of rivers, dykes and ditches which have little visual presence in the landscape.
 - Ancient enclosure roads with characteristic wide verges and hedgerow boundaries, particularly in the east.
 - Long westward views to the power stations on the River Trent, and eastward views to the scarp face of the Lincoln 'Cliff'.
- 4.24. The wider landscape character of the 'Till Vale' is defined by an agricultural landscape with large, flat, open fields and a strong rural character. The hedgerow boundaries to the fields are predominantly hawthorn, are kept low and have few hedgerow trees. The landform is more enclosed to the east where the Scheme is proposed, however the large open character of the agricultural fields is evident.

Landscape sensitivity

- 4.25. The most sensitive parts of the 'Till Vale' landscape include:
- Rural roads and minor farm tracks bordered by wide verges and hedgerows;
 - Edges of villages which show evidence of medieval settlement;
 - Avenues and lines of trees on the approaches to farms
 - View to Lincoln Cathedral.
 - Small woodlands and their edges being vulnerable to agricultural activity/works

Principles for landscape management

- 4.26. New tree planting along the approaches to villages and farms to improve the identity of the local landscape. Lines of trees are characteristic. Tree planting should be confined
- 4.27. The management and replanting at existing small farm woodlands and shelterbelts to create well-structured edges.
- 4.28. The management and improvement of trees and hedgerows that contribute to the landscape setting of villages and along rural roads.
- 4.29. Reinstatement of hedgerows removed to provide sight-line for vehicles. Heavy goods vehicles erode the character of rural roads through the loss of hedgerows and trees, and by the presence/use of roads in the landscape.

Socio-economic context

- 4.30. As set out in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, which is the Local Plan adopted by West Lindsey, Central Lincolnshire is located within the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) area and represents roughly 30% of the GLLEP area's population, employment and business base. The draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) notes that Greater Lincolnshire has an economy of £20.7bn with an ambition to grow the Gross Value Added (GVA) by £3.2bn by 2030. The GLLEP area boasts a mix of traditional manufacturing, a comprehensive agri-food sector, energy and services, and is strong in health and care and the visitor economy. In these sectors and others the area benefits from a large number of small businesses – a distinctive feature of the economy.
- 4.31. The GLLEP's priority sectors include; agri-foods, energy and water, health and care, visitor economy and ports and logistics, but this should not diminish the important roles of other sectors, including manufacturing and engineering, to the local economy. The Central Lincolnshire Authorities will play a key role in the delivery of the vision for most of these sectors.
- 4.32. The Economic Needs Assessment (ENA) (2020) projects the economic growth and job growth to 2040, which in turn was influenced by the LIS and other work being produced by the GLLEP. The ENA highlights that there has been strong growth in recent years, outstripping anticipated growth, and projects forward a growth of approximately 992 jobs per year.
- 4.33. The visitor economy is a significant and growing sector within West Lindsey. The area is an attractive, peaceful rural area which combines an outstanding natural environment with historic villages in close proximity to the City of Lincoln. Lincolnshire's visitor economy is worth £2.4bn (STEAM data Lincolnshire County Council), with the sector supporting 30,000 jobs and a far reaching supply chain across the county. Food and drink spending alone generates £44m into the local economy, with recreation adding £18m and retail contributing £59m. The visitor economy is a significant sector for people's livelihoods.
- 4.34. The impact of Covid lockdowns has been severe. Lincolnshire has experienced a 52% reduction in all tourism spending (STEAM data 2020), with full time jobs being reduced by half from 2,500 jobs to just over 1,200. There has been a 52% reduction in visitor numbers and a 50% reduction on the number of visitor days. Food and drink spend fell from £44m to £21m (reduction of £13m) and retail spend fell from £59m to £29m a reduction of £20m). Recreational spend reduced by £10m to £8m. Overall, local tourism businesses have experienced a reduction of over £100m from their revenue.
- 4.35. Reflective of the defining agricultural character and culture of West Lindsey, one of the key tourist events is the Lincolnshire Show, held annually at the Lincolnshire Showground. The show is a flagship event for the area, with over 60,000 visitors and 500 exhibitors each year. The success of the Lincolnshire Show strongly relies upon the local tourism sector accommodating the visitor demand it creates.

- 4.36. Forecasts have predicted that it will take a timescale of up to 2025/26 for businesses in the sector to recover to pre-Covid levels, based on the assumption that no material externalities will compromise this recovery.

5. Decision making Policy framework

- 5.1. The Application falls to be determined under Section 104 of the Planning Act 2008 and that Section must be read in its entirety when determining compliance.
- 5.2. S104(2) PA2008 sets out the matters to which the SoS must have regard in deciding an application submitted in accordance with PA 2008. In summary, the matters set out in s104(2) include any relevant national policy statements, any local impact report and any other matters the SoS thinks are both important and relevant to the decision.
- 5.3. Section 104(3) of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (PA 2008) requires that the SoS must decide the application in accordance with any relevant national policy statement (NPS), except to the extent that the SoS is satisfied that, in summary:
 - doing so would lead to the United Kingdom being in breach of its international obligations;
 - doing so would lead to the SoS being in breach of any duty imposed on him under any enactment;
 - doing so would be unlawful under any enactment;
 - the adverse impact of the proposed development would outweigh its benefits, or
 - that any prescribed condition for deciding the application otherwise than in accordance with the NPS would be met.
- 5.4. S104 PA2008 also sets out the circumstances in which the SoS may decide the application otherwise than in accordance with a national policy statement, s104 needs to be considered in full alongside all other relevant legislation.
- 5.5. In order to be granted development consent under Section.104, a development proposal must comply with the relevant National Policy Statements (NPS). WLDC agrees that NPS EN-1 and EN-3 are the relevant NPSs applicable to the Application.
- 5.6. WLDCs position is that the determination of NSIPs under section 104 of the PA 2008 requires consideration of that section as a whole (compliance with all subsections is required).
- 5.7. The determination of NSIPs under the PA 2008 requires the decision maker to have regard to all criteria set out in subsection (2). S104(2) PA2008 sets out the matters to which the SoS must have regard in deciding an application submitted in accordance with PA 2008. In summary, the matters set out in s104(2) include any relevant national policy statements, any local impact report and any other matters the SoS thinks are both important and relevant to the decision.
- 5.8. In determining NSIP applications, the decision maker must decide the application in accordance with all subsections (3) – (9) inclusive. A failure to comply with one or more of the subsections, would indicate non-compliance with section 104.
- 5.9. Under Section 104(3) of the PA2008 the Secretary of State is required to determine the scheme in accordance with relevant NPSs. The Scheme is therefore required to comply with the NPSs in order to be granted development consent.
- 5.10. In the event that the Secretary of State find the Scheme compliant with section 104(3), compliance with, inter alia, section 104(7) which requires them to be satisfied that the adverse impacts of the Scheme would outweigh its benefits.

- 5.11. In determining compliance with section 107(7), the Secretary of State must have regard to matters set out in section 104(2), including any Local Impact Report and any matters that are both important and relevant to the decision. Such matters will include the statutory development plan and other important and relevant policy.

6. Policy framework

- 6.1. The adopted statutory development plan applicable to the Scheme must be given due weight in the decision making process as a matter that is both 'important and relevant' pursuant to section 104(2)(d) of the PA2008.
- 6.2. The Secretary of State must also have regard to this LIR when determining the OESF application, which will inherently include regard to the policy set out in this section.
- 6.3. Both the LIR and the adopted development plan will be important matters to which regard will be had when considering whether the Scheme adverse impacts outweigh its benefits in accordance with section 104(7) of the PA2008.

Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (April 2023)

- 6.4. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (Local Plan) forms the adopted development plan for the West Lindsey district. The Local Plan was adopted in April 2023 and therefore represents a wholly 'up to date' statutory development plan. WLDC considers that the Local Plan should be considered 'important and relevant' for the purposes of section 104 and should be afforded significant weight in the decision making process.
- 6.5. The Local Plan forms part of the development plan for West Lindsey (replacing the previous Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, adopted in 2017). The Local Plan was adopted in April 2023 and therefore represents an 'up to date' statutory development plan to which significant weight should be afforded in decision making under section 104 of the PA 2008.
- 6.6. The most relevant policies to the determination of the Scheme and a brief summary of each are set out below.

Policy	Summary
The Vision for Central Lincolnshire	<p>In delivering the overall vision for Central Lincolnshire to be a prosperous and desirable place to live, work and visit, a key objectives include:</p> <p>Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure - to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity across Central Lincolnshire by delivering measurable net gain in biodiversity through development and establishing nature recovery networks through planning.</p> <p>To provide opportunities for people to access and appreciate wildlife and the nature environment whilst safeguarding protected sites.</p> <p>Landscape and townscape – to protect and enhance the rich diversity of the character and appearance of Central Lincolnshire's landscape and townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place.</p>
Policy S14: Renewable energy	<p>All major development proposals should explicitly set out what opportunities to lower a building's embodied carbon content have been considered, and which opportunities, if any, are to be taken forward.</p>
Policy S15: Protecting Renewable Energy Infrastructure	<p>The Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee is committed to supporting the transition to a net zero carbon future and will seek to maximise appropriately located renewable energy generated in Central Lincolnshire (such energy likely being wind and solar based).</p> <p>Proposals for renewable energy schemes, including ancillary development, will be supported where the direct, indirect, individual and cumulative impacts on the following considerations are, or will be made, acceptable.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The impacts are acceptable having considered the scale, siting and design, and the consequent impacts on landscape character; visual amenity; biodiversity; geodiversity; flood risk; townscape; heritage assets, their settings and the historic landscape; and highway safety and rail safety; and ii. The impacts are acceptable on aviation and defence navigation system/communications; and iii. The impacts are acceptable on the amenity of sensitive neighbouring uses (including local residents) by virtue of matters such as noise, dust, odour, shadow flicker, air quality and traffic. <p>Permitted proposals will be subject to a condition that will require the submission of an End of Life Removal Scheme within one year of the facility becoming non-operational, and the implementation of such a scheme within one year of the scheme being approved. Such a scheme should demonstrate how any biodiversity net gain that has arisen on the site will be protected or enhanced further, and how the materials to be removed would, to a practical degree, be re-used or recycled.</p>
Policy S10: Supporting a Circular Economy	<p>The Joint Committee is aware of the high energy and material use consumed on a daily basis, and, consequently, is fully supportive of the principles of a circular economy.</p> <p>Accordingly, and to complement any policies set out in the Minerals and Waste Development Plan, proposals will be supported, in principle, which demonstrate their compatibility with, or the furthering of, a strong circular economy in the local area (which could include cross-border activity elsewhere in Lincolnshire).</p>
Policy S11: Embodied Carbon	<p>All development should, where practical and viable, take opportunities to reduce the development's embodied carbon content, through the careful choice, use and sourcing of materials.</p>
Policy S43: Sustainable Rural Tourism	<p>Development proposals within villages named in the Settlement Hierarchy in Policy S1 that will deliver high quality sustainable visitor facilities including (but not limited to) visitor accommodation, sporting attractions, and also including proposals for temporary permission in support of the promotion of events and festivals.</p>
Policy S53: Design and Amenity	<p>All development, including extensions and alterations to existing buildings, must achieve high quality sustainable design that contributes positively to local character, landscape and townscape, and supports diversity, equality and access for all.</p>
Policy S54: Health and Wellbeing	<p>The potential for achieving positive mental and physical health outcomes will be taken into account when considering all development proposals. Where any potential adverse health impacts are identified, the applicant will be expected to demonstrate how these will be addressed and mitigated.</p>
Policy S57: The Historic Environment	<p>Development proposals should protect, conserve and seek opportunities to enhance the historic environment of Central Lincolnshire.</p>
	<p>Listed Buildings</p> <p>Permission to change the use of a Listed Building or to alter or extend such a building will be granted where the local planning authority is satisfied that the proposal is in the interest of the building's preservation and does not involve activities or alterations prejudicial to the special architectural or historic interest of the Listed Building or its setting.</p>
	<p>Conservation Areas</p> <p>Development within, affecting the setting of, or affecting views into or out of, a Conservation Area should preserve (and enhance or reinforce it, as appropriate) features that contribute positively to the area's character, appearance and setting.</p>

	<p>Archaeology</p> <p>Development affecting archaeological remains, whether known or potential, designated or undesignated, should take every practical and reasonable step to protect and, where possible, enhance their significance.</p>
Policy S60: Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity	<p>All development should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> protect, manage, enhance and extend the ecological network of habitats, species and sites of international, national and local importance (statutory and non-statutory), including sites that meet the criteria for selection as a Local Site; minimise impacts on biodiversity and features of geodiversity value; deliver measurable and proportionate net gains in biodiversity in accordance with Policy S61; and protect and enhance the aquatic environment within or adjoining the site, including water quality and habitat. <p>Mitigation of Potential Adverse Impacts</p> <p>Development should avoid adverse impact on existing biodiversity and geodiversity features as a first principle, in line with the mitigation hierarchy. Where adverse impacts are unavoidable, they must be adequately and proportionately mitigated. If full mitigation cannot be provided, compensation will be required as a last resort where there is no alternative.</p> <p>Development will only be supported where the proposed measures for mitigation and/or compensation along with details of net gain are acceptable to the Local Planning Authority in terms of design and location and are secured for the lifetime of the development with appropriate funding mechanisms that are capable of being secured by condition and/or legal agreement.</p> <p>If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission will be refused.</p>
Policy S61: Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains	<p>Following application of the mitigation hierarchy, all development proposals should ensure opportunities are taken to retain, protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity features proportionate to their scale, through site layout, design of new buildings and proposals for existing buildings with consideration to the construction phase and ongoing site management.</p>
	<p>Biodiversity Net Gain</p> <p>The following part of the policy applies unless, and until, subsequently superseded, in whole or part, by national regulations or Government policy associated with the delivery of mandatory biodiversity net gain arising from the Environment Act 2021. Where conflict between the policy below and the provisions of Government regulations or national policy arises, then the latter should prevail.</p>
Policy S66: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows	<p>Development proposals should be prepared based on the overriding principle that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the existing tree and woodland cover is maintained, improved and expanded; and <p>opportunities for expanding woodland are actively considered and implemented where practical and appropriate to do so.</p>

Hedgerows

Proposals for new development will be expected to retain existing hedgerows where appropriate and integrate them fully into the design having regard to their management requirements. Proposals for new development will not be supported that would result in the loss of hedges of high landscape, heritage, amenity or biodiversity value unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh the loss and this loss can be clearly demonstrated to be unavoidable. Development requiring the loss of a hedgerow protected under The Hedgerow Regulations will only be supported where it would allow for a substantially improved overall approach to the design and landscaping of the development that would outweigh the loss of the hedgerow. Where any hedges are lost, suitable replacement planting or restoration of existing hedges, will be required within the site or the locality, including appropriate provision for maintenance and management.

Policy S67: Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Proposals should protect the best and most versatile agricultural land so as to protect opportunities for food production and the continuance of the agricultural economy.

National Policy

- 6.7. National policy governing the principle of development for renewable energy proposals within its scope is the National Policy Statement (NPS) for renewables EN-3, which should be read together with the Overarching NPS for Energy, EN-1.
- 6.8. The energy NPSs were updated and designated in January 2024. The effect of the updated policy was the extension of coverage to include solar energy generation and the provision of explicit support for large scale, ground mounted solar generating stations.
- 6.9. The NPSs play a significant role in decision making on NSIPs. As NPSs that are relevant to solar energy development are adopted, the OESF will be determined in accordance with section 104 of the Planning Act 2008

NPS EN-1 – Overarching Policy Statement for Energy

- 6.10. NPS EN-1 (January 2024) sets out the government's commitment to increasing renewable generation capacity. EN-1 establishes general principles relating to the need for all energy infrastructure, noting that there is an urgent need for new electricity generating capacity. This urgent need is expressed clearly in that "...a secure, reliable, affordable, Net Zero consistent system in 2050 is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar".
- 6.11. NPS En-1 recognises the strategic national importance of solar generation in the UK's energy generation 'mix' of technologies, requiring a sustained growth in the capacity of solar generation in the next decade. Solar generation is explicitly included with the scope of technologies as being required to meet the defined 'urgent need', and it recognises the contribution solar can make to achieving net zero, providing security of electricity supply and an affordable, reliable system.

NPS EN-3 – National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure

- 6.12. NPS EN-3 (January 2024) provides further policy specific to renewable electricity generating technologies.
- 6.13. NPS EN-3 provides technology specific policy relating to solar generating stations. It states the Government's commitment to sustained growth in solar development, including the benefits of the technology in relation to cost and speed of delivery.
- 6.14. The impacts of the scale of NSIP solar development in rural areas is recognised, and it sets out the key policy consideration such as irradiance, site topography, proximity to dwellings, capacity and the importance of a grid connection on the commercial viability of projects being promoted

NPS EN-5 – National Policy Statement for Networks

- 6.15. Whilst providing policy for long-distance transmission systems (400kv and 275kv lines), NPS EN-5 (July 2011 and November 2023) also cover associated infrastructure such as substations and converter stations.
- 6.16. Due to the scope of the proposed development, WLDC consider NPS EN-5 to be an important and relevant matter with regard to the relevant associated development of the proposed application.

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.17. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the governments planning policies for England. The NPPF does not include policies specific to NSIPs.
- 6.18. The NPPF nonetheless provides guidance on the requirement for good design, promoting healthier communities, conserving the historic environment, conserving the natural environment, sustainable transport and meeting the challenges of climate change. With due regard to the scope of the policy at a national level, WLDC consider the NPPF to be an important and relevant matter for the determination of the application under section 104 of the PA2008.
- 6.19. In relation to the delivery of renewable energy, the NPPF states (paragraph 160) that to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, (development) plans should:
- *“provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, and their future re-powering and life extension, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts)”;*
 - *“consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and “*
 - *“identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.”*
- 6.20. Section 15 of the NPPF provides key policy on ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’. It states that (para. 180) that ‘ planning...decisions should contribute to the and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) *Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).*

Other Relevant Policy

- 6.21. In addition to the above, WLDC consider the following policy to also be relevant and important for the determination of the application under section 104 of the PA2008:
- Powering up Britain (March 2023)**
- 6.22. This document published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero aims to quintuple the UK’s current solar power capacity to 70GW by 2035, as part of ambitions to full decarbonise the power sector by this date. The plan emphasises ground-mounted solar schemes, given it is “one of the cheapest forms of electricity generation and is readily deployable at scale”. The plan seeks large scale solar deployment across the UK, looking for development mainly on brownfield, industrial and low/medium grade agricultural land.
- 6.23. Solar and farming can be complementary, supporting each other financially, environmentally and through shared use of land. We consider that meeting energy security and climate change goals is urgent and of critical importance to the country, and that these goals can be achieved together with maintaining food security for the UK. We encourage deployment of solar technology that delivers

environmental benefits, with consideration for ongoing food production or environmental improvement.

- 6.24. The Powering up Britain plan recognises that as with any new development, solar projects may impact on communities and the environment. The planning system allows all views to be taken into account when decision makers balance local impacts with national need.

The British Energy Security Strategy (2022)

- 6.25. The British Energy Security Strategy sets out the immediate need to manage the financial implications of soaring commodity prices in the near term, on households and businesses which are already feeling economic pain as the post-Covid cost of living has risen: "The first step is to improve energy efficiency, reducing the amount of energy that households and businesses need." (50p5).
- 6.26. In the near-term, the strategy sets out a high-level action plan to upgrade the energy efficiency of at least 700,000 homes in the UK by 2025, and to ensure that by 2050 all UK buildings will be energy efficient with low-carbon heating. Further, the strategy sets out an intent to phase out the sale of new and replacement gas boilers by 2035. [50, p12].
- 6.27. The Strategy aims to:
- Cut planning consent process time by over half through, among other measures, strengthening the Renewable National Policy Statements (EN-3) to reflect the importance of energy security and net zero;
 - Increase the pace of deployment of Offshore Wind by 25% to deliver up to 50GW by 2030, including up to 5GW of innovative floating wind. Wind will contribute over half the UK's renewable generation capacity by 2030. [50, p16];
 - Consider all options including Onshore Wind through the improvement of national electricity network infrastructure and support of a number of new English projects with strong local backing, so prioritising "putting local communities in control" of local onshore solutions. Repowering of existing onshore wind sites is also under consideration. [50, p18];
 - Support a 5-fold increase in deployment of solar technology by 2035, recognising the abundant source of solar energy in the UK and an 85% reduction in cost over the last ten years of solar power. For ground-mounted solar, the strategy indicates a future consultation on planning rules to strengthen policy in favour of development on non-protected land, while ensuring communities continue to have a say and environmental protections remain in place. [50, p19];
 - Increase UK plans for deployment of civil nuclear to up to 24GW by 2050 – three times more than operational capacity in 2022 and representing up to 25% of our projected electricity demand. This includes the intention to take one project (Sizewell C) to FID during the current Parliament, and two projects to FID in the next Parliament, including Small Modular Reactors, subject to value for money and relevant approvals. [50, p21]. The selection process for further UK projects is anticipated to be initiated in 2023 [50, p22]; and
 - Double the UK ambition for hydrogen production to up to 10GW by 2030, with at least half of this from electrolytic hydrogen [50, p22], facilitated by bringing forwards up to 1GW of electrolytic hydrogen into construction or operational status by 2025.

The National Infrastructure Strategy (2020)

- 6.28. The National Infrastructure Strategy (NIS) published in November 2020 sets out plans to transform the UK's infrastructure. The Strategy is the Government's response to recommendations made by the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), which was set up to provide impartial, expert advice to the government on long-term infrastructure priorities. In July 2018, the NIC published a National Infrastructure Assessment which provided the foundation for many of the measures included within the NIS.
- 6.29. One of the aims of the NIS is to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Government acknowledges in the NIS that to deliver net zero, the share of generation from renewables needs to dramatically increase. It identifies that this can be achieved by the provision of greater generation

capacity from onshore wind and solar. As recommended by the NIC, the NIS sets out plans to include solar PV in the next auction round (2022) for Contracts for Difference (CfD), which is the Government's main mechanism for supporting low-carbon electricity generation. This incentivises investment in renewable energy by providing developers of projects with high upfront costs and long lifetimes with direct protection from volatile wholesale prices, and they protect consumers from paying increased support costs when electricity prices are high.

- 6.30. The NIS demonstrates the Government's commitment, including a financial commitment, to supporting solar generation now.

The Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future (2020)

- 6.31. The Energy White Paper published in December 2020 is one of the more recent Government policies setting out how the UK will reach net zero emissions by 2050.
- 6.32. The Paper explains that it is likely that overall demand for electricity will double by 2050 due to the electrification of other sectors such as transport heating. On page 42, it states that meeting this demand by 2050 would require "a fourfold increase in clean electricity generation with the decarbonisation of electricity increasingly underpinning the delivery of our net zero target".
- 6.33. It identifies the Government's aim for a fully decarbonised, reliable and low-cost power system by 2050 and that market conditions will determine the best solutions for very low emissions and reliable supply, at a low cost to consumers.
- 6.34. The Paper explains that the government is not targeting a particular generation mix but commits the government to maintaining the market conditions which stimulate the cost reductions that have been seen in the renewable energy market over the last five years. It does, however, state that it is possible to determine key characteristics of the future generation mix at this stage identifying on page 43 that a "low-cost, net zero consistent system is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar". It highlights that this will need to be complemented by technologies which provide power, or reduce demand, to manage intermittency. It states that currently this includes "nuclear, gas with carbon capture and storage and flexibility provided by batteries, demand side response, interconnectors and short-term dispatchable generation providing peaking capacity, which can be flexed as required", thereby also highlighting the role of battery storage in the energy mix.
- 6.35. This Paper highlights the government's commitment to solar to achieve net zero targets and the need to provide this urgently

A Green Future: Our 25-year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)

- 6.36. The 25 Year Environment Plan published in 2018 sets out the government's 25-year plan to improve the environment within a generation.
- 6.37. It sets out 10 goals which include the achievement of: clean air; clean and plentiful water; thriving plants and wildlife; reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards like flooding and drought; the more sustainable and efficient use of resources from nature; enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment; mitigation and adaption to climate change; minimisation of waste; management of exposure to chemicals; and enhanced biosecurity.
- 6.38. Six key areas of policy are set out in the plan and include:
- Using and managing land sustainably (including embedding an 'environmental net gain' principle for developing and measuring natural capital and reducing flood risk).
 - Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes (including developing a Nature Recovery Network and reviewing National Parks and AONBs).
 - Connecting people (including children) with the environment to improve health and wellbeing (including encouraging children to be close to nature, both in and out of school and greening out cities).

- Increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution and waste (including achieving zero avoidable plastic waste by end of 2042).
- Securing clean, productive and biologically diverse seas and oceans (including a post Brexit new sustainable fisheries policy).
- Protecting and improving the global environment (including providing 'international leadership and leading by example' and 'leaving a lighter footprint on the global environment').

6.39. This plan highlights the Government's support for the reduction in the UK's carbon footprint; protection and enhancement of the natural environment; and ensuring land is managed with environmental gains which is of relevance to the Scheme.

Solar Roadmap: United Kingdom Powered by Solar (2025)

6.40. The recently published UK Solar Roadmap sets out the UK Government's strategy and plan of action to achieve significant increases in solar deployment to support the delivery of clear power by 2030.

6.41. The roadmap outlines the actions for the industry and government to overcome challenges to delivering the ambition set out in the Clean Power Action Plan; which seeks the deployment of 45-47GW by 2030. The roadmap also sets out the aspirations for longer-term growth beyond 2030.

7. Key Impacts – cumulative

- 7.1. WLDCs key concerns and objections to the OESF relate to its cumulative impact with other NSIP solar electricity generating stations that have either been consented or are awaiting decision.
- 7.2. There are four other NSIP solar scheme's to which the OESF will add further significant impacts to the West Lindsey District:
- Gate Burton Energy Park (531MW) (Order Limits: 824ha approx.) – Consented 12/07/2024
 - Cottam Solar Project (600MW) (Order Limits: 1450ha approx.) – Consented 05/09/2024
 - West Burton Solar Project (480MW) (Order Limits: 886ha approx.) – Consented 24/01/2025
 - Tillbridge Solar Project (500MW) – (Order Limits: 1670ha approx.) - Recommendation stage (decision due by October 2025)
- 7.3. The OESF Order Limits extend to approximately 1,414ha (14.14km²) and would add a further 750MW of solar development to the existing cumulative baseline. This would result in a total cumulative Order Limits land take of approximately 6,244ha/62.44km² and total generation of 2,861MW / 2.861GW.
- 7.4. This amount of solar development within a close geographical area is unprecedented and gives rise to significant adverse impacts that have not been experienced on a cumulative basis in England.
- 7.5. From the commencement of the examination of the first NSIP solar application, WLDC have raised significant concerns regarding the cumulative impacts of all of the projects and the approach to decision making. Whilst NSIP applications are examined and determined on an individual basis with cumulative impacts extending only to recognition that such assessments have been carried out in an ES, WLDCs consistent view is that the applications should have been determined on the basis of their acceptability as a groups of projects. The impacts of all of the NSIPS against the baseline of a rural agricultural environment will be significant and harmful, including the construction phase.
- 7.6. The overarching policy context for the consideration of cumulative impacts are set out in the relevant NPS's. NPS EN-1 requires the Secretary of State, when considering any proposed development and weighing its adverse impacts against its benefits, to take into account 'its potential adverse impacts....including any long-term and cumulative adverse impacts' (NPS EN-1 para. 4.1.5).
- 7.7. Applicants are required to set out how residual impacts will be compensated for as far as possible, setting out how any mitigation or compensation will be monitored and agreed to ensure success and that action is taken (including adaptive management). Cumulative impacts of multiple developments with residual impacts must also be considered (NPS EN-1 para, 4.2.12).
- 7.8. WLDC's concerns around the potential cumulative construction period is derived from the lifespan of the DCOs that have been granted or sought, and the estimated construction periods cited in the respective project ESs.
- 7.9. The DCO lifespan being sought for projects is 5 years and the estimated construction period is 24 months, aside from the Gate Burton Energy Park which cites a period of 24-36 months.
- 7.10. Based upon these parameters for the 4 NSIPs either consented, or at decision stage , plus the OESF as the fifth NSIP, a simple 'staggering' of development periods within the 5 year periods for each consent could lead to construction activity occurring up to 2033. There is no control over the

commencement of construction aside from that it must do so within 5 years of the Orders coming into force.

7.11. The table below helps demonstrate this potential scenario.

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL
NSIP SOLAR FARMS
POTENTIAL PROGNOSIS OF CONSTRUCTION
**24 month construction period assumption*

Key:

DCO granted
Expected decision date
Decision estimated
Construction period

PROJECT	DCO into force	Est. Construction period (longest)	YEAR											
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035
Gate Burton Energy Park	Aug-24	36 months												
Cottam Solar Project	Sep-24	24 months												
West Burton Solar Project	Jan-25	24 months												
Tillbridge Solar Project	Oct-25	24 months												
One Earth Solar Farm	Dec-26	24 months												

7.12. WLDC consider this period to be a significant length of time for residents to endure, and highlight the impact as one that should be considered negatively in the planning balance.

7.13. The matters below discuss further specific impacts in more detail.

Lifespan of the project and its impacts

7.14. WLDC notes that the lifespan of the project is proposed to be for a period of 60 years. This reflects the lifespan of the other four NSIP solar schemes in the district, who have either secured or are seeking a consent for this period of time.

7.15. WLDC notes that the applicant considers the Scheme to constitute a 'temporary' development and have treated it as such in their EIA. This has resulted in the assessed impact being derived on the basis that the impacts will be 'temporary'.

7.16. WLDC consider a 60 year timescale to have the effect of permanent impacts. Whilst the infrastructure can be removed at the end of the consent lifespan, this period is significant and will be experienced over several generations.

7.17. To reduce or downgrade impacts on the basis that 60 years is 'temporary' is considered to be an unrealistic approach. All assessments should have been carried out on the basis that the impacts would be permanent to reflect the time period over which they would be experienced. This would potentially be beyond the year 2090 based on the lifespan of development consents being granted.

7.18. WLDC considers that the decision maker should determine the application on the basis that the impacts are 'permanent' in terms of their impact on communities and the environment.

Landscape and visual

7.19. WLDC raises objections to the Scheme due to its cumulative impact, alongside other NSIP solar projects, on landscape character and the visual effects people will experience in the district.

7.20. WLDC notes that the applicant has provided a drawing that identified the approximate location of other projects through numbered circles (Figure 18.9 / Drawing Number EN10159/APP/6.20/18.9).

Whilst serving as a useful reference, WLDC wishes to see a drawing that shows the true extent of solar farm area coverage in the District and surrounds. Were such a drawing produced with, for example, the Order Limits/red-line boundaries of other projects shown, the extent of land lost to solar farm development and the proximity to each other would be revealed. WLDC considers that this exercise is required in order for the cumulative impacts of the OESF project to be properly considered.

Landscape Character

- 7.21. WLDC consider that it is essential that, when considering the acceptability of the Scheme, it must be done so with regard to the cumulative impact with other solar NSIP projects either consented or awaiting decision in the district.
- 7.22. NPS EN-3 (paragraph 2.10.257) states that the Secretary of State will consider the landscape and visual impact of any proposed solar PV farm, taking account of the effect of the development on landscape character, together with the possible cumulative effect with any existing or proposed development
- 7.23. WLDC notes that Landscape and Visual assessment in the ES does not carry out a cumulative assessment against the projects listed in paragraph 7.2 above. This is due to a 2km study area buffer being applied, which excludes the other projects.
- 7.24. Whilst this approach may reflect typical methodology, it results in there being no assessment of the total impact of all of the projects on the landscape character of West Lindsey and the significant magnitude of change that its character will endure as a consequence of solar farm development cumulatively.
- 7.25. As explained in section 4 above, the landscape of West Lindsey is characterised by the large, open agricultural fields. The implementation of the cumulative solar farm projects will have a marked change on that landscape character area, being wholly contrary to the defining and valued character of the Till Vale landscape character area. This proposal would continue on from that development and now expand it into the Trent Valley LCA in addition to that already committed and soon to be taking place within the Till Vale LCA. as
- 7.26. The erosion of this landscape through the quantum of development being imposed is unprecedented and will cause material harm for over 60 years.

Visual effects

- 7.27. The cumulative visual impact of the OESF is not simply limited to a consideration of whether more than one project has such an impact from a single viewpoint or viewpoints.
- 7.28. WLDCs concern relates to the visual effects that people will experience when travelling through the landscape. Cumulatively, the Scheme will be the first project a person would experience when travelling into the district from the south-east, following which the spread of solar farm development extends beyond Gainsborough to the northern extent of the Cottam Solar Project (a distance of circa. 24km/15 miles)
- 7.29. The sequential experience through the landscape will be materially harmed. The OESF will add to the existing impacts that the project cited above will have, extending the area within which people will experience alien solar farm development, predominantly within the Till Valley landscape character area.
- 7.30. The impacts are materially harmful, with a significant area offering limited relief from solar farm development for communities and visitors.
- 7.31. WLDC consider these visual effects to be unacceptable when assessed against policy. Whilst NSIP proposals appear to only be determined on their own impacts, WLDC state again that it is the cumulative impacts that require robust consideration and explanation of conclusions.

- 7.32. WLDCs position is that there must be a tipping-point at which the landscape character is unable to reasonably accommodate further change as a consequence of solar farm development. The addition of the OESF to the baseline of other NSIP solar projects clearly breaches that tipping-point.

Traffic

- 7.33. The impact and management of cumulative construction traffic has been an issue that WLDC has consistently raised as a significant concern.
- 7.34. The Scheme proposes two construction vehicle access routes to the site (APP-136, 6.21 Appendix 12.2 Transport Assessment, Figures 3-1 and 3-2):

Proposed Access Route 1 - from ABP Immingham to the eastern site access junctions

- Depart ABP Immingham through the west gate proceeding west on Humber Road;
- Travel onto A160 at Manby roundabout proceeding west towards A180;
- Proceeds west from at A180, merging into M180;
- Turns southwards to travel along A15 to Lincoln;
- Proceeds west on A46 at Riseholme roundabout, Lincoln;
- Proceeds north on the A57 at Carholme roundabout, Lincoln;
- Turns southwards onto A1133 at Newton on Trent to the site entrance.

Proposed Access Route 2 – from Goole Docks to the western site access junction

- Depart Goole Docks onto A161 proceeding west;
- Proceed west at the M62 junction 36;
- Proceed south onto M18 at junction 35;
- Proceed south on A1(M), merging to A1, At M18 junction 2;
- Exit the A1 at Markham Moor Interchange and proceed eastwards on the A57
- Proceed eastwards and turn right into the western site access.

- 7.35. The cumulative projects Gate Burton, Cottam, West Burton and Tillbridge solar farm NSIPs all utilise the A15 for the delivery of construction traffic.
- 7.36. The OESF project specifically excludes consideration and assessment the addition of construction traffic generated by the project to the already significant traffic generated by other cumulative projects. This includes the use of A15, which each project proposes to use. Both the OESF, Gate Burton and West Burton solar projects will also be utilising the A57 for construction traffic.
- 7.37. The OSEF Transport Assessment states that the Cottam Solar project has not been included in the cumulative assessment as it would not coincide with the OESF construction period. It also omits the Tillbridge Solar Project from the assessment for the same reasons.
- 7.38. WLDC contends that this is an incorrect assumption to make as the Cottam project has a 5 year consent lifespan, which has yet to commence development (or submit details to discharge DCO 'requirements'). There is therefore a strong likelihood that construction activity and associated

travel movement could occur at the same time using the same roads for five solar NSIP projects concurrently.

- 7.39. WLDC considers that, as all the traffic data for each project is in the public domain, the OESF should assess the likely cumulative construction traffic impacts.
- 7.40. The OESF assesses and proposes two construction traffic route options. As both options have been demonstrated to be viable by the applicant, WLDC considers that there is no compelling reason to propose both routes, and that the 'Proposed Access Route 2', using the M18 to access the site from the west, should be the only option used. This would avoid potential significant cumulative construction traffic impacts along the A15, the A46 Lincoln bypass and the A57 from Lincoln to the site.
- 7.41. The avoidance of 'Proposed Access Route 1' would minimise the impacts upon communities in terms of disruption, noise and air quality impacts, and additional traffic management that could extend for a period of 5-10 years should all five NSIP projects overlap/stagger their construction phases.
- 7.42. It is also noted by WLDC that the OESF project has not engaged collaboratively with other cumulative projects with regard to traffic management. The other solar NSIP project of Gate Burton, Cottam, West Burton and Tillbridge have all worked together to produce a 'Joint Report on Interrelationships', which brings together the key cumulative impacts of the projects and identifies areas where impacts could be minimised/mitigated. This report was produced and submitted as part of the respective applications and was updated as required during examination phases.
- 7.43. WLDC considers it unfortunate that the OESF has chosen not to collaborate with other projects in the manner that they have done to minimise impacts on local communities.

Tourism

- 7.44. WLDC considers that there is potential for the proposal to have a negative impact upon the tourism economy within the West Lindsey District.
- 7.45. WLDCs concern relates to potential cumulative impact of the OESF and the other solar developments within the district with regard to the use of tourist accommodation in the West Lindsey District to accommodate construction workers. The ES does not provide any assessment of the likely impact specifically within the West Lindsey District; it only assesses capacity within the much wider study area.
- 7.46. If the cumulative impacts result in much of the accommodation available within West Lindsey being used to accommodate construction workers, WLDC has concerns that this would have an adverse impact upon the tourism sector. Should there be a significant reduction in the availability of accommodation for tourists, it can be assumed that visitors will look elsewhere beyond the District. Due to the potential lengthy cumulative construction period of a number of years, the ability for tourist accommodation businesses to recover once construction is complete is unknown and it is feared it would take significant time to do so. The tourist industry is already seeking to re-establish growth post-COVID, and eliminating accommodation for visitors could prolong this recovery.
- 7.47. WLDC notes that the applicant states that the influx of workers to be positive to the tourism sector, however this does not appear to take account of the wider linked-industry benefits that tourism has. In visiting an area, tourists will naturally visit attractions in the area and spend within other hospitality and leisure facilities during their stay.
- 7.48. Should the cumulative impact upon the availability of tourist accommodation for visitors be significantly reduced, and the cumulative construction period enduring for longer than 5 years, it may be concluded that such effects could be adverse and long term.
- 7.49. With construction traffic and associated works being carried out during the summer months and clashing with peak agricultural traffic (harvest) and the Lincolnshire Show, visitors and tourists will

experience considerable frustration particularly those using the A15 and the nearby highway network.

Agricultural land

- 7.50. There will be significant impacts caused by the cumulative loss of agricultural land available for the production of food as a consequence of the Scheme.
- 7.51. Policy S67: Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land of the CLLP 2023 states that significant development resulting in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land will only be supported if:
- The need is clearly established;
 - The benefits outweigh the need to protect such land, when taking into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land;
 - The impacts of the proposal upon ongoing agricultural operations have been minimised through the use of appropriate design solutions; and
 - Once the development has ceased its useful life then the land should be returned to its former use.
- 7.52. The council expects all these tests to be met, particularly in relation to the economic value of the land to WLDC and its inhabitants which is in line with national policy. Moreover, it is expected that the land would be restored to its former use. This is particularly important as the agricultural land is an important contributor to the local economy and culture of the region.
- 7.53. Paragraph 5.11.12 of the NPS (EN-1) outlines that applicants should 'seek to minimise impacts on the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification) and preferably use land in areas of poorer quality (grades 3b, 4 and 5) except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations'.
- 7.54. Under Paragraph 5.11.34 of the NPS (EN-1), the decision maker should ensure that 'applicants do not site their scheme on the best and most versatile agricultural land without justification The SoS should also 'take into account the economic and other benefits of that land'.
- 7.55. The NPPF also states that BMV is land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification and recognises the economic and other benefits of such land (para. 187). Footnote 65 states that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.
- 7.56. In view of the above, it is expected that the loss of both BMV and poorer quality land should be taken into account. This is particularly true given the agriculture lands contribution to the quality and character of the environment or the local economy.
- 7.57. Both national and local planning policy requires the protection of valuable agricultural land, including specifically for the production of food. Whilst it is understood that the grazing of livestock alongside solar panels falls within the category of 'food production', to rely upon this to demonstrate compliance with policy, it must be demonstrated that land will genuinely be 'available' for tenants. Simply stating that land 'could' be available does not go far enough to contend that land for the production of food will not be 'lost' for the 60 year lifespan of the project.
- 7.58. The part of OESF located within the West Lindsey District is located on agricultural land classified as Class 2 and 3a (Figure 8.6 Drawing Number EN10159/APP/6.20/8.6 Rev. C02), the land taken with Class 3b being less than the other two classifications combined. The area of land classified as 2 and 3a is to be lost to accommodate solar panels, substation and BESS.

- 7.59. The Scheme has therefore failed to avoid the Best and Most Versatile land and has furthermore sited development that has greater direct impacts upon the quality of that land upon classification 2 and 2a.
- 7.60. As set out above, national and local policy requires solar projects to avoid class 1, 2 and 3a land as a preference. Unlike the four other NSIP projects, which either wholly or largely avoided these agricultural land classifications, the OESF has given less concern to this policy requirement and proposed to remove Best and Most Versatile land (3a) from being available for food production to accommodate the Scheme.
- 7.61. The cumulative loss of significant areas of land available for the production of food is a clear and significant negative impact and is an unacceptable impact in WLDCs view.

Maintenance and replacement

- 7.62. WLDC is concerned about the unassessed likely potential impacts that could occur from the waste and recycling of infrastructure components replaced under the broad 'maintenance' clause in the dDCO.
- 7.63. The concern relates to the approach to 'maintenance' as a power conferred by the draft DCO. The OESF project (individually and cumulatively with other NSIP solar projects) have the ability to replace panels on a piecemeal basis across the 60 year lifetime of the project. Whilst keeping below the EIA thresholds for an individual replacement 'event' these can be repeated throughout the whole application lifespan.
- 7.64. WLDC's understanding is that panels could require replacement from approximately 20 years of use, and the BESS will also require a full replacement. It is also understood that there is insufficient capacity in West Lindsey, Lincolnshire or even the UK to recycle this material at the current time.
- 7.65. The application documents do not provide any clarity on how replaced infrastructure will be dealt with. In the absence of any information relating to what recycling facilities may be delivered in the future, WLDC would welcome clarity on what the approach would be against the existing baseline.
- 7.66. As all of the cumulative solar NSIPs are able to replace substantial amounts of solar panels and the BESS without any control or understanding of the potential impacts, WLDC maintain a significant concern that such activities could give rise to adverse environmental impacts, and impacts on communities.

8. Key Impacts – project specific

8.1. As set out in Section above, WLDC contends that the OESF project must be determined in the context of its cumulative impacts with other projects in the district, and that these impacts are materially harmful.

8.2. Notwithstanding this position, this section sets out the key impacts that the project individually 'in solus' will have on communities and the environment.

Need case

8.3. WLDC acknowledges the urgent need to deploy infrastructure for the generation of electricity from renewable sources as set out in NPSs EN-1 and EN-3.

8.4. The principle of deploying renewable energy generation infrastructure is also supported by policy S14 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023.

8.5. WLDC recognizes the OESF as a 'Critical National Priority' (CNP) under NPS EN-1, which typically means the need for such projects outweighs residual effects. However, WLDC argues that the cumulative impacts of this project, combined with four other NSIP solar projects in West Lindsey, are 'exceptional'. These impacts will last at least 60 years and significantly alter the district's landscape character, creating a solar farm landscape throughout the district that will be experienced by residents and visitors. WLDC emphasises that this situation is unprecedented, with no other DCO decision having to consider such extensive cumulative impacts during construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning. The eradication of the existing landscape character over such a large area is deemed 'exceptional' by WLDC, and we believe this must be taken into account when assessing the project's acceptability against policy, particularly due to its unique and significant cumulative impacts on the landscape.

Project design

8.6. The OESF application includes documents explaining the approach taken to design; most notably 'Design Approach Document' (APP-171 Doc 5.8) and 'Outline Design Parameters' (APP-172 Doc 5.9).

8.7. NPS EN-1 (para. 4.7.3) provides policy on the purpose of 'good design' and usefully refers to the being the 'means by which a many policy objectives...can be met, for example.... In terms of siting and use of appropriate technologies, can help mitigate adverse impacts..'

8.8. Local Plan policy S14 aligns with national policy in requiring proposals for renewable energy schemes, including ancillary development, to be considered acceptable where the impacts on landscape character and visual amenity to be considered acceptable.

8.9. Whilst recognising the general locations and site characteristics favoured by solar farm development, WLDC's view is that policy requires applicants to minimise impacts as far as possible. The design approach adopted by the OESF project has, however, resulted in solar panels being sited up to field boundaries in highly visible locations. Additionally, associated development such as the BESS and substation have also been located in a location which is highly visible with open views into the site from areas within West Lindsey and adjacent to the south from within Newark and Sherwood District Council administrative area.

8.10. The location of panels, BESS and substation in the large open field to the east of the A1133 represents a highly visible and conspicuous part of the OESF project and WLDC does not understand from the application how, integrating policy requirements on 'good design' has resulted in a methodology that has resulted in this area being selected as the optimal location for this type of development.

- 8.11. WLDC contends that the location of this infrastructure on open, visible land upon agricultural land classifications that policy states should be avoided, demonstrates a flawed approach to project design. The resulting impacts are significant and adverse to the communities and environment within the West Lindsey District.
- 8.12. In WLDCs view, appropriate design objectives would have involved the avoidance of locating infrastructure with the greatest bulk and height (the substation and BESS) within such conspicuous locations where their impacts are greater than had more appropriate locations been selected (e.g. smaller scale landscapes, utilising existing environment features to screen and increase distance from public rights of way/highways).
- 8.13. With regard to the general site layout arrangements, the siting of solar panel up to the edges of field boundaries creates a 'hard' boundary to the site, with panels being readily visible from public viewpoint. WLDC would expect design principles to establish an effective buffer between field boundaries and the solar panel in the interest of integrating the panel into the existing landscape in a manner that retains the prominence of field boundaries. This negative impact is particularly experienced from the A1133 and the public right of way to the west of the site (north of North Clifton).
- 8.14. Such a design approach would have been more effective in attempts to minimise the impacts of the Scheme on landscape character and visual amenity.

Landscape and visual

- 8.15. The impact of large scale solar farm development within the landscape is a key concern for WLDC. The OESF will have significant and adverse impacts upon landscape character and visual effects on communities and visitors to the district.
- 8.16. In considering the landscape character and visual impact of the project, WLDC have had regard to the policy requirements of NPS EN-1 and EN-2, along with the relevant policies in the adopted Local Plan.
- 8.17. NPS EN1 notes that virtually all nationally significant infrastructure projects will have adverse effects on the landscape, but that there may also be beneficial landscape character impacts arising from the proposal (para. 5.10.5). Notwithstanding the above, it further requires project to be 'designed carefully', taking account of the potential impact on the landscape. This includes having regard to the siting, operational and other relevant constraints to minimise harm to the landscape, providing reasonable mitigation where possible and appropriate.(para. 5.10.6).
- 8.18. In decision making, NPS EN-1 requires the Secretary of State to 'consider whether the project has been designed carefully, taking account of environmental effects on the landscape and siting, operational and other relevant constraints, to minimise harm to the landscape, including by mitigation' (para. 5.10.37).
- 8.19. Local Plan policy S14 requires proposals for renewable energy schemes, including ancillary development, to ensure that direct, indirect individual and cumulative impacts are, or will be made, acceptable. To determine the acceptability of those impacts, the following tests are to be applied (relevant test for landscape and visual impacts cited below):
- i. The impacts are acceptable having considered the scale, siting and design, and the consequent impacts on landscape character, visual amenity...;
- 8.20. Testing compliance with the above criteria is via applicable policies elsewhere in the local plan, which includes the 'Vision' for the Central Lincolnshire area with the objectives to protect and enhance the diversity of the character of the area, and maintain and strengthen local distinctiveness.
- 8.21. As explained above, the design approach applied to the OESF project has resulted in the siting of large scale infrastructure in the form of the substation and BESS being located in conspicuous and highly visible location within the West Lindsey District. The solar panel arrays also extend close to

field boundaries, including those adjacent to public highways. The impact of this design and layout results in the proposed infrastructure being highly visible and causing significant adverse harm to both landscape character and visual amenity.

- 8.22. Viewpoint location 2a is from a public right of way (footpath) located on higher ground to the west of the application site. From this viewpoint, panels will be readily visible as a conspicuous element in the landscape, located 'underneath' and interrupting a long distance view toward Lincoln Cathedral (Grade 1 Listed).
- 8.23. Viewpoint 4 is from a proposed site entrance on the A1133. The 'Year 1' image (Figure 11.13.4A) shows the presence of a solid wooden close boarded-type fence to be located around the perimeter of the site adjacent to the A1133. The design and character of this fence is wholly contrary to the rural character of the area, introduce a crude structure, typically found in urban areas, for the construction period over several years. WLDC finds this fence to be wholly unacceptable in such a location regardless of its 'temporary' purpose.
- 8.24. The landscape character experienced from this viewpoint is that of large open agricultural fields. The introduction of the alien features of solar PV panes, substation and BESS will significantly erode this character, reduce the openness and prevailing agricultural character. The colouring of the solar panel will create a solid dark blanked effect that will be experienced along the A1133 and the public right of way to the west. The adverse visual impacts will be experienced along the A1133 when travelling into and out of the West Lindsey District.
- 8.25. Viewpoint 24 looks northwards along the Trent Valley LCA. As the Landscape Character Assessment indicates (page 19) development on the low lying west of the A1133 would be prominent and not easily accommodated without detracting from the gentle transition to the open, flat farmland on the banks of the River Trent. WLDC is of the view that the proposal will create such a prominent development feature which would be clearly visible in the landscape.
- 8.26. WLDC deems the impact of the OESF upon landscape character and visual effects within the district to be significant and adverse. It is not understood why the Scheme has been designed in a manner that does not seek to minimising effects by siting large scale infrastructure in such a prominent location, clearly visible from public rights of way upon the only raised ground in the nearby landscape.
- 8.27. Having considered the nature of these impacts, WLDC considers that the impacts on the landscape could be minimised further, as required by policy through the consideration of:
- Increasing the set-back of solar PV panels from the site boundary with the A1133.
 - Siting the substation and BESS further to the east (away from the A1133 and the public right of way) to sit on lower topography and be viewed against the backdrop of existing woodland.
 - Reinforce and increase the height of the western site boundary adjacent to the A1133 with further tree and hedgerow planting with appropriate species such as maple, hawthorn, ash and oak. Deliver such planting through the Landscape Environmental Management Plan (LEMP) (APP-179), ensuring that there are no breaks along the highway (e.g. reinforce the gaps near to the layby to the south of the site entrance which offers clear views of the site).

Agricultural land

- 8.28. WLDC raises significant objections to the impact of the OESF on the loss of currently available agricultural land for the production of food, much of which is classified as Best and Most Versatile Land (Agricultural Land Classifications 2, and 3a).

- 8.29. NPS EN-3 requires solar electricity generating station projects to prefer poorer quality land to higher quality land, avoiding the use of 'Best and Most Versatile' (BMV) land where possible (para. 2.10.29. BMV land is defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.
- 8.30. Local Plan policy S14 applies a presumption in favour for proposal for ground based photovoltaics and associated infrastructure, unless the 'proposal is (following a specific soil assessment) to take place on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land and does not meet the requirements of Policy S67.
- 8.31. Local Plan policy S67 requires all development proposals to 'protect the best and most versatile land so as to protect opportunities for food production and the continuance of the agricultural economy'. It states that significant development resulting in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land will only be supported if:
- The need for the proposed development has been clearly established and there is insufficient lower grade land available (unless such lower grade land would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations);
 - The benefits and/or sustainability considerations outweigh the need to protect such land, when taking into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land; and
 - The impacts of the proposal upon ongoing agricultural operations have been minimised through the use of appropriate design solutions; and
 - Where feasible, once any development which is supported has ceased its useful life the land will be restored to its former use (to be secured by a planning condition where appropriate).
- 8.32. WLDC considers that the application does not adequately justify the loss of BMV land (APP-053 Figure 8.6.) The OESF proposed the loss of approximately 660.9ha of BMV land (APP-168 Planning Statement para. 22.3.9) and the justification appears to extend to the need for renewable energy generation project and the temporary 60 year project lifespan as matters that override this impact.
- 8.33. WLDC disagrees with the justifications provided by the applicant. A significant amount of BMV land is purposed to be lost without sufficient justification as to way the design approach has not avoided its use as part of the scheme. To locate infrastructure such as the BESS on BMV land has not been adequately justified, especially where there are lower grades of land nearby that could accommodate these Scheme components.
- 8.34. The applicant's reliance on the loss of BMV land being 'temporary' is, in WLDCs view, flawed given the 60 year lifespan that the OESF seeks development consent for. This is a significant period of time, akin to permanent development, where land would not be available across the whole Scheme for the production of food. The total land and over 660ha of BMV land will be lost to the agricultural sector for the production of food for several generations. This is an impact that is significant and adverse.
- 8.35. WLDC considers that the Scheme could have readily been better designed to avoid the loss of such land, without materially compromising the delivery of the national need for renewable energy generation projects and nor the contribution the OESF would make towards that policy aim.

Traffic and transport

- 8.36. WLDC raises significant concerns regarding the impacts of construction traffic on its communities and environment.
- 8.37. As discussed above, the cumulative impact of the addition of construction traffic generated by the OESF to the same highway network being used by four other NSIP solar projects will give rise to significant traffic management, delay and frustration over a period that could stretch between five and ten years.

- 8.38. WLDC considers the use of the 'Proposed Access Route 1' which begins at ABP Immingham, progresses on the A180/M180 onto the A15 south, and then to A46 at Lincoln and using the A57 to the site, to give rise to significant impacts. This is both in terms of the impacts cumulatively, and the impacts of the OESF individually in using local roads through the West Lindsey district to access the site in its south-western corner.
- 8.39. WLDC considers that the Scheme should use 'Proposed Access Route 2' as a route for construction traffic. Such an approach would utilise major motorway and A-class roads, minimising the use of local roads to access the site,
- 8.40. WLDC also question why the Scheme is proposing two construction access points in close proximity to each other from the A1133. There does not appear to be a compelling reason to remove hedgerows forming the field boundary to create this access. The use of a single access would minimise the environmental harm caused and WLDC would welcome such an amendment to the OESF project.

Tourism

- 8.41. WLDC identifies significant potential impacts on the tourism sector within the district as a consequence of the scheme. WLDC considers that there will be a long-term impact on tourism as a result of the Scheme during the construction phase.
- 8.42. The influx of construction workers will materially decrease the availability of tourist accommodation, which will be further exacerbated on a cumulative basis with other DCO solar projects within West Lindsey.
- 8.43. The significant reduction in the availability of tourist accommodation will, in WLDC's view, result in visitors seeking accommodation in different parts of the region, which will have a direct and indirect effect on tourism in the district.
- 8.44. Once the construction period for all projects is complete (which will occur for a number of years), there is no certainty that the tourism sector will recover to its former level and, if so, how long this would take.

Cultural heritage

- 8.45. WLDC notes that the Royal Observer Corps Roman Fort Scheduled Monument (List Entry Number 1003608) is located to the west of the OESF Order Limits. The Scheduled Monument is a 1st century Roman vexillation fortress sitting upon the ridge to the east of the River Trent. To the south lies the remains of two Roman marching camps and, immediately to the north, lies a Royal Observer Corps Monitoring Post.
- 8.46. The monument is designated for the following reasons:

Period: the fortress and camps date from the 1st century AD, during the military conquest of Britannia by the Roman Army, and are highly representative of this initial phase of the Roman conquest and occupation of Britain;

Rarity: Vexillation fortresses form a rare subset of Roman defensive sites;

Survival: Three sides of the fortress survive, complete with outworks and internal features. The two camps survive as the northern arm of the defensive circuit;

Potential: The fortress and camps remain unexcavated and contain considerable potential to inform on the nature of the Roman Army in the early days of the occupation of Britannia.

- 8.47. WLDC note the applicant's assessment regarding the impact of the project upon the Scheduled Monument, concluding that there would be a very low magnitude of impacts to the wider setting of the Scheduled Monument, which is a minor neutral effect (not significant) in the short and medium term. This conclusion is reached due to the assessment view that the solar arrays would be low-lying and the strategic role of the asset in the landscape would remain.
- 8.48. Notwithstanding the applicant's assessment, WLDCs view is that the OESF would be readily visible from the Scheduled Monument from views eastwards looking out and down onto the wider large scale landscape. WLDC notes the Relevant Representation submitted by Historic England, suggesting that the viewpoint from the Scheduled Monument should be from the observer corps. post, as it represents a designated viewpoint that utilises the same topography as the fort, contributing to its significance.
- 8.49. WLDC supports this suggestion and would welcome the submission of this additional viewpoint to inform the assessment of the impacts upon the Scheduled Monument.

Maintenance and replacement

- 8.50. It is not clear to WLDC how the replacement of infrastructure (project components) has been accounted for in the assessment. The assessment does not justify or reason the degradation rates or whether degradation could be accelerated by climate change.
- 8.51. Being unable to identify the likely failure rate of panels and the requirement to replace BESS and substation infrastructure during the lifespan of the consent, leaves the potential likely impacts during the operational phase unclear.
- 8.52. The wide scope of the definition of 'maintenance' in the dDCO has the effect of allowing a developer to replace a whole NSIP project over its lifespan. The application states that panels, BESS and other associated development will need to be replaced at least once during the project, which have the potential for significant adverse environmental effects. This will be exacerbated when the need to re-place and re-construct applies to all four NSIPs cumulatively.
- 8.53. There remains no mechanism for WLDC to consider the impacts of 'maintenance' and place any controls on what will be decommissioning and construction activity throughout the operations phase of the Scheme. The application is unclear in providing details on the approach to managing waste from 'maintenance' activities.

BESS & fire safety

- 8.54. WLDC acknowledges the Outline Battery Safety Management Plan submitted as part of the application to identify the fire safety risks associated with the BESS and to explain the measures proposed to mitigate those risks.
- 8.55. WLDC maintains concerns regarding the risk of fire from BESS infrastructure and the effectiveness of processes to ensure that events are avoided and/or dealt with in a manner that provides a high level of protection to communities and the environment.
- 8.56. WLDC expects the applicant to work closely with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service to provide all necessary information regarding the installation of the Scheme, including site design features, to facilitate hazard and risk analysis studies. Such engagement should also ensure that comprehensive risk management and emergency response plans are developed, to be achieved through the sharing of detailed site designs at as early a stage as possible.
- 8.57. Due to the importance of this risk to the communities and environment in the district, WLDC requests that it is included as a consultee body in the approval of the dDCO requirement number 7 'Battery safety management plan'.

9. Summary and conclusions

- 9.1. The section below provides a summary of the key impacts of the project identified by WLDC. The impacts are categorised as 'Positive', 'Negative', and 'Neutral', with the phase(s) of the project to which they relate also specified.

Positive impacts

- EN-1 delivery of low carbon electricity generation (in solus) (operation)
- Aligns with strategic policy (in solus) (operation)
- Mitigation delivered through the LEMP (in solus) (construction and operation)
- Carbon benefits over the lifespan (in solus) (operation)
- Additional permissive rights of way (in solus) (operation)

Negative impacts

- Landscape and visual – impacts on landscape character (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Sequential effects through the landscape (cumulative) (construction and operation)
- Design up against field boundaries (in solus) (operation)
- Visible and conspicuous BESS/SS – inc from the prominent PROW in area (in solus) (construction and operation)
- Loss of BMV land (in solus) (construction and operation)
- Strategic construction traffic (cumulative and in solus) (construction)
- Access points – numbers (in solus) (construction)
- Tourism (cumulative and in solus) (construction)
- Impacts of construction cumulatively with other projects with a lack of co-ordination during construction (cumulative) (construction)
- Scope of 'maintenance' powers enabling significant replacement / re-powering and waste/recycling (cumulative and in solus) (operation)

Neutral impacts

- Biodiversity (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Hydrology (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)

- Glint and glare(cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Buried heritage (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Air quality (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Noise and vibration (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)

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customer.services@west-lindsey.gov.uk**



West Lindsey District Council
Guildhall, Marshall's Yard
Gainsborough
Lincolnshire, DN21 2NA

One Earth Solar Farm

Written Representation

EN-010159

West Lindsey District Council

July 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document forms the Written Representation (WR) of West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) to the examination of the One Earth Solar Farm (OESF) Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) application (the 'Scheme').
- 1.2. This written representation is based on the Council's current understanding of the information comprised in the application for the Scheme at the time of writing. The Council's position on individual topics may therefore change and/or be supplemented as the Examination progresses particularly if there is meaningful engagement with the Applicant on key topics of concern.

Purpose and scope of the Written Representation

- 1.3. This WR set out WLDC's case in terms of the merits of the Scheme. It sets out the statutory decision making requirements, and the relevant planning policy framework upon which the application is to be assessed to determine whether development consent should be granted under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008).
- 1.4. This WR focusses on the key matters of concern for WLDC and provides an assessment of the overall project against policy, balancing its benefits and disbenefits to reach an overall conclusion about the acceptability of the application.

Relationship with the Local Impact Report

- 1.5. WLDC have submitted a Local Impact Report (LIR) under the provision of section 60 of the PA2008.
- 1.6. The purpose of the LIR is to set out WLDC's view on the local impacts of the project. Following an assessment of the application documents, the LIR identifies these key impacts and provides reasoning as to why they have been identified. The LIR does not calibrate any weighting to the impacts identified, and nor does it carry out an assessment against policy with a 'planning balance' exercise to reach a conclusion on the overall acceptability of the OESF application.
- 1.7. This WR is therefore to be read alongside the LIR as a document that goes beyond solely identifying impacts and serves as an assessment of the merits of the application against policy as required by the PA2008.

2. West Lindsey District - Local Context

Central Lincolnshire and the West Lindsey district

- 2.1. West Lindsey is a district council located in Central Lincolnshire, a collective area that encompasses the City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey. The West Lindsey district covers an area of over 115,700Ha (1,150km²) and is located within Lincolnshire County Council who are the county council and are also impacted by the proposed solar farms.
- 2.2. Central Lincolnshire is characterised by a population that lives in a range of settlements that vary in size and character. Lincoln is the largest settlement with a population of approximately 110,000 living in the principle urban area. Lincoln acts as a service centre over a wide geographical area, with villages sourcing most services and employment requirements in the city, effectively extending its catchment population to around 165,000.
- 2.3. West Lindsey borders North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire to the north; East Lindsey in the east; North Kesteven and the city of Lincoln in the south. The River Trent forms a natural boundary to the west where the district meets Bassetlaw District Council and Newark and Sherwood District Council, within the administrative region of Nottinghamshire County Council.
- 2.4. The West Lindsey district hosts main towns such as Gainsborough, Caistor and Market Rasen, which serve the northern and southern parts of the wider Central Lincolnshire area. Gainsborough experienced significant growth during the 19th century as an industrial and engineering centre, with a shift of focus to manufacturing in the 20th century. It now provides a thriving manufacturing/engineering sector with national and international companies headquartered in the town.
- 2.5. WLDC is predominantly rural and interspersed with settlements across the area. The district provides an attractive setting for its three market towns of Caistor, Gainsborough and Market Rasen. The district is the 13th most sparsely populated area in England with a population of 95,153 and a density of 82 people per km² based on 2021 census data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The population has increased by 6% since the last census in 2011. Over 23% of the population of West Lindsey in the census are over the retirement age compared to 19% in the rest of the United Kingdom
- 2.6. The remainder of Central Lincolnshire and the West Lindsey district is predominantly rural, characterised by a settlement pattern of villages as well as the smaller towns of Market Rasen and Caistor. As set out above, the average population density is amongst the lowest in lowland England, with the majority of settlements not exceeding a few hundred people.
- 2.7. Collectively, the rural area nonetheless accounts for over half of Central Lincolnshire's population. Functionally, the rural villages typically operate as clusters that share key services, with larger villages acting as local service centres upon which communities rely for basic facilities and as social hubs.
- 2.8. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has a strong presence in the West Lindsey District and the wider Central Lincolnshire area. Active Royal Air Force (RAF) bases at Waddington, Cranwell and Digby make a significant contribution to the area's demographic and economic make up. Former bases have been utilised to deliver new housing and employment development. Following the closure of RAF Scampton and Home Office decision to end its plans to house asylum seekers there, the Council has announced its

own intentions to accelerate a £300 million regeneration plan, along with its development partner. Central Lincolnshire is home to the Red Arrows and its RAF heritage (including Lincolnshire's historic role as the centre of Bomber Command and the neighbouring base for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in East Lindsey) support the expansion for the area's existing visitor economy.

Landscape character

- 2.9. Central Lincolnshire's natural environment is varied and contrasting, characterised by gentle chalk and limestone uplands with low lying fens and fenland. The Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) falls partly in Central Lincolnshire, with its distinctive landscape of rolling hills and nestling villages.
- 2.10. The wider rural landscape of Central Lincolnshire comprises a sweeping character with big skies, and is a highly valued asset, making a significant contribution to local distinctiveness and attractiveness.
- 2.11. The West Lindsey landscape is characterised by a consistent north-south grain, which forms one of its most striking characteristics. The broad valleys of the Trent and the Ancholme/Barlings Eau are subdivided by a narrow Jurassic limestones ridge, known locally as the 'Cliff'. The 'Cliff' is relatively narrow (circa. 5km) and runs the full length of Central Lincolnshire, forming a unifying topographic feature and, as a key factor in the origins and historic development of Lincoln, makes a strong contribution to its present quality and character. The 'Cliff' is a significant local feature, with a west facing scarp and a shallow eastern dip slope that falls towards the Lincoln Clay Vale. In this area field sizes are large and the landscape character is of an open, agricultural landscape with well-spaced field boundaries and long-distance views.
- 2.12. Outside of the urban areas, land use in Central Lincolnshire and West Lindsey in particular is predominantly agricultural with intensive arable crops dominating. Soils are typically fertile and of high quality for agriculture.
- 2.13. West Lindsey and the wider Central Lincolnshire area hosts a wide range of natural habitats, including wetland, woodland, calcareous grassland and remnants of heathland fen, which together provide ecological networks and nodes of sufficient scale to support wildlife adaptation and environmental resilience to climate change.
- 2.14. Biodiversity in the area is experiencing pressure from factors including climate change, habitat fragmentation, development and large scale intensive agriculture. Major landscape-scale initiatives are proposed to restore and enhance the area's ecological networks and corridors.

Socio-Economic

- 2.15. As set out in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, which is the Local Plan adopted by West Lindsey, Central Lincolnshire is located within the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) area and represents roughly 30% of the GLLEP area's population, employment and business base. The draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) notes that Greater Lincolnshire has an economy of £20.7bn with an ambition to grow the Gross Value Added (GVA) by £3.2bn by 2030. The GLLEP area boasts a mix of traditional manufacturing, a comprehensive agri-food sector, energy and services, and is strong in health and care and the visitor economy. In these sectors and others the area benefits from a large number of small businesses – a distinctive feature of the economy.
- 2.16. The GLLEP's priority sectors include; agri-foods, energy and water, health and care, visitor economy and ports and logistics, but this should not diminish the important roles of other

sectors, including manufacturing and engineering, to the local economy. The Central Lincolnshire Authorities will play a key role in the delivery of the vision for most of these sectors.

- 2.17. The Economic Needs Assessment (ENA) (2020) projects the economic growth and job growth to 2040, which in turn was influenced by the LIS and other work being produced by the GLLEP. The ENA highlights that there has been strong growth in recent years, outstripping anticipated growth, and projects forward a growth of approximately 992 jobs per year.

Environment

- 2.18. The district is characterised by large-scale arable farmland and also hosts areas of valuable heathland, grassland, wetland and woodland interests. The most important grassland habitats are found on the chalk escarpment with a high concentration of acid grassland.
- 2.19. To the south and eastern fringes of Gainsborough there lies areas of wet meadow providing habitat for breeding waders such as curlew and redshank. A small meadow in the centre of the Marsh is designated as an SSSI with valuable wet meadow flora.
- 2.20. Water is an important aspect of Central Lincolnshire's environment. The area has a long history of land drainage and flood management, and significant areas of low-lying land are maintained for agriculture by pumped drainage. River flooding is closely controlled through embankments and washlands as part of wider management plans for the main river catchments. Conversely, Lincolnshire is already experiencing pressure on its water resources from increasing trends in consumer and commercial demand, coupled with predicted increases in the frequency and severity of drought due to climate change. Major new infrastructure to supply the Lincoln area with water abstracted from the Trent was completed in July 2014.
- 2.21. Due to its topographical characteristics, the area has a history of land drainage and flood management, and significant areas of low-lying land are maintained for agriculture by pumped drainage. River flooding is closely controlled through embankments and washlands as part of wider management plans for the main river catchments.

Key challenges

- 2.22. West Lindsey District and the wider Central Lincolnshire area is facing a range of challenges. These include the requirement to improve social and economic conditions, including health, housing, jobs and the range and quality of facilities, whilst also ensuring that the environment is improved and that growth does not erode the area's environmental and heritage assets, or increase pressure on natural resources.

3. The Scheme

- 3.1. The description of the Scheme is set out in the supporting Planning Statement and the Environmental Statement (ES).
- 3.2. The Scheme comprises the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array electricity generating facility, comprising:
- solar PV panels;
 - Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS);
 - onsite substations; and
 - associated grid connection infrastructure which will allow for the generation and export of electricity to the proposed National Grid High Marnham Substation.
- 3.3. The infrastructure components for which development consent is sought (development within the Order Limits) includes:
- PV Modules;
 - Mounting structures;
 - Power Conversion Stations;
 - Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS);
 - Onsite Substation and Ancillary Buildings;
 - Low Voltage Distribution Cables;
 - Grid Connection Cables;
 - Fencing, security and ancillary infrastructure;
 - Access Tracks; and
 - Green Infrastructure.
- 3.4. The applicant has secured a connection agreement with National Grid to allow the export of up to 740 megawatts (MW) of electricity to the High Marnham Substation.

4. Decision Making and Policy Framework

Legislation

- 4.1. WLDC recognises the application as one made under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for development that falls within the definition of energy generating stations set out in section 15 of that Act.
- 4.2. The proposed development comprises the construction, operation and decommissioning of solar arrays for the generation of electricity, also including a Battery and Energy Storage System (BESS), the import/export connection to the National grid and onsite converter stations.
- 4.3. National Policy Statements (NPS) EN-1 and EN-1 provide policy for solar photovoltaic energy generation and are therefore designated NPSs that have effect for the proposed application. The OESF is to be determined under section 104 of the PA2008, which states:

“104 Decisions in cases where national policy statement has effect

- (1) *This section applies in relation to an application for an order granting development consent if a national policy statement has effect in relation to the development of the description to which the application relates.*
- (2) *In deciding the application, the Secretary of State must have regard to –*
 - (a) *any national policy statement which has effect in relation to development of the description to which the application relates (a “relevant national policy statement”),*
 - (aa) *the appropriate marine policy statements 9if any), determined in accordance with section 59 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009;*
 - (a) *Any local impact report (within the meaning given by section 60(3) submitted to the Secretary of State before the deadline specified in a notice under section 60(2);*
 - (b) *Any matters prescribed in relation to development of the description to which the application relates, and*
 - (c) *Any other matters which the Secretary of State thinks are both important and relevant to the Secretary of State’s decision.*
- (3) *The Secretary of State must decide the application in accordance with any relevant national policy statement, except to the extent that one or more of subsection (4) to (8) applies.*
- (4) *This subsection applies if the Secretary of State is satisfied that deciding the application in accordance with any relevant national policy statement would lead to the United Kingdom being in breach of any of its international obligations.*

- (5) *This subsection applies if the Secretary of State is satisfied that deciding the application in accordance with any relevant national policy statement would lead to the Secretary of State being in breach of any duty imposed on the Secretary of State by or under any enactment.*
- (6) *This subsection applies if the Secretary of State is satisfied that deciding the application in accordance with any relevant national policy statement would be unlawful by virtue of any enactment.*
- (7) *This subsection applies if the Secretary of State is satisfied that the adverse impact of the proposed development would outweigh its benefits.*
- (8) *This subsection applied if the Secretary of State is satisfied that any condition prescribed for deciding an application otherwise than in accordance with a national policy statement is met.*
- (9) *For the avoidance of doubt, the fact that any relevant national policy statement identifies a location as suitable (or potentially suitable) for a particular description of development does not prevent one or more of subsections (4) to (8) from applying.*

Local Impact Report

- 4.4. WLDC have submitted a Local Impact Report (LIR) relating to the OESF project alongside this Written Representation.
- 4.5. The LIR sets out what WLDC consider to be the key impacts of the scheme that should be given due consideration in the determination of the DCO application as being 'important and relevant' factors.

Other Relevant Matters

Statutory development plan

- 4.6. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP) forms part of the development plan for West Lindsey (replacing the previous Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, adopted in 2017). The Local Plan was adopted on 24th April 2023 and therefore represents an 'up to date' statutory development plan to which significant weight should be afforded in decision making under section 104 of the PA 2008. The key policies relevant to the development are listed below.
 - The Vision for Central Lincolnshire
 - Policy S10: Supporting a Circular Economy
 - Policy S11: Embodied Carbon
 - Policy S14: Renewable energy
 - Policy S15: Protecting Renewable Energy Infrastructure
 - Policy S16: Wider Energy Infrastructure
 - Policy S17: Carbon Sinks
 - Policy S43: Sustainable Rural Tourism

- Policy S53: Design and Amenity
- Policy S54: Health and Wellbeing
- Policy S57: The Historic Environment
- Policy S60: Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy S61: Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains
- Policy S66: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy S67: Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

- 4.7. Whilst the CLLP should be read as a whole as an important and relevant matter, Policy S14 provides the technology specific policy applicable to the OESF project.
- 4.8. Compliance with this policy is considered essential for solar energy generating projects to be granted through the Planning Act 2008 as an important and relevant matter that should be given significant weight under section 105.
- 4.9. Policy S14 affirms a commitment to supporting the transition to a net zero carbon future and seeks to maximise appropriately located renewable energy generation in Central Lincolnshire, with an acknowledgement that such energy generation is likely to be wind and solar developments. The policy is supportive of the deployment of renewable energy schemes where direct, indirect, individual and cumulative impacts on a range of consideration are acceptable.
- 4.10. In order to comply with S14, compliance with the following three tests is required to be demonstrated:
- i. The impacts are acceptable having considered the scale, siting and design, and the consequent impacts on landscape character; visual amenity; biodiversity; geodiversity; flood risk; townscape; heritage assets, their setting and the historic landscape; and highway safety and rail safety; and
 - ii. The impacts are acceptable on aviation and defence navigation system/communications; and
 - iii. The impacts are acceptable on the amenity of sensitive neighbouring uses (including local residents) by virtue of matters such as noise, dust, odour, shadow flicker, air quality and traffic.
- 4.11. Applicable policies within the CLLP are used to test a proposals compliance with test i) above.
- 4.12. For all three criteria, applicants are required to submit robust assessments. Where significant adverse effects are concluded by the decision maker following consideration of such assessments, the effects are to be weighed against the wider benefits of the application.

- 4.13. As part of a planning balance, significant additional weight in favour of the proposal will arise for any proposal which is community-led for the benefit of that community.

In addition to the above, Policy S14 provides additional policy specific for solar based energy proposals. In summary:

- Solar thermal and photovoltaic panels (and associated infrastructure) to be installed on existing property will benefit from a presumption in favour of permission unless there is a clear and demonstrable significant harm arising.
- Proposals for ground based photovoltaics and associated infrastructure, including commercial scale proposals, will be under a presumption in favour unless:
 - There is clear and demonstrable significant harm arising; or
 - The proposal is to take place on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land and does not meet the requirements of policy S67 (BMV Agricultural Land); or

- 4.14. The land is allocated for another purpose in this Local Plan or other statutory based document, and the proposal is not compatible for such other allocation. Other key local plan policies that feed into the consideration of S14 criteria include:

- **Policy S53 ('Design and Amenity')** - requires all development to achieve 'high quality sustainable design that contributes positively to local character, landscape and townscape, and supports diversity, equality and access for all' and that 'good design will be at the centre of every development proposal...'. Policy S53 provides a range of criteria for projects to demonstrate compliance which, although written in a form that relates to a wide range of developments, it includes policy that relates to the OESF project including;
 - Integrating into its surroundings;
 - Relating well to a site's local and wider context to enhancing existing character and distinctiveness to ensure development can satisfactorily assimilated into the surrounding area;
 - Enhancing existing character;
 - Making effective and efficient use of land;
 - Incorporate and retain as far as possible existing natural features;
 - Minimise the need for resources both in construction and operation.
- **Policy S54** requires the potential for achieving positive mental and physical health outcomes to be taken into account when considering all development proposals and requires developers to submit a Health Impact Assessment for non-residential development proposals of 5ha or more. Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has also been published to help guide developers and decision makers on the implementation of policy S54 Health and Wellbeing in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.
- The adopted SPD defines Health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. As well as access to good quality healthcare services and lifestyle choices, there are many factors that affect health and wellbeing. These include the physical and social conditions in which people live, culture, education, housing, transport, employment, crime, income, leisure, and other services. These all influence health in either a positive or negative way, both directly and indirectly. These factors are commonly known as the wider determinants of health." (page 2).

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.15. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the governments planning policies for England. The NPPF does not include policies specific to NSIPs.
- 4.16. The NPPF nonetheless provides guidance on the requirement for good design, promoting healthier communities, conserving the historic environment, conserving the natural environment, sustainable transport and meeting the challenges of climate change.
- 4.17. With regard to conserving and enhancing the natural environment, paragraph 180 states that *“Planning authorities and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*
- a) *Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).”*
- 4.18. WLDC consider the paragraph 174(a) to be a relevant consideration to the examination of the OESF, particularly with regard to indirect impacts upon the designated Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) protected by policy S62 of the adopted development plan.

Other relevant policy.

- 4.19. In addition to the above, WLDC consider the following policy to also be relevant and important for the determination of the application under section 105:
- Powering up Britain (March 2023);
 - The British Energy Security Strategy (2022);
 - The National Infrastructure Strategy (2020);
 - The Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future (2020);
 - A Green Future: Our 25 year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018); and
 - Solar Roadmap – United Kingdom Powered by Solar (2025)

5. Key issues

5.1. The key issues identified by WLDC are set out in the sections below and assessed in terms of their compliance with policy and their acceptability in the context of section 104 of the PA2008.

5.2. The impacts are considered in terms of:

- **Cumulative impacts** with other NSIP solar farm projects;
- **Individual project impacts** (in solus)

Cumulative impacts

5.3. WLDCs key concerns and objections to the OESF relate to its cumulative impact with other NSIP solar electricity generating stations that have either been consented or are awaiting decision.

5.4. There are four other NSIP solar scheme's to which the OESF will add further significant impacts to the West Lindsey District:

Gate Burton Energy Park (531MW) (Order Limits: 824ha approx.) – Consented 12/07/2024

Cottam Solar Project (600MW) (Order Limits: 1450ha approx.) – Consented 05/09/2024

West Burton Solar Project (480MW) (Order Limits: 886ha approx.) – Consented 24/01/2025

Tillbridge Solar Project (500MW) – (Order Limits: 1670ha approx.) - Decision stage

5.5. The OESF Order Limits extend to approximately 1,414ha (14.14km²) and would add a further 750MW of solar development to the existing cumulative baseline. This would result in a total cumulative Order Limits land take of approximately 6,244ha/62.44km² and total generation of 2,861MW / 2.861GW.

5.6. This amount of solar development within a close geographical area is unprecedented and gives rise to significant adverse impacts that have not been experienced on a cumulative basis in England.

5.7. From the commencement of the examination of the first NSIP solar application, WLDC have raised significant concerns regarding the cumulative impacts of all of the projects and the approach to decision making. Whilst NSIP applications are examined and determined on an individual basis with cumulative impacts extending only to recognition that such assessments have been carried out in an ES, WLDCs consistent view is that the applications should have been determined on the basis of their acceptability as a groups of projects. The impacts of all of the NSIPS against the baseline of a rural agricultural environment will be significant and harmful, including the construction phase.

5.8. The overarching policy context for the consideration of cumulative impacts are set out in the relevant NPSs. NPS EN-1 requires the Secretary of State, when considering any proposed development and weighing its adverse impacts against its benefits, to take into account 'its potential adverse impacts....including any long-term and cumulative adverse impacts' (NPS EN-1 para. 4.1.5).

- 5.9. Applicants are required to set out how residual impacts will be compensated for as far as possible, setting out how any mitigation or compensation will be monitored and agreed to ensure success and that action is taken (including adaptive management). Cumulative impacts of multiple developments with residual impacts must also be considered (NPS EN-1 para, 4.2.12).
- 5.10. WLDC's concerns around the potential cumulative construction period is derived from the lifespan of the DCOs that have been granted or sought, and the estimated construction periods cited in the respective project ESs.
- 5.11. The DCO lifespan being sought for projects is 5 years and the estimated construction period is 24 months, aside from the Gate Burton Energy Park which cites a period of 24-36 months.
- 5.12. Based upon these parameters for the 4 NSIPs either consented, at decision stage or in examination, plus the 5th NSIP due to be submitted shortly, a simple 'staggering' of development periods within the 5 year periods for each consents could lead to construction activity occurring up to 2033. There is no control over the commencement of construction aside from that it must do so within 5 years of the Orders coming into force.
- 5.13. The table below helps demonstrate this potential scenario.

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL
NSIP SOLAR FARMS
POTENTIAL PROGNOSIS OF CONSTRUCTION
**24 month construction period assumption*

Key:

DCO granted
Expected decision date
Decision estimated
Construction period

			YEAR											
PROJECT	DCO into force	Est. Construction period (longest)	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035
Gate Burton Energy Park	Aug-24	36 months												
Cottam Solar Project	Sep-24	24 months												
West Burton Solar Project	Jan-25	24 months												
Tillbridge Solar Project	Oct-25	24 months												
One Earth Solar Farm	Dec-26	24 months												

- 5.14. WLDC consider this period to be a significant length of time for residents to endure, and highlight the impact as one that should be considered negatively in the planning balance.
- 5.15. The matters below discuss further specific impacts in more detail.
- Lifespan of the project and its impacts**
- 5.16. The proposed the lifespan of the project is to be for a period of 60 years. This is consistent with the other four NSIP solar schemes in the district, who have either secured or are seeking a consent for this period of time.
- 5.17. NPS EN-3 states that an upper limit of 40 years is typical, although applicants may seek consent without a time-period or for differing time-periods of operation (para. 2.10.65).
- 5.18. The applicant considers the Scheme to constitute a 'temporary' development and have applied this to is assessment of impacts in the ES. This has resulted in the impacts being factored on the basis that they will only be experienced on a temporary basis.

- 5.19. WLDC consider a 60 year timescale to be a significant period time, lasting over several generations. It will result in its impact being no different to that of permanent development. The OESF would exist, potentially alongside other cumulative NSIP solar projects, up to and beyond the year 2090.
- 5.20. To reduce or downgrade impacts on the basis that 60 years is 'temporary' results in a false outcome. WLDC consider that impacts should have been assessed on the basis that they were effectively 'permanent'. All assessments should have been carried out on the basis that the impacts would be permanent to reflect the time period over which they would be experienced.
- 5.21. WLDC considers that the application should be determined on the basis that the impacts of the OESF on communities and the environment are permanent in planning terms.

Landscape and visual

- 5.22. WLDC raises objections to the Scheme due to its cumulative impact, alongside other NSIP solar projects, on landscape character and the visual effects people will experience in the district.
- 5.23. WLDC notes that the applicant has provided a drawing that identified the approximate location of other projects through numbered circles (Figure 18.9 / Drawing Number EN10159/APP/6.20/18.9). Whilst serving as a useful reference, WLDC wishes to see a drawing that shows the true extent of solar farm coverage in the area. Were such a drawing produced with, for example, the Order Limits/red-line boundaries of other projects shown, the extent of land lost to solar farm development and the proximity to each other would be revealed. WLDC considers that this exercise is required in order for the cumulative impacts of the OESF project to be properly considered.

Landscape Character

- 5.24. WLDC consider that it is essential that, when considering the acceptability of the Scheme, it must be done so with regard to the cumulative impact with other solar NSIP projects either consented or awaiting decision in the area.
- 5.25. NPS EN-3 (paragraph 2.10.257) states that the Secretary of State will consider the landscape and visual impact of any proposed solar PV farm, taking account of the effect of the development on landscape character, together with the possible cumulative effect with any existing or proposed development.
- 5.26. CLLP Policy S14 states that renewable energy schemes will be supported where impacts on landscape character and visual amenity are acceptable. To establish compliance in terms of 'acceptability', the impacts must be tested against other applicable policies in the Local Plan.
- 5.27. **Policy 53 is an applicable policy that must be satisfied to comply with Policy S14. S54** requires all development to achieve 'high quality sustainable design that contributes positively to local character, landscape and townscape, and supports diversity, equality and access for all' and that 'good design will be at the centre of every development proposal...'. Policy S53 provides a range of criteria for projects to demonstrate compliance which, although written in a form that relates to a wide range of developments, it includes policy that relates to the OESF proposal including;
- Integrating into its surroundings;

- Relating well to a site's local and wider context to enhancing existing character and distinctiveness to ensure development can satisfactorily assimilated into the surrounding area;
- Enhancing existing character;
- Making effective and efficient use of land;
- Incorporate and retain as far as possible existing natural features;
- Minimise the need for resources both in construction and operation

- 5.28. In assessing compliance with the above criteria, the supporting ES does not provide an assessment beyond a study area boundary of 2km. As a consequence, there is no formal assessment of the magnitude of the cumulative landscape character change within the West Lindsey District.
- 5.29. The landscape of West Lindsey is characterised by the large, open agricultural fields. The implementation of the cumulative solar farm projects will have a marked change on that landscape character area, being wholly contrary to the defining and valued character of the Till Vale landscape character area.
- 5.30. The erosion of this landscape through the quantum of development being imposed is unprecedented and will cause material harm for over 60 years. The impacts will not be assimilated into the landscape
- 5.31. The extent and amount of land that will host alien solar farm development within the district, coupled with the lack of assessment, fails to comply with NPS EN-1 and CLLP policies S14 and S53.

Visual effects

- 5.32. The OESF will be experienced as part of cumulative series of NSIP scale solar farms within the district. It will represent the first project encountered when travelling into the district from the south-east, following which the spread of solar farm development extends beyond Gainsborough to the northern extent of the Cottam Solar Project (a distance of circa. 24km/15 miles)
- 5.33. The sequential experience of solar farm infrastructure by communities and visitor travelling through the landscape will be harmful, with increasingly limited visual relief spanning distance of over 13 miles. The OESF will add to the existing impacts extending the area of impact.

Summary

- 5.34. The cumulative impact caused by the addition of the OESF to the cumulative projects represents a clear tipping-point to which the landscape character is unable to reasonably accommodate further change as a consequence of solar farm development. .
- 5.35. The OESF does not comply with relevant NPS' and nor the CLLP policy with regard to its impacts on landscape character and visual effects.

Construction traffic

- 5.36. The impact and management of cumulative construction traffic has been an issue that WLDC has consistently raised as a significant concern.

- 5.37. NPS EN-1 recognises that NSIP proposals can have a variety of substantial impacts on the surrounding transport infrastructure (para. 5.14.1). The Secretary of State should seek to ensure that the mitigation of transport impacts, including during construction, have been considered (para. 5.14.18).
- 5.38. NPS EN-1 further states that, where the proposed mitigation measures are insufficient to reduce the impact on the transport infrastructure to acceptable levels, the Secretary of State should consider requirements to mitigate adverse impacts on transport networks arising from the development (para. 5.14.19)
- 5.39. NPS EN-3 states the importance of assessing various potential routes to the Order Limits for the delivery of materials and components during the construction period and the suitability of access roads for construction vehicles.
- 5.40. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. It also states that development should minimise the scope for conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.
- 5.41. The Scheme proposes two construction vehicle access routes to the site (APP-136, 6.21 Appendix 12.2 Transport Assessment, Figures 3-1 and 3-2).
- 5.42. Proposed Access Route 1 begins at ABP Immingham, and uses the A180, M180, A15, A46, A57 and A1133 to access the site.
- 5.43. Proposed Access Route 2 begins at Goole Docks and proceeds to the site using the A161, M62, M18, A1(M), A1 and A57 to access the western site access.
- 5.44. The cumulative projects Gate Burton, Cottam, West Burton and Tillbridge solar farm NSIPs all utilise the A15 for the delivery of construction traffic.
- 5.45. The OESF project does not assess the additional construction traffic that it will impose on the local highway network cumulatively with the other NSIP solar projects. This is particularly relevant when considering the impacts of construction traffic using the A15, which is a highway also to be used by other solar projects. The Gate Burton and West Burton solar projects will also be utilising the A57.
- 5.46. It is therefore very clear that construction traffic associated with multiple NSIP scale solar farm projects could be using the A15 and the A57 during the same periods.
- 5.47. The reason given by the applicant in excluding the Cottam Solar Project and the Tillbridge Solar Project from a cumulative assessment was that it would not coincide with the same construction period as the OESF. This assertion is incorrect as the five year lifespan of the DCOs either granted, or sought to be granted, would allow for all of the projects to be constructed at the same time. As none of the consented NSIP solar farms have even yet to submit details to discharge their 'requirements' the likelihood of concurrent construction traffic using local highways increases.
- 5.48. As data for all cumulative projects is in the public domain, an assessment of the potential cumulative traffic impacts should be carried out. As submitted, there is insufficient detail to robustly assess these impacts.
- 5.49. Should the applicant amend their application by committing to using Proposed Access Route 2 only, the adverse cumulative impacts along the A15 and the A57 within the West

Lindsey District would be avoided. Such a commitment would minimise the impacts upon communities in terms of disruption, noise and air quality impacts, and additional traffic management that could extend for a period of 5-10 years should all five NSIP projects overlap/stagger their construction phases.

- 5.50. The developers promoting the other solar NSIP projects of Gate Burton, Cottam, West Burton and Tillbridge, worked collaboratively to produce a 'Joint Report on Interrelationships'. This report set out the respective impacts of each project, including cumulatively, and provided commitment to joint working to minimise impacts during construction. This included construction traffic. The OESF has not engaged, however, with other developers and there remains no commitment to work collaboratively to minimise impacts for communities and visitors.
- 5.51. The potential cumulative impacts of construction traffic on the amenity of local residents and visitors, and the lack of full assessment and commitment to collaborative working with cumulative projects falls contrary to NPS EN-1 and CLLP policy.

Tourism

- 5.52. WLDC considers that there is potential for the proposal to have a negative impact upon the tourism economy within the West Lindsey District.
- 5.53. NPS EN-1 states that the Secretary of State should have regard to the socio-economic impacts of new energy infrastructure identified by the applicant and from any other sources that the Secretary of State considers to be both relevant and important to its decision (para. 5.13.9).
- 5.54. The cumulative impacts of all of the NSIP solar projects in the district during construction upon tourist accommodation availability and reducing the attractiveness of the area for visitors is a key concern and an adverse impacts
- 5.55. The likelihood of construction phase of the five NSIP projects occurring concurrently, potentially up to a period of between five and ten years, will result in the current tourist accommodation being saturated to meet this demand.
- 5.56. This would have an adverse impact upon the tourism sector through the reduction in the availability of accommodation for tourists and visitors to the West Lindsey district. Due to the potential lengthy cumulative construction period of a number of years, the ability for tourist accommodation businesses to recover once construction is complete is unknown and it is feared it would take significant time to do so.
- 5.57. The tourist industry is already engaged in recovery following the impacts of Covis 'lockdown' periods and requires capacity for tourists to re-establish growth.
- 5.58. Whilst the influx of construction workers using existing accommodation could be deemed to have a temporary positive economic impacts, it does not take account of the wide linked-industry benefits that is inherent to the tourism sector. Visitors to the district staying in local accommodation will also, for example, visit local destinations, attractions, events and local services.
- 5.59. With construction traffic and associated works being carried out during the summer months and clashing with peak agricultural traffic (harvest) and the Lincolnshire Show, visitors and tourists will experience considerable frustration particularly those using the A15 and the nearby highway network.

- 5.60. The availability of accommodation for visitors to the district are likely to be significantly reduced over a long period of time during the construction phases of the five NSIP projects cumulatively. This will have an adverse impact upon the wider tourist sector in the district, materially affecting its ability to recover from the 'Covid' period and achieve growth ambitions.

Agricultural land

- 5.61. The significant impacts caused by the cumulative loss of agricultural land available for the production of food.
- 5.62. Paragraph 5.11.12 of the NPS (EN-1) outlines that applicants should 'seek to minimise impacts on the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification) and preferably use land in areas of poorer quality (grades 3b, 4 and 5) except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations'.
- 5.63. Under Paragraph 5.11.34 of the NPS (EN-1), the decision maker should ensure that 'applicants do not site their scheme on the best and most versatile agricultural land without justification The SoS should also 'take into account the economic and other benefits of that land'.
- 5.64. The NPPF also states that BMV is land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification and recognises the economic and other benefits of such land (para. 187). Footnote 65 states that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.
- 5.65. Policy S67: Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land of the CLLP 2023 states that significant development resulting in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land will only be supported if:
- The need is clearly established;
 - The benefits outweigh the need to protect such land, when taking into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land;
 - The impacts of the proposal upon ongoing agricultural operations have been minimised through the use of appropriate design solutions; and
 - Once the development has ceased its useful life then the land should be returned to its former use.
- 5.66. WLDC wishes to emphasise the importance of preserving agricultural land, particularly Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land, in line with national and local planning policies. The council expects that any development on such land must demonstrate clear economic value to the district and ensure restoration to its original agricultural use. This is crucial given the land's contribution to the local economy, environment, and cultural identity.
- 5.67. The proposed OESF (solar farm) project involves the loss of agricultural land classified as Grades 2 and 3a—categories considered BMV. Although the grazing of livestock alongside solar panels is technically considered food production, WLDC argues that this alone is insufficient to meet policy requirements unless it is clearly demonstrated that the land will remain genuinely accessible for agricultural tenants throughout the project's 60-year lifespan.

- 5.68. Unlike other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), which have largely avoided BMV land, the OESF proposal places significant infrastructure—including solar panels, a substation, and a battery energy storage system (BESS)—directly on high-quality agricultural land. This approach, according to WLDC, fails to prioritize the protection of valuable farmland and disregards planning policy preferences.
- 5.69. The cumulative effect of removing substantial areas of productive land from food production is seen as a significant and unacceptable negative impact. WLDC concludes that the scheme does not adequately mitigate or justify the loss of BMV land and therefore does not align with established planning principles.

Maintenance and replacement

- 5.70. WLDC has significant concerns regarding unassessed environmental impacts associated with the long-term maintenance of the OESF solar project, particularly regarding the replacement and disposal of infrastructure components such as solar panels and battery energy storage systems (BESS). The draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) grants broad powers for maintenance, allowing piecemeal replacement of components over the project's 60-year lifespan. While individual replacement events may fall below Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) thresholds, their cumulative effect could be significant.
- 5.71. WLDC notes that solar panels typically require replacement after around 20 years, and BESS will also need full replacement. However, there is currently insufficient recycling capacity in West Lindsey, Lincolnshire, or even the UK to manage this waste. The application documents lack clarity on how replaced materials will be handled or recycled, and no baseline or future recycling strategy is provided.
- 5.72. Given that multiple Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) may follow similar replacement patterns without oversight, WLDC is concerned about the potential for adverse environmental and community impacts. The council calls for greater transparency and control over maintenance-related waste to ensure long-term sustainability and compliance with environmental standards.

One Earth Solar Project – individual project impacts

Need case

- 5.73. WLDC acknowledges the urgent need to deploy infrastructure for the generation of electricity from renewable sources as set out in NPSs EN-1 and EN-3.
- 5.74. The principle of deploying renewable energy generation infrastructure is also supported by policy S14 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023.
- 5.75. WLDC recognizes the OESF as a 'Critical National Priority' (CNP) under NPS EN-1, which typically means the need for such projects outweighs residual effects. However, WLDC argues that the cumulative impacts of this project, combined with four other NSIP solar projects in West Lindsey, are 'exceptional'. These impacts will last at least 60 years and significantly alter the district's landscape character, creating a solar farm landscape throughout the district that will be experienced by residents and visitors. WLDC emphasises that this situation is unprecedented, with no other DCO decision having to consider such extensive cumulative impacts during construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning. The eradication of the existing landscape character over such a large area is deemed 'exceptional' by WLDC, and we believe this must be taken into account when assessing the project's acceptability against policy, particularly due to its unique and significant cumulative impacts on the landscape.

Project design

- 5.76. West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) has reviewed the design approach of the OESF solar project, as outlined in the submitted documents, including the 'Design Approach Document' and 'Outline Design Parameters'. While national policy (NPS EN-1) and local policy (S14) both emphasize the importance of good design in renewable energy developments—particularly in mitigating adverse impacts on landscape and visual amenity—WLDC finds the OESF design lacking in this regard.
- 5.77. The council acknowledges that solar farms often require specific site characteristics, but stresses that developers must still minimize visual and environmental impacts. However, the OESF project places solar panels, a substation, and a battery energy storage system (BESS) in highly visible locations, including a large open field east of the A1133. These installations are clearly visible from within West Lindsey and the neighbouring Newark and Sherwood District, raising concerns about their visual prominence and the lack of integration with the surrounding landscape.
- 5.78. WLDC argues that the design fails to demonstrate how national and local design policies were meaningfully applied. The placement of large infrastructure on open, high-quality agricultural land—areas that policy suggests should be avoided—reflects a flawed design strategy. The council believes that better design choices could have reduced the visual and environmental impact, such as placing bulkier infrastructure in less exposed areas or using natural features for screening.
- 5.79. Additionally, the layout places solar panels directly up to field boundaries, creating a harsh visual edge and reducing the landscape's natural character. WLDC expected the design to include buffer zones to soften the visual impact and preserve the prominence of field boundaries, especially from key viewpoints like the A1133 and nearby public rights of way.
- 5.80. In conclusion, WLDC finds the current design approach inadequate in addressing landscape and visual concerns and believes alternative design strategies could have significantly reduced the scheme's adverse impacts.

Landscape and visual

- 5.81. West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) has expressed significant concerns regarding the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed OESF solar farm. The council believes the development will result in substantial and adverse effects on the district's landscape character and visual amenity, affecting both local communities and visitors.
- 5.82. In assessing these impacts, WLDC has referred to national policy statements NPS EN-1 and EN-2, as well as the adopted Local Plan. NPS EN-1 acknowledges that most nationally significant infrastructure projects will have some adverse landscape effects but stresses the importance of careful design to minimise harm. It requires developers to consider siting, operational constraints, and mitigation measures. Similarly, Local Plan policy S14 mandates that renewable energy proposals must demonstrate that their direct, indirect, individual, and cumulative impacts are acceptable, particularly in terms of scale, siting, and design.
- 5.83. WLDC argues that the OESF project fails to meet these standards. The substation and battery energy storage system (BESS) are proposed in highly visible, open locations within West Lindsey, while solar panels are sited close to field boundaries and public highways. This layout results in infrastructure that is visually intrusive and inconsistent with the rural character of the area.
- 5.84. Specific viewpoints highlight these concerns. From Viewpoint 2a, located on higher ground to the west, the solar panels will interrupt long-distance views toward Lincoln Cathedral—a Grade I listed building—within one of the most sensitive landscape character areas identified in the West Lindsey Landscape Character Assessment. Viewpoint 4, from the A1133 site entrance, reveals plans for a solid wooden fence that WLDC considers inappropriate for the rural setting, further degrading the landscape during the multi-year construction period.
- 5.85. The introduction of solar panels, the substation, and BESS into large, open agricultural fields will erode the area's openness and rural identity. The dark, solid appearance of the panels will be particularly noticeable from the A1133 and nearby public rights of way, creating a stark contrast with the existing landscape.
- 5.86. Viewpoint 24 looks northwards along the Trent Valley LCA. As the Landscape Character Assessment indicates (page 19) development on the low lying west of the A1133 would be prominent and not easily accommodated without detracting from the gentle transition to the open, flat farmland on the banks of the River Trent. WLDC is of the view that the proposal will create such a prominent development feature which would be clearly visible in the landscape.
- 5.87. WLDC questions why the project has not been designed to minimise these effects, especially given the visibility of the site from elevated public viewpoints. The council believes that alternative design choices could have significantly reduced the visual and landscape impacts.
- 5.88. To address these concerns, WLDC recommends several mitigation measures:
- Increasing the setback of solar panels from the A1133 boundary.
 - Relocating the substation and BESS further east, onto lower ground and closer to existing woodland, to reduce visibility.

- Enhancing the western site boundary with additional tree and hedgerow planting using native species such as maple, hawthorn, ash, and oak. This planting should be implemented through the Landscape Environmental Management Plan (LEMP) and ensure continuous screening, particularly near gaps like the layby south of the site entrance.

5.89. In conclusion, WLDC maintains that the OESF project, as currently designed, will cause significant and avoidable harm to the landscape character and visual amenity of the West Lindsey District. The council urges the applicant to revise the design and implement stronger mitigation measures in line with national and local policy requirements.

Agricultural land

- 5.90. WLDC strongly objects to the proposed loss of agricultural land—particularly Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land (classified as Grades 2 and 3a)—as part of the OESF solar farm development. The council argues that the scheme would result in the long-term removal of approximately 660.9 hectares of high-quality farmland from food production, which it considers a significant and adverse impact.
- 5.91. National Policy Statement (NPS) EN-3 advises that solar projects should avoid BMV land where possible, favouring lower-grade land. Similarly, Local Plan policies S14 and S67 reinforce the need to protect BMV land, only permitting its use when strict criteria are met. These include demonstrating a clear need for the development, proving that no suitable lower-grade land is available, and ensuring that the benefits of the proposal outweigh the loss of productive land. Additionally, any development should minimise disruption to ongoing agricultural operations and commit to restoring the land after the project ends.
- 5.92. WLDC contends that the OESF application fails to meet these requirements. The applicant has not sufficiently justified why BMV land must be used, particularly for infrastructure like the battery energy storage system (BESS), when lower-grade land is available nearby. The justification offered—primarily the national need for renewable energy and the project's 60-year “temporary” lifespan—is seen by WLDC as inadequate. The council argues that a 60-year period is effectively permanent in terms of agricultural impact, removing land from food production for multiple generations.

Furthermore, WLDC believes the project could have been designed more sensitively to avoid BMV land without compromising its contribution to national renewable energy targets. The council maintains that the current approach disregards both national and local planning policy and represents a missed opportunity to balance energy development with long-term food security and agricultural sustainability.

Traffic and transport

- 5.93. WLDC raises significant concerns regarding the impacts of construction traffic on its communities and environment.
- 5.94. As discussed above, the cumulative impact of the addition of construction traffic generated by the OESF to the same highway network being used by four other NSIP solar projects will give rise to significant traffic management, delay and frustration over a period that could stretch between five and ten years.
- 5.95. WLDC considers the use of the ‘Proposed Access Route 1’ which begins at ABP Immingham, progresses on the A180/M180 onto the A15 south, and then to A46 at Lincoln and using the A57 to the site, to give rise to significant impacts. This is both in terms of the impacts cumulatively, and the impacts of the OESF individually in using local roads through the West Lindsey district to access the site in its south-western corner.

- 5.96. WLDC considers that the Scheme should use 'Proposed Access Route 2' as a route for construction traffic. Such an approach would utilise major motorway and A-class roads, minimising the use of local roads to access the site,
- 5.97. WLDC also question why the Scheme is proposing two construction access points in close proximity to each other from the A1133. There does not appear to be a compelling reason to remove hedgerows forming the field boundary to create this access. The use of a single access would minimise the environmental harm caused and WLDC would welcome such an amendment to the OESF project.

Tourism

- 5.98. WLDC identifies significant potential impacts on the tourism sector within the district as a consequence of the scheme. WLDC considers that there will be a long-term impact on tourism as a result of the Scheme during the construction phase.
- 5.99. The visitor economy is a significant and growing sector within West Lindsey. The area is an attractive, peaceful rural area which combines an outstanding natural environment with historic villages in close proximity to the City of Lincoln. Lincolnshire's visitor economy is worth £2.4bn (STEAM data Lincolnshire County Council), with the sector supporting 30,000 jobs and a far reaching supply chain across the county. Food and drink spending alone generates £44m into the local economy, with recreation adding £18m and retail contributing £59m. The visitor economy is a significant sector for people's livelihoods.
- 5.100. The impact of Covid lockdowns has been severe. Lincolnshire has experienced a 52% reduction in all tourism spending (STEAM data 2020), with full time jobs being reduced by half from 2,500 jobs to just over 1,200. There has been a 52% reduction in visitor numbers and a 50% reduction on the number of visitor days. Food and drink spend fell from £44m to £21m (reduction of £13m) and retail spend fell from £59m to £29m a reduction of £20m). Recreational spend reduced by £10m to £8m. Overall, local tourism businesses have experienced a reduction of over £100m from their revenue.
- 5.101. Reflective of the defining agricultural character and culture of West Lindsey, one of the key tourist events is the Lincolnshire Show, held annually at the Lincolnshire Showground. The show is a flagship event for the area, with over 60,000 visitors and 500 exhibitors each year. The success of the Lincolnshire Show is strongly reliant upon the local tourism sector accommodating the visitor demand it creates.
- 5.102. Forecasts have predicted that it will take a timescale of up to 2025/26 for businesses in the sector to recover to pre-Covid levels, based on the assumption that no material externalities will compromise this recovery.
- 5.103. The influx of construction workers will materially decrease the availability of tourist accommodation, which will be further exacerbated on a cumulative basis with other DCO solar projects within West Lindsey.
- 5.104. The significant reduction in the availability of tourist accommodation will, in WLDC's view, result in visitors seeking accommodation in different parts of the region, which will have a direct and indirect effect on tourism in the district.
- 5.105. Once the construction period for all projects is complete (which will occur for a number of years), there is no certainty that the tourism sector will recover to its former level and, if so, how long this would take.
- 5.106. The OESF project will have a significant negative impact on the local tourism sector, causing damage to its image and recovery.

Cultural heritage

- 5.107. The Royal Observer Corps Roman Fort Scheduled Monument (List Entry Number 1003608) is located to the west of the OESF Order Limits. The Scheduled Monument is a 1st century Roman vexillation fortress sitting upon the ridge to the east of the River Trent. To the south lies the remains of two Roman marching camps and, immediately to the north, lies a Royal Observer Corps Monitoring Post. The purpose of the designation is due to the importance of
- 5.108. The monument is designated for the following reasons:
- Period:** the fortress and camps date from the 1st century AD, during the military conquest of Britannia by the Roman Army, and are highly representative of this initial phase of the Roman conquest and occupation of Britain;
- Rarity:** Vexillation fortresses form a rare subset of Roman defensive sites;
- Survival:** Three sides of the fortress survive, complete with outworks and internal features. The two camps survive as the northern arm of the defensive circuit;
- Potential:** The fortress and camps remain unexcavated and contain considerable potential to inform on the nature of the Roman Army in the early days of the occupation of Britannia.
- 5.109. The Infrastructure Planning (Decisions) Regulations 2010 requires decision makers to have regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of a scheduled monument.
- 5.110. Section 5.9 of NPS EN-1 recognises that the construction, operation and decommissioning of energy infrastructure has the potential to result in adverse impacts on the historic environment. The historic environment includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interactions between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, landscapes and planted or managed fauna.
- 5.111. NPS EN-1 requires Applicants to fully assess the significance of heritage assets affected by a proposed development and ensure that the extent of the impact can be adequately understood from the application and its supporting documents (para. 5.9.12).
- 5.112. In decision making, NPS EN-1 states that the Secretary of State should seek to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposed development, including development affecting the setting of a heritage asset (para. 5.9.22). In considering the impact of a proposed development on any heritage asset, the Secretary of State should give considerable important and weight to the desirability of preserving all heritage assets, with any harm or loss of significance requiring clear and convincing justification (para. 5.9.28).
- 5.113. Where substantial harm (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset (including scheduled monuments), the Secretary of State should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm to, or loss of, significance is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that harm or loss (para. 5.9.31)

- 5.114. Where a proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (para. 5.9.31)
- 5.115. NPS EN-3 provides specific policy relating to the impacts of solar PV generation project on the historic environment (Section 2.10). Key policy stated includes:
- Solar PV development on the historic environment will require expert assessment in most cases and may have effect both above and below ground (para. 2.10.107);
 - As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large-scale solar farms which, depending on their scale, design and prominence, may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset (para. 2.10.118).
- 5.116. CLLP Policy S57 requires development to protect, conserve and seek opportunities to enhance the historic environment. In instances where a development proposal would affect the significance of a heritage asset (both designated or non-designated), including any contribution made by its setting, the applicant will be required to describe and assess the significance of the asset, including its setting; identify the impact of the proposed works on the significance and special character of the asset, including its setting; and provide a clear justification for the works so that the harm can be weighed against public benefits.
- 5.117. The applicant has carried out a assessment of the impact of the Scheme on the Scheduled Monument. The assessment concludes that there would be a very low magnitude of impacts to the wider setting of the Scheduled Monument, which is a minor neutral effect (not significant) in the short and medium term. This conclusion is reached due to the assessment view that the solar arrays would be low-lying and the strategic role of the asset in the landscape would remain.
- 5.118. Notwithstanding the conclusions of the applicant's assessment, the OESF would be readily visible from the asset, which would have an adverse impact upon the view outwards to the east. This will include solar panels and potentially the substation and BESS.
- 5.119. Due to the historic function of the asset, its relationship with the surrounding landscape is considered to be an important part of its setting. To assist with understanding the impact in this regard, it is considered that an additional viewpoint should be provided from the observer corps. post, as it represents a designated viewpoint that utilises the same topography as the fort, contributing to its significance. This view has also been expressed by Historic England.
- 5.120. Whilst there the conclusions reached by the applicant are not contended at this stage, the submission of this further information would enable a robust assessment to be made against relevant policy to determine the acceptability of the Scheme's impacts on the Scheduled Monument.

Maintenance and replacement

- 5.121. It is not clear to WLDC how the replacement of infrastructure (project components) has been accounted for in the assessment. The assessment does not justify or reason the degradation rates or whether degradation could be accelerated by climate change.

- 5.122. Being unable to identify the likely failure rate of panels and the requirement to replace BESS and substation infrastructure during the lifespan of the consent, leaves the potential likely impacts during the operational phase unclear.
- 5.123. The wide scope of the definition of 'maintenance' in the dDCO has the effect of allowing a developer to replace a whole NSIP project over its lifespan. The application states that panels, BESS and other associated development will need to be replaced at least once during the project, which have the potential for significant adverse environmental effects. This will be exacerbated when the need to re-place and re-construct applies to all four NSIPs cumulatively.
- 5.124. There remains no mechanism for WLDC to consider the impacts of 'maintenance' and place any controls on what will be decommissioning and construction activity throughout the operations phase of the Scheme. The application is unclear in providing details on the approach to managing waste from 'maintenance' activities.

BESS & fire safety

- 5.125. WLDC acknowledges the Outline Battery Safety Management Plan submitted as part of the application to identify the fire safety risks associated with the BESS and to explain the measures proposed to mitigate those risks.
- 5.126. WLDC maintains concerns regarding the risk of fire from BESS infrastructure and the effectiveness of processes to ensure that events are avoided and/or dealt with in a manner that provides a high level of protection to communities and the environment.
- 5.127. WLDC expects the applicant to work closely with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service to provide all necessary information regarding the installation of the Scheme, including site design features, to facilitate hazard and risk analysis studies. Such engagement should also ensure that comprehensive risk management and emergency response plans are developed, to be achieved through the sharing of detailed site designs at as early a stage as possible.
- 5.128. Due to the importance of this risk to the communities and environment in the district, WLDC requests that it is included as a consultee body in the approval of the dDCO requirement number 7 'Battery safety management plan'.

WLDC Values

- 5.129. WLDCs 'Vision', established through its Corporate Plan 2023-2027, is "West Lindsey is a great place to be where people, businesses and communities can thrive and reach their full potential". The WLDC 'vision' is to be achieved through the implementation of 'Core Values', which includes 'To have integrity in everything we do'.
- 5.130. The above 'vision' and 'values' apply to all WLDC activities and responsibilities, including planning related duties. With regard to its role as a relevant Local Authority for the examination and determination of the OESF project, WLDC wishes to ensure that the proposed development, if consented, would be constructed, operated and decommissioned in a manner that satisfies those values.
- 5.131. WLDC would welcome confirmation from the applicant, OESF, that all aspects of the project, including organisation values, use of human resources, supply chain management and approach to engagement with local communities will be governed by appropriate values and ethics.
- 5.132. The draft Development Consent Order

6. Requirements

- 6.1. The dDCO defines WLDC as a ‘relevant planning authority’ for the purpose of approving the following DCO ‘Requirements’:
- i. Requirement 3 – phasing of the authorised development and date of final decommissioning);
 - ii. Requirement 4 – requirement for written approval
 - iii. Requirement 5 – detailed design approval
 - iv. Requirement 6 – community liaison group
 - v. Requirement 8 – landscape and ecology management plan
 - vi. Requirement 9 – biodiversity net gain
 - vii. Requirement 10 – fencing and other means of enclosure
 - viii. Requirement 13 – construction environmental management plan
 - ix. Requirement 14 – operational environmental management plan
 - x. Requirement 16 – operational noise
 - xi. Requirement 17 – skills, supply chain and employment
 - xii. Requirement 20 – decommissioning and restoration
 - xiii. Requirement 21 – ground conditions
- 6.2. The ‘Requirements’ that are not specified for approval by WLDC are (to be approved by Lincolnshire County Council and Nottinghamshire County Council:
- i. Requirement 7 – battery safety management plan
 - ii. Requirement 11 – surface water drainage
 - iii. Requirement 12 – archaeology
 - iv. Requirement 15 – construction traffic management plan
 - v. Requirement 18 – public rights of way management plan
 - vi. Requirement 19 – soil management plan
- 6.3. WLDC agrees with the above responsibilities for the approval of DCO ‘Requirements’, however would additionally wish to be consulted on the following as matters that have impacts on the communities of West Lindsey:
- i. Requirement 7 – battery safety management plan
 - ii. Requirement 15 – construction traffic management plan.
- 6.4. Requirement 20 currently lacks a mechanism to require decommissioning if the project ceases to generate energy prior. Given that, in this scenario, the harms would remain without the benefits of the project we request a mechanism is added to ensure decommissioning should generation cease prior to 60 years following final commissioning.
- Schedule 15 - Article 45: Procedure for discharge of requirements**
- 6.5. WLDC is in the position of potentially being responsible for the approval of DCO requirements relating to five solar NSIP projects, which all may feasibly be seeking such approvals on similar timescales.

- 6.6. The likely volume, technical complexity and requirement to consult external bodies will place considerable time pressures on WLDC to assess important details that will affect the communities and environment of the district for over half a century.
- 6.7. In light of these pressures, WLDC wishes to see the following amendments to Schedule 15:
- That WLDC must give notice to the undertaker (applicant) if its decision on the application within a period of **13 weeks** beginning with the later of-
 - a) The day immediately following that on which the application is received by the authority;
 - b) The day immediately following that on which further information has been supplied by the undertaker under paragraph 3 (of Schedule 15); or
 - c) Such longer period that is agreed in writing by the undertaker and the relevant planning authority
- 6.8. The increase in this time period from 10 to 13 weeks is considered proportionate to enable WLDC to carry-out its duties in the public interest.

7. Planning balance

- 7.1. The application falls to be determined in accordance with section 104 of the PA2008.
- 7.2. WLDC raises significant objections to the project; key issues being the cumulative impact on the landscape and visual amenity and construction impacts, and the impact of the project in solus on landscape character and visual effects.
- 7.3. WLDC recognises that the Scheme would help meet a national need for additional electricity generating capacity, and this accords with the UK's energy policy to decarbonise electricity generation and deliver security of supply.
- 7.4. The cumulative circumstances of this proposal being determined alongside three other NSIP solar projects results in unprecedented cumulative impacts in construction, operation and decommissioning.
- 7.5. WLDC concludes that that proposal fails to accord with the relevant NPSs, the NPPF, the adopted Local Plan and adopted Neighbourhood Plans with regard to its cumulative impacts and the impact on landscape character and visual effects/amenity.
- 7.6. WLDC consequently objects to the OESF project and invites the SoS to refuse development consent.

Positive impacts

- EN-1 delivery of low carbon electricity generation (in solus) (operation)
- Aligns with strategic policy (in solus) (operation)
- Mitigation delivered through the LEMP (in solus) (construction and operation)
- Carbon benefits over the lifespan (in solus) (operation)
- Additional permissive rights of way (in solus) (operation)

Negative impacts

- Landscape and visual – impacts on landscape character (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Sequential effects through the landscape (cumulative) (construction and operation)
- Design up against field boundaries (in solus) (operation)
- Visible and conspicuous BESS/SS – inc from the prominent PROW in area (in solus) (construction and operation)
- Loss of BMV land (in solus) (construction and operation)
- Strategic construction traffic (cumulative and in solus) (construction)
- Access points – numbers (in solus) (construction)
- Tourism (cumulative and in solus) (construction)

- Impacts of construction cumulatively with other projects with a lack of co-ordination during construction (cumulative) (construction)
- Scope of 'maintenance' powers enabling significant replacement / re-powering and waste/recycling (cumulative and in solus) (operation)

Neutral impacts

- Biodiversity (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Hydrology (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Glint and glare(cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Buried heritage (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Air quality (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)
- Noise and vibration (cumulative and in solus) (construction and operation)

**If you would like a copy of this document in large print, audio, Braille or in another language:
Please telephone 01427 676676 or email
customer.services@west-lindsey.gov.uk**



West Lindsey District Council
Guildhall, Marshall's Yard
Gainsborough
Lincolnshire, DN21 2NA

Agenda Item 6d



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

Tuesday, 15 July 2025

Subject: WLDC Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030

Report by:	Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Contact Officer:	James Makinson-Sanders Economic Growth Team Manager James.ms@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To present the West Lindsey Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 (and draft Action Plan) for approval.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- (1) Prosperous Communities Committee approve the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 (and draft Action Plan).
- (2) Prosperous Communities Committee note that an annual infographic update on progress against the strategy is circulated via the Members Newsletter.
- (3) Prosperous Communities Committee disband the Economic Growth Strategy Task and Finish Group.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: There are **no** direct legal implications linked to the composition of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030. Legal implications may be identified for specific interventions/projects identified as part of the delivery of the Action Plan, but those will be subject to separate governance as part of business case development, committee approval and the delivery process for that specific activity.

Where there is a requirement to commission and/or procure goods and services - this will be subject to WLDC's agreed procurement and contract procedures, requiring corporate sign-off. Subsidy Controls will be observed where required.

Financial: FIN/46/26/PC/SST

There are **no** financial implications arising from the composition of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030.

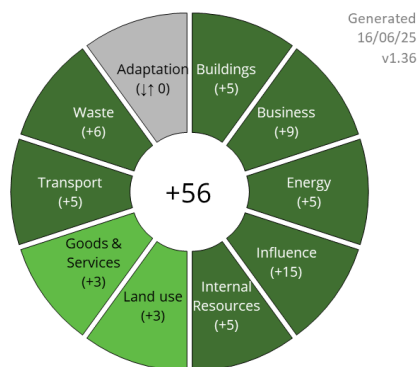
Staffing: There are **no** staffing implications arising from the composition of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030. The majority of projects identified in the Action Plan will be co-ordinated and delivered by the current Growth Team (or other teams within the Council and/or external partners). Where additional resources or skills are required to deliver specific projects these will be subject to separate governance as part of business case development, committee approval and the delivery process for that specific activity.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: The Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 has been designed to promote/support 'inclusive growth' to ensure all residents have opportunities to live the best lives they can and to help our businesses and economies to thrive.

Although there are **no** direct EQI implications arising from the composition of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030, WLDC has a statutory public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 (this is enshrined in the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy). Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows: A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to: (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. Where practicable, interventions/projects identified as part of the delivery of the Action Plan will include an assessment of equality considerations and how to tackle potential inequalities linked to accessing growth opportunities.

Data Protection Implications: Although there are **no** data protection implications arising from the composition of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030, WLDC has a statutory public sector duty under the Data Protection Act 2018 to ensure that any personal data obtained in connection with delivering Action Plan activities are handled in compliance with the Act. Data is likely to be collected in relation to assisting customers to access grant funding, deliver projects and to process any enquiries. Data may be shared with external partners and/or consultants (employed or contracted by WLDC to assist in the delivery of Action Plan projects) and internal departments such as Finance to process grant payments. WLDC's Data Protection Officer will ensure that any process employed which collects personal data respects the persons rights and follows prescribed law.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: As part of the development of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 the Climate Environment and Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool has been used to consider the environmental impact of the strategy: (in the broader context of the West Lindsey economy):



Generated
16/06/25
v1.36

West Lindsey District Council will be net zero by 2050 (24 years and 6 months away).

At this stage, CESIA has been used to summarise the likely broader positive impact the strategy could have through a commitment to champion sustainable business practices, as well as stimulating commercial investment linked to the green transition and supporting the growth of sectors that contribute to country's net-zero ambitions.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: Although there are **no** section 17 crime and disorder considerations arising from the composition of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030, interventions/projects identified as part of the delivery of the Action Plan have the potential to create sustainable employment opportunities negating the need to undertake criminal activity. Regeneration investments are likely to reduce anti-social behaviour and increase a sense of community and pride in self/place.

Health Implications: Although there are **no** direct health implications arising from the composition of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030, interventions/projects identified as part of the delivery of the Action Plan have the potential to support the local economy to grow and create sustainable employment opportunities which have a broad positive impact on resident well-being.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

More information relating the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 Consultation (including results) can be accessed at: <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/council-democracy/have-your-say/consultations/previous-consultations/economic-growth-strategy-2025-2030-consultation>

The current Economic Growth Strategy 2014-2034 can be accessed at: <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/growth-regeneration/economic-strategy>

The Economic Recovery Plan 2021-2024 can be accessed at: <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/growth-regeneration/economic-recovery-plan>

Risk Assessment: There are **no** significant risks associated with the composition of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030. Individual risk assessments may be identified for specific interventions/projects identified as part of the delivery of the Action Plan, but those will be subject to separate governance as part of business case development, committee approval and the delivery process for that specific activity.

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

X

No

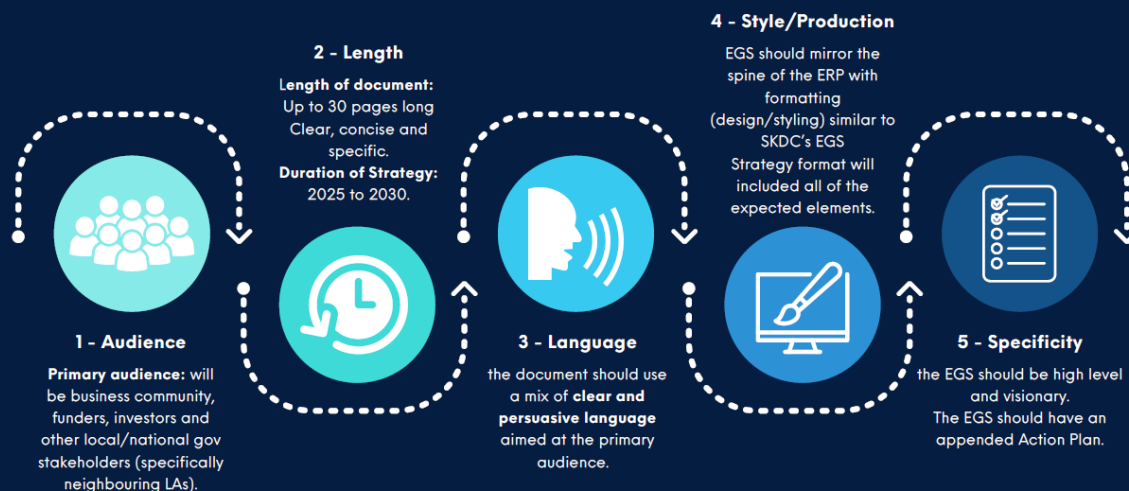
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 West Lindsey District Council new Economic Growth Strategy will run from 2025 to 2030. The aim of this strategy is to build on the successes of the Economic Recovery Plan 2021 to 2024 and foster a dynamic, vibrant, resilient and inclusive economy that supports sustainable growth, meets the challenges of climate change and fulfils the economic potential of the district, benefiting all of our communities and confirming West Lindsey's role in the wider regional economy.

2 The Economic Growth Strategy Task and Finish Group (EGSTFG)

- 2.1 Informal discussions took place at Leaders Panel on 29/01/24 around the development of a new economic growth strategy (to replace WLDC's economic growth strategy 2014-2034 and Economic Recovery Plan 2021-2024). New strategy development was required to position WLDC, and the local economy, to take advantage of emerging opportunities while concurrently mitigating operational challenges experienced by both local businesses and public sector stakeholders.
- 2.2 Leaders Panel, reflecting on the development of recent strategic documents, suggested that a collaborative approach to the strategy's development should be adopted via the establishment of a task and finish group with 'consensus direction' at key decision points to inform and shape the composition of the strategy.
- 2.3 Terms of reference were developed for the group and on 19/03/24 Prosperous Communities Committee approved the formation of the EGSTFG.
- 2.4 Membership of the EGSTFG was cross-party and cross-district. The purpose of the group, made up of WLDC officers and members, was to provide an informal steering/collaboration forum for the development of the emerging economic growth strategy – exploring and identifying direction at each identified 'collaboration point' (CP) to inform the composition of the next element of the strategy. The EGSTFG was intended as a discussion/steering forum only and did not have authority to approve elements of strategy as they were produced.
- 2.5 The EGSTFG met on five occasions and discussions included:
- (1) Strategy 'Look and Feel';
 - (2) Strategic Priorities;
 - (3) SWOT Analysis;
 - (4) Consultation;
 - (5) District Profile and Performance Metrics; and;
 - (6) Composition of final Strategy.
- 2.6 An example of the collaborative development that took place, focussed on the specific nature of the final document can be found below:



- 2.7 The concluding EGSTFG meeting took place on 17/06/25, where members reflected on the work of the EGSTFG to date and made observations linked to final working draft strategy and draft Action Plan.
- 2.8 The EGSTFG recommended that upon approval of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030, officers produce a condensed version of the strategy that is more accessible to a wider audience and publish this version on WLDC's corporate website.
- 2.9 The meeting identified in 2.7 represented the final meeting of the EGSTFG and as per 3.6 of the EGSTFG terms of reference ('the EGSTFG will be disbanded following submission of a closure report to its parent committee'), this paper serves as the closure report and the EGSTFG will now be disbanded.
- 2.10 Officers would like to extend their thanks to members for their support and direction as part of the EGSTFG process.

3 Consultation on the Economic Growth Strategy

- 3.1 In Q3 2024, the EGSTFG confirmed strategic priorities for growth and agreed that officers should consult with stakeholders on these priorities.
- 3.2 The consultation identified that the strategy would be delivered through a fluid Action Plan linked to five distinct themes: (1) Inclusive Growth and Regeneration; (2) Business Environment; (3) Investment; (4) Employment and Skills; and; (5) Sustainability and the Green Economy.
- 3.3 Between 28th October 2024 and 6th December 2024, WLDC sought feedback on these strategic themes. Additionally, the consultation also asked consultees to reflect on the challenges and opportunities for the local economy – now and over the next five years. This approach ensured that stakeholders were involved at the start of the strategic planning process and meant consultees responses could be integrated into the final composition of the strategy.

- 3.4 The consultation was fully aligned with WLDC's consultation strategy 'Moving Forwards Together: Empowering Community Voices' which emphasises empowering communities, fostering inclusivity and ensuring transparency in decision-making.
- 3.5 In order to ensure alignment, acknowledging that all residents have a stake in a dynamic, vibrant, resilient and inclusive economy, the EGSTFG targeted the consultation at the 'whole community' to ensure we captured both the views of our core strategy audience e.g. businesses, partner organisations, as well as secondary stakeholders such as employees etc.
- 3.6 The consultation was undertaken using both online and paper surveys and the EGSTFG targeted stakeholders via multiple routes (directing stakeholders to the consultation web-page) including:
- (1) Town and Parish Council newsletter;
 - (2) Member newsletter;
 - (3) Citizens Panel;
 - (4) Press release;
 - (5) Social media;
 - (6) Business Ebrief;
 - (7) Email contacts;
 - (8) Resident Ebrief; and;
 - (9) WLDC Officers.
- 3.7 This inclusive approach returned 389 consultation responses, representing businesses, partners, employees and other stakeholders.
- 3.8 Respondents were overwhelming supportive of the themes identified. For full results, please see appendix 3.
- 3.9 With respect to challenges, overall respondents identified a wide range of challenges facing the West Lindsey economy - with a strong emphasis on provision of funding, improved infrastructure, workforce development and community support. There was a call for practical, accessible and meaningful solutions to address these challenges and support sustainable economic growth.
- 3.10 With respect to opportunities, overall respondents identified opportunities with a strong focus on sustainability, innovation and collaboration. Respondents confirmed the need for practical, accessible and meaningful support to help realize these opportunities and drive local economic growth.

4. Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030

- 4.1 West Lindsey District Council's Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 (appendix 1) sets out our vision and ambition for the future growth and development of West Lindsey's economy.
- 4.2 West Lindsey stands at a pivotal moment in its economic development. The broader economy, at both macro and micro levels, is constantly evolving and often complex and ambiguous. Businesses are exposed to multiple, volatile market forces which, while presenting opportunities also impact upon the bottom line.
- 4.3 The Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 aims to drive sustainable prosperity in West Lindsey, ensuring businesses, residents and investors thrive through innovation, collaboration and long-term sustainability. The strategy emphasises inclusive growth and regeneration,

supporting market towns, rural enterprises and emerging growth sectors. The strategy includes the following priorities and opportunities:

Strategic Priorities:

1. Inclusive Growth and Regeneration
2. Business Environment
3. Investment
4. Employment and Skills
5. Sustainability and the Green Economy

Key Opportunities:

1. Clean Energy (STEP Fusion)
2. Agri-Tech
3. Defence and Security
4. Visitor Economy
5. Town Centre Regeneration
6. Digital Economy
7. Housing
8. Transport Infrastructure Development

4.4 The strategy has been developed logically (utilising a structured approach to evidence gathering, strategy definition, opportunity identification etc.) and fully aligned with emerging, over-arching strategy and funding opportunities (e.g. alignment with the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority's strategic approach). WLDC have been acknowledged by partners for applying this best practice approach to strategy development.

4.5 The strategy, a whole organisation commitment, will be delivered through collaboration, place leadership and evidence-led approaches. Monitoring and evaluation of the fluid Action Plan will ensure progress and impact are tracked, with annual reviews to support adaptation to changing economic circumstances.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

5.1 Delivery of this strategy will be focused around a rolling medium-term Action Plan (draft attached at appendix 2) - linked to the strategic themes identified within this strategy.

5.2 In alignment with the strategy, the Action Plan is intended to be dynamic in order to react to changing economic circumstances and flexible to capitalise on emerging opportunities.

5.3 The Action Plan will be reviewed annually and amended as appropriate - both in terms of composition and delivery timescales.

5.4 To track delivery progress, impact monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken using both over-arching economic metrics which we have developed with strategic partners (the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership) and project specific analysis which will animate the broader outcome(s) of our interventions.

5.5 Metrics will measure data, direction of travel and performance versus comparators. These metrics will also be reviewed annually and updated where required.

5.6 Progress updates will be reported back to stakeholders annually via summary info-graphics and case studies where pertinent.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 represents an ambitious plan to support the development of a thriving West Lindsey economy leading into Local Government Reorganisation. The strategy is also realistic (achievable) and provides an overarching framework for economic development in the district, supported by a flexible Action Plan which is adaptable to change and opportunity.





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Forward:

An Interconnected Geography of Opportunity

Our Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030, developed by members, officers and the community (businesses, residents and other stakeholders), builds on the progress delivered as part of the Economic Recovery Plan 2021-2024. It sets out a bold vision to drive sustainable prosperity, ensuring that businesses, residents and investors can thrive in an environment built on innovation, collaboration, and long-term sustainability.

At the heart of our strategy is a commitment to inclusive growth and regeneration. We recognise that economic success must be shared across all sectors and communities, ensuring that our market towns, rural enterprises and emerging growth sectors have the support they need to flourish. We will build on our targeted regeneration programmes, creating diverse and sustainable town centres – the foundation of vibrant, equitable local economies that attract investment and talent.

We recognise that a strong business environment is essential for economic resilience. West Lindsey is home to a diverse range of enterprises, from micro-businesses to established SMEs. Our strategy promotes entrepreneurship, innovation and business support, providing access to funding, resources and expert guidance. By fostering a culture of enterprise, we will empower businesses to scale-up, adapt and compete in an evolving global market.

Investment is a cornerstone of our approach. By facilitating public and private sector investment, we will enhance infrastructure, digital connectivity and job creation. Championing strategic investments in transport, energy and technology infrastructure will ensure that West Lindsey remains a competitive and attractive location for businesses and residents alike.

Our focus on economic diversification will strengthen resilience, creating new opportunities in agri-tech, clean energy, defence and advanced manufacturing.

Employment and skills development are critical to our district's long-term success. Through partnerships with educational institutions and industry leaders, we will align workforce capabilities with market demands. By supporting investment in skills training, apprenticeships and career pathways, we will equip our residents with the tools they need to succeed in high-growth sectors.

Sustainability cuts across our vision. As we embrace the opportunities linked to the green economy, we will continue to advocate for environmentally responsible growth, ensuring that economic progress is balanced with climate-conscious policies. By promoting renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and low-carbon initiatives, we will contribute to the UK's net-zero ambitions, making West Lindsey a leading advocate in eco-friendly economic development.

Our strategy is guided by place leadership principles. We will continue to deliver growth using an evidence-led, collaborative, enabling and customer-centric approach. We believe that strong governance, strategic partnerships and community engagement are essential to achieving our goals. By working together, we can unlock West Lindsey's full economic potential, creating a prosperous, forward-thinking district that is ready for the future.

This is our vision. This is our commitment. Together, we will build a thriving, sustainable and inclusive economy for West Lindsey.

Cllr Trevor Young
(Leader, West Lindsey District Council)

Cllr Lesley Rollings
(Chair, WLDC Prosperous Communities Committee)

Executive Summary: An Interconnected Geography of Opportunity

West Lindsey District Council's Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 sets out our vision and ambition for the future growth and development of West Lindsey's economy.

West Lindsey stands at a pivotal moment in its economic development. The broader economy, at both macro and micro levels, is constantly evolving and often complex and ambiguous. Businesses are exposed to multiple, volatile market forces which, while presenting opportunities also impact upon the bottom line.

The district has a rich heritage of innovation and entrepreneurship and economic metrics confirm the local economy's potential - this strategy supports the positioning of the district to take advantage of emerging economic opportunities.

West Lindsey's strategic location promotes regional economic inter-connectivity - ensuring the district is an integral part of the East Midlands economic geography of opportunity. This, combined with strategic alignment with central government and devolved authority policy, will help to foster a dynamic, resilient and inclusive local economy that benefits all West Lindsey communities.

The Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 aims to drive sustainable prosperity in West Lindsey, ensuring businesses, residents and investors thrive through innovation, collaboration and long-term sustainability. The strategy emphasises inclusive growth and regeneration, supporting market towns, rural enterprises and emerging growth sectors. The strategy includes the following priorities and opportunities:

Strategic Priorities:

- Inclusive Growth and Regeneration
- Business Environment
- Investment
- Employment and Skills
- Sustainability and the Green Economy

Key Opportunities:

- Clean Energy (STEP Fusion)
- Agri-Tech
- Defence and Security
- Visitor Economy
- Town Centre Regeneration
- Digital Economy
- Housing
- Transport Infrastructure Development

The strategy, a whole organisation commitment, will be delivered through collaboration, place leadership and evidence-led approaches. Monitoring and evaluation of the fluid action plan will ensure progress and impact are tracked, with annual reviews to support adaptation to changing economic circumstances.

Place:

An Interconnected Geography of Opportunity

Despite being a largely rural and sparsely populated district, West Lindsey's strategically advantageous location presents significant growth opportunities.

Gainsborough – West Lindsey's main service and commercial centre (which is home to sector leading businesses such as Ping, Einox, AMP Rose etc.) is experiencing significant urban regeneration as a result of both public and commercial investment. The town's gateway location into Central Lincolnshire from the Sheffield City Region/Nottinghamshire and close proximity to the planned STEP Fusion development at West Burton represent the western edge 'STEP/A15 Corridor of Opportunity' (Energy, Agri-Tech, Defence, Space, Communications, Aeronautics and Robotics).

Ideally located to take advantage of infrastructure investment that improves transport, digital and utility connectivity, the 'corridor of opportunity' incorporates the Central Lincolnshire FEZ (Hemswell Cliff), the emerging Agricultural Growth Zone and the Scampton regeneration site north of Lincoln.

Concurrently, and in line with our strategic ambition to disperse sustainable growth across our wider rural geography, growth will be further driven by evolving both traditionally strong local sectors including primary agriculture, the visitor economy and manufacturing as well as emerging creative and lifestyle clusters – all of which will play a leading role in evolving the circular economy and decarbonisation activity.

West Lindsey's landscape, rural lifestyle and abundance of natural (including the Lincolnshire Wolds – the East Midlands only 'National Landscape') and historic assets make it a popular location to live and visit. Opportunities for cultural engagement, active leisure and community involvement – combined with highly competitive house prices form a compelling quality of life offer – based around our historic market towns (Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor, as well as the Lincoln fringe villages).



Road – close connections to: the M18, M180 and M62 as well as the A1, A15, A46



Rail – passenger stations in Gainsborough and Market Rasen. Less than 1 hour to: Nottingham, York, Sheffield and Lincoln. Daily trains from Lincoln to London, Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester

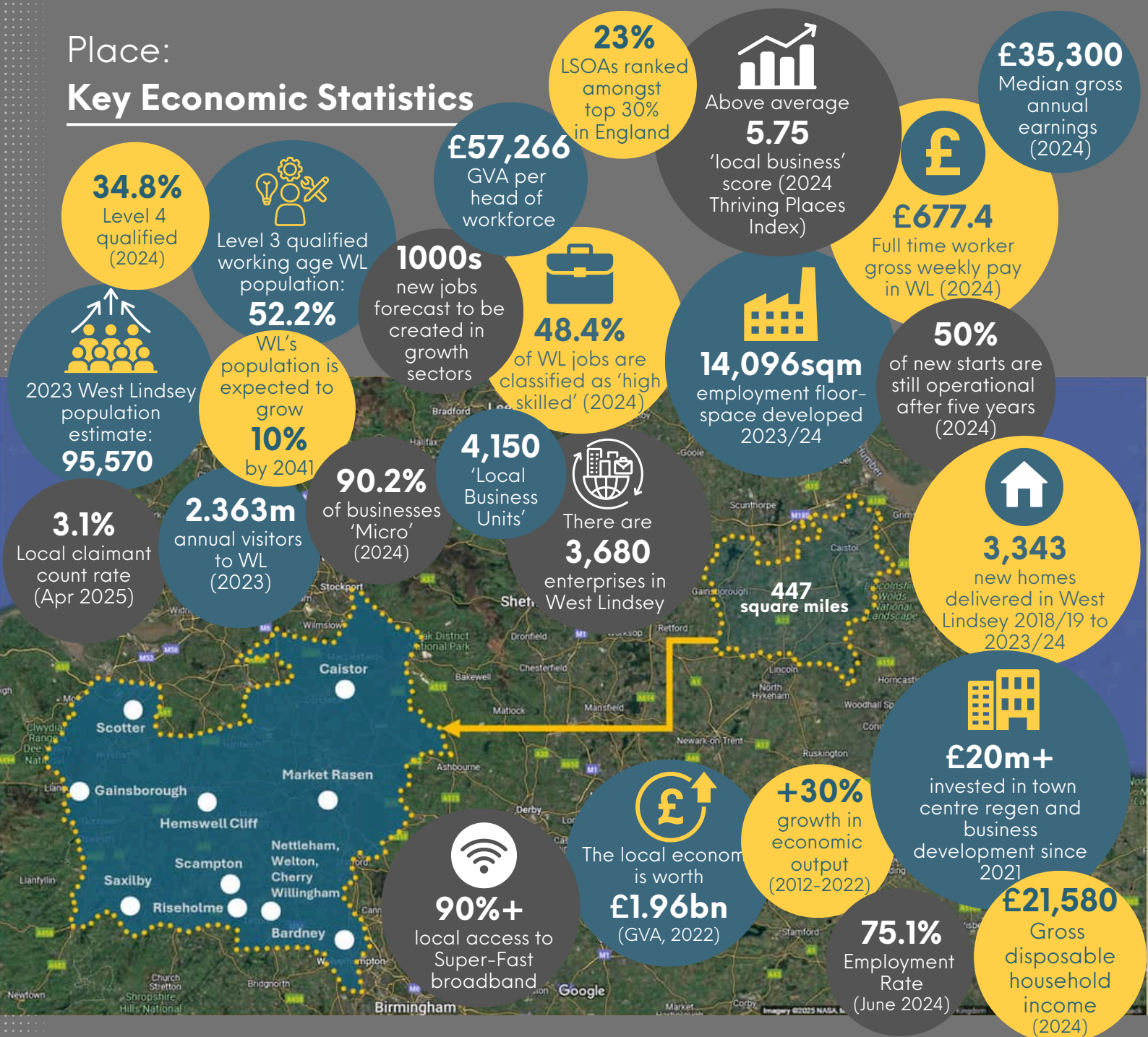


Air – close connections to: Humberside Airport (direct access to Amsterdam Schiphol international hub) East Midlands Airport and Freeport Leeds Bradford Airport Doncaster Sheffield Airport – likely to reopen during the life of this strategy



Sea – commercial freight transport on the River Trent. Close connections to: Humber Freeport (UK's busiest port complex and global trade gateway)

Place: Key Economic Statistics



West Lindsey is a predominantly rural geography and shares many of the socio-spatial and economic traits experienced by partner geographies in Lincolnshire. The District has historically been characterised by:

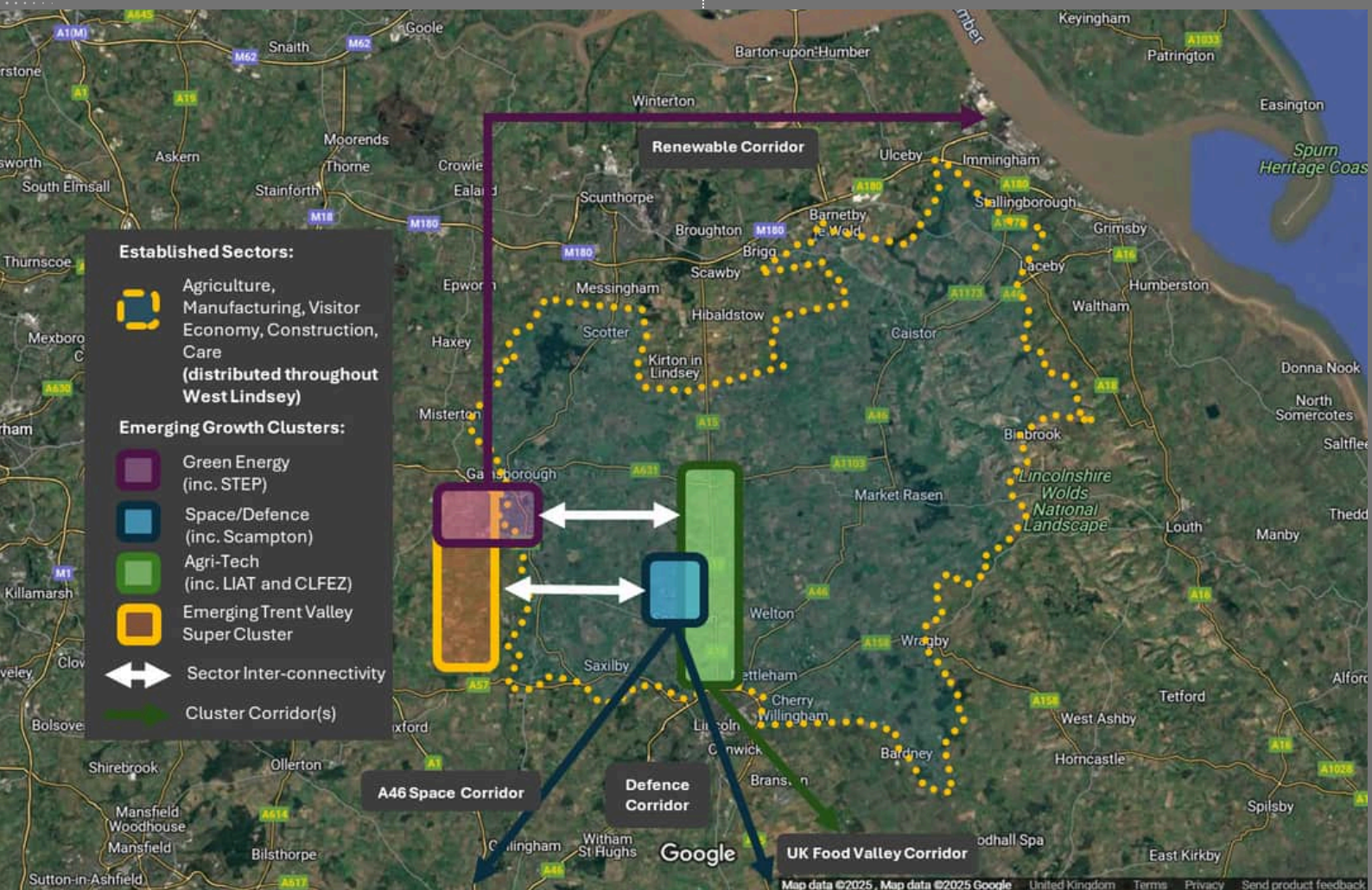
- A sparse population coupled with infrastructure and connectivity challenges linked to rurality
- Low qualifications/skills base
- Lower output and productivity
- Economic inactivity
- An ageing population and workforce
- Inequality - pockets of both significant deprivation and wealth

This position, however, was starting to improve pre-pandemic, particularly around productivity. Metrics such as GVA and Gross Median Weekly Pay had improved beyond 'Rural as a Region' averages. Conversely, the percentage of people in low paid jobs continued to rise and the gap between the growth of gross disposable household income in West Lindsey increased versus the rest of England.

Despite these challenges, West Lindsey is now entering a period of economic opportunity with the potential to significantly improve socio-economic metrics via public funding and indigenous/inward business investment to support and realise growth which will create jobs and increase the resilience of the local economy.

West Lindsey's economy is currently worth £2 billion (Gross Value Added) annually and has grown by 30% over the past decade (higher growth than both the UK and Greater Lincolnshire economy over the same period). The local economy benefits from a diverse and well established business base, reflecting historic industrial strengths – centred around agriculture, manufacturing and construction, sectors which are still experiencing modest growth.

Alongside established industrial sectors, the local visitor economy (worth £172m annually) continues to grow year-on-year, both in terms of income and employee numbers. The care sector is also growing, linked to West Lindsey's increasingly ageing population. These sectors are part of a broader, inter-connected economy which continues to contribute to the sustainable growth of the wider Lincolnshire economy.

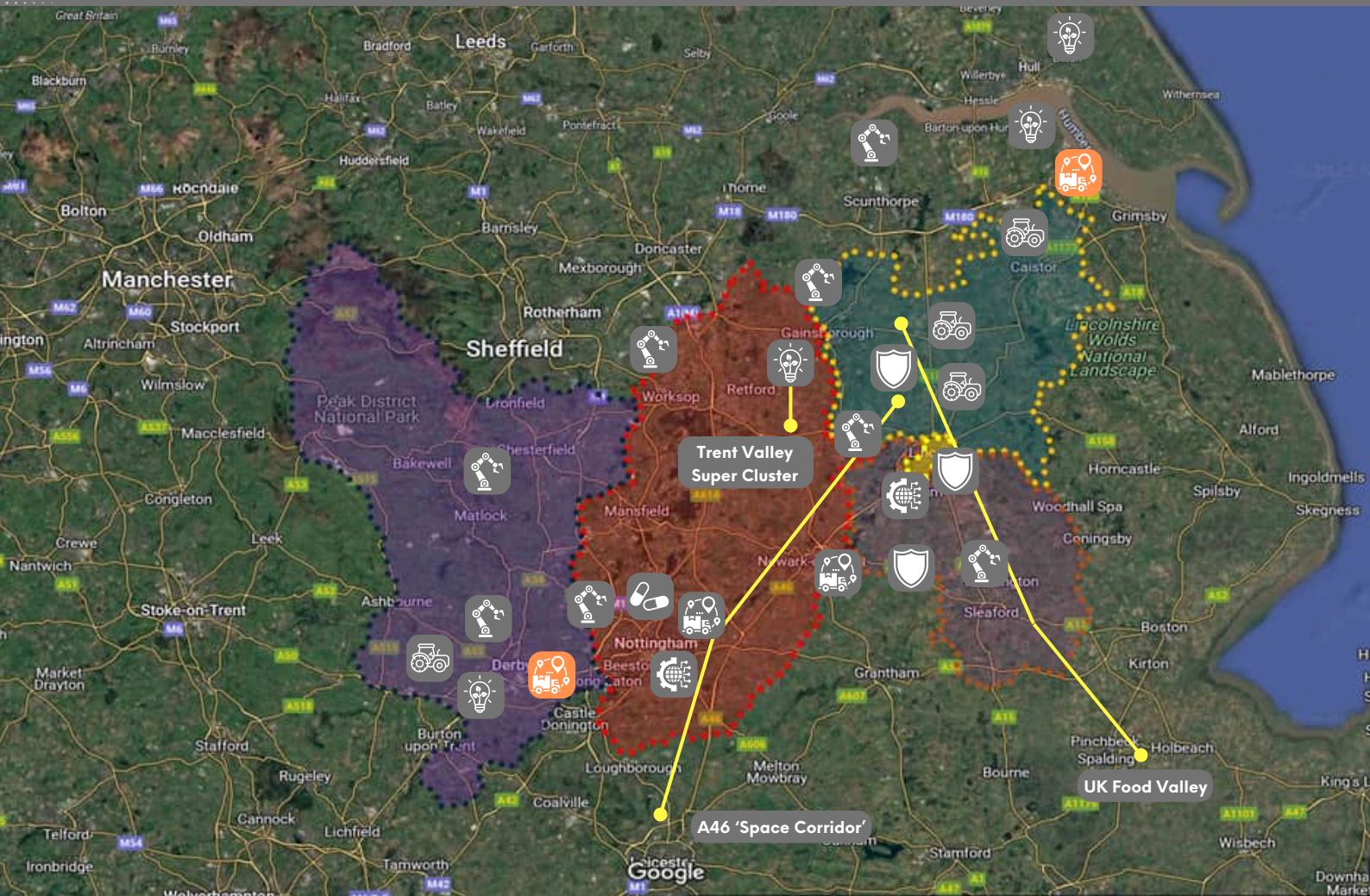


West Lindsey's close proximity to the emerging 'Trent Valley Super Cluster' also presents significant opportunities around hydrogen production, advanced manufacturing, data-centres, artificial intelligence and linked supply-chains.

Critically, the Gainsborough/A15 'Corridor of Opportunity' presents significant scope for future growth, with the potential to create considerable volumes of investment, income and skilled job creation – strengthening West Lindsey's position within the East Midlands economy. West Lindsey's emerging growth sectors include:

- Clean Energy
- Defence, Security, Space and Robotics
- Agri-Tech

Place: Connected Growth



Connected Growth:

Economic activity is not constrained by the boundaries of public administration. Growth, and the policy that supports it, focuses on functional geographies within which there are economic similarities in terms of business sectors, travel to work patterns, labour markets and critically - opportunity.

Geographic Key:

-  West Lindsey (Central Lincolnshire, GLCCA)
-  Lincoln (Central Lincolnshire, GLCCA)
-  North Kesteven (Central Lincolnshire, GLCCA)
-  Nottinghamshire (EMCCA)
-  Derbyshire (EMCCA)
-  Freeport

West Lindsey is an integral part of the East Midlands economic geography of opportunity (also extending towards the Humber Bank), anchored around the growth sectors identified within the Government's emerging Industrial Strategy. Partners are already collaborating to ensure this inter-connected economic region realises its' growth potential. Key sectors include:

-  Advanced Manufacturing
-  Life Sciences and Healthcare
-  Digital and Creative
-  Ports and Logistics
-  Agri-Food
-  Clean Energy
-  Defence and Space

S.W.O.T. Analysis

Collaborative analysis of local economic data, sectoral composition and consideration of West Lindsey's functional economic geographies has resulted in the following analysis:

Strengths

- Established agricultural (agri-food) base.
- Thriving and expanding visitor economy (inc. Aviation Heritage).
- Strategic location (gateway to neighbouring economic geographies).
- Entrepreneurial culture.
- Enterprising manufacturing/engineering sector.
- Quality of life (Rurality).
- Culture of collaboration around R&D and innovation (particularly within agri-tech cluster).
- Significant regeneration of market towns.
- Housing led growth supporting future supply of employment land (and potential for job creation).
- 'Best in class' local plan (CLLP).
- Strong network of large villages, supporting economic growth.

Opportunities

- Evolution of the 'A15 Corridor of Opportunity' and linked growth sector development (agri-food, defence, clean energy etc.).
- On-going visitor economy development.
- Digital economy (and improved digital infrastructure/connectivity)
- Provision of demand led business support for SMEs.
- Developing a highly skilled workforce which responds to local economic opportunities (with a focus on apprenticeships).
- Increased levels of investment as a result of lower land values and cost of business via strategic place marketing.
- Growing the health and care sector in response to the ageing population.
- New government policy and devolution objectives aligned with West Lindsey's economic opportunities.
- Development of the circular economy and wider green business opportunities.
- Realising business efficiencies linked to artificial intelligence.

Weaknesses

- Ageing working population and economic inactivity in some parts of West Lindsey.
- Sub-optimal infrastructure including utilities, road networks and public transport.
- Sub-optimal general B2B collaboration around business development.
- Lower levels of business diversification.
- Low skills base and access to Training/HE/FE.
- Pockets of acute deprivation and unemployment.
- Sparsity
- Pockets of lower productivity
- Historically lower levels of inward Investment.
- Under-performance as a functional economic geography.
- 'Last Mile' infrastructure quality.
- Key service centre (Gainsborough) located on the western periphery of the district.

Threats

- Macro economic volatility.
- Environmental challenges.
- Cuts to public funding.
- Out migration of skilled workers.
- Limited stock of employment land.
- On-going under investment in utility and infrastructure provision.
- Ongoing volatility of development costs.

Strategy:

Alignment and Context

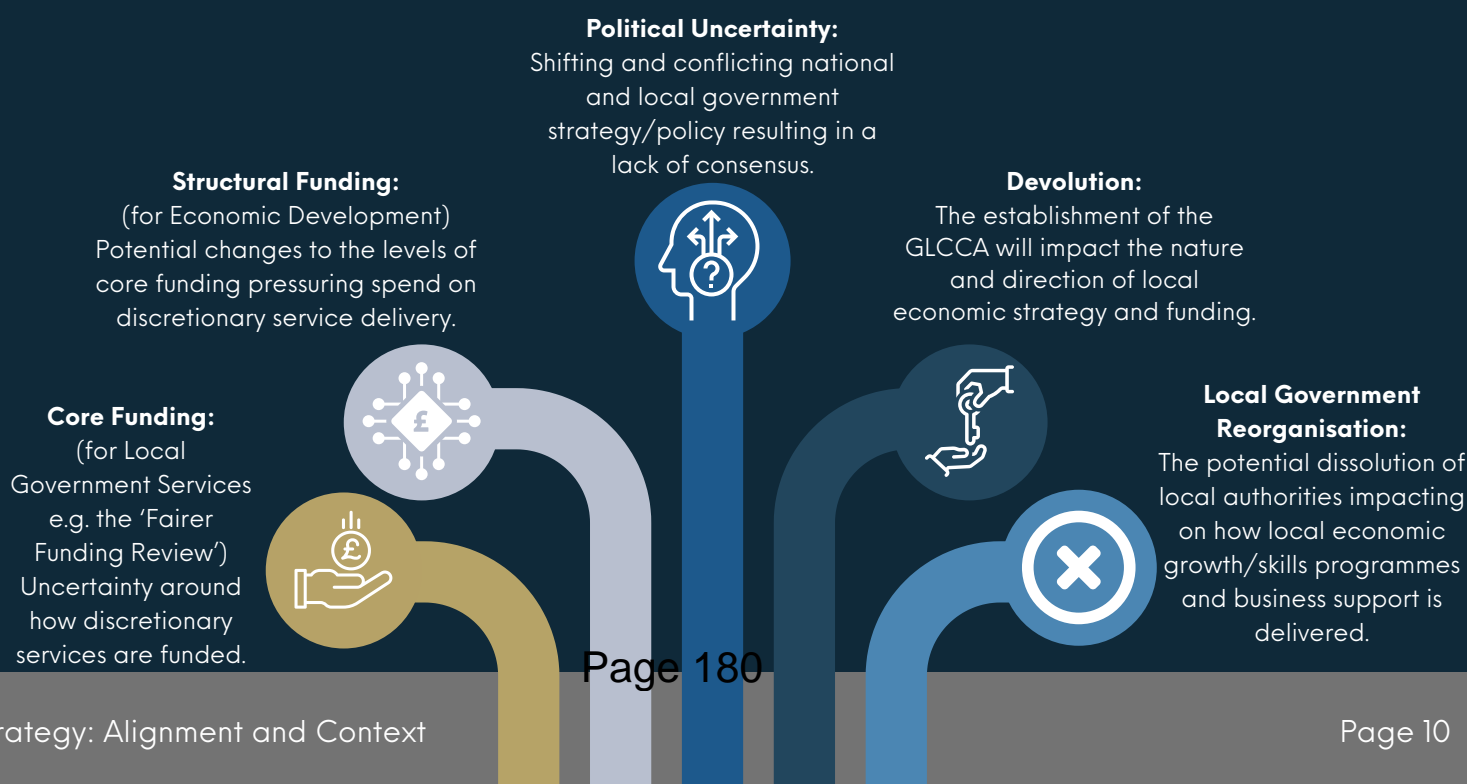
Nationally, the economic policy context continues to evolve rapidly, with Government identifying economic growth as their number one mission. Through this mission, Government plan to deliver new homes and invest in the critical infrastructure which underpins economic growth, drives improved productivity and results in improved living standards. The UK's **Future Industrial Strategy, 'Invest 2035'**, aims to drive long-term economic growth by attracting more investment and fostering domestic business growth and improving productivity in strategic sectors.

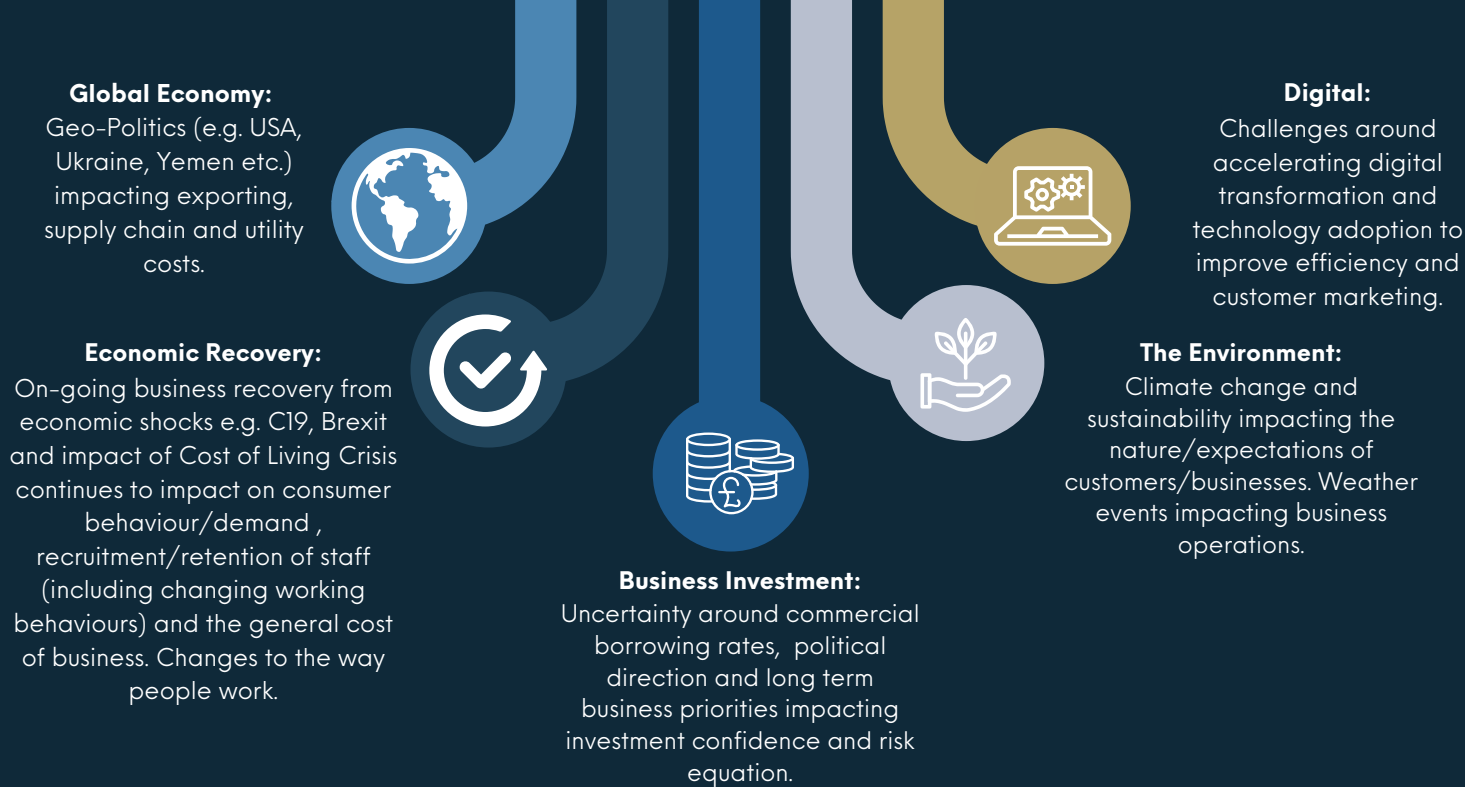
This 10-year plan focuses on creating a stable environment for businesses to invest and grow, particularly in high-potential sectors. The strategy also aims to address barriers to growth (infrastructure and planning), improve skills, develop international trade, evolve place partnerships, support innovation/net-zero and ensure that the benefits of economic growth are felt across the UK. This, along with linked policy (e.g. The National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF and the proposed Planning and Infrastructure Bill), will shape the opportunities to stimulate local growth and deliver growth supporting infrastructure.

Regionally, devolution has created the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Council Authority (GLCCA) which will lead on the growth of local sectoral clusters, improving the local business environment and the composition of local growth plans. Change will be delivered by the GLCCA via the following boards, linked strategy (Greater Lincolnshire Local Growth Plan 2025-2035, Spatial Development Strategy and Investment Plan) and operational programmes: (1) **Transport Board** dedicated to enhancing connectivity and infrastructure across Greater Lincolnshire; (2) **Skills and Employment Board** focused on workforce development, education, and training initiatives to meet local employment needs; and; (3) **Business and Infrastructure Board** aimed at driving economic growth, supporting businesses and overseeing infrastructure projects and investments.

Additionally, although subject to change, the GLCCA has published '**A Flourishing Lincolnshire**' outlining its' initial priorities including: (1) the UK Food Valley; (2) Energy Security; (3) Defence; (4) Employment and Skills; and; (5) Transport and Infrastructure. The GLCCA has also committed to lobbying Government for a Greater Lincolnshire Growth Zone.

Economic Growth operates within an ever evolving, volatile, complex and often ambiguous macro-environment: **External Service Drivers**








West Lindsey businesses also operate within constantly evolving macro and micro-environments influenced by: **External Market Forces.**

The following regional strategies also dictate the nature and extent of growth in West Lindsey:

(1) **‘A 2050 Vision for Greater Lincolnshire’** is a strategic framework developed by local authorities in Greater Lincolnshire – an element of which identifies an innovation led future for the local economy.

(2) **Greater Lincolnshire Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Framework (SIDP)** determines priorities for investment into critical infrastructure, particularly in support of new housing and proposes funding strategies using devolved funds, national programs and local funding.

(3) **Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP)** – (and linked Neighbourhood Plans) adopted in 2023, guides economic growth in West Lindsey, Lincoln and North Kesteven by setting-out a long term strategy for development, aligned with sustainability, which includes:

-  Infrastructure, Residential and Commercial Development
-  Town Centre Regeneration
-  Strategic Site and Employment Land Allocations

Locally, there are a number of WLDC strategies (and linked action plans) that contribute towards the growth of the local economy. **‘Moving Forward Together: Our Vision for West Lindsey – Corporate Plan 2023-27’** confirms an over-arching commitment towards supporting business development, job creation and improving the local skills base. This corporate position is supported by operational strategies such as:

- (1) **‘Employment & Skills Strategic Aims and Delivery Plan 2025-2028’** is focused on the continued development of a skilled local workforce, that meets the present and future needs of the local and wider economy and aligned with the Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland Local Skills Improvement Plan;
- (2) **‘Housing Strategy 2022’** which focuses on providing access to good quality housing that meets the needs and aspirations of residents, while also promoting economic development;
- (3) **‘Environment and Sustainability Strategy’** identifies how WLDC will advocate/support sustainable business development and land use;
- (4) **‘Visitor Economy Strategy 2022’** outlines how WLDC will stimulate the growth and development of the local visitor economy.

Strategy:

Alignment and Context



West Lindsey's economy is well positioned to deliver growth which contributes towards both emerging national and regional (Greater Lincolnshire Combined Council Authority) strategic priorities.

Growth policy focuses on fostering regional economic growth, innovation and investment – aligning with the goals of creating a high-tech, low-carbon economy while ensuring that local industries remain competitive in the global market. West Lindsey's growth potential levers include:

Growth Driving Sectors (GDS): WL is home to a number of strategy identified growth sectors, such as Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy and Defence, as well as multiple GDS adjacent clusters such as Agri-Tech. There are opportunities to foster innovation in these GDSs through local universities (such as the University of Lincoln) and research institutions. These can drive the development of cutting-edge technologies, particularly in sectors/sub-sectors such as advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, defence and green energy creating 1,000s of jobs and £bns of GVA contributions locally.

Pro-Business Environment: Overcoming barriers to investment and supporting local businesses, through simplifying investment (and financial support), innovation, cheaper energy and access to improved infrastructure are key elements of both local and national growth strategy. Policy interventions will stimulate growth in WL's GDSs. Investment in skills training and educational opportunities with a focus on upskilling the workforce, especially in digital, green and technical sectors, will support West Lindsey's economic transformation. Enhancements to transport and digital connectivity will improve access to national and international markets and investment in infrastructure in West Lindsey is crucial to support local business growth and attract inward investment.

Place Leadership: West Lindsey is well positioned to work with government and stakeholders to ensure growth ambitions are embedded in local strategy and enabling policy and backed by GLCCA's growth deal funding.

Strategy:

Theory of Change (T.O.C.)

The following overarching T.O.C. summary brings together all of the analysis undertaken in preparing this growth strategy – highlighting how positive change will be realised.

This analysis will be explored in more detail through West Lindsey's strategic priorities for local economic development and the key opportunities for sustainable growth over the next five years.

<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Lindsey faces the challenge of transitioning to a high-tech, low-carbon economy while ensuring local industries remain competitive globally. Improving physical and digital infrastructure and ensuring the local workforce has the requisite skills to match the evolving needs of high-growth sectors. Transforming rurality into growth opportunity. 	<p>Current Situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like many rural economies, WL has a sparse population, lower qualification/skills base, lower output and productivity, an aging workforce and infrastructure/connectivity challenges linked to rurality. WL has a strong manufacturing, primary agriculture and visitor economy base, with emerging sectors supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy. Growth in the local economy is focussed around clean energy, agricultural innovation and defence. Infrastructure improvements are required to support economic growth. The University of Lincoln (LIAT etc.) plays a crucial role in research and development, particularly in agri-tech and sustainable technologies. 	<p>Data Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2022, WL's GVA was £1.96b, up from £1.6b the previous year. WL's growth in economic output over the past decade (2012-2022) was +30% (UK = +18%). In 2021, the amount of employment floorspace in the district increased by 56% Lower Universal Credit Claimant rate (3.3%) than regional and national comparators. Strong growth in residents with level 3 and 4 qualifications. Business survival rates better than national averages. <p>Data Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volatile economic activity rates. 25% of working age population 'economically inactive'. Qualification profile remains lower than national averages.
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WL's economy aligns well with the Government's Future Industrial Strategy (FIS) and GLCCA - which emphasizes innovation, sustainability, and inclusive growth. Growth-driving sectors such as advanced manufacturing, clean energy, creative, defence and digital technologies present significant opportunities for economic development. 	<p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean Energy: Work collaboratively around STEP Fusion (and the wider Trent Valley Super-Cluster). Agricultural Innovation: Evolve the 'Ag-Zone and CLFEZ agricultural corridor. Defence: Work with partners and the private sector to realise the defence/space opportunity. Skills Development: Focus on digital skills, modern apprenticeships and growth sector training around clean energy, agri-tech and defence. Infrastructure Investment: Improve transport networks and digital connectivity. Support for SMEs: Enhance the business support ecosystem for SMEs, particularly growth sectors. Industry-Academia Partnerships: Strengthen collaboration between local businesses and the University of Lincoln. 	<p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A thriving, low carbon economy with a strong focus on innovation and sustainability. Increased high skill, high wage job opportunities in growth sectors. Improved infrastructure supporting economic growth and attracting investment. A resilient and adaptable workforce equipped with the skills of the future. Stronger collaboration between industry, academia and public sector. A more equitable, inclusive and sustainable local economy and society. <p>Efficiencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined planning process via CLLP. Strategic approach to ensure efficient investment of public finance to accelerate growth investment. Simplified business support.
<p>Current Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents travel to work outside WL which stifles local growth. Business are less productive and tend to stay as SMEs (Micro), limiting the economic potential of the local economy. WL sub-performs as a functional area of economic geography. Slow growth entrenches deprivation in pockets of WL. WL has a limited number of higher value/skilled job opportunities for residents. In response, local partners are working collaboratively to ensure a strategic focus on supporting growth sector opportunities which will help long-term sustainable economic and environmental transition. Digital, utilities, transport and employment-land infrastructure improvements are planned to support local growth. 		

Strategy:

Strategic Priorities for Growth

Building on the economic analysis presented in this strategy and the priorities/themes identified in both existing and emerging national and local strategies/plans, the following strategic priorities for growth in West Lindsey have been identified.

These priorities have been qualified through consultation with stakeholders, including local businesses, residents and wider representative/stakeholder groups and partner organisations.

The identified priorities have been positioned to take advantage of the opportunities arising through new and developing plans for Greater

Lincolnshire and the strong culture of collaborative working with partners to achieve the collective goals of Greater Lincolnshire and the wider East Midlands region.

This strategic approach, which will remain agile in order to respond where required to both uncertainty and opportunity, complemented by a flexible Action-Plan (see Appendix one) will position West Lindsey's economy to realise on-going growth moving into local government reorganisation.

Following further strategic priority definition, the strategy identifies and provides further context around West Lindsey's key economic opportunities.

West Lindsey District Council is committed to fostering a dynamic, vibrant, resilient and inclusive economy that supports sustainable growth, meets the challenges of climate change and fulfils the economic potential of the district, benefiting all of our communities and confirming West Lindsey's role in the wider regional economy. The strategy focuses on:



By focusing on these key themes, West Lindsey District Council aims to build a dynamic and prosperous future, where economic growth and regeneration are achieved through collaboration, innovation and a customer-centric approach.

Theme 1: Inclusive Growth and Regeneration

Vision for West Lindsey:

'Through the delivery of growth and regeneration programmes, we will support the development of a thriving West Lindsey economy where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from economic success, leading to more diverse, equitable and sustainable town centres and communities.'

Approach:

Consultation with stakeholders has confirmed a desire to ensure growth benefits all. West Lindsey is a district of contrasts. Despite many communities performing well (in an economic sense), analysis highlights acute pockets of deprivation, inter-generational economic inactivity, youth unemployment and challenges linked to rurality/sparsity.

Our approach to delivering inclusive growth and regeneration will seek to ensure that through our interventions, local economic growth, and more importantly - economic well-being, is accessible to as many of our residents as possible. In order to realise growth, while concurrently lowering barriers to opportunity, we will:

- Continue to lobby for growth enabling infrastructure investment which supports emerging opportunities and bridges gaps between rural and urban provision.
- Champion place-making and build on the significant investments we have recently made via the Levelling-Up Fund and National Lottery Heritage Fund to revitalise our town centres (e.g. 'Thriving Gainsborough 2024') with further programmes targeted at addressing market failure through the generation of commercial investment.
- Use our place-leadership role to work with developers to improve social-infrastructure, deliver balanced housing stock and commercial buildings which create a sense of pride in place for residents.



- Lever our key growth projects, such as STEP, in order to maximise their economic reach/social value (via local investment, supply-chain, skills development etc.) and create opportunities for our residents most likely to be excluded from the labour market.
- Support the re-imagining of our town centres as places to live, work and shop by targeting interventions that tackle vacancies and retail churn to improve the vibrancy of the local retail/leisure/service and market mix (including the night-time economy).
- Continue to utilise structural growth funding, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to deliver programmes to support growth across the district which is focused on meeting the specific needs of our rural communities.

We will also evolve our relationships with representative organisations, such as the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Business, to promote equitable employment practices, advocate sustainable and inclusive business models and support social enterprises and cooperatives.

Additionally, we will seek to increase the local socio-economic value of our growth investments through procurement activity and seek to ensure the planning process distributes opportunity through-out the district equitably.

Theme 2:

Business Environment

Vision for West Lindsey:

‘Through the provision of advice, resources and funding which encourage growth, entrepreneurship and innovation, West Lindsey’s Micro, SMEs and larger businesses will have the opportunity to realise their potential.’

Approach:

Consultation with stakeholders emphasises that local businesses have: (1) an on-going need for practical support which addresses real-world business challenges; and; (2) financial assistance to realise commercial opportunities. Additionally, stakeholders identify that all support should be demand-led and respond to the unique needs of the business accessing support, supporting innovation and adaptation – especially given the volatile operating environment many businesses find themselves competing in.

West Lindsey has an entrepreneurial business culture with a strong base of SMEs, scale-up businesses and business survival rates significantly higher than national averages – all of which are positive indicators of economic resilience and growth potential. Conversely, high streets continue to struggle in response to changing consumer behaviour and external market factors e.g. utility prices, continue to increase operational costs for many businesses. On-going structural uncertainty is also having a negative impact on business operations, confidence, investment and ultimately, commercial sustainability. To support West Lindsey’s businesses we will:

- Work with partners to improve access to growth finance that helps de-risk SME investment, improves businesses growth and sustainable, high value job creation throughout the district.
- Explore, with funding partners, opportunities to deliver business infrastructure including incubators/start-up units and grow-on space.
- Support sustainable additional employment land allocations through the local and neighbourhood plans.
- Support local entrepreneurs, start-ups and micro-enterprises, scale-ups and high-growth businesses with support programmes which are focused on meeting the specific needs of the end-user.
- Establish a key account management programme to ensure West Lindsey’s most significant businesses – in both mature and emerging sectors, can engage with local government and partners.
- Build a business case for a pan-district business forum, providing a platform for B2B collaboration around growth opportunities, workforce development and knowledge transfer.
- Continue to work with partners to support foreign-owned businesses/investors.
- Advocate and support local business exporting into the global market.
- Continue to develop and promote West Lindsey’s visitor economy, town centres, markets and footfall events.
- Continue to utilise structural growth funding, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to co-fund the delivery of the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub and WLDC’s bespoke local business support provision.
- Animate supply chain opportunities.



Theme 3:

Investment

Vision for West Lindsey:

'Through the facilitation of investment from both the public and private sector, we will drive West Lindsey's economic resilience and diversification, job creation and improvements to infrastructure and digital connectivity to create a conducive environment for businesses and communities to thrive.'

Approach:

Consultation with stakeholders confirms an expectation that WLDC should continue to play a leading role in facilitating investment into the whole district. There is strong support for improving physical and digital infrastructure, with a focus on 'future-proofing' and incorporating sustainable technologies. Although WLDC works pro-actively to encourage and facilitate both public and private investment in the district, it is undeniable that investment decision making continues to be impacted by market uncertainty, the commercial viability of investments in the district and investors appetite for risk.

Our approach to investing in growth projects will continue to be based around sound business case development. In parallel, our approach to supporting investment will be based around maintaining an investment ready culture, enabling investment through a supportive approach which helps businesses to mitigate risk. In order to provide investors (both public and commercial) with confidence we will:

- Utilise our adopted local plan to take a flexible approach to growth in order to support/facilitate the realisation of emerging commercial opportunities.
- Ensure that, as part of the Local Plan review, future employment land and residential allocations meet future growth requirements, using planning policy to help create the conditions in which interested parties can invest with certainty.
- Work with partners, such as Invest/Team Lincolnshire, to provide dedicated investment, relocation or expansion support.



- Work with partners, such as Lincolnshire County Council and the Greater Lincolnshire CCA (as well as utility providers) to develop policy/business cases which: (1) make the case for investment to unlock local sites (e.g. Sustainable Urban Extensions); (2) improves community connectivity; (3) delivers additional housing and serviced employment land; (4) delivers transport, utility and digital infrastructure improvements to support West Lindsey's priority growth sectors (e.g. regenerating Scampton).
- Continue to work in partnership with developers/investors to address market failure, revitalise our high-streets/communities and deliver locally iconic developments (e.g. Savoy Cinema, Gainsborough).
- Continue to maintain our intelligence led approach to handling investment enquiries, working pro-actively with stakeholders/agents to bring vacant units/sites into commercial use.
- Evolve our place-marketing collateral, launch the 'Invest West Lindsey' website to promote the district, local opportunities and supporting local business networks.
- Continue to lobby, develop policy and the mechanisms to aid West Lindsey's communities hosting Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) realise significant community benefit in both the direct locality and across the wider district.

Theme 4:

Employment and Skills

Vision for West Lindsey:

'Through partnership working with educational institutions and industry, we will strive to improve skills development and employment opportunities in West Lindsey - aligning workforce capabilities with current and future market needs, particularly in our emerging growth sectors - developing a pipeline of local talent to support all local businesses to realise growth'

Approach:

Consultation with stakeholders identifies the on-going need for WLDC to work in partnership with employers and education/skills providers to improve functional skills, raise productivity and create career pathways - particularly for younger residents. Additionally, stakeholders identify there is a need to improve both up-skilling opportunities and access to employment across all sectors through-out the district. There is also strong support for maintaining and developing relationships with businesses and skills providers to ensure skills shortages are identified/addressed, apprenticeships prioritised, employment is inclusive and West Lindsey has a workforce which is ready to respond to opportunity.

West Lindsey already benefits from a collaborative approach to skills and employment planning via established bodies like the West Lindsey Employment and Skills Partnership. Conversely, despite research confirming that although the district benefits from a number of encouraging metrics, including improving higher skills levels and low unemployment - there is a significant workforce deficit, out-migration for training or employment and pockets of acute skills and employment deprivation. Critically, there is only minimal local provision around further and higher education, despite nationally renowned facilities such as the Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology (LINCAM) based/operating in West Lindsey.

Local employers often struggle to access the training and development their employees require locally and the ageing population is creating issues around succession planning. Building on the legacy of the WLDC's UKSPF funded 'People and Skills' programme, workforce development strategy will be focused on future-proofing employee skills, addressing employment gaps and aligning education and training with industry needs (particularly those in emerging sectors such as defence, agri-tech and clean energy). Working with the GLCCA to ensure Local Skills Improvement Plans, local Get Britain Working Plans and skills funding works for the West Lindsey economy more broadly, we will:



- Work with stakeholders via the West Lindsey Employment and Skills Partnership to both address local challenges and facilitate local opportunities identified via the Employment and Skills Delivery Plan, ensuring ongoing skills intelligence and forecasting proactively address future business and workforce needs.
- Continue to strengthen links with the University of Lincoln and explore the potential for a campus based in Gainsborough focused on developing advanced manufacturing and fusion adjacent skills, building on the successful LINCAM model.
- Support businesses/educational institutions to develop a talent pipeline for WL's emerging growth sectors via industry led programmes which aligns local skills development with ongoing/future sector needs.
- Explore the potential for a West Lindsey trade school.
- Establish the business case for a Fusion Skills Cafe in Gainsborough.
- Engage with schools to develop skills curriculum, animate local career pathways, support placements and inspire the future workforce (emerging/established sectors).
- Engage with employers and skills providers to address local access issues in order to address travel/connectivity issues and reduce barriers to employment and training.
- Work with providers to promote life-long learning, re-skilling and apprenticeships - particularly around digital and green skills.

Theme 5: Sustainability and the Green Economy

Vision for West Lindsey:

'Through advocacy and promoting sustainable economic practices that balance growth with environmental stewardship, we will ensure West Lindsey contributes to net-zero ambitions.'

Approach:

Consultation with stakeholders confirms that transitioning to a low carbon economy and adopting greener technology is a necessity for environmental sustainability and a key economic opportunity for local businesses. However, stakeholders also identify that the 'net-zero transition' is costly, complicated and time consuming for many businesses and there is a definite requirement for practical business support and funding to realise benefit which balances sustainability with financial viability.

Corporately, WLDC is committed to championing sustainable business practices, as well as stimulating commercial investment linked to the green transition and supporting the growth of sectors that contribute to country's net-zero ambitions. As part of this approach we will support, with partners, businesses to identify how:

- Investing in energy-efficient technology and transitioning to renewable energy sources like solar or wind can significantly cut carbon emissions and reduce long-term business costs.
- Sourcing materials responsibly, partnering with eco-friendly suppliers and reducing transportation emissions through local procurement strategies can improve sustainability.
- Moving from a linear 'take-make-dispose' model to a circular system that emphasises reuse, recycling and refurbishment to minimise waste.
- Reducing packaging, implementing recycling programs and finding ways to re-purpose byproducts can make operations more sustainable.
- Switching to low carbon fleets, optimising delivery routes and leveraging rail or sea freight over air transport can lower carbon footprint.
- Upskilling employees core environmental literacy can reduce costs, drive innovation and realise commercial opportunities.



- Implementing water-saving technologies and practices in production, office spaces and supply chains can preserve this vital resource.
- Creating goods that are durable, repairable and made from sustainable materials can attract eco-conscious customers and reduce environmental impact.
- Participating in carbon offset programmes, investing in reforestation or biodiversity projects and supporting regenerative agriculture can help balance emissions.
- Encouraging sustainable practices in the workplace, such as remote work options, carpooling and eco-friendly office policies, fosters a sustainability-focused culture.

To do this, we will continue to work with partners at organisations such as the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub to ensure local businesses have access to the support resources required to realise net-zero transition and business opportunities linked to sustainability.

We will also ensure we act as local sustainability advocates and encourage businesses to embrace opportunities for sustainable innovation, efficiency and market differentiation.

More broadly we will build upon work with partners to conduct district-wide climate vulnerability assessments and develop adaptation strategies for critical infrastructure and economic assets. We will also explore how sustainable energy generation can mitigate grid constraints which may prevent business growth in West Lindsey.

Key Opportunity 1: Growth Sector, Clean Energy (STEP Fusion)

Vision for West Lindsey:

'West Lindsey has leveraged its proximity to West Burton (STEP fusion) and other renewable energy projects to evolve a local advanced manufacturing and service supply chain which has improved local skills levels, infrastructure and created a volume of jobs and local business opportunities'



£102.9m Annual Average GVA
(until 2065 from STEP)



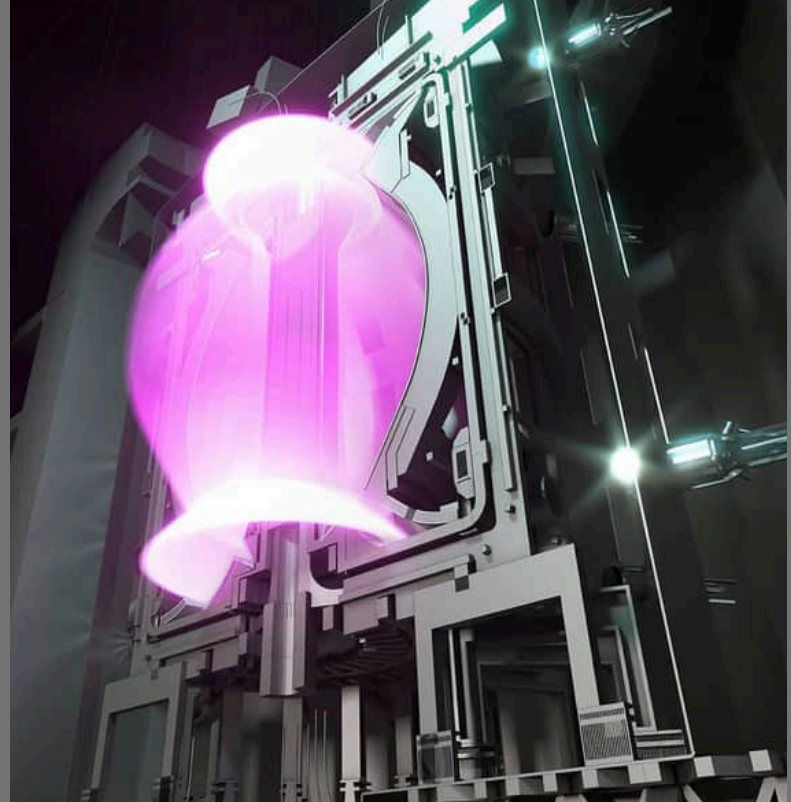
1,329 Annual Average Jobs
(until 2065 from STEP)

Background:

Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production (STEP) was announced as part of the Government's 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution' in 2020 which sought to design and construct a prototype fusion power plant by the 2040s. This internationally significant, first of its kind programme will result in the UK being one of the first countries in the World to commercialise fusion energy generation, placing it at the forefront of the clean energy revolution.

In order to progress the realisation of STEP, both strategic and operational engagement/collaboration groups have been formed in partnership with UKAEA, representing the interests of 30+ organisations/businesses in the Midlands. These groups operate with the shared purpose of enabling the progression of STEP development to maximise the direct/indirect socio-economic benefits from the programme, with STEP acting as a catalyst for wider regional benefits.

In addition to the redevelopment of the West Burton site, the Trent Super Cluster Vision identifies the future use of the former Cottam and High Marnham sites for Data, AI, Hydrogen and Food/Agri Tech, with the potential to create over 15,000 highly skilled jobs and generate £930m GVA per annum.



Opportunity:

STEP, located at West Burton – next to Gainsborough, is identified as a key element of the 'Corridors of Opportunity', which positions West Lindsey as the 'engine room' for the development of clean energy, defence and agri-technology sectors in the Greater Lincolnshire economy. WLDC will continue to work with partners to:

- Deliver construction and operations phase training – equipping local people with the necessary skills to compete for the job opportunities.
- Promote fusion in local schools and promote career pathways leading to local recruitment.
- Develop local supply chains – promoting and providing support for local businesses to access commercial opportunities.
- Undertake local sector/cluster development – supporting the UK fusion sector and facilitating the creation of a local cluster of clean energy adjacent businesses.
- Support inward investment.
- Support the requisite investment in improving local infrastructure (transport, local homes, sites/premises and services) to service the requirements of the opportunity.
- Identify programmes to maximise the benefits from increasing local footfall and spend.



Key Opportunity 2: Growth Sector Agri-Tech

Vision for West Lindsey:

'The Ag-Zone becomes the UK's most dynamic, productive and sustainable agricultural cluster, investing in its capital and knowledge base to be a global exemplar of agricultural growth'



£165m GVA uplift by 2035



731 jobs created by 2035

Background:

The Ag-Zone was originally proposed in Autumn 2022, to secure the future of the Greater Lincolnshire agriculture and horticulture sector during a period of significant change.

Focused around the emerging agri-tech cluster at Riseholme in West Lindsey, which is rapidly emerging as a key national centre for advanced agri-tech, organisations such as the Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology (LIAT), Barclays Eagle Lab and two national Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) in agri-robotics and the use of AI in agri-tech have already emerged.

This growth has also led to a series of programmes to support start-ups and spinouts in agri-tech, with the first of these now being commercialised. This has created a growing cluster of agri-tech businesses, supported by over £100m of applied R&D and innovation funding since 2016.

This cluster of activity, which includes: education from foundation level to PhD; an active CPD and knowledge exchange programme for industry; a large and fast growing innovation programme; and, a growing community of agri-tech companies, means West Lindsey is poised to be a leading UK centre for agri-tech.

Opportunity:

Over the next 10 years, the Ag-Zone has the potential to experience significant growth (see above). Furthermore, the Ag-Zone supports the broader Agri-Food sector in Greater Lincolnshire including:

- Agricultural and Horticultural Producers;
- Food Processing and Supply Chain Businesses;
- Agri-Tech and Input Suppliers; and;
- Professionals, Innovation and Skills Providers.

Critically, WLDC and partners can play a key role in supporting the Ag-Zone and broader sector development by creating the conditions for investment growth:

- Enabling Policy (Planning etc.)
- Employment Land Provision
- Infrastructure Investment
- Investment Marketing and Facilitation
- Financial Incentives
- Skills Development and Training Programmes
- Public/Private Sector Partnerships

Key Opportunity 3:

Growth Sector, Defence and Security

Vision for West Lindsey:

'Scampton is part of a thriving and internationally important defence (and adjacent sectors) cluster built around cutting edge innovation, technology and sustainability'



£108m GVA per annum



Up to **1,725** High skilled new jobs

Background:

The UK (and International) defence and security sector is undergoing rapid digital transformation and growth as a result of increased government investment. The Royal Air Force presence in central Lincolnshire is accompanied by a cluster of major defence and security technology businesses (and skilled staff), providing operational support for ISTAR and digital systems. They are part of a wider regional industrial base with advanced digital, manufacturing and energy capabilities, including Industry 4.0 technologies, robotics and automation, automotive and power systems. This knowledge intensive sector is one of the fastest growing in Greater Lincolnshire and employment has risen by 21% since 2019 with turnover increasing by 31% over the same time period

The former RAF Scampton base, historically home to the World famous RAF Red Arrows display team, 617 'Dambusters' Squadron and the Vulcan Bomber, ceased military operations in 2023. The dormant site was quickly identified as a viable location for the development of a nationally significant defence cluster.

The 900 acre secure site includes a fully operational and CAA-licensed CAPI68 3,000 meter runway. With low ambient population density and local communities supportive of commercial site redevelopment, Scampton provides the ideal environment for businesses engaged in aerospace, space, robotics, defence manufacturing, technology R&D, innovation, testing and evaluation. Scampton is also identified as a key element of the 'Corridors of Opportunity'

Opportunity:

The redevelopment of the former RAF Scampton base will deliver significant economic benefits and presents multiple opportunities for economic regeneration, nationally significant sector development and the creation of a sustainable, high-tech industrial ecosystem.

The Scampton Master Plan sets out the redevelopment vision for a sustainable mixed-use site encompassing commercial, aerospace, defence, education and heritage activities – a key element of the 'A46 Midlands Space Corridor' vision, enabling growth across the wider region. WLDC will continue to work towards site acquisition and disposal to its development partner Scampton Holdings Ltd in order to realise:

- High value local job creation and skills development.
- Domestic and International site investment
- Local infrastructure (transport/digital) improvements
- Development of local supply/service chains
- Regeneration of the local area
- Innovation sector(s) development (e.g. defence, advanced manufacturing etc.)
- Carbon neutral site operations
- The development of aviation heritage and tourism
- Sector adjacent linkages to the Trent Super Cluster



Key Opportunity 4:

Visitor Economy

Vision for West Lindsey:

'West Lindsey has continued to develop as a quality visitor destination attracting more visitors and encouraging people who are already visiting to stay longer, explore further and spend more in the local economy during their trip'



£171.82m Sector value (2023)



2.363m Visitors (2023)

Background:

The visitor economy is a significant and growing sector within West Lindsey, which has grown from an annual value of £93m in 2012 to £172m in 2023. The sector provides a variety of local employment opportunities either directly, or across the local supply chain (employing nearly two thousand employees in 2023) and generates volume footfall for our high-street shops and service providers.

The district is an attractive, rural area which combines an outstanding natural environment (including the Lincolnshire Wolds) with historic service centres/market towns (e.g. Gainsborough, Market Rasen) and villages as well as close proximity to the city of Lincoln. The district is also rich in aviation heritage and has a developing cultural and leisure offer (via WLDC's Cultural Strategy). WLDC's current Visitor Economy Strategy is underpinned by key principles, which remain vital to the ongoing growth and success of the sector and the wider local economy:

- Visitors must have a positive rewarding experience; they will want to share with others.
- Residents must benefit from the Visitor Economy.
- The District's Environment must be protected.
- The Visitor Economy must be continuously developed.

Opportunity:

West Lindsey has a number of ingredients to develop an increasingly successful and prosperous visitor economy: a broad heritage offer and a range of attractions and activities (such as the race-course at Market Rasen and the Lincolnshire Showground); a strong food, hospitality and retail sector; including Marshalls Yard in Gainsborough and family-friendly attractions such as Rand Farm Park, Lincoln Zoo and Forestry England's Willingham Woods.

Critically, WLDC and partners can play a key role in supporting sector development by working collaboratively to deliver increased:

- Volumes of flexible accommodation e.g. self-catering and 'glamping'.
- Provision and promotion of outdoor activities e.g. cycling and walking.
- Product development around food, shopping and attractions to improve quality and experience.
- Usage of locations such as Market Rasen Race Course and the Lincolnshire Showground for music and business events.
- Variety of events to support market development and generate media attention.
- Quality of the local tourism product offer.
- Promotion of the 'whole' West Lindsey offer including local producers, street markets etc.

Key Opportunity 5:

Town Centre Regeneration

Vision for West Lindsey:

'West Lindsey's town centres will continue to undertake vibrant transformation to counter structural changes to the composition of the high street, focused on sustainable growth, heritage preservation, inclusivity and economic prosperity'



£23m+ invested in the regeneration of our towns (since 2020)

Background:

WLDC has a proud history of facilitating investment into the regeneration of the district's town centres. This investment is crucial because it encourages business growth, creates jobs and attracts visitors – making our towns more vibrant. The investment also leads to improved public spaces, fostering a sense of community pride and identity. Investing in our town centres is part of our long term approach to addressing high street vacancies, the health of our stall markets and place making more broadly.

During the 2010s Market Rasen was a location for the Portas Pilot scheme, a programme aimed at rejuvenating high streets across the UK. More recently, the 'Historic Building Grant' has helped regenerate a number of town centre buildings and supported the establishment of the town's banking hub. In Caistor, WLDC have worked alongside the Government's High Street Task Force (HSTF) through the 'Unlock Your Place's Potential' programme. This approach has resulted in the vacant former Co-Op building being redeveloped as part of a £3m programme to provide additional commercial, community and holiday accommodation space. The UKSPF funded 'Large Village Retail Grant' has helped regenerate local commercial, transport and leisure infrastructure.

Gainsborough, through Levelling-Up and National Lottery Heritage funding, has benefited from over £18m of targeted investment into the 'Thriving Gainsborough' programme which includes the regeneration of the town's Market Place, town centre parks, heritage buildings, Bus Station, way-finding signage and the building of the Savoy Cinema.



Opportunity:

Moving forwards, WLDC is keen to work with commercial partners and wider stakeholders to build on this catalytic investment in order to address market failure and further improve the physical, economic, social (including healthcare provision) and environmental characteristics of West Lindsey's town centres – encouraging footfall, dwell time and spend. Opportunities include:

- Evolving our proactive 'place-partnership' approach ('Audit, Engage, Encourage and Promote') to tackling vacancies and developing the town-centre retail/service mix – using commercial specialists to support the identification and recruitment of new businesses that improve the mix.
- Maintaining and improving the 'Invest Gainsborough' initiative and supporting local business networks.
- Developing and deliver the Vacant Property Action Plan.
- Identifying funding opportunities to support the delivery of elements of the next phase of the Gainsborough Heritage Master Plan.
- Refreshing the Markets Action Plan and exploring the potential for a speciality market programme.
- Exploring the potential for further investment into public realm improvements.
- Incentivising investment via business grants and business support.
- Utilising levers such as festivals, entertainment and free parking to drive footfall generation.
- Identifying funding to deliver improved wayfinding in Market Rasen and Caistor.

Key Opportunity 6: The Digital Economy

Vision for West Lindsey:

"West Lindsey has embraced digital opportunities, improved infrastructure and connectivity and started to realise the efficiency benefits of Artificial Intelligence"



100% Superfast connectivity by 2028



731 jobs created by 2035

Background:

In 2022, provisional estimates show that the digital sector contributed £158.3 billion to the UK economy. Digital opportunities linked to both high tech sector growth and emerging opportunities around quantum technologies, programming, data engineering, design and artificial intelligence are pillars of a modern economy.

High-quality digital infrastructure is essential for positioning West Lindsey to take advantage of technological advances, local commercial opportunities, support inward investment and more broadly – improve living standards and well-being.

Historically, there has been a spatial disparity in digital infrastructure provision and linked improvements to connectivity. The roll-out to more sparsely populated areas such as West Lindsey has been slower as a result of both technical and commercial factors. Project Gigawatt (led by BDUK and LCC locally) is focused on delivering full fibre infrastructure to the district, but currently access to superfast in the district is around 90.24% and ultrafast 57.27%.

Improving local access would contribute to increased economic growth, innovation and productivity through improved digital connectivity, as well as supporting those that are vulnerable or disadvantaged to access skills, training and flexible employment opportunities.

Opportunity:

West Lindsey is home to a growing and diverse cluster of digital and tech businesses, including a cluster of cutting edge agri-tech businesses at Riseholme. Improving local digital connectivity, particularly in growth sectors, will boost the local economy.

There is an opportunity for WLDC to work with partners (and the wider business community) to:

- Enhance digital connectivity across the whole district through the roll out of improved fixed and mobile connectivity (5G, Super/Ultra Fast broadband).
- Support the introduction of smart technologies
- Lever higher investment into emerging digital infrastructure
- Develop supply chain connectivity to Data Centres and AI Growth Zones
- Develop financial incentives, networking and mentorship for digital businesses to support realisation of commercial opportunities
- Develop digital skills development and training programmes
- Support tech enablement for non-digital businesses

Key Opportunity 7:

Housing

Vision for West Lindsey:

'West Lindsey has a balanced housing mix which supports the infrastructure requirements of a growing local economy enabling residents to access to high-quality, affordable housing and sustainable communities'



1,306 new homes delivered
(2006 to 2024)



8,000 new homes required to be
delivered in Central Lincolnshire by
2030

Background:

The Government are committed to delivering 1.5 million new homes over the next five years. An overhaul of the planning system is underway and new mandatory housing targets are once again required to be agreed within local plans.

As part of the Greater Lincolnshire Devolution Deal increasing the choice, quality and diversity of the housing offer, as well as the numbers, was agreed as a priority for the new joint working arrangements between the GLMCCA, Lincolnshire County Council, the unitary authorities, districts and other stakeholders (including Homes England) operating in Greater Lincolnshire. As part of the deal, the following commitments to housing delivery were made:

- Unlocking barriers to affordable housing delivery, regeneration and wider housing growth through the development of a housing pipeline.
- Infrastructure development to support housing growth.

Collaboration has already commenced with the completion of the Greater Lincolnshire housing pipeline study in early 2025 and early discussions are underway to develop the approach to delivery of the required Spatial Development Strategy for Greater Lincolnshire.



Opportunity:

The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (adopted April 2023) promotes a spatial strategy which focuses on delivering sustainable growth for the area which meets the needs for homes and jobs, regenerates places and communities and supports necessary improvements to facilities, services and infrastructure.

Moving forwards, the plan-led approach to growth in Central Lincolnshire aims to maintain and enhance the role of Gainsborough as the main town in West Lindsey, supporting the towns growth and regeneration objectives. The Market Towns of Caistor and Market Rasen are also recognised for their ability to deliver proportionate growth in housing, employment retail and wider service provision, whilst villages varying in scale also have carefully planned growth allocations. Key opportunities include:

- Utilising Gainsborough's Sustainable Urban Extensions to support the growth requirements of the STEP development (2,800 new homes required).
- Supporting Neighbourhood Plans to deliver sustainable local socio-economic growth.
- Working with partners to ensure new housing supports the 'Corridors of Growth' - meeting the requirements of the future workforce.

Key Opportunity 8: Transport Infrastructure Development

Vision for West Lindsey:

'Transport infrastructure development creates a more productive, connected, efficient and sustainable transport network in West Lindsey, supporting economic growth and improving commercial opportunities for local businesses'



CEPR research identifies that for every £1 spent on transport infrastructure, £3 to £7 benefit is generated

Background:

Economic Growth is a fundamental theme of the Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan and West Lindsey's current transport network plays a crucial role in connecting the district to Greater Lincolnshire and the regions:

- **A15:** This major road runs north-south through West Lindsey, providing access to Lincoln and the A46 to the south – connecting to the M180 (M18 and M62) motorways, Humberside Airport and the Humber ports to the north.
- **A631:** This road runs east-west, linking Gainsborough to Market Rasen. It is an important route for local traffic and goods movements onto the A15 and A46 and a gateway route into Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire.
- **A46:** This major trunk road connects West Lindsey to the A1, M1 and provides access to major cities like Leicester and Nottingham as well as the south Humber Bank (Freeport).
- **Rail:** Local services link with both the East Coast Mainline (London) and major Midlands/Northern cities.

There have been recent investments in local network improvements, such as the new Foxby Lane roundabout in Gainsborough, which will improve traffic flows and safety as well as supporting local housing development and the commercial development of employment land.

Opportunity:

The improvement (including maintenance), efficiency (in terms of the flow of people, goods and services) and safety of key transport links in and out of West Lindsey (and Central Lincolnshire more broadly) to ports, rail/air-hubs (e.g. Humberside, East Midlands airports) and the strategic road network, as well as digital connectivity to support emerging smart transport solutions, is a critical enabler of local economic and business growth. Key opportunities include:

- Improving the A15 economic growth corridor infrastructure to support Defence and Agri-Food sector opportunities.
- Developing 'gateway' road (A631), rail and waterway infrastructure to support the evolution of the STEP programme and Clean Energy sector.

More broadly, WLDC and partners (e.g. GLCCA) can play a key role in shaping and delivering transport programmes that are focused on:

- Road/Rail Upgrades and Air-Hub linkages
- Improved Local Public Transport
- Active Travel Schemes
- Digital Connectivity/Smart Travel
- Sustainable and Green Transport
- Strategic Growth Corridor Development

Delivering Change: Collaboration and Place Leadership

‘Place leadership’ is a strategic approach where local authorities and other stakeholders collaborate to improve the quality of life and economic prosperity of a specific area.

In order to support the continued restructuring of the local economy – which contributes towards improving outcomes for residents, communities and local businesses as well as a more equitable, environmentally friendly and sustainable West Lindsey, it is critical that we work in a holistic way.

Realising West Lindsey’s economic opportunities (via the appended action plan) and delivering positive change will be challenging. Navigating a complex operational environment with multiple public, private and community organisations – each with their own objectives, requires decisive leadership and collaborative place-focused partnership working.

West Lindsey District Council have worked to define how Place Leadership can be used to refocus how local services are delivered. The development of this approach (and supporting toolkit) is particularly timely given the way that the economic development in West Lindsey, and Greater Lincolnshire more broadly, is changing as a result of devolution and the establishment of the GLCCA.







In the context of economic growth and through the lens of place leadership, West Lindsey District Council will act as a leading enabler of local economic change, advocating West Lindsey’s growth and setting the context for local growth into Local Government Reorganisation.

As part of our commitment to place we will continue to develop our strategic and operational relationships, working with both current and emerging partners at a place-based level to address challenges and opportunities, removing ‘silos’ and promoting outcome focused partnership working.

West Lindsey’s Place Leadership Principles:

-  Evidence Led
-  Collaborative
-  Partnership Focussed
-  Enabling
-  Coordinated
-  Customer Centric

West Lindsey’s Place Leadership Toolkit:

-  Creating narratives and priorities for Place Leadership at place-based levels.
-  Equipping officers and members with the right language and knowledge to ensure West Lindsey is at the centre of long-term, consistent strategic decision-making.
-  Using intelligent data analysis and insight from communities to back-up decisions.
-  Auditing stakeholders, their objectives and existing relationships to promote positive partnership working.
-  Supporting internal staff and external partners to become ‘place champions’ – championing West Lindsey and the vision across their work.
-  Creating case studies to showcase behaviours and positive outcomes through a Place Leadership approach.

Delivering Change: Commercial Place Shaping

‘Commercial Place Shaping’ is a strategic approach which involves enhancing commercial areas to foster economic growth, attract investment and support local businesses. It creates vibrant, accessible spaces that encourage community interaction, increase footfall and reflect local character – aligning with broader goals of urban revitalisation, livability and sustainable development.

In delivering this strategy, we will continue to act as a leading enabler of investment into West Lindsey. Our operational regeneration programmes, such as ‘Thriving Gainsborough 2024’, address entrenched economic decline by improving both the physical and economic conditions of our places – resulting in a more compelling and sustainable long-term investment proposition(s).

In order to facilitate commercial place shaping, West Lindsey District Council and partners (e.g. Team Lincolnshire), will support investment into West Lindsey’s high streets and on employment land in the district.

Our holistic approach will help investors to mitigate risk, develop, grow and create sustainable jobs:



Strategic and Place Advocacy

We will work at a senior level to foster productive commercial relationships, develop policy/programmes/collateral which supports the case for local investment, consider strategic acquisitions (where financially viable) and identify and convert funding/investment opportunities which support commercial place making.



Development Control

We will use planning policy to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest with confidence. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan takes a flexible approach to town centre and employment land growth, management and adaptation in order to support the realisation of emerging commercial opportunities.



Town Centre Regeneration

Utilising structural funding (e.g. the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) we will deliver both capital and revenue interventions which support the long term vitality of the district’s town centres and employment land (and social infrastructure) to build confidence in place and encourage commercial investment.



Business Support and Market Intelligence

We will provide a package of ‘soft-landing’ support to encourage investment into West Lindsey – either directly (through our Growth and Planning teams and regeneration programmes) or via our partners. To support this approach, we will continue to undertake significant analysis around town centre properties/employment land use and proactively liaise with agents in order to promote active commercial usage.

Delivery of this strategy will be focused around a rolling medium-term **action plan** - linked to the strategic themes identified within this strategy.

In alignment with the strategy, the action plan is intended to be dynamic in order to react to changing economic circumstances and flexible to capitalise on emerging opportunities.

The action plan will be reviewed annually and amended as appropriate - both in terms of composition and delivery timescales.

To track delivery progress, impact monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken using both overarching economic metrics which we have developed with strategic partners (identified below) and project specific analysis which will animate the broader outcome(s) of our interventions.

Metrics will measure data, direction of travel and performance versus comparators. These metrics will also be reviewed annually and updated where required.

Progress updates will be reported back to stakeholders annually via summary info-graphics and case studies where pertinent.

Theme 1: Inclusive Growth and Regeneration

- GVA per head of Workforce (real terms)
- Wages - Weekly Pay
- Employment Rate
- Out of Work Benefits
- Vacancy Rates
- Gross Disposable Household Income

Theme 2: Business Environment

- Business Survival Rate (3 Year)
- Total Businesses
- Total Businesses per 1,000 of Population
- Business Birth and Death Ratio

Theme 3: Investment

- Estimated Investment Funding
- Employment Floor Space Developed

Theme 4: Employment and Skills

- Total Jobs
- Job Postings
- Qualifications - Level 3+
- % of Occupations classed as High Skilled

Theme 5: Sustainability & the Green Economy

- Median Housing Energy Efficiency Score
- Per Capita CO2 Emissions within the scope of Local Authority
- Total Commercial and Industrial Emissions



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Get In Touch:

 www.west-lindsey.gov.uk

 growth@west-lindsey.gov.uk

 01427 676676





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- Per Capita CO2 Emissions within the scope of Local Authority
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Theme 1: Inclusive Growth and Regeneration

Vision for West Lindsey:

'Through the delivery of growth and regeneration programmes, we will support the development of a thriving West Lindsey economy where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from economic success, leading to more diverse, equitable and sustainable town centres and communities.'

Approach:

Consultation with stakeholders has confirmed a desire to ensure growth benefits all. West Lindsey is a district of contrasts. Despite many communities performing well (in an economic sense), analysis highlights acute pockets of deprivation, inter-generational economic inactivity, youth unemployment and challenges linked to rurality/sparsity.

Our approach to delivering inclusive growth and regeneration will seek to ensure that through our interventions, local economic growth, and more importantly - economic well-being, is accessible to as many of our residents as possible. In order to realise growth, while concurrently lowering barriers to opportunity, we will:

- Continue to lobby for growth enabling infrastructure investment which supports emerging opportunities and bridges gaps between rural and urban provision.
- Champion place-making and build on the significant investments we have recently made via the Levelling-Up Fund and National Lottery Heritage Fund to revitalise our town centres (e.g. 'Thriving Gainsborough 2024') with further programmes targeted at addressing market failure through the generation of commercial investment.
- Use our place-leadership role to work with developers to improve social-infrastructure, deliver balanced housing stock and commercial buildings which create a sense of pride in place for residents.



- Lever our key growth projects, such as STEP, in order to maximise their economic reach/social value (via local investment, supply-chain, skills development etc.) and create opportunities for our residents most likely to be excluded from the labour market.
- Support the re-imagining of our town centres as places to live, work and shop by targeting interventions that tackle vacancies and retail churn to improve the vibrancy of the local retail/leisure/service and market mix.
- Continue to utilise structural growth funding, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to deliver programmes to support growth across the district which is focused on meeting the specific needs of our rural communities.

We will also evolve our relationships with representative organisations, such as the Lincolnshire Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Business, to promote equitable employment practices, advocate sustainable and inclusive business models and support social enterprises and cooperatives.

Additionally, we will seek to increase the local socio-economic value of our growth investments through procurement activity and seek to ensure the planning process distributes opportunity through-out the district equitably.

Key Economic Metrics:

GL = Greater Lincolnshire

Indicator/Source	Latest Data	Direction of Travel				Snapshot
GVA per Head of Workforce (real terms calculated) Source: ONS LA GVA, BRES Employment	£57,266 (UK = £62,859)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Below national average but improving in short and long term and performing better than local comparators
		↑	↑	↑	↑	
Wages - Weekly Pay Source: ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2024 - resident based	£677 (UK = £729)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Below national average, improving in short and long term but performing worse than national and local comparators
		↑	↑	↓	↓	
Employment Rate Source: ONS Labour Force Survey, June 2024	75.1% (UK = 78.4%)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Below national average, worsening in short and long term and performing worse than national and local comparators
		↓	↓	↓	↓	
Out of Work Benefits Source: ONS Claimant Count, Oct 2024	3.2% (UK = 4.3%)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Lower than national average, but worsening in short and long term and performing worse than national and local comparators
		↑	↑	↑	↑	
Vacancy Rate Source: WLDC Reporting and Local Data Company RLTA reports	15.9% (UK = 14.0%)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Higher than national average but improving in short and long term and performing better than national comparator
		↓	↓	↓		
Gross Disposable Household Income Source: ONS GDHI per head of population 2024	£21,580 (UK = £22,580)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Below national average but improving in short and long term and performing better than national and local comparators
		↑	↑	↑	↑	

Key Actions:

Activity	Lead	Measurement	Time Frame
1.1 Continue the work with the RSN to champion inclusive growth and advocacy for rural communities in support of the Delivering for Rural Campaign.	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
1.2 Continue to work closely with Town and Parish Councils to strengthen and develop their economic capacity and resilience during LGR transition (i.e via development of NPs, localised energy Schemes, local business groups etc.).	Pan Council	Narrative	Ongoing
1.3 Delivery of Gainsborough Town Centre Regeneration Programme via the approved UKSPF Business Plan for 25/26.	Growth	Milestone /Metric	By March 2026
1.4 Continue to champion and drive heritage led regeneration renewal across the main market towns of Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor to attract new businesses, visitors and residents.	Growth	Milestone /Metric	Ongoing
1.5 Update the West Lindsey Housing Strategy in line with new Nation Policy/ Government Strategy Publication.	Housing	Milestone	2026
1.6 Support development of Strategic Partnership with Homes England.	Housing	Narrative	Ongoing
1.7 Continue to play an active role in Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning function.	Policy and Strategy	Milestone	Ongoing
1.8 Continue to lobby for growth enabling physical and digital infrastructure schemes which supports inclusive access, enterprise growth and social mobility.	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing

Theme 2:

Business Environment

Vision for West Lindsey:

‘Through the provision of advice, resources and funding which encourage growth, entrepreneurship and innovation, West Lindsey’s Micro, SMEs and larger businesses will have the opportunity to realise their potential.’

Approach:

Consultation with stakeholders emphasises that local businesses have: (1) an on-going need for practical support which addresses real-world business challenges; and; (2) financial assistance to realise commercial opportunities. Additionally, stakeholders identify that all support should be demand-led and respond to the unique needs of the business accessing support, supporting innovation and adaptation – especially given the volatile operating environment many businesses find themselves competing in.

West Lindsey has an entrepreneurial business culture with a strong base of SMEs, scale-up businesses and business survival rates significantly higher than national averages – all of which are positive indicators of economic resilience and growth potential. Conversely, high streets continue to struggle in response to changing consumer behaviour and external market factors e.g. utility prices, continue to increase operational costs for many businesses. On-going structural uncertainty is also having a negative impact on business operations, confidence, investment and ultimately, commercial sustainability. To support West Lindsey’s businesses we will:

- Work with partners to improve access to growth finance that helps de-risk SME investment, improves businesses growth and sustainable, high value job creation throughout the district.
- Explore, with funding partners, opportunities to deliver business infrastructure including incubators/start-up units and grow-on space.
- Support sustainable additional employment land allocations through the local and neighbourhood plans.
- Support local entrepreneurs, start-ups and micro-enterprises, scale-ups and high-growth businesses with support programmes which are focused on meeting the specific needs of the end-user.
- Establish a key account management programme to ensure West Lindsey’s most significant businesses – in both mature and emerging sectors, can engage with local government and partners.
- Build a business case for a pan-district business forum, providing a platform for B2B collaboration around growth opportunities, workforce development and knowledge transfer.
- Continue to work with partners to support foreign-owned businesses/investors.
- Advocate and support local business exporting into the global market.
- Continue to develop and promote West Lindsey’s visitor economy, town centres, markets and footfall events.
- Continue to utilise structural growth funding, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to co-fund the delivery of the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub and WLDC’s bespoke local business support provision.
- Animate supply chain opportunities.



Key Economic Metrics:

GL = Greater Lincolnshire

Indicator/Source	Latest Data	Direction of Travel				Snapshot
Business Survival Rate (3 Year) Source: ONS Business Demography 2024	53.7% (UK = 53.0%)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Above national average, but worsening in short and long term and performing worse than local average
		↓	↓	↑	↓	
Total Businesses Source: ONS Interdepartmental Business Register	4,150	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	N/A
		↓	↑			
Total Businesses per 1,000 of Population Source: ONS Interdepartmental Business Register, ONS Population Estimates	44.3 (UK = 47.6)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Below national average, worsening in short and long term and performing worse than national and local comparators
		↓	↓	↓	↓	
Business Birth to Death Ratio Source: ONS Business Demography Quarterly 2024	1.03 births per death (UK = 1.02)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Above national average, improving in short term but worsening long term and performing better than national and local comparators
		↑	↓	↑	↑	

Key Actions:

Activity	Lead	Measurement	Time Frame
2.1 Continue to work in partnership with LCC to evolve, support and promote the delivery of the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub support offer.	Growth	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
2.2 Delivery of UKSPF 25/26 funded Flagship West Lindsey Business Support Programme.	Growth	Narrative /Metric	By March 2026
2.3 Continue business engagement and aftercare initiatives via the delivery of digital newsletters, webinars and in-person business events.	Growth	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
2.4 Continue the Data collection programme including Town Centre Vacancies Index, footfall data monitoring and commercial/retail audits.	Growth	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
2.5 Work with partners to ensure local supply chain opportunities are maximised both in existing and emerging sectors.	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
2.6 Establish a key account management protocol for West Lindsey's most significant businesses	Growth	Narrative	Q3 2026
2.7 Establish the business case for a pan-district business forum to support B2B collaboration.	Growth	Narrative	Q3 2026
2.8 Continue to promote West Lindsey's Visitor Economy, Town Centres, Markets and Footfall Events (Leisure, Culture etc.).	Growth/Comms	Narrative	Ongoing
2.9 Explore, with partners, opportunities to deliver new business infrastructure (including employment 'space' and transport/digital/utility infrastructure).	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
2.10 Support, with partners, Foreign Owned Businesses and help animate exporting opportunities to local businesses.	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing

Theme 3:

Investment

Vision for West Lindsey:

'Through the facilitation of investment from both the public and private sector, we will drive West Lindsey's economic resilience and diversification, job creation and improvements to infrastructure and digital connectivity to create a conducive environment for businesses and communities to thrive.'

Approach:

Consultation with stakeholders confirms an expectation that WLDC should continue to play a leading role in facilitating investment into the whole district. There is strong support for improving physical and digital infrastructure, with a focus on 'future-proofing' and incorporating sustainable technologies. Although WLDC works pro-actively to encourage and facilitate both public and private investment in the district, it is undeniable that investment decision making continues to be impacted by market uncertainty, the commercial viability of investments in the district and investors appetite for risk.

Our approach to investing in growth projects will continue to be based around sound business case development. In parallel, our approach to supporting investment will be based around maintaining an investment ready culture, enabling investment through a supportive approach which helps businesses to mitigate risk. In order to provide investors (both public and commercial) with confidence we will:

- Utilise our adopted local plan to take a flexible approach to growth in order to support/facilitate the realisation of emerging commercial opportunities.
- Ensure that, as part of the Local Plan review, future employment land and residential allocations meet future growth requirements, using planning policy to help create the conditions in which interested parties can invest with certainty.
- Work with partners, such as Invest/Team Lincolnshire, to provide dedicated investment, relocation or expansion support.



- Work with partners, such as Lincolnshire County Council and the Greater Lincolnshire CCA (as well as utility providers) to develop policy/business cases which: (1) make the case for investment to unlock local sites (e.g. Sustainable Urban Extensions); (2) improves community connectivity; (3) delivers additional housing and serviced employment land; (4) delivers transport, utility and digital infrastructure improvements to support West Lindsey's priority growth sectors (e.g. regenerating Scampton).
- Continue to work in partnership with developers/investors to address market failure, revitalise our high-streets/communities and deliver locally iconic developments (e.g. Savoy Cinema, Gainsborough).
- Continue to maintain our intelligence led approach to handling investment enquiries, working pro-actively with stakeholders/agents to bring vacant units/sites into commercial use.
- Evolve our place-marketing collateral, launch the 'Invest West Lindsey' website to promote the district, local opportunities and supporting local business networks.
- Continue to lobby, develop policy and the mechanisms to aid West Lindsey's communities hosting Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) realise significant community benefit in both the direct locality and across the wider district.

Key Economic Metrics:

GL = Greater Lincolnshire

Indicator/Source	Latest Data	Direction of Travel				Snapshot
Estimated Investment Funding Source: The Data City, Deal Room 2024	£18.3m	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Improving performance in the short and long term
		↑	↑			
Employment Floor Space Developed Source: WLDC AMR 23/24	14,096sqm	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Improving performance in the short and long term
		↑	↑			

Key Actions:

Activity	Lead	Measurement	Time Frame
3.1 Develop the Invest West Lindsey website.	Growth	Narrative /Metric	Q4 2025
3.2 Work with the GLCCA to ensure the emerging Local Growth Plan endorses Place Leadership approach as a mechanism to local economic growth.	Growth	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
3.3 Work with partners to deliver the AgZone cluster of opportunities along the A15 growth corridor.	Growth	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
3.4 Identify and supply new sites for employment.	Growth	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
3.5 Capitalise on the emerging investment opportunities to promote the district's offer to areas where economic links are low e.g. Sheffield City Region and Nottinghamshire.	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
3.6 Develop a portfolio of funding ready infrastructure projects to kick-start investment, unlock and stimulate economic activity within the District.	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
3.7 Continue to work in partnership with Team Lincolnshire and other local/regional stakeholders to attract inward investment and collaborative initiatives to promote workforce development and knowledge sharing.	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
3.8 Delivery of UKSPF 25/26 funded Growing Innovation STEP Investment Plan.	Growth	Narrative	By March 2026
3.9 Work with partners to develop Scampton and develop the local defence cluster.	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
3.10 Continue with actions as identified in the Visitor Economy Strategy under the key themes of product development, destination basics, marketing and promotion and partnership and collaboration.	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
3.11 Continue to work with partners to develop the STEP Fusion Programme and wider Trent Super Cluster vision work.	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
3.12 Continue to lobby, develop policy and the mechanisms to aid West Lindsey's communities hosting Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).	Growth	Narrative	Ongoing

Theme 4:

Employment and Skills

Vision for West Lindsey:

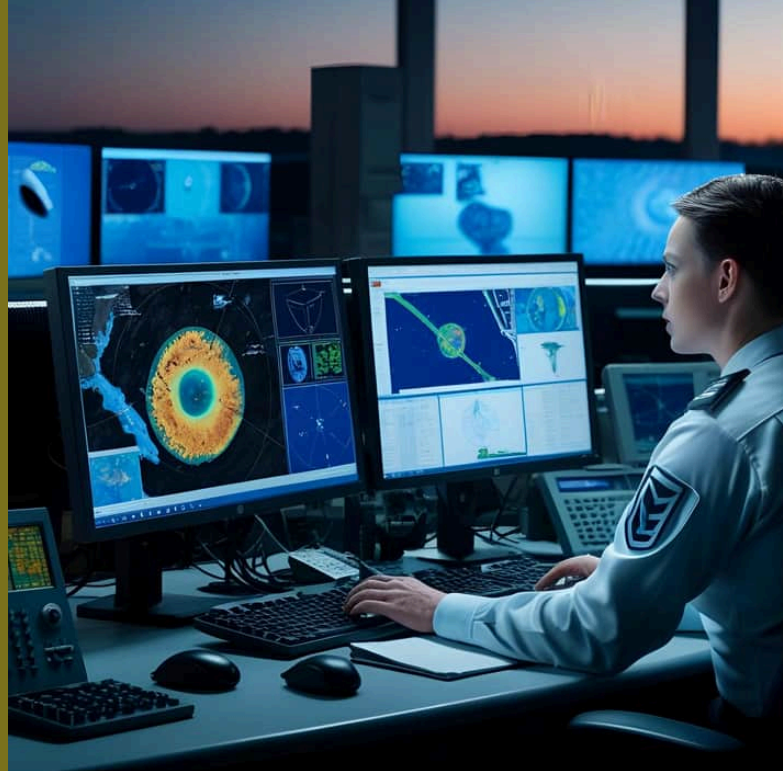
'Through partnership working with educational institutions and industry, we will strive to improve skills development and employment opportunities in West Lindsey - aligning workforce capabilities with current and future market needs, particularly in our emerging growth sectors - developing a pipeline of local talent to support all local businesses to realise growth'

Approach:

Consultation with stakeholders identifies the on-going need for WLDC to work in partnership with employers and education/skills providers to improve functional skills, raise productivity and create career pathways - particularly for younger residents. Additionally, stakeholders identify there is a need to improve both up-skilling opportunities and access to employment across all sectors through-out the district. There is also strong support for maintaining and developing relationships with businesses and skills providers to ensure skills shortages are identified/addressed, apprenticeships prioritised, employment is inclusive and West Lindsey has a workforce which is ready to respond to opportunity.

West Lindsey already benefits from a collaborative approach to skills and employment planning via established bodies like the West Lindsey Employment and Skills Partnership. Conversely, despite research confirming that although the district benefits from a number of encouraging metrics, including improving higher skills levels and low unemployment - there is a significant workforce deficit, out-migration for training or employment and pockets of acute skills and employment deprivation. Critically, there is only minimal local provision around further and higher education, despite nationally renowned facilities such as the Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology (LINCAM) based/operating in West Lindsey.

Local employers often struggle to access the training and development their employees require locally and the ageing population is creating issues around succession planning. Building on the legacy of the WLDC's UKSPF funded 'People and Skills' programme, workforce development strategy will be focused on future-proofing employee skills, addressing employment gaps and aligning education and training with industry needs (particularly those in emerging sectors such as defence, agri-tech and clean energy). Working with the GLCCA to ensure Local Skills Improvement Plans, local Get Britain Working Plans and skills funding works for the West Lindsey economy more broadly, we will:



- Work with stakeholders via the West Lindsey Employment and Skills Partnership to both address local challenges and facilitate local opportunities identified via the Employment and Skills Delivery Plan, ensuring ongoing skills intelligence and forecasting proactively address future business and workforce needs.
- Continue to strengthen links with the University of Lincoln and explore the potential for a campus based in Gainsborough focused on developing advanced manufacturing and fusion adjacent skills, building on the successful LINCAM model.
- Support businesses/educational institutions to develop a talent pipeline for WL's emerging growth sectors via industry led programmes which aligns local skills development with ongoing/future sector needs.
- Establish the business case for a Fusion Skills Cafe in Gainsborough and explore the potential for a West Lindsey trade school.
- Engage with schools to develop skills curriculum, animate local career pathways, support placements and inspire the future workforce (emerging/established sectors).
- Engage with employers and skills providers to address local access issues in order to address travel/connectivity issues and reduce barriers to employment and training.
- Work with providers to promote life-long learning, re-skilling and apprenticeships - particularly around digital and green skills.

Key Economic Metrics:

GL = Greater Lincolnshire

Indicator/Source	Latest Data	Direction of Travel				Snapshot
Total Jobs Source: Lightcast 2024	28,100	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Improving performance in short and long term
		↑	↑			
Job Postings Source: Lightcast 2024	4,800	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Improving performance in long term, but decreases in short term
		↓	↑			
Qualifications Level 3+ Source: Census 2021 (NB: Long term change is 10 years)	47% (UK = 50.8%)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Below national average, improving performance in long term, but not improving as quickly as national and local comparators
			↑	↓	↓	
% of Occupations classed as High Skill Source: SOC 1,2,3 Lightcast 2024	43% (UK = 48%)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Below national average but improving in short and long term and outperforming national and local comparators
		↑	↑	↑	↑	

Key Actions:

Activity	Lead	Measurement	Time Frame
4.1 Design and deliver a programme of employment and training events for job seekers.	Communities	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
4.2 Create a Green Skills Academy Partnership to develop specialised training programmes in green construction, renewable energy installation, retrofit and environmental management.	Growth/Communities	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
4.3 Work with FE, HE and training providers to ensure skills are developed to support emerging sectors and new investment entering the District.	Communities	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
4.4 Continue to explore the potential for a FE/HE campus based in Gainsborough focused on developing advanced manufacturing and fusion adjacent skills.	Growth/Communities	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
4.5 Work with key stakeholders to ensure appropriate skills and training provision is in place to support business growth in the district (as per Objective 1 of the Employment and Skills Delivery Plan).	Communities	Narrative	Ongoing
4.6 Improve access to training and increase employment prospects for West Lindsey residents (as per Objective 2 of the Employment and Skills Delivery Plan).	Communities	Narrative	Ongoing
4.7 Provide support in meeting the skills needs of local employers (as per Objective 3 of the Employment and Skills Delivery Plan).	Communities	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
4.8 Engage with schools to develop skills curriculum animate local career pathways, support placements and inspire the future workforce (emerging/established sectors).	Communities	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
4.9 Explore, with partners, the potential for a West Lindsey Trade School.	Growth/Communities	Narrative	Ongoing
4.10 Work, with partners, to develop the business case for a Fusion Skills Cafe.	Growth/Communities	Narrative	Ongoing
4.11 Undertake a mapping exercise to identify the distribution of skills and training activity in the District.	Communities	Narrative	Ongoing

Theme 5: Sustainability and the Green Economy

Vision for West Lindsey:

'Through advocacy and promoting sustainable economic practices that balance growth with environmental stewardship, we will ensure West Lindsey contributes to net-zero ambitions.'

Approach:

Consultation with stakeholders confirms that transitioning to a low carbon economy and adopting greener technology is a necessity for environmental sustainability and a key economic opportunity for local businesses. However, stakeholders also identify that the 'net-zero transition' is costly, complicated and time consuming for many businesses and there is a definite requirement for practical business support and funding to realise benefit which balances sustainability with financial viability.

Corporately, WLDC is committed to championing sustainable business practices, as well as stimulating commercial investment linked to the green transition and supporting the growth of sectors that contribute to country's net-zero ambitions. As part of this approach we will support, with partners, businesses to identify how:

- Investing in energy-efficient technology and transitioning to renewable energy sources like solar or wind can significantly cut carbon emissions and reduce long-term business costs.
- Sourcing materials responsibly, partnering with eco-friendly suppliers and reducing transportation emissions through local procurement strategies can improve sustainability.
- Moving from a linear 'take-make-dispose' model to a circular system that emphasises reuse, recycling and refurbishment to minimise waste.
- Reducing packaging, implementing recycling programs and finding ways to re-purpose byproducts can make operations more sustainable.
- Switching to low carbon fleets, optimising delivery routes and leveraging rail or sea freight over air transport can lower carbon footprint.
- Upskilling employees core environmental literacy can reduce costs, drive innovation and realise commercial opportunities.



- Implementing water-saving technologies and practices in production, office spaces and supply chains can preserve this vital resource.
- Creating goods that are durable, repairable and made from sustainable materials can attract eco-conscious customers and reduce environmental impact.
- Participating in carbon offset programmes, investing in reforestation or biodiversity projects and supporting regenerative agriculture can help balance emissions.
- Encouraging sustainable practices in the workplace, such as remote work options, carpooling and eco-friendly office policies, fosters a sustainability-focused culture.

To do this, we will continue to work with partners at organisations such as the Business Lincolnshire Growth Hub to ensure local businesses have access to the support resources required to realise net-zero transition and business opportunities linked to sustainability.

We will also ensure we act as local sustainability advocates and encourage businesses to embrace opportunities for sustainable innovation, efficiency and market differentiation.

More broadly we will build upon work with partners to conduct district-wide climate vulnerability assessments and develop adaptation strategies for critical infrastructure and economic assets. We will also explore how sustainable energy generation can mitigate grid constraints which may prevent business growth in West Lindsey.

Key Economic Metrics:

GL = Greater Lincolnshire

Indicator/Source	Latest Data	Direction of Travel				Snapshot
Median Housing Energy Efficiency Score Source: ONS Housing Analysis	68: Band C (UK = 68)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	In line with national average, improving in the short term and outperforming national and local comparators
Per Capita CO2 Emissions within the scope of LAs Source: UK Local Authority and Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Statistics 2005-2022 DESNZ	4.7kt CO2e per capita (UK = 3.8)	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Above national average, improving in the short term but performing worse than national and local comparators
Total Commercial and Industrial Emissions Source: UK Local Authority and Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Statistics 2005-2022 DESNZ	72.7kt CO2e	1 YR	5 YR	5 YR v UK	5 YR v GL	Improving performance in short and long term

Key Actions:

Activity	Lead	Measurement	Time Frame
5.1 Educate, support and engage with businesses to promote the implementation of circular sustainable and energy-efficient practices that will drive the transition to a low carbon economy.	Policy/ Growth	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing
5.2 Review the council's procurement processes to ensure the local authority supply chain is minimising carbon emissions, including through sustainable and circular procurement.	Policy	Narrative	Ongoing
5.3 Develop a Circular Economy Action Network to identify and implement circular economy opportunities, focusing on waste reduction, materials recovery and new business models.	Policy/ Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
5.4 Continue to work in partnership and represent West Lindsey across relevant Lincolnshire Sustainability Network groups.	Policy/ Growth	Narrative	Ongoing
5.5 Conduct district-wide climate vulnerability assessments and develop adaptation strategies for critical infrastructure and economic assets.	Policy	Narrative	Ongoing
5.6 Conduct practical research into how sustainable energy generation could mitigate grid constraints which may prevent business growth in West Lindsey.	Policy	Narrative	Ongoing
5.7 Work with Business Lincolnshire to ensure West Lindsey businesses have access to commercial support to help realise business opportunities linked to sustainability.	Growth	Narrative /Metric	Ongoing



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Get In Touch:

 www.west-lindsey.gov.uk

 growth@west-lindsey.gov.uk

 01427 676676

ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Consultation Report February 2025



Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030 consultation:

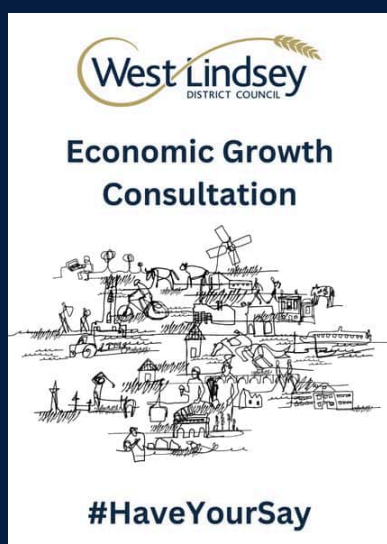
Background: West Lindsey District Council is currently developing a new Economic Growth Strategy that will run from 2025 to 2030. The aim of this strategy is to build on the successes of the Economic Recovery Plan 2021 to 2024 and foster a dynamic, vibrant, resilient and inclusive economy that supports sustainable growth, meets the challenges of climate change and fulfils the economic potential of the district, benefiting all of our communities and confirming West Lindsey's role in the wider regional economy.

Consultation: The consultation identified that the objectives (identified above) will be delivered through a work-plan linked to five distinct themes: (1) Inclusive Growth and Regeneration; (2) Business Environment; (3) Investment; (4) Employment and Skills; and; (5) Sustainability and the Green Economy. Between 28th October 2024 and 6th December 2024, WLDC sought feedback on these strategic themes. Additionally, the consultation also asked consultees to reflect on the challenges and opportunities for the local economy – now and over the next five years. This approach ensured that stakeholders were involved at the start of the strategic planning process and meant consultees responses could be integrated into the final composition of the emerging strategy.

Method: The consultation was fully aligned with WLDC's consultation strategy 'Moving Forwards Together: Empowering Community Voices' which emphasises empowering communities, fostering inclusivity and ensuring transparency in decision-making.

In order to ensure alignment, acknowledging that all residents have a stake in a dynamic, vibrant, resilient and inclusive economy, we targeted the consultation at the 'whole community' to ensure we captured both the views of our core strategy audience e.g. businesses, partner organisations, as well as secondary stakeholders such as employees etc.

The consultation was undertaken using both online and paper surveys and we targeted stakeholders via multiple routes (directing stakeholders to the consultation web-page) including:



- (1) Town and Parish Council newsletter;
- (2) Member newsletter;
- (3) Citizens Panel;
- (4) Press release;
- (5) Social media;
- (6) Business Ebrief;
- (7) Email contacts;
- (8) Resident Ebrief; and;
- (9) WLDC Officers.

This inclusive approach returned 389 consultation responses, representing businesses, partners, employees and other stakeholders.

This document is also published on our corporate website at: <https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/council-democracy/have-your-say/consultations/previous-consultations>

The new growth strategy will be published in Summer 2025.

All enquiries relating to this consultation should be e-mailed to: Growth@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Results: Consultees were asked to confirm whether or not they agreed with the following (summarised) statements. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed with all statements:

■ Strongly Agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly Disagree

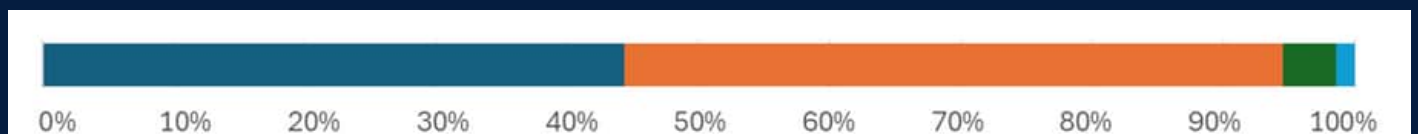
1a: The strategic themes provide a clear vision and approach to delivering growth.



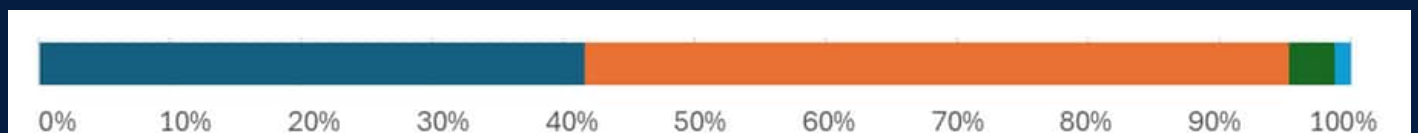
3a: Sustainable growth should create opportunities for everyone.



4a: Investment in towns and villages is important to ensure sustainability and pride in place.



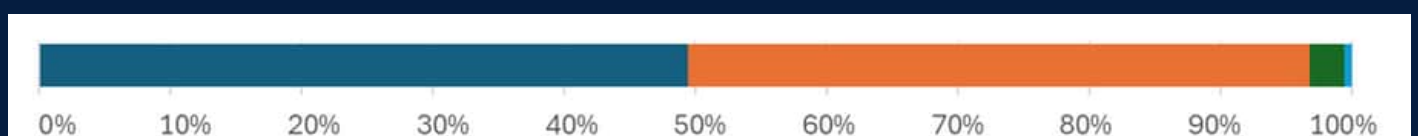
5a: Access to support is critical for WL entrepreneurs/business to realise growth potential.



6a: WLDC should facilitate public and private investment to develop a resilient economy.



7a: Access to training is critical to improving skills, productivity and access to employment.



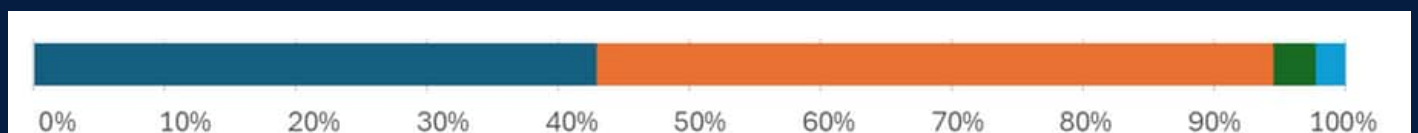
8a: Agri-Tech/Robotics, Clean Energy and Air, Space and Defence are WL's growth sectors.



9a: WL's economy should contribute towards realising net-zero by adopting green practices.



10a: WL's businesses should be encouraged to embrace environmentally sustainable growth.



Results: Consultees were asked to identify what they believed were ‘the main challenges facing the West Lindsey Economy over the next five years’.

Overall, respondents identified a wide range of challenges facing the West Lindsey economy – with a strong emphasis on provision of funding, improved infrastructure, workforce development and community support. There was a call for practical, accessible and meaningful solutions to address these challenges and support sustainable economic growth. A summary of the key challenges can be found below:



Funding and Investment: A significant concern is the lack of central funding and investment in the area. Respondents highlighted the need for financial support to drive economic growth and development.



Infrastructure and Connectivity: Respondents identified the need for significant investment in both digital and physical infrastructure, including sustainable transport, renewable energy systems and high-speed broadband in rural areas. Poor road conditions and transport links are also major concerns.



Economic Transition: Supporting local businesses through major changes such as digitalization, sustainability requirements and changing consumer expectations are seen as key challenges. Rising operational costs and cost competition are additional concerns that respondents felt local businesses were facing.



Workforce and Skills: Addressing an ageing population, retaining young talent and filling skills gaps across both traditional and emerging sectors were highlighted as key local challenges. Respondents identified that there is a need for better education and training to support local employment.



Rural-Urban Divide: Respondents stated that ensuring equitable development across the district and preventing rural isolation were important issues. Maintaining viable local business services in smaller communities was also a concern for some respondents.



Climate Resilience: Adapting to climate change impacts (particularly in the agricultural sector) and supporting businesses to meet environmental regulations and transition to sustainable practices were seen as critical challenges by many respondents.



Economic Inclusivity: Respondents identified that making sure economic growth benefits all communities, addressing pockets of deprivation and creating accessible job opportunities across different skill levels.



Regeneration and High Street: Regenerating town centers and improving the attractiveness of high streets to prevent people from shopping elsewhere was identified as a priority by many respondents.



Housing and Property: The condition of business premises and housing stock more broadly is a concern for some respondents, as is a need for more social housing and affordable homes for young people.



Government Policies and External Factors: Respondents mentioned the impact of government policies, global financial difficulties and geopolitical issues as major macro challenges and there was also concern about the impact of Brexit and climate change on the local economy.

Respondents also felt that tackling Crime and Community/Mental Health were also important in the context of a healthy local economy.

Results: Consultees were asked to identify what they believed were **'the main opportunities for the West Lindsey Economy over the next five years'**.

Overall, respondents identified opportunities with a strong focus on sustainability, innovation and collaboration. Respondents confirmed the need for practical, accessible and meaningful support to help realize these opportunities and drive local economic growth. A summary of the key opportunities can be found below:



Green Economy Leadership: Respondents identified that there is the potential for West Lindsey to become a pioneer in sustainable rural development by combining renewable energy, green agriculture and circular economy initiatives.



Innovation and Technology: Respondents suggested that WL could build on the area's agricultural heritage to develop an agri-tech cluster. They also identified opportunities linked to embracing new sectors like digital and clean energy.



Skills Development: Creating a skilled local workforce through partnerships with education providers, focusing on future-proof sectors and green technologies was highlighted as a key opportunity by respondents.



Community Regeneration: Using sustainable development to revitalise town centres and rural communities, while concurrently improving both environmental and social outcomes are seen as major opportunities.



Inward Investment: Attracting businesses and remote workers seeking sustainable, rural locations with good connectivity, lower cost of living and higher quality of life was identified as a key lever to unlock local economic opportunities.



Funding and Support: Taking advantage of government support for green initiatives and future iterations of 'levelling up' to accelerate local development is seen as a key opportunity by many respondents.



Tourism: Respondents identified that promoting the local visitor economy and leveraging the area's natural beauty and rural charm to attract visitors and investment continued to be a significant economic opportunity.



Redevelopment Projects: Opportunities related to the redevelopment of sites like the West Burton power station, RAF Scampton and other redundant sites are highlighted by respondents as significant for economic growth.



Clean Energy: Embracing renewable energy projects, such as fusion, solar and wind power and supporting green initiatives are seen as important opportunities for the local economy.



Collaboration and Partnerships: Working across boundaries and collaborating with neighbouring districts, educational institutions and businesses to drive economic growth and development was seen as critical to realise economic growth.

Respondents also felt that community engagement, promoting a positive image of the area and fostering a sense of pride and ownership among residents are important for economic development.

Prosperous Communities Committee Work Plan (as at 7 July 2025)

Purpose:

This report provides a summary of items of business due at upcoming meetings.

Recommendation:

1. That Members note the contents of this report.

Date	Title	Lead Officer	Purpose of the report	Date First Published
15 JULY 2025				
15 Jul 2025	Temporary Excess Waste Update (Big Bin Clear Out BBCO)	Robert Gilliot, Operational Services Manager	Update on the BBCO after year 1	23 May 2025
15 Jul 2025	WLDC Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030	James Makinson-Sanders, Economic Growth Team Manager	Presentation of the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030, developed with members of the EGS Task and Finish Group.	23 May 2025
15 Jul 2025	One Earth Solar Farm - WLDC submissions	Russell Clarkson, Development Management Team Manager	To agree West Lindsey DC's approach towards the One Earth Solar Farm NSIP including the submission of key documents (such as the Local Impact Report) to the public examination.	23 May 2025
24 Jul 2025	Asylum Dispersal in West Lindsey	Sarah Elvin, Homes, Health & Wellbeing Team Manager	Report to update on the Asylum position in West Lindsey and seek authority for spend of the Asylum Dispersal Grant funding	
16 SEPTEMBER 2025				
25 Sep 2025	Gainsborough Health Provision	Amy Potts, Programme Manager	A report to outline existing GP provision in Gainsborough's scope, requirements and options, to form a business case working with the NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) for a future working model	

4 NOVEMBER 2025

4 Nov 2025	Proposed Fees and Charges 2026/2027	Sue Leversedge, Business Support Team Leader	Proposed fees and charges to take effect from 1 April 202.
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2 DECEMBER 2025

11 Dec 2025	Progress and Delivery Quarter Two (2025/26)	Claire Bailey, Change, Projects and Performance Officer, Darren Mellors, Performance & Programme Manager	Progress and Delivery Quarter Two (2025/26)
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27 JANUARY 2026

27 Jan 2026	Prosperous Communities Committee Draft Budget 2026/2027 and estimates to 2030/2031	Sue Leversedge, Business Support Team Leader	The report sets out details of the Committee's draft revenue budget for the period of 2026/2027 and estimates to 2030/2031
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27 MARCH 2026

28 APRIL 2026
