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Project:
THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
COMPANY - INSTALLATION OF A 2848
PANEL SOLAR FARM AT LARKINS FARM,
GELLINGS LANE, KNOWSLEY. L34 9EN

By:
MCC

Date:
11/9/2023
Revision:

**ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT TO SUPPORT A PLANNING APPLICATION THAT PROPOSES THE
INSTALLATION OF A 2848 PANEL SOLAR FARM AT LARKINS FARM, GELLINGS LANE, KNOWSLEY. L34 9EN**

PREPARED BY MR MIKE CARR MSc MRTPI

MAT DESIGN LIMITED

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT: -

INSTALLATION OF A 2848 PANEL SOLAR FARM, ORGANIC
BOUNDARY FENCING, 1NO SUB STATION, 1NO
TRANSFORMER BUILDING, SITE SERVICE ACCESS,
ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND BIO-DIVERSITY
IMPROVEMENTS (NET GAIN)

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF:-

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMPANY

DATE:

SEPTEMBER 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

This Energy And Sustainability Assessment has been prepared by MAT Design Limited on behalf of The Neighbourhood Services Company and forms part of a planning application submission to Knowsley Metropolitan and should be considered in conjunction with the supporting plans, statements and supporting information.

This assessment should also be considered in conjunction with Knowsley Council's Sustainable Energy Action Plan, which was approved on 6/8/2014.

Section 1.2 of the Action Plan (Challenges and Opportunities of Climate Change and the Role of Energy) identifies that one of the greatest environmental threats currently facing the planet is the threat of climate change.

Exacerbated by a growing population and a demand for higher living standards, climate change has the potential to fundamentally change the planet and the prosperities of its inhabitants.

The challenge presented by climate change is to reduce the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere in order to slow the warming process and avoid the worst effects of climate change – some of which are already presenting themselves today in the form of extreme weather events, sea level rises, increase of the arctic ice summer melt and loss of habitats across the planet. The opportunity presented by climate change is the chance to take a path towards a positive, healthy, sustainable and prosperous future.

We consider that the solar farm proposals for the site are consistent with and support the key principles of the Action Plan

2. THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDS

The application site is a parcel of grade 3b agricultural land that is sandwiched between the settlement boundaries of Croxteth & Gilmoor (within the Liverpool City Borough) to the south and west, whilst the main NSC commercial hub and A580 link from the M57 form the sites northern and eastern boundaries

Access and egress into the site is taken directly from the A580/M57 slip road and onto access track that links to the site. Ample visibility splays are available at the track junction with the A580/M57 slip road

In terms of the setting of the site in the wider area, the application site sits approximately 300m from the nearest settlement boundary, and is located close to local services, schools, medical facilities and public transport. As such, the development site can be described as being located in a sustainable location for purposes attached to the consideration of this planning application.

In terms of the agricultural quality of the land, we would highlight the following material considerations:-

- Government guidance on assessing development proposals on agricultural land identifies that grade 3b land, is land with moderate limitations that affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield;
- In this case, the land has been used for barleycorn crop, as varieties of crops are limited that can grow in the soil;
- 220kg of fertiliser per hectare has been used over time to make the soil more for crop growing, meaning that an expensive and intensive headland management system has to be used to prevent the higher levels of nutrient run-off from the spreading to the wetland area.

3. ECOLOGY AND BIO-DIVERSITY GAIN

As part of the preparation of this planning application, and following pre-application engagement with the LPA through the Environmental Impact Assessment process, we commissioned Tyrer's Ecological Consultants to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, carried out Great Crested Newt (GCN) Surveys and formulated a Biodiversity Net-gain Assessment.

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In terms of the reports, the following conclusions and recommendations were reached:-

- **The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal** – See section 8 of the attached report;
- **The Great Crested Newt (GCN) Surveys** - The combined survey effort has found no evidence of great crested newt in any of the four ponds surveyed using traditional survey methods. As such, no licence requirements or specific intervention measures for great crested newts are recommended and;
- **The Biodiversity Net-gain Assessment** - Following the completion of a biodiversity net-gain assessment, the scheme is projected to achieve over 10% net-gain in Area and Linear units, which is the minimum threshold expected to be mandated by the forthcoming Environment Bill.

The habitat creation and enhancement proposed can be delivered through a Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) detailing landscaping, management and biodiversity provision prescriptions; this document **can be secured by planning condition.**

These survey set out in details how the site and the local environment will be protected and enhanced as part of the proposals for planning permission.

4. SITE REMEDIATION

The proposed solar farm panels and support panel framework would simply be removed from the site, along with the sub-station and transformer building from the north west corner of the site. The result would be an open field that would then be planted up to marry in with the wildflower meadow, which forms the southern section of the field.

Planting would be consistent with the Larkins Farm Fence And Meadow Details Statement (September 2023), which has been submitted with the planning application.

Our intention would be to retain the living fence that is proposed to the northern boundary of the site, given that it would continue to provide bio-diversity improvement to this part of the site.