

SOHAM SOLAR PARK

To: **General Purposes Committee**

Meeting Date: **24th November 2015**

From: **Chief Finance Officer**

Electoral division(s): **Soham and Fordham Villages**

Forward Plan ref: **2015/044** *Key decision:* **Yes**

Purpose: **To consider a proposal to build a 60 acre solar farm on the County Council's Rural Estate at Triangle Farm, Soham.**

Recommendation: **The Committee authorises the development of the Solar Farm project and the specific commitments set out within this report and delegates any amendments to the non-financial elements to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee.**

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Although General Purposes Committee (GPC) has already given authority for this project to proceed in line with the County Council's governance requirements, central Government's governance requires its own precise wording for the Council's project to be part of that authority, and as a result this further decision is sought from GPC.
- 1.2 On 26th February 2015 the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) announced that the County Council's Soham solar farm was successful in a competitive auction which has led to contracts being offered to a total of 27 renewable electricity projects, including 5 solar projects, across the UK. The contract, known as Contracts for Difference (CFD), is the Government's new approach to support large scale renewable energy and the auction was the first of its kind. The Contracts for Difference are managed by the Low Carbon Contract Company (LCCC) on behalf of DECC.
- 1.3 The GPC of 19th May authorised "the development of an Investment Grade Proposal for the solar farm and delegate the final decision to enter into a contract for the construction of a Solar Farm at Triangle Farm, Soham subject to the project meeting the minimum financial returns set out in this report to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee." The Investment Grade Proposal (IGP) met the Council's minimum financial returns, and the construction contract was signed on 18th August 2015.
- 1.4 The CFD sets out Milestone Deadline Dates to ensure that the contract is proceeding as LCCC requires; as part of CFD the "Milestone Requirement Notice" must be agreed with LCCC by 25th February 2016. This deadline is to ensure that the project meets the necessary standards and confirms the Council's commitment to the project.
- 1.5 It has become clear in discussions with LCCC, after delegated authority was granted by GPC, that they require very specific wording to agree that the scheme meets with their requirements under the CFD and that the delegated authority already provided is not sufficient for LCCC's purposes.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 To meet LCCC's specific requirements under CFD the Council must formally commit to:
 - (i) "undertake the Project, as defined within the CFD agreement;
 - (ii) approve the total financial commitments required to commission the Project (the "**Total Project Spend**");
 - (iii) approve a timetable for undertaking the Project which demonstrates that the Facility can reasonably be expected to be commissioned no later than the Longstop Date; and
 - (iv) approve the plan for obtaining the Necessary Consents"

The Longstop date is 30th September 2017.

- 2.2 The project has been approved by GPC, as the IGP met the Council's financial returns. LCCC has stated that the approval must be for a project, rather than a proposed scheme, which is what was deemed as approved by

LCCC.

2.3 The total project cost is estimated at £10,000,000. This includes for both the agreed construction costs set out in the IGP and the Council's pre-construction costs that have already been approved.

2.4 The current project timeline is:

- (i) Finalise site design. **Complete by end November 2015**
- (ii) Assess whether an amendment to the planning consent is necessary once the site design has been completed and take forward with East Cambridgeshire District Council if this is the case. **Commence immediately site design is completed, with estimated completion by end January 2016.**
- (iii) Provide information to meet conditions set out within the planning permission dated 8th October 2015. **Complete by end December 2015.**

Planning Condition	To be completed by:
Site Design and Soft Landscaping	External Consultant
Environmental Management Plan	External Consultant
Construction Management Plan	External Consultant
Highways Improvements	CCC Highways team

- (iv) Complete Milestone Deadline Date requirements of LCCC by **end of December 2015.**
- (v) Project construction **May to September 2016.**
- (vi) UKPN to connect site and power generation commences **September 2016.**

2.5 The planning permission dated 8th October 2014 is the only consent required.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The investment returns will help support services for the benefit of all.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

The project will provide clean renewable energy for up to 3,000 homes, thereby reducing the Council's and Cambridgeshire's carbon footprint.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

There are no significant implications for this priority.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

The Project will cost £10,000,000.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

Public consultation was carried out as part of the planning application process.

4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Local Members have been kept informed as the project has progressed.

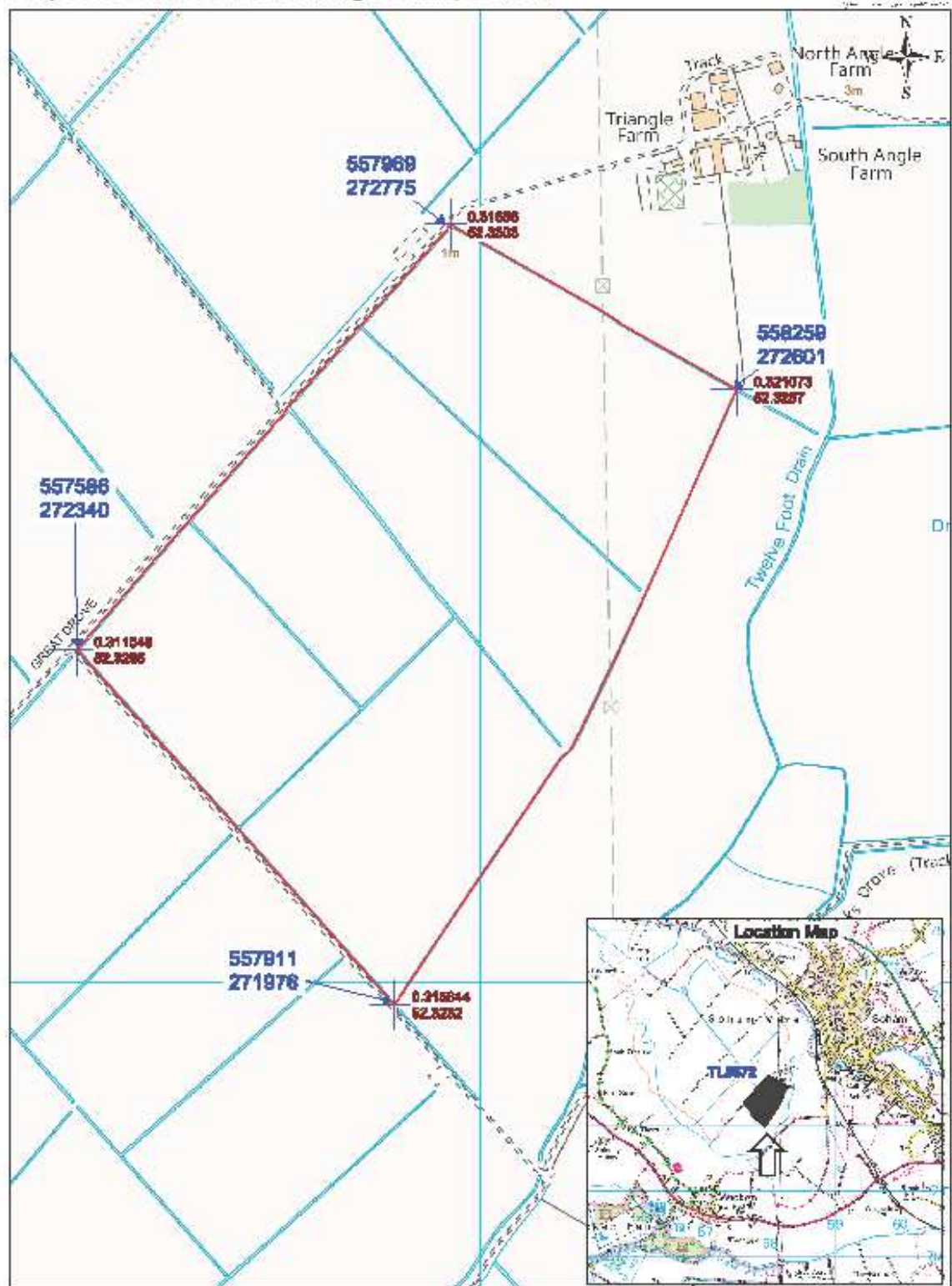
4.6 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

Source Documents	Location
Planning Decision Notice dated 8th October 2014	1 st Floor Octagon Shire Hall Oct1104 Castle Hill Cambridge CB3 0AP
General Purposes Committee Minutes – 19th May 2015	http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/Committees/Minutes/Committees/Meeting.aspx?meetingID=839

Appendix A: Location Plan and Site Map

Proposed Solar Farm at Triangle Farm, Soham



Scale (at A4): 1:5000

Date: 30th March 2015

By: bs270

File: \\ccc.cambridgeshire.gov.uk\gis\Res\Ppd\Estates\COUNTY FARMS\SolarFarm-Proposed\15-03-30 SohamSolarFarm(Test\DM).wor (Job No.2968)

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