

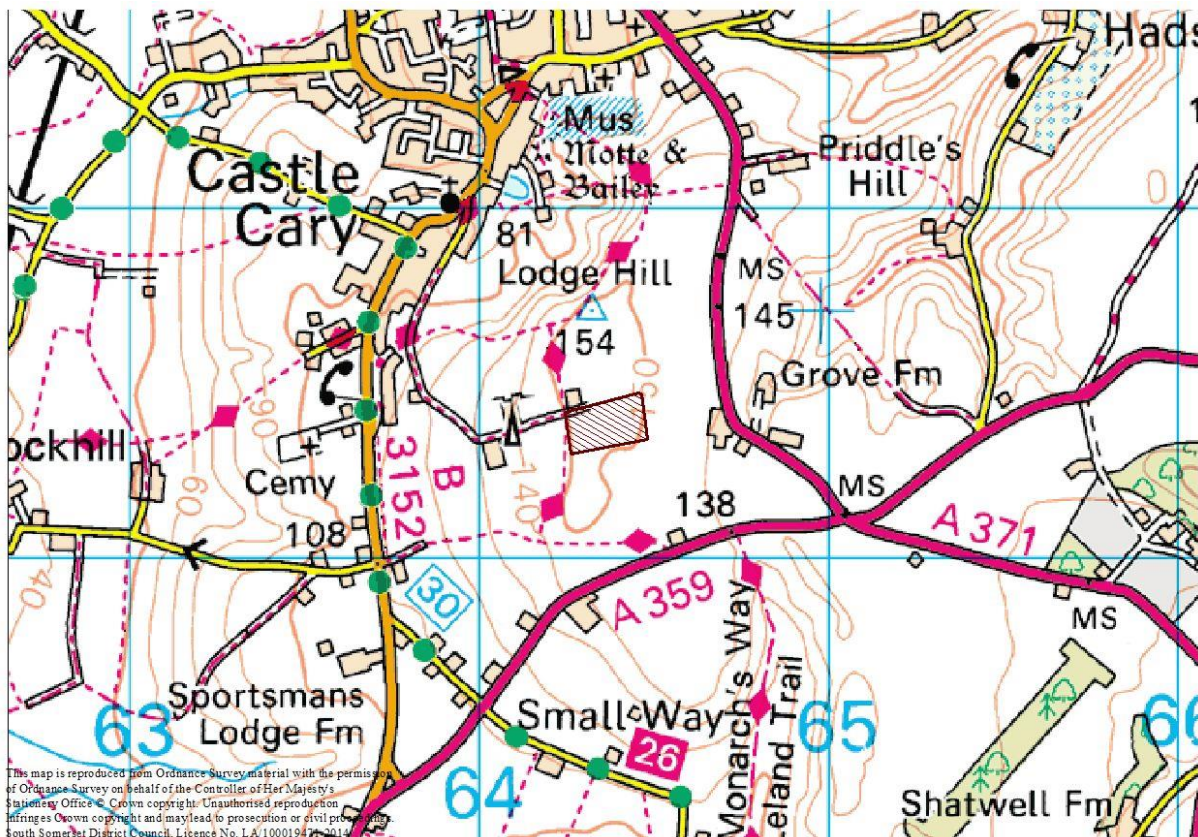
Officer Report on Planning Application: 14/03587/FUL

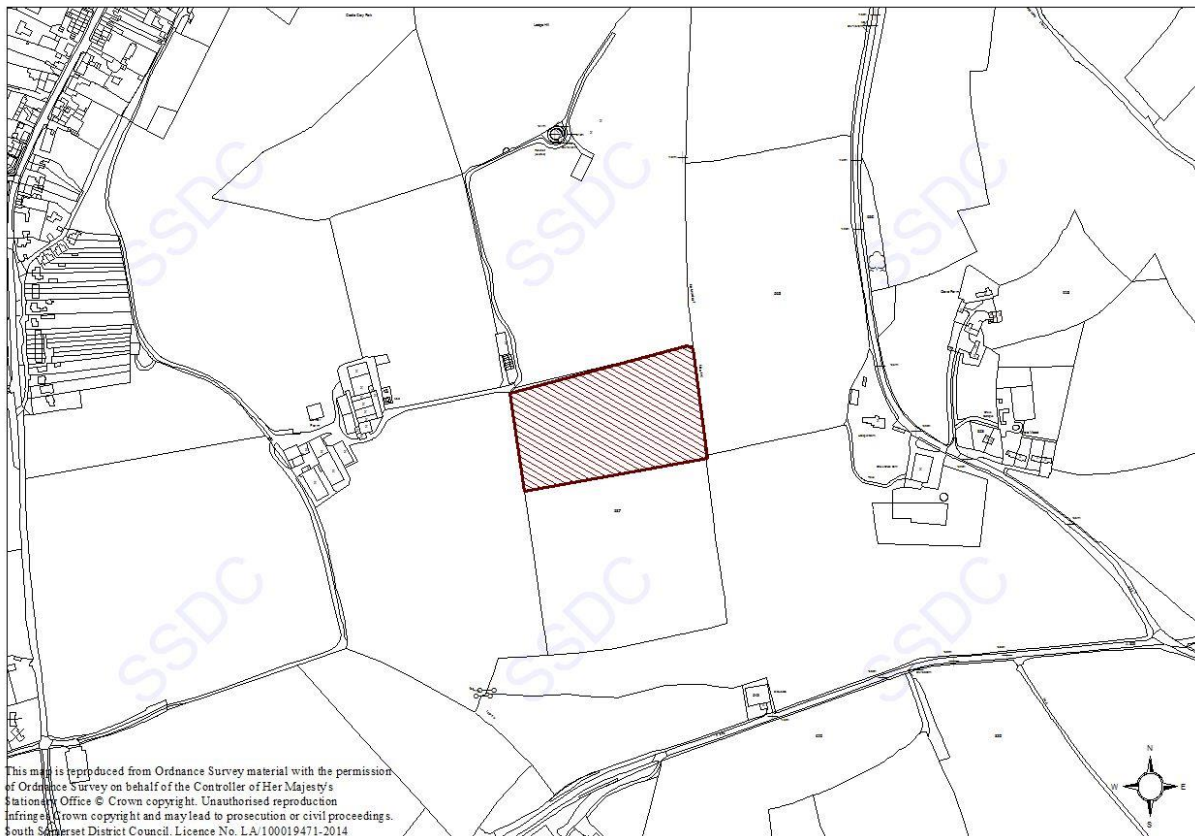
Proposal :	Installation of standalone solar PV modules and associated infrastructure (GR:364360/131378)
Site Address:	Land Adjoining Manor Farm The Park Castle Cary
Parish:	Castle Cary
CARY Ward (SSDC Member)	Cllr N Weeks Cllr H Hobhouse
Recommending Case Officer:	Alex Skidmore Tel: 01935 462430 Email: alex.skidmore@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date :	10th November 2014
Applicant :	Brilliant Harvest 001 Limited
Agent:	Nick Leaney Aardvark EM Ltd Higher Ford Wiveliscombe, Taunton, TA4 2RL
Application Type :	Major Other f/space 1,000 sq.m or 1 ha+

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The size of the proposed development is such that under the scheme of delegation the application, if recommended for approval, must be determined by committee.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL





This application is seeking planning permission to erect a 1.8MW solar PV farm on a 2.67 hectare site to generate electricity to feed into the national grid. The application as originally submitted sought the development on a permanent basis however the application has since been amended to a temporary proposal, seeking to development for a 30 year period or until it is no longer required for the generation of electricity, whichever is the sooner.

The scheme seeks to erect approximately 6800 photovoltaic panels, mounted on metal posts driven into the ground with a maximum height of 2.17m orientated to face south and arranged in rows aligned in a west to east direction with the ground beneath left to grass over. Other associated infrastructure includes security cameras and fencing, transformer and switchgear unit.

The application site occupies the northern section of a larger agricultural field, with the land classed as grade 3b (moderate quality), and is in an elevated an open countryside location. There are a number of public rights of way in the vicinity, most notably the Monarch's Way (WN 6/4) which passes immediately to the west of the site, and there is a public viewing platform a short distance to the north which offers far reaching panoramic views including in the direction of this site. At present the boundaries of the site are quite open. The site is located within flood zone 1, the lowest flood risk zone, and is located within a ground water catchment area. The site is not within any special ecological designations.

The site is within an areas of high archaeological interest and potential and is approximately 700m distant from a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM) situated on the edge of Castle Cary and which is the site of a motte and two baileys. The nearest listed building is Hadspen Barn located approximately 180m to the east and there are numerous listed buildings within Castle Cary itself, most notably All Saints Church which is Grade II*.

This application is supported by the following documents:

- Design and Access Statement
- Planning Statement
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)
- Land Classification Report
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Historic Environment Assessment
- Magnetometer Survey Report (Archaeology)
- Environmental Considerations Statement
- Habitat Survey
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Construction and Traffic Management Plan

RELEVANT HISTORY:

14/02305/EIASS: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening request in relation to a proposed photovoltaic solar farm. EIA not required.

POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 repeats the duty imposed under S54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and requires that decision must be made in accordance with relevant Development Plan Documents unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan comprises the saved policies of the South Somerset Local Plan. The policies of most relevance to the proposal are:

- ST3 - Development Areas
- ST5 - General Principles of Development
- ST6 - The Quality of Development
- EC1 - Protecting the Best Agricultural Land
- EC3 - Landscape Character
- EC7 - Networks of Natural Habitats
- EC8 – Protected Species
- EH1 – Conservation Areas
- EH5 – Development Proposals Affecting the Setting of Listed Buildings
- EH11 – Archaeological Sites of National Importance (Scheduled Ancient Monuments)
- EH12 – Areas of High Archaeological Potential and Other Areas of Archaeological Interest
- EP3 - Light Pollution
- EU7 – Groundwater Catchment Areas
- CR9 – Public Rights of Way and Recreation Routes

International and European Policy Context

There are a range of International and European policy drivers that are relevant to the consideration of renewable energy developments. Under the Kyoto Protocol 1997, the UK has agreed to reduce emissions of the 'basket' of six greenhouse gases by 12.5% below 1990 levels by the period 2008-12.

Under the Copenhagen Accord (2010), the UK, as part of the EU, has since agreed to make further emissions cuts of between 20% and 30% by 2020 on 1990 levels (the higher figure being subject to certain caveats). This agreement is based on achieving a reduction in global emissions to limit average increases in global temperature to no more than 2°C.

The draft European Renewable Energy Directive 2008 states that, in 2007, the European

Union (EU) leaders had agreed to adopt a binding target requiring 20% of the EU's energy (electricity, heat and transport) to come from renewable energy sources by 2020. This Directive is also intended to promote the use of renewable energy across the European Union. In particular, this Directive commits the UK to a target of generating 15% of its total energy from renewable sources by 2020.

National Policy Context

At the national level, there are a range of statutory and non-statutory policy drivers and initiatives which are relevant to the consideration of this planning application. The 2008 UK Climate Change Bill increases the 60% target in greenhouse gas emissions to an 80% reduction by 2050 (based on 1990 levels). The UK Committee on Climate Change 2008, entitled 'Building a Low Carbon Economy', provides guidance in the form of recommendations in terms of meeting the 80% target set out in the Climate Change Bill, and also sets out five-year carbon budgets for the UK. The 2009 UK Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) provides a series of measures to meet the legally-binding target set in the aforementioned Renewable Energy Directive. The RES envisages that more than 30% of UK electricity should be generated from renewable sources.

The 2003 Energy White Paper provides a target of generating 40% of national electricity from renewable sources by 2050, with interim targets of 10% by 2010 and 20% by 2020. The 2007 Energy White Paper contains a range of proposals which address the climate change and energy challenge, for example by securing a mix of clean, low carbon energy sources and by streamlining the planning process for energy projects. The Planning and Energy Act 2008 is also relevant in that it enables local planning authorities (LPAs) to set requirements for energy use and energy efficiency in local plans.

National Planning Policy Framework

Part 1 - Building a strong, competitive economy

Part 3 - Supporting a prosperous rural economy

Part 7 - Requiring good design

Part 10 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Part 11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Part 12 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

The NPPF outlines that local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources. They should:

- have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources;
- design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts;
- consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure the development of such sources; and
- identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for collocating potential heat customers and suppliers.

The NPPF further advises that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should:

- not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and also recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions;
and
- approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should also expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.

The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should aim to:

- avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development;
- mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life arising from noise from new development, including through the use of conditions; and
- identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.

In determining applications, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

It is considered that the main thrust of the NPPF is to positively support sustainable development, and there is positive encouragement for renewable energy projects. However the NPPF reiterates the importance of protecting important landscapes, especially Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as well as heritage and ecology assets.

National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014)

Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 5-013-20140306 sets out advice in relation to large scale ground-mounted solar PV farms and suggests that LPAs will need to consider:-

- encouraging the effective use of land by focusing 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.

Other Material Considerations

South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy:

Goal 1 - Safe and Inclusive

Goal 3 - Healthy Environments

Goal 4 - Quality Public Services

Goal 5 - High Performance Local Economy

Goal 7 - Distinctiveness

Goal 8 - Quality Development

Goal 10 - Energy

Goal 11 - Environment

South Somerset Carbon Reduction and Climate Change Adaption Strategy 2010- 2014

CONSULTATIONS

Castle Cary Town Council: Recommend approval. There should be no site entrance via The Park due to the location of the primary school.

Pitcombe Parish Council (adjoining parish): Object. The scheme will have an unacceptable visual impact on the surrounding area and properties. The screening proposed does not seem adequate in respect of the adjoining properties. It will impact on the local amenity and heritage through its proximity to three historic rights of way. Access to the site is inadequate with no proper road from the A359 or B3152. The scale of the development is relatively small as such any benefits arising from renewable energy cannot outweigh the harm it causes. No benefits accrue to our community which is most affected.

County Highways: No objection, subject to a condition seeking the submission and agreement of a Construction Traffic Management Plan.

It is noted that access is intended via the existing access leading on to the public highway B3152 south of Castle Cary opposite Coopers Ash Lane where a 40mph speed limit applies. It is proposed that there will be no additional traffic movements in Castle Cary town centre.

County Rights of Way: There is a Public Right of Way (PROW) abutting the site. Any works must not encroach on the width of the footpath and the health and safety of walkers must be taken into consideration during works.

Monarch's Way Association: Object. The position of the solar park close to the top of Lodge Hill will remove the local distinctiveness found when walking this area. The Lodge Hill area is unique in the landscape and this open aspect uniqueness would be lost. It will also look very different in the naturally evolved landscape that many visitors come to enjoy. Tourism should

be very important to Somerset, many local businesses rely on their income from visitors whether they are walkers or people simply enjoying the countryside. This proposal will reduce the attractiveness of this area for both visitors and walkers.

The Monarch's Way is a heritage footpath and crosses and follows along the side of the site. It is a nationally important and highly valued and follows very closely the escape route taken by Charles II after defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651.

Three public rights of way, the Macmillan Way, the Monarch's Way and Leland Trail, converge along the western boundary of the site. No effort has been made to hide the solar park where the Monarch's Way enters the solar field. The solar park infrastructure will have a substantial impact on views from these footpaths especially on the approach from the southwest.

The site lies within a higher level agricultural stewardship target area, where the objectives are to conserve and enhance the natural environment, landscape, historic environment, public access and natural resources. The proposal is at odds with these objectives.

Other concerns raised include:

- a full archaeological survey is required;
- the site has been used to grow crops, the categorisation of the land as grade 3 is an understatement;
- has the impact of the development on ground water drainage. This facility has a greater density of panels than most other similar schemes;
- cumulative impact of this proposal along with other solar farms in the area;
- the proposal will have a substantial impact and would change the character and / or appearance of the landscape for a long period of time;
- Contrary to clause 112 of the NPPF which states that significant development of agricultural land must be demonstrated to be necessary;
- This seek a further expansion of the site in the future.

Technical Engineers: No comments received.

Environment Agency: No objection. Recommended our local drainage engineer also be consulted and that a number of informatives be added to the decision.

Climate Change Officer: No objections. The UK has a target to meet 20% of energy needs from renewables by 2020. Despite this, renewable electricity generation within South Somerset currently only supplies just over 4% of the District's electricity. The development will generate the sufficient electricity to serve the equivalent of 387 households which equates to 33% of Castle Cary.

MOD: No objection.

English Heritage: No objection.

In their initial comments they raised an objection due to insufficient information in relation to the impact of the proposal upon heritage assets. Following the submission of additional information by the applicant they withdrew their objection and concluded that any impact upon the setting of the highly graded assets within Castle Cary and Hadspen would be limited.

Ecology: Raised no objection. I have noted the ecology report submitted with the application.

I consider my comments below also address those made by the Somerset Wildlife Trust.

A disused badger sett was noted on site. Whilst it was concluded that badgers were no at significant risk there is a risk of sett activity changing prior to construction, I therefore recommend a condition for an up to date badger survey and a method statement for the protection of badgers if necessary. The NPPF (para 118) expects development to deliver some enhancement for biodiversity through taking opportunities to incorporate features beneficial for wildlife within new developments. A condition to secure measures for biodiversity enhancement is also recommended.

Somerset Wildlife Trust: Request that the mitigation and enhancements set out within Section 5.3 of the submitted habitats survey be implemented.

County Archaeology: No objection. Initially requested further information in order to assess the nature of the archaeological remains detailed in the submitted geophysical survey. Following further exploratory works on site in liaison with County Archaeology their initial objection was withdrawn and concluded that the proposal would have limited or no archaeological implications.

Landscape Officer: Raises no substantive landscape objection. (Please refer to Annex A at the end of this report for the Landscape Officer's full comments.)

Looking at the application overall, whilst the location selected is not strongly related to existing development form, and projects some incongruity of character within this agricultural landscape, I would acknowledge that the scale of the proposal has the potential to be accommodated within the context of the hilltop field without undue impact, and the site's visual profile is low in most part, other than at the immediate edge. Its visibility can be further played down by landscape mitigation, though amendment of the mitigation proposal is necessary for it to be acceptable. Mindful that national government guidance is heavily weighted in favour of renewables, and that LPAs are urged to approve renewable energy schemes providing impacts can be made acceptable, then providing a fuller mitigation proposal is agreed, then I would not consider the extent of landscape and visual impact to be sufficiently adverse to enable an over-riding landscape objection to be raised.

From a landscape standpoint the only detailed information still required is;

- (a) The finished details of CCTV installations – to be matt, and of subdued tone.

If you are minded to approve the application, could you please request pre-determination;

- (b) A revised landscape mitigation proposal,

... and subsequently condition;

- 1) the approved planting scheme to be implemented in the forthcoming planting season, November 2014 – mid March 2015.
- 2) A site restoration proposal to be submitted for approval, detailing the works necessary to revert the site to open agricultural land on completion of the lifetime of the array, along with the retention of the new landscape features arising from this application.

Following these comments the applicant submitted a revised landscaping scheme which the Landscape Officer has confirmed he is satisfied with.

REPRESENTATIONS

Three sets of written representations have been received from members of the public raising the following concerns and objections:

- Cumulative impact of such developments in the area. A large park opposite the Holbrook House Hotel is already in situ. Any more will have a disproportionate impact on the local countryside.
- Detract from the enjoyment of this historic area and rights of way.
- The site is just off the summit of one of the highest points in the district, Lodge Hill which draws many walkers. The Monarch's Way is a heritage footpath which draws many visitors, they will not return or recommend the walk to others if they have to skirt this solar farm.
- I walked beside a solar installation in full sun last week and the loud electrical humming noise was very disconcerting.
- The site is not adequately screened. The site will be visible from many aspects particularly in the winter months.
- If this is approved it may be difficult to resist future expansions of the site with consequential implications for the surrounding area and properties.
- Solar technology is developing rapidly. This site may have a relatively short economic life.
- The government is focusing solar development on already developed commercial and industrial buildings rather than the countryside.
- The Pitcombe Parish Plan indicates significant opposition to solar parks although there is recognition that there could be some areas within the parish where they would be acceptable. The parish boundary is adjacent to the site.
- Will the developer have sufficient long-term funding to dispose of this equipment when it is no longer needed?
- Loss of productive farmland from food production.
- The statutory consultation process is inadequate to reach all interested parties.
- If approved conditions for the effective all-year round screening of the site with all cables underground and to ensure the site is cleared when it becomes redundant should be imposed. A levy should also be imposed for the benefit of the local community.

Ramblers Association: Object. The development will be detrimental to the attractive landscape in the location and particularly the extensive views eastwards. Planning authorities should avoid permitting such developments in areas of high scenic value. It has not been demonstrated that the development of greenfield land is necessary. If approved the developer should be required to keep the popular public footpath WN6/4 accessible and safe for the public to use at all times. The development will seriously detract from the natural beauty of views from this path particularly towards King Alfreds Tower in the east.

CONSIDERATIONS

This application is seeking temporary planning permission to erect a 1.8MV solar PV farm on a 2.67 hectare site to generate electricity to feed into the national grid for 30 years after which time the infrastructure will be removed and the land restored.

The scheme seeks to erect approximately 6800 photovoltaic panels, mounted on metal posts driven into the ground with a maximum height of 2.17m orientated to face south and arranged in rows aligned in a west to east direction with the ground beneath left to grass over. Other associated infrastructure includes security cameras and fencing, transformer and switchgear unit.

The main considerations for this application are considered to relate to the principle of the development, landscape character and visual amenity, impact on archaeology and other heritage assets, impact on ecology, residential amenity of nearby residential properties, flooding and drainage and highway safety.

Principle:

Part 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local authorities should “have a positive strategy to promote energy for renewable and low carbon sources” and “design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts”. Additional supplementary guidance National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), published in March, accompanies the NPPF and is referred to in the policy section above.

Whilst the land is greenfield the site includes grade 3b agricultural land, as such the proposal will not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land. The development is sought on a temporary 30 year basis or until it has become redundant, whichever is the sooner, after which time the land will be fully restored to its former agricultural use. The panels are to be spiked into the ground with grass grown under and around the arrays making it capable of being grazed by sheep and that biodiversity enhancements can be achieved. In this regard the development is considered to comply with the aims and objects of the NPPF and its accompanying practice guidance and to be acceptable in principle.

Landscape character and visual amenity:

The adjoining Pitcombe Parish Council, several members of the public, the Monarch's Way Association and Ramblers Association have objected to the proposal and its impact upon character of the local landscape, views in and out of the area and in particular from the public footpaths that pass close to the site.

The site is located on a hilltop plateau elevated above nearby Castle Cary where there is a network of public rights of way (PROW) passing close to the site, including the Leland Trail, McMillan Way and Monarch's Way (WN 6/4), along with Lodge Hill viewing platform situated a short distance to the north.

At present the site is quite open and only the eastern edge contained by a low-managed hedgerow and post and wire fencing to the north and west. Whilst the proposed solar farm is quite industrial in character the Landscape Officer notes that the site itself is quite flat and the arrangement of the arrays correspond quite well with the immediate field pattern and should not encroach onto the sloping ground to the west. A revised landscaping plan includes new native hedge planting along the north, west and south boundaries of the site and the reinforcing of the existing hedgerow currently growing along the eastern boundary. On the basis of these revised landscaping details the Landscape Officer is satisfied that the proposal will have only a very limited impact on the landscape and that a suitable level of screening will be achieved to ensure that it does not encroach significantly into any views from the footpaths in the area, the Lodge Hill view point and other surrounding vantage points.

Issues of cumulative impact resulting from the development have also been raised, most significant in this regard is the large scale array installed at Higher Holbrook approximately 5km to the southeast. The Landscape Officer is satisfied however that due to the lie of the land of that scheme and varying landscape types that intervisibility of the sites is avoided and that the current proposal does not raise any cumulative impact concerns.

Subject to the imposition of conditions to secure the revised landscape plan and a long-term management plan to address on-going maintenance concerns of the agreed planting the proposal is not considered to raise any substantive landscape or visual amenity concerns.

Residential amenity:

The nearest neighbouring property is approximately 180m to the east. Given this distance and the relatively low profile of the proposed development and its inanimate nature it is not anticipated that the proposal will cause any demonstrable harm to nearby residents. The impact of the proposal of views from nearby properties has been raised as a concern by Pitcombe Parish Council however changes to or loss of a view carries very limited weight in the determination of planning applications.

Access and highway safety:

Access to the site will be via an existing farm track leading onto the B3152 where there is a 40 mph speed limit. The applicant has stated that they will seek that all delivery vehicles avoid passing through the middle of Castle Cary and that they intend to display directional signs to this effect. The highway authority is satisfied with these arrangements subject to the submission of a Construction Traffic Management Plan detailing the size of delivery vehicles and the approach routes to be used. On this basis the proposal is not considered to raise any substantive highway safety concerns.

Ecology:

The application site is not located within any areas subject to any special habitat or ecological designations. The application was accompanied by a Habitat Survey report which indicated that there was a disused badger sett on the site. The Council's Ecologist is satisfied with this report and its findings and subject to conditions to secure an up to date survey of the badger setts and measures for the enhancement of biodiversity the proposal is considered to raise no substantive ecology related concerns.

Heritage and Archaeological Assets:

The site is within areas of high archaeological interest and potential and is approximately 700m from a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM), The Park, situated on the edge of Castle Cary. The nearest listed building is Hadspen Barn located approximately 180m to the east and there are numerous listed buildings within Castle Cary itself, most notably All Saints Church which is Grade II*.

Following the submission of additional information relating to the impact of the proposal upon nearby listed buildings and SM English Heritage accepts that any such impact will be limited and has not objected to this proposal. Bearing in mind topography of the area and the proposed planting scheme it is accepted that the proposal should not be visible in the context of any of these heritage assets.

In addition to the archaeological survey report submitted with the application the applicant has carried out some trial trenching on site in conjunction with County Archaeologist. Following this additional work County Archaeology are satisfied that the development raises no significant archaeological concerns.

Drainage and Flooding:

The site is located in flood zone 1 and as such is at low risk of flooding, and is also within a ground water catchment area. The Environment Agency has accepted the details set out within the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment and there is no evidence to suggest that the proposal would result in any significant increase in surface water runoff or adversely affect the quality and volume of ground water.

Other matters:

- Environmental Impact Assessment – The proposal falls within the scope of Schedule 2, sub-section 3a of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 requiring that a formal screening decision be carried out. This was carried out prior to the submission of this current application when it was concluded that an Environmental Impact Assessment was not required.
- Public Rights of Way - There is no reason why the proposed development should lead to the obstruction or interference of any surrounding PROWs or adversely affect the amenity of users of these PROWs.

Conclusion:

Government advice is clear. Planning Authorities should approve applications for renewable energy projects where impacts are (or can be made) acceptable (NPPF Para 98). The current application has raised some concerns in relation to visual amenity, landscape character, heritage assets and ecology. A thorough assessment of the potential impacts of the development indicates that, for the most part, they are acceptable - or can be made acceptable by appropriate mitigation measures - in the context of Government advice and the clear need for renewable energy sources. Where impacts can be overcome by way of pre-commencement or other conditions (i.e. archaeology, ecology, landscaping) appropriate conditions are recommended. Subject to the appropriate controls set out in conditions, it is considered that the impacts of the proposal can be considered 'acceptable' as set out in Government guidance. Notwithstanding the objections received from Pitcombe Parish Council, the Monarch's Way and Ramblers Associations and members of public, the proposal is considered to represent a sustainable form of development and is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant consent for the following reason:

Notwithstanding local concerns and the concerns of the Monarchs Way and Ramblers Associations it is considered that the benefits in terms of the provision of a renewable source of energy, which will make a valuable contribution towards cutting greenhouse gas emissions, outweigh the limited impact of the proposed PV panels on the local landscape character. As such the proposal accords with the Government's objective to encourage the provision of renewable energy sources and the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, the National Planning Practice Guidance and Policies ST3, ST5, ST6, EC1, EC3, EC7, EC8, EH1, EH5, EH11, EH12, EP3, EU7 and CR9 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006.

Subject to the following:

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

Reason: To accord with the provisions of section 91(1) of the Town and Country

Planning Act 1990.

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans drawings numbered BH1310185S-010-01, BH110185S-002-1, BH1310185S-001-05, BH110185S-003-02, BH110185S-004-1, BH110185S-005-03, BH110185S-006-01 and BH110185S-008-01 received 07/08/2014.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

03. The development hereby permitted shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition before 31/12/2044 or within six months of the cessation of the use of the solar farm for the generation of electricity whichever is the sooner in accordance with a restoration plan to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The restoration plan will need to include all the works necessary to revert the site to open agricultural land including the removal of all structures, materials and any associated goods and chattels from the site.

Reason: In the interests of landscape character and visual amenity in accordance with Policies ST3, ST5, ST6 and EC3 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

04. The supporting posts to the solar array shall be anchored into the ground as detailed on approved drawing BH110185S-004-1 received 07/08/2014.

Reason: In the interests of sustainable construction and to accord with Part 10 of the NPPF.

05. The landscaping scheme shown on drawing titled Landscape Management Plan received 12/09/2014 shall be completely carried out within the first available planting season from the date of commencement of the development. For the duration of this permission the trees and shrubs shall be protected and maintained, and any trees or plants which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and landscape character in accordance with policies ST5, ST6 and EC3 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

06. No works hereby permitted shall be commenced unless a landscape management plan has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. Such a plan shall detail measures for the protection of any new and retained planting, the height at which the perimeter hedge planting shall be maintained and an on-going programme of maintenance. Such agreed details shall be fully implemented for the duration of the use hereby permitted, unless any variation is agreed by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and landscape character in accordance with policies ST5, ST6 and EC3 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

07. Prior to commencement of each significant stage of ground works, an updated survey for badger setts will be undertaken by a competent person, and if any are present within 30 metres of the area of activity, the works shall not commence until a method statement for the protection of badgers has been produced and any necessary Natural England licences have been obtained. The method statement shall be implemented in full.

Reason: For the conservation and protection of legally protected species in accordance

with Policy EC8 of the South Somerset Local Plan, and to ensure compliance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and The Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

08. No works hereby permitted shall be commenced unless details of measures for the enhancement of biodiversity have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The biodiversity enhancement measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: For the enhancement of biodiversity in accordance with NPPF.

09. No means of external illumination/lighting shall be installed without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity and to safeguard the rural character of the area to accord with Policies EC3, ST6 and EP3 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

10. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced unless the external finished colour of the CCTV equipment and security fencing has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity and to safeguard the rural character of the area to accord with Policies EC3, ST6 and EP3 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

11. No form of audible alarm shall be installed on the site without the prior written consent of the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenity and the rural amenities of the area to accord with Policy ST6 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

12. No development hereby permitted shall be commenced unless details of the means of connection to the electricity grid from the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity and to safeguard the rural character of the area to accord with Policies EC3, ST5 and ST6 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

13. The development hereby permitted shall not commence unless a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall include construction vehicle movements, construction operation hours, construction vehicular routes to and from site, construction delivery hours, expected number of construction vehicle per day, car parking for contractors, specific measures to be adopted to mitigate construction impacts in pursuance of the Environmental Code of Construction Practice and a scheme to encourage the use of public transport amongst contractors. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved Construction Management Plan.

Reason in the interest of highway safety and the rural amenities of the area to accord with Policies ST5 and ST6 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

14. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter implemented by the approved Contractor. The plan and any contract shall stipulate the size of vehicles to be used for deliveries and the

routes to be used.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety to accord with Policy ST5 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

Informatives:

01. Please take note of the advice and recommendations set out within the Environment Agency's letter dated 05/09/2014.