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Response to Planning application from Hertfordshire County Council (T and CP GDP Order 2015)

Director of Planning

North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 3JF

District ref: 21/03380/FP
HCC ref: NH/10262/2021
HCC received: 14 October 2022
Area manager: Matthew Armstrong
Case officer: Matthew Armstrong

Location

Land To The North And East Of Great Wymondley, Hertfordshire

Application type

Full Application

Proposal

AMENDED PROPOSAL

Proposed solar farm measuring 88 hectares with associated battery storage containers, transformers stations, storage buildings, fencing etc including means of access.

Recommendation

Notice is given under article 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Prior to the commencement of the development, detailed engineering drawings of the accesses as shown indicatively on drawing numbers 3004-01-D04 and 3004-01-D05 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority. These shall include details of suitable hardsurface for at least the first 20 metres from the back edge of carriageway and appropriate associated drainage, as well as visibility splays of 2.4 m X 105m to east and 148m to west, within which there shall be no vertical obstruction between 0.6m and 2m. The accesses as approved by these plans shall be in place before commencement of the development, and to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To ensure accesses which are safe and suitable, in the interest of the free and safe flow of public highway users.
- 2) Prior to the commencement of the development, detailed engineering drawings of the passing bay along Graveley Lane as shown indicatively on drawing numbers 3004-01-D04 and 3004-01-D05 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the

Highway Authority. This shall include measures to demonstrate how the passing bay will not be parked up in by vehicles associated with the wider public. The passing bay as approved by these plans shall be in place before commencement of the development, and to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To ensure the approach route is safe and suitable during construction, in the interest of the free and safe flow of public highway users.

3) Before completion of construction, detailed engineering drawings shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority, which show revised designs to the two site accesses, reducing their width and providing suitable associated tighter kerb radii (to accommodate ongoing maintenance vehicles). Within 3 months of completion of construction, the revised access designs as approved by these plans shall be in place to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To ensure accesses which are safe and suitable in the long term, in the interest of the free and safe flow of public highway users.

4) Before completion of construction, detailed engineering drawings shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority, which show removal of the passing bay along Graveley Lane and full reinstatement of the grass verge/embankment and vegetation). Within 3 months of completion of construction, this bay shall be removed and full verge/embankment and vegetation reinstated as approved by these plans to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To ensure Graveley Lane is reinstated to a suitable environment in the long term, and in the in the interest of the free and safe flow of public highway users.

5) Prior to the commencement of the development, a 'Construction Traffic Management Plan' shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan. The 'Construction Traffic Management Plan' shall identify details of:

- the phasing of construction and proposed construction programme.
- the methods for accessing the site, including wider construction vehicle routing.
- the numbers of daily construction vehicles including details of their sizes, at each phase of the development.
- the hours of operation and construction vehicle movements.
- details of any highway works necessary to enable construction to take place.
- details of construction vehicle parking, turning and loading/unloading arrangements clear of the public highway.
- details of any hoardings.
- details of how the safety of existing public highway users and existing public right of way users will be maintained.
- management of traffic to reduce congestion.
- control of dirt and dust on the public highway, including details of the location and methods to wash construction vehicle wheels, and how it will be ensured dirty surface water does not runoff and discharge onto the highway.
- the provision for addressing any abnormal wear and tear to the highway.
- the details of consultation with local businesses or neighbours.
- the details of any other Construction Sites in the local area.
- waste management proposals.
- signage

HIGHWAY INFORMATIVES:

I recommend inclusion of the following Advisory Notes (ANs) to ensure that any works as part of this development are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Highways Act 1980 and other relevant processes.

AN1) Storage of materials: The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence.

Further information is available via the website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN2) Obstruction of public highway land: It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to wilfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway or public right of way network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements before construction works commence.

Further information is available via the website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN3) Road Deposits: It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit mud or other debris on the public highway, and section 149 of the same Act gives the Highway Authority powers to remove such material at the expense of the party responsible. Therefore, best practical means shall be taken at all times to ensure that all vehicles leaving the site during construction of the development are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available via the website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN4) Construction standards for new/amended vehicle access: Where works are required within the public highway, the Highway Authority require the construction of such works to be undertaken to their satisfaction and specification, and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. If any of the works associated with the construction of the access affects or requires the removal and/or the relocation of any equipment, apparatus or structures (e.g. street name plates, bus stop signs or shelters, statutory authority equipment etc.) the applicant will be required to bear the cost of such removal or alteration. Before works commence the applicant will need to apply to the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements. Further information is available via the website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

COMMENTS:

Since our previous response, there has been extensive discussions with the applicant to try and overcome our concerns. The Highway Authority made clear that the applicant needs to undertake a thorough site visit assessment to include an audit of the approach routes, with regular width measurements taken along it and commentary as to how two large HGVs can pass by one another during construction. Concerns were also raised about the potential extent of vegetation that would need to be cut down to provide any carriageway widening and visibility splays.

The applicant has now submitted additional plans: 3004-01-D04, 3004-01-D05 and 3004-01-ATR03. They have supported this with commentary by e-mails. These include spot measurements of the Graveley Lane carriageway width at regular intervals, and photographs. The majority of the approach route of Graveley Lane is greater than 6m, varying between 6.7m at the widest point – underneath the A1(M) bridge – to 6.1m. As such, this section of Graveley Lane is adequate to allow HGVs to

pass in opposite directions. Over a circa 50m section covering the western end of the carriageway, it narrows down to around 4.8m (with some slight variation along this section).

As such a passing bay is proposed along this section, and the applicant has now provided details of the level of forward visibility to/from this bay. This satisfies us that approaching drivers will have the time to make a decision as to whether they need to slow down to let an oncoming vehicle pass by using this bay (or vice versa). The provision of this bay will, however, likely result in the loss of a notable amount of grass verge / embankment / vegetation, as might the cutting back of other vegetation in order to achieve the necessary visibility splays from the two accesses, and forward visibility around bends on Graveley Lane. The LPA will need to consider the impact of this on flora and fauna, but it should be noted that the passing bay will be reinstated after construction works are complete.

The applicant states in their Transport Statement that a maximum of 40 two-way HGV movements per day will take place during construction, with an average of 8 two-way HGV movements per day over the remainder of the construction period. However, they now explain that experience from similar sites elsewhere in the country shows that daily vehicle numbers will be less than this, with the maximum predicted to be up to 10 to 20 two-way HGV movements per day (i.e. between 5-10 HGVs).

A revised glint and glare assessment has been produced which now shows receptor height of 1.05m for road users rather 1.5m. This illustrates that there is no material difference in the level of effects between the two heights.

Taking everything into account, the Highway Authority no longer objects to the proposal subject to the above conditions.

Signed

Matthew Armstrong

27 October 2022