The Planning Inspectorate

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Your Ref: PL/2023/10394
Our Ref: APP/Y3940/W/25/3360237

30 July 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Appeal by Low Carbon Solar Park 24 Limited
Site Address: Land South of Salisbury Road, Near Homington, Coombe Bissett, Salisbury, SP5 4JT

I enclose a copy of our Inspector's decision on the above appeal(s).

If you have queries or feedback about the decision or the way we handled the appeal(s), you should submit them using our "Feedback" webpage at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate/about/complaints-procedure.

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The Planning Inspectorate cannot change or revoke the outcome in the attached decision. If you want to alter the outcome you should consider obtaining legal advice as only the High Court can quash this decision.

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Thank you in advance for taking the time to provide us with valuable feedback.

Yours sincerely,

Joanna Carter
Joanna Carter

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Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 July 2025

by S Harrington MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/25/3360237
Land South of Salisbury Road, Near Homington, Salisbury, Wiltshire

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Low Carbon Solar Park 24 Limited against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
- The application Ref is PL/2023/10394.
- The development proposed is construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic farm and associated infrastructure.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic farm and associated infrastructure at Land South of Salisbury Road, Near Homington, Salisbury, Wiltshire in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PL/2023/10394, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. Since the determination of the application, a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published. Parties have had the opportunity to comment on the changes within the appeal timetable. Therefore, no parties will have been prejudiced by my having regard to the latest version in reaching my decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:

    - character and appearance of the area; and
    - biodiversity.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The site lies within a Special Landscape Area and is approximately 0.8km from the boundary of the Camborne Chase National Landscape (CCNL). Whilst the appeal site does not lie within the CCNL, it is within its setting.

5. The Council's reason for refusal considers that there is insufficient detail in relation to the connection of the proposal to the national grid, or details of any battery energy storage systems (BESS) and as such the proposal would have an adverse impact on the wider landscape. Indeed, the Council's appeal statement expands

further on potential implications in relation to matters such as effect on the CCNL of future connection infrastructure outside of the appeal site, whilst accepting that the landscape and visual effects of the 'solar array' which forms the proposal before me is localised and/or mitigated.

6. The Point of Connection (POC) is an existing substation approximately 0.7km to the south of the site (the Homington substation). POC infrastructure does not form part of the proposal before me. No policy or other legislative requirement has been brought to my attention that requires the appellant to include connection infrastructure in the planning application.

7. Further, there is no requirement for the inclusion of BESS within a solar farm, and my attention has been drawn to other solar farms in the area which do not feature BESS. Whilst often a complementary technology to solar farms, the applicant has not sought for inclusion of BESS within the proposal before me.

8. A variety of scenarios of connection have been highlighted by the appellant, including those achieved via underground cables. Moreover, separate powers exist for statutory undertakers to carry out work for the transmission and distribution of electricity which would not necessarily require the separate express grant of planning permission. Even if a further planning application is required for connection infrastructure, or indeed for any future BESS provision, the effect of any such proposal on the wider landscape, including that of the CCNL would be for the appellant to consider, and the Council to determine acceptability through a future application.

9. Nevertheless, in terms of the proposal before me, the appeal site lies within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 5B: Ebble Chalk River Valley, whilst LCA C2 'Ebble Broad Chalk River Valley Floor', dissects the host LCA to the south of the site, and LCA D8 'Netherhampton Chalk Downland' lies to the north-east.

10. The surrounding area is locally undulating and has a rural agricultural character demonstrating some of the key characteristics of the LCA it falls within and those adjacent, including broad river valley chalk slopes, valley slopes dominated by intensive arable production, contained within a system of extensive field units, patches of woodlands creating a localised sense of enclosure, as well as mature hedgerows and areas of tranquillity.

11. The appeal site itself also reflects these characteristics, being on undulating topography, enclosed by hedgerows, and near areas of woodland, including mature trees along the A354 described by an interested party as 'Beech Tree Avenue'. In general, the appeal site enforces and positively contributes to the surrounding landscape character.

12. Precise details of the development have not been finalised at the application and appeal stages. However, whilst precise details of the final proposal have not been submitted, in order to allow a robust assessment of the likely effects of the scheme, the proposal adopts a 'worst case' approach based on the maximum parameters of the scheme, and identifying development zones. This includes for the purposes of Landscape and Visual Appraisal, the solar panels being a maximum of 3m in height, where it is put to me that it is possible the majority of the panels would be at a height of 2.5m.

13. This approach allows some flexibility in the final design and siting of elements of the proposal. This is a reasonable approach in light of the evolving technology involved and that a contractor has not yet been appointed for the development.

14. I am content that the level of information submitted is sufficient for me to determine what the main impacts of the development would be, and that the final appearance can be satisfactorily controlled by the imposition of suitable conditions.

15. At my site visit, I observed the appeal site from the various viewpoints outlined in the appellant's Landscape and Visual Appraisal[1] (LVA). In terms of visual effects, the site character would inevitably change due to the use of the site for electricity production infrastructure and associated presence of utilitarian structures and paraphernalia.

16. However, I observed the site to be contained by the topography of Homington Down to the south and south-west which prevents intervisibility with the CCNL. Furthermore, although mature hedges and trees such as those at 'Beech Tree Avenue' provide screening, nearby glimpse views would still be possible from the surrounding highway network and intersecting Public Right of Way (PRoWs). Nevertheless, the appeal site has relatively low visibility in the wider landscape.

17. Moreover, the proposal also provides for extensive landscaping which includes both new structural planting and reinforcement of existing hedgerows. Whilst the planting would take time to establish, once established it would successfully contribute to additional screening from receptors including those along existing PRoWs

18. There would be an inherent change in the appeal site due to the insertion of a solar farm into agricultural fields. However, in combination with the bowl shaped topography of the site and the existing and proposed landscape mitigation, I find that whilst the proposal would lead to a small degree of very local and short-term negative impact on the landscape, the landscape harm would be localised and minor.

19. Moreover, the change would be temporary, albeit long term, and the associated landscape mitigation would introduce new planting that positively enhances the area. Once mature, the planting would successfully mitigate the localised and minor harm identified in the context of the Special Landscape Area and wider landscape character, and would not result in harm to the setting of the CCNL.

20. With regard to cumulative effects, the proposal would be in reasonably close proximity to the Bake Farm Solar Farm. Nevertheless, I observed that opportunities to experience two or more of the schemes at the same time is limited due to topography and intervening mature planting. As such I find that the proposal would not result in domination of the landscape by solar farms, or other harmful cumulative effects.

21. To conclude, I find that temporary minor harm to the character and appearance of the area would be mitigated through landscape measures. The proposal would accord with Core Policy 42, and Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy January 2015 (CS). Amongst other matters, these policies seek to ensure that proposals for standalone renewable energy installation satisfactorily assess

[1] Prepared by: The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd Nov 2023

landscape impact, protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and mitigate any negative impacts as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures.

Biodiversity

22. As stated in the main issue above, nothing has been drawn to my attention which would require an appellant to include connection infrastructure in the planning application. As such whilst noting the ecological and geological constraints of the surrounding area, it would be for the appellant and determining Council to ensure that any future planning application in relation to connection infrastructure, if required, would not harmfully effect surrounding river systems or their biodiversity.

23. Significant ecological survey work has been undertaken by the appellant in relation to protected species and habitats and a biodiversity net gain has been demonstrated through the inclusion of new hedgerows, together with the creation and enhancement of grassland meadows. The Council's ecologist has raised no objection to the proposal on biodiversity grounds, and given the substantive evidence before me, and subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions to safeguard biodiversity, I see no reason to find to the contrary.

24. To conclude, the proposal would not adversely effect biodiversity, and on the contrary would deliver an enhancement subject to conditions. As such, the proposal would accord with CS policies Core Policy 42, Core Policy 50 and Core Policy 52. These policies seek, amongst other matters, to ensure proposals for standalone renewable energy installations take into account and take opportunities to enhance biodiversity, demonstrate how it protects features of nature conservation, and retain and enhance green infrastructure.

Other Matters

25. The proposal is within the zone of influence of the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC); Great Yews SAC; Salisbury Plain SAC; Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area (SPA); The New Forest SAC; New Forest SPA; and New Forest Ramsar (the European Sites). These sites are afforded protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended (the Habitat Regulations). As the Competent Authority, I may only grant permission after having ascertained for myself that the proposal before me would not affect the integrity of these or any other protected site.

26. The River Avon SAC's qualifying habitat features comprise water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation. Species that are present as a qualifying feature but not the primary reason for selection comprise Bullhead; Brook lamprey; Sea lamprey; Atlantic salmon; and Desmoulin's whorl snail.

27. The Great Yews SAC's qualifying habitat feature is Taxus baccata woods of the British Isles (yew-dominated woodland).

28. The Salisbury Plain SAC's qualifying habitat features comprise Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands; Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia); and Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia), and supports Marsh fritillary butterfly.

29. The Salisbury Plain SPA's qualifying feature are Stone curlew and Hen harrier. Species present as a qualifying feature but not the primary reason for selection are Quail and Merlin.

30. The New Forest SAC qualifying habitat features are Alkaline fens, Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior; Asperulo-Fagetum beech forests; Atlantic acidophilous beech forests with Ilex and sometimes also Taxus in the shrublayer; Bog woodland; Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion; European dry heaths; Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils; Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix; Old acidophilous oak woods with Quercus robur on sandy plains; Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or of the Isoeto-Nanojuncetea; Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains: Littorelletalia uniflorae; and Transition mires and quaking bogs. Species present as a qualifying feature but not the primary reason for selection are Great crested newt; Southern damselfly; and Stag beetle.

31. The New Forest SPA's qualifying features are European nightjar; Woodlark; Dartford warbler; Wood warbler; Eurasian hobby; European honey-buzzard and over-wintering Hen harrier.

32. The New Forest Ramsar is designated for supporting valley mires and wet heaths of outstanding scientific interest; supporting a diverse assemblage of wetland plants and animals including several nationally rare species; and for supporting mire habitats of high ecological quality and diversity and have undisturbed transition zones. The invertebrate fauna of the site is important due to the concentration of rare and scarce wetland species.

33. The conservation objectives of all these sites are to ensure maintenance or restoration of their integrity, with relation to the extent, distribution, structure, and function of the habitats, the supporting processes on which those habitats rely, and the distribution and total populations of the qualifying species.

34. In the consideration of likely significant effects (LSE), the appellant's shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (sHRA) sets out that all LSE from the project alone and in combination can be ruled out. On the evidence before me, I agree that the appeal proposal would not have any impact on their qualifying species or conservation objectives, due to the scale of the development, the development type (the construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic farm with associated infrastructure), lack of connected watercourses or other ecological pathways and distance to any European Sites. As such I am satisfied that there would be no LSE and Appropriate Assessment is not required.

35. Concerns have been raised in relation to glint and glare and the effect on aircraft. The appellant's Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study considers amongst other matters aviation and concludes that no significant impacts are predicted upon road safety, residential amenity, and aviation activity. Whilst the study does highlight possible solar reflections towards the left-hand base leg and associated join of the visual circuit for runway 22 of Spire-View airstrip, these are predicted to be of intensities no greater than 'potential for temporary after-image' and considered operationally accommodatable as such a low impact is predicted and no mitigation is recommended. I see no reason to disagree with this finding.

36. A number of other matters have been raised by interested parties, made both at the planning application and the appeal stages. Where comments relate to the main issues, they have been considered as part of my reasoning elsewhere. Other objections are not in contention by the Council, including site selection and loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, nearby occupiers living conditions, highway safety, heritage and archaeological impacts, and flood risk plus other matters which are not material considerations.

37. I have carefully considered all representations. However, I have not been presented with compelling substantive evidence to demonstrate that the appeal proposal would be unacceptable with regard to any of these matters or would result in unacceptable effects in relation to them. In the absence of any additional technical evidence submitted at appeal stage to contradict that already considered by the Council and relevant statutory consultees, they do not affect my conclusions on the main issues.

Conditions

38. The Council has provided a list of suggested conditions in the event of the appeal being allowed, which I have assessed and, where necessary, amended wording with regard to the advice provided in the Planning Practice Guidance. In addition to the standard time condition, it is necessary for a condition to confirm the approved plans in the interests of certainty.

39. Pre-commencement conditions requiring full final details, construction details of access, a Construction Management Statement, a Construction Environmental Management Plan, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan, a Construction Management Plan and Land Management Plan, are necessary in relation to highway safety, protection of residents living conditions, protection of ecology and biodiversity, character and appearance, and to manage flood risk and pollution. These conditions are required to be pre-commencement to avoid the need for future remedial action and in the interests of safety and pollution control.

40. Although significant ecological survey work has been submitted providing adequate information on protected species and proposed mitigation measures, further pre-commencement conditions are necessary to ensure survey data is current and mitigation appropriate prior to commencement.

41. Conditions are also necessary requiring an external lighting scheme be submitted prior to installation in the interests of conserving biodiversity, and conditions ensuring that arboricultural protection and mitigation measures and appropriate landscaping are carried out in the interests of the character and appearance of the area and biodiversity.

42. Further conditions are necessary in relation to delivery times in the interests of residents living conditions, and to ensure access, gates and visibility splays are completed and maintained in the interests of highway safety.

43. A condition setting out the time limit for the operational period of the proposal and its subsequent decommissioning is also necessary in the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

44. Finally, the Council suggest a condition in relation to a future application for the point of connection. As detailed in the first main issue above, a variety of scenarios

of connection are available, some of which may not require a planning application. Therefore, such a condition is not necessary, reasonable or relevant to the development being permitted.

Conclusion

45. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is allowed.

S Harrington

INSPECTOR

Schedule

Conditions

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

2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and details:
DWG No: LCS052-SP-01 Rev 06; DWG No: LCS052-DZ-01 Rev 06;
DWG No: edp7926_d010d; DWG No: LCS052 PLE-01; Glint and Glare Study dated February 2024; Skylark Mitigation Strategy dated March 2024 prepared by EDP; Ecology Technical Note dated March 2024 prepared by EDP; Technical Briefing Note dated March 2024 prepared by EDP; Framework Landscape Ecological Management Plan dated March 2024 prepared by EDP; Landscape and Visual Assessment Report dated November 2023 prepared by EDP; Noise Assessment Report ref 784-B043545 dated November 2023 prepared by Tetra Tech.

3) No development shall commence on site until full details (which must be within the parameters set out in the submitted Planning Design and Access Statement dated November 2023) of the final layout, locations and dimensions, design, materials and colour (where appropriate) to be used for the panel arrays, inverters, substation, control building, switch room, CCTV cameras, fencing and any other components of the scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

   The development shall not exceed the limits as shown on approved plan DWG No: LCS052-DZ-01 Rev 06 Development Zone Plans Plan.

   Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and thereafter retained for the lifetime of the development.

4) No development shall commence until the construction details of the access track and construction compound have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

   Development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

5) No development shall commence on site until a Construction Management Statement (CMS) has been submitted to and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The CMS shall include the following:

   - the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
   - loading and unloading of plant and materials;
   - storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
   - the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate;

- wheel washing facilities;
- measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction;
- a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works; and
- measures for the protection of the natural environment.
- hours of construction, including deliveries;
- How access will be maintained and managed for all users of Homington Road
- throughout the construction phase.
- Pre-condition Survey: A photographic pre-condition (and post condition) highway survey

The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved CMS.

6) No development shall commence until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP shall provide details of the avoidance, mitigation and protective measures to be implemented before and during the construction phase, including but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- identification of ecological protection areas/buffer zones and tree root protection areas and details of physical means of protection, e.g. exclusion fencing.
- Working method statements for protected/priority species, such as nesting
- birds and reptiles.
- Mitigation strategies already agreed with the local planning authority prior to determination, such as for protected species; this should comprise the pre-construction/construction related elements of strategies only.
- Work schedules for activities with specific timing requirements in order to avoid/reduce potential harm to ecological receptors; including details of when a licensed ecologist and/or ecological clerk of works (ECoW) shall be present on site.
- Key personnel, responsibilities and contact details (including Site Manager and ecologist/ECoW).
- Timeframe for provision of compliance report to the local planning authority; to be completed by the ecologist/ECoW and to include photographic evidence.

The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved CEMP.

7) No development shall commence until a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The LEMP will include long term objectives and targets, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for each ecological feature within the development, together with a mechanism for monitoring success of the management prescriptions, incorporating review and necessary adaptive management in order to attain targets.

The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which long term implementation of the plan will be secured. The LEMP shall be implemented in full and for the lifetime of the development in accordance with the approved details.

8) No development shall commence until a Skylark Mitigation Strategy to compensate the loss of any Skylark territories has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall include the following:

- Up to date base line surveys of the development land and proposed mitigation area.
- Evidence of the number of Skylark nest plots required.
- A drawing specifying the location of existing Skylark territories and proposed Skylark mitigation plots.
- Details of the purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed Skylark nest plots.
- Detailed management plan including required operations of Skylark mitigation plots.
- Details of persons responsible for implementing the strategy.
- Details of monitoring and reporting methods including pathways for remediation.

The Skylark Mitigaton Strategy shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and all features shall be retained for the lifetime of the approved development until deconstruction is completed.

9) No development shall commence until details of the number, design and locations of bat roosts and nesting opportunities for birds has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved details shall be implemented before the site is brought into operation and shall remain for the lifetime of development.

10) No development shall commence until further Bat Surveys as recommended within ‘Beech Tree Solar Farm, Salisbury -Technical Briefing Note for Bats - edp7926_r009a - QA: JGw/GCr_CRo/FMi_100424’ have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The report shall contain details of survey work to establish whether bats are present within existing trees on site and if so, the necessary details to enable a full assessment of impacts of development on bats as well as all necessary mitigation measures. The works shall be undertaken in complete accordance with the approved details.

11) No development shall commence on site until a construction management plan and land management plan, which shall include monitoring of, and measures to retain, the existing vegetation across the site, together with details of drainage arrangements during the construction phase, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

12) The proposed development shall only be undertaken in accordance with the 'Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Excavation' prepared by Cotswold Archaeology, dated 26 March 2024, reference AN0851.

13) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Arboricultural Report undertaken by Tree Heritage ref: THL-R23-110 dated November 2023.

The trees must be protected in accordance with the approved statement throughout the period of development.

14) All landscape planting shall be undertaken in accordance with DWG No: edp7926_d010c Landscape and Ecology Strategy Plan and the Landscape and Visual Appraisal ref: edp7926_r0002A and maintained as such thereafter.

All soft landscaping comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the completion of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

All shrubs, trees and hedge planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any trees or plants which, within a period of 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 prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

15) All deliveries of solar panels and any other associated construction materials of the development hereby approved shall be confined to between the hours of: 0730 to 1800 Mondays to Fridays; and at no times on weekends or bank holidays.

16) No part of the development shall be first brought into use until the visibility splays shown on the plan ref:410558-MMD-XX-BA21-DR-C-003 (Appendix B in the Transport Report) have been provided with no obstruction to visibility at or above a height of 900mm above the nearside carriageway level. The visibility splays shall always be maintained free of obstruction thereafter.

17) Any entrance gates shall be set back 5m from the edge of the carriageway for the Operational Access and at least 10m from edge of carriageway for the Construction Access, such gates to open inwards only.

18) The development hereby permitted shall not be first brought into use until the area between the edge of the carriageway and the gates (Operational Access) has been consolidated and surfaced (not loose stone or gravel). The access shall be maintained as such thereafter.

19) No external light fixture or fitting shall be installed within the application site unless details of the proposed new lighting has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The submitted details will demonstrate how the proposed lighting will impact on bat habitat compared to the existing situation.

20) In the event that the development ceases to be operational, then all associated development on, under or above the application site shall be removed from the site and the land returned to its former condition in accordance with a Decommissioning Plan to be first submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of decommissioning, and within six months of the cessation of the use of the site.

21) Prior to the development hereby approved being decommissioned, the applicant shall submit an ecological assessment and mitigation report for approval by the local planning authority. The site shall then be decommissioned in accordance with the approved details.

End of Conditions