

COTMOOR SOLAR FARM.

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SOLAR FARM
AND BATTERY STATIONS TOGETHER WITH ALL ASSOCIATED WORKS,
EQUIPMENT AND NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE.



PLANNING STATEMENT

**FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A SOLAR FARM AND BATTERY
STATIONS TOGETHER WITH ALL ASSOCIATED
WORKS, EQUIPMENT AND NECESSARY
INFRASTRUCTURE**

PLANNING STATEMENT

COTMOOR SOLAR FARM

ON BEHALF OF JBM SOLAR PROJECTS 6 LTD.

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PLANNING | **DESIGN** | **ENVIRONMENT** | **ECONOMICS**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of JBM Solar Projects 6 Ltd (The Applicant) to support a planning application for a Solar Farm and battery stations together with associated equipment and infrastructure on Land near to Halloughton, Southwell, Nottinghamshire (the Application Site).

Proposed Development

- 1.2 This application seeks full planning permission for a ground-mounted solar PV development including battery storage with the following Description of Development:

“Construction of a solar farm and battery stations together with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure.”

- 1.3 The Proposed Development would have a capacity of 49.9MW. Planning Permission is sought for a temporary period of 40 years from the date of first exportation of electricity from the site.
- 1.4 The onsite Substation will be required on a permanent basis, as the Substation will become part of the local electricity distribution network. Therefore, following the temporary 40 year period, the solar panels, battery stations and associated equipment will be removed however, the Substation and access to it will be retained on a permanent basis.

Application Context

- 1.5 National and International legislation sets targets for reduction of carbon emissions and increasing renewable energy generation.
- 1.6 The **European Union Renewable Energy Sources Directive (2009/28/EC)**¹ was published in April 2009. A key principle of this document is the inclusion of a binding agreement which commits member states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020 compared to 1990 levels. The legally binding obligation for the United Kingdom was set at 15% of final energy consumed to be from renewable sources by 2020.

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009L0028&from=EN>

1.7 This target has been further updated under the **European Union 2030 Energy and Climate Change Framework**² which builds on the 2020 climate and energy package and was adopted by European Leaders in October 2014. The 2030 framework sets three key targets for the year 2030:

- At least 40% cuts in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels;
- At least 32% share for renewable energy; and
- At least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency.

Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019

1.8 On 12 June 2019 the Government laid the draft Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 to amend the Climate Change Act 2008 by introducing a target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is otherwise known as a net zero target. The draft order would amend the 2050 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target in the Climate Change Act from at least 80% to at least 100%, thereby constituting a legally binding commitment to end the UK's contribution to climate change.

1.9 The draft instrument was subject to the affirmative procedure and was debated and approved by the House of Commons on 24 June 2019; and by the House of Lords on 26 June 2019. The Order came into force on 27 June 2019.

1.10 Having regard to the above, the application proposals make an appreciable contribution to meeting the amended Climate Change targets as set out within the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019. It is clear that in order for the UK to meet the ambitious target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050, a presumption in favour of increasing the number and output of low carbon energy sources, such as solar farms, is entirely appropriate and necessary.

Speech by the Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP to the Large Scale Solar Conference (April 2013)

1.11 This speech is referred to in the NPPG and relates to the need for solar PV and placing it at the heart of the UK's energy mix.

² https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/strategies/2030_en

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- 1.12 The speech also refers to the Ministers desire to 'see a lot, lot more' but that as 'we take solar to the next level, we must be thoughtful, sensitive to public opinion, and mindful of the wider environmental and visual impacts.'
- 1.13 The NPPG generally reflects this approach of encouraging and requiring large scale solar schemes to be developed in a sustainable manner. The Minister's speech is not policy as such.

Written Ministerial Statement on Solar Energy: Protecting the local and Global Environment (March 2015)

- 1.14 As above, this Written Ministerial Statement is referred to in the NPPG.
- 1.15 Eric Pickles (Secretary of State) in March 2015 made a statement on Solar Energy and protection of the global and local environments. In respect of the use of agricultural land, Mr Pickles stated that compelling evidence needed to be provided for solar on Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land.
- 1.16 This application has demonstrated that the site is grade 4 (poor quality agricultural land). Such land does not form Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land and therefore accords with the Written Ministerial Statement.

Pre-Application Advice

- 1.17 Pre-Application advice was received from Newark and Sherwood District Council on 29th April 2019. The pre-application advice confirmed that the principle of development could be considered acceptable in this location subject to an assessment of the site specific issues.

Screening Opinion

- 1.18 A Screening Opinion was issued by Newark and Sherwood District Council on 27th August 2019. The Screening Opinion confirmed that the proposed development is considered to fall within the criteria and thresholds of Class 3a 'Industrial installations for the production of electricity' of Schedule 2 of the 2017 Town and Country Planning Environmental Impact Regulations. Newark and Sherwood District Council confirmed that based on the details provided the proposal is unlikely to have complex or significant environmental effects and therefore an Environmental Statement is not required.

Planning Application Documents

1.19 The planning application submission is comprised by the following:

- Application Form and Notices;
- Planning Drawings, including Site Location Plan, Site Layout and equipment elevations;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Planning Statement;
- Statement of Community Involvement;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA);
- Ecological Assessment;
- Flood Risk Assessment;
- Heritage Desk Based Assessment and Geophysical Survey Report;
- Glint and Glare Study;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment;
- Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP);
- Agricultural Land Classification Report; and
- Noise Assessment.

1.20 This statement takes the following form:

- **Section 2** provides a description of the application site and its immediate surrounding context;
- **Section 3** describes the various elements of the Proposed Development;
- **Section 4** summarises planning policy and guidance relevant to the consideration of the planning application for the Proposed Development;
- **Section 5** outlines the key benefits that would be experienced from the Proposed Development being granted planning permission and becoming operational;
- **Section 6** undertakes consideration of the effects of the development against planning policy requirements and considers the planning balance; and
- **Section 7** provides a summary and conclusion of the planning statement.

2. APPLICATION SITE AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The site comprises thirteen agricultural fields to the north of the village of Halloughton. A separate area of woodland, which will be unaffected by the development proposals, but improved for biodiversity lies to the west of the site.
- 2.2 The site comprises land within both the parish of Halloughton and the parish of Southwell.
- 2.3 The southern portion of the site is located to the north of Halloughton within the parish of Halloughton. This section of the site comprises five large linear fields with boundaries at their edge, including copses at the western and part of the southern boundary. Overhead electricity lines and pylons cross this parcel in an east-west direction. The built-up area of Halloughton lies close to the southern boundary of the parcel and the A612 Highcross Hill forms part of the eastern boundary. Agricultural land surrounds the parcel in other directions.
- 2.4 The northern section of the site is located further from Halloughton and largely lies within the parish of Southwell, comprising seven separate fields of various sizes. The parcel includes buildings associated with New Radley Farm, which has its own access track from the north. Bridleway (BW74) runs from the north-eastern edge of Halloughton Wood in a broadly east to west direction through a small portion of the site. An overhead electricity line runs east to west through the southern section of the site and the Westhorpe Dumble crosses the site in the same direction just to the north of this.
- 2.5 A review of the Newark and Sherwood's Adopted Policies Map has been undertaken. This has shown that the site is entirely outside of any defined settlement and is therefore in the open countryside for the purposes of planning. Within the development plan for Newark and Sherwood, there is a Site of Interest in Nature Conservation (Core Policy 12 and DM7) running in a broadly east to west direction through the northern portion of the site. Additional Sites of Interest in Nature Conservation are located in close proximity to the western boundary of the site.
- 2.6 An area of Ancient Woodland 'Halloughton Wood' is located c.150m to the west of this site at its closest point.
- 2.7 A series of existing field boundaries, hedgerows and vegetation are present around and across the proposed application site.

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- 2.8 The built-up area of Halloughton lies close to the southern boundary of the parcel and the eastern site boundary lies adjacent to Highcross Hill (A612) and Stubbin's Lane.
- 2.9 A number of isolated properties are located in close proximity to the application boundary including; New Radley Farm and Stubbins Farm.
- 2.10 With regard to nearby designations, much of Halloughton is defined as a Conservation Area, including four Grade II and one Grade II* Listed Buildings. Further Grade II Listed Buildings are located to the east. Southwell to the north-east of the proposed site contains a large Conservation Area and numerous Listed Buildings.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 This application seeks Planning Permission for the construction of a solar farm and battery stations with a capacity of 49.9MW for a temporary period of 40 years from the date of the first exportation of electricity from the site, with the exception of the DNO substation which will remain on site permanently.
- 3.2 The development as proposed is the result of an iterative design process which is summarised in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

Solar Arrays and Supporting Equipment

- 3.3 The solar farm would consist of solar PV panels placed on metal arrays arranged in rows, allowing for boundary landscaping, perimeter fencing and access. The PV panels will be laid out in rows across the site in east-west orientation and face to the south at 20 degrees from the horizontal to maximise efficiency, with a maximum height of less than 3m. The arrays are spaced to avoid any shadowing effect from one panel to another with topography dictating exact row spacing that can range between approximately 4m and 6.5 metres. The arrangement of the solar PV panels themselves will either be 3 in portrait or 6 in landscape, as shown on the submitted drawings.
- 3.4 Plant and other equipment to support the generation of electricity is located around the site, adjacent to internal tracks to ensure access can be achieved to these for maintenance purposes. The tracks would have a width of 3.5m and be constructed with crushed aggregate. The supporting equipment includes inverter stations positioned around the site.

Battery Stations

- 3.5 The battery stations will be located throughout the site. Each station comprises containerised battery units/inverters, DC-DC converter boxes and ancillary equipment.

Cabling and Grid Connection

- 3.6 Underground cabling will be placed around the site connecting the development to the proposed substation towards the south-eastern of the site.

Perimeter Fencing and CCTV

- 3.7 It is proposed that a 2m high security deer fence will be installed around the edge of the site. Badger friendly/small mammal access points will be prescribed at various locations along the fencing to allow the passage of Badgers across the site.
- 3.8 In addition to fencing, it is proposed that 3m high pole mounted CCTV security cameras will be installed inside and around the site.

Access

- 3.9 The proposed site access is located off Bridle Road Farm in the south-eastern corner of the site boundary. The site access connects to the wider highway network via Highcross Hill Road. The proposed site access will serve the entire site and will be connected to a network of internal roads within the site. Following completion of construction a double width farm gate will be installed at the access point that adjoins the public highway in order to retain the traditional feel in Halloughton village. The solar farm security gate will be setback from the public highway and will be completely out of site.
- 3.10 There is a Public Bridleway reference BW74 which broadly runs through a small portion of the centre of the site in an east to west direction. Bridleway BW74 commences at the north-eastern edge of Halloughton Wood and continues towards Southwell. Additionally, a public footpath runs along the northern site boundary and in close proximity to the western site boundary. It is proposed to retain the existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in the current location.

Landscaping

- 3.11 The layout of the development ensures there will be minimal works to or loss of the existing trees and hedgerows within the site. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) confirms that the layout has been designed to incorporate the existing trees and boundary vegetation into the scheme, as a result no trees, tree groups or hedgerows will require removal in their entirety. The removals required are located at the site access and for the access tracks within the site where there were no existing gaps to be utilised.
- 3.12 Where required, gaps in hedgerows will be repaired with appropriate native hedgerow species supplemented with native tree planting to reflect local landscape character.

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- 3.13 The landscape treatment for the proposed solar farm is intended to mitigate potential visual effects. The Proposed Development would seek to retain and enhance existing landscape elements to further integrate the proposals into the surrounding landscape.
- 3.14 The AIA concludes that the proposed development appears to be feasible from an arboricultural perspective and retained trees can be adequately protected during construction activities to sustain their health and longevity.
- 3.15 Additionally, a biodiversity enhancement area has been included to the west of the solar development site as indicated on the accompanying site layout plan forming an existing woodland.

Construction and Operation

- 3.16 Construction is expected to take place over approximately 6 months (up to 26 weeks) based on the construction of similar developments.
- 3.17 Once installed, the solar farm would require infrequent visits for the purposes of maintenance or cleaning of the site. Such work typically requires 10-20 visits per year. The facility would be unmanned, being remotely operated and monitored.

Decommissioning

- 3.18 At the end of the 40-year operational lifespan of the solar farm, the site would be restored back to full agricultural use with all equipment and below ground connections removed (with the exception of the DNO substation). However, the landscape enhancement measures would remain, providing long-term benefits to the local landscape character of the area. It is envisaged that the decommissioning of the solar farm would take approximately six months.

4. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that all planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2 The Newark and Sherwood Local Plan is made up of the following parts:

- Newark and Sherwood Amended Core Strategy DPD (March 2019);
- Allocations and Development Management DPD (July 2013); and
- Southwell Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2026.

4.3 Following the adoption of the Amended Core Strategy DPD in March 2019, the remaining elements of the Plan Review now need to be progressed. The Allocations and Development Management Issues Paper (2019) is reviewed in this section.

4.4 Other material planning considerations include national legislation, policy and guidance, comprising:

- National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019);
- National Planning Practice Guidance (first published March 2014);
- EN-1: Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (July 2011); and
- EN-3: National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (July 2011).

4.5 This chapter identifies the key relevant planning matters contained within the Development Plan and other material planning considerations pertinent to the determination of the planning application.

Climate Emergency

4.6 Newark and Sherwood District Council declared a Climate Emergency on 16th July 2019. The Council are now developing a district-wide greening programme along with measures to try and reduce the carbon footprint.

4.7 Since the declaration of a climate emergency in Newark and Sherwood, the Council have been working to:

- Audit existing environmental practice within the Council;
- Establish data to determine the Council's carbon footprint – working with The Carbon Trust;
- Consider the Council's contribution to the district carbon footprint more widely according to national data from reputable sources;
- Engage with stakeholders;
- Coordinate a Climate Emergency Strategy;
- Produce an accompanying Carbon Reduction Action Plan to mitigate the Council's carbon emissions.

Development Plan

- 4.8 The Newark and Sherwood Local Plan is made up of the adopted Newark and Sherwood Amended Core Strategy DPD (adopted March 2019) and the Allocations and Development Management DPD (adopted July 2013). In addition, the north-western portion of the site is located within the boundary of the Southwell Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2026 (adopted October 2016).
- 4.9 Following the adoption of the Amended Core Strategy DPD in March 2019, the Council is not reviewing the allocations and development management policies contained within the Allocations and Development Management DPD. Consultation on the Plan Review Allocations & Development Management Issues Paper was undertaken in July 2019. It is anticipated that the publication of the draft DPD will occur in Summer 2020 with submission expected in September 2020.

Adopted Development Plan

Newark and Sherwood District Council Amended Core Strategy DPD (March 2019)

- 4.10 The Newark and Sherwood District Council Amended Core Strategy DPD was adopted in March 2019. The Amended Core Strategy DPD (March 2019) replaces the former Core Strategy document, which was first adopted in 2011, prior to the adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012.
- 4.11 The most relevant policies contained within the Amended Core Strategy DPD are discussed below;

4.12 **Core Policy 10** of the Amended Core Strategy DPD sets out the Councils commitment to tackling the causes and impacts of climate change and commits to delivering a reduction in the Districts carbon footprint. Core Policy 10 states that the Council will work with developers to;

"promote energy generation from renewable and low-carbon sources, including community-led schemes, through supporting new development where it is able to demonstrate that its adverse impacts have been satisfactorily addressed."

4.13 Core Policy 10 goes on to explain that Policy DM4 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation', contained within the Newark & Sherwood Allocations & Development Management DPD (July 2013), provides the framework against which the appropriateness of proposals will be assessed.

4.14 **Core Policy 12** refers to 'Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure' and confirms that:-

"the District Council will seek to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological diversity of the District... The District Council will therefore: Expect proposals to take into account the need for the continued protection of the District's ecological, biological and geological assets...seek to secure development that maximises the opportunities to conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity."

4.15 The application site is located adjacent to a Site of Interest in Nature Conservation. This planning application is accompanied by a detailed ecological assessment, the findings of which are summarised in Section 6 of this Planning Statement.

4.16 **Core Policy 13** relates to 'Landscape Character' and states:-

"The District Council will work with partners and developers to secure: New development which positively addresses the implications of relevant landscape Policy Zone(s) ensuring that landscapes, including valued landscapes, have been protected and enhanced."

4.17 A detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) supports this application and confirms that although the character of the site would change as a result of the proposal, the overall landscape character of the wider area would remain predominantly unchanged by the Proposed Development. The LVIA confirms that the

proposed development would retain and enhance key landscape characteristics identified in the East Midlands and, Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment. The proposal will not have any permanent negative effects upon features within the local landscape such as topography, boundary hedgerows/trees and the definition of existing field patterns.

4.18 **Core Policy 14** relates to the 'Historic Environment' and confirms:-

"The District Council will work with partners and developers in order to secure: the continued conservation and enhancement of the character, appearance and setting of the District's heritage assets and historic environment...the preservation and enhancement of the special character of Conservation Areas including that character identified through Conservation Area Character Appraisals."

4.19 This application is accompanied by a Heritage Assessment which concludes that the proposals would not result in any harm to any other heritage assets as a result of changes to setting. The Assessment confirms that the proposed development would result in a very small degree of harm to the heritage significance of the Halloughton Conservation Area, though there would be no harm to the individual significances of its inherent Listed Buildings and non-Listed historic structures. The level of such harm would fall at the lowest end of the scale of 'less than substantial'.

4.20 **SoAP 1** refers to the 'Role and Setting of Southwell' and confirms that the District Council will seek to protect and enhance the historic character of Southwell Conservation Area. SoAP 1 also confirms that development should identify, protect and enhance the setting of Southwell.

Newark & Sherwood Allocations & Development Management DPD (July 2013)

4.21 The primary policy of relevance within the Allocations and Development Management DPD is **Policy DM4** 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation'. The policy and supporting text support the development of renewable energy schemes. Policy DM4 states:

"In order to achieve the commitment to carbon reduction set out in Core Policy 10, planning permission will be granted for renewable and low carbon energy generation development, as both standalone projects and part of other development, its associated infrastructure and the retrofitting of existing development, where its benefits are

not outweighed by detrimental impact from the operation and maintenance of the development and through the installation process upon:

1.The landscape character or urban form of the district or the purposes of including land within the Green Belt arising from the individual or cumulative impact of proposals;

2.Southwell Views as defined in Policy So/PV or the setting of the Thurgarton Hundred Workhouse, as defined in Policy So/Wh;

3. Heritage Assets and or their settings;

4. Amenity, including noise pollution, shadow flicker and electromagnetic interference;

5. Highway safety;

6. The ecology of the local or wider area; or

7. Aviation interests of local or national importance.”

4.22 The specific considerations “landscape character”, “ecology” and others are considered in detail within the accompanying technical assessments which are summarised in Chapter 6 of this Planning Statement.

4.23 In summary, the design of the proposals are of functional appearance, where practical steps have been taken to soften the design, such as in the use of shorter CCTV poles and deer fencing forming the perimeter fencing rather than more industrial palisade fencing. The siting in the landscape has been considered at length within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The accompanying LVIA concludes that the proposed development has been designed in such a way as to help comply with the relevant policies relating to landscape character, and the need to protect and enhance local landscape features and improve biodiversity.

4.24 In addition to the above, the proposal includes the retention and reinforcement of existing hedgerows that bound the site, which would be maintained to an appropriate height. This aspect of the proposal would greatly improve visual screening of the site and would result in subsequent ecological benefits. Further details are contained within the submitted planting proposals accompanying the application.

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- 4.25 In terms of material harm on residential amenity these impacts are considered very limited given the predominantly isolated nature of the Application Site and benign nature of the proposals. Careful consideration has been given to the nearest residential properties, as set out in section 2. It is submitted that the proposals, on account of low overall height and benign nature, would not give rise to loss of amenity as a result of overshadowing or overbearing structures, noise pollution or effluence.
- 4.26 The impacts on the environment are likewise very limited and a series of mitigation and improvement measures are set out which would be to the benefit of localised ecology on the site. These details, and assessment of affects are set out in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, as well as the supporting Ecological Assessment report.
- 4.27 In terms of impact on "Heritage assets and/or their settings", much of Halloughton is defined as a Conservation Area, including four Grade II Listed Buildings and one Grade II* Listed Building. Further Grade II Listed Buildings are located to the east of the site. Southwell to the north-east of the parcels contains a large Conservation Area and numerous Listed Buildings. A Heritage Assessment has been prepared which concludes that the proposals would not result in any harm to any other heritage assets as a result of changes to setting.
- 4.28 In respect of noise output, the proposed transformers, inverters, batteries and DNO Substation would give rise to a slight hum during operation, however, this will be contained to within the site boundary with the panels themselves silently converting solar irradiation to electricity. This is considered in detail as part of the Noise Assessment. The nature of the proposed development does not give rise to air quality issues or odours.
- 4.29 Having regard to "Aviation interests of local or national importance", as set out in the criteria contained within Policy DM4, the proposals would not be of a height which give rise to concern.
- 4.30 **Policy DM5** refers to 'Design' and sets out criteria by which new development should be assessed against. Policy DM5 confirms that **"In accordance with Core Policy 12, natural features of importance within or adjacent to development sites should, wherever possible, be protected and enhanced...where it is apparent that a site may provide a habitat for protected species, development proposals should be supported by an up-to date ecological**

assessment, including a habitat survey and a survey for species listed in the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plan...Significantly harmful ecological impacts should be avoided through the design, layout and detailing of the development with mitigation, and as a last resort, compensation (including off-site measures), provided where significant impacts cannot be avoided."

- 4.31 **Policy DM7** refers to 'Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure' and sets out that development **"should protect, promote and enhance green infrastructure to deliver multi-functional benefits and contribute to the ecological network both as part of on site development proposals and through off site provision."** The application is accompanied by a detailed Ecological Assessment which has considered the best practice measures and the means in which the land within and surrounding the proposed Solar Farm can be improved to benefit habitats and wildlife.
- 4.32 **Policy DM8** relates to 'Development in the Open Countryside' and seeks to prevent inappropriate development in the open countryside, in order to preserve the countryside as a natural resource whilst contributing to the prosperity of the District. Policy DM8 is silent on the appropriateness of renewable energy in the open countryside. The District Council's commitment to tackling climate change is instead set out in Core Policy 10 (addressed above). Notwithstanding the above, it is understood that a number of consents have been granted by Newark and Sherwood District Council for renewable energy schemes in the open countryside.
- 4.33 **Policy DM9** refers to 'Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment' and sets out that: **"all development proposals concerning heritage assets will be expected to secure their continued protection or enhancement, contribute to the wider vitality, viability and regeneration of the areas in which they are located and reinforce a strong sense of place"**. The proposals are not considered to be in conflict with this policy expectation.
- 4.34 **Policy DM12** refers to a 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' and states:- **"A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework."**

Neighbourhood Planning

4.35 The north-western part of the application site is located within the boundary of Southwell Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Southwell Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2026 was adopted in October 2016.

4.36 The following objectives contained within the Southwell Neighbourhood Plan are considered to be relevant to the proposed development:

- Objective 1: Sustainable Development – **"to ensure that proposals for new development are presented within the wider social, economic and environmental context and that informed decisions about future growth can be made."**
- Objective 2: Environment and Climate Change – **"to effectively protect and manage the natural environment in and around Southwell to achieve sustainable development and mitigate the effects of climate change."**

4.37 The Southwell Neighbourhood Plan seeks to increase the amount of energy generated locally from renewable and low carbon sources. **Policy E6** of the adopted Southwell Neighbourhood Plan refers to climate change and carbon emissions. Policy E6 states:-

"Proposals for low carbon energy generation schemes will be supported provided they comply with relevant national, NSDC and Neighbourhood Plan policies, with specific reference to the following criteria:

- **Does not impact negatively on the local landscape character and the setting of the settlement in accordance with other development plan policies.**
- **Does not impact negatively on the setting and character of any heritage asset.**
- **Fully assesses the impact of any tall structures within the landscape or townscape.**
- **Takes account of the Southwell Protected Views policy in the A&DM DPD (Ref: So/VP).**

• **Demonstrates compliance with the NSDC Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document."**

4.38 Other policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan which are relevant to the determination of this planning application include:

- Policy SD1: Delivering Sustainable Development;
- Policy E1: Flood Risk Assessments and Mitigation;
- Policy E2: Flood Resilient Design;
- Policy E3: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity;
- Policy E4: Public Rights of Way and Wildlife Corridors;
- Policy DH1: Sense of Place;
- Policy DH3: Historic Environment;
- Policy TA3: Highways Impact.

Emerging Development Plan

Plan Review – Allocations and Development Management Issues Paper 2019

4.39 Following the Adoption of the Amended Core Strategy DPD in March 2019, the remaining elements of the Plan Review now need to be progressed. The Allocations and Development Management Issues Paper was published for consultation between July and August 2019.

4.40 Within the Allocations and Development Management Issues Paper (2019) it is confirmed that DM4 'Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Energy Generation' remains compliant with the revised NPPF (2019), however, account should be taken of new national policy on wind energy.

4.41 It is anticipated that the Amended Allocations and Development Management DPD will be adopted in 2021.

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019)

- 4.42 The updated NPPF was published in February 2019 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to achieve sustainable development.
- 4.43 Paragraph 148 of the NPPF states that the planning system should support transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate and should support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 4.44 Paragraph 154 confirms that applicants are not required to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and that local planning authorities (LPAs) should recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. LPAs are directed to approve applications if impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.
- 4.45 The NPPF considers effects on a range of matters, which outline the approaches to be adopted by LPAs in considering applications.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (first published March 2014)

- 4.46 The Government's web-based NPPG went live on 6th March 2014 and contains guidance on the planning system and has been subject to updating periodically. The web-based guidance should be read alongside the NPPF and is a material consideration in the consideration of planning applications.
- 4.47 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy forms one of the chapters in the NPPG. Paragraph 013 (ID: 5-013-20150327) is entitled "What are the particular planning considerations that relate to large scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic farms?" and sets out the following particular factors for consideration:
- **encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value;**
 - **where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.**

- **that solar farms are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use;**
- **the proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare (see guidance on landscape assessment) and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;**
- **the extent to which there may be additional impacts if solar arrays follow the daily movement of the sun;**
- **the need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing;**
- **great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large-scale solar farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large-scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset;**
- **the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges;**
- **the energy generating potential, which can vary for a number of reasons including, latitude and aspect.**

4.48 This planning application is located on greenfield land and is supported by an Agricultural Land Classification report which demonstrates that the site forms Grade 4 'Poor Quality' Agricultural Land. The proposed solar arrays and associated equipment (excluding the substation) will be temporary structures which will be on the site for 40 years and once the equipment is removed the site will be restored. The site layout demonstrates the security measures including CCTV and fencing which have been incorporated into the design. In addition, this planning application is supported by a series of technical assessments which consider the above factors in detail. A summary of the technical assessments prepared to support this planning application has been provided within Chapter 6 of this Planning Statement.

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (July 2011)

4.49 EN-1 was published in July 2011 to set out national policy for energy infrastructure in the UK. Its primary purpose is to be applied to decisions for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, but it is confirmed this document can be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

4.50 Paragraph 3.4.1 sets out the UK commitments to sourcing 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020. To hit this target, and to largely decarbonise the power sector by 2030, EN-1 states that:

“It is necessary to bring forward new renewable electricity generating projects as soon as possible. The need for new renewable energy electricity generation projects is therefore urgent.”

4.51 The National Policy Statement sets out how the energy sector can help deliver the Government’s climate change objectives by clearly setting out the need for new low carbon energy infrastructure to contribute to climate change mitigation.

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (July 2011)

4.52 EN-3 was also published in July 2011 and sets out the national policy for renewable energy projects. EN-3 should be read in conjunction with EN-1.

4.53 Similar to EN-1, EN-3 sets out the importance of renewable energy in achieving the Government’s ambitious targets for renewable energy generation, highlighting that a **“significant increase in generation from large-scale renewable energy infrastructure is necessary to meet the 15% renewable energy target”**.

5. BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

5.1 This Chapter sets out the benefits which would result from the Proposed Development, considering both the wider benefits and specific benefits of the scheme, including to the local community.

Wider Benefits

5.2 The development will have an export capacity of 49.9MW. A solar farm of this size, with associated battery stations, will therefore generate and store a significant amount of electricity from renewable sources and mean a reduction of approximately 20,690t³ of CO₂ emissions annually. This represents a significant contribution to the legally binding national and international requirement and associated targets to increase renewable energy generation and reduce CO₂ emissions, as outlined at Chapter 1 of this Statement. For context, the solar farm can meet the energy needs of approximately 12,209⁴ homes in the District. The generation of this level of renewable energy therefore represents a substantial benefit if Planning Permission were to be granted.

5.3 This scheme also represents a significant financial investment, and would benefit the local economy due to the construction workers on-site during peak times of the construction period, which is expected to be around 6 months.

5.4 The Proposed Development will also provide temporary jobs, both direct jobs on-site and indirect/induced roles in the wider economy, during the 6-month construction period.

5.5 Where possible, the Proposed Development retains and enhances existing landscape features, particularly the hedgerow field boundaries and promotes the use of traditional field hedges and diversity of native hedgerow species. This ecological and landscape enhancement is a benefit to be afforded further weight in favour of granting planning permission.

³ Annual CO₂ offset based on an estimated saving of 430g of CO₂ per kWh generated.

⁴ Equivalent number of homes powered estimate based on an average electricity consumption per household of 3,941 kWh based on Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy 2018 data (the most recent available) for Newark and Sherwood
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/regional-and-local-authority-electricity-consumption-statistics>, accessed 16.04.20.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 This chapter considers the merits of the proposal in the context of the Social, Economic and Environmental benefits of the development.

Social, Economic and Local Community Benefits

6.2 The previous Chapter sets out the benefits of the scheme. In summary, these are:

- Increased renewable energy generation, equivalent to provide electricity to approximately 12,209 homes, and assistance towards reducing CO₂ emissions saving 20,690t of CO₂ per annum;
- Economic benefit associated with investment and jobs on-site during peak times of the construction period;
- Appropriate Biodiversity and landscape enhancements via increased boundary planting and species-rich grassland.

6.3 The local economic investment and community benefits of the proposed scheme gains support from Policy DM12 (presumption in favour of sustainable development) due to the improved economic and social conditions in the area as outlined above.

6.4 The above outcomes associated with the scheme progressing, and associated Local Plan support, are considered to cumulatively represent very substantial benefits. There are material considerations which weigh greatly in favour of planning permission being granted.

6.5 Core Policy 10 confirms that the Council is committed to tackling the causes and effects of climate change. Additionally, Policy DM4 supports renewable and low carbon energy generation where its benefits are not outweighed by detrimental impact from the operation and maintenance of the development.

6.6 Planning permission should therefore be granted unless adverse effects of the development outweigh these beneficial impacts. Consideration of the environmental impacts is provided below in order to make this judgement.

Environmental Impacts

Landscape and Visual Effects

6.7 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared to accompany this planning application.

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- 6.8 The LVIA confirms that the proposals would retain and enhance key landscape characteristics identified in the East Midlands and Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment. The proposed solar farm and development would not have any permanent negative effects upon the following features: topography, boundary hedgerows/trees and the definition of the existing field patterns.
- 6.9 Although the character of the site would change, the overall landscape character of the wider area would remain predominantly unchanged as a result of the proposed development.
- 6.10 The LVIA confirms that views from within the grounds of Southwell Minster and from within the Southwell Conservation Area are restricted by intervening built form, vegetation and landform. While other key views, including from Halloughton are assessed.
- 6.11 Overall, the LVIA concludes that the proposed development has been designed to help comply with the relevant policies relating to landscape character, and the need to protect and enhance local landscape features and improve biodiversity.

Ecology

- 6.12 A detailed Ecological Assessment and Phase 1 Habitat Survey has been undertaken to accompany this planning application. Field Survey work has been undertaken to consider the implications of the proposed development on protected species and Designated sites for Nature Conservation together with local (non-designated) Habitats & Flora identified. A Biodiversity Management Plan is submitted which sets out how the site would be managed for the duration of the operational life of the Solar Farm and battery stations, alongside the measures to be implemented during construction, to ensure the enhancement of ecology and biodiversity as part of the scheme of landscaping and ecological improvement is secured.
- 6.13 Specific consideration is given to species of: Bids, Bats, Badger, Otter, Water Vole, Hazel Dormouse, Amphibians, Reptiles alongside other species and invasive species.
- 6.14 Great crested newts have been found to be present in two ponds (P12 and P13) adjacent and near to the site boundary. While Badgers are considered in the separately submitted confidential appendix.

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- 6.15 While fully detailed within the accompanying technical reports it is demonstrated that the proposals are acceptable in ecological terms and will provide a net biodiversity gain having utilised the biodiversity calculator matrix.

Heritage

- 6.16 A Heritage Assessment has been prepared to support this planning application. The Heritage Assessment provides information regarding the significance of the historic environment and archaeological resource.
- 6.17 The Assessment confirms that the site itself appears to have remained in agricultural use throughout its history. The results of a site-wide geophysical survey corroborate this, having identified only agricultural traces of little, if any, archaeological interest, and little, if any, heritage significance.
- 6.18 The proposed development would have the potential to result in a very small degree of harm to the heritage significance of Halloughton Conservation Area, however, there would be no harm to the individual significances of its Listed Buildings and non-Listed historic structures.
- 6.19 The Assessment concludes that the proposals would not result in any harm to any other heritage assets as a result of changes to setting.

Transport and Public Rights of Way

- 6.20 A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been prepared to accompany this planning application. The CTMP sets out how any potential transport impacts of construction and operation will be managed and mitigated.
- 6.21 The proposed access is located on Bridle Road Farm Road in the south-eastern corner of the site boundary. The CTMP confirms that this access point is considered acceptable for the HGVs associated with this development.
- 6.22 It is estimated that the construction of the solar farm could generate up to 12 two-way vehicle movements per day. However, it is typical with schemes of this nature that as the construction progresses the number of deliveries decreases.
- 6.23 Highcross Hill Road/Bridle Farm Road Junction is considered satisfactory for the low hourly numbers of vehicles associated with the construction phase.

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- 6.24 Overall, the CTMP concludes that suitable routing and measures can be provided in conjunction with traffic associated with construction activities.
- 6.25 With respect of PRowS these will remain in their current positions where they cross the site. Additional and new hedging planting along the sides of the PRow are proposed as part of the development to the PRow which runs through the site in order to preserve the rural feel to the PRow and screen views of the solar panels, associated equipment and fencing. The PRow will remain open during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases.

Flooding and Drainage

- 6.26 This planning application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which includes a drainage strategy.
- 6.27 The FRA confirms that the site falls within Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. The site is not considered to be at risk from groundwater, sewers, reservoirs and other artificial sources.
- 6.28 The assessment confirms that it is proposed to manage the impermeable area associated with the substation with bunded storage and an attenuation basin.
- 6.29 Overall the FRA confirms that the proposals will be safe from all forms of flooding and provide a betterment to downstream flood risk and pollution, therefore meeting the aims of the NPPF with regards to flood risk and drainage.
- 6.30 A number of additional natural drainage measures have also been agreed in collaboration with the Southwell Flood Forum members in order to provide even further betterment to downstream flood risk, with a particular focus on the rate of discharge into the Westhorpe Dumble watercourse.

Agricultural land

- 6.31 An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Report has been prepared to accompany this planning application. The ALC confirms that the site forms Grade 4 (Poor Quality) Agricultural Land. Such land does not form Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land.

Glint and Glare

- 6.32 A Glint and Glare Study has been undertaken to accompany this planning application.

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- 6.33 The study has assessed the possible impact upon surrounding road users, dwellings and aviation activity associated at RAF Syerston.
- 6.34 The study confirms that overall no significant impact upon any of the assessed receptors is expected and therefore mitigation is not expected to be a requirement.

Arboriculture

- 6.35 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been prepared to accompany this planning application. A total of 60 trees, 48 groups of trees and 33 hedgerows were surveyed. None of the trees surveyed are protected by Tree Preservation Order.
- 6.36 The site layout has been designed to incorporate the existing trees and boundary vegetation into the scheme, therefore, no trees, tree groups or hedgerows will require removal in their entirety. Sectional removals will be required to accommodate the new access track, as well as the removal of minor sections to allow the new perimeter fencing to be installed.
- 6.37 As no trees of vegetation will have to be moved in their entirety, the Arboricultural Impact Assessment confirms that the significance of the tree loss is regarded as low when considering the majority of the arboricultural resource being retained.
- 6.38 The assessment concludes that the proposed development appears to be feasible from an arboricultural perspective, the assessments confirm that retained trees can be adequately protected during construction activities to sustain their health and longevity.

Noise Assessment

- 6.39 A Noise Assessment has been undertaken. The assessment concluded that the operation of the solar farm, battery stations and associated equipment would generate low noise levels during operation. The solar PV panels themselves do not generate noise, noise is however attributable to the associated plant, equipment and substation. Noise levels attributable to the night-time operation of the battery stations would remain very low, and substantially below a level which would result in adverse noise impacts, when assessed against the WHO night-noise guidelines. Noise levels attributable to the full operation of the solar farm during the daytime period would also remain very low and substantially below a level which would result in adverse noise effects. Mitigation measures are proposed for the closest inverters to Halloughton to further limit noise effects.

6.40 Assessing the noise levels against relevant standards and guidance concluded that the operation of the plant would result in noise levels below a level which would represent the lowest observed adverse effects level, thus ensuring that the operation of the development does not result in unacceptable levels of noise and is therefore compliant with the requirements of the NPPF.

National Policies

6.41 There is significant support for the principle of renewable energy developments in the NPPF. Paragraph 148 is clear that the planning system should support transition to a low carbon future and specifically renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. Granting planning permission for the proposed solar farm would comply with these requirements and demonstrate support for such schemes.

6.42 The NPPF also directs that planning applications for renewable development should be approved if impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. As outlined above, the assessments of environmental effects have been shown to be limited and would also accord with the provisions of national policy and the NPPG where these specifically refer to environmental effects. The proposal is therefore in compliance with national policy.

Planning Balance

- 6.43 To summarise, the above planning assessment has demonstrated the following:
- This planning application is in broad compliance with the Development Plan and national planning policy and guidance. Policy compliance strongly supports planning permission being granted;
 - The development and operation of the solar farm would give rise to a wide range of environmental and economic benefits which amount to a very substantial weight in favour of planning permission being granted;
 - The impacts associated with the development at this location are potentially limited, and the proposal is in compliance with relevant issue specific planning policies in the Development Plan, so do not weigh against the development.
- 6.44 In consideration of compliance with the Development Plan and other planning policy requirements, the significant benefits associated with the Proposed Development and limited adverse effects, it is clear that this development is, on balance, acceptable in planning terms.

6.45 The Proposed Development has been shown to achieve the main objectives of sustainable development (environmental, social and economic) without causing undue detriment to any of these matters. The presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF therefore applies here. As the NPPF at paragraph 14 directs, in such circumstances and where the application complies with the Development Plan, the application should be approved without delay.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of JBM Solar Projects 6 Ltd (The Applicant) to support a full planning application for a Solar Farm and battery stations together with associated equipment and infrastructure on Land near to Halloughton, Southwell, Nottinghamshire (the Application Site).
- 7.2 The Proposed Development would involve the construction of a ground mounted solar farm along with associated battery stations, security fencing and buildings within the application site. The development will have capacity of 49.9MW.
- 7.3 The development supports the UK Government's intention move to a low carbon economy, which represents a substantial benefit.
- 7.4 The Development Plan for the area relevant to this application comprises the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted March 2011), the Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Document (adopted July 2013) and Southwell Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2026 (adopted October 2016).
- 7.5 The impacts of the proposal have been shown to be acceptable and, where necessary mitigation measures have been set out to reduce potential impacts of the Proposed Development.
- 7.6 The significant benefits associated with this proposal provide a valuable contribution towards meeting the challenging obligations of the Government regarding renewable energy generation, and also in the form of economic investment and ecological and landscape enhancements, are factors which weigh heavily in favour of this development.
- 7.7 This statement therefore demonstrates that, upon considering the following matters, this proposal, on balance falls well within the scope of acceptability:
- Broad compliance with the Development Plan and National Planning Policy guidance;
 - The significant benefits associated with the scheme; and
 - The relatively benign impacts associated with the development.
- 7.8 Accordingly, this proposal represents sustainable development and, as such, this planning application should be approved without delay.

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DESIGN



ENVIRONMENT



PLANNING



ECONOMICS



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