

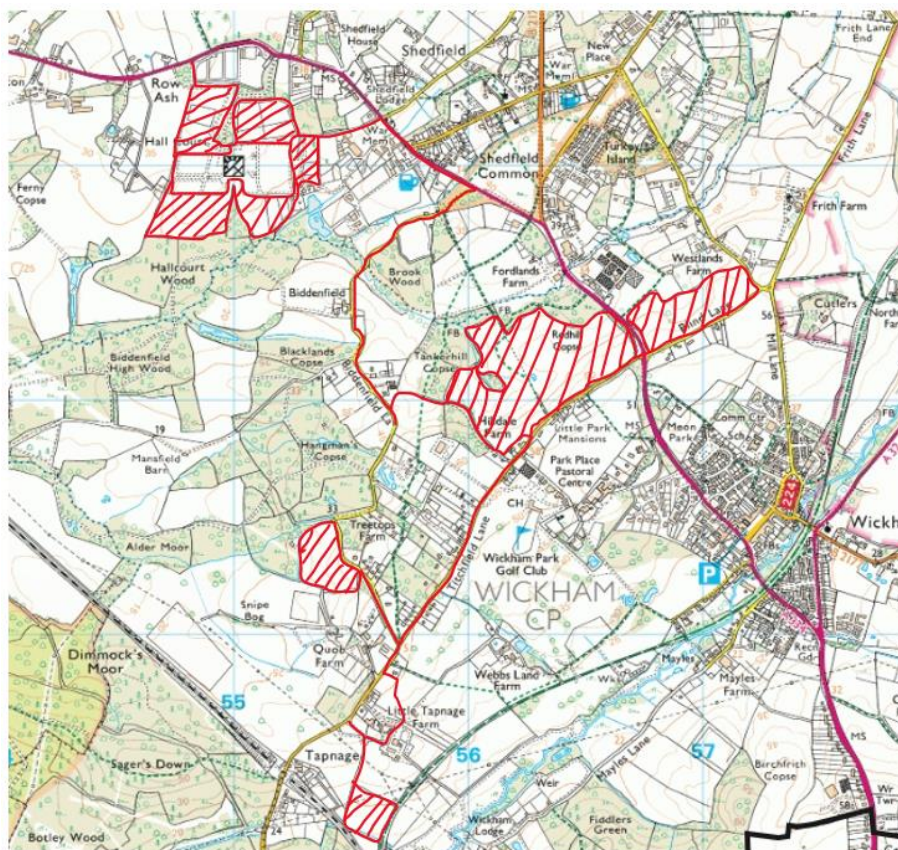
WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
PLANNING COMMITTEE

Case No: 24/02804/FUL
Proposal Description: Installation, operation and decommissioning of renewable energy generating station comprising ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays together with transformer stations, site accesses, internal access tracks, security measures, access gates, other ancillary infrastructure, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. temporary permission for 40 years.
Address: Land At Titchfield Lane Wickham Hampshire
Parishes: Shedfield and Wickham And Knowle
Applicants Name: Mr P Silk
Case Officer: Rose Chapman
Date Valid: 3 February 2025
Recommendation: Application permitted
Pre Application Advice No

Link to Planning Documents

[Link to page – enter in reference number 24/02804/FUL](#)

<https://planningapps.winchester.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=simple>



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Reasons for Recommendation

The development is recommended for permission as it is considered that the proposal would result in public benefits that outweigh the harm generated.

General Comments

The application is reported to Committee due to the number of Objections submitted contrary to the Officer recommendation.

Wickham and Knowle and Shedfield Parish Council's have requested for the application to be determined by Planning Committee, based upon material planning considerations is shown below.

Amendments to Plans Negotiated

Additional information was submitted in relation to:

- BNG
- Ecology
- Landscape and visual Impacts
- Trees
- Sustainability and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Historic Environment
- Public Rights of Way
- Cumulative development that would impact the layout of Parcel 8.

As these details are relating to technical details and clarification of submitted plans this was not readvertised.

Site Description

The application site is split into 3 distinctive parcels.

To the North are parcels 1-5 these are located within Shedfield Parish and are situated around the existing Solar Farm at Raglington Farm and Shedfield Equestrian.

Parcel 1 is currently laid to grass and rises to a high point approximately half way down the field. Raglington Farm is located directly to the south. There is a band of mature trees, forming part of Crooked Row (SINC) along the eastern boundary that is separated from the sit by an existing track. To the west there is a mature hedge though there are several gaps along this.

Parcel 2 is connected to parcel 1 by a strip of land to the west of Raglington solar farm. This field has a high point to the north and falls to the south and is currently sown for oats. To the south and east the site is bounded by Triangle Row (SINC) and Hallcourt Wood (SINC). To the west there is a mature hedge though there are several gaps along this. Hall Court Cottage lies to the west.

Parcel 3 is approximately the same level as parcel 1 however the land falls gently to the east. To the north and west of the field is Crooked Row (SINC) and Biggs Copse lies to the east. The field is currently used for grazing horses.

Parcel 4 is located within Shedfield Equestrian Centre. This site was formally Upper Dagwells Copse as such a large area is covered by a TPO even though the trees were removed some time ago. Part of the field is currently subject to enforcement action for

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some unauthorised uses to the south and western parts of the field. However, the majority of this field is used for grazing horses. There is an existing track that runs through the middle of the field.

Parcel 5 is located to the south of Raglington Farm within Shedfield Equestrian Centre. There are a number of unauthorised developments in this area as well as grazing areas for horses. Triangle row (SINC) lies to the western boundary. The south and eastern boundaries are open.

The remainder of the parcels lie within Wickham and Knowle Parish. To the east lie parcels 6-8.

Parcels 6 and 7 are separated by a Public Right of Way (PROW) (Wickham 14) this meets PROW Wickham 21 to the north of the parcel 7 and . To the north and east lie Tankerhill Copse (SINC) and Redhill Copse (SINC) lies to the north of field 7. There are a number of accesses into these fields from both Titchfield Lane and the A334. There are a number of residences and commercial developments to the south of field 6, Oaklands, Coldharbour Farm and Drokes Farm share a boundary with parcel 6. Paw Paddock dog exercise area is located to the south of parcel 7. These fields are sown for oats.

Parcel 8 is located in a prominent position at the corner of the A334 and Blind Lane. PROW Wickham 12 runs along the northern boundary with this parcel. The field is currently laid to grass for hay and has traditionally been used for the Wickham music festival. The South Downs National Park lies approximately 65m to the east of this field. This field is bounded by mature trees and hedges however there are substantial gaps within this that present open views across the site and to the neighbouring farms and residences.

Parcels 9 and 10 are to the south.

Parcel 9 is accessed off Biddenfield Lane with 2 points on access, one to the north and one to the southeast. This field is kidney shaped with a high point at the south eastern access, the land falling to the north and west. To the west the field is bounded by Round Copse (SINC) and to north the field is bounded by Hangmans Copse (SINC). To the south and east of the site there is a boundary of mature trees and hedges however there are significant gaps that offer views into and from the site to the surrounding areas.

Parcel 10 is accessed off a farm track off of Titchfield Lane. The field is roughly diamond shaped with the access to the north end. The land falls gently from north to south. Pylons lie over the northern section of the site which form the local connection point for the power grid. The site is bounded with mature trees and hedges that are broken by farm accesses. PROW Wickham 501 runs along the eastern boundary. The rail way runs along the western boundary.

Proposal

The proposal is for 63 Ha of solar panels over 10 parcels which would generate a maximum 49.9MW of electricity. The solar panels would be approximately 2.4m high.

Parcel 4 would include some raising of the ground by 1.2m.

The application also includes String Inverters, MV Transformer stations, customer switchgear, spare parts containers, Distribution Network Operator compound and

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construction compounds. Associated development in the form of fences, cctv, lighting and landscaping is also proposed.

The proposal includes cable routing along existing cable routes where possible along side highways.

The application will make use of a number of existing accesses, with upgrades to accommodate development along the A334, Blind Lane, Biddenfield Lane and Titchfield Lane.

Public Right of Way (PROW) Wickham 14 is proposed to be amended to follow the existing permissive path between parcels 6 and 7.

Significant planting is also proposed.

Relevant Planning History

23/02499/SCREEN - Proposed Installation Of A Standalone Solar Pv Array Together With Ancillary Infrastructure And Equipment, Landscaping And Access At Land At Titchfield Lane, Wickham, Fareham, Hampshire Po17 5pd. – EIA not required

24/01656/SCREEN - Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) - EIA not required

Consultations

Service Lead – Built Environment (Archaeology) -

- No objection subject to conditions (12, 13 and 26)

Service Lead – Built Environment (Historic Environment) –

- Objection due to concerns over nearby Heritage Assets adjacent to parcels 6 and 7

Service Lead – Engineering (Drainage) -

- No comment

Service Lead – Sustainability and Natural Environment (Ecology) –

- No objection following additional information submitted. Subject to conditions 13, 19, 20 and 22

Service Lead – Sustainability and Natural Environment (Landscape) –

- Concerns over parcels 8 and 9 and recommend their removal from the application.

Service Lead – Sustainability and Natural Environment (Trees) –

- No objection subject to condition (13 and 18)

Service Lead – Sustainability and Natural Environment (Sustainability) –

- Further information requested

Service Lead – Public Protection (Environmental Health) –

- Concerns raised regarding waste on site. Conditions (7, 13, 25) recommended.
- Concerns regarding low frequency noise, condition (6 and 13) recommended.

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Hampshire County Council (Rights of Way) –

- No objection subject to conditions and obligations secured via s106
- Further comment submitted to remove obligations. No objections subject to conditions. These have been included as informatives.

Hampshire County Council (Flood Authority) –

- No objection subject to condition (8)

Hampshire County Council (Highway Authority) –

- No objection subject to conditions (9) and a S278 agreement.

Hampshire and IoW Fire and Rescue –

- No objection

Natural England -

- No objection subject to condition (13)

Southern Water –

- Concern over tree planting in close proximity to sewers, rising mains and/or water mains. Condition recommended in regard to planting locations. This has been included as an informative.

Portsmouth Water –

- No objection

Environment Agency –

- No objection subject to condition (5)

National Grid –

- No comment

Historic England –

- General comments regarding visual effects and mitigation.

Nature Space –

- Concern over out of date surveys, further information requested.

Fareham Borough Council –

- No comment

CPRE Hampshire –

- Objection due to concerns over the visual impact generated, loss of tranquillity and encroachment of development between Shedfield and Wickham in regard to field 6-8

Network Rail

- Request that the applicant contacts Network Rail prior to commencement of development
- Concern that drainage information is lacking however agree that this can be

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covered under a condition (5 and 8)

Representations:

Wickham and Knowle Parish Council:

Wickham and Knowle Parish Council OBJECT to this planning application.

The Parish Council note that the screening application was for 130 acres but this full application is for 170 acres – a significant difference, with no increase in generation capacity. No explanation has been given for this increase in size. The generation capacity for the site needs to be under 50MW in order for the lawful determination of the scheme to be made by the LPA. Should the scheme generate more than 50MW then it would be unlawful for the LPA to determine it.

The Parish Council are aware that Field 9 within this application is still being used for landfill. Unscreened soil is being transported to the site daily together with sifted soil. While we will refer to it throughout the objection, we believe that this field should not be considered. The continuous use of this site for landfill renders the October 2024 Soil Survey void and should not be accepted. Enforcement case 24/00229/WKS was opened in August 2024.

Planning Policy

The application area does not fall within any settlement boundary. Therefore LPP1 - Policy MTRA 4 - Development in the Countryside applies.

- The policy states that only certain types of development will be permitted, this application does not meet any of those exceptions listed. It is also not supported by emerging Local Plan Strategic Policy SP3 (Development in the Countryside).
- The policy states “Development proposed in accordance with this policy should not cause harm to the character and landscape of the area or neighbouring uses, or create inappropriate noise/light and traffic generation.”

This application covering 63 hectares of rural countryside will cause irreparable harm to the character and landscape of this area, which is picked up throughout this objection, along with the disruption that having panels placed over 10 separate plots of land will cause.

As much as 40% of the site is on Best and Most Versatile Land. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024 –Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment states “ Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.” The Government has also re-affirmed the importance of protecting our soils and the services they provide in the Natural Environment White Paper: The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (June 2011), including the protection of best and most versatile agricultural land (paragraph 2.35).

- LPP1 Policy CP12 - Renewable and Decentralised Energy supports development of larger-scale renewable energy developments, especially where there is a strong degree of community benefit and/or community ownership. This application references community benefit only in passing and does not satisfy the requirements of planning policy. Specifically:

- The Planning Statement (ref R002), refers to Community Benefit (3.2.14) and states “Conrad (Development) II Ltd are in discussions with the Parish Councils concerning possible local community benefits (R004)”
- The Statement of Community Engagement (Ref R004), refers to Community Benefits and residents or organisations who have enquired about what

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community benefits there will be, yet there is no mention at all from Conrad about what the company would be willing to offer as community benefits. The report concludes “Further discussions about community benefits will continue outside of the planning process”.

There has been no further dialogue with the Parish Council since September 2024. The Parish Council would not be able to support any application of this size without understanding what level of community benefit the developer deems suitable.

- LPP1 Policy CP12 also states when assessing proposals for large-scale renewable energy and decentralised energy schemes, 7 principles should be taken into account. Of those 7 areas, this application is contrary to 4 of them:

- impact on areas designated for their local, national or international importance, such as Gaps and the South Downs National Park, conservation areas and heritage assets, including their setting.

The eastern corner of Field 8 lies approximately 50m from the western edge of the South Downs National Park (SDNP). This is countryside we and the planning authority should be protecting as stated in NPPF, para189.

Furthermore, LPP1 Policy CP20 –South Downs National Park states

“Development within and adjoining the South Downs National Park which would have a significant detrimental impact to the rural character and setting of settlements and the landscape should not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal is of overriding national importance”

The applicant makes no attempt to demonstrate that the proposal is of overriding national importance. With almost 500 acres of already approved or in application industrial solar and battery developments there is no evidence to support this.

- potential to integrate with new or existing development, whilst avoiding harm to existing development and communities;

Fields 6,7,8, 9, and 10 are stand alone, with no potential to integrate with new or existing development. This scattergun approach appears unconsidered.

Rather than offering a measured approach to a large-scale renewable energy scheme, Conrad appears to be making do with what land they can get an option on.

- benefits to host communities and opportunities for environmental enhancement;

At the time of this application there are no community benefits being considered. No further dialogue with the Parish Council and communities has taken place since first announcement of the project and no reason has been proposed as to why the communities should host this large-scale, sprawling energy development. The energy company and the landowners are the only beneficiaries of this site.

With the South Downs National Park running through our landscape it is not an area that needs environmental enhancement. This application offers no opportunities for environmental enhancement

- effect on the landscape and surrounding location

The local area is one of natural and historic beauty however such a significant development of up to 200,000 solar panels, substations, security fencing, CCTV, and other infrastructure will change the landscape character from rural to industrial. Which is also contrary to LPP2 Policy DM23 –Rural Character and emerging Local Plan Strategic Policy NE1 (Natural Environment).

Fields 6,7,8,9,10 are directly adjacent to the highway. Fields 6,7, and 8, are very large and very visible from heavily used roads (A334, B2177 and Titchfield

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Lane) and a public footpath running right through the middle of 7 & 8. The view of the South Downs National Park as you enter Blind Lane from the Titchfield Lane end will change from one of outstanding natural beauty to a rolling landscape of solar panels.

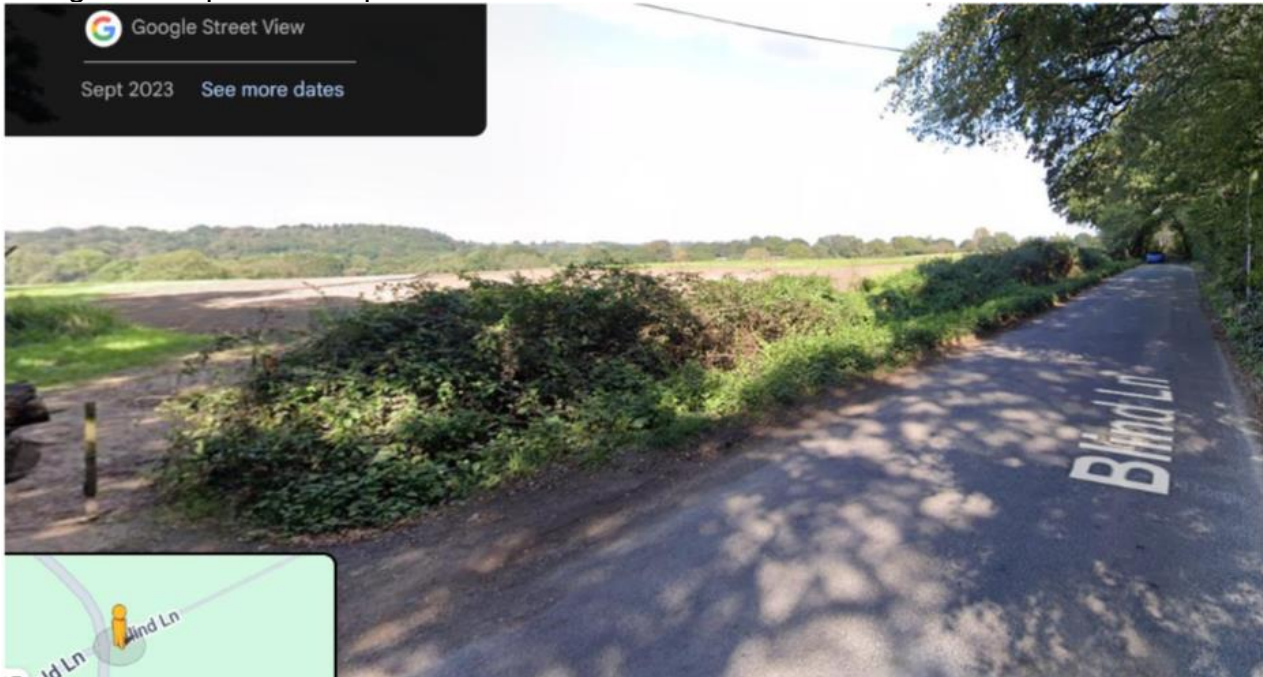


Image of Field 8 from Blind Lane

It is unusual for sites to be positioned so close to the highway and intrusive to the public eye and should not be supported by the planning authority as a suitable location.

LPP1 Policy CP20 - Heritage and Landscape Character and the emerging Local Plan Policy NE9 (Landscape Character) –puts emphasis on supporting new development which recognises, protects and enhances the District's distinctive landscape and heritage assets and their settings. This development is contrary to LPP1 Policy CP20 and doesn't protect or enhance the landscape.

Priority Right of Way (PROW)

The design of the site means that there is a PROW passing through the centre of the site between fields 7 and 8, this footpath will now be surrounded on both sides by a corridor of (at least) 2-3m high panels. All the advice for developers encourages them to avoid designing a site where this is the case. It would fundamentally change the feel of a country walk in open fields to a walk in an industrial zone.

It is clear that the solar panels and fencing and other infrastructure will be dominant for users of the PROW. We do not believe that the visual mock ups used in this application are a true reflection of the final development.

Statement of Community Involvement

Conrad Energy has failed to consult with the local communities.

There are over 2000 households in the Wickham and Knowle parish, and over 1600 households in the Shedfield Parish.

Conrad energy wrote to 370 households only, choosing to engage only with immediately adjacent addresses. Due to the size and location of the development, and the disruption the construction will bring, the Parish Council feel that the wider

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communities should have been engaged.

Two closed public consultation events were held, with only the 370 households being invited, ignoring the wider community.

Wickham, Knowle and the adjacent parish of Shedfield have a well-used network of community groups on social media, in particular Facebook, including two residents associations, which could have been used effectively to inform the local communities of the public consultations and engage properly, however Conrad chose not to.

The fact only 3 feedback forms and 5 emails were received as a result of the consultation highlights this inadequate exercise.

The statement says meetings with Shedfield Parish Council and Wickham Parish Council will also be held once the planning application has been submitted. These have not happened.

Section 4.14 covers engagement with the Wickham and Knowle Parish Council. The Parish Council has a different recollection of this informal meeting. Only 2 of the 10 fields (fields 6 and 7) were discussed with the Parish Council during the meeting, therefore reducing the impact considerably. The Parish Council flagged they have concerns of over-development and the multiple renewable energy applications for Titchfield Lane, in addition to this one, and the lack of consideration being taken to the Area as a whole. The Parish Council also said they would expect to see significant community benefits; however no further engagement has taken place.

Highways

The Parish Council and residents have significant concerns about over development of Titchfield Lane. Multiple applications from Solar and battery storage sites to Southern Water's Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project and local plan development sites all which require significant construction and HGV movements. One pending application alone (HCC/2024/0503) has measured that there are currently an average of 5 movements of Class 5 HGV s (4 axle trucks) per business day on Titchfield Lane and if the application were to be approved this would increase by a further 36 movements per day for a period of 5 years. 24/02804/FUL proposes an "average" figure of 8 HGV movements per day during the construction phase. Taken together these two applications would take the number of HGV movements on the lane from 5 to 49. And there are yet other applications under consideration for development on the lane that would use HGV s. These applications and their road safety impacts on a lane where there are pinch points at which 2 HGV s cannot pass one another without serious danger of collision must be considered holistically and not in isolation.

Average HGV Movements

This application states 1,081 two-way (in and out) vehicles utilised for the whole construction period, anticipated to last for 1 year / 260 working days. As made clear above, this equates to 8 HGV movements per day, with 4 vehicles arriving and 4 vehicles departing the various sites across an average day. Yet what has not been disclosed is that there will be peak times for HGV movements depending on the part of the project. The average figure is of no use if the reality is that for a substantial part of the project there will be considerably higher than average movements.

The application makes no reference to how these lorry movements will work across the 10 sites. Only 4 lorries across the sites per day does not add up.

Cabling Route

There is little information on the impact of the proposed cabling route, which runs along the narrow and winding Titchfield Lane (with its many pinch points) and also the very

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rural small (single track) Biddenfield Lane. During the initial consultation residents were told that cable route would not go along Biddenfield Lane - this is no longer the case and indeed almost the whole length of Biddenfield Lane will be dug up to accommodate the cabling. The application does not show how the cable gets from site 10 to the Botley Wood Substation?

The full disruption of the works must be considered. This is not a complete picture.

Road Safety

Titchfield Lane/A334 crossroads- Section 8 is located immediately alongside the A334/Titchfield and Blind Lanes crossroads that are heavily used and not well designed to cope with the volume of traffic they have to accommodate. As part of the development of 120 houses at Bishops Gardens on Winchester Road in Wickham, there is an agreement to improve the layout of this junction, as detailed in planning application 17/02615/FUL. These improvements have yet to take place, but with the occupation of the new houses at Bishop's Garden they are becoming increasingly necessary. Any development in this corner of Section 8 needs to allow for the intended future reconfiguration of this junction.

Titchfield Lane is a narrow country lane with several locations where it is impossible for two HGV s to pass safely. This point has been made very effectively by local resident groups with pictorial evidence in relation to other applications for developments along the lane (e.g. 21/03089/HCS). It has been demonstrated by the road traffic survey conducted for that application that the current daily number of Class 5 (4 axle HGV s) movements on the lane is on average only 5 per day.

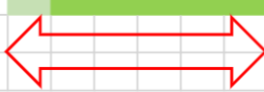
There is a good reason for that: the lane is unsuitable for HGV s. Even if the "average" figure of 8 HGV movements is taken as reasonable (which we contest) the increase in such movements would be 160%.

Over development

The combination of five solar developments in a local rural area served only by country lanes, that are totally unsuitable & unsafe for large volumes of heavy construction traffic will only exacerbate the local traffic & road safety problems.

1. Botley Energy Reserve 2 Ltd 49MW BESS- in operation.
2. Raglington Solar Park 5.8MW - operating since 2013
3. Conrad Energy (Developments) II Limited 49.9MW Solar Farm
4. Grenergy 50MW BESS
5. Navigate Corporation (SLR) 10.5MW Solar Farm

It is very likely that work on developments 3, 4, & 5 would coincide compounding the traffic & road safety problems.

TITCHFIELD LANE ENERGY PROJECTS	2025				2026				2027				2028				2031
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Grenergy BESS (50MW)																	
Conrad Energy Solar Farm (50MW)																	
Navigate Corp Solar Farm (10.5MW)																	
																	
Significant period of HGV construction traffic overlap - potentially 18months!																	

Why are the impacts of these developments not being looked at cumulatively?

To exacerbate the significant issues further, as well as these sites, Southern Water's Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project (HWTWR), which will run along

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Titchfield Lane and Blind Lane is currently going through the consultation process with development due to start in four years' time.

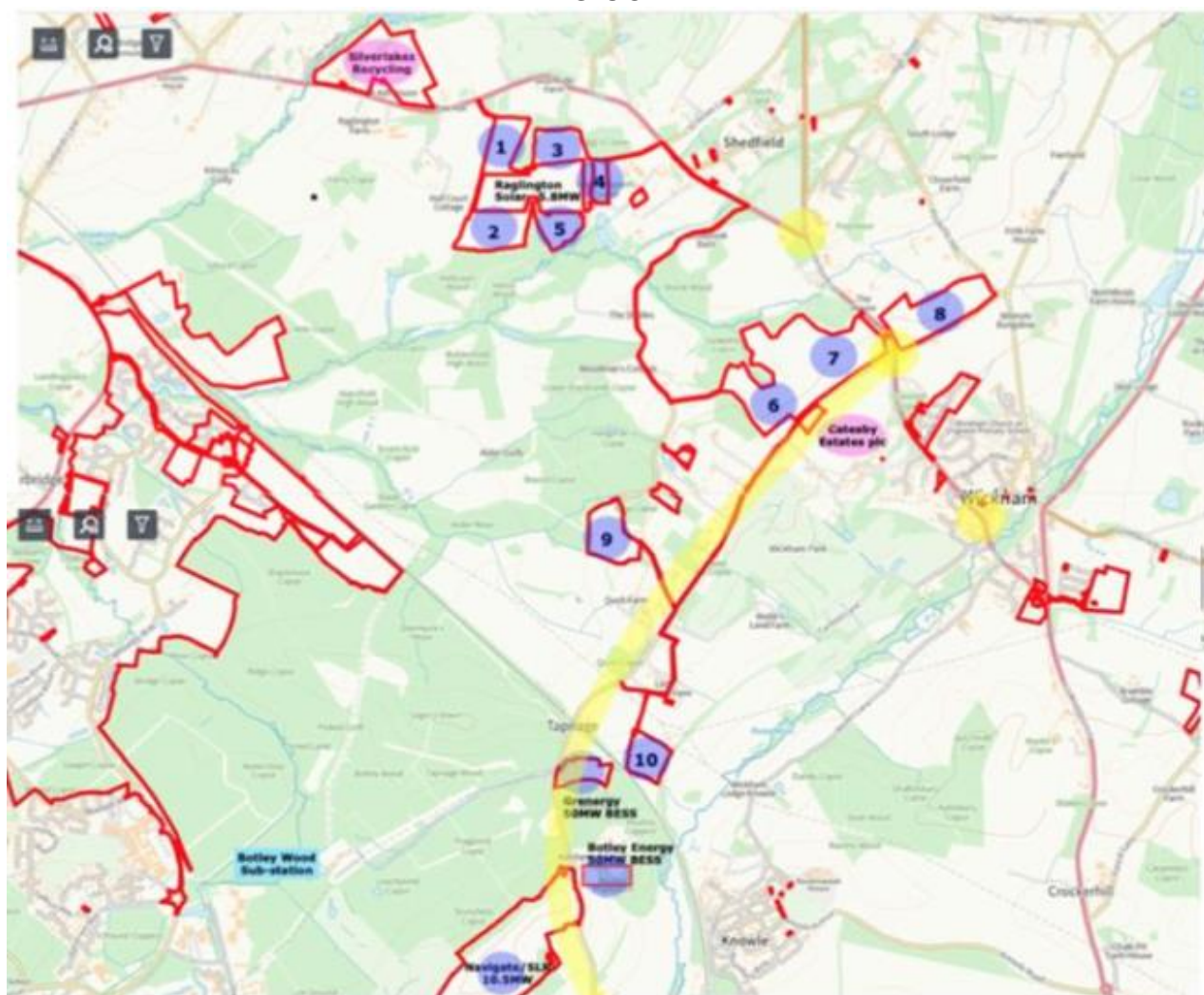
There is also a potential housing development site being promoted through the emerging Local Plan which sits at the junction of Titchfield Lane/A334. Due to the HWTWR project the pipeline running through the land, the land will no longer viable for farming. The planning authority must take this into consideration when reviewing the application.



Image: Southern Water's HWTWR project

The following image highlights all current developments either permitted or in planning.

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Solar Energy Projects Numbers 1 – 10 – Conrad Energy

Botley Energy Reserve 2 Ltd 49MW BESS - in operation.

Raglington Solar Park 5.8MW - operating since 2013

Conrad Energy (Developments) II Limited 49.9MW Solar Farm

Greenergy 50MW BESS

Navigate Corporation (SLR) 10.5MW Solar Farm

Catesby Estates plc Land Development Proposal
Silverlakes Recycling Expansion Proposal

Local Traffic congestion hotspots inc. Titchfield & Biddenfield Lanes

Access

Field 9 –Biddenfield Lane. The unauthorised landfill is being transported to site by large tractor & 20 tonne tipping/trailer. The single-track lane is unsuitable for both HGV 's and tractor/trailer combinations. The latter exceeds Titchfield Lane weight restriction of 7.5tonnes. The current activity is causing significant problems for the neighbours and highlights precisely the problems developing this site will bring. Contrary to LPP2 Policy DM18 –Access and Parking, and LPP2 Policy DM 17 - Site Development Principles

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Image: Biddenfield Lane

Gas Works

Field 9 has two mains gas pipes running through the site. The Parish Council note that there is no consideration of the pipes within the application.

Waste Management

The Design and Access Statement, Section 5.5 Waste Management states:

- The solar panels will be erected on driven posts and engineered to sit at the correct angle relative to the topography such that the panel mounting systems will account for any undulations across the field. Similarly, it will only be necessary to undertake some minor re-levelling which may be required for the construction of the ancillary structures.

- The contractor will ensure that all surplus or waste materials from either materials imported to site or from those generated on site are dealt with responsibly.

Yet Site 9 in Biddenfield Lane currently has a significant volume of unauthorised soil waste being imported into the site, sifted and the contaminated soil used to level the area. While the site is not currently owned by Conrad it contradicts the Design and Access Statement and point of minimal impact. Conrad in pre-application information given to the Parish Council made a specific point of stating that there would be no landfill associated with its proposals.

The bottom part of this field was formerly a council tip that ceased operation in the

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1960's. Landfill was deposited into this area approx five (5) years ago, however for the past 18m-2yrs the upper part of the field has been receiving landfill.

Residents have confirmed the landfill material and noted it contained concrete, tiles & wiring, No landfill applications can be found for the site and the unauthorised landfill is currently being looked into by Planning Enforcement.

The landfill continues almost daily with associated noise and disruption. This is contrary to LPP2 Policy DM 17 - Site Development Principles and LPP2 Policy DM19 – Development and Pollution



Image: Field 9, tractor bringing soil into the site

Conclusion

The Parish Council is not disputing the need for renewable energy. However, the NPPF (December 2024) (Section 165) states cumulative landscape and visual impacts must be considered. Not only does the impact on these 10 sites across 63 hectares cause considerable harm to the landscape, the rural character and over-development of Titchfield Lane needs to be addressed. This application should not be considered on its own.

There are numerous substations/connection points across the south and indeed across the country. This application does not cover the reason for 10 disparate sites across open countryside, nor does it cover alternative sites. One should not assume that just because there is a substation the surrounding countryside is suitable for development. The impact on rural countryside, on the doorstep of the South Downs National Park is significant, it will change the landscape from countryside to industrial. Fields that should be saved for farming will be suffocated by hundreds of thousands of solar panels.

The planning process puts emphasis on Community Benefit. The application makes no reference as to what level of community benefit this application would bring. This is not something that should be discussed and agreed once an application is approved. This should be agreed as part of the planning process so it is supported by planning policy. The applicant has not clearly communicated the full extent of this development with

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communities, instead choosing to engage with only neighbouring properties. No further engagement has taken place, and the Parish Council cannot support an application where the bad outweighs the good.

Shedfield Parish Council:

Shedfield Parish Council (SPC) is not opposed to solar farms. However, we have significant concern about the nature of the application and the negative impact it will have on our parish and our residents.

We object to this application in its current form and wish to emphasize our key concerns:

1. Site Suitability –Approximately 40% of the proposed fields have steep north-facing slopes. Solar farms are generally placed on south-facing slopes for maximum efficiency.
2. Agricultural Land Use –Area 6, 7, and 8 are best and most versatile arable land and Government policy states that such land should not be used for solar farms.
3. Impact on Public Amenity and Access –The temporary loss and rerouting of a PROW Footpath 14 would significantly impact public wellbeing and access to green spaces. The northern area of this development is surrounded by Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (AW) and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) which will be impacted adversely by the cabling and other enabling works.
4. Inefficient Cabling –The proposed cabling route is excessively long, leading to unnecessary power loss.
5. Alternative Sites –It is expected that the applicant would have considered brownfield sites, instead of good arable land.
6. Unresolved Enforcement Issues –It has been confirmed by Winchester City Council that two live enforcement matters relate to field 4, within Shedfield parish and field 9, within Wickham parish. We would recommend that these live cases are resolved prior to the application being determined.

The difference between the screening and full application is 40 acres, not hectares. We would like to refer you to the following report from WinACC (Winchester Action on the Climate Crisis) regarding renewable energy generation in Winchester District.
<https://www.winacc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Final-Renewable-Energy-Report-2024.docx.pdf>

It is important to note that Winchester and Eastleigh are among the top 10 authorities in England for renewable energy generation. What is evident, however, is that Shedfield Parish and the surrounding areas have disproportionately borne the impact of solar farms.

Alternative locations outside our parish should be considered.

The following figures are sourced from the WinACC report above. If the developments currently in progress, along with this application, are approved, our entire parish will be encircled by solar farms.

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Operational Locations within this and neighbouring parishes	Installed Capacity (MW)
Raglington Farm, Shedfield	5.8
Winchester Road, Bishops Waltham	6.0
Forest Farm, Bishops Waltham	3.0
Locks Farm, Bishops Waltham	18.0
In Development	
Land at Titchfield Lane, Wickham & Shedfield	69 ha
Glebe Farm, Shedfield	22 ha, 10MW

The above referenced report is the source of these figures.

SPC Objection

We object to this application on a number of grounds.

1. National Guidelines planning policies.

The proposal is not aligned with the Government's Guidance on Renewable and low carbon energy ("GGR")¹ which is designed to help local councils develop policies and identify planning considerations, nor the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF")² which sets out Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

We draw attention to the following (para 6 GGR):

- The need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities.
- Cumulative impacts require particular attention, especially the increasing impact that wind turbines and large-scale solar farms can have on landscape and local amenity as the number of turbines and solar arrays in an area increases.
- Local topography is an important factor in assessing whether such 'farms' could have a damaging effect on landscape and public amenity.
- Great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting.
- Proposals in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and in areas close to them where there could be an adverse impact on the protected area, will need careful consideration.
- Protecting local amenity is an important consideration which should be given proper weight in planning decisions. (all our emphasis)

In conjunction with:

- GGR guidance which encourages the effective use of land by focusing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land –not on greenfield sites or protected environments such as AW & SINC.
- Also supported by the principle in the NPPF that planning policies and decisions should promote making as much use as possible of previously developed or

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brownfield land (para 117 NPPF).

We note that renewable developments still need to meet the requirements of 'sustainable development' under the NPPF. Legitimate considerations (such as planning, policy, environmental and community) should not be bypassed or downplayed. The NPPF still requires any sustainable development to accord with an up-to-date development plan. Landscape enhancement. The NPPF requires planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural local environment, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity commensurate with their identified quality in the development plan (NPPF para 170). This includes AW and SINC.

Historic Environment. Part 16 of the NPPF, providing guidance relating to historic environment, states:

- Heritage Assets.... are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations (Para 184).
- Planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting (Para 189).
- Planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including the setting of a heritage asset) and consider the impact on a heritage asset to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal (Para 190). (See also Paras 192, 193, 194, 195, 196).
- In addition, in 2017 Historic England published "The Setting of Heritage Assets" GPA Note 3 (second edition).

2. Footpaths and Land Use:

The Importance of Footpaths and the Impact of Footpath 14's Re-routing

Footpaths are a crucial part of both rural and urban landscape, offering pedestrians and local community amenity through connectivity, recreation, and environmental benefits. They allow people to enjoy nature, move safely without reliance on roads, and contribute to overall well-being.

The temporary loss and rerouting of Footpath 14 is a serious concern, particularly for residents of Waltham Chase, Shedfield, Shirrell Heath and Wickham, and surrounding villages. This footpath provides scenic countryside views, with rolling hills and woodland borders, offering an immersive natural experience. However, the proposed diversion is inadequate in comparison. Instead of the open countryside, the rerouted path is enclosed by fencing on both sides, creating a corridor-like experience that lacks the charm and openness of the original route.

Additionally, the diversion runs through a solar farm, replacing the picturesque setting with a closed-in fenced path, limiting the scenic and recreational value of the walk. This change diminishes the footpath's original purpose of providing a tranquil escape into nature.

Preserving access to high-quality footpaths is essential for both local communities and visitors. Authorities should consider alternative solutions that maintain the rural character and scenic value of Footpath 14, ensuring that it continues to serve as a valuable public amenity. This is more concerning as this land is highly valuable as arable land.

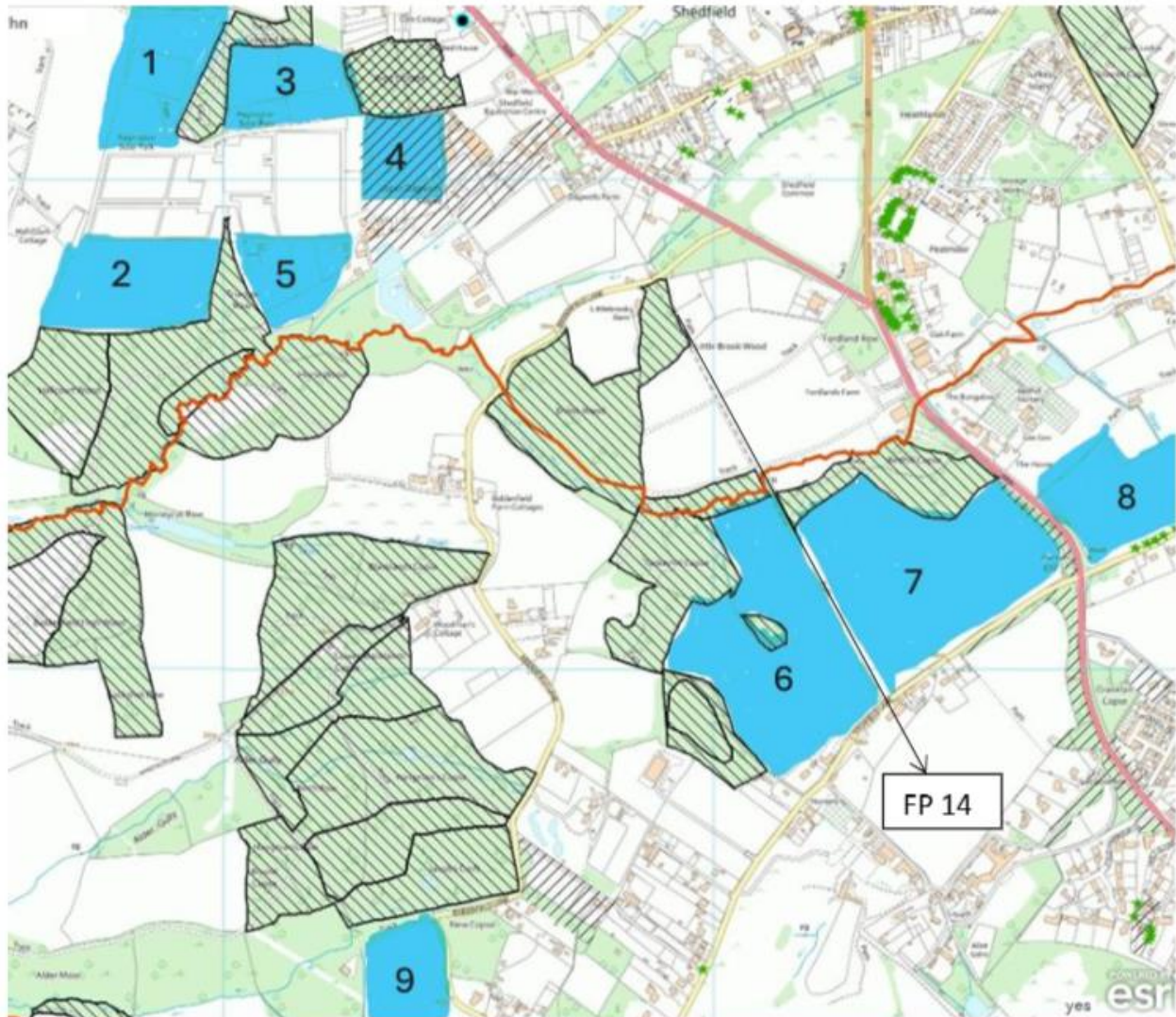
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3. Land Areas and Their Significance

The proposed development of 69 hectares of utility-scale solar infrastructure across Shedfield and Wickham parishes will have a negative impact on the landscape, and therefore, on the character of the area. In particular, it will affect trees, which play a crucial role in maintaining the visual amenity of the countryside. Many of these trees are located in protected environments and must be carefully considered in relation to the proposed development areas outlined in the application.

Nine of the ten areas are particularly affected by this development and Footpath 14 is shown in Fig1 below:



Areas 1 –9 highlighted in blue on the above map are to indicate the proximity of the solar fields to areas of AW, tree protection areas and SINC sites.

The land affected by this fragmented development is divided into ten distinct areas, nine of which have unique characteristics, concerns and problems. Proposals to establish any additional solar farm arrays here pose significant environmental concerns.

Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 are bounded by Ancient Woodlands. The most important are Tankerhill Copse and Redhill Copse, Hallcourt Wood, Horse Wood, Triangle Row, Crooked Row, Biggs Copse, Blacklands Copse and Lower Blacklands Copse which are all designated Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and are Sites of Importance for Nature

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Conservation (SINC). In addition, Biggs Copse and Upper Dagwells Copse are protected by Tree Protection Orders (TPOs). These sites will require a disproportionately large amount of fencing and access roads for works to allow cabling to be installed, required for the development.

We understand that there is a proposed upgrade of a telecommunications mast located at Raglington Farm Wood at Botley Road, Shedfield which overlaps area 1 above. The Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project, known as Water for Life, is currently open for its second consultation, regarding proposed pipeline routes, the proposed water recycling plant and associated pumping stations and the proposed sites for the above ground plant along the pipeline route. These works will impact roads, highways and access during their installation at Blind Lane and Titchfield Lane.

Area 1 on Raglington Farm

History of Land Raising and Land Fill and Woodland Impact

This farm has previously been used as a land fill/land raising site and is located adjacent to an ancient woodland and a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The map above (Figure 1) shows Ancient Woodlands (outlined in black and hatched on a green background) and woodland protected by TPOs (outlined in green and hatched). Proposals to establish an additional solar farm here pose significant environmental concerns.

The initial solar farm was strategically positioned away from the road and screened with a bund to preserve the rural character of the area. Due to the elevated nature of the land, additional screening would not be effective. The history of planning applications and appeals indicates that this land may be unsuitable for further solar farm development. All previous applications, comments, conditions and decisions can be found at Hampshire County Council and Winchester City Council.

Area 2 on Raglington Farm: Ancient Woodland and Productive Arable Land

This area consists of high-quality arable land, vital for food production. Surrounded by Ancient Woodland and SINCs, particularly Hallcourt Wood and Triangle Row and hedgerows, this land plays a crucial role in agricultural sustainability. Transforming it into a solar farm for the next four decades will require extensive enabling works, involving the boundary protected woodlands with unavoidable damage. It would result in the permanent loss of productive land, which is unnecessary given the availability of alternative sites.

Area 3 & 5 (previously part of Raglington Farm): Ancient Woodland and Possible Unregulated Landfill Use

Area 3 was not historically classified as a landfill site under planning application 07/01242/HCS. If landfill activity has taken place without approval, it must be investigated before any further developments occur. The area is enclosed on three sides by Ancient Woodland, Crooked Row and Biggs Copse. Area 5 is bounded by Triangle Row with Horse Wood in close proximity and has been a site of tipping and landfill activity and is currently being investigated by the Environment Agency. The absence of historical planning references suggests that these could be unregulated landfill sites, raising further concerns about its suitability for development. Both these areas provide access to existing solar farms.

Area 4 (Located within Shedfield Equestrian Centre): Ancient Woodland and Unauthorised Brownfield Conversion

Upper Dagwells Copse and Biggs Copse bound Area 4. Upper Dagwells Copse lies

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within Shedfield Equestrian Centre. This area has been unlawfully converted into a brownfield site. In September 2022, enforcement action was taken by Winchester City Council and EN7 was served. Additionally, Upper Dagwells Copse is protected by a TPO and trees have been removed illegally from this tree group.

This enforcement action was subsequently appealed by the landowner (Appeal C: APP/L1765/C/22/3309990) and dismissed at appeal. The Planning Inspector has now deemed that this area must be returned to countryside.

Areas 6, 7, and 8: Ancient Woodland, SINC and High-Quality Agricultural Land

These areas encompass valuable arable pastures that have been used for diverse crop production for many years. Losing these fields to solar farm development would result in a significant reduction in the country's food production capability. Unlike brownfield sites, which are better suited for solar farm development, these greenfield sites should be preserved. Area 6 is traversed by Footpath 14 (see Fig1 above), the loss of which is directly associated with these areas, further exacerbating the issue of disrupted connectivity. The visibility of these fields from roads and footpaths would further alter the landscape, creating a feeling of enclosure within Shedfield Parish Council's jurisdiction. Areas 6, 7 and 8 are north facing fields which are very steeply sloped towards the northern end of the field. They are bounded at the northern end, at the bottom of the slope, by Ancient Woodland and SINC's Tankerhill Copse and Redhill Copse. The topography of areas 6 and 7 ensure that the Ancient Woodlands on the northern boundary are at risk of soil impaction and water runoff.

Development Alternatives and Environmental Considerations

The proposed development consists of a divided collection of ten sites dispersed throughout Wickham and Shedfield Parish rather than a singular, well-planned location. It does not conform with the National Planning Policy Framework. We would recommend that the developers explore alternative sites to avoid using arable land, and the unnecessary impact on Ancient Woodlands, SINC's and disruption to a well-used footpath.

Although the applicant's tree survey indicates that the majority of high quality (category A or B) trees would not be removed, no less than 15 high quality individual trees and 4 tree groups are proposed for removal to facilitate access, infrastructure, and construction works along with category B and C trees. In accordance with Natural England and the Forestry Commission's standing advice for Ancient Woodland, ancient and veteran trees, a 15m buffer zone will need to be applied to each enabling a working area to protect adjacent Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and individual veteran trees.

Mitigation Measures would include:

- "No-dig" construction methods for access tracks within Root Protection Areas (RPAs).
- Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) would have to be used to avoid root damage when installing underground cables involving RPAs and under footpaths particularly FP13 & 14.
- It is unclear where the entry and receiver pits for HDD are proposed to be located, though they must be away from any tree RPAs and PROW to avoid damage and disturbance to trees, path surfaces or obstruction of public access. At least a 15m buffer zone would be required.
- A detailed tree planting scheme would have to be provided to compensate for any tree loss or hedgerow removal, incorporating native species to enhance biodiversity.

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- Mitigation and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) would have to be shown. The Landscape Plan should ensure a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity.

The claim that the solar farm would displace 9.6 million tonnes of CO2 annually, equating to 145.5 million miles of travel, lacks a comprehensive assessment of the agricultural loss resulting from land conversion. This claim is unproven in the application.

Conclusion

The proposed development threatens valuable agricultural land, environmental conservation sites, SINC, 9 Ancient Woodlands, and the rural character of the area. The loss of Footpath 14 is a major concern as it disrupts pedestrian connectivity across the countryside, particularly between the villages of Waltham Chase, Shedfield, Shirrell Heath and Wickham. The proposed diversion does not serve as an adequate replacement and fails to maintain the integrity of the existing walking network. Additionally, the proposed development threatens the rural character of the area. The lack of conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and the significant loss of productive land and other concerns raised within this objection, leads Shedfield Parish Council to believe that this application should be heavily scrutinised to preserve the countryside and footpath connectivity within our parish.

Wickham Residents association:

OBJECTION to Planning Application 24-02804-FUL – Conrad Energy Solar Farm Development Titchfield Lane Wickham

I am writing to object on behalf of the Wickham Residents Association (WRA) to the extensive and invasive Solar Farm development proposed by Conrad Energy. We were not directly notified regarding the application and given its unexpected size and complexity it has taken time for us to pull our reaction together, based on investigation and input from our members. We are submitting this within the time frame extended for the Parish Council.

WRA has been intimately involved with Titchfield Lane issues since late 2020 and has led on the objection to the proposed development of a solar farm on the Old Funtley Tip. We know the geography of the area and many of the people who live along this narrow country lane. They are already deeply concerned regarding the increasing general volume of traffic and the illegal heavy vehicle traffic along the restricted 7.5 tonne restricted section.

According to the Vectos Swept Path Analysis produced in 2023, Titchfield Lane has 14 sections at which a lorry and a car cannot pass without encroachment. The wing mirror and other car debris along the Lane is testament to the frequent car on car clashes that signal the dangers of the Lane but go unreported and do not appear in the statistics you rely on. Hampshire Police have confirmed that they do not have the resource to monitor or patrol the Lane. Cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians use it at their peril. Note: I can provide you with a copy of the Vectos report if you wish.

To be clear there is no objection to solar farms. In fact, when Conrad first presented the proposal, in their “consultation”, describing it as “a 50MW solar farm in the field at the top of Titchfield Lane” there was a relatively warm response. However, the final version in the application, encompassing 10 sites extending along Titchfield Lane and Bidenfield Lane has caused alarm.

For our residents this is the context against which they view this new and very extensive
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proposal and there is deep frustration that “the Authorities” only deal on a case-by-case basis and appear not to take account of the total activities legal and illegal impacting Titchfield Lane.

Key Issues.

Who should consider this Planning Application

In the United Kingdom, the planning and permission for solar farms over 50MW falls under the jurisdiction of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) regime. The primary authority responsible for determining permission is the Planning Inspectorate.

This involves a detailed examination of the environmental impact, community consultation, and overall planning merits. The Inspectorate then makes a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, who makes the final decision.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is mandatory for solar farms over 50MW. The EIA evaluates the potential effects on the environment, including impacts on wildlife, water resources, and landscape. This assessment is a critical component of the application process, and it helps to ensure that development is sustainable and minimizes adverse effects.

Public consultation is an integral part of the planning process. Developers are required to engage with local communities, stakeholders, and authorities to understand concerns and gather feedback. This engagement helps to ensure that the project has local support and addresses any potential issues. Conrad is an experienced operator and has set the output slightly below 50MW to ensure that this development does not fall under the NSIP jurisdiction. We note that the stated capacity at the consultation stages was 49.9MW on significantly less acreage than the currently planned 170 acres. It would be reasonable to assume that an output greater than 50MW would be achievable and we question whether that is the objective of Conrad whilst avoiding the scrutiny of NSIP. We seek assurance that the sub 50MW claim is thoroughly investigated and verified

Land Use and Recovery

We understand that circa 40% of the land that Conrad plan to use is Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (BMV). It is classified as Grades 1, 2, and 3a under the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system. These lands are capable of producing high yields of a wide variety of crops and are essential for the UK's food security and agricultural economy. Therefore, any proposal to utilize BMV land for solar farms must carefully consider the potential impacts and adopt measures to mitigate them.

We see no mention of usage mitigation in the Design and Access Plan from Conrad apart from a reference in section 7 that “the design allows for the option of low intensity grazing of livestock on the site throughout the operation of the modules”. The question is does the current plan achieve the required balance between renewable energy goals and agricultural land preservation? Is low intensity grazing part of the plan or are we destined to lose the use of this valuable acreage for several decades? Is there stakeholder investment in ensuring this land remains productive?

Noted that in their report Conrad state that “Following decommissioning of the modules, the proposal is fully reversible and as there are no significant physical changes made to the land in terms of earth removal or levelling, there will be no constraints on returning the site to its current condition”

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Who will be responsible for the decommissioning and how will it be funded. Do Conrad or the landowner provide a bond and guarantees.

Cumulative Development Impact on the Community

As noted earlier, the residents have been subjected to a series of disruptive developments in previous years and there is deep concern regarding the creeping industrialization of Titchfield Lane and Funtley Rd and now Biddenfield Lane. The road surface of the Lanes is inherently unstable constructed as it is on a clay base. This is further aggravated by heavy vehicles, with the volume on the increase. The source of the 500k+ tonnes of landfill for Funtley is unknown, so we have to assume that the southern and northern routes will be used. This is in the same period as the development of Funtley Tip if that is approved. There are also other developments in the offing and the cumulative impact of all these is having a significant impact on the wellbeing of those immediately affected.

The residents in Biddenfield are particularly affected, as the Lane is a single carriageway and will be ripped up to lay cabling. The tranquility of this small community will be significantly impacted, and this is already happening with illegal dumping of building waste for which there has been no Local Authority permission. The mixed building waste is currently being covered by topsoil. This illegal dumping has been reported to Winchester "Enforcement" with no apparent result.

This application cannot just be viewed in isolation, and we seek assurance from Hampshire Planning and Winchester Planning functions that they will take account of all current and likely developments impacting the Lanes before making a determination on individual applications.

Rose, the Officer we have been liaising with at Hampshire Planning is Sam Dumbrell. We have provided information, insight and analysis to him over the past two+ years regarding Funtley and we recommend that a link to him will give you a broader view of all the issues on Titchfield Lane

Other

There are many other issues to explore, for example the PROW, Water run off, Cable Routing, Visual impact particularly on those fields that are north facing, and Community benefit. However, the key issues are our main focus, and we look forward to feedback on those.

The role of WRA as the representative of a large group of residents with whom we are in contact personally and via social media is to get to the truth of issues that concern residents and make sure that information is correctly disseminated. This kills conjecture and rumour and aids finding sensible solutions. As we have with Sam, we will provide you with whatever information is relevant to help the achievement of the correct outcome. If you wish to visit the location and link with relevant sensible residents, we would be very happy to facilitate that visit. Please call anytime.

13 Objecting Representations received from different addresses within the Winchester District citing the following material planning reasons:

- Loss of green space
- Encroachment into the countryside
- Lack of consultation
- Impact on heritage assets
- Solar panels will be poorly looked after
- Site is too large

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- Each field should be considered separately
- Visual impact
- Loss of BMV agricultural land
- Impact on landscape
- Loss of permissive paths
- Should extend PROWs
- Impact on highways/traffic build up
- Cumulative development impacts
- Lack of highways infrastructure
- Glint and glare impact on drivers at Titchfield Lane/Blinc Lane/Winchester Road cross roads
- Lack of community benefit
- Lack of information
- Piecemeal development
- Contrary to policy
- Should prioritise brownfield and roofs over Greenfields
- Not reflective of Screening opinion
- Area is taking more than fair share of solar development
- Impact on PROW
- Proposed planting is inadequate
- Loss of Wickham Festival location
- Impact on local businesses
- Parcels 6-8 have north facing slopes
- Plans submitted are indicative
- Surface water drainage
- Trees will overshadow
- Impact on trees/ancient woodlands
- Construction impacts
- Lack of collaboration with existing solar farm
- Solar energy is not stable
- Impact on ecology
- Impact on historic assets
- Loss of outlook
- Lack of other locations looked at
- Unclear where the point of connection is
- Narrowness of proposed access routes
- Will not be maintained

One of the comments received from the above did not include a postal address however was sent from a business within Winchester District and therefore has been included within the Winchester District comments.

3 objections from addresses outside of Winchester District have been submitted. Their comments echo the above.

Two of these objections did not include a postal address and none has been received following Officer investigation, as such these comment was included within the non-Winchester District addresses.

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3 Supporting Representations received from different addresses citing the following material planning reasons:

- Would support green energy proposals
- Grouped part of the proposal close to existing to limit impact
- Impacts would be minimal
- Much needed green energy
- Would fit with the landscape
- Proposes good screening planting
- PROW has been considered carefully
- Would result in over 20% BNG
- Would have ecological enhancements
- Good community consultation
- Avoiding use of BMV land.

One neutral comment was submitted in regard to:

- Possible public benefit of permissive paths/extension of the PROW network along the south of parcels 6-8 to allow off road pedestrian permeability.

One additional neutral comment was submitted however due to the content was considered as an objection.

Relevant Government Planning Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

- 2. Achieving sustainable development
- 4. Decision-making
- 9. Promoting sustainable transport
- 11. Making effective use of land
- 12. Achieving well-designed places
- 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

National Planning Practice Guidance

- Biodiversity net gain
- Climate change
- Consultation and pre-decision matters
- Design: process and tools
- Determining a planning application
- Effective use of land
- Environmental Impact Assessment
- Flood risk and coastal change
- Historic environment
- Land affected by contamination
- Natural environment
- Noise
- Planning obligations
- Renewable and low carbon energy
- Transport evidence bases in plan making and decision taking

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- Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements
- Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas
- Use of planning conditions
- Water supply, wastewater and water quality

National Policy Statements

National Policy Statement: Overarching NPS for Energy (EN-1) (January 2024)

National Policy Statement: Renewable Energy Infrastructure EN-3 (January 2024)

Winchester Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy (LPP1)

DS1 – Development Strategy And Principles

MTRA1 – Development Strategy Market Towns And Rural Area

MTRA3 – Other Settlements In The Market Towns And Rural Areas

MTRA4 – Development In The Countryside

MTRA5 – Major Commercial And Educational Establishments In The Countryside

CP12 – Renewable and decentralised Energy

CP14 – Effective Use Of Land

CP15 – Green Infrastructure

CP16 – Biodiversity

CP17 – Flooding, Flood Risk And The Water Environment

CP19 – South Downs National Park

CP21 – Infrastructure and Community Benefit

Winchester District Local Plan Part 2 – Development Management and Site Allocations

DM1 – Location of New Development

DM10 – Essential Facilities and Services in the Countryside

DM15 – Local Distinctiveness

DM16 – Site Design Criteria

DM17 – Site Development Principles

Dm18 – Access and Parking

DM19 – Development and pollution

DM20 – Development and Noise

DM21 – Contaminated Land

DM22 – Telecommunications, Services And Utilities

DM23 – Rural Character

DM24 – Special Trees, Important Hedgerows and Ancient Woodland

DM26 – Archaeology

DM29 – Heritage Assets

Emerging Local Plan 2020-2040

SP1 – Vision and Objectives

SP2 – Spatial Strategy and Development Principles

SP3 – Development in the countryside

CN1 – Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change

CN2 – Energy Hierarchy

CN5 – Renewable and Low carbon Energy Schemes

CN6 – Micro Energy Generation Schemes

CN8 – Embodied Carbon Assessment

D7 – Development Standards

D8 – Contaminated Land

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T1 – Sustainable and Active Transport and Travel
T4 – Access for new developments
NE1 – Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity and the Natural Environment in the District
NE4 – Green and Blue Infrastructure
NE5 – Biodiversity
NE6 - Flooding, Flood Risk And The Water Environment
NE8 - South Downs National Park
NE9 – Landscape Character
NE14 – Rural Character
NE15 - Special Trees, Important Hedgerows and Ancient Woodland
HE1 – Historic Environment
HE2– All Heritage Assets
HE3 – Designated Heritage Assets
HE4 – Non Designated Heritage Assets
HE5 – Protecting the Significance of Heritage Assets and mitigating unavoidable harm
HE7 – Non -designated Archaeological Assets
E10 – Farm Diversification

Supplementary Planning Document

National Design Guide 2019
High Quality Places 2015
Shedfield Village Design Statement
Wickham Village Design Statement

Other relevant documents

Climate Emergency Declaration, Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2020-2023.
Nature Emergency Declaration.
Statement of Community Involvement 2018 and 2020
Landscape Character Assessment March 2004 and emerging LCA December 2021
Biodiversity Action Plan 2021
Historic England Guidance
Good Practice Advice in Planning 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment | Historic England (2015)
Good Practice Advice in Planning 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets | Historic England 2nd Edition (2017)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 4
Published 30 June 2020
Ancient monuments and Archaeological Area Act 1979

Planning Considerations

Principle of development

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) require that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Emerging Local Plan, as now agreed by Full Council, has been submitted to the Secretary of State, the Emerging Local Plan examination sessions have been completed but the examination remains open and can be given appropriate and increasing weight in the assessment of development proposals in advance of examination and adoption.

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Paragraph 168 of the NPPF (2024) states that when determining application for renewable and low carbon energy development, Local Planning Authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy.

Policy CP12 (Renewable and Decentralised Energy) offers general support to the generation of renewable energy. Whilst the policy does not specifically refer to solar farms, they are embraced within the policy under the generic term “development of large-scale renewable energy developments”. Seven criteria are outlined that need to be considered when applying this policy. Those specifically relevant to this application are:

- impact on areas designated for their local, national or international importance, such as the South Downs National Park, conservation areas and heritage assets, including their setting;
- contributions to national, regional & sub-regional renewable energy targets and CO2 savings;
- potential to integrate with new or existing development whilst avoiding harm to existing development and communities;
- benefits to host communities and opportunities for environmental enhancement;
- proximity to transport links;
- connection to the electricity network;
- effect on the landscape and surrounding location.

All these criteria will be considered below.

Regarding national policy, whilst this application does not (in total) cross the 50MW threshold that would classify the application as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, both EN-1 and EN-3 are material considerations. The National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy (EN-1) indicates that the Government is committed to meeting a legally binding target to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels. As a general statement of the Government’s objective, this is considered material notwithstanding it is contained within an NPS. EN-1 also states that wind and solar are likely to be the main contributors to achieving a secure, reliable affordable & net zero electricity system by 2050. EN-3 the NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure, includes a specific section on Solar Photovoltaic Generation. It sets out a series of issues that should be considered. These issues will be addressed below.

The Climate Change Act commits the UK government by law to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050. In 2021 the Government committed to decarbonising the UK electricity system by 2035 in advance of the more general target date outlined above. Increasingly, the need for a move away from fossil fuel and towards renewable sources of energy production is supported for reasons of energy security and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. This position has only been strengthened by more recent government publications and guidance such as the Energy White Paper (Powering our Net Zero Future) and the Energy Security Strategy that refers to a fivefold increase in solar, which must rely heavily on ground mounted provision.

The NPPF contains sections that are considered as supportive of solar farm schemes and sections that indicate caution in terms of the need to consider the impacts on the natural and manmade environments.

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This theme of competing factors is set out in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy paragraph 013 (March 2015) and in the 25 March 2015 statement from the then Secretary of State. When referring to the provision of solar farms, the PPG sets out 9 matters for consideration. These are:

- encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value.
- where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.
- that solar farms are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use.
- the proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety.
- the extent to which there may be additional impacts if solar arrays follow the daily movement of the sun.
- the need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing.
- great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large-scale solar farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large-scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset.
- the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges.
- the energy generating potential, which can vary for a number of reasons including, latitude and aspect.

The March 2015 statement from the then Secretary of State includes the following:

"The National Planning Policy Framework includes strong protections for the natural and historic environment and is quite clear that local councils when considering development proposals should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Yet, some local communities have genuine concerns that when it comes to solar farms insufficient weight has been given to these protections and the benefits of high-quality agricultural land. As the solar strategy noted, public acceptability for solar energy is being eroded by the public response to large-scale solar farms which have sometimes been sited insensitively.

Meeting our energy goals should not be used to justify the wrong development in the wrong location and this includes the unnecessary use of high-quality agricultural land. Protecting the global environment is not an excuse to trash the local environment. When we published our new planning guidance in support of the Framework, we set out the particular factors relating to large scale ground mounted solar photovoltaic farms that a local council will need to consider. These include

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making effective use of previously developed land and, where a proposal involves agricultural land, being quite clear this is necessary and that poorer quality land is to be used in preference to land of a higher quality.

We are encouraged by the impact the guidance is having but do appreciate the continuing concerns, not least those raised in this House, about the unjustified use of high quality agricultural land. In light of these concerns we want it to be clear that any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence. Of course, planning is a quasi-judicial process, and every application needs to be considered on its individual merits, with due process, in light of the relevant material considerations”

In May 2024 the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero issued a statement entitled Solar and Protecting our Food Security and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land. This statement reinforced the need for the planning system to consider food production and protecting the best and most versatile land when considering planning applications for solar farms. This duty will be met within this assessment.

All the matters outlined in these documents will be considered in reaching any decision. The above does indicate that there is potential in principle for a solar farm to be supported subject to the consideration of more detailed policies.

Turning now to the question of whether a countryside location is justified, the application site lies within open countryside where LPP1 Policy MTRA4 states that development will be limited to a small number of categories. None of these categories explicitly refers to the provision of a solar farm, although the first category does refer to “development with an operational need for a countryside location, such as agriculture, horticulture or forestry”. The use of the words “such as” implies there are other activities beyond those listed, that could be considered for a countryside location if they can present an operational need. However, it should be noted that MTRA4 does include a final element that indicates even if a development proposal is acceptable under this policy, it should not cause harm to the character and landscape of the area or neighbouring uses or create inappropriate noise/light and traffic generation.

Alternatives to a countryside location such as an installation on roofs or brown field land, are not considered to offer the applicant practical options. The extent of brown field land within the district is limited and under pressure for housing development. An expectation on the developer to co-ordinate sufficient roof area with the appropriate orientation and entering agreements with individual property owners is considered too onerous. Roof mounted solar panels can provide a useful contribution towards renewable energy generation and it does have a role to play, but this is likely to come forward as a result of individual initiatives and not at the scale that could substitute schemes of this size.

When considering the above, this solar farm is considered to have an operational need that justifies a countryside location under the first part of policy MTRA4, subject to the acceptability of the scheme in the context of further policies and the application of the final part of MTRA4.

In conclusion, at both the national and local level, there is support in principle for renewable energy proposals in the countryside, but a recognition that this support is not unqualified and must take account of the wider impacts of any scheme on the local

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environment. Every application needs to be considered on its individual circumstances and merits, in the light of the relevant development plan policies and other material considerations that apply.

Assessment under 2017 EIA Regulations.

The applicant submitted a screening request in August 2024. The development does not fall under Schedule I of the 2017 Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, but the developments does fall within Schedule II of the regulations. Having assessed the implications and potential impacts likely to arise from the development, an opinion was issued in September 2024 and it was found that and EIA was not justified in this instance.

Factors Influencing Site Selection and the Consideration of Alternatives

On the basis that a requirement for a countryside location is accepted under the first part of MTRA4, it is appropriate to consider the factors that influence the choice of this specific site within the countryside. National Policy Statement EN-3 on Renewable Energy Infrastructure and Paragraph 013 of the PPG on Renewable and low carbon energy offer a range of factors that would influence site selection. These include:

- South facing aspect and site topography
- Network connection
- Proximity of site to dwellings
- Agricultural land classification and land type
- Continued agricultural use and/or encourages biodiversity
- Temporary in duration.
- Glint and glare
- Protection of heritage assets
- Accessibility
- Public Rights of Way
- Security and lighting
- Mitigating Landscape and visual impacts by screen planting
- Energy generation potential

All of the above criteria are relevant and will be considered in the planning assessment. The applicant has submitted information relating to the site selection procedure that was followed and which resulted in them choosing this site. This is set out in the Design and Access Statement.

The applicant proposes to connect to the grid via the local distribution network located at Parcel 10. The applicant engaged with the Local Distribution Network to identify areas with available connection and capacity to handle the power generated by the scheme. This is subject to a number of factors including:

- As short a cable route as possible.
- Consideration of environmental and planning constraints.
- Consideration of geographical and topographical features.
- Exclusion of land within National Park.
- Desire to avoid agricultural land with small fields or land in recreational use such as golf courses.
- Engagement with landowners within the 5km search area

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Having applied the selection criteria the application has come forward with the current proposal.

Connection points to the Local Distribution Network (LDN) are limited in the district. The implication of this is that where available connections exist, then they need to be subject of careful consideration.

Regarding the issue of agricultural land quality, this is considered in more detail below, but it can be noted that land within the application site is grade 3a, 3b and 4. Grades 3b and 4 are not categories considered to be best and most versatile and which should be avoided for the provision of a solar farm. A solar farm can therefore be acceptable on this type of ground subject to other considerations. Whilst the agricultural use would cease for the life of the solar farm, it would result in biodiversity benefits which are outlined in more detail below.

The level of detail applied to the consideration of alternatives is a matter that has featured in a number of recent planning appeal decisions including a recent High Court case (Bramley Solar Farm Residents Group v SSLUHC & Ors [2023]). This confirmed that a strict sequential test is not required but that a review of alternatives is appropriate. In conclusion, it is considered that the applicant has undertaken a pragmatic and proportionate review and explanation of the factors that have resulted in the selection of this site. This is accepted by the local planning authority as a satisfactory exercise.

Impact on character and appearance of area

LPP1 policy MTRA4 (Development in the Countryside) seeks to limit development outside built-up areas. Of the four types of development that are envisaged as potentially being acceptable in the countryside, the only one that could apply to a solar farm is that they have an operational need for such a location based on the extent of the land take required. However, that situation must still meet the other more general tests in terms of not causing harm to the character and landscape of the area or neighbouring uses or create inappropriate noise/light and traffic generation. Moreover, other development plan policies also need to be considered when addressing these impacts. LPP2 policy DM23 (Rural Character) supports development which does not have an unacceptable effect on rural character as a result of visual intrusion, the introduction of incongruous features, destruction of locally characteristic rural assets or by impacts on tranquillity. The policy then lists a number of factors to be taken into account when considering the effect on rural character and sense of place.

This includes keeping visual intrusion to a minimum, not having an unacceptable impact on tranquillity, not detracting from the enjoyment of the countryside from public rights of way and assessing the type and number of vehicles associated with any development.

LPP1 policy CP20 (Heritage and Landscape Character) seeks to link the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment with the protection and enhancement of landscape and heritage assets and their settings. Landscape impacts do not stop at the district boundary and South Downs National Park has similar protective policies whilst the NPPF provides an overarching layer of protection in Section 15.

Within the Winchester Landscape Character Classification, the site forms part of the Shedfield Heathlands (plots 1-4), Whiteley Woodlands (plots 9 and 10) and Lower Meon Valley (plots 6-8) Landscape Character Areas.

The key issues that are occurring in the area are identified as the following:

Shedfield Heathlands:

- Continued management of remnant heath areas and species-rich neutral grassland.

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- Retention and management of hedgerows and woodlands.
- Loss of heathland characteristics.
- Absence of hedgerow saplings.
- Impact of fertiliser and herbicide use on biodiversity and water supplies.
- Soil erosion.
- Management of ancient woodland.
- Loss of ancient field systems.
- Visual impact of pony paddocks.
- Visually prominent suburban development, lacking local character, and further pressure for urban fringe related activities.
- Prominent structures/urbanisation.
- Increased artificial light on tranquil rural quality.
- Ash dieback and the loss of mature trees within the landscape
- Some properties have significant lengths of tall conifer hedge or close board fencing boundaries fronting onto roads which detract from the rural character, particularly when located away from main settled areas. Heavy traffic.
- Change to alternative crops such as vines which threaten to change the character if extensively introduced.
- Solar farms which threaten to change the character if extensively introduced.
- Cumulative effects of sustainable energy and infrastructure developments

Whiteley Woodlands:

- Loss of species rich grassland through applications of fertiliser and herbicide and also through lack of grazing.
- Potential for improved woodland management using Forestry Authority grants.
- Lack of footpath access to large areas of countryside.
- The character area is crossed by the main South Coast railway line and a section of the M27, which crosses through the southern area adjacent to Whiteley. Traffic and train noise, lighting, security fencing, bridges, and unnatural landform all combine to reduce the tranquillity of the area.
- The major development of Whiteley, which provides employment, housing and community/ service facilities has a suburban character although set within a mature wooded context. Development in the area continues to expand, and this will significantly change this part of the character area and further erode tranquillity of the adjacent areas.
- Some areas of paddocks, nurseries, equestrian centres and smallholdings are situated along roads, mostly in the east of the area. Sometimes there are associated detracting features such as conifer hedges, signage, security fencing and gates, and polytunnels.
- In places businesses fronting the roads with colourful signage, dominant fences and gateways, and car parks create a suburban and visually discordant character. Further pressure for urban fringe use related activities There are instances of ornate entrances which give detract from the rural character, some with highly secure gateways, others with open views of large properties with extensive hard paving, and incongruous ornamentation.
- Increased artificial light on tranquil rural quality.
- Ash dieback and the loss of mature trees within the landscape

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- Some private gardens have significant lengths of tall conifer hedge or close board fencing boundaries fronting onto roads which detract from the rural character, particularly when located away from main settled areas.
- Some leisure pursuits noted in the area, such as paintball and clay shooting, are likely to impact tranquillity, particularly when located away from main settled areas.
- Pylons cross the area, but run through Botley Wood to a substation set within the woodland. Therefore, they do not dominate the landscape except when viewed along the substation access road from Funtley Lane. The gateway area further detracts from the character with signage, fencing and concrete grasscrete within the bellmouth entrance.
- Cumulative effects of sustainable energy and infrastructure developments
- Potential for agricultural run-off (including top soil erosion) to cause biological changes in the Upper Hamble.
- Possible fertiliser/pesticide run-off from golf course into the Upper Hamble SINC.
- Solar farms which threaten to change the character if extensively introduced.
- Change to alternative crops such as vines which threaten to change the character if extensively introduced.

Lower Meon Valley:

- Impact of intrusive electricity pylons particularly to the south of the character area. A short section of the M27 cuts across the southern tip causing significant noise and visual intrusion on the immediate surroundings.
- Some intrusive developments on the valley sides at Knowle and the golf course south-west of Wickham.
- Sustained management of semi-natural meadows and vulnerability of the river valley landscape to changes such as land drainage or canalisation of water courses.
- Impact of large-scale farm buildings and industrial buildings on the open valley sides and lack of integrating planting. New housing developments and the cumulative impact of small infill sites on settlement patterns.
- The impact of urban fringe encroachment, including horsiculture and its associated paddock fencing and outbuildings, and inappropriate suburban garden boundaries.
- Under-management of historic parkland trees and loss of parkland pasture
- Loss of indigenous hedgerows, trees and grassland on golf courses.
- Cumulative effects of infrastructure developments and intrusive vertical elements such as wind farms, communication masts, flues, pylons, and rigs associated with hydraulic fracturing ('fracking') which can be visible over long distances.
- Poly-tunnels and solar farms which can be particularly noticeable due to their colour and reflective qualities.
- Ash dieback and the loss of mature trees within the landscape.

The application site is considered to exhibit some, but not all of the key issues listed above.

The application is supported by several documents including a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, Ecological Impact Assessment, Heritage and Archaeology Assessment.

The following points are taken from these documents:

- Have considered effects on landscape character designations, heritage designations, residential receptors, recreational receptors & road receptors.

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- Study area identified at 2km with further review out to 6km.
- LVIA taken precautionary approach.
- Considered effects during construction year 1 and year 15.
- Site does not carry any landscape designations.
- Looked at range of receptors (residential, heritage assets, recreational & roads).
- Landscape mitigation to include retention, protection, enhancement of existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands. New tree belts and hedgerows.
- Around site boundary margins create area of species rich grassland.
- Under panels create species rich grassland suitable for grazing by livestock.
- Existing and proposed native hedgerows managed to 3m+ in height.
- Ongoing landscape management of planting during life of solar farm.
- No landscape mitigation proposed outside site boundaries.
- Considered impact on both Landscape Character and on Visual Amenity.
- Would introduce manmade feature into predominantly agricultural landscape. When considered in context of electricity infrastructure already in area, predicted proposal would not give rise to any significant effects.
- No significant effects on surrounding LCAs including those within SDNP.
- Some inevitable effect on visual amenity during construction and early years on number of residential properties.
- No significant effects on either landscape character or visual amenity in relation to National Park, on its special qualities or setting.
- Effect on SDNP rated as not significant years 1 & 15.
- Conclusion is any effects on landscape character or visual amenity confined to surrounding local areas reducing over time due to retention of existing vegetation and proposed mitigation planting.
- Localised and limited effects. Development can be accommodated without undue harm to character and visual amenity.
- Have considered cumulative and in-combination effects of proposal.

To further assist the assessment the applicant has submitted a number of photomontages showing the site at years one, and fifteen. Whilst these show the views to be softened over time, from certain locations, sections of the panels would still be in view after year fifteen and the overall landscape would change.

The scheme has attracted a number of objections with regard to its impact on landscape character and on visual amenity. The Service Lead – Natural Environment (Landscape) and The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNP) have also objected. The basis for these objections are specifically in relation to plots 8 and 9. In regard to the SDNP they have raised concerns regarding the setting of the National Park as parcel 8 is located approximately 100m from the edge of the National Park.

In terms of the Landscape Officer comments concerns have been raised in regard to the impact of parcel 8 on the SDNP setting and the impacts of parcel 9 on the rural character of area. Both of these consultees have maintained an objection throughout the determination of this application. The potential impact on the National Park is considered separately below and accordingly, the remainder of this section will focus on the potential impact on the area outside of the National Park.

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The site is not a designated landscape, nor is it considered to be a valued landscape in the meaning set out in NPPF para 180 (a). However, it is acknowledged that it does have value in terms of its character and appearance. All countryside has character traits that need to be considered when making a decision.

Policy DM23 (Rural Character) sets out 6 factors to consider when assessing the effect of any development on rural character. The sixth factor relates to domestic extensions which does not apply in this instance. The following considers each factor in turn setting out the policy reference and then responding to it:

1. *Visual intrusion and the effect on the setting of settlements, key features in landscape or on heritage assets should be minimised and cumulative impacts considered:*

The extent of the application site and its segmented nature results in a variation in the level of impact that will be experienced both in terms of the impact on landscape character and the effect on visual amenity. An additional factor is the applicant's approach to the lay out of the parcels as development is set back inside the field boundaries.

Views from the north into parcels 1-5 are currently limited by the presence of the existing field hedgerow boundaries and set backs from the Botley Road (A334). Limited views are possible into the site over the intervening hedgerows. Without the hedgerows on the boundaries to the fields containing parcels 1-5, the proposed fence line and the PV arrays would be exposed. The remaining views are screened by the existing buildings at Shedfield Equestrian Centre and set backs from the road between 250m and 300m.

With regard to parcels 6-8, the majority of views of the site from Titchfield Lane are screened by the roadside hedge. Public Right of Way (PROW) Wickham 14 runs between parcels 6 and 7 which is fully open for the majority of the length through the application site with some tree and hedge screening at the southern end toward Titchfield Lane. From Blind Lane, parcel 8 is largely exposed to the south due to the gaps within the southern hedge. Due to the topography of the area the proposal would be visible from the Public Right of Way (Wickham 12) which runs along part of the northern boundary of parcel 8. The northern boundary of parcel 8 as existing is open with sparse trees and shrubs and a post and wire fence.

With regard to parcels 9 and 10 the majority of views are either from Biddenfield Lane, in the case of parcel 9 and from PROW Wickham 501 or by users of the train line from Botley that runs adjacent to parcel 10. Parcel 9 is bounded on all sides with mature trees and hedges though there is one notable gap to the western boundary and the access provides open views across the site. Parcel 10 is set back from Titchfield Lane by approximately 200m and is not visible. The field is surrounded by mature trees and hedges with the exception of a number of field gates to allow agricultural access. As such the visual impact from PROW Wickham 501 is currently mitigated by the existing boundaries. Without the hedgerows on the boundaries to the fields containing parcels 8 and 9, the proposed fence line and the PV arrays would be exposed.

On all the application site boundaries, significant planting is shown with new hedgerows or tree belts to be established inside the existing field boundaries referred to above. However, it is acknowledged that these would take approximately 10 years to form effective screen barriers. The application does in essence seek to establish a second line of screening behind the primary field boundaries.

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When reviewing the potential impact of the fence and panels to views from the north into parcels 1-5, the separation distance from public vantage points on Botley road is approximately 100m. This means that even if the hedgerows were removed the degree of impact is not considered to be significant. This creates an adequate separation distance to prevent significant harm.

There is no reason to believe that the existing field boundary features which judging by their condition, have evidently been in place for some considerable time, will be removed.

It is accepted that there will be a change to landscape character and visual amenity in certain parts of the site. This is acknowledged in the applicant's viewpoint assessment where significant effects would result in views from PRoWs. However, these are considered to be localised and the combination of mitigation through planting and/or the separation distance from public vantage points means that any impact would be reduced over time as the planting established.

2. Physical impacts:

The scheme would see the installation of a number of roadways, solar array frames and panels, container type structures on plinths/slabs and large sections of security fencing. Excluding the removal of a small section of trees within parcel 4 to facilitate development a total of 10-15m of hedging in 4 locations to facilitate access and the removal of 8 trees to enlarge the access to parcels 6 and 7, the proposal does not require the removal of any other vegetation to be implemented. The scheme would see the introduction of new hedgerows on the outside of the security fencing to define the area of panels in what are presently open fields. These will dramatically change views from the PRoWs (which cross the application land) within the wider landscape from what is presently a uniform cultivated expansive area to one that is more contained and fragmented. However, this will only be for the temporary life of the scheme. The majority of the new planting is focused on the perimeter (secured via condition 28). As this is reinforcing existing vegetation, it is not considered to change the character of the area in any significant way. It is however unavoidable that the landscape character will change particularly during the operational life of the solar farm with the introduction of the planting around the fenced off areas containing the solar arrays. This concern over the change in character forms part of the objection raised by the landscape officer.

3. Tranquillity:

This factor refers to the introduction of lighting, sources or activities which could affect the quiet nature of the environment. No lighting is proposed for the development and condition 21 requires any details should this change. Noise is considered elsewhere but generally is considered acceptable from a rural tranquillity perspective. Tranquillity is also considered in the context of the enjoyment that a person would experience of walking through open and undeveloped countryside. It is acknowledged elsewhere in this report that the views and experience of users of the surrounding area and PRoWs will change, but that has to be balanced against the reinforcement of existing vegetation and the increase in overall habitat through new areas of hedgerow and woodlands. These actions are likely to enhance the overall biodiversity of the area which will attract more wildlife, thereby contributing to the enjoyment of the countryside.

4. The Development should not detract from the enjoyment of the countryside:

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Construction activity will be evident particularly to people using the PRow network that crosses or runs adjacent to the site. The applicant has committed to keeping the network open during construction. Activity in the fields in terms of the presence of vehicles, equipment or people will be more intense than if the land remained in agricultural use but this will only be for the construction period. Once the construction phase is completed, the proposal does not include any activity or moving parts that may attract attention, and due to the static nature of the use it is not considered that significant noise is generated to result in harm to the enjoyment of the countryside. Any impacts that may occur to people using those PRow that cross the application site would only be of a short duration. Visits made by technical staff are infrequent during the operation of the scheme and are not considered to disrupt the enjoyment of the countryside by others.

The lengths of PRow that run through the site are limited. PRow Wickham 14 runs between parcels 6 and 7. It is proposed to change the routing of the PRow to follow the desire line through the site. This has been reviewed by Hampshire Countryside services and has been considered acceptable. A gap of approximately 15m would be created between the parcels to allow the new route of Wickham 14 as well as new hedge rows either side of the footpath maintained to a height of 3m to mitigate the impact of the proposal on users.

This will improve general accessibility for walkers in the area. Whilst there are positive and negative impacts on the enjoyment of the countryside associated with the proposal, on balance the outcome is considered by officers to be neutral.

5. Traffic levels should not result in harm to rural character:

The construction phase will see the largest number of traffic movements associated with the development. These will be restricted to an agreed route as shown within the submitted Construction Traffic Management plan (CTMP). Three routes are proposed, north, south and Parcel 10 route. The northern route would take the A334 (Botley Road) to access parcels 1-8 and the southern route would also serve parcels 6-9. Site compounds are proposed on parcels 1, 7 and 10 focussing traffic away from smaller roads for the majority of the construction period.

At this level, it is not anticipated that harm to the rural character would result. For the majority of the life of the site, only occasional maintenance visits are anticipated. In the operational phase, traffic generation will be acceptable and would have no negative impact on rural character. Concerns on traffic levels have been raised by the South Downs National Park Authority, this is considered within the relevant section of the report.

Summary

It is accepted that the development would change the character of the site and its immediate area and by implication its contribution to the local landscape. The applicant is seeking to soften the visual impacts by the provision of an extensive planting scheme which has been added to at each stage in the revision of the application. Whilst the generally accepted approach of planting new hedgerows on the outside of the security fencing is present in this scheme, the concept adopted has been to reinforce perimeter features. This has the benefit of enhancing existing features and reinforcing the linkages between them from both a landscape and biodiversity perspective. It is also anticipated that much of this reinforcement will remain after the solar farm is decommissioned thereby providing a long-term landscape benefit.

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Notwithstanding the above, the establishment of the proposed planting will take a number of years to become effective. Even after establishment, it is likely that some degree of views of the panels and other facilities will remain. This will be intermittent localised and limited in duration. Nevertheless, the change to landscape character will be evident from day one and would remain throughout the life of the scheme.

In conclusion, the potential impact on landscape character and on visual impact has attracted objections from members of the public, from CPRE, from the WCC Landscape Officer and from the SDNP. Any impact is considered to be localised in extent. In its early years before the landscape planting becomes established the scheme would have an adverse impact on landscape character in terms of impacting on the fundamental characteristics that make up the area. Even as the planting becomes established, a degree of impact will remain. The visual impact which is how the landscape is viewed and felt by people would also be impacted particularly for those people using the PRow that would now run between the fenced off areas. This section most affected is limited in length. The change for walkers is from an open arable landscape to one that is more enclosed by the presence of the security fencing but with screen vegetation, tree planting and enhanced biodiversity.

When considering the harm prior to the establishment of strategic landscaping and mitigation, and the views of the proposal from public viewpoints which cannot be mitigated or removed in the long term, the proposal would not be in complete accordance with CP20 (Heritage and Landscape Character), LPP2 policy DM23 (Rural Character) and the final paragraph of policy MTRA4 (Development in the Countryside) of the LPP1. The degree of negative landscape impact is considered to have great weight in the decision-making process. With the landscape impact identified, it is important that this is taken into account alongside all relevant factors. A conclusion is reached on this in the Planning Balance section of this report.

Development affecting the South Downs National Park

The application site is located 0.1km from the South Downs National Park.

Government policy relating to National Parks is set out in English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 and The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) updated 2024. The Circular and NPPF confirm that National Parks have the highest status of protection, and the NPPF states at paragraph 182 that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in national parks and that the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations and should be given great weight in National Parks.

Paragraph 182 also addresses the presence of development near a National Park when it says, 'development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated area'.

At the local level, policy CP19 of the Local Plan Part 1 notes that:

"Development within and adjoining the South Downs National Park which would have a significant detrimental impact to the rural character and setting of settlements and the landscape should not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal is of overriding national importance, or its impact can be mitigated".

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The Potential for development to have an impact on designated areas such as the National Park and its setting and the need for this to be recognised and taken into consideration is included within policy CP12 (Renewable and Decentralised Energy). The National Park boundary runs up Mill Lane and Northfields Farm Lane to the west of parcel 8.

No part of the application site lies within the National Park (NP), Other parts of the site (parcels 6 - 8) lie within close proximity to the NP.

The National Park Authority (NPA) objected to the application. The NPA refer to concerns over the impact on the setting of the national park as a result of changes to the character of the area from its current condition of an open arable landscape to an enclosed landscape. The NPA asks that if the application is supported then harm to the NP should be minimised, with conditions regarding dark skies, and construction traffic to minimise impacts on the setting of the SDNP.

Accepting that the application site forms part of the area adjacent to the National Park, it is acknowledged that the proposal will change the character of that area to a degree. However, the extent of the impact will vary depending on whether the view is from the perimeter roads where the site has a minor contribution towards the overall view that includes land which forms part of the National Park.

Regarding the change to landscape character, when travelling along Mill Lane the triangle where it meets Blind Lane and Prickets Hill, the peripheral view to the west will include land within the National Park. However, the peripheral view to the east is terminated by the substantial roadside hedge. There are no views into Parcel 8 until further down Blind Lane. The proposal is to establish a new 15m wide hedge line behind the existing roadside hedge.

Whilst it has already been acknowledged that any countryside even that not carrying any designation has character, it must also be acknowledged that the application site forms part of a block of land area that was excluded from the National Park designation.

As noted elsewhere in this report, the impacts on users of the lanes arising from the development in parcel 8 are limited and those routes do not offer extensive views out of the site and into the National Park. The current landscape is considered to predominantly result from modern agricultural practices and shows little regard to the historic field patterns of the past. This would be replaced with more of an enclosed landscape. Whilst the development would change the environment through which people travel, it will retain the distant views, and the biodiversity enhancement measures will create a richer biodiversity which should raise the enjoyment factor.

On the issue of dark skies, the National Park is a dedicated Dark Skies Reserve and an assessment on the potential risk of disrupting this status is required. The National Park web site shows that the application site lies adjacent to a zone classified as a Transition Zone. The development will not result in any source of light impacting on dark skies. It is not proposed to use lighting outside of the construction phase and no lighting is proposed for the operational phase. This limitation will be secured by conditions (13 and 21). The proposal is not considered to introduce any permanent light emissions and does not harm the National Park's status as a Dark Skies Reserve.

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In conclusion, the NPA has objected to the proposal. These have been reviewed in detail above. In this instance, a significant detrimental impact to the rural character and setting of the Park has not been identified, and secured mitigations play a role in reducing any impact further in the long term. Whilst the transition from an arable crop to grassland may take some time to accomplish, it is considered that this would effectively screen the proposal from the NP and mitigate the impact on the setting of the SDNP.

It is acknowledged that there is a degree of harm created by the change to landscape character that impacts on the setting of the National Park, however, this is severely limited. The degree of harm given the local characteristics and the relationship between the National Park and the application site on the ground means that any negative impact on the National Park is of moderate weight. This has therefore been taken into account in the planning balance section alongside other considerations.

Historic Environment

The works affect the setting of statutory Listed buildings and Archaeology. These are:

Row Ash House – A Grade II listed building located approximately 530m to the west of Parcel 1.

Hall Court – A Grade II listed building located approximately 260m to the west of parcel 1.

Aylings (1 and 2 Botley Road) – A Grade II listed building located approximately 250m to the northeast of parcels 3 and 4.

Little Park Mansions - A Grade II listed building located on the opposite side of Titchfield Lane from parcels 6 and 7.

Park Place – A Grade II* listed building and Hampshire listed historic park and garden located approximately 80m (park and garden) and 360m (house) to the south east of parcels 6 and 7.

Little Tapnage Farmhouse – a Grade II listed building located approximately 250m to the north of parcel 10.

There are also a number of below ground assets in the areas around the application site. There are none within the application site.

It is noted that the Heritage Assessment highlighted additional listed buildings and the Shedfield and Wickham conservation areas. This is primarily due to the 1km search area that was undertaken for the study. Due to the intervening distances and the topography of the area, the above buildings were considered to be directly impacted. The remaining building and conservation areas settings were not considered to be impacted by the proposal.

The development is within the setting of the above listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets. The following legislation and policies are taken into account in the assessment and determination of this planning and listed building application.

Relevant Legislation

The preservation of the special architectural/historic interest of the listed building and its setting (S.66 P(LBCA) Act 1990; Policy DM29 & DM30 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2 Adopted 2017; Policy CP20 Winchester District Joint Core Strategy; NPPF (2023) Section 16.

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The preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of the conservation area (S.72 P(LBCA) Act 1990; Policies DM27 & DM28 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2 Adopted 2017; Policy CP20 Winchester District Joint Core Strategy; NPPF (2024) Section 16).

The preservation of a non-designated heritage asset (Policies DM29 & DM32 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2 Adopted 2017; Policy CP20 Winchester District Joint Core Strategy; NPPF (2024) Section 16).

Guidance

Where dealing with listed buildings, decision makers are required to have due regard to the “desirability of preserving the [Listed] building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.” under Section 16/66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990). Case law has established that where an authority finds that a development proposal would harm the setting of a listed building, it must give that harm “considerable importance and weight”.

Where dealing with conservation areas, decision makers are required to pay special attention to the “desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.” under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990).

Due regard has been given to these requirements, as set out in the Historic Environment consultation response and assessment within this report.

The historic environment section of the Planning Practice Guidance further outlines the role of the Local Planning Authority in considering the effects of new development that are in the vicinity of or affect the setting of listing buildings and heritage assets. Paragraph 205 of the NPPF advises that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage asset in considering the impact of a proposal on its significance (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Paragraph 206 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Policy CP20 of WDLPP1 and Policy DM29 of WDLPP2 ensure that development preserves and enhances heritage assets and their settings.

The significance of the Heritage Assets primarily derives from their architectural features and historic context. The setting of the heritage assets contribute to this significance by providing the rural context of the assets.

How the Heritage Assets are experienced

The majority of the listed buildings are private residences and therefore are publicly viewed from the road or driveways. In the case of Park Place, the building is not readily visible from public areas however it can be viewed from PROW Wickham 1 which runs to the north of the Park and Garden.

Hall Court is not readily visible except from the private driveway that is shared with a number of other buildings that are not listed.

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The below ground assets are not readily visible with the exception of some moderate land forms indicating their presence. However, these are not readily visible without specialist equipment.

The impact of the proposal on the significance of the Heritage Asset and its setting and how this is experienced

Solar panels in the countryside present an alien and urban feature, which is out of character within the context they sit. They are, as in this case, surrounded by tall security fencing and CCTV cameras, in this case on 3m high poles every 50-70 m. Whilst the solar panels at 2.4m high, can potentially be disguised by extra planting, the apparent need for CCTV cameras everywhere adds to the alien effect of these types of development.

In relation to their impact to heritage assets, the solar panels generally create a level of harm where the heritage assets and their settings are affected, but due to their green energy credentials, it is acknowledged there is likely to be a level of public benefit to balance the harm. The CCTV is more difficult to justify, and having 9 parcels of land as proposed, every parcel being surrounded by CCTV, will make the landscape covered in CCTV poles. While it is noted that this could result in harm to the landscape and the setting of the surrounding Heritage Assets without mitigation. It is considered that the proposed planting would be grown to a minimum of 3m and would be located outside of the security fencing thereby screening the proposed development as well as the CCTV columns, though it is noted that it would take time for the planting to fully establish resulting in less than substantial harm to the surrounding historic properties.

Parcels 1-5 would have the potential of impacting the settings of Hall Court and Aylings, however the lie of the land and relative distance, the impact is likely to be minor or not visible and would not impact the significance of these heritage assets. With the mitigations proposed, solar panels on these parcels of land are not objected to.

Row Ash (Grade II) is slightly further away, and therefore impact to this house is going to be less than Hall Court.

Parcels 6 and 7 offer wide open countryside views highly visible from the public realm along PROW Wickham 14. Solar panels here would negatively impact the setting of Little Park Mansions which is Grade II listed, and just across the road from the proposed solar panels. A 1.5m high new hedge line is proposed at the top of the ridge to partially screen the proposal. It is noted that concerns have been raised by the Historic Environment Officer in regard to the intervisibility of the proposal and Little Park Mansions. While it is noted that there would likely be some intervisibility due to the height of the building and the expanse of the proposal, it is considered that the topography of parcels 6 and 7 in combination with additional planting proposed along the ridge of these parcels would soften the impact of the proposal on the setting of Little Park Mansions.

It is accepted that solar panels on these parcels of land would negatively affect the setting of Little Park Mansions which would result in a degree of less than substantial harm.

Little Park Mansions also sits within Park Place, a pre-1810 park registered on the Hampshire Inventory of Historic Parks and Gardens, which is directly opposite Parcels 6 and 7, and it is considered a non-designated heritage asset. The setting of the non-designated heritage asset would be negatively affected along its boundary next to the solar farm, by virtue of having alien development next to an historic park. However, harm on the overall significance of the non-designated heritage asset is likely to be low level.

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Park Place (Grade II*) is also within this non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) of the same name, but the impact to its setting is such that the development is not likely to be visible due to relative distance, and therefore impact will be minimal or nil and therefore no harm is found on the setting of this NDHA.

Little Tapnage Farmhouse (Grade II) would be impacted by the construction of Parcel 10, but once the construction is complete, the impact of the solar panels on the setting of the listed building is likely to be very minor due to the relative distance therefore no harm is found in regard to this building.

In regard to below ground heritage assets The application is supported by an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment [DBA] and a Geophysical Survey Report. Together these reports provide a good assessment of the archaeological potential of each of the application areas, a description of the proposed scheme and likely impacts together with an appropriate Setting Assessment undertaken in line with recognised sector guidance.

The DBA does indicate that no historic hedgerows will be affected with existing field access points utilised, however the Access Arrangement drawings in Appendix B of the Transport Statement does indicate some alterations to facilitate access and it is suggested that these details are reviewed within regards to any identified historic hedgerows.

DBA sets out details of additional archaeological evaluation (trial trenching) within individual scheme areas and, depending on the results of trial trenching, further archaeological mitigation as required (conditions 11,12 and 26).

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposals will result in less than substantial harm to the significance of Little Park Mansions. The proposals would accord with the requirements of Section 16 para 205 of the NPPF (2024), Policy CP20 of WDLPP1 and DM29 of WDLPP2 and the historic environment section of the Planning Practice Guidance. This harm is balanced by the public benefits arising from the generation of electricity that would serve over 12,000 homes, as well as ecological benefits.

It is considered that the proposals would preserve the significance of the non-designated heritage asset. The proposals would accord with the requirements of Section 16 para 209 of the NPPF (2024), Policies CP20 of WDLPP1 and DM29, of the WDLPP 2; and the historic environment section of the Planning Practice Guidance.

Neighbouring amenity

LPP2 policy DM17 seeks to ensure that any development does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on adjoining properties by reason of overlooking, overshadowing or being overbearing. Policy DM20 seeks to protect residential amenity from noise that may result from a development. The NPPF provides an overarching layer of protection in Section 15.

The character of this area is one of scattered residential properties with the occasional cluster of dwellings. It is well established that the loss of a view is not a material planning consideration. However, it is necessary to consider if the development may impinge unacceptably on the living conditions and environment of the occupants of any property close to the site or impact on the more general amenities of an adjoining land use.

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Parcels 1-5

To the north of Parcels 1-5 lie Rowash Farmhouse, Oakes Farm House, Southside Farm and Southside Cottage. To west lie 1-8 Hall Court, Little Hall Court and Hall Court Cottage. To the east are a number of dwellings both authorised and unauthorised within Shedfield Equestrian Centre.

To the north the closest dwelling would be located approximately 150m with a field and a number of mature green boundaries as existing that limit the impact to the dwellings to the north of the site. The local topography of the area also serves to limit views of the proposal. It should also be noted that between Southside Farm and Southside Cottage and the application site is Crooked Row SINC and ancient woodland. Given the existing outlook that these buildings benefit from, the presence of the panels or the additional planting is not considered to result in any adverse impact on the living environment of these properties.

To the west the closest dwellings are located approximately 140m from the edge of the application site. Concerns have been raised in regard to the proposed development from the neighbouring properties in this area, in regard to overbearing and glint and glare. It is considered that there is a significant separation distance between the application site and these properties. The proposal also includes improving the existing hedge boundaries and introducing additional hedging to screen the site from the neighbours. It is acknowledged that it may take some time for the planting to establish however the resulting impact of the proposal on the neighbouring amenities of the neighbours is considered to be to an acceptable degree.

To the east the site is open with the nearest dwelling located approximately 80m from the edge of the application site. However there are a number of buildings that form Shedfield Equestrian Centre and other authorised uses on the site that help to screen the views of the proposal to these dwellings. Given the existing outlook that these buildings benefit from, the presence of the panels or the additional planting is not considered to result in any adverse impact on the living environment of these properties.

Substations are proposed close to the existing solar farm at Raglington Farm and therefore the noise generated would not result in harmful levels of noise, however conditions have been recommended to secure details of above ground plant that may generate noise (6).

Parcels 6-8

There are a number of dwellings in the vicinity of parcels 6-8, these are listed below:

- Cold Harbour Farm
- 1-12 Little Park Mansions
- Stable Cottage
- Northwood Cottage
- Cherry Tree Cottage
- Hazlewood
- Mulberry House
- The Ridge
- Little Woodley
- The Crossways
- Ridge House

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- Great Pecks
- Wykeham Cottage
- Green Hayes
- North Oaks
- Kingfisher Cottage
- Westlands Farm

It is considered that the existing boundaries of the application site to the north, east and west have substantial planting that would be retained. The closest neighbours to this area would be Cold Harbour Farm (adjacent to parcel 6), Oaklands (approximately 7m away from parcel 6), The Crossways, Ridge House, Great Pecks, Wykeham Cottage and Green Hayes (all approximately 15m from Parcel 8).

For the properties in close proximity to parcel 6 it is considered that the land falls away from these buildings and the layout has been considered to ensure that the proposed panels would be located along the fall of the land with mitigation planting along the ridge of the site. As such it is not considered that the proposal would result in harm to the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties.

For the properties facing parcel 8 it is acknowledged that the existing boundary is open with pockets of existing trees that are sporadically placed along the southern boundary of the site. As such the change in outlook would be significant, however the proposal includes new planting approximately 10m deep along the length of the southern boundary to protect the residential amenities of the neighbours to the south. It is therefore, not considered to result in any adverse impact on the living environment of these properties.

Parcel 9

Opposite parcel 9 is a row of 7 dwellings, of these Silver Birches (approximately 17m from the parcel) and Beechwood (approximately 40m from the parcel) would likely be the most impacted by the proposal. However, due to the lay of the land, with Parcel 9 falling away from the dwellings to the east of the site in combination with the set back from the edge of the field it is not considered that the proposal would result in any adverse impact on the living environment of these properties.

Parcel 10

Two Oaks Farm is located approximately 170m from this parcel. Due to the topography and separation distance, it is not considered that the proposal would result in harm to the neighbouring amenities of this property.

Concerning the issue of noise disturbance, the application contains details of equipment that would be installed. Concern has been expressed by third parties regarding the noise output that would be generated. A noise impact Assessment has been submitted. The main focus of interest in terms of noise generations relates to the inverters and transformers. The inverters convert the Direct Current output from the panels to Alternating Current whilst the transformers increase the voltage to facilitate its connection to the grid. The application is seeking to place this equipment as far away from residential properties as possible. Regarding the separation distances of the inverter units and residential properties the following relationships would exist.

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- Approximately 400m from Oakes Farm House
- Approximately 300m from Little Hall Court and Hall Court Cottage

Parcels 6-8

- Approximately 340m from Oaklands and Cold Harbour Farm
- Approximately 70m from Green Hayes

Parcel 9- 10

- Approximately 130m from Silver Birches
- Approximately 150m from Beechwood
- Approximately 300m from Two Oaks Farm

Regarding the proposed substation facility in parcel 10, the separation distance between this facility and the nearest residential property is 300m to the north. The applicant is supported by a revised Noise Assessment Report which sets out a range of mitigation measures. However, concerns have been raised by the Environmental Health Officer regarding low frequency noise. It is considered by officers that noise report uses generic values to form the assessment and do not look specifically at the type of inverter being proposed. As such it is considered that a condition for a further noise assessment is reasonable once the specific inverters have been identified (6). It is also considered reasonable to condition a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to ensure that neighbour impacts during construction is kept to a minimum (13). However, it should be noted that the submitted CTMP includes a number of mitigation measures for the construction period including, delivery times, traffic managements for delivery vehicles and dust and noise management.

In conclusion, the applicant has presented sufficient information from which it is possible to make a suitable assessment of the potential impact from the development on nearby residential properties wherever they are located. The conclusion of that assessment is that the scheme is acceptable based on the situation presented by the applicant.

The proposed two stage approach to establishing noise levels and the separation distances to the nearest noise sensitive receptors will ensure no unacceptable adverse impact from noise. This will be secured through the conditions. The proposed CEMP will cover the other aspects referred to by the EHO to control impacts during the construction phase including potential dust concerns. The potential noise disturbance from construction traffic has been considered. On this basis, officers consider that the scheme complies with the general policy framework and specifically policy DM17 of LPP2.

Sustainable Transport

Policy CP10 (Transport) and policy DM18 (Access and Parking) both seek to ensure that any development has a safe means of access off and onto the highway. The East Hampshire Local Plan Joint Core Strategy has similar policies and the NPPF provides an overarching layer of protection in Section 9. Whilst the main site access arrangements would be located within the East Hampshire part of the site, it is appropriate that WCC has regard to the general approach to accessing the site.

Parcels 1-5 will be accessed off an existing entrance on to the A334 that currently serves the existing solar farm at Raglinton Farm.

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Parcels 6 and 7 would be accessed of existing field accesses off both the A334 and Titchfield Lane. The access off the A334 would be widened as one of the construction compounds would be located at this location.

Parcel 8 would be accessed off existing field accesses off Blind Lane.

Parcel 9 would be accessed off existing accesses off Biddenfield Lane, accessed from the southern end of the road.

Parcel 10 would be accessed off an existing farm track and access off Titchfield Lane.

The application is accompanied by a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and Transport statement. This includes a construction routing plan showing 3 main access points from the M27 at Junction 7 to access the A334 for parcels 1-7, Junction 10 for parcels 6-9 and junction 9 (via the A27) to access parcel 10.

The CTMP identifies 3 construction compounds, one at parcel 1, the second at parcel 7 and the last at parcel 10. These have been designed to allow storage of materials, contractor parking and welfare facilities, from these locations deliveries to other parcels can be made primarily through internalised tracks, limiting the use of the wider highways network. However, it is noted that specialist equipment such as the MV transformer Stations will need to be delivered directly to individual parcels. These would be delivered using the existing accesses highlighted above.

The Highway engineer raised no objection to the proposal subject conditions for an updated CTMP and construction of accesses prior to the commencement of development (9 and 10). Concerns have been raised in regard to the suitability of Biddenfield and Blind Lanes for larger vehicles. The Transport assessment submitting indicated that smaller vehicles would be used for making deliveries to these parcels (8 and 9) as well as using banksmen to facilitate access and egress.

During the operational phase the vehicle movements would be minimal with monthly visits for maintenance. However, it is acknowledged that during construction the vehicle movements would be higher as outlined in the Transport Statement. The Transport Statement indicates that there would be 1081 two-way vehicles for the whole construction period that is estimated to last for 1 year. The Highways Engineer has highlighted that this equates to 8 HGV movements per day over the various parcels.

In terms of contractor vehicles, it is expected that approximately 100 contractors would be on site during construction hours. The proposal would see contractors parking at the proposed compounds and then being taken to the relevant parcel via minibus. This would result in approximately 24 two-way movements per day. It is noted that the Highways Engineer has stated that the proposed vehicle movements would be negligible when considering the existing amount of traffic using the A334. It is noted that Titchfield Lane, Biddenfield Lane and Blind Lane have not been considered in this. However, it is considered that Titchfield Lane is a heavily used road and therefore the proposed usage would be minimal in comparison over the construction period. In terms of Biddenfield Lane and Blind Lane these are much less used roads and therefore while the increase in traffic would be notable it is not considered to be harmful given the limited construction period.

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While the CTMP is considered to be comprehensive it is considered that it is not fully complete as details are missing which would be finalised once contractors have been secured. As such it is considered that a condition for an updated CTMP is appropriate to secure these additional details once further information is available (condition 10).

Concerns have been raised in regard to the cumulative impact of development on the highway and traffic disruption. Specifically in relation to the Hampshire application for a solar farm at the old Funtley refuse site (HCC/2024/0503). It is considered that this application has not yet been permitted and therefore the cumulative impact of the vehicles generated by the Hampshire application cannot be taken into consideration at this time.

The applicant has committed to keeping the existing footpaths open during the construction phase. The precise management tools to secure this and keep any walkers safe are to be detailed in the final CTMP. Opportunities to improve on the PRow network are encouraged and the applicant has proposed to permanently divert footpath Wickham 14, that runs between parcels 6 and 7, to follow the existing desire line. This is considered to be acceptable.

Hampshire Countryside Authority initially raised a request for footpath 14 to be resurfaced however, the updated plans show a wider corridor and upon review it was not considered that the resurfacing would be necessary and therefore have removed this request. It is noted that a number of conditions have been requested by Hampshire Countryside service. Officers have reviewed these and consider that the proposed conditions would be covered by requirements under the Highways Act and therefore instead have been included as informatives.

It is considered that the proposal complies with the general policy framework and specifically with LPP1 policy CP10 and policy DM18 of LPP2.

Ecology, Trees and Biodiversity

The presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a Planning Authority is considering a development that, if implemented, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. European protected species (EPS) have full protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill, or deliberately disturb EPS.

In this instance, an Ecological Impact Assessment and Newt Survey has identified the possible presence of Great Crested Newts. Updated reports were submitted following concerns raised by the Ecologist regarding Great Crested Newts and the lack of testing in some ponds as well as additional information regarding cable routes.

The newt report submitted indicates that all ponds in the area of the application site did not contain newts and therefore no mitigation is required in this instance. The presence of a protected species on site has therefore been addressed and the submitted reports are acceptable. The proposal therefore complies with policy CP16 of the LPP1.

It is noted that the Ecology report highlights 10-15m of hedge to be removed in total over 4 areas of the site. These would be minimal changes for the most part, to achieve visibility splays and access to parcels 7, 8 and 9. Therefore, while the total amount of hedge removal would be a cause for concern without further ecological surveys for dormouse, the limited nature of the removal, distributed over multiple parcels is considered to be

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acceptable without the need for further surveys. The Ecology Report recommends a precautionary approach and therefore this is considered to be acceptable in this instance. The proposal therefore complies with policy CP16 of the LPP1.

There are a number of Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINCs) and ancient woodlands around the application site. These include:

- Crooked Row located between parcels 1 and 3
- Hall Court Wood located to the south of parcel 2
- Triangle row located between parcels 2 and 5
- Biggs Copse located to the north of parcel 4
- Redhill copes to the north of parcel 7
- Tankerhill Copse to the north and southwest of parcel 6
- Birch row and Hangmans Copse located to the north of parcel 9
- Round Hill Copse to the west of parcel 9

As such a 15m buffer should be implemented to prevent harm to these trees.

Botley Wood and Everett's and Mushes Copses SSSI is also located approximately 40m to the south of parcel 10. However, due to separation distance, type of habitats and species this SSSI has been selected for, and the limited transboundary effects associated with the construction phase solar farm development, it is unlikely that a realistic ecological pathway of effect exists.

Parcel 4 is also covered by a group Tree Preservation Order, however the majority of these trees have been removed previously. The remaining trees, G53 and G54 are considered to be of poor to very poor quality. As such G54 (very low quality) is proposed to be removed to facilitate development. This is considered to be acceptable.

In total 8 trees and 2 groups would be removed to facilitate development. The majority of these are located adjacent to the proposed accesses or are labelled as U (very poor Quality) and should be removed.

The Tree Officer has reviewed the information submitted and has raised no objection subject to conditions (13 and 18), these are considered to be reasonable. It is noted that concerns have been raised in regard to some of the cable routing running within the 15m buffer of the Ancient woodlands. It is considered that the routing is, for the most part outside of the 15m buffer, however there are some instances where the routing is following existing cable routes or roads where the buffer is unavoidable. Given the level of existing development it is considered reasonable for the cable routing to follow existing routes and roads to limit the impact on the surrounding trees as much as possible. However, it is considered that a condition for a tree protection plan is reasonable to prevent harm to ancient woodlands and notable trees during the construction (18).

The application is supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric which demonstrates a significant uplift in BNG. The proposal includes 12.64% increase in habitat credits, 63.53% increase in hedge credits and 11.73% increase in watercourse credits. As such it is considered that the 10% requirement for BNG has been exceeded, notwithstanding this the full set of BNG conditions is considered reasonable to secure the mitigation in perpetuity (19 and 22). The proposal would therefore be in compliance with policy CP16 in this regard.

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Sustainable Drainage

LPP1 policy CP17 (Flooding, Flood Risk and the Water Environment) requires development to avoid flood risk to people and property by following four specific actions. The policy also requires that any development does not cause an unacceptable deterioration to water quality and again lists four actions to achieve this.

The proposal would result in a significant amount of solar panels being introduced and as such a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and drainage strategy has been submitted. The site as a whole is located within flood zone 1 and therefore is a low risk of flooding from rivers and sea.

The nature of the proposed development as a solar farm means its operation will not result in the generation of any new wastewater. The construction workforce will be serviced by a series of portaloos located in the construction compound. That waste will be removed from the site for disposal.

The proposal would remove the repeated compaction of the soil from farm equipment and would introduce grass cover under the solar arrays which has been proven to reduce high levels of water runoff. However, to ensure no additional flooding would be created swales have been proposed within parcels 2,5,6,7,8 and 9 as a precautionary approach along the down slope boundaries. These swales would be approximately 0.3m deep and allow surface water to permeate at a safe rate.

The drainage engineer has reviewed the details and raised no concerns subject to further details secured via condition (9) these are considered to be reasonable. It is also considered appropriate to condition the recommendations within the FRA (5).

The proposals within the FRA and drainage strategy area considered to be in accordance with policy CP17.

Other Topics

Impact Resulting from Glint and Glare

LPP2 policies DM17 (Site Development Principles) and DM19 (Development & Pollution) contain criteria that seek to protect residents and quality of life generally from light intrusion or pollution.

A Glint and Glare assessment has been submitted which indicated that there would be impacts on some residential receptors without mitigation being in place. Further to this the assessment looks into the impacts once mitigation is in place and highlighted that there would be 2 residential receptors, Cold harbour Farm and Drokes Farm, located to the south of parcel 6 would have a low impact as a result of glint and glare for a modest amount of the year.

The assessment also looked at commercial receptors, in terms of air, road and rail. These were also found to be low following a visibility assessment and no impacts were found after mitigation would be introduced with no significant affects on air traffic. As such it is considered appropriate to condition mitigation planting to ensure that any impacts.

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Under these circumstances, it is considered that the scheme complies with the general policy framework and specifically policy LPP2 policy DM17 (Site Development Principles) and DM19 (Development & Pollution) have been complied with.

Unauthorised Development

It was noted at the site visit to parcel 9 that works to raise the level of the land have been progressing. Following officer investigation it cannot be found that these works have been authorised and it has been raised to Hampshire County Enforcement Team.

Notwithstanding, any investigation that may result the proposal would likely be installed above the additional soil that this being imported onto parcel 9. As such it is considered reasonable to condition contaminated land reports and accurate site levels as existing and proposed (conditions 7,13 and 25).

Fire Safety

WCC LPP2 policy DM18 (Access & Parking) seeks to ensure that the emergency services can gain access to and within a new development.

There is a need for the site to be accessible to emergency vehicles and for them to be able to use the internal road network to reach the area of panels or any of the support infrastructure. Contrary to the view of the Fire Service, this matter would not be addressed through the Building Regulations and needs to be considered at this stage under planning.

As the site is not occupied, the emergency services also need access to certain details in the event of an incident. This information includes matters such as the contact details for the operator so the whole site or part of it can be isolated; precise details of what equipment and materials are on site together with their location and if there are any hazardous materials on site. This can be addressed through the provision on site of information boards or Premises Information Box (PIB) The precise details including their locations can be approved through a condition compliance submission (condition 23).

A condition can be imposed to ensure that the internal roadways can accommodate an emergency vehicle. The provision of an access capable of accommodating an emergency vehicle means that the proposal would comply with the requirements of policy DM18, whilst the provision of information boards or Premises Information Boxes will ensure there is an appropriate level of information available to the emergency services to ensure they are best positioned to respond in the event of an incident. Under these circumstances it is considered that policy DM 18 of LPP2 is complied with. The Fire and Rescue Service have responded to the consultation approach and have no concerns relating to the proposal.

The Effect on and Potential Loss of Agricultural Land

On the question of the agricultural land classification and food production, best and most versatile (BMV) land is defined in the glossary to the NPPF as land of grades 1, 2 and 3a. An assessment of the soil type has been submitted indicating that 38.9% of the site as a whole would be considered 3a, 34.4% of the area would be 3b and the remainder (22%) would be grade 4.

Consideration has been given to the fact that the solar farm would be a temporary use and that all the proposed elements would be removed on the decommissioning of the facility, allowing the land to return to agriculture. The forty-year break would also allow the soil to rest and improve its health. A condition is proposed that requires a soil management plan

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(14). Information from the applicant indicates that the higher quality grade land has been used to grow oats, and hay over the last 5 years. The remaining parcels have been laid to grass. Regarding the impact on food production, the amount of land concerned is relatively insignificant. In the southeast of England there are 1.114 million hectares of arable land under cultivation. These are all considered to be relevant matters.

It is considered that the proposal would still allow for regenerative maintenance methods such as using sheep to graze between the arrays and therefore a farming/food generation would still be possible throughout the life time of the proposal. This does retain a link to agricultural although it must be acknowledged that the land would not be as productive than previously.

On 15 May 2024 the Energy Security Secretary issued a statement entitled “Solar and Protecting our Food Security and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land” The following points have been taken from the statement:

- Food security an essential part of national security
- Important best agricultural land is protected and food production prioritised.
- Energy security threats mean need to deploy renewable energy.
- Planning system needs to balance these considerations of protecting local environment & food production against need to deliver secure clean green energy.
- NPS outlines preference for use of previously developed or brownfield land.
- If agricultural land to be proposed, need to avoid use of best and most versatile.
- Statement sets out details on how policy on balancing competing priorities is intended to apply.
- Applicants should seek to minimise use of BMV (grades 1, 2 & 3a)
- Highest quality agricultural land least appropriate for solar developments.
- Important to consider not just impacts of individual proposals but also whether there are cumulative impacts from several schemes in same locality.

Therefore the proposal is considered to be acceptable in this regard.

Relationship to the Southern Water Pipeline Scheme

Part of the application site (parcel 8) would be subject to the Southern Water Pipeline that is proposed to run from Havant Thicket reservoir to Otterbourne Water Treatment Works. As such amended plans have been submitted to indicate that both schemes could still be accommodated without making either proposal unviable.

Equality

Due regard should be given to the Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty. Public bodies need to consciously think about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making. The weight given to the Equality Duty, compared to the other factors, will depend on how much that function affects discrimination, equality of opportunity and good relations and the extent of any disadvantage that needs to be addressed. The Local Planning Authority has given due regard to this duty and the considerations do not outweigh any matters in the exercise of our duty.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

In accordance with paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024), the consideration of the local planning policy framework has shown that there is general support in principle for this type of renewable energy proposal subject to the consideration of other relevant planning policies. This position is also supported by the government targets relating to carbon

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reduction and the production of renewable energy. When considering the locational requirements for a scheme of this size, it is considered that a case is made for a countryside location and the applicant has provided information that shows the selection of this site is based on a sound and realistic assessment of alternatives. The deliverability of the scheme in terms of the connection agreement and the broader context of the push for renewable energy generation means that this should be afforded substantial weight in any decision.

Although the application site is located within the countryside, there are scattered residential properties in the surrounding area. The proposal has no tall structures or moving parts that could adversely overwhelm any of the nearby properties. Accordingly, the nature of the proposal and the separation distances mean that there is no adverse impact on the living environment of these properties. The site does contain equipment with the potential to generate noise but the separation distances and the intention to impose noise conditions mean there is no unacceptable adverse impact on any noise sensitive receptor. Additional concerns have been raised over the potential impact from low frequency noise but the advice from the formal consultees is that an adverse impact will not result.

A glint and glare analysis has been undertaken which concluded that no adverse impact will result from the development and has been found to be acceptable.

A transport assessment has been undertaken which indicates that the proposal would not result in harm to highways users or result in impacts to the highways network.

Turning to heritage matters, there are a number of grade II listed buildings in the locality and they have a relationship with their surrounding agricultural landscape, which does include their settings. For the reasons set out above in the main body of the report the proposal is in conflict with policy CP20 (Heritage and Landscape Character). However, the NPPF and more recent caselaw sets out a scale for the consideration of impacts on heritage assets. The Heritage Officer's assessment of the overall impact resulting from the proposal is considered to be at less than substantial harm specifically on Little park Mansions which lies to the south of parcels 6 and 7.

The conclusion of the level of harm to the listed buildings is at a level of less than substantial. This is at the bottom of the scale of impact. This does not mean that no impact would occur, and it carries substantial weight in decision making. The requirement is to make a judgement on the scale of the impact. When the impact is classified at less than substantial, NPPF paragraph 208 allows the harm to be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal. That judgement will be undertaken below.

The scheme is considered to attract limited economic benefits and an employment and Skills plan is considered appropriate to condition (15). This will secure the opportunity for local firms and educational establishments to benefit from the scheme.

When considering there are benefits and potential negative impacts relating to the economic benefits, this issue is given moderate positive weight in the planning balance.

It is accepted that the scheme will change the character of the site itself, its immediate surroundings and affect the visual amenity that people experience when crossing the area.

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The identified harm to the landscape in general and to the setting of the National Park means the scheme does not comply with the final part of LPP1 policy MTRA4 (Development in the Countryside), CP19 (South Downs National Park), CP20 (Heritage and Landscape Character). and LPP2 policy DM23 (Rural Character). This must be given significant weight and importance when reaching a decision.

The use is temporary and the whole site would revert back to agriculture after 40 years. Furthermore, the decommissioning conditions do seek to retain any element of the new planting (which will have matured by that time) which are considered to reinforce landscape character.

The public benefits from the proposal are considered to be the contribution made towards renewable energy generation that would assist in reaching the UK's Carbon reduction target.

The Council also has its own zero carbon target of 2030, following the declaration of a Climate Emergency in June 2019. However, that goal is not supported at the present time by any adopted planning policy. The scheme would also reinforce home security of energy supply and secure significant biodiversity enhancements. Securing renewable energy from scheme of this size is considered to justify a rating of positive substantial weighting and the biodiversity enhancements are considered to carry significant positive weight in the final decision.

The assessment of heritage assets, paragraph 208 of the NPPF indicates that the ranking of less than substantial harm should be weighed against public benefits which are considered to include the securing of renewable energy and the biodiversity gains. The goal of carbon reduction in energy generation is viewed as an important national target to prevent the negative impacts of climate change on society. This is considered to afford substantial weight in support of the scheme. It is also recognised that the land will revert back to an agricultural use at the end of the life of the solar farm with the soil having rested from the intensive arable use for the intervening period. When the clear and substantial positive public benefits of the scheme are weighed against the landscape impacts at both the local level and those on the setting of the National Park, as well as against the less than substantial harm to heritage assets, the balance is considered by officers to favour support for the application. This is notwithstanding the acknowledged conflict with landscape policies MTRA4 (Development in the Countryside), CP20 (Heritage and Landscape Character) and DM23 (Rural Character) and the conflict with Heritage policy CP20(Heritage and Landscape Policy).

The development complies with a number of development plan policies, as identified above. There is a conflict with policies MTRA4, CP19, CP20 and DM23 as a result of the impact on the landscape, the National Park and heritage assets referred to above but, given the outcome of the assessment recommended in the NPPF and the consideration of all the benefits of the scheme set out above it is considered that there are material considerations which outweigh the non-compliance with some policies of the development plan. Therefore, whilst this conflict has been considered, it does not warrant refusal of the application in this instance. Accordingly, when making the planning balance, and after consideration of the application against the full extent of the policy framework, the application is considered acceptable. As such the officer's recommendation is to grant planning permission.

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Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: comply with the provisions of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Document ref: 23-341B - Noise Impact Assessment

Document ref: 1300 V1.4 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Document ref: 5704 – Arboricultural Impact Assessment

Document ref: RMA-C2653 – Flood Risk Assessment and drainage strategy

Document ref: WOR 4910.2 - Ecological Impact Assessment May 2025

Document ref: 2205-R004 – Design and Access statement

Document ref: 2306-062/CTMP/01 – Transport Statement and Construction Traffic Management Plan

Document ref: P24-318 Ver 2.2 – Archaeology and Heritage Desk Based assessment

Document ref: WOR 4910.2 May 2025- Biodiversity Net Gain Plan

Document ref: WOR 5292 - Great Crested Newt Survey Report

‘Glint and Glare Assessment’ by new environmental dated 22.11.2024 submitted to the Local Planning Authority 20.12.2024

Drawing number: BHA_5704_01 rev B – Tree Survey plan

Drawing number: BHA_5704_02 rev A – Tree Retention and Removal Plan

Drawing number: C2653 – Swale drainage plan

Drawing number: 1300/9 Sheet 1 of 4 - Landscape and Ecological Enhancement Plan: Parcels 1 to 5

Drawing number: 1300/9 Sheet 2 of 4 - Landscape and Ecological Enhancement Plan: Parcels 6 to 8

Drawing number: 1300/9 Sheet 3 of 4 - Landscape and Ecological Enhancement Plan: Parcel 9

Drawing number: 1300/9 Sheet 4 of 4 - Landscape and Ecological Enhancement Plan: Parcel 10

Drawing number: 2306-062 SK03 rev D - Proposed Access & Visibility Splay At Blind Lane

Drawing number: 2306-062 SK04 rev B - Proposed Access & Visibility Splay Eastbound In At Titchfield Lane

Drawing number: 2306-062 SK06 rev A - play At Blind Lane Proposed Site Access Arrangement At Biddenfield Lane Opposite 'Silver Birches'

Drawing number: CEL -SP -ST -001 – Spare Parts Container

Drawing number: CEL -STD -CCTV-002 – CCTV Security Column

Drawing Number: CEL -STD -FE -002 – Deer Fence

Drawing Number: CEL -STD -GA-001 – Typical Gate Elevation

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Drawing number: CEL -STD -MV-SUB -001 – MV Substation
Drawing number: CEL -STD -PV-002 rev A – PV Array Indicative Cross Section
Drawing number: CRE019-CC -001 – Construction Compound – North
Drawing number: CRE019-CC -002 – Construction Compound – Central
Drawing number: CRE019-CC -003 rev 01 – Construction Compound – South
Drawing number: CRE019-FP -001 – Footpath diversion
Drawing number: CRE019-ICR -001 rev A – Indicative proposed cable route
Drawing number: CRE019-LP -002 rev 11 – Location Plan
Drawing number: CEL -STD -AT -001 – Access track cross section
Drawing number: CRE019-PL -001 – Planning Layout Overview
Drawing number: CRE019-PL -002 – Planning Layout north
Drawing number: CRE019-PL -003 rev 01 - Planning Layout central
Drawing number: CRE019-PL -004 – Planning Layout south
Drawing number: CEL-STD-SUB-132kV-001 – 132kV substation
Drawing number: CRE019-EL -01 rev 02 – Titchfield Lane Sightline Cross Section
Drawing number: CRE019-EL-001 – existing plan
Drawing number: CRE019 SD-02 rev 02 – Customer Switchgear
Drawing number: CRE019 SD-04 rev 03 –Palisade Fencing
Drawing number: CRE019-PL-WA-001 – Central Field planning layout (water pipeline area)

Reason: For certainty and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.

3. The development hereby permitted shall cease on or before the expiry of a 40-year period from the date of the first export of electricity. The land shall thereafter be restored to its former condition in accordance with a scheme of decommissioning work (the 'Decommissioning Scheme'). The Decommissioning Scheme shall include:
- a) The removal of the solar panels and all associated above ground works.
 - b) Development roles, contracts and responsibilities
 - c) Public communications strategy including complaints procedure.
 - d) A traffic management plan to address likely traffic impact issues during the decommissioning period.
 - e) An archaeological management plan including a methodology to confirm that any features identified in the application or during the pre-commencement review and field work, are also protected during any decommissioning works.
 - f) An environmental management plan to include details of measures to be taken during the decommissioning period to protect wildlife and habitats and elements of the planting/habitat to be retained.
 - g) Details of site restoration and aftercare.
 - h) An implementation timetable.

The Decommissioning Scheme shall be submitted no later than 39 years and 6 months from the date of the first commercial export of electricity and subsequently implemented as approved.

In the event the Solar Farm ceases to generate electricity for commercial export to the grid for a continuous period of 12 months prior to the end of the 40 year operational period, and unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority, a scheme of early decommissioning works (the 'Early Decommissioning

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Scheme') shall be submitted to the local planning authority within 3 months of the end of the 12 month cessation period. The Early Decommissioning Scheme shall include the details as listed above (a-h).

Reason: To ensure that the site is restored in the long-term interests of the visual character of the surrounding area to comply with policy DM23 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2 and that the effects of site decommissioning on the highway network is mitigated in the interests of highway safety in accordance with policy DM18 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2.

4. Notification of the date of first commercial export of electricity shall be given in writing to the local planning authority within 1 month of the date of first commercial export occurring.

Reason: To ensure that the trigger time for other actions is recorded.

5. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment Document ref: RMA-C2653 and the following mitigation measures it details:

- a) The MV substation in Field 9 and the customer switchgear in Field 10 shall be raised 450 mm above the existing ground levels to ensure they are above the potential surface water flood levels.

These mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the scheme's timing/phasing arrangements. The measures detailed above shall be retained and maintained thereafter throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development.

6. Prior to the commencement of development, a full acoustic report shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The report shall assess the specific noise impacts, including low frequency noise from the proposed inverters and substations as outlined in the report referenced Titchfield Lane Solar Park, Noise Impact Assessment for Planning Application dated 14th November 2024, 23-341B.

Development must then continue in accordance with the approved details. Any mitigation measures identified in the acoustic report must be in operation prior to the occupation or use of the development hereby approved.

Further details of our expectations regarding noise levels and assessments can be found at <https://www.winchester.gov.uk/planning/other-guidance>

Reason: To ensure acceptable noise levels within noise sensitive premises are maintained.

7. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted (or within such extended period as may be agreed with the Local Planning Authority), a scheme to deal with contamination shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The scheme shall conform to current guidance and best practice as set out in BS10175:2001 Investigation of potentially contaminated sites - code of practice and

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Contaminated Land Reports 7 to 11, or other supplementary guidance and include the following phases, unless identified as unnecessary by the preceding stage and agreed in writing by the LPA:

A desk top study and conceptual model documenting all the previous and existing land uses of the site and adjacent land;

A site investigation report documenting the ground conditions of the site and incorporating chemical and gas analysis identified as appropriate by the desk top study;

A remedial strategy detailing the measures to be undertaken to avoid risk from contaminants and/or gases when the site is developed and proposals for future maintenance and monitoring. Such scheme shall include nomination of a suitably qualified person to oversee the implementation of the works.

Reason: In order to secure satisfactory development and in the interests of the safety and amenity of the future occupants.

8. No development shall begin until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site, has been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details should include :

- a) A technical summary of the design.
- b) Infiltration test results undertaken in accordance with BRE365 and providing a representative assessment of those locations where infiltration features are proposed and winter groundwater monitoring data demonstrating the 1m unsaturated zone between the peak measured groundwater level and the base of any proposed infiltration feature.
- c) Detailed drainage plans to include type, layout and dimensions of drainage features including references to link to the drainage calculations.
- d) Detailed drainage calculations to demonstrate existing runoff rates are not exceeded and there is sufficient attenuation for storm events up to and including 1:100 + climate change.
- e) Exceedance plans demonstrating the flow paths and are as of ponding in the event of blockages or storms exceeding design criteria.
- f) Reason: To ensure that adequate waste water network capacity is available to adequately drain the development in accordance with policy CP15 of the Local Plan Part 1.

Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted, written verification produced by the suitably qualified person shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The report must demonstrate that the remedial strategy approved has been implemented fully, unless varied with the written agreement of the Local Planning Authority in advance.

Reason: In order to secure satisfactory development and in the interests of the safety and amenity of future occupants.

9. No development shall start on site until the accesses, construction and maintenance routes, including the footway and/or verge crossing and Public Right of Way crossings have been constructed and lines of sight provided in accordance with the approved plans or those stipulated during the S278 process. The agreed lines of sight shall be kept free of any obstruction exceeding 1 metre in

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height above the adjacent carriageway and shall be subsequently maintained so thereafter.

Reason: To provide satisfactory access and in the interests of highway safety.

10. No development shall start on site until an updated construction traffic management plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, which shall include:
- a. A programme of and phasing of demolition (if any) and construction work;
 - b. The provision of long term facilities for contractor parking;
 - c. The arrangements for deliveries associated with all construction works inclusive of designated routes;
 - d. Access and egress for plant and machinery inclusive of designated routes;
 - e. Protection of pedestrian routes during construction;
 - f. Location of temporary site buildings, compounds, construction material, and plant storage areas;
 - g. Details of the methodology for ensuring dirt is not transferred onto the highway from the site (i.e. wheel washers), and onwards mitigation should this fail, such as the employment of mechanical road sweepers, and the subsequent refresh of street lining (as and when required) should this be damaged during the process.

Demolition and construction work shall only take place in accordance with the approved method statement.

Reason - In order that the Planning Authority can properly consider the effect of the works on the amenity of the locality.

11. No development or any works of site preparation shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title have:
- a. submitted a Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological evaluation (trial trenching) to the location planning authority for approval in writing and;
 - b. have implemented the archaeological evaluation in full in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To assess the extent, nature and date of any archaeological deposits that might be present and the impact of the development upon these heritage assets. Policy DM26 Winchester District Local Plan Part 2; Policy CP20 of the Winchester District Joint Core Strategy.

12. No development or any works of site preparation shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title have:
- a. submitted a Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological mitigation works based on the results of the trial trenching to the local planning authority for approval in writing. The Written Scheme of Investigation shall include:
 - i. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording
 - ii. Provision for post investigation assessment, reporting and dissemination
 - iii. Provision to be made for deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation (archive)

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- iv. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation and;
- b. have implemented the programme of archaeological mitigation works in accordance with the approved details. No development or site preparation shall take place other than in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation.

Reason: To mitigate the effect of the development upon any heritage assets and to ensure that information regarding these heritage assets is preserved by record for future generations. Policy DM26 Winchester District Local Plan Part 2; Policy CP20 of the Winchester District Joint Core Strategy.

13. No development shall commence until such time as a Construction Environmental Management Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The final CEMP shall include:
- a) Development roles, contracts and responsibilities
 - b) Existing and proposed site levels
 - c) Any necessary measures to protect nearby ancient woodland.
 - d) Details of the storage of any hazardous materials, chemicals and hydrocarbons on site during construction.
 - e) Details of the final piling methodology or any other foundation construction (using penetrative methods) to be used during construction. The methodology statement to include details of equipment, methodology, noise mitigation measures, grout, control measures and monitoring to ensure no increase in risk to controlled waters or drinking supplies.
 - f) Details relating to the establishment and removal of the site compounds to be established across the site including the timetable for their establishment and removal.
 - g) Construction working hours.
 - h) Details of dust suppression, mitigation and avoidance measures to be deployed during construction.
 - i) Construction plant noise reduction measures, including if required detailed for the use of acoustic screens and enclosures, to be deployed.
 - j) Storage of construction materials/chemicals and equipment.
 - k) Details of the type of construction plant and equipment to be used.
 - l) Details for the use of fences and barriers to protect adjacent land, footpaths and highways if required.
 - m) Details setting out how unobstructed use of the PRoW will be maintained during any work.
 - n) Details of waste storage and collection during construction.
 - o) Means of pest control.
 - p) Measures to protect the existing biodiversity of the site including any pre commencement meetings.
 - q) A public communication strategy, including complaints procedure.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that all construction work in relation to the application does not cause materially harmful effects on nearby land, properties, businesses, and the wider environment.

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14. No development or other operations (including site preparation and any groundworks) shall commence until a Soils Management Plan has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan should set out the means to be used to protect soils during construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the solar farm such that the objectives of the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan are not compromised and crop growing agricultural operations may resume following the operational life of the solar farm.

Reason: To ensure that the condition of the soil is retained, maintained and enhanced through the various phases in the life of the solar farm development and into its restoration at the cessation of the use.

15. No development shall commence until such time as an Employment and Skills Plan has been submitted to, and approved by, the local planning authority based upon the Winchester City Council Employment and Skills Template. The employment and skills plan will identify opportunities for access to work experience, employment, training and apprenticeships both directly and within the wider supply chain and the means for publicising such opportunities alongside engagement to be undertaken with educational institutions. The approved Employment and Skills Plan shall subsequently be implemented as approved.

Reason: To maximise economic, employment and engagement opportunities for the population of the district and to comply with the intentions of policy CP8 of LPP1.

16. Before any of the PV panels or Inverters are first installed within the site, the final manufacturer specifications including details of the maximum output (Watts) of the proposed panels to be installed including the dimensions of individual panels and the maximum output capacity of the inverters (AC) shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. As part of the submitted details, confirmation shall be included to confirm only panels which have an anti-reflective coating shall be installed. Only the approved equipment shall be installed. Any future replacements shall not exceed the nominated capacities. Any replacement panels must also have an anti-reflective coating.

Reason: To ensure that the site does not exceed its approved power output and to ensure that the panels installed within the site are those on which the Glint and Glare assessment was based.

17. Before any structure, equipment or infrastructure including the supporting frames for the PV panels is first brought onto the site, details of the intended finish colour shall be submitted to and approved in writing with the local planning authority. The items shall be finished in this colour and shall be retained in this finish hereafter.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory visual relationship between the new development and the surrounding area to comply with the intentions of policy DM23 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2.

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18. No development including site clearance, demolition, ground preparation, temporary access construction/widening, material storage or construction works shall commence until a scheme for tree protection, prepared in accordance with BS5837:2012 "Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction - Recommendations" has been submitted to; and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No development or other operations shall take place other than in complete accordance with the approved tree protection scheme.
- a) The tree protection scheme shall include the following information:
 - b) A tree protection plan showing the position of protection zones, fencing and ground
 - c) protection measures to be established for retained trees.
 - d) Prior to commencement of works, an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) must be submitted detailing:
 - i. Installation of tree protection measures before any site activities or clearance;
 - ii. Provision for signage of protection zones and precautionary areas;
 - iii. No construction-related activities (e.g., material storage, machinery movement)
 - e) within designated tree protection zones.
 - f) schedule of works for any vegetation management required, including pruning of trees and details of timing in relation to the construction programme;
 - g) Arboricultural supervision to be undertaken during any arboriculturally sensitive and key stages of construction including installation of access tracks within RPAs using "no-dig" techniques;
 - h) A regular monitoring schedule by a qualified arboricultural consultant to ensure
 - i) compliance
 - j) Detail of all No-Dig Construction and Ground Protection Measures;
 - k) Details of any cellular confinement system to prevent soil compaction.
 - l) Detail of protection where HDD is required near tree roots.
 - m) Construction Management Restrictions
 - n) A post-construction tree health assessment to be completed to ensure all retained trees have not been adversely affected.

Reason: To ensure the protection and long term viability of retained trees, to minimise impact of construction activity and to safeguard the amenity value that the identified trees have within the surrounding area.

19. The development shall not commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP), prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). The HMMP shall include the following details:
- a) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
 - b) any necessary legal mechanism or covenant for securing the monitoring over the relevant period;
 - c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
 - d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development;

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- e) a proposed definition of 'completion of development' in respect of the development hereby approved.
- f) The approved Biodiversity Gain Plan shall be maintained for at least 30 years after the development is complete.

The approved habitat creation and enhancement works shall be implemented in full within six months of the date of their written approval. Notice in writing shall be given to the LPA once the habitat creation and enhancement works as set out in the HMMP have been completed.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate setting to the development and to secure a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with the statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

20. No development shall take place until a Biodiversity and Landscape Management Plan (BLMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The BLEP shall include:

- a. Native planting specification (including native hedgerow and wildflower grassland)
- b. Areas for hard surfacing and the materials to be used;
- c. Other means of enclosure (including any retaining walls and hedgehog fencing);
- d. Biodiversity enhancement measures
- e. Establishment and maintenance schedule covering the first five years following the completion of development

No development shall take place unless these details have been approved and then only in accordance with those details.

The approved landscaping measures shall be provided on site within the first planting season following the written approval of the submitted landscaping details. If within a period of 5 years from the date of the planting, if the tree is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies (or becomes in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority seriously damaged or defective) another tree of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place within the next planting season, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate setting to the development and to secure a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with LPP1 policy CP16 and LPP2 policies DM16 and DM17.

21. Details of any external lighting of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the development hereby permitted first coming into use. The information shall include a layout plan with beam orientation, and schedule of equipment in the design (lumen type, mounting height, aiming angles and luminaire profiles) and hours of use. The lighting shall be installed, maintained and operated in accordance with the approved details.

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Reason: To protect the neighbouring amenities; and to ensure that the ecological value of the site is not adversely impacted upon by the development.

22. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until Biodiversity Gain measures have been implemented in full accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Plan Document ref: WOR 4910.2 May 2025 submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Written confirmation shall be provided to the local planning authority of the date of the completion of the development and the implementation of the Biodiversity Gain Plan.

Reason: To accord with the Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021), and Policies CP16 and CP21 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 1.

23. Prior to the first export of any electricity generated by the development hereby permitted, details for the provision and display of emergency information shall be installed within the site at appropriate locations. The details of the information, the nature of the display (Premises Information Box or board) and the proposed locations that would hold or display the information shall be submitted to and approved in writing with the local planning authority. The submitted information shall include but not be limited to: a plan of the site, identifying the structures that are located within it, the point of connection to the grid, the method to isolate the panels, contact details for parties and details of any inflammable substances or hazardous substances on site.

The approved information shall be placed in the agreed locations before any electricity is exported from the site and retained so long as electricity is generated by the site. The details shall be reviewed and updated as required.

Reason: To ensure that Emergency Services has adequate access and information of the layout of the site and its contents before entering the facility and to comply with the intentions of policy DM18 of LLP2.

24. Prior to the first export of any electricity generated by the development hereby permitted, a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP), (drawing on the contents of the Biodiversity Management Plan and the Ecological Assessment Report) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The LEMP will address the post landscape scheme establishment and long-term commitments to manage the site to ensure that it delivers on the proposed landscape and biodiversity enhancements. The content of the LEMP shall include the following:

- a) Aims and objectives of management to achieve or exceed the contribution that will be made towards the overall Biodiversity Net Gain figures
- b) Description and evaluation of existing features including the retention of the existing vegetation, its reinforcement where necessary the height it is to be maintained at and the intentions regarding its long terms management.
- c) Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management.
- d) Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives.

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- e) Prescriptions for management actions.
- f) Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed enhancement measures;
- g) Proposed management of the roadside hedgerows (including minimum heights to be maintained) to ensure they continue to provide an effective screen to the application site.
- h) Proposed management of the grassed areas
- i) Replacement planting or seeding in the event of loss after the 5-year establishment period.
- j) Preparation of an annual work schedule for the implementation of management actions.
- k) Details of the body or organisation responsible for implementation of the plan.
- l) Details of the timetable for monitoring and review of management actions, that will then influence successive management action and the role of the local planning authority within that process.

Details of a schedule for proposed plant watering. The schedule to be adhered to until the plants are established.

The LEMP shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning landscape and biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The monitoring of the LEMP will also include any proposed changes to the management regime of any part of the site. The LEMP will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To deliver the landscape enhancements and the biodiversity net gain promoted as part of the scheme and to comply with policy DM23 of the Winchester DM26 Winchester District Local Plan Part 2 and policy CP16 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 Joint Core Strategy.

25. Development shall cease on site if, during any stage of the works, potential contamination is encountered which has not been previously identified, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Works shall not recommence before an assessment of the potential contamination has been undertaken and details of the findings along with details of any remedial action required (including timing provision for implementation), has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be completed other than in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to secure satisfactory development and in the interests of the safety and amenity of future occupants.

26. Following completion of archaeological fieldwork, within 9 months (unless otherwise agreed in writing), a report will be produced in accordance with an approved programme including where appropriate post-excavation assessment, specialist analysis and reports and publication. The report shall be submitted to and approved by the local authority.

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Reason: To ensure that evidence from the historic environment contributing to our knowledge and understanding of our past is captured and made publicly available. Policy DM26 Winchester District Local Plan Part 2; Policy CP20 of the Winchester District Joint Core Strategy.

27. All cables linking any of the generating areas to the onsite substation and from there to the connection point to the grid, shall be installed underground. Before any trenching is opened up for the installation of cable runs, details of the locations of the proposed cable runs together with a methodology for the installation works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The methodology shall set out:
- a) measures to be adopted for the avoidance of any harm to adjoining vegetation and root protection areas,
 - b) where appropriate measures to minimise any impact on residents
 - c) a notification strategy for residents/businesses

The installation work shall then be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the development has minimal impact on the existing hedges and trees within the application site to comply with the intentions of policy CP16 of LPP1.

28. The landscape enhancement detailed within Drawing number: 1300/9 Sheet 1 of 4, Drawing number: 1300/9 Sheet 2 of 4, Drawing number: 1300/9 Sheet 3 of 4, Drawing number: 1300/9 Sheet 4 of 4 shall be implemented within the first planting season following the first commercial export date. Any trees, shrub or plants which, within a period of 5 years after planting, are removed, die or in the opinion of the local planning authority, become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced as soon as is reasonably practicable in the next planting season with others of the same species, size and number as originally approved unless a suitable alternative species has otherwise been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. Details of a schedule for proposed plant watering shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority before any planting takes place. The schedule to be adhered to, until the plants are established.

Reason: To ensure that the landscape character of the site and its contribution to the wider area is maintained and to comply with the intentions of policy DM23 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2.

Informatives:

1. This permission is granted for the following reasons:
The development is in accordance with the Policies and Proposals of the Development Plan set out below, and other material considerations do not have sufficient weight to justify a refusal of the application. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning permission should therefore be granted.

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2. The Local Planning Authority has taken account of the following development plan policies and proposals:-
Local Plan Part 1 Joint Core Strategy: DS1, MTRA4, CP10, CP12, CP16, CP17
Local Plan Part 2: DM1, DM15, DM16, DM17, DM18, DM19, DM23, DM24, DM27, DM28, DM29, DM30, DM32
3. The applicant shall accommodate the public's safe and continued access to Wickham Footpath 14 throughout the lifespan of the development, ensuring any temporary closure orders and/or orders to permanently divert the PROW are secured in writing from the relevant authority, prior to any obstruction of the definitive line of the footpath taking place. Development, in so far as it affects a right of way, must not be started and the right of way should be kept open for public use, until or unless the necessary order has come into effect.
4. The applicant is advised to contact Southern Water to discuss the proposed water pipeline that may be constructed through parcel 8 and any planting that is proposed in close proximity to existing water infrastructure.
5. The applicant is advised:
 - To liaise with the Highways Authority and Hampshire Countryside Services on development matters relating to the public Highway.
 - That there should be no obstruction, hindrance or a hazard to the public who retain the right to safe access to the Public Rights of Way at all times.
 - That no planting should take place within 2 metres of the surface of any Public Right of Way, including Wickham Footpath 14, to prevent future root disturbance or shading of the right of way surface, which could otherwise cause a public nuisance or hazard and require additional remedial work to be undertaken by Hampshire County Council Countryside Service, as Highway Authority for Public Rights of Way