

SOLAR ARRAY HANDOUT

What a Local Authority Planning Officer finds helpful

When looking at solar farms there are many 'receptors' to consider. These receptors can include people or places; they could be visitors to a park and garden, someone walking the Cotswold Way or someone living near to the application site.

What is useful for me as an officer is detailed information regarding the affected receptor. In the case of the Upper Wick site, there is the potential for the application to affect many historic buildings and places; what I need to know is how significant the impact of the proposed development would be on these buildings/places. We have to appreciate that any new development will have an impact but, will it be an adverse impact and if so, how adverse? If it is slight, then it means that we can focus on proposed landscaping and other mitigation, if its moderate or significant then we need to be more rigorous in our assessment of all receptors to see if the development would affect just one or many receptors.

Photographs from significant view points from historic Parks and Gardens are very welcome as you will know the sites better than us! In the case of Stancombe Park, there are many distinctive areas either with buildings or seating areas. These areas were positioned in specific locations for a reason; probably for the views. The right to a view is not a material planning consideration, but an historic setting is as are views into and out of the AONB. It is this kind of detailed information that we need as officers aren't always as familiar with listed buildings and sites as we perhaps should be. This is when we need to rely on you to draw our attention to specific matters.

In the case of Upper Wick, we have instructed our own independent landscape appraisal. Unfortunately we don't have the expertise in-house when looking at landscape matters so we felt that this was an appropriate and necessary assessment to have. They will be including an assessment of the historic environment.

IMPACTS/FACTORS TO CONSIDER AND SOURCES OF HELP/INFORMATION

- Is the site in an area of landscape designation?
- Does it affect many historic assets and if so which ones and how badly?
- How significant will this impact be?
- Can the impact be mitigated in any way?
- Can you put together a map of assets/views affected?
- Are there likely to be any significant archaeological assets (local HER will have details of any known assets)?
- Can you put together photos of assets/views affected and if so add description of site, relationship to proposed development, impact on landscape character, visual impact, magnitude of impact, effect of proposed development (high, moderate, low)?
- What grade is the farmland? Allocate land with least environmental/amenity value (NPPF para 110). Seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality (para112)
- Does it affect any AONBs, Conservation areas, etc.
- Cumulative impact with other proposals for solar arrays in the area - can you put together a map of these?
- How does it conflict with the Landscape Character Assessment (should be on Local Authority website) of the area?

- Were are the closest SSSIs?
- What level of electricity is produced? Is mains top up required?
- Is there reference to decommissioning? What will happen then?
- Are hedgerows removed? Is new planting appropriate?
- What is the traffic impact on rural lanes - there will be HGVs during construction and decommissioning?
- Many applications attempt to demonstrate habitat enhancement for wildlife - in reality the areas beneath the panels are shaded
- The site will need an array of huts and tracks which are damaging to the landscape - any comments?
- Is there a high security fence?
- Are there public view points of the site (ie. footpaths and roads) ?
- When the site is in operation there will be reflective glare. How close is the site to any local airfield? In this case does it affect flight paths of migrating birds from Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.
- How close is the site to any local airfield/motorway etc
- Will the site be lit at night
- Is there a local action group you can help? - look at the Cotswold Edge Solar Group's website : **<http://www.cotswoldedgesolargroup.org.uk>**
- Consider approaching : CPRE, The Battlefields Trust, AONB conservation committees, Natural England, English Heritage, Local parish councils, Local MP, local councillors
- Legislation - both NPPF, Local Plan, Government PV advice - Government PV Strategy Part I (Oct 2013) & Part 2 (4.4.14)
- If it goes to appeal consider asking for Rule 6 Status : **www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/pins/guide_rule_6/pdf**
- Appeal decisions for other solar sites eg. **<http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/assets/Documents/District/Planning-DM/Hacheston/Hacheston-Solar-Farm-Suffolk-2193911.pdf>** There are others and you will be able to find more if you search online.
- NFU Best Practice for Solar Farms which has the Solar Trade Association's 'Ten Commitments' it wants its membership to comply with in the construction and management of solar farms in order to deliver multiple benefits from the land.
- DCLG (Dept for Communities and Local Govt) "Planning Practice Guidance for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy" July 2013
- Ask your fellow CGT members :

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Over the coming weeks we will be starting discussions on

- Research recording keeping
- NELMs
- Writing Statements of Significance
- Solar arrays