**APPLICATION NO: 21/01645/SCR**

**Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 - Screening Request (Regulation 6) - Construction of Solar Farm and battery storage facility**

**Ridgewell Airfield Foxes Road Ashen Essex**

**UPRN: 010006910583 E: 575144 N: 241628**

**Consultation Response of Ashen Parish Council**

Ashen Parish Council has considered the proposal in the light of the 2017 Regulations and the associated guidance and has taken into account any mitigation identified within the screening application as submitted. The Council concluded that for the following reasons the Development Proposals would clearly be **likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as nature, size and location and would therefore constitute EIA development.**

1. The proposed development is for an industrial installation for the production of electricity on about 76 hectares of open agricultural land; in addition to the close coverage by the photovoltaic arrays it would be likely to be associated with the usual elements of a solar farm, including security fencing, CCTV cameras and ancillary inverter units together with a battery storage unit and service building; for the proposed 40 year life of the facility the proposals would accordingly appear uncompromisingly industrial and alien to its rural location, as can be seen in similar solar parks elsewhere;
2. The industrialisation of about 76 hectares of open countryside in an area widely enjoyed by the public for recreation would be a very significant and in this case detrimental environmental effect;
3. Furthermore, the northern two sites lie in part or in whole within the identified Stour River Valley landscape area and the Stour Valley management area where the landscape and associated impact would be particularly damaging; it would not be possible effectively to screen any of the sites, given the views from higher land in the vicinity, including from the other side of the Stour Valley;
4. No site specific land classification accompanies the application – the national ALC mapping is inadequate for this purpose; it is highly likely that this land constitutes as a whole best and most versatile agricultural, the effective loss of which for at least the 40 years of the development would be a significant environmental effect;
5. The construction period involving significant construction traffic, piling and other activities for a period of at least six months and a similar period for the development’s decommissioning would cause major disturbance in the area; moreover, the lanes serving the area of the three sites are totally unsuitable for the HGV traffic of the character likely to be required, to the overall public and environmental detriment; as a consequence the construction impacts (and decommissioning impacts) taken as a whole would be likely to constitute a highly significant and detrimental effect;
6. There would likely to be significant detriment to protected species and in particular the Great Crested Newt population which breeds in the water meadows and would be likely to forage across this area; and
7. The area is one of particular local historical and archaeological importance, having regard to its association with the wartime use as an airbase, which forms an important part of the social and cultural history of the area; in particular the effect of piling over about 76 hectares of land would be likely to destroy much of the archaeological resource.