

North Muskham Parish Council  
c/o The Clerk to the Council  
1 Village Way  
Farndon  
Newark  
Notts NG24 4SX  
Email: northmuskhampc@hotmail.co.uk

**To the Planning Inspectorate**

**Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations)– Regulations 10 and 11**

**Application by Elements Green Trent Ltd (the Applicant) for an Order granting Development Consent for the Great North Road Solar Park (the Proposed Development)**

**Scoping Opinion: North Muskham Parish Council**

North Muskham Parish Council has considered the scoping report and wishes to make the following observations:

**1. Cumulative assessments**

In addition to this proposal, we are aware of other singular planning applications for Battery Energy Storage systems and PV solar farms in the Newark and Sherwood District Council area and in identifiable and potential impactful proximity to this proposal that are currently undergoing various stages of the planning process. Whilst in a singular state, impact on a receptor may be moderate but, cumulatively, may have a severe effect. This will include landscape and visual effects but also potentially in physical and psychological health terms of residents and visitors to the area.

**The Council wishes for these to be scoped in, ie: all approved and still to be determined applications for PV BESS and PV farms within 10km of the order limits.**

**2. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**

No height given for CCTV and Lighting poles, but we presume that these will be at a minimum height of 4mtrs and, as such, are likely to have a substantial impact on residential visual amenity and as such should be further determined and highlighted.

**Further, we suggest that, in line with growing standard practice in the UK, that the residential visual amenity assessment should scope in all impacted premises within 1 km of the solar arrays and associated structures and all residential properties within 500m of the outer edge of the cable corridors.**

As a minimum, with regard to residential visual amenity impacts, we note that the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note suggests that, for lower profile structures, Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) may be required for properties in "very close proximity", which could be 50-250m from the development, rather than the 100m suggested.

The proposal has a peak of 800MW. Given that Staythorpe's gas-powered output is 1750MW. The proposal will add another 50% to its capacity. Will this necessitate additional overground transmission infrastructure. **If so, this element should be scoped in we suggest. Further that the landscape study area of 5km be scoped in excepting underground cabling.**

### **3. Traffic and access**

**Fear and intimidation effects are stated as applicable to pedestrians only. Given the national cycle route network is within the proposed development area, which is popular with long distance cycling clubs, the Parish Council asks that cyclists and indeed equestrian users are included and all scoped in.**

**Insufficient volumes, times etc of visiting vehicles to support operational maintenance, repair and renewal and incident response, are shown. Estimated quantification and frequency should be highlighted.**

On traffic and access, environmental weight limits apply to many local roads, constraining route choice. The cumulative impact of construction journeys on those available must take into account that (a) local level crossings are closed for rail traffic for significant periods, (b) local roads are frequently used as diversionary routes for the A1 and (c) the A46 Newark by-pass upgrade is likely to be being constructed on a similar timeframe.

The National Cycle Trail crosses parts of the scoping area.

**These aspects should be scoped in.**

### **4. Flooding and Hydrological**

Pluvial and fluvial extremes and return periods are being re-defined and will continue to do so as locked in climate change impacts increase. Climate change impacts on SUDS must be considered, especially in higher areas where overtopping will result in flooding at lower levels and down stream of watercourses. Also changes to the natural off flow from the land occupied by the Solar arrays is likely and is likely also to form new channels and ill-defined water courses. **The risk of run off of any operational pollutants onto neighbouring arable land should be considered and scoped in.**

**The impact on aquifers in the development area should be determined, quantified and scoped in.**

## 5. Glint and Glare

**The proposed elevated section of the A46 dualling project should be re-considered for such impact ref 5.2 (Zone of theoretical visibility- south east area). The Council suggests that this be scoped in and also the sample points for the A1 and East Coast Main Line should be closer than the stated 200mtr centres.**

We are concerned that it may be difficult to assess the scope of glint and glare impact until more exact panel height, type (fixed or tracking) and locations are known. Until then, as well as transport receptors, a precautionary approach that scopes in any ground receptors within the identified zones of visual influence should be taken.

## 6. Land Use and Food production

The Scoping Report refers to the agricultural land considered as either Grade 2 or Grade 3.

2.2 Site Selection Principles 35 – Minimising the use of the Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land, avoiding outline Grade 2 agricultural land where possible and practical and avoiding any development on Grade 1 agricultural land These categories are determined by DEFRA and can be described as:-

- Grade 1 - Excellent quality agricultural land with no or very minor limitations
- Grade 2 - Very good quality agricultural land with no or very minor limitations
- Grade 3 - Good to moderate quality agricultural land (see Sub Grades below)
- Grade 4 - Poor quality agricultural land with severe limitations which significantly restrict the range and level of yield of crops.
- Grade 5- Very poor-quality agricultural land with very severe limitations which restrict use of permanent pasture or rough grazing with the exception of occasional pioneer forage crops.

Category 3 is further divided into two Sub Grades, thus forming 6 effective grades in total.

- Grade 3a - Good quality agricultural land with moderate limitations that affect the choice of crop, timing and type of cultivation/harvesting or level of yield. This land can produce moderate to high yields of a narrow range of crops or moderate yields of a wide range of crops.
- Grade 3b – Moderate quality agricultural land with strong limitations that affect the choice of crop, timing and type of cultivation/harvesting or level of yield. This land produces moderate yields of a narrow range of crops, low yields of a wide range of crops and high yields of grass.

The designated 3a subdivision is particularly important in relation to planning. Grades 1, 2 and 3a need to be considered much more carefully when considering planning applications. Grades 1, 2 and Subgrades 3a are considered the 'best and most versatile' (BMV) land category in the current planning system. This land is deemed the most flexible, productive and efficient in response to inputs. It is the best to deliver future crops for food and non food uses (such as biomass, fibres and pharmaceuticals).

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 170) requires planning authorities to “recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land” when making decision on development proposals. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-land-assess-proposals-for>.

Much of the land immediately west of North Muskham is high quality arable land being used for production of cereals, potatoes and sugar beet for the local sugar factory and for a significant part of the proposal area, similar crops are grown as well as maize for anaerobic digesters.

Much land in/near Muskham is actually in Category 2. The areas that are nearest to North Muskham as defined in the Figure Referencing (page 160) within the Scoping Report are as follows:

- SE-e6 – North of Muskham village
- SE-d5 – North West
- SEd6 – North West
- SEd4 – South West

Further North to Cromwell:

- NE-d1 – North North
- NE-e1 – North North West

Figure 10.2 Provisional Agricultural Land Classification in the Scoping Report shows the Grade 2 Land in light blue. The Defra Open-source website confirms much of the land as category 3 (it does not show Sub Grades 3a and 3b) but that some is Grade 2. All of the Land in the above figure referencing around North Muskham are either entirely or largely Grade 2.

**We consider that the effect of the development on food security should be assessed, since the impact on soil quality does not account for the socio-economic effect of having so large an area of land out of food production for so long a period, particularly where conditions for production are good and the local economy is historically adapted to this industry. We consider this impact should be scoped in.**

The report suggests (pg 105/504) that sheep farming may be conducive and supportive with regards to the beneficial and concurrent land use beneath the solar arrays. The report does not however reflect that sheep farming in the UK is in the decline and land use for sheep farming has substantial availability above demand.

## **7. Ecology, Ornithology and Bio diversity**

**A number of species are mentioned but we suggest the following should also be scoped in:- Barn Owls, Deer, Hen Harriers – one of the UK’s rarest birds of prey. (Conservation status – Hen Harrier Classified in the UK as Red under the Birds of Conservation Concern 5: the Red List for Birds (2021). Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 19). Residents have seen these on numerous occasions in and around SE-26.**

It is not clear whether the study will consider the impact on the stated study species in regard of their natural and habitual behaviour to travel significant distances from their base habitat. This is especially relevant with Otter and to a lesser extent Badger. **It is suggested that the report and study should include the impacts that the substantial fencing will have on these behaviours and the well being and sustainability of habitats and be scoped in.**

#### **8. Proposed Ecology study area/survey area:**

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve is not highlighted on maps or in the Scoping Report. Figure 6.1 Statutory Designated Sights – has a key indicating, amongst other things, Local Nature Reserves. **Whilst the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve at North Muskham (off Manor House Drive) is just outside of the Order Limits in should still be scoped in and highlighted in dark blue as per similar sites.**

**Immediately north of this asset is a further 25 acres of land currently being sought for purchase by Nth Muskham Parish Council to protect and nurture the land and to make formal submission for this to be a nature reserve. This should also be highlighted and scoped in as per above.**

#### **9. Public Rights of Way**

**FP1 and FP 8 are incorrectly marked on the map.**

The many PROWs within the scoping area are high contributors to the attraction of the area for recreation and tourism. Many are ancient rights of way which are part of the culture of the area. **The Council considers that stopping up and diversions will remove this historic link and legacy and the historic character of such rights of way should be considered and scoped in.**

#### **10 Miscellaneous Issues**

Human Health Impact Assessment: ONS published 27/11/2023: "A million fewer people are gaining health benefits from nature since 2020 <http://tinyurl.com/4zmbtmc8>, estimating the financial and medical cost of post-covid reduction in accessing nature. GNRSP would likely further discourage such access. **We suggest that the cumulative impacts during construction, operation and de-commissioning of the proposal on the physical and psychological health and well being of residents with the area must be considered and scoped in.**

We trust that these observations and suggestions are useful and will be taken on board. We would be pleased to discuss the matter further should it assist.