

James Kirkham

From: David Pickford <david.pickford@pegasusgroup.co.uk>
Sent: 25 August 2022 18:22
To: James Kirkham
Cc: Hannah Race
Subject: RE: Solar Farm - Agricultural land classification and Bicester capacity.

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Hello James

I contact you further to the below.

Regarding the query you have raised in terms of grid capacity, I can confirm that there is no contradiction between the Network Availability Assessment produced by Narec Distributed Energy (dated January 2022) and the 'Padbury Brook Solar Farm' proposals that are currently coming forward through the planning process.

Assuming that the 'Padbury Brook Solar Farm' proposals have already obtained grid connection approval before proceeding through the planning process, then it will already be in the 'pipeline' and form part of the basis of the grid constraints outlined in the submitted Network Availability Assessment. If the 'Padbury Brook Solar Farm' proposals haven't secured grid connection already (and therefore don't form part of the basis of the grid constraints outlined in the submitted Network Availability Assessment) then such a proposal will not be deliverable given the current grid constraints identified in the submitted Network Availability Assessment. Obviously some projects progress to the pre-application and planning application stages sooner than others (for a variety of background reasons), hence why 'Padbury Brook Solar Farm' is coming forward later than the proposal being proposed under planning application ref. 22/01682/F.

A key point to note for the 'Padbury Brook Solar Farm' proposal is that it would appear to connect to a 132kv connection and therefore has a different connection route to the proposal being proposed under planning application ref. 22/01682/F. As noted in the submitted Network Availability Assessment, 132kv connections are not viable for schemes of the size of the proposal under planning application ref. 22/01682/F, which as per the submitted Network Availability Assessment is utilising the maximum 20MVA that was available via the Headington substation connecting to the viable connection route (for this smaller scheme) of a 33kv powerline. The much larger size of the 'Padbury Brook Solar Farm' proposal (44MW plus battery storage) allows a viable connection via a 132kv connection to the Bicester substation. Narec have confirmed that such connections are usually only viable for 50MW or more solar farms so they assume that the battery storage of the 'Padbury Brook Solar Farm' proposal is allowing that scheme to be viable. Ultimately the 'Padbury Brook Solar Farm' site is not a legitimate, suitable alternative site to at Manor Farm, Noke for the proposal being proposed under planning application ref. 22/01682/F.

As such I can confirm that the conclusions of the Network Availability Assessment remain entirely valid and indeed Narec have very recently confirmed that the situation is only getting worse in the short term in Cherwell District, as such, having regard to the submitted Connection Power Line Constraints Map it is clear that there are no suitable and viable sites outside of the Oxford Green Belt that could accommodate this proposal and this therefore contributes to the very special circumstances of the proposal with regard to the local and national policy related to the Green Belt, along with the other considerations that form the overall very special circumstances set out in the submitted Planning, Design & Access Statement. As a reminder this includes the very clear need for this proposal in terms of the generation of renewable energy, assisting in reducing carbon emissions, combating climate change and ensuring local energy security which would assist with delivering the Council's commitments under the declared Climate Emergency and Climate Action Framework 2020, and responding to the ongoing countrywide energy price increases and threats to the supply of imported oil and gas.

Can you confirm if this helps alleviate your initial queries/ concerns regarding the Network Availability Assessment and grid capacity and connection constraints element of the very special circumstances case? We can always get Narec to provide something further on this if you are clear in terms of the specific further information needed?

Regarding agricultural land classification, I note that you have consulted with Natural England further on this matter and they have confirmed that the site is indeed Class 3b (and therefore non-BMV in line with the NPPF definition) and corresponding they have confirmed that they have no concerns. For clarity, can you confirm that you no longer have any concerns on this issue please?

For clarity on other matters, I provide an update as follows:

- **LLFA comments** – the Applicant’s drainage consultant (Nijhuis) has been liaising with the LLFA on their comments and they have agreed upon a strategy in terms of responding to the comments received. Nijhuis are now producing this response / update to the FRA. This should be complete to submit for re-consultation next month.
- **OCC Highways comments** – further survey work is needed to robustly respond to the comments received and this work will be undertaken in September (after the school holidays), as such results of the survey work and a response / updated Transport Statement should be complete to submit for re-consultation at the end of September/early October.
- **Comments from the BBO Wildlife Trust & CDC Ecology** – the Applicant’s ecology consultant (BSG) will be collating a response to these comments having regard to the other (positive) ecology related consultee comments received from Natural England, NatureSpace and the RSPB.
- **OCC Archaeology & Historic England comments** - We expected these comments before submitting the application given the situation with archaeological works and the pre-application comments from the County Archaeologist. Additional on-site archaeological works haven’t been able to proceed until now (mid-late August, related to harvesting), so to avoid any further delays to the application, the decision was taken to submit the application before the trial trenching work was undertaken on-site. The comments are being addressed through the current archaeological trenching which has now started at the site. This is not scheduled to be completed until 16/09/2022 with a current estimation that reporting will be complete by the end of October for re-consultation.
- **Public comments including Parish Council/Meeting & Councillor comments** – for clarity we aim to provide an overall comprehensive summary response letter to the various matters raised by local people, groups and Parish Councils/Meetings & Councillors. Understandably though we would like to do this once we are clearer on the position with relevant consultees, including the outstanding comments we are awaiting on that Hannah has noted below, plus responses back from the above consultees once we have provided the further information requested in terms of drainage, visibility splays, ecology impacts and archaeological trenching works.

We are confident that the detailed / technical matters related to drainage, transport, ecology and archaeology can all be resolved.

I look forward to hearing from you further on this, including an update on outstanding consultee comments.

Ahead of the meeting next week it would be useful if you and I could have a quick chat over the phone, just to help highlight outstanding matters and any issues, to inform the content and order of the agenda for the meeting. Would you be agreeable to this? And if so would you be free either tomorrow or Wednesday (31st) for a quick chat?

Kind regards

David Pickford
Associate Planner

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From: Hannah Race <Hannah.Race@pegasusgroup.co.uk>
Sent: 24 August 2022 15:57
To: James Kirkham <James.Kirkham@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>
Cc: David Pickford <david.pickford@pegasusgroup.co.uk>
Subject: RE: Solar Farm - Agricultural land classification and Bicester capacity.

Hi James

Thank you for your email and for accepting the meeting request, we are looking forward to speaking with you and I will send a brief agenda before the meeting.

We are awaiting consultation responses from CDC Trees, CDC Landscape and Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks. Please could you confirm when these comments will be available.

Kind regards

Hannah Race
Planner

E Hannah.Race@pegasusgroup.co.uk
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From: James Kirkham <James.Kirkham@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>
Sent: 24 August 2022 12:57
To: Hannah Race <Hannah.Race@pegasusgroup.co.uk>
Cc: David Pickford <david.pickford@pegasusgroup.co.uk>
Subject: RE: Solar Farm - Agricultural land classification and Bicester capacity.

Hi Hannah

I have just returned from leave. I have accepted the meeting invite now. I will speak to you need Friday.

PLEASE NOTE: I work part time. My working days are Wednesday to Friday

Kind regards

James Kirkham BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI -
Principal Planning Officer – General Developments Planning Team
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From: Hannah Race <Hannah.Race@pegasusgroup.co.uk>
Sent: 09 August 2022 10:53
To: James Kirkham <James.Kirkham@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>
Cc: David Pickford <david.pickford@pegasusgroup.co.uk>
Subject: RE: Solar Farm - Agricultural land classification and Bicester capacity.

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Hello James

I hope you are well.

Please can you confirm whether you are available for a Teams meeting at 10am on the 2nd of September. I will then send out a meeting diary invite.

Kind regards

Hannah Race
Planner

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From: James Kirkham <James.Kirkham@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>
Sent: 29 July 2022 18:53
To: Hannah Race <Hannah.Race@pegasusgroup.co.uk>

Cc: David Pickford <david.pickford@pegasusgroup.co.uk>

Subject: RE: Solar Farm - Agricultural land classification and Bicester capacity.

Hi

I don't know if I will be able to add more at a meeting than I discussed the other day. I will continue to chase up comments.

If you wish to meet the 2nd September would be best for me via MS teams.

PLEASE NOTE: I work part time. My working days are Wednesday to Friday

Kind regards

James Kirkham BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI -
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From: Hannah Race <Hannah.Race@pegasusgroup.co.uk>

Sent: 28 July 2022 12:02

To: James Kirkham <James.Kirkham@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>

Cc: David Pickford <david.pickford@pegasusgroup.co.uk>

Subject: RE: Solar Farm - Agricultural land classification and Bicester capacity.

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Hi James

Thank you for your time just now, and for setting out the below email.

We are in the process of working with the applicant and other consultants to address the consultee comments and are awaiting a response from ecology and landscape as discussed. We will collate a response letter to the consultee comments in due course.

As discussed, you are happy to have a meeting and we propose the week commencing August 29th, after your annual leave and hopefully enough time to allow for the outstanding comments to be received and addressed. Please let me know your availability and I will get a diary invite sent across.

Many thanks,

Hannah

Hannah Race
Planner

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From: James Kirkham <James.Kirkham@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>
Sent: 28 July 2022 11:40
To: Hannah Race <Hannah.Race@pegasusgroup.co.uk>
Subject: Solar Farm - Agricultural land classification and Bicester capacity.

Hi Hannan

As discussed. On ALC the Minister in the below links appears to claim 3b is BMV

https://www.solarpowerportal.co.uk/news/eustice_says_local_authorities_disregarding_guidance_around_solar_development

See Q 8 onwards of these Environmental Audit Committee
<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/10501/html/>

As discussed I have also asked Natural England to consider the Soil Report you have submitted given the queries that are raised in the public reps about the subjective nature of the distinction between 3a and 3b.

Also in regard to network availability for solar farms in the areas You appear to suggest in your submission that there is insufficient capacity in Bicester to accommodate larger solar farms however there seems to be proposals emerging for a new 62.5gwh solar farm near Bicester which would appear to be at odds with this –

<https://padburybrooksolarfarm.co.uk/>

I hope this helps.

PLEASE NOTE: I work part time. My working days are Wednesday to Friday

Kind regards

James Kirkham BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI -
Principal Planning Officer – General Developments Planning Team

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