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22 September 2023

Wiltshire Council

Bythesea Road

Trowbridge

Wiltshire

BA14 8JN

Dear Sir/Madam,

Variation of Condition 2 application relating to permission 13/06140/FUL - Development of 80.5ha solar photovoltaic farm with attendance equipment and infrastructure at Land at Snarlton Farm Snarlton Lane Melksham Wilts SN12 7QP

Please find our planning application submission to vary Condition 2 of the above planning permission to adjust the proposed operational lifespan of the project from 25 years to 40 years. As a result of market changes and technological advancement, which allow solar farms to be maintained for longer periods, the applicant is seeking to increase the period that the Solar Farm is permitted to operate for.

In this case, the original planning permission at this site granted consent for a 25 year period from the date that electricity is first exported to the electricity grid network as set by condition 2 with decommissioning to take place in the 26th year.

Importantly, this application proposes no physical changes to the solar farm or any of the mitigation measures previously permitted. The panels themselves are also capable of an electricity generating life much greater than the 25-year period. Therefore, whilst the efficiency of the installed solar panels and infrastructure will reduce over time it has been determined that the solar farm can continue to operate viably beyond the 25 year period in a subsidy-free market. In essence, the project can make very effective use of the existing infrastructure and grid connection during years 25-40 and continue to make a significant contribution to Government renewable energy generation targets.

The applicant seeks permission to alter Condition 2 of the permission which read:

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.

For ease and simplicity it is proposed that the revised condition we applying for should state:

2 - The permission hereby granted shall be for a temporary period and shall expire 40 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.

The proposed amendment to condition 2 to allow an increased period of solar farm operation remains consistent with the original purpose of the condition, which is to ensure the proper decommissioning of the solar farm at the end of its operational life. Other than an extension to the solar farms operational period the site will remain unchanged. The site has been in operation for a number of years without issue and there would appear to be no reason why the solar farm would cause any additional harm to continue to operate for the proposed extended period of time.

The solar farm will continue to make a positive contribution to meeting renewable energy targets, reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with fossil fuelled electricity generation, contribute to security of supply, and to an extent enhance biodiversity. We hope the Council will agree to this change and allow the variation to condition 2.

Yours Faithfully

RICHARD MURRAY
On Behalf of Murray Planning Associates