



LIGHTSOURCE
RENEWABLE ENERGY LIMITED

ADDENDUM TO PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT



MILL HILL FARM, SHERIFF HUTTON,
YORK, NORTH YORKSHIRE, YO60 6QN

DOC REFERENCE: Mill Hill Farm

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Lightsource Renewable Energy Limited
7th Floor, 33 Holborn
London
EC1N 2HT

Company Number 7129343

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Prepared by	Jessica Gittoes	Position	Senior Planner
Reviewed by	Penelope Laurenson MRTPI	Position	Head of Planning

1 INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared as an addendum to the Planning, Design and Access Statement in support of a planning application for a 5MW Solar Farm at Mill Hill Farm, Sheriff Hutton, York, North Yorkshire, YO60 6QN. A detailed description of the proposed solar farm is provided in the accompanying Planning and Design and Access Statement.

This statement provides supporting information on the assessment of alternative sites within close proximity of the location of the proposed Mill Hill solar farm, in addition to the information provided within the Planning, Design and Access Statement under Sections:

- 2.1 'Site Selection';
- Section 6.1 'Use of Agricultural', and;
- Appendix A 'Use of Agricultural Land'.

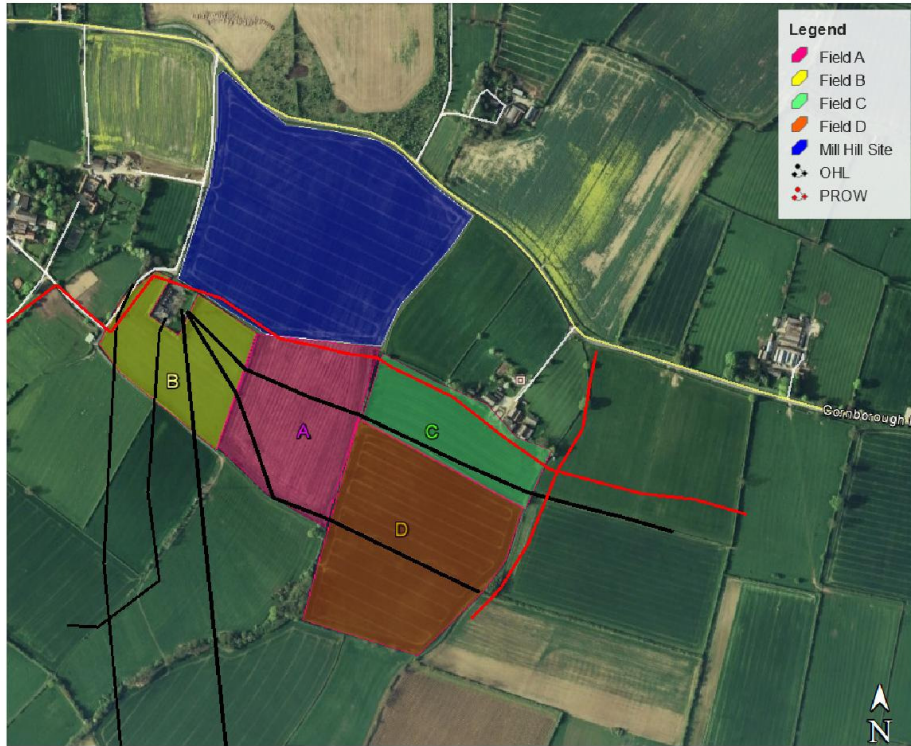
1.1 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

As stated in Section 2 of the Planning, Design and Access Statement, various criteria is assessed in determining whether a site has potential for a solar farm development. Whilst all of these criteria are important in determining whether a site has potential for the development of a viable solar farm, the following are of particular relevance to the reasons why the use of agricultural land is necessary in this instance:

- Grid Capacity
- Site Size
- Site Availability

Grid capacity is a significant constraint on solar development. If there is no grid capacity then it is not possible to develop a solar farm. By assessing maps prepared by the Distribution Network Operators (DNO) Lightsource's Development Team identifies areas around the Country where there may be grid capacity to provide for new generation connections. The general area of Sheriff Hutton was identified through this process as having potential for available grid capacity. Lightsource's Development Team then started to look for specific sites that would meet the technical requirements for a viable solar farm and which would avoid planning constraints.

As part of the site selection process, a wide area was assessed at a desktop level by the Planning Team and investigated further through a site visit. Fields A - D identified in the below aerial image are a selection of the fields assessed as part of this process. The assessment process was not limited to this area, if further information is required on all sites assessed, this can be provided to Rydale District Council.



1.1.1 FIELD A

Field A was initially considered as part of the site selection process as it is within the ownership of the land owner. This field was ruled out for a number of reasons. The key reason being the size of the field was not sufficient for operating a financially viable solar PV system. As mentioned above a site size of a minimum of 20 acres is required and field A is only 11.8 acres. The size of the site is further restricted by the presence of two existing overhead lines (OHL) passing across the field. Any OHL requires a solar PV set back distance of 6m each side of the OHL. In these areas no solar panels can be located further reducing the area available.

Lightsource has considered placing panels in Site A and the proposed site at Mill Hill however Field A is bordered to the north by a Public Right of Way (PROW) and it was felt that the PROW would be isolated between the panels creating a footpath “corridor”. It was considered that this would not be welcome by users of the PROW and this option was discounted.

Field A is open to views from Sheriff Hutton and Sherriff Hutton Castle.

1.1.2 FIELD B

Field B is not within the ownership of the landowner associated with the solar farm application at Mill Hill. This site was discounted for a number of reasons similar to those mentioned for Field A.

- The size of the field was not large enough, being 8.2 acres
- The site is bisected by 5 existing OHLs, each requiring individual set back distances further reducing the size of the site.

- Construction access to the site would require to be via the existing road off Cornbrough Road. Following consultation with the surrounding residents, it has been established this road is not appropriate for construction traffic and would cause significant disturbance to residences.

1.1.3 FIELD C

Field C is within the ownership of the landowner at the proposed Mill Hill site. This site was discounted for reasons similar to those mentioned for Fields A and B.

- The size of the field was not large enough, being 6.88 acres
- An OHL crosses the length of the southern section of the field further reducing the size of the site.
- The site also has a PROW running along the northern section of the field removing the availability of usable area within the site, and resulting in potentially significant visual impacts
- The field is open to views from Sheriff Hutton and Sherriff Hutton Castle.

1.1.4 FIELD D

Field D is not within the ownership of the landowner associated with the solar farm application at Mill Hill.

Field D almost meets the area requirements being 18.7 acres however was discounted due to openness to Sheriff Hutton and Sheriff Hutton Castle and the potential for adverse visual impacts.

Field D would also require a 700m cable route to Sheriff Hutton Primary Substation to connect the solar farm. This would involve crossing two sections of mature hedgerow and one watercourse ultimately increasing the potential for impacts on the surrounding natural environment.

1.1.5 MILL HILL SITE

The Mill Hill site was selected for the following key reasons:

- The site was not located within any local or national designations
- The site is located on poor grade agricultural land
- The site is 28 acres
- The site benefits from existing screening, including dense hedgerows along the western boundary, south-eastern boundary, north-western boundary of site
- Additional screening will further visually contain the site and provide improved landscaping and net biodiversity gains to the surrounding area
- The site is out of view of Sheriff Hutton and Sheriff Hutton Castle, minimising potential for adverse visual impacts
- The site's proximity to a viable grid connection makes the selected site an ideal candidate for a solar PV installation

The new landscaping works are detailed in the Planting Plan and Planning, Design and Access Statement. The proposed planting includes over 2300 trees, 1000 bushes/scrubs, a total length of 480m of new hedgerow planting, species diverse grassland seed mix covering 7.3ha and field margins of species-rich wildflower meadow mixture covering 4ha.

It is important to state, the proposal was well received by the local community at the drop-in community consultation event on 11th March. Over 385 households were directly informed of the proposal and the event was well attended. Further information on the positive feedback is within the Statement of Community Involvement accompanying the planning application.

1.1.6 AGRICULTURAL LAND VALUE

As highlighted in the Planning, Design and Access Statement, Lightsource has engaged consultants to undertake an Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) study of the Mill Hill site. The ALC has identified that the site comprises wholly of land of Subgrade 3b. Such land is not identified as “best and most versatile agricultural land” (BMV) in the National Planning Policy Framework. It is poorer quality land, and thus its use is consistent with the Planning Policy Guidance.

It is also important to remember that the use is entirely reversible and will be fully decommissioned at the end of its operational life. The proposed solar farm does not affect the land quality and land resource is not affected. Consequently this proposal results in reduced intensity of agricultural use for the duration of the consent, but not the loss of the land. Therefore the land will be available for agricultural use by sheep grazing during the life of the scheme, and will be available in full for arable or grazing use after the scheme is decommissioned.

2 CONCLUSION

The requirement for a rural location, given land area requirements, environmental constraints within the area, combined with grid capacity and the limited supply of brownfield sites that are both technically feasible for solar farms and commercially available for development, means that it is necessary to utilise agricultural land for this solar farm development. The Agricultural Land Classification assessment has identified the fields as being Grade 3b land, which is of poorer value. The proposed solar farm at Mill Hill will not harm land quality, incorporates sheep grazing as an ongoing agricultural use, and also includes extensive new planting and proposals for biodiversity enhancement. Therefore the proposal is in line with planning policy guidance.