

**17/05825/FUL**

**Consultations and Notification Responses**

**Ward Councillor Preliminary Comments**

**Councillor Clive Harris**

First Comment: In view of the uproar locally caused by the initial development and the construction and now service traffic using the Ilmer Road for access and not the main road, I would like to see this application brought to committee if the officers are minded to approve under delegated powers.

Amended comment: The neighbours have indicated that they are very concerned by the visual and vehicular impact on this rural location which provides the only access to the community in Ilmer village. The special nature of vehicles needed to service, maintain and update the site in the future they consider will cause extensive damage to the Ilmer Road. In light of these comments if minded to approve could you please refer at least to Delch but preferably to committee.

**Parish/Town Council Comments/Internal and External Consultees**

**Longwick cum Ilmer Parish Council**

Comment: The Longwick-cum-Ilmer Parish Council does not object to this planning application but has the following concerns:-A new means of access to the eastern site via the existing lay-by on the A4129 has been sited for industrial vehicular access to minimise the danger, obstruction and inconvenience to the users of the highway. The construction traffic is not adhering to the agreement in the original planning application to use the access from the Thame Road and is using the Ilmer Road which is totally unsuitable for the size and width of the lorries often wider than the road itself. This condition needs to be enforced to protect the newly resurfaced Ilmer Road and the safety of the residents. The Parish Council does not consider that there is a satisfactory standard of landscaping and requests that the current unsightly screening of the site is improved and sympathetic to the local area.

**Control of Pollution Environmental Health**

Comment: I have no objections to this application

**Cadent Gas Ltd Plant Protection Department**

Comment: Not received

**Town Planning Team Network Rail**

Comment: No objections, but attach an informative for the Applicant's attention.

**Rights of Way and Access**

Comment: No objection received, but require a condition requiring the surfacing details of the access.

**The Ramblers Association**

Comment: Not received

**County Highway Authority**

Comment: No objections subject to conditions.

The applicant has recently submitted additional information in the form of a Highway Access Assessment. I note that my previous comments raised objections to the access proposals of the development, the applicant has suggested off-site works and the use of a Construction Traffic Management Plan in order to overcome the objections of the Highway Authority.

In response to the culvert weight limit, the applicant will be required to carry out works to either augment or replace the culvert to a standard capable of accommodating the construction traffic required by the proposed development. As such, should these off-site works be approved by the Local Planning Authority, the proposal should overcome the objections of the Highway Authority based upon the unsuitability of the aforementioned Ilmer Lane culvert to take development traffic.

In order to address the restricted width of the carriageway, the applicant should provide additional off-site works in order to widen sections of the highway to accommodate the required construction traffic and other vehicles utilising the highway. I note that Ilmer Lane is the sole public highway access for the settlement of Ilmer, and that the proposal of all off-site works must therefore ensure continual public access along Ilmer Lane. Details of how access is to be maintained should be submitted along with information upon the agreed off-site works. These proposals should include vehicle tracking for the length of Ilmer Lane, including the proposed culvert and passing bays to demonstrate their viability.

A Construction Traffic Management Plan detailing the access arrangements should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval in consultation with the Highway Authority. The requirements are outlined in the below condition.

Section 59 pre-start/post-construction surveys for the highway between Thame Road (A4129) and the proposed site access are required. This is in order to ensure that any damage to the local highway network during the period of construction will be repaired by the applicant subsequent to the completion of construction.

Mindful of the above comments, the Highway Authority removes its objection to the proposed application subject to the following conditions being placed upon any permission granted.

#### **Landscape Officer**

Comments: Revised proposals have been submitted that show the proposed battery storage units at a reduced height of 2.2m (from 5m) and the inverters reduced to 2.5m (from 4m). The proposed transformer apparatus is confirmed as having a finished height of 6.8m. The six 4m high transformer units (shown yellow on previous layout) and 4m container (shown red on previous layout) are removed from the scheme. There is some confusion as to the relationship between this proposal layout and landscape scheme, and the landscape scheme permitted for the adjacent solar farm as they appear to conflict. This requires clarification as they cannot both be implemented.

Visual Impacts: The main visual effects would be felt from PRoW LCI/12/2, directly adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. The PRoW is located on the inside of the existing hedgerow so there would be no screening at all until the proposed hedgerow planting established. The adverse effect would be felt from the point where the PRoW crosses the railway line to the south, to the point where it goes into a wooded copse and joins PRoW ASA/6/1 to the north. Users of this PRoW would experience the development in the context of the existing solar farm, also visible, but also be affected by the new vertical elements of the 6.8m high transformer apparatus. Vertical features are not a characteristic of this landscape and their visual effects are therefore greater than those of horizontal, linear features such as solar panels, railways and roads. The proposed development would also be much closer than the existing solar farm. I consider users of LCI/12/2 to have a sensitivity of Medium; and would experience a High magnitude of change, resulting in a Moderate Adverse visual effect. In the longer term, when the hedgerow planting has established (10+ years) this would reduce to Moderate/Minor Adverse effect (as the majority of the development would be screened but the transformer apparatus would still be visible at close quarters). Visual effects would also be felt from the majority of PRoW LCI/34/1, on the other

side of the adjacent field, to the east of the site. Users of this PRow will not be so affected by the existing solar farm as it is screened by the intervening hedgerow near the eastern boundary of the site. This hedgerow would also help screen the proposed battery storage units etc. but not the 6.8m high transformer apparatus which would look incongruous above the hedge line. I consider users of LCI/34/1 to have a sensitivity of High; and would experience a Medium magnitude of change resulting in a Moderate Adverse visual effect. In the longer term, when the proposed hedgerow trees have established (5+ years) and provide some screening for the transformer apparatus, this would reduce to Moderate/Minor Adverse effect. I agree with the LVA that impacts on PRow beyond those described above would be minor.

Landscape Character Impacts: I consider the landscape to have a Medium sensitivity; and would experience a Medium magnitude of change (from the introduction of permanent vertical apparatus), resulting in a Moderate/Minor Adverse effect on landscape character. In the longer term, landscape benefits could be gained from the establishment of a high quality, mixed native hedgerow and tree planting scheme. This would help balance the negative aspects and reduce the effect on landscape character to Minor/Negligible Adverse effect.

Conclusion: The development would have a permanent Moderate/Minor Adverse visual effect on users of local PRow's, LCI/12/1 and LCI/34/1 and a Minor/Negligible Adverse effect on landscape character. The landscape and visual impact of this development could be reduced if the 6.8m high transformer apparatus was located in the southern corner of the site, where it could be set against some existing tree cover and the railway embankment, leaving the lower and less impactful battery storage units and inverters to be located further north where there is less existing landscape cover. Either way, a high quality, mixed native hedgerow and tree planting scheme would be required as a condition of any permission.

Further Comment: I'm happy if they submit a plan with the proposed planting removed and make reference to a proposed scheme on the plan or elsewhere instead. However, there must be a clear requirement in the report for 'a high quality, mixed native hedgerow and tree planting scheme' around the periphery of the site that ties in with existing landscape features and also the planting scheme for the permitted solar farm scheme adjacent. Reason - to provide landscape and biodiversity enhancements and ensure landscape and visual impacts are reduced to a minimum. Details can be agreed at condition stage.

### Representations

Nine letters of objection received from seven households:-

- Access route goes against the route approved for the solar farm
- Size, height and scale of the proposal
- Further industrialisation of the landscape
- Impact from background noise
- Heavy construction traffic will undermine the repair scheme to Ilmer Lane.
- The proposed development will bring the solar panels right up to local visibility
- Access to the solar farm is via Ilmer Lane.
- Safety of people who use the site recreationally