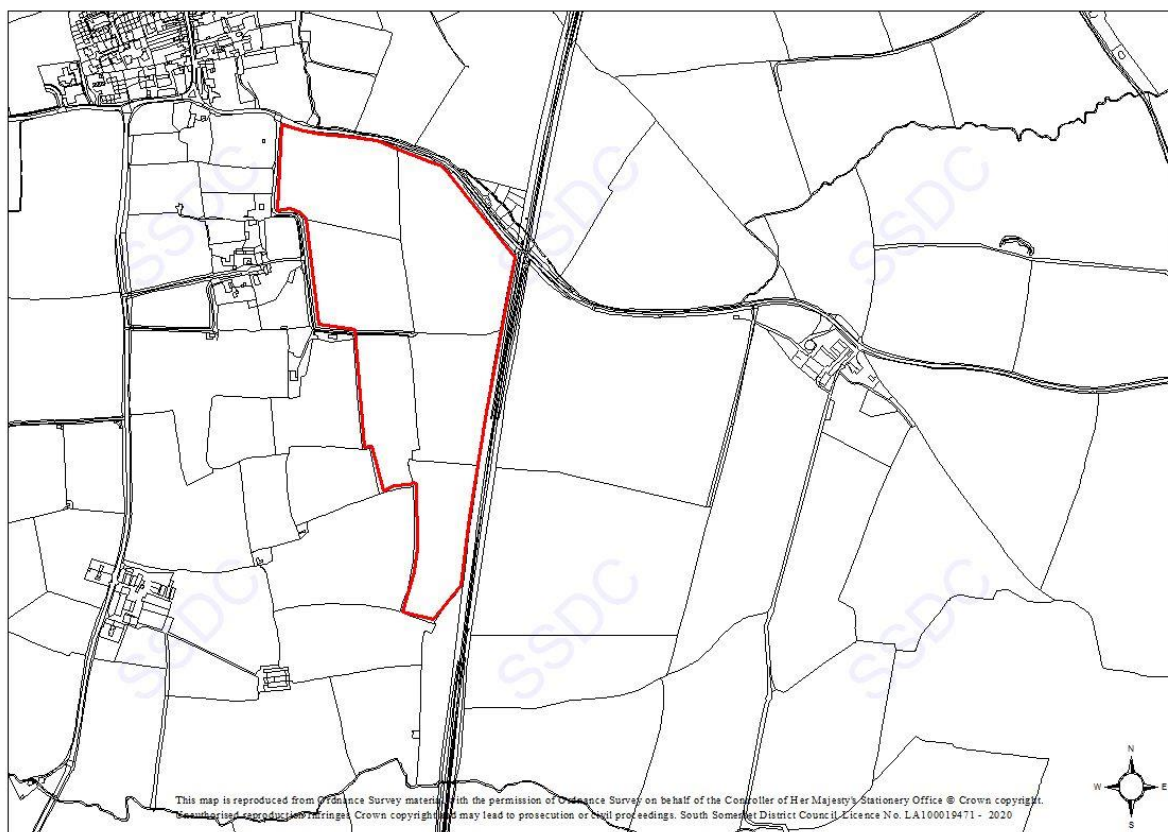


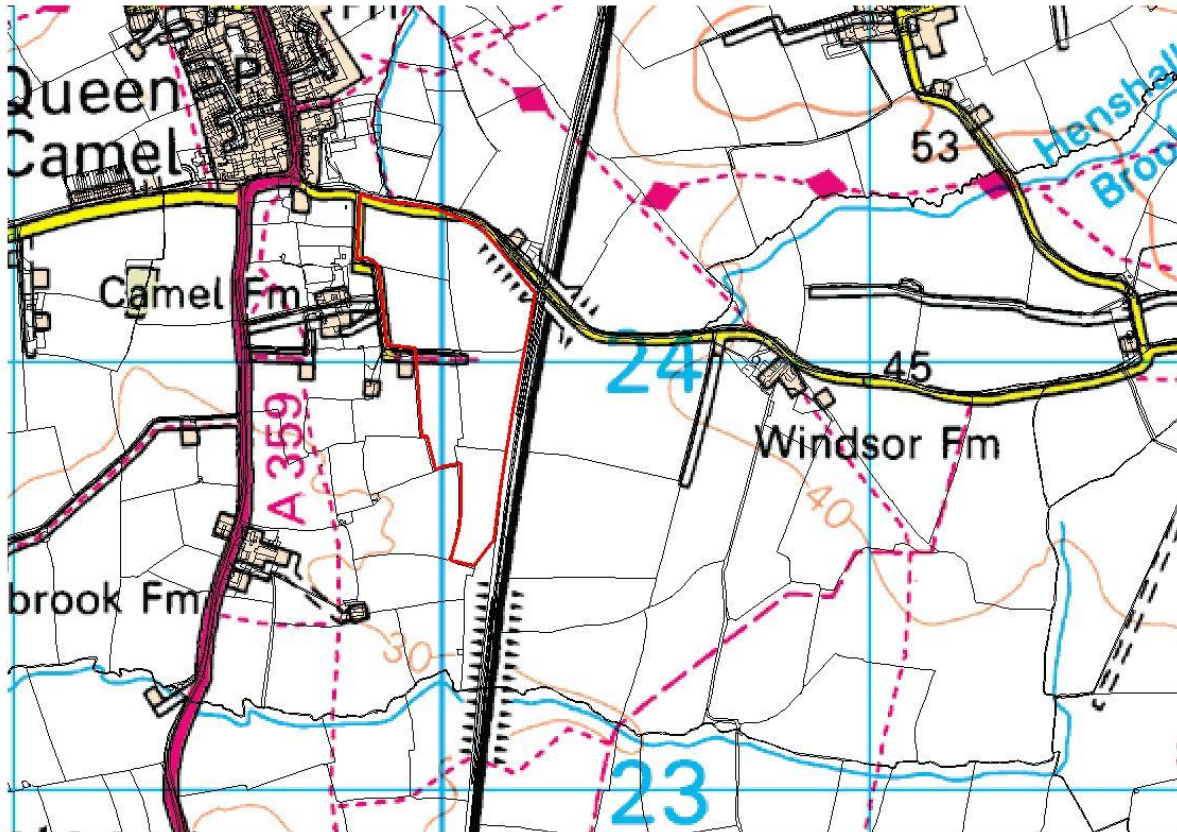
Officer Report On Planning Application: 20/00952/FUL

Proposal :	Proposed solar farm and associated development, comprising the installation of solar panels, the erection of substation, switchgear, storage/communications buildings, the provision of inverter cabins and battery containers, construction of access and stone track, fencing and gates, installation of CCTV cameras, and associated landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.
Site Address:	Land OS 1100 Bindwell Lane Queen Camel
Parish:	Queen Camel
CAMELOT Ward (SSDC Member)	Cllr M Lewis
Recommending Case Officer:	David Kenyon Tel: 01935 462091 Email: david.kenyon@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date :	30th June 2020
Applicant :	NextPower SPV 8 Limited
Agent: (no agent if blank)	Mr James Jamieson Intelligent Alternatives 100 Brand Street GLASGOW G51 1DG
Application Type :	Major Other f/space 1,000 sq.m or 1 ha+

REASON FOR REFERRAL

The application is referred to Committee in terms of the Council's Scheme of Delegation as it comprises a large scale major development proposal ('Major Major'). Third party objections have been received.





SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

This is a detailed application seeking full planning permission for a "Proposed solar farm and associated development, comprising the installation of solar panels, the erection of substation, switchgear, storage/communications buildings, the provision of inverter cabins and battery containers, construction of access and stone track, fencing and gates, installation of CCTV cameras, and associated landscaping and biodiversity enhancements", at Land OS 1100, Bindwell Lane, Queen Camel, Yeovil.

The application site is located within open countryside. It comprises an irregular parcel of broadly flat land containing six agricultural fields, currently laid to grass, and occupying an area of approximately 19 hectares, between Bindwell Lane to the west and the railway line to the east. The agricultural land is good and moderate quality, with approximately 6.7 hectares of the land being classified as Grade 3a and approximately 12.3 hectares classified as Grade 3b. The site is generally flat, lying at elevations of between 34m (south) and 37m (north) above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

The northern half of the site lies directly to the east of Bindwell Lane, approximately 150 metres south east of the urban extents of Queen Camel. Bindwell Lane reverts to an unmade track on its return eastwards across approximately half of the central area of the site. The north the site is bounded by a minor road which becomes Church Hill further to the east. Its eastern boundary is formed by the mainline railway. Fields are generally delineated by modest hedgerows, with more substantial growth including numbers of mature trees along its boundary with Bindwell Lane.

The site lies approximately 60 metres south east of the southern boundary to Queen Camel Conservation Area and approximately 140 metres east of two Listed Buildings at Camel Farm; Camel Farmhouse and Camel Farm Cottage.

The site lies within Flood Zone 1. A small watercourse called Henshall Brook runs to the north of the site.

There are Public Rights of Way (PROW) in and around the site, with a short stretch of restricted byway within the site boundaries. Several public footpaths can be found to the north, west and south of the site and the Leland Trail Long Distance Footpath (LDFP) is approximately 300 metres to the north of the site. The Monarch's Way LDFP can also be found further away in westerly, easterly and southerly directions.

The site is not located in or directly adjacent to any sensitive landscape designations. However, the northern and north western parts of the site lie within the Mineral Safeguarding Area.

An operational solar farm is located directly to the east of the site, on the opposite side of the adjacent railway line. That solar farm was subject to a grant of planning permission dated 28th January 2014 (ref. 13/01697/FUL - "Solar PV development and associated works. To include the installation of ground based racking systems, mounted solar panels, power inverter stations, transformer stations, sub-station and comms building, fencing, associated access gates and tracks, and CCTV security cameras mounted on free standing support poles.")

The proposed development would involve the following distinct phases:

- construction phase - approximately 20 weeks;
- operation phase - 40 years; and
- de-commissioning phase - approximately 20 weeks,

and comprises the following:

Solar Panels

Solar panels would be installed on rows of 'tables'. These would be a maximum of 3m above ground level. The panels would be dark blue or black and would face due south. There would be at least 80cm between the bottom of the panels and the ground to facilitate sheep grazing in and around the panels. Documentation submitted with the application states that it is anticipated that there would be a minimum of 3.2 metres between rows to allow maintenance and associated farming activity. However, final row spacing would depend on ground conditions and detailed engineering design.

Substation Building

A proposed substation building, measuring approximately 3.3 metres in height, 6.2 metres in length and 3.2 metres in width, would be of metal/fibreglass construction, coloured light grey or moss green. It would be sited at the north eastern extremity of the site close to the bridge where the county highway passes over the railway line.

Switchgear Building

A proposed switchgear building, measuring approximately 3.3 metres in height, 6.2 metres in length and 3.2 metres in width, would be of metal construction, coloured light grey or moss green. It would be sited adjacent to the proposed substation building.

Inverter Cabins

These would be metal structures, coloured light grey or moss green, measuring approximately 12.2 metres in length, 3.1 metres in width and 3.2 metres in height. 7 no. such structures would be placed on the site; five alongside the access track which would run in a north / south direction in the central part of the site and two alongside the access track that would run near to the eastern boundary at the southern part of the site.

Storage / Communications Buildings

Two metal / fibreglass buildings are proposed for communications equipment and/or storage. These would be of metal construction, coloured light grey or moss green, measuring approximately 7 metres in length, 3 metres in width and 3 metres in height. These would be sited immediately to the south of the substation and switchgear buildings.

Battery Containers

Battery containers are proposed, in the form of standard metal, light grey / moss green shipping containers, which would be approximately 12.2 metres in length, 2.4 metres in width and 2.6m in height. 4 no. such containers would be sited to the north west of the substation and switchgear buildings.

Access Track, Fence, Gates and CCTV

The site would be accessed by approximately a 4 metres wide crushed stone access track and would be enclosed by a 2 metres high wooden post and metal wire deer fence with occasional metal gates. The posts would be spaced between 4 metres and 8 metres apart. Static CCTV cameras would be located along the fence lines both along the external boundaries of the site and internally within the site as well, generally every 50 metres apart, on metal poles up to 3 metres in height. Overall, there would be approximately 53 metal poles with one CCTV camera provided on each such pole.

Other Works

Other specific works would take place on the site including landscaping, the proposed vehicular access and biodiversity enhancements.

Included as part of the planning application submission are the following drawings and documents:

Drawings

- o Location Plan scale 1:25000 (A3 paper) dated 9 October 2018
- o Location Plan scale 1:5000 (A3 paper) dated 9 October 2018
- o Solar Farm Layout, Rev A1, 182-02-PV-Bindwell Lane, dated 18/05/2020
- o Racking Details, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019
- o 33KV Substation Housing, Rev A1, dated 18/03/2019
- o 33KV Switchgear Housing, Rev A1, dated 19/09/2019
- o Inverter / Transformer Detail, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019
- o Storage / Comms Building, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019
- o Battery / Storage Container, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019
- o Fence Detail, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019
- o CCTV Detail, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019

Documents

- o Planning, Design and Access Statement (17/12/2019), prepared by Intelligent Alternatives Ltd
- o Indicative Traffic Management Plan (12/12/2019), prepared by Intelligent Alternatives Ltd
- o Indicative Traffic Management Plan Revision A (05/11/2020), prepared by Intelligent Alternatives Ltd (submitted in response to Highway Authority's comments regarding speed survey, visibility splays based on speed survey results, amended swept path analysis and associated design changes)
- o Flood Risk Assessment Incorporating Sustainable Drainage Strategy (11/09/2018), prepared by Nijhuis Industries Ltd
- o Updated Flood Risk Assessment Incorporating Sustainable Drainage Strategy (03/11/2020), prepared by Nijhuis Industries Ltd (based on infiltration testing as requested by the LLFA and a subsequently revised approach to drainage using the ditches on the site)
- o Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (October 2018), prepared by Amalgam Landscape - including Location Plan (Figure 1), Site Analysis (Figure 2), Cumulative Solar Schemes (Figure 3), Landscape Relevant Designations (Figure 4), Landscape Character (Figure 5), Topography (Figure 6), Principal Visual Amenity Receptors (Figure 7) and Landscape Masterplan (Figure 8)
- o Historic Environment desk based Assessment (August 2018), prepared by AH Heritage Planning

- o Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (24/10/2018), prepared by Quantock Ecology
- o Biodiversity Enhancement, prepared by Next Energy Capital
- o Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study (August 2020), prepared by Next Power SPV8 Ltd
- o Agricultural Land Classification (August 2018), prepared by Soil Environment Services Ltd

RELEVANT HISTORY

Application Site

18/04003/EIASS. Proposed solar farm and associated equipment - EIA not required.

18/00295/EIASS. Proposed solar farm and associated equipment - EIA not required.

15/02779/EIASS. Proposed 8 hectares Photovoltaic Park - EIA not required.

Sutton Bridge Solar Park site

This is the existing solar park site on Land OS 4200, Sutton Montis Road, Queen Camel which lies immediately to the east of the railway line and current the application site

13/01697/FUL. Solar PV development and associated works. To include the installation of ground based racking systems, mounted solar panels, power inverter stations, transformer stations, sub -station and comms building, fencing, associated access gates and tracks, and CCTV security cameras mounted on free standing support poles.

Application permitted with conditions 28.01.2014.

12/04622/EIASS - Screening opinion for a proposed solar PV installation - EIA not required

POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), and Paragraphs 2, 11, 12, and 14 of the NPPF states that applications are to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a general duty on local planning authorities when determining planning applications as respect listed buildings and states:

"in considering whether to grant planning permission, or permission in principle, for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any feature of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."

Similarly, Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a general duty on local planning authorities when determining planning applications as respects conservation areas and states:

"In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area.....special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."

For the purposes of determining current applications the Local Planning Authority considers that the adopted development plan comprises the policies of the South Somerset Local Plan

2006 2028 (adopted March 2015).

Policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 -2028)

SD1 - Sustainable Development
EQ1 - Addressing Climate Change in South Somerset
EQ2 - General Development
EQ3 - Historic Environment
EQ4 - Biodiversity
EQ5 - Green Infrastructure
EQ7 - Pollution Control
EP5 - Farm Diversification
TA5 - Transport Impact of new development
TA6 - Parking Standards

Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan 2019 to 2030

A Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for Queen Camel parish has been prepared and pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14) took place between May and July 2019. Currently, the NP has reached the examination stage, with the independent examiner having published her report on 1st June 2020. The examiner has concluded that, subject to certain policy modifications, the NP can proceed to referendum. Thus it is at an advanced stage but has yet to go through the referendum process.

On 3rd September 2020, the Council's District Executive Committee voted to accept the Examiner's recommendations on the Queen Camel NP. The decision Statement and referendum version of the NP have been posted on the Council's web site. It should be noted that Regulations linked to the Coronavirus Act 2020 mean that no elections or referendums can take place until 6 May 2021. This includes neighbourhood planning referendums. These provisions are being kept under review by the Government and may be amended or revoked in response to changing circumstances. In the meantime, Planning Practice Guidance states that neighbourhood plans awaiting referendums can be given significant weight in decision-making.

The NP (referendum version, May 2020) contains no policies directly relating to renewable energy projects. Policies considered to be relevant in respect of this application proposal are:

Policy QC5 - Business and Employment
Policy QC8 - Improving Public Footpaths and Creating Cycle Paths / Bridleways
Policy QC12 - The Rural Setting of the Village and Key Views
Policy QC13 - Conserving and Enhancing Local Heritage Assets
Policy QC14 - Archaeology
Policy QC15 - Community Consultation

National Planning Policy Framework - February 2019

Chapter 2 - Achieving sustainable development
Chapter 4 - Decision-making
Chapter 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
Chapter 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities
Chapter 11 - Making effective use of land
Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed places
Chapter 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Chapter 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

National Planning Practice Guidance

National Design Guide, September 2019

Somerset Minerals Plan

Queen Camel falls within a Mineral Safeguarding Area. Policy SMP9 refers.

Policy-related Material Considerations

Somerset County Council Parking Strategy (September 2013)

Somerset County Council Highways Development Control - Standing Advice (June 2017)

CONSULTATIONS

Queen Camel Parish Council

Queen Camel Parish Council voted 4 members in support and 3 members against this application. Therefore the Parish Council supports this application.

South Cadbury and Sutton Montis Parish Council

Raises no objections or observation and therefore supports the proposed development.

Sparkford Parish Council

Does not feel that another large installation around Queen Camel is necessary as there is already a large solar panel array at Windsor Farm. Concerns are also raised about the visual impact.

Marston Magna Parish Council - No comments received.

Rimpton Parish Council - No comments received.

Corton Denham Parish Council - No comments received.

County Highway Authority

No objections subject to conditions.

SSDC Highway Consultant

Refer to advice and recommendation from Highway Authority.

SSDC Environmental Health

Given that the proposed substation and switchgear buildings are located over 300m away from residential properties the noise impact will be negligible. No objections are raised but conditions are recommended in respect of the submission of a method statement detailing the working methods to be employed on site during the construction, hours of any noise emissions and no burning of materials on site.

County Public Rights of Way Team

There is a public right of way (PROW) recorded on the Definitive Map that runs through the site at the present time (restricted byway WN 23/41) and a PROW that runs adjacent to the site (public footpath WN 23/18). Consideration must be given to all lawful users of the restricted byway WN 23/41 which encompasses pedestrians, horse riders, pedal cyclists and users of non-mechanically propelled vehicles.

No objections raised subject to the proposed access track requiring surface authorisation from SCC Rights of Way Group where it crosses the restricted byway WN 23/41. Associated infrastructure may be required.

Lead Local Flood Authority

No objections subject to a condition being attached to any grant of planning permission requiring the submission of details of a surface water drainage scheme, based on sustainable drainage principles, together with details of a programme of implementation and maintenance for the lifetime of the development.

Environment Agency - No comments received.

Wessex Water

No objections subject to measures to protect the existing public water main which crosses the site being fully implemented in accordance with details to be agreed with the Planning Authority and Wessex Water.

County Ecology Team

No objections subject to conditions being recommended to secure ecological mitigation and biodiversity enhancement measures.

Natural England

Comments offered regarding reverting the land back to agriculture once the development is no longer need. No objections raised subject to the imposition of a condition relating to soil management within a submitted Construction Environment Management Plan.

Network Rail

No objections are raised although, as the applicant is already aware following discussions with Network Rail's Asset Protection (ASPRO) team, the applicant must engage with ASPRO at a later stage once there is a more detailed construction methodology and programme drawn up.

Ministry of Defence

No objections.

Crime Reduction and Designing Out Crime Officer, Avon and Somerset Police

No objections.

South West Heritage Trust - No comments received.

SSDC Conservation Specialist - No comments received.

SSDC Tree Officer - No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

Seven third parties have been notified, a site notice displayed and an advertisement has been placed in the local newspaper. Eight representations objecting to the application and one representation in support have been received and are set out in full on the website.

The objections include very detailed comments and reasons raised by the CPRE Somerset both in response to submitted documentation included within the application submission and in response to comments made by the applicant's agent. The objections are set out in detail in letters dated 14th May, 23rd June, 17th September and 24th November 2020 and will not be copied within this report. Nevertheless the conclusions and other comments set out by the CPRE in its correspondence can be summarised as follows, in no particular order:

- o Adverse impacts on landscape, village character, footpaths and amenity contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan Policies 5 (this states that there should be no adverse impacts on the character of the area arising from business and employment proposals), 8 (footpaths), and 12 (Environment); and SSDC LP Policy EQ2, which seeks to conserve and enhance the landscape character of the area, and reinforce local distinctiveness and respect local context.
- o Adverse cumulative effects arising from the location of the proposal adjacent to an operational solar farm at Sutton Bridge, in conflict with the provisions of NPPF para 151, and government Planning Policy Guidance for renewable and low carbon energy proposals, last updated 1 October 2019.
- o The submitted LVIA relies on the assertion that only 'glimpses' of the site will be seen. This assessment is patently inaccurate as a site visit will confirm. It also takes no account of

the visual impact on walkers along the lane. The western and southern site boundaries are lined by a thinned out and unmanaged hedge with multiple gaps. The road along Sutton Lane is unhedged for long stretches. If this project is approved, the landscape looking south from Sutton Bridge and its lengthy approaches will be completely dominated by solar panels almost as far as the eye can see.

- o Non-compliance with Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan Policy 15 (Community Consultation) and LP Policy SS2 which requires robust consultation and engagement.

- o There is potentially no longer any economic justification for the large scale of this proposal or the use of a Greenfield site in this sensitive location immediately adjacent to a rural settlement, following the government's recent announcement of the re-introduction of a subsidy scheme for solar farms, which would make smaller and brownfield sites viable. (The decision on this application should at least be deferred until these subsidies are announced so that an informed decision can be taken as to whether a smaller scheme would be viable).

- o It is acknowledged that community benefits are not a material planning consideration. It nevertheless remains the case that the applicant has offered a one-off sum of £15,000 in community benefits which falls far below what Cornwall and Dorset have achieved in their negotiations with Solar PV developers. The government has now announced that it will consider commissioning a register of renewable projects in England and their associated benefits to incentivise best practice and standardise approaches. Although at present there appears to be no means of requiring an applicant to abide by good practice, it nevertheless is indisputable that the offer made in this case is woefully inadequate and does not conform with good practice.

- o This planning application was explicitly based on the argument that the scale of the installation needs to be so large precisely because it would not benefit from subsidy. This basis no longer exists. Solar PV are to be included in the CfD subsidy regime for next year. This being the case, there is no longer sufficient justification for such a large development to dominate the Queen Camel landscape. A much smaller development could be viable with the benefit of the CfD subsidy, although the CPRE considers that the site is not an appropriate one. The result of placing two solar farms adjacent to each other is that they will dominate the landscape and change its character. This is precisely the situation that government guidelines aims to avoid.

Objections raised by other third parties have included similar concerns to those raised by the CPRE and in particular include in summary (again in no particular order):

- o The scale and visual aspects will leave an ugly scar on this very tranquil and attractive corner of Queen Camel. This proposal, when combined with the adjacent solar farm at Sutton Bridge, will be very visible from a number of the national footpaths in the area including along the Monarch's Way and Macmillan Way, especially from the Corton Denham ridge, and also from Cadbury Castle. No amount of screening will hide the vast array of solar panels and the buildings and CCTV camera poles of 3 metres in height. Furthermore there are at least two other solar farms within a reasonably close distance and visible from the overlooking higher ground which, along with this proposal, will add to the spoilt views of the rural and peaceful countryside with industrial type development.

- o The exaggeration of hedgerow height and density shown in submitted photographs, especially in the winter months, mean that hedgerows will not mitigate the impact of what would be an extensive development on currently productive farmland.

- o Inadequate biodiversity enhancements as a result of such large scale development.

- o Loss of agricultural land.

- o Concern about noise generation from the machinery within the proposed buildings to be constructed / placed on the site background hum and at times during the summer relatively loud noise from cooling fans / vents..

- o Concern about loss of privacy from CCTV cameras.

- o Proximity of Camel Farm and Camel Farm Cottage which are grade II Listed Buildings - the development will change their setting and overall character.

- o Road safety concerns.

- o There has been no advanced consultation with the community for this type of

commercial development and the impact it will have on the village and its rural setting.

- o Suggestion that the use of PV technology is outdated and in a few years clean, reliable, renewable energy will not be supplied by these types of development.
- o Suggested mitigation measures, including effective year round screening, provision of effective noise screening from vents and fans, and reduction in size of the proposed development and limiting it to the fields closest to the railway line.

The one representation of support comments that:

- o Reducing emissions from coal and gas fired power stations through renewable energy sources is not only sensible but essential. Solar is cheap to install and maintain, far less costly than conventional power stations, and safer.
- o This proposal is for panels mounted such that sheep can graze beneath them, giving dual use to the land and providing shade for animals in hot weather. Noise is not an issue, there will be a slight hum in a remote location. Visual impact is entirely subjective - a field with panels generating clean energy can be seen as very attractive.

CONSIDERATION

Principle of development

The National Planning Policy Framework advises that, when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emission. Also, to approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable (paragraph 154).

Local Plan Policy EQ1 is applicable in considering renewable energy proposals. Bullet point 3 states that 'Development of renewable and low carbon energy generation will be encouraged and permitted, providing there are no significant adverse impacts upon residential and visual amenity, landscape character, designated heritage assets, and biodiversity.' Policy EQ2 also refers to the need to safeguard landscape character of the area and visual appearance is clearly a weighty matter in considering environmental harm.

While it might be preferable for brown field sites to be considered before green field agricultural land there is no requirement for developers to consider brown field sites in the first instant. The supporting information indicates that the land on which the arrays are to be located and fenced is a little less than one third Grade 3a good quality agricultural land and two thirds 3b moderate quality agricultural land. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF advises that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other considerations, recognising the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. There is no relevant policy within the Local Plan specifically applicable to agricultural land protection.

The land is proposed to be continued in agricultural use and as such the use, as well as scale of the good quality land involved, is not considered sufficient reason to seek to refuse the proposal. Any permission would be for a long-term but temporary basis for a period of 41 years (construction phase, approximately 20 weeks; operation phase, 40 years; and de-commissioning phase, approximately 20 weeks). A condition can be imposed to require the site's restoration following cessation of its approved use should the site become redundant; and on this basis the principle of the use of this agricultural land for the purpose of a solar farm is considered acceptable. Accordingly the main considerations for this application relate to landscape character and visual appearance, impact on heritage assets, highway safety, residential amenity, food risk and drainage, and biodiversity.

Landscape Character and Visual Appearance

The site lies within the National Character Area 140, Yeovil Scarplands. This has key characteristics including contrasting and varied, but complementary rhythm of scarps and vales, with a rural agricultural character with distinct pastoral, mixed and arable areas, and manor houses and large mansions in landscaped parks.

At local level, the application site falls within *Region 7: Central Plain, Moors and River Basins* as indicated in the South Somerset District Council's landscape character assessment (*The Landscape of Somerset, 1993*). *Region 7: Central Plain, Moors and River Basins* is described as a large area of low lying clay lands framed between the escarpments of hills. It has a gentle landform, with a series of rolling ridges and shallow vales through which water courses, including numerous rivers flow, creating broad pastures. The land-use is mixed with large areas of arable on the ridges and 'islands' giving way to permanent grassland in the river corridor, floodplain and moors. Population density is low with settlements confined to the better drained ridges and hillocks.

The *Lower Lias Clay Vales, Rivers and Flood Plains character zone* extends across this region and is characterised by its rural character. It has an attractive field pattern divided by mature hedgerows scattered with numerous oaks also lining droves and lanes. This great expanse is crossed by numerous watercourses, mostly well-defined by alders and willows. On the 'islands' hedgerows are generally kept low and hedgerow trees infrequent.

The Monarch's Way/Macmillan Way recreational route lies approximately 2.5km to the east of the application site at its closest point. Expansive views in a westerly direction are available from high, prominent open sections of the Monarch's Way route over the adjacent lower flat to gently sloping farmland, scattered with settlements, including contained operational solar schemes.

In close proximity to the application site is the operational solar park at Sutton Bridge. Lying about 2.1km to the west of the site is another operational solar development on Land at Southfield Farm and also approximately 2.5km to the south west the operational solar development at The Cypress House Road. These operational developments are on flat to gently sloping land within the predominantly agricultural landscape

The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) makes reference to the cumulative impact of the current proposal alongside the current operational solar schemes. It advises that cumulative assessment is concerned with the 'additional' effects of the proposed development when perceived with other operational, consented or pending planning solar schemes. The cumulative assessment considers the additional impacts and effects on landscape character, landscape relevant designations and visual amenity receptors and their views. In relation to visual amenity receptors, there are two types of impact. These include (i) combined impacts which occur when the receptor is able to perceive two or more developments from one viewpoint, in combination or in succession; and (ii) sequential impacts which occur when the receptor has to move to another viewpoint to see different solar developments, travelling along regularly used routes such as major roads or popular or recognised public rights of way.

The operational Sutton Bridge solar park immediately to the east of the proposed development, and the other operational solar schemes to the west and south-west, are situated within the same landscape character zone as the proposed development, the *Lower Lias Clay Vales, Rivers and Flood Plains*.

The LVIA contends that the proposed development and the operational solar schemes would be absorbed into this rural and expansive landscape, with an attractive field pattern divided by mature hedgerows scattered with numerous oaks with limited to no additional cumulative effects on landscape character. The characteristic regular and strong field pattern screens the wider cumulative influence of solar schemes on the landscape. Even when perceived in combination with the immediately adjacent Sutton Bridge operational solar scheme, the strong

enclosure by mature vegetation within the flat to gently sloping landscape ensures that there would be very few locations where the existing and proposed solar schemes can be perceived in combination and influence landscape character. Although there is the potential for the proposed development to be perceived in combination with the immediately adjacent operational solar development, but only fleetingly and from gaps in the surrounding vegetation from the elevated railway bridge between the solar schemes, in reality, any cumulative effects on landscape character would be extremely restricted.

In summary, the submitted LVIA states that the proposed development would:

- o add a relatively contained built element to the landscape;
- o avoid and will not have a direct or indirect influence on any designated landscapes;
- o be set within the regular landscape pattern within mature and well-vegetated field boundaries, which will be protected and enhanced through additional planting, including in-fill planting to the existing boundaries, where necessary and promotion and growth of the new species rich and native hedgerows and tree planting;
- o result in the additional provision of new species rich vegetation, which will enhance both the landscape pattern and increase screening for nearby visual amenity receptors;
- o only be intermittently overlooked from in very close proximity, from gaps in enclosure and/or elevated locations along minor roads, its influence dramatically reducing over time and swiftly with distance from the proposed development site. Although selectively initially perceived, the proposed development will be a contained built element, set within a well-vegetated landscape, whose influence will very quickly diminish with time, notwithstanding it is temporary and reversible;
- o be occasionally perceived adjacent and in combination with the operational solar scheme immediately to the east. The addition of the proposed development will not significantly increase the perception of numerous solar schemes on either the landscape or views and therefore there will be limited cumulative effects as a result of the proposed development; and
- o overall, would have very limited impacts on landscape relevant designations, landscape character and visual amenity receptors and their views.

This is strongly disputed by the CPRE and third party objectors who are firmly opposed to what they consider to be the unacceptable cumulative landscape and visual impacts of placing the proposed solar farm adjacent to an operational solar farm at this particular prominent location in the Queen Camel landscape. The impact of adjacent renewable energy sites at this location is that the proposed development would become a significant or defining character of the landscape as seen from Sutton Bridge and the lengthy approaches either side of it, and from multiple viewpoints in the wider landscape and along the site periphery. In this case, the immediate proximity to the settlement and the consequent number of walkers along Sutton road would aggravate the cumulative impacts. The hedges surrounding the proposed site are unmanaged and thin, and both full views and glimpses of the site are available at multiple points all along the boundary. Furthermore there is very little vegetation cover on the long approaches either side of Sutton Bridge. The existing operational solar farm is highly visible and prominent in the landscape, and when combined with this much larger proposed adjacent solar farm, the combined cumulative effect would be that the solar panel arrays would become a feature in many views and a significant or defining characteristic of the wider landscape looking southwards from Sutton Bridge and its lengthy approaches. The submitted LVIA depends for its assessment of 'minimal' cumulative impacts on the inaccurate assertion that only a 'fleeting' glimpse of the arrays will be seen. The CPRE disagrees with this and opines that the LVIA ignores the multiple views of the adjacent sites from the lengthy unscreened approaches along the road to the bridge, and from the numerous gaps in the unmanaged hedges around the long periphery of the proposal site, and from overlooking higher ground. It also ignores the impact on walkers, of which there are many due to the proximity to the settlement.

Officers consider that the proposed development would be visually noticeable within the landscape, particularly when viewed from the more immediate views from Sutton Bridge itself which looks down onto the site and from other open sections of the road. Taken cumulatively

with the existing solar park to the east of the site, such impact would be significant and demonstrable from such vantage points. Due to the height of the bridge above the site, it would be very difficult for any new landscaping to effectively screen the proposed buildings and array of solar panels to be constructed. However, from wider more distant views and from closer views where land levels are similar to those of the application site, having regard to existing vegetation screening on boundaries and proposed new landscaping, the proposal itself would have the potential to be accommodated within the context of the wider landscape without undue impact, and the site's visual profile is low in most part.

Nevertheless, whilst there are potentially grounds on which to base a landscape objection, 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, the extent of the expressed landscape impact from the more immediate views is not considered to be of such an extent to be sufficiently adverse to generate an overriding landscape objection, subject to conditions including the granting of a temporary permission only in order that the land can be restored to its agricultural use once the solar park is decommissioned. The solar array would be glimpsed nearby the site, but seen amid field boundaries and at a distance the additional planting and site management that sees raised hedgerow heights, despite their deciduous nature, is considered, favourably mitigates in support of the solar arrays presence.

Impact on Heritage Assets

The Conservation Specialist has not raised any concerns with the site's relationship and possible impact on heritage assets. The siting of the solar array and its distance from the nearby designated heritage assets are such that it is considered that the development would result in no harm to the settings of these designated heritage assets, or at the very worst would cause "less than substantial harm" at a lower scale of such harm. On that basis, due regard should be had to paragraph 196 of the NPPF which advises that, where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, then such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. Mindful of the Government's commitment to the principle of renewable energy projects, it is considered that the public benefit that would accrue as a result of this proposed development would outweigh any perceived low level of "less than substantial harm" that would accrue to the settings of some or all of the nearby designated heritage assets.

Paragraph 199 of the NPPF requires developers to record and advance understanding of any heritage asset to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.

It is recommended that the applicant be required to provide archaeological monitoring of the development and a report on any discoveries made as indicated in the NPPF. This should be secured by the use of a planning condition attached to any permission granted. The imposition of such a condition is considered to be both reasonable and necessary.

Highway Safety

The County Highway Authority has stated that, as a fully functioning solar farm, the level of traffic associated with the site would be minimal and as such raises no objections to the principle of the development. Whilst it is recognised that the access point onto this site is existing, during the course of the 24 week construction phase the use of this access will increase between 08:00 and 18:00 to approximately 2 to 3 large vehicles per hour. It is presumed that these larger vehicles will be in addition to other site personal vehicles. This road is covered by the national speed limit of 60 mph. In addition, it is noted that all deliveries will be conducted on site, and that a site compound is to be created.

However, further detail was requested by the Highway Authority regarding access visibility splays and the construction of the access. In order for this proposal to be fully acceptable in

highway terms amendments were requested in respect of re-positioning the access road at right angles to the existing highway; there to be no loose or unbound material used in the surface treatment of the access within 20m of the highway boundary; any gates to be erected across the access road to be inward opening and set back no less than 20m from the highway boundary; the access to be provided with vehicle visibility splays measuring 2.4m x 215m in both directions (or if these splays could not be achieved, evidence by way of a speed survey to the effect that a reduction in visibility splay provision will not cause a highway safety issue).

Such amended details have been submitted, including details regarding a Construction traffic Management Plan, and the Highway Authority confirms that it has no objections to the proposed development subject to conditions relating to access provision, hardsurfacing, entrance gates, surface water disposal provision, parking and turning of vehicles and no obstruction to visibility.

Residential amenity

Objections have been raised by local residents including issues relating to noise and privacy issues arising from the development.

On the first issue, the Environmental Health Officer has raised no objections. Given that the proposed substation and switchgear buildings are located over 300m away from residential properties, he comments that the noise impact would be negligible. In any event, it should be noted that, if in the opinion of the LPA unacceptable noise pollution does occur in the future, further action could be taken by the LPA under separate "environmental" health legislation.

In response to the second concern about potential loss of privacy for local residents due to the siting and height of the CCTV cameras, the submitted Planning, Design and Access Statement states that static CCTV cameras will be located along the fence line. The intention is that the recording envelope of the CCTV cameras would not penetrate outside of the immediate solar farm boundaries and therefore there would be no risk of privacy infringement. Also, that the proposed cameras would have a fixed field of vision directed along the perimeter and inwards towards the solar farm. It is recommended that a condition is imposed ensuring that the field of vision of each camera is fixed as so described and there is no subsequent variation to allow a greater field of vision for any of the cameras without the prior written approval of the LPA.

In addition, in order to safeguard residential amenity, a condition is recommended stating that no form of audible alarm shall be installed on site without the prior written agreement of the LPA.

Flood Risk and Drainage

Due to the nature of the site and location of the panels throughout the site, rainfall could be concentrated in one area due to the nature of the development. This could cause waterlogging of the ground, and increase run off, which can be mitigated by the use of a gravel trench/infiltration system to encourage infiltration to ground.

The LLFA recommends no objection subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the provision of a construction stage drainage strategy to include details to demonstrate that during the construction phase measures will be in place to prevent unrestricted discharge, and pollution to the receiving system. This should also include information on the installation of the panels and associated access and demonstrate how soil compaction will be prevented. Any compaction of the soil and lack of vegetation cover will increase both run off and pollution to receiving watercourses, therefore, there must be ongoing consideration into the operation and maintenance of the site and drainage strategy.

Wessex Water raises no objections but wishes to see specific details of the measures to be used to protect the existing public water main which crosses the site. A condition to this effect is recommended.

Biodiversity

Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that the impact of development on wildlife is fully considered during the determination of a planning application under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations 2017). Policy EQ4 of the Local Plan also require proposals to pay consideration to the impact of development on wildlife and to provide mitigation measures where appropriate.

The County Ecologist notes that a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the application site was carried out by Quantock Ecology in October 2018. This report recommends that badger surveys be carried shortly before construction commences, measures to harm dormice and nesting birds.

The County Ecologist raises no objections but recommends the imposition of conditions relating to the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan and a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan.

Impact on Railway Users

Consultation has taken place with Network Rail. A Glint and Glare assessment has been undertaken which concludes that, from the review of the available imagery, views of the proposed development would be screened by terrain and existing vegetation and therefore a train driver passing through that stretch of railway would not see the proposed development and would not experience a solar reflection in practice.

Network Rail has raised no objections but will carry out direct liaison with the applicant regarding a more detailed construction methodology and programme.

Other Matters

Detailed comments have been raised by the CPRE regarding the inadequate community benefits being offered/paid by the applicant and that the applicant has carried out no prior consultation with the local community.

On the first point, the Courts have judged that the fact that a matter may be regarded as desirable (for example, as being of benefit to the local community or wider public) does not in itself make that matter a material consideration for planning purposes. For a consideration to be material, it must have a planning purpose (i.e. it must relate to the character or the use of land, and not be solely for some other purpose no matter how well-intentioned and desirable that purpose may be) and it must fairly and reasonably relate to the permitted development (i.e. there must be a real—as opposed to a fanciful, remote, trivial or de minimis—connection with the development)—criteria are known as the Newbury criteria. In addition, another important principle for local authorities is to ensure that there is not the perception at any time of permissions being bought or sold by way of developers offering inducements to the residents/public.

The detailed comments made about community benefit payments and benefits are not considered to be overriding material planning considerations when determining the merits of this application. The government may encourage local communities to enter into negotiations with solar companies for community benefits but this is not part of the planning considerations and therefore would be a matter the local community needs to take up direct with the applicants.

In response to the second point, both the Local Plan Policy SS2 and Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan Policy QC15 encourage consultation with the local community prior to the submission of a formal planning application. This is an approach encouraged in the NPPF. However, the absence of such pre-application discussions is not an overriding reasons to refuse a planning application. The policies. The policies seek to encourage such discussion rather than to make it compulsory to do so.

Conclusion

Government advice states that local planning authorities should approve applications for renewable energy projects where impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Notwithstanding local concerns, 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 impact of the proposed PV panels on the local landscape character and heritage assets. . In addition, the proposal would not cause significant and demonstrable detriment to highway safety, residential amenity, flood risk and drainage and biodiversity interests. 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, Policies SD1, EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4, EQ5, EQ7, EP5, TA5 and TA6 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant policies and aims within the Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan.

01. Government advice states that local planning authorities should approve applications for renewable energy projects where impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Notwithstanding local concerns, 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 impact of the proposed PV panels on the local landscape character and heritage assets. . In addition, the proposal would not cause significant and demonstrable detriment to highway safety, residential amenity, flood risk and drainage and biodiversity interests. 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, Policies SD1, EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4, EQ5, EQ7, EP5, TA5 and TA6 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant policies and aims within the Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan.

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 drawings:

- Location Plan scale 1:25000 (A3 paper) dated 9 October 2018
- Location Plan scale 1:5000 (A3 paper) dated 9 October 2018
- Solar Farm Layout, Rev C2, 182-02-PV-Bindwell Lane, dated 18/05/2020
- Racking Details, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019
- 33KV Substation Housing, Rev A1, dated 18/03/2019
- 33KV Switchgear Housing, Rev A1, dated 19/09/2019
- Inverter / Transformer Detail, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019
- Storage / Comms Building, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019
- Battery / Storage Container, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019
- Fence Detail, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019
- CCTV Detail, Rev A1, dated 01/08/2019

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 within 41 years of the date of this permission 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 the NPPF and Policies EQ1, EQ2 and EQ5 of the South Somerset Local Plan and Policy QC12 of the Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan.

04. No development shall be commenced until details of the surface water drainage scheme, based on sustainable drainage principles, together with details of a programme of implementation and maintenance for the lifetime of the development, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This scheme shall aim to enhance biodiversity, amenity value, water quality and provide flood risk benefit (i.e. four pillars of SuDS) to meet wider sustainability aims and shall ensure that surface water runoff post development is attenuated on site and discharged at a rate and volume no greater than greenfield runoff rates and volumes. Such works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, and thereafter so retained and maintained.

These details shall include:

a) Details for provision of any temporary drainage during construction. This should include details to demonstrate that during the construction phase measures will be in place to prevent unrestricted discharge, and pollution to the receiving system. There must also be due consideration to the compacting of soil during the construction of a solar site. Compaction of the soil and lack of vegetation cover will increase both run off and pollution to receiving watercourses.

b) Information about the design storm period and intensity, discharge rates and volumes (both pre and post development), temporary storage facilities, means of access for maintenance (6 metres minimum), the sustainable methods employed to delay and control surface water discharged from the site, and the measures taken to prevent flooding and pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface waters.

c) Any works required on and off site to ensure adequate discharge of surface water without causing flooding or pollution (which should include refurbishment of existing culverts and headwalls or removal of unused culverts where relevant).

d) Flood water exceedance routes both on and off site, note, no part of the site must be allowed to flood during any storm up to and including the 1 in 30 event, flooding during storm events in excess of this including the 1 in 100yr (plus 40% allowance for climate change) must be controlled within the designed exceedance routes demonstrated to prevent flooding or damage to properties.

e) Provision to be made within the site for the disposal of surface water so as to prevent its discharge onto the highway.

f) A management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by an appropriate public body or statutory undertaker, management company and / or any other arrangements to secure the operation and maintenance to an approved standard and working condition throughout the lifetime of the development. There must be ongoing consideration into the operation and maintenance of the site and drainage strategy. The applicant must ensure that the ground cover and vegetation is maintained appropriately.

Reason: The agreement of details of a surface water drainage scheme and a programme of implementation and maintenance for the lifetime of the development prior to commencement of development is fundamental to ensure that the development is served by a satisfactory system of surface water drainage, which will aim to enhance biodiversity, amenity value, water quality and provide flood risk benefits (i.e. four pillars of SuDS) to meet wider sustainability aims, and that the approved system is retained,

managed and maintained throughout the lifetime of the development, in accordance with Policy EQ1 of the South Somerset Local Plan, relevant guidance within the NPPF and the Technical Guidance to the NPPF.

05. Prior to commencement of the development hereby permitted, measures to protect the existing public water main which crosses the site shall be fully implemented in accordance with details which shall be previously submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with Wessex Water. Such details shall be shown on submitted plans and shall include the following:

- a) The precise location of the water main within the application site, a 6 metres buffer zone either side and along the entire length of the outer pipe, and measures to be carried out to clearly physically identify the positioning of the water main on the site itself.
- b) Details of all access tracks, whether of a temporary or permanent nature, including their construction type, depth of excavations below ground, means of hardening and draining, within the 6 metres buffer zone.
- c) Details of all cabling to be installed within the 6 metres buffer zone.
- d) Details of all piling to be carried out within the 6 metres buffer zone.
- e) Details of fence post positions and depths within the 6 metres buffer zone.

Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (or any Order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order), at no time shall any buildings, structures, solar panels, portacabins or similar be erected, constructed, stationed or placed within the 6 metres buffer zone

Such approved details shall be strictly adhered to during the course of the development, and there shall be no variations to such approved details without prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Wessex Water, and thereafter so retained and maintained as such.

Reason: The imposition of a pre-commencement condition is considered appropriate to enable the Local Planning Authority and Wessex Water to fully assess all works to be carried out within a 6 metres buffer zone either side of the public water main which crosses the application site and to ensure there is no damage caused to said water main which is a critical public infrastructure asset prior to commencement of the development hereby permitted in the interests of public amenity, having regard to Policies EQ2 and EQ7 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant guidance within the NPPF.

06. No development shall commence unless a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), including a method statement detailing the working methods to be employed on site during the construction works (and preparation associated with construction works), has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, throughout the construction period, the approved details within the CEMP shall be strictly adhered to.

The CEMP shall include:

- a) The hours of construction operations, and deliveries to and removal of plant, equipment, machinery and waste from the site. Such construction works and deliveries shall be carried out only between 08.00 hours and 18.00 hours Mondays to Fridays; 08.00 hours and 13.00 hours on Saturdays, and at no times on Sundays and Bank or Public Holidays, unless the Local Planning Authority gives prior written agreement to any changes in the stated hours.

- b) Measures (including screening) to control the emission of dust, fumes, odour, mud/dirt, noise, vibration and external lighting (including security lighting) during the construction period. Regard shall be had to mitigation measures as defined in BS 5228: Parts 1 and 2: 2009 Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites.

c) A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from any construction works. There shall be no burning of materials arising on site during any phase of demolition and site clearance works and during the construction process, unless prior written approval is obtained from the Local Planning Authority.

d) Methods and means of management of soils through the construction, operation and restoration phases.

Reason: The agreement of details of a Construction Environmental Management Plan prior to the commencement of development is fundamental to ensure a satisfactory level of environmental protection; to minimise disturbance to local residents; the prevention of harm being caused to the amenity of the area; in the interests of highway safety during the construction process, and in the interests of European and UK protected species, having regard to Policies TA5, EQ1, EQ2, EQ4 and EQ7 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant guidance in the NPPF.

07. No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall include the following:

a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.

b) Identification of 'biodiversity protection zones'.

c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).

d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.

e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.

f) Responsible persons, lines of communication and written notifications of operations to the Local Planning Authority.

g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: The agreement of details of a Construction Environmental Management Plan prior to the commencement of development is fundamental to ensure a satisfactory level of environmental protection; the prevention of harm being caused to the amenity of the area; and in the interests of European and UK protected species, having regard to Policies EQ2, EQ4 and EQ7 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant guidance in the NPPF.

08. A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to, and be approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the development. The content of the LEMP shall include the following details:

a) Description and evaluation of features to be created, restored, protected and managed.

b) Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management.

c) Aims and objectives of management.

d) Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives.

e) Prescriptions for management actions.

f) Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period).

g) Details of the body or organization responsible for implementation of the plan.

h) On-going monitoring and remedial measures.

The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery. The plan 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 biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the development contributes to the Government's target of no net biodiversity loss as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy EQ4 of the South Somerset Local Plan, and the Council's obligations for biodiversity under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

09. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a detailed scheme of landscaping, which shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of the development, as well as details of any changes proposed in existing ground levels. The landscaping scheme shall include details of:

a) Planting plans (to a recognised scale) and schedules indicating the location, number, species, density, form root types/root volumes and size of proposed tree, hedge and shrub, and also including native species which occur locally and chosen to provide food for insects on which bats feed. All new trees and hedges planted on site should ideally be from local native stock, such as blackthorn, field maple, ash, hornbeam, hazel, dogwood, spindle and/or beech. All new shrubs must be high nectar producing to encourage a range of invertebrates to the site, to provide continued foraging for bats, and the shrubs must also appeal to night-flying moths which are a key food source for bats.

b) The method and specifications for operations associated with installation including ground preparation, the use of bio-degradable weed-suppressing geo-textile, staking/supporting, tying, guarding, strimmer-guarding and surface-mulching; and planting establishment, protection, management and maintenance of all retained and new tree, hedge and shrub planting.

c) Written specifications including cultivation and other operations associated with tree, plant and grass establishment.

d) Existing landscape features such as trees, hedges and shrubs which are to be retained and/or removed, accurately plotted (where appropriate).

e) Existing and proposed finished levels (to include details of grading and contouring of land and any earthworks and details showing the relationship of any proposed mounding to existing vegetation and surrounding landform where appropriate).

f) The means of accommodating change in level (e.g. retaining walls, steps, railings, walls, gates, ramps, or other supporting structures).

g) The location, type and materials to be used for hard surfacing (including where applicable for permeable paving, tree pit design, underground modular systems, sustainable urban drainage integration and use within tree Root Protection Areas), including specifications and details of manufacturer, type and design, colour and bonding pattern where appropriate. Samples may be required to be submitted and approved.

h) The position, design, materials, means of construction of all site enclosures and boundary treatments (e.g. fences, walls, railings, hedge(banks)), where appropriate.

- i) An on-going management and maintenance plan of all the approved landscaping features.
- j) A timetable for the implementation of the approved hard and soft landscaping scheme.
- k) The body or organization responsible for implementation, and subsequent management and maintenance, of the approved landscaping plan.

There shall be no excavation or raising or lowering of levels within any prescribed root protection areas of retained trees and hedges unless previously approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The approved hard and soft landscaping scheme shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved timetable of implementation and shall thereafter be protected, managed and maintained in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To clarify the level of detail of landscaping to form part of any subsequent application for reserved matters in order to safeguard and enhance the landscape character and visual amenity of the area; to help assimilate the development into its immediate surrounds; and to provide ecological, environmental and biodiversity benefits, having regard to Policies EQ2, EQ4 and EQ5 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant guidance within the NPPF.

- 10. No development hereby approved shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard any archaeological remains on the site, and to accord with the NPPF and Policy EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

- 11. The proposed access shall be constructed in accordance with details shown on the approved plans and shall be available for use prior to the importation of any materials associated with the solar panels or any foundation materials required. Once constructed the access shall be maintained thereafter in that condition at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience in accordance with Policies TA5 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant guidance within the NPPF.

- 12. There shall be no obstruction to visibility greater than 600 millimetres above adjoining road level in advance of lines drawn 2.4 metres back from the carriageway edge on the centre line of the access and extending to points on the nearside carriageway edge 49m to the west and 52m to the east of the access. Such visibility shall be fully provided before the development hereby permitted is commenced and shall thereafter be maintained at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience in accordance with Policies TA5 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant guidance within the NPPF.

- 13. Prior to the importation of any materials associated with the solar panels or any foundation materials required, the access over at least the first 20 metres of its length, as measured from the edge of the adjoining highway, shall be properly consolidated and surfaced (not loose stone or gravel) in accordance with details which shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Once constructed the access shall thereafter be maintained in that condition at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience in accordance with Policies TA5 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant guidance within the NPPF.

14. Any entrance gates erected shall be hung to open inwards, shall be set back a minimum distance of 20 metres from the carriageway edge and shall thereafter be maintained in that condition at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience in accordance with Policies TA5 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant guidance within the NPPF.

15. Any areas allocated for parking and turning of vehicles, shall be kept clear of obstruction and shall not be used other than for parking and turning of vehicles in connection with the development hereby permitted.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience in accordance with Policies TA5 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant guidance within the NPPF.

16. No CCTV equipment or other cameras shall be installed on the site other than those shown on the approved solar farm layout plan, in accordance with the CCTV design details submitted with the application. Each camera hereby permitted shall be static, shall be angled to have a fixed field of vision along the fence line and into the site, and shall be of a visual range all to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the installation of any CCTV camera on site.

There shall be no subsequent variation to allow a greater field and range of vision for any of the cameras without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity and to safeguard the rural character of the setting in accordance with the aims of the NPPF and Policies EQ1 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

17. Other than the approved lighting on the substation building hereby permitted, no other floodlighting, security lighting or other external means of illumination to light the proposed development, either directly or indirectly, shall be provided, erected, installed, placed or operated at the site, either on a permanent or, notwithstanding the provisions of Article 3, Schedule 2, Part 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification) on a temporary basis, without the prior granting of planning permission by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: The Local Planning Authority is of the opinion that there should be no external illumination operated on the site in order to safeguard the amenities of the locality having regard to Policies EQ1 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan and relevant guidance within the NPPF. Any proposed external illumination at the site, either permanent or temporary, should be made the subject of a separate planning application to be considered on its merits.

18. No form of audible alarm shall be installed on the site without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to safeguard the rural character of the setting in accordance with the aims of the NPPF and Policies EQ1, EQ2 and EQ7 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

Informatives:

01. Somerset County Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) as defined by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Flood Risk Regulations 2009. Under section 23 of the Land Drainage Act there is a legal requirement to seek consent from the relevant authority before piping/culverting or obstructing a watercourse, whether permanent or temporary. This may also include repairs to certain existing structures and maintenance works. This requirement still applies even if planning permission has been granted.

For more information, please visit

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/waste-planning-and-land/apply-for-consent-to-work-on-an-ordinary-watercourse/>

02. The applicant may find the Defra guidance on soils management helpful https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716510/pb13298-code-of-practice-090910.pdf and also the solar industry guidance which highlights soils on p.9

<http://www.solar-trade.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/BRE-Planning-Guidance-for-Solar-Farms.pdf>.

03. Development, insofar as it affects the rights of way should not be started, and the rights of way should be kept open for public use until the necessary Order (temporary closure/stopping up/diversion) or other authorisation has come into effect/ been granted. Failure to comply with this request may result in the developer being prosecuted if the path is built on or otherwise interfered with.

The health and safety of the public using the PROW must be taken into consideration during works to carry out the proposed development. Somerset County Council (SCC) has maintenance responsibilities for the surface of a PROW, but only to a standard suitable for the public use. SCC will not be responsible for putting right any damage occurring to the surface of a PROW resulting from vehicular use during or after works to carry out the proposal. It should be noted that it is an offence to drive a vehicle along a public footpath, public bridleway or restricted byway unless the driver has lawful authority (private rights) to do so.

If it is considered that the development would result in any of the outcomes listed below, then authorisation for these works must be sought from Somerset County Council Rights of Way Group:

- o A PROW being made less convenient for continued public use.
- o New furniture being needed along a PROW.
- o Changes to the surface of a PROW being needed.
- o Changes to the existing drainage arrangements associated with the PROW.

If the work involved in carrying out this proposed development would:

- o make a PROW less convenient for continued public use; or
- o create a hazard to users of a PROW,

then a temporary closure order will be necessary and a suitable alternative route must be provided. For more information, please visit Somerset County Council's Rights of Way pages to apply for a temporary closure:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/rights-of-way/apply-for-a-temporary-closure-of-a-right-of-way/>