



**Prosperous Communities  
Committee**

**Tuesday, 29 October 2024**

**Subject: Tillbridge Solar - Local Impact Report (LIR)**

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 Local Impact Report (LIR) prepared for the Tillbridge Solar Project Development Consent Order (DCO) examination

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- To accept the invitation and approve the submission of a Local Impact report (LIR) to be made on the Tillbridge Solar DCO examination; and
- To review the draft Local Impact report (LIR) 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 LIR to the Examination, having taken into consideration the committee's comments.

## IMPLICATIONS

### **Legal:**

At a meeting of this committee on 1<sup>st</sup> 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/89/25/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 Local Impact Report (LIR) seeks to identify those members of the Community that may be impacted by the development of the Tillbridge Solar Project.

### **Data Protection Implications :**

None expected to arise from this report.

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**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 capacity 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 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, with the largest proportion of this (1,852,892 tCO<sub>2</sub>e) relating to the replacement of the BESS at 10 year intervals.

**Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations :**

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

**Health Implications:**

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: 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 :**

**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 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024 and will run until 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025. The Secretary of State will be due to have determined the application within 6 months of the examination closing (i.e. by 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025).
5. As part of the examination process, West Lindsey DC has been invited to submit a Local Impact Report (LIR). 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)).
6. It is not a requirement for West Lindsey DC to submit an LIR. 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.
7. It is recommended that the draft LIR appended to this report is reviewed, and 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 Local Impact Report 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.
- 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). The Order Limits can be viewed at appendix 2.
- 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.
- 1.6 Appendix 4 provides an indicative layout of the proposed solar project.
- 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.
- 1.7 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).
- 1.8 The Local Authority does not therefore determine the application. However, local authorities are strongly encouraged to participate in the NSIP process, and examination.
- 1.9 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).

- 1.10 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)).

## **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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024, PINS confirmed that the application had been accepted for examination.
- 2.3 On the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2024, the Examining Authority (ExA) released its “Rule 6” letter. This confirms the appointment of the Examining Authority – Planning Inspectors 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 15<sup>th</sup> October in Gainsborough, to consider how the application will be examined (not the merits of the application).
- 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 proposed the 6-month examination to commence on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024 (with the Preliminary Meeting) and will close on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025. It envisages seven deadlines, and the weeks commencing 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 It states that “*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*”.
- 2.9 The draft timetable proposes that the Local Impact Report is submitted by Deadline 1 on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024.
- 2.10 Officers have made written representations to the ExA, and oral representations at the Preliminary Meeting to advise that WLDC cannot meet this proposed deadline, as our Scheme of Delegation requires that the LIR must be determined by the Prosperous Communities Committee which is itself convening on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

- 2.11 The final examination timetable is expected to be published by the ExA in week commencing 21<sup>st</sup> October, and the Committee will be updated with any revisions at the meeting, including the revised deadline for submitting an LIR.

### 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	1,451	DCO Granted
West Burton Solar Project	480MW	886.4	Decision expected by 8 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2024
<b>Tillbridge Solar</b>	<b>500MW</b>	<b>1,400</b>	<b>Examination</b>
One Earth Solar	740MW	Approx 1,500 (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 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and closed on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024. On the 12<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024. On the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024. The Secretary of State is due to have made a decision by 8<sup>th</sup> November 2024.



- 3.7 It comprises 3 individual parcels of land between Saxilby and the A1500 (Tillbridge Lane).
- 3.8 On the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 public consultation in the summer of 2024, and anticipate making their application in “Q1 2025”.

#### **4 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
- Legislative & Policy Context (including the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan)
- Review of developer's "alternatives and Design Evolution"
- Landscape and Visual Amenity
- Ecology and Nature Conservation
- Socioeconomics and Land Use
- Transport and Access
- Cultural Heritage
- Soils and Agriculture
- Climate Change
- Noise and Vibration
- Water Environment
- Ground Conditions
- Glint and Glare
- Air Quality
- Materials and Waste
- Other Environmental Matters
- Conclusion and Summary table

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 table is provided at the back of the LIR.

4.8 The draft LIR identifies a number of local impacts that may arise from the development. It anticipates that there will likely be significant local impacts as a result of the development on such matters as:

Landscape & visual – significant moderate adverse impacts (negative) in solus; and significant moderate to large impacts (negative) in combination with other solar projects;

Transport and access – significant (negative) impact during the construction phase;

Climate change – significant (positive)

Noise and vibration – one significant negative effect from construction traffic noise is expected.

## **5 Recommendations**

5.1 It is recommended that a Local Impact Report (LIR) is submitted to the examination of the Tillbridge Solar Project. The Secretary of State will be required to take it into consideration when determining whether to grant the application for a DCO.

5.2 It is recommended that the Committee review the draft Local Impact Report 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 LIR to the

examination, taking into consideration the committee's comments, and having consulted with the Chair of this Committee.