



Priory Farm Solar Array

Proposed Development of a Photovoltaic Solar Array on Land at Priory Farm to the East of Great Wymondley, North Hertfordshire

PINS Ref: APP/X1925/V/23/3323321

LPA Ref: 21/03380/FP

Summary Proof of Evidence on Transport Matters by Lee Kendall

On Behalf of the Applicant



AGR 4 Solar Limited

**August 2023
3004-01-LK/SummPoE**

Document Ref: APP/LK/1



Document Control

Revision	Date	Prepared By	Reviewed / Approved By
3004-01-LK/SummPoE	09-08-23	LK	LK
3004-01-LK/SummPoE	14-08-23	LK	LK

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1.0 SUMMARY OF MAIN PROOF OF EVIDENCE

1.1 Preamble

1.1.1 The evidence which I have prepared for this called-in application relates to the proposed solar farm development (the ‘proposed development’) on land at Priory Farm to the East of Great Wymondley, North Hertfordshire (the ‘application site’). My main evidence is provided in a separate volume (document ref APP/LK/2). This document provides a summary of my main evidence.

1.2 Policy

1.2.1 Within my main evidence I have assessed the compliance of the proposed development with relevant transport-related planning policies, including those from the NPPF, the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011—2031 (adopted 2022), the Wymondley Parish Neighbourhood Plan (Made Sep 2019). I have also summarised various parts of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) to demonstrate the compliance of the proposed site access arrangements with these important highway design standards.

1.2.2 Within my main evidence I have also sought to quantify the *potential* transport-related harm to the green belt, so that this can be weighed in the context of the overall planning balance and the relevant national and local green belt policies.

1.2.3 My main evidence concludes that the Appeal Proposal is compliant with (or at a minimum does not fall foul of) the relevant policies and standards.

1.3 The Manner in the Application was Considered by the Local Highway Authority (LHA)

1.3.1 Prior to the resolution to grant permission for the proposed development by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) at North Hertfordshire Council (NHC) in November 2022, an agreement was reached between Axis (representing the Applicant) and the LHA at Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) that the scheme would be acceptable in traffic and transportation terms.

1.3.2 This agreement followed a series of technical discussions and minor amendments to the access arrangements, and was subject to normal conditions concerning the arrangement of the site accesses and passing bay, construction traffic routes, and



the post-construction phase reduction to the scale and nature of the temporary access works (CD 116).

- 1.3.3 This agreement is reflected in section 5.29 of the Council's Statement of Case (CD 138), which states that *"The impacts upon the local highway network would be temporary during the construction of the Solar Farm and the impacts of the Proposal would be adequately controlled by conditions. It is considered that this matter is neutral in the planning balance."*

1.4 Appraisal of the Transport-Related Facets of the Scheme

General

- 1.4.1 In simple terms, the transport-related effects of any solar farm, including the proposed development, are at their highest for only a temporary period during the construction period. In this case the construction period will be around only 36 weeks.
- 1.4.2 Following construction, traffic activity is typically imperceptible, limited to only a very small number of engineer / maintenance visits per week.
- 1.4.3 The proposed development will be accessed via two simple priority-controlled junctions located on either side of Graveley Lane, as indicated on Drawing No. 3004-01-D04 (CD 25), and as agreed with the LHA.
- 1.4.4 During construction, the two site accesses would each lead into site compound areas, wherein materials can be laid down, staff can park, and where construction staff welfare and wheel washing facilities would be located.
- 1.4.5 A passing place would also be located on the northern side of Graveley Lane to the east of the proposed site access, where the lane is slightly narrower.
- 1.4.6 To minimise the visual impact of the site accesses, the geometry of the site access junctions will be 'downgraded' and much reduced within 3 months of the end of the construction period. Similarly, the proposed passing place will also be removed. There are suggested planning conditions put forward to secure these post-construction changes.
- 1.4.7 The purpose of these conditions is to ensure that the visual impact of the site accesses and passing bay is minimised to appropriately meet the construction and



post-construction needs of the development, and so that the environment around the accesses is restored, as much as possible, thus helping to minimise impact upon the green belt.

1.5 Construction Traffic Forecasts

1.5.1 There are three distinct traffic-generating phases in the proposed development lifespan - the construction phase, the operational phase, and then the decommissioning phase. The 40-year operational phase would give rise to a negligible level of traffic - only one or two engineer site visits per week in a small van.

1.5.2 In terms of the construction phase traffic

- i) The traffic-generation forecasts have been based on a 'first principles' approach, based on the materials to be delivered to the sites and the number of construction staff;
- ii) Construction activity would last around only 36 weeks;
- iii) Construction activities would take place 6 days per week, between 08:00 – 18:00 Monday to Friday and between 08:00 – 13:00 on Saturdays;
- iv) No deliveries would take place on Sundays, with the possible exception of one-off abnormal loads or large vehicles such as cranes.
- v) A total of around 2,156 two-way delivery movements are forecast to occur over the full 36-week construction period;
- vi) A significant proportion of materials (comprising mostly aggregate for the construction of the on-site tracks) would be delivered during the first 4 weeks (11% of the construction phase). During this period, up to around 40 two-way delivery movements might be expected per day;
- vii) In the remaining 32 weeks (89% of the construction phase), up to around only 8 two-way delivery movements might be expected, per day; These two-way delivery movements are significantly lower than the initial 4-week period, and would be largely imperceptible and temporary in nature;
- viii) In addition, there will also be approximately 50 staff requiring access to the site per day, on average. During peak activities, the number of construction-related staff may rise to around 120;
- ix) For robustness, it has been assumed that each staff vehicle would have an occupancy rate of 2 staff per vehicle, on average. In reality, the occupancy rate per vehicle is likely to be 3 or more, particularly if (as is common with solar farm



construction) the contractor utilises a workforce that will be brought by minibus to and from their place of accommodation during the construction phase;

- x) Therefore, in total, the maximum traffic generation associated with the proposed development would be 160 daily two-way movements, including both delivery-related movements and staff trips, but within around the first 4 weeks of the 36-week construction period;
- xi) For the remainder of the construction period (32 weeks), there would be a maximum of approximately 128 two-way movements per day, on average, again inclusive of delivery-related movements and staff trips. This equates to an average of 12 additional 2-way movements per hour throughout the working day, or approximately one additional vehicle movement every 5 minutes. This level of trip generation is therefore considered to be negligible.
- xii) It is likely that the majority of staff trips would occur at the beginning and end of the working day and are unlikely to coincide with delivery-related movements. There will be approximately 4 two-way delivery-related movements per hour throughout the working day, which equates to approximately 1 movement every 15 minutes. This frequency of activity means it is unlikely that two vehicles will meet in opposite directions along Graveley Lane very frequently;
- xiii) Background traffic flows along Graveley Lane are relatively low, with only around 5 two-way movements per minute during the peak hours, and approximately 2 two-way movements per minute outside of the peak hours; and,
- xiv) HGV turning movements into and out of the site accesses will also be managed by a banksman to minimise conflict with other road users.

1.5.3 The decommissioning phase would be effectively a mirror of the construction phase in terms of traffic generation.

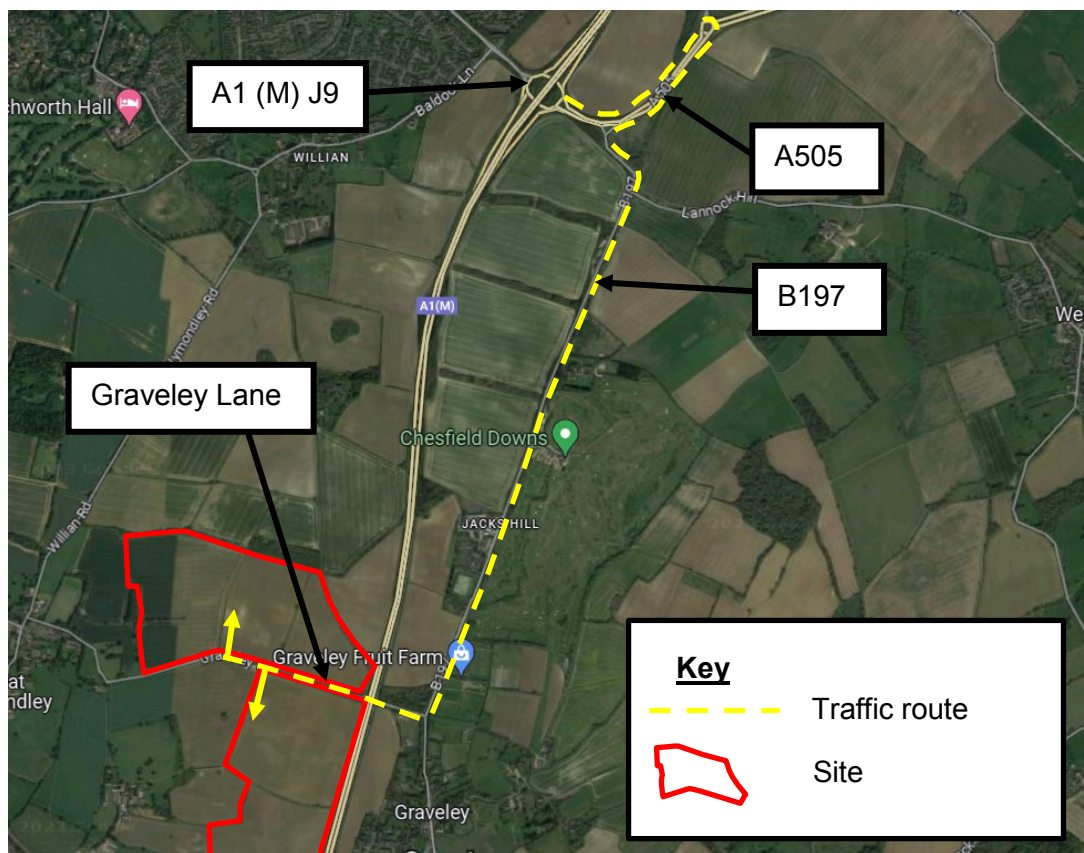
1.6 Construction Traffic Management Plan Measures

1.6.1 During the construction period, all delivery and construction traffic would be directed along carefully-chosen road routes that have no significant sensitive receptors along them.

1.6.2 **Image 3.1** below indicates the construction traffic route to and from the A1(M) J9, via a short section of the A505, the B197 and Graveley Lane.



Image 3.1 – Construction Traffic Route



1.6.3 A planning condition to secure a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) that has been put forward, as is normal in these circumstances. The CTMP will outline how the effects of construction traffic will be minimised.

1.6.4 The CTMP will include consideration the following:-

- i) Temporary warning and directional signage;
- ii) The formation of the temporary passing bay on Graveley Lane, as discussed earlier;
- iii) The times within which construction activity would occur, as discussed earlier;
- iv) There will be designated waiting areas for HGV's routing towards the site from both the north and south. These will be located at South Mimms Services on the A1(M) for HGV's travelling from the south, and at Baldock Services, J10 A1(M), for HGV's travelling from the north. HGV's will be required to park up within these service areas and call ahead to the site manager to ascertain whether it is acceptable to move forward to the site;



- v) All plant, delivery/collection vehicles and cranes will be supervised by a banksman and operatives using 'stop' and 'go' signs to manage the flow of passing cars;
 - vi) The phasing of the construction and proposed construction programme;
 - vii) The numbers of daily construction vehicles including details of their sizes, at each phase of the development;
 - viii) Details of construction vehicle parking, turning and loading/unloading arrangements and compounds, clear of the public highway;
 - ix) Details of any hoardings;
 - x) Details of how the safety of existing public highway users and existing public right of way users will be managed;
 - xi) Management of traffic to reduce congestion;
 - xii) 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;
 - xiii) The provision for addressing any abnormal wear and tear to the highway;
 - xiv) The details of consultation with local businesses or neighbours;
 - xv) The details of any other Construction Sites in the local area; and,
 - xvi) Waste management proposals.
- 1.6.5 All proposed excavations, construction activities and traffic control measures necessary to lay electrical cables within the local highway network will be subject to a S50 licence¹ and associated traffic management approval process via HCC (a separate consenting regime to planning).
- 1.6.6 This will be subject to a separate detailed application and will detail precisely what measures will be taken to ensure that road users are not unduly inconvenienced or unnecessarily disrupted by any construction activity. Some partial and temporary road closures / diversion activities will be necessary in order to facilitate the cable laying. Operatives will be instructed to manage access to residential and commercial properties through the use of 'stop', 'go' signs, or a rolling traffic light system, to

¹ Under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991



control the flow of traffic whilst works are being undertaken along the planned cable route to the National Grid sub-station south-west of Little Wymondley.

- 1.6.7 In summary, there is no reason to believe that construction traffic-related activity represents a reason to resist the proposed development. Construction traffic will occur over a relatively limited temporary time period, it will be modest in volume and nature, it will occur along traffic routes with no material sensitive receptors, and it can be carefully managed and controlled by means of appropriately worded planning conditions that the LHA have agreed to.

1.7 Third Party Objections

- 1.7.1 The transport-related objections raised by third parties during the course of the application have been reviewed and have been found to be either flawed, or lacking in substantive reasons to resist the development.

1.8 Transport-Related Harm to the Green Belt

- 1.8.1 Section 2 of my main evidence includes an assessment of the compliance of the proposed development with relevant national and local transport planning policy.
- 1.8.2 The exception to this is the assessment of harm caused to the green belt by the transport-related effects of the scheme (paragraph 148 of the NPPF).
- 1.8.3 The main transport-related effects of the development comprise the visual effects of the proposed site accesses and passing place on the locality, and also the effects of traffic activity during the construction and decommissioning phases.
- 1.8.4 The visual effects / harm caused by the site accesses and passing place will be temporary in nature, lasting for the duration of the construction phase only. Thereafter the passing place will be removed and the site access junctions will be reduced in scale and nature, so that the affected areas will be restored and returned to nature.
- 1.8.5 It is my view that the future site access arrangements will be immaterially different to the kind of agricultural access arrangements that one might expect to find spread everywhere throughout the British countryside. They will not therefore appear as an incongruous feature within the landscape.



- 1.8.6 Likewise, the effects / harm caused by traffic activity will also be minimal, and largely temporary in nature, as described above.
- 1.8.7 I therefore conclude that the harm caused to the green belt by the transport-related effects of the proposed development will be very limited.
- 1.8.8 It is again worth reiterating that the Council have indicated that the matter of transport is, in their view, actually 'neutral' in the planning balance (section 5.29 of CD 138).
- 1.8.9 My main evidence all sets out how it is my view that the scheme does not even approach falling foul of the test whereby an unacceptable impact on highway safety would arise, nor indeed would it approach failing the test of whether a 'severe' cumulative traffic congestion impact would arise.
- 1.8.10 The proposed development was not objected to by the LHA during the course of the planning application and the planning committee were content to grant planning permission based on the officer recommendation. There a number of standard transport-related planning conditions put forward that will ensure the delivery of the scheme in a safe and satisfactory manner.
- 1.8.11 It is therefore my overall conclusion that there should be no resist to withhold planning permission for the proposed development from a transport perspective, and it is therefore commended to the Inspector for approval.



