

Essex County Council
**Energy & Low Carbon
Environment & Climate Action**
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Date: 18/07/2022
Your ref.: S62A/22/0000004

FAO Case Officer,

Re: S62A/22/0000004 | The erection of a 14.3MW solar photovoltaic farm with associated access tracks, landscaping, supplementary battery storage, and associated infrastructure at Land east of Parsonage Road, and south of Hall Road, Stansted, Essex, CM22 6PL

Thank you for providing Essex County Council (ECC) with the opportunity to assess and advise on the proposed energy & low carbon strategy/plans for the aforementioned planning application. Following my previous letter, we have now received further information from the applicant Stansted Airport and our position is as follows.

Energy & Low Carbon

ECC is committed to taking action on climate change and established the [Essex Climate Action Commission](#) (ECAC) in response to national requirements to reduce carbon emissions. The purpose of the Commission includes reducing the carbon footprint of ECC to make Essex a net zero County by 2050, mitigate the effects of climate change, and to explore how we attract investment in natural capital and low carbon growth, including renewable energy. As part of ECC's commitment, proposals to increase the amount of renewable energy generated in Essex that will help to reduce carbon emissions from the electricity grid, whilst also mitigating negative impacts, and maximising positive environmental and socioeconomic impacts is welcomed. The ECAC has recommended that '*Essex produces enough renewable energy within the county to meet its own needs by 2040*', with the commission seeing a critical role in this for large scale solar production but "*on available land without unduly compromising agricultural land*". As such, ECC welcomes and supports in principle this proposal that will secure a long-term supply of renewable power to support operations at Stansted Airport as an important project that demonstrates a commitment to the decarbonisation of our electricity network in the County.

Furthermore, ECC have published, which have been prepared in collaboration with Essex Local Planning Authorities, a set of '[solar farm guiding principles](#)' on ground-mounted solar photovoltaic farms to encourage the highest standards of solar farms. These sit within the Essex Design Guide and can be referred to by Local Authority Officers in preparation of SPDs and other policy documents; referred to as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

(NSIPs). These principles can also be used by developers of solar farms within Essex to inform their plans and proposals. As such the following comments on the proposed development are drawn on from the principles;

1. Lifetime emissions from the site should be net zero. Although these sites are generally considered to have a positive impact on emissions reduction because of the production of renewable electricity, there is still the need to ensure that lifetime emissions from the construction, operation and decommissioning of sites are minimised, by for example electrifying the construction and maintenance fleet or by offsetting embedded emissions from the production and construction of the site. All ancillary buildings onsite should also aim to be net zero. Low carbon construction materials and practices should also minimise the carbon footprint of the development e.g. by local procurement and minimising transport of materials; also supporting the local economy and green growth and seeking to maximise social value benefits throughout the project lifetime in procurement, construction and operation processes. Solar developments should also contribute to the greening of the local economy through increasing green jobs, and green sector skills through upskilling their workforce for example, as these skills will be transferable for both large- and small-scale solar installations. This will also support the Essex Climate Action Commission recommendation to “*make Essex a centre of innovation for emerging renewable technologies (e.g. small scale nuclear, & manufacturing of renewables products such as solar tiles)*”. As such details of the proposed lifetime emissions of the development and their alignment with net zero standard would be welcome.
2. Neighbouring communities may be impacted by the development and as such it is important that local communities can realise the benefits associated with the project throughout its lifetime through a “community led locality benefit” approach. Developer-led renewable energy infrastructure generation should make a financial or other contribution to the locality, led by the community. The expectation would normally be an opportunity for part community ownership and/or an ongoing community benefit fund that allows local residents to directly benefit from the development and keep more of the value generated by the development in the local economy. As a result of the recommendations made from the Essex Climate Action Commission, it is generally expected that all large-scale renewable energy developments in Essex should include an element of community ownership. However, in the case of this project we recognise the important contribution that Stansted Airport already makes to the community and the local economy through its position as the largest employer in the area and through its work on building skills through both the Stansted Airport Employment and Skills Academy and the Stansted Airport College as an important mitigating factor in this consideration.

Yours sincerely,
Kayra Salih,
Energy Efficiency Officer

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