

APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2025/07598
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Pythouse Farm, Tisbury, Salisbury, SP3 6PA
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Installation of 416 ground mounted solar panels and electrical enclosure.
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The site consists of an area of land, north of existing farm buildings at Pythouse Farm. The site is bounded on the west by a lane designated as public highway with woodland beyond, and to the east by a line of mature native hedge, providing screening to the site.

The development site is within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (Formerly AONB).

PROPOSAL

262kWp installation to be arranged in a cluster of 416 PV panels in 13 banks of 32 panels in seven staggered rows. To be situated to the north of the existing two rows of solar panels, in a single field currently occupied as a foraging area for chickens produced on the Pythouse Estate. Underground cable linking to a grey GRP enclosure cabinet, located close to the chicken shed, proposed to connect to an existing nearby pole mounted transformer connecting to the grid.

PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal / Summary
S/1992/1596 - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 18/12/1992 – CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FARM TRACK
S/1991/1316 - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 13/11/1991 – CONVERSION OF EXISTING BARNs TO 4NO. RESIDENTIAL UNITS AND ALTERATIONS TO ACCESS
S/1989/0616 - Full planning permission Decision - Withdrawn Date: 17/5/1989 – CONVERSION OF REDUNDANT BARNs TO LARGE DWELLING WITH ANNEXE
S/2004/0233 - Agricultural & Forestry - Detailed matters Decision - Withdrawn Date: 8/4/2004 – MOBILE POULTRY HOUSE FOR FREE RANGE LAYING HENS
S/2002/0243 - Full planning permission Decision - Prior Approval Required Date: 25/2/2002 – MOBILE POULTRY SHED
15/00993/FUL - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 10/4/2015 – Erection of agricultural building to house poultry
14/09933/APD - Agricultural & Forestry - Detailed matters Decision - Prior Approval Refused Date: 27/11/2014 – Prior notification for the erection of free range poultry house
17/00206/FUL - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 3/3/2017 – Erection of agricultural building to house poultry (including the removal of a number mobile poultry houses)
19/00441/FUL - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 4/4/2019 – Erection of agricultural building to house poultry
19/11490/DOC - Approval of details reserved by a condition Decision - Approved Date: 23/12/2019 – Discharge of Condition 04 of planning permission 19/00441/FUL

19/11975/DOC - Approval of details reserved by a condition – Discharge condition 4 of 19/00441/FUL (Erection of agricultural building to house poultry)

S/1992/0753 - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 8/7/1992 – CONSTRUCTION OF NEW AGRICULTURAL ACCESS AND CLOSURE OF EXISTING ACCESS

15/11185/FUL – Full planning permission Decision – Approve with Conditions Date: 03/03/2016 - THE PROVISION OF 188 GROUND MOUNTED PV PANELS IN 2 FREE STANDING ARRAYS (94 PER ARRAY)
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RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Statutory Legislation:

National Planning Policy:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- National Design Guide

Development Plan:

The adopted *Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)*, with particular regard to:

- Core Policy 1 Settlement Strategy;
- Core Policy 2 Delivery Strategy;
- Core Policy 3 Infrastructure Requirements;
- Core Policy 27 Spatial Strategy for the Tisbury Community Area;
- Core Policy 42 Standalone Renewable Energy Installations;
- Core Policy 48 Supporting Rural Life;
- Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Core Policy 51 Landscape;
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping;
- Core Policy 58 Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment;
- Core Policy 60 Sustainable Transport;
- Core Policy 61 Transport and Development;
- Core Policy 64 Demand Management;
- Core Policy 69 Protection of the River Avon SAC.

Supplementary Planning Documents and other Guidance:

- Wiltshire Design Guide (adopted April 2024)
- Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026, adopted 2015 - including the Car Parking Strategy and Cycling Strategy, adopted 2015
- The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Cranbourne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan 2025-2030
- Tisbury and West Tisbury Neighbourhood Development Plan 2019-2036 (Made November 2019)

ISSUES

• **Principle of the Development**

Assessment against national and local policy support for renewable energy, including CP42 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the NPPF.

- **Landscape and Visual Impact**

Assessment of effects on landscape character and views, including cumulative impacts with other nearby solar developments.

- **Neighbour Amenity**

Consideration of potential impacts on residential amenity, including outlook, noise, glint and glare.

- **Highway Safety and Access**

Review of the Construction Traffic Management Plan, access arrangements, and anticipated vehicle movements during construction and decommissioning.

- **Ecology and Biodiversity**

Assessment of submitted ecological surveys, biodiversity net gain, and mitigation/enhancement measures in accordance with Policy CP50 and the Environment Act 2021.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WC Highways: No objection, subject to condition

Initial comments:

'A full construction method statement must include:

Routing plan

This has been included, showing all traffic coming from the A303 via Fonthill Bishop, this would involve all vehicles travelling along the C43 Fonthill Park North which progresses through The Archway and it is considered that this route through the Archway is unacceptable. It is likely that the larger vehicles specified as being required for the delivery of parts will be unable to pass through the Archway. Please can the route be re-assessed and a new routing plan provided.

Traffic Management Plan (including signage drawing(s))

It is suggested that this is still to be prepared, then must be approved by their client before it is submitted to the LHA for approval. This could be controlled via a condition, but please can it be confirmed when this will be available.

Details of temporary/permanent Traffic Regulation Orders

No details received, please can it be confirmed if any TRO's are required.

I also asked for a Management plan to include details how the size, number and frequency of vehicles required for the maintenance of the site once it has been constructed and in operation.

The following has been suggested:

The frequency and type of maintenance activities will depend on the following factors:

- *Manufacturer's recommendations*
- *Frequency of use*
- *Operating environment*
- *Age of equipment and any previous issues*

However, please can a suggested number of vehicles , their frequency and size be confirmed as expected to attend site.'

Revised comments following submission of additional information:

'The lorry data sheet has been received for a Daf CF330 26T Curtain lorry, this is acceptable.

'Section 11.4 Site Traffic Management' still states the following:

Expected deliveries will include:

Welfare unit: 4X4 with a trailer

Solar Panels: 40ft curtain side 1No.

Metal framework: Flatbed lorry 1No.

Plant delivery: low loader plant trailer 2No.

Point of connection enclosure: HIAB lorry 1No.

Concrete lorry: 1No.

All other materials and operatives will arrive in small to medium sized vans: 4 or 5 vans per day expected

If this document is to be conditioned does it need to be updated with the Daf CF330 26T Curtain lorry x 2 for the delivery of the solar panels and metal framework. It does state in section A.4.2 Main site routing, that the deliveries will be split, so you may be satisfied that this is covered, I will be guided by you on this point.

Traffic Management Plan (including signage drawing(s))

This has now been included and is accepted, no signage is proposed, this is accepted.

Details of temporary/permanent Traffic Regulation Orders

None required - accepted

I also asked for a Management plan to include details how the size, number and frequency of vehicles required for the maintenance of the site once it has been constructed and in operation.

It has been stated that engineers will attend once a year for cleaning and maintenance using one 4x4 vehicle or one 3.5 tonne LCV, this is accepted.

I therefore am now content with the information supplied and offer no highway objection subject to the Construction Phase Health & Safety and Environmental Plan and Construction Management Plan being conditioned'

WC Public Protection: No comment

WC Landscape: Comment, stated below:

'The proposal is for a small-scale solar array which will have limited and local landscape and visual effects. The site is well screened by woodland to the west and north, a hedgerow to the east and farm buildings to the south. However, there are views from the lane that runs along the western and northern boundary where there is no hedgerow. While this view is only obtainable in proximity to the site there is an opportunity to provide enhancement to local landscape character and visual amenity by planting a new hedgerow along this boundary. It would also provide connectivity to the hedgerow along the eastern boundary, a benefit for biodiversity.

Overall, I don't consider that the nature and scale of the proposal will undermine the qualities of the wider landscape of the AONB/NL, especially with the enhancement of a new hedgerow.'

WC Ecology: No objection subject to conditions, comment stated below:

Thank you for consulting Ecology. I have reviewed the application and supporting documents against OS Maps, aerial photography of the site and surrounding area, together with GIS layers of statutory and non-statutory designated sites and existing records of protected species.

Information considered:

- Proposed Block Plan, Singleton Design, P961/03, Rev A*
- Design and Access Statement, Nadder Community Energy Group*
- Bat Transect Survey Report, Enims, July 2025, October 2025*

- Biodiversity Net Gain Report, LC Ecological Services, December 2025
- Statutory Biodiversity Metric, DC, November 2025

The site comprises a plot of species-poor modified grassland to the north of existing farm buildings and solar panels, and bound by woodland to the west and hedgerow to the east. It is proposed to install 416 further solar panels and an electrical enclosure.

COMMENTS:

River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Hampshire Catchment

This development falls within the catchment of the River Avon SAC and has potential to cause adverse effects alone or in combination with other developments through discharge of phosphorus in wastewater.

A test of likely significance has been carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (Wiltshire Council) as required by Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This concluded that since there is no proposal to create additional overnight accommodation, there would be no overall mechanism for adverse effect. The HRA has concluded that the application is not likely to have significant impacts on the SAC and subsequently the application is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

Chilmark Quarries Special Area for Conservation (SAC)

The site lies within consultation zones for Barbastelle and Greater Horseshoe bats associated with the Chilmark Quarries Bats SAC. It therefore has the potential to result in significant adverse impact on the special features of the SAC. Appropriate Assessment (AA) under Section 63 of the Habitats Regulations must be carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (the LPA) to determine the potential significant effects and the suitability of any measures proposed to avoid or mitigate those effects.

An Appropriate Assessment has been completed by the LPA with a favourable conclusion, subject to suitable mitigation measures being secured by condition and implemented. In this case, a Construction Method Statement (CMS) and lighting condition should be applied. The AA has been sent to Natural England (13/01/2026) and the application must not be determined until they have agreed with the LPAs conclusion.

Bats

Following a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in November 2024, bat transect surveys were undertaken in May-September 2025, and static monitoring surveys in September 2025. Common pipistrelles were the most frequently recorded species. No Barbastelle or Greater horseshoe bats were recorded (the site falls within the core area buffers of said Annex II species). A low number of unidentified Myotis calls were recorded by the static detectors on 4 of 13 survey nights, but it is not known if these belonged to Bechstein's bats. Otherwise, no evidence of Annex II species was recorded. The bat survey report concludes that the site had "moderate" levels of bat activity from common bat species, and "low" levels of activity from uncommon species.

The highest levels of bat activity were recorded at the woodland edges and around the farm buildings – the proposed solar panels would be set back from the woodland by 20m and hedgerow by 12m at their closest points. As such, the potential impact of habitat loss (loss of 0.12 ha of modified grassland) is considered to present a low risk to bats. Risks of disturbance and fragmentation can be managed through a CMS and lighting condition, as above.

Other protected species and sites

The woodland to the east of the field boundary is considered to be deciduous woodland Priority Habitat, adjoining Pythouse Planting County Wildlife Site (CWS) (~110m from the site boundary). Habitats of the wider landscape are therefore of good value to bats, badgers, nesting birds and other protected wildlife. **Precautionary measures for the protection of the adjoining woodland and such species should be detailed within the Construction Method Statement.**

*In line with the NPPF and with CP50, applications must ensure that gains for biodiversity relevant to local habitats and wildlife populations should form part of the proposed development. The ecology report recommends the installation of bat boxes in the wider site. **The details, locations and implementation of these ecological enhancements should be secured via a condition.***

Biodiversity Net Gain

Under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) this application is required to deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The Biodiversity Gain Plan condition will automatically apply if approval is forthcoming.

A completed statutory metric calculation (Biodiversity Net Gain Report, LC Ecological Services, December 2025; Statutory Biodiversity Metric, DC, November 2025) confirming the baseline and predicted post- development biodiversity units of Site has been submitted (including the condition assessment sheet and map).

Information in the completed on-site baseline habitat tabs is accepted as accurate based on the information submitted. The pre-development (baseline) situation is summarised below.

On-site pre-development (baseline) biodiversity value	0.57 Habitat units
	0.00 Hedgerow units
	0.00 Watercourse units
Are there any irreplaceable habitats on-site?	No
Has any habitat degradation of occurred?	No

Confirmation of how the development will achieve BNG is a post-determination matter however consideration should be given to how any proposed BNG will be secured.’ The suggested conditions have been added to this permission.

Parish Council: No objection, comment stated below:

‘The West Tisbury Parish Council give their full support to the solar farm.’

REPRESENTATIONS

One Objection, stated below:

‘Put panels on roofs, like industrial buildings, before covering green fields. Obvious?’

ASSESSMENT

Solar farms form part of the UK’s strategy to reduce carbon emissions and transition towards cleaner, more sustainable sources of energy. As the impacts of climate change become more pressing, renewable energy developments like solar farms play an increasingly important role in helping to meet national and local carbon reduction targets. Wiltshire Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030, and national planning policy encourages local authorities to support renewable energy projects where the impacts are, or can be made, acceptable. However, the need for clean energy must be balanced with other important considerations such as protecting landscape character, heritage assets, local amenity, agricultural land, and biodiversity. This section of the report provides a detailed assessment of the relevant planning issues, including how the proposed solar farm aligns with local and national policy objectives, and whether its impacts are acceptable when weighed against the wider environmental benefits of the scheme.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

In accordance with this statutory requirement, this application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the Development Plan, including the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and, where applicable, any made Neighbourhood Plans. Consideration has also been given to the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a material consideration in the assessment.

Principle of Development

Paragraph 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages local plans to support the increase in the use and supply of renewable and low-carbon energy, while ensuring that any adverse impacts are appropriately addressed.

Paragraph 168 of the NPPF confirms that applicants are not required to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low-carbon energy. Instead, local planning authorities are expected to approve such schemes if their impacts are (or can be made) acceptable, in accordance with national policy.

In line with this national direction, Wiltshire Council has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. This ambition is embedded within the Wiltshire Climate Strategy, which identifies renewable energy generation as a key priority for the efficient and environmentally responsible use of land, in support of a growing population and biodiversity.

At the local level, Core Policies CP1 and CP2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) set out the spatial strategy for sustainable development in the county. While the proposal does not directly deliver housing or employment development, it represents a form of sustainable development, supporting Wiltshire's transition to a low-carbon economy. The development may also deliver short-term employment opportunities during the construction phase.

Core Policy 42 of the WCS provides specific policy support for standalone renewable energy schemes, stating that such proposals will be supported where it is demonstrated that individual and cumulative impacts have been satisfactorily addressed. The policy identifies the following considerations as particularly relevant (in the context of this proposal):

- i. The landscape, particularly in and around AONBs
- ii. Biodiversity
- iii. Use of the local transport network
- iv. Residential amenity, including noise, odour, visual amenity and safety
- v. Best and most versatile agricultural land.

The application is supported by a range of documents, which include (but are not limited to) the following:

- SSEN Cable Route
- Bat Transect Survey Report
- Solar Panel Data Sheet
- Design and Access Statement

- Proposed Electrical Enclosure
- Solar Panel Details
- BNG Assessment
- Statutory Metric Calculator
- Bat Survey
- Risk Assessment
- Construction Management Plan
- Solar Programme
- CPP Nadder Community Energy
- Construction Phase Health and Safety Environmental Plan

The information submitted is considered to be sufficient to allow the Council to assess whether the proposal has adequately addressed the criteria set out under Core Policy 42 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

As a matter of principle, the development of a solar farm is supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will not result in unacceptable impacts, or that any identified impacts can be suitably mitigated. A detailed assessment of the proposal against the relevant criteria of CP42—including landscape, biodiversity, residential amenity, transport, and agricultural land quality—is provided in the following sections of this report.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Criteria (i) of Policy CP42 of the WCS requires standalone renewable energy installations to take into account the landscape, particularly in and around AONBs.

Policy CP51 of the WCS expresses that proposals should be informed by and sympathetic to the distinctive character areas and further expresses that development must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character. If there are negative impacts, they must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. CP51 requires development proposals to demonstrate that identified aspects of landscape character have been protected, conserved and where possible enhanced, which includes the following summarised aspects which are relevant for assessment of the scheme:

- (i) The locally distinctive pattern and species composition of natural features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and waterbodies
- (ii) The locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings
- (iii) The separate identity of settlements
- (v) Landscape features of cultural, historic or heritage value
- (vii) Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise and motion
- (viii) Landscape functions

Policy CP57 of the WCS requires high quality design and place shaping for all new development and includes the expectation that proposals should make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire. Proposals should demonstrate how the development meets the expectations of criteria of CP57 which includes the following summarised points which are relevant for assessment of the scheme on landscape matters:

- (i) Enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development and responding to local topography by ensuring that important views into, within and out of the site are to be retained and enhanced.
- (ii) The retention and enhancement of important landscaping and natural features.
- (vi) making efficient use of land whilst taking account of the characteristics of the site and the local context
- (xii) The use of high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping

Wiltshire's Climate Strategy further refers to the Council's GBI which sets out a long-term vision, strategic goals and principles for delivering green and blue infrastructure across Wiltshire.

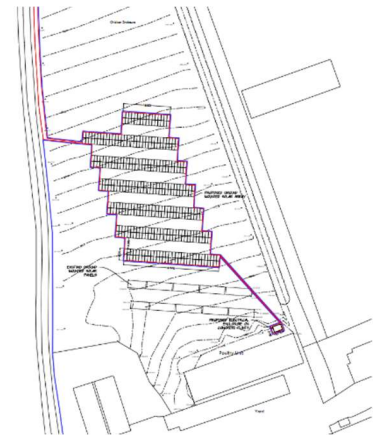
The landscape consultee has responded to the application with no objection, noting that the proposal is for a small-scale solar array which will have limited local landscape and visual effects. They noted that the site is well-screened by woodland to the west and north, a hedgerow to the north, and the farm buildings to the south. They also confirmed that they do not consider the nature and scale of the proposal to undermine the qualities of the wider landscape of the National Landscape. It was suggested that as there are views from the lane to the western and northern boundary, obtainable in proximity to the site, enhancements could be provided by planting of hedgerow along this boundary. It was considered that this would provide connectivity to the hedgerow along the eastern boundary, and also be of benefit to biodiversity. A pre-commencement condition has been included in this consent to confirm, in agreement with the Local Planning Authority, how the boundary treatment will be implemented.

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. Under Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, LPAs and other relevant authorities must now "seek to further" the statutory purposes of National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), replacing the previous duty to merely "have regard to" them. This is an active duty, requiring authorities to take reasonable and proportionate steps to support the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, special qualities, and key characteristics of these designated areas when exercising any function that affects them.

To the south of the site, is an existing solar array, granted consent under 15/11185/FUL, pictured below:



The proposed additional solar array is to be sited to the north of the existing panels, shown below:



The proposed ground mounted solar array is of a suitable scale within the site, located centrally which retains a distance from the adjacent road to the west. The associated electrical enclosure, on a concrete plinth, is to be sited to the rear of an existing poultry unit, and would therefore be obscured from view, and only be seen in the context of the existing farm buildings.

The proposal would not be visible from Newtown, the highway running to the south of the site, as the existing farm and residential dwellings provide screening. Due to the topography of the site, the land rises to the north east, and as such the panels would be in a raised position to the rear of Pythouse Farm. The solar array may be visible from unclassified road C302 which is adjacent to the west of the application site, however the side elevation of the array would be over 17 metres from the highway. It is possible to consider the impact of solar panels in this location, due to the existing array within the same field. It is not considered that the panels are or detrimental impact on the landscape, and a significant area of field is retained to the north of the site. The panels are seen in relation to the existing farm buildings and solar panels, and as such would not be of further detrimental impact on the landscape, or visual amenity in the area. There are no Public Rights of Way that provide views of the site, or proposed solar panels. As the solar panels are ground mounted, they could be removed in future, and the land would be retained as existing, prior to the implementation of solar panels.

One objection was received during consultation, stating 'put panels on roofs, like industrial buildings, before covering green fields.' Although it is acknowledged that solar panels can be put on the roofs of existing buildings, the NPPF (para168) states that Local Planning Authorities are expected to approve renewable energy schemes, if their impacts are, or can be made, acceptable, in accordance with national policy. Should the land no longer be required for the solar array, this can be removed, and the land returned to its former state with minimal impact short term, and no long term impact.

Best and most versatile agricultural Land

The National Policy Statement (NPS) for Energy, published in January 2024, is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The NPS is relevant to both nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) and smaller-scale renewable energy proposals considered at the local level.

In May 2024, a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero provided further guidance on balancing national priorities for energy security and food production. The WMS states:

“Due weight needs to be given to the proposed use of Best and Most Versatile land when considering whether planning consent should be granted for solar developments. For all applicants the highest quality agricultural land is least appropriate for solar development and as the land grade increases, there is a greater onus on developers to show that the use of higher quality land is necessary.”

Both the NPPF and the NPS define Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land as land falling within Grades 1, 2, and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.

Footnote 65 of the NPPF reinforces this approach, stating:

“Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.”

Further guidance is provided in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), Paragraph 013 (ID: 5-013-20150327), which advises that:

- Local planning authorities should encourage the use of previously developed and non-agricultural land for large-scale solar farms.
- Solar farms are typically temporary structures, and planning conditions can be used to secure the removal of infrastructure once it is no longer in use and restoration of the land to its previous condition.

At the local level, Core Policy 42 (criterion viii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires that proposals for standalone renewable energy schemes demonstrate that the impact on Best and Most Versatile agricultural land has been satisfactorily considered.

In addition, the Wiltshire Climate Strategy (2022–2027) identifies as a key objective:

“The efficient and environmentally sensitive use of land, providing for the needs of an increasing population and nature; food production, renewable energy generation, housing and transport, alongside woodland creation and nature recovery.”

Agricultural Land Classification strategic maps show the likelihood of BMV land and identify the site as likely to have an ALC of Grade 3; however, Natural England's explanatory note on ALC strategic scale maps is clear that the gradings are predictions and that the map is *“intended for strategic planning purposes only, is not suitable for use below scale 1:250,000 or for the definitive classification of any local area of site.”*

In line with national planning guidance, the use of previously developed land and non-agricultural land should be prioritised for the development of ground-mounted solar farms. However, it is recognised that across Wiltshire, there is a limited supply of previously

developed or non-agricultural land of sufficient scale that is not already in active alternative use and capable of accommodating large-scale solar installations.

In this case, the proposal relates to land classified as Grade 3 agricultural land. While this represents agricultural land of good to moderate quality, officers consider that the nature of the development, combined with mitigation and retention of the surrounding land for agricultural purposes, ensures that long-term harm to agricultural productivity will be minimal.

It is also noted that the proposal allows for the continued agricultural use of the site, which is currently a chicken enclosure, and that soil quality may improve over the operational lifetime of the development due to reduced intensive agricultural activity.

On balance, any limited harm arising from the use of Grade 3 agricultural land is considered to be outweighed by the wider public benefits of renewable energy generation. Subject to conditions securing the removal of the solar farm infrastructure upon cessation of use, and restoration of the land to its original agricultural condition, the development is considered to comply with the aims of the NPPF, guidance in the Planning Practice Guidance, and Core Policy 42 (criterion viii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Amenity

Core Policy 57 (Point vii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to respect the amenity of existing occupants and ensure appropriate amenity levels for future residents.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly Paragraph 135, reinforces the need for development to provide a high standard of amenity for both existing and future users.

The application site is not immediately adjacent to any residential dwellings, with the ownership boundary extending to the east, south, and south west. The solar array is to be sited north of existing solar panels, within land currently used as a chicken enclosure. Public Protection have provided a response of no comment, and the proposed solar panels are not considered of impact on residential amenity. The electrical enclosure is to be sited to the rear of the poultry unit, within the farm site, and it is therefore not considered that there would be any impact on amenity in terms of noise generated.

As such, it is considered that the application conforms with CP57 of the WCS, and NPPF para 135, with no measurable impact on amenity for surrounding dwellings.

Highways Impacts and Parking

Criteria (vi) of Policy CP42 requires proposals to take into account the use of the local transport network. Criteria (ix) of Policy CP57 of the WCS requires development to ensure the public realm, including new roads and other rights of way, are designed to create places of character which are legible, safe and accessible.

Policy CP60 of the WCS expresses the Councils support and encouragement of sustainable, safe and efficient movement of people and goods within and through Wiltshire. Expressing under part CP60(vi) that there should be assessment and, where necessary, mitigation of the impact of development on transport users, local communities and the environment.

Criteria (ii) of Policy CP61 of the WCS requires proposals to be capable of being served by safe access to the highway network. CP61 further expresses that, where appropriate, contributions will be sought towards sustainable transport improvements.

Policy CP62 of the WCS requires development to provide appropriate mitigating measures to offset any adverse impacts on the transport network at both the construction and operational stages. Policy CP64 of the WCS relates to demand management which includes traffic management measures.

Strategies included within LTP3 include Wiltshire's Road Safety Strategy (2011) Cycling Strategy (2014) and Accessibility Strategy (2014).

The highways consultee has provided a response of no objection, following submission of additional information, and updated Construction Management Plan and Construction Phase Health & Safety and Environmental Plan. The full construction method statement has been agreed, and conditioned. The Traffic Management Plan has confirmed that no signage is proposed, and this is accepted by the highways consultee. Details of the temporary/permanent traffic regulation orders was requested; however, it was confirmed that none were required, and this was accepted by the highways consultee. It was requested that the Management Plan be updated to include details relating to the maintenance of the site once it has been constructed and is in operation. This was provided and stated that engineers will attend once a year for cleaning and maintenance, using on 4x4 vehicle or one 3.5 tonne LCV, which was accepted by the highways consultee.

The proposal would require highways access during construction, and then for maintenance once a year while in operation. The site is accessed from the south eastern corner of the site, from the existing farmyard, off the Newtown highway which runs to the south of the site. Although the highways in this area are narrow, the exiting operations at Pythouse Farm require farm vehicles to access the site, and therefore the surrounding highways and access are currently used for large vehicles. A Construction Management Plan and Construction Phase Health & Safety and Environmental Plan have been provided, and agreed with the highways consultee, which ensures there would not be a detrimental impact on highways safety or access during construction and maintenance of the proposed solar array. These documents have been conditioned on this consent, to ensure the mitigation and safety measures are adhered to.

The application confirms with Core Policies 57, 60, 61, and 64 of the WCS There is not considered measurable detrimental impact on highways safety or access that would justify refusal.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Paragraph 192 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the expectation that planning should protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity. In exercising its statutory functions, the local planning authority must ensure that it has sufficient information to assess whether the proposal is likely to result in harm to protected habitats or species.

Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 introduces a requirement that all planning permissions granted in England are subject to a condition preventing development from

commencing until a Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) demonstrating at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.

At a local level, Core Policy 50 (CP50) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to protect Wiltshire's natural environment, including features that perform ecological functions for wildlife. Proposals must demonstrate how they have considered features of nature conservation and geological value in their design. CP50 also expects all development to seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity, with enhancement measures contributing to the aims of the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

The application has been submitted with supporting ecological documentation, including biodiversity net gain metrics, habitat surveys, ecological assessments, and a Biodiversity Management Plan. The following key biodiversity features have been identified on site:

River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Hampshire Catchment

The development falls within the River Avon SAC catchment, and has the potential to cause adverse effects alone or in combination with other developments through the discharge of phosphorous wastewater. As the application does not include the creation of additional overnight accommodation, there would be no overall mechanism for adverse effect, and as such the application is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

Chilmark Quarries Special Area for Conservation (SAC)

The site lies within the consultation zone for Barbastelle and Greater Horseshoe bats associated with the Chilmark Quarries Bats SAC, and therefore has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts on the special features of the SAC. An Appropriate Assessment has been completed by the Local Planning Authority with a favourable conclusion, subject to suitable mitigation measures being secured through condition, and implemented. The AA has been agreed by Natural England, and conditions and mitigation agreed.

Bats

Following a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in November 2024, bat transect surveys were undertaken in May-September 2025, and static monitoring surveys in September 2025. The bat survey report concludes that the site had "moderate" levels of bat activity from common bat species, and "low" levels of activity from uncommon species. The highest levels of bat activity were recorded at the woodland edges and around the farm buildings – the proposed solar panels would be set back from the woodland by 20m and hedgerow by 12m at their closest points. As such, the potential impact of habitat loss (loss of 0.12 ha of modified grassland) is considered to present a low risk to bats. Risks of disturbance and fragmentation can be managed through a CMS and lighting condition.

Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat and Pythouse Planting Country Wildlife Site

The woodland to the east of the field boundary is considered to be deciduous woodland Priority Habitat, adjoining Pythouse Planting County Wildlife Site (CWS). Precautionary measures for the protection of the adjoining woodland and bats, badgers, nesting birds and other protected wildlife should be detailed within the Construction Method Statement.

In line with the NPPF and with CP50, applications must ensure that gains for biodiversity relevant to local habitats and wildlife populations should form part of the proposed development. The ecology report recommends the installation of bat boxes in the wider site.

The details, locations and implementation of these ecological enhancements will be secured via a condition.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) this application is required to deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The Biodiversity Gain Plan condition will automatically apply to this consent. A completed statutory metric calculation confirming the baseline and predicted post-development biodiversity units of the site has been submitted and accepted by the ecology consultee, and confirmation of how the development will achieve BNG is a post-determination matter.

The suggested ecological conditions have been included on this consent, in line with the ecology and Natural England consultation response.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

At the heart of the NPPF there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development requiring local planning authorities to approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; and where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless (taken from paragraph 11d of the NPPF):

- The application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing development proposed; or
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole;

The proposed development is considered acceptable in planning terms.

The proposed development is for the installation of a renewable led energy scheme comprising ground mounted photovoltaic solar arrays together with ancillary infrastructure. The proposed development is sustainable development that will make a significant contribution to the supply of renewable energy helping to reduce carbon emissions required to meet the Climate Change Act 2050 net zero target.

In recent Appeal decisions, including Appeal APP/Y3940/W/25/3376878, for the installation of ground mounted solar PV panels at Land South of Potterne Park Farm (located in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape), the Inspector found that in balancing the harms and benefits, generation of renewable energy is afforded significant weight, biodiversity gain afforded moderate weight, and economic benefits awarded moderate weight. They noted that although there would be adverse effects on the character and appearance of the area, this would be limited and localised in nature, and can be mitigated through landscape and planting, which carried moderate weight. They concluded that the solar PV panels would be of extremely limited harm to the setting of the National Landscape and that the benefits arising would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the limited landscape harms.

No material considerations have been identified that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits or indicate that permission should be refused, having regard to the assessment above and the representations received.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in planning terms and in accordance with the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the National Planning Policy Framework, and all other relevant material considerations.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to conditions

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

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

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Construction Phase Health & Safety and Environmental Plan 35567 – Nadder Community Energy V3 Date Received: 17/03/2026

Construction Management Plan Date Received: 27/01/2026

Risk Assessment (SSWUK) Date Received: 13/01/2026

Location Plan ref: P961/01 Rev A Date Received: 02/12/2025

Proposed Block Plan ref: P961/03 Rev A Date Received: 02/12/2025

Application Form Date Received: 01/10/2025

Solar Panel Details ref: P961/04 Date Received 18/09/2025

Proposed Electrical Enclosure ref: P961/05 Date Received: 18/09/2025

Solar Panel Data Sheet Date Received: 18/09/2025

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. The development will be carried out in strict accordance with the following document:

- Section 4 of the Bat Transect Survey Report, Enims, October 2025
- Biodiversity Net Gain Report, LC Ecological Services, December 2025

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and for the protection, mitigation and enhancement of biodiversity.

4. No development shall commence on site (including any vegetation removal or works to existing structures), until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Construction Method Statement shall include all precautionary measures to be implemented during the construction period, for the protection of sensitive habitats and species known to be present within or adjacent the site, with particular reference to bats, nesting birds, and the bordering deciduous woodland. The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved Construction Method Statement.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection, mitigation and compensation for protected species and priority habitats throughout the construction period.

5. Any new external lighting that is installed across the site shall be designed and implemented to minimise sky glow, glare and light trespass. It shall be designed in a downward facing position at all times and shall meet the criteria for Environmental Zone E0 as defined by the Institute of Lighting Professionals 'Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light' 2021.

Any external lighting installed at the site shall be retained and maintained as such thereafter for the lifetime of the development.

REASON: To ensure appropriate levels of amenity are achieved; to protect the National Landscape and to minimize impacts on biodiversity caused by light spillage to areas above and outside the development site.

6. Prior to the start of construction, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) shall be 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 to attain targets. The LEMP shall also include details of the number, design and locations of ecological enhancement features, including bat roosts and nesting opportunities for birds (e.g. bat and bird boxes).

The LEMP shall be implemented in full and for the lifetime of the development in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:

To ensure the long-term management of landscape and ecological features retained and created by the development, for the benefit of visual amenity and biodiversity for the lifetime of the scheme.

7. Before the panels come into operation, details of the northern and western boundary treatment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed works.

REASON: To minimise the impact on the setting of the landscape of the National Landscape and the character of the area.

8. Upon the development ceasing to be utilised to generate electricity, the panels and other associated infrastructure shall be removed from the site.

REASON: To minimise the longer term impact on the setting of surrounding heritage assets, the landscape of the National Landscape and the character of the area once the development has reached the end of its useful life.