



Jonathan James
Wiltshire Council
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

By email only to: Jonathan.James@Wiltshire.gov.uk

15 December 2022

Dear Jonathan,

APPLICATION NO: 20/08618/FUL

DESCRIPTION: Installation of a solar farm.

LOCATION: Land West of A429 (Crudwell Road), North Malmesbury, Wilts

Thank you for consulting the Cotswolds National Landscape Board¹ on the additional information submitted in support of this proposed development, which would be located within the setting of the Cotswolds National Landscape.²

In reaching its planning decision, the local planning authority (LPA) has a statutory duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.³ The Board recommends that, in fulfilling this 'duty of regard', the LPA should: (i) ensure that planning decisions are consistent with relevant national and local planning policy and guidance; and (ii) take into account the following Board publications⁴:

- Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2018-2023 ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to Policy CE1 (Landscape), which specifies that development proposals should ensure that views out of the Cotswolds National Landscape are conserved and enhanced;
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to Landscape Character Types (LCT) 11 Dip-Slope Lowland;
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to LCT 11 ([link](#));
- Cotswolds AONB Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change ([link](#));
- Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statements ([link](#)) particularly, in this instance, with regards to the Renewable Energy Position Statement ([link](#)), Development in the Setting of the AONB ([link](#)), Tranquillity Position Statement ([link](#)) and Dark Skies and Artificial Light ([link](#)) and its appendices ([link 1](#), [link 2](#), [link 3](#)).

Our previous response dated 1 October 2021 raised a number of issues with the previous Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) submitted by the applicant in support of the application. We therefore welcome the submission of a new LVIA, dated 6 July 2022, and note the comments provided by the Council's Landscape Officer, Mark Goodwin, dated 8 November 2022. Having considered the information submitted, the Board **does not object** to the application.

Cotswolds Conservation Board

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The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), managed and looked after by the Cotswolds Conservation Board.

cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Chairman:
Brendan McCarthy

Vice Chair:
Rebecca Charley

In our previous response we requested that three locations were included in a revised visual assessment. The new LVIA contains 'photoviewpoint' and 'context view' photographs situated in these broad locations which we understand were agreed with the Council's Landscape Officer and which were taken in wintertime (December 2021). These are welcomed and they show that clear views of the proposed solar farm from the National Landscape are not possible from these particular locations due to the intervening screening features of woodland, trees and vegetation and in some cases, local topography.

On balance, we do not disagree with the new LVIA's conclusion that the proposed development of the main solar farm site would result in a minor adverse (i.e. not significant) landscape effect on the setting on the AONB. Based upon the photographs in the LVIA we also consider it is unlikely that views from PROWs in the National Landscape would be impacted in any significant (in EIA terms) adverse manner as a result of the development.

We also note the Council's Landscape Officer's recent recommendation to remove his previous objection subject to the preparation and submission of an effective and enforceable landscaping scheme that appropriately protects and enhances local landscape character and Green Infrastructure and would support this requirement.

It is disappointing that the new LVIA does not appear to have responded to our recommendation that consideration should be given to glint or glare caused by the reflection of sunlight off the solar panels during daylight hours, despite this also being recommended in the Planning Practice Guidance referred to at paragraph 2.1.2 of the LVIA. However, given the LVIA has demonstrated there to be limited intervisibility between the site and viewpoints within the National Landscape, we do not wish to raise an objection on this matter.

The LVIA also does not respond to our recommendation to discuss the potential introduction of lit elements into the night-time landscape as a result of any lighting associated with the proposed development. Therefore, and without prejudice, should the Council be minded to grant planning permission, we would request that appropriate pre-commencement planning conditions relating to any lighting are imposed in the interests of the conservation and enhancement of the dark skies of the National Landscape which are one of its 'special qualities'.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this response.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Joyce

Planning Officer

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NOTES:

- 1) The name used for the organisation associated with the AONB designation is the Cotswolds National Landscape Board. At times this is abbreviated to National Landscape Board or The Board. The legal name of the organisation remains the Cotswolds Conservation Board but this name is no longer used in most circumstances.
- 2) Cotswolds National Landscape is the new name for the Cotswolds Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The new name takes forward one of the proposals of the Government-commissioned 'Landscapes Review' to rename AONBs as 'National Landscapes'. This change reflects the national importance of AONBs and the fact that they are safeguarded, in the national interest, for nature, people, business and culture.
- 3) Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/section/85
- 4) The documents referred to in our response can be located on the Cotswolds National Landscape website under the following sections
 - a. Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2018-2023
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/management-plan
 - b. Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/lca
 - c. Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/lsg
 - d. Cotswolds AONB Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/ldlc
 - e. Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statements
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/ps1
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/ps2