

15/00588/FUL

Land To The West Of Admington Road (adjacent To Preston Bushes) Preston-on-Stour.

Construction and 25 year operation of a solar farm (on a site area of 39.7 ha of land) and associated infrastructure for connection to the electricity network including underground cable, Inverter Cabins, Comms buildings, 66kV Substation with associated switchgear, control and metering rooms, 4m high pole mounted CCTV cameras, 2m high security fencing and temporary construction compound, section of overhead powerline, access track and new vehicle access onto Admington Road and ecological and landscape enhancement measures.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board raise **no comments** in respect of this application (though make recommendations in respect of planning conditions should the Council be minded to approve the proposal).

The Cotswolds Conservation Board has received notification of this application via Natural England. The site lies approximately 1.5km outside the nationally protected AONB, though the site is considered to be within its setting (see attached Position Statement). The application does note the potential to cause harm on the setting of the AONB as this is a large solar farm site at 39.7 ha in area.

There are views down towards the site from the northern elevated sections of the Cotswolds, for example from around Meon Hill. As the photomontage from Viewpoint 06 (Centenary Way on Meon Hill) shows, part of the solar farm (currently visible as a green field) will be visible from the AONB. As the site appears to be dropping away in height from the AONB, the ability to see into part of the site is likely to be due to the elevation of the viewer from within raised ground in the AONB.

In this particular case, there is substantial mature tree belts around the majority of the southern parts of the site, therefore only a limited view into part of the site can be seen from the AONB.

On the above basis the Cotswolds Conservation Board raise no comments but do recommend, that should the Council be minded to approve this proposal, that a landscaping planning condition is added to specifically try and further reduce the impact on the views from the AONB. The views into and across the site for example could be addressed by strengthening the level of landscaping between each field to allow hedgerows to grow up and to include more native specimen trees. There may be some localised impact on overshadowing of panels, but by undertaking this additional level of work should mitigate against the outstanding element of the site that remains visible from the AONB. Tall hedge lines and mature tree belts are part of the character of the immediate landscape when viewed from the south.

In addition to the above we recommend a management plan for the full 25 years of the site, to ensure all boundary landscaping within and around the site and both new and existing, is maintained at an appropriate height and condition. There should in addition, be an ability to review the management plan of the site to ensure the landscaping is providing suitable screening and is being appropriately managed.