The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 February 2015

by J M Trask BSc(Hons) CEng MICE

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 5 June 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/A/14/2221012
Land at Snarlton Farm, Snarlton Lane, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 7QP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr St John Hughes of Sandridge Solar Power Ltd against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
- The application Ref 13/06140/FUL, dated 15 November 2013, was refused by notice dated 16 April 2014.
- The development proposed is a 80.5ha solar photovoltaic farm on land 2km to the east of Melksham, Wiltshire along with attendant equipment and infrastructure.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a 80.5ha solar photovoltaic farm on land 2km to the east of Melksham, Wiltshire along with attendant equipment and infrastructure at Land at Snarlton Farm, Snarlton Lane, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 7QP in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 13/06140/FUL, dated 15 November 2013, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matter

2. Since the appeal was made there has been a change in the development plan (which is explained below) and another application for a solar farm in the area has been refused by the Council (details are given later in this Decision). I have taken these matters into account in my consideration of this appeal as I do not consider that this would cause prejudice to any interested party.

3. The proposed operational life of the solar photovoltaic farm is 25 years.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether any harmful impacts of the proposed development would outweigh the benefits of the scheme, including the production of electricity from a renewable source, having particular regard to:

   i. whether the proposed solar farm would be appropriately located on agricultural land; and

   ii. the effect upon the character and appearance of the area including any cumulative impact arising from other permitted solar farms within the area.

Reasons

Policy

5. Statute provides that the appeal is to be decided in accordance with the provisions of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Since the application was refused the Wiltshire Core Strategy has been adopted by the Council and is now part of the development plan. The Core Strategy has replaced the West Wiltshire District Plan (2004) and Policies C1 and C34 of that plan have been superseded by Policies CP2, CP34, CP48, CP50, CP51 and CP52 of the Core Strategy but with the exception of Policy CP51 these policies are not particularly relevant to the main issues.

6. Core Strategy Core Policy CP42 is the most relevant policy. Among other things it supports standalone renewable energy schemes subject to satisfactory assessment of impact on the landscape, including any cumulative effects, and it seeks to avoid the use of the best and most versatile agricultural land. It also requires the consideration of Policy CP51.

7. While Core Policy CP51 generally seeks to protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character, any but the smallest standalone renewable energy scheme in the countryside is likely to have some negative effect on landscape character and visual amenity, at least within its near vicinity. Moreover Policy CP51 does not exclude all negative impacts but does seek that they are mitigated. Thus in terms of the effect upon the character and appearance of the area the issue is the magnitude of any negative effects after mitigation and how far they extend, including any cumulative effects with other developments.

8. The relevant policies of the Core Strategy are broadly consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which is an important material consideration. The Framework includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This has three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. In relation to the environmental dimension, the Framework includes the core principle of protection of the countryside for its intrinsic value and it aims to protect and enhance valued landscapes (para 109). Other environmental considerations include meeting the challenge of climate change. In Section 10 the Framework promotes and seeks to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts (para 97). It also provides for the approval of renewable energy applications if the impacts can be made acceptable, unless material considerations indicate otherwise (para 98).

9. In relation to the economic dimension of sustainable development, economic growth in rural areas is supported by the Framework. It encourages diversification of agricultural and other land based rural enterprises. However, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, the Framework encourages the use of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality (para 112).

10. The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG) supports the Framework policies and has superseded Planning Practice Advice for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (July 2013). The PPG recognises the potential impact of large-scale solar farms on the rural environment, particularly in undulating

landscapes. It encourages the effective use of land by focusing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land. However, it does not preclude necessary development on agricultural land, subject again to a preference for poorer quality land over higher quality land. The PPG explains the Framework policy that all communities have a responsibility to help increase the use and supply of green energy but acknowledges that the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities.

11. I have also had regard to the overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) and the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3).

12. National policy in the Framework has not been changed by either the UK Solar PV Strategy or by subsequent letters and statements made by various Government Ministers and to which I have been referred. That dated 29 January 2014 emphasised that the impact on the landscape needs to be made acceptable and that this is a very high test. The letter dated 1 November 2013 did not support inappropriately sited solar PV and preferred the use of low grade agricultural land (25 April 2013), domestic and commercial roof space and previously used land (22 April 2014). The statement on 25 March 2015 referred to the need to consider the necessity of siting a proposal on agricultural land.

Land Use

13. Although not part of the reason for refusal the Council has since raised concerns in respect of whether the guidance in the PPG amounts to a requirement for a sequential assessment of site location. This relates to when a proposal involves agricultural land and the policy and guidance that poorer quality land should be used in preference to higher quality land.

14. The land is classified as primarily Grade 4 poor quality and is used for grazing and some forage crops; it is not the best and most versatile agricultural land. While the use of greenfield land is not encouraged, a site of this size could only reasonably be accommodated in the open countryside. Also the need for suitable grid connection limits the availability of potential sites.

15. The appellant has confirmed that other options have been assessed, such as on large car parks, but there is no similarly sized area in the vicinity available at a commercially viable rent and with suitable access to the national grid. Nevertheless, the site comprises predominantly poor quality Grade 4 land and I do not consider that there is a policy requirement for a more detailed assessment of possible alternatives.

16. However, even were the sequential test to be applied, given the scale of the proposed development, it is unlikely that it could be accommodated on brownfield sites or within urban areas. In order to avoid the use of more sensitive areas of countryside and higher quality land it is therefore necessary to use this poor quality agricultural land.

17. On my visit I noted that the heavy clay soil means that most of the land is laid to pasture with a few fields of crops for fodder on the higher eastern and northern parts of the site. While improvement of poor quality land is not unusual, in this case the appellant proposes the appeal site would also be

grazed by sheep and the farmers who work the land have confirmed that they are content that the height of the panels would be satisfactory and allow for sheep grazing as well as the solar installation.

18. I conclude that the proposal avoids the use of the best and most versatile land. It conforms to the requirements of the development plan and the Framework in that regard and is appropriately located on agricultural land.

Character and Appearance

19. The appellant's Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) uses terms that describe the level of landscape and visual effects. These are Imperceptible, Slight, Moderate, Substantial and Severe. The Council uses the terms Not Significant, Minor, Moderate, Major and Severe. For the avoidance of doubt I consider the terms and definitions of the terms to be similar but have used the Council's terminology.

20. Most of the vegetation in the area is deciduous. While the appellant's LVIA was based on an assessment during summer months, I carried out my site visit in the winter. It was apparent that even without leaves the planting has a significant screening effect but the impact I have assessed would be considerably less in the summer when screening would be enhanced.

Landscape Character

21. The appeal site comprises 17 fields to the east of Melksham. The fields are worked by three farms, Snarlton Farm, Tanhouse Farm and Sandridge Farm.

22. The site is mostly on reasonably level ground and is part of a shallow valley with ridges to the north and south. There is a gentle rise in the land to the south of the site and part of the site is on the lower slope of the ridge to the north. There is an area of woodland (Morass Wood) on the northern slope and several woodland plantations adjoin the site. I have seen no evidence that these longstanding woodlands would be under threat during the 25 year life of the development.

23. Two lines of electricity pylons run through the site. Main roads run along the ridge to the north (A3102) and in the lower part of the valley (A365) and some houses have recently been built on the edge of Melksham to the west of the site. Nevertheless, the area otherwise retains a rural, tranquil, open and expansive character and appearance.

24. The site lies in an area defined as Avon Open Clay Vale in the *Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment* and Melksham Open Clay Vale in the *West Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment*. The main landscape characteristics of the area are identified as including wide open skies, long distance views, mixed use farmland with medium scale field patterns, hedgerows and a comprehensive footpath network. The management strategy for the Avon Open Clay Vale includes conserving the elements that contribute to the rural, tranquil landscape and the management strategy for the Melksham Open Clay Vale includes conserving and enhancing the landscape setting to Melksham including the hedgerow boundaries.

25. There is an existing solar farm at Craymarsh Farm, situated about 300m from the south west corner of the appeal site and another near Poulshot about 3km to the south east of the site. The proposal for a solar development at Rew Farm

(Ref 14/03736/FUL) has been refused permission. The Council has confirmed that the only other solar farms permitted within 5km of the site are near Broughton Gifford, which is on the other side of Melksham. I note that the planning permission for the Norrington Lane development near Broughton Gifford has recently been quashed[1]. Although there are several other solar farms in the wider area they are sufficiently distant from the site to ensure that they are not seen in the same view or seen soon before or after the proposed scheme when travelling along roads or public rights of way. Therefore they do not contribute to any harmful cumulative impacts on landscape character or visual impact.

26. The appeal site would cover an area of about 80.5ha. The proposal would result in the presence of regular rows of hard surfaced solar panels and the structures of the arrays and these, together with the associated new buildings and structures, would form a strong physical presence. The uniform nature of the development would give rise to a uniform appearance contrary to the subtle changes in land colour and texture currently apparent.

27. It is therefore clear that the proposal would alter the landscape character of the immediate area by the introduction of these new elements. However, the impact would be partially mitigated in that the existing hedgerows between fields would be maintained at a height of around 2.5m to 3.0m. Also the surrounding woodlands and the trees in the hedgerows would help break up and screen the development. Some new planting is also proposed, particularly along the western part of the southern boundary of the site and the southern part of the eastern boundary. The retention of hedgerows and the new planting would ensure that the field pattern, which is one of the main characteristics of the area, was retained.

28. The proposed development would also be low level and would not encroach on public rights of way. Accordingly, the other main landscape character features of the area, including the wide open skies, the availability of long distance views and a comprehensive footpath network would be retained.

29. The Craymarsh Farm development is relatively small and the additional adverse cumulative impact on landscape character resulting from the combined effects of the existing and proposed developments, over and above that resulting from the proposal itself, would be minor.

30. The proposal would have a regular industrial appearance and would not fully conserve the rural landscape or all of the landscape setting to Melksham and so would not be in accord with the relevant objectives of the landscape character assessment management strategies. The proposal would result in a major adverse impact on the local landscape and the character of the rural fields in which it is located. Nevertheless, as described above, given the wide open skies and large scale panoramas that characterise the area, the development would not be the defining characteristic of the area. The panels would only be seen at close distances or as occupying a part of a wider landscape. Accordingly, I agree with the conclusions of the appellant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that the adverse impact on the wider area would be (in the Council's terms) minor to moderate.

[1] Gerber v Wiltshire Council [2015] EWHC 524 (Admin)

Visual Amenity

31. In terms of the visual impact of the development I have assessed the effect when seen from a number of viewpoints. Public rights of way surround the site and are widespread in the surrounding area. Recreational users of public rights of way are likely to be more sensitive visual receptors than, for example, car drivers who are passing quickly through the area and concentrating on the road. Bridleway MELW25a runs parallel to and about 120m south of the southern boundary of the site. There is a farm track along the north side of the hedge but the bridleway lies to the south of the hedgerow for the westernmost half of the length parallel to the site boundary. Along this section most of the site would not be particularly apparent as it would be at a lower level than the bridleway and screened by vegetation.

32. Along the eastern section the bridleway is to the north of the hedgerow and from this section the scale of the proposed development would be apparent. Some new hedgerow planting has been proposed by the appellant but this does not extend sufficiently far to the east to provide visual screening from this part of the right of way. Nevertheless, increasing the length of the proposed new hedgerow or strengthening the existing hedgerow by additional planting to increase the density and height would adequately screen the development. While I acknowledge that developing a dense and high hedgerow generally takes time, more mature planting at close centres is also possible. Thus satisfactory planting could be required by the imposition of a suitable condition and this is discussed later in this decision. It is likely that the higher part of the site would remain clearly visible from the bridleway but it would be seen against the backdrop of Morass Wood and Eighteen Acre Plantation to the north of the site and would be sufficiently distant to result in a moderate adverse visual impact in the context of the expansive views and wide open skies.

33. Prater's Lane bridleway (MELW40) runs along the western boundary of the site for about 1.5km. I walked along this part of the bridleway during my site visit. Apart from gateways the site is mostly screened from the bridleway, even for most horse riders, by a high hedge. In winter months the development would be visible through the hedge but views would be filtered. While the presence of the development would be apparent, most users of the bridleway would be moving and the glimpses of the solar arrays would have a limited and temporary impact as part of a longer journey.

34. Seend Ridge, the villages of Seend and Seend Cleeve and the abundant number of public rights of way around the villages lie about 2km to the south of the site, on the opposite side of the Kennett and Avon canal. The proposal is shown in Figure 6.18 of the LVIA which is a photomontage of the view from Viewpoint 12, which is similar to Committee View 4. The development would be most apparent from the upper levels of the ridge, particularly the footpath along the ridge to the rear of the village hall. The development at Craymarsh Farm is also visible from this footpath, albeit that it is at a low level and, even in winter, does not draw the eye as it is a relatively small element of a wider landscape.

35. The proposed solar arrays would generally be seen against the backdrop of Morass Wood and Eighteen Acre Plantation to the north of the site with Eight Acre Plantation and the small wood to the south of it (Memory Wood) screening the north west extremity of the development. The hedges would remain so the

field pattern would still be apparent and this would break up the development to some extent. Even so, the eye would be drawn to the development and from that to the solar farm at Craymarsh Farm. The proposed scheme would be large but even when seen together with the Craymarsh scheme, in the context of the panoramic views available from the ridge, it would not have a great visual impact. Nevertheless, it would result in the introduction of a large area of development and a significant change to the existing view which would result in a moderate to major adverse impact.

36. The A3102 at Sandridge Hill lies to the north of the site and is on elevated ground. The proposal is shown in Figure 6.17 of the LVIA which is a photomontage of the view from Viewpoint 5. Part of the development could be seen in the gap between Morass Wood and Eighteen Acre Plantation but otherwise the closest part of the development to the road, and the occasional property along it, would be generally screened by woodland and landform. The more distant part of the development would be visible from the road, as is that at Craymarsh Farm, but they would only be seen in fleeting glances by road users and only the rear of the arrays would be apparent. Thus in my view the visual impact would be minor to moderate adverse.

37. The view of the site from Sandridge Farm is largely screened by the Moonground and Hundred Acre Plantations and from Broad Lane Farm much of the site would be behind the gentle ridge on the south side of the site. I also visited other view points in the area but found no harm that would make a noticeable addition to that described above.

38. While the full extent of the development would not be seen from any one viewpoint, and it would be broken up by hedgerows, the scale of the proposal would be unlike anything else in the area. Any effects from glint and glare would increase the visual prominence of the development. The visual impact would vary from minor adverse from some viewpoints to moderate to major adverse from others.

39. The 4.1ha solar farm at Craymarsh Farm is clearly visible from other public rights of way that meet near the south west corner of the site with the bridleway passing through the development. Thus there would be some cumulative effect for those travelling along these routes as one solar farm would be seen soon after another. However, the Craymarsh Farm development is relatively small and subject to the completion of the additional or strengthened hedgerows described above the additional adverse cumulative visual impact resulting from the addition of the proposed development would be minor.

40. I have also had regard to the solar farm near Poulshot but this would add little to the cumulative impact as it is not prominent in the same views as the proposed scheme and would not be seen soon after or before the proposal when travelling through the area. The solar farms at Broughton Gifford are on the other side of Melksham and would not make a significant contribution to any cumulative impact.

Conclusions on Character and Appearance

41. The proposal in this case is a large scheme and there would be major effects on landscape character within each of the fields where panels would be located, as would be the case with any solar farm in the countryside. However, the scheme

would retain hedges and the field pattern, which are a key characteristic of the area. The hedges, woodland and low height of development would mitigate the effects on landscape character in the wider area. Other key characteristics such as the open views and expansive character would be retained and the solar farm would not become a defining characteristic. The cumulative impact would be little greater than the impact of the proposal itself.

42. With regard to Policy CP51, I conclude that there would be a major effect on landscape within the appeal site but minor or at most moderate effects on the wider landscape as a whole and that negative effects can be significantly mitigated.

43. In terms of visual amenity the main consideration is the effect on people viewing the site from public places and especially recreational users of public rights of way. The development would be screened by existing and proposed vegetation and this would limit the opportunities for viewers to perceive landscape change. The full extent of the site would only be apparent within the context of a wider landscape and the cumulative effect on visual amenity would be little greater than the impact of the proposal itself.

44. In terms of Policy CP51 I conclude that after mitigation the development would only have a significant effect when seen from a limited number of viewpoints and that these effects would be typically minor and only moderate to major in a few locations.

45. I conclude that while the proposed scheme would have a detrimental impact on the rural character of the local area there would be little effect on the overall tranquil, open and expansive aspects of the character and appearance of the wider area.

Benefits

46. There is in-principle support for renewable energy schemes in Policy CP42 and the Framework provides that the benefits of proposals in terms of renewable energy can be material considerations. The appellant advises that the proposed development would produce about 48,570 MWh of energy per year, which would be enough to supply around 11,400 homes. It would result in carbon dioxide savings of about 500,000 tonnes and 1,000,000 tonnes when compared to gas fired or coal fired power generation. It would contribute about 12% of Wiltshire's target of installed renewable electricity generated locally. This would be a large scheme that would provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. This warrants considerable weight.

47. The proposal would support the Government's targets in terms of renewable energy provision to meet international commitments. Also there would be ecological enhancement of the appeal site through the replacement of poor productivity arable acreage with species diverse meadows and additional and improved habitats such as new hedgerows and belts of rough grassland. That would accord with guidance in the PPG that biodiversity improvements are to be encouraged around arrays.

48. The proposal would support economic growth in this rural area by providing an additional source of income and so increasing the financial security of farming enterprises. Thus it would represent farm diversification which is supported by the Framework. The agricultural function of the land would also continue by

means of sheep grazing and the site would thus be used effectively for agriculture as well as for electricity production.

49. There would be a financial investment in the local economy with employment opportunities and the need for accommodation during the construction period as well as the need to provide security over the 25 year operational period. However, I have seen insufficient details of the educational benefits claimed by the appellant to include them in the planning balance.

Other Matters

50. I have taken into account the letters of objection and concerns raised by local residents and Wiltshire Protect, the submission of a petition objecting to the proposal and also the many letters submitted in support of the scheme. I have also had regard to the views of the local Parish Councils and Town Council, two of which supported and one of which objected to the proposal. I understand the various concerns expressed and have taken them into account insofar as they are founded on valid planning reasons and supported by substantial evidence. They have been weighed together with all other material considerations.

51. There are a number of heritage assets in the wider area but given the distances from the site and the screening between there will be no noticeable effect on the significance of the assets or their settings. This view is supported by English Heritage and the Council's Conservation Officer.

52. I also note that the intention is to set up a community benefit fund to invest in the needs of the local community but I have seen no details of this and have not included it in the planning balance. I have had regard to all other matters raised but have found no other matters of sufficient weight to alter the planning balance.

Balance

53. Given the extent of the benefits and limited effects on landscape character and visual amenity of the wider area beyond the appeal site I conclude that overall the impacts would be acceptable and the proposal accords with the aims of the development plan and is also sustainable development for the purposes of the Framework.

Conditions

54. The Council has suggested a number of conditions. The solar installation should be required to be removed within 25 years of this decision, or if it ceases to be operational for a period of 6 months. Also the site should be restored by means of an agreed scheme of work to safeguard the character and appearance of the surrounding area. In the interests of precision I have modified the requirement in terms of restoring the land to its current standard. Also, in the interests of clarity and safeguarding ecological and biodiversity interests, I have included the Council's suggested condition in respect of a decommissioning ecological survey and scheme.

55. A condition requiring a detailed surface water run off limitation scheme is necessary to prevent any increased risk of surface water flooding. A construction traffic management plan, including provisions to safeguard access to the nearby school, is required to ensure highway safety and for the same reason visibility splays are required. Temporary fencing is necessary to protect

the public's right to use the public rights of way. In the interests of safeguarding ecological and biodiversity interests habitat surveys and any remedial work identified should be carried out. For the same reason the works should be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Environmental Report.

56. The timing of construction operations should be limited and lighting during the operational phase restricted to protect local amenity. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Environmental Report a buffer strip shall be retained next to watercourses to minimise flood risk and protect biodiversity. Also a condition requiring a minimum height of the panels is necessary to ensure the area would be suitable for sheep to graze.

57. While proposals for planting and maintaining hedgerows have been put forward by the appellant it seems to me that the detailed proposals, including plant spacing, height at planting and limited cutting regime would not result in the timely establishment of the substantial hedgerows necessary to limit the visual harm that would otherwise result from the development. Strengthening of the existing hedgerow with new planting to increase the height or an additional length of high and dense hedgerow would also be required along the southern edge of the installation as described above. However, the Framework requires approval of renewable energy applications if the impacts can be made acceptable, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the imposition of a condition, as suggested by the Council, for a landscape management plan to be approved by the Council and for implementation of the landscaping scheme would result in the impact being made acceptable and are necessary to ensure a satisfactory landscaped setting and the protection of important landscape features.

58. Finally, in the interests of clarity and good planning, the approved drawings should be listed and the development required to be carried out in accordance with them.

59. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

J M Trask

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions: 1 to 15
Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/A/14/2221012
Application Ref: 13/06140/FUL

1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.

2) The permission hereby granted shall be for a temporary period and shall expire 25 years from the date of this decision. Within 6 months of the date of expiry of this planning permission, or, if sooner, the cessation of the use of the solar panels for electricity generation purposes for a continuous period of 6 months, the solar panels together with any supporting/associated infrastructure including the inverter stations, security equipment, poles and fencing shall be removed from the land and the land restored to its former agricultural condition in accordance with a scheme of work to be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The scheme of work, including a restoration plan and a decommissioning scheme that takes account of a recent ecological survey, shall be submitted to the local planning authority not less than six months before the removal of the installation.

3) No development hereby permitted shall commence until a detailed surface water run off limitation scheme together with supporting calculations and a programme for implementation have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted details shall include the details of future ownership and maintenance for all drainage works serving the site. The approved scheme shall be implemented and maintained in accordance with the approved programme and details.

4) No development hereby permitted shall commence until a construction traffic management plan (CTMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and the construction shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details. The CTMP shall include:

- A condition survey of the site access onto the A3102 and Prater's Lane bridleway, along with a detailed programme of measures to be employed to maintain the highway/PRoW from damage. Should any damage accrue attributable to the development, all damage shall be remedied in accord with details submitted to the local planning authority within 3 months and approved in writing;
- Exact details of the numbers, types and timing of delivery lorries to the site (which should avoid school departure / collection times);
- A scheme of signing and lining relating to the school and construction access, which should make drivers aware of the construction access and school arrangements;
- The procedures in place to ensure that lorry wheels are free of mud before returning to the highway;
- Details of all deliveries entering and exiting the site involving large HGV and other large vehicles to ensure safe access and egress at the site;
- Details of the site management co-ordinator who will ensure compliance with the CTMP;

- How users of public rights of way on and near the A3102 access shall be protected during the works; and
- Details of how construction workers' traffic and lorry traffic shall be accommodated (including turning provision) on the site.

Any departures from the agreed Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be agreed in writing by the local planning authority prior to such actions or works being carried out on site.

5) No development shall commence on site until visibility splays, based on the drawing titled 'Sandridge Solar Farm Vision Splays for Site Access Plan' have been provided at the access point and have been provided between the edge of the carriageway and a line extending from a point 2.4 metres back from the edge of the carriageway, measured along the centre line of the access, to the points on the edge of the carriageway 43 metres in the west direction and 160 metres in the east direction from the centre of the access. Such splays shall thereafter be permanently maintained free from obstruction to enable clear vision above the height of 1m above the level of the adjacent carriageway. Full details shall be submitted detailing the extent of hedge and tree removal and the protection of the school boundary and hedge re-instatement.

6) No development shall commence on site pursuant to the installation of the solar arrays or associated infrastructure until the temporary fencing has been erected in full accordance with the temporary fencing plan. The temporary fencing must be robustly secured to ensure it does not collapse to avoid any further obstruction of the Prater's Lane Bridleway. On completion of the installation the temporary fencing shall be removed entirely from the site and the bridleway shall be kept free from any other obstruction.

7) A habitat condition survey measured against the details listed within the Habitat Protection, Creation and Management Plan shall be undertaken by a professional ecologist during the period June to August and submitted for Local Planning Authority approval in the first, third and fifth years after the site first becomes operational. Where monitoring identifies any non-compliance, remedial measures will need to be identified, implemented and reported through an agreed procedure with the Council. The removal of hedgerows and ground preparation shall be undertaken during the period 1st September to 28th February. If done outside this period, any such works shall be preceded by a survey undertaken by a professional ecologist; and only undertaken in accordance with the ecologist's written advice.

8) The construction, site layout and site management works shall be undertaken in accordance with the details contained in the Habitat Protection, Creation and Management Plan as detailed within Figure 8.5 (in chapter 8 of the Environmental Report); and the Reasonable Avoidance Measures for Great Crested Newts as detailed within Appendix 8.2 of the same report.

9) During the construction phase no machinery shall be operated, no process shall be carried out and no delivery shall be taken or dispatched from the site outside the following hours; Mon-Fri 07:30 to 18:00, Saturday 08:00 to 13:00 nor at anytime on Sundays or public holidays.

10) Following the installation of the solar farm, there shall be no external lighting/illumination at or on the site unless otherwise approved by the planning authority following the submission of a separate planning application.

11) In addition to the provisions of condition 8 a buffer strip measuring 2 metres measured from the top of a bank of any watercourse, water body or ditch shall be retained at all times during the construction period. Thereafter, a managed buffer strip shall be extended to 5 metres to allow for the growth of a longer sward to improve habitat potential adjacent to all ditches, water bodies and watercourses.

12) The solar panels are to be positioned a minimum of 1000mm above ground level.

13) Notwithstanding details submitted as part of the application and in addition to the provisions of condition 8 no development hereby permitted shall commence until a landscaping scheme and landscape management plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority which shall cover tree, hedge and root protection measures, the on-site management of the existing hedgerows (which shall be allowed to develop to a minimum 3 m winter height), as well as producing exact tree and hedgerow planting details (including location, species, height at planting and spacing), permanent fencing details, hedgerow planting as described in this Appeal Decision and a programme for the infill and proposed new planting and its on-going management and monitoring which shall cover the lifetime of the development.

14) The approved landscaping scheme shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the completion of the development. All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees, hedgerow or plants which, within the period of twenty five years, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. All hard landscaping shall also be carried out in accordance with the approved details or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

15) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
Appeal Drawing Reference 001 - Site Layout and Construction
(Figure 3.1 within Environmental Report)
Appeal Drawing Reference 002 - PV Array Detail
(Figure 3.2 within Environmental Report)
Appeal Drawing Reference 003 - Typical Cable Trenching
(Figure 3.7 within Environmental Report)
Appeal Drawing Reference 004 - On Site Track Design
(Figure 3.8 within Environmental Report)
Appeal Drawing Reference 005 - Access Route to Site
(Figure 3.9 within Environmental Report)
Appeal Drawing Reference 006 Rev D - Vision Splays for Site Access Junction with A3102
(Figure 3.10 within Environmental Report)

Appeal Drawing Reference 007 - Existing and Proposed Floor Plan
Appeal Drawing Reference 008 - Indicative Security Camera
Appeal Drawing Reference 009 - Cross Section of Track & Temporary Fencing
Appeal Drawing Reference 010 - Existing and proposed elevations
Appeal Drawing Reference 011 - Block Plan
Appeal Drawing Reference 012 - 132kv Substation Details
Appeal Drawing Reference 013 - Digital Terrain Model (Topographical Plan)