



The countryside charity  
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Branch Chair  
Mrs Jan Arger

**Authority:** East Riding of Yorkshire Council

**Type of consultation:** Planning Consultation

**Full details of application/consultation:** 22/02460/STPLF - Installation and operation of approximately 49.9MW renewable energy generating station comprising ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays with Primary Substation and control building compound, inverter stations, cabling, security measures, access gates, site access, internal tracks and other ancillary infrastructure at lands accessing onto and directly East of A164 Beverley Road, Driffield

**At land at:** Land South East of Poundsworth, Beverley Road, Driffield, East Riding Of Yorkshire

**Type of response:** Comment

**Date of Submission:** 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022

All responses or queries relating to this submission should be directed to the Secretary for the Trustees at the contact details shown above on this frontispiece.

All CPRE North and East Yorkshire comments are prepared by the charity using professional planners whose research and recommendations form the basis of this response in line with national CPRE policies.

External planning consultant used in this response:



KVA Planning Consultancy  
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## Comment

CPRE North and East Yorkshire ('CPRENEY') welcomes the opportunity to comment on this application for the installation and operation of approx. 49.9MW renewable energy generating station comprising ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays with Primary Substation and control building compound, inverter stations, cabling, security measures, access gates, site access, internal tracks and other ancillary infrastructure at lands accessing onto and directly East of A164 Beverley Road, Driffield at land South East of Poundsworth, Beverley Road, Driffield, submitted to East Riding of Yorkshire Council ('the Council') on behalf of Elgin Energy EsCo Ltd ('the applicant').

The 76.38ha site, to be known as 'Sunderlandwick Solar Farm', is situated to the north of the village of Hutton (circa 0.6km) and south of the town of Driffield - circa 0.7km. The western boundary of the site is located adjacent to and accesses onto the A164 Beverley Road. The eastern boundary adjoins the Hull to Scarborough railway line.

Details of the proposal is set out in full in the applicant's Design and Access Statement but is summarised below:

- Photovoltaic (PV) Solar Panels erected on steel frames in arrays of 24 or 48 panels;
- Primary Substation and control building compound including Customer and DNO Substation buildings;
- 12 No. Inverter Substation units typically measuring 12.2m (l) x 2.44 (w) x 2.6m (h) to be located across the site;
- Perimeter post and wire "deer" fencing (c.2.45m high);
- A number of strategically located CCTV security cameras (c.3m high);
- Access will be via existing openings onto the A164; and
- Associated internal service tracks.

At the end of the proposed 40-year operational period, the solar farm and its ancillary equipment will be decommissioned, dismantled and removed and the site will be fully reinstated to the satisfaction of the local planning authority and returned to its agricultural use.

## Planning Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that an application should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The planning system should contribute to achieving sustainable development. The National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (2021) aims to deliver sustainable development through the implementation of its policies. Paragraph 11 states that for decision making this means:

c) *'approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay;*  
*or*

d) *where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*

*l. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

*II. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.'*

Paragraph 219 of the NPPF clarifies that existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of the Framework. Weight should be given to them according to their consistency with the NPPF. (The closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that should be attributed).

The Development Plan relevant to this application consists of:

- Strategy Document (adopted April 2016); and
- Allocations Document (adopted July 2016).

It is understood that the Council are in the process of preparing a new Local Plan which will replace a number of existing adopted planning policy documents with a single policy document, the Regulation 19 version of the draft Local Plan is currently out for public consultation. However, until such time as the Plan has been through examination and is progressing towards adoption, no weight can be attributed to the new Local Plan in the determination process and as such, full weight should be given to the saved Local Plan policies and other material considerations as necessary including the NPPF.

CPRENEY do not object to the generation of renewable energy by solar arrays and consider that the generation and supply of low carbon energy will be core to achieving the UK goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 or earlier. This will require a transformation of our energy system over the next 20–30 years. The scale and immediacy of the threat to the climate and our countryside means that change is necessary.

The current model of renewable energy development has resulted in some poor outcomes for landscapes, the environment and rural communities. CPRENEY wants to change this and believes it is possible to achieve the net-zero transition, including the introduction of new solar developments, in harmony with our wider environmental and social objectives.

This means taking a strategic planning approach to development of renewable energy assets at the local level and ensuring that local communities are empowered to help shape their local energy response. CPRENEY will, therefore, only support solar developments which:

- minimise impacts on landscapes, tranquility and heritage, through appropriately scaled development;
- minimise the impacts on the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land;
- bring net benefits to biodiversity;
- benefit the rural economy; and
- are supported or owned by local communities.

Furthermore, CPRENEY consider that renewable energy generation and climate change mitigation must be maximised within urban areas and priority given to using previously developed land in line with CPREs 'brownfield first' policy.

The proposal subject to consideration is on Grade 2-3b Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land. This land is very good-moderate land which has been successfully farmed for many generations for crop production. Our new PM has stated that BMV land should be avoided for large scale solar farms in favour of food production and food security, albeit this guidance is yet to trickle down into planning guidance. The

unfortunate events elsewhere in the world currently have seen food shortages resulting in empty shelves. CPRENEY are of the opinion that this large-scale scheme is therefore entirely in the wrong location and that this BMV land should be retained as such.

CPRENEY understand that this is an unprecedented and challenging period of time for farmers, and the benefits of a solar farm can be attractive, especially over a 40-year period. However, as set out in Welsh planning guidance \*\*\* there is no guarantee that even ground mounter solar panels, will actually result in the reclamation of good quality land at the end of their lifespan and can in fact harm the soils rendering it of lesser grade and value.

Notwithstanding the above, CPRENEY are aware that Hutton Cranswick Bridleway Number 7 and Skerne and Wansford Bridleway No 2 pass through the site. Further, Hutton Cranswick footpath 18 is located close to the southern boundary of the site. CPRENEY would not wish for users of these public rights of way to be deterred from accessing the countryside, so readily accessible for nearby urban centres, as a result of the proposal, or for the impact of glare and noise from the solar arrays, during construction and operational periods, to impact on equestrian users of the bridleways. It is considered that before determination the BHS should be consulted on such matters.

Furthermore, the northern site boundary sits within 50m of the River Hull Headwaters SSSI which are nationally important as the most northerly chalk stream system in Great Britain and particularly important for water vole, a protected species. The Hull Headwaters flow into the nearby Skerne Wetlands Nature Reserve. The applicant needs to ensure that the water environment does not get polluted during the construction phase as a result of surface water run-off or the build-up of sediment. Within its setting are areas of important grassland and woodland which should not be impacted by the proposal which should be protected by appropriate conditions including the approval of a construction management to ensure that impacts of noise and dust will not detrimentally impact the SSSI and its ecological setting.

Having considered the location plan and supporting documentation, it is noted that there are several sporadic farmsteads and individual dwellings in close proximity to all boundaries of the site and larger numbers of residential properties in Driffield, Skerne, Hutton, Eastburn, Kirkburn and Southburn which all may be impacted by the proposals. The Council should ensure they are satisfied that these sensitive receptors will not be impacted by glint and glare or noise and dust from the site during both construction and operational phases prior to determination.

### **Conclusion**

CPRENEY welcomes the opportunity to comment on this detailed planning application for a large, 76.38Ha solar array between Hutton and Driffield.

CPRENEY recognise the need to transition away from fossil fuels towards a renewable and clean energy generation mix, including solar, to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 or earlier. In some circumstances it is recognised that ground mounted solar arrays can be well screened and mitigated appropriately. However, CPRENEY do not consider that large-scale solar farms are appropriate in the open countryside on greenfield sites, especially where they utilise some of the best quality BMV land and may impact the amenity of users of public rights of way and bridleways as is the case for this proposal.

CPRENEY reserves the right to comment further should any additional information be submitted in support of the proposal.