Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford

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Dear Members

Special Planning Committee (Large Scale Major Application)

A special meeting of the Planning Committee will be held in the **Craddock Room, Civic Suite, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford** on **Tuesday 23 June 2026** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded.

The Committee will meet at the rear of the Civic Centre and depart at **9.30am** to visit the site(s) as set out in the agenda and re-convene at the Civic Centre at approximately **12.30pm** to determine the application(s).

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown in each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.

Head of Law and Governance

SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
(LARGE SCALE MAJOR APPLICATION)
23 JUNE 2026

Chairman - Councillor B McKeown
Vice-Chairman - Councillor S N Spencer

AGENDA

MEMBERSHIP

Chairman - Councillor B McKeown

B M Cross	B McKeown
P C Edgeller	A R McNaughton
A D Hobbs	D M McNaughton
J Hood	A J Sandiford
R A James	S N Spencer
P W Jones	

ITEM NO 3 ITEM NO 3

SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE – 23 JUNE 2026

Ward Interest - Nil

Planning Applications

Report of Head of Economic Development and Planning

Purpose of Report

To consider the following planning applications, the reports for which are set out in the attached **APPENDIX**:-

		Page Nos
24/38719/FUL	**Stallington Sprink, Stallington Road, Blythe Bridge** This application has been referred to the Planning Committee because the development is a large scale major application **Officer Contact -** (Richard Wood, Development Lead) Telephone 01785 619324	4 - 66
23/37193/FUL	**Land North of Marston Grange, Marston** This application has been referred to the Planning Committee because the development is a large scale major application **Officer Contact -** (Richard Wood, Development Lead) Telephone 01785 619324	67 - 80

Previous Consideration

Nil

Background Papers

Planning application files are available for Members to inspect, by prior arrangement, in the Development Management Section. The applications including the background papers, information and correspondence received during the consideration of the application, consultation replies, neighbour representations are scanned and are available to view on the Council website.

Application:	24/38719/FUL
Case Officer:	Tom Cannon
Date Registered:	19 June 2024
Target Decision Date: **Extended To:**	18 September 2024 4 December 2025
Address:	Stallington Sprink, Stallington Road, Blythe Bridge, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire
Ward:	Fulford
Parish:	Fulford
Proposal:	Construction and operation of a solar farm with all associated works, equipment, necessary infrastructure and biodiversity net gains.
Applicant:	Renewable Energy Systems Ltd
Recommendation:	Approve, subject to conditions and no intervention by the Secretary of State

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Reasons for Referral to Committee

Application 24/38719/FUL is a large-scale major application which is exempt from the Council's scheme of delegation and as such needs to be determined by the Planning Committee.

CONTEXT

1.0 Site and surroundings

1.1 The application site comprises of several fields, situated between the village of Fulford, and the hamlets of Saverley Green and Stallington. It also lies within Flood Zone 1, land with a low risk of flooding.

1.2 The application site extends to around 69.21 hectares in size and consists primarily of agricultural grassland which is divided into 19 fields, bounded by well-established mature hedgerows, woodland and trees. The field numbers (1-19) are identified on the submitted 'Field Numbers Plan: Figure 3'. The land currently forms part of the land holdings associated with Little Leacroft Farm and Fulford Hall Farm.

1.3 To the north of the site, a 33kV overhead line runs in a west-east direction crossing Fields 2 and 3. There are also two 11kV overhead lines that cross the land towards the centre of the application site, with one of these extending in a northwest-southeast direction across Fields 5, 6, 8 and 9, and the other in a southwest-northeast direction extending through Fields 12 and 14.

1.4 Two Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are located within the application site; Fulford 12 and Fulford 15, both of which are Category C footpaths. The A50 lies around 0.5km to the north and extends between the application site and the village of Blythe Bridge.

1.5 The settlement of Stallington is located around 0.5km to the west, with Saverley Green, approximately 0.5km to the east of the application site. Both settlements are small in scale and are not identified as settlements where the majority of future development should be located in the Council's Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy in Policy SP3 of The Plan for Stafford Borough (TPSB). The proposed point of vehicular access to the application site is at the southern boundary, taken from Saverley Green Road.

1.6 Although there are no designated or non-designated heritage assets on the application site, it is situated within the wider setting of the Fulford Conservation Area (FCA), which lies around 311m south of the site boundary at its closest point. It is also acknowledged that there are several listed buildings, including the Grade II listed Church of St Nicholas and Fulford Hall and its Garden House in the northern portion of the FCA, that the application site could be considered to be within the wider landscape setting of. Nevertheless, most of the site lacks any intervisibility with the FCA, due to the intervening mature vegetation and topography. There are also several non-designated heritage assets around the application site, consisting mainly of historic farmsteads, including Little Leacroft Farm, Lower Gorsty Birch Farm, and Higher Gorsty Birch Farm.

1.7 There are no European nature conservation sites or national statutory nature conservation sites within close proximity of the application site. The application site is also located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

1.8 A screening opinion was submitted for the construction and operation of a solar farm on the site prior to this application being lodged (Ref: 23/37774/ESS). Officers confirmed that the proposal is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore does not constitute EIA development.

The proposal

1.9 Full planning permission is sought for a period of up to 40 years for the installation of a ground mounted photovoltaic (PV) solar farm development, generating up to 30MW of electricity. The development of this site will provide a connection point to the National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) network.

1.10 The application site would accommodate the following elements:

- Solar panel arrays
- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)
- Transformers/inverters
- Distribution Network Operator (DNO) substation
- Onsite cabling
- Fencing and security measures
- Maintenance Tracks and Site Access Gate

1.11 **Solar panel arrays**

The ground mounted solar arrays would be fixed to a mounting structure (frame) in a fixed orientation to form arrays across the application site. The metal racks would be pile driven into the ground and therefore would not require concrete foundations in line with best practice. The PV modules would be supported on a galvanized steel or aluminium support structure that is supported on embedded piles. The modules would be orientated to face the south at a range of panel tilts between 10^{o} and 40^{o}. The lowest point of the modules is approximately 0.8m above ground. The maximum total structure height will be approximately 3.5m. There will be a minimum clearance spacing between the rows of arrays of approximately 2m to avoid shading by adjacent arrays.

1.12 **Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)**

The Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) use batteries to store and distribute electrical energy. The energy that is stored in these containers can be drawn upon when there is low generation from the panels, in order to export electricity to the grid at these times and to meet the demand for power. The application proposes battery storage compounds at the 9 inverter locations across the site, located on areas with concrete footing surrounded by gravel, rather than in one standalone BESS Compound area.

1.13 **Transformers/inverters**

Inverter units are required to convert direct current produced by the solar panels into alternating current electricity which is used by the grid network. There would be 9 inverter units located on the application site.

1.14 **Distribution Network Operator (DNO) Substation**

The DNO substation contains the electrical switchgear, which comprises of disconnect switches used to control and protect the electrical equipment, as well as to isolate the circuit if a fault occurs in the solar farm or on the local electricity distribution network. To enable electricity generated by Leaford Solar Farm to be exported to the wider grid network, the on-site substation will connect to Forsbrook Substation located to the northeast of the solar farm. There is an agreement with the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) for the DNO to carry out and manage all works relating to the connection from the solar farm to Forsbrook Substation. It is anticipated that the substation will remain in situ at the end of the 40 year period as it would form part of the distributor network.

1.15 **Onsite cabling**

Cabling would connect the electrical infrastructure across the site. The cabling would be buried in trenches.

1.16 **Fencing and Security Measures**

Deer fencing would be constructed around the application site for health and safety and security reasons. The fencing would be high tensile steel wire with hinge joints, with mammal gates included. Security fencing would be constructed around the proposed Client/DNO Substation, BESS Compound and Inverter and Battery Storage Area. This fencing is likely to either palisade or weld mesh and have a maximum height of 2.4m, comprising a standard wire mesh fence on post foundation dependent on ground conditions. 121 inward facing CCTV security cameras at a maximum height of 4m constructed on concrete foundations are proposed at the security and deer fencing. There will be no artificial lighting around the site as the CCTV would be inward facing infra-red. However, floodlights are to be used for infrequent maintenance and operational activities only. Lighting will be manually controlled rather than PIR, to prevent unnecessary activation.

1.17 **Maintenance Tracks and Site Access Gate**

The maintenance tracks will be constructed within the fenced boundary of the site to provide access to the infrastructure by construction vehicles. The tracks will be designed to have sufficient radii for turning of the construction vehicles. Site access will be taken from the southern boundary at Saverley Green Road. A double leaf vehicle gate for access alongside a pedestrian gate will be installed in order for construction and maintenance vehicles to enter and exit the site appropriately. In order to create the access tracks throughout the site, approximately 90m of hedgerow would be removed from field boundaries to facilitate access and the construction of fencing. Nevertheless, it is proposed to create approximately 1.4km of hedgerow, enhance approximately 1km of hedgerow and plant trees within approximately 1km of hedgerow. The access tracks would be approximately 4m wide with 0.25m shoulders at either side

1.18 **Other elements**

The proposal includes a drainage strategy comprising a combination of existing drainage ditches, new swales and filter drains, together with ecological and biodiversity landscaping enhancements.

1.19 **Reports**

The application is supported with the following technical reports which are referred to in the relevant subsections of this report:

- Planning Statement;
- Green Belt Assessment;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Statement of Community Involvement;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Report;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy;
- Historic Environment Assessment;
- Geophysical Survey Part1 and Part2;
- Transport Statement;

- Glint and Glare Assessment;
- Acoustic Impact Assessment;
- Agricultural Land Classification Report; and
- Arboricultural Implications Assessment.

Officer Assessment - Key Considerations

2.0 Planning policy framework

2.1 The proposal would generate up to 30MW of electricity and therefore falls under the threshold of 50MW for the development to be determined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

2.2 The proposal also falls within the threshold under Schedule 2, 3 (a) Energy Industry of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017 as the site exceeds 0.5 hectares. A screening opinion was requested by the applicant (23/37774/ESS) prior to the submission of this application, and it was concluded that the proposal is not likely to have significant effects on the environment having regard to the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the Regulations and the proposal is therefore not considered to represent EIA development.

2.3 The Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended) sets a legally binding target to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions from their 1990 level by 100% by 2050 which is known as the ‘net zero target’. During 2023 the Government made a commitment to reduce emissions by 78% compared with 1990 levels by 2035.

2.4 Section 38(6) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended, require decisions to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

2.5 The Development Plan is influenced at national level by:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2025
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) 2025
- National Design Guide (NDG) 2021.

2.6 The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 Parts 1 and 2 (TPSB).

2.7 Other guidance relevant to the proposal include the following:

- Overarching National Policy Statement for energy (EN-1) (2023)
- National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3) (2023)
- BRE Planning guidance for the development of large scale ground mounted solar PV systems (2014)
- BRE Agricultural Good Practice Guidance for Solar Farms (2014)
- BRE National Solar Centre Biodiversity Guidance for Solar Developments (2014)
- House of Commons Library: Planning and Solar Farms (July 2023)
- House of Commons Library: Planning for Solar Farms (May 2024)
- Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (2024).

3.0 Principle of Development

3.1 The government in its Energy White Paper (December 2020) has set the aim of a fully decarbonised, reliable and low-cost power system by 2035. The government noted that a net-zero consistent electricity system is most likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar power, although these renewable sources would need to be supplemented with other technologies such as nuclear, gas with carbon capture usage and storage and batteries.

3.2 According to the House of Commons Library: Planning and solar farms (July 2023), 'The British Energy Security Strategy' (April 2022) provided further detail on the government's proposals for reducing its reliance on imported fossil fuels and accelerating its deployment of domestic sources of energy. One of its aims set out in the Strategy was to "*ramp up*" the deployment of both rooftop and ground-mounted solar systems. The government said it intended to achieve a fivefold increase in solar power by 2035 (from a capacity of 14GW to 70GW).

3.3 The overarching aims of the NPPF have been considered in the assessment of this application, with specific reference to the following areas:

3.4 Section 13: Protecting the Green Belt: This section outlines the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy, which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Development such as the application scheme which is located in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it meets one of the listed exceptions listed in paragraph 154 and 155.

3.5 Paragraphs 161, 166 and 168 of the NPPF confirm, amongst other things that, the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future.

3.6 TPSB contains overarching policies and principles, all of which are set under the umbrella of the purpose of the planning system being able to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as set within Spatial Principle (SP) 1 and section 2 of the Framework.

3.7 SP6 (v) of TPSB gives support to rural sustainability through protecting and enhancing the environmental assets and character of the Borough whilst sustaining the social and economic fabric of its communities that can be achieved by promoting use of sources for renewable energy.

3.8 SP7 (i) of TPSB states that development located within the Green Belt will only be supported if it is consistent with national policies for the control of development, and Policy E5. Policy E5 relates to Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt, which the application site is not. Therefore, Policy E5 is not relevant to the determination of this application. The proposal also accords with criteria (ii, iii and iv) of Policy SP7, as the proposal is consistent with this policy's objectives to support rural sustainability by delivering renewable energy, does not conflict with the environmental protection and nature conservation policies of the development plan for the reasons set out elsewhere in this report, and provides the necessary mitigation/compensatory measures to address any potential harmful impacts of the development.

3.9 TPSB Policy N3 then explains that the development of schemes for the generation of renewable energy will be supported where there is no harm to residential amenity, limited adverse impacts on townscape, landscape and heritage assets, no harmful environmental impacts such as emissions, noise, water environment and has been accompanied by decommissioning conditions to allow the site to be restored following cessation of energy production.

3.10 The application site is washed over by the North Staffordshire Green Belt where the NPPF confirms that development is inappropriate, unless it meets one of the listed exceptions listed in paragraph 154. Paragraph 155 of the NPPF also adds that the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where four criteria apply, namely, that the development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan; there is a demonstratable need for the type of development proposed; the proposal would be in a sustainable location; and the proposal would meet the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 of the NPPF. These issues are assessed in detail later on in this section of the report.

3.11 Paragraph 160 of the NPPF also advises that when located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

3.12 A number of development exceptions are listed, however the development of a site for renewable energy is not a listed exception which would be considered appropriate in the Green Belt. Notwithstanding this, paragraph 168 of the NPPF confirms that when determining applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments, significant weight should be given to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposals contribution to a net zero future.

3.13 In view of the above, the principle of development will only be considered acceptable if the development satisfies all of the criteria set out in paragraph 155 of the NPPF or, if it represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt, very special circumstances exist which clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm arising from the development. A detailed assessment of the proposals in the context of Green Belt policy follows.

Green Belt

Appropriateness

3.14 The NPPF at paragraph 143 sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt which are to:

(a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

(b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;

(c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

(d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

(e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.15 Government policy attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts is their openness and permanence.

3.16 Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that “Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.”

3.17 Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it meets one of the listed exceptions. The proposed development does not meet any of the listed exceptions.

3.18 Paragraph 155 of the NPPF adds that “the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

(a) The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

(b) There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;

(c) The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and

(d) Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’

requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157.”

155a - Grey Belt

3.19 Grey Belt is defined within the Glossary of the NPPF (Annex 2) as follows:

> *"For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d) in Paragraph 143. 'Grey Belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."*
>
> (emphasis underlined)

3.20 As per the definition above, grey belt can include previously developed land or any other land that does not contribute to purposes a), b) or d) of the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt listed at paragraph 143 of the Framework.

These three criteria are:

(a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

(b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;

(d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

3.21 Generally urban sprawl will occur when new development is proposed on the urban fringe of settlements. The site is situated in the countryside, approximately 0.5km from the small villages of Fulford, Stallington and Saverley Green and 2.5km to the southeast of the closest significant large built-up area of Stoke-on-Trent (SOT). The small market towns of Cheadle, Stone and Blyth Bridge are located around 5.5km, 5km and 0.7km from the site respectively. Given the separation distance between the site and SOT, it would not result in the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. Moreover, as consent is only being sought for a temporary period, and the land will be returned as close as practical to its former condition at the end of this period, the proposal would not introduce a permanent addition to the countryside. For these reasons, the proposal meets the definition of grey belt when assessed against criteria (a) set out above.

3.22 The small market towns of Cheadle and Stone and the settlement of Blythe Bridge are located around 5.5km, 5km and 0.7km to the north-east, south-west and north of the site respectively. Again, due to the separation distances to these settlements and temporary nature of the development, the proposal would not result in neighbouring towns merging into one another or impact on the setting or special character of historic towns. As such, the proposal would comply with the requirements of criterion (b) and (d).

3.23 The applicant has also provided 2 recent appeal decisions (Ref: 3347424 - Walsall) and (Ref: 3359260 - Kent) where Inspectors concluded that similar proposed solar arrays in the Green Belt near to existing conurbations represent ‘grey belt’ development. The relationship between the proposed solar installation and Stoke-on-Trent to the north of the site closely resembles the correlation between the allowed appeal in Walsall with the West Midlands conurbation.

3.24 For the reasons set out above, officers conclude that the development would utilise ‘grey belt land’. In terms of whether the proposal would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt (taken together) across the area of the plan, it is acknowledged that the development will result in some degree of harm in terms of ‘encroachment (purpose (c)) in paragraph 143 of the NPPF. However, in the context of the overall plan area as a whole, the proposal would result in a temporary encroachment of approximately 0.63% of the Green Belt within the Borough. This is not considered to be a significant impact. No harm would arise to purpose e) regarding regeneration. Therefore, the development of the part of the Green Belt land that comprises the application site would not affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way. As such, officers find that the proposed development would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.

155b). There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed

3.25 Paragraph 168 of the NPPF states that when determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal’s contribution to a net zero future. As set out elsewhere in this report, the proposed development would assist in meeting the need for renewable energy and therefore accords with criterion b of paragraph 155.

155c). The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to [paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework]

3.26 Criterion (c) requires that the development would be in a sustainable location, with reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF. This proposal would include two phases, the construction phase and the operational phase. During the construction phase the total anticipated number of vehicle trips 2, 900 vehicles, of which 825 are HGVs across a construction period of 12 months. During the operational phase there would be a very infrequent number of light good vehicle movements per year to undertake scheduled maintenance, as such the proposed development would not generate a significant number of regular trips once operational. Officers therefore do not consider this level of traffic movement to be significant, nor would it have an unacceptable effect on the highway network or safety. The Highway Authority have raised no objection on these grounds. The use of alternative methods of transport for this type of development is not likely to occur and as such Officers are of the view that Criterion (c) of paragraph 155 is met.

155d). Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' set out in paragraphs 156-157.

3.27 The Golden Rules set out in paragraphs 156 and 157 of the NPPF do not apply in this case.

Overall Green Belt conclusion - Grey belt

3.28 For the reasons set out above, Officers consider that the application site represents grey belt land and is not, therefore, inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Although paragraph 160 of the NPPF states that when located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development, in this case paragraph 160 is not triggered. As such, the development is not regarded as inappropriate because parts a. b. and c. of NPPF paragraph 155 apply.

Agricultural Land Classification/Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

3.29 The NPPF defines the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMVAL) as being in grades 1, 2 and 3a. Poorer agricultural land is defined within grades 3b, 4 or 5. The National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3) advises that poorer quality of land should be preferred to higher quality land and that BMVAL should be avoided where possible.

3.30 The submitted Agricultural Land Classification Report (ALCR) confirms that 95.68% of the application site is Grade 3b and 4.32% is Grade 3a land. The proposed development therefore largely avoids development on BMVAL (i.e. in Grade 3a land), with only small areas in Field 9 and Field 12 of BMVAL being utilised for development. Moreover, the land under the panels will continue to be used for agriculture and the agricultural land quality can be enhanced by resting the land from more traditional intensive farming methods. In addition, the proposal is temporary in nature and very easily reversed. As such, the proposal would not result in the significant loss of BMVAL.

Decommissioning

3.31 In accordance with Policy N3 the application is supported with an 'Outline Decommissioning Plan'. It is therefore recommended that conditions are applied to any grant of permission to require the development to be appropriately decommissioned in the future. Natural England have also recommended that a condition be attached to safeguard soil resources and agricultural land which is considered to be reasonable and necessary.

Principal of development overall conclusion

3.32 For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that the principle of the development accords with the overarching policies and principles of TPSB and NPPF, subject to the impact of the proposed development upon the character of the site and surrounding area, heritage assets, residential amenity, highway safety and natural environmental factors (biodiversity, flooding and drainage) being acceptable.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:

Sections 2, 11, 14

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable development

SP3 Stafford Borough Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy

SP6 Achieving Rural Sustainability

SP7 Supporting the Location of New Development

E2 Sustainable Rural Development

N3 Low Carbon Sources and Renewable Energy

Overarching National Policy Statement for energy (EN-1)

National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3)

BRE (2014) Agricultural Good Practice Guidance for Solar Farms

House of Commons Library: Planning and solar farms - July 2023

Solar and protecting our Food Security and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land - Statement made on 15 May 2024

4.0 Landscape Assessment - Impact on character and surroundings

4.1 Section 12 of the NPPF seeks to achieve well-designed and beautiful places. The principles of the NPPF are also supported by the National Design Guide (NDG). TPSB Policies N1 and N8 seek to secure enhancements in design quality by meeting principles concerning ‘use’, ‘form’, ‘space’ and ‘movement’, as well as expectations for new developments to reinforce and respect the character of the settlement and the landscape setting, through the design and layout that includes use of sustainable building materials and techniques that are sympathetic to the landscape.

Landscape Visual Impact Assessment

4.2 The Applicant has submitted a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The LVIA includes a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). The ZTV has been modelled with each point 3.6m above ground. The LVIA provides an assessment of the following viewpoints (VP):

(1) 1 Footpath between Site and Fulford - Recreational PRoW. Views close to the west side of the Site. Cumulative views.

(2) Saverley Green Road - Road near settlement edges of Fulford and Saverley Green. Views from the southern boundary and into the main entrance.

(3) Lower Gorsty Birch - Residential and minor road views on the northern site boundary.

(4) Footpath to north of the Site - PRoW close to site to the north within context of local landscape.

(5) Fulford Lane, Stallington - Residential and minor road. Views from the west.

(6) Long Lane near Fulford - Recreational Stone Circles Challenge and minor road near Fulford with views to the Site within the wider landscape.

(7) North end of Cresswell - Residential, recreational and road on north side of settlement edge of Cresswell.

(8) Totmonslow - Residential, recreational and minor road, distance views from the east.

(9) Draycott Cross - Minor road, distant, elevated views from the north-east.

(10) Footpath Fulford No 3 - Recreational PRoW. Views close to west of the site. Cumulative views.

4.3 The LVIA methodology seeks to examine 'Landscape Value', 'Landscape Sensitivity', 'Magnitude of Landscape Effects', 'Overall Level of the Landscape Effects', 'Assessment of Visual Effects', 'Visual Susceptibility', 'Visual Value', 'Visual Sensitivity', 'Magnitude of Visual Effects' and 'Overall Level of Visual Effects'. The above viewpoints are summarised below in terms of their sensitivity/susceptibility, magnitude of change and effects during year 1 and year 15 of operation.

4.4 The LVIA has also been reviewed on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by an independent landscape expert (Design Midlands). The contents of these assessments are considered below.

4.3 The applicant asserts that the proposed development would inevitably result in some important, short and long term, and adverse but reversible effects on the landscape resource and visual amenity of the application site and its surrounds. The effects would be limited by a number of factors including the low-lying nature of the solar panels and their arrangement within existing field patterns; the continued grazing and use across the site; the location of the site on a north-facing slope and the greater portion of visibility to the less prominent back side of the solar panels; the potential screening properties and landscape benefits of existing and proposed hedges and hedge trees, and other landscape mitigation; and the reversible nature of the proposed development. The proposed development has been designed with stand-offs to limit effects on Fulford and its setting, and to reduce effects on the footpaths that cross the application site itself and Saverley Road.

4.4 The LVIA states that significant effects would affect relatively small numbers of receptors located on or within the immediate vicinity of the site. Significant landscape effects would be restricted to the fabric and landscape character of the site itself; and cumulative changes to the key characteristics of Settled Plateau Farmland Slopes Landscape Character Type (LCT).

4.5 In conclusion, the LVIA finds all significant effects, other than those occurring within the site itself and its immediate vicinity, would be mitigated through landscape measures. Landscape and visual effects would be reversible after the 40-year operational period.

4.6 Design Midlands have reviewed the submitted LVIA and has undertaken their own assessment of the proposed development and concluded that LVIA shows the applicant has taken a well-considered approach to the landscape. Their response set out several areas in which they felt the proposed development could be improved to help reduce the impact on the landscape. These key areas are listed below:

4.7 Red Line

Hedgerows and existing field patterns generally define locations of panels though there are a number of exceptions. The red line boundary does not follow the hedgerow lines or field patterns and splits Field 5. The red line boundary at fields 15/16, 17 responds to the topography. The applicant has confirmed that the amended plans now demonstrate that the mitigation indicated in the LEMP for field 17 is now inside the red line boundary of the site.

Officer response:

The applicant has addressed the above concerns by providing further clarity on the historic field patterns and amending the red line boundary to include the mitigation across the site including vegetation which serves to mitigate landscape and visual effects. This was addressed in their most recent submission of revised plans and information.

4.8 Vehicular Access

Treatment to the vehicular access point along Saverley Green Road is currently out of character with the surrounding context. Whilst it is understood that a large splay may be required and the hedgerow needs to be trimmed, the approach to planting of double hedges here is uncharacteristic and out of character with the area. This will have a negative impact on the character and nature of the road, which is currently lined on both sides by verges, single well-maintained hedgerows. The approach here needs further consideration.

Officer response:

Changes have been made to improve the visual character of this area. In addition, it has been clarified that a double hedge is not proposed at the entrance and the photomontage for VP1 was amended to facilitate this. This was addressed in the most recent submission of revised plans and information.

4.9 Ecological Diversity and net gain

Proposed enhancements, if carried out will improve the site's ecological value and achieve a 10% net gain.

Officer response:

This is not considered of relevance to the assessment of the LVIA and is covered elsewhere in this report and by separate legislation.

4.10 Public Rights of Way - Navigation, accessibility and use

More views from the public rights of way particularly through the site would be helpful and the user experience clarified. Where the 2 PRoW's (C12) and (C15) cross the site, walkers will become more enclosed and solar panels will be seen at close quarters though planting will partially screen views. This may be more obvious in winter months.

This development provides an opportunity to improve the public rights of way through the site, particularly where they are currently inaccessible.

There are a number of areas where the public rights of way are not easy to navigate and are wet, boggy and not well sign posted. Whilst some of these are outside the site development area, an approach and strategy should be provided as to how the development will or could contribute to improving access along the PRoW.

The PRoW between 14 and 15 and 16 lines a watercourse and is waterlogged, overgrown and inaccessible. Whilst planting lining this provides some screening, is appropriate in nature and extends the character of the lane, it is unclear how access and use of this route will be improved. This needs resolving.

Officer response:

An assessment from an additional viewpoint was undertaken as requested. A full assessment of the impact on the PRoW is undertaken elsewhere in this report. This was addressed in the most recent submission of revised plans and information.

4.11 Mitigation

Field 17 is open in nature. The PRoW currently runs within the open field. Solar panels are proposed in this field. Mitigation is a new hedgerow in field 17 and meadow planting. This would increase the sense of enclosure and would not be in keeping with the adjoining hedgerows which are single in nature. A double hedgerow is not considered appropriate here and does not sit naturally within the immediate context.

Retaining the open nature of this field would provide a green open vista through the site from Fulford to Saverley Green and minimise the impact of the solar panels.

Removal of the panels and BESS from Field 17 is suggested.

Officer response:

The suggested mitigation has been agreed with the Applicant. This was addressed in the most recent submission of revised plans and information.

4.12 Hedgerows and Field Boundaries

Whilst tree planting and new hedge planting does screen and provide biodiversity it may be helpful to clarify how these contribute to the character of the area. The nature and character of the hedgerows differs throughout the landscape. In some instances, lower hedgerows with sporadic small trees, other areas taller less managed hedgerows. Appropriate approaches to mitigation may not always be planting 3.5m high.

Field boundaries are generally strengthened, though there are a number of instances where new planting seems uncharacteristic. This includes a line of proposed trees in Field 3 and a new hedgerow. Whilst they may be native they do not seem to respond to any historic field patterns and their logic, orientation, length, positioning and rational is unclear apart from screening. Entrance hedgerow treatment at the vehicular access. Hedgerow and enclosure in field 17

Officer response:

Landscape Character guidance for hedges and trees within the Site does not specify height or trimming regimes. Given the existing differences which are caused by land owner practices it is felt that could all hedges be maintained as tall, this would not be out of character when considered within the wider landscape. The linear space that is formed by trees and hedges on the north and south sides of F3 are, in addition to providing more robust screening of the substation etc area to the south-east, designed to retain the context of the small watercourse which crosses the Site east to west. The double hedge point has already been addressed. This was addressed in the most recent submission of revised plans and information.

4.13 Officers conclude that the proposed development would cause a Moderate effect on the landscape character of the site and the surrounding area. The proposed development would cause a Moderate Adverse impact in close views from the highway and Public Rights of Way. Additional harm would result to only a few close by viewpoints.

4.14 Impact on Public Rights of Way

Paragraph 105 of the NPPF states that:

> "*Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails"*.

4.15 Two Public Rights of Way (PRoW) cross the application site - Fulford 12 and Fulford 15. Design Midlands (DM) were commissioned by the Council to provide advice on the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development. The Landscape Officer representing DM advised that the key impact of this development is on both PRoWs intersecting the main site and that:

> *"Where the 2 PRoWs C12 and C15 cross the site, walkers will become more enclosed and solar panels will be seen at close quarters though planting partially screens views. This may be more obvious in winter months"*

4.16 In direct response to DM the applicant has prepared and submitted a Public Rights of Way Management Plan. The aim of the PRoW Management Plan was to address the way in which the two PRoW's crossing the application Site (Fulford 12 and Fulford 15) would be impacted by the proposed development and how the PRoWs would be managed to help ensure they remain safe to use and disruption to users is minimised throughout all phases of the proposed development. The document also sought to address the comments made by the Staffordshire County Council Public Rights of Way Officer, The Ramblers and the Council's Design Advisor.

4.17 Prior to submitting the planning application, the applicant had already had regard to the impact on the PRoW through their design. For example, a minimum setback distance of 7.5m was applied from the panels to the PRoW, with larger setback distances achieved in some areas. The design was adapted to take into account the proposed Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) application for Footpath 15 to be considered as a bridleway. All inverters have been positioned specifically away from PRoWs to further protect the PRoW amenity value. Mitigation planting has been proposed at the two PRoW's that cross the Application Site to further reduce the landscape and visual impacts. A Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) was produced and submitted alongside the planning application, detailing the mitigation planting. For example, the Applicant proposes a wildflower seed mix at either side of the PRoW to provide users of the PRoW with a more enjoyable and scenic view. Alongside this, existing hedgerows and the proposed native species hedge will be planted and maintained to 3.5m to aid in screening the proposed development from users of the PRoW.

4.18 In addition to above, the applicant has provided further information, justification and mitigation through the submitted PRoW Management Plan which now goes above and beyond the scheme as originally submitted with the application. Moreover, the PRoW Management Plan makes the following recommendations:

- Confirmation that PRoW Fulford 12 and Fulford 15 will remain open during both the construction and operational period of the proposed Development, with priority given to the users of the PRoW. Should any PRoWs be damaged during the construction phase, the Applicant will be liable to repair the damage and return it to a comparable surface condition;

- There will be banksmen where the PRoW is crossed by the access track in order to supervise any manoeuvres. A dedicated person will be appointed for the management of the delivery booking system in order to ensure appropriate management and scheduling of any crossings at the PRoWs.

- Site access will be taken from the southern boundary at Saverley Green Road. This access track crosses both PRoW's that run through the Application Site boundary. All points where the PRoW's cross the Application Site boundary will be appropriately signed, advising the general public of dates and hours of working. Signage will also alert construction vehicles not to cross without a banksman available. The exact location of the signs providing such information will be agreed with Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Officer.

- All drivers of construction vehicles accessing the Proposed Development will be briefed via daily 'toolbox talks' regarding the location of the PRoWs, crossing the PRoWs and the potential for PRoW users to be crossing these during the hours of construction.

- There is anticipated to be around 10-15 LGV trips to the application site per year for maintenance. It is anticipated that the access tracks would only be used during these times and would utilise the same process as the construction period with the use of banksmen at the PRoW crossings and 'toolbox talks' for maintenance staff with priority always given to users of the PRoW.

- For security and safety purposes, the Proposed Development will be closed to the general public via security fencing and a locked gate. The security fence installed around the perimeter of the solar farm will be erected at the start of the construction programme and will remain for the duration of the operation until decommissioning of the solar farm.

- The proposed development will be enclosed with 2.4m high deer fencing which will be screened from view at the PRoWs by additional planting as previously discussed.

- No furniture, fence, barrier or other structure will be erected on or across the PRoW network without consultation and agreement with Stafford Borough Council/Staffordshire County Council. CCTV will be inward facing and not directly cover any PRoW.

- The Applicant has implemented a further setback from PRoW Fulford 12 in Field 17 of approximately 37m.

- An additional viewpoint (VP10) was assessed at the request of Design Midlands from the apex of PRoW Fulford 3 in order to assess the impact of the proposed development from this view.

- Improved drainage Fulford 15 to alleviate the worst area of flooding.

4.19 Officers consider the changes to be a welcomed improvement for users of the PRoW when crossing the site or adjacent to the site. The amendments provide a landscaped corridor with amenity grassland, wildflower meadow, hedgerows and trees making a very notable improvement to the initial proposals.

4.20 It is acknowledged that the LVIA also examines viewpoints during construction, however, given that the construction phase is expected to last approximately 12 months, the impact on views during construction would be short-term.

4.21 The LVIA identifies the highest level of impact in terms 'magnitude of change' to be 'medium' (VP3, VP4 and VP5 during year 1 of operation). The LVIA provides the following typical description of this level (medium) as:

> *"Partial loss of or alteration to key features or perceptual aspects of the baseline and/or the addition of new features that may be prominent but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. The effects would be at the scale of the landscape character type/area within which the proposal lies. The effects would be medium-term and/or partially reversible. (Table 1.7)"*

4.22 However, the level of 'magnitude of change' for VP3, VP4 and VP5 during year 15 of operation will be reduced to 'Low', which is typically described in table 1.7 of the LVIA as:

> *"Minor loss of or alteration to views and/or the addition of new features that would not be prominent, and/or would not contrast with the existing view. Glimpsed views, experienced for a small part of a journey or activity. The views would be distant, oblique and/or only a small part of the view would be occupied by the proposed development. The effects would be short term and/or reversible."*

4.23 With regards to landscape effects, the LVIA identifies the highest level of impact as 'moderate adverse' during year 1 of operation and 'minor adverse' during year 15 of operation. Table 1.8 of the LVIA provides the following typical description of landscape effects in terms of 'moderate adverse':

> *"The proposed development would be at variance with the existing character and would detract from, diminish or remove valued characteristic features, elements and/or their setting".*

'Minor adverse' is typically described as follows:

> *"The Proposed Development would be slightly at variance with the existing character. The Proposed Development would likely partially remove some valued characteristic features or introduce some features that will not be entirely compatible with the receiving landscape."*

4.24 In summary, the LVIA considers the highest level of impact from the development of the main site to be a 'medium' (magnitude of change) and 'moderate adverse' (landscape effects) during year 1 of operation. The mitigation measures are considered to reduce the level of impact to 'Low' (magnitude of change) and 'minor adverse' (landscape effects) from year 15 of operation.

4.25 The established methodology contained within the LVIA is accepted by officers. The viewpoints chosen within the LVIA are also considered to form a fair representation of the location and extent of views of the site and have been verified following the officer's site visit.

4.26 Overall, it is considered that the submitted LVIA provides an adequate summary of the above impacts in stating:

> *"The LVIA has concluded that, whilst the Development would give rise to varying degrees of mostly adverse landscape and visual effects on a number of receptors, the degree of effects predicted to occur during the operational phase would be limited and significant effects would occur mainly within the Site itself and its immediate setting."*

The impacts upon receptors forming heritage assets are considered under Section 5 of this report.

4.27 <u>Reversibility of development</u>

BRE guidance explains that:

> "*Solar PV installations which are developed on agricultural ground should be 'reversible', allowing the site to be easily restored to a more intensive agricultural use. Intrusive development, such as trenching and foundations,*

should therefore be minimised and the use of mass concrete should be avoided. Where possible Solar PV arrays should be installed using 'pile' driven or screw foundations, or pre-moulded concrete blocks (shoes), and capable of easy removal".

4.28 The Parish and neighbours' concerns regarding the reversibility of the development are noted. Whilst concrete foundations are required for structures/buildings and fencing at the substation site, and also for the BESS, inverters, CCTV posts and gate at the main site, the solar panel tables and associated fencing which covers the majority of the development site would be 'driven' directly into the ground without the use of concrete foundations.

4.29 Overall, the use of concrete is considered to be minimal for a development of this scale. The minimal use of concrete, together with continued agricultural use and ecological enhancements, as well as appropriate management of the land and decommissioning scheme, would potentially allow the land to be restored back to full agricultural use after the expected 40-year operational phase of the development.

Overall conclusion on landscape impact

4.30 The Parish and neighbours' concerns regarding the visual impact of the development are noted. The proposal would result in loss of views from the PRoWs within the site despite mitigation and landscaping improvements along the public footpaths. However, the amendments to the scheme have limited the impact the development would have upon users of the PRoWs.

4.31 The effect upon views from outside the site would be low and minor after 15 years of operation. The construction methodology comprising minimal use of concrete would support site restoration and decommissioning of the temporary solar farm development. The loss of views from the PRoWs is considered unavoidable due to the large scale nature of the development, however the impacts are considered to be reversible in the future.

4.32 Whilst the proposal would cause a moderate degree of harm to the landscape character and visual amenity of the area, officers conclude that the impact of the proposed development would not lead to a significant adverse effect on the overall visual amenity and character of the area. Thus, the proposal would accord with Policies N1 and N8 of the TPSB.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:

Sections 8, 12, 15

The Plan for Stafford Borough

SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

N1 Design

N8 Landscape Character

BRE Planning guidance for the development of large scale ground mounted solar PV systems

5.0 Impact on heritage assets

5.1 Paragraph 212 of the NPPF states:

> "*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance*."

5.2 Furthermore paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that:

> "*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use*."

5.3 Paragraph 216 of the NPPF states that:

> "*The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset."*

5.4 Policy N9 of the TPSB expects development proposals to sustain and, where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets and their setting by understanding the heritage interest, encouraging sustainable re-use and promoting high design quality. Furthermore, policy N9 states:

> "*Where harm to significance is unavoidable, appropriate mitigation measures will be put into place, including archaeological investigation (including a written report) or recording. This information should be deposited at the County Record Office and be available to the general public."*

5.5 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) states that special regard shall be had to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

5.6 There are no designated or non-designated heritage assets or identified archaeological features located within the site boundary.

Designated Heritage Asset

5.7 The nearest designated heritage asset is the FCA, located approximately 311m south of the application site. FCA is characterised by 16th to 19th century buildings, and a proliferation of farmhouses. The settlement has long established agricultural ties going back to at least the medieval period, and its location and setting in rural farmland strengthens that connection and contributes to the historic interest of the conservation area.

5.8 The application site lies within the rural agrarian landscape which forms part of the wider setting of the FCA. The LVIA states that whilst there would be some distanced views of the solar farm from some elevated parts of Fulford Village not in the conservation area (including Cherry Close, Highview Road, and higher portions of Fulford Road) it is unlikely that there would be views from within the conservation area boundary. The northern part of the FCA, closest to the application site, is on a lower land level and the site is located beyond the edge of the valley in which the conservation area sits. As such, all views from the conservation area, including the Church of St Nicholas and Fulford Hall, looking towards the development site would be obscured due to the topography of the land and thus the impact to the setting of the FCA would be very low.

5.9 In relation to the impact on nearby listed buildings, namely the Grade II listed Church of St Nicholas and Fulford Hall and its Garden House, the Council's Conservation Officer (CO) is satisfied that by virtue of the landscape topography, and intervening features such as farm buildings, and mature trees it is unlikely that there would be any intervisibility between the listed buildings and the application site. As such, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the setting of the afore mentioned designated heritage assets.

Non - Designated Heritage Asset

5.10 Upon assessing the original application submission the CO noted that the proposed development will have the greatest impact on several non-designated heritage assets, all of which are historic farmsteads. The most adversely affected non-designated heritage assets being Little Leacroft Farm, Lower Gorsty Birch Farm, and Higher Gorsty Birch Farm.

5.11 In response to these concerns, the applicant has made several revisions to the scheme including, agreeing to the inclusion of planning conditions requiring the submission of a detailed design of the CCTV cameras and fencing and for the requirement of heavy standard trees to be planted to the northwestern corner at Field 1. A Heritage Statement Addendum (HAS) was also submitted to provide a more thorough assessment of the impact of the proposed development on Non-Designated Heritage Assets.

5.12 The CO has reviewed the submitted HAS and welcomes the afore mentioned conditions. Whilst the solar panels have not been omitted from the western side of Field 1 as previously requested, the existing field boundaries are delineated by hedgerows in these fields which are shown to be retained as well as the introduction of a new hedgerow to reinstate a previously lost historic field boundary. In addition, screen planting is now shown to the western boundary of Field 1, and the boundary between Field 1 and Field 3. The HAS states that these are to be native species trees and hedgerows, with the trees to the north-west corner of Field 1 (closest to Lower Gorsty Birch Farm) are to be heavy standard trees, which will provide a reasonable amount of screening between the panels and Lower Gorsty Birch Farm and Little Leacroft Farm. The additional screen planting and reinstatement of a historic hedgerow boundary is welcomed from a conservation perspective.

5.13 In summary, whilst the proposed development would lead to some harm to the setting of the non-designated heritage assets, the amended LEMP and the submitted Leaford Solar Farm Addendum Report have adequately mitigated this with additional tree and hedgerow planting to Fields 1 and 3, as well as reinstatement of a historic field boundary to Field 1. Therefore, subject to the afore mentioned conditions being included on any consent granted, the proposal would not adversely impact on the significance of nearby non-designated heritage assets.

Archaeology

5.14 The County Archaeologist has identified the site as an historic agricultural landscape. The submitted Historic Environment Assessment Report has been informed by a geophysical survey (GS). Although the archaeological potential of the site is considered low, due to the inconclusive results of the GS, lack of previous archaeological interventions in the wider area and the scale of the development proposed, the County Archaeologist has advised that a further stage of archaeological evaluation such as trial trenching across the site would be appropriate. They have also suggested that it could be undertaken by way of an alternative evaluation and characterisation approach with the applicant's archaeological advisors. This innovative approach, which combines geophysical survey, UAV survey, geochemical analysis, and targeted trial trenching, has been tried to good effect elsewhere in the county on consented solar farm sites and can be secured via condition.

5.15 Subject to the afore mentioned conditions, the proposal would preserve archaeological remains and potential and accord with policy N9 of the TPSB and section 16 of the NPPF.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:

Section 16

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

N1 Design

N8 Landscape Character

N9 Historic Environment

6.0 Highways, access and parking

6.1 Paragraph 116 of the NPPF stipulates that:

> *"Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe."*

6.2 In turn, TPSB Policy T1 seeks to achieve sustainable transport. Policy T2 also requires new development to have a safe and adequate means of access and internal circulation; not have unacceptable highway safety impacts and provide sufficient parking provision.

6.3 The submission is supported by a Transport Statement (TS), which includes recommended traffic management measures, and a Designated Construction Vehicle Route to Site (with associated plan). The Parish and neighbours' concerns regarding highway safety are noted regarding these matters.

Vehicular access

6.4 The proposed development would be served by a new vehicular access point, taken from Saverley Green Road. The access will take the form of a simple priority junction. Saverley Green Road serves as a link between the settlements of Fulford and Saverley Green. In the vicinity of the site the road is a single carriageway semi-rural road with an approximate width of 6-6.5m and the road is unlit and subject to the national speed limit. The road is lit and subject to a 30mph speed restriction within the settlements of Fulford and Saverley Green.

6.5 Speed surveys have been carried out at the proposed access location which indicate that the 85th percentile speeds are 45.7mph and 46.2mph in the east and west-bound directions, respectively. As such, it is considered that a reduced visibility splay of 160m is applicable for a design speed of 50m. The TS illustrates that these visibility splays can be achieved and also demonstrates the site access junction with swept path assessments for vehicles coming from and going to the east. The Highway Authority (HA) have raised no objections to the adequacy of the proposed access point and have recommended conditions to ensure that the accesses and visibility splays are provided. These conditions should be attached to any approval.

Construction phase

6.6 The construction phase is expected to last 12 months. It is proposed that there would be two temporary construction compounds within the main site, accessed via the upgraded field access. The compounds would provide sufficient space for contractor parking, delivery and storage of materials, plant, equipment and turning of HGVs. The majority of the equipment for the substation site would be delivered to the main compound then redistributed via light good vehicles. Although some direct HGV access to the substation site would be required to deliver the larger components. The layout details of the construction compounds should be secured via condition.

6.7 It is expected that the majority of traffic will arrive from the strategic road network via the A50. Traffic will then take Uttoxeter Road east from the Tean Roundabout. After approximately 1.8km vehicles will take the right-hand turn into Cresswell Lane. Vehicles will then travel along Cresswell Lane for approximately 2km. Traffic will then take the right-hand turn into Saverley Green Road before travelling approximately 1.1km to the proposed site access.

6.8 During the construction period there is estimated to be a total 2,900 vehicles movements, of which 825 are HGVs across a construction period of 12 months. Assuming a 27 working days per month this equates to approximately 28 two-way tips per day. The arrivals and departures for construction staff are not expected to coincide with traditional network AM and PM peak periods. Although there is an increase in the number of HGVs and the numbers on a daily basis can be variable it is only for a 12 month period and it is therefore considered that this will not have a severe impact on the surrounding highway network.

6.9 The HA have no objections to the scheme subject to conditions to ensure that the access and visibility splays are provided prior to first use, submission of a final Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), expanding upon the preliminary CTMP, pre and post condition surveys and passing places. These conditions are considered to be reasonable and necessary and should be attached to any approval. Any works to the highways would require a separate highways agreement and an informative should also be included to ensure that the developer is aware of this.

Operational phase

6.10 Once operational the development would largely be unmanned. Routine maintenance and inspections of the site would be carried out by a light van or 4x4 type vehicle with a frequency of approximately 10-15 visits per year. Maintenance vehicles would access the sites via the established access and would park within the site. During the operational phase traffic movements are not considered to impact upon the local road network.

Conclusion - highway impacts

6.11 In conclusion, whilst concerns regarding highway safety have been raised the proposal is considered to provide sufficient mitigation measures to overcome these matters. As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regards to highways, access and parking, subject to conditions.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:

Section 9:

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

T1 Transport

T2 Parking and Manoeuvring Facilities

7.0 Residential Amenity

7.1 TPSB Policy N1 and the Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) seek to ensure that new development does not detract from residents' amenity, such as overlooking, privacy, daylight/sunlight and noise impacts.

Outlook

7.2 The closest residential area to the application Site is the village of Saverley Green which lies approximately 0.3km to the east. Due to the separation distances between the development and neighbouring residential properties and the proposed landscape mitigation measures, it is concluded that the proposal would not cause a material loss of residential amenity with regards to outlook, overbearing impact, loss of daylight/sunlight or overshadowing. Furthermore, the nature of the development does not give rise to any privacy issues.

Noise and disturbance

7.3 The submitted Acoustic Impact Assessment includes an assessment of the worst case noise-impact scenario. This report concludes that noise levels resulting from the operation of the site will generally be low and no specific noise mitigation is required. The Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) concur with this assessment and raise no objection to the scheme on the basis that conditions are imposed to ensure the predicted sound levels are achieved.

7.4 It is noted that the construction of a development at this scale is likely to cause some disturbance to neighbouring residents, however the construction period is relatively short. A condition should be applied to limit construction and delivery hours to between 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 17:00 on Saturdays. It is likely that that the main cause of disturbance would be due to construction traffic. Once operational the development is not considered to cause disturbance to residential properties due to the minimal traffic movements to site and the nature of the scheme.

External lighting/glint and glare

7.5 Artificial lighting would be utilised during the construction phase and during construction hours which are proposed to be:

- 07:00 to 19:00 on weekdays; and
- 08:00 to 17:00 on Saturdays

7.6 The only exception to this is the floodlights present on the Client/Distribution Network Operator Substation which would be used for infrequent maintenance and operational activities only. Lighting will be manually controlled rather than PIR sensors, preventing unnecessary activation.

7.7 In order to ensure that any external lighting is of a suitable design given the rural location, a condition should be imposed securing full details of all external lighting, including that associated with the construction phase.

7.8 The application is supported by a Glint/Glare Assessment (GGA), which considers the impact of glint and glare upon receptors including residential properties, road, rail, air traffic and national trails. Glint and glare are defined within the report as:

"Glint - a momentary flash of bright light

Glare - a continuous source of bright light"

7.9 The GGA predicts that there will be no impact from glare to eleven of the eighteen modelled receptors, whilst low impact glare was predicted at four. At three of the modelled receptors, the model predicted glare lasts for less than 60 minutes daily, albeit at an incidence of potentially greater than three months of the year. However, further review of mitigating factors indicated that the residual glare impact at these receptors is low. The EHO agrees with these findings. On this basis, no further mitigation is recommended.

Conclusion – Residential amenity

7.10 The Parish and neighbours' concerns regarding impact upon residential amenity are noted. However, in light of the above, the proposal is not considered to cause a detrimental impact upon the residential amenities enjoyed by neighbouring properties in respect of outlook, noise/disturbance, light pollution or glare.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:

Section 12

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

N1 Design

8.0 Ecology

8.1 TPSB Policy N4 requires developments to ensure the Borough's natural environment will be protected, enhanced and improved. The enhancement and protection of biodiversity is also echoed by TPSB Policy N8.

8.2 Under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (CHSR), the Local Planning Authority as the competent authority, must have further consideration to the impact of this development. A screening opinion was submitted prior to the application being lodged (Ref: 23/37774/ESS) for the construction and operation of a solar farm on the site. Officers confirmed that the proposal is not likely to have significant environmental effects, including the effect on effect on ecology and therefore does not constitute an EIA development. The site also does not fall within any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation sites.

Designated Sites

8.3 Two statutory designated sites have been identified within 5 km of the site boundary: Barlaston and Rough Close Common Local Nature Reserve (LNR), located 2.7 km to the west and Coyney Woods LNR, located 4.1 km to the north-west. Barlaston and Rough Close Common LNR is designated for its lowland heath habitats whereas Coyney Woods LNR is designated for a range of woodland habitats. Both LNRs are ecologically separated from the site by the villages of Meir Heath and Blythe Bridge respectively, as well as the outer fringes of the city of Stoke-on-Trent. Based on this lack of ecological connectivity, no adverse impacts on the Barlaston and Rough Close Common LNR or the Coyney Woods LNR are anticipated.

8.4 TPSB Policy N4 requires developments to ensure the Borough's natural environment will be protected, enhanced and improved. The enhancement and protection of biodiversity is also echoed by TPSB Policy N8.

8.5 Hulme Quarry NNR and SSSI, located 5.2 km to the north-west, is designated for its geology as well as its grassland, heathland and woodland habitats. Hulme Quarry is not hydrologically nor ecologically connected to the site and the village of Blythe Bridge and the outer fringes of the city of Stoke-on-Trent lie between Hulme Quarry and the site. Due to the lack of ecological connectivity distance between Hulme Quarry and the site, no adverse impacts are anticipated on the Hulme Quarry NNR and SSSI as a result of the proposed development.

Non-Designated Sites

8.6 New Inn BAS, located 0.5 km to the east of the site, is designated for a complex of semi-improved grassland habitats with wet ditches, species-poor hedges and mature hedgerow trees and is ecologically connected to the site via hedgerows. Approximately 90 m of hedgerow will be removed as part of the proposed development, to allow for site access and access between different land ownerships. Nonetheless, it is proposed to create approximately 1.4km of hedgerow, enhance approximately 1km of hedgerow and plant trees within approximately 1km of hedgerow. On this basis, no adverse impacts are anticipated on the New Inn BAS nor on the ecological networks of the local area.

8.7 Mount Pleasant Local Wildlife Site (MPLWS), located 0.6 km south, is designated for semi-improved neutral grassland and a small pond with diverse marginal and aquatic vegetation. It is ecologically connected to the site via hedgerows. It is anticipated that approximately 90 m of hedgerow is to be removed as part of the proposed development, to allow for access. On this basis, no adverse impacts are anticipated on the MPLWS nor on the ecological networks of the local area.

8.8 Hose Wood Local Wildlife Site (HWLWS) and Ancient Woodland Inventory site, located 1.1 km to the south-east, is designated for its remnants of ancient semi-natural woodland, much of which has been cleared through reclamation schemes, to provide grazing land for the adjacent farms. It is ecologically connected to the site via hedgerows. Approximately 90 m of hedgerow is to be removed as part of the proposed development, to allow for access. On this basis, no adverse impacts are anticipated on HWLWS nor on the ecological networks of the local area.

8.9 Blythe Bridge Woods BAS, located 1.4 km to the north, is designated for oak and ash woodland. It is ecologically separated from the site by the town of Blythe Bridge to the north of the site. On this basis, no adverse impacts are anticipated on Blythe Bridge Woods BAS.

8.10 Stallington Heath Local Wildlife Site (SHLWS), located 1.7 km south-west, is designated for a small area of woodland. There is limited ecological connectivity to the site via hedgerows but otherwise SHLWS is separated from the site by the village of Fulford. No adverse impacts are anticipated on SHLWS.

8.11 Blacklake Plantation BAS, located 1.8 km to the west, is designated for being a former Meir Heath that has been replanted with trees but retains heathland plants within the ground flora. There is limited ecological connectivity to the site via hedgerows, but no similar plant assemblages were recorded within the site boundary. No adverse impacts are anticipated on the Blacklake Plantation BAS.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

8.12 Under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (CHSR), the Local Planning Authority as the competent authority, must have further consideration to the impact of this development. A screening opinion was submitted prior to the application being lodged (Ref: 23/37774/ESS) for the construction and operation of a solar farm on the site. Officers confirmed that the proposal is not likely to have significant environmental effects, including the effect on ecology and therefore does not constitute a EIA development.

8.13 In this case, due to the separation distance involved and lack of ecological/hydrological linkages to the afore mentioned designated and non-designated sites, a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) has not been required and the proposal would not result in a likely significant negative impact upon the reasons for designation of the sites, directly or indirectly, alone or in combination. On this basis, it is concluded that the LPA have met its requirements as the competent authority, as required by the Regulations and therefore the proposal would comply with the requirements of the Development Plan and the NPPF in this regard.

Protected species

8.14 The submitted Ecological Appraisal (EA) found that the site provides habitat for invertebrates, Great Crested Newts, bats, birds, badgers and otters, with a 30m buffer having been erected on site around badger sets and trees with bat roost potential. The EA concludes that the proposal would not detrimentally impact upon protected species, subject to appropriate working methods being followed. The SBC Biodiversity Officer raises no concerns with the submitted EA and advises that the recommendations should be adhered to. A condition should be attached to ensure compliance with the EA.

8.15 According to ‘House of Commons Library: Planning for Solar Farms’ (February 2024),

> *“Some organisations have also raised concerns about the impact of solar farms on biodiversity. For example, CPRE Hertfordshire argued that solar farms “can impact detrimentally on biodiversity and wildlife” as they may prevent “the movement of animals” and restrict “wildlife corridors”.*

8.16 The fencing proposed around the solar panels has the potential to restrict wildlife movements. However, the applicant has confirmed that it is intended to use ‘mammal gates’ to allow free movement. The proposed landscaping would also retain the hedgerow corridors through the site aiding wildlife movement.

8.17 With regards to Great Crested Newts, Natural England (NE) have provided a letter of comfort which confirms that they see no impediment to the issuing of a protected species licence which will ensure that the proposed development will not give rise to an unacceptable impact on Great Crested Newts and their habitats.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

8.18 According to the 'BRE National Solar Centre Biodiversity Guidance for Solar Developments':

> "…*recent studies of agri-environment schemes indicate that appropriate land management can bring about significant increases in wildlife populations on agricultural land. In the same way, with appropriate land management, solar farms have the potential to support wildlife and contribute to national biodiversity targets. Indeed, solar farms may have several additional advantages in that they are secure sites with little disturbance from humans and machinery once construction is complete. Recent research suggests biodiversity gains on solar farms can be significant".*

8.19 The submitted BNG calculations show an increase in overall net gain in biodiversity for both habitat units and hedgerow units above the required 10% threshold and thus suitable for meeting BNG targets with a net gain of 74.20% for habitat units and a net gain of 22.04% for hedgerow units. This will be secured via a a Biodiversity Gain Plan condition.

Trees

8.20 The application is supported with an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), including Tree Protection Plans. The Council's Arboricultural Officer (AO) initially raised concerns due to the proximity of the proposed panels to these trees and their Root Protection Areas (RPA) leading to pressure for their removal, and potential shadowing of panels, decreasing their efficacy. However, where specific trees would have been impacted by the installation of panels, these panels have been removed. Similarly, the majority of instances where trees could potentially cause significant shading to panels have also been removed. Whilst there are still 5 instances of potential shading the applicant has confirmed that this would not detrimentally impact on the efficacy of the panels upon installation or for the duration of any consent. These details are considered acceptable by the AO.

8.21 If approved, it is recommended that the details set out in the Arboricultural Method Statement are secured via condition, to include details of works within the root protection areas of retained trees, and any that have the potential to result in damage to retained trees and to secure Arboricultural site supervision. This is considered to be reasonable and necessary and should be attached. A condition should also be attached to secure suitable tree protection measures during construction.

Conclusion

8.22 The Parish and neighbours' concerns regarding impact upon biodiversity and protected sites are noted. Subject to conditions, the proposal is not considered to detrimentally impact upon protected species or protected sites and would provide a significant biodiversity net gain. The proposal would also retain the health of adjacent trees in accordance with policies N4 and N8 of the TPSB.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework:

Section 15

The Plan for Stafford Borough

SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

N4 The Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure

N5 Sites of European, National and Local Nature Conservation

N8 Landscape Character

BRE National Solar Centre Biodiversity Guidance for Solar Developments

House of Commons Library: Planning for Solar Farms (May 2024)

9.0 Flooding and Drainage

9.1 TPSB Policy N1 states that development should not be located in areas of flooding or contribute to flooding elsewhere. Policy N2 of TPSB states that all new development is expected to provide Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

Flood risk

9.2 The site is at low risk of flooding, however, the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) highlights that there is a small section of fluvial flooding associated with an unnamed tributary of the River Blythe. This tributary runs west to east through the northern part of the development site.

9.3 The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) concur that solar panels can be considered water-compatible up to depths of around 1m and in addition to this, a 10m buffer has been included from the banks of the watercourse to reduce the risk of flooding and to allow access for maintenance of the watercourse. All critical / electrical infrastructure (i.e inverters, substation and battery energy storage system) have been located outside of any flood extent; therefore, the design of the development is appropriate in terms of safeguarding against the potential sources of flooding at the site.

Surface water drainage

9.4 In relation to surface water runoff, the proposed development will introduce approximately 10,230m² of hardstanding in the form of the battery energy storage areas (BESS) and the substation and AC-AC storage, assuming permeable paving is to be used for access tracks across the site. However, in the addendum material, the AC-AC storage area was removed and therefore the percentage of hardstanding across the site would likely be considerably less. The proposed hardstanding was approximately 1.5% of the total site area before the AC-AC storage was removed.

9.5 The individual BESS sites cover approximately 600m² each, or less than 0.1% of the site area. Therefore, they will have negligible impact on the existing runoff rates, volumes, or flow routes.

9.6 The proposed substation positioned to the north of the development covers an area of 4,700m² and attenuation storage will be required. Storage estimates have been provided using Causeway Flow and an estimated storage volume of 284m³ will be required for the 1 in 100 year plus 25% CC event, based on a limited discharge rate of 2.1 l/s (2-year Greenfield runoff rate). The FRA outlines that due to the presence of the solar panels, there will be limited space to accommodate above ground storage features such as ponds and basins; However, sufficient space is available on Site to utilise a swale as an above ground attenuation feature.

9.7 The neighbours' concerns regarding flooding are noted. The LLFA concur with the findings of the FRA and raise no objections to the indicative surface water management plan, subject to conditions securing the final detailed surface water drainage design and drainage management.

Conclusion

9.8 Subject to conditions, it is considered that the proposed development would be acceptable with regards to flooding and drainage and accords with the development plan and NPPF in this regard.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework: Section 14

The Plan for Stafford Borough

SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

N1 Design

N2 Climate Change

10.0 Other Matters

10.1 The Police Architectural Liaison Officer has no objections to the scheme but has advised that solar farms are often targeted by thieves and as such recommends various security measures. The proposed scheme includes these and as such provides a suitable level of security. The Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have raised no in principle objections to the proposals but provided advice regarding the installation of fire preventative and control measures.

10.2 The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) provides guidance in respect of Grid Scale Energy Storage Systems which the applicant indicates that the scheme would be compliant with and that provision would be available for the storage of water for firefighting purposes.

10.3 It is understood that BESS installations now include sophisticated automatic monitoring systems which are designed to deal with any problems. But in any event the type of battery proposed would minimise any potential for problems to occur and that the battery containers and other would equipment follow the latest guidelines on spacing. The likelihood of fire would be minimised to the lowest possible level and there would be little likelihood of thermal runaway should a fire occur in any container. Notwithstanding this, to ensure that there are no fire risks, a condition is recommended, requiring the submission of a battery safety and fire risk management plan. This aligns with the approach taken by an Inspector in the recent Drointon solar farm appeal. SFRS have raised no objections to this condition.

11.0 Conclusion and planning balance

11.1 The adoption of the National Policy Statements (NPSs) on 17th January 2024 to provide planning guidance for developers of nationally significant energy infrastructure projects, is also intended to speed-up the decision making for the Secretary of State to determine Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) for renewable energy schemes, including renewable electricity generation such as solar power.

11.2 Whilst the proposal is not a NSIP, the development of the 30MW Solar Energy Scheme would help to accelerate the governments intentions towards achieving a fivefold increase in solar power by 2035 (from a capacity of 14GW to 70GW), to create a fully decarbonised, reliable and low-cost power system by 2035 and also meeting its net zero target by 2050.

11.3 It has been found that the development would constitute the development of 'grey belt' land and would not therefore represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposal would also not involve the loss of a significant amount of BMVAL and enable agricultural practices to continue while delivering renewable energy, enabling a viable use and public benefit to the borough. Although the proposed 40 year operation of the solar farm is a long period of time and can be considered to be a temporary development, the construction methodology alongside the ecological enhancements is expected to allow the sole agricultural use to be restored.

11.4 Whilst there would be a visual impact upon the PRoWs intersecting the main site which is considered unavoidable due to the scale of the development, mitigation measures have been provided which are considered to be appropriate. It is also noted that the impacts on the public footpaths would be reversible once the panels are removed. The impacts on views further from the site are not considered to be detrimentally harmful and the development would preserve designated heritage assets. There would be no adverse loss to the residential amenities enjoyed by surrounding neighbours.

11.5 The renewable energy development supports the government's aim towards tackling climate change as well as meeting its net zero target and the proposal is strongly balanced in accordance with the development plan policies and national guidance.

11.6 The development is therefore considered to accord with the development plan and NPPF and is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

Consultations (summarised)

SBC Arboricultural Officer

14 August 2025

All issues where the previous officer requested for panels to be removed have been resolved and as such there is no objection to the development.

SBC Biodiversity Officer

12 July 2024

Recommends that proposals for enhancing habitats in section 4.6 of the ecology report and the plans in the BNG Report (Appendix) should be presented within a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and the recommendations made in the Badger report should be followed.

External lighting design must avoid light spill on hedgerows and woodland areas. There is potential for Bat Boxes to be installed on suitable mature trees on site. Works should not be undertaken in the nesting season (March to August), unless it can be demonstrated by the developer that breeding birds will not be affected. This can be done by requesting a method statement for protection/avoidance of nesting birds as a condition.

There is potential for various bird boxes to be installed in the areas of woodland and on any other mature tree. The proposal for BNG as outlined in Fig. 3 Habitats to Enhance, and the Landscape Environmental Management Plan, should be formalised within a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, along with the other enhancements to biodiversity as described in section 4.6 of the Ecological Appraisal.

SBC Conservation Officer

25 July 2025

Whilst the proposed development would lead to some harm to the setting of the non-designated heritage assets, the amended LEMP and the submitted Leaford Solar Farm Addendum Report have adequately mitigated this with additional tree and hedgerow planting to Fields 1 and 3, as well as reinstatement of a historic field boundary to Field 1.

Ministry of Defence

19 March 2025 and 5 July 2024

Following review of the application documents, the proposed development falls outside of MOD safeguarded areas and does not affect other defence interests. The MOD, therefore, has no objection to the development proposed.

SCC Archaeologist

15 July 2024

Should permission be granted, an archaeological evaluation, comprising archaeological evaluation trenching* which will further characterise potential below ground archaeological features identified by the HEA and the geophysical survey, including the former parish boundary, and notionally ‘blank’ areas across the site will be required.

The archaeological evaluation should be undertaken in advance of any groundworks in order for the results to inform the need for further staged works and to inform the scale and extent of these further archaeological works (such as excavation, watching brief etc.), assist the applicant in developing alternative design or installation options, should the results deem it necessary.

SBC Design Advisor

17 April 2025

There is one specific topic area identified within the Design Midlands landscape report that was considered to be relevant and important to the scheme delivering a more acceptable and supportable proposal from a wider design perspective and which does not appear to have been substantively addressed by the most recently updated information, and this is revisited and highlighted below.

It was previously advised that a notably disappointing aspect of the site and the original proposals was how poorly signposted, maintained, and in places illegible, inaccessible and impassable the PRoW network is as it crosses and connects the site to the wider movement network. This was also highlighted within the Design Midlands landscape report in its Section 5, and it is largely considered that the recently updated and submitted information does not appear to adequately address these issues. The quality and character of these routes are considered to be a key component in how the public and users of the site experience the landscape and quality of place, and while the scheme was considered to largely screen the PRoWs from the worst visual impacts of the panels through augmented or new hedgerows, it remains considered that substantive physical improvements to the 2 PRoW’s as they run through the site and connect to the wider movement network should be included and embedded within the proposed works to ensure that they are acting to positively enhance the character and quality of the place and the experiential aspects of the users of them. While the most recent amended information does now provide improved drainage works to C15 to alleviate the worst area of flooding, which is very welcomed and supported, this appears to be the only proposed revised additional works to the PRoW network.

As highlighted by the Ramblers Association consultations and generally agreed with, the lack of tangible improvement (beyond the drainage improvement to one section of C15) would not appear to fulfil the spirit of the guidance set out in Paragraph 105 of the NPPF. In this and for the other reasons highlighted above, it is advised that the applicants further consider and provide response to address the comments and observations set out in section 5 of the Design Midlands report of August 2024 in relation to the PRoW network.

Design Midlands

27 August 2024

Generally, a well considered approach to the landscape.

Environment Agency

21 March 2025

Having reviewed the additional information our original objection is removed.

Our previous comments dated 31 July 2024 sought further information from the applicants relating to the proposed track and crossing, location of inverters/battery storage and hardstanding and boundary fencing. This has now been provided. We note that all inverters, sub-station, hardstanding and battery storage will be located outside of the Flood Zone 3 extent and, as such, are satisfied that there will be no impedance of flood flows or increased flood risk elsewhere post development.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

1 April 2026

No objections. As battery energy storage is proposed Staffordshire Fire and Rescue would be in favour of a condition requiring the submission of a Battery Safety Management Plan.

11 March 2025 and 5 July 2024

Provides general advice to ensure the Fire and Rescue Service can adequately service the site should they need to. Consideration also needs to be given to ensure that the battery energy storage system does not pose a hazard in the event of a fire.

Environmental Health Officer

18 March 2025

Having reviewed the Acoustic Assessment and Glint and Glare Assessment. Environmental Health have no objection to this application subject to conditions ensuring that the ancillary infrastructure is installed in the approved locations and sound levels do not exceed 40 dB LAr or the background sound level plus 5 dB, whichever is the greater, for both daytime and night-time periods.

SCC Highway Authority

28 February 2025 and 2 July 2024

No objections (on highway grounds) to the proposed development subject to conditions ensuring that the access and visibility splays are provided and CEMP submitted.

Highways England

14 March 2025

No Objection

Historic England

28 February 2025 and 18 July 2024

No comments.

National Grid

14 March 2025

No objection.

Natural England

23 August 2024

From the documents accompanying the consultation we consider this application falls outside the scope of the Development Management Procedure Order (as amended) consultation arrangements, as the proposed development would not appear to lead to the loss of over 20 ha ‘best and most versatile’ (BMV) agricultural land.

For this reason, we do not propose to make any detailed comments in relation to agricultural land quality and soils, although sustainable soil management should aim to minimise risks to the ecosystem services which soils provide, through appropriate site design/masterplan/Green Infrastructure.

Network Rail

18 September 2024

No objection.

The safety of railway level crossings and all crossing users is of paramount importance and we would have concerns over any proposals that may increase the usage or risk of a railway crossing. In this instance, we note that proposed construction vehicle route will follow Cresswell Lane, which has a level crossing which egresses the Crewe to Derby line.

It would be our preference that construction traffic associated with the scheme, is routed away from Level Crossings as to avoid unnecessary usage. Should this not be possible, works at the site must not cause any obstruction to traffic approaching and leaving the level crossing at any time. This is to ensure that crossing users can enter and leave the crossing area safely and prevent queueing back over the crossing.

From the information supplied, although it is not anticipated that any abnormal loads will be required to serve the development, we note that abnormal Indivisible Load vehicles (under the Special Types General Order (STGO)) may be required for the delivery of larger components. Network Rail would have serious reservations if during the construction or operation of the site, abnormal loads will use routes that include Network Rail assets. Should the need for an STGO vehicle(s) be identified, Network Rail would request that the applicant contact our Asset Protection Project Manager (contact details below) to confirm that any proposed route using abnormal loads is viable and to agree a strategy to protect our asset(s) from any potential damage caused by abnormal loads. I would also like to advise that where any damage, injury or delay to the rail network is caused as a result of abnormal loads (related to the application site), the applicant or developer will incur full liability.

Newt Officer

24 September 2024

The applicant has provided a letter of comfort which confirms that a licence is capable of being granted, and based on the terms of that letter, no additional surveys are required before the planning decision is made.

Staffordshire Police

19 March 2025 and 15 July 2024

Provide advice to the Applicant regarding Secured by Design guidance and the development should be implemented in accordance with the recognised principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.

Ramblers

5 June 2025

Although the additional information provides a better perspective of the screening hedging and land contours, it does not alter the adverse effect this development will have on the amenity of the affected PRoWs, particularly Fulford FP 12 and 15. this remains against the spirit of NPPF 104.

The screening hedging is proposed to be three metres high which will screen the solar panels but will also screen the current wider views of the local surroundings along the affected portion of the path, akin to walking in a hedging tunnel. If the hedging is not rigorously maintained then the path would rapidly become obstructed by hedge overgrowth.

Ramblers therefore continue to object to this development.

SCC Definitive Map and Spatial Information Officer

3 March 2025

Do not object to the proposed development and provide general advice to ensure that existing Public Rights of Way remain unaffected by the proposed development.

SCC Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA):

10 March 2025 and 11 July 2024

No objection to the application, subject to a pre-commencement condition to ensure that the full detailed drainage design (including management and maintenance plan) is submitted for review.

Fulford Parish Council

19 September 2024

Object for the following reasons:

- The size and scale of the proposed development is not in keeping with the rural character of the area.
- All the villages surrounding the proposed development are small hamlets which will be adversely and irrevocably impaired by the proposed development.
- The scheme would bring no benefits to the local community and there is no overriding need for such a large-scale development in this location.
- Impact on nearby listed buildings and nearby dwellings;

- The development would be overbearing for the surrounding small villages of Saverley Green, Stallington and Fulford affecting the enjoyment of views and footpaths for the residents, as well as visual blight and dominate the local landscape.
- Inappropriate development in the Green Belt and no very special circumstances demonstrated to justify the development.
- Harm to openness of the Green Belt.
- Set a precedent for allowing further solar farms to be built on Green Belt Land over using brownfield sites.
- Access concerns and disruption during the construction phase/maintenance of the development on the surrounding area and congestion on highway network.
- Surrounding lanes unsuitable for HGVs.
- Cumulative impact with other schemes in Creswell (Staffs Moorlands DC).
- Impact on local footpath network.
- Impact on flood risk/drainage concerns.
- Consideration needed of the solar arrays carbon footprint over its lifespan and how it is disposed of.
- Reassurance needed to ensure that the panels are not hazardous to residents/controlled waters.
- Question efficiency of solar farm in winter months.
- Effective consultation not carried out with the local community/Parish Council.
- Clarification requested on how long solar energy can be stored and is there a plan for the power generated to be exported to the national grid.
- How long do solar batteries last.
- Size and Location of backup Battery store
- Extra details of maintenance policy and procedure required
- Visual impact for users of any footpath and bridleway across the site the development removes footpaths and diverts other footpaths.
- Negative impacts on landscape character the proposed development have negative impacts and ruins the landscapes character.

- Loss of productive arable land
- Loss of local wildlife habitats wildlife corridors which will be detrimental.
- Unacceptable negative impact on local heritage
- Noise and vibration impact on nearby dwellings.
- Likely negative affect on tourism and local businesses
- The development is not temporary

Urban Vision Enterprise on behalf of Fulford Parish Council

18 September 2024

The entire site is within the North Staffordshire Green Belt and concerns are raised that the impacts have not been assessed properly. The Green Belt Assessment submitted with the application suggests that impact on unrestricted sprawl is low and this appears to be based on the view that this is only an issue for sites immediately adjacent to urban areas. There is nothing in planning policy or planning practice guidance to suggest that urban sprawl is only an issue for the inner band of green belts. The urban sprawl purpose applies to the whole of green belts. The impact should therefore be high. Similarly, the assessment identifies impact on 'safeguarding countryside from encroachment' as moderate. This impact should be high as it is a large urbanising development in the middle of the countryside.

The Friends of the Earth policy interactive map identifies nearby potential sites for solar development, outside of the green belt. It is difficult to see any justification for such development in the green belt. Approval for inappropriate development in the green belt would be contrary to national policy and could set a precedent for similar inappropriate development.

Although the projected vehicular movements associated with the operation of the site are relatively low, concerns are raised about the adequacy and safety of the proposed site access at the construction and decommissioning phases. This is due to the speed of traffic, capacity of the road, limited visibility, lack of footways and vulnerable road users including horse riders and pedestrians.

Public Right of Way (PRoW) 'Fulford 15' runs through the site. It is unclear how the development will impact this PRoW. Currently there is insufficient information provided to assess either harm or opportunities for enhancement.

Concerns are raised over vehicular damage during construction and loss of trees to facilitate the development. There is no mention of the recent refusals for similar schemes by both East Staffordshire Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council within 5km of the application site and outside of the green belt. These were refused on grounds including cumulative impact, landscape character, residential amenity, highways, scale and massing and visual impact.

Effective consultation was not carried out with the local community by the developer. Only one site notice has been posted on a stile within the site. There was no site notice at the proposed vehicular entrance to the development or anywhere around the site periphery.

Neighbours:

Total responses - 58 comments

Total objections - 50 comments

Total in support - 7 comments

Total neither objecting nor supporting - 1 comment

50 letters of objections, material planning considerations summarised:

- Inappropriate for the green belt
- Should be placed on a brownfield site or on roofs of warehouses instead
- Will cause disruption as the road network will be totally overwhelmed
- Noise pollution
- Negative impact on local wildlife
- Risk of flooding especially on Saverley Green Road
- Proposal is too close to quiet village locations, would be seen as a blight on the rural community
- Would forever change agricultural practices and activity and would destroy forever natural habitats and hedgerows with loss of grazing land, footpaths and access to rights of way
- Farmland should stay as farmland producing food
- Any benefits of solar farms do not outweigh harm to the green belt
- Surrounding highways not equipped for construction traffic

- Visual impact detrimental to local landscape
- Increase in crime with criminal opportunity via access to materials used before and on site
- No need to build this thing in our beautiful village, there are plenty of other spaces where people don't live that it can be built
- Loss of footpaths, an amenity used by the local community
- Loss of very little remaining countryside and the harm it will cause to the wildlife and their habitats is unthinkable
- The bridge at the bottom of Stallington Lane is low and the lane itself is extremely narrow all of the way up. The road surface is awful and flooding we experience down that road is bad, and the extra traffic will cause issues
- It would impact the peaceful pleasure of walking, cycling riding, even commuting in our natural surroundings
- It would be an eyesore during its construction and its exploitation
- If this goes ahead then the surrounding area will likely become 'Brown Field'. That will then give developers Cart-Blanche to build anything, anywhere within that and adjacent areas
- Proposed development far too large
- The solar farms already established on the A50 corridor are hideous and I cannot understand why local government allow this sacrilege of our quintessential English countryside
- The construction of Leaford Solar Farm will disrupt the tranquillity of the Staffordshire countryside, which is rapidly disappearing among housing estates and other profit driven enterprises
- We need renewable energy, but solar panels are not zero carbon

7 letters of support, material planning considerations summarised:

- We need more renewable energy
- Solar farm is in a good location not near people's properties and won't affect people's views
- Well thought out planning application with consideration for the local community

- Doesn’t spoil the local area and once set up will not create any noise or disturbance to community
- Land is of low value and we have a lot of land around, so the impact is minimal
- Whether the land is used for agriculture or solar farming, the land is still being used to provide for the general public
- Due to the lack of support for farming and agriculture in general, supports this farmer diversifying; it’s still farming but in a different capacity
- We have to accept schemes like this as to decarbonise our economy and combat climate change

Publicity

Site Notice expiry: 7 August 2024

Press Notice expiry: 30 July 2024

Relevant Planning History

23/37774/ESS - Screening opinion for solar farm. The proposal is not likely to have significant environmental effects and therefore does not constitute EIA development.

Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

1. The Development hereby permitted shall commence no later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

2. This permission relates to the submitted details, specification and the following drawings, except where indicated otherwise by a condition attached to this consent, in which case the condition shall take precedence:

    - 05004-RES-LAY-DR-PT-002 - revision 4 - Figure 1: Site Location Plan
    - 05004-RES-LAY-DR-PT-003 - revision 3 - Figure 2: Site Location Map
    - Figure 3 - revision 1: Field Numbers
    - 05004-RES-LAY-DR-PT-004 - revision 9 - Figure 4: Infrastructure -
        - Layout
    - 05004-RES-LAY-DR-PT-005 - revision 8 - Figure 5: Infrastructure Layout Enlargement (Sheets 1 - 18)

- 05004-RES-ERW-DR-PT-001- revision 1- Figure 6: Typical Access Track Detail
- 05004-RES-CTN-DR-PT-001 - revision 1 Figure 7: Typical Construction Compound Layout
- 05004-RES-SOL-DR-PT-001 - revision 4 - Figure 8 - Typical PV Module and Rack Detail - Sheets 1- 2
- 05004-RES-SOL-DR-PT-002 - revision 3 - Figure 9 - Typical Inverter and Storage Layout - Sheets 1 - 2
- 05004-RES-SOL-DR-PT-003 - revision 3 - Figure 10 - Typical Inverter Substation
- 05004-RES-SUB-DR-PT-002 - revision 3 - Figure 11 - Typical DC-DC Convertor
- 05004-RES-BAT-DR-PT-001 - revision 3 - Figure 12 - Typical Battery
    - Storage Enclosure
- 05004-RES-SUB-DR-PT-001 - revision 2 - Figure 13 - Client/DNO Substation Plan and Elevations - Sheets 1 - 12
- 05004-RES-LAY-DR-PT-006 - revision 1 - Figure 14: Indicative Bess Compound Layout
- 05004-RES-SEC-DR-PT-001 - revision 3 - Figure 15 - Typical Security Fence Detail - Sheets 1 - 2
- 05004-RES-SEC-DR-PT-002 - revision 3 - Figure 16 - Typical Deer Fence
- 05004-RES-SEC-DR-PT-003 - revision 2 - Figure 17: Typical Security CCTV Detail
- Landscape and Ecology Management Plan - revision 8 - Figure 19
- Landscape and Ecology Management Plan - Enlargement - revision 8 - Figure 20
- Figures 21-24 - Proposed Vehicular Access Arrangements

3. The local planning authority shall be notified in writing of the First Export Date within 21 days of that event occurring. The development hereby permitted shall cease on or before the expiry of a 40-year period from the date of the first export of electricity and the Local Planning Authority shall be notified of the cessation of electricity generation and storage in writing no later than 5 working days after the event.

4. Within three months of the date of cessation of the export of electricity from a part of the Site, a Partial Decommissioning Method Statement (PDMS) shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval in writing. The PDMS shall include the following:

   (a) programme and timetable for decommissioning works for that part of the Site, including measures to secure the removal of all PV modules and racks, any foundations or anchor systems, plant, equipment, fencing, ancillary equipment.

   (b) restoration works to return the land within that part of the Site to agricultural use, save for retained landscape and ecological features and habitats.

   The decommissioning of the Development and restoration of that part of the Site shall be implemented in strict accordance with the approved PDMS and timescales.

5. Within three months of the date of cessation of the export of electricity from all of the Site, or within a period of 39 years and 9 months following the First Export Date, whichever occurs first, a Decommissioning Method Statement (DMS) shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval in writing. The DMS for the Site shall include the following:

   (a) programme and timetable for decommissioning works for the Development, including measures to secure the removal of all PV modules and racks, any foundations or anchor systems, plant, equipment, fencing ancillary equipment and substation.

   (b) restoration works to return the land to agricultural use, retained landscape and ecological features and habitats.

   The decommissioning of the Development and restoration of the Site shall be implemented in strict accordance with the approved DMS and timescales.

6. The Battery Energy Storage containers shall not be installed on site until a Battery Safety Management Plan (BSMP), including measures to control fire risk and water storage arrangements, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The BSMP shall prescribe measures to facilitate safety, fire risk and fire management during the construction, operation and decommissioning stages of the development. The Battery Energy Storage containers shall thereafter be operated in accordance with the approved BSMP at all times.

7. No development including any works of demolition or preparation works shall take place on Site unless and until a Construction Management Plan (CMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved CMP shall be adhered to throughout the construction period and shall include details relating to:

(a) parking for vehicles of site personnel, operatives and visitors,

(b) loading and unloading of plant and materials,

(c) programme of works (including measures for traffic management),

(d) wheel washing facilities,

(e) measures to control the emissions of dust and dirt during construction,

(f) a scheme for the recycling/disposing of waste resulting from construction works,

(g) details of any horizontal directional drilling,

(h) a Community Liaison Plan to include details of how consultation and

(i) dialogue with local residents will be maintained during the construction phase,

(j) details of the Construction Site Manager shall be provided to the local planning authority and provided on a board at the Site access

8. All construction traffic shall only use the traffic route to and from the Site as indicated on Figure 15 of the submitted Transport Statement reference GB01T23A19.PROJ2000.2002. Construction traffic movements shall also be limited to 08:00 - 18:00 hours on Mondays to Fridays, 08.00- 14.00 on Saturdays, and not at all on Sundays and Bank and Public Holidays.

9. No development shall commence and no construction traffic shall enter the site until a full condition survey of the existing roads and verges along Saverley Green Road from the junction with Cresswell Road up to the Site entrance/exit to be used by construction vehicles, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Within three months of construction finishing, a post construction condition survey across the same extent of adopted highway shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any highways defects identified in the survey resulting from construction activities of the Development, shall then be corrected in accordance with a schedule of works and timetable that has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

10. No on-site development shall commence other than activities associated with the construction of the access point, until the site access and associated visibility splays shown on Figure 10 of the submitted Transport Statement, Reference number GB01T23A19.PROJ2000.2002, have been provided. The visibility splays shall thereafter be kept free of all obstructions to visibility over a height of 600 mm above the adjacent carriageway level.

11. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, an archaeological Project Design shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Project Design shall provide details of the programme of archaeological works to be carried out within the site, including post-excavation reporting, and appropriate publication.

    The programme of archaeological works, including post-excavation assessment shall thereafter be implemented and completed in full in accordance with the approved Project Design and provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of the results.

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

13. The ancillary inverters (PCS units), transformers and dual DC battery storage containers attached to the photovoltaic panels shall be installed in the locations indicated in Figure 1 of the Acoustic Assessment (Ref 05004-8945769).

14. The development hereby permitted shall be designed and operated to ensure that the rating sound level, determined using the BS 4142:2014 methodology external to any properties identified in Table 9 of the Acoustic Assessment (Ref 05004-8945769) shall not exceed 40 dB LAr or the background sound level plus 5 dB, whichever is the greater, for both daytime and night-time periods.

15. No development shall begin until the final detailed surface water drainage design has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

    The final design shall conform to the design detail summarised Revision 5 of the Leaford Solar Farm Flood Risk Assessment (312040, 10/01/2024).

    The design shall further demonstrate:

    - A surface water drainage system designed in accordance with the non-technical standards for sustainable drainage systems (DEFRA, March 2015).

- Detailed design (plans, network details and full hydraulic calculations) in support of any surface water drainage scheme, including details on any attenuation system, SuDS features and the outfall arrangements.

- Performance calculations shall demonstrate the performance of the designed system and attenuation storage for a range of return periods and critical storm durations (15 mins up to 48 hours), to include as a minimum the 1:2 year, 1:30 year and the 1:100-year plus climate change return periods.

- The hydraulic modelling design shall use FEH Rainfall Data and shall apply an allowance of 25% upon rainfall to model the impact of climate change.

- Provision of an acceptable management and maintenance plan to ensure that surface water drainage systems shall be maintained and managed for the lifetime of the development. To include the name and contact details of the body(-ies) responsible.

The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

16. Prior to the commencement of development, a landscaping and planting scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscaping and planting scheme shall include the following details:

(a) all trees, hedgerows and other planting to be retained

(b) a planting specification to including numbers, density, size, species and positions of all new trees, hedgerows and other planting

The landscaping and planting scheme shall thereafter be implemented within the first planting season following the first Export Date.

Any plants, trees or hedgerows planted as part of the approved landscape and planting scheme that are removed, die or become seriously damaged or diseased within a period of 5 years from the date of first planting shall be replaced with others of similar size and species in the next planting season, unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

17. Prior to the commencement of development, a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The LEMP shall include;

(a) a maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development

(b) a programme of implementation.

(c) description and evaluation of features to be established and managed

(d) ecological trends and constraints on site that could influence management

(e) aims and objectives of management

(f) appropriate management prescriptions for achieving aims and objectives

(g) preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan)

(h) details of the body or organisation responsible for implementation of the plan

(i) ongoing monitoring and remedial measures

The measures within the approved LEMP shall thereafter be implemented and maintained for the duration of the Development.

18. Notwithstanding the details approved pursuant to 16, all trees to be planted within the north-western corner of Field 1 shall comprise of native species heavy standard trees, the location, density and species of which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the development first being brought into use. The tree planting shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details and within the first planting season following the first Export Date.

19. Before the development is commenced, including any ground works, the tree protection measures detailed in the Arboricultural Implications Assessment, revision B, dated January 2024 by David Archer Associates shall be provided and thereafter maintained throughout the duration of the construction works.

20. No development shall commence until a Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) and Biodiversity Management and Monitoring Plan (BMMP) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The BGP and BMMP shall demonstrate that a 74.20% for habitat units and a net gain of 22.04% for hedgerow units shall occur, within a 30-year period commencing at the First Export Date, as a result of the Development. The BGP and BMMP shall include 30-year objectives, management responsibilities, maintenance schedules and a methodology to ensure the submission of monitoring reports. Monitoring reports shall be submitted to the local planning authority during years 2, 5, 10, 20 and 30 from the First Export Date, demonstrating how the BGP is progressing towards achieving its objectives, along with evidence of any necessary specific arrangements and rectifying measures.

21. Prior to the First Export Date a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP), including a timetable for implementation, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The BEP shall include the locations and specifications of durable and suitably placed bat and bird boxes within retained vegetation, and the locations of log piles/hibernaculum. The BEP shall additionally show the locations and specifications of mammal gates in fencing to retain connectivity across the Site for mammals. The BEP shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details for the duration of the Development.

22. No external lighting shall be installed within or on the boundary of the site, unless the local planning authority has first approved in writing details of:

    (a) the location of all units of external illumination

    (b) the height, design, beam orientation and measures to control light spillage and intensity of illumination.

    The approved external illumination units shall thereafter be provided and maintained in accordance with the approved details for the lifetime of the Development.

23. All construction activities shall only take between the hours of 08.00 to 18:00 hours Monday to Friday, 08.00 to 14.00 Saturdays, and not at all on Sundays and Public and Bank Holidays.

24. Notwithstanding any description, details and specifications submitted, the mounting poles for the CCTV including the camera unit shall have a maximum height above ground level of not more than 2.5metres.

25. The CCTV units shall only use infra-red lighting and be directed inwards into the site.

26. Notwithstanding any description, details and specifications submitted, prior to their erection on site, details of the external colour finish of the substations, containers, any other ancillary buildings, internal security fencing, deer fencing, mammal gates and CCTC mounting poles shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and thereafter be retained as such for the life of the development.

27. Notwithstanding any description, details and specifications submitted, the strainer posts for the site perimeter deer fence shall be in timber and thereafter retained as such for the life of the development.

28. Notwithstanding any description, details and specifications submitted, details of the materials for all hardstanding and surfacing of the access tracks shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to their installation. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details and thereafter retained as such for the life of the development.

29. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the measures within in Section 5 (PRoW Management Strategy) of the Leaford Solar Farm Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Management Plan Document Ref: 312040/070525/BT/3.0 Issue-3.0.

30. No development shall commence unless and until a Great Crested Newt Mitigation Strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall include:

    (a) Details of survey findings confirming presence/absence and population size.

    (b) A method statement outlining avoidance, mitigation, and compensation measures.

    (c) Timetable for implementation of mitigation works,

    (d) Details of monitoring and reporting procedures.

    (e) Confirmation of any required European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England.

    The development shall thereafter be carried out in full accordance with the approved strategy with all mitigation features retained.

31. The solar PV array shall not extend into the areas shaded in red on Drawing No 05004-RES-LAY-DR-PT-004 Rev 9 Figure 4 (Infrastructure Layout).

The reasons for the Council's decision to approve the development subject to the above conditions are:

1. To comply with the requirements of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. In order to define the permission.

3. To ensure that the site is returned as close as possible to its original condition on expiry of this permission, in accordance with Policy N1 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

4. To ensure that the site is returned as close as possible to its original condition on expiry of this permission, in accordance with Policy N1 of the Plan for Stafford Borough

5. To ensure that the site is returned as close as possible to its original condition on expiry of this permission, in accordance with Policy N1 of the Plan for Stafford Borough

6. To ensure that the site is returned as close as possible to its original condition on expiry of this permission, in accordance with Policy N1 of the Plan for Stafford Borough

7. In the interest of highway safety and to ensure that safe and suitable access to the site is provided during the construction phase, in accordance with Policy T2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

8. In the interest of highway safety and to ensure that safe and suitable access to the site is provided during the construction phase, in accordance with Policy T2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

9. In the interest of highway safety and to ensure that safe and suitable access to the site is provided during the construction phase, in accordance with Policy T2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

10. In the interest of highway safety and to ensure that a safe and suitable access to the site is provided in accordance with Policy T2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

11. To ensure that the development does not adversely impact on archaeology, in accordance with Policy N9 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

12. To ensure that the development does not impact on any previously unidentified contaminated land and in the interests of public safety, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

13. To safeguard the occupiers of nearby residential properties from undue noise and to ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development (Policy N1 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

14. To safeguard the occupiers of nearby residential properties from undue noise. (Policy N1 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

15. To ensure that site is appropriately drained and prevent flood risk on the site/adjoining land, in accordance with Policy N2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

16. To preserve landscape character, in accordance with Policies N1, N4 and N8 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

17. To ensure that the required biodiversity enhancements are provided, in accordance with Policy N4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

18. To protect existing landscape features, in accordance with Policies N1, N4 and N8 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

19. To protect existing landscape features, in accordance with Policies N1, N4 and N8 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

20. To ensure that the required biodiversity enhancements are provided, in accordance with Policy N4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

21. To ensure that the required biodiversity enhancements are provided, in accordance with Policy N4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

22. To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development and to safeguard the occupiers of nearby residential properties from light pollution. (Policy N1 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

23. To safeguard the occupiers of nearby residential properties from undue noise and general disturbance. (Policy N1 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

24. To ensure that a secure environment is provided, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

25. To ensure that a secure environment is provided, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

26. To preserve landscape character, in accordance with the Policies N1, N4 and N8 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

27. To preserve landscape character, in accordance with the Policies N1, N4 and N8 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

28. In the interest of highway safety and preserve the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with Policies T2 and N1 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

29. To protect the amenity of nearby public rights of way, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

30. To protect great crested newts, in accordance with Policy N4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

31. To preserve the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with Policies N1, and N8 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

Informatives

1 In accordance with the requirements of Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Order) 2015, as amended, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2024, the Council has worked in a positive and proactive way in determining the application and has granted planning permission.

2 The applications attention is drawn to the comments of the Environment Agency dated 21 March 2025 in respect of the crossing of the watercourse by two security fences and an access track will likely require a consent under Land Drainage Act regulations from Staffordshire County Council. We recommend that the applicant contacts flood.team@staffordshire.gov.uk to discuss the issues likely to be raised.

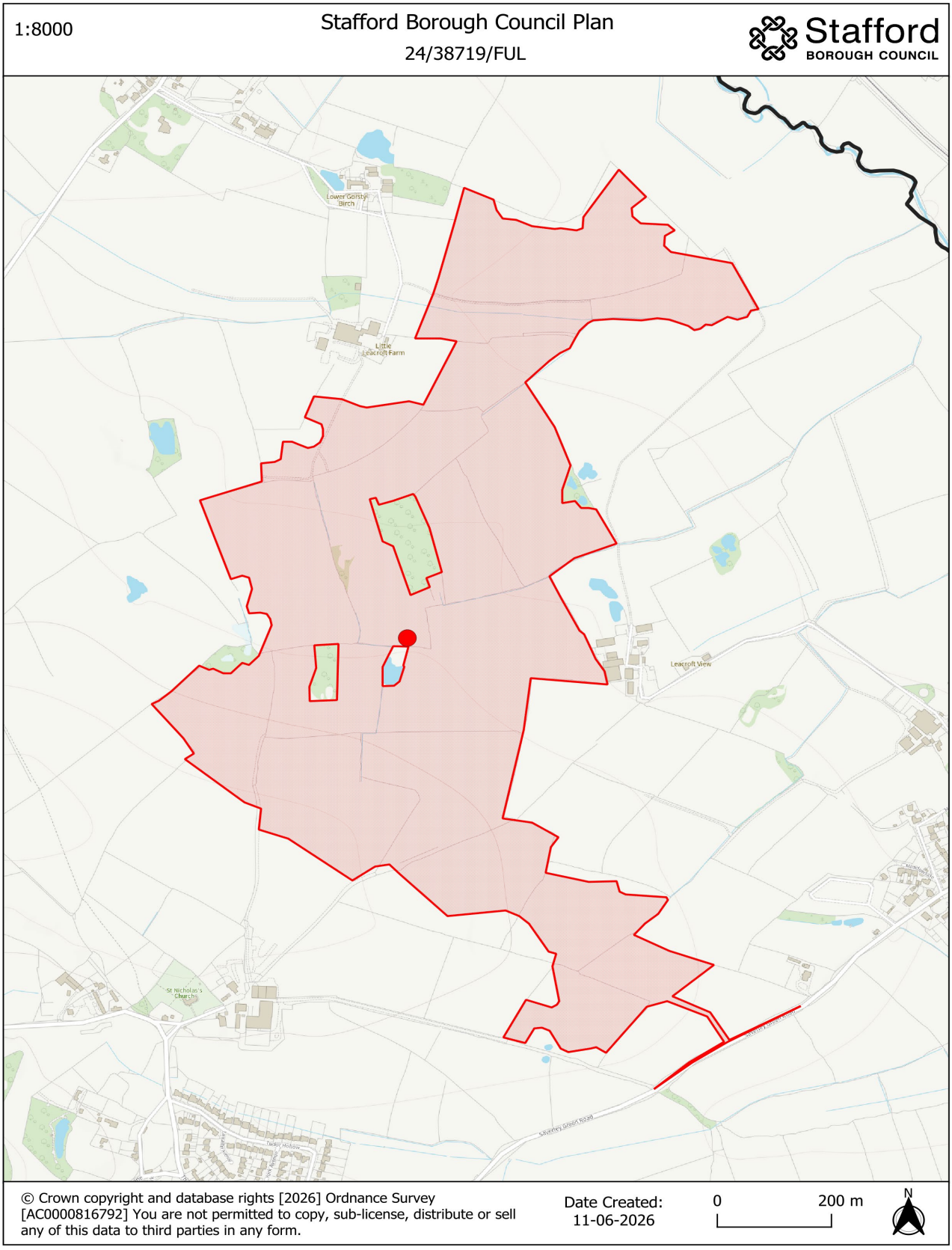
3 The applications attention is drawn to the comments of the Staffordshire Police Designing Out Crime Officer dated 19 March 2025.

4 The applications attention is drawn to the comments of Network Rail dated 18 September 2024 in respect of the development not causing obstruction to traffic approaching and leaving the level crossing which egresses the Crewe to Derby line.

5 The applications attention is drawn to the comments of the local Highway Authority dated in respect of any off-site work within the adopted highway including work to alter access points or to provide additional or to enhance existing passing places, will require a Highway Works Agreement with Staffordshire County Council. The applicant is requested to contact Staffordshire County Council in order to secure the Agreement. The link below is to the Highway Works Information Pack and an application form for the agreement. Please complete and send to the address indicated on the application form, which is Staffordshire County Council at Network Management Unit, Staffordshire Place 1, Wedgwood Building, Tipping Street, Stafford, Staffordshire ST16 2DH. (Or email to nmu@staffordshire.gov.uk). The applicant is advised to begin this process well in advance of any works taking place in order to meet any potential timescales.

6 National Grid Electricity Distribution have 33,000v and 11,000v overhead lines within the vicinity of the works. National Grid therefore require the developer to make an application to them for the relocation of the overhead lines to ensure that they can maintain/repair their network, whilst providing an efficient network to their existing customers.

24/38719/FUL
Stallington Sprink
Stallington Road
Blythe Bridge



Application:	23/37193/FUL
Case Officer:	Tom Cannon
Date Registered:	3 March 2023
Target Decision Date: **Extended To:**	2 June 2023 10 October 2025
Address:	Land North of Marston Grange, Marston, Stafford, Staffordshire
Ward:	Seighford and Church Eaton
Parish:	Creswell
Proposal:	Application for flood compensation works pursuant to planning permission ref: 20/32039/REM
Applicant:	Barratt West Midlands and Bovis Homes (Mercia Region)
Recommendation:	Approve, subject to conditions

Reason for referral

Application 24/37193/FUL is a large-scale major application which is exempt from the Council's scheme of delegation and as such needs to be determined by the Planning Committee.

Context, background and proposal

Outline planning permission was granted in 2018 (Ref:16/24595/OUT) for a residential development of up to 700 dwellings and associated infrastructure on land north of Marston Grange, Marston.

A subsequent reserved matters consent was issued in 2021 (Ref: 20/32039/REM) for 700 dwellings, and approving the layout, scale, appearance and landscaping of the development, including drainage details. The reversed matters approval was submitted by Barratt and Bovis, with the site essentially split horizontally into two sections along the proposed spine road (primary access) with Barratt seeking to develop the southern section and Bovis the northern part.

Condition 12 of the outline consent secured, where feasible, a Flood Risk Management Scheme for a flood storage area within the site in relation to the Sandyford Brook as recommended by the Environment Agency (EA), with condition 13 of the same consent also requiring details of the design of the surface water drainage system. Although condition 13 was discharged under application 20/33416/DCON, the details submitted under application 21/34097/DCON relating to condition 12 were refused, on the basis that insufficient flood modelling information/flood compensation measures had been provided for assessment by the EA, to demonstrate whether the proposed flood storage area(s) are acceptable.

This current application provides full details of the proposed flood compensation measures, outlining the flood risk modelling approach that has been taken to date to allow the assessment to progress, and details the proposed approach going forward for the North Eastern Attenuation Pond only. Work on the proposed development has been largely completed, so this application is effectively seeking retrospective permission for the afore mentioned aspects.

Officer Assessment - Key Considerations

1. Flood compensation measures/drainage Infrastructure

The applicant has submitted a Hydraulic Modelling Note (HMN) which sets out that in 2020 a preliminary flood storage feasibility assessment was undertaken on their behalf (Reference LNOS-WSP-XX-ZZ-DR-RP-0001) looking at high-level options for flood storage with an outline Flood Storage Area (FSA) suggested to the north east of the development site.

It was proposed that this FSA would have a bed level of 96.00m and a top of bank level of 97.00m, with banks of 1:3 gradient, assuming a nominal flood depth of 1m to provide an estimated 10,200m^3 of storage capacity. It should be noted, however, that this calculated volume was not based on hydraulic modelling nor associated with a particular return period event. The hydraulic modelling undertaken for this assessment quantifies potential storage that may be provided by a storage area.

A further assessment was undertaken to assess the viability of including a FSA within the consented Scheme extents, however, the construction of this was deemed to be overly complex, when considered in conjunction with the wider Scheme requirements.

The focus of the submitted HMN is therefore on identifying a suitable location for a FSA outside of the original site boundary but under land controlled by the applicant and subsequently undertaking hydraulic modelling to determine the storage volumes that can feasibly be achieved. This land forms the red line of the current planning application site.

From the HMN, it has been stated that the baseline model for the Marston brook has now been updated to model the impact of the post-developed scenario; to include for 2 no. attenuation basins within the development plot and a FSA in land to the north of the original red line site boundary (land outlined in red on this current application). The modelling scenario has now been upgraded to include an allowance of 30% for climate change, rather than 20% as previously modelled.

Comparing the baseline and post-development results for the Marston Brook, the HMN states that there is a reduction in peak flows and in-channel volumes at the downstream extent of the model for all of the return period events that were tested (1 in 20 year, 1 in 100 year, 1 in 100 year +30% climate change and 1 in 1000 year).

- For the 1 in 100 year plus 30% climate change scenario (the design event), the peak flow at the downstream extent of the model is reduced by 10.8% in the post-development scenario, from 2.50m^3/s in the baseline scenario to 2.23m^3/s in the post-development scenario.

- In the 100 year plus 30% climate change event, approximately 9840m^3 of water is held in the FSA.

The HMN indicates that the inclusion of the flood storage area provides betterment to the downstream section of the Marston Brook in terms of reducing peak flows and in-channel volumes, as requested by the Condition (12) of the outline consent.

With regards to the modelling undertaken in support of the application in the HMN, the Environment Agency (EA) have applied a risk-based approach to the assessment of these proposals and the flood model. On this basis, the EA have confirmed that the development is safe, will not increase flood risk to third parties whilst offering flood risk reductions downstream, as required by Policy Stafford 2 - North of Stafford The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011 - 2031. The EA have also confirmed that, having reviewed the WSP note relating to the proposals, they are satisfied that the proposed storage would provide flood risk betterment downstream and would accord with the requirements of condition 12. As such, the flood compensation works subject to this application are considered appropriate and accord with the objectives of both the outline and reserved matters consents.

<u>Policies and Guidance:-</u>

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 170-182

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policy Stafford 2

2. Landscaping, trees and green Infrastructure

The application has been accompanied by landscape layout plans and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA). This includes details of mixed wetland planting around the attenuation basin, with woodland edge planting strengthening the existing hedgerow and tree planting along the western boundary. Meadow/wildflower mix would be spread across the remainder of the site.

Although the proposal would require the removal of 4 individual trees and 2 tree groups (or parts of the group) and 5 sections/parts of the hedges and woody scrub will need to be removed in whole or in part to facilitate the flood compensation works, this will be compensated for by the afore mentioned planting across the site, providing greater species diversity and improving the age range structure. All the additional tree and shrub planting forms part of the landscaping scheme and its delivery can be secured via condition.

The AIA also includes tree protection plans, detailing how retained trees will be protected during construction works. However, as work is nearing completion, a condition is required, ensuring the approved tree protection measures are retained for the duration of excavation/construction works.

Subject to the afore mentioned conditions regarding the implementation of new landscaping/tree planting and tree protection measures, the proposed flood compensation measures would preserve the landscape character of the site and wider development. It would therefore accord with paragraphs: 131, 135, 137 and 139 of the NPPF and Policies N1. N4 and N8 of TPSB which, amongst other things, seek to ensure that proposals preserve important landscape features, are visually attractive and provide appropriate and effective landscaping.

3. Biodiversity/ecological impact

Policy N4 states that the natural environment will be protected and that new development where damage to the natural environment is unavoidable must provide appropriate mitigation. The policy further requires that natural habitats and species in the locality are protected.

Policy N1 requires development to retain significant biodiversity and landscaping features and create new biodiversity areas. To comply with the guidance contained within the NPPF and the Council’s biodiversity duty new development must demonstrate that it will not result in the loss of any biodiversity value of the site.

The application is accompanied by bat, badger and great crested newt surveys and an Ecological Mitigation Strategy (EMS) which confirm that there is no evidence of roosting bats on site. Although there are badger setts on the land, subject to the mitigation measures set out in the badger survey report being followed, the development would provide appropriate compensatory measures to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on badgers. These details along with a lighting strategy to ensure the development does not impact on foraging bats can be secured via condition, as requested by the Biodiversity Officer.

Turning to the impact on great crested newts, the area affected by this application does not have any existing ponds and is completely cut off by the housing development and the river here. As such, Naturespace have confirmed that there will be no reason for great crested newts to be present on the site as a result. Thus, the development would not impact on great crested newts.

Subject to the afore mentioned conditions, the proposal would protect biodiversity and retain significant landscape features, in accordance with Policy N1 and N4 of TPSB.

With respect to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), as the application was submitted before the 12 February 2024, it is not required to deliver a 10% increase in BNG. The landscaping strategy and EMS include ecological enhancements in the form of new native planting and mitigation measures to protect affected species. Subject to these details been implemented/adhered to, the scheme would not result in the loss of any biodiversity on the site, as required by the NPPF.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 15

The Plan for Stafford Borough

N1 (Design)

N2 (Climate Change)

N4 (The Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure)

N5 (Sites of European, National and Local Nature Conservation Importance)

4. Other matters

The proposed development is within the Consultation Distance of a major hazard pipeline (Ref: 8403_2681 National Gas). However, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on-line standing advice tool confirms that the HSE does not advise, on safety grounds, against the granting of planning permission in this case.

5. Conclusion and planning balance

The proposed flood compensation scheme submitted under this application provides suitable flood mitigation/management works which will reduce peak flows and in-channel volumes to the downstream section of the Marston Brook, as requested by the Condition (12) of the outline consent. The EA have also confirmed that the proposed compensation measures are safe, will not increase flood risk to third parties whilst offering flood risk reductions downstream, and accord with the requirements of condition 12 and Policy Stafford 2 of TPSB.

Subject to conditions securing the implementation of the proposed landscaping strategy and mitigation measures to protect affected species, the works would also enhance the character and appearance of the site and protect biodiversity. On this basis, it is recommended that planning permission is granted.

Consultations

Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

Do not advise against.

Environment Agency

Response dated 30 March 2026

The response provided on the 7 May 2025 remains valid and is our current position. We reviewed the WSP note related to the proposals and the confirmation of a reduction in peaks flows. The associated modelling was subject to a basic review by my colleagues who were satisfied that the proposed storage would provide flood risk betterment downstream. Therefore, in relation to Condition 12, we are satisfied.

Response dated 7 May 2025

Whilst the site lies within Flood Zone 1, the low risk Zone, there was a conditioned requirement for the applicant to provide assessment and modelling to demonstrate no flood risk impacts and that the proposed compensatory works would result in a reduction in flows downstream.

The submitted WSP Technical Note (ref:70066591 - Land North of Stafford) confirms that, when ‘comparing the baseline and post-development results for the Marston Brook, there is a reduction in peak flows and in-channel volumes at the downstream extent of the model for all of the return period events that were tested (1 in 20 year, 1 in 100 year, 1 in 100 year +30% climate change and 1 in 1000 year)’. As such the report confirms compliance with the condition requirements.

With regards the modelling undertaken in support of the above we have applied a risk-based approach to the assessment of these proposals and the flood model. In this instance, a basic review has been carried out but we have not undertaken a full assessment of the fitness for the purpose of the modelling and can accept no liability for any errors or inadequacies in the model.

As stated above the associated Technical Note, supported by the modelling, has confirmed that the development is safe and will not increase flood risk to third parties whilst offering flood risk reductions downstream.

Biodiversity Officer

Response dated 10 December 2025

WSP carried out a Bat Activity Report, July 2020. The survey is now out of date, however as the surveys did not find evidence of roosting bats and because recommendations still apply, an updated report is not required.

Recommendations in the report are:

Trees, T1, T13 and T27 are planned to be retained as part of the Proposed Development. If the plans change to involve the felling of any of these trees, further survey will be required to determine the likely presence or absence of bat roosts within these trees.

It is recommended that the lighting strategy for the Site seeks to:

- Ensure there is no lighting of any bat mitigation measures, including roosts, bat boxes or mitigation habitat
- Use the minimum light levels necessary for the relevant task/function, this may equate to reducing light intensity, and/or using the minimum number or light sources or minimum column height;
- Use hoods, louvres or other luminaire design features to avoid light spill onto retained and newly created areas of vegetation likely to be used by foraging and commuting bats;
- Use narrow spectrum light sources where possible to lower the range of species affected by lighting, specifically avoiding shorter wavelength blue light, using instead warm/neutral colour temperature <4,200 kelvin lighting (BCT, 2014b); and
- Use light sources that emit minimal ultra-violet light to avoid attracting night-flying invertebrate species which in turn may attract bats to the light.

To encourage compliance with planning policy (as detailed in Section 4.3 of this report) the following measures are recommended for inclusion within the Proposed Development;

- Inclusion of nectar-rich plant species in soft landscaping areas that are attractive to night-flying insects to enhance foraging opportunities for bats;
- Creation and retention of linear vegetation (tree-lines and hedgerows) within the landscaping scheme to provide additional commuting corridors across the Site for bats;
- Provision of standing water-bodies to provide an additional foraging resource for bats using the site, which may benefit Myotis and Nyctalus bats in particular; and
- Installation of bat bricks or bat tubes into the fabric of any new buildings and/or installation of bat boxes to suitable retained trees to increase the roosting opportunities on Site for bats.

Great Crested Newt

The Newt Officer should be consulted on this application.

Newt Officer

Response dated 12 December 2025

This application is for flood alleviation works on a housing development already underway. As such the GCN survey information is over 10 years old at this point and no longer valid. However, the area affected by this particular application does not have any ponds and is completely cut off by the housing development and the river here, so there will be no reason for great crested newts to be present here. As such, the development would not impact on great crested newts.

Lead Local Flood Authority

Response dated 23 July 2023

The LLFA are a consultee for matters of surface water flooding and drainage, however, the LLFA have an interest in this application due to the flooding issues downstream of the Site, particularly upon Sandon Road where the Marston Brook joins up with the Sandyford Brook.

As such, I have reviewed the hydraulic modelling note undertaken by WSP (dated 9 April 2021) and submitted with this application.

This modelling report was conditioned as part of the outline application 16/24595/OUT (Condition 12) and states:

Prior to the commencement of each phase of the development hereby approved where feasible a Flood Risk Management scheme to provide an acceptable flood storage area within the site to service that phase (which may service other phases) shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. Before construction, the flood storage area will need to be hydraulically modelled using the Environment Agency's current model for Sandyford Brook to demonstrate that there will be a reduction in flows downstream.

This benefit must be approved by the Environment Agency.

The scheme shall be fully implemented and subsequently maintained, in accordance with the timing/phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

From the report, it has been stated that the baseline model for the Marston brook has now been updated to model the impact of the post-developed scenario; the model has been updated to include for 2 no. attenuation basins within the development plot and a Flood Storage Area in land to the north of the red line site boundary.

I also note that the modelling scenario has now been upgraded to include an allowance of 30% for climate change, rather than 20% as previously modelled.

Comparing the baseline and post-development results for the Marston Brook, the report states that there is a reduction in peak flows and in-channel volumes at the downstream extent of the model for all of the return period events that were tested (1 in 20 year, 1 in 100 year, 1 in 100 year +30% climate change and 1 in 1000 year).

- For the 1 in 100 year plus 30% climate change scenario (the design event), the peak flow at the downstream extent of the model is reduced by 10.8% in the post-development scenario, from 2.50m^3/s in the baseline scenario to 2.23m^3/s in the post-development scenario.

- In the 100 year plus 30% climate change event, approximately 9840m^3 of water is held in the FSA.

The report indicates that the inclusion of the flood storage area provides betterment to the downstream section of the Marston Brook in terms of reducing peak flows and in-channel volumes, as requested by the Condition (12).

I don’t believe that the LLFA would have any further comments upon the report, however, I am aware that the LLFA’s duty focuses on the drainage of surface water and I (and the LLFA) don’t want to impose on the requirements of other consultees. The Environment Agency will be more suited to providing comments as to whether the updates to the baseline model and the newly presented modelling results are satisfactory to discharge the condition.

I would therefore be grateful if any correspondence from the Environment Agency could be forwarded onto myself, particularly if the EA raise any objections to the information currently presented. As previously stated, we do have an interest in any schemes which provide betterment to the downstream situation with regard to flooding issues.

I have included David Hughes at the EA in this correspondence as I believe he has previously looked at the Site and I believe the condition originated with the EA so I presume they will also have been consulted on the modelling report.

Tree Officer

No comments received on updated arboricultural impact assessment.

Original comments dated 11 July 2023

There appears to be an outgrown hedge / trees near the eastern and western boundaries of this site. The applicant has not submitted any Arboricultural information for this scheme, which is surprising given the adjacent development, which this is linked to. There are trees that are likely to require removal and protection, indeed the key for the landscaping layout suggests some trees to be retained, but as most are not shown then this is confusing and ambiguous.

It is noted that this application refers to 20/32039/REM and the layout of this application was amended (*ref 22/36346/FUL*) and as part of that permission there was a Tree Protection Plan required that was subsequently submitted (*ref 21/34096/DCON*), that did not extend into this site but stopped at the southern end.

There needs to be an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) for this proposal to show what vegetation is being removed and if so how this is mitigated for via appropriate replacement planting. Given the required excavation it is likely that there will need to be an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) produced.

It is noted on the submitted information that a wildflower meadow of a very large width is being proposed with no tree cover at all. There would be an opportunity to introduce some individual trees within this large area to replicate a remnant hedge line or even wider spaced parkland all of which would add to the biodiversity for this site. This would increase foraging for birds and mammals and would enhance a naturalistic setting.

From an Arboricultural point of view, I recommend that this application is Refused on the grounds of lack of information.

Cannock Chase AONB Officer

Response dated 4 October 2023

No comments to make.

Neighbours

No comments received.

(No response received from the highway authority, Natural England, the Parish Council or Cadent).

Relevant Planning History

22/36346/FUL - Variation of condition 2 (amendments to plans) on application

20/32039/REM - amendments to the approved plans and design of the dwellings - Approved 24 February 2023.

20/32039/REM - Reserved matters application for 700 dwellings to outline permission 16/24595/OUT seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping, and including internal access roads, footpaths, drainage, associated parking provision, open space and infrastructure - Approved 12 February 2021.

16/24595/OUT - Outline planning application for residential development of up to 700 dwellings (Use Class C3), 1 No. (up to 60 bed) elderly living facility (Use Class C2), a one form entry primary school (Use Class D1) and a local centre to provide up to 2500 sqm GIA of open use (Use Classes A1 and/or A2 and/or A3 and/or A5 and/or D1) development together with supporting infrastructure including: green infrastructure, highways and associated works. All matters are reserved other than the principal points of access - Approved 10 October 2018.

Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

1. The development authorised by this permission shall be carried out in complete accordance with the following drawings and specifications, except where indicated otherwise by a condition attached to this consent, in which case the condition shall take precedence:-

    - Site Location Plan ref. AAH5503-67 Rev. C;
    - Northern Parcel Landscaping Layouts ref. AAJ5190-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9035-P01 Sheet 1 of 4;
    - Northern Parcel Landscaping Layouts ref. AAJ5190-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9036-P01 Sheet 2 of 4;
    - Northern Parcel Landscaping Layouts ref. AAJ5190-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9037-P01 Sheet 3 of 4;

- Northern Parcel Landscaping Layouts ref. AAJ5190-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9038-P01 Sheet 4 of 4;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment/Method Statement by RPS Ref: JSL 3618 dated 11 September 2020
- Bat Activity Survey by WSP Ref: 700063286 dated July 2020
- Great Crested Newt Survey by WSP Ref 31242
- Ecological Mitigation Strategy by WSP Ref: 700063286 dated November 2020
- Badger Bait Making Report and Method Statement by WSP Ref: 700063286
- Northern Parcel External Levels Layout Sheet 1
- Northern Parcel External Levels Layout Sheet 2
- Hydraulic Modelling Note, prepared by WSP and dated 9 April 2021;

2. The approved soft landscaping details shown on the following approved plans shall be implemented in the first planting and seeding seasons following the completion of the flood compensation measures approved under this consent:

   - Northern Parcel Landscaping Layouts ref. AAJ5190-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9035-P01 Sheet 1 of 4;
   - Northern Parcel Landscaping Layouts ref. AAJ5190-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9036-P01 Sheet 2 of 4;
   - Northern Parcel Landscaping Layouts ref. AAJ5190-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9037-P01 Sheet 3 of 4;
   - Northern Parcel Landscaping Layouts ref. AAJ5190-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9038-P01 Sheet 4 of 4;

   Any planting, seeding or turfing which within a period of five years after implementation, is removed, dies or becomes seriously damaged or defected shall be replaced as soon as reasonably practicable with others of a similar species, size and number as originally agreed.

3. The tree protection measures detailed in the approved Arboricultural Impact Assessment/Method Statement by RPS Ref: JSL 3618 shall be retained in the approved positions for the duration of excavation/construction works.

4. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations and mitigation measures contained in the Ecological Mitigation Strategy by WSP Ref: 700063286, Bat Activity Survey by WSP Ref: 700063286, Great Crested Newt Survey by WSP Ref 31242 and the Badger Bait Making Report and Method Statement by WSP Ref: 700063286.

5. The flood compensation works hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until details of any external lighting/lighting strategy for the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved lighting details/lighting strategy.

The reasons for the Council's decision to approve the development subject to the above conditions are:

1. To define the permission.

2. To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development. (Policies N1 g and h of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

3. To safeguard the amenities of the local area and to protect the natural features that contribute towards this and that are important in the appearance of the development. (Policy N4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough).

4. In order to ensure that the development does not result in damage or harm to legally protected species or their habitat/roost. (Paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

5. In order to ensure that the development does not result in damage or harm to legally protected species. (Paragraph 197 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

Informatives

1 In accordance with the requirements of Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Order) 2015, as amended, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2025, the Council has worked in a positive and proactive way in determining the application and has granted planning permission.

23/37193/FUL
Land North of Marston Grange
Marston