

Planning

Head of Service: Adrian Duffield



T. Brock
Cumnor Parish Council

BY EMAIL

12 January 2022

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Ref: P21/V3288/SCR

Dear Tina,

Re: Enquiry regarding decision in relation to application P21/V3288/SCR

Thank you for your email dated 21 December 2021 in connection with the above. In view of the comprehensive and detailed nature of the points you have raised I have reviewed the Screening Opinion with the case officer and can offer the following comments.

I understand that you would like a better understanding of how the council reached the decision not to require Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in relation to the proposed solar PV array in Cumnor. I hope the following comments help to address your concerns.

In screening Schedule 2 projects, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must take account of the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the 2017 EIA Regulations, although not all of them will be relevant. The Indicative Screening Thresholds table (Paragraph: 58, Reference ID: 4-058-20150326 of the Planning Practice Guidance) illustrates the issues that are most likely to need to be considered for this type of development, which includes level of emissions to air, arrangements for the transport of fuel and any visual impact. However, there will be other issues which will be specific to the nature and location of the development. The LPA uses the EIA screening checklist to help ensure that the relevant issues for EIA are considered and to provide a clear audit trail.

The Local Planning Authority has 21 days to assess a screening opinion, and the council is not required to carry out formal consultation on Screening Opinion Applications. However, Cumnor Parish Council and North Hinksey Parish Council were notified of the application for information, and both Parish Councils provided comments which were considered as part of the assessment.

You have queried whether parish concerns raised regarding the impact of the proposal on important views were considered. The Important View 12 identified



within the Cumnor Neighbourhood Plan is situated on the public right of way running along the north-western boundary. Whilst Important View 12 was not directly referenced in the screening assessment report, the public right of way to which it relates was referred to in section 7.2. Landscape effects were also considered at section 7.1. Officers sought advice from the Council's Landscape Architect, and consideration of the Important Views within the parish and towards Oxford were identified and considered within these comments. The Landscape Architect came to the view that the visual impacts are unlikely to be significant in EIA terms. However, a planning application would still need to be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The comments from the Landscape Architect can be viewed in full on the council's website.

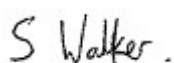
Similarly, officers sought advice from the Council's Countryside Officer in the light of parish comments made on the potential impact of the proposal and biodiversity, and these comments are also available to view on the Council's website. The Countryside Officer came to the view that, having regard for the characteristics, location and scope for potential impacts, the impacts are unlikely to be significant to trigger EIA. This does not overrule any subsequent planning application needing to be informed and including relevant habitat and protected species surveys.

With regards to concerns of cumulative effects, this was addressed in section 12 of the EIA screening report. Given the distance to other solar farms, with the nearest being approximately 6km to the south-east, and taking into consideration the size of the proposal, it is not considered that this project would result in significant cumulative effects to warrant EIA; there appears to be no direct line of sight between the solar farms mentioned, the landscape would not become dominated by solar arrays and there are no clear cumulative traffic related effects.

These matters, as well as other concerns raised in your email, are not considered to have a significant effect to warrant EIA. This does not mean that the council has accepted the proposal, or that any subsequent planning application should not be subject to relevant assessments such as those mentioned above e.g., LVIA, relevant habitat and protected species surveys, and a transport statement. Should an application be submitted, the parish councils will be consulted in the normal way and invited to make comments which will be taken into consideration in the LPA's assessment.

I hope my comments address your concerns outlined in your email received on 21 December 2021. If you remain dissatisfied, you can follow the Council's formal complaints procedure which is set out on the website. You need to explain why you consider your comments have not been adequately answered.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Walker
Major Applications Team Leader

CC: Cllr Alison Jenner, Cllr Judy Roberts
Cllr Debby Hallett, Cllr Emily Smith