

ITEM 7

APPLICATION NO.	13/02735/FULLS
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION - SOUTH
REGISTERED	11.12.2013
APPLICANT	KS SPV32 Ltd
SITE	Land At Eveley Farm, Stevens Drove, Houghton, SO20 6SA, HOUGHTON BROUGHTON
PROPOSAL	Construction of solar photovoltaic park with attendant infrastructure.
AMENDMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amended/Additional plans received: 20 December 2013; 15 April 2014• Amended/additional information received 2, 7, 10 and 31 March, 8, 15, 16 April 2014, 9 and 10 July 2014.
CASE OFFICER	Miss Katherine Fitzherbert-Green

Background paper (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This item is presented to the Planning Control Committee (PCC) following the resolution of the Southern Area Planning Committee (SAPC) to delegate the application to the Head of Planning for the grant of planning permission subject to conditions, notes and a Legal Agreement. This resolution is contrary to the relevant policies of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan and therefore the recommendation of the Head of Planning.
- 1.2 The SAPC report and Update Paper for the 15 July 2014 meeting are appended to this report as **Appendix A** and **Appendix B** respectively together with the drawings presented to SAPC.

2.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The key consideration for the Planning Control Committee is the resolution from SAPC to grant planning permission for the proposed development contrary to the recommendation of the Head of Planning and Building. Members of the SAPC gave consideration to a number of aspects in support of the proposal. In particular, SAPC were mindful of the contribution this renewable energy proposal would have in meeting energy needs, with the lack of adequate agricultural land classification and the landscape impact of the development deemed to be insufficient to justify a refusal. SAPC therefore disagreed with the recommendations of the Head of Planning and Building as detailed within section 5.0.

Principle of development

- 2.2 TVBC has no corporate performance indicator relating to the production of energy from renewable sources. Notwithstanding this, it is recognised that the proposal is a significant renewable energy development, and by providing up to 49MW of electricity feeding into the National Grid, would make a significant contribution towards Government targets for renewable energy (see paras. 8.2 – 8.3 of Appendix A). This contribution however has to be mindful of the current direction of Government as detailed within the NPPF and the more recent Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) with focus upon ensuring that the location for such development is appropriate, with proper weight to be given to environmental considerations such as landscape and visual impact (see para 8.4 – Appendix A).

Landscape character and visual impact

- 2.3 Member's attention is drawn to the conclusions of the Landscape Officer regarding the large scale impact this proposal would have upon landscape character and visual amenity (see para 5.2 of Appendix A). The concern is addressed more fully within paragraphs 8.11 – 8.22 of the SAPC report (Appendix A). In principle, it is considered that the introduction of the solar panels, fencing and supplementary boundary planting of the scale proposed would significantly change the landscape character and also the visual enjoyment of users of the footpaths that abut the boundaries of the site. For instance, users of the footpaths to the north and west boundaries can gain both filtered and direct views of an open aspect across rolling countryside, this being most apparent towards the north east of the site where more panoramic views are afforded both in a north and south direction.
- 2.4 The development however proposes the establishment of the solar panels and attendant infrastructure, in conjunction with new boundary planting that will close off such an appreciation of the landscape. Whilst the development itself is only for a temporary period of 25 years, the boundary planting would remain beyond this timescale thereby creating a permanent change to visual amenity. As such, the footpaths would become permanently enclosed for their full length and would provide limited sense to a walker that the site is within a wide landscape setting. The effect of the development therefore materially changes the landscape character and will have a long lasting effect contrary to policy DES01 and paragraph 98 of the NPPF. This effect is considered to be harmful to the intrinsic character of this part of the countryside being conspicuous and prominent to the footpaths in close proximity and is considered to outweigh the benefits of generating energy through a renewable source. These harmful effects are unable to be made acceptable through the imposition of planning conditions.

Loss of agricultural land

- 2.5 The second reason for refusal of the Head of Planning and Building refers to the potential loss of a significant area of land which could be of a good agricultural grade. As detailed in paragraphs 8.6 – 8.10 of the SAPC report (Appendix A), the agricultural land classification has been disputed and the supporting information to the application deemed to be incomplete.

Whilst the applicant has since sought to provide details of their site search to demonstrate that there are no other suitable sites available for use in preference to the application site, it remains that the grade of the land is unclear and the requirements of paragraph 112 of the NPPF cannot be fulfilled, with the requirements of this paragraph not distinguishing between a temporary or permanent use.

3.0 CONCLUSION

3.1 The proposed development would make a contribution towards the national requirements for providing renewable energy which carries weight in favour of the development. However the need for renewable energy however does not automatically override the need for environmental protection with the scale of the development found to adversely affect the landscape character and the visual amenity of the wider landscape. Furthermore, it has not been adequately demonstrated that the site comprises moderate grade 3b agricultural land as to be satisfied the location of the proposal is justifiable.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION OF SOUTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Delegate to the Head of Planning for completion of a legal agreement to secure to secure highway matters and then PERMISSION subject to conditions and notes:

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

Reason: To comply with the provision of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development shall not be carried out other than in complete accordance with the approved plans comprising drawings:

- P13-1290-EI01-L (1/4) - Floor plan with PV Layout – plan view;
- P13-1290-EI01-L (4/4) - Floor plan with PV Layout – plan view;
- P12-1290-EI01-L (2/4) - Floor plan with PV Layout – Cross Sectional View;
- P12-1290-EI01-L (3/4) - Floor plan with PV layout – Cross sectional View;
- P13-1290-EL01-I (1/2) - Floor Plan with PV Plant, Substation – schematic;
- P13-1290-EL01-I (2/2) - Floor plan / cross sectional view – detail substation – schematic;
- P13-1290-EK01 (1/1) - Inverterstation – Top/Front view/Section;
- P13-1288-EK01 (1/1) - Center Station – top/front view;
- P13-1290-EK02 (1/2) – Additional Camera Cross Section;
- P13-1290-EK02 (2/2) - Additional Camera Cross Section.

Reason: In the interests of proper planning.

3. With the exception of the replacement pylon, the planning permission hereby granted is for a period of 25 years from the date that the development is first implemented. Written notification of the date of first implementation of the planning permission shall be given to the Local Planning Authority no later than 28 days after the event.

Reason: In order that the land is returned to its original condition and use following the expiry of the permission in accordance with policies SET03, DES01, and ENV08 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. No development shall take place until an updated badger survey has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, together with any necessary amendments to the Badger Mitigation Plan. This updated badger survey should establish whether the badger sett has expanded to within 30m of the construction works and provide means for badgers to continue to access the site. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To avoid impacts to badgers in accordance with policy ENV05 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006.

5. No development shall take place until full details of the layout for the parking and manoeuvring onsite of contractor's and delivery vehicles during the construction period shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the commencement of development and retained for the duration of the construction period.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety in accordance with Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006 policies TRA05 and TRA09.

6. No development (including site clearance and any other preparatory works) shall take place until a scheme detailing how trees shown on the approved plans and adjacent to the temporary construction access to be retained are to be protected has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such a scheme shall include a plan showing the location and specification of any protective fencing, ground protection or other precautionary measures as informed by British Standard 5837:2012. Such protection measures shall be installed prior to any other site operations and at least 2 working days notice shall be given to the Local Planning Authority. Tree protection installed in discharge of this condition shall be retained and maintained for the full duration of works or until such time as agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. No activities whatsoever shall take place within the protected areas without the prior written agreement of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the enhancement of the development by the retention of existing trees and natural features during the construction phase in accordance with Test Valley Borough Local Plan policy DES08.

7. Tree protective measures installed in accordance with condition 6 shall be maintained and retained for the full duration of the works or until such time as agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority's Arboricultural Officer. No activities nor material storage, nor placement of site huts or other equipment whatsoever shall take place within the fencing without the prior written agreement of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the avoidance of damage to existing trees and natural features during the construction phase in accordance with the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006.

- 8. All service routes, drain runs, soakaways or excavations in connection with the same shall remain wholly outside the tree protective fencing without the prior written agreement of the Local Planning Authority Arboricultural Officer.**

Reason: To ensure the avoidance of damage to existing trees and natural features during the construction phase in accordance with Test Valley Borough Local Plan policy DES08.

- 9. No development shall take place (including site clearance) within the application site as edged in red, 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 brief and specification for a scheme of investigation and mitigation, which has been submitted by the developer and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

Reason: The site is potentially of archaeological significance in accordance with Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006 policy ENV11.

- 10. No development shall take place until a surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The drainage strategy should demonstrate the surface water run-off generated up to and including the 100 years critical storm (30% climate change allowance) will not exceed the run-off from the undeveloped site following the corresponding rainfall event. The scheme shall include an appropriate assessment carried out under Building Research Establishment (BRE) Digest 36 demonstrating that infiltration is suitable for the site. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: To prevent an increased risk of flooding, both on and off site in accordance with policy HAZ02 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006.

- 11. No development shall take place until details for the formalisation of the passing places on Broughton Road between the A30 and the site access and improvement works to the junction of Broughton Road and the A30 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with these details and implemented prior to the commencement of the construction phase of the development.**

Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with policy TRA09 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006.

- 12. No development shall take place until the construction details for the temporary access road between the site and the junction with Broughton Road have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall also include the proposed implementation programme for the construction and also the closure and removal of the temporary access road.**

The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and retained during the construction period.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure protection of the adjacent trees in accordance with policies TRA05 and DES08 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006.

- 13. No development shall take place until full details of a scheme of soft landscape works including planting plans; written specifications (stating cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/densities and an implementation programme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall also include; proposed finished levels or contours; means of enclosure and hard surfacing materials (where appropriate). The landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme and the implementation programme.**

Reason: To improve the appearance of the site and enhance the character of the development in the interest of visual amenity and contribute to the character of the local area in accordance with Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006 policy DES10.

- 14. No development shall take place until a schedule of landscape maintenance for a minimum period of 25 years has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The schedule shall include details of the arrangements and programme for its implementation. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved schedule.**

Reason: To ensure that the works undertaken maintain the appearance of the site and enhance the character of the development in the interest of visual amenity and contribute to the character of the local area in accordance with Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006 policy DES10.

- 15. No development shall take place until details of signage to warn contractors and delivery drivers of the presence of the public rights of way and the presence of walkers on the footpaths has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The signage shall be implemented prior to the commencement of development on site and shall be retained during the construction period.**

Reason: To ensure the public rights of way remain safe to users in accordance with policy TRA08 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006.

- 16. The development shall not be brought into operation until ecological enhancement measures as detailed within the paragraph 6.7.6 ix and x of Volume 2: Environmental Statement (February 2014 Rev C) have been implemented on site. The measures shall be retained thereafter.**

Reason: To improve opportunities for biodiversity in accordance with policy ENV05 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006.

- 17. The clearance of vegetation greater than 50cm in height pursuant to facilitating the development hereby approved shall only be undertaken between September and February (inclusive).**

Alternatively, a competent ecologist shall undertake a pre-clearance check for occupied birds' nests and if necessary the supervising ecologist shall maintain a watching brief during vegetation clearance works. Work shall cease in any areas where occupied nests are identified and a 5m exclusion zone maintained around such nests, until such time as those nests become unoccupied of their own accord.

Reason: To avoid impacts to breeding birds in accordance with Test Valley Borough Local Plan (June 2006) policy DES09 and ENV05.

- 18. There shall be no external lighting erected on the site during the operational phase of the development.**

Reason: In the interests of the countryside location and to avoid impacts to fauna on the site in accordance with policies DES01, ENV01 and ENV05 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006.

- 19. The combined BS4142:1997 'specific noise level' from inverter equipment and other ancillary fixed plant associated with the development shall not exceed 28dB LAeq (one hour) at any time of operation, in accordance with the predicted worst-case noise level provided within the supporting acoustic assessment. The noise level shall be determined at the nearest existing residential property and/or any existing residential properties that may be more greatly affected. The measurements and assessments shall be made according to BS4142:1997.**

Reason: In the interest the protection of the amenities in the locality in accordance with policy AME 04 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan.

- 20. The solar panels hereby approved shall not exceed 3 metres above ground level.**

Reason: In the interest of the countryside location in accordance with Test Valley Borough Local Plan policies DES01.

- 21. All buildings and structures on site shall be dark green in colour and shall thereafter be retained as such.**

Reason: To ensure that the development is appropriate to the character and appearance of the area in accordance with policy DES01 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006.

- 22. No later than 12 months prior to the end of this permission, a site restoration scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include a programme of works to remove the solar panels and related equipment, and shall be fully implemented within 12 months of the expiry of this permission.**

Reason: In order that the land is restored to its original condition and use following the expiry of the permission in accordance with policies SET03, DES01, and ENV08 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 23. If the solar farm hereby permitted ceases to operate for a continuous period of 6 months then, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, a scheme for the decommissioning and removal of the panels and any other ancillary equipment, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority within 3 months of the end of the cessation period.**

The scheme shall include details for the restoration of the site. The scheme shall be implemented within 12 months of the date of its agreement by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the landscape impact of the development exists only for the lifetime of the development.

- 24. No construction process shall be carried out, no machinery shall be operated and no construction or delivery traffic shall enter or leave the site outside the hours of 10.00am – 8.00pm Monday to Friday or 08.00am – 2.00pm on Saturdays, nor at any time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays unless approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

Reason: In the interest of the amenities in the local area in accordance with Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006 policies DES01, AME01 and AME04.

- 25. The public rights of way shall remain available for safe public use at all times. No contractor or delivery vehicles, machinery, equipment or materials or anything associated with the development hereby permitted shall be left on or near the public footpath so as to obstruct, hinder or provide a hazard to walkers.**

Reason: To maintain the existing public rights of way in accordance with policy TRA08 of the Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006.

Notes to applicant:

- 1. Birds nests, when occupied or being built, receive legal protection under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). It is highly advisable to undertake clearance of potential bird nesting habitat (such as hedges, scrub, trees, suitable outbuildings etc.) outside the bird nesting season, which is generally seen as extending from March to the end of August, although may extend longer depending on local conditions. If there is absolutely no alternative to doing the work in during this period then a thorough, careful and quiet examination of the affected area must be carried out before clearance starts. If occupied nests are present then work must stop in that area, a suitable (approximately 5m) stand-off maintained, and clearance can only recommence once the nest becomes unoccupied of its own accord.**
- 2. In reaching this decision Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) has had regard to paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. TVBC work with applicants and their agents in a positive and proactive manner offering a pre-application advice service and updating applicants/agents of issues that may arise in dealing with the application and where possible suggesting solutions.**
- 3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out and completed strictly in accordance with the submitted plans, specifications and written particulars for which permission is hereby granted or which are subsequently submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority and in compliance with any conditions imposed by the Local Planning Authority.**

4. **Please ensure that all development/works complies with the approved plans. Any changes must be advised and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority before they are carried out. This may require the submission of a new planning application. Failure to do so may result in enforcement action/prosecution.**
5. **Permission is required under the Highways Act 1980 to construct/alter a vehicular access. Please contact the Head of Highways (West) Hampshire County Council, Jacobs Gutter Lane Hounslow, Totton, Southampton, SO40 9TQ. (02380 663311) or highways-transportwest@hants.gov.uk at least 6 weeks prior to work commencing.**
6. **The highway works to Broughton Road subject of condition 11 will require the completion of a legal agreement under section 278 of the Highways Act prior to the commencement of works.**
7. **The applicant's attention is drawn to the terms of the s106 agreement pursuant to signage works and lorry routing.**

**5.0 RECOMMENDATION OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING
REFUSE for the reasons:**

1. **The proposed development, by reason of its size and scale would have an unacceptable impact upon the landscape character of this location with the magnitude of change imposed upon the character of the area having an adverse visual impact detrimental to the enjoyment of the countryside as experienced by users of public rights of way sitting in close proximity to the application site. The development conflicts with the Test Valley Borough Local Plan policies ESN32 (Renewable Energy Developments) and DES01 (Landscape Character).**
 2. **Insufficient information has been submitted within the application to confidently conclude that the application is located solely on land classified as agricultural Grade 3b. The application also fails to demonstrate that there are no other alternative sites of poorer agricultural quality land which could be used in preference to the application site for the siting of this large scale solar development. The development therefore does not accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 112) and Planning Policy Guidance.**
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APPENDIX A

Officer's Report to Southern Area Planning Committee – 15 July 2014

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AMENDMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amended/Additional plans received: 20 December 2013; 15 April 2014• Amended/additional information received 2, 7 10 and 31 March, 8, 15, 16 April 2014.
CASE OFFICER	Miss Katherine Fitzherbert-Green

Background paper (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This application is presented to the Southern Area Planning Committee in accordance with Test Valley Borough Council Code of Conduct.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application site totals approximately 77.6ha comprising three agricultural fields located within open countryside to the northwest of Eveley Farm. The site is detached from nearby settlements, sitting approximately 1.5km to the north east of Broughton, 2km north west of Houghton and 1.8km southwest of Stockbridge. The site is not located on any land designated for its ecological, landscape or conservation value. The character of the area is principally defined by the undulating countryside with open views, large arable fields, and hedgerows defining the field boundaries with pockets of scattered woodland.

2.2 The site itself is positioned approximately 600m south of the A30 and is broadly in a 'T' shape. The northern boundary sits on a ridgeline with the site extending south on land which slopes downwards towards the south and east and rises to the north and west. Approximately 490m of the northern boundary abuts a public Right of Way which extends between an entry point from the A30 and then west towards Broughton Road. In proximity to Broughton Road, the site is offset from this Right of Way by a small elongated triangular field. Access for the purposes of construction will be taken from Broughton Road at a point where this Right of Way connects with the highway and also a further Right of Way which extends in a southerly direction parallel to the western boundary of the site. The southern boundary of the fields accommodating the photovoltaic panels then continues in a north-easterly direction to incorporate further land to the southeast of the principle site.

2.3 The development is to also incorporate a smaller parcel of land positioned approximately 780m to the south east of the principle fields which additionally comprises agricultural land. Access to this parcel is via Houghton and through Lodge Farm.

3.0 **PROPOSAL**

3.1 Planning permission is sought for a ground mounted photovoltaic solar park on land to the north west of Eveley Farm. The solar park comprises the installation of approximately 206,000 photovoltaic solar panels across an area of 77.6ha with capacity to generate approximately 49MW of electricity which will be fed into the National Grid. This is stated to be equivalent to providing energy to 12,500 households per year and avoiding the production of 30,700 tonnes of CO². The installation is expected to have a 25 year lifespan followed by a decommissioning period, at which point the infrastructure would be removed. An exception to this temporary period is the installation of a primary substation which would be adopted by Scottish and Southern Electric (SSE) who require this part of the site to be excluded from any time limiting planning condition.

3.2 The photovoltaic panels are to be mounted in rows spaced 3.5m apart, at an angle of 20 degrees (to the horizontal) and orientated to maximise sunlight and energy production. The panels, of 1.66m x 1.0m in size, will be supported by a steel beam framework which is to be pile driven into the ground. This pile system requires no concrete; and as such there are no foundations requiring removal. Mounted with a lower edge set at 0.8m above ground level, the panels will extend to an upper edge set between 2.3 – 3m. Space between the rows will be given over to grassed track ways for maintenance with the land seeded to provide a grassland meadow.

3.3 To convert the direct current (DC) generated by the solar panels, inverter substations are required to house transformer equipment that will turn the DC into alternating current (AC). A total of 38 inverter cabinets will be positioned across the site connected to the panels via underground cabling. These stations comprise a single pre-fabricated building of 2.5m x 6.9m and rising up to 3.0m in height sitting on a concrete pad.

3.4 The inverter stations in turn will be connected to an offsite electrical primary substation which will provide the connection to the electricity network. The primary substation comprises a compound of up to 90m by 74m to be enclosed on the external perimeter by woodland/shelterbelt planting of 5m in depth and incorporating both coniferous and deciduous planting. This planting is expected to reach 5m – 8m in height after a period of 10 years. Internally, the area will then be secured with 1.2m stock fencing and then an area of 45m by 35m also demarcated by 2.40m high palisade fencing in a powder coated green finish. The compound is to contain three further cabinets of varying dimensions and ranging from between approximately 3.0m to 3.60m in height and a replacement 27m high pylon.

- 3.5 The land devoted to the siting of the photovoltaic panels and inverter stations will be enclosed using 1.90-2.0m high deer fencing on timber posts. Along this perimeter will be the erection of strategically positioned infra-red activated security cameras mounted on 3m high poles cited approximately 50m apart. Existing planting is to be retained where possible to provide natural screening, which is to be enhanced where necessary. New hedgerow or woodland planting is proposed to the site boundaries, with hedgerows to the north parallel to the right of way 'gapped' up, new woodland planting of 10m in depth to the west and new field hedgerows to the south and southeast boundaries. A further existing hedgerow running centrally through the site in a northwest to south east direction is to also be reinforced.
- 3.6 During the construction period, a temporary construction/storage compound is to be created to the north of the site with access from Broughton Road. The compound would be removed following the completion of the works since solar PV panels would be located over it. As part of the post construction work of the site, this access road would be also removed and the ground reinstated. Post construction access would be taken via Eveley Farm for maintenance purposes. The construction period is expected to last 26 weeks with works occurring between 8.00am – 6.00pm Monday to Friday, 8.00am – 2.00pm on Saturdays and with no working on Sundays or Bank Holidays. Mobile external lighting may be required during this phase for work during poor light or inclement weather with the structures comprising rigs of 3m in height with the bulkheads fixed to illuminate downwards. The lighting would additionally be used during the operational phased for maintenance only if required.

4.0 **HISTORY**

- 4.1 13/00291/SCRS – Screening Opinion under Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 for development of a solar farm. Issued – 04.03.2013
13/00794/SCOS – Scoping Opinion under Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 for development of a solar farm. Issued 11.06.2013.

5.0 **CONSULTATIONS** – Only/final comments expressed in summary

5.1 **Policy** – No objection

- Site lies in the countryside. Policy SET03 establishes that development will only be permitted where there is an overriding need for a countryside location or it is of a type appropriate within the countryside as established through the policies listed within criterion b, which includes policy ESN32;
- Policy ESN32 provides the framework for considering renewable energy proposals. Subject to compliance with these requirements, no objection is raised to the principle;
- Consideration should be given to other pertinent policies including those within the DES, AME, TRA and ENV chapters of the BLP, the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance (paras 26-28);
- The Revised Local Plan DPD demonstrates the direction of travel of the Borough Council. However, the saved policies of the adopted Borough Local Plan (2006) remain the statutory development plan and should be given greater weight unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 **Landscape – Objection**

- The site is situated in rural countryside formed from two large fields and a smaller section of a third field, currently in arable use;
- The fields are on a prominent ridgeline between two valleys contributing to the surrounding rolling chalk downland landscape. The fields forming the site are bounded by hedgerows, some of which have degraded through lack of management;
- Public byways sit to the north, east and west boundaries which link to a wider network of public footpaths, feeding into the Clarendon Way and the Test Way;
- Byways are recognised open areas with public access where primary enjoyment is of the landscape;
- The site is found in the LCA10C Thruyton and Danebury Chalk Downland landscape character area (LCA) which has particular characteristics (inc. undulating open chalk downland, arable farming, small hills, remoteness, large farmsteads, wide views);
- The site is broadly in line with this landscape character area as a tranquil and unspoilt area of undulating chalk downland with linear settlements to the north east and south west;
- Clear views of the site are gained through large gaps in hedgerows along the northern, eastern and western sections of the byway;
- The elevated position on a ridge line means it is highly visible;
- There are long distance panoramic views from Danebury Ring hillfort to the north west (a Scheduled Ancient Monument) and is of national significance;
- There are small-scale long-distance views of the site from Marsh Court to the south east;
- There are further long distance views from footpaths to the east and south west of the site.

Landscape Character

- Strong concerns regarding the impact on the landscape character;
- The introduction of alien features in the landscape on a very large scale and a large scale change of use of the countryside will have an adverse impact on this predominantly unspoilt and tranquil area;
- It is recognised that there is some intrusion from pylons and the A30 road to the north. The landscape however is still dominated by rolling farmland, strong hedgerow networks and blocks of woodland;
- Proposals seek to retain and enhance existing hedgerows and also a row of trees is being planted between the two largest fields. This does not mitigate against the large scale harm to landscape character and urbanisation of the site;
- The proposals are therefore not acceptable in landscape character terms.

Visual Amenity

- Strong concerns regarding the impact on visual amenity from public byways located close to the site along the north, east and west boundaries;
- The LVIA is relatively thorough although the photo montage shown from Danebury Ring is at sunset when shadows would be elongated and is not an acceptable time of the day to be taking photos for a visual study;
- Several long views from surrounding high points in the landscape. The colour of the fields would visibly change after construction from green/yellow or brown to varying grey shades depending on the sky and the vantage points;
- The solar panels will be clearly visible from a number of different long views. The views from a long distance are not considered to be significant;
- Views from Danebury Ring and Marsh Court are sensitive due to the historical importance of these sites. The extent of the view of the solar farm from both these locations would not detract from the overall wide panoramic views of the rolling countryside. These views of the solar farm are therefore not considered to be significant in landscape terms;
- Proposals would lead to significant adverse harm from close up views along the public byway;
- Do not agree with the applicant's view that once additional tree and shrub planting along such boundaries has matured (after 15 years), the visual impact would be 'nil';
- The visual impact could be considered 'nil' during summer months if the new planting is well maintained and the ground conditions are optimum;
- This does not take into consideration views during winter months where there would be wide diffused views through the site causing significant harm to visual amenity;
- Existing views towards open rolling countryside would be adversely changed to views of up to 3m high solar panels, tarmac roads, fencing and 3m high buildings;
- The proposals are therefore unacceptable in landscape terms, harmful to landscape character and visual amenity and therefore contrary to policies DES 01, DES 02 and DES 10.

5.3 **Trees** – No objection

- Mature hedgerows around the site perimeter and dividing the site;
- Few scattered trees within the perimeter hedge;
- Tree details accompanying the application appear to give a fair reflection of the trees, required root protection areas and need for protection;
- Proposed solar cells, perimeter fencing and other site infrastructure designed to remain clear of and at appropriate separation from perimeter and crossing hedgerows/trees;
- Proposed new planting – hedges, tree belts/woodland cover along with gapping up of existing hedgerows will result in considerable net gain in tree cover;
- Submission includes some provision for protecting trees and hedgerows during construction. Conditions should be imposed to ensure this is installed and respected.

5.4 Highways – No objection

- No objection subject to conditions and a legal agreement securing off site signing and works as described in the CTMP;
- Chapter 10 (of the ES) contains a couple of typographical errors. It does accurately summarise the Highway Authority requirements;
- Visibility required at access point is currently unavailable.

5.5 Environment Protection – No objection

- The only matter of Environmental Health concern is noise associated with the Invertors. This is a tranquil area so any noise from noise-generating equipment has the potential to stand out;
- The Noise Assessment predicts the combined level of noise from the 38 inverter stations would produce up to 28dB(A) or potentially 5dB lower depending on which inverter type is finally chosen;
- The prediction methodology assumes simultaneous operation and appears conservative, not taking into account noise reduction through screening by any intervening topographical features (i.e. hills) or ground absorption;
- The calculation is, if anything, likely to be an overestimate, which is reassuring, though it is safer to assume that that is not the case;
- The Noise Assessment uses a methodology for a mixed residential and industrial area. This is a rural area so the conclusions should be treated with caution, being not necessarily sufficiently protective to reflect the rural nature of the area;
- Predicted combined noise levels of 28 dB(A) is very low. It is not known if prominent tones at certain frequencies (e.g. a distinctive whine or drone) might exist;
- Very low background noise levels are typical in remote rural areas and any industrial-like noise will stand out and erode the tranquillity of the area;
- If a rating of 35dB(A) were to be adopted and this level realised in practice, the level would at times be at or above thresholds with respect to predicting the likelihood of complaints;
- In other words, such noise could at quietest times be audible and stand out in a non-trivial way, albeit at a low level in absolute terms and probably only on the quietest days;
- Prefer the applicant to adopt the quietest option for the inverters bringing noise levels to below negligible levels, even for a rural area or a condition attached requiring a limit of 28dB(A);
- This level of noise may well be faintly audible outdoors at the quietest times, but is nevertheless a very low level;
- Condition details of noise mitigation.

5.6 Environment Agency – No objection

- No objection subject to a condition requiring details of a surface water drainage scheme.

5.7 **HCC Archaeology** – No objection

- Note that archaeological mitigation will be extended to address the impacts of swales, scrapes and bunds;
- Archaeological issues should be secured by an archaeological condition.

5.8 **HCC Ecology** – No objection

- The proposal confirms a badger sett in excess of 30m from the site boundary;
- The submitted mitigation shows numerous badger gates installed in the perimeter fencing enabling badgers to forage within the site which is welcomed;
- Recommend that an updated survey is carried out to ensure that no new sett entrances have been excavated closer to or within the site;
- The amended landscape scheme is acceptable;
- Conditions and notes advised.

5.9 **Hampshire and IOW Wildlife Trust** – No objection

- The site comprises agricultural land covering approximately 78 hectares and is partly enclosed by defunct hedgerows with and without scattered trees and stock fencing;
- Recommend the clearance of vegetation between the months of September and February;
- Proposed mitigation is very broad and omits management prescriptions aimed at enhancing the site for wildlife. There is a missed opportunity to significantly enhance the site for a variety of species by introducing management practices such as a managed grazing regime, new hedgerow planting, erection of bat boxes and nest boxes;
- Mitigation should be submitted alongside a detailed management plan aimed at maximising the ecological enhancement of the site over the next 25 years;

5.10 **Natural England** – No objection

- Not likely to be an adverse effect on this site as a result of the proposal being carried out in strict accordance with the details as submitted;
- The SSSI does not represent a constraint in determining this application;
- Conditions suggested to address the effect of the development upon a badger sett, the timing of vegetation clearance and requiring no illumination on the site near hedgerows;
- Expect the LPA to assess other possible impacts on other sites, landscape character and local/national biodiversity priority habitats and species;
- The site is in proximity to Eveley Wood SINC which is a material consideration for which Natural England does not hold specific information;
- The proposal appears to not be located within, or within the setting of, any nationally designated landscape;
- Proposals should complement and where possible enhance local distinctiveness;
- The proposal has not been assessed by Natural England for impacts on protected species;

- The proposal presents opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife such as the incorporation of roosting opportunities for bats, installation of bird nest boxes or the use of native species in the landscape planting;
- Measures to enhance biodiversity should be secured from the applicant to include installation of bat and bird boxes, use of native plant species and installation of badger gates to enable badgers to access the site.

5.11 Design and Conservation – No objection

- Original submission omitted any assessment of the visual impact or otherwise on views from Marsh Court (Grade 1) and its registered garden (Grade II*) and to a lesser extent, Danebury Hill (Schedule Ancient Monument);
- It has been adequately demonstrated that the visual impact of the proposed solar farm on views from Marsh Court and its registered park and garden would be minimal;
- Similarly it has been shown that there would be no undue impact on Danebury Hill;
- No objection was raised to the impact upon the setting of three adjacent Conservation Areas or the nearby listed buildings.

5.12 English Heritage – No objection

- Photomontages of the views from Marsh Court (Grade 1 listed) have been assessed;
- The proposal would have minimal impact on the special interest of the listed building of Marsh Court and its registered park and garden;
- No objection is raised to this proposal.

5.13 Civil Aviation Authority – No objection

- CAA has a duty to provide aviation safety advice. It is not necessary to consult the CAA about many types of development, including Solar Photovoltaic Panels;
- In cases where a development (as listed) might affect an airport, the airport operator is the appropriate consultee.

5.14 National Air Traffic Control – No objection

- The proposed development has been examined from a technical safeguarding aspect and does not conflict with safeguarding criteria;
- No safeguarding objection to the proposal;
- The view is in response to the position of NATS responsible for the management of enroute air traffic.

5.15 Reading Agricultural Consultants – comments

- The assessment of agricultural land quality set out in the ES has not been carried out in accordance with the established guidelines and criteria for classifying agricultural land, and is not a reliable indication of the site's land quality;

- Natural England's Technical Information Note (TIN) 049 indicates that the Provisional ALC maps are not sufficiently accurate for use in the assessment of individual fields. They should not be used other than as general guidance;
- The TIN indicates that selected areas of the country have been surveyed in greater detail in accordance with guidelines and criteria. There are no detailed MAFF survey results for this site;
- ALC surveys, according to published Guidelines are undertaken by field surveyors using hand held augers to examine soil to a depth of 1.22 with one boring hole per hectare. This is usually supplemented by digging occasional small pits to inspect the soil profile;
- Soil profiles are combined with climatic and other data to produce an ALC map and report;
- No soil profiles were examined by handheld augers to a depth of 1.2m or to any impenetrable layer and no soil pits were dug;
- There is no description of the soil profiles across the site and the ES does not refer to the full set of climatic parameters required for ALC;
- It is impossible on the basis of the information presented to classify the land in the light of the established guidelines;
- From knowledge of the soils on these parent materials, it is highly unlikely that there will be a uniform grade across an area of this size.

5.16 **Romsey Ramblers** – Support.

5.17 **HCC Countryside Access** – No response.

5.18 **Scottish and Southern Electric** – No response.

6.0 **REPRESENTATIONS** Expired 19.06.2014

6.1 **Houghton Parish Council** –

Initial comments (in summary) – objection on the grounds of:

- Extensive errors, inconsistencies, fundamental flaws in the application, with areas which require further clarification, are ambiguous, or contain detail which is selective in the applicant's favour;
- Reference is made to a different site location, to schemes in Cornwall, the installation of a wind turbine, differing MW outputs, inconsistent hours for construction, incorrect road names, incorrect references to Conservation Areas and to sites of ecological interest, incorrect construction periods and is out of date with regard to other similar distances;
- Listed Buildings are omitted from the references;
- The land provides good yields of barley, oil seed rape and wheat and is not grazed contrary to the ES;
- The site is within the foraging radius for the Mottisfont Bats SAC;
- Fly life on the River Test is declining. The application has no research into the impact upon insects from large expanses of solar panels potentially affecting the lifecycle of the River Test's aquatic insects and invertebrates with disastrous effects on the Test's biodiversity or commercial value;

- The Glint and Glare assessment doesn't address the proximity to Middle Wallop and Bossington Airstrip with potential danger to air traffic and possibility that army helicopters and other aircraft will fly more frequently over the villages of Broughton and Houghton;
- No reference is made to Popham airfield.

Comments to amended scheme (in summary) – objection on the grounds of:

- Contrary to TVBC BLP policies SET03, SET08, ENV01, ENV05, ENV17, ESN32, DES01, DES06, DES10, the DECC UK Solar PV Strategy and DCLG Planning Practice Guidance (2014) with reference to the siting, scale, landscape and visual impact, risk to biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife;
- Loss of good quality agricultural land as per TVBC BLP policy ENV08;
- Application continues to contain numerous errors and omissions;
- Not demonstrated that there is an overriding need to be located in such a beautiful area of countryside. The solar park is not directly linked to any existing agricultural use;
- The scale and location of the site are inappropriate;
- Significant visual impact;
- The proposed screen planting will take at least 10 years to become established. Even after this time, the solar panels will be visible from a number of areas, particularly in the winter;
- There have been numerous objections from local people to the planning application and their views should influence the decision;
- Detrimental to distinctive landscape qualities of the area, its visual impact is not in keeping and the development will not integrate with the local environment due to the inclusion of unnatural landscape features;
- Visible from a number of places (e.g. Danebury Ring Hillfort) and therefore will disrupt a view from a public place which forms part of a distinctive character of an area;
- The 27m high tower associated with the transformer station is not in scale;
- The River Test is an SSSI. Insufficient research has been carried out to determine the impact on fly-life on the Test;
- The development would be detrimental to the immediate and wider landscape;
- The agricultural grading report is not thorough. A detailed soil analysis has not been undertaken. A large proportion of the land has been farmed successfully suggesting that the grading at 3b may not be accurate;
- All Houghton Parish Councillors are in favour of renewable energy schemes. They are currently considering initiating a community led renewable energy scheme.

Broughton Parish Council -

6.2 *Initial comments* (in summary) – objection on the grounds of:
Initial comments were submitted jointly from Houghton and Broughton Parish Councils. See paragraph 6.1.

Comments to amended scheme (in summary) – objection on the grounds of:

- Application is not in line with latest Ministerial Statement;

- Government policy seems to be moving away from greenfield sites to brownfield sites;
- Proposed site and scale of the site;
- Landscape and visual impact;
- Medium risk to biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife;
- Concern that planning requirements would not be enforced by TVBC;
- Viability about the company, KS SPC 32 Ltd;
- Although revised, the application still contains numerous errors and omissions and is only viable financially if able to secure current feed in tariffs;
- Local and UK economic benefits,

CPRE (comments in summary)

- 6.3
- Do not object in principle to the solar array but on account of its enormous extent;
 - Impact on an important and cherished landscape and its visual intrusiveness from some significant local landmarks;
 - Solar installation needs to be sensitively planned with four guiding principles set out by the Minister for State for Energy and Climate Change;
 - The application breaches the guiding principles;
 - Endorse critical local reactions on environmental and amenity grounds;
 - Breach of Kronos own criteria for sites in terms of scale, generating capacity and the avoidance of using up good quality farming land.

Hampshire Gardens Trust (x2) – comments in summary

- 6.4
- Unacceptable and detrimental impact upon the designed views from Marsh Court (Grade 1) and from its setting of terraces and walks (Grade II* - top 6% in the UK) and further garden structures (Grade II). The quality of the built heritage at Marsh Court is not sufficiently identified or its significant properly addressed;
 - Lutyens took care in the setting of buildings. The choice of a cut and fill site on a steep chalk hill for Marsh Court was to take advantage of the views to the upper reach of the Test Valley;
 - Impact upon Houghton Lodge (Grade II*) with 4 hectares of landscaped pleasure grounds and 0.75ha of parkland;
 - Need to consider the application against the NPPF Sections 7 and 12 and para 132 as well as BLP policies ENV11, ENV16 and ENV17 and BLP Review Policy E9;
 - Solar farms should only be located on inferior farmland with the site has been used for wheat crops. Even Grade 3 land does not prevent achieving good yields of wheat and other arable crops;
 - No analysis of better suited alternative sites, preferably on brownfield sites or within urban areas;
 - Cumulative impact of solar farms in Test Valley is already heavy.

Comments to amended scheme (x3) – in summary

- LVIA remains inadequate
- Detrimental impact upon the designed views from Marsh Court (Grade 1) and from its setting of terraces and walks (Grade II*) and further garden structures (Grade II). The quality of the built heritage at Marsh Court is not sufficiently identified or its significant properly addressed;
- Montages presented are misleading and the Heritage Statement inadequate. Lutyens was renowned for placing buildings to take advantage of views all around the house and from the designed setting.
- The designed views to the west of Marsh Court on an elevated site will be compromised;
- An appeal at Green Place, Stockbridge noted specifically designed views to the natural landscape contribute to the significance of the heritage asset;
- Concern about the height of the solar panels at 3m which appear to be adversely positioned to the south of the proposed 27m substation tower with no indication of its design;
- The photomontages indicate that the tower will be in designed views from Marsh Court and detrimental to the landscape of the Test Valley;
- The height and positioning of screen planting will be inadequate especially in winter when leaves are off the trees;
- The impact of an industrial installation with parking provision and access roads on the natural rural landscape is unacceptable and detrimental to the character of the sensitive landscape;
- Support provision of solar parks on an acceptable scale and appropriately and discreetly sited with no adverse impact.

Representations to original submission

6.5 **Support**

- Petition containing 208 signatures expressing support/no objection for the proposal organised by Broughton Pro Solar; and
- 7 letters from 30 North End; Hawthorns, The Hollow; Hill View, Romsey Road; The Anchorage (x2), Salisbury Road; and Broughton Pro Solar.

Comments in support are provided in summary.

Principle

- Broughton is an active, dynamic, forward thinking, working and ever changing village. The solar farm fits very well with this;
- Solar farms are just another piece of the much needed infrastructure;
- The solar farm is made up of temporary structures which do not damage or compromise the farmland and is not comparable to a housing development;
- People would be shocked if pylons, telegraph poles, roads or airplanes were invented now – these are prominent on the skyline and are taken for granted and make our lives possible;
- Not often one can make a positive impact on a matter of global importance;
- Generation of sustainable and cleaner electricity to go into the national grid to benefit the whole country;

- Electricity generated by solar panels rather than fossil fuels helps reduce CO² emissions;
- Reducing reliance on fossil fuels is an obligation not just in the NPPF but internationally;
- The solar farm would point to forward looking attitudes in the area that recognise the need to invest in future generations;
- Use of such technology can help address the huge problem of climate change facing the whole world;
- TVBC, Houghton and Broughton Parish Council and Kronos deserve congratulations for bringing this opportunity to have a solar farm in the area, to be one of the largest type in the country;
- It is a cause for celebration and the community should be proud;
- Need to move with the times/time to follow the examples of Germany and Denmark where renewables supply a significant amount of energy;
- Beneficial to the community;
- More valuable as an energy producer than the current agricultural use;
- Need to encourage the fight against climate change and the generation of cleaner, renewable energy.

Landscape impact

- The visual impact will be insignificant from Broughton and only visible from one or two locations;
- The Solar Park is in a hollow with perimeter planting and would not impose on the landscape;
- Enables continued agricultural use with grazing under the panels so will maintain the area's agricultural character;
- Site is relatively discrete and well screened and where it is visible, such impact is unlikely to be 'significant';
- Any visual impact is outweighed by the benefits locally and nationally;
- Changes to agricultural practice have transformed the landscape;
- It is a productive area, whether for crop or electricity – it is the farmer's floor and will remain so;
- The visual impact appears minor when compared to changes of previous decades;
- Positive ecological benefits, as seen on MOD land where wildlife is not disturbed;
- Not visible to the highway to the north and west;
- There will be prices to pay for the installation but any perceived negative impact is a small price to pay for the fantastic opportunity to generate cleaner energy.

Other

- Benefits for biodiversity and ecology providing improved habitat niches for important flora and fauna;
- Accustomed to seasonal rushes of tractors. Whilst setting up the installation, there will be some discomfort but the outcome will be worth it;
- Objections have been submitted largely based on suppositions without strong factual basis;

- Homeowners report a reasonable financial return on domestic solar panels.

Objection

- 58 letters from Testwood House, Virginia Cottage, The Manor House; North Houghton Manor; Cloverfield (x2), Coopers Farmhouse (x2), South End Cottages, Mayfield House, Bossington House, Houghton; The Cottage, Wayside (x2), Woodrising, The Hollow; Moulard Cottages, Dixons Lane; Ashley, Dixons Way; 1 Chattis Hill Stables; The Cottage, Rookery Farmhouse (x3), Butlers Cottage, September Cottage Rookery Lane; 6 Coolers Farm; Mill House, Horsebridge Road; The Old Plough, High Street; Church Farm House (x3), Queenwood Downs, Buckholt Road; The Buildings, Crantock Cottage; St Mary's Cottage, Rectory Lane; Burnbrae, Salisbury Road; Foords Farm, The Wicket, Paynes Lane; Marsh Court (x3), Stable Cottage, Marsh Court; North Lodge, Marsh Court Road; Kings Head House, High Street; Ashley Park, Hoplands; Hare House (x2), Stockbridge Road; 5 Horsebridge Road, Kings Somborne; 2 Zouch Farm Road, Tidworth; Monks, Nether Wallop, 9 Kinsmead, Anna Valley; Little Brook Farm, Landford Wood; Kolkinnon House, Hook; Mill House, Beaminster; 29 Wrights Close, Winchester; 11 Charlton Avenue (x2), Surrey; 2 Bouverie Court, Whissendine; Roche Court, Winterslow; Hildon House, Appleshaw; Bridgefoot Farm, Plaitford; The Old Dairy, Sutton Scotney; Lake House;
- 20 representations with no/incomplete postal addresses;
- Farnham and Houghton Fishing Club, Test and Itchen Association; Broughton Against Kronos Solar (BAKS).

Comments are provided in summary.

Principle

- Contrary to policy SET03, SET08 and ESN32 of the Local Plan, national planning policy (NPPF – chapters 11-12, para 97), guidance by the Minister for Climate Change and Revised Local Plan policies SD1, COM02, E1, E2, E5, E9, T1;
- Insufficient evidence to demonstrate an overriding need or to consider connection into an 11kv line in the area enabling a smaller scale development commensurate with the location;
- Policy to date has been for conservation and preservation of an attractive landscape;
- There is just as much a housing crisis as an energy crisis and an house would not be allowed here;
- Broughton has evolved over some 3000 years. An area the same size of the village will be developed in an unbroken, featureless carpet of black;
- Serious overdevelopment;
- The proposal is for industrial use and inappropriate for agricultural land;
- The development should be positioned on wasteland and fill in areas between urban towns, roadsides, on brownfield land, or former airfields, degraded soil, former industrial estates, avoiding undulating land etc;
- The site for 25 years will be used for industrial purposes changing the land classification contrary to planning policy;

- The Minister of State for Energy and Climate is keen for solar developments on domestic or commercial roofs (e.g. in Andover) and previously used land. This development does not meet this criterion. LPAs are required to take account of this view;
- Commercial judgement is one for the Applicant however for solar farms each decision has a direct economic impact on every householder therefore consideration is required against para 42 of the NPPF.

Scale

- Size is hard to recognise in an area where most fields are no larger than 20 acres;
- Size of 200 acres is inappropriate. Smaller parks have proved to be viable;
- Measured in a NE-SW direction, the solar array extends for just under a mile and in the NW-SW direction by half a mile;
- Overwhelming size and scale, industrial in scale, inappropriately large;
- Would object less if the site was smaller;
- Size and scale is out of keeping with the natural beauty of Test Valley which contains places of significant and special scientific interest;
- Size of the site is the same as the village of Broughton;
- The size should be more limited, for instance to 50-60 acres in the centre of the site or loosely around existing disused buildings and away from public rights of way with suitable screening and fencing.

Landscape character and impact

- Contrary to policies DES01, DES02, DES08 and DES09;
- Site is an area of outstanding natural beauty and an SSSI;
- Major visual impact on a large area of countryside highly admired for its rural attractiveness, beauty, openness, and for being unspoilt;
- Blot/unacceptable eyesore/alien/dominating structure on the landscape and not sensitively placed, ruining views from walks on Broughton Down and other footpaths and close to Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation as well as from the river corridor and riparian land;
- Loss of remoteness and tranquillity, vistas protected from visual intrusion;
- The site is visible from all higher ground locations/miles around given its elevated position and particularly from/to Danebury Hill, Meon Hill, Clarendon Way, Stockbridge Down, Ashley, Compton, Fir Hill, Broughton Down, Wallop Brook valley, Stockbridge Common, Bossington Estate, Pittleworth Estate, Marsh Court Estate, Compton Estate, and Ashley Park Estate;
- The site will be visible to Stockbridge Common – a fine example of unspoilt chalk downland thought worthy of preservation by the National Trust;
- Area has been deemed sufficiently worthy of protection with SSSI and AONB designations;
- Views extend beyond 5km from the site meaning it is not well contained;
- The development will radically change/damage and alter the environment and quite change the character of the surrounding area;

- The development will be like projecting a mirror image view standing out like a sore thumb within an area of countryside;
- Existing screening will become de-screened as trees grow old, are felled or fall;
- Zone of Visual Influence underestimates/is not a true reflection of the area affected by the development and presents an incorrect and misleading picture, ignoring many high profile public vantage points;
- Serious alteration to the character and beauty of the countryside;
- More suited to brownfield sites, alongside motorways or on buildings and not prime countryside;
- Counterintuitive on environmental grounds with the site too large to plant as to not be seen;
- Loss of ancient trees to Broughton Drove byway. The lane and trees will never be reinstated;
- The development fails to take opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions;
- The landscape impact can never be reversed;
- Consideration needs to be given to the cumulative impact if all the parks in the area are granted permission and whether there comes a point where there are too many and the whole character is changed;
- Cumulative impact at Saxeley Farm, Red Rice, Andover, Westover Solar Park, Barrow Hill, Goodworth Clatford visible to Danebury Hill with another proposal at Cowdown. A 5km radius has been applied for sites in the area which is not a specific or recognised radius for assessment of cumulative impact;
- Industrial in appearance out of keeping with the natural character;
- Impact from 4m high panels;
- More suited for flat land;
- Areas were left out of the LVIA photographs (e.g. The Beeches) which totally overlook the solar farm;

Landscape mitigation

- Not possible to screen the site by landscaping and high industrial fencing within the total visibility envelope;
- Proposed mitigation does not hide more than half the site, even at the 10 year point from Broughton Down. New trees will not grow to 60-80ft in 10 years as required to mitigate the visual intrusion;
- Proposed screening will be ineffective and not screen all of the site, particularly in winter;
- Compositing grass cuttings on the hedgerows will kill roots of plants and trees and thereby kill the screening;
- Cutting 1/3 of the hedging each year to 1m in height means the site will be visible in all future years from the surroundings areas and bridleways;
- Is loose aggregate appropriate on a hill?
- Trees at viewpoint 17 look alien in the landscape setting;
- Reliance upon painting structures green may help structures blend into the landscape but not when surrounded by PV panels. Structures will still be identifiable and a change to the landscape view regardless of colour;

- A planted grass sward will take time to establish and may not achieve full cover shading panels on the ground;
- Cumulative impact of 5 other parks granted permission with 4 pending taken together will have a major impact on Test Valley;
- Planting and fencing should be conditioned to be completed prior to work on the actual park can commence rather than ensuring compliance afterwards;
- Tree planting should be of substantial sized specimens and not whips;
- Conditions should be imposed on the fencing to be deer fencing and not palisade;
- No requirement to insist the landscaping occurs in default of the contractor going bust. An Italian contractor has been appointed so there is no possibility of pursuing him if he returns to Italy;
- There is no commitment to land use with only vague comment about grazing or strimming. Maintenance requires clarification. There should be a prohibition on using herbicide to control vegetation. It is not likely that sheep or strimming will adequately control vegetation;
- Grazing does not occur at any other solar park. Light will not reach the ground so nutritious plants will not grow and without grazing, pernicious weeds will thrive needing strong weed killer to remove them;
- Grazing sheep will not be able to flock thus upsetting them;
- With lack of commitment, detail and no practical way to carry out land maintenance, the application should be refused;
- Fencing will be detrimental to deer, badgers and foxes which enjoy the natural features of this land;
- The application refers to grazing March to October but also cutting the grassland in April, July and September. Both methods cannot be employed as there will be no grass to cut;
- Unlikely to be possible to graze in March, typically before grass starts growing. Grazing needs careful management if it is intended to create flower rich grasslands;
- What type of sheep will be stocked – breeding ewes, lambs or other? When will lambing take place? Managing lambing amongst solar panels is unimaginable with welfare issues;
- Panels at 0.8m above ground will injure ewes or older lambs as sheep are curious and accident prone;
- Use of chemicals to control pernicious weeds and scrub will poison the soil, wildlife and attempts to support biodiversity;
- Mitigation will be ineffective during the lifetime of the development to visually screen the site from surrounding SSSIs;

Impact upon agricultural land

- Criteria for the 'right type' of land have not been met;
- The land should be classified as Grade 3a and not 3b or 4;
- Arable farming is itself a solar activity as sun is required for crop growth. This is just swapping one solar harvest for another;
- Grazing the site requires sun to grow the grass and in the shade of panels, this will be low. Any grazing is likely to be for tidiness;

- Two thirds of the site (i.e. 1 in 3 of the fields) is Grade 3a. The remaining land could be described as poor quality as a result of poor husbandry/not being farmed in 2013;
- Remaining fields are tenanted and are superbly productive supporting high quality cereal crops with high yields;
- Doubt grazing could occur around the panels. Grazing needs attention, weed control, fertiliser, mowing requiring tractors and implements;
- Removal of land from food production;
- Loss of productive arable land used for wheat, oilseed rape, and linseed;
- Cannot believe that after 25 years the land will be returned to agricultural use uncontaminated by piled foundations and disintegration of panels and supports;
- It was never intended to lose productive agricultural land to host solar farms;
- Farm diversification is necessary sometimes to remain viable which is not the case here;
- Land is in short supply to produce enough crops with prospects of imports being necessary;
- The claimed independent ground grading assessment is not included in the application and cannot be verified;
- Adjacent Bossington Estate/600 acres of land south of the site is Grade 3a.

Highway matters

- Contrary to TRA05, TRA08 and TRA09;
- Hazardous increase in heavy vehicular traffic;
- Impact on the small villages and roads during construction;
- Construction access lasting 6 months is from a dangerous junction;
- Traffic lights are to be installed and holding bays constructed for 40 tonne lorries with widespread disruption and considerable inconvenience for villagers and those accessing Broughton meaning long waits while traffic flows from the junction of Chattis Hill/A30 and the site;
- Likely that the A30 will also require unwelcomed traffic lights to enable vehicles to turn properly with local traffic finding alternative routes;
- Access is via a dangerous section of the A30 and Broughton Road, a narrow country lane that supports only domestic single lane traffic;
- Access is on a blind bend that experiences severe ice in the winter;
- The access will require the felling of a number of ancient trees at the north of Broughton Drove byway;
- Broughton Road provides sole access to farm premises and is in constant use throughout the day;
- Urbanisation of a narrow country lane that provides the main entrance and exit to the village of Broughton;
- Surprised that there have only been 2 collisions in 5 years on the A30 towards Chattis Hill where lorries will access the site;
- Passing places will need to be 15-20m long if a lorry or bus were to pass causing damage to the banks and hedgerows of Broughton. Full reinstatement to the current natural state will never be possible;

- The access should have wheel washing facilities which are removed completely and the entrance/access restored to its present condition;
- The route to the site is bordered by hedges and banks with over 50 species of wild flower in the section to be used;
- The road would need to be widened;
- No evidence that TVBC will take measures to ensure any traffic management plan is implemented in full, that lorry routing agreements can be controlled and enforced against;
- The access for construction traffic to the substation is via Lodge Farm which has not been assessed in the supporting documentation for acceptability, safety and long term access.

Impact to Public Rights of Way

- Two sides are bounded by a Right of Way. The rural quality of these will be compromised which is not overcome by hedging;
- Access is through an important local footpath and ancient byway interfering with this amenity and erecting fencing will alter the enjoyment of, and sense of being in the countryside;
- The footpaths have already suffered through 4x4 use;
- There is no pleasure in walking past a solar farm;
- Potential closure of a bridleway with construction so close to the bridleway making it impassable for horses;
- No screening materials provided. Use of barbed wire and electric fences across or alongside a right of way is a nuisance, danger and offence contrary to the Highways Act 1980;
- A vast amount of electric cabling is a danger therefore parents will not allow children to use the rights of way, denying them a right.

Security

- Increased criminality will ensue as electric cabling and solar panels will encourage metal thieves to use footpaths for legitimate access.

Pollution

- Pollution to the River Test and Wallop Brook;
- No statement about the control of runoff in the Environmental Statement;
- During the lifetime, sun/rain weathering will produce soluble metallic corrosion products from the metalwork and organic polymers leaching from the solar panels;
- The toxicity may be sufficient to show in local groundwater. The site is in proximity to the River Test, and underground water is pumped downstream of the site;
- Potential pollution of water pumped from wells serving properties and farms;
- Aquifers which feed the River Test originate on this escarpment with any risk of river pollution being a major concern for responsible agencies;
- Herbicides will ruin the soil and run into rivers, especially after 25 years;
- Panels will need cleaning from debris, dust and bird droppings with chemicals entering the soil;
- Who will ensure contamination will not run into adjacent land.

Flood Risk

- Effect of flooding on the area from the River Test and Wallop Brook;
- Increase in flooding from loss of trees and hedgerows given the impact on the soil to absorb water;
- Flood effects are a particular concern given floods over winter 2013/2014;
- A Duty of Care regarding flooding is being ignored;
- Is there a reasonable necessity for the property owner to alter the drainage?
- Rain water run off causes flooding in Rookery Lane from Broughton Drive;
- Risk to properties, highways and byways below the site area;
- Insufficient means within the site to capture rainwater to protect adjacent property and land.

Biodiversity

- Contrary to policy ENV04, ENV05, ENV08 and ENV10;
- Close to Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (e.g. Marsh Court, North Park Wood, Yew Hill);
- Detrimental to wildlife, delicate chalk land habitat,
- Surrounding area is identified under the SSSI classification;
- Harm to fish and plant life of the River Test from toxins leached into the ground from the panels;
- Threaten the stability, safety and food sources of a number of bird breeds (including ground nesting birds) and potentially their existence;
- Loss of hedgerows will lead to loss of wildlife;
- No information on the impact of large reflective surfaces drawing egg-laying adult females of aquatic ephemeropteran insects from the river channel, breaking the life cycle;
- Potential harm to dragonflies and damselflies;
- Aquatic invertebrates are an important feature of the River Test SSSI and the decline has been a significant concern in recent years.

Heritage

- Contrary to policies ENV11, ENV16 and ENV17 aimed at protecting historic gardens and cultural heritage;
- Proximity to heritage assets (e.g. Marsh Court – Grade 1 and Houghton Lodge - Grade II*), scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens and at least one Conservation Area;
- Consent was refused at West of Somborne Park Road due to the impact upon the setting of Green Place, an important heritage asset;
- Closely located to the pilgrimage path/Clarendon Way, Danebury Hill;
- Marsh Court is visible for a long distance;
- Loss of archaeological importance;
- Site is located in a Conservation Area.

Noise

- Noise during construction will be immense;
- Emission of noise during construction, operation and maintenance;

- Noise from inverter stations and the substation;
- Construction should not occur at weekends given potential noise.

Glint and glare

- Impact upon air traffic, including from Middle Wallop and the Bossington Airstrip, and not just from Old Sarum Airfield. No mention is made of Middle Wallop or Popham;
- Bossington Estate airfield is in daily use and there is a risk to pilot safety;
- No amount of screening can stop the solar farm being visible from the sky;
- Large number of aircraft movements, particularly in the summer with this route avoiding military restrictions to the north;
- How many airfields (both military and private) are there in the area?
- The size of the farm will cause navigational confusion;
- Landing planes will be difficult;
- Impact on flight safety to Bossington Airstrip from glare affecting pilots' vision and also rendering other aircraft invisible in flight;
- Eveley Farm and Bossington Airstrip are at similar heights. The solar farm will be in clear line of sight;
- Solar panels are most reflective when light fall on the panel so the glare will be greatest when the sun is low in the sky. Scattering of reflected light, gaps between the panels and the proportion of the image of the reflected sun and could reflect light to pilots taking off and landing;
- Old Sarum Airfield is about 10 miles away so there is no problem to pilots taking off and landing.
- Bossington Airfield is less than 2 miles south. Glare predictions for taking off and landing puts Bossington airstrip just outside the problem area;
- It is predicted that at 3000m, the predicted glare problem is moved southwards;
- The effects of glare in rendering aircraft invisible to another pilot must be considered;
- The region is busy for aircraft flying east/west and west/east between Southampton controlled airspace and Middle Wallop airfield which should be of concern to the Civil Aviation Authority;
- An alliance with the manager of Old Sarum Airfield might believe that the airfield is vulnerable to glare effects.

Economic factors

- Solar energy is not practical in the UK climate and is only viable due to Government subsidies. It is a political decision, not a strategic one;
- German Government is withdrawing subsidies from solar and wind farms and the UK Government is also considering reductions. It is the wrong time to be making a decision on a short term political goal;
- Subsidies result in an immediate uplift of 1000% of the economic rent to landowners from £100 per acre to £1000 per acre with a value of £6 million to the landowner;
- Short term commercial benefits felt by only a small number of individuals;

- The Government owned Salisbury Plain could be built on by solar parks and the income accrued to the Government not landowners. Allowing the German PV industry to switch to Salisbury Plain could generate £2.7 billion for debt reduction and public services;
- If the farm proves inefficient or uneconomic, the change of use would be irreversible and it is inconceivable that the site could be returned to pristine countryside;
- European Union scrapped legally binding renewable obligations for solar parks where the price of electricity is twice that of conventional electricity;
- It is likely that Southern Electric would not be prepared to continue buying electricity if it is not legally required to do so;
- Little contribution to the local economy with materials imported from Germany or China and with a non-local workforce.

Tourism/recreation

- The area is admired by tourists from the UK and abroad who support local businesses;
- Stockbridge and the area attracts tourists for walking, cycling, fishing and to partake in the beauty of the river and its tributaries, water meadows and downland benefitting hotels, B&B, pubs, restaurants and shops in excess of £4million per annum;
- The small businesses will not survive and be a loss of revenue to the Council and cause of local unemployment (to include river keepers (with their homes), fishing guides, contractors, workers in the hospitality trade);
- Loss of tourism and revenue in the area;
- Harm to the aesthetic of a visit to a Sculpture Park located 5 miles towards Salisbury;
- Chalk stream fly fishing is an economically viable business providing employment;
- Compton Estate is listed for fishing and pheasant shooting attracting international visitors.

Other

- Concern about the transparency and fairness of the planning application, requiring assurance that the proper procedure is followed and justice done;
- The application should be considered at County or National level given its size;
- Lack of consideration/consultation/notification with the community of Houghton and Broughton;
- With no financial bond to ensure the land is reinstated, what would stop it becoming developed for industrial or housing?
- It is unlikely that the 150 construction workers will be sourced locally;
- It should be put on hold whilst alternative sites are sought;
- Inefficient form of energy generation with an unpredictable timing and quantum of supply causing power management issues into the local network and not the National Grid. No details are provided as to how this would be managed;

- Energy from geothermal, tidal, wave, hydropower, voltaic tiles on roofs and wind turbines should be looked at before solar farms;
- Solar technology is changing which could necessitate a smaller footprint in the future. This is not the right energy source;
- No evidence to demonstrate that the development will support the local community;
- The developer states that the site will be cleared in 25 years – this needs to be imposed through a S106 and enforceable conditions;
- The number of households likely to be supplied is exaggerating the contributions. The community effect is about 1/3rd of what is claimed;
- Driven by politics without consideration to a proper long term strategy;
- There is a need to increase efficient carbon fuelled power generation and nuclear energy;
- If the site was for B2 use it would not be allowed;
- How will the site be policed for maintenance?

Application submission

- Errors, inconsistencies, inaccuracies and confusing and contradictory information prevent the application from being fully and properly considered or it being possible to respond to;
- Absence of any photomontages within the application;
- Information has been cut and pasted from other applications;
- Numerical errors suggest that the true size is not comprehended by the applicant;
- From the numerical errors, it is suggested that the primary substation is about 1000 times too small;
- Concentric circles in the LVIA maps cite distances from the centre of the site and not the edge which is misleading;
- No details/evidence provided of alternative brownfield sites better suited for solar parks as requested within the Scoping Opinion;
- A valid application needs to be resubmitted on a new timetable;
- The application is incomplete and it's production rushed;
- Pictures are missing or are distorted;
- No details provided of any legal agreement;
- Archaeological and heritage sites have been misrepresented;
- Glint and Glare report uses unknown sources of data, unknown methodologies and cannot be validated for accuracy. A worst case should be shown;
- Who is the author of the glint and glare analysis?
- What are the qualifications of the author of the ecological survey which gives no reference to bees, butterflies and diverse chalk-land flora?
- Absence of any invertebrate studies;
- LVIA is unnecessary long and often lacks convincing arguments with errors in the text and supporting figures, definitions not carried through, a confused baseline assessment, unclear assessment regarding the pylon, and some views discounted;
- Construction Traffic Management Plan contains omitted information, lacks detail and is inconsistent with the ES;

- The opportunity for making amendments to the application suggest pre-determination in favour of the proposal and bias;
- Unsure that the LPA has a duty to help the applicant to repair a defective application
- Commercial judgement is one for the Applicant however for solar farms each decision has a direct economic impact on every householder therefore consideration is required against para 42 of the NPPF;

Non Material Planning Considerations

- Precedent;
- The applicant is not from the UK meaning that tax payers subsidies will have no benefit to this country;
- Inappropriate for the Planning Committee to determine the application given the influence of the landowner on the Committee;
- Solar power is a daytime phenomenon and mainly a summertime one with excess power thrown away. In winter it does not contribute to meeting peak demand. This requires need for standby power stations;
- Solar power replaces one low carbon source (nuclear) with another more costly one;
- Disruption of the goodwill and reputation of Test Valley;
- The applicant has offered Houghton and Broughton Parish Councils financial sums if they approve the application. Can this be accepted or be legal?

Representations to amendments/additional information

6.6 **Support** – comments in summary

3 letters from Ronas and Chapel Close (x2), Houghton

Principle

- Moral and legal duty to reduce carbon emissions released into the atmosphere. One way is to use solar as a renewable energy;
- Need to set a good example to the world on this matter. Can't preach on this matter if we do not take responsibility ourselves;
- Live under the threat of energy security and climate uncertainty;
- Chances to work towards an economically and environmentally sustainable future should be welcomed;
- An opportunity to provide such an installation exists in Houghton;
- If technology advances and the PV installation is no longer needed then it can be removed relatively quickly and the land fully restored to agriculture;

Landscape impact

- The countryside is not for the few to enjoy but to benefit the majority in a variety of ways;
- Having viewed the site from all points on the compass, believe the visual impact to be minimal.

Objection

- 15 letters from 55 York Mansions, London; Oakwood House, West Tytherley; Hare House (x2), Nether Wallop; Marsh Court, Stockbridge (x3); Ashley Park, Ashley; The Wicket, Paynes Lane; Ashlea, Dixons Lane; Rookery Farmhouse; The Beeches, Broughton, Testwood House; Cloverfield (x2) Houghton;
- 6 x postal addresses unknown – emails only.

Comments in summary

Principle

- Photovoltaic panels can be embedded in all sorts of buildings without loss of amenity to the countryside;
- Alternative energy sources need to be appropriately located;
- No overriding need for the location in the countryside;
- Inappropriate to an area surrounded by SSSI classified land;
- Contrary to Government Policy published in April 2014 from DECC which states that future large scale solar installations should be on roofs of industrial and commercial buildings (e.g. in Andover) and on other brownfield sites, not greenfield sites. Government policy is moving away from large scale solar greenfield sites;
- Site should be in urban, developed areas where the energy can be taken up (e.g. examples along the A303 at Yeovil with use of uninhabitable and unusable space), at industrialised sites (e.g. Southampton Docks) or on warehouse roofs;
- Doesn't meet current government guidelines for large solar farms on agricultural land;
- Need to demonstrate that a proposed site is suitable and that alternative sites, particularly non-agricultural, have been considered;
- Low efficiency reduces the expected benefit and undermines the development. There are other projects in the vicinity;
- The planned 49MW is just below the Local Authority's approval level of 50MW;

Scale

- Size is out of keeping with the rural settlement in the area in terms of scale;
- Industrial scale of development and should be considered for a brownfield site;
- Would object less if the site was half the size and remote from the northern byway;

Landscape character and impact

- Size at 76ha (190 acres) is too great and has an excessive visual impact;
- Close to Conservation Areas;
- Site is visible contrary to the Landscape Assessment, with unobstructed views from The Beeches, Danebury Ring and Marsh Court; as well as Compton Estate, Ashley Park Estate, and Marsh Court Estate;

- No mention of the impact upon the bulk of Broughton, only a small subset of the village which is a significant error. Distances cited to settlements, features and high ground are measured from the centre of the site;
- Loss of important green space;
- Palisade fencing is alien to the landscape;
- Located in area of outstanding beauty and tourism with no benefits to the local area or inhabitants;
- Covering of countryside with mirrors and concrete;
- Fencing and screening will not be adequate, trees and hedges do not grow overnight;
- Advance of technology will render this a huge, ugly and totally unnecessary blot on the landscape within a very short time;
- Inefficient scheme for generating electricity compared to the impact on the countryside;
- There are areas of wasteland in the country and fill-in areas between towns, roadsides etc where solar panels would have limited negative impact;
- Would not object to an acre of panels but object to the size.
- Many brownfield sites sit unused and empty;
- Solar Park would take up a large part of the horizon as viewed from The Beeches;
- No photos show the impact of the 27m high tower which would be a similar eye sore to a wind farm;
- Screening by itself is not sufficient mitigation;
- Application omits photographs from areas of theoretical visibility, with some photos taken with wide angle lenses giving a misleading view. No photographs from Hildon Road;
- Visual Impact Zone is inaccurate and believe that the park will be visible from Ashley along the Clarendon Way and towards Parnholt Wood;
- Impact from footpaths immediately adjacent to the site;
- The access will require felling a number of ancient trees at the north end of Broughton Drove;
- The magnitude of effects on a small number of receptors has increased in the amended LVIA, notably in the construction and operational phases but with little text to clarify this change;
- Viewpoints 18 and 19 make no reference to potential effects on views to the proposed substation, only the main part of the site. The substation and new pylon will be visible from these viewpoints with a major effect;
- Assessment of adverse (moderate) effects on landscape character throughout the lifetime of the development must be given due weight;
- LVIA text is formulaic and often does not respond directly to the site, with definitions not always carried through into the final assessment and specific explanations. The visual baseline is confusing;
- View points with potential views have not been included in the LVIA. These may have been discounted, but this is not clear. The omission of potentially affected viewpoints means there cannot be a fair and true assessment of the landscape and visual impact;

- The amended LVIA is adequate and clearer but identifies a number of receptors adversely affected, including some new receptors and whether the level of impact has increased from (adverse) minor to moderate;
- Identification now of potential impacts of (adverse) moderate significant during construction and operation;
- LVIA does not apply best practice methodology to assess effects of decommissioning, finding the significance to be beneficial. It should be nil;
- The LVIA cannot be relied upon to make a reasonable judgement on impact of landscape character and visual amenity;

Landscape mitigation

- Proposed mitigation does not hide more than half the site, even at the 10 year point from Broughton Down. New trees will not grow to 60-80 ft in 10 years as required to mitigate the visual intrusion;
- Proposed screening will be ineffective and not screen all of the site, particularly in winter;
- Compositing grass cuttings on the hedgerows will kill roots of plants and trees and thereby kill the screening;
- Cutting 1/3 of the hedging each year to 1m in height means the site will be visible in all future years from the surroundings areas and bridleways;
- Is loose aggregate appropriate on a hill?
- Trees at viewpoint 17 look alien in the landscape setting;
- Reliance upon painting structures green may help structures blend into the landscape but not when surrounded by PV panels. Structures will still be identifiable and a change to the landscape view regardless of colour;
- A planted grass sward will take time to establish and may not achieve full cover shading panels on the ground.

Impact upon agricultural land

- Removal of land from food production which has been farmed for hundreds of years;
- The soil has grown potatoes, seeds and oilseed rape successfully therefore the soil must be Grade 3a (or Grade 2) given good yields;
- Comments regarding limited yields have not been quantified;
- No attempt has been made to change to cattle or sheep if poorly yielding;
- No proper soil analysis tests have been carried out and no scientific soil analysis undertaken by a soil scientist or agronomist. Agricultural Land Classification requires a detailed soil/ALC survey at 1ha intervals to Natural England guidelines;
- No attempt has been made to measure or estimate the volumetric content of topsoil stones;
- Agricultural Land Classification maps provide a broad assessment and does not subdivide grade 3 land to 3a or 3b;
- Bossington land to the south is mostly chalky loam – grade 3a;
- The tractor driver for Bossington Estate states there is no bad arable land in the area and always sees healthy crops on the land;
- The applicants dismissed the growing of potatoes on the land as not important;

- Proposal for grazing is stated to require restricted defecation which is not possible to manage;
- Removal of piled foundations will cause permanent damage to soil quality;

Highway matters

- Access to the site during installation seems inadequate;
- Impact on the small villages and roads during construction;
- Potential obstructions to byways to enable horse riding to occur during construction;
- Omission of reference to the impact of lorries on rural roads, details of passing places and the impact these will have on the removal of grass verges, hedgerows and habitats for flora and fauna;
- No specific information on numbers/frequency of vehicles or type;
- Access via an already dangerous section of the A30 which is a narrow country lane that will support single lane traffic for domestic vehicles;
- Access is via a notorious blind bend which experiences ice in the winter;
- Broughton Road has had two collisions over the last 5 years and in the same period, 5 collisions with one fatality on the A30 between Nine Mile Water crossroads and the Danebury Hill junction at Meon Hill;
- Broughton Road provides sole access to farm premises and is in constant use;
- Due to a dip in the road, vehicles can disappear from view;
- CTMP does not consider 2 HGVs or a bus and HGV passing;
- Controlled lights might be needed at the A30 junction;
- The revised CTMP is consistent and gives a clear indication that the site could cause significant highway safety concerns to Broughton Road;
- No drawings or dimensions have been given to ensure HGVs can turn with the amended junction or within proposed passing places;
- No information provided on the implications of any temporary diversion or extinguishment of the Right of Way during construction;

Security

- Security will have to be monitored with lighting which will have a wide effect;
- CCTV mounted on 3m high poles will increase visual disturbance;
- Security features will make the site look like a prison compound;

Pollution

- The pollution report is merely a letter claiming that potential pollution from run-off from the solar panels is low. Low is still a possibility;
- No guarantee against run-off from panels damaged by fail, hail or vandalism and leak silver, lead, tin and silicone to the soil and then Wallop Brook and the River Test;
- Solar panels have not been in existence for 25 years so have not been practically tested for corrosion;
- Cleaning chemicals for the panels and herbicides for weeds would get into the rivers.

Flood Risk

- Potential for run-off with water not able to be absorbed and cause flooding;
- Drainage/flood risk downhill from site.

Biodiversity

- Possible soil erosion issues and run-off which may affect the Test, a World important chalk stream and world best for dry fly fishing;
- Even small changes in the surrounding area can affect the temperature of the river and cause untold damage;
- Will the site be managed to ensure the listed biodiversity aims;
- Jeopardising the ecosystem;
- Solar panels can be damaged, leaking silver, lead, tin and silicone into the soil and eventually the River Test;
- Delicacy of the natural balance of the unique chalk river valley and the attendant damage to the fishing;
- Absence of any report on the effect of solar panels on fly life – invertebrate flies will lay eggs on the panels mistaking them for water;
- Prevailing winds will not stop flies from going to panels;
- The River Test is world famous for its chalk streams for recreation.

Heritage

- Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and TVBLP policy ENV17 should be central to decision making with the NPPF (para 132-134) also relevant;
- The pilgrimage path/Clarendon Way and Danebury hill are closely located;
- Views from Marsh Court (Grade 1) and its gardens (Grade II*) do not take into account the importance of the settings as designed by Lutyens;
- Many Grade II buildings in Broughton, as well as Bossington House, St James Church and the Roman Village have been left out of the impact zone. The selection is arbitrary and based on out of date data;
- Intrusive on views from Marsh Court which is sited and designed to enjoy the natural landscape and take advantage of this position with the harm not outweighed by the public benefits of generating renewable energy;
- Similarities are drawn to the dismissed appeal at Green Place with harm to the setting and significance of the listed building, despite being temporary and reversible;
- Photomontages produced by the applicant are misleading. There will be some degree of adverse impact on views. Panels should face south west rather than south to avoid glint and glare on views from Marsh Court.

Noise

- The noise levels are a risk – this is not a mixed residential or industrial area;
- Intrusive activities on the quiet countryside from construction on Saturdays from 8.00am – 2.00pm;

Lighting

- Inclusion of lighting during the construction phase and CCTV cameras to the perimeter of the site;

- 3m high lighting – some permanent will disturb bats, wildlife and humans;
- Natural England ask that no lighting illuminates hedgerows and work takes place outside of 1 March – 1 July.

Glint and glare

- 4 airfields near the proposed solar farm, Bossington is 2.5km away;
- CAA state awareness of potential hazards of glare causing dazzle, confusion with aeronautical lights and electromagnetic interference with navigation aids suggesting ideally a safety assurance is supplied, including a risk assessment. No such assessment has been submitted;
- Statutory consultation obligations should be met concerning safeguarded airports or air traffic control sites;
- The report submitted states there is a risk that a pilot would not be able to see another aircraft between the Bossington airstrip and the solar farm;
- Need to consider the legal ramifications for TVBC if a pilot were killed or injured as a result of the solar farm;
- No screening can hide the solar farm from the air;
- Bossington airstrip is used by old aeroplane, bi-planes and handmade planes with basic equipment unable to deal with electromagnetic interference or glint and glare.

Other

- A smaller site is dismissed as unviable whereas other sites are smaller and viable;
- No plans for the solar park to be an education opportunity;
- Some inverter stations are very close to byways, with a size equivalent to 20ft containers;
- Lack of understanding of soil farming or consideration of the community;
- Need to develop in developed areas;
- No justification that the site could be smaller and connect to 11MW lines in the area;
- Energy generating potential has been based upon false data and will create serious fluctuation management problems for SSE;
- Concerns about maintenance and the obligation for maintenance;
- Who will police the management of the site;
- Appeals in Ashford and Suffolk (x2) were dismissed on grounds of loss of visual amenity on the landscape, large scale loss of agricultural land, failure to demonstrate no suitable alternative brownfield land or non-agricultural land available within a reasonable search area, impact upon listed buildings and no guarantee that planting (as mitigation) will be maintained for the life of the development;
- Stockbridge and the surrounding areas are tourist spots and attract large numbers of walkers and cyclists to partake in the beauty of the area;
- Tourists also partake in fishing, shooting, walking, cycling, riding, accommodation, food, shopping with local employment. Jobs and homes could be lost because of the threat to the countryside and pollution to the River Test;
- The applicant likens Test Valley to Bavaria where solar farms have not affected tourism. Topography in Bavaria is very different to Test Valley;

- The beauty and quiet of Test Valley is important to the Test Valley tourist industry;
- The Borough Council's job is to preserve the area;
- DCLG guidance is available as guidance documentation.

Application submission

- Application does not resolve issues raised in the Screening and Scoping Opinions;
- Inadequate/lack of consideration of alternative sites;
- No demonstration of the benefit to the community with a legal agreement to provide community facilities not appropriate and not compliant with government guidance;
- The Environmental Statement does not assess the development against latest government guidance, it just lists it verbatim;
- The form in which additional information makes the consideration of the case more difficult and obscures contentious points;
- Inaccurate/evasive information and omissions within the submission, poor photos with distortions;
- No reference to Green Place, Somborne Park Road, Stockbridge dismissed due to the adverse impact on a Grade II listed building;
- No details provided of alternative brownfield sites;
- Distances to settlements, features, and high ground are taken from the centre of the site rather than the edge for accuracy;
- Failure to refer to Government documentation;
- Maps fail to show every viewpoint;
- No evidence that TVBC will take measures to ensure the implementation of any traffic management plan. Any terms must be enforceable in law;
- Need for TVBC to have an oversight role with the ability to control implementation strictly in accordance with the terms of approval;
- Marsh Court is incorrectly described as Grade II* whereas it is Grade I with photos taken from Marsh Court without permission;
- Failure to consider the Screening Opinion for Michelmersh or the Scoping Opinion for Cowdown Farm;
- Conclusions on combination of sites cannot be safely relied upon;
- The Transport Assessment is inconsistent with the Construction Traffic Management Plan.

Non Material Planning Considerations

- Setting a precedent;
- No recompense for locals – no free energy for surrounding villages or effort to make us carbon neutral;
- Energy will be channelled to urban centres. Cities and towns should look at generating their own energy;
- Individuals should look at their own energy usage. Turn off the street lights in Andover and Romsey;
- Scheme is for private profit, to a foreign company with no investment or money derived from using a British company to manufacture or run the farm;

- The land owner has a conflict of interest, has failed to remove a fallen tree partially blocking a BOAT and cut back overgrown hedging;
- Measly sum offered to the two immediate villages. Offers to the community of £50,000 is an admission that it will affect the area.
- Government thinking is that subsidies have been too generous and the unintended consequence benefits individuals rather than small community schemes that will benefit the area as a whole;
- Subsidies will be withdrawn next April and the community is left as victims of misguided funding with a legacy lasting 25 years;
- Supporting reports were not done by local companies but located in Truro or Germany meaning little business brought to the area;
- The construction will bring little work to the area with components from China, labour from Europe with no benefit to the community, bringing no taxes to the UK and no work to local people;
- Short term commercial venture benefitting just a few.

7.0 **POLICY**

7.1 **Government Guidance** - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); National Policy Statement for Energy Infrastructure (NPS), Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014).

Test Valley Borough Local Plan (2006)(TVBLP) - SET03 (Development in the Countryside), SET08 (Farm Diversification), ENV01 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), ENV05 (Protected Species), ENV11 (Archaeology and Cultural Heritage), ENV17 (Setting of Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Archaeological Sites, and Historic Parks and Gardens), HAZ06 (Safeguarded Aerodromes and Technical Sites), ESN32 (Renewable Energy Developments), TRA05 (Safe Access), TRA06 (Safe Layouts), TRA09 (Impact on the Highway Network), DES01 (Landscape Character), DES03 (Transport Corridors), DES04 (Route Network), DES05 (Layout and Siting), DES06 (Scale, Height and Massing), DES07 (Appearance, Details and Materials), DES08 – Trees and Hedgerows, DES09 (Wildlife and Amenity Features), DES10 (New Landscaping), AME03 (Artificial Light Intrusion), AME04 (Noise).

Draft Revised Local Plan (2014) - On the 8 January 2014 the Council approved the Revised Local Plan (Regulation 19) for public consultation. The statutory 6 week period of public consultation was undertaken from 24 January to 7 March 2014. The Council is currently in the process of acknowledging and analysing all the representations that were received. At present the document, and its content, represents a direction of travel for the Council. The weight afforded to it at this stage would need to be considered against the test included in para 216 of NPPF. It is not considered that the draft Plan would have any significant bearing on the determination of this application.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) - Broughton Village Design Statement.

Other Material Considerations

- The 2009 Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC) – sets a target for the UK to achieve 15% of its energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020;
- Coalition Government's Programme for Government (June 2010) – addressing climate change and maximising the exploitation of UK's renewable energy resources;
- Coalition Government's Programme for Government National Renewable Energy Action Plan (July 2010) - all about securing energy supplies;
- The International, European and UK Renewable Policy Frameworks – providing financial support for renewable including feed in tariffs, unblocking barriers to delivery and seeking to develop emerging technologies;
- UK Solar PV Strategy Part 1: Roadmap to a Brighter Future (Oct 2013) – Department of Energy & Climate Change – established 4 guiding principles:
 - Support solar PV alongside other energy generation technologies in delivering carbon reductions, energy security and customer affordability;
 - To meet the UK's 15% renewable energy target from final consumption by 2020 and decarbonisation in longer term;
 - Ensure solar PV are appropriately sited, giving proper weight to environmental considerations; and,
 - Support for solar PV should assess and respond to the impacts of deployment on grid systems balancing, grid connectivity and financial incentives.
- Planning Guidance for the Development of large scale ground mounted solar PV systems;
- Gregory Barker MP – Minister of State for Energy & Climate Change letter dated 1 November 2013 - Solar Energy
- Gregory Barker MP - Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change, letter dated 22 April 2014

8.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The main planning considerations are the principle of development and the impact of the proposal upon:

- The loss of agricultural land;
- The landscape character and visual impact;
- Highway Safety;
- The Natural Environment;
- Heritage Assets (including archaeology);
- Flooding and Surface Water Runoff;
- Glint and Glare
- Aircraft Safety
- Residential Amenity;
- Noise;
- Land Contamination;
- Tourism;
- Security;

- Community Involvement and Gain;
- Other matters.

Principle of development

National commitment to renewable energy

- 8.2 Since 2004, UK domestic energy production has been outstripped by consumption making the UK a net energy importer. Concerns have therefore been nationally expressed over energy security and the vulnerability of energy supplies, including the effect on pricing, fuel poverty and climate change. In response, the Climate Change Act 2008 set an ambitious target of a 34% cut in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions against a 1990 baseline by 2020, rising to an 80% reduction by 2050. These targets are the UK's contribution to a global GHG reduction confirmed as necessary to limit climate change, with encouragement specifically given to renewable/low carbon energy generation. More recently, the Government's Renewable Energy Strategy 2009 set out a scenario to meet a legally binding target to ensure that 15% of our energy comes from renewable sources by 2020 and suggests that 30% of our electricity should be renewably generated. Notably, the Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change, Gregg Barker, cited in a letter of 22 April 2014 that solar PV is 'one of the priority renewable energy technologies'.
- 8.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has a role to play within the promotion of renewable energy. It places significant emphasis upon delivering sustainable development by supporting and securing appropriate renewable energy projects within its core principles. As such, the NPPF (para 98) advises that applications for renewable energy should be approved if impacts are, or can be, made acceptable unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This recognises the responsibility placed on all communities to contribute towards renewable energy production. Therefore notwithstanding the local opposition to the development cited above, there is a strong strategic policy framework which supports renewable and low carbon development proposals.
- 8.4 Since the publication of the NPPF, the Government direction on renewable energy, including solar farms, has received further examination at the national level. Solar energy remains a priority; however the focus now includes a greater emphasis upon ensuring that the location for such developments is appropriate. For instance, the UK Solar PV Strategy Part 1 (Oct 2013) sets out guiding principles for solar PV which states, amongst other things that solar PV should be appropriately sited with proper weight given to environmental considerations such as landscape and visual impact. Avoiding inappropriate siting has additionally been cited in directions from the Minister for Energy and Climate Change (1 Nov 2013). Furthermore, March 2014 saw the publication of new Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which crucially places weight upon how well a solar installation integrates into the landscape and topography. The PPG stresses that "*Local planning authorities should not rule out otherwise acceptable renewable energy developments....*" and "*...distance of itself does not necessarily determine whether the impact of a proposal is unacceptable. Distance plays a part, but so does the local context including factors such as topography, the local environment and nearby land uses.*"

This is why it is important to think about in what circumstances proposals are likely to be acceptable and plan on this basis”.

Local context

- 8.5 The site is located within the countryside where there is a general policy of restraint of development. Policy SET03 of the Borough Local Plan allows for development in the countryside provided that there is overriding need for the proposal in a countryside location or that the development is of a type appropriate to the countryside as set out in further Local Plan policies, this includes policy ESN32 (Renewable Energy Development). Policy ESN32 notes that proposals for renewable energy will be permitted provided that there is no detrimental impact on the landscape; the proposal does not adversely affect features or areas of ecological, historical or cultural interest; and measures are undertaken to minimise the impact of the development on local land use. The principle of this form of development in the countryside is therefore acceptable, subject to compliance with the individual criteria and other relevant policies of the BLP as discussed below.

Loss of Agricultural Land

- 8.6 The proposed development seeks a temporary permission for the land identified for the installation of the solar panels changing its use from arable to solar power (with possible inclusion of grazing) for the 25 year lifespan of the project. Following decommissioning, the land is to be returned to an agricultural use and therefore does not represent a permanent loss of such land. The land at present has a history of arable crop production as part of a larger arable holding, supporting wheat, spring barley and oilseed rape. This loss of agricultural production, albeit for a temporary period has been the subject of objection expressed during the course of the application, citing that the development should first explore, or be sited upon brownfield land, poor quality land or on the rooftops of buildings.
- 8.7 The NPPF (para 111) seeks to encourage the effective use of land by re-using brownfield land providing it is not of high environmental quality. Paragraph 112 indicates that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality should be used in preference to that of a higher quality. As this solar array is large scale, it is ‘significant development’ thereby engaging paragraph 112. The PPG (2014) also sets out particular planning considerations relating to active solar technology. The first factor for consideration requires “...*focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided it is not of high environmental value*”. The first part of the second factor deems it necessary to consider “*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*”. The PPG also makes reference to speech by the Minister for Energy and Climate Change, Greg Barker, to the solar panel industry in 2013 who said “*Where solar farms are not on brownfield land, you must be looking at low grade agricultural land..*”. This consideration of low grade land was also reiterated within the UK Solar PV Strategy (2014) and a letter of 22 April 2014 from Greg Barker to Local Planning Authorities.

The emphasis of Government is clear that the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land (i.e. grades 1 – 3a) should be avoided where reasonably possible and if BMV agricultural land is to be used, this should be the last resort and be robustly justified.

- 8.8 Whether this site comprises BMV agricultural land has been a subject of debate within the representations received. The supporting documentation cites the land as comprising entirely Grade 3b (moderate) agricultural land with a visual assessment and trial pits observing the land to have a high chalk and stone content with substantial deposits of flint. Grade 3b is deemed to be capable of growing a narrow range of crops however the stoniness of the soil is reported to result in poor water retention, crop growth problems, and crops producing below average and unprofitable yields. A large number of representations have disputed this conclusion, suggesting that this land should in fact be classified as Grade 3a (good) based on the continued production of good yields and the quality of neighbouring land.
- 8.9 To assist in concluding upon these differences of opinion, Reading Agricultural Consultants have provided advice direct to the LPA on the methodology applied by the applicant in determining the soil quality. This advice intended to give comfort that the land is Grade 3b and therefore acceptable for large scale solar development. In response, RAC has advised that the methodology applied to determining the agricultural land quality has not been completed in accordance with established guidance published by MAFF. Most notably, the assessment has not undertaken any auger surveys across the site or analyses of soil profiles against climatic parameters and data. RAC have concluded that the submitted assessment is not a reliable indication of the land quality and that it is unlikely the site will have a uniform grade as implied within the application. In the absence of a full assessment and proper investigation, it cannot be confidently concluded that the site comprises entirely Grade 3b quality land and is therefore appropriate for the siting of this large scale solar development in accordance with the NPPF (para 112) and advice contained within the PPG.
- 8.10 Even with the assertion that the land is Grade 3b, the application additionally omits any demonstration that the use of this site is preferable to any other areas of poor agricultural land quality within a reasonable search area (which could extend beyond the local authority's administrative area). The NPPF (para 112) also requires that where areas of land proposed for large scale developments are of a higher quality (e.g. Grade 3a and above), it is necessary to demonstrate that poorer quality areas of land cannot be used "in preference" to that of higher quality. With the LPA not able to be confident that the land is of a poorer quality, it cannot be accepted that the requirements of the NPPF (paragraph 112) have been met.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Principle

- 8.11 The NPPF (para 17) recognises within its core planning principles the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and seeks to protect and enhance valued landscapes. Government guidance, Statements, Strategies and Letters as cited in section 7 and paragraph 8.4 above all require the consideration of the landscape and visual impact of solar installations and whether any adverse impacts can be made acceptable. For instance, the most recent PPG acknowledges that *'the visual impact of a well-planned and well screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively'*.
- 8.12 Locally, policy ESN32(b) requires consideration of the impact of renewable energy schemes on the immediate and wider landscape with policy DES01 (Landscape Character) stipulating that the landscape and visual impact of a development should be without detriment to the landscape qualities and be in keeping with the character of an area. Policy DES01 additionally gives regard to the integration of a development within a landscape through provision of appropriate landscaping which is also provided for within policy DES10 (New Landscaping). Notably there is no national or local planning requirement to require new solar installations to be completely screened from public view, asserting that it is acceptable for such development to be visible within the landscape.
- 8.13 This application has been subject to pre-application discussion with the applicant raising concern that the resultant conclusions of the Landscape Officer are misaligned with the advice provided at the pre-application stage. This is not considered to be the case with the pre-application primarily providing advice as to the content and detail of a final Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to accompany any planning application. Whilst support was given at the pre-application stage to the principle of renewable energy developments, it was advised that further work was required to address the landscape impact of the development. The pre-application advice was subject to, and without prejudice to, any final assessment of the planning application and its accompanying LVIA.

Impact upon landscape character

- 8.14 The application site is located within the Landscape Character Area 10C Thruxton and Danebury Chalk Downland which has a generally unspoilt and agricultural character. The north of the site is situated upon a plateau which gives open wide views of the countryside across the undulating topography with these views predominately of the agricultural scene interspersed with pockets of woodland and hedgerow field boundaries. Dissecting this view is the presence of pylons and power lines which sit predominately towards the east but nonetheless appear upon the horizon. The site has a remoteness and tranquillity attributed to the natural landscape, despite the proximity to nearby settlements and principle highways.

The land proposed for the panels itself undulates, ranging between 64AOD to the southwest boundary through to 87AOD to the north east. The land proposed for the primary substation is situated approximately 800m to the south east and at a lower ground level, again upon agricultural land.

- 8.15 The planning application has been accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which was amended during the course of the application. This LVIA determines that the development will have varying levels of impact upon the landscape and acknowledges that the development “...will involve the introduction of new and incongruous elements within the landscape setting, which will be obtuse to the existing character of the landscape”. This has been rated within the LVIA as having a “(adverse) Moderate” impact upon the landscape with a large scale change to some landscape characteristics, particularly during construction. The effects of construction are recognised as temporary across the 26 week construction period but also beyond this time whilst the grassland establishes (approx. 12-18 months). The grassland itself is also acknowledged within the LVIA as having “..an adverse effect on the landscape character, found within the patchwork of arable fields...” although this discordancy across the wider setting is considered to be reduced when viewed in conjunction with further afield grasslands. The development does seek to mitigate this landscape character impact by retaining current field shapes and proposing new or reinforced planted boundaries, with the LVIA also identifying that the structures on the land will not be inappropriate or entirely isolated from the overhead pylons which constitutes a ‘man-made influence’ in the wider landscape setting.
- 8.16 Notwithstanding these mitigation measures, the Landscape Officer has expressed concern regarding the very large scale of the development with its consequent impact upon the landscape character. This concern extends to both the undulating plateau given over for the installation of the solar panels and the land given over the primary substation. The scale and spread of the development across the wide extent of the landscape with the highest part of the site sitting on a plateau is such that it would be contrary to the landscape qualities and local character of the area and therefore would not accord with criterion a) and b) of policy DES01. It is considered that whilst mitigation measures have been proposed, these are insufficient to account for the very large scale of the site. As such, the development cannot be successfully integrated into the local environment contrary also to criteria c) of policy DES01.

Impact upon Visual Amenity

- 8.17 The LVIA continues by assessing the visual impact of the development from a number of public viewpoints to include public highways, byways, footpaths, and from heritage assets (e.g. Danebury Hillfort, Marsh Court and the local Conservation Areas). The assessment identifies that, during the construction phase, the development will give rise to visual impacts upon the landscape,

ranging from “nil effects” through to “(adverse) Major” significance attributed to the varying public vantage points. The lowest level of significance is assigned to points where the site is simply not visible due to the distance or topography through to the distinct disturbance to views from public footpaths which abut the site boundaries. Similar effects are identified during decommissioning, albeit the greatest level of harm has been lowered to an “(adverse) Moderate” significance accounting for the maturity of landscaping during the project timespan. Whilst it is acknowledged that these phases will attract the greatest levels of harm, the construction and decommissioning works are the most temporary phases of the overall project.

- 8.18 During the 25 year operation of the site, the LVIA has identified the development to again have a range of landscape impacts. In long range views, these have been assigned a significance level of “nil” or “negligible” due to the undulating topography or existing enclosure from mature vegetation which ensures that the site is not a distinct or unduly incongruous element in the countryside. The Landscape Officer has concurred with the level of significance and agrees that, whilst the site will be glimpsed in a number of a long range views, these are at a distance and are less intrusive to the enjoyment of the countryside. It is additionally agreed that there are no adverse cumulative impacts arising from the development and even from sensitive sites such as Danebury Hill or Marsh Court the development will not demonstrably detract from the wide panoramic views of the rolling countryside.
- 8.19 Contrary to this, the development has been assessed as having an “(adverse) Moderate” visual impact from Broughton Down (approx. 2.5km east) and Broughton Hill (approx. 3km south) through to “(adverse) Major” significance to the public byways to the immediate north and west of the site. For instance, mid-range views from Broughton Down are of a high quality adding to the sensitivity of the development in the landscape, and within these views the breadth and width of the installation would be apparent. The applicant indicates that the “*scale of effects would improve*” but also acknowledges that the “*situation would remain similar throughout its operational lifespan*” due to the elevated position. This is described by the applicant as a consequence of the development given that views cannot be easily mitigated due to the interlying topography. Indeed there is no statutory requirement to wholly screen the development from every public vantage point and with the development seen at a distance with sitting within a much wider panoramic scene, the development as seen from Broughton Down is not visually intrusive to a demonstrable level that would adversely affect the remoteness and tranquillity of the countryside.
- 8.20 The principle concern regarding visual impact is from the public rights of way which sit to the north and west of the site from which the development has been identified to have an “(adverse) Major” to “(adverse) Major-Moderate” significance. These public rights of way do (in part) abut the boundaries of the site and have varying views into and across the land due to variations in ground level to the site, the presence of hedgerows or are enclosed by overhanging trees with understorey hedgerows.

To the north of the site the footpath (in part) sits at a lower level to the land and therefore the presence of the panels on rising land beyond will replace glimpses of the countryside with views of the rear face of the panels being an incongruous and overbearing element to the enjoyment of the footpath. This will generate a marked dilution in the sense that one has of a natural or rural isolation. Other parts of this same footpath, together with the footpath to the west are enclosed by vegetation or benefit from a greater detachment from the site boundary therefore lessening direct views of the site, particularly in a summer landscape. Conversely, the impact of the panels to these footpaths across the rest of the year would be more marked and obtrusive.

- 8.21 The enjoyment of using these footpaths is gained from this planted or topographical enclosure but is not separated from the expectation that the footpaths will then open out to afford the wider and extensive views across the landscape. The development however with its new boundary planting, extensive areas given over to the solar arrays and the associated infrastructure (e.g. fencing, inverter stations, mounted CCTV) will remove this particular element to the visual enjoyment of the landscape on this plateau. The resultant view would be informed by the immediately apparent and conspicuous development dominating the views from the footpaths, with these views also enclosed by the new boundary planting. The stopping of the longer views for the lifetime of the project is considered detrimental to the remoteness and tranquillity of the countryside. Whilst it could be argued that new or enhanced boundary planting would detract from the views of the solar panels by continuing the enclosure of the footpaths, the Landscape Officer is of the opinion that the planting proposed is insufficient to enclose views of the site, particularly during winter months. The development is therefore deemed to have an adverse impact on visual amenity within the vicinity of the site and remains a detraction from the rural character of the area. The detrimental harm identified is contrary to policies ESN32, DES01 and DES10 of the Local Plan.
- 8.22 The detrimental impact of the development upon visual amenity is reserved to the extensive area given over to the solar panels. This concern does not extend to the primary substation positioned 800m to the south given the topography, the proposed enclosure and detachment from the local rights of way network. The substation is positioned as to not be as readily apparent in the landscape and also benefits from its proximity to Lodge Farm and the collection of buildings which also sit within the landscape. The substation has been the subject of comment with respect to the erection of a 27m high pylon which will be viewed within the landscape given its height. It is noted however that this is a replacement structure within the line of pylons that extend across the countryside parallel to Houghton as opposed to any new feature in the landscape. The development is considered to be acceptable in this respect.

Highway Safety

- 8.23 The Local Plan contains a number of policies (TRA) that address issues of traffic and land use, examining aspects of highway safety, parking provision, access and site layouts and the impact on the highway network.

The principle highway impacts relating to the development is from the construction period which is anticipated to last approximately 26 weeks with access required for the delivery of the equipment together with vehicle movements related to contractors.

- 8.24 The application details the intention to ensure that HGV vehicles approach the site from the A30, then to head south along Broughton Road and onto the site via a new private access road. A total of 2660 HGVs (i.e. arrivals and departures) will access the site across this 26 week period, with vehicle movements ranging from 17 per day (i.e. 9 arrivals/8 departures) to a peak of 24 per day at week 16. Such vehicles are indicated to be accessing the site outside of peak weekday traffic hours, the timing of which could be subject to a planning condition. Personnel working on site will also arrive via minibus with temporary parking provided within a contractor's compound sited to the north of the site. Vehicles exiting the site will be cleaned via a wheel washing facility to minimise mud transferring to the local road and the site will have a road sweeper to ensure that the road network is maintained in an appropriate condition. Once operational, the site will be remotely monitored with only periodic vehicle movements for maintenance purposes.
- 8.25 Concerns have been raised to the development, with particular regard to the traffic movements during construction, alterations required to the junction with the A30/Broughton Road, the ability of Broughton Road to accommodate the nature of the vehicles serving the site and for the provision of passing spaces. These passing spaces are to be situated in positions along Broughton Road, making use of space where either, there is no hedgerow to be removed, to improve existing passing spaces or be positioned close to the site. The highway concerns however have not been shared by the Highways Officer who has been satisfied that, subject to a lorry routing agreement and appropriate directional signage, no adverse risk to the highway network or highway safety would arise from the proposal. Further agreement will be required to secure the offsite works to the passing places and to the junction with the A30. With these measures secured in conjunction with appropriate planning conditions, the development is deemed acceptable against the TRA policies of the BLP.

Natural Environment

Biodiversity

- 8.26 Local Plan policies ENV01 and ENV05 seek to ensure that adverse harm does not arise upon biodiversity interests and protected species respectively with criteria b to policy ESN32 also ensuring that the proposal does not adversely affect features or areas of ecological interest. These policies place a responsibility upon the applicant to demonstrate that any protected species have been accounted for within the submission and to provide long term enhancements for biodiversity. The site is located outside any area subject to a specific ecological designation although within a 5km radius of the site sits Eveley Wood designated as ancient woodland, as well as the Mottisfont Bats and Salisbury Plain Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the River Test, Mottisfont Bats, Broughton Down and Danebury Hill Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

- 8.27 The application has been supported by an extended Phase 1 habitat survey. This survey work considers that the development is not likely to give rise to adverse impacts on protected species subject to appropriate mitigation measures, appropriate site operation (e.g. timing) and biodiversity enhancements. Of note was the presence of a badger sett within the site boundary with evidence also that the site is used for commuting and foraging. This activity is accommodated within the ecological mitigation with the provision of badger gates within the boundary fencing. Bats are likely to commute and/or forage along the more substantial hedgerows with Barn Owls foraging existing field margins. Nesting birds are also likely to be present on site within the taller/dense vegetation to the boundary. No objection has been raised from the HCC Ecologist nor Natural England as to the impact of the development upon protected species or sites designated for their ecological interest respectively.
- 8.28 The site has also been considered for the presence of rare arable plants with the conclusion the intensive management of the land with applications of herbicide across the arable footprint having not been favourable to such plant species. Nor has this cultivation of the land been conducive to encouraging invertebrate fauna (e.g. bees, butterflies). The replacement of land in arable cultivation with new meadow and species diverse grassland formed by a wildflower and grass seed mix has great potential to bring ecological /biodiversity benefits. Further planting is proposed to the field margins and to the internal field boundary strengthening foraging opportunities and habitat diversification with improved connectivity providing greater opportunities for colonisation by a range of flora and fauna. It is anticipated that a species assemblage will develop offering a substantially greater diversity than the current site has to offer. All in all, the enhanced planting and the anticipated ecological gains shall bring about more lasting benefits beyond the lifespan of the solar installation.
- 8.29 Finally, concern has additionally been expressed through the representations that there is evidence that some invertebrate fauna that lay eggs in fresh water can be 'confused' by solar PV arrays and attempt to lay eggs on the panels. The concern is that this confusion would subsequently harm the sensitive ecological status of the River Test. This concern has been considered within the Environment Statement noting that the site is over 1.4km from the River Test with prevailing winds blowing towards the river from the site as opposed to towards the site. No objection has been raised to this particular ecological concern from the HCC Ecologist therefore it is not considered that a reason for refusal on these grounds could be substantiated. The development is therefore considered to accord with policies ENV01, ENV05 or ESN32 (b) of the Local Plan.

Trees

- 8.30 Policy DES08 seeks to ensure that development proposals have due regard to trees ensuring that trees with amenity value are retained in perpetuity. There are numbers of existing trees to the site boundaries which form an integral part of the landscape character of the area, with those to public footpaths having a greater public amenity value. With the exception of the site access, the relationship between these trees and the solar panels has been designed to ensure that the trees both currently, and with future growth, would not adversely affect the optimum function of the panels through adverse shading. This is achieved through appropriate siting, orientation and intervening distances of the panels. Concern has been raised that trees are to be lost to facilitate the site entrance for the construction process however these species are not mature specimens that have a distinct amenity value with the loss sufficiently mitigated with new planting proposed elsewhere to the site. The proposal is therefore deemed to accord with policy DES08 of the TVBLP.

Impact upon Heritage Assets (including Archaeology)

- 8.31 Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act 1990 places a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. It is also important to establish whether any harm to the significance of a heritage asset derived from the impacts to its setting amounts to “substantial harm” for the purposes of the NPPF (para 133). Locally Policy ESN17 of the Local Plan accords with these requirements with further regard given to features of historic or cultural interest within criteria b of policy ESN32.
- 8.32 Heritage assets within the vicinity of the site comprise the Conservation Areas of Houghton, Broughton and Stockbridge. Eveley Farmhouse as a Grade II listed building is positioned approximately 550m to the south, with further listed buildings, to include Marsh Court (Grade 1) and Houghton Lodge (Grade 2**) and their registered parks and gardens (also Grade II*) set within the wider landscape. Parallels have been drawn to the impact of this development upon the setting of these heritage assets to an appeal decision from Green Place, Somborne Park Road in February 2014. This case saw an application dismissed at appeal on the grounds of the “considerable harm to the setting of Green Place”, despite this harm being “less than substantial” from a solar farm positioned approximately 20m from its boundary. It is not considered that the relationship between Green Place and its neighbouring solar farm is distinctly comparable to the application site where the application proposal would be either screened from view by the undulating topography, intervening landscaping or viewed at a greater distance within wide open vistas of the undulating countryside.
- 8.33 Notwithstanding this, careful consideration has been given to the potential for intervisibility between the heritage assets and the solar installation and the potential harm upon the setting of the local Conservation Areas and listed buildings during the 25 year lifespan of the installation only. This has required consultation with both the Design and Conservation Officer and English Heritage with both consultees responding with no objection.

With either little or no intervisibility, or any distant views not considered to amount to “substantial” harm upon the setting of these heritage assets when seen against the backcloth of the landscape, the development is considered to be acceptable against the requirements of the NPPF and policy ENV17 of the BLP.

- 8.34 With regard to archaeological interests, the Environmental Statement reveals little in the way of archaeological potential remaining on the site. Analysis of the site has suggested the presence of medieval or post-medieval cultivation features together with ring-ditches possibly associated with ploughed out Bronze Age barrows. These ring ditches have a high potential for sub-surface archaeological deposits to remain together with other associated archaeological features within the application site. The construction of the solar installation through associated ground works could potentially impact upon unknown buried archaeological remains; however, the significance of any impact is considered to be low given that the solar arrays would be formed without concrete/hardcore foundations and instead would be pile driven with shallow cable trenching and only top-soil stripping to form access tracks and compound areas. Given that agricultural ploughing operations would have potentially impacted much more severely in terms of the level and extent of ground disturbance, the archaeological potential of the site can be addressed through planning condition as advised by the HCC Archaeologist.

Flooding and Surface Water Run-Off

- 8.35 The application site lies outside of any area determined by the Environment Agency to be at risk from flooding, siting within Flood Zone 1 where the flood risk is less than 1 in 1000 years. Furthermore, the Environment Agency has been consulted on the application and has raised no objection to the development on flood risk grounds, whether from fluvial, ground or surface water sources.
- 8.36 With regard to surface water run-off, the development only introduces a small area of impermeable surfacing in relation to the overall site area (0.3%), attributed principally to the inverter stations and primary substation. A SUDs drainage system is proposed to address any issues from run-off comprising swales, scrapes and bunds to manage the run off with features incorporated to intercept and store any flows thus ensuring that any run off generated by the site (e.g. from impermeable surfaces or during construction when large vehicles are on site) is no greater than for the existing use of the land. This system in conjunction with the absence of heavy agricultural machinery compacting the land, the absence of any ploughing or furrowing and the presence of vegetation cover over the 25 year operation period is in fact expected to improve the water acceptance into the soil and reduce existing run off rates. Had the proposal been deemed acceptable in other respects, a planning condition could have been imposed requiring details of the drainage scheme. The proposal accords with policy HAZ02 (Flooding).

Glint and Glare

- 8.37 The PPG (2014) advises that any application for large scale solar arrays gives consideration to the potential for excessive reflection, glint or glare adding to the sensitivity of such installations within the landscape and the potential impact on aircraft safety. Glint maybe produced as a direct reflection of the sun in the surface of the PV solar panel to cause viewer distraction. Glare however is a continuous source of brightness as a reflection of the bright sky around the sun, rather than a direct reflection of the sun. For any given location, these effects are likely to occur only for periods of the year when the sun is at a particular angle.
- 8.38 To minimise this impact, solar PV crystalline panels (as proposed) are specifically designed and coated with anti-reflective surfaces to ensure the panels have a very low reflectively level. To give off excessive reflection would severely reduce their efficiency and value. Supporting information to the application indicates that the panels will, over time, also gather dust which will not be completely washed away by rain thereby leading to a more diffuse reflection of sunlight. The panels are therefore understood to be less reflective than surfaces such as water, snow, glass buildings or car parks, being designed to capture as much sunlight as possible to convert to electricity and not lose it through reflection. This information has been considered in conjunction with the absence of any landscape objection on this potential impact with the development deemed acceptable in this regard with no overriding demonstrable harm arising.

Aircraft Safety

- 8.39 It is understood that aircraft pilots will observe glint from a number of sources from time to time, but that it will generally have little effect unless the aircraft is flying towards the source of glint (which requires a continuously descending flight profile). Glint is described as being a very short lived transient event and is likely only to happen for an aircraft approaching to land with a glint source near to a runway. The site does sit within proximity to the private airfields of Bossington and Chattis Hill with other airfields including Middle Wallop, Old Sarum, Boscombe Down and Thruxton within the wider vicinity.
- 8.40 The submitted Glint and Glare Analysis indicates that the solar farm could reflect sunlight at flat angles, which is an issue for aircrafts during take-off and landing within very limited western and eastern angle ranges. The only airfield sitting within this angle range is Old Sarum Airfield which is too distant from Eveley Farm to give rise to any adverse impact. Other sites, such as Bossington airstrip are located closer, but to the north and south of the application site and therefore outside of the angle range. In considering matters of aircraft safety, regard has also been given to planning decisions within Test Valley which have similarly been deemed acceptable and without adverse harm to air traffic to the same named airfields.

Furthermore, the National Air Traffic Control Service has expressed no safeguarding interests related to air traffic, the Civil Aviation Authority also responded with no objection and no objections have been received from any other aerodrome operator. In the absence of objections from the aircraft industry, noting also that studies from countries with more established solar industries (e.g. USA and Germany) show no significant risk to aeroplanes through reflectivity nuisance from solar panel installations at airport terminals, the proposal is deemed to be acceptable in this respect against advice contained within the PPG.

Residential Amenity

- 8.41 Policies AME01 (Amenity and Privacy) and AME02 (Sunlight and Daylight) consider the effect of development upon neighbouring residential amenities, addressing aspects of privacy and private open space and daylight/sunlight respectively. The policy also considers any harm arising from dominance or overbearing development and the effect this can have on the outlook from a property. This development is not a type which is to give rise to any loss of privacy or loss of sunlight or daylight to any residential property. Concern has been raised regarding the impact upon views from individual properties, albeit this not being a material planning consideration. Notably, the closest property to the site is in fact Eveley Farm is positioned offset from the site boundary by approximately 550m and screened by intervening woodland. It is not considered that the development gives rise to adverse harm to private residential amenity and accords with policies AME01 and AME02 of the TVBLP.

Noise

- 8.42 The AME policies continue with policy AME04 (Noise and Vibration) which considers the effect of noise and vibration from nearby land uses and the effect of these upon the amenity of occupants. In this respect, it is possible that some noise and disruption could occur during construction (and decommissioning stages) which is predicted to last 26 weeks. This impact could be ameliorated through the agreement of a Construction Method Statement secured as a pre-commencement condition to detail how and when the site shall be developed, with similar details to cover the decommissioning process.
- 8.43 Once operational, the photovoltaic panels do not give rise to any noise issues. It is possible however that low levels of noise could be generated from cooling fans within the inverter stations operating at times when electricity is being generated (e.g. sunlight hours). Cumulatively, this sound could be audible beyond the site boundary given the number of stations dispersed across the site above any background noise. The application responds to this potential impact within an acoustic report that examines the accumulated airborne noise transmitted from the site to determine whether the generation of such noise is likely to adversely erode the tranquillity of the immediate environs. This has been subject to consideration by the Environmental Protection team concluding that, subject to further details secured by planning condition that the development would not create any substantive noise related nuisance and accords with policy AME04.

Land Contamination

- 8.44 Representations to the application have expressed concern that the installed PV panels could potentially give rise to land contamination from metal or chemical substances, particularly as the panel's age or become damaged. In response, the applicant has indicated that the potential of pollution runoff from intact polycrystalline panels is very low with the panels designed to resist natural forces (e.g. hail, sun). Furthermore, a regular maintenance and inspection process would identify any failed units which would be replaced by the site contractor as damaged panels do not produce energy. In addition to the comments by the applicant, neither the Environment Agency (EA) nor the Environmental Protection Officer has raised any objection on the grounds of land contamination arising from the leaching of contaminants from the photovoltaic panels. As further information, a planning application considered by Wiltshire Council in April 2014 for a 80ha solar park near Melksham, Wiltshire (LPA ref 13/06140/FUL) reported that the EA had '*no knowledge of any cases in the UK where such pollution has resulted from farm development*'. It is therefore not considered that any refusal could be substantiated on contamination grounds with the proposal according with policy HAZ04 (Land Contamination) of the TVBLP.

Tourism

- 8.45 Representations to the application have raised concern that the proposal will have a negative impact upon the tourism trade within Test Valley, given that the area is an attractive one to visit for sport (e.g. fishing, shooting) and recreational (e.g. walking, cycling) purposes. With a number of solar parks already present within Test Valley, no substantive evidence has been presented within these representations to suggest that such installations are having a negative impact upon the local tourist trade or appeal. Given the location of the site, albeit positioned to abut or be visible from a limited number of public rights of way and vantage points, it is suggested that the separation from the main tourist attractions ensures that the proposal is unlikely to have a demonstrable or detrimental effect upon local tourism.

Security

- 8.46 Solar farm sites are understood to attract low levels of criminal activity with the only elements attractive for theft comprising the copper cabling which is buried underground. Notwithstanding this, the site is to be fully enclosed with deer fencing to deter unauthorised access and criminal activity. Security CCTV cameras are to additionally be installed, mounted on 4m high poles with infra-red built in sensors linked to an alarm system with remote monitoring.

Community Involvement and Gain

- 8.47 This development is recognised as a renewable energy installation although it does not establish any direct community/local end-user benefits since the generated electricity would be fed directly into the National Grid. Notwithstanding this, the applicant is committed to engaging with the local community and has proposed to offer local incentives to Houghton and Broughton Parish Councils in the form of annual community funds.

These incentives do not form any material planning consideration and have not been sought against the tests of CIL. As such, any agreements reached between the developer and the local community must and will remain separate to the assessment of this planning application and have no involvement from the Local Planning Authority.

Application submission

- 8.48 The application has been subject to extensive comment regarding its content and brevity of the detailed reports to differing aspects of the proposal. The applicant has sought to address issues arising within the submission of revised information, the request of which is not unusual within the consideration of a planning application. Amended information has been subject to revised consultation and renotification with third parties.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The proposed development would make a contribution towards the national requirements for providing renewable energy which carries weight in favour of the development. However the need for renewable energy however does not automatically override the need for environmental protection with the scale of the development found to adversely affect the landscape character and the visual amenity of the wider landscape. Furthermore, it has not been adequately demonstrated that the site comprises moderate grade 3b agricultural land as to be satisfied the location of the proposal is justifiable.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the reasons:

- 1. The proposed development, by reason of its size and scale would have an unacceptable impact upon the landscape character of this location with the magnitude of change imposed upon the character of the area having an adverse visual impact detrimental to the enjoyment of the countryside as experienced by users of public rights of way sitting in close proximity to the application site. The development conflicts with the Test Valley Borough Local Plan policies ESN32 (Renewable Energy Developments) and DES01 (Landscape Character).**
 - 2. Insufficient information has been submitted within the application to confidently conclude that the application is located solely on land classified as agricultural Grade 3b. The application also fails to demonstrate that there are no other alternative sites of poorer agricultural quality land which could be used in preference to the application site for the siting of this large scale solar development. The development therefore does not accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 112) and Planning Policy Guidance.**
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APPENDIX B

Officer's Update Report to Southern Area Planning Committee – 15 July 2014

APPLICATION NO.	13/02735/FULLS
SITE	Land at Eveley Farm, Stevens Drove, Houghton, SO20 6SA HOUGHTON BROUGHTON
COMMITTEE DATE	15 July 2014
ITEM NO.	7
PAGE NO.	11-68

1.0 **VIEWING PANEL**

- 1.1 A Viewing Panel was held on Friday 11 July 2014 attended by Councillors Bundy, Bailey, Anderdon, Hibberd, A Dowden, C Dowden, Boulton, Ward, Hurst and Tilling. Apologies were received from Councillors Collier, Johnston, Cosier, Finlay, and Dunleavy.

2.0 **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- 2.1
- **Amended Plans** – Revised site plan and cross section clarifying the height of the proposed (replacement) tower as being 29.5m as opposed to 27m received 10 July 2014 to supersede the drawings on pages 61 and 62 of the Agenda;
 - **Additional Information** – ‘Summary of the evaluation of potential Solar PV sites in Hampshire and reasons for the section of Eveley Solar Farm’ received 9 July 2014.

3.0 **CONSULTATIONS**

- 3.1 **Highways** – correction to typographical error to paragraph 5.4 (final bullet point - page 160). The final word should read ‘available’ and not ‘unavailable’.

Reading Agricultural Consultants – correction to typographical error to paragraph 5.15 (2nd bullet point on page 19) – ‘1.22’ should read ‘1.2’.

English Heritage – in summary

- Wish to submit supplementary comment;
- Come to attention that a further visual assessment of the potential impact of the proposed solar farm on the significance of Marsh Court has been carried out, commissioned by Marsh Court;
- The new information seems to contradict that previously submitted by the applicant and indicates that the 30m high substation tower would be clearly visible from Marsh Court;
- The setting of Marsh Court contributes to the significance of the grade I listed building and registered park. Views from the house and garden are very important and a further modern intrusion into the views would constitute a degree of harm;
- It is important that the LPA has an accurate understanding of the level of harm this proposal would cause to the significance of Marsh Court;
- The NPPF seeks to reduce harm and that any harm must be clearly and convincingly justified;

- The NPPF acknowledges that there can be instances when harm to a heritage asset can be outweighed by public benefits brought about by the proposal and in weighing the benefits, the authority ‘shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building and its setting...’;
- Urge the LPA to test the accuracy of the range of visual information submitted and seemingly contradictory. Any decision must be based on accurate information;
- It would seem to indicate that the substation mast would be visible, and assess that this proposal would cause a low level of harm to the significance of Marsh Court and its registered garden.

Design and Conservation – no objection (comments in summary)

- Further to latest comments from English Heritage, a further assessment of the proposal was undertaken by Design and Conservation that included revisiting Marsh Court to ascertain views out from first and second floor vantage points from the western range of the house and also from within the grounds;
- The 30m tower referred to by English Heritage is to replace one that already exists close by;
- Whilst this existing pylon is clearly discernible from Marsh Court, the replacement would be of the same height and sited within a matter of metres of the existing one. It is considered that the visual impact of this proposed new pylon on the views from Marsh Court would be negligibly different to what presently exists;
- Structures around the base of this new pylon would mean they would not be visible from Marsh Court due to inter-lying topography;
- Along the eastern boundary to the fields subject of this application, Marsh Court is visible in easterly views, however for much of the application site, its topography and inter lying land would mean the site would not be visible from Marsh Court or its grounds;
- Marsh Court could be discerned from a raised storage tank feature that lies well out of the application site, with the land to the east falling away. As such, views of Marsh Court were from an elevated position over a hedgerow;
- The perception was that, were the proposed development to be potentially visible from Marsh Court, it would be from this south western corner of the southerly field. Views would be restrictive at best;
- It is considered that with the provision of appropriate mitigation measures to screen this part of the site, the proposed development would not impact on the views towards the site from Marsh Court;
- On this basis and following an assessment of both the additional information submitted by the applicant and Marsh Court, and having undertaken a further assessment, Design and Conservation raise no objection to this proposal.

4.0 REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 1 letter from ‘Broughton Against Kronos Solar’ (BAKS) – in summary:

- BAKS represents a large group of Broughton and Houghton residents who object to the Eveley Solar Farm proposal;
- Are in favour of green energy produced in the right place and on the right scale but Eveley Solar Park is not this;

- Believe the siting of the solar farm is against Government Policy as it was never intended for good agricultural land be given over to solar farms;
 - Latest government policy is to oppose large green field solar farms and promote on site generation (e.g. industrial/building roof tops);
 - Renewable Obligation Certificates (i.e. method by which operators receive subsidies) will be scrapped from 1 April 2015 to discourage large-scale based solar parks;
 - Eveley Solar Farm would be blight on the countryside, have an adverse visual impact, with inadequate screening proposals;
 - Wire fencing and CCTV would given appearance of a prison camp;
 - Noise from invertors could destroy local tranquillity;
 - Proposal is a highly inefficient quack remedy for climate change;
 - It's electricity would cost substantially more to produce than conventional electricity;
 - It would produce no electricity at night and very little in winter when demand is high;
 - It is only viable provided it has access to subsidies designed for roof top solar installations;
 - Destroy highly productive agricultural land;
 - Damage biodiversity of Test Valley – destruction of Mayfly populations mistaking solar panels for water and Mottisfont bats could be discouraged from using their regular feeding ground in Eveley Wood;
 - Concern that the parent company of the applicant may be a venture capital company. A permission could be sold on and therefore the applicant would have no responsibility for statements in the planning application;
 - TVBC are custodians of the beautiful and irreplaceable countryside;
 - Urge to reject this vast industrial eyesore that would damage such a large area of our idyllic countryside.
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