

**Item No 02:-**

**21/02735/FUL**

**Land At Grid Reference 398111 195688**

**Kemble Wick**

**Kemble**

**Gloucestershire**

## Item No 02:-

**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, fencing, security cameras, access tracks, associated landscaping and cabling for grid route of approx. 7.9 kilometres in length at Land At Grid Reference 398111 195688 Kemble Wick Kemble Gloucestershire**

<b>Full Application 21/02735/FUL</b>	
Applicant:	Aura Power Developments Limited (with The Bathurst Estate As
Agent:	
Case Officer:	Martin Perks
Ward Member(s):	Councillor Tony Berry
Committee Date:	8th December 2021
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	<b>PERMIT subject to no objection from Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology</b>

### **Main Issues:**

- (a) Provision of Renewable Energy
- (b) Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area
- (c) Access and Highway Safety
- (d) Impact on Residential Amenity
- (e) Impact on Protected Species
- (f) Drainage and Flooding
- (g) Archaeology and Heritage Assets

### **Reasons for Referral:**

This application is referred to Planning and Licensing Committee in the interests of transparency. Cotswold District Council officers (Chris Crookall-Fallon, Head of Climate Action, Cotswold DC; Frank Wilson, Finance Director, Publica Group; Jenny Poole, Deputy Chief Executive, Cotswold DC) have had discussions with the Applicant about the solar farm development proposal over the course of the last nine months. A statement setting out the Council's involvement with this application is attached to this report (Chris Crookall-Fallon 18th August 2021).

### **I. Site Description:**

I.1 This application primarily relates to an area of agricultural land located approximately 700m to the south-west of the village of Kemble. The site is also located approximately 200m to the north-west/west of the centre of the hamlet of Kemble Wick. The application site falls partly within Cotswold District and partly within the administrative area of Wiltshire Council. The application site as a whole measures approximately 72.81 hectares, of which 53.03

hectares is located within Cotswold District and 19.78 hectares within Wiltshire Council's area. The south-western part of the application falls within the jurisdiction of Wiltshire Council.

1.2 The area of the site within Cotswold District extends across a gently undulating landscape comprising a mix of agricultural fields, hedgerows and a small area of woodland (Bob's Copse). The north-western edge of the site lies adjacent to a woodland (Kemble Wood). The aforementioned wood extends to approximately 24 hectares in size and is designated as an Ancient Woodland. Land to the north-east of the site consists of agricultural fields. A converted barn (Rendall's Barn) is located adjacent to the north-eastern edge of the solar farm site. The solar farm also extends to the north of the aforementioned dwelling.

1.3 The western boundary of the solar farm site lies adjacent to 2 aircraft hangars and agricultural fields. The south-eastern edge of the site lies adjacent to a single carriageway metalled lane. Agricultural fields are located to the south of the lane.

1.4 The A429 lies approximately 300m to the north of the application site. Cotswold Airport is located approximately 500m to the north/north-west of the proposed solar farm. The Kemble to London railway runs in a north-south direction approximately 550m to the east of the site.

1.5 The site of the solar farm is located outside both the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a Special Landscape Area (SLA). The boundary of the AONB is located approximately 1.4km to the north of the application site. The boundary of Kemble and Ewen Special Landscape Area is located approximately 300m to the north of the proposed solar farm.

1.6 A Public Right of Way (BKE8) extends in a roughly north-south direction approximately 170m to the east of the application site at its closest point.

1.7 In addition to the site of the solar farm, the application site also extends in a linear manner for approximately 7.9km in a north-easterly direction to an area of land located on the southern edge of Cirencester (at the south-western end of Wilkinson Road). The aforementioned route will contain underground cabling. The cable trench will measure approximately 0.47m in width. However, a 10m corridor has been set out for the laying of the cables. The cable route will extend to the south and east of Kemble and pass under the River Thames. It will primarily extend across agricultural fields. The cabling route extends through the Kemble and Ewen Special Landscape Area for part of its length.

1.8 The cabling route is located approximately 40m to the south of 'Settlement SE of Chesterton Farm Settlement SE of Chesterton Farm' Scheduled Ancient Monument. Norwood Castle SAM is located approximately 870m to the south of the site of the solar farm.

## **2. Relevant Planning History:**

2.1 None

### **3. Planning Policies:**

INF10 Renewable & Low Carbon Energy Develop't  
EN1 Built, Natural & Historic Environment  
EN2 Design of Built & Natural Environment  
EN4 The Wider Natural & Historic Landscape  
EN7 Trees, Hedgerows & Woodlands  
EN8 Bio & Geo: Features Habitats & Species  
EN10 HE: Designated Heritage Assets  
EN11 HE: DHA - Conservation Areas  
EN14 Managing Flood Risk  
EN15 Pollution & Contaminated Land  
INF4 Highway Safety  
INF5 Parking Provision

### **4. Observations of Consultees:**

- 4.1 Gloucestershire County Council Highways: No objection subject to conditions
- 4.2 Gloucestershire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority: No objection
- 4.3 Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology: *'We have recently approved a Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological trial trenching (a more recent version of the one submitted with this application). Once we are in receipt of the results of the trial trench evaluation then we be able to advise on the significance of heritage assets with archaeological interest impacted by the proposals, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework'.*
- 4.4 Environment Agency: No objection subject to conditions
- 4.5 Historic England: No comments
- 4.6 Natural England: No objection
- 4.7 Biodiversity Officer: No objection subject to conditions
- 4.8 Tree Officer: No objection subject to conditions
- 4.9 Landscape Officer: No objection subject to conditions
- 4.10 Environmental and Regulatory Services Noise: No objection subject to condition
- 4.11 Wiltshire Council: No response to date

### **5. View of Town/Parish Council:**

5.1 Kemble and Ewen Parish Council

Response dated the 15th August 2021:



'At the Parish Council meeting of 13 August 2021 the council resolved to support the application subject to the following which is relevant to the construction phase of the project:

The Kemble and Ewen Neighbourhood Plan (KENP) Policy KE10 requires that all proposals for development within and around Kemble should be accompanied by a thorough assessment of the potential effects on archaeological heritage assets in accordance with the specified guidelines. The policy was described as a model policy by GCC archaeological service and is supported by the evidence base independent Archaeological report in the KENP. The Solar Farm proposal does not seem to have used this. This needs to be addressed and monitored by the respected authorities.

Although the construction is only a temporary activity it will span a long period and its disruption both above ground and below ground in areas of significant sensitivity requires justification and much care. As such, the Parish Council request that in line with NDP Policy KE10 a thorough assessment of the potential effects on archaeological heritage assets is carried out and it would highlight the following:

#### The Site

1. Kemble Wood is classified as ancient woodland by Natural England and it also contains archaeological features such as Anglo Saxon/Medieval wood banks . In 682 AD land on both sides of a wood called Kemble was granted to Malmesbury Abbey by the King of the West Saxons. This would make the wood at least 1,400 years old, remembering that it was already in existence when it appears in the charter. Kemble village is possibly named after the wood. The Heyes article on Kemble Wood in Glevensis shows how significant this wood is ecologically, historically and archaeologically.
2. Kemble and Ewen Parish Council have applied to have a footpath reinstated which vanished from the Ordnance Survey maps after 1947. It ran from Kemble Wick to Kemble Wood and then to the A429 at the county boundary. This application is with Gloucestershire County Council 573/11/123(1)
3. Archaeology outside Kemble Wood:
  - a. Roman Pottery has been found in the south west and west of Randall's Barn
  - b. An area of crop marks, south west of the two 1939 aircraft hangars and just outside of the site, can be seen on an aerial photograph . Does it go beyond that area in anyway?
  - c. The hedge line between Kemble Wick and Randall's Barn is not straight like most of the field boundaries in this area. It's sinuous characteristic and the fact the land to the east of it is considerably lower suggest it is a pre enclosure boundary and probably medieval. It should be protected in the construction stage.

Though a geographical geophysical survey has been completed, a field walking survey is necessary to pick up anything missed by the geophysical survey as the area, especially around Kemble Wood.

#### The Grid Connection (which runs through a Special Landscape area)

1. The route crosses a field which still has ridge and furrow, a rarity in Kemble where little has survived since the Second World War.

2. *Kemble Park is a major element in the landscape and form of the ancient village of Kemble. It is a medieval deer park and is recognised as Woodpasture and Parkland, and a BAP Priority Habitat, by English Nature . There are some very ancient pollarded oak trees along the boundary with the Park Covert. There is concern that root systems will be damaged by the grid connection. In the Kemble and Kemble Station Conservation Area Appraisal September 2016 (see Kemble and Ewen Parish Council website, Neighbourhood Development Plan, 8.1-8.7) it was proposed that the park should be included in the Kemble Conservation Area.*

3. *The route now enters the Thames Corridor. The connection would cut through pasture land in the Thames flood plain which has earthworks which include an older channel of the Thames. The connection also crosses the Thames and the Thames Path. There have been no details on how that would look or work.*

4. *The connection passes under an old railway bridge through the embankment for the Kemble to Cirencester Branch Line next to Severall's Wood. Here there are cropmarks of a possible Roman rectilinear enclosure in an aerial photograph in the National Heritage Collection (HER 38046). Considerable amounts of Roman pottery have been found in the field just on the north side of this bridge.*

5. *The connection crosses the Thames and Severn Canal. It continues to be an aspiration of the Thames and Severn Canal Trust to restore the canal. The connection crosses at the site of a swing bridge over the canal (see OS 6inch to mile map in the maps section of the Parish Archive on the Kemble and Ewen Parish Council website).*

*Additional, The Parish Council request that all reasonable steps should be carried out to minimise the impact of construction on Kemble Wick and Woodlands. Also, the flood mitigation works identified in the application are essential to minimise future impact on local residents and should not be omitted during the construction of the site.'*

5.2 Further response received on the 18th August 2021 - see attached document.

5.3 Cirencester Town Council: No response to date

5.4 Siddington Parish Council: No response to date

## **6. Other Representations:**

6.1 10 objections, 3 support and 2 general comments received.

### **6.2 Main grounds of objection are:**

i) Traffic - Devils Copse and the junction between the A429 and the intersecting Oaksey / Culkerton Road are notorious accident blackspots. There have been numerous serious and fatal accidents on the roads near to the proposed site. The scale of the planned solar farm will be likely to distract drivers, the creation of it will generate a lot of heavy traffic on a rural road. It will be a source of glare and increase the number of accidents on an already dangerous stretch of road.

ii) Aircraft - the skies above the solar farm are on a very busy flightpath, regularly used by planes at Cotswold Airport . The glare from the panels would be a hazard to aircraft as they take off and land.

iii) Public Amenity - the solar farm would damage the enjoyment of the public rights of way and bridle path along a much used and valued route. It will dominate the footpaths between Chelworth and Kemble Wick and the glare of the panels, the look of the sight and the latent humb will blight the amenity.

iv) The proposed planting of hedgerows and trees, not to mention the removal of 8 metres of hedgerow, will not mitigate the impact of the solar panels on the countryside. It will take decades for trees to grow, they may only be tall enough to screen the panels, when the solar farm is at the end of its 40 year tenure.

v) Flooding - roads off the fields where the solar farm is proposed, especially the roads from Oaksey to Chelworth and Oaksey to Kemble are prone to flooding, as are the lanes at Kemble Wick. In winter time the lanes are often under water. The run off from the site will make the water problems in the area worse.

vi) Over development - a solar farm of 70 hectares is out of proportion, far too big for countryside in which it would sit, a landscape which borders the Cotswolds AONB. The scale of it is out of all proportion with the tiny hamlets and villages that surround it, it would overwhelm the area, swamping small communities with solar panels.

vii) Privacy light and noise - for some hamlets, like the cluster of houses at Woodlands and homes at Kemble Wick the solar farm will be right in their face, impacting their privacy and peace, especially during the construction period.

viii)The solar farm surrounds Bob's Copse on 3 sides - leaving very narrow corridors for the wildlife - which is extensive and thriving (deer and hare to name a couple of regular inhabitants of Bobs Copse) - to move around and exist uninterrupted. How will Aura Power ensure that this precious wildlife is not impacted particularly during the construction phase?

ix) Whilst I am in favour of renewable energy opportunities I feel very strongly that the Bathurst estate and Aura Power have not provided a satisfactory explanation as to the current site selection versus possible alternatives. Given the extensive land available then more suitable alternatives with less impact on local residents' amenities and proximity to domestic housing should be considered or at least a satisfactory explanation as to why this is not possible should be provided.

x) National guidance states that large scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment particularly in undulating landscapes. The development is in such an undulating landscape. The LVIA makes clear that the proposed impacts will be adverse and major. The development has neither been well planned nor is it well screened and to the extent that it is screened it obliterates views and landscape features which are valued and protected by development plan policy. In this context it is not planned sensitively.

xi) National guidance encourages the effective use of land by focusing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land provided it is not of high environmental value. The land is not previously developed and it is not non-agricultural. It is agricultural land

which has been regularly farmed productively for generations. The agricultural land report is explicit in saying that no detailed survey has been undertaken. The level of survey is no more detailed than the land classification maintained by Natural England. The provisional agricultural land classification maps the whole of the area covered by the development as Grade 3, a classification which is supported by the farming regime operated on this land and all of the land in the surrounding area.

xii) National guidance requires that where a proposal involves green field land evidence should be available to show that the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poor quality and has been used in preference to higher quality land. No evidence has been provided to show that the use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary.

xiii) Adverse impact of glint and glare on landscape.

xiv) Inadequate justification of site selection and consideration of alternative sites.

xv) Contrary to Kemble and Ewen Neighbourhood Development Plan Policies KE6, KE10 and K11 as it harmful to green infrastructure, archaeology and landscape.

xvi) Adverse landscape impact and impact on views experience from Public Right of Way.

xvii) Landscape mitigation will not be effect until a period of 10 years has elapsed. Mitigation will be an obstruction of views over pleasant and open countryside.

xviii) Grid connection works will last for many months and will be very intrusive in a series of locations identified as being importance in Neighbourhood Plan Policy KE11.

xix) Access to open countryside and the promotion of good health is supported in the NPPF. This proposal materially harms the countryside at locations which will actively discourage people from their present enjoyment of it.

xx) The protection and enhancement of the natural and historic environment are important considerations which are offended against by this application.

xxi) Proposal is contrary to development plan and material elements of national policy and guidance.

xxii) Kemble Wick is on the outskirts of the Cotswolds AONB and Kemble is part of a conservation area. It is astonishing that plans for a solar farm have been submitted in the full knowledge that residents will be impacted rather than choosing a location elsewhere in the 15000 acres of the Bathurst Estate.

xxiii) The topography of the fields means that the solar arrays will be prominent.

xxiv) The imposition of solar arrays and buildings to the extent proposed on the 172 acres, with nearly 4.5km of security fences on an otherwise pastoral landscape, would be bound to have an incongruous, industrialising and alien impact that would be harmful to the landscape character of the area.

xxv) Every time I draw my bedroom curtains in winter months, instead of looking out onto Cotswold farm land, I will view a solar farm.

xxvi) Adverse impact on flooding. Water re-directed from the fields to a quarry flooded my property.

xxvii) Adverse impact on wildlife.

xxviii) Potential noise impact.

xxix) Cumulative impact of large solar farms on the area.

xxx) Impact on Ancient Woodland.

xxxi) Object to site selection process. Of the 2000 acres available within Kemble Farm a site has been selected that is as close as possible to 10 or 11 households within or bordering the farm.

xxxii) Kemble Farm is very aware of the flooding at Kemble Wick and Woodlands. Many times, every year, the lanes in Kemble Wick and Woodlands and down to Oaksey flood, caused by the water runoff from the proposed site. Houses are also at risk, especially Telling Barn. Kemble Farms has done some work on this improving the drainage ditches, but the volume of water pouring off the fields overwhelms these defences. With rainwater running off the panels, this increases the volume of water in channels through the solar farm, which have less chance to soak into the soil but instead leads to excessive run-off.

xxxiii) The applicant is looking for 5-year window of implementation. We think this is unreasonable and we would like to have a much shorter implementation window. On the 2 sites where they have got approval, this period is limited to 3 years.

xxxiiii) The solar panels will be 3m high, which is large. On all the solar farms we have seen, we have never seen any that high. With the development going right up to the boundary with the lane to Woodlands, which is about 0.5m below the field boundary in parts, this would mean there would be panels towering 3.5m as you walk/ride/drive down it, which will be very oppressive and ugly, spoiling what is a beautifully county lane. Similarly, there will be 3m high panels from our boundary, which again will spoil not only our view, but all users of the bridleways and footpaths that cross the area. This will be compounded by steel 2.5m fence and security cameras that will be mounted on 5m poles.

xxxv) The applicant states standard working hours are 7am to 7pm weekdays and 7am to 1pm on Saturdays. As we are mainly at home most days, we feel they should seek more standard business hours, which are weekdays between 9am and 5pm, to avoid prolonged disturbance, with the site being so close to us.

xxxvi) The report says that the glint and glare is like still water. This is not reassuring, as we have all experienced the glint and glare when driving on wet roads into the sun, with the brightness being very distracting. As the proposed site wraps around our house from east round to the north, we will be in direct line of the rising sun, which we would call a significant impact. Due to the contours of the land, new hedges would have to 10's meters high to obscure the panels.

xxxvi) As the area is very quiet, a background hum from equipment on sunny days, when we are most likely to be in our garden, would be a big nuisance to the enjoyment of our property.

xxxvii) We have a 1 m wall along our garden to the north, meaning that we have sight of a large expanse of the proposed site (photo 3). Due to the height differences in our view, new hedgerows will not screen the site.

xxxviii) Inverters should be sited as far away as possible from bridleways, byway and equestrian businesses or land used for keeping horses

xxxix) The applicant states the site needs to be between 60-70 ha, but provide no reason why it needs to be this big. The vast majority of solar sites are less than this, including their Bishampton site that is 36 ha and Burnt tree site at 55 ha.

xl) The applicant states that 'the land should be suitable for the Proposed Development and not hindered by any physical constraints or would be likely to cause any unacceptable significant impacts on any surrounding designations and receptors.' Our home is clearly a significant receptor that the solar farm will cause an unacceptable impact on.

xli) We did initially engage with Aura Power, but it soon became apparent that they would change very little to the plans they presented us with, so we disengaged and decided to rely on the planning process to put over our thoughts and concerns.

xlii) We pushed Aura Power on the site selection and even took time to draw up proposed sites within Kemble Farms that are not close to houses, closer to the sub-station and much flatter, but the only response we got was that this site was the only suitable choice, with no reasons given for dismissing other areas or why this area was chosen.

xliii) Planting of trees and hedges will have no impact on this view and the far reaching views will go from undulating fields to an undulating industrial zone. Our assessment is that the impact will be high throughout the life of the proposed development, despite any planting.

xliv) The original report says the most noise will be produced by the inverter / transformer kiosks, which have a sound power level of 84 dB, which is similar to a diesel truck

### **6.3 Main grounds of support are:**

i) In light of the authority declaring both Climate and Ecological emergencies, with aims of achieving net zero as soon as possible that a development such as this has to be supported. The IPCC 6th report recently released leaves us in absolutely no doubt how serious and how quickly we must act. This renewable energy project with its added biodiversity enhancements makes a very important contribution towards local and national targets.

ii) As a district which has very limited capacity for renewable energy projects given the AONB status of the Cotswolds, combined with the fact the authority has declared both Climate and Ecological emergencies (with aims of achieving net zero as soon as possible) a well thought through, biodiversity enhancing, non-permanent development such as this should not just be approved, but championed. An approval would be a real statement of intent from the council that it takes its responsibilities seriously for meeting local and national targets for green energy and sustainable living, and recognises the importance it can play in achieving

these goals. A denying of such an application would show the opposite to be true, with nice slogans and false promises the best it can contribute to the climate emergency.

iii) As a local resident, I would like to support this planning application. The most recent IPCC report underlines the importance of taking urgent action to tackle the climate crisis and we must do so now for the sake of future generations, even if it means changes to the countryside.

iv) The clear benefits of this project in terms of generating renewable energy to reduce carbon emissions, and its contributions to local biodiversity and ecology, outweigh any perceived visual impact the panels may have, whether this is from public footpaths or people's homes.

v) The Council has declared both a climate and ecological emergency and a solar farm of this size will clearly make a large and positive contribution to future net zero targets.

#### **6.4 General comments are:**

i) If the council is minded to support this application a condition should be attached to prevent the use of the access to the site from Kemble. This access runs alongside the eastern boundary of Top Farm from West Way and a Condition would be important in order to protect the residential amenity of Kemble residents from noise, dust and traffic to and from the development site and to protect the safety of users of the public footpath. The development traffic would conflict with these amenities and I ask that a Condition is applied to restrict all access to the site for both the development of the solar farm and ongoing maintenance.

ii) Gloucestershire Access and Bridleways Officer for the British Horse Society (BHS) states that Wiltshire bridleway CRUD4 runs immediately alongside part of the development just above Woodland (below Kemble Wood). It is very likely that walkers, cyclists and horse riders from Gloucestershire also use bridleway CRUD4, accessing it from local lanes. The applicant should be made aware of all the possible resulting effects of their development on the safety and enjoyment of the users of CRUD4 and that they must be required to follow BHS guidelines as part of any permission granted. Factors relevant to the development are fencing, width of affected rights of way, siting of inverter housing, effects on any rights of way of drainage arrangements.

iii) Glint and glare from the panels could also affect bridleways CRUD26 and OAKS11. Quoting from the leaflet Advice on Solar Farms (version 1/2017): "Arrays should be avoided where glare is likely to affect users of an equestrian route or an equestrian business."

iv) The construction phases of the site will lead to increased HGV traffic in the area. We would ask that consideration be given to the existence of equestrian establishments, which may need to access the bridleways and lanes available to the west of Spratsgate Lane, thus incurring additional risk to horses and riders from the increase in HGV and other vehicle traffic.

v) We would like to raise concern that there are numerous restricted byways, bridleways and footpaths in the area of the substation southeast of Cirencester, as well as in and around Ewen and Kemble, which could be affected by the construction of the cable route and which

do not seem to be mentioned in the Transport Statement. Any damage to the surface or reduction in convenience of these public rights of way as a result of the proposed cable route construction should, of course, be remedied and/ or improved.

vi) As a portion of bridleway CRUD4 is contiguous with the perimeter fence of the proposed site, the use of the bridleway should not be rendered any less convenient or commodious than before the development of the solar farm. Riding adjacent to the proposed wire mesh fence could be considered less commodious than the current open fields. The enjoyment of the countryside environment would be considerably reduced.

**Cotswolds Conservation Board:** Given this relatively close proximity and the type of development being proposed, we recommend that the local planning authority (LPA) should consider potential visual impacts on the National Landscape (including the visual impact in winter conditions). 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 publications

## **7. Applicant's Supporting Information:**

Ecological Impact and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment  
Arboricultural Impact Assessment  
Landscape And Visual Appraisal  
Landscape, Ecological And Hydrological Management Plan  
Transport Statement  
Heritage Impact Assessment  
Geophysical Survey  
Flood Risk Assessment  
Drainage Impact Assessment  
Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study  
Noise Impact Assessment  
Agricultural Land Classification Report  
Planning Statement  
Design and Access Statement  
Statement of Community Involvement  
Construction Environmental Management Plan

## **8. Officer's Assessment:**

### **Proposed Development**

8.1 This application seeks planning permission for the creation of a solar farm together with associated development including transformers, inverters, a substation compound, fencing, security, cabling and access tracks. The solar farm site extends to an area of approximately 72.81 ha with approximately 19.78 ha in Wiltshire and 53.03 ha in Cotswold District in Gloucestershire. In addition to the area occupied by the solar farm, it is also proposed to lay underground cables for a length of approximately 7.9km between the solar farm and the southern edge of Cirencester (at the south-western end of Wilkinson Road).



8.2 The proposed development is predicted to have a generation capacity of up to 49.9 Megawatts. Electricity will be generated by parallel rows of solar panels which will be south facing. Each panel will be mounted at a height of approximately 0.8m above ground level and will have an overall height of 3m. The panels will be tilted at an angle of between 10-25 degrees. There will be a distance of 2-6m between each of the rows of panels.

8.3 The proposed development is predicted to have a construction period of up to approximately 6 months and an operational period of 40 years.

8.4 In addition to the solar panels, it is also proposed to site a number of metal shipping container style buildings on the site that will act as transformer/ inverter substations and spare parts containers. The transformer/inverter buildings will each measure approximately 6.1m long by 2.5m wide by 2.6m high and will total approximately 16 in number. The spare parts containers will each measure approximately 6.1m long by 2.5m wide by 2.6m high. The submitted plans show approximately 11 such buildings. The aforementioned buildings will be spread throughout the site.

8.5 An on-site substation will be located in the north-east part of the site. It will measure approximately 11.3m long by 4.5m wide by 3.9m high.

8.6 The perimeter of the solar farm site will be surrounded by deer fencing measuring approximately 2.1m in height.

8.7 Vehicular access to the solar farm site will be via an existing field entrance located on the southern side of the A429 to the north of the site. An existing informal farm track will be upgraded and extended to serve the new development. The track will extend along the northern side of Kemble Wood. A network of new tracks, each measuring approximately 4m in width will be created within the site. The tracks will be surfaced in a compacted gravel. A temporary construction compound measuring approximately 30m by 40m will be constructed in the northern part of the site adjacent to the eastern side of Kemble Wood. It will be retained for the construction phase of the development and then replaced with solar panels and landscaping.

8.8 Electricity generated by the solar panels will be connected to the National Grid at a point located on the southern edge of Cirencester. The applicant is proposing to install a 7.9km long underground cable that will extend from the north-eastern boundary of the site to a new substation compound located on the southern side of Wilkinson Road. The proposed site occupies the north-eastern corner of an existing field. The eastern side of the site lies adjacent to an existing substation which connects into an existing network of overhead electricity pylons. The proposed substation compound will incorporate customer and Distribution Network Operator substation kiosks. The Distribution Network Operator substation will measure approximately 5.2m by 4m by 3.8m high. The customer substation kiosk will measure approximately 7m by 4.1m by 3.9m high. Access from the proposed compound to Wilkinson Road will be via an existing access point that serves the existing substation located to the north-east of the site.

8.9 The proposed underground cable route will primarily extend in a north-east direction from the site of the solar farm to Cirencester. The route will extend to the south and east of Kemble, to the north of Ewen and the west of Siddington. It will extend under the River Thames at a point between Kemble and Ewen. The proposed route will principally extend

through fields. However, the north-eastern section of the route between Kemble and Cirencester will either follow the line of, or run roughly parallel with, the dismantled Cirencester to Kemble railway line. The final section leading into Cirencester will lie adjacent to a road.

8.10 The proposed cables will be placed in a trench measuring approximately 1.3m deep and 0.5m wide. Drilling will be used when there is a need to place the cables under roads or water courses such as the River Thames.

8.11 The applicant is proposing to introduce new landscaping as part of the scheme including 524m of native species hedgerow, 2.93 hectares of native species woodland planting, the enhancement of 0.28 hectares of existing plantation woodland with native species infill planting, the provision of 56 hectares of native species grass and meadow grazing land, the planting of 2.99 hectares of native species grass and wildflower meadow mix, the creation of 0.37 hectares of tussock grassland and the planting of 176 trees.

#### **(a) Provision of Renewable Energy**

8.12 The proposed development is intended to provide a renewable source of electricity generation and to reduce dependence on fossil fuels thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

8.13 In considering this application, it is necessary to have regard to the UK Government's recent commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 100% relative to 1990 levels by 2050. In June 2019, parliament passed legislation (Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019) to ensure that the commitment to achieve 'net zero' is legally binding. The need to reduce dependence on fossil fuels has therefore been recognised at a national level.

8.14 In July 2019, Cotswold District Council declared a climate emergency. It is committed to making its activities net zero by 2045, achieving 100% clean energy uses across a full range of functions by 2030 and embedding climate change emergency considerations in all work areas, decision making processes, policies and strategies.

8.15 With regard to planning policy and guidance, the following is considered relevant to this application:

8.16 Cotswold District Local Plan Policy INF10: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development states:

*1. Proposals for the generation of energy from renewable or low carbon sources will be permitted, provided it is demonstrated that:*

- a. any adverse impacts individually and/or cumulatively, including; visual amenity; landscape character; heritage assets; biodiversity, water quality and flood risk; highways, residential amenity, including shadow flicker, air quality and noise, are or can be satisfactorily mitigated.*
- b. It is of an appropriate type, scale and design for the location and setting;*
- c. It is compatible with surrounding land uses, such as military activities; and*

d. *It avoids using the best and most versatile agricultural land unless justified by compelling evidence.*

2. *The infrastructure and all associated apparatus and structures relating to the installation must be removed, and the site reinstated where appropriate, should it become redundant for energy generation purposes.*

8.17 In terms of national guidance, paragraph 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that *'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'*

8.18 With regard to meeting the challenge of climate change, paragraph 152 of the NPPF states that *'the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate' and 'it should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings, and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.'*

8.19 Paragraph 158 of the NPPF states:

*'When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:*

- a) *Not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and*
- b) *Approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas'.*

8.20 The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states:

*'Increasing the amount of energy from renewable and low carbon technologies will help to make sure the UK has a secure energy supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions to slow down climate change and stimulate investment in new jobs and businesses. Planning has an important role in the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in locations where the local environmental impact is acceptable.*

*Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 5-001-20140306'*

8.21 It is evident that national and local planning policy and guidance are supportive, in principle, of renewable and low carbon energy development. With regard to this application, information submitted with the planning application states that *'the solar PV array would generate approximately 48,0834 megawatt hours per year ('MWh/yr') which would offset the annual electricity usage of approximately 12,887 homes in the Cotswold District Council and Wiltshire Council Areas and save the emission of 21,638 tonnes of CO2.'* The current proposal will

therefore make a significant contribution to the supply of renewable energy across both this District and the area covered by Wiltshire Council.

8.22 It is considered that the provision of renewable energy of the scale proposed represents a significant benefit that weighs in favour of the proposed scheme. Notwithstanding this, it is necessary to weigh this benefit against the potential impacts of the scheme. The impacts of the proposal will be covered in the following sections of this report.

**(b) Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area**

8.23 The site of the proposed solar farm occupies a network of agricultural fields located broadly between the hamlet of Kemble Wick to the south-east and the A429 to the north-west. An ancient woodland (Kemble Wood) is located adjacent to the north-western boundary of the application site. A further woodland known as Bob's Copse is linear in form and lies towards the centre of the site. Land to the north-east of the site consists of agricultural fields and coppices of trees. Part of the north-western and south-western boundaries of the site adjoin land occupied by 2 aircraft hangars. The section of the site extending into Wiltshire Council's area is bordered by agricultural fields. A section of the south-eastern part of the site lies adjacent to a metalled lane which serves a single residential dwelling (Woodlands) located to the south-west of the application site. The south-eastern boundary of the site lying to the north-west of Kemble Wick will be set back approximately 200m from the centre of the aforementioned settlement. A field and an area of woodland lie between the south-eastern boundary of the site and Kemble Wick.

8.24 The site of the solar farm is located outside of both the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Kemble and Ewen Special Landscape Area (SLA). The boundary of the AONB is located approximately 1.4km to the north of the application site. The boundary of Kemble and Ewen Special Landscape Area is located approximately 300m to the north of the proposed solar farm.

8.25 The proposed cable route will extend through Kemble and Ewen Special Landscape Area (SLA) where it runs between Kemble and Ewen and to the north of Ewen.

8.26 The following Local Plan policies are considered relevant to the proposal:

8.27 Local Plan Policy EN1 Built, Natural and Historic Environment states:

*'New development will, where appropriate, promote the protection, conservation and enhancement of the historic and natural environment by:*

- a. ensuring the protection and enhancement of existing natural and historic environmental assets and their settings in proportion with the significance of the asset;*
- b. contributing to the provision and enhancement of multi-functioning green infrastructure;*
- c. addressing climate change, habitat loss and fragmentation through creating new habitats and the better management of existing habitats;*
- d. seeking to improve air, soil and water quality where feasible; and*

- e. *ensuring design standards that complement the character of the area and the sustainable use of the development.'*

8.28 Local Plan Policy EN4 The Wider Natural and Historic Landscape states:

1. *'Development will be permitted where it does not have a significant detrimental impact on the natural and historic landscape (including the tranquillity of the countryside) of Cotswold District or neighbouring areas.*

2. *Proposals will take account of landscape and historic landscape character, visual quality and local distinctiveness. They will be expected to enhance, restore and better manage the natural and historic landscape, and any significant landscape features and elements, including key views, the setting of settlements, settlement patterns and heritage assets.'*

8.29 Development within the SLA is subject to the following policy:

8.30 Local Plan Policy EN6 Special Landscape Areas states:

*'Development within Special Landscape Areas will be permitted provided it does not have a significant detrimental impact upon the special character and key landscape qualities of the area including its tranquillity'*

8.31 In addition to the above, policies in the Kemble and Ewen Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2031 are also relevant to the determination of this application.

8.32 Policy KE6 - Green Infrastructure states:

*'The network of Green Infrastructure (GI) within the neighbourhood plan area will be protected for its recreation, open space and wildlife value. New GI, particularly where it creates links to the existing GI network and improves access to the countryside for informal recreation and net gains in biodiversity will be supported.*

*Development will only be permitted where it retains/protects/enhances the recreational, biodiversity, water management and other functions of the GI network.*

*New development should enhance linkages to the wider existing GI network and improve access to the countryside for informal recreation, where appropriate. '*

8.33 Policy KE11 -Landscape states:

*Proposals for development should:*

- a) *Retain and where possible enhance those landscape assets which are of benefit to the quiet enjoyment of the rural landscape by residents and the community. In identifying such areas regard will be had to the Kemble Landscape Appraisal undertaken by Tyler Grange;*
- b) *Maintain the physical and visual separation between Kemble and Ewen to retain the sense of identity of the distinct settlements;*

- c) *Reinforce the Thames valley landscape in respect of its recreational value and visual amenity creating a quiet and tranquil valued rural landscape;*
- d) *Maintain and enhance field pattern and enclosure where possible;*
- e) *Enhance valued landscape features which are in decline or in poor condition;*
- f) *Avoid further aesthetic erosion of the landscape/farmed edge of the villages; and*
- g) *Protect views and vistas identified in the Kemble Landscape Appraisal and the Kemble and Kemble Station Conservation Areas Appraisal undertaken by Montagu Evans from significant detrimental impact.*

8.34 In terms of national guidance, Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by '*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes*' and '*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*'.

8.35 The solar farm site occupies a gently undulating group of fields which are bordered to the north-west by woodland and which are themselves separated by coppices of woodland and hedgerows. The part of the solar farm site within Cotswold District is visible from a Public Right of Way (BKE8), which extends in a roughly north-south direction to the east of the application site. The western side of the Right of Way is open which allows views to the south-west towards and across the application site. A further Public Right of Way (CRUD4) runs in a north-west to south-east direction through land in Wiltshire. It will run alongside the south-western part of the solar farm site falling within Wiltshire Council's area. Views of the existing aircraft hangars and the south-western part of the site can be obtained from the Right of Way. Views from the metalled lane running along the south-eastern edge of the site are largely screened by existing vegetation. Public views from the A429 to the north-west are screened to a significant degree by Kemble Wood.

8.36 The application site sits within an agricultural landscape. However, the character and appearance of the wider area is heavily influenced by Cotswold Airport, which is located approximately 500m to the north-west of the solar farm, Kemble Enterprise Park which is located approximately 1km to its west and the presence of 2 aircraft hangars adjacent to the south-western and north-western boundaries of the site.

8.37 This application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The Council's Landscape Officer has assessed the LVIA and states '*The LVIA identifies that while the site itself would change character with the introduction of PV panels and associated infrastructure, the effects are contained due to the presence and retention of existing green infrastructure on site. The LVIA identifies that the Landscape effects on the site would be Major Moderate adverse. The effects on the wider landscape setting were identified to be Minor-Negligible and Negligible adverse. It is noted that these would be long term effects, but reversible.*

*In terms of the visual impact, there is a restricted visual envelope by virtue of the low lying flat landform and containment provided by the existing boundary vegetation. The effects upon viewpoints within or nearby the site are identified to be Moderate-Major, however at an increasing distance from the site viewpoints were assessed to have an effect of no change or Negligible. It is also noted that the likely residual visual effects would reduce due to the establishment of mitigation planting.*

*The LVIA concluded that the proposed development can be delivered without undue harm and significant long term effects on landscape character and visual amenity, and any adverse effects, although long term are reversible. Mitigation measures are identified to have long term benefits to the scheme and contribute positively to the landscape character.'*

8.38 The Landscape Officer goes on to state *'I can confirm that I agree with the findings of the LVIA assessment and provided that a robust mitigation planting strategy can be agreed, I would not raise an objection to the proposed scheme. I consider that once new planting has become established, this will help to protect the views of the site that can be obtained locally. Furthermore, I consider that there is an opportunity to enhance the green infrastructure across the site and bring about some beneficial changes to the landscape.'*

8.39 This application is accompanied by a Landscape, Ecological and Hydrological Management Plan which sets out details of new planting within and around the application site. The proposed scheme will introduce new hedgerows, trees and wildflower meadows and native species grassland into the area. Existing hedgerows will be enhanced and new hedgerow and tree planting introduced along the north-eastern and south-eastern boundaries of the site which are visible from the Public Right of Way to the east. Moreover, the solar panels will be set back from the aforementioned Right of Way thereby allowing the openness of the existing route to be retained. The Right of Way will continue to lie alongside agricultural fields. Whilst the solar panels will be visible, the views will be from a distance and their introduction will not therefore result in an enclosure of the Right of Way. It is considered that the proposed landscape planting will significantly mitigate the impact of the proposal especially in the longer term. The proposal is considered to provide a significant amount of green infrastructure across the site in accordance with the Cotswold Design Code and Policy KE6.

8.40 With regard to the impact of the proposal on Kemble Wick, the proposed scheme seeks to retain an area of agricultural land between the site and the settlement. An undeveloped area will therefore be retained to the north-west of the settlement. In combination with an existing woodland that lies adjacent to the settlement and new landscape buffer planting, it is considered that the introduction of the solar farm will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on views experienced from the settlement.

8.41 The solar panels will be approximately 3m in height and will not therefore be readily visible from the wider landscape such as the SLA and the AONB to the north. The proposals are considered not to have an adverse impact on views experienced from, or to, the aforementioned designated areas.

8.42 In addition to the solar panels, it is noted that a number of other elements will be introduced onto the site such as perimeter fencing and container buildings to house transformers and spare parts. The proposed fencing will be 2.1m in height and will take the form of deer fencing which is more open than standard security fencing. It will therefore have less of an urbanising impact on the site than a more typical security fence. The container buildings will be limited in number and spread across the site. Having regard to the size of the site as a whole, the aforementioned elements are considered not to have a greater impact on the character or appearance of the landscape than the solar panels.

8.43 With regard to glint from the solar panels, the applicant has submitted a Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare study which has assessed the potential impact of solar reflection from the panels on the landscape, local residents and highway safety as well as aircraft utilising Cotswold Airport. The aforementioned study states that *'the results show that the reflections produced are of intensity similar to or less than those produced from still water and significantly less than reflections from glass and steel'*. Due to the position of existing roads, properties and the airport in relation to the application site (and the south facing nature of the panels), together with landscaping and topography, it is considered that the findings of the report are reasonable. The development can therefore be undertaken without having an unacceptable impact in respect of glint and glare.

8.44 With regard to the proposed cable route and new substation in Cirencester, the cabling will be located underground and will not therefore be visible following its installation. Landscape restoration measures will be put in place to ensure that the affected land is restored following the laying of the cables. The cable route is considered not to have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of Kemble and Ewen SLA. The proposed substation will be located next to an existing electricity compound that serves a number of overhead electricity pylons. It will also lie at the edge of an industrial estate. The proposed site will be partly concealed from the adjacent road by a hedgerow and is not of a size or form that will be readily visible within the landscape. It is considered that the cabling and substation compound will not have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the area.

8.45 Overall, it is considered that the proposed development will have an impact on the character or appearance of the area. However, this impact will be mitigated by new landscape planting. It is also of note that the development is reversible and that the land can be returned to agriculture in the future.

8.46 In response to concerns received from local residents about the availability of other sites, the applicant has undertaken a site selection process which has assessed the suitability of sites including areas of previously developed land within a 10km radius of the network connection at Cirencester. New sites need to be located in reasonable proximity of a connection to the National Grid in order to ensure that electricity generated by the solar panels can be transferred efficiently. There are no brownfields sites within the 10km radius of the connection that could accommodate the size of development proposed. In addition, other constraints such as the AONB, the SLA, Flood Zones 2 and 3, heritage designations, SSSIs and areas of higher quality agricultural land restrict the availability of other land within the search area. It is considered that the applicant has undertaken reasonable steps to investigate the availability of other sites. The choice of the current site is therefore considered reasonable in this respect.

8.47 With regard to cumulative impact of solar farm developments, it is noted that this Council has granted permission for a number of solar farms across the District in recent years. Completed sites include the following:

8.48 Land Parcel East Of Witpit Lane Preston 15/01923/FUL & 20/02034/FUL 23.38MW - 40.99 hectares

8.49 Land Parcel To The North Of The Byre Badsey Lane Willersey 13/00578/FUL 4MW 9.35 hectares



8.50 Land At Norton Hall Mickleton 12/05095/FUL 2.5MW 7.5 hectares

8.51 Land Adjacent To Northwick Substation Chipping Campden 11/01247/FUL 5 MW 20 hectares & 12/05072/FUL 2.25 MW 8.2 hectares

8.52 Permission has also been granted for 9.3 hectares 5MW site at Broadfield Farm between Aldsworth and Northleach (15/03186/FUL ) and for a 19.94MW 32 hectare site on land at Ashton Road to the south of Siddington (20/04499/FUL). Neither of the aforementioned schemes has been completed.

8.53 In addition to the above, a solar farm is present outside the District between Long Newnton and Crudwell approximately 5km to the south-west of the current application site. Wiltshire Council is also dealing with an application for a 50MW 110 hectare solar farm development on land to the south-west on Minety approximately 6km to the south-east of the current application site.

8.54 None of the above sites are viewed in connection with the proposed development. Recent permissions at Siddington and Preston, as well as the above mentioned sites to the south-west and south-east of the application site, are considered to be sufficiently distant from the application site to avoid harm arising from cumulative impact.

8.55 It is noted that the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that the *'deployment of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes. However, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively.'* The PPG advises of particular factors that should be taken into consideration when assessing large-scale solar farm proposals such as encouraging the use of previously developed and non-agricultural land, the use of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to higher quality land, glint and glare and the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with hedgerows.

8.56 In response to the PPG, it is considered that the applicant has reasonably demonstrated that there are no areas of previously developed land that could accommodate the development proposed. In addition, the proposal is considered not have an adverse in respect of glint and glare, and additional landscaping will mitigate the landscape and visual impact of the development. With regard to agricultural land, the applicant has commissioned an Agricultural Land Classification Report which concludes that the land falls within Grades 3b and 4. The land is therefore considered not to fall within the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land category as defined in the NPPF. Moreover, the land can continue to be used for grazing during the lifetime of the solar farm and it will be returned to agricultural use following the de-commissioning of the site.

8.57 Overall, it is considered that the introduction of the solar farm will have a landscape and visual impact on the character and appearance of the area. However, this impact will be mitigated by proposed new landscaping and green infrastructure. The impact of the proposed development is also considered to be relatively localised. It is considered that the landscape and visual impacts of the proposal are outweighed by the benefits arising from the provision of renewable energy and the need to address the issue of climate change.

### **(c) Access and Highway Safety**

8.58 The proposed solar farm will be accessed by an existing field entrance located on the A429 to the north of the site. An existing unsurfaced farm track will be upgraded to enable access initially by construction traffic and subsequently by service vehicles during the lifetime of the development. A network of new tracks will be created within the site to facilitate future site maintenance and management.

8.59 In terms of highway impact, the main impact on the local road network will occur during the construction phase of the development. Following completion of the development, the site will be managed remotely with on-site trips limited to around 2 per month. It is considered that the long term operation of the site is therefore unlikely to have an adverse impact on highway safety or the operation of the road network. With regard to the construction phase of the development, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) Highway Officers state *'the Transport Statement has deduced that a total of 6,640 total vehicle movements would be generated at the site access during the construction period of six months. It has been noted that this represents perhaps 40 - 60 vehicle movements per day and indicates that the access would be very active. Given also that many of the vehicles using the access would be large, heavy HGVs, it would be essential for comprehensive traffic management to be established to provide for the safe operation of the access and the safety of all other road users. An approved traffic management scheme would be required to be in place prior to any site mobilisation and be maintained throughout the construction period of the development.'* GCC Highway Officers have therefore recommended the attachment of a condition covering traffic management should permission be granted. It is considered that the existing highway network has capacity to accommodate the level of traffic generated during the construction phase of the development.

8.60 It is noted that the applicant is proposing to construct a temporary construction compound at the northern part of the site to accommodate construction traffic and contractors. In addition, all construction traffic will access the site via the A429 rather than via the network of lanes extending through Kemble and Kemble Wick. Access visibility along the A429 from the proposed site entrance can also meet the requisite visibility requirements for a 60mph road.

8.61 With regard to the proposed substation in Cirencester, GCC Highway Officers are satisfied that the shared access arrangements with the existing substation site are acceptable and that adequate visibility can be achieved.

8.62 GCC Highway Officers are also satisfied that the creation of the cabling route can be undertaken in a manner that will not have an adverse impact on highway safety. However, a condition is recommended requiring the agreement of a Construction Management Plan which will cover details relating to drilling under the highway and construction traffic.

8.63 Comments regarding the impact of the proposal on existing Public Rights of Way are noted. Separate agreement will be required from GCC Rights of Way should the development require the temporary closure or diversion of any Rights of Way within Gloucestershire. Wiltshire Council will address comments regarding Public Right of Way CRUD4 which falls within Wiltshire.

8.64 GCC Highway Officers raise no objection to the application and consider it to be acceptable in highway safety terms. It is considered that the proposal accords with Local Plan Policies INF4 and INF5 and guidance in Section 9 of the NPPF.

#### **(d) Impact on Residential Amenity**

8.65 The solar farm site is located in an area of open countryside. The nearest dwellings to the site are located within Kemble Wick to its south-east, a property called Woodlands to the south-west and a property called Rendall's Barn to the north-east. The proposed solar panels will not generate discernible levels of noise once in place. However, associated plant and machinery such as transformers and substations can generate noise.

8.66 The applicant has undertaken a Noise Impact Assessment which has assessed the potential level of noise generated by the proposal against existing background noise levels. The report states that *'an assessment of operational noise impact has been undertaken in accordance with BS4142:2014 and the level of impact has been found to be Low, with predicted Rating levels below background sound levels at all receptors, during both daytime and night-time periods. In addition, the target criteria specified by the Environmental Health Departments of Cotswold and Wiltshire Councils of BS 4142 Rating levels being 5 dB below background levels has also been achieved'*.

8.67 The Council's Environmental and Regulatory Services Noise Officer has assessed the proposal and states that *'I consider the applicant's noise assessment to be robust and safe. As such, I have no objection in principle to the solar farm at this location, subject to a standard noise related condition.'* It is considered that the proposed development will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on local residents in terms of noise pollution.

8.68 It is noted that the construction phase of the development will generate vehicle movements to and from the site. The construction of the panels and associated developments will also generate a degree of noise and disturbance. However, the proposed access to the solar farm site will be located approximately 1.5km from Kemble Wick and the proposed temporary construction compound will be approximately 1km from the aforementioned settlement. The construction period will last approximately 6 months and is therefore considered to be relatively limited in its timescale. The construction of the panels closest to Kemble Wick and other properties will also last for a lesser period than 6 months. It is therefore considered that the construction phase of the development can be undertaken without having an unacceptable adverse impact on residential amenity.

8.69 Concerns regarding views of the site from existing properties are noted. However, the siting of the solar panels has been designed to ensure the retention of a landscape buffer between Kemble Wick and the proposed panels. An existing woodland also provides a further degree of screening. Having regard to the proposed separation distance and existing and proposed landscaping, it is considered that the proposed scheme will not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of existing residents.

#### **(e) Impact on Protected Species**

8.70 The site of the proposed solar farm occupies an area of land comprising agricultural fields, hedgerows and coppices of woodland. In addition, an ancient woodland (Kemble Wood) is located adjacent to the northern edge of the application site. It is identified as a

Local Wildlife Site. The Ecological Assessment submitted with this planning application states *'The site comprises arable, building, hardstanding of negligible ecological importance and poor semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedgerow, scrub and tall ruderal vegetation of site ecological importance and mature trees, species-rich hedgerows, woodland and waterbodies of local ecological importance'*. Surveys indicate the presence of great crested newts within 3 ponds on the site. In addition, ground nesting birds were identified in the arable fields and a badger sett was also identified. The existing hedgerows, woodland and ponds are identified as priority habitats.

8.71 The proposed solar farm will primarily be located on arable fields which are considered to be of low biodiversity value. The proposed scheme will also result in the loss of approximately 52m of hedgerow to facilitate site access. The proposed development seeks to protect existing woodland, trees, ponds and other remaining hedgerows during the course of the development. The applicant is also proposing to introduce new landscaping as part of the scheme including 524m of native species hedgerow, 2.93 hectares of native species woodland planting, the enhancement of 0.28 hectares of existing plantation woodland with native species infill planting, the provision of 56 hectares of native species grass and meadow grazing land, the planting of 2.99 hectares of native species grass and wildflower meadow mix, the creation of 0.37 hectares of tussock grassland and the planting of 176 trees. In addition, measures have been put forward to ensure that the timing of works and working practises minimise disturbance to existing fauna.

8.72 The proposed cable route has been aligned to minimise disturbance to features such as woodland, hedgerows and water features. The cable route, by virtue of its limited depth and width, is considered not have an unacceptable ecological impact subject to the suitable restoration of the route following its installation.

8.73 The principal impact of the proposal will be during the construction phase of development. Once in operation, the site will be subject to limited disturbance which minimise the impact of the proposal on protected species.

8.74 The applicant has commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of the proposed development. The assessment indicates that the proposed development will result in a gain in biodiversity value of 26.74% for habitats and 35.71% for hedgerows.

8.75 The Council's Biodiversity Officer and Natural England have assessed the proposal and raise no objection to the application. It is considered that the proposed development can be undertaken without having an adverse impact on protected species or their habitat. The proposed scheme also includes the introduction of green infrastructure and habitat creation which are considered to represent an ecological enhancement. It is considered that the proposed development accords with Local Plan Policy EN8 and guidance in Section 15 of the NPPF.

#### **(f) Drainage and Flooding**

8.76 The proposed solar farm is located within a Flood Zone 1 which is the lowest designation of flood zone and one wherein developments such as that proposed are acceptable in principle. A section of the cabling route passing under the River Thames falls within a Flood Zone 3 which is the highest designation of flood zone.

8.77 This application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment and a Landscape, Ecological and Hydrological Management Plan which have set out detailed drainage proposals for the application site. The submitted reports have had regard to concerns raised by the local community about surface water from the fields causing flooding of local roads. During periods of heavy rainfall, surface water flows through the site and discharges into a culvert to the south of the site. The culvert can occasionally overflow causing surface water flooding. Whilst the proposed development will retain large areas of permeable surfacing, it is noted that the solar panels will have the potential to change the manner in which rainfall enters the land. In order to mitigate the impact of the development, the applicant is proposing to introduce a number of land management practices to manage surface water run-off.

8.78 It is intended to create areas of lowered ground within the site (lowered bunds) which will capture surface water run-off before dispersing it across the site. The lowered bunds will typically be 0.25-0.4m in depth and are intended to divert surface water flows from the existing flow route. In addition, filter drains will be installed on every 5th row of the solar panels and along the southern perimeter of the site. In addition, new landscaping will be introduced which will also help to mitigate surface water run-off. It is considered that the proposed drainage measures will address surface water run-off from the development.

8.79 Gloucestershire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority (LFA) has assessed the surface water drainage impact of the proposal and raises no objection to the scheme.

8.80 With regard to the cable route extending under the River Thames, the applicant has submitted details relating to the method of drilling that will take place. The Environment Agency has assessed the proposals and raises no objection to the application.

8.81 Overall, it is considered that the development can be undertaken without having an adverse impact on drainage or flooding in accordance with Local Plan Policy EN14.

### **(g) Archaeology and Heritage Assets**

8.82 The application site is located in an area which is considered to be sensitive in archaeological terms. Archaeological remains dating from the Iron Age, Bronze Age, Roman and Medieval periods have been identified in the landscape around the site of the proposed solar farm. In addition, Norwood Castle Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) is located approximately 900m to the south-east of the application site.

8.83 Neighbourhood Plan Policy KE10 - Archaeology is considered relevant to this application. It states:

*'Any future proposals for development within and around Kemble and Ewen villages should be accompanied by a thorough assessment of the potential effects on archaeological heritage assets in accordance with guidelines issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and in accordance with a brief approved by the Historic Environment Service of Gloucestershire County Council. This work must be carried out prior to the submission of any planning application.'*

*Where possible, and appropriate, development proposals should seek to incorporate archaeology in such a way that any conserved remains can be accessed by the public and that suitable signage and information is provided to and on the site to promote such access and aid interpretation of the asset.'*

8.84 This application is accompanied by a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and Geophysical Survey report which have undertaken an archaeological assessment of the site and its surroundings. The submitted information includes details of historic record searches and the results of walkover and geophysical surveys. The applicant states '*To summarise, the survey detected magnetic anomalies associated with archaeological and possible archaeological origins comprising enclosures, trackways, ring ditches, field systems, ditch lengths and pit-type responses. The majority of these are located within 1 km of the Site with some areas of archaeological interest identified along the Grid Route Study Area (as defined within the HIA). These include medieval ridge and furrow cultivation, former field boundaries, modern ploughing and field drains. Those within the Solar Study Area (as defined within the HIA), broadly correlate to what has been identified through the HER data with a concentration around Kemble Aerodrome (HER 21827) mainly to the west of the Solar Study Area and other anomalies located on the south-eastern corner of the Solar Study Area where a possible Deserted Medieval Village - Kemble Wick (HER 9677) is recorded.*

*The geophysical survey recorded the overall archaeological potential of this site to be of moderate to high in the Solar Study Area, with a low to moderate potential assigned to the grid cable route*

*Should significant sub-surface archaeological features be encountered at this stage, in agreement with the Council Archaeologist, further mitigation in the form of exclusion areas or concrete footings instead of pile driven poles should be undertaken to mount the solar panels.'*

8.85 Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology has assessed the application and made the initial comments:

*'Geophysical survey has been carried out, which has identified a number of features of potential archaeological interest. We have recently approved a Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological trial trenching (a more recent version of the one submitted with this application). Once we are in receipt of the results of the trial trench evaluation then we be able to advise on the significance of heritage assets with archaeological interest impacted by the proposals, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework.'*

8.86 In response to these comments, the applicant is in the process of undertaking the requested trial trenching. Once completed the results will be forwarded to Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology for assessment. Subject to no objection being raised by the aforementioned consultee, it is considered that the development can be undertaken without having an adverse impact on features of archaeological interest.

8.87 With regard to the impact of the proposal on heritage assets such as SAMs, listed building and conservation areas, it is noted that the site of the solar farm is located over 1km from the nearest listed building or conservation area. Norwood Castle SAM is located approximately 900m to the south-east of the site. However, due to distance, the low lying nature of the two sites and the limited height of the proposed solar panels, the introduction of the solar panels and associated development are considered not to have an adverse impact on the setting of the SAM.

8.88 With regard to the cable route, the installation of the cables will result in a temporary short term change to the appearance of the cable route. However, once installed the cable route is considered not to have an adverse on listed buildings, conservation areas or non-designated heritage assets. Historic England has raised no comments in response to the proposal.

## Other Matters

8.89 The applicant has requested a 5 year period in which to implement the development instead of the usual 3 years. The applicant states that *'due to current issues surrounding availability of contractors and supply chain issues in relation to the equipment that we will be looking to use on the site. It is uncertain how long these issues will persist and we would hope to be commencing development well in advance of five years, but the extension to five years would provide us with additional comfort'*. In light of the size of the proposed scheme and the complexities involved in the development of both the solar farm and the cabling route, it is considered reasonable to extend the time period for commencement from 3 to 5 years.

8.90 The Council's Tree Officer is satisfied that the proposed development can be undertaken without having an adverse arboricultural impact. Tree and hedgerow protection measures will be put in place prior to the commencement of development in order to protect existing features. A 15m buffer zone will be maintained between Kemble Wood and the solar panels. It is considered that the proposal accords with Local Plan Policy EN7.

8.91 This application is zero rated for the purposes of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

## 9. Conclusion

9.1 Overall, it is considered that the proposed development will make a significant contribution to the supply of renewable energy and will accord with national and local planning policy and guidance which seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is noted that the proposed development will have an impact on the character and appearance of the landscape and change the relationship of the existing site with Kemble Wick. However, it is considered that the landscape and visual impact of the proposal will be mitigated by new landscaping. It is therefore considered that the benefits of the proposal in terms of the provision of renewable energy outweigh its impact on the character and appearance of the area. It is therefore recommended that the application is granted permission subject to no objection from Gloucestershire County Council Archaeology.

## 10. Proposed conditions:

1. The development shall be started by 5 years from the date of this decision notice.

**Reason:** To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawing number(s):

3679-REP-001, 2259.M2.018.3.A, 2259.M4.016.3.0, 3679-REP-033, 3679-REP-036, 3679-REP-037, 3679-REP-038, 3679-REP-039, 3679-DR-ALR-001, 9400.E4.017.3.0, 9400.M2.014.1.0, 9400.M2.021.3.0, 9400.M2.31.3.0, 9400.M2.037.3.0, 9400.M4.0.3.0, EPC-0261-P-C-TR.1, EPC-0261-P-E-LA-EX REV 1, EPC-0261-P-E-LA-EX-P REV 1, EPC-0261-P-E-LA-EX-SSE REV 1, EPC-0261-P-E-LA-SPL REV 1, EPC-0261-P-E-LA-SPL-P REV 1, EPC-0261-P-E-LA-SPL-SSE REV 1, EPC-0261-P-E-LA-SS.REV 2, 3679-DR-LAN-101 M, 3679-DR-ALR-001, 3679-DR-ALR001-Figure 7

**Reason:** For purposes of clarity and for the avoidance of doubt, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. Within 12 months of the cessation of their use for electricity generating purposes the solar panels together with any supporting apparatus, mountings, foundations, inverters, platforms, collecting stations, transfer station, fencing and other associated equipment shall be permanently removed from the land fully in accordance with a decommissioning statement that has first been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To ensure that the landscape is restored to a condition appropriate for its location in the open countryside in accordance with Local Plan Policy EN4.

4. Prior to the decommissioning of the site, an Ecological Assessment and Mitigation report detailing measures to protect protected species and their habitats during the decommissioning of the site shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The site shall be decommissioned fully in accordance with the approved report.

**Reason:** To safeguard protected and priority species, priority habitats during the decommissioning of the solar farm in accordance with Local Plan Policy EN8, paragraphs 174, 179 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Council's duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

5. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a comprehensive scheme of traffic management shall first be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the development shall be undertaken fully in accordance with the approved traffic management scheme.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Local Plan Policy INF4. It is important that these details are agreed prior to the commencement of development as traffic generated during the construction phase of the development has the potential to impact on the operation of the local highway network and highway safety.

6. Prior to commencement of the development hereby permitted, a Construction Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved plan shall be adhered to throughout the construction period.

The Construction Management Plan shall include, but not be restricted to, the details of:

- i) Parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors (including measures taken to ensure satisfactory access and movement for existing occupiers during construction);
- ii) Routes for construction traffic;
- iii) Any temporary access to the site;
- iv) Appropriate safety and mitigation measures at all accesses required on the grid route;
- v) Locations for loading/unloading and secure storage of plant, waste and construction materials;
- vi) Location of offices and welfare facilities;
- vii) Locations for the temporary stockpiling of topsoil and subsoil;
- viii) Method of preventing mud and dust being carried onto the highway;
- ix) Arrangements for turning of vehicles;
- x) Arrangements to receive abnormal loads or unusually large vehicles; and



- xi) Methods of communicating the Construction Management Plan to staff and site visitors.

**Reason:** In the interests of safe operation of the adopted highway during the construction of the development in accordance with Local Plan Policy INF4. It is important that these details are agreed prior to the commencement of development as traffic generated during the construction phase of the development has the potential to impact on the operation of the local highway network and highway safety.

7. Prior to the commencement of the development of the site of the solar farm hereby permitted, including any mobilisation work, visibility splays measuring 2.4 metres by 215 metres shall be provided from the solar farm access in both directions along A429. Thereafter, the area of the visibility splays shall be kept clear of obstruction above a height of 0.9m.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Local Plan Policy INF4.

8. Prior to the commencement of the development of the site of the solar farm hereby permitted, including any mobilisation works, the site access junction from A429 shall be constructed and completed in accordance with the details for the layout, construction and operation of the access which have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the approved access junction shall be retained in accordance with the approved details at all times throughout the period of construction of the development.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Local Plan Policy INF4.

9. Prior to the commencement of the development of the substation on Wilkinson Road, visibility splays measuring 2.4 metres by 43 metres shall be provided from the sub-station access along Wilkinson Road in both directions. Thereafter, the area of the visibility splays shall be kept clear of obstruction above a height of 0.9m.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Local Plan Policy INF4.

10. The development shall be undertaken fully in accordance with the landscaping details shown in the Landscape, Ecological and Hydrological Management Plan, Kemble Solar Farm and Grid Connection, October 2021 Version B.

**Reason:** To ensure the development is completed in a manner that is sympathetic to the site and its surroundings in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies EN1 and EN4.

11. The entire landscaping scheme shall be completed by the end of the first full planting season (1st October to 31st March the following year) following the installation of the first solar panel on the application site.

**Reason:** To ensure the development is completed in a manner that is sympathetic to the site and its surroundings in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies EN1 and EN4.

12. Any trees or plants shown on the approved landscaping scheme to be planted or retained which die, are removed, are damaged or become diseased, or grassed areas which become eroded or damaged, within 5 years of the completion of the approved landscaping scheme, shall be replaced by the end of the next planting season. Replacement trees and plants shall be of the same size and species as those lost, unless the Local Planning Authority approves alternatives in writing.

**Reason:** To ensure that the planting becomes established and thereby achieves the objective of Cotswold District Local Plan Policies EN1 and EN4.

13. Prior to the commencement of any works on site (including demolition and site clearance), a Tree and Hedgerow Protection Plan (THPP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The THPP shall be a scaled drawing prepared by an arboriculturalist showing the finalised layout proposals, tree retention, tree/landscape protection measures and Construction Exclusion Zones (CEZs) - all in accordance with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - recommendations'.

Tree and hedgerow protection measures shown on the THPP must be put in place prior to the commencement of any works on site (including demolition and site clearance) and shall not be removed until the completion of the development.

Fires on sites should be avoided if possible. Where they are unavoidable, they should not be lit in a position where heat could affect foliage or branches. The potential size of the fire and the wind direction should be taken into account when determining its location, and it should be attended at all times until safe enough to leave. Existing ground levels must remain the same within CEZs and no building materials or surplus soil shall be stored therein. All service runs shall fall outside CEZs unless otherwise approved by the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To safeguard the retained/protected tree(s) in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policy EN7. It is important that these details are agreed prior to the commencement of development as works undertaken during the course of construction could have an adverse impact on the well-being of existing trees and hedgerows.

14. No development shall take place until an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The AMS shall be prepared by a suitably qualified arboriculturalist in accordance with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - recommendations'

The AMS shall include as a minimum:

- i) A schedule and specification of any tree and hedgerow works;
- ii) Specifications for barriers and ground protection;
- iii) Procedures for any specialist construction techniques and any supervised excavations within the Root Protection Areas;
- iv) Phasing of work;
- v) An auditable system of site monitoring;
- vi) A detailed Tree and Hedgerow Protection Plan

15. The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved AMS.

**Reason:** To safeguard the retained trees and hedgerows in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policy EN7. It is important that these details are agreed prior to the commencement of development as works undertaken during the course of construction could have an adverse impact on the well-being of existing trees and hedgerows.

16. No development shall take place until a full Tree Protection Strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The Protection Strategy (to be prepared by a suitably qualified arboriculturalist and in accordance with BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - recommendations') shall include where appropriate -

1. Arboricultural Implications Assessment
2. Arboricultural method statement
3. Tree Protection Plan
4. A timetable of arboricultural site inspections (to be carried out by a suitably qualified Arboriculturalist and all findings reported in writing to the Local Planning Authority).

The approved strategy shall be implemented in full according to the timescales laid out in the strategy, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To safeguard the retained/protected tree/s in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policy EN7. It is important that these details are agreed prior to the commencement of development as works undertaken during the course of construction could have an adverse impact on the well-being of existing trees.

17. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA): Flood Risk Assessment, Kemble Solar Farm and Grid Connection, Arcus Consultancy Services, June 2021, and the supporting information provided in the letter dated 27th September 2021 from Arcus Consultancy Services Ltd to Environment Agency, Thames Sustainable Places Team, entitled Kemble Solar Farm Grid Connection Environment Agency Response - Reference 21/02735/FUL, and the following mitigation measures they detail:

- i) Any excavated material from the works shall be stored outside Flood Zones 2 and 3 as defined in figure 3 in Appendix B of the FRA.
- ii) On completion of the works in Flood Zones 2 and 3, as defined in figure 3 in Appendix B of the FRA, the ground shall be restored to its pre-excavation levels and condition.
- iii) Any directional drilling, excavation and filling works within Flood Zones 2 and 3 shall be completed during the summer months (June to August inclusive), unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

These mitigation measures shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved details and retained thereafter throughout the lifetime of the development.

**Reason:** To prevent flooding elsewhere by maintaining floodplain storage and conveyance in accordance with Local Plan Policy EN14..

18. If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until a remediation strategy detailing how this contamination will be dealt with has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

**Reason:** To ensure that the development does not contribute to, and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of water pollution from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site in accordance with Local Plan Policy EN15 and paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

19. When assessed in terms of British Standard 4142:2104+A1:2019, the Rating level of noise arising from the development hereby permitted, including all equipment, substation and associated plant (inverters, transformers), shall not at any time exceed the prevailing background noise level at any residential dwelling, either existing or consented at the time of this consent.

**Reason:** In order to ensure that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact on residential amenity in accordance with Local Plan Policy EN15.

20. Prior to the installation of any external lighting, a scheme shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority which specifies the provisions to be made for the level of illumination of the site and the control of light pollution. The scheme shall be implemented and retained in accordance with the approved details. No other external lighting shall be installed on the site other than that agreed as part of the approved lighting scheme.

**Reason:** In order to preserve the rural character and appearance of the site and in the interests of residential amenity and biodiversity, in accordance with Cotswold District Local Plan Policies EN2, EN4, EN6, EN8 and EN15.

21. The development shall be undertaken and operated in accordance with the following documents and drawings as submitted with the planning application:

- i) Sections 3 and 4 of the 'Ecological Impact and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment' report dated 29th June 2021 prepared by Tyler Grange for both the solar farm and grid connection route, and the biodiversity net gain outcomes.
- ii) Section 4 of the Planning Addendum Statement dated November 2021 prepared by Aura Power;
- iii) Landscape, Ecological and Hydrological Management Plan (LEHMP) for Kemble Solar Farm and Grid Connection dated October 2021 (Version B) for a minimum period of 30 years;
- iv) iii. Construction Environmental Management Plan dated October 2021 Version B prepared by Arcus Consultancy Services Ltd;

v) Drawing number: 3679-DR-LAN-101 M (Landscape Mitigation Plan)

All the biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures and biodiversity net gain requirements shall be implemented in full according to the specified timescales and drawings, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and shall thereafter be permanently retained.

**Reason:** To ensure that biodiversity is protected and enhanced in accordance with The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended, Policy EN8 of the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031, Circular 06/2005, paragraphs 174, 179 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework and in order for the Council to comply with Part 3 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

22. Before the implementation of the landscaping scheme (in accordance with the Landscape Mitigation Plan), a biodiversity monitoring strategy shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The purpose of the strategy shall be to ensure that the biodiversity net gain outcomes concluded in Section 4 of the 'Ecological Impact and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment' report dated 29th June 2021 prepared by Tyler Grange are achieved. The content of the Strategy shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- i. Aims and objectives of monitoring to match the stated purpose;
- ii. Identification of adequate baseline conditions prior to the start of development;
- iii. Appropriate success criteria, thresholds, triggers and targets against which the effectiveness of the various conservation measures being monitored can be judged;
- iv. Methods for data gathering and analysis;
- v. Location of monitoring;
- vi. Timing and duration of monitoring;
- vii. Responsible persons and lines of communication;
- viii. Potential remedial measures that may be implemented where appropriate; and
- ix. Review, and where appropriate, publication of results and outcomes.

A report describing the results of monitoring shall be submitted to the local planning authority at intervals identified in the strategy (at least every 5 years). The report shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that Conservation aims and objectives are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed with the local planning authority, and then implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme.

The monitoring strategy will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

**Reason:** To secure the effective implementation of the biodiversity net gain outcomes in accordance with Local Plan Policy EN8 and paragraphs 174, 179 and 180 of the NPPF

## **Informatives:**

1. Please note that the proposed development is not liable for a charge under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended) because it is development of building(s) into which people do not normally go or only go intermittently for the purpose of maintaining or inspecting machinery.

2. The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has considered how the proposed sustainable drainage system can incorporate measures to help protect water quality, however pollution control is the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

Future management of Sustainable Drainage Systems is a matter that will be dealt with by the Local Planning Authority and has not, therefore, been considered by the LLFA.

Any revised documentation will only be considered by the LLFA when resubmitted through [suds@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:suds@gloucestershire.gov.uk) e-mail address.

3. The development hereby permitted includes the carrying out of work on the adopted highway. You are advised that before undertaking work on the adopted highway you must enter into a highway agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 with the County Council, which would specify the works and the terms and conditions under which they are to be carried out.

Contact must be made with the Highway Authority's Legal Agreements Development Management Team at [highwaylegalagreements@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:highwaylegalagreements@gloucestershire.gov.uk) allowing sufficient time for the preparation and signing of the Agreement. You will be required to pay fees to cover the Council's costs in undertaking the following actions:

- i. Drafting the Agreement
- ii. A Monitoring Fee
- iii. Approving the highway details
- iv. Inspecting the highway works

Planning permission is not permission to work within the highway. A Highway Agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 must be completed, the bond secured and the Highway Authority's technical approval and inspection fees paid before any drawings will be considered and approved.

4. No materials, plant, temporary structures or excavations of any kind shall be deposited/ undertaken on or adjacent to any Public Right of Way that may obstruct or dissuade the public from using the Public Right of Way whilst development takes place.

5. No changes to any Public Right of Way direction, width, surface, signing or structures shall be made without the prior written approval of the Gloucestershire County Council or the necessary legal process.




6. No construction / demolition vehicle access shall be taken along or across any Public Right of Way without prior permission and appropriate safety/mitigation measures approved by the Gloucestershire County Council. Any damage to the surface of the Public Right of

Way caused by such use will be the responsibility of the developer or their contractors to put right / make good to a standard required by the Gloucestershire County Council



21/02735/A



-  Planning Boundary
-  Bathurst Estate Land
-  Local Planning Authority Boundary

1:25,000 Scale @ A3

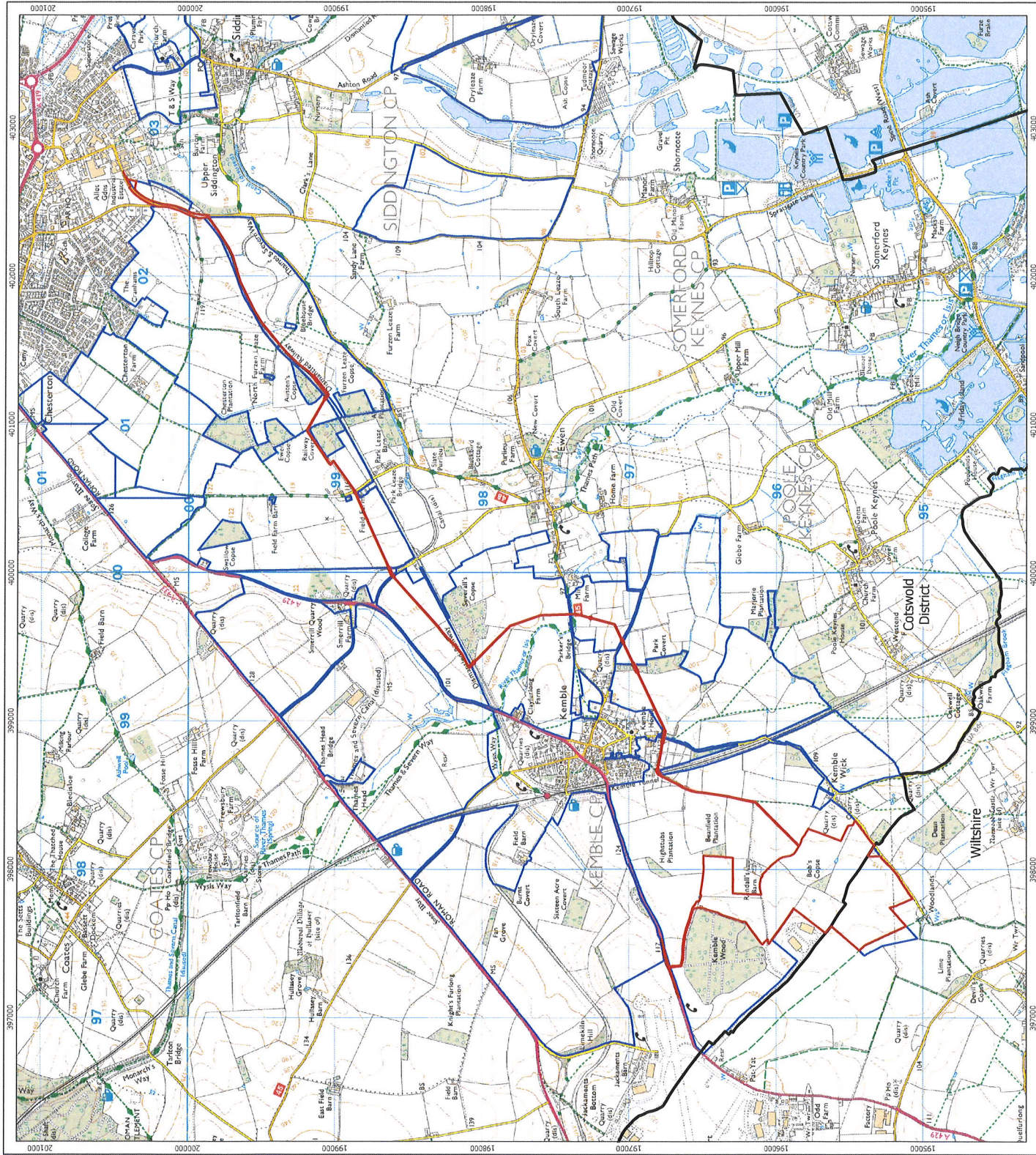


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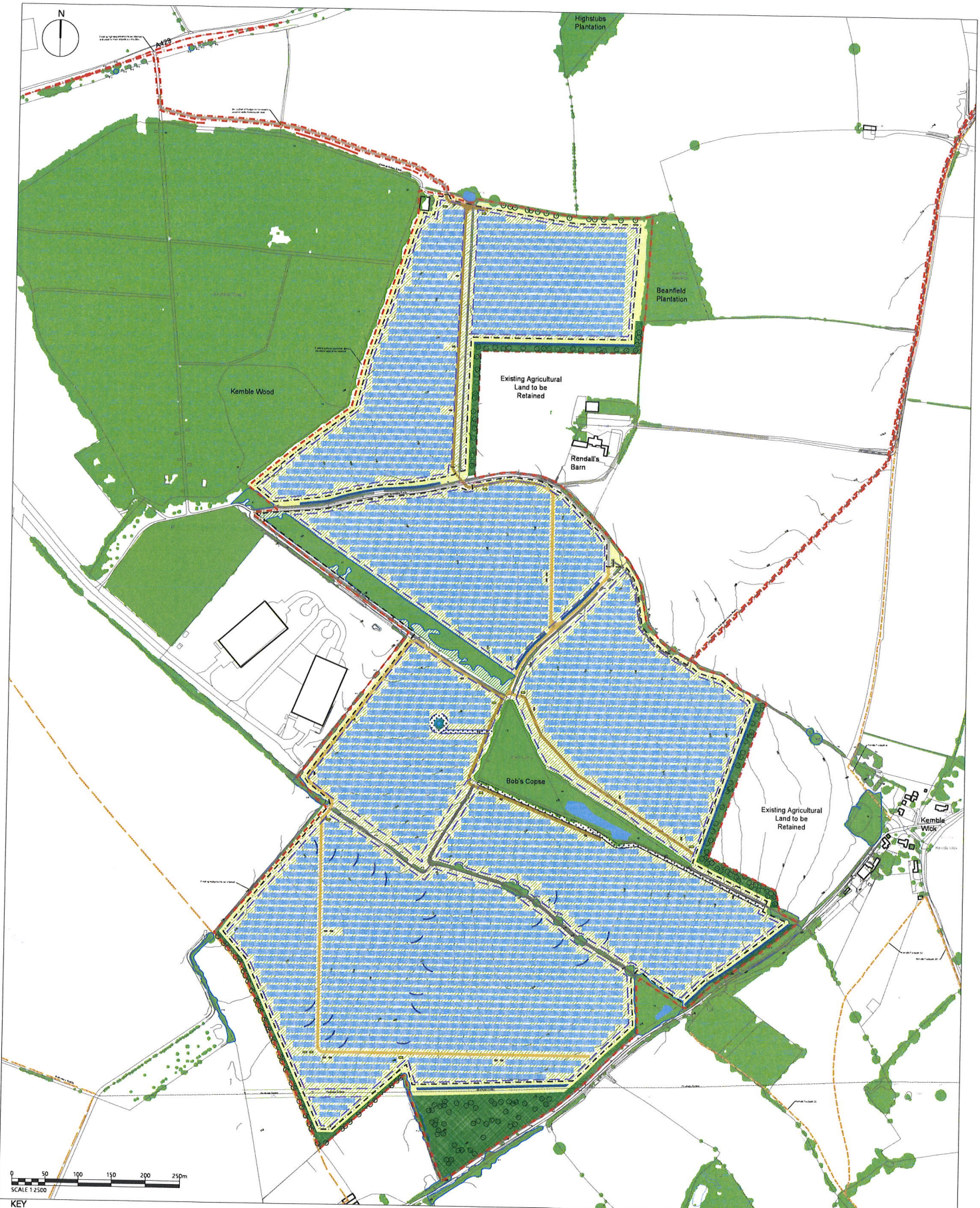
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Site Location Plan  
Planning Drawing 1

Kemble Solar Farm and  
Grid Connection  
Planning Application







**KEY**

	CORE STUDY AREA BOUNDARY		SOLAR PANEL DEVELOPMENT AREAS		NATIVE SPECIES TUSsock GRASS HEX ENDS - TUSsock, HENTON, FORESTATE		SOLAR PANELS
	EXISTING BUILDINGS		EXISTING WATER BODIES		NATIVE SPECIES TREE PLANTING - SELECTED STANDARDS, SPECIES TO INCLUDE BEECH, BIRCH, HORNbeam, DREWY AND OAK TO MATCH LOCAL SPECIES COMPOSITION		INVERTER / TRANSFORMER
	EXISTING OVERHEAD POWER LINE		EXISTING BRIDLEWAY		NATIVE SPECIES HEDGEROW PLANTING (SPECIES TO INCLUDE BLACKTHORN, SLOE, FIELD MARSH, HAZEL AND Hawthorn)		CONTOURS - 1M INTERVALS
	EXISTING TREE, WOODLAND, HEDGEROWS AND VEGETATION TO BE RETAINED		EXISTING FOOTPATH		NATIVE SPECIES WOODLAND HIX - HORNbeam SPINUS along SOUTHERN BOUNDARY, SPECIES TO INCLUDE BIRCH, BLACKBERRY, CHERRY, OAK, ASH, DOG ROSE, FIELD MARSH, Hawthorn, HAZEL, HORNbeam		SHADE PARTS CONTAINERS
	CATEGORY A TREES AND VEGETATION AS DEFINED BY BS5837:2012		EXISTING PLANTATION WOODLAND TO BE ENHANCED WITH NATIVE SPECIES WOODLAND TREES AND UNDERSTORY TO MATCH EXISTING NATIVE SPECIES WITHIN PLANTATION		NATIVE SPECIES GRASS AND HEADOW HIX FOR HEEP GRASSING LOCATED AROUND AND UNDER SOLAR PANELS		LINE OF GRID ROUTE
	CATEGORY B TREES AND VEGETATION AS DEFINED BY BS5837:2012		2.5m HIGH BOUNDARY FENCE (OVER FENCES AND ASSOCIATED ACCESS GATES, AND METAL GATEPOSTS)		NATIVE SPECIES GRASS AND MIDDLEFLOWER HEADOW HIX		

**REVISIONS SCHEDULE**

Rev	Date	Description
A	15.09.2023	Issued for approval
B	15.09.2023	Revised to comply with comments from Project Manager (PM)
C	08.10.2023	Revised to reflect Project Manager comments (PM)
D	21.10.2023	Revised to incorporate comments for design, including planting added to south eastern boundary (PM)
E	08.11.2023	Revised to incorporate comments for design, including planting added to the southern boundary (PM)
F	18.12.2023	Revised to remove Field 7 and include additional tracks in south of fields (AT)
G	23.02.2024	Revised to update the layout (PM)
H	22.02.2024	Revised following internal comments (PM)
I	22.02.2024	Revised to update the layout (PM)
J	29.06.2024	Revised panel layout (H)
K	15.08.2024	Revised to more enable an northern part of the site (AK)
L	15.08.2024	Revised to update core study area boundary (PM)
M	15.08.2024	Revised to update core study area boundary (PM)
N	12.11.2024	Revised to comply with client comments (PM)

**General Notes:**

1. Drawing to be read in conjunction with Tree Survey drawings and reports prepared by Tyler Group.

2. All construction on site to be undertaken in line with BS5837:2012.

3. The owner shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning and other consents for the proposed works.

4. The contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning and other consents for the proposed works.

5. The contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning and other consents for the proposed works.

6. The contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning and other consents for the proposed works.

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12. The contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning and other consents for the proposed works.

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17. The contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning and other consents for the proposed works.

18. The contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning and other consents for the proposed works.

19. The contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning and other consents for the proposed works.

20. The contractor shall be responsible for obtaining all necessary planning and other consents for the proposed works.

NOTE: ALL EXISTING HEDGEROWS WITHIN THE SITE TO BE CAPPED UP AND UNBLENDED WITHIN THE PROPOSED PLANTING AND STANDARD TREES (TREES TO BE LOW GROWING SUCH AS BLACKBERRY, BIRCH, FIELD MARSH, HAZEL AND Hawthorn).

**FOR PLANNING**

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**ARCUS**

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Landscape Architecture & Arboriculture  
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Tel: +44 (0)1273 815 430  
www.arcusconsulting.co.uk

PROJECT: Kamble Solar Farm  
TITLE: Landscape Mitigation Plan  
CLIENT: Auro Power  
DATE: 09.09.2024 SCALE: 1:2000(A1)  
DRAWN: MNI DRAWING NO: 24-79-00-LAN-111  
CHECKED: HT REVISION: H

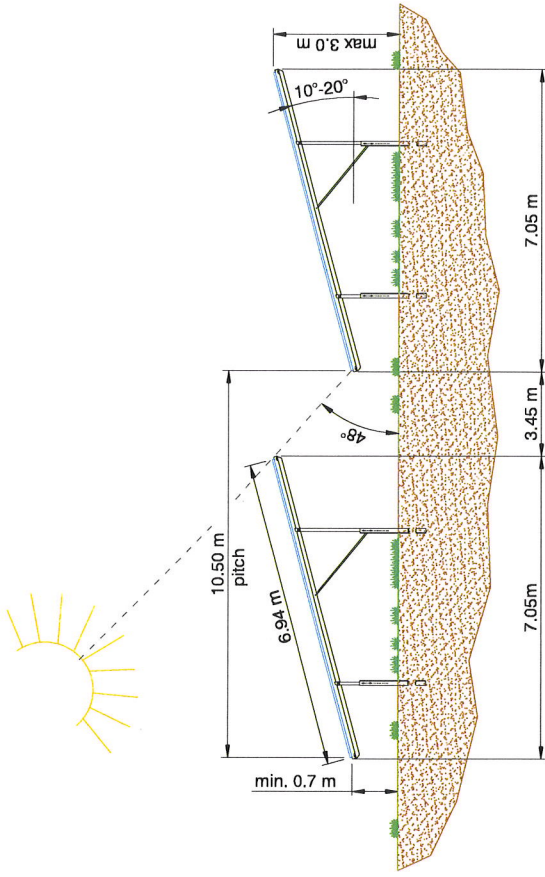




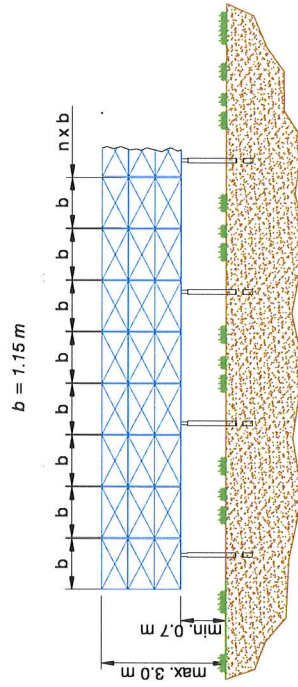
View south-west from Public Right of Way (BKE8)



**1** Cross Section Substructure  
#1:100



**2** Front View substructure  
#1:100



**Note:**  
Exemplary substructure.  
Up-to-date no detailed track design has been provided by supplier.

**UK\_Kemble Solar Farm**

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A	A3_420x297		
0	06 Oct 2020	PJF	SJA
Revi.	Date	Design	Check
		Appr.	
Title:		Indicative Solar panel Elevation	
Document-No.:		2259.M2.018.3.A	
Status:		Revision: A	
07 Jan 2021			

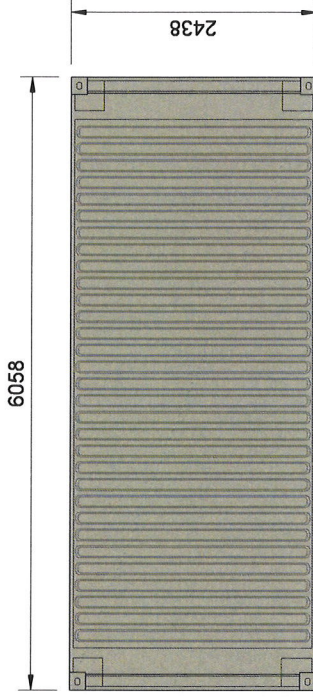
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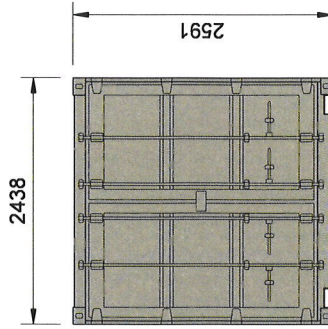
# 1 Top view of spare part container

M 1:50



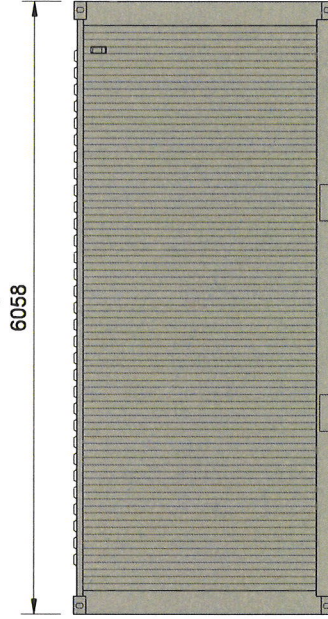
# 2 Elevation - front view

M 1:50



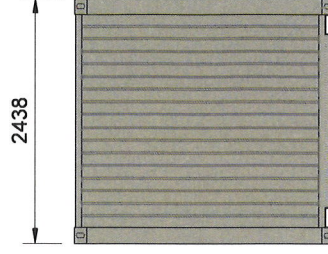
# 3 Elevation - side view

M 1:50



# 4 Elevation - back view

M 1:50



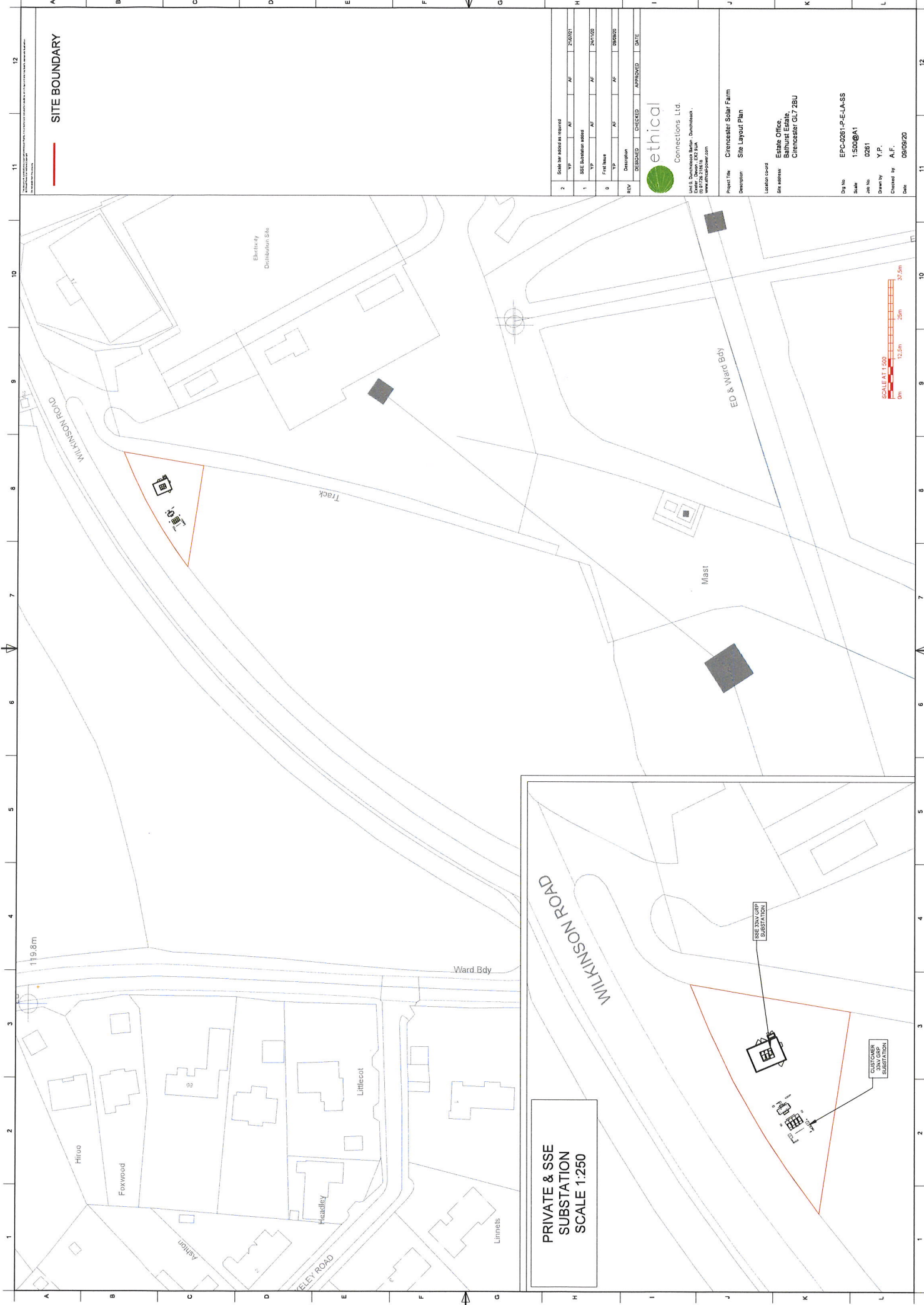
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Revi.	Date	Desi.	Chec.	Appr.	Revision Description
0	06 Oct 2020				Original drawing

 ib vogt GmbH Helmholtzstr. 2-9 10587 Berlin Tel. +49 30 397440-0 www.ibvogt.com		Page: Size: 1 A3_420x297		Copying of this document and distribution to others and the use or communication of the contents hereof are forbidden without expressed authority. Offenders are liable to the payment of damages © by ib vogt GmbH	
Title: Indicative Spare Parts Container		Drawing Scale: 1 1:50		Document-No.: 9400.M2.021.3.0	
Status: 06 Oct 2020		Revision: 0		Project-No. Deser. Serial-No. Size Rev. 9400.M2.021.3.0	





**SITE BOUNDARY**

Scale bar added as required

REV	DESCRIPTION	DATE
2	Scale bar added as required	21/09/21
1	SSE Substation moved	20/10/20
0	First Issue	09/09/20

DESIGNED	CHECKED	APPROVED	DATE



ethical  
Connections Ltd.  
Units 5, Churchfields Estate, Southwick,  
Great Ouse Valley, MK45 2BA  
www.ethical-power.com

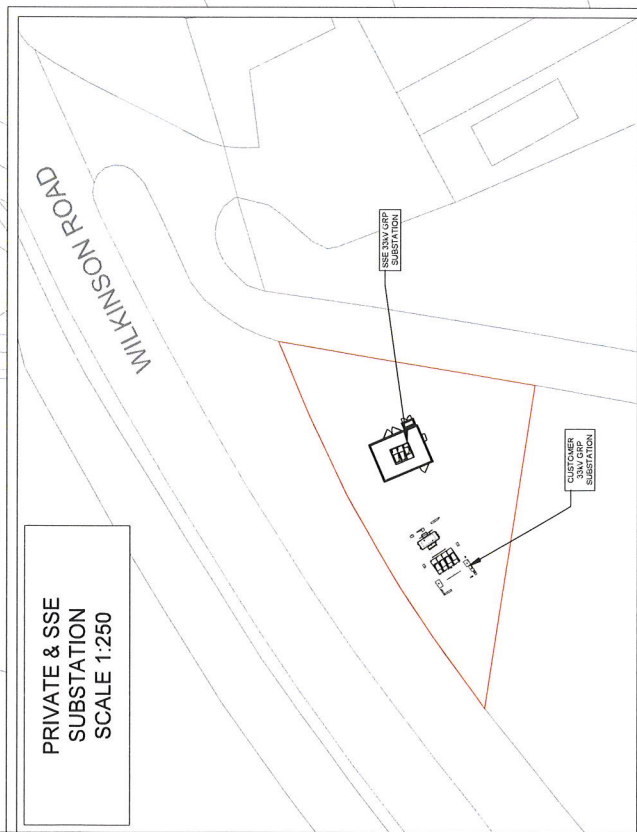
Project Title: Crencaster Solar Farm  
Site Layout Plan

Location: Crencaster Estate, Baulhust Estate, Crencaster GL7 2BU

Drp No: EPC-0281-P-E-LA-SS  
Scale: 1:500@A1  
Job No: 0281  
Drawn by: Y.P.  
Checked by: A.F.  
Date: 09/09/20



**PRIVATE & SSE  
SUBSTATION  
SCALE 1:250**



11 12

11 12

A B C D E F G H I J K L

A B C D E F G H I J K L

119.8m

Ward Bdy

Hiruo  
Foxwood

Headley  
Littlecot

Linnets

ELEY ROAD

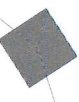
WILKINSON ROAD

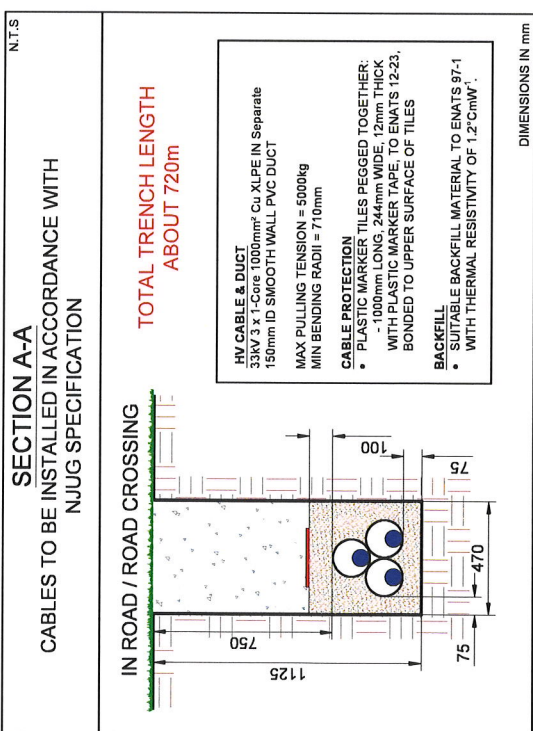
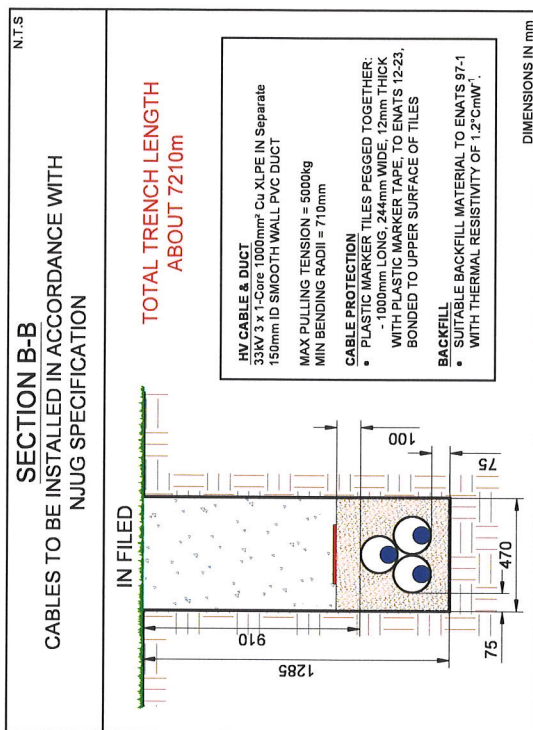
Mast

ED & Ward Bdy

Electricity  
Distribution Site

Track





Project Title: Cirencester Solar Farm  
Description: Trench Cross Section Layout (High Level)

Location (owner)  
Site address:  
Estate Office,  
Dunstable,  
Cirencester GL7 2BU

Drawn by: EPC-0261-P-C-TR  
Scale: NTS  
Job No: 0261  
Checked by: Y.P.  
Date: 24/09/20

REV	Description	DESIGNED	CHECKED	APPROVED	DATE
01	Final Issue				

# 1 Gate

M 1:30

## Gate

Coating: Galvanized to BS EN ISO 1461 : 1999

Powdered coated if required

Hang post: 88.9 dia CHS

Hang Post: 114 dia, CHS

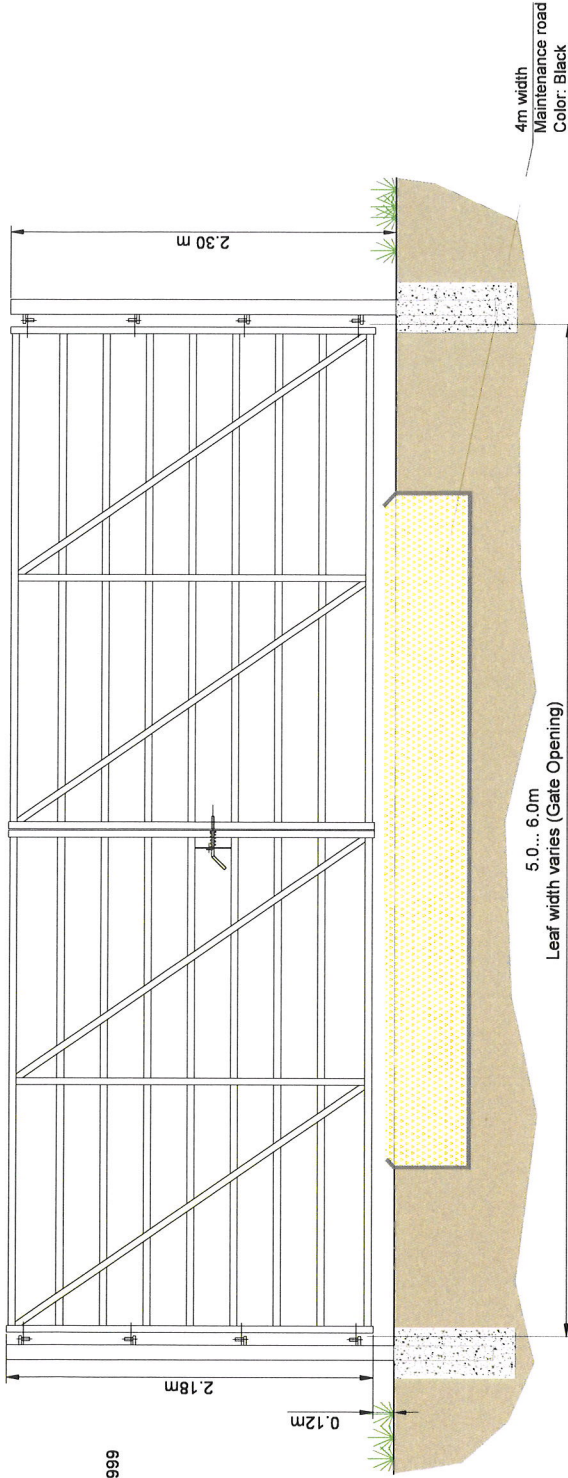
Slam Post: 88.9 dia, CHS

Rails: 40dia, 32 dia, CHS

Stiles: 50 x 25 RHS

Brace: 40 x 6 M.S Flat Bar

Height: 2.30 m



# 2 Deer fence

M 1:30

## Deer fence

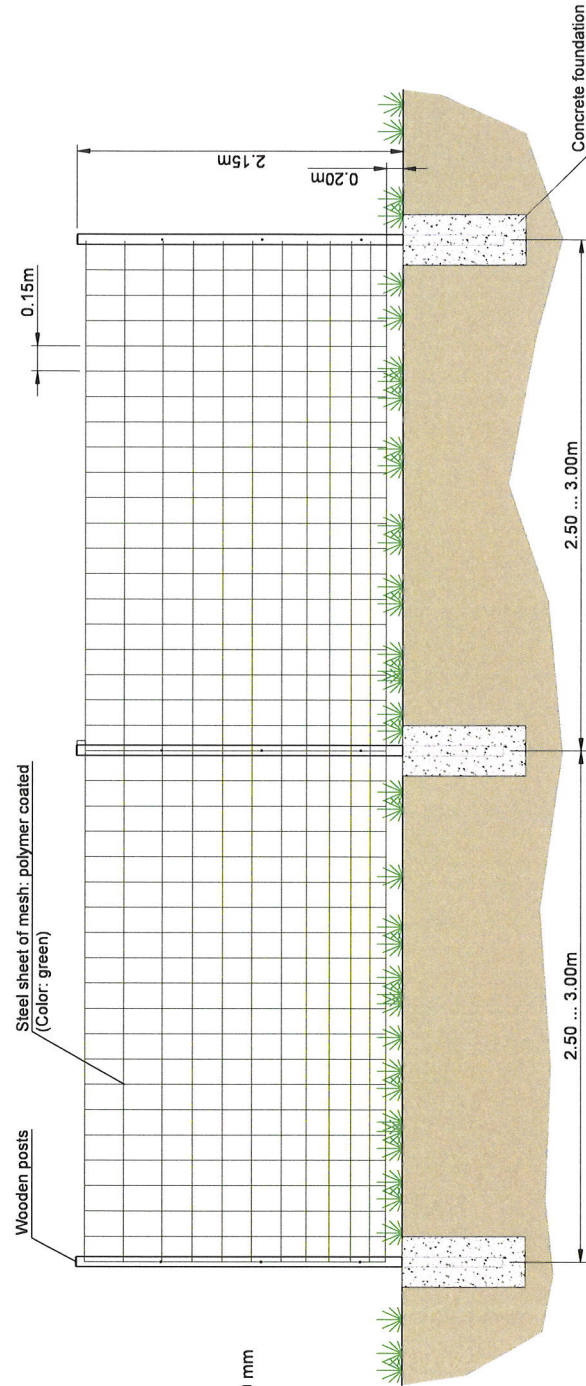
Coating: heavy galvanized

Top and bottom wire dia: 2.00 mm

Intermediate line wire dia: 2.00 mm

Distance between gauze wires: 150 mm

Height: 1.80 - 2.00 m



\*Exact height depending on the surface

Rev.	Date	Desi.	Chec.	Appr.	Revision Description
0	14 Sep 2021	PFE	SJA		Original drawing

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Page:	Size:	Kemble Solar Farm	
1	A3_42x297		
Of:	Drawing Scale:		
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Status:	Document-No.:		
14 Sep 21	2259.M4.016.3.0		
Revision:	0		

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18<sup>th</sup> August 2021

Chis Crookall-Fallon Head of Climate Action

Planning Application 21/02735/FUL, received 8 July 2021

Applicant: Aura Power Developments Limited

Record of prior Cotswold District Council engagement with the Applicant.

Cotswold District Council officers (Chris Crookall-Fallon, Head of Climate Action, Cotswold DC; Frank Wilson, Finance Director, Publica Group; Jenny Poole, Deputy Chief Executive, Cotswold DC) have discussed with the Applicant the solar farm development proposal infrequently, over the course of the last nine months.

First contact with the Applicant was 17/11/2020, around the time the Applicant held a public consultation meeting on the proposed scheme. A non-disclosure agreement was signed by both parties on 5/1/2021, allowing the disclosure of confidential information between the parties.

Discussions with the Applicant to date have all been virtual. The principal topic of discussion has been the potential opportunity, hypothetical only at this stage, for CDC to invest directly in the solar farm, if and when planning permission is granted and the project proceeds.

The Council's interest in the applicant's solar farm derives from the Council's investment recovery strategy, and as such, officers' engagement with the applicant has been overseen by the Council's investment board chaired by Cllr Dale.

Under the NDA the Applicant has disclosed preliminary, high-level information relating to, eg, the solar farm's expected approximate capital cost, in order to inform the Council's thinking in respect of potential future investment discussions.

The Applicant has been reminded verbally from the earliest contact that discussions with officers on the topic of potential investment are entirely detached from the Applicant's planning application, and that no influence on the planning application is possible. The Applicant is an experienced solar developer and has confirmed their understanding of this distinction. At no time have officers had any engagement with the Applicant's planning application, and at no time has the Applicant sought any input from officers regarding the application.

All discussions with the Applicant to date have been in good faith and to date there is no agreement in force, either express or implied, regarding the Council's intention to enter into further negotiations with the Applicant. It is, nonetheless, the Council's intention at this time to continue discussions with the Applicant.

## Kemble Wick Solar Farm Proposal – concerns of the KEPC over the impact of the construction.

### The Site

1. Kemble Wood is classified as ancient woodland by Natural England<sup>i</sup> and it also contains archaeological features such as Anglo Saxon/Medieval wood banks<sup>ii</sup>. In 682 AD land on both sides of a wood called Kemble was granted to Malmesbury Abbey by the King of the West Saxons. This would make the wood at least 1,400 years old, remembering that it was already in existence when it appears in the charter. Kemble village is possibly named after the wood. The Heyes article on Kemble Wood in *Glevensis* shows how significant this wood is ecologically, historically and archaeologically.

a) The Kemble and Ewen Parish Council have applied to have a footpath reinstated which vanished from the Ordnance Survey maps after 1947. It ran from Kemble Wick to Kemble Wood and then to the A429 at the county boundary, see the map above. This application is with Gloucestershire County Council [573/11/123\(1\)](#)

b) Archaeology outside Kemble Wood.

Roman pottery found in the south west and west of Randall's Barn.

An area of crop marks, south west of the two 1939 aircraft hangars and just outside of the site, can be seen on an aerial photograph<sup>iii</sup>. Does it go beyond that area in anyway?

The hedge line between Kemble Wick and Randall's Barn is not straight like most of the field boundaries in this area. It's sinuous characteristic and the fact the land to the east of it is considerably lower suggest it is a pre enclosure boundary and probably medieval. It should be protected in the construction stage.

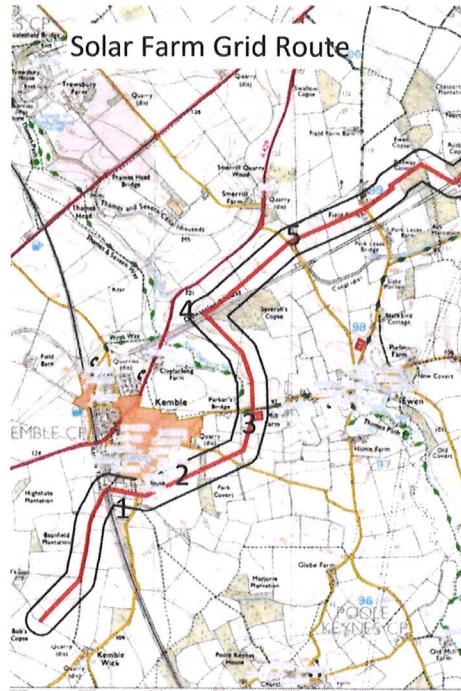
Though a geophysical survey has been completed, a field walking survey is necessary to pick up anything missed by the geophysical survey as the area, especially around Kemble Wood, was disturbed during the Second World War, see Heyes.

### The Grid Connection – which after the Kemble Wick Road runs through the Special Landscape Area.

1. The route crosses a field which still has ridge and furrow, a rarity in Kemble where little has survived since the Second World War.

1. Kemble Park is a major element in the landscape and form of the ancient village of Kemble. It is a medieval deer park and is recognised as Woodpasture and Parkland, and a BAP Priority Habitat, by English Nature<sup>iv</sup>. There are some very ancient pollarded oak trees along the boundary with the Park Covert. There is concern that root systems will be damaged by the grid connection. In the Kemble and Kemble Station Conservation Area Appraisal September 2016 (see Kemble and Ewen Parish Council website, Neighbourhood Development Plan, 8.1-8.7) it was proposed that the park should be included in the Kemble Conservation area.

2. The route now enters the Thames Corridor. The connection would cut through pasture land in the Thames flood plain which has earthworks which include an older channel of the Thames. The connection also crosses the Thames and the Thames Path. There have been no details on how that would look or work.



3. The connection passes under an old railway bridge through the embankment for the Kemble to Cirencester Branch Line next to Sevall's Wood. Here there are cropmarks of a possible Roman rectilinear enclosure in an aerial photograph in the National Heritage Collection (HER 38046)<sup>9</sup>. Considerable amounts of Roman pottery have been found in the field just on the north side of this bridge.

2. The connection crosses the Thames and Severn Canal. It continues to be an aspiration of the Thames and Severn Canal Trust to restore the canal. The connection crosses at the site of a swing bridge over the canal (see OS 6inch to mile map in the maps section of the Parish Archive on the Kemble and Ewen Parish Council website).

The Kemble and Ewen Neighbourhood Plan (KENP) Policy KE10 requires that all proposals for development within and around Kemble should be accompanied by a thorough assessment of the potential effects on archaeological heritage assets in accordance with the specified guidelines. The policy was described as a model policy by GCC archaeological service and is supported by the evidence base independent Archaeological report in the KENP. The Solar Farm proposal does not seem to have used this. This needs to be addressed and monitored by the respected authorities

Although the construction is only a temporary activity it will span a long period and its disruption both above ground and below ground in areas of significant sensitivity requires justification and much care.