<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy/particular-planning-considerations-for-hydropower-active-solar-technology-solar-farms-and-wind-turbines/>

Updated 18.6.2015

**What are the particular planning considerations that relate to large scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic Farms?**

Related policy : NPPF – para 112

The deployment of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes. However, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively.

Particular factors a local planning authority will need to consider include:

* encouraging the effective use of  land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value;

where a proposal  involves greenfield land, whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays. See also a [speech by the Minister for Energy and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP, to the solar PV industry on 25 April 2013](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/gregory-barker-speech-to-the-large-scale-solar-conference) (*… large scale deployment on a greenfield site … on a site where no mitigation can eliminate adverse visual impacts, in a protected landscape and in the setting of … listed buildings … is precisely the sort of proposal that \*DCLG & DECC do not want permitted.”)* and [Written Ministerial Statement – Solar energy: protecting the local and global environment – made on 25 March 2015](http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2015-03-25/HCWS488/). *(Meeting our energy goals should not be used to justify the wrong development in the wrong location and this includes the unnecessary use of high quality agricultural land. Protecting the global environment is not an excuse to trash the local environment … We appreciate … the continuing concerns … about the unjustified use of high quality agricultural land. In light of these concerns we want it to be clear that any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence.)*

* 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 (see [guidance on landscape assessment](http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy/particular-planning-considerations-for-hydropower-active-solar-technology-solar-farms-and-wind-turbines/#paragraph_022)) and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;
* the extent to which there may be additional impacts if solar arrays follow the daily movement of the sun;
* the need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing;
* **great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large scale solar farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset;**
* the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges;
* the energy generating potential, which can vary for a number of reasons including, latitude and aspect.

**The approach to assessing cumulative landscape and visual impact of large scale solar farms is likely to be the same as assessing the** [**impact of wind turbines**](http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy/particular-planning-considerations-for-hydropower-active-solar-technology-solar-farms-and-wind-turbines/#paragraph_023)**. However, in the case of ground-mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography the area of a zone of visual influence could be zero.**