



Planning Committee South

Members are invited to a **Meeting of the Planning Committee South** to be held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Tuesday, 16 December 2025 at 2pm**

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Members:

Councillor Seamus Bennett (Chair), Councillor John Fisher (Vice-Chair), Councillor Tom Daly, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Debbie McCallum, Councillor Mike Ninnmey, Councillor Lee Reeves, Councillor Rosie Smithson.

An Agenda is set out below.

Part One – Open to the Public		Pages
1	Apologies for Absence and Substitutions	
2	Declarations of Interest Members and Officers are invited to make any declarations of interests, and the nature of that interest, that they may have in relation to items on the Agenda and are also reminded to make any declarations at any stage during the Meeting if it becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.	
3	Declarations of Lobbying and Responses to Lobbying To receive any Declarations of Lobbying in respect of any item on the agenda and also declarations of any response to that lobbying.	
4	Minutes of meeting To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2025.	1 - 12
5	East Suffolk Enforcement Action - Case Update ES/2631 Report of the Head of Planning and Building Control	13 - 30
6	DC/25/1945/FUL - Fynn Valley Golf Club ES/2633 Report of the Head of Planning and Building Control	31 - 43
7	DC/21/5550/FUL - Land at Park Farm ES/2632 Report of the Head of Planning and Building Control	44 - 90

There are no Exempt or Confidential items for this Agenda.

Close



Chris Bally, Chief Executive

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Interested parties permitted to speak on an application are a representative of Town / Parish Council or Parish Meeting, the applicant or representative, an objector, and the relevant ward Members. Interested parties will be given a maximum of three minutes to speak and the intention is that only one person would speak from each of the above parties.

If you are registered to speak, can we please ask that you arrive at the meeting **prior to its start time (as detailed on the agenda)** and make yourself known to the Committee Clerk, as the agenda may be re-ordered by the Chairman to bring forward items with public speaking and the item you have registered to speak on could be heard by the Committee earlier than planned.

Please note that any illustrative material you wish to have displayed at the meeting, or any further supporting information you wish to have circulated to the Committee, must be submitted to the Planning team **at least 24 hours** before the meeting.

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Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Planning Committee South** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Tuesday, 28 October 2025 at 2pm**

Members of the Committee present:

Councillor Seamus Bennett, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Colin Hedgley, Councillor Debbie McCallum, Councillor Lee Reeves, Councillor Rosie Smithson

Officers present: Pip Alder (Democratic Services Officer), Matthew Beale (Assistant Planner (Development Management)), Joe Blackmore (Planning Manager (Development Management)), Hannah Lence (Assistant Planning Officer/Planner (Career Grade)), Agnes Ogundiran (Conservative Political Group Support Officer), Steve Milligan (Principal Planner (Development Management)), Ben Woolnough (Head of Planning and Building Control)

Others present: SCC Highways representative

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Daly, who was substituted by Councillor Packard, Councillor Ninnmey, who was substituted by Councillor Thompson, and Councillor Fisher, who was substituted by Councillor Plummer.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hedgley declared an interest in item 6 as Ward Member.

3 Declarations of Lobbying and Responses to Lobbying

Councillor Hedgley pointed out that when they attended the site visit for item 6 they were shown around by a member of staff. It was explained that due to the safeguarding and health and safety aspects of visiting an educational establishment it was necessary to have a guided visit, which was explained at the site visit and in the notes. Councillor Hedgley had attended Parish Council meetings where item 6 had been discussed. He was asked to represent them but said he would take a neutral attitude.

4 Minutes of meeting

On the proposal of Councillor Reeves seconded by Councillor Hedgley it was

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 East Suffolk Enforcement Action - Case Update

The Enforcement Officer explained there was one update to the report relating to C.1 where an extension for compliance had been granted. The new date will be included on next month's report. Councillor Smithson asked about the Queen at Brandeston. The Enforcement Officer explained it was a complex enforcement matter and some attempts to comply had been made. It had been reviewed at a site visit and evidence submitted and they were looking to issue an outcome shortly.

On the proposal of Councillor Hedgley, seconded by Councillor Smithson it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the outstanding enforcement matters up to 24th September 2025 be noted.

6 DC/24/4253/FUL - Otley College, Charity Lane

The Committee received report **ES/2556** of the Head of Planning and Building Control which related to planning application **DC/24/4253/FUL**. The Assistant Planning Officer gave a presentation and explained that the application decision was deferred at the September Planning South Committee meeting to allow a site visit to take place. The site visit took place on 21 October 2025. The Assistant Planning Officer ran through the objections from the Parish Council and showed a map of the parish boundaries of Grundisburgh and Otley. A map detailing the speed limits of the roads surrounding the application site was shown together with photographs of the site, including the sign indicating Charity Lane was unsuitable for HGV vehicles. The existing and proposed block plans of the site were shown and she highlighted the small increase of hard standing and the proposed drainage plan. Plans of the entrance and exit to the site were shown and the placement of the bollard at the exit to prevent entry and only allow vehicles to exit right onto Charity Lane. The proposal was recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

Councillor Hedgley asked if the no left turn at the exit onto Charity Lane was enforceable. The Planning Manager explained it was a condition of the scheme but this could be answered by the Highways officer.

Councillor Reeves asked if the HGVs would be driven off the site by a qualified driver at first to a main road and then transfer to a student. The Assistant Planning Officer said this information had not been provided.

The Objector was invited to speak. He explained he lived on Charity Lane and drove past the site in large vehicles. He showed photos of the road and pointed out that in one of them you couldn't see the HGV in the picture that was turning onto the lane. He said cars travelled in the middle of the road and this was a nice country lane, not a major road. He highlighted the line from a letter from Highways, submitted as part of the application, regarding the register of complaints and register of actions to be taken. He felt this looked like there were issues. He then showed the speed order reduction which talked about the increase in traffic. He believed this proposal was highly risky and reckless. He objected and the application should be withdrawn.

There were no questions for the Objector.

Councillor Bowers from Otley Parish Council was invited to speak. He supported the Objector's comments and illustrated his objection with photographs. He explained it was 40mph coming down to a give way where it then became a 60mph road. There was not enough room on the left hand side, where lorries have to turn, without blocking the road and going onto the verge. He showed pictures of two HGVs on the B1079 that could not pass each other and said it was impossible to have even a car passing a lorry. He said Charity Lane was used as a rat run and it was not suitable for HGVs. He believed it was absurd to allow this application to go through. He acknowledged that the college does a great job but the Parish Council doesn't support this. He questioned the SCC Highways view on the application.

Councillor Smithson asked if the Parish Council had done a survey on the number of lorries travelling along this road. Councillor Bowers said they were waiting for County Councillor Elaine Bryce and Patrick Spencer MP to attend their meeting. No improvements to highways have been made and they haven't done a survey.

Councillor Thompson said the college was preparing the students for everything. He felt this could be an ideal training place as the trainer can give students advice about these situations. Councillor Bowers disagreed.

Councillor McCallum asked for clarity about the meeting taking place with Elaine Bryce and Patrick Spencer and if it was about Sizewell C (SZC). Councillor Bowers confirmed it was about safety on the B1078 and B1079 and related to the quarry, the college and SZC.

The Applicant was invited to speak. She said they had reflected on the discussions at the last meeting and changes to the traffic management statement had been provided. She explained that this campus at Otley was now vibrant and this offering was important and that it was imperative we focus provision on what was needed most. There were positives and negatives as a result of large infrastructure projects and it is known that it will be hard to find lorry and bus drivers with SZC coming. Offering HGV courses now will help the situation as we need to have drivers for local busses and companies. The College was planning ahead and they have accessed funding to focus on the low paid/unemployed. Although it won't be significant numbers of people trained it will have an impact. She assured Members that they would have close scrutiny of what was going on and would adhere to conditions such as no left turn onto Charity Lane in order to protect villagers. The routes will move away from small roads. She pointed out that the dwellings on Charity Lane are owned by the college and

inhabited by college staff. She explained that the driving instructors would drive vehicles out of the college until they are confident that the students are capable enough to do it themselves. She pointed out that main roads can have learners on them at any time and they could currently have as many horse boxes and tractors coming out of the site at any time. She noted that visibility would be improved as a result of the application.

Councillor McCallum noted there were other facilities in the area such as Debach that were suitable. She asked if the College had considering doing the driving at another site. The Applicant said there was infrastructure available on site that you wouldn't get offsite, such as catering, management and administration; it would be too much of a burden to do this provision off site. Councillor McCallum asked how long the lessons were. The Applicant explained they were 2-hour sessions in the vehicles and then classroom sessions. Councillor McCallum asked why this couldn't be split between two venues. The Applicant said it was not possible as it wouldn't maximise the benefits and it would not be a good use of public money.

Councillor Reeves asked about the updated traffic management statement as he felt it would be useful to know what was included. The Planning Manager explained it was received late Friday afternoon so was reluctant to include as it could prejudice and the recommendation to approve was based on information already received. He would have liked to see the information shared but members of the community have a right to respond but it was received too late.

Councillor Hedgley asked how the project was financed. The Applicant explained it was through grant funding from SZC and East Suffolk Council.

Councillor Smithson asked if the vehicles will be dual controlled and have dash cams. The Applicant said all those features were critical and will be in place.

Councillor Plummer asked if there was a designated place where the changeover will take place between instructor and the learner. The Applicant explained this would need the instructor to participate in the conversation as it would be dependent on each student but it would be managed and safe.

Councillor Bennett asked if students will be paying less to get qualified. The Applicant said their organisation has a different funding position and they can access government money to offer free/heavily discounted courses for those who are lower qualified/on benefits which is different to commercial providers. The College is public sector and work with those most in need.

Councillor Deacon asked for clarity that the vehicles be dual control and the Applicant confirmed they will be.

Councillor McCallum asked if the application garnered extra sympathy because they are cheaper courses. The Planning Manager said it gave very limited weight as it was not a direct planning consideration.

The Suffolk County Council Highways Officer was invited to speak. Councillor McCallum asked if there were no logistical problems with training having seen the photographs.

The Highways Officer said there were no significant impacts. Councillor Smithson asked if a precedent would be set by allowing this application that would encourage other HGVs to use Charity Lane, especially when there is an advisory sign that Charity Lane was not suitable for HGVs. She asked who managed this and looked at any issues that arose over time. The Highways Officer explained it was an advisory sign and as there were only 6 vehicles going in and out as a result of this planning application it was unlikely other vehicles would notice. This was less than 300m of Charity Lane so just a small area.

The Chair invited Members to debate. Councillor Hedgley agreed with the comments by Councillor McCallum. He felt the Applicant put a good spin on things but an unemployed person can go into a job centre and ask for an HGV training course. Some councils can make contributions to HGV training and Mayors also have funding whilst some logistic firms offer training or you can apply for an advance learner loan towards costs or the Veteran scheme can cover costs. These funding opportunities have existed for a long time. He can't see how this helps anyone in particular and feels the College just wants to add something to their training that looks good. A lot has been done to get people into HGV training so he was not convinced about this application.

Councillor McCallum said she knows these roads and felt there were other opportunities out there. She wasn't convinced this was a safe route and that other alternatives could have been sourced.

Councillor Deacon valued the opportunity for HGV training, especially for those without other qualifications. He pointed out that we have country lanes all over Suffolk and they must take HGVs for residents to exist. However on the site visit he found the lane to be under a great deal of stress just from normal vehicles and he had doubts over the safety. He asked what would happen if the application was refused.

The Planning Manager explained that Members needed to give regard to the benefit of this college offering this training. They could not say if there was enough HGV training but it was not an overprovision and there was no proof that there was not a need. The NPPF says development should only be refused if there was an unacceptable impact that was severe and that is the key test. Highways say there is not a severe impact and this is only a short section of road. The Council would be unlikely to succeed at appeal but he does recognise local feeling about this application.

Councillor Packard said that in planning terms the College has explained how these vehicles will move about and we should encourage this type of training. The College has shown how they will manage this and he supported it.

Councillor Smithson acknowledged the problems with having a shortage of drivers and was not convinced that 12 trips a day would have a significant impact. She was minded to approve even though she found Highway's approach to roads a little cavalier. She would like there to be more monitoring.

Councillor Thompson said there were a number of places where drivers could train but you need to keep producing trained drivers all the time.

Councillor Hedgley had listened to what had been said and acknowledged the need for

more HGV drivers. However there are lots of places available but no-one is taking them up and having them at the College won't make a big impact on numbers. There were already 4-5 training providers in the area and if this is approved there will be additional HGVs, damage to roads and increased pollution. He said these roads are not suitable for HGVs and we don't have to add to something that is already bad.

The Chair instinctively felt it was wrong but the prospect of people learning something like this in a college environment would be a positive thing and offers something that you don't get through a commercial route. The intensity of use of 12 movements a day Monday-Friday in office hours brings it into the realms of acceptability. He did see the Parish Council views, but he saw an HGV going down Charity Lane even though there are advisory signs. The negative publicity for the College if it went wrong would be very damaging.

Councillor McCallum said her objection wasn't about the number of lorries, but the reasoning of being trained on these roads. Not knowing where they will stop to change drivers causes her concern. Having learner drivers on these roads concerned her.

Councillor Plummer pointed out that students were not coming to do a course that was simply learning to drive an HGV and wider learning would go on. The confidence of being in that college environment would be a benefit and gives opportunity. Having 6 journeys a day seems a good balance.

Councillor Reeves would have liked to see the details of the mitigations being put in place as they might answer some of their queries but was likely to support it. He acknowledged that Highways supported it.

On the proposal of Councillor Packard, seconded by Councillor Smithson it was

RESOLVED

That the application is approved, subject to conditions, including:

1. Standard 3-year time limit for implementation
2. Approved drawings and documents
3. Lighting design strategy for biodiversity
4. Development must be undertaken in accordance with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Newt Survey
5. BNG Plan to accord with the BNG Statement
6. Construction Management Strategy
7. Visibility splays
8. Completion of accesses prior to first use
9. All HGV/LGV traffic movements to be in accordance with the submitted Traffic Management Statement
10. Standard BNG condition

After a short adjournment the meeting reconvened.

The Committee received report **ES/2557** of the Head of Planning and Building Control which related to planning application **DC/21/2503/OUT**. The Planning Manager gave a presentation explaining that the application was made in outline, with all matters reserved, save for access, which was detailed in full. He explained the background to the site and highlighted the 2021 application date and that it had been delayed due to some Highways issues. The proposal relates to a site allocated in the Development Plan for housing and comprises up to 41 dwellings served by a new vehicular access from the B1121 / Saxmundham Road. Associated works are detailed within the application.

The Planning Manager showed site plans and site photos including those showing the site access. Members were presented with the plan showing access points and vehicular routes through the site and the right of way on the boundary of the site which would be improved. A map showing the Rights of Way network was shown with the Mill Lane route shown in blue which was a narrow lane with no room for a footway. Photos were shown of the footpath that could be widened and made into a bridleway.

Members were shown a site map of the entrance into the site with the proposed shared cycle path on Saxmundham Road and tactile crossing points. A new bus stop was proposed but this was not supported due to the negative impact it would have on the adjacent Grade II listed building. There could be a new crossing point to the existing bus stop and there would be offsite Highways works to improve access for pedestrians along Forge Close through conditions but they were limited in what can be achieved due to the nature of the road.

The Planning Manager showed a photo of the verge that Highways say is under their ownership but is contested by residents of Schott's Meadow. He showed improvements that would be made from the exit from The Beeches although these were limited due to the nature of the road.

He explained that the Parameter Plan with key uses identified would be embedded into the planning permission if approved. He pointed out the swale and pockets of greenery and play space area. The grey areas are where housing would be located and he highlighted the drainage basin next to Schott's Meadow. Members were shown an indicative housing plan but the final layout would be further scrutinised.

The Planning Manager showed a map of the proposed National Grid Sea Link project and it was noted that the local community was unsettled having multiple things to decide. However it was pointed out that this application site was an allocated site and there was no reason to delay a decision due to other plans that are being consulted on.

He concluded by running through the material considerations and key issues and explained that the amended details of the scheme are acceptable and in compliance with policy, so the application was recommended for approval subject to the conclusion of a s106 Agreement and conditions as summarised in the report.

Councillor Hedgley asked to see map and if the brown area had already been built out, which was confirmed by the Planning Manager.

Councillor Smithson asked about the walking route to school. She asked if you would have to walk in the road and if there was no way of creating a safe route to the school. The Planning Manager explained that the scheme will fill in some missing footways but in some areas, like Mill Lane, it wasn't possible. He explained that there was a route through Schott's Meadow but this was a private development and not a public right of way. The best mitigations possible would be put in and there would be an improvement on the current situation.

The Head of Planning and Building Control explained that on small estates there are unadopted roads with connecting pathways. They do become part of the community but the management company could stop access. There could be an application for a right of way in the future. He said other provisions were provided and there are over 270 dwellings in Benhall that were accessing the school without a safe route but they were doing the best they can.

Councillor Reeves asked about the enhanced bridleway and if it would be suitable for cyclists and a double buggy to fit side by side. The Planning Manager explained it would be 3 metres wide and resurfaced. He couldn't say if they would fit both side by side but the Chair said it was a good width for a shared path.

Councillor Packard asked about the railway line. The Planning Manager said Network Rail have not objected but the railway line would have to be fenced off which was included as a condition of the boundary treatment.

Councillor McCallum asked why planners were using maps and not Google Earth. The Head of Planning and Building Control said Google Earth was not always completely up to date so they have to be careful. He said they would keep to what is included in plans at the moment but advised members to use Google Earth for their meeting preparation.

Councillor Reeves asked about the bus stop next to the Grade II listed building and thought that if people were advised to use the one on the other side of the road this would be going the wrong way. The Planning Manager explained there was already a bus stop by the Grade II listed building but there would be no formal shelter erected as this would detract from the Grade II listed building. There would be an improved road crossing there though.

The Chair asked about the speed limit. The Planning Manager said it was 40mph on the road that you would exit out of the estate onto and then national speed limit further along.

Councillor Plummer asked about secondary schools. The Head of Planning and Building Control said most went to Leiston and there was bus provision.

The Objector was invited to speak. He lives in Schott's Meadow and objects on the grounds that the access is not suitable. The access is onto a fast, 40mph main road. He contested that Highways owns the land between the development and the main road and showed a map of the property deeds showing the land owned by residents marked by a red line which included the verge. No lights were proposed on the path which

would be very dark. The road was not suitable and it will become even busier as more vehicles will be coming down there. Opening up access through Schott's Meadow was not something the residents would be open to. He showed a picture of farm machinery accessing the field and asked how this would access the fields beyond the site. The width of access would be reduced and he questioned if this site was appropriate for this many houses.

Councillor Nicholson spoke on behalf of the Parish Council. She explained this was the largest number of houses ever built in Benhall at one time and it needs to be as good as it can be in terms of links with the village. Activities for mental and physical wellbeing are important. They feel that the access route onto the B1121 is awful with a contested verge ownership and a shared path that is too narrow. There were always vehicles parked along the road and vulnerable users will be tangling with vehicles. You wouldn't let children use this route. It has no benefit to the village but there is a better option by using footpath 26. Instead of a 'nice to have bridleway' this could be the key access to the village. It comes out opposite the primary school and the access point to the new cycling route and gives better access to the village facilities. Therefore they would like to see the main non-vehicular access to be via footpath 26 and the other route could be dropped entirely as it is unsafe. She concluded that they were very confused by the Sea Link and planning applications and wasn't sure who trumped who.

Councillor McCallum asked if the Parish Council was happy with the development but not the access. Councillor Nicholson said they weren't entirely happy but accept it is in the Local Plan. Councillor McCallum asked if they had worked with the developer. Councillor Nicholson said no but they would like to.

The Applicant's Agent was invited to speak. He said the main consideration is that this is allocated in the Local Plan. There are 12 criteria on what it should deliver and they strongly believe that it delivers on all the points. This has been scrutinised for over 4 years. He explained that they weren't putting 50 units on the site as per the Local Plan because the site can't take 50 and it would be an overdevelopment. His family lives in the village and what they have designed will fit into the village like the Schott's Meadow development. It is policy compliant, there will be 14 affordable homes, sustainable drainage and they have engaged with Highways to provide enhancements. There will be a good housing mix which will be attractive and not over developed. There is capacity at the sewage works and they will be upgrading footpath 26 so it is 3metres wide and resurfaced.

Councillor Smithson asked about tractors going through the site. The Agent said this was a risk. Originally they had looked at accessing the back of the site whilst the front was farmed but now it was the other way around. There will still be a field at the back but this will be dealt with at detailed design stage.

The Chair asked about footpath 26. The Agent explained it was being upgraded so it can be used all year round and it was part of the proposal.

Ward Member Councillor Graham spoke. She explained historically the residents were opposed to the development but they accept that it will go ahead so they want to make sure it is fully integrated and promotes active travel. She said the footpath should be the main access rather than the other proposal on Saxmundham Road, which would

not be accessible and was not considered suitable by the disability forum. They would like the footpath improved to a high quality bridleway in consultation with the Parish Council together with maintenance agreements in place for both these active travel schemes. In rural communities bridleways often become unusable. This was a small, rural community that was facing big challenges but they were going to great lengths and the cycling/walking strategy should not be undermined.

The Planning Manager explained that footpath 26 will be upgraded to be 3m wide. The Chair asked him to clarify which section he was talking about. The Planning Manager showed the map and explained that the footpath marked in purple would be made a bridleway. There was nothing to say a resident had to use the access on Saxmundham Road. They might choose to go either way. However there was still the issue with accessing Mill Lane and he showed the route down Mill Lane to the school on google street view. He explained there was no scope to introduce a footway in Mill Lane but this route is already in use by residents and this application will make improvements where they can.

The Head of Planning and Building Control said the cycling/walking/wheeling group has been looking at improvements connecting Benhall to Saxmundham and £400k of CIL will be used to improve this route. This has only been allocated because of the site allocation in the Local Plan. The pavement does help to connect to Saxmundham and without this pavement and crossing points you would have to double back onto Mill Lane. There is some joined up delivery. He confirmed that the verge area B1121 was Highways land.

Councillor Reeves asked if the footpath marked in purple was footpath 26. The Planning Manager said it was and pointed it out on the map. He explained that the section as far as Mill Lane would be upgraded to bridleway standard.

The Chair asked for route clarity on the B1121 and how it linked up with the new CIL funded route cycling/wheeling/walking route to Saxmundham. The Head of Planning and Building Control said it doesn't connect directly but it is in the Local Plan and offers improvements that do improve and promote active travel. He reminded Members that they also have to meet the housing numbers imposed by Government.

Councillor Reeves asked if there was early years provision at the primary school. The Planning Manager wasn't sure but believed there was.

Councillor Deacon said as the site is in the Local Plan and the footpath will be hard surfaced and there is access to the school he doesn't have an issue and would be happy to proposing approval.

Councillor McCallum agreed with Councillor Deacon and would second it.

The Chair said it was an important area for the cycling group. The solution wasn't ideal and the speed limits and parking issues were still there. Further campaigning needs to be done to make this as safe as possible.

On the proposal of Councillor Deacon, seconded by Councillor McCallum it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That the application be approved and granted outline planning permission, subject to the conclusion of a S106 Agreement and with conditions as summarised below.

1. Time limits
2. Submission of Reserved Matters / compliance
3. Reserved Matters detail to be in accordance with approved parameter plans
4. Access approved in accordance with submitted plans/details
5. Details of off-site highway works to be submitted and approved
6. Details of fire hydrants as required by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service
7. Standard archaeological conditions
8. Standard suite of ecological conditions
9. Standard land contamination condition(s)
10. Construction Management Plan
11. Highways conditions (to be confirmed via update sheet)
12. Drainage – submission of strategy with RM application
13. Drainage – construction surface water management plan
14. Public right of way – improvements and upgrades; details to be submitted for approval
15. Public right of way – implementation of improvements and upgrades
16. Details of fencing required by Network Rail to be submitted for approval

8 DC/25/3118/ADN - Sizewell Beach Toilet Block

The Committee received report **ES/2558** of the Head of Planning and Building Control which related to planning application **DC/25/3118/AND**. Members received a presentation from the Assistant Planner who explained that the application was for non-illuminated advertising consent for the erection of a wall mounted timber notice board with glass door at the Sizewell Beach Toilet Block. The Assistant Planner showed images of the proposed new noticeboard and a photo of the existing noticeboard. He explained that the application triggered a referral to planning committee as East Suffolk Council was the owner of the building to which the notice board would be installed. The application was recommended for approval subject to conditions.

Councillor Reeves asked if it was correct at paragraph 3.1 of the report where it says the size of the noticeboard was 1 x A4 and surely it was much larger. The Assistant Planner confirmed it was 1m by 62cm and thinks this was a typo in the report and should have read A1 not A4.

On the proposal of Councillor Bennett, seconded by Councillor Thompson it was unanimously

RESOLVED

That Approval is recommended to grant advertisement consent subject to conditions.

1. All advertisements displayed, and any land used for the display of advertisements, shall be maintained in a clean and tidy condition to the reasonable satisfaction of the

Local Planning Authority. Reason: As required by the Town and Country (Control of Advertisement) Regulations in force at this time.

2. Any hoarding or similar structure, or any sign, placard, board or device erected or used principally for the purpose of displaying advertisements shall be maintained in a safe condition to the reasonable satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. Reason: as required by the Town and Country (Control of Advertisements) Regulations in force at this time.

3. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out other than in complete accordance with the drawings SZC-SZ0100-XX-000-DRW-100738 REV 01 and SZC-SZ0100-XX-000-DRW-100796 on 12/08/2025. Reason: For avoidance of doubt as to what has been considered and approved.

The meeting concluded at 4:21pm

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Chair



Planning Committee South

Title of Report:

East Suffolk Enforcement Action – Case Update

Meeting Date

16 December 2025

Report Author and Tel No

Mia Glass
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Is the report Open or Exempt?

Open

REPORT

The attached is a summary of the status of all outstanding enforcement cases for East Suffolk Council where enforcement action has either been sanctioned under delegated powers or through the Committee up until 24th November 2025. At present there are 22 such cases.

Information on all cases has been updated at the time of preparing the report such that the last row in the table for each item shows the position at that time. Officers will provide a further verbal update should the situation have changed for any of the cases.

Members will note that where Enforcement action has been authorised the Councils Solicitor shall be instructed accordingly, but the speed of delivery of response may be affected by factors which are outside of the control of the Enforcement Service.

The cases are organised into categories based upon current status:

A. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served, and the compliance period is still ongoing. *8 current cases*

B. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served and is now the subject of an appeal. *7 current cases*

- C. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served, upheld on appeal, and is now within a compliance period. *4 current case*
- D. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served, upheld on appeal/no appeal submitted and is currently the subject of court action. *0 current cases*
- E. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served, upheld on appeal/no appeal submitted and now in the period for compliance following court action. *1 current case*
- F. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served, upheld on appeal, and the period for compliance following court action has now expired, so further legal proceedings are being considered and/or are underway. *1 current cases*
- G. Cases on which a formal enforcement action has been placed on hold or where it is not currently expedient to pursue. *1 current case*

RECOMMENDATION

That the outstanding enforcement matters up to 24th November 2025 be noted.

A. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served, and the compliance period is still ongoing.

A.1

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/2018/0476/USE
Location / Address	Part Os 1028 Highgate Lane Dallinghoo
North or South Area	South
Date of Report of Breach	15.11.2018
Nature of Breach: Siting of a converted vehicle for residential use	
Summary timeline of actions on case 11/09/2023 - Enforcement Notice served. Comes into effect on the 11/10/2023 19/03/2024 - Extension of time given until May, due to ground conditions. 15/05/2024 - Extension of time given until 27/06/2025 due to receipt of confidential information 23/06/2025 - Further extension granted until 19 th June 2027 due to confidential information	
Current Status/Position In compliance period.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	19.06.2027

A.2

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/22/0038/DEV
Location / Address	The Queen The Street Brandeston
North or South Area	South
Date of Report of Breach	11.02.2022
Nature of Breach: Change of use for the property from public house with ancillary accommodation to an independent residential dwelling.	
Summary timeline of actions on case 11/04/2024 -Enforcement notice served. Comes into effect on the 11/05/2024 17/06/2025 -Site visit conducted and investigations ongoing.	
Current Status/Position Investigation ongoing.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	11.05.2025

A.3

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/22/0066/DEV
Location / Address	Hornbill Business Park, Hornbill Way, Ellough
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	11.03.2022
Nature of Breach: Erection of new business units	
Summary timeline of actions on case 31/10/2024 -Enforcement Notice served, comes into effect 30/11/2024, with 9-month compliance period. 26/06/2025 - Planning application submitted for development DC/25/2597/FUL. 15/07/2025 - 6-month extension given, to allow for the planning application to be decided.	
Current Status/Position Within compliance period.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	15.01.2026

A.4

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/23/0256/DEV
Location / Address	45 Essex Road, Lowestoft
North or South Area	North

Date of Report of Breach	04.08.2023
Nature of Breach: Erection of a porch	
Summary timeline of actions on case 05/12/2024 -Enforcement Notice served, comes into effect 08.01.2025, with 3-month compliance period. 14/03/2025 - Planning application received to reduce the porch- DC/25/1006/FUL 12/05/2025 -DC/25/1006/FUL approved for reduced porch. Current porch required to be removed within 6 months of the permission. 29/10/2025 - Site visit, notice has been complied with. Case closed.	
Current Status/Position Case Closed	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	12/11/2025

A.5

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/24/0047/DEV
Location / Address	Potton Hall Blythburgh Road Westleton
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	09.02.2024
Nature of Breach: Breach of Condition 8 of C/06/0819– hardstanding laid	
Summary timeline of actions on case 18/02/2025 – Breach of Condition Notice served. Comes into effect on the 18/02/2025. 4 month compliance period. 19/03/2025 - Application submitted including the hardstanding- DC/25/1209/FUL. 27/08/2025 - Planning application approved for part of the hard standing. 6 months given for unauthorised section to be removed.	
Current Status/Position In compliance period.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	27.02.2026

A.6

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/22/0154/DEV
Location / Address	175 London Road North, Lowestoft
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	20.05.2022
Nature of Breach: Unauthorised changes to shop front	

<u>Summary timeline of actions on case</u> 11/06/2025 – Enforcement notice served. Comes into effect on 11/07/2025. 6-month compliance period.	
<u>Current Status/Position</u> In compliance period.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	11.01.2026

A.7

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/23/0406/DEV
Location / Address	148 Blackheath Road, Lowestoft
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	17.11.2023
<u>Nature of Breach:</u> Unauthorised partially built extension	
<u>Summary timeline of actions on case</u> 11/06/2025 – Enforcement notice served. Comes into effect on 11/07/2025. 4-month compliance period.	
<u>Current Status/Position</u> In compliance period.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	11.11.2025

A.8

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/22/0329/DEV
Location / Address	Farm View 4 Millville, Mill Lane, Campsea Ashe
North or South Area	South
Date of Report of Breach	24.08.2022
<u>Nature of Breach:</u> Erection of a storage building	
<u>Summary timeline of actions on case</u> 19/08/2025 – Enforcement notice served. Comes into effect on 18/09/2025. 4 month compliance period.	
<u>Current Status/Position</u> In compliance period.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	18.12.2025

B. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served and is now the subject of an appeal

B.1

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/21/0201/DEV
Location / Address	39 Foxglove End, Leiston
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	26.04.2021
Nature of Breach: Artificial hedge, support structure and fencing which is over 2m in height	
Summary timeline of actions on case 28/11/2022 – Enforcement Notice served. Comes into effect on the 06/01/2023. 2 months for compliance 09/01/2023 - Pre-start letter from Planning Inspectorate 09/01/2024 - Start letter received from Planning Inspectorate, statements required by 20 th February 2024.	
Current Status/Position Awaiting Planning Inspectorate Decision.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	Dependent upon date and outcome of Appeal Decision

B.2

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/22/0247/USE
Location / Address	Part Land East Of Mariawood, Hulver Street, Henstead
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	15.11.2018
Nature of Breach: Siting of mobile home	
Summary timeline of actions on case 21/09/2023 –Enforcement Notice served. Comes into effect on the 21/10/2023 23/10/2023 - Appeal submitted, awaiting start letter. 05/01/2024 - Start letter received from Planning Inspectorate, statements required by 15 th February 2024. 01/08/2025 - Planning Inspectorate site visit 03/09/2025. 30/10/2025 -The Inspector allowed the appeal and quashed the enforcement notice.	
Current Status/Position Enforcement notice quashed	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	n/a

B.3

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/23/0234/DEV
Location / Address	Animal Welfare Centre, 333 High Street, Walton
North or South Area	South
Date of Report of Breach	26.07.2023
Nature of Breach: Change of use of animal clinic and boarding facilities to use for storage of furniture, building materials and other associated items with a property development business.	
Summary timeline of actions on case 02/05/2024 -Enforcement notice served. Comes into effect on the 01/06/2024 03/06/2024 -Appeal Submitted, awaiting start date. 19/09/2024 -Appeal start letter received. Statement due by 28 th October 2024	
Current Status/Position Awaiting Planning Inspectorate Decision.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	Dependent upon date and outcome of Appeal Decision

B.4

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/24/0103/DEV
Location / Address	37 Foxglove End, Leiston
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	28.03.2024
Nature of Breach: Erection of artificial hedge and supporting structure	
Summary timeline of actions on case 13/08/2024 -Enforcement Notice served, comes into effect 12/09/2024, with 2 month compliance period. 13/09/2024 - Appeal submitted, awaiting start letter.	
Current Status/Position Awaiting Planning Inspectorate Decision.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	Dependent upon date and outcome of Appeal Decision

B.5

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/23/0336/DEV
Location / Address	Land at The Green, Saxtead, Woodbridge
North or South Area	South
Date of Report of Breach	29.09.2023

Nature of Breach: Laying of a hardstanding and associated groundworks	
Summary timeline of actions on case 17/10/2024 -Enforcement Notice served, comes into effect 16/11/2024, with 4-month compliance period. 29/11/2024 - Appeal submitted, awaiting start letter. 11/02/2025 - Start letter received, statements due by 20 th March 2025.	
Current Status/Position Awaiting Planning Inspectorate Decision.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	Dependent upon date and outcome of Appeal Decision

B.6

Location / Address	Land Adjacent Toad Cottage 146 Kirton Road Trimley St Martin
North or South Area	South
Date of Report of Breach	11.11.2022
Nature of Breach: Unauthorised storage	
Summary timeline of actions on case 18/02/2025 - Enforcement Notice served. Comes into effect on the 20/03/2025. 3 month compliance period. 18/03/2025 - Appeal submitted, awaiting start letter. 15/04/2025 - Appeal start letter received. Statements due by 26 th May 2025.	
Current Status/Position Awaiting Planning Inspectorate Decision.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	Dependent upon date and outcome of Appeal Decision

B.7

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/24/0292/USE
Location / Address	The Old Golf Shop, Newbourne Road, Waldringfield
North or South Area	South
Date of Report of Breach	13.09.2024
Nature of Breach: Unauthorised residential use of golf shop.	
Summary timeline of actions on case 29/04/2025 – Enforcement notice served. Comes into effect on the 29/05/2025. 12 month compliance period. 16/06/2025 - Appeal start letter received, statements due 28 th July.	
Current Status/Position	

Awaiting Planning Inspectorate Appeal Decision	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	Dependent upon date and outcome of Appeal Decision

C. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served, notice upheld on appeal, and is now within a compliance period.

C.1

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/23/0163/DEV
Location / Address	12 Holland Road, Felixstowe
North or South Area	South
Date of Report of Breach	26.05.2023
Nature of Breach: Erection of a ground floor extension and air conditioning unit.	
Summary timeline of actions on case 26/03/2024 - Enforcement Notice served. Comes into effect on the 25/04/2024 29/04/2024 – Appeal submitted. Statement due by 20 th June 12/06/2025 - Appeal dismissed. 21/10/2025 - Extension of time agreed due to extenuating circumstance.	
Current Status/Position In compliance period following appeal.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	23.02.2026

C.2

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/21/0121/USE
Location / Address	The Pastures, The Street, North Cove
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	17.03.2021
Nature of Breach: Material change of use of Land to a storage use, including the stationing of static and touring caravans for residential use and the storage of vehicles, lorry backs, and other items.	
Summary timeline of actions on case 03/11/2022 – Enforcement Notice served. Comes into effect on the 05/12/2022. 4 months for compliance 14/11/2022 - Pre-start letter from Planning Inspectorate 14/12/2022 - Appeal started. Written Representations Process, statement due by 6 th February 2023. PINS Reference APP/X3540/C/22/3312353 13/06/2025 - Appeal visit date set for 18 th August 2025. 26/08/2025 - Appeal dismissed. 6 months for compliance.	
Current Status/Position In Compliance period	

Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	26.02.2026
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C.3

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/22/0158/DEV
Location / Address	11 Wharton Street, Bungay
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	20.05.2022
Nature of Breach: Without Listed Building Consent the unauthorised installation of an exterior glazed door located in front of the front door.	
Summary timeline of actions on case 28/11/2022 – Listed Building Enforcement Notice served. Comes into effect on the 06/01/2023 . 3 months for compliance 09/01/2023 – Pre-start letter from Planning Inspectorate 31/01/2023 – Start letter received from Planning Inspectorate, statements required by 14 th March 2023. 17/09/2025 - Appeal dismissed. 3 months for compliance.	
Current Status/Position In compliance period	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	17.12.2025

C.4

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/20/0131/LISTL
Location / Address	6 Upper Olland Street, Bungay
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	15.04.2020
Nature of Breach: Unauthorised works to a Listed Building (Installation of roller shutter and advertisements)	
Summary timeline of actions on case 17/03/2022 - Listed Building Enforcement Notice served and takes effect on 18/04/2022. 3 months for compliance. 19/04/2022 - Appeal start date. Written Representations Procedure PINS Reference APP/X3540/F/22/3297116 07/06/2022 – Statement submitted 28/06/2022 – final comments due. 3/10/2025 - Appeal dismissed, compliance required by 2 nd January 2026.	
Current Status/Position In compliance period.	

Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	02/01/2026
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D. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served, upheld on appeal/no appeal submitted and is currently the subject of court action.

E. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served, upheld on appeal/no appeal submitted and now in the period for compliance following court action

E.1

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/21/0051/USE
Location / Address	Land West Of Guildhall Lane, Wrentham
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	10.02.2021
Nature of Breach: Change of use and unauthorised operational development (mixed use including storage of materials, vehicles and caravans and residential use /erection of structures and laying of hardstanding)	
Summary timeline of actions on case 10/03/2022 - Enforcement Notices served and takes effect on 11/04/2022. 4 months for compliance. 25/08/2022 - Site visit to check for compliance with Notices. File has been passed to the Legal Dept for further action. 19/12/2022 – Court date set following non compliance at Ipswich magistrates for 30 th January 2023. 30/01/2023 - Court over listed and therefore case relisted for 27 th March 2023 27/03/2023 - Defendant did not attend, warrant issued, awaiting decision from court. 31/07/2023 - Defendant attended court, plead guilty to all charges and was fined £5134.78 in total. 23/07/2024 - Site visit undertaken, court papers updated and passed to legal. 24/07/2025 - High Court for injunction proceedings. Court requires further information to be submitted. 10/10/2025 - Injunction granted. Cease residential use and removal of caravans and mobiles homes required by 10 th April 2026 and other requirements of the notice by 10 th June 2026.	
Current Status/Position In injunction compliance period.	
Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	10/04/2026 & 10/06/2026

F. Cases on which a formal enforcement notice has been served, upheld on appeal, and the period for compliance following court action has now expired, so further legal proceedings are being considered and/or are underway.

F.1

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	EN08/0264 & ENF/2013/0191
Location / Address	Pine Lodge Caravan Park, Hazels Lane, Hinton
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	20.10.2008
<u>Nature of Breach:</u> Erection of a building and new vehicular access; Change of use of the land to a touring caravan site (Exemption Certificate revoked) and use of land for the site of a mobile home for gypsy/traveller use. Various unauthorised utility buildings for use on caravan site.	
<p>15/10/2010 – Enforcement Notice served 08/02/2010 - Appeal received 10/11/2010 - Appeal dismissed 25/06/2013 - Three Planning applications received 06/11/2013 – The three applications refused at Planning Committee. 13/12/2013 - Appeal Lodged 21/03/2014 – Enforcement Notices served and became effective on 24/04/2014 04/07/2014 - Appeal Start date - Appeal to be dealt with by Hearing 31/01/2015 – New planning appeal received for refusal of Application DC/13/3708 03/02/2015 – Appeal Decision – Two notices quashed for the avoidance of doubt, two notices upheld. Compliance time on notice relating to mobile home has been extended from 12 months to 18 months. 10/11/2015 – Informal hearing held 01/03/2016 – Planning Appeal dismissed 04/08/2016 – Site re-visited three of four Notices have not been complied with. 21/04/2017 - Trial date. Two charges relating to the mobile home, steps and hardstanding, the owner pleaded guilty to these to charges and was fined £1000 for failing to comply with the Enforcement Notice plus £600 in costs. The Council has requested that the mobile home along with steps, hardstanding and access be removed by 16/06/2017. 19/06/2017 – Site re-visited, no compliance with the Enforcement Notice. 14/11/2017 – Full Injunction granted for the removal of the mobile home and steps. 21/11/2017 – Mobile home and steps removed from site. Review site regarding day block and access after decision notice released for enforcement notice served in connection with unauthorised occupancy /use of barn. 27/06/2018 – Compliance visit conducted to check on whether the 2010. 06/07/2018 – Legal advice sought. 10/09/2018 – Site revisited to check for compliance with Notices. 11/09/2018 – Case referred back to Legal Department for further action to be considered.</p>	

<p>11/10/2018 – Court hearing at the High Court in relation to the steps remain on the 2014 Enforcement Notice/ Injunction granted. Two months for compliance (11/12/2018).</p> <p>01/11/2018 – Court Hearing at the High Court in relation to the 2010 Enforcement Notice. Injunctive remedy sought. Verbal update to be given. Injunction granted. Three months given for compliance with Enforcement Notices served in 2010.</p> <p>13/12/2018 – Site visit undertaken in regards to Injunction served for 2014 Notice. No compliance. Passed back to Legal for further action.</p> <p>04/02/2019 – Site visit undertaken to check on compliance with Injunction served on 01/11/2018</p> <p>26/02/2019 – case passed to Legal for further action to be considered. Update to be given at Planning Committee</p> <p>27/03/2019 - High Court hearing, the case was adjourned until the 03/04/2019</p> <p>03/04/2019 - Officers attended the High Court, a warrant was issued due to non-attendance and failure to provide medical evidence explaining the non-attendance as was required in the Order of 27/03/2019.</p> <p>11/04/2019 – Officers returned to the High Court, the case was adjourned until 7 May 2019.</p> <p>07/05/2019 – Officers returned to the High Court. A three month suspended sentence for 12 months was given and the owner was required to comply with the Notices by 03/09/2019.</p> <p>05/09/2019 – Site visit undertaken; file passed to Legal Department for further action. Court date arranged for 28/11/2019.</p> <p>28/11/2019 - Officers returned to the High Court. A new three month suspended sentence for 12 months was given and the owner was required to comply in full with the Injunctions and the Order of the Judge by 31/01/2020</p>	
<p><u>Current Status/Position</u> Site visited. Case currently with the Council’s Legal Team for assessment. Charging orders have been placed on the land to recover costs.</p>	
<p>Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)</p>	<p>Dependent upon potential Legal Process</p>

G. Cases on which a formal enforcement action has been placed on hold or where it is not currently expedient to pursue

G.1

LPA Enforcement Case Reference	ENF/2015/0279/DEV
Location / Address	Land at Dam Lane Kessingland
North or South Area	North
Date of Report of Breach	22/09/2015
<p><u>Nature of Breach:</u> Erection of outbuildings and wooden jetties, fencing and gates over 1 metre adjacent to highway and engineering operations amounting to the formation of a lake and soil bunds.</p>	
<p><u>Summary timeline of actions on case</u> 22/09/2015 - Initial complaint logged by parish. 08/12/2016 - Case was reopened following further information 01/03/2017 - Retrospective app received. Following delays in information requested, on 20/06/2018, Cate Buck, Senior Planning and Enforcement Officer, took over the case, she communicated and met with the owner on several occasions. 05/09/2018 - Notice served by recorded delivery. 18/06/2019 - Appeal started. PINS Reference APP/T3535/C/18/3211982 24/07/2019 – Appeal Statement Submitted 05/02/2020 - Appeal dismissed. Compliance with both Notices by 05/08/2020 03/03/2021 - Court hearing in relation to structures and fencing/gates Case adjourned until 05/07/2021 for trial. Further visit due after 30/04/21 to check for compliance with steps relating to lake removal. 30/04/2021 - Further legal advice being sought in relation to the buildings and fencing. Extension of time given until 30/04/21 for removal of the lake and reverting the land back to agricultural use due to Licence being required for removal of protected species. 04/05/2021 - Further visit conducted to check for compliance on Notice relating to the lake. No compliance. Case being reviewed. 05/07/2021 – Court hearing, owner was found guilty of two charges and had already pleaded guilty to one offence. Fined £550 and £700 costs 12/07/2021 – Letter sent to owner giving until the 10th August 2021 for the structures to be removed 13/08/2021 - Site visited and all structures had removed from the site, but lake remains</p>	
<p><u>Current Status/Position</u> On Hold. Ongoing consideration is taking place in respect of the compliance with the enforcement notice for removal of the lake. This is due to the possible presence of protected species and formation of protected habitat. Consideration is also required in respect of the hydrological implications of removal of the lake. At present, with the removal of structures and no harmful use taking place, the lake removal is not an immediately urgent action.</p>	

Date by which Compliance expected (or prosecution date)	31/12/2025
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Committee Report

Planning committee - 16 December 2025

Application no. DC/25/1945/FUL

Location

Fynn Valley Golf Club
Rose Hill
Witnesham
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP6 9JA

Statutory determination date 9 July 2025

Application type Full Application

Applicant Mr Robert Cawley

Parish Witnesham

Proposal Change of Use from staff room/office to full time Warden's accommodation

Case Officer Eleanor Attwood
07385 407101

eleanor.attwood@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Authorising Officer Katherine Scott, Principal Planner (Development Management)

Determination route This application is before Planning Committee for determination because applicant is either a member of staff or elected member of East Suffolk Council.

1. Summary

- 1.1. This application seeks planning permission 'change of Use from staff room/office to full time Warden's accommodation'.
- 1.2. This application is before Members because the applicant is an elected member of East Suffolk Council and the application is therefore required to be determined by the Planning Committee.
- 1.3. The application is recommended for refusal.

2. Site Description

- 2.1. The development site comprises land associated with Fynn Valley Golf Club. Fynn Valley Golf Club is located on the east side of Witnesham Road, to the north-east of Witnesham village, but is outside of a defined settlement boundary and is therefore located in the Countryside. The surrounding land is agricultural.
- 2.2. The site is not within a Conservation Area or within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths National Landscape.
- 2.3. The golf club's vehicular access off Witnesham Road is shared by several residential properties and holiday letting accommodation situated further east.
- 2.4. The application site comprises a self-contained residential unit positioned on an area of hardstanding. This unit is understood to be currently vacant, but it is subject to an enforcement case, and evidence suggests that it was previously occupied for residential use.
- 2.5. A previous application (DC/24/2596/FUL) sought to retain the unit for use as chef's accommodation; however, this was refused on the grounds of non-compliance with Policy SCLP5.6.
- 2.6. On the wider area of hardstanding, permission was granted under application DC/24/3458/FUL for the siting of a storage unit and the retention of another unit for storage purposes.

3. Proposal

- 3.1. Permission is sought for the retention of the unit for use as warden's accommodation at Fynn Valley Golf Club
- 3.2. The unit contains two bedrooms, a bathroom, and an open plan kitchen/dining/sitting area.
- 3.3. The applicant has indicated that the unit may be intended for dual use as wardens' and chefs' accommodation. However, the application has been submitted on the basis of wardens' accommodation only.

4. Background to the Application

- 4.1. The unit is currently subject to an open enforcement case. During a site visit in September 2023, officers observed several portacabins, containers, and caravans being used for residential purposes, including the unit that is the subject of this application. This constituted a breach of planning control.
- 4.2. Following this visit an application was submitted which proposed to retain the subject unit for residential use to accommodate a chef, along with the retention of other portacabins for storage and office use (Ref: DC/24/2596/FUL). The application was refused under delegated authority as the proposed residential use of the unit was found to be contrary to Policy SCLP5.6 (Rural Workers Dwellings).
- 4.3. A subsequent application (Ref: DC/24/3458/FUL) was submitted seeking to retain a number of portacabins for storage and office use. This application did not include the unit that is the subject of the current proposal and was subsequently approved.
- 4.4. The unit remains on site without any authorised use. As a result, the enforcement case remains open pending determination of the current application.

5. Consultations/comments

- 5.1. No third party representations have been received. The consultation period has expired.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Witnesham Parish Council	22 May 2025	12 June 2025
Summary of comments: "No Objection Following consideration at Planning and Property Committee meeting 9th June 2025"		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
SCC Highways Department	22 May 2025	10 June 2025
Summary of comments: Recommend a condition to secure parking areas.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Environmental Protection	22 May 2025	29 May 2025
Summary of comments: No comments to make.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Ecology	22 May 2025	2 June 2025

Summary of comments: Informative for protected species recommended.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
SCC Fire And Rescue Service	22 May 2025	2 June 2025
Summary of comments: Comments provided on access and fire fighting facilities, and water supplies.		

Site notices

Site Notice Type	Date Posted	Expiry date	Reason
General Site Notice	4 June 2025	25 June 2025	General Site Notice

6. Planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

SCLP3.3 - Settlement Boundaries (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP4.2 - New Employment Development (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP5.3 - Housing Development in the Countryside (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP5.6 - Rural Workers Dwellings (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP7.2 - Parking Proposals and Standards (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP10.1 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP10.4 - Landscape Character (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP11.1 - Design Quality (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP11.2 - Residential Amenity (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document (East Suffolk Council, Adopted April 2024)

7. Planning Considerations

- 7.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.2. The East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan was adopted on 23 September 2020 and forms part of the Development Plan.
- 7.3. The Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document was adopted in April 2024 and forms a material consideration for this application.
- 7.4. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) also form material planning considerations in the determination of planning applications.

Principle of Development

- 7.5. The proposal seeks the retention of a residential unit for use as full-time wardens' accommodation.
- 7.6. The Design and Access Statement states that a warden is "*required to be on site 24 hours to provide security, access, and take charge of deliveries.*"
- 7.7. The statement also notes that planning permission has been granted for an extension to the clubhouse, which is expected to increase customer capacity, with evening events accommodating over 300 people. In addition, the golf club currently has four holiday lodges, with permission for ten more.
- 7.8. It is suggested that the warden will support functions at the clubhouse and manage the holiday accommodation, alongside the daily operation of the golf club for golfing activities.
- 7.9. The proposal, as submitted, would effectively constitute a new residential dwelling in the countryside and therefore requires assessment against Policy SCLP5.3.
- 7.10. In accordance with Policy SCLP5.3, outside of the defined Settlement Boundaries, new residential development will be limited to:
 - a) Affordable housing to meet identified local needs on exception sites adjacent to, or well related to, Settlement Boundaries or clusters of housing in the countryside (in accordance with Policy SCLP5.11 and Policy SCLP5.4);
 - b) Limited development within existing clusters (in accordance with Policy SCLP5.4);
 - c) Replacement dwellings on a one to one basis where these are no more visually intrusive in the countryside than the building to be replaced;
 - d) Subdivision of an existing larger dwelling;
 - e) Conversion of an existing building (in accordance with Policy SCLP5.5);
 - f) Rural workers dwellings, where there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work (in accordance with Policy SCLP5.6);

g) Other residential development consistent with policy on residential development in the countryside contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 7.11. The supporting information provided with this application is limited. The Design and Access Statement does not specify which criterion of Policy SCLP5.3 the proposal seeks to satisfy. Nevertheless, officers have assessed the scheme against this policy and concluded that it does not meet criteria (a) to (e). Further consideration is given below in relation to rural workers' dwellings (criteria f and g).
- 7.12. The proposal has been considered under criterion f of Policy SCLP5.6 (Rural Workers Dwellings). The application documents do not refer to this policy, and the application does not fully address the requirements of the policy (guidance for which can be found in the Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document).
- 7.13. The proposal has not been presented as a temporary use. However, if it had been, policy SCLP6.5 would not be applicable as this policy relates to permanent dwellings, although the considerations would be similar. Instead, paragraph 84 of the NPPF would be key. This sets out that "*planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply: a) there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;*". It is not considered that this paragraph could be met for wardens accommodation.
- 7.14. In consideration under SCLP5.6, there are a number of rural activities that require a worker to be accommodated either on-site or nearby. In particular there are some agricultural, horticultural and forestry practices which may require a worker to attend at short notice and to be available during the night and day. In addition, accommodation within the area may be unaffordable or in short supply to house the worker. This may then result in the need for a rural worker dwelling. However, it is important that this does not result in a proliferation of housing in the countryside often in unsustainable locations. Accordingly, there must be a strong, evidenced need that the dwelling is essential to the functioning of the rural business that the rural worker dwelling will be associated with. An application would also need to demonstrate that there is need for the worker to be accommodated permanently.
- 7.15. Policy SCLP5.6 states that proposals for permanent dwellings in the countryside for rural workers will only be permitted where:
- a) There is a clearly established existing functional need for a worker to be accommodated;
 - b) The need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling or accommodation in the area which is suitable and available for the occupied workers or, could be converted to do so;
 - c) The need relates to a full time worker, or one who is primarily employed in the rural sector, and does not relate to a part time requirement;
 - d) The unit and the rural activity concerned has been established for at least three years, has been profitable for at least one of them, is financially sound and has a clear prospect of remaining so; and
 - e) The proposed dwelling is sensitively designed, landscaped and located to fit in with its surroundings and of a scale that reflects its functional role to support the agricultural activity.

Where a rural dwelling is permitted, the occupancy will be restricted by condition to ensure that it is occupied by a person, or persons, currently or last employed in local rural employment.

- 7.16. The council has published the Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document which provides detailed guidance on what should be submitted to support such applications.
- 7.17. Very limited information has been provided by the applicant to justify the need for a rural worker's dwelling in this location. The submitted documents have made no reference to the policies within the local plan, or to the Rural Development SPD. These were key concerns raised in refused application DC/24/2596/FUL, and this should have highlighted to the applicant the importance of providing clear and comprehensive supporting information to justify the proposal.
- 7.18. The applicant was given additional time within the current application to provide further supporting information. However, no details relevant to the proposed wardens' accommodation were submitted. Additional material was later provided outside the agreed timeframe, relating instead to chef's accommodation, and the applicant requested that this information remain confidential. As such, it has not been taken into account in the assessment of this application, both due to its lack of relevance and because not publishing supporting information would disadvantage the public and committee members.
- 7.19. Overall, officers consider that the application fails to demonstrate a functional need for on-site accommodation in connection with the golf club business or to explain why this need could not be met by existing housing within the locality. The criteria of policy SCLP5.6 will be considered in turn below, in conjunction with the guidance contained within the Rural Development SPD.

SCLP5.6 (a)

- 7.20. The Rural Development SPD sets out that; the applicant will need to demonstrate that there is a functional need for a worker(s) to live on site. The worker should be essential to the operation of the business and not merely convenient. The applicant will be expected to demonstrate why a person is required on site and that should a rural worker dwelling not be provided then the business would not be able to function properly. The worker should be required to live on site through-out the year as well as day and night.
- 7.21. Particular reference needs to be made to the tasks that require a year-round, day-night worker to be physically onsite. It should be supported with details of how many expected staff-hours each task is expected to take and why these tasks are essential for the business to function. Consideration will be given to the nature of the tasks, and which require a permanent presence from the worker on site, as well as how alternative methods including the use of technology have been explored and if/why they are not deemed appropriate.
- 7.22. The application has stated that a warden is required to be on site 24hrs to provide security, access, take charge of deliveries. However, the effectiveness of the proposed accommodation for this purpose is questionable. The unit is located some distance from the main entrance and from the golf club building, with a number of other intervening

buildings. It is therefore does not appear well situated to fulfil these purposes and no information has been provided to explain this further.

- 7.23. While the application refers to security requirements, the Rural Development SPD makes clear that an on-site presence for security purposes is unlikely to constitute a functional need where alternative measures, such as enhanced CCTV, alarms, motion and temperature monitoring and fencing, could reasonably provide adequate security. It is considered that alternative security measures could reasonably be implemented and, accordingly, security considerations do not justify the proposed accommodation.
- 7.24. It is acknowledged that the golf club will have the capacity to host functions, some of which may extend into the late evening. However, this is a common feature of similar establishments and does not ordinarily necessitate the presence of a permanent warden on site, as events are often covered by shift workers. The application provides no substantive evidence or justification to demonstrate why, in this instance, such functions require a member of staff to reside permanently on the site.
- 7.25. Wardens' accommodation for campsites or tourist facilities is not uncommon; however, it is generally associated with larger-scale operations or those which provide specialist holiday sites for guests with disabilities. Although tourism accommodation expansion is proposed for this site, it has not yet been implemented, and the number of holiday units permitted are not of a scale which would require permanent on-site presence of a warden.
- 7.26. No evidence has been presented to provide a convincing argument that there is a functional need for a warden to be physically accommodated on the site, attend at short notice, or be available day and night for the business, as required by SCLP5.6(a).

SCLP5.6 (b)

- 7.27. The Rural Development SPD sets out that there may be existing suitable dwellings either on-site or nearby which would negate the need for a new dwelling. Preference should always be given to existing suitable dwellings over creating new dwellings in what are largely unsustainable locations. The SPD sets out what would need to be provided to demonstrate compliance with criterion b.
- 7.28. No evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the identified need could not be met by existing dwellings or other suitable accommodation within the locality, or through the conversion of an existing building, as required by SCLP5.6(b). Given the site's proximity to Ipswich, it is highly likely that appropriate accommodation is available within a reasonable distance to house staff.

SCLP5.6 (c)

- 7.29. The Rural Development SPD sets out that the Rural Worker Dwelling Statement should provide details of how many expected staff-hours each task is expected to take justifying that a full-time worker is required. Consideration will be given to the nature of the tasks and which require a permanent presence from the worker on site. Tasks that require a small number of checks over a 24-hour period that could be undertaken remotely through the use of technology are unlikely to require a full-time worker on their own. Consideration should also be given to the business's staffing levels and whether other employees can meet the need rather than creating a rural worker dwelling.

- 7.30. The application has not demonstrated a clear need for a full-time warden, as required by SCLP5.6(c).

SCLP5.6 (d)

- 7.31. The Rural Development SPD sets out that in order to allow a rural worker dwelling the Local Authority must be satisfied that the business is a viable enterprise ensuring a future connection between the dwelling and the business. The applicant will need to show it is an established business operating for at least 3 years. The prospect of the business remaining viable for the future also needs to be demonstrated. The SPD sets out what would need to be provided to demonstrate compliance with criterion d.

- 7.32. It is understood that the golf club is long-established, however, no substantive evidence has been provided for as required by SCLP5.6(d). To assess whether the existing business is viable, financial information from the last three years prior to the planning application is required to show that the business was profitable for at least one of those years.

SCLP5.6 (e)

- 7.33. In regard to criterion e), the unit is of a modest scale which would not be visible from public areas. However, the unit does not appear to be well situated for the function which it has been proposed for, given its distance from the clubhouse and entrance of the site. As such the dwelling does not appear to be well located to reflect the proposed functional role.

- 7.34. As a rural workers dwelling it is expected the design of dwelling would reflect the functional role of the dwelling, which can allow for smaller dwellings. That being said, future occupiers should still be able to expect a reasonable level of amenity provision.

- 7.35. The scheme does not include any private amenity space for the unit. Furthermore, the submitted floor plans indicate that the unit would contain two bedrooms and have an internal floor area of approximately 40 sqm, which, when assessed against the Nationally Described Space Standards, falls below the minimum requirement for a two-bedroom dwelling. This would result in a poor level of amenity for future occupants unless the unit were occupied by a single person.

- 7.36. No further information has been provided on the expected occupancy of the unit, and as set out above there is insufficient justification for the functional need for the residential unit. Therefore, the proposal would result in the addition of a new residential dwelling in the countryside with a poor level of amenity provision for future occupiers, for which there is no demonstrated justification.

- 7.37. As such the proposal does not appear to fulfil the requirements of criterion e and would also conflict with SCLP11.2.

Conclusion on SCLP5.6

- 7.38. On the basis of the above assessment, the proposal is considered to conflict with policy SCLP5.6.

- 7.39. It is acknowledged that employment within the hospitality industry can be difficult to sustain and manage. However, hospitality is not in isolation in that respect. While there

may be a functional benefit of a warden being in close proximity to their place of work, it would not be a necessity, and the application has not demonstrated otherwise.

- 7.40. On the basis of the information available, officers consider that the proposal would not fulfil the requirements of SCLP5.6. In addition, the lack of supporting information to justify the proposed development remains a significant concern.

Visual Amenity and Landscape Impact

- 7.41. The unit is a modest scale and will not be visible from public areas and will be contained within the existing golf course. As such, the proposal presents no meaningful adverse landscape or visual impacts given their location within the existing golf course landscape context and existing surrounding tree cover. Therefore, there is no identified conflict with SCLP11.1 or SCLP10.4.

Residential Amenity

- 7.42. The unit is located far enough from neighbours that it would not lead to any loss of privacy, loss of light or oppression to neighbouring properties. The scheme would therefore not harm the residential amenity of neighbours.
- 7.43. The functional need for the dwelling has not been evidenced in the application. As such, the proposal would result in a new dwelling in the countryside which falls below the Nationally Described Space Standards and offers no private amenity space. The proposal would therefore result in the creation of a new dwelling with substandard amenity provision for future occupiers, and without justification for this. As such, it is considered that the proposal provides insufficient amenity space for a new dwelling, which would be contrary to policy SCLP11.2.

Parking and Highway Safety

- 7.44. It is judged that sufficient parking could be provided for the proposed residential unit. The Highways Authority have not objected and no adverse impact to highway safety is expected.

Biodiversity

- 7.45. The Ecology Team have been consulted and have not raised concerns or requested any additional surveys. Based on the available information the proposed development appears unlikely to result in a significant adverse impact on protected species or UK Priority habitats or species (under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006)).
- 7.46. The development is not eligible for mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain as it meets the de minimis exemption criteria.
- 7.47. The site is within the Suffolk Coast RAMS Zone of Influence (Zone B - within 13km of the Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Deben Estuary SPA/Ramsar and Sandlings SPA) and therefore a financial contribution to the scheme or equivalent mitigation identified via a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required in order to mitigate in-combination recreational disturbance impacts on habitats sites (European designated sites) arising from new residential development. Two residential units have been proposed. No RAMS

payment has been submitted; a conclusion of no adverse effect on the integrity of Habitats Sites can therefore not be reached and the application must be refused in accordance with the requirements of Local Plan Policy SCLP10.1 and NPPF Chapter 15.

Planning Balance

- 7.48. In light of the published NPPF update and the most recent Regulation 10A reviews East Suffolk Council is not able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply in both Local Plan areas (Waveney Local Plan area and Suffolk Coastal Local Plan area).
- 7.49. Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', will therefore apply in decision making on planning applications for housing development in the East Suffolk Local Planning Authority area.
- 7.50. While the proposal would technically add a dwelling to the Council's housing supply, it would not represent sustainable development. The site is physically detached from any defined settlement and would be heavily reliant on private car use. The unit is small, provides minimal amenity space, and is located within an operational golf course. If permission were granted, occupancy would need to be restricted to a warden employed at Fynn Valley Golf Club. Consequently, the scheme would not make a meaningful contribution to meeting the district's housing needs.
- 7.51. In applying the tilted balance under paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, the benefits of delivering an additional dwelling carry only limited weight given the proposal's restricted occupancy and unsustainable location. The benefits are significantly outweighed by the harm arising from conflict with Policies SCLP5.3 and SCLP5.6, as it would result in a new dwelling within an unsustainable countryside location without any demonstrated justification.

Other Matters

- 7.52. The applicant has indicated that they intend the unit to be used for both warden and chef accommodation, although only warden's accommodation has been included in the proposal. The use of the unit for chef's accommodation was considered and refused under application DC/24/2596/FUL.
- 7.53. Under the current application, the applicant provided further information to officers to justify use of the unit for chefs' accommodation. The applicant required the information to be kept confidential and so it has not been considered within this application.
- 7.54. Notwithstanding this, the submitted information is not directly relevant to the proposal for wardens' accommodation, and in any case would not be sufficient to demonstrate compliance with SCLP5.6.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. The proposal for wardens' accommodation is not considered to accord with the rural workers dwelling policy under Policy SCLP5.6 as the application submission is devoid of any practical evidence or justification to permit such accommodation on this site.
- 8.2. Furthermore, it is considered unlikely that such justification could be provided for the proposed purpose.

- 8.3. The site also lies within the 13km zone for designated sites where no mitigation or contribution has been provided to ensure that the development would not result in adverse impacts to designated sites.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1. Refuse.

The reasons for the decision to refuse permission are:

1. The application seeks planning permission for the retention of an existing residential unit for use as wardens' accommodation at Fynn Valley Golf Club. The siting and use of the unit would result in new residential development in the countryside and requires consideration under policy SCLP5.6 (Rural Workers Dwellings).

It has not been demonstrated that there is a clearly established functional need for a worker to be accommodated on site; that there are no existing dwellings or accommodation in the area which are suitable and available for the workers; that the need relates to a full time worker who is primarily employed in the rural sector; that the unit and the rural activity concerned has been established for at least three years, has been profitable for at least one of them, is financially sound and has a clear prospect of remaining so; or that the unit is of an appropriate scale and location for the proposed functional role.

The application therefore fails to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance with SCLP5.6. Moreover, based on the information available, it is considered that the proposal could not reasonably be justified under this policy, as there is no demonstrated essential need for a warden to reside on the site, nor any realistic prospect that such a need could be evidenced for the current operations.

The proposal would otherwise result in the addition of a new dwelling in an unsustainable countryside location. The dwelling would provide substandard levels of amenity for the occupier due to the size of the unit and lack of private amenity space. There is no justification for such a dwelling as the functional need has not been evidenced in the application.

The proposal is therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies SCLP5.3, SCLP5.6, and SCLP11.2 of the East Suffolk Council Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (September 2020).

2. The site is within the Suffolk Coast RAMS Zone of Influence (Zone B - within 13km of the Sandlings SPA; Deben Estuary SPA/Ramsar and Stour and the Orwell Estuaries SPA/Ramsar) and therefore a financial contribution to the scheme or equivalent mitigation identified via a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required in order to mitigate in-combination recreational disturbance impacts on habitats sites (European designated sites) arising from new residential development. Local Plan Policy SCLP10.1 seeks to support regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended) where proposals that would cause a direct or indirect adverse effect on the integrity of Habitats Sites (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) will not be permitted.

The applicant has failed to submit relevant information in relation to the potential disturbance caused by additional visitors to Habitats Sites as a result of the development and measures

required to mitigate this. It therefore cannot be concluded that the development will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of Habitats Sites and therefore the proposals are considered contrary to Policy SCLP10.1 East Suffolk Council Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (September 2020) and Section 15 of the NPPF.

Informatives:

1. The Council offers a pre-application advice service to discuss development proposals and ensure that planning applications have the best chance of being approved. The applicant did not take advantage of this service. The local planning authority has identified matters of concern with the proposal and the report clearly sets out why the development fails to comply with the adopted development plan. The report also explains why the proposal is contrary to the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and local plan to deliver sustainable development.

Background information

See application reference DC/25/1945/FUL on [Public Access](#)

Committee Report

Application no. DC/21/5550/FUL

Location

Land At Park Farm
Loudham Hall Road
Loudham
Woodbridge
Suffolk
IP13 ONW

Statutory determination date 11 March 2022

Agreed extension date 28 November 2025

Application type Full Application

Applicant BSR Energy

Parish Pettistree

Proposal Erection of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array, with a total export capacity of up to 21 MW. Each of the solar panels will be mounted on a fixed panel system. The panels are covered by high transparency solar glass with an anti-reflective coating which minimises glare and glint, while aiding in the maximum absorption of the available sunlight. The panels are dark grey/blue in colour and are mounted on a frame of anodized aluminium alloy and galvanized steel.

Case Officer Katie Fowler

katie.fowler@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Authorising Officer Kathryn Oelman

Determination route The Head of Planning Services referred this application to Planning Committee for determination because in their opinion the application is of significant public interest; would have a significant impact on the environment; or should otherwise be referred to Members due to its significance in some other respect.

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The application seeks planning permission for a 21 MW solar farm comprising ground mounted solar PV panels, vehicular access from Loudham Hall Road with internal access tracks, landscaping and associated infrastructure including security fencing, CCTV cameras and grid connection infrastructure including inverter and substation buildings.
- 1.2 This application was originally determined by the Planning Committee South held on 28th May 2024 whereby the application was resolved to be approved subject to conditions. A decision notice was subsequently issued to that effect on 17th June 2024. Following the determination of the application, a claim was lodged with the Planning Court for a judicial review in respect of East Suffolk Council's decision to grant planning permission.
- 1.3 The Claimant was aggrieved by the grant of planning permission and alleged that:
 - (1) The Defendant [East Suffolk Council] failed to have regard to a material consideration: the extent of any impact on designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the application site; and
 - (2) The Defendant's Officer's report misled the committee as to the impact of the development on The Lodge.
- 1.4 East Suffolk Council accepted that it failed to have regard to the extent of any impact on the Grade II* listed Loudham Hall and it was agreed that on this basis, the planning permission should be quashed and the application be returned to the Planning Committee for redetermination. On this basis, the Claimant accepted it unnecessary for the proceedings of the Planning Court to pursue Ground 2.
- 1.5 On 2nd September 2024 the Planning Court determined that the Claimant's claim be allowed, and the planning permission granted by East Suffolk Council on 17th June 2024 under application reference DC/21/5550/FUL was quashed (this decision is provided as Appendix 1 to this report).
- 1.6 It is on this basis that the application appears before the Planning Committee for its re-determination. Whilst it was agreed that East Suffolk Council had failed to have regard to the impact upon the Grade II* listed Loudham Hall, the quashing of the decision requires that application is to be re-determined in its entirety.
- 1.7 Having re-assessed the application, officers conclude that the proposal would accord with the development plan. It is noted that the development would result in the production of renewable energy and that, whilst this would give rise to benefits which attract significant weight, the harms arising from the proposed development must also be carefully considered. On balance, officers conclude that the collective benefits would outweigh the harms identified and that material considerations would not indicate that a decision be taken otherwise; therefore, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

2.0 Site Description

- 2.1 The application site comprises an area of approximately 37.08 hectares and is situated within the countryside to the south east of Wickham Market and east of Pettistree. It lies within the Parish of Pettistree and shares its western boundary with the A12. The site consists of agricultural land with a tree copse to the centre of the site (which is outside of the red line site boundary). Two sets of electricity pylons run diagonally through the site. The site would be accessed off Loudham Hall Road, immediately to the south. The topography of the site falls within the tip of the northern boundary and rises up towards the south; beyond the tree copse, the site plateaus out. Outside of the site boundaries, the topography declines.
- 2.2 There is a Public Right of Way (PROW) (footpath 7) which enters approximately halfway down the western boundary and then travels in a south easterly direction to Loudham Hall Road. Going west this PROW crosses the A12 and joins up with Chapel Lane leading into Wickham Market. Further from the site, the wider PROW network includes a route to the north of the site (approx. 120m away at its closest point) and also to the east (approx. 240m at its closest point). A permissive footpath previously penetrated through the northern boundary, but this has now been closed up.
- 2.3 The surrounding area is mainly rural, consisting of agricultural land separated by boundary hedgerows. Areas of woodland are located close to the eastern, and adjacent to the south western, edges of the site. There are a number of small farms and isolated houses in the vicinity.
- 2.4 The application site is entirely located within Flood Zone 1 with a small pocket of surface water flooding located between the tree copse and the southern boundary. The site is located within the Impact Risk Zone of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the closest being Sandlings Forest approx. 3.64km to the south-east. Sandlings Forest is also the closest Special Protection Area (SPA) to the application site. There is a Ramsar site located approx. 4.17km to the south (Deben Estuary).

3.0 Proposal

- 3.1 Planning permission is sought for a proposed solar photovoltaic ('PV') farm that would generate up to 21 megawatts ('MW') of output capacity. The proposed development would also include infrastructure associated with this use. The proposal would comprise of the following elements:
- Rows of solar PV panels (minimum height of 0.8m and maximum height of 2.6m). The PV panels would be finished in an anti-reflective coating in a dark grey/blue colour and mounted on a frame of anodized aluminium alloy and galvanised steel;
 - 10no. transformers (measuring approx. 3.1m in height, 3.4m in depth and 2.1m in width) positioned at intervals throughout the site;
 - 1no. Distribution Network Operator (DNO) switchgear station (measuring approx. 5.165m in depth, 5.39m in width and 4.275m in height). The external walls of the building would be fitted with LED PIR security lighting and emergency fluorescent bulkhead lights and would be located within the south-west corner of the site;
 - Substation compound located within the south-west corner of the site, comprising of:

- 1no. private switchgear comprising of a concrete base (measuring approx. 3.15 in depth, 6.15m in width) and an enclosure (measuring approx. 3m in depth, 6m in width and 3.277m in height). The enclosure would comprise of LED PIR security lighting and emergency fluorescent bulkhead lights;
 - 1no. Aux transformer (measuring approx. 2.4m in height, 1.6m in depth and 2.1m in width);
 - 1no. welfare unit (measuring approx. 6.1m in width, 2.44m in depth and 3.2m in height) with 2no. 4G masts attached to the roof;
 - 2no. spares containers (measuring approx. 12.2m in width, 2.4m in depth and 3.2m in height);
 - Perimeter fencing located around the PV panels, transformers and substation. The fencing would measure approx. 2.5m in height and would be of a post and rail format with timber fence posts and galvanised steel wire. The top of the fence is stated as being finished in plain or barbed wire;
 - Access gates to the substation and to each parcel of PV panels measuring approx. 6m in width and 2.5m in height. The materials of the gate have not been specified;
 - CCTV cameras spaced in intervals of between approx. 15m – 45m along the perimeter fencing (mounted on poles at a height of 3.5m);
 - Internal access tracks (also referred to as transformer access track);
 - DNO access track;
 - Point of connection to the grid;
 - Internal underground cabling to connect the panels to the equipment;
 - Landscaping works and proposed planting.
- 3.2 The site would be accessed from Loudham Hall Road via a new vehicular crossover along the southern boundary of the site. The access would be located approx. 88m west of the existing access to Loudham Hall.
- 3.3 The proposed PV array would be connected to the Grid via a 33kV overhead line which is located within the site. The applicant has confirmed that the works to connect the solar farm to the grid would be completed under the General Permitted Development Order.
- 3.4 It is noted that the Planning Statement confirms that the development would have a lifespan of 40 years. At the end of the useful life of the facility, it would be decommissioned and all associated equipment removed, with the land reverted back to agricultural use.
- 3.5 Over the course of the application, a series of amendments have occurred. The former officer report notes those amendments undertaken up to the point at which the application was determined by the Planning Committee. Following the quashing of the decision, the applicant submitted the following new information, which was the subject of a full consultation with consultees and third parties, the most recent of which was August 2025:
- Submission of Statement of Clarification
 - Submission of heritage impact assessment
 - Submission of site selection statement
 - Submission of section showing the application site and Sandpit Cottage
 - Updated reports including:
 - Ecology reports (including protected species surveys)
 - Landscape visual assessment

- Flood risk assessment
- Tree survey
- Arb planning statement
- Public right of way management plan
- Noise assessment
- Agricultural land classification
- Statement of community involvement
- Landscape masterplan (to add visibility splays)

3.6 However, further amendments have taken place since the most recent consultation which are summarised below:

- Reduction in height of the CCTV camera poles from 6m to 3.5m;
- Revised landscape masterplan to remove the red line boundary and to include a hedgerow along the perimeter fencing adjacent to Sandpit Cottage;
- Amendment to the welfare container elevations to show the correct size as depicted by the proposed site layout;
- Amendment to fence elevations to show the wildlife holes discussed within the application;
- PROW management plan amended to include temporary diversion route.

3.7 These amendments broadly involved the reduction in scale of elements of the proposal. Where the amendments involved the introduction of something (namely the hedgerow adjacent to Sandpit Cottage), officers had direct correspondence with the adjacent owner and occupier to notify them of the matter and give them opportunity to make comment.

4.0 Environmental Impact Assessment

4.1 The application has been previously screened under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 whereby the Local Authority adopted a Screening Opinion (ref: DC/21/2387/EIA) that negatively screened the development and considered it to not constitute Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development.

4.2 However, given the time that has passed since this screening opinion was issued, it has been necessary to re-screen the development in accordance with the EIA Regulations. The development falls within the description of Schedule 2 development under the Regulations by virtue of category 3(b). The Regulations are clear that development which falls within column 1 and exceeds the threshold contained within column 2 of Schedule 2, should be screened.

4.3 Since the Screening Opinion was issued the Towns Farm Solar Farm has been granted consent to the north of Saxmundham (ref: DC/21/5515/FUL). On the 22nd July 2022, Sizewell C was also granted a Development Consent Order (DCO) (ref: DC/22/3775/DCO). Albeit this was granted after the original Screening Opinion was issued, the officer did anticipate the impacts of Sizewell C within their consideration of the cumulative effects. Additionally, it is recognised that Loudham Hall, a Grade II* listed building was not considered by the previous Screening Opinion. As such, each of these factors have now been considered by the Local Authority in reaching an updated Screening Opinion.

- 4.4 In line with the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Regulations, the Local Planning Authority has taken into account the nature, scale, magnitude and location of the development. Having considered the potential for significant effects on the environment, including cumulative impacts, it is concluded that the proposal would not be likely to have significant environmental effects within the meaning of the Regulations.
- 4.5 Accordingly, the development does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

5.0 Relevant Planning History

- 5.1 Application No. DC/21/2387/EIA – EIA Screening Opinion – Proposed development of a 21MWp solar PV development – EIA Not Required

6.0 Consultees

- 6.1 The previous officer report published on 17th June 2024 details all the previous consultee responses. This report is available on Public Access; the link for which is provided below: [DC/21/5550/FUL | Erection of a solar photovoltaic \(PV\) array, with a total export capacity of up to 21 MW. Each of the solar panels will be mounted on a fixed panel system. The panels are covered by high transparency solar glass with an anti-reflective coating which minimises glare and glint, while aiding in the maximum absorption of the available sunlight. The panels are dark grey/blue in colour and are mounted on a frame of anodized aluminium alloy and galvanized steel. | Land At Park Farm Loudham Hall Road Loudham Woodbridge Suffolk IP13 0NW](#), it is also provided in Appendix 2 to this Report.
- 6.2 Responses from consultees received after the committee in 2024, and in response to the new information provided, have been reported here and are summarised below:

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Campsea Ashe Parish Council	17 July 2025	02 September 2025
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>Opposed to the development in the sensitive setting of the Deben Valley. There are no relevant changes to the original application and hence concerns are maintained about the impact on the key landscape settings in the area.</p> <p>We are also principally opposed to the use of arable land for such purpose when the provision of renewable energy could be advanced more intelligently by mandatory roof top solar on new build.</p>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Pettistree Parish Council	17 July 2025	26 August 2025
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>The panels and associated infrastructure will be highly visible from a significant number of viewpoints in the surrounding parishes. These include promoted public rights of way within and</p>		

beyond the river valley, roads (lanes and the A12) and residential properties. The development will have an adverse visual impact on the setting of several designated and non-designated heritage assets. Photographic evidence will be provided.

Within the Statement of Clarification, BSR appears to misunderstand the guidance on what amounts to a 'valued landscape' under the NPPF Paragraph 187 a. PPC believe that the site qualifies as valued landscape because it conforms with a number of the criteria listed in the Landscape Institute guidance. This including includes a river valley landscape and associated buildings of heritage value. It is also of importance to note that under the previous SCLP the whole of the valley landscape fell into Special Landscape.

The inadequacy of the plans in relation to the location of the fencing and proposed mitigations.

The risk of flooding from run off onto Loudham Hall Road, an on-going problem which will be accentuated by the runoff and drainage from the panels.

The vast number of documents that have now been filed, making the process of analysis and commenting very complex for residents and putting them at a disadvantage in terms of access to the ESC decision-making process.

There are significant traffic and safety implications for Loudham Hall Road. The need for traffic management has not been addressed.

The traffic implications for Wickham Market, given that is already having to deal with the increase in traffic caused by Sizewell C.

The cumulative impact of this site added to the very many other solar sites currently in construction or proposed for Suffolk and the lack of any genuine benefit for residents who will bear all the inconvenience of these developments, whilst profits go to international companies with no other stake in our communities

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Ufford Parish Council	17 July 2025	25 August 2025

Summary of comments:

1. Impact on the landscape – Expressed strong concern that the proposed development would negatively impact the visual appeal of the Pettistree area. The sloping nature of the site and elevation panels would dominate existing hedgerows, transforming the rural landscape into an industrial one. Development would be out of character with the countryside.
2. Agricultural land – No mention of agricultural land classification in the ecological appraisal. Object to the agricultural land being taken out of food production.
3. Flood risk – Inadequate flood management plan. Lack of detail of the proposed SuDS scheme. Run off from the site would flow into River Deben and potentially impact Ufford. Concurs with the advice provided by the Internal Drainage Board.
4. Impact on local residents - Support the residents of Pettistree that would be significantly affected by the increase of traffic. Construction traffic would need to join the A12 through Ufford and therefore Ufford residents would also be affected.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Wickham Market Parish Council	17 July 2025	01 August 2025

Summary of comments:

Having considered the application we believe that the development would contravene Policies SCLP9.1 Low Carbon and Renewable Energy, SCLP10.1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity and SCLP10.4 Landscape Character.

We believe that the development will cause a significant adverse impact on both the Landscape and Visual Impacts and flora and fauna. The scheme is visible from many vantage points both within and across the valley and only offering hedge screening is totally inadequate. The fence drawings do not show that they would be raised for badgers to pass through.

The BNG document does not take into account the Local Plan Landscape Appraisal and hence the subjective assessments are perhaps flawed. The propose development does not demonstrate that it maintains, restores or enhances the existing green infrastructure network and positively contributes towards biodiversity and/or geodiversity. While the proposed landscape mitigation would go in some way to mitigate the impact, it is felt that they are totally inadequate for a development of this size.

The development does not protect or enhance the area in anyway.

Wickham Market Parish Council therefore objects to the planning application.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Ward Councillor – Cllr Sally Noble	17 July 2025	21 July 2025

Summary of comments:

Objection still stands. The site is totally unsuitable for reasons already explained – heritage impact, impact on river valley, a valued landscape, visual effects on the residents of Sandpit Cottage and Loudham Hall Estate.

	17 July 2025	02 September 2025
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Summary of comments:

Objection still stands and fully support other objections. There are serious omissions in this application in relation to valued landscape, drainage and flooding, not to mention heritage issues and the overall impact on local communities.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
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Suffolk County Council Highways	17 July 2025	21 July 2025
Summary of comments:		
No objection subject to conditions being imposed.		
	17 July 2025	24 September 2025
Summary of comments:		
Confirmation that a construction traffic management plan should be conditioned.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Suffolk County Council Public Rights of Way	17 July 2025	01 August 2025
Summary of comments:		
Holding objection due to discrepancy between the stated and illustrated widths of the PROW. The PROW Management Plan mentions gates which would not be permitted. The Management Plan mentions a temporary closure and a permissive alternative route is strongly encouraged during the construction period.		
	17 July 2025	06 October 2025
Summary of comments:		
No objection to the application subject to conditions which require the provision of a section of the PROW, details of signage and a temporary Traffic Regulation Order being submitted.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Suffolk County Council Lead Local Flood Authority	17 July 2025	07 August 2025
Summary of comments:		
Holding objection to allow for the applicant to confirm any material changes to the FRA and drainage strategy from the prior revision.		
	17 July 2025	01 September 2025
Summary of comments:		
No objection subject to conditions.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
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Suffolk County Council Archaeology	17 July 2025	30 July 2025
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>No objection subject to conditions being imposed.</p>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Environment Agency	17 July 2025	28 July 2025
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>All new development at the site including solar panel units, access tracks and welfare unit have been sited within Flood Zone 1, land with a low probability of flooding as defined by the PPG. A small area to the east of the site falls within Flood Zone 3, but all development has been sequentially sited away from this land.</p> <p>The area proposed for new development will remain in future Flood Zone 1 when climate change is considered.</p> <p>The access/egress route for the site also falls within Flood Zone 1.</p> <p>[Officer clarification: a small area of the site did lie within Flood Zone 3 but this was removed from within the red line boundary prior to the application being previously determined. It now falls part of the blue line.]</p>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Natural England	17 July 2025	04 August 2025
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>No comment.</p>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Historic England	17 July 2025	03 September 2025
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>The designated heritage assets falling under our remit for comment are far enough from the proposed development and screened by woodland, so their significance is unlikely to be directly harmed. However, they note the presence of the former lodge to Loudham Hall along with remnants of historic parkland and request that these are given due consideration and weight in the decision making process. They note the Council's conservation team has raised concerns and</p>		

suggested mitigation, which the Historic England supports. Historic England do not wish to object to the application.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Council Ecology	17 July 2025	04 August 2025
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>No objection subject to conditions being imposed.</p>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Council Environmental Protection	17 July 2025	23 September 2025
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>No objection to the application subject to conditions being imposed.</p>		
	17 July 2025	26 September 2025
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>Confirmation that Environmental Protection request a Construction Management Plan be conditioned.</p>		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Council Design and Heritage	17 July 2025	11 August 2025
<p>Summary of comments:</p> <p>Further information is needed as to whether the areas identified along Loudham Hall Road will be appropriately and sensitively screened. Following the provision of appropriate screening measures, I will have no objection to this application.</p>		
	17 July 2025	11 September 2025
<p>I have reviewed the Heritage Impact Assessment submitted by the Loudham Hall Estate and the new Impact Assessment written in response by the applicant. I believe the application does indeed cross from a minor to a moderate degree of less than substantial harm. Nevertheless, my judgement on the effects of the proposed development on any other heritage assets, designated or otherwise, remains unchanged.</p> <p>In the event of approval being granted, I would strongly advise that a condition or other suitable provision is made for the applicant to provide a comprehensive long term hedge management plan. This will ensure that any screening measures are maintained throughout the stated duration</p>		

of the solar farm's presence and will not result in a delayed visual impact to the setting of Loudham Hall and the curtilage listed lodge.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Council Trees and Landscape	17 July 2025	15 August 2025

Summary of comments:

The addendum report, which assesses the visual impact of the development upon properties which were not included in the original assessment, is appropriate and I am largely in agreement with their conclusions that visual effects will be limited by topography and existing vegetation.

Other than this, the current submission is materially unchanged from the original application, therefore my previous response remain relevant. I agree that this is not a valued landscape in terms of Para 170 of the NPPF.

Overall, I remain concerned that the proposed development would have a major impact on the character and visual qualities of this section of the Deben Valley which cannot initially be mitigated. However, the extent of these impacts is largely limited to the site itself and its immediate surrounds, and if the planting is successful as predicted, they should be temporarily limited. If the Council elects to approve the proposed development, full landscape planting details and their maintenance and long-term management and an arboricultural method statement should be sought by condition.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
UK Power Networks	17 July 2025	12 August 2025

Summary of comments:

Please note there are HV/LV underground cables on the site running within close proximity to the proposed development. There are also overhead cables on the site. Prior to commencement of work accurate records should be obtained from UKPN.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Suffolk Wildlife Trust	17 July 2025	24 July 2025

Summary of comments:

Suffolk Wildlife Trust raise no objection to this proposal but highlight that changes to the Biodiversity Net Gain Calculations are required, an ongoing program of biodiversity monitoring should be considered alongside precautionary measures for hazel dormice.

	17 July 2025	24 September 2025
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Summary of comments:

Confirmation that concerns have been addressed through communication with ESC Ecology team.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
East Suffolk Water Management Board	17 July 2025	22 July 2025

Summary of comments:

The site is partly within the Internal Drainage District. The advice of the Lead Local Flood Authority should be followed.

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Suffolk Constabulary	17 July 2025	27 August 2025

Summary of comments:

Growing risk of crime which effects solar farms. Suggested measures to put in place to deter crime taking place.

	17 July 2025	29 September 2025
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Summary of comments:

Confirmation that they are happy with the applicant’s proposed approach and confirms that they raise no objection.

7.0 Third Party Representations

- 7.1 As noted above, this report contains a summary of third party responses which have been received in relation to the consultation which began on 17th July 2025. The previous officer report contains all previous comments received from third parties.
- 7.2 Since the previous committee, 19 representations have been received raising objections to the application, from a total of ten addresses. Representations from Sandpit House included a detailed appraisal of its historic significance as a non-designated heritage asset. Representations from Loudham Hall Estate included a Built Heritage Statement prepared by Dr David Dickie with the intention of providing an independent assessment on this issue. Representations from Ms Anne Westover included photomontages of landscape views. Representations received also included objections from the Ipswich Ramblers Society and the River Deben Association.
- 7.3 Some of the comments received are of considerable length, therefore in the interests of brevity it has not been possible to provide full details of their concerns within this report. However, the key issues raised have been summarised below:

- Sandpit House is the only remaining house from Loudham Village. Sandpit House should be identified and recognised as a non-designated heritage asset which would be adversely affected by the development proposals.
- Sandpit House is low lying compared to the development site. A detailed section through the site should be provided, to allow the finished height of the development relative to Sandpit House to be appreciated.
- The development would be extremely intrusive and materially affect the setting of Sandpit House and Loudham Hall.
- The development will have considerable impacts upon the landscape. Sections/elevations through the site relating to the relevant public viewpoints (particularly up and down Loudham Hall Road and from within the area of Sandpit House) should be provided.
- All the photographs seem to be taken within the site, thus giving no indication at all as to their impact on views from the public highway or from Sandpit House.
- Development is in too close proximity to heritage assets.
- Unacceptable impact on Grade II* listed Loudham Hall and curtilage listed lodge.
- Disregard of the impact upon the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Campsey Priory and listed buildings at Ashe Abbey.
- Historic views of Grade II* St Peter and Paul Church Pettistree not considered.
- Concern over HGV impacts and potential subsidence to Hall Farm House and Stone Cottage caused by vibration from construction HGVs.
- Traffic management proposals are vague and a detailed traffic management plan is required to clearly set out how traffic coming from each direction will be held back to avoid coming into head to head contact. This will seriously disadvantage residents/agricultural traffic.
- The proposal will reduce the value of the PROW through the site. If the application is permitted, the PROW must be maintained and open for use at all times.
- Loss of PROW during construction.
- Loss of agricultural fields for food production.
- Industrialisation of the countryside, harm to valued landscape and agricultural land.
- The solar array will be detrimental to the visual aspect of the countryside.
- Site forms part of a valued landscape.
- Disagreement that the landscape harm would be limited to the site itself.
- Lack of cumulative landscape assessment.
- The development does not benefit the community.
- Insufficient consideration of the amenity impacts to the Lodge at Loudham Hall.
- Glint and glare study has not considered the PROW or the Lodge.
- Insufficient information regarding flooding and transport.
- Concerns over flooding.
- Proposal would result in noise pollution.
- Concerns over crime being brought into the area.

8.0 Publicity

The application has been the subject of the following press advertisement:

Publication	Published date	Expiry date	Reason
East Anglian Daily Times	28 August 2025	18 September 2025	Public Right of Way Affected

			Major Application Affects Setting of Listed Building
East Anglian Daily Times	6 January 2022	27 January 2022	Public Right of Way Affected Major Application Listed Building

9.0 Site Notices

Site Notice Type	Date Posted	Expiry date	Reason
General Site Notice	17 July 2025	7 August 2025	Public Right of Way Affected Major Application Listed Building
General Site Notice	14 January 2022	4 February 2022	Listed Building Listed Building Public Right of Way Affected Major Application

10.0 Planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

National Policy Statements 2025

SCLP3.2 – Settlement Hierarchy (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP3.3 - Settlement Boundaries (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP4.5 – Economic Development in Rural Areas (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP7.1 - Sustainable Transport (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP9.1 - Low Carbon & Renewable Energy (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP9.5 - Flood Risk (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP9.6 - Sustainable Drainage Systems (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP10.1 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP10.3 - Environmental Quality (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP10.4 - Landscape Character (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP11.1 - Design Quality (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP11.2 - Residential Amenity (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP11.3 – Historic Environment (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP11.4 – Listed Buildings (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP11.6 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

SCLP11.7 - Archaeology (East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

Historic Environment SPD (2021)

11.0 Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

- 11.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Council's Development Plan in the context of this application consists of the East Suffolk Council – Suffolk Coastal Local Plan ('the Local Plan'), adopted September 2020.
- 11.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) ('NPPF') is committed to achieving sustainable development. One of the overarching objectives is the environmental aspect which seeks to use natural resources, minimise waste and pollution, mitigate and adapt to climate change and move to a low carbon economy (Paragraph 8).
- 11.3 Paragraph 168 of the Framework outlines that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should not require

applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, Paragraph 168 states that local planning authorities should give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation.

11.4 Paragraph 013 of the Planning Practice Guidance on renewable and low carbon energy details that the deployment of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes. However, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively. As such, the following should be considered by local planning authorities:

- 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 encouraged 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 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.

11.5 Turning to the proposed development specifically, the application site is located outside of any settlement boundary, meaning that it is located within the Countryside for the purposes of Policies SCLP3.2 (Settlement Hierarchy) and SCLP3.3 (Settlement Boundaries). For development in the Countryside, Policy SCLP3.2 says that development requirements will come forward through Neighbourhood Plans and windfall sites in accordance with other policies in the Local Plan. Policy SCLP3.3 does not reference developments in the Countryside outside employment, town centre, or residential uses.

- 11.6 Policy SCLP9.1 (Low Carbon and Renewable Energy) states that the Council will support low carbon and renewable energy developments where the following criteria can be met:
- a) They can evidence a sustainable and, ideally, local source of fuel;
 - b) They can facilitate the necessary power connections required for functional purposes; and
 - c) They are complementary to the existing environment without causing any significant adverse impacts, particularly relating to the residential amenity, landscape and visual impact, the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB, transport, flora, fauna, noise and air quality, unless those impacts can be appropriately mitigated.
- 11.7 The proposal involves the provision of renewable energy and would produce enough renewable electricity to power just over 5000 homes per year. With regards to the principal requirements of Policy SCLP9.1, the proposed development would convert readily available solar energy to electricity, thereby satisfying criterion a) referenced above.
- 11.8 Regarding criterion b), the applicant has stated the connection to the grid is via an overhead line on site, thereby satisfying criterion b).
- 11.9 The remaining requirements set out under criterion c) of Policy SCLP9.1 relate to the environmental impacts of the proposed development which are discussed under the subsequent headings of this report.
- 11.10 Policy SCLP9.1 concludes by stating that when renewable energy developments are no longer operational, there is a requirement for the development to be decommissioned and removed, with the site completely restored to its original condition. It is proposed that the solar farm would have an operational lifespan of 40 years, after which point the development would be decommissioned, removed, and the site completely restored to its original condition in accordance with Policy SCLP9.1. A condition is recommended to secure this requirement.
- 11.11 The principle of low carbon and renewable energy development is well established within both national and local planning policy and guidance. Applications for renewable energy schemes within East Suffolk should therefore be supported in line with planning policy requirements and local commitments.
- 11.12 To summarise, the principle of the proposed development is considered to be acceptable under the provision of Policy SCLP9.1. Likewise, the principle of the proposed development would be consistent with the relevant objectives contained within the NPPF, whilst also contributing towards the achievement of local and national climate change targets.

Alternative Sites Assessment – Agricultural Land and Brownfield Land

Agricultural Land

- 11.13 The PPG (paragraph 013) sets out that LPAs should have consideration for ensuring agricultural land has been shown to be necessary for use and poor-quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land.

- 11.14 Policy SLP10.3 (Environmental Quality) states that development proposals will be expected to protect the quality of the environment, by amongst other matters, giving consideration to the impacts upon soil and loss of agricultural land.
- 11.15 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF explains that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other matters, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Footnote 65 to paragraph 188 of the NPPF advises that, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.
- 11.16 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land as that within grades 1, 2, and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.
- 11.17 The application is accompanied by an Agricultural Land Classification report prepared by ADAS and dated July 2021 which identifies that the land comprises Grade 3b and Grade 4 agricultural land. Grade 3b land is moderate quality agricultural land, with Grade 4 land comprising poor quality agricultural land. Neither of these classifications fall within the BMV agricultural land classification.
- 11.18 Within the Site Selection Statement, the applicant acknowledged that the use of moderate quality land (Grade 3) is discouraged. However, the applicant has also demonstrated that there is limited Grade 4 (~11.9%) and Grade 5 (~0.3%) within Suffolk. As such, it is accepted that due to constraints around grid capacity, some loss of higher quality land would be likely. Nevertheless, some limited harm would still arise from the loss of medium quality land (Grade 3b) and the effects of taking it out of agricultural food production.
- 11.19 The submitted Planning Statement notes that once decommissioned, the site can be reverted to agricultural use. On this basis, any grant of consent should be conditioned for a soil management plan to be submitted to ensure that the soil is safeguarded during construction activities and in the longer term, therefore its quality can be safeguarded during this period.
- 11.20 In this regard, the proposal would be broadly in accordance with Policy SCLP10.3 which requires consideration to be given to the impacts of development on soil quality and the loss of agricultural land. However, the loss of agricultural fields for food production should be given some weight.

Brownfield Land

- 11.21 The Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) published in 2015 was explicit in stating that solar farms should make effective use of previously developed land and, where a proposal involved agricultural land, being quite clear this is necessary, and that poorer quality land is to be used in preference to land of a higher quality. Only where land is identified as BMV land would advice contained within the WMS be relevant. Given that the application site is made up by Grade 3b and 4 land, it would not be necessary to apply the brownfield sequential test in this instance.

Built Heritage

Designated Heritage Assets

- 11.22 Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Paragraph 212 of the NPPF is clear that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Paragraph 213 goes on to say that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Finally, paragraph 215 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 11.23 Policy SCLP11.3 (Historic Environment) sets out that the Council will work to conserve and enhance the historic environment and to ensure where possible, development makes a positive contribution to the historic environment. It says that the policies of the NPPF will be applied in respect of designated and non-designated heritage assets, and it requires that all development proposals which have the potential to impact on heritage assets or their settings be supported by a Heritage Impact Assessment. The level of detail of a Heritage Impact Assessment should be proportionate to the scheme proposed and the number and significance of heritage assets affected.
- 11.24 Policy SCLP11.4 (Listed Buildings) states that proposals which affect the setting of a listed building will be supported where they (amongst other considerations) (a) demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the building and its setting alongside an assessment of the potential impact of the proposal on that significance; (b) do not harm the character of the building or any architectural artistic, historic or archaeological features that contribute towards its special interest; and (c) are of an appropriate design, scale, form, height, massing and position which complement the existing building.
- 11.25 There are no designated heritage assets within the site. There are however several heritage assets nearby to the site which the proposed development has the potential to impact the setting of:
- Loudham Hall, Loudham Hall Road – Grade II*(list entry no. 119956) located approximately 300m south of the southern boundary;
 - Church of All Saints, Wickham Market – Grade II* (list entry no. 1377135) located approximately 700m north-west of the northern boundary;
 - Mill House, The Mill, Campsea Ashe – Grade II* (list entry no. 1030830) located approximately 500m east of the south-east corner of the site;
 - Barn, The Priory, Campsea Ashe – Grade II (list entry no. 1030829) located approximately 550m east of the south-east corner of the site;
 - Abbey House, The Priory, Campsea Ashe – Grade II* (list entry no. 1030828) located approximately 560m east of the south-east corner of the site;

- Site of Campsey Priory – Scheduled Monument (list entry no. 1005998) located approximately 530m east of the south-east corner of the site;
- Church of St Peter and St Paul, Pettistree (list entry no. 1377418) located approximately 900m west of the western boundary of the site.

- 11.26 A Built Heritage Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group (ref: P24 1832_HT_R001v6_SB dated May 2025) and is submitted with the application. The Built Heritage Statement ('BHS') has reviewed the above-mentioned designated heritage assets and considers that those which have the potential to be sensitive to the development proposals are Loudham Hall and the Church of All Saints, Wickham Market. The BHS therefore goes on to assess this further. The four other assets (amongst other designated heritage assets not mentioned above) were ruled out from further assessment as the site was not considered to form part of the setting that positively contributes to their overall heritage significance due to the nature of the asset and a lack of visual connections, spatial relationships and historic connections. The BHS details the full rationale behind excluding those designated heritage assets.
- 11.27 The Council's Built Heritage Officer has reviewed the BHS and agrees with its finding in this regard. In their response, the Built Heritage Officer has stated that the BHS is satisfactory in considering the context of the application and the scope of the works proposed.

Loudham Hall – Assessment of significance

- 11.28 While the BHS considers the site to not possess a high degree of significance in its own right, the site is located within the setting of multiple heritage assets. The most prominent of these is the Grade II* Listed Building, Loudham Hall.
- 11.29 Loudham Hall is a Country House which serves as the principal residence of the Loudham Hall Estate. The building possesses a 16th century core but has seen significant changes and alterations over the following centuries, particularly in the mid to late 18th century. The building itself is orientated towards the south-east and would have originally been formally approached from this direction. Today Loudham Hall is accessed via Loudham Hall Road which is located along the northern boundary of the estate. This access is marked by an entrance gate and lodge, which is a curtilage listed building and therefore extends the setting of the Listed Building further into this northern area.
- 11.30 The application site has historically been associated with Loudham Hall as part of its wider estate which formerly encompassed a significant amount of agricultural land in this area, as well as the hamlet of Loudham itself. The application site would have likely functioned as agricultural land for at least the last two centuries.
- 11.31 As a large Country House, Loudham Hall has been clearly designed to emphasise its prominence and implied ownership of the surrounding landscape. As a result, Loudham Hall's special interest expands to cover not only its historic association, fabric and architectural design but also its position as a landmark in the surrounding agricultural setting. This is reflected in the elevated grading of the building as Grade II*.
- 11.32 Development has occurred in some areas throughout the former extent of the estate, including the addition of the A12 towards the north and west, as well as electricity pylons which are visible when looking westwards from Loudham Hall. There is also a small-scale

solar farm (1.068MW) to the south-east of the Listed Building (application no. DC/14/2236/FUL). Aside from these elements, the immediate grounds of Loudham Hall and Loudham Park remain largely unaltered with most of its curtilage intact.

Setting of Loudham Hall – Impacts and effects arising

- 11.33 The proposed development is substantial in size and would involve a clear departure from the agricultural appearance of the existing fields. Despite this, the intervisibility between the principal structure of Loudham Hall and the proposed development is limited due to its position largely behind substantial tree cover. This was observed by officers on site at Loudham Hall on 14th March 2025.
- 11.34 Nevertheless, the closer proximity of the curtilage listed lodge by extension places the application site within Loudham Hall's setting. On this basis, coupled with the nature and scale of the proposal, the Built Heritage Officer has concluded that the proposal would have an unavoidable impact to the setting of Loudham Hall in this context.
- 11.35 The submitted BHS highlights that there are some gaps within the vegetation along the southern boundary of the application site which the Built Heritage Officer has stated must be appropriately filled with additional planting to mitigate some of the impact of the change of character of the application site. It has been agreed with the Built Heritage Officer that it would be reasonable for a condition to be imposed which requires details and agreement of such planting. Aside from the benefits in landscape terms, the addition of this planting would go some way to ensuring the development is disguised and that the change to the agrarian setting is not superficially obvious.
- 11.36 The BHS concludes that the impact of the proposed development on the heritage significance of Loudham Hall as a result of development within its setting would be at the lower end of the scale of less than substantial harm. However, Loudham Hall Estate have submitted an independent review of the applicant's BHS, which has identified the harm to be at the upper end of the range of less than substantial harm. Having reviewed this submission and the applicant's response, the Council's Built Heritage Officer now considers that the proposal would result in a moderate degree of less than substantial harm.

Church of All Saints – Assessment of significance

- 11.37 The immediate setting of the Church, a Grade II* Listed Building, comprises the burial ground bound by walls and railing through which an informal path passes. Its wider and extended setting comprises domestic and commercial buildings and spaces that form part of the settlement of Wickham Market.
- 11.38 The submitted BHS identifies that given the topography of the land surrounding the church, as well as it being located within a built-up area, any longer distance views from the church or its immediate surrounds are prevented. Meaning the application site is not visible from this designated heritage asset or its setting.
- 11.39 However, as highlighted by the BHS, the height of the spire of the church allows it to be seen from some vantage points within and across the application site. While, the topography of the site means that opportunities to view it are limited, it does align with the PROW footpath which runs through the site. This footpath was first shown within the

site in the late 19th century, suggesting that the footpath did link Loudham Hall road with the settlement at Wickham Market. The BHS identifies that the church spire would have therefore acted as a wayfinder. The BHS notes that the construction of the modern A12 by-pass with no formal pedestrian crossing has also changed the footpath and its connection to Wickham Market.

- 11.40 The BHS outlines that the heritage significance of the Church is principally embodied in its physical fabric and its architectural interest, particularly its spire. The Church also derives communal value as a place of worship and activities for past and present communities. Whilst the setting of Church by way of the burial ground and settlement of Wickham Market are considered to contribute towards its setting, this is less significant than its historic fabric.
- 11.41 The BHS finds that there is no historic functional association with the application site and the church. The limited ability to view the church and the intervening distance, means that the church is not a highly prominent feature in views from the application site. The BHS concludes that the application site makes a neutral contribution to the heritage significance of the Church via setting.

All Saints Church – Impacts and effects arising

- 11.42 The proposal would result in the change in appearance of agricultural fields in the extended setting of the Church, albeit the application site cannot be seen from the Church.
- 11.43 While the Church spire is visible in some views from the PROW footpath and from across the site in some parts, the ability to see the spires would not be entirely lost as a result of the proposed development. The BHS sets out that the topography of the site and the omission of solar panels in the western part of the site, would ensure that views of the spire would be retained. On this basis, the BHS concludes that the proposal would not detrimentally affect how the Church is experienced, nor its heritage significance and therefore the proposed development would have a neutral impact on the significance of the Church.
- 11.44 The Council's Built Heritage Officer has reviewed the assessment of All Saints Church and agreed with its findings. The proposed development would therefore be considered to have a neutral impact upon the designated heritage asset of All Saints Church.

Extent of Harm

- 11.45 As identified above, it has been concluded that the proposed development would have a neutral impact upon the setting of All Saints Church, a designated heritage asset.
- 11.46 However, the proposed development would be considered to result in less than substantial harm to the special interest of Loudham Hall through development in its general setting. The degree of harm has been identified as moderate. In accordance with paragraph 215 of the NPPF, where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Accordingly, the proposal must be justified following a balanced judgement.

11.47 The Council's Built Heritage Officer has advised that in the event of approval being granted a condition or other suitable provision is made for the applicant to provide a comprehensive long-term hedge management plan.

Heritage Balance

- 11.48 The Council's Built Heritage Officers considers that the proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset of Loudham Hall through changes to its wider setting. This harm has been identified to be moderate on the less than substantial scale. As directed by the NPPF, the harm associated with this designated heritage asset should be given great weight (paragraph 212).
- 11.49 The proposal would deliver a renewable energy facility that would create up to 21MW of power. The benefits of renewable energy are significant and are detailed elsewhere in this report. It is considered therefore that the harm to the heritage asset caused by development within its setting does possess a clear and convincing justification.
- 11.50 Having given great weight to the conservation of the asset (Grade II* listed Loudham Hall) it is considered that the harm to its significance would be outweighed by the considerable public benefits identified. As such, officers consider that the heritage balance would be satisfied as the proposal would result in public benefits and would therefore not conflict with Policy SCLP11.3 of the Local Plan nor the NPPF, in this regard.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 11.51 Policy SCLP11.6 (Non-Designated Heritage Assets) states that applications which result in the harm to the significance of a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) will be judged based on the balance of the scale of any harm or loss, and the significance of the heritage asset. Paragraph 216 of the NPPF states that the effect of an application on the significance of a NDHA should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect NDHAs, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 11.52 The Council does not hold a list of NDHAs but does have criteria based on the archaeological, architectural, artistic and/or historic interest of the asset to assist in their identification. Upon scoping the submitted BHS, the Council's Built Heritage Officer raised three potential buildings which may be considered as NDHAs:
- Sandpit Cottage, located immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary;
 - The Cottage, Fowls Watering located approximately 100m north of the northern boundary;
 - Old House, Fowls Watering located approximately 100m north of northern boundary.
- 11.53 Based on the information submitted and the BHS, it is the view of the Built Heritage Officer that Sandpit Cottage and the Old House would meet the criteria as set out by East Suffolk Council¹ to be considered as NDHAs. The rationale behind not viewing The Cottage as a NDHA is due to it not possessing the relevant criteria in order to be considered as such.

¹ [Non-designated heritage assets » East Suffolk Council](#)

Sandpit Cottage (also known as Sandpit House)

- 11.54 The Built Heritage Officer has set out that the reason for Sandpit Cottage being considered to constitute its status as a NDHA is due its architectural interest (aesthetic value) by way of it remaining a valuable example of 17th century vernacular design. It is also due to its historic interest (association) as it falls within the former bounds of the estate of Loudham Hall, with which it was historically associated until the late 20th century.
- 11.55 The submitted BHS discusses that there are limited opportunities to view Sandpit Cottage from within the application site, with it only becoming visible along the eastern boundary. Given the lack of functional association and the limited intervisibility, the BHS finds that the site only makes a minor positive contribution to its significance. The Built Heritage Officer has not raised objections to the conclusions reached regarding the contribution or effects of the development upon Sandpit Cottage.

Old House, Fowls Watering

- 11.56 The Built Heritage Officer has reached the view that Old House can be considered a NDHA due to its architectural (aesthetic value) and historic interest (representativeness). The building retains interesting historic vernacular features, including a hipped roof with a central Dutch gable. Old House appears to retain its historic footprint and overall appearance, presenting a surviving representation of an 18th century vernacular farmhouse.
- 11.57 Historic estate maps and tithe apportionment confirm that the application site was not historically connected with Old House and there is no known current association either. The application site is visible in views with Old House and it is likely that the site can be viewed from some parts of Old House, particularly first floor windows, albeit this would be at a distance. The submitted BHS states that Old House can be seen in filtered views from within some western parts of the site. While the BHS does not highlight this, it was noted that there are also views of Old House available from along the northern boundary.
- 11.58 The BHS finds that the site makes a minor positive contribution to the significance of Old House. Despite the omission of its views along the northern boundary, the Council's Built Heritage Officer is content that the BHS has drawn an accurate conclusion on the contribution that the application site makes to the heritage significance of Old House.

Impacts and Effects Arising

- 11.59 The submitted BHS identifies that the proposed development would result in minor harm to the significance of Sandpit Cottage and Old House from the change within the setting of these NDHAs. This would predominantly result from the change in outlook associated with the heritage assets. Having had regard to the scale of this harm or loss and the significance of these heritage assets (in accordance with paragraph 216) it is concluded that this would amount to limited weight.

Landscape Character and Visual Impact

- 11.60 Policy SCLP10.4 (Landscape Character) notes that development proposals will be expected to demonstrate their location, scale, form, design and materials will protect and enhance

the special qualities and features of the area; the visual relationship and environment around settlements and their landscape settings; distinctive landscape elements; visually sensitive skylines, seascapes, river valleys and significant views towards key landscapes and cultural features; and the growing network of green infrastructure. It goes on to note that proposals should include measures that enable a scheme to be well integrated into the landscape and enable connectivity to the surrounding green infrastructure and Public Rights of Way network. It also states that development will not be permitted where it will have a significant adverse impact on rural river valleys.

- 11.61 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF requires that planning decisions ensure that developments are visually attractive as a result of appropriate and effective landscaping and that they are sympathetic to local character and historic, including the surrounding landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. Further, paragraph 187 states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: (a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- 11.62 The PPG advises on some particular considerations that relate to large scale ground-mounted solar farms. Paragraph 013 states that the development of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes. However, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively. Policy SCLP9.1 (Low Carbon and Renewable Energy) states that renewable energy development should be complementary to the existing environment without causing any significant adverse impacts to landscape and visual impact.
- 11.63 Large-scale solar array development can have significant impacts on both landscape character and visual amenity. There is a distinction to be made between impact on landscape character, which should be treated as a resource, and impact on visual amenity which is the effect on people observing the development in places where the development can be viewed, such as villages, roads, public rights of way and individual dwellings.

Landscape Character

- 11.64 The application site is made up of three agricultural fields (or part thereof) with a tree copse within the centre, but which lies outside of the red line boundary. The application site and fields to the south-east of the site are predominantly used for arable farming. In comparison to the land directly south and to the north-east which are used as meadow/fallow fields.
- 11.65 The boundaries of the application site are typically defined by a network of ditches with intermittent vegetation and hedgerows. While some of the hedgerows are relatively dense, there are a number of instances where the sparse screening gives rise to open views of the site. This is particularly the case towards the northern end of the site.
- 11.66 The submitted Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) identifies the application site as falling within the Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment (2018) B7 Deben Valley Landscape Character Area (LCA) with a small southern section of the site falling within N1 Boulge Park and Bredfield Rolling Farmland LCA. The submitted assessment concludes,

having considered a range of factors, that the *value* of the site and its immediate surroundings is 'Medium'.

- 11.67 The LVIA goes onto assess the degree of *susceptibility* of the site (i.e. the ability of the landscape to accommodate the development without undue consequences for the maintenance of its existing qualities). This is judged to be 'Medium' because there would be direct impact on the physical features of the site. It should be noted however that the change in character of the landscape would be viewed within the context of the existing pylons which project through the site and form part of its baseline landscape character, making the immediate landscape less sensitive to solar development.
- 11.68 In terms of overall *sensitivity* (combining *value* and *susceptibility*), the LVIA considers this to be 'Medium' given that the landscape is not of local or regional recognition of importance and is therefore able to accommodate some change. The landscape character effects mostly relate to the application site and its immediate surrounds, rather than the wider landscape character area. The Landscape Officer has considered that 'Medium' sensitivity is a realistic conclusion.
- 11.69 While the site would ultimately be decommissioned and returned to its existing state, this would be over a fairly substantial time period.
- 11.70 Considering the operational phase, the proposed development would include additional planting that would increase the overall hedgerow length of the site. This is regarded as beneficial to landscape character by the Landscape Officer. The report acknowledges that the presence of the solar farm would fundamentally alter the character of the landscape of the site and its immediate surrounds. The LVIA records this as a 'Major Adverse' change both on completion and after 15 years, solely in respect of the local context of the site. The Landscape Officer has agreed with this conclusion also.
- 11.71 In respect of wider published landscape character area/types, these effects are considered to be negligible for the national classification and slight for the district level assessment. This is largely due to the topography of the application site and surrounding area which allows for the proposed planting to effectively screen proposed development. The presence of hedgerows along field margins is not out of character for the LCA and therefore the proposal would be considered to have a slight impact at most.
- 11.72 The anticipated construction phase is relatively short (3 to 6 months) and there would be some additional impacts over this phase, but these would have a minor adverse impact given their short term and low scale.
- 11.73 The applicant's addendum to the LVIA also assesses the likely cumulative effects of the development in combination with other projects in the 500m study area. It concludes that effects would range from 'Negligible adverse' to 'Neutral' and that these effects are generally confined and effectively mitigated.
- 11.74 The overall impacts to the landscape character are judged to be 'Moderate' when weighing the 'Major' local impacts against the 'Negligible' wider impacts on the landscape character area. The harm would mostly occur between year 1 and year 8 but would reduce over time. This 'Moderate' harm will need to be weighed in the wider planning balance as detailed in later sections of this report.

Visual Impact

- 11.75 Visual amenity relates to the direct visual impacts on receptors (people) and the magnitude of those changes rather than on the landscape.
- 11.76 The visual receptors with greatest sensitivity would be users of the local PROW network especially the footpath that crosses the site. A number of viewpoints around and within the site have been selected, all of which are located on points of public access.
- 11.77 In respect of the users of the footpath that runs through the site (Pettistree 7), the solar array would cause a 'Major Adverse' magnitude of change to the view with 'Major' effects in the early years after installation. These effects would only moderate as the new hedge planting either side of the footpath matures. Through the course of the application, the PROW corridor was widened to 10m which would allow for views over the wider landscape and would prohibit the proposed development from forming a narrow visual corridor. On this basis it is considered that the effect to PROW users would be 'Major Adverse' at year 1 which would then be reduced overtime to 'Moderate-Minor-Adverse' as a result of the proposed planting and the width of the corridor.
- 11.78 A number of concerns have been raised in relation to the public rights of way to the north/east of the site, particularly from PROW 10 and PROW 17. Views from these PROWs have been picked up within the LVIA (as depicted by viewpoints 7 and 8 of the LVIA) which shows that they are frequently interrupted by intervening vegetation which would be supplemented in some places by new hedgerow planting to reduce 'Moderate' effects to 'Minor'. While new planting is not proposed along the eastern boundary which is visible from PROW 17, it is considered that due to the distance between this route and the application site, the extent of dense intervening vegetation and the direction that people would be travelling along this route, the proposal would largely have a negligible impact on visual receptors of the PROW footpaths.
- 11.79 Viewpoint 7 is also representative of views from the residential properties of Old House and The Cottage (Nos. 1 and 2 Fowl Watering). It is anticipated that views from the principal rooms would suffer 'Moderate Adverse' effects initially, reducing to 'Minor' over time as new planting matures.
- 11.80 In respect of road users in cars, Slight effects would be experienced by those on Loudham Hall Road with only glimpsed views as planting matures. Other road users are unlikely to experience any meaningful effects.
- 11.81 Sandpit Cottage has now been considered within the addendum to the LVIA. It is noted as being at a lower level than the receiving land, with mature trees and scrub between the garden boundary and the proposed panels. There would be very limited views into the site with only the ends of a limited number of panels potentially visible through understorey scrub in winter. The Landscape Officer agrees with the submitted assessment of 'Moderate' level of effect (assumed adverse). During the course of the application, planting has been proposed along the perimeter fencing which would reduce the impacts of the proposal to 'Slight' as planting matures.

- 11.82 The addendum also assesses the visual impact on other properties that were not included in the original assessment. The Landscape Officer has advised that the additional visual impact assessments are appropriate. The addendum concludes that the visual effects would be limited by topography and existing vegetation which is agreed with. Where adverse effects are noted, it is agreed that these could be moderated over time as new screen planting establishes and grows.
- 11.83 A landscape masterplan has been submitted which generally covers enhanced site boundary planting and management of existing hedges to enhance the screening ability. New planting is also proposed either side of the PROW that runs through the site. Other measures to enhance ecological value are also included. The details submitted are largely agreeable with a condition being required for specific planting details to be provided.
- 11.84 It should also be noted that landscape maintenance and long term management should be sought by condition. This should include agreement of the management of the proposed planting adjacent to Sandpit Cottage to ensure it is maintained to an acceptable height.
- 11.85 A "Photograph Document" has been submitted by a Ms Anne Westover. The document largely highlights that views of the proposal would be possible if nothing changes from the current landscape scenario. However, the landscape masterplan (drawing number 1051074-BSR9001-TOW-L-007 Rev 12, received 7th October 2025) which has been submitted seeks to mitigate the impacts of development by retaining and gapping-up exiting hedgerows and managing them at a height between 3-4 metres in the south, by re-establishing a hedgerow along the northern boundary and by retaining existing vegetation within the site and providing a scrub area on the western boundary.
- 11.86 In spite of this, it is not the case that the applicant or officers are of the view that the proposal would not still be visible from some viewpoints. The LVIA seeks to identify those viewpoints with the highest sensitivity and magnitude of change, as it cannot investigate every possible viewpoint in detail. These viewpoints were agreed with the Landscape Officer and have been explored in order to ensure the significance of that effect is understood. It should be noted that the landscape mitigation proposed as a result of this assessment will combine to reduce the visibility of the development in the main as well. As such, the key conclusions drawn above remain appropriate and the most relevant.
- 11.87 In conclusion, the proposed development would introduce localised changes to visual amenity which would generally be confined and effectively mitigated. Overtime, mature vegetation and boundary enhancements would further minimise these impacts. The overall harm to visual amenity is judged as 'Moderate'.

Valued Landscape

- 11.88 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF places emphasis on protecting 'valued landscapes', although these are not defined. Although all landscapes could be valued by an individual or group of people, it is considered that in order to be considered a 'valued landscape' for the purposes of the NPPF, the landscape must exhibit and be valued for its demonstratable physical attributes, which elevate it above just open countryside but perhaps below those areas that are formally designated, such as National Parks or National Landscapes. A landscape does not have to be nationally or locally designated to be a valued landscape for the purposes of the NPPF. It is a matter of planning judgement and depends on whether

the area is more than mere countryside, having physical attributes which take it out of the ordinary.

- 11.89 The LVIA sets out that the landscape of the site is not valued for the purposes of the NPPF as it is not covered by any statutory designations or identified as high quality in any of the development plan documents or public evidence landscape character study documents. The Landscape Officer has considered this within their response and agreed with the findings of the LVIA in this regard. As such, in terms of paragraph 187 of the NPPF, the application site is not considered by officers to form part of a valued landscape.
- 11.90 However, this does not mean that the landscape has no value; the LVIA has been informed by, and is sympathetic to, the special qualities and features that it contains. In this case, the surrounding landscape is defined in part by the river to the north and east. Views of the development within this context have been carefully assessed and the impacts noted above. However, the existence of the pylons and A12 behind the site to the west are also influential in this context and this effects both the scenic beauty and tranquillity of this setting. In short, officers consider it cannot be said that the of landscape potentially affected by this development is of 'elevated' quality or perceived to be 'out of the ordinary' in this regard.

Residential Amenity

- 11.91 Policy SCLP11.2 (Residential Amenity) states that when considering the impact of development on residential amenity, the Council will have regard to; (a) privacy/overlooking; (b) outlook; (c) access to daylight and sunlight; (d) noise and disturbance; (e) the resulting physical relationship with other properties; (f) light spillage; (g) air quality and other forms of pollution; and (h) safety and security. Development will not cause an unacceptable loss of amenity for existing or future occupiers of development in the vicinity.
- 11.92 The application site is directly adjoined by Sandpit Cottage along the eastern boundary. This is the only residential property which directly adjoins to the site, however there is a significant land level change between the application site and Sandpit Cottage as recognised by the submitted illustrative section (drawing no. 1051076-ADAS-XX-XX-DR-2001). To the south of the site is Loudham Hall; the application site is separated from Loudham Hall by the intervening road. The dwelling is also set back within the plot and as such, there would be a separation of some 280m between Loudham Hall and the application site. To the north of the site are two residential properties known as Old House and The Cottage. They would remain separated from the site by agricultural fields, measuring some 100m between the application site and the two dwellings.

Construction Impacts

- 11.93 The main impacts to residential amenity would arise during the construction and decommissioning periods. Policy SCLP10.3 (Environmental Quality) states that development proposals will be expected to protect the quality of the environment to minimise, and where possible, reduce all forms of pollution and contamination; this includes air quality and noise pollution.

- 11.94 During the construction phase there is potential impacts from noise and dust emissions. However, a noise and dust management scheme secured through a Construction Management Plan ('CMP') would be capable of reducing the risk. The provision and implementation of the CMP shall be secured through condition. The condition should also require the mitigation measures identified (or alternative measures) are employed during decommission. The Council's Environmental Protection Officer has agreed that subject a CMP being conditioned, the proposal would be capable of appropriately controlling noise and dust during construction and when the site were decommissioned.
- 11.95 Concerns have been raised in relation to the impacts of vibration during the construction period upon the nearby residential properties, particularly Sandpit Cottage due to the change in land levels and geological composition (sand) of the soil. These concerns were shared with the applicant, and they confirmed that prior to construction, a ground survey would be undertaken the scope of which would include the following testing:
- Boreholes including window sampling and discrete pile testing;
 - Trial pits and trenches;
 - In-situ testing covering resistivity testing;
 - Geotechnical laboratory testing including corrosivity, moisture, particle size, distribution, shear box, thermal resistivity/water content/sulphate suite.
- 11.96 The survey would be completed to understand the makeup of the ground. Should the surveys identify areas of instability, appropriate measures such as piling or alternative ground-stabilisation methods would be implemented. The applicant has confirmed that solar panels would only be installed on land that meets the required stability standards.
- 11.97 A condition should therefore be imposed which requires the ground survey, its findings and any necessary measures to be submitted to and agreed by the local planning authority prior to construction works. The Environmental Protection Officer has also confirmed that a condition should be imposed which requires a vibration assessment to be undertaken to ensure that the construction works would not result in a statutory nuisance. Subject to these conditions being imposed, officers are satisfied that the matters which fall within the scope of a planning application will have been adequately considered and any residual impacts would be a civil matter between the applicant and the relevant property owner to be resolved.

Operational Impacts

- 11.98 A Noise Assessment Report (ref: 2060448-RSK-RP-001-(04)) dated June 2025 has been submitted with the application. It is understood that amendments have been previously made to the scheme to reduce the number of inverter stations from 21 to 10 to lessen the noise impacts of the scheme. The inverter stations have also been amended to be located further from noise sensitive receptors, with four of the inverters between installed with acoustic barriers in a "U" shape between 3.5 – 4m in height. It is also understood that the solar farm would not be operational at night (23:00 to 07:00 hours) and would not have any associated battery storage facilities or associated mechanical services plant. An exception to the operational hours may occur during a relatively short summer period when there is enough sunlight in the period of 05:00 to 07:00 for the system to be operational, the Noise Assessment has also considered this period.

- 11.99 The Council's Environmental Protection Officer has reviewed the Noise Assessment Report and agrees that in both daytime and 05:00 to 07:00 operational periods, the operational rating noise level from the proposal is predicted to be more than 10dB below the existing ambient sound levels and at most receptors, considerably below. This is indicative of a low impact from noise.
- 11.100 Subject to the imposition of the conditions requiring a validation noise survey, details of the acoustic barriers to be provided and for the development to be carried out in accordance with the agreed operational hours, the proposed development would not be considered to have unacceptable impacts of noise, in accordance with Policy SCLP11.2 and Policy SCLP10.3.
- 11.101 Given the separation between the residential dwellings of Old House, The Cottage, Loudham Hall (including the Lodge) and the application site, it is not considered that the proposed development would be overbearing or dominant upon occupiers to a degree that would be considered unacceptable. Similarly, given the topographical changes between the application site and Sandpit Cottage, as well as the separation between the boundary and the actual development, the proposal would not be considered dominant upon the occupiers of Sandpit Cottage.
- 11.102 As discussed above, views of the proposal from the nearby residential properties would be possible and would be considered to result in some adverse visual impacts. These impacts would be somewhat mitigated through intervening planting to soften the outlook onto the application site as depicted by the landscape masterplan. However, it is acknowledged that the effectiveness of this planting would vary with views potentially being more prominent in winter months when leaf coverage is lower, this would be particularly the case for the Lodge, Sandpit Cottage, Old House and The Cottage.
- 11.103 The proposed site layout plan details CCTV cameras in regular intervals along the perimeter fencing. The layout does not depict the finalised position or angles of the CCTV cameras. To ensure privacy is still attributed to the nearby residential properties, a condition should be imposed requiring the exact location, position and sight line of the cameras to be agreed.
- 11.104 In other respects, the proposed development would not result in unreasonable harm by way of being unduly dominating or otherwise unacceptably impacting living conditions as a result of the scale and proximity to nearby residential dwellings described above. It is considered that the development would not dominate or overshadow nearby dwellings to the detriment of residential amenity.
- 11.105 It is acknowledged that the proposal would result in a change in character to the application site and the concerns raised by neighbouring owners and occupiers have been carefully considered. However, the proposed solar farm would not be considered to result in any detrimental impacts to the residential amenity of the nearby residential properties in accordance with Policy SCLP11.2.

Glint and Glare

- 11.106 The PPG on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy at Paragraph 013, advises planning authorities to consider the visual impact of large scale ground-mounted solar farms,

specifically the effect on the landscape of glint and glare, as well as on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety.

- 11.107 A Glint and Glare Study has been prepared by PagerPower dated January 2025. Importantly, the solar panels have been proposed to make use of an anti-reflective coating which minimises glint and glare, therefore reflections would be reduced over a standard reflective surface.
- 11.108 The Glint and Glare Study has considered the potential impact of reflection upon nearby residential properties. The assessment identifies there are 21 residential dwellings that could possibly face reflections from the solar arrays. However, the assessment goes on to conclude that for all dwellings where reflections are geometrically possible, screening in the form of existing vegetation or buildings has been identified. No views of the reflective area are possible, and no impact is expected. This is likely due to the solar reflections only being geometrically possible within spring, summer and autumn months where foliage would act as effective screening. Whereas solar reflections during winter months when vegetation would be sparser would not be geometrically possible according to the Glint and Glare Study. Further mitigation in the form of hedgerow planting and infilling has been proposed to ensure reflections during the spring, summer and autumn months would not occur. Subject to a condition being imposed requiring the planting and maintenance of these hedgerows, it is considered that the effects of glint and glare on these residential dwellings would not be significant.
- 11.109 An addendum Glint and Glare Study submitted and dated July 2024 considered the potential impacts of glint and glare upon the Lodge. The addendum has considered that solar reflections from panels to the east of the Lodge would be geometrically possible, but that screening in the form of existing vegetation would significantly obstruct views such that no impact is predicted. It is noted that Loudham Hall are not satisfied with the results of this assessment as it has focused (they say) on the west facing windows rather than the north facing windows. However, reflections into the north facing window would not be geometrically possible, as detailed by the assessment. It is therefore considered unlikely that the proposal would result in an unacceptable degree of solar reflections to the occupiers of the Lodge.
- 11.110 In respect of receptors other than residential dwellings, the Glint and Glare Study has identified roads and PROW users as facing potential impact. Of the 14 identified road receptors along the A12, the assessment predicts that 11 would not be affected when factoring in existing screening. For three receptors, marginal views may be possible. However, it is predicted that the reflective area would be outside of the field of view for drivers travelling north or south along the A12. In relation to the B1438, reflections would be geometrically possible to all 10 road receptors. However, no impact is considered when screening is considered.
- 11.111 The assessment sets out that local roads have not been taken forward for geometric modelling as any solar reflections would be considered low impact. Given there is mature intervening vegetation, the road users of Loudham Hall Road are unlikely to face significant impacts of glint or glare. In the instance some impacts were felt, as road users are moving this would be a glint encounter as most rather than a long term impact. However, given the existing hedgerow and the geometry of the site in respect of Loudham Hall Road, these impacts are unlikely.

11.112 In relation to PROW, the assessment details that reflections would be geometrically possible towards eight of the 18 receptors. Of these eight, only five would have visibility of the reflective area and experience reflections in practice. The assessment has judged the impacts of this to be low when taking into account other environmental considerations.

11.113 Overall the proposed development would not be considered to result in unacceptable impacts reflections from the panels, such that no mitigation is required. A condition is recommended to ensure that the panels used are blue/grey in colour with an anti-reflective coating. The proposal would therefore not be considered to conflict with policy in this regard.

Design

11.114 Policy SCLP11.1 (Design Quality) establishes a general requirement for all new development to reflect local distinctiveness and incorporate high-quality design principles with regards to appearance, scale, layout and landscaping.

11.115 From a purely design and appearance perspective (as opposed to the landscape, visual and built heritage impacts which have been discussed above) the proposed development would involve the installation of a large number of solar panels in a series of rows, oriented east to west which would be of a scale, design and appearance typical for a solar farm and not objectionable.

11.116 In regard to the design of the arrays, each of the solar panels would be mounted on a fixed panel system. The panels would be covered by high transparency solar glass with an anti-reflecting coating which minimises glint and glare, while aiding the maximum absorption of the available sunlight. The panels would be dark grey/blue in colour and mounted on a frame of anodized aluminium alloy and galvanised steel.

11.117 The DNO, substation compound and associated equipment would be located within the south-western corner of the site. Transformer stations would be positioned at intervals throughout the site. These elements would have a utilitarian appearance, but which would be acceptable in the context of a solar development. The elevation plans for fencing depicts an option between plain or barbed wire and it is considered that plain wire would be more sympathetic to the character of the area and therefore a condition should be imposed to that effect.

11.118 Notwithstanding the assessment made in relation to the landscape, visual and built heritage impacts, the design of the proposed development when viewed in isolation would be acceptable and in accordance with Policy SCLP11.1. It is however recognised that the proposal would result in other impacts given the siting of the development as set out within this report.

Ecology

11.119 Policy SCLP10.1 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) states that development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it maintains, restores or enhances the existing green infrastructure network and positively contributes towards biodiversity and/or geodiversity through the creation of new habitats and green infrastructure and improvement to

linkages between habitats. New development should provide environmental net gains for both green infrastructure and biodiversity as well as ecological enhancements and should provide a biodiversity net gain that is proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposal.

11.120 Chapter 15 of the NPPF is also clear that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the local environment by minimising impacts on providing net gains for biodiversity.

11.121 The site is not located within an area which is subject to any statutory ecological designations but does fall within a SSSI Impact Zone. The nearest statutory designated sites are as follows:

- Suffolk and East Coast Heaths National Landscape – approx. 2.6km to the southeast.
- Sandlings Forest (SSSI and SPA) – approx. 3.5km to the southeast.
- Deben Estuary (Ramsar, SSSI, SPA) – approx. 4.5km to the south.
- Grimston Warren Pit (SSSI) – approx. 4.56km to the east.

11.122 There are also eight County Wildlife Sites (CWS) within 2km of the site, the closest of which is Ashe Abbey Decoy Pond which is approximately 0.4km from the site.

11.123 Impacts are considered unlikely upon statutory or non-statutory designated sites due to the distance with the application site and given the nature of the development being non-residential.

11.124 There are a number of habitats within the site which have been highlighted by the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) as having the potential to support protected and priority species. Several updated ecology reports have been provided as the site contains suitable habitats for foraging/commuting bats, badgers, breeding birds, wintering birds, reptiles, hedgehog, amphibians, water vole and otters. Mitigation measures are included in these reports which should be secured through the imposition of a condition.

11.125 The development is exempt from mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) as the application was submitted prior to the introduction of mandatory BNG in early 2024. Despite this, a BNG Assessment has been submitted which demonstrates that the development could result in a net gain of 74% in habitat units, 25% in hedgerow units and 43% in watercourse units.

11.126 The previous case officer report noted that the findings of the applications Shadow HRA (ADAS, August 2021) were acceptable and were subsequently adopted as the LPA's HRA conclusion. Natural England and the Council's Ecology Officer have not raised any matters which suggest that the circumstances surrounding the HRA have changed and therefore the previously adopted HRA is assumed to remain relevant.

11.127 Lighting is only proposed to the buildings within the substation. A condition should be imposed requiring details of this lighting to be submitted and agreed to ensure it would be sensitively designed given the ecological considerations on and adjacent to the site.

11.128 Taking into account the above and subject to the implementation of the conditions mentioned and those recommended by the Council's Ecology Officer, the proposed

development would not be considered to adversely affect ecology or biodiversity in accordance with Policy SCLP10.1. Additionally, the proposal would be likely to result in a net gain to the biodiversity of habitat units and hedgerow units, which is a benefit in this regard.

Arboriculture

- 11.129 Policy SCLP10.4 (Landscape Character) states that, amongst other matters, development proposals will be expected to demonstrate that their location, scale, form, design and materials will protect and enhance distinctive landscape elements including trees, hedgerows and field boundaries, and their function as ecological corridors. Paragraph 136 of the NPPF highlights the importance of trees for helping to mitigate against and adapt to climate change and requires existing trees to be retained wherever possible.
- 11.130 An updated Arboricultural Planning Statement (ADAS, May 2025) has been submitted to assess any changes to the features on site. It was established that updated measurements including stem diameters, heights and crown spreads were required to be recorded and that since the initial survey, the group previously referenced as G19 had been removed. The application site therefore now contains 70 tree features, consisting of 46 individual trees, 19 groups of trees and five hedgerows which have the potential to be impacted by the development. Of these trees, nine were recorded as Category A trees, 40 as Category B trees, 20 as Category C trees and one as Category U.
- 11.131 The Arboricultural Planning Statement confirms that the development would not require the removal of any trees to facilitate the proposal. However, a circa 12.5m section of one category B tree group (G17) would require removal to facilitate construction of the new access off Loudham Hall Road. The landscape masterplan (drawing number 1051074-BSR9001-TOW-L-007 Rev 12, received 7th October 2025) depicts that a proposed hedgerow would be planted to mitigate the hedgerow that would be removed to facilitate the access construction. This will be secured through a landscape condition.
- 11.132 To ensure that the proposed development would not result in harm to any trees on site (besides the section of G17 which requires removal) various tree protection measures would be provided during the construction phase and are detailed within Section 6.0 of the report. Subject to the development being carried out in accordance with those tree protection measures, the proposal would accord with Policy SCLP10.1.

Archaeology

- 11.133 Policy SCLP11.7 (Archaeology) states that an archaeological assessment proportionate to the potential and significance of remains must be included with any planning application affecting areas of known or suspected archaeological importance to ensure that provision is made for the preservation of important archaeological remains. Where proposals affect archaeological sites, preference will be given to preservation in situ unless it can be shown that recording of remains, assessment, analysis report and/or deposition of the archive is more appropriate. Archaeological conditions or planning obligations will be imposed on consents as appropriate. Measures to disseminate and promote information about archaeological assets to the public will be supported.

- 11.134 The application is accompanied by an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment prepared by ADAS and dated September 2021. This was previously reviewed and after investigation, SCC Archaeology Services concluded that the application was acceptable subject to conditions being imposed requiring further works to record and advance the understanding of the significance of any heritage assets before construction works take place.
- 11.135 SCC Archaeology Services have not raised any reason to suggest that the assessment requires updating. As such, with the appropriate conditions provided to safeguard archaeological assets within the application site, the proposal would be considered acceptable and to accord with Policy SCLP11.7.

Flood Risk

- 11.136 Policy SCLP9.5 (Flood Risk) notes that proposals for new developments will not be permitted in areas at high risk of flooding unless the applicant satisfies the safety requirements in the Flood Risk National Planning Policy Guidance. Developments should exhibit the three main principles of flood risk, in that, they should be safe, resilient and not increase flood risk elsewhere. Paragraph 181 of the NPPF mirrors this advice and is clear that when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere.
- 11.137 Policy SCLP9.6 (Sustainable Drainage Systems) states that developments should use sustainable drainage systems to drain surface water. Runoff rates from new development must be restricted to greenfield runoff rates wherever possible. Similarly, paragraph 182 of the NPPF states that applications which could affect drainage on or around the site should incorporate sustainable drainage systems to control flow rates and reduce volumes of runoff and which are proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal.
- 11.138 The application site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and experiences only some small pockets of surface water flood risk which are concentrated within the southern parcel of the site. An updated Flood Risk Assessment (LDE, May 2025) has been submitted with the application.
- 11.139 The development has been sequentially placed in Flood Zone 1. While there are some small pockets of surface water flood risk, the FRA states that the surface water drainage strategy would accommodate the surface water generated on site. Following the site's topography, the surface water run off would flow east towards the on-site water course and off-site field boundary ditches, to be eventually conveyed away from the site.
- 11.140 The submitted FRA outlines that the main ground impact comes from the poles which the solar panels sit on, the access track and the ancillary infrastructure (e.g. transformers, substation etc.). The solar panels themselves would not contribute to any ground impact as any rainfall which directly falls upon the panels would run off to reach the ground. The FRA details that the runoff would then flow underneath the next array of panels in the direction of the site's topography where it would then infiltrate to the ground. A swale is proposed along the eastern and southern perimeter fence to control any excess runoff generated from the development. The FRA demonstrates that the swales would offer a significantly greater amount of attenuation storage than what is required for the development alone. The bunds adjacent to the swales would prevent any excess flows

leaving the site boundary and are depicted within the FRA as having a height of between 15-16cm. Appendix G of the FRA details the location of the swales and demonstrates that they could be appropriately accommodated between the panels and the perimeter fencing.

- 11.141 The applicant's drainage consultant has stated that as only panels are proposed in the area affected by surface water flood risk and they would be raised from ground level, the development would not be affected by flooding in this area. The drainage consultant has also confirmed the "pit" within the south-east corner of the site would be maintained in its current form.
- 11.142 SCC as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) have reviewed the updated FRA and raised no objection to the scheme, subject to their recommended conditions being imposed. On this basis, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy SCLP9.5 and Policy SCLP9.6.

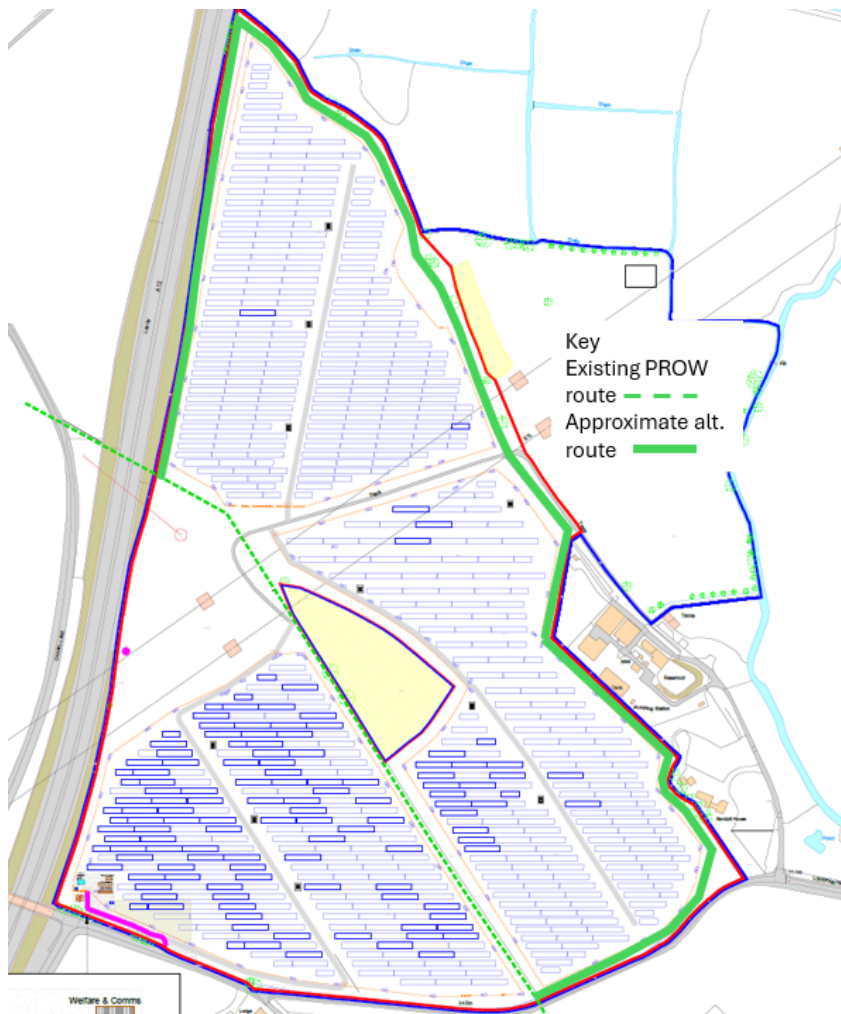
Water Quality

- 11.143 Paragraph 187(e) of the NPPF discusses that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as water quality.
- 11.144 During the construction phase, there is a risk of accidental water pollution which could impact the ditch network. Any adverse impact from water pollution would be mitigated through the implementation of the Construction Surface Water Management Plan, which could be secured through condition. The buffer zone that has been created between the development and the ditch networks would further help to mitigate against water pollution.
- 11.145 Subject to a condition requiring those mitigation measures being implemented, the development would not result in water pollution, in accordance with paragraph 187(e) of the NPPF.

Public Rights of Way

- 11.146 There is a public right of way (PROW) Pettistree Footpath 007 which transects diagonally through the site, from the western boundary to the southern boundary. The proposed site plan depicts that the PROW would be maintained through the creation of a hedge-lined corridor measuring 10m in width which has been depicted on the site layout plan.
- 11.147 SCC PROW officers initially raised an objection to the scheme as the PROW Management Plan did not reference the 10m wide corridor. It has been agreed that a condition should be imposed requiring the PROW Management Plan is updated to reference this corridor, as well as a section provided to show the relationship between the corridor and the PROW route according to the definitive map. Details of matters such as PROW signage and surfacing of the access track over the PROW should also be conditioned. Subject to these conditions being imposed, SCC and ESC PROW officers have confirmed the treatment of the PROW upon occupation would be acceptable.

11.148 However, concerns were also raised in relation to the temporary closure of the PROW during construction works. SCC PROW officers encouraged the applicant to provide a permissive alternative route to ensure continued access to the wider PROW network for users throughout the construction period. As a result, the applicant has proposed an alternative route which would extend along the north and southern boundaries of the site, the approximate route is depicted below.



11.149 This alternative route would add approx. 900m to the length of the footpath. The applicant has consulted with their construction team to ensure that adequate Health and Safety measures are afforded to PROW users, and with this in mind, the alternative route is considered to be the most suitable. SCC and ESC PROW officers have reviewed the proposed alternative route and based on the applicant's justification, considered it acceptable. However, a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order would be required from SCC prior to the diversion being undertaken and a condition should be imposed requiring this is obtained.

Highways

11.150 Policy SCLP7.1 (Sustainable Transport) states that development will be supported where amongst other matters, any significant impacts on the highways network are mitigated; it is well integrated into, protects and enhances the existing pedestrian routes and the public right of way network; it reduces conflict between users of the transport network including pedestrians, cyclists, users of mobility vehicles and drivers and does not reduce road

safety; and the cumulative impact of new development will not create severe impacts on the existing transport network.

- 11.151 Paragraph 116 of the NPPF is explicit that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.
- 11.152 The site access would be obtained from Loudham Hall Road and the applicant has confirmed that some hedgerow works (discussed above) would be required to facilitate adequate visibility splays. The submitted Technical Note (July 2022) demonstrates that the site access could accommodate the predicted vehicles within the proposed geometry and traffic management measures, including the use of temporary traffic signals at the site access during construction hours. It has therefore been demonstrated that the site access could be used safely, and SCC as the local Highway Authority ('LHA') have raised no objection to its location.
- 11.153 A Transport Statement (February 2022) and additional Technical Note (July 2022) have been submitted to support the application. The previous officer report contains the assessment of these documents, and no evidence has been presented to indicate that their comments and findings would be outdated. After construction, the site would encounter low levels of traffic equivalent to around one van per week for regular maintenance purposes.
- 11.154 The LHA have raised no objection to the application subject to a number of conditions being imposed. Further to their consultation response, the LHA have confirmed that a Construction Traffic Management Plan should be secured through a condition.

Crime Prevention

- 11.155 Paragraph 96(b) of the NPPF states that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places. Paragraph 102(a) outlines that planning decisions should promote public safety and take into account wider security and defence requirements.
- 11.156 Suffolk Constabulary Designing Out Crime have been consulted on the application and have highlighted that the high value of component parts used in solar farms, has led to a marked rise in theft from such installations. In response to this consultation, the applicant has set out a number of security measures that they typically put in place which include:
- 2.1m post and wire mesh fencing around site boundaries;
 - 2m heras fencing and gates for compounds;
 - CCTV cameras mounted on 3.5m poles;
 - Sold secure "gold" standard padlocks;
 - Signage indicating the use of SmartWater® forensic marking technology;
 - On site security personnel during construction.
- 11.157 The applicant is currently working with DeterTech to carry out detailed security assessments across their UK sites which combine physical site inspections with localised crime intelligence to identify potential vulnerabilities.

11.158 Suffolk Constabulary have reviewed the applicant's response and have noted that they are pleased with the measures proposed and confirm that they do not raise an objection to the application. On this basis, it is considered that the proposal would adhere to the NPPF in its attempts to reduce crime on the site.

Economic Development

11.159 Policy SCLP4.5 (Economic Development in Rural Areas) supports development proposals that grow and diversify the rural economy, particularly where this will secure employment locally, enable agricultural growth and diversification and other land based rural businesses.

11.160 The previous officer report noted that the proposal would result in the temporary loss of agricultural land but recognised clean energy is a key sector in the East Suffolk Growth Plan. It was noted that the proposal would align with the East Suffolk Growth Plan as it would provide additional energy infrastructure to support the growing energy supply chain.

11.161 The officer report also recognised that agriculture, food and drink form key sectors in East Suffolk. The current land use is agricultural, and it has been stated that currently no jobs are supported on this site. The proposed development would result in the creation of one job. This means the land would continue to provide significantly low job density but the proposed development in this location would not have a detrimental impact on the availability of direct employment and local employment opportunities. As such, it was concluded that the proposal furthers the objectives of the East Suffolk Growth Plan and there are no reasons presented which suggest that this would no longer be the case.

Other Material Considerations

11.162 A material consideration in the determination of planning proposals for renewable energy is the National Policy Statements ('NPS') for the delivery of major energy infrastructure. The NPS recognises that large scale energy generating projects will inevitably have impacts, particularly if sites are in rural areas.

11.163 NPS EN-1 and EN-3 identify the approach to delivering nationally strategic level energy schemes. EN-3 recognises that solar is to play a key part in the strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector and will help deliver greater energy independence.

11.164 It is noted that the Climate Change Act 2008, as amended, sets a legally binding target to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions from their 1990 level to net zero by 2050 and reducing emissions by 78% compared with 1990 levels, by 2035. On 24th July 2019, East Suffolk Council declared a climate emergency and in doing so, the Council made the following pledges:

- To set up a Cross Party Task Group, to investigate ways to the cut the Council's carbon and harmful emissions, with an ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030;
- To work with Suffolk County Council and other partners across the country and region towards the aspiration of making the county of Suffolk carbon neutral by 2030; and

- To work with the Government to deliver its 25 year Environmental Plan, and increase the powers and resources available to local authorities in order to make the 2030 target easier to achieve.

11.165 The Council’s current Strategic Plan ‘Our Direction 2028’ continues the commitment to meet net zero targets by 2030 through supporting, promoting and implementing green technology which contributes to local and national energy infrastructures.

11.166 The importance of solar in delivering energy security for the UK is clearly set out within Government policy. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and National Energy System Operator (NESO) have set up the “Clean Power 2030”² pathway which looks to achieve 95% net-zero electricity generation by 2030. Within the UK, the current installed capacity for solar measures 16.6GW and to meet this target, an increase of 47GW of solar would be required by 2030. In addition, the Government Policy Paper “UK Infrastructure: a 10 year plan” includes a major focus on solar energy, with a goal of reaching up to 47GW of installed solar capacity by 2030.

11.167 In response to the Clean Power Action Plan, the Government’s Solar Road Map (Policy Paper, 30th June 2025) introduced a strategic plan to increase solar development by up to 50GW by 2030. This road map looked to address the practical actions for industry and government to overcome the challenges of delivering this ambition in order to boost the UK’s energy security.

11.168 The proposed development is estimated by the applicant to produce enough clean, renewable electricity to power 5,251 homes per year which would represent a saving of 4,651 tonnes of CO2 annually.

11.169 There are no physical constraints limiting early development of the application site and the development has a grid connection offer in place. The grid offer is reflective of NESO’s Grid Connection Reform which focuses on projects which are “ready” and “needed” to meet the Government’s clean power targets. Therefore, the solar farm would be able to make an early and significant contribution of achieving the statutory net target set of 50GW of solar by 2030. It would enable the delivery of clean and secure renewable energy to be realised. This carries significant overarching weight.

12.0 Conclusion

Development Plan

12.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that in dealing with an application for planning permission the authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application and any other material considerations.

12.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

² [Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A new era of clean electricity – main report - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101222/clean-power-2030-action-plan-main-report.pdf)

12.3 The proposed development would be compliant with Policy SCLP9.1 (Low Carbon and Renewable Energy), particularly in regard to the following areas:

- The applicant has demonstrated the power connections required for functional purposes;
- The proposal would not cause significant adverse impacts to residential amenity;
- The proposal would not cause significant adverse impacts to landscape and visual impact;
- The proposal would not cause significant adverse impacts to transport;
- The proposal would not cause significant adverse noise and air quality;
- A condition would be attached to the planning permission (if granted) which would require the site to be decommissioned and restored when energy generation use ceases or becomes non-functional for a period of 6 months or more, or after a 40 year period (whichever is sooner).

12.4 It has been argued by residents and the Parish Council that the proposal would be contrary to Policy SCLP10.4 (Landscape Character) on the basis that it would have a significant adverse impact on the rural river valley. However, officers do not concur with this view and find that the impacts are moderate overall; with most of this harm arising within the immediate environs of the site, rather to the wider landscape. It is considered that, provided the mitigation planting proposed is secured, the proposal would protect the landscape character of this area and comply with this policy.

12.5 Taking the above considerations into account, officers consider that the proposal would not conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole.

Other material considerations:

12.6 As set out in Paragraph 8 of the NPPF achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and needed to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- an economic objective (to help build a strong, responsive, and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation, and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure);
- a social objective (to support strong, vibrant, and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being); and
- an environmental objective (to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy).

12.7 The presumption in favour of development sits at the heart of the NPPF. In this case, the policies which are most important for determining the application are not deemed to be out-of-date. As a consequence, if the proposal accords with the development plan, Paragraph 11(c) of the NPPF directs approval without delay (subject to there being no material considerations which indicate otherwise).

12.8 In this case, taking into consideration the presumption in favour of sustainable development and finding no conflict with the NPPF as a whole, it is not considered there are any material considerations which indicate otherwise; and for the record the wider planning balance has been satisfied for the reasons set out below.

Planning balance

Heritage Impact

12.9 The proposed development would give rise to a moderate level of less than substantial harm to the setting of the Grade II* listed building, Loudham Hall, however, the public benefits would outweigh this harm and the heritage balance would be satisfied.

12.10 Officers note that enhanced hedgerow screening will be provided between the development and the curtilage of Loudham Hall (including the Gate House). Having considered how the agrarian setting currently contributes to the particular significance of Loudham Hall, and how development within its setting would cause an impact by loss of this agrarian setting, it is considered that this could be mitigated to a degree by this screening; because visually this conflict would be less apparent, however, it is acknowledged the development would still fundamentally persist to exist (for a 40-year period) and the undeveloped field would not. It is therefore considered that overall, this harm carries limited weight.

12.11 No more than minor harm would occur to the two non-designated heritage assets. Having regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of these assets, it is considered that this would attract very limited weight.

Landscape Impact

12.12 Irrespective of the proposed landscape mitigation, the proposal would have a moderate impact upon the landscape character and a moderate impact on visual amenity. This judgement has been reached when weighing the local impacts (major) versus the wider impacts (negligible). Officers consider that as the magnitude of landscape harm is relatively contained, it is therefore warranted moderate weight.

Temporary loss of Agricultural Land

12.13 The proposal would involve the loss of medium quality (Grade 3b) and poorer quality (Grade 4) agricultural land. The proposal would take the land out of agricultural food production even if for a limited (40 years) time. This would result in some limited harm.

Residential Amenity

12.14 The proposed development would result in some temporary impacts during the construction period to nearby residential properties. These impacts would predominantly be in the form of noise, highway traffic and potentially vibrations. However, the construction (and subsequently decommissioning) period would only be for a limited time and would be minimised to an acceptable degree, therefore this is only afforded limited weight.

Biodiversity and ecology

12.15 The proposal would result in some limited loss of hedgerows and trees but these would be compensated for by ecological enhancements and an overall significant Biodiversity Net Gain. The BNG exceeds the expectations set out within the NPPF and would be a benefit of the scheme, albeit as the application was submitted prior to the 2024 Regulations, it has not been held to the same level of scrutiny as applications determined under these Regulations would be. As such this is attributed limited weight.

Renewable Power Generation

12.16 Over the course of its lifetime, the proposal would make a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions and this would also contribute to energy security; this attracts significant weight.

Conclusion

12.17 Taking into account the above, it has been concluded that on balance, the collective benefits would outweigh the harms identified. It is acknowledged that this is a balanced decision and based on relative weights of the benefits against the harms. If the Planning Committee are minded to agree, a summary of the conditions recommended to be imposed are set out below.

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to conditions including those listed below.

Conditions:

1. Standard timeframe condition
2. Development to be carried out in accordance with approved plans

Operation

3. Development to occur for a 40 year period only
4. Decommission strategy to be agreed
5. Soil management plan to be submitted and agreed (prior to commencement)

Landscape and Arb

6. Details of a landscape scheme to be submitted to and agreed. Landscape scheme shall include details of additional planting along the southern boundary adjacent to the access with Loudham Hall. Management of the scheme to be provided including management of the planting adjacent to Sandpit Cottage

7. Detailed arboricultural method statement to be submitted and agreed (prior to commencement)
8. Tree protection to be carried out in accordance with section 6.0 of Arboricultural Planning Statement (May 2025) (prior to commencement)
9. Notwithstanding fence elevation plan, the fence is to be finished with plain wire. Details of the materials of the gates are to be submitted and agreed.

Ecology

10. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan to be submitted and agreed (pre commencement).
11. Development to be carried out in accordance with the ecology assessments
12. Construction Environment Management Plan (Biodiversity) to be submitted and agreed (prior to commencement)
13. No removal of hedgerows, trees or shrubs during bird breeding season
14. No lighting to be installed unless a lighting design strategy for biodiversity is submitted and agreed
15. Ecological Enhancement Strategy to be submitted and agreed (pre commencement)
16. Additional badger survey report to be submitted and agreed (prior to commencement)

Environmental Protection / Amenity

17. Construction Management Plan to be submitted and agreed
18. Ground survey to be submitted and agreed
19. Vibration on site to be controlled
20. Details of acoustic barriers to be submitted and agreed and development to be carried out in accordance with appendix 5 and section 8.1 of the Noise Assessment
21. Validation noise survey to be submitted and agreed
22. Operation hours to accord with those assessed by the Noise Assessment
23. CCTV camera locations and directions to be submitted and agreed

Flood Risk

24. Development to be carried out in accordance with surface water strategy and flood risk assessment, including appendix G
25. Construction Surface Water Management Plan to be submitted and agreed including the prevention of accidental water pollution
26. A surface water drainage verification report to be submitted and agreed

Archaeology

27. Written scheme of investigation to be submitted and agreed (prior to commencement)
28. Site investigation completed and agreed
29. Archaeological management plan to be submitted and agreed for the use of any no dig construction methods

Highways

30. Details of the proposed access to be submitted and agreed
31. Visibility splays to be provided prior to use of the access
32. Photographic condition survey of the highway to be submitted and agreed
33. Construction Traffic Management Plan to be submitted and agreed
34. PROW Management Plan updated
35. Temporary Traffic Regulation Order to be sought from SCC

Background information

See application reference DC/21/5550/FUL on [Public Access](#)