



Report to Planning Committee 5 December 2024

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Report Summary	
Report Title	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (“NSIP”) – Update Report
Purpose of Report	To provide an update on the status of the One Earth Solar Farm (“OESF”) and Great North Road (“GNR”) NSIP Projects.
Recommendations	None. For information Purposes.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide an update on the current status of the OESF and GNR NSIP projects and for members to note the activities undertaken by officers in recent months and to provide information on the up-and-coming milestones for these projects.
- 1.2 Members will recall that in a report to the Planning Committee on the 6th June 2024, it was agreed that quarterly updates would be provided, including on the Council’s inputs, where there were substantive updates to be reported. Members will also recall the report, provided for information to the 1st August Planning Committee, which detailed the Council’s response to the pre-application statutory consultation on the OESF project.

2.0 Update

- 2.1. On both projects, there is ongoing informal engagement with the applicant(s) and their representatives. This is in addition to the statutory consultation processes that the applicant(s) must discharge with the Council as a statutory consultee during the pre-application stage, in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008. The informal engagement includes project updates from the applicant(s) and covers ongoing discussions around the methodology for the environmental assessment work on both projects.
- 2.2. Members may also be aware that the applicant on the GNR scheme has put forward a potential community benefit fund that would be available in the event that permission was forthcoming and the Development Consent Order (“DCO”) was granted by the Secretary of State (who make a final decision on NSIPs, following a

recommendation from the Examining Authority). In this regard, members should also be aware that there is no legal requirement for community benefit to be offered, but nor is there a mechanism by which it can be secured through the planning process and therefore it cannot be afforded weight as a material planning consideration by the decision maker. It is therefore offered on a voluntary basis and there is no means by which financial community benefit can be guaranteed. This is a point that is subject to ongoing debate at government level with a recent Parliamentary debate on this matter, further information can be found here: [CDP-2024-0127.pdf](#).

- 2.3. An update is provided on both the OESF and GNR projects below, including a recap of milestone stages undertaken to date and future stages of the projects.
- 2.4. The OESF project is at a more advanced stage than GNR, having completed the key statutory responsibilities that the applicant needs to discharge with the Council, which has included consultation on the Statement of Community Consultation (“SOCC”) (which details how the applicant will undertake their statutory consultation) and delivery of the statutory consultation events themselves which took place between May and July of this year. The applicant has also recently written to the Council requesting a response on the adequacy of consultation milestone. The Adequacy of Consultation Milestone (AoCM) is a relatively new requirement for an applicant and was introduced as a result of guidance published by the Planning Inspectorate in April 2024.
- 2.5. The AoCM is a written document provided to the Planning Inspectorate setting out the consultation undertaken to date, confirming that the approaches set out in the SOCC have been met and providing a summary of consultation responses received and how these responses are shaping the proposed application. An applicant is obliged to seek the views of the LPA before providing a response to the Inspectorate.
- 2.6. It should be noted that the AoCM is a non-statutory requirement, and it does not preclude the ability of the Council to respond to the formal request from the Planning Inspectorate under Section 55(4) (b) of the Planning Act 2008, which will take place once the application is submitted. Accordingly, the formal and final view of the Council on the adequacy of consultation will be provided after the application is submitted.

One Earth Solar Farm (OESF) – Summary of Milestone Dates.

Activity	Dates	Status
Consultation on Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC)	Response issued 3.5.24	Complete
Response to Applicant’s Statutory Consultation	Response issued 22.7.24	Complete
Informal engagement with applicant on technical issues.	Ongoing	Ongoing

Adequacy of Consultation Milestone.	Written response requested by 22.11.24.	Ongoing
Submission of Application to Planning Inspectorate	Programmed for 31.1.25.	Not complete.

2.7. Turning to GNR, the applicant is not at as an advanced stage as OESF, but with the Council having provided a response to the SOCC consultation in August. The next key stage for the applicant is the delivery of the statutory consultation which is planned to take place in January and February 2025. In the meantime, there are various informal update meetings that are taking place, with the application planned to be submitted in August 2025. There is also a possible member briefing that the applicant has been advised to consider before the statutory consultation commences.

Great North Road Solar Farm (GNR) – Summary of Milestone Dates.

Activity	Dates	Status
Consultation on Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC)	Response issued 23.8.24	Complete
Response to Applicant's Statutory Consultation	Consultation planned for January – February 2025.	Not complete.
Informal engagement with applicant on technical issues.	Ongoing	Ongoing
Adequacy of Consultation Milestone.	Planned for May 2025.	Not complete.
Submission of Application to Planning Inspectorate	Programmed for August 2025.	Ongoing

3.0 Implications

3.1 In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations officers have considered the following implications; Data Protection, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime and Disorder

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.