

RE: 15/00350/FUL The construction of a ground mounted 4MW solar farm and associated infrastructure including substation, transformer stations, access, roads and fencing. Lower Stanley Farm Gretton Fields Gretton Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL54 5HQ.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board has considered the above planning application and wishes to raise an **objection** for the following reasons:

Although the site is outside the nationally protected AONB the site is visible from the Cotswolds edge/within the AONB as the ground rises. The Board was consulted at the pre-application stage and although we did not assess views from every location, we were satisfied there were multiple public viewpoints towards the site from within the AONB (as shown in part within the LVIA).

The Board takes a pragmatic approach to trying to accommodate development of this nature within its setting. However, in this case it is complicated by the fact that the site lies in a lowland position, in a narrow gap close to the edge of the AONB but with the higher ground of the AONB wrapping around the site to the North, East, South and West. Only a narrow gap of land to the North-west of the site is not part of the nationally designated landscape.

As shown in part within the submitted LVIA, the development of this area for a solar farm will clearly feature in a variety of public viewpoints from the AONB and indeed in viewpoints from within the AONB across the lowland area to other parts of the AONB. There will be a clear change in landscape character with the typical agricultural scene, which remains the predominant characteristic at present, being replaced by the urbanising/developed influence of a solar farm with its panels and associated equipment.

There has been scope in certain circumstances, where the landscape has been more suitable, to provide mitigation, particularly through improved boundary hedge/tree planting. However, in this case we consider the views into the site from the elevated AONB to be too extensive to be simply hidden by allowing the boundary hedges to grow up with some additional planting (see photomontages within the LVIA). Indeed substantial amounts of new planting in itself would become discordant with the established character of this existing lowland area.

The Board therefore raises an objection to this development as it did at the pre-application stage. Of further assistance I attach an appeal decision for a solar farm, where the Board did not consider the impact on setting to be a significant issue, yet the Inspector still dismissed the appeal. In addition I attach the Board's Position Statement on Setting which further helps explains our objection to this proposal.