



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

Tuesday, 29 October 2024

Subject: Tillbridge Solar - Written Representations (WR)

Report by:	Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Contact Officer:	Russell Clarkson Development Management Team Manager russell.clarkson@west-lindsey.gov.uk
Purpose / Summary:	To consider the Written representations prepared for the Tillbridge Solar Project Development Consent Order (DCO) examination

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- To agree the submission of Written Representations (WR) to be made on the Tillbridge Solar DCO examination; and
- To review the draft Written Representations (WR) prepared for the Tillbridge Solar examination, and 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, 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 was approved. This report is aligned with the approved process.

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/88/25/PCCB/SST

Resourcing of the NSIP process has been subject to a separate decision from this paper.

(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 Written representations (WR) will address any impacts that may be anticipated on the West Lindsey community.

Data Protection Implications :

None expected to arise from this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :

The Tillbridge Solar Park proposes renewable energy generating park comprising solar photovoltaic arrays and on site battery energy storage system (BESS).

The Scheme will have a 500MW connection to the National Grid Cottam Substation. Over the 60-year lifetime of the Scheme, the applicant says it will have a total energy generation figure of approximately 48.5 TWh. The applicant estimates “the Scheme will generate enough electricity to power approximately 299,383 homes per annum”.

It concludes that renewable energy generation from the Scheme during the first year of operation is estimated to be 866,394 MWh. Total operational emissions over the design life of the Scheme are estimated at 2,470,621 tCO₂e, with the largest proportion of this (1,852,892 tCO₂e) relating to the replacement of the BESS at 10 year intervals.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations :

Any anticipated crime and disorder implications will be addressed within the Written representations.

Health Implications:

Any anticipated health implications for the local community will be addressed within the Written representations.

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: Tillbridge Solar Project Information:
<https://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010142>

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 :

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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

Executive Summary

1. The 500MW Tillbridge Solar Project, proposed by Tillbridge Solar Ltd, qualifies as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). It therefore falls to be determined by the Government under the provisions of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008).
2. It is one of five solar NSIP projects that are proposed within the District.
3. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects are examined by the Planning Inspectorate, a Government Agency. The Examining Authority (ExA) will make recommendations to the relevant Secretary of State who will then determine the application as to whether to grant a Development Consent Order (DCO).
4. However, host authorities are expected to have an important role to play in the PA2008 process. Local Authorities are expected to participate in the examination process. The examination commenced on 15th October 2024 and will run until 15th April 2025. The Secretary of State will be due to have determined the application within 6 months of the examination closing (i.e. by 15th October 2025).
5. As part of the examination process, interested parties (IP) including the host authorities, are invited to submit a written representation (WR) to clarify their views on the application that were included in their relevant representation.
6. The draft examination timetable (to be confirmed) seeks that written representations are submitted by deadline 2 on Thursday 14th November 2024.
7. It is recommended that WLDC submits written representations by the stated deadline. In anticipation, Draft WR have been prepared and are appended to this paper. It is recommended that responsibility is delegated to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities in consultation with the Chair of this committee, to complete and submit the final written representations to the Tillbridge solar examination, having incorporated the feedback of the Committee.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Tillbridge Solar Project is an energy project comprising ground mounted solar photovoltaic arrays, and on-site energy storage along with associated development.
- 1.2 The principal site would be located approximately 5km to the east of Gainsborough, between the villages of Hemswell, Springthorpe and Glentworth. The Order Limits of the proposed development can be seen at appendix 2.
- 1.3 The principal site will cover an area approximately 1,400 hectares (Ha)-comprising 900Ha of developable area (including solar PV, Battery energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure); and 500Ha non-developable areas (considered for environmental mitigation and enhancement). An indicative site layout is provided at appendix 4.
- 1.4 There will be an approximately 16km long cable route corridor (Approximately 318Ha), which would run underground cables (400kV) to connect the principal site to the Cottam Substation in Nottinghamshire. The cable route corridor would run north of Stow, and south of Marton, before crossing the Trent into Nottinghamshire.
- 1.5 The operational life of the Scheme is to be 60 years.
- 1.1 The Scheme will have a 500MW connection to the National Grid Cottam Substation. As an energy generating station that would have a capacity that exceeds 50 megawatts (MW), it qualifies as a Nationally Significant infrastructure Project (NSIP). The Planning Act 2008 ('PA2008') introduced a new 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, as the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.6 Since 1st April 2012, the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) are the Government Agency responsible for examining applications for NSIPs, 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 or not to grant a DCO. For an energy proposal such as the Tillbridge Solar Park, the relevant SoS will be the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (current role holder: The Rt Hon Ed Milliband MP).
- 1.7 The Local Authority does not therefore determine the application. However, local authorities are strongly encouraged to participate in the NSIP process, and examination.
- 1.8 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).

- 1.9 Whereas the LIR sets out the host Authority’s assessment of the likely local impacts that would arise from the development, the WR is the opportunity for WLDC to set out its views and opinions on the proposed development.

2 The Examination Process

- 2.1 An application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) was made by Tillbridge Solar Ltd to the Planning Inspectorate on 10th April 2024. Tillbridge Solar Ltd is a joint venture partnership between Tribus Clean Energy and Recurrent Energy (A subsidiary of Canadian Solar).
- 2.2 On the 8th May 2024, PINS confirmed that the application had been accepted for examination.
- 2.3 On the 17th September 2024, the Examining Authority (ExA) released its “Rule 6” letter. This confirms the appointment of the Examining Authority – Nicholas Ely and Luke Simpson. The Rule 6 letter is enclosed at appendix 1.
- 2.4 As announced in the Rule 6 letter, the initial Preliminary Meeting was held on Tuesday 15th October in Gainsborough, considering only how the application will be examined (not the merits of the application). This is the formal commencement of the 6-month examination.
- 2.5 A Draft Examination timetable was produced with the Rule 6 letter. A final examination timetable will be produced in the week following the Preliminary Meeting.
- 2.6 The draft timetable proposes the 6 month examination will commence on 17th October 2024 (with the Preliminary Meeting) and will close on Tuesday 15th April 2025. It envisages seven deadlines, and the weeks commencing 13th January 2025 and 3rd March 2025 (if required) are reserved for public Hearings.
- 2.7 The Rule 6 letter explains that *“that the Examination of NSIPs are primarily a written process and hearings take on an inquisitorial approach as opposed to an adversarial one.”*
- 2.8 The Rule 6 letter explains that all interested parties (IP) can make written representations (WR). This includes the host authorities. The draft timetable proposes that WR are submitted by deadline 2 on Thursday 14th November.
- 2.9 The final examination timetable is expected to be published by the ExA in week commencing 21st October, and the Committee will be updated with any revisions at the meeting.

3 Other Solar Projects

- 3.1 The Tillbridge Solar Project is one of five nationally significant solar projects proposed within the West Lindsey District.

Project Name	Installed Capacity (MW)	Extent of Order Limits(Ha)	Status
Gate Burton Solar Project	500MW	824	DCO Granted
Cottam Solar Project	600MW	1451	DCO Granted
West Burton Solar Project	480MW	886.4	Decision expected by 8 th Nov 2024
Tillbridge Solar	500MW	1400	Examination
One Earth Solar	740MW	Approx 1500 (200 Lincs / 1300 Notts)	Pre-application

- 3.2 A map showing the Tillbridge Scheme in the context of other solar developments is included at appendix 3.
- 3.3 The **500MW Gate Burton Energy Park** (824Ha) by Gate Burton Energy Ltd, is to be located to the south-west of Gainsborough. It commenced its examination on 4th July 2023 and closed on 4th January 2024. On the 12th July 2024, the new Secretary of State announced his decision to grant the Development Consent Order.
- 3.4 The **600MW Cottam Solar Project** (1451Ha) is proposed by Island Green Power. The project was subject to examination between 5th September 2023 and 5th March 2024. On the 5th September 2024, the Secretary of State announced his decision to grant the Development Consent Order.
- 3.5 The development area is separated into 4 distinct sites. Cottam 1 (894Ha) comprises a number of sites and fields to the north east of Sturton by Stow. Cottam 2 (132Ha) is situated to the north east of Corringham. Cottam 3A (168Ha) is to the north east of Blyton, in proximity of the Blyton race track. Cottam 3B (73Ha) is 400m to the east of the village of Pilham.
- 3.6 The **480MW West Burton Solar Project** (886.4Ha) is also by island Green Power. The examination ran from 8th November 2023 – 8th May 2024. The Secretary of State is due to have made a decision by 8th November 2024.
- 3.7 It comprises 3 individual parcels of land between Saxilby and the A1500 (Tillbridge Lane).
- 3.8 On the 19th September 2024, the Secretary of state wrote to the applicant, to request the developer to “provide further information regarding the option to remove solar panels from Stow Park Deer Park (“the Stow Park Alteration”).”

- 3.9 The **740MW One Earth Solar Project** is proposed by developers PS Renewables and Ørsted. The site is proposed on land to the south of Newton on Trent, and would fall within the Districts of West Lindsey, Bassetlaw, and Newark & Sherwood. It would lie within both Lincolnshire (approx. 200Ha) and Nottinghamshire (approx. 1300Ha) counties.
- 3.10 This scheme is at the pre-application stage. The developer undertook statutory consultation in the summer of 2024, and anticipate making their application in “Q1 2025”.

4 Written representations (WR)

4.1 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).

4.2 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.”

4.3 It is recommended that WLDC take the opportunity to submit written representations to the Tillbridge Solar examination.

4.4 In preparation of the examination, draft WR have been produced and are contained at appendix 5.

4.5 The draft WR proposes that the key impact of the scheme can be categorised into four key areas, as follows:

- The cumulative impact of the Tillbridge Solar Project with other solar NSIP projects upon landscape character and visual effect;
- The cumulative impact of the Tillbridge Solar Project with other solar NSIP projects upon local communities with regards to construction impacts (including traffic and transport (inc. traffic management), noise and disturbance).
- The impact of the Tillbridge Solar Project in solus on the landscape character and visual effects.
- The impact of the Tillbridge Solar Project in solus in terms of maintenance and waste management.

- 4.6 It concludes 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. 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. The cumulative circumstances of this proposal being determined alongside three other NSIP solar projects results in unprecedented cumulative impacts in construction, operation and decommissioning.”*

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that Written representations (WR) on the behalf of WLDC are submitted to the examination of the Tillbridge Solar Project.
- 5.2 It is recommended that the Committee review the draft WR prepared for the Tillbridge Solar Project examination (appendix 5), and delegate authority to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities to complete, finalise and submit the final WR to the examination, taking into consideration the committee’s comments, and having consulted with the Chair of this Committee.