

APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION CASE OFFICER REPORT

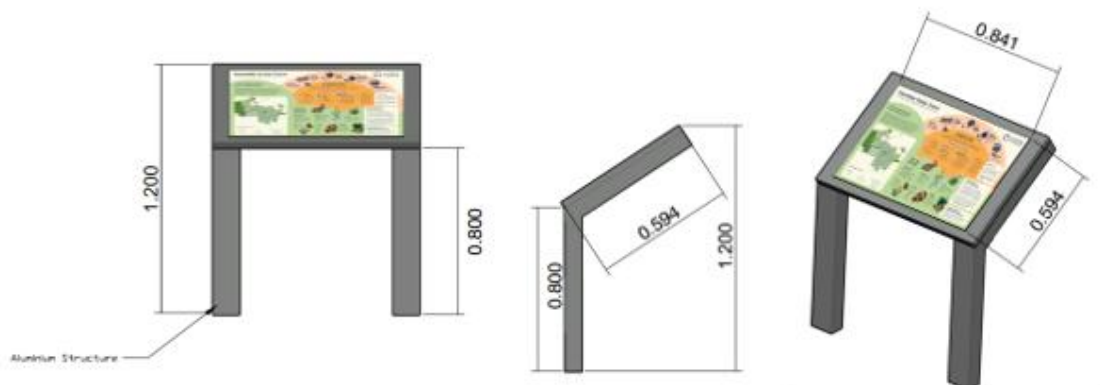
APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/02382
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Bathurst Estate, Kemble, Cirencester, GL7 6ND
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	The erection of a single non-illuminated information board to sit adjacent to Kemble Solar Farm on the south western boundary.
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The application site comprises land to the north and west of Kemble Wick. A majority of the site lies within Cotswold District, with a significant minority, around 20 hectares of the total 73, located in Wiltshire. The western part of the site is crossed by a public right of way, Bridleway CRUD4. The wider area has considerable issues with respect to flood risk from various sources, however the extent of the site known to be at a heightened risk of flooding is limited; what risk is known is associated with surface water flooding. This vicinity is also known to be an area of significant archaeological potential, with a mosaic of buried archaeology sites between this part of the county and Malmesbury.

PROPOSAL

The application proposes a single, non-illuminated information board to be installed beside the public bridleway along the south-western edge of Kemble Solar Farm. The board is intended for people using the bridleway and will explain what the solar farm does, how the land around it is managed, and the environmental and community benefits it provides. It would be modest in size, free-standing, and made from an aluminium structure with a powder-coated finish. Its position has been carefully chosen so that it is clearly visible to passers-by without interfering with use of the bridleway or appearing intrusive in the surrounding rural landscape.





PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal / Summary
20/05360/SCR - Screening Opinion - TCPA EIA 2006 Decision - EIA Not required Date: 10/8/2020 – EIA Screening Report for Kemble Solar Farm for solar photovoltaic development and associated grid connection
PL/2021/06919 - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 2/3/2022 – The installation of a solar farm comprising an array of ground mounted solar PV panels with associated infrastructure including housing for inverters, transformers and electrical equipment, a substation compound, as well as fencing, security cameras, acce
PL/2025/02066 - Non-Material Amendment Decision - Approve Date: 15/4/2025 – To Amend Condition 2 (Plans) of Planning Permission PL/2022/09140 - Replace the approved standalone inverters, with the use of string inverters; Variation of conditions 2, 5, 9, 10, 13 and 16 of PL/2021/06919 to allow for this replacement and account for
PL/2025/02787 - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 18/9/2025 – Installation of security cameras comprising 37 pole mounted CCTV cameras to enhance security and safeguarding measures for the infrastructure and assets associated with the approved solar farm 'Kemble Solar Farm'.
PL/2026/02591 - Full planning permission – The erection of a single non-illuminated information board to sit adjacent to Kemble Solar Farm on the south western boundary. Pending Consideration

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 development plan for Wiltshire comprises the *Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)* (adopted January 2015) and any made neighbourhood plans, which remains the principal statutory

planning document guiding development across the county. In line with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Though the development plan is considered as a whole, those parts deemed to be particularly relevant to this application are listed below:

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 13 Spatial Strategy Malmesbury Community Area
- Core Policy 35 Existing Employment Sites
- Core Policy 42 Standalone renewable energy installations
- Core Policy 48 Supporting Rural Life
- Core Policy 51 Landscape
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping;
- Core Policy 60 Sustainable Transport;
- Core Policy 61 Transport & Development;
- Core Policy 67 Flood Risk;

Emerging Plan

The examination of the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan has been paused and the weight to be afforded to any part of the emerging plan can be no more than very limited. A decision on how to proceed shall be made by the Council in May (2026).

Neighbourhood Plan:

Crudwell Neighbourhood Plan May 2021
Policy DD2 – Design

Supplementary Planning Documents and other Guidance:

- Wiltshire Design Guide (adopted April 2024)
- A Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Wiltshire: Wiltshire's Natural Environment Plan 2022-2030

ISSUES

The main issues that need to be addressed in this case include:

- Whether the development is acceptable in principle (CP 1 and 2)
- Whether the scheme constitutes high quality design (CP 57)
- Whether the scheme would have an acceptable impact upon the reasonable living conditions of the adjoining occupants (CP 57)
- Whether the scheme would have an acceptable landscape impact (CP 51)

- Whether there will be any land contamination / air quality issues (CP 55)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WC Highways: No objection subject to conditions

Parish/Town Council: No comment received

Cotswold District Council: No comment received

REPRESENTATIONS

In accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), the application was publicised by way of:

- Neighbour notification letters sent to adjoining and nearby properties;
- A site notice displayed near the site on the 01/05/2026

These methods were used to inform interested parties and provide a period of 21 days for comments to be submitted.

Below is a summary of the representations received during the consultation period. Only material planning considerations have been taken into account in the assessment of this application. Non-material issues, such as property values or private legal disputes, cannot be considered in the determination process.

ASSESSMENT

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

Policy Context

Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy of the WCS establishes a hierarchy of settlements to guide where development should be focused. The policy prioritises growth in:

- Principal Settlements (e.g., Salisbury, Chippenham, Trowbridge) – main focus for strategic growth.

- Market Towns – support local services and employment; suitable for sustainable development.
- Local Service Centres – smaller towns and villages with a range of services; limited development supported.
- Large and Small Villages – development should be limited and respond to local needs.
- Outside the defined settlements – development is strictly controlled and generally not supported unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Core Policy 2: Delivery Strategy of the WCS sets out how development will be distributed and delivered across Wiltshire. The policy emphasises:

- Sustainable patterns of growth, reducing the need to travel and supporting local services.
- Development should be plan-led, aligning with the settlement strategy and supported by infrastructure.
- Windfall development (not allocated in plans) must still comply with the principles of sustainable development.
- Development outside settlement boundaries is generally not permitted, unless it meets specific policy exceptions (as set out in paragraph 4.25 of the WCS).

Together, CP1 and CP2 ensure that new development is strategically located, sustainable, and supports the character and function of Wiltshire's communities.

Assessment

The site lies outside a defined settlement, which means development is generally restricted. However, the proposal needs to be considered in the context of its scale and purpose.

In this case, the application is for a single, non-illuminated information board associated with the already-approved and operational Kemble Solar Farm. It does not introduce a new use, nor does it involve permanent buildings or expanded activity on the site. Instead, it is a minor addition that sits alongside an existing development and serves a simple, informative purpose for people using the nearby bridleway.

The information board would have a very small physical footprint and would not change how the land is used. It would not generate additional traffic, rely on new infrastructure, or create pressure for further development in the countryside. As such, it does not conflict with the overall aim of directing growth to sustainable locations.

Given its limited scale and its clear functional link to an existing lawful development, the proposal can reasonably be considered an acceptable and proportionate form of development in this location.

Conclusion

While the site is outside a settlement boundary, the proposal is minor in nature and closely related to an established use. It does not result in unnecessary countryside development or conflict with the settlement strategy set out in Core Policies 1 and 2. Taking a proportionate and common-sense approach, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle.

Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

Policy Context

Core Policy 57 of the WCS requires high-quality design that:

- Enhances local character.
- Responds to the natural, historic, and built environment.
- Retains important features (e.g., trees, hedges).
- Supports sustainable construction and compatibility with surrounding uses.
- Creates safe, legible, and accessible spaces.

Section 12 of the NPPF emphasises design that is:

- Visually attractive.
- Functionally effective.
- Contributes to the quality of the built environment.

The Wiltshire Design Guide encourages sensitivity to local character, materials, and architectural styles and supports modern living standards while maintaining aesthetic and functional quality.

Building for a Healthy Life Framework promotes healthy, inclusive, and sustainable places. The document encourages:

- Walkability.
- Access to green space.
- Active design principles for well-being.

At a local level, Policy DD2 (Design) of the Crudwell Neighbourhood Plan 2019–2026 requires development to respect the character of the parish and avoid harm to visual amenity, with particular regard to scale, form and appearance in a rural setting.

Assessment

The proposal involves the installation of a single, small, non-illuminated information board positioned next to the public bridleway along the south-western edge of Kemble Solar Farm. Its design is simple and functional, using a modest aluminium frame with a powder-coated finish. The board is not intended to draw attention from the wider landscape, but instead to sit discreetly within its setting and be read by people using the bridleway.

In terms of scale, the board is small and proportionate, and its location has been carefully selected so that it does not obstruct the bridleway or interfere with its use by walkers, cyclists or horse riders. It does not require the removal of trees, hedgerows or other landscape features, and therefore leaves the existing rural character of the area unchanged.

As the board is non-illuminated, it will not introduce light pollution or visual disturbance, particularly during hours of darkness. Its purpose is purely informative, helping those passing by to better understand the solar farm, how the land is managed, and the wider environmental benefits of the site.

Overall, the proposal responds well to its surroundings and aligns with the design principles set out in the Crudwell Neighbourhood Plan, as well as wider county and national guidance. It is discrete, well-considered, and appropriate for its location.

Conclusion

The proposed information board is modest in scale, simple in design and carefully sited. It would not harm the character or appearance of the surrounding rural area and would sit comfortably alongside the existing bridleway and solar farm. The development is therefore considered to accord with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, Section 12 of the NPPF, the Wiltshire Design Guide, and Policy DD2 of the Crudwell Neighbourhood Plan.

Amenity

Policy Context

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.

These policies guide the assessment of amenity impacts, which will be considered in detail under the below headings.

The proposal would not give rise to any amenity impacts. The information board is small in scale, passive in use and located away from any residential properties. It would not result in overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of light or any sense of enclosure, nor would it generate noise once installed. Given its modest size and siting next to an existing bridleway, the board would sit unobtrusively in its surroundings and would not affect the amenity of any existing or future residents.

The proposal therefore accords with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and relevant guidance in the NPPF.

Highways Impacts and Parking

Policy Context

Transport implications are a key factor in assessing planning applications, especially for larger developments. Proposals must demonstrate:

- Safe and suitable access for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and those with mobility impairments.
- No severe residual impacts on the surrounding highway network.
- Promotion of sustainable travel, reducing reliance on private vehicles.
- Adequate parking and cycle provision, in line with adopted standards.
- Protection and enhancement of public rights of way and active travel routes.

Relevant policies include Core Policies 60–64 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, supported by the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan, Car Parking Strategy, and Cycling Strategy. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and LTN 1/20 (DfT) provide further design guidance for active travel infrastructure.

Proposals must also ensure safe access for refuse collection vehicles and comply with the Wiltshire Council Waste Storage and Collection SPD (2017).

Where necessary, Transport Assessments or Statements should be submitted to evaluate impacts and identify mitigation. Planning conditions or legal agreements may be used to secure off-site improvements, travel plans, or contributions to sustainable transport infrastructure.

Assessment

The proposal would not result in any highway or parking impacts. The information board is located within a field on the solar farm site, set well back from the public highway and screened by the solar arrays between the site and the road. It does not require vehicular access, generate traffic, or lead to additional visits to the site. There is no need for parking provision, cycle storage or refuse collection, as the board is a passive feature intended for use by people already travelling along the adjacent public bridleway. The proposal would not obstruct or alter the public right of way and would be positioned to ensure it does not interfere with its safe use by pedestrians, cyclists or horse riders. WC Highways, when consulted, advised no objection, subject to the condition requiring the bridleway to be kept clear and no motorised vehicle access being permitted.

Conclusion

Given its small scale, remote location from the highway, and lack of traffic generation, the proposal would have no impact on highway safety, traffic movement or parking. It is considered acceptable in transport terms and accords with Core Policies 60–64 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and relevant transport guidance.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Policy Context

The ecological impact of development is a key planning consideration, especially for larger schemes. Proposals must assess and address potential effects on:

- Protected species
- Priority habitats
- Ecological networks
- Green and blue infrastructure

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to:

- Avoid harm to ecological assets.
- Deliver measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), in line with the Environment Act 2021.
- Support habitat restoration and connectivity.
- Integrate biodiversity into site design.

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022–2030) promotes nature recovery, ecosystem services, and habitat connectivity through development.

Unless exempt, National policy requires a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for major developments, demonstrated via:

- Biodiversity Metric calculations
- Ecological assessments (e.g. PEAs, Phase 1 surveys, protected species surveys)

Assessment

The proposal would not result in any ecological or biodiversity impacts. The information board would be installed within land forming the solar farm on land that is already managed and influenced by development. It would require only a very small ground footprint, with no vegetation removal or changes to land management, and would not affect habitats, protected species or ecological networks. Given its size (approximately 1m²), the proposal falls within the de minimis exemption for Biodiversity Net Gain and does not undermine the biodiversity enhancements already delivered as part of the wider solar farm.

Conclusion

The development is therefore considered acceptable in ecological terms and consistent with Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Policy Context

Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to:

- Protect, conserve, and enhance landscape character and quality.
- Respect local distinctiveness, key views, and visual receptors.
- Give particular weight to impacts on National Landscapes (formerly AONBs) and locally valued landscapes.

The Wiltshire Design Guide SPD (2024) promotes a context-led approach, encouraging integration with natural features and settlement patterns while avoiding visual intrusion.

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022–2030) supports landscape protection through green infrastructure, habitat connectivity, and nature-based solutions.

The NPPF emphasises the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes, particularly those with scenic, historic, or ecological significance. Planning decisions should:

- Recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- Safeguard key views, local distinctiveness, and landscape settings.
- Ensure development is well-integrated into its surroundings and avoids visual intrusion, especially in sensitive or designated areas.

Landscape impact must be considered alongside biodiversity, heritage, and green infrastructure objectives, with mitigation measures encouraged where harm cannot be avoided.

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.

Assessment

The proposal involves the installation of a single, small, non-illuminated information board within an existing solar farm, set within a rural field and well away from the public highway. The board would sit amongst the approved solar arrays, which influence the character of the site, and would not break the skyline or interrupt any important views. Due to its modest size and discreet siting, the information board would not be visually prominent when seen from the surrounding landscape or nearby vantage points. No landscaping features would be removed to accommodate the proposal, and it would not alter the wider landscape character of the area or affect any designated or sensitive landscapes. Overall, the proposal would be visually unobtrusive and well-integrated with its immediate surroundings.

Conclusion

Given its small scale, discrete appearance and position within an existing developed site, the proposal would not result in harm to landscape character or visual amenity. It preserves the open and rural nature of the area and accords with the aims of Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Wiltshire Design Guide, and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Conclusion

The proposed development is considered acceptable in planning terms. The benefits of the scheme include providing clear and accessible information to users of the adjacent public bridleway, helping to explain the purpose, operation and environmental benefits of the existing solar farm, and improving public understanding of land management and renewable energy generation. The proposal is modest in scale, does not give rise to any material harm, and would not affect residential amenity, highway safety, ecology, or landscape character. On this basis, the benefits of the proposal outweigh any potential impacts, none of which are considered significant or require mitigation. The proposal is therefore 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 and documents: Received 13th April 2023

Site Location Plan Rev Issue 01 (AD)
Proposed elevation and Detail Rev Issue 1 (AP30)
Board Specification Spec6533_GH_v2.

Information Board CGI
Application Form

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

- 3 No construction or demolition vehicle access shall take place along Public Right of Way [CRUD4] unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Wiltshire Council Rights of Way Warden. Any necessary safety, mitigation or reinstatement measures shall be submitted to and approved in advance and implemented as agreed.

Reason: To protect the public right of way and ensure it remains safe and available for public use.

- 4 No materials, plant, temporary structures or excavations shall be placed or undertaken on or adjacent to the public right of way that would obstruct or adversely affect its use at any time during the development. The public right of way shall be kept clear at all times. Any damage to the route arising from the development shall be made good upon completion of the works.

Reason: To ensure the public right of way remains unobstructed and available for safe and convenient public use.

- 5 No external lighting shall be installed to the reference board unless details have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any approved lighting shall be implemented in accordance with those details.

Reason: To protect the character of the area and the amenity of nearby occupiers.

Informative

- 6 Any alterations to the approved plans, brought about by compliance with Building Regulations or any other reason must first be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority before commencement of work.

Informative

- 7 The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition “(the biodiversity gain condition”) that development may not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be Wiltshire Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. For further information on exempt developments please refer to:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.

Irreplaceable habitat

If the onsite habitat includes irreplaceable habitat (within the meaning of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) there are additional requirements for the content and approval of Biodiversity Gain Plans.

The Biodiversity Gain Plan must include, in addition to information about steps taken or to be taken to minimise any adverse effect of the development on the habitat, information on arrangements for compensation for any impact the development has on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat.

The planning authority can only approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if satisfied that the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat is minimised and appropriate arrangements have been made for the purpose of compensating for any impact which do not include the use of biodiversity credits.

Nic Thomas - Director of Planning, Economy and Regeneration