



Committee and date

South Planning Committee

9 December 2014

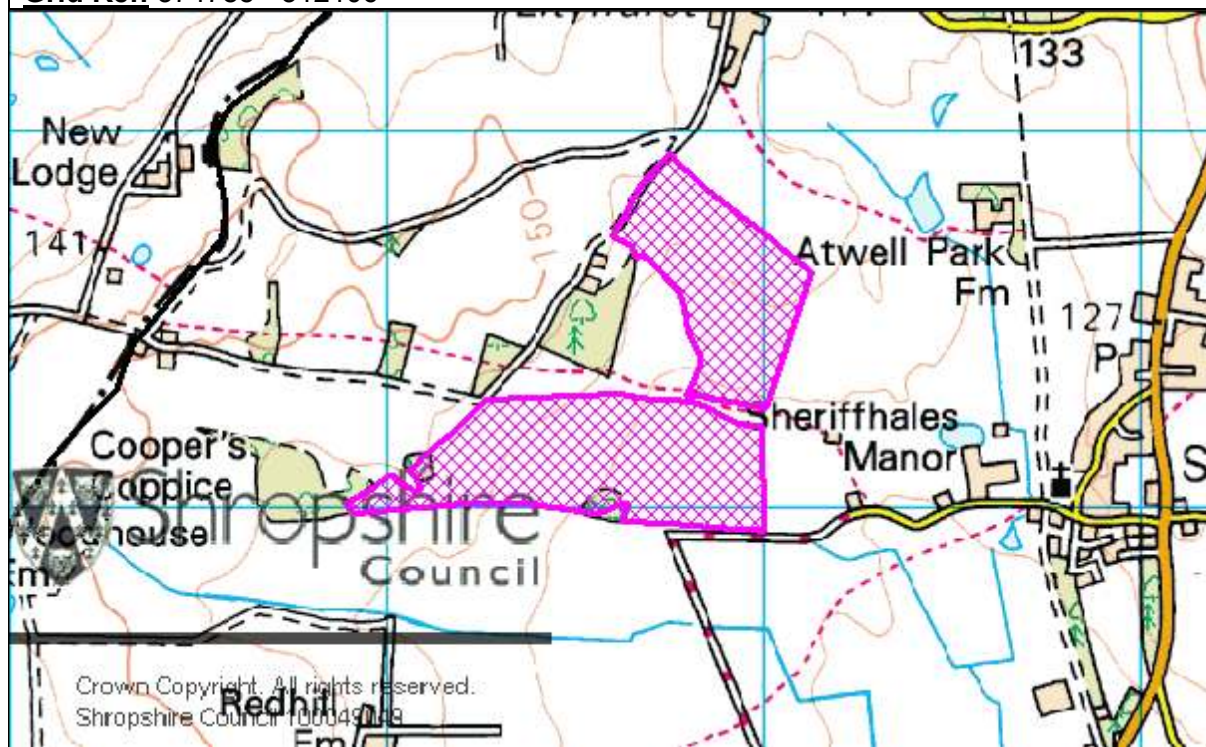
Development Management Report

Responsible Officer: Tim Rogers
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Summary of Application

Application Number: 14/03444/FUL	Parish:	Sheriffhales
Proposal: Installation and operation of a solar farm and associated infrastructure		
Site Address: Proposed Solar Farm To The West Of Sheriffhales Shropshire		
Applicant: Lightsource SPV 39 Limited		
Case Officer: Kelvin Hall	email: planningdmc@shropshire.gov.uk	

Grid Ref: 374785 - 312106



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Recommendation:- Grant Permission subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1.

Contact: Tim Rogers (01743) 258773

REPORT

1.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 1.1 The application seeks permission for the installation of a solar farm comprising arrays of solar panels with associated buildings and infrastructure. The proposal (as amended) would comprise the installation of 97,336 solar panels generating 24.82MW of electricity which would be fed into the local power grid network. The panels would be installed within west-east orientated rows. They would be mounted on fixed frames, of either galvanized aluminium or steel, in a landscape configuration. They would be angled at 20 degrees, with the highest edge at a maximum height of 2.4 metres and the lowest at 0.8 metre.
- 1.2 Buildings and other infrastructure proposed comprises the following:
- 14no. inverter buildings: each measuring 8 metres x 1.3 metres x 2.6 metres high;
 - 8no. transformer installations: each measuring 4.5 metres x 4.1 metres x 3.6 metres high;
 - 7no. production substations: 5 metres x 2.4 metres x 3.2 metres high
 - Client side substation: 6 metres x 2.4 metres x 3.2 metres high
 - Distribution Network Operator (DNO) substation: 9.1 metres x 2.9 metres x 3.1 metres high.
- 1.3 The above buildings would be cabin like structures, constructed of either stainless steel or polyurethane panels. The DNO substation would be located at the southern boundary of the site. The other buildings would be sited in seven separate clusters, relatively evenly space around the central parts of the site. Other than the DNO substation the buildings would be Moss Green in colour. The DNO substation would be Bottle Green.
- 1.4 A 2 metres high timber post and wire fence would be installed around the perimeter of the solar farm, for security purposes. CCTV security cameras (39no.) would be erected around the site perimeter. These would be on timber poles, approximately 2.8 metres in height. Once the panels have been erected the land is proposed to be grazed by sheep.
- 1.5 Landscaping would include tree planting along the southern boundary of the site, the planting of a new hedgerow along the eastern boundary of the northernmost field, and the planting of a new hedgerow through the middle of the southwestern field. Other planting would include infill planting to close up gaps in existing hedgerows. Swales would be constructed to improve runoff and reduce flood risk.
- 1.6 The application is supported by a number of detailed documents, including: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; Ecological Appraisal; Archaeological Assessment; Historic Environment Settings Assessment; Flood Risk Assessment; Traffic Management Method Statement; Biodiversity Management Plan; Agricultural Land Classification Assessment.

2.0 SITE LOCATION/DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application site lies approximately 800 metres to the west of the village of Sheriffhales. The site covers an area of approximately 42 hectares on three adjacent agricultural fields. The northernmost field is gently undulating; the westernmost field is on a gentle south-facing slope; the southeast field is relatively flat.

2.2 There are scattered residential properties in the vicinity of the site. The nearest of these are: Big Wood Cottage (approximately 90 metres to the southwest of the northernmost field), Keepers Cottage (approximately 190 metres to the east), Lilyhurst (approximately 260 metres to the north), Manor Cottages (approximately 450 metres to the east). Atwell Park Farm (approximately 490 metres to the northeast), Sheriffhales Manor, a Grade II Listed Building (approximately 540 metres to the east), and Redhill Farm is situated approximately 600 metres to the south. It should also be noted that planning permission for the conversion of agricultural buildings at Redhill Farm into seven residential units was granted in 2011.

2.3 Between the northernmost field and the southwesterly field there is an area of woodland which is designated as ancient woodland. The boundary of the Lilleshall Hall Grade II Registered Park is approximately 560 metres to the north. The site lies approximately 630 metres to the west of the boundary of Sheriffhales Conservation Area. A public footpath runs in a generally west-east orientation to the north of the southern fields. The Green Belt lies approximately 1km to the south.

2.4 Vehicular access to the site would be gained from the A5 public highway to the south of the site, via an existing access track. A new field access point would be created in order to facilitate this which would avoid the need for construction traffic to pass through the village of Sheriffhales.

3.0 REASON FOR COMMITTEE DETERMINATION OF APPLICATION

3.1 Parish Council's views are contrary to the Officer recommendation; the Local Member and Committee Chair have both requested a Committee decision.

4.0 COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIONS**4.1 Consultee Comments**

4.1.1 **Sheriffhales Parish Council** Objects to this planning application on the grounds of:

- 1) Totally inappropriate development in open countryside
- 2) Inappropriate use of good agricultural land bringing industrialisation use into farm lane
- 3) The size of the site - 110 acres, is massively out of scale and character to anything in the very rural Parish of Sheriffhales
- 4) Such development should be on roofs of industrial/factory sites
- 5) No power produced is for use by the two farms involved in the application and is there for a purely operation taking land away from the production of food
- 6) The site can be seen from fourteen sites in and near the Parish: Hilton Bank, The Centre of Sheriffhales Village, Pinfold, The Evergreens, Church Lane, Dukes Drive (Crackley Bank to Lillyhursh Road, A5, Crackley Bank, Sandy Lane, Redhill, Houghton Hill, Decker Hill and from near to the Crematorium.

In relation to the modifications made to the layout, the Parish Council confirms that it maintains its objection.

4.1.2 **Natural England** No objections.

Statutory nature conservation sites: – no objection. The proposal is unlikely to affect any statutorily protected sites or landscapes.

Protected species: We have not assessed this application and associated documents for impacts on protected species. Standing Advice should be applied to the application.

Local sites: If the proposal site is on or adjacent to a local site, e.g. Local Wildlife Site, Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Site (RIGS) or Local Nature Reserve (LNR) the authority should ensure it has sufficient information to fully understand the impact of the proposal on the local site before it determines the application.

4.1.3 **SC Highways** No objections.

Construction and decommissioning: Section 3 of submitted Construction, Decommissioning, and Traffic Management Method Statement provides information with regard to proposed access to the site during construction and decommissioning. The proposed access to the site is an existing access and considered acceptable. However, as per the submitted plan confirmation of the construction traffic route will be required prior to commencement. Section 3.3 of the statement suggests a condition survey will be undertaken prior to construction; the applicant should contact the Highways Manager for the area prior to commencement of development. It is recommended that the following planning condition or similar is attached to any permission granted to ensure that recommendations within the submitted Construction, Decommissioning, and Traffic Management Method Statement are adhered to for the duration of the development:

No development shall take place until details of the proposed construction traffic route has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The submitted Construction, Decommissioning, and Traffic Management Method Statement shall be implemented prior to commencement, and adhered to throughout the duration of the development.

4.1.4 **SC Drainage** The surface water run-off from the solar panels is unlikely to alter the greenfield run-off characteristics of the site therefore the proposals are acceptable.

Watercourses are present within the development site. A 3m wide easement from the top of each watercourse bank, is required for maintenance purposes.

4.1.5 **SC Ecologist** Recommends conditions.

Trees to be removed should be assessed for bat potential and any necessary aerial survey undertaken.

Great crested newts A single pond (P4) was present on the application site. Three ponds within 250m of the site were assessed by Avian Ecology (2014) for great crested newt (GCN) suitability. Ponds 1 and 2 were found to have 'below average' suitability and eDNA tests concluded 'undetectable' GCN presence. Ponds 3 and 4 were evaluated as 'poor' suitability. The majority of the site is arable land, considered sub-optimal for GCN. It is agreed that no further survey is necessary.

Avian Ecology propose a series of Risk Avoidance Measures to prevent incidental harm to amphibians during construction in Appendix 2, which should be conditioned (see Appendix 1).

Bats: Avian Ecology carried out a scoping survey of trees and report that 8 have bat roosting potential with a further 14 with limited potential. The Arboricultural Appraisal Tree Protection Plan indicates removal of T12 (a dead cherry tree and T13 a sweet chestnut) to facilitate construction of the access track. It is not clear whether these have been categorised for bat roosting potential.

Trees to be removed should be assessed for potential bat roost habitat as described in The Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines* (2nd Edition 2012).

The hedgerows, waterbodies and woodland edges provide suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat. These are to be retained and the reversion of the arable land to grassland and native tree and hedgerow planting are likely to improve bat foraging opportunities. Avian Ecology also recommends installation of bat boxes on the site margins.

Nesting birds: Avian Ecology recommend that any vegetation removal is undertaken outside of the bird breeding season and an informative is recommended.

Habitat Enhancement: Enhancement measures such as hedgerow planting and grassland (re)creation are set out in the Biodiversity Management Plan dated July 2014. Management of the grassland by sheep proposed with an area excluded to provide habitat for nesting birds. A condition is recommended requiring that the Biodiversity Management Plan shall be carried out for the lifetime of the development (see Appendix 1).

Badgers: A Badger Appendix by Avian Ecology identifies badger features within and adjacent to the site – confidential advice has been given by the Ecologist and has been omitted from this summary.

The perimeter fencing has potential to interfere with badger foraging routes. To maintain these badger gates or lifted fencing will be provided. These are shown on the submitted fencing design plans.

A pre-construction badger survey is recommended to check for any newly created setts and any necessary amendment to the plans or licences will be applied for. A condition is recommended requiring that work is carried out strictly in accordance with the Badger Appendix.

- 4.1.6 **SC Rights of Way** Footpath 2 Sheriffhales runs between the two areas proposed for the solar farm. It is noted that the path has been taken into consideration within the plans.
- 4.1.7 **SC Archaeology** No objection subject to conditions. The development proposal involves land covering c45ha located west of the village of Sheriffhales. There are two recorded Historic Environment Records within the development boundary Find Spot in c1953 of a rotary quern near Lillyhurst, Sheriffhales and Old quarry, Far Wood nr. Lilleshall A number of non-designated heritage assets relating to prehistoric settlement are located within the surrounding area.

In terms of direct impact on known and unknown archaeological remains the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment concludes that a moderate potential for Roman activity of local to regional significance has been identified for the northern limits of the study site. This despite the significant concentrations of Roman military and civilian occupation located to the south of the proposed development and linked by the major Roman road of Watling Street, several of which should be deemed to be of national significance. A low, but untested, potential for Prehistoric remains was identified, based on the known HER records of three rectangular ditched enclosure to the south of the development site.

On the basis of the above a recommendation was made for further pre-determination evaluation in the form of a geophysical survey of the site. This has now been completed and a report issued (Archaeological Geophysical Survey 2014 Bartlett-Clark Consultancy). The report identifies two discreet linear features that are potentially of archaeological relevance and although no extensive disturbances were identified that would relate to the presence of a WWII decoy site there were a few strong/recent disturbances nearby.

The conclusions of the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment could not rule out the potential for archaeological remains within the development boundary and the Geophysical Survey identified features of possible archaeological potential but stressed their significance would be low. The impact of the ground disturbance from piling, cable trenching, access tracks and other infrastructure installations is likely to be significant on any below ground archaeological remains. As the archaeological potential of the development site has not been fully tested the impact of the development on archaeology cannot be disregarded. In view of the above, and in relation to Paragraph 141 of the NPPF, I recommend that a programme of archaeological work be made a condition of any planning permission for the proposed development (see Appendix 1).

A condition should be considered requiring the extent of the areas requiring alternative construction methods to be confirmed in writing during the course of the development

- 4.1.8 **SC Conservation** Overall it is considered that the conclusions arrived at within the Historic Environment Settings Assessment are broadly accurate. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states that where a proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. It is considered that in this instance there

may be some less than substantial harm to heritage assets as a result of this proposal, however it is considered that the public benefits of the proposal outweigh this harm and the impact will be timelimited and reversible at the end of the lifetime of the development. The proposed landscaping and planting measures will also help to minimise any impact to heritage assets.

4.1.9 **SC Trees** No objections. The revised arboricultural report and associated plans satisfactorily address the points raised in my previous consultation response. No objections providing suitable measures are taken to protect retained trees and hedges from damage during development and subject to appropriate new planting (see conditions in Appendix 1).

4.1.10 **English Heritage** No specific comments. The application(s) should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice.

4.2 **Public Comments**

4.2.1 There have been four objections to the proposal and 25 letters of support. The grounds for objection are summarised below.

Damage to the Landscape and Environment

- The proposed development will create a significant eyesore. In particular, this will affect the residents of Sheriffhales, traffic on the nearby stretch of the A5 road and residents of the neighbouring dwellings.
- The development is not in keeping with the agricultural character of the locality.
- The proposed development would cover an area of 110 acres which is too big.
- The development site is good agricultural land and should be used for growing crops.
- Badgers may suffer as a result of the development. In particular, their setts may be damaged by the construction of the perimeter fence and from the proposed planting of trees.
- There are more appropriate locations for solar panels, such as on factory roofs.
- If the proposed development is approved it may set a precedent for financial investors purchasing good agricultural land to convert into solar farms.
- If the feed in tariff makes this a non viable operation, it would be abandoned for others (council) to deal with
- Concern over what will happen after its 20 year life
- Solar is best placed on buildings with dwellings or commercial operations going on below, not agricultural land and of this scale

Personal Concerns

- A local farmer has planning permission for the construction of seven dwellings on land adjacent to the development site which, when built, will look over the solar farm.
- The development may exacerbate a drainage issue whereby water runs off the development site onto adjacent land that is owned by a local farmer.

Safety

- There would be issues with glare off the solar panels. In particular, this would affect helicopters from Shawbury that train overhead of the development site.
- The plan proposes improvements to an existing through road for access. This may encourage motor vehicles to use the improved roads which would create a hazard for the cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians who currently enjoy the road.

Electricity generation

- To promote the fact that it will power thousands of houses is incorrect, as the sun goes down, the output will cease
- Peak demand for domestic power is in the evening when the sun is not shining.

4.2.2 The grounds for support are summarised below:

Sustainability

- Solar farms are an environmentally friendly and sustainable way of producing renewable energy.
- Britain, to satisfy its energy consumption, has an unhealthy overreliance on fossil fuels, global economics and foreign political stability. This kind of development should be welcomed as it helps to combat the national energy problem.
- Local authorities and local communities have a civic duty to contribute towards renewable and low carbon energy generation. The development accords with paragraph 97 of the NPPF which contains this sentiment.

Protection of the Landscape and the Local Environment

- The development would be well concealed by hedges and the natural contours of the landscape.
- The design given in the proposed development carefully considers the local environmental impact of the development.
- The solar farm would include sheep grazing so that there is an ongoing agricultural use of the site.
- The development will enhance the natural environment for the enjoyment of local wildlife by planting a hedgerow and a wild flower meadow.
- The development would be removed after 25 years. So any detrimental impact is only temporary.
- Solar panels are preferable to wind turbines because they are short in height and silent.

Benefit to the Community

- The development would give a much needed boost to the local rural economy.
- The development site is of poor agricultural quality and difficult to farm conventionally. The proposed development site would make excellent use of such land. The objectors' claims that the land is of a good quality are unfounded and inaccurate.

- The Parish Council has objected with no evident consultation with the community. In particular, it has appeared to dismiss the £30,000 a year, for 20 years, offered to the community by the developer. The Parish Council vote on the matter was unfair to the community, unconstitutional and potentially invalid. Furthermore, one of the Councillors appears to have a vested interest in the matter and is not representing the community as he / she should.

Diversification

- Solar farms, along with other 21st Century technological diversification of the rural landscape, will inevitably become more commonplace in future years to come. This should be welcomed and embraced.

5.0 THE MAIN ISSUES

- Principle of development
- Community consultation
- Siting, scale and design and impact on landscape character
- Site selection and agricultural land quality considerations
- Local amenity considerations
- Historic environment considerations
- Ecological considerations
- Highways considerations
- Flood risk considerations
- Decommissioning and land reinstatement

6.0 OFFICER APPRAISAL

6.1 Principle of development

6.1.1 One of the core planning principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to support the transition to a low carbon future. This includes encouraging the use of renewable resources. Planning Practice Guidance on Renewable and low carbon energy sets out the particular planning considerations that apply to solar farm proposals (see Section 10.2 below) and states that 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.

6.1.2 The Shropshire Core Strategy provides similar support by stating that the generation of energy from renewable sources should be promoted (Strategic Objective 1), and that renewable energy generation is improved where possible (Policy CS6). Core Strategy Policy CS8 positively encourages infrastructure, where this has no significant adverse impact on recognised environmental assets, that mitigates and adapts to climate change, including decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy generation, and working with network providers to ensure provision of necessary energy distribution networks.

6.1.3 The proposed 24.82MW solar farm would be capable of generating enough electricity to power 6770 typical households. The application states that this would reduce emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere by around 11550 tonnes each year, the equivalent of removing 2560 standard cars from the road each year. The

proposal would provide significant environmental benefits through the generation of renewable energy, and it is considered therefore that there is no in principle planning policy objection to the proposal and that there is significant policy support in principle.

6.2 **Community consultation**

6.2.1 The application is accompanied by a Statement of Community Involvement which summarises the pre-application engagement and consultation that the applicant undertook with the local community and stakeholders. Prior to the submission of the planning application the applicant distributed a leaflet to 206 local residents and businesses and the Parish Council, providing information on the application and an invitation to a drop-in event. A subsequent community engagement event was held, organised by the applicant. This was also publicised through an advertisement in the local press. It is understood that approximately 50 people attended the event. Other publicity has also been undertaken.

6.3 **Siting, scale and design and impact on landscape character**

6.3.1 Core Strategy policy CS6 seeks to ensure that development is appropriate in scale and design taking into account local context and character, having regard to landscape character assessments and ecological strategies where appropriate. Policy CS17 also seeks to protect and enhance the diversity, high quality and local character of Shropshire's natural environment and to ensure no adverse impacts upon visual amenity, heritage and ecological assets. Saved Bridgnorth Local Plan Policy D11 requires that buildings and structures associated with renewable energy schemes are designed to minimise their impact on the landscape. It is noted that the site and surrounding land are not covered by any landscape designation.

6.3.2 The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). This confirms that the site and its immediate surroundings fall within the landscape character type identified as Estate Farmlands in the Shropshire Landscape Character Assessment. This typology is typical of the gently rolling lowland rural landscape found within the central part of Shropshire, and typically includes an ordered pattern of medium to large scale fields and pockets of woodland. Existing uses of land in this rural area primarily comprise agriculture, with scattered farms and residential properties, and the village of Sheriffhales to the east.

6.3.4 The LVIA assesses the value of the local landscape as moderate. The LVIA notes that existing features in the area include intact field hedgerows typically 2 metres or more in height, hedgerows associated with trackways and lanes reaching 3-4 metres in height, and small copses. It states that given the degree of hedgerow enclosure in the local landscape, development of the type proposed has potential to be integrated with the local landscape without resulting in significant disruption to local landscape character. As a result it suggests that landscape sensitivity is medium.

6.3.5 In terms of mitigation, it is proposed that existing hedgerows would have gaps filled, and a significant amount of new hedgerow planting is proposed. Hedgerows would be managed to allow them to establish to 3 metres in height and 1.5 metres in width. Tree planting is proposed along the southern boundary (41no.) and also along the southern part of the eastern boundary of the site (14no.).

6.3.6

The LVIA states that the proposed development would be integrated into the local landscape through hedgerow reinforcement and additional hedgerow planting, and that in time this would enhance local landscape features. It suggests that the magnitude of landscape impact is considered to be low and, taking into account the medium landscape sensitivity, the overall significance of landscape effect is considered to be minor.

6.3.7

The LVIA suggests that potential visual receptors include scattered residential properties, public rights of way, and local roads. It states that the properties are high sensitivity receptors, the public rights of way are medium sensitivity, and the transport corridors are low sensitivity. In assessing visual effects the LVIA has chosen a number of locations around the site as representative receptors. The LVIA assesses the significance of visual effects by considering the visual sensitivity of each of these receptors against the magnitude of change, taking into account the landscape mitigation proposed. For receptors within close proximity of the site, the LVIA considers that the significance of visual effects for would be no greater than moderate, during both winter and summer. Given the landform and vegetation cover, it states that visual receptors beyond distances of 500m would generally only experience partial or filtered views, resulting in only very inconspicuous changes or no change in the existing view. As a result the LVIA considers that, at worst, effects for such receptors would be considered to be minor in winter reducing to negligible during the summer.

6.3.8

As a general observation it is recognised that the proposed development covers a significant area of land and has the potential to impact adversely on the character of the local landscape. Nevertheless it is considered that the presence of a block of woodland between the northernmost and southernmost fields of the site acts as a backdrop to many views of the site. In terms of views from the village of Sheriffhales, these would be restricted due to distance, existing vegetation and the proposal to plant a new hedgerow and trees along the eastern boundary of the site. The topography of the area and the existing hedgerows and other vegetation would serve to restrict views into the site further.

6.3.9 However, following a site visit Officers recommended that the applicant investigated what further mitigation could be achieved to reduce the visibility of the proposed solar farm, particularly from views from the south. The application was subsequently revised, as follows:

- removal of panels from the higher parts of the southwest field
- removal of panels from the higher parts of the northernmost field
- additional planting of trees along the southern boundary of the site, within the hedgerow which is proposed to be reinforced.

6.3.10 It is recognised that these modifications have reduced the energy generation benefits of the proposal through the reduction in the number of panels, decreasing its capacity from 30.5MW to 24.82MW. Nevertheless the additional mitigation put forward by the applicant is welcomed, as it is considered that this has significantly reduced the visual impact of the proposed development. The planted height of the proposed trees would be 3-3.5 metres and this would provide immediate impact in the landscape. The applicant states that they would reach a semi-mature height within a period of 10-15 years.

- 6.3.11 It is accepted however that parts of the proposed solar farm would still be visible from receptors to the south, including Redhill Farm. From Redhill Farm, the principal visible elements of the development would be those situated on the higher slopes of the southern fields and parts of the northernmost field. Due to topography and existing intervening vegetation, the nearest visible panels would be likely to be significantly more than 600 metres away. At this distance, and given the proposed planting which would in time provide some level of additional screening, it is not considered that the visibility of the panels at these receptors would be overbearing or prominent in the landscape.. As such it is not considered that it would represent an unacceptable impact.
- 6.3.12 In relation to the public rights of way network, the main impacts of the proposal would be on views from the footpath adjacent to the northern boundary of the site. At the eastern section of this (approximately 400 metres in length) the panels would be sited adjacent to the path. At the western section (approximately 280 metres in length) it is proposed to provide a strip of wildflower meadow between the path and the nearest panels which would provide a separation distance. It should be noted that the adjacent field to the south slopes downwards away from the path, and this would reduce the extent to which the site could be considered to have an overbearing impact on users of the path. The solar farm would however be visible from the path through the proposed post and wire perimeter fence, and it is accepted that it would have some impact upon views of the wider landscape experienced from the path. Nevertheless these views would be transitory and overall, in view of the wider benefits which would be provided by the solar farm, it is not considered that the impact of the proposal due to visual effects from the public rights of way network is sufficient to warrant a reason for refusal of the application.
- 6.3.13 Overall it is considered that whilst the proposal would have some impact on the character of the local landscape it is not considered that this would be unacceptable particularly given the significant benefits that the proposal would bring about through the generation of renewable energy. On this basis, it is considered that the proposal can be accepted in relation to Core Strategy Policies CS6 and CS17 and saved Bridgnorth Local Plan Policy D11.

6.4 **Site selection and agricultural land quality considerations**

- 6.4.1 Planning Practice Guidance advises that local planning authorities should encourage the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value.

- 6.4.2 The application sets out the justification for proposing the use of agricultural land for the solar development, and states that factors influencing site selection include site size, grid capacity and site availability. It states that at present a minimum of 8ha is required to provide a viable solar farm given current market conditions. The application is accompanied by an assessment of vacant or derelict sites within Shropshire. Based upon records of brownfield sites in the National Land Use Database of Previously Developed Land (NLUD-PLD), the applicant's assessment concludes that there are no available vacant or derelict sites within Shropshire above 6ha.

- 6.4.3 Planning Practice Guidance advises that, in considering solar farm proposals located on greenfield sites, local planning authorities should consider whether the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.
- 6.4.4 An Agricultural Land Classification report has been submitted with the application. This states that 58% of the site area is classed as Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land, 8% is Grade 3a (good) and 34% is Grade 3b (moderate). The best and most versatile agricultural land is classified as Grades 1, 2 and 3a. Grade 3b is classed as moderate quality agricultural land. Most of the site is therefore classed as best and most versatile agricultural land.
- 6.4.5 The application is accompanied by a Sequential Test Analysis Study undertaken by the applicant's consultants. This considered 34 potential alternative sites within 2km and 10km of the site. It found that there are no potential alternative sites of poorer quality agricultural land or subject to any less environmental constraints than the proposed site.
- 6.4.6 In relation to the impacts of the proposal on the best and most versatile agricultural land, it should be noted that the development would not result in the loss of agricultural land, as it is proposed that the land would be grazed by sheep once the panels have been installed. In addition the land would be returned to agriculture once the panels have been removed when they are no longer used, or after 30 years. In addition it is noted that there would be biodiversity enhancements proposed by way of significant additional hedgerow planting, tree planting and the provision of wildflower meadow. The preference for the use of poorer quality agricultural land, as set out in planning guidance, is acknowledged. However, based upon the information submitted it is considered that a satisfactory level of assessment has been undertaken to justify the use of best and most versatile land for the proposed solar farm development. As such it is concluded that the greenfield location proposed for the site would not conflict with national planning guidance. In the absence of any other specific objections to the proposal it is not considered that the use of higher quality agricultural land for the development would warrant a refusal of the application.
- 6.5 **Local amenity considerations**
- 6.5.1 Core Strategy policy CS6 seeks to safeguard residential and local amenity. Saved Bridgnorth Local Plan Policy D11 requires that renewable energy schemes do not detract from the residential amenities of the area.
- 6.5.2 Noise: In terms of noise, the application states that the cooling fans within the inverter cabinets would generate a small amount of noise whilst the solar farm is operating during the day. However the application states that the cabinet itself trap the majority of noise generated. In addition the application states that no noise is generated in the evening, night and early morning when ambient noise levels are typically lowest. The application states that there are strict conditions relating to noise within the contracts that are entered into with the construction firms which require that a maximum noise level of 35dBA is not exceeded at the site boundary.

It is not anticipated that the proposal would have any significant impact on the local area due to noise emissions.

- 6.5.3 Glint and glare: The planning application notes that the glass used to make the panels is specifically designed to absorb as much daylight as possible to convert to electricity, and therefore has a low level of reflectivity when compared to surfaces such as window glass, water or snow. It states that the potential for glint and glare from a solar farm is much lower than the potential for glint and glare from other man-made structures such as poly tunnels and glass houses, as well as natural features such as water or snow. There is no information to suggest that the proposal would result in adverse levels of impact upon local amenity due to glint or glare.

6.6 Historic environment considerations

- 6.6.1 Core Strategy Policy CS17 requires that developments protect and enhance the diversity, high quality and local character of Shropshire's historic environment. Saved Bridgnorth Local Plan Policy D11 requires that renewable energy schemes do not result in adverse impact on the setting of heritage assets. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF requires that, where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In addition, Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that, in considering whether to grant planning permission which affects the setting of a Listed Building, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting.

- 6.6.2 A Historic Environment Settings Assessment has been submitted as part of the planning application to assess the impact of the proposed development on the setting of designated heritage assets in the area. This assessment finds that the proposed development would have no more than a negligible impact on the significance of the designated heritage assets in the surrounding area, due to the distance from the proposed development and favourable screening provided by the surrounding topography and vegetation.

- 6.6.3 The Council's Historic Environment team initially requested additional photo montages to provide further evidence of the conclusions of the heritage assessment. These has now been provided.

- 6.6.4 The nearest listed buildings in the area are located within the historic core of Sheriffhales to the east, and at Sheriffhales Manor. Intervening vegetation provides visual separation of these assets to the application site, and it is considered that this minimises the impact upon the setting of these listed buildings. The Conservation Officer considers that the conclusions of the submitted are broadly accurate. The Officer considers that the harm to heritage assets may be less than substantial. Officers are of the view that this level of harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal. It is also noted that the proposed is time limited and reversible.

- 6.6.5 In relation to archaeological matters, the Council's Archaeological Officer has noted that the submitted Desk Based Assessment finds that the potential for archaeological remains of low to moderate significance to survive within the site cannot be ruled out. The Officer has recommended additional archaeological evaluation. The applicant

is preparing this with a view to undertaking trial trenching. The Officer has recommended that a condition is imposed to secure this work and this is included in Appendix 1.

6.6.6 On the basis of the above it is considered that subject to the condition recommended the proposed development would provide satisfactory protection against harm to heritage assets, particularly when considered against the significant public benefits of the proposal in terms of renewable energy production.

6.7 Ecological considerations

6.7.1 Core Strategy Policy CS17 seeks to protect and enhance the diversity, high quality and local character of Shropshire's natural environment and to ensure no adverse impacts upon visual amenity, heritage and ecological assets. It is noted that the application site does not form part of any statutory or non-statutory designated site for nature conservation.

6.7.2 A desk-based ecological study and Extended Phase I habitat survey have been undertaken to assess the impact the proposal would have upon ecology and habitats on and near to the site. No protected or notable species were observed during the survey. The application states that the ecological value of the site overall is considered to be low. It is proposed that precautionary measures are adopted to protect habitats and species during the construction phase of the development, including general Reasonable Avoidance Measures for reptiles and amphibians. Boundary hedgerows, field margins and hedgerow trees would be predominantly retained as part of the proposed development. Other proposed mitigation and enhancement measures include: the reversion of arable land to more species diverse grassland; the planting of approximately 900 metres of native species hedgerows and more than 50 trees; the installation of bird and bat boxes; the planting of wildflower meadow areas. The Ecological Appraisal states that implementation of these measures will lead to a net biodiversity gain at a local level.

6.7.3 The Council's Ecologist has not raised any specific concerns over the proposed development. In relation to great crested newt the Ecologist has confirmed that no further survey work is required. A condition can be imposed requiring that the Risk Avoidance Measures and the recommendations of the ecological reports are adhered to. It is considered that this will provide satisfactory safeguards in relation to badgers. In addition it is proposed that a condition requiring that if any trees need to be removed to form the access then satisfactory investigations for their bat roosting potential are agreed (see Appendix 1).

6.7.4 Biodiversity management: A condition can be imposed to require that landscape planting is protected and managed and to require any failures to be replaced. In addition it is considered that it would be appropriate to require that a biodiversity management plan is submitted and agreed to ensure that habitat enhancement measures are managed appropriately. An appropriate condition can be imposed on any permission granted.

6.7.5 Subject to this, it is considered that the measures proposed in relation to protected species, and those for ecological enhancement are appropriate, and that the proposal is therefore in line with Core Strategy Policy CS17.

6.8 Highways considerations

6.8.1 Once construction has been completed the application states that there would be up to 31 vehicle visits to the site per year. These would be principally for maintenance purposes, including grass cutting, the washing of panels, general site maintenance, and meter reading. These vehicles would access the site via an existing farm track to the east. It is not considered that this limited amount of traffic raises any particular highways issues.

6.8.2 The application is accompanied by a Construction, Decommissioning and Traffic Management Method Statement which provides details of the level of construction traffic and how this would be managed, including delivery times and the anticipated level of traffic. This indicates that there would be typically up to 6 deliveries per day during the construction period. This construction traffic would access the site via a track from the A5 to the south, thereby avoiding the need for vehicles to pass through the village of Sheriffhales. The Method Statement proposes that a highway condition survey is undertaken prior to the commencement of construction, and that any damage caused would be repaired following the completion of construction works. The Highways Officer has raised no concerns regarding traffic issues, subject to agreement on traffic routing. It is considered that the Traffic Management measures put forward are suitable for the proposed development, and a condition can be imposed to require that these procedures are adhered to along with a traffic route to be agreed (see Appendix 1).

6.9 Flood risk considerations

6.9.1 Core Strategy Policy CS18 seeks to reduce flood risk and avoid adverse impact on water quality and quantity. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been submitted as part of the planning application. This confirms that the site lies entirely within Flood Zone 1, signifying areas with the lowest probability of fluvial flooding.

6.9.2 Rainwater running off the panels would drain into the ground as a present. Access paths would be formed using compacted stone/gravel. The FRA estimates that these, and the proposed buildings would result in an impermeable area of 2% of the overall site area of 47 hectares. The FRA concludes that the runoff rates for the proposed development are likely to be similar to those for the existing land use.

6.9.3 It is proposed to deal with any additional volumes for rainfall runoff generated from tracks and the buildings through the creation of SUDS features such as swales. These swales would encourage infiltration to ground and provide attenuation and further storage for rainfall runoff during significant storm events.

6.9.4 The Drainage Officer has confirmed that the existing surface water drainage characteristics of the site are unlikely to be affected by the proposed development, and it is considered that the drainage strategy is acceptable. Overall it is considered that the proposal does not raise significant issues in relation to flood risk and surface water management, and that the proposal can be accepted in relation to Core Strategy Policy CS18.

6.10 Decommissioning and land reinstatement

6.10.1 Saved Bridgnorth District Local Plan Policy D11 requires that renewable energy schemes include realistic means to ensure the removal of any plant, buildings or structures when they become redundant, and that they provide for the restoration of the site. Concern has been raised by a resident regarding the possibility that the development would be abandoned if the feed-in tariff make the proposed non viable, and that this may be the case at the end of its life. It should be noted that the feed-in tariff situation is not a planning matter. In relation to potential abandonment, a planning condition can be imposed to require the removal of all of the equipment at the end of its useful life, or within 30 years whichever sooner. In addition, the application confirms that the applicant is responsible for full reinstatement of the site at the end of the lease. The application also states that the scrap/recycle value of the raw materials used in the construction of a solar farm exceeds the cost of removing them from the site and undertaking minor site restoration, and this would serve as an incentive to remove the infrastructure at the end of its operational life.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 The proposed installation of a solar farm on agricultural land to the west of Sheriffhales would allow the generation of a renewable form of energy for export to the National Grid, and contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions. As such it is supported in principle by both national and local planning policy. The proposal would have some impact on local landscape character and on visual amenity, however this would be relatively localised due to topography and existing vegetative cover. Landscape mitigation would be provided in the form of the planting of significant new hedgerow, infill hedgerow planting and new trees. In addition modifications have been undertaken to the site design to remove panels from the more prominent locations at higher elevations, in order to seek to address local concerns over their visibility. Any limited harm to heritage assets in the area is considered to be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal. The proposal would generate minimal traffic once constructed, and construction traffic can be satisfactorily managed. Whilst the proposal would utilise a significant proportion of best and most versatile agricultural land, the land would remain in agricultural use through sheep grazing and would be returned to agriculture at the end of its operational life following the removal of the panels. In addition the proposal would result in significant ecological benefits through the planting of trees and hedgerows and other biodiversity enhancement measures. It is not considered that the prevention of the use of the land for arable farming is a sufficient reason on its own to refuse the application. The proposal would not adversely affect local amenity or existing drainage conditions.

Overall, whilst it is recognised that the development would result in some impact on the character of the area, particularly in view of the scale of the proposal, in relation to the significant wider benefits of the proposal, it is considered that these impacts can be accepted on balance in relation to Development Plan policies and other material considerations. As such the grant of planning permission can be recommended subject to the conditions as set out in Appendix 1.

8. **Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

8.1 Risk Management

There are two principal risks associated with this recommendation as follows:

- As with any planning decision the applicant has a right of appeal if they disagree with the decision and/or the imposition of conditions. Costs can be awarded irrespective of the mechanism for hearing the appeal - written representations, a hearing or inquiry.
- The decision is challenged by way of a Judicial Review by a third party. The courts become involved when there is a misinterpretation or misapplication of policy or some breach of the rules of procedure or the principles of natural justice. However their role is to review the way the authorities reach decisions, rather than to make a decision on the planning issues themselves, although they will interfere where the decision is so unreasonable as to be irrational or perverse. Therefore they are concerned with the legality of the decision, not its planning merits. A challenge by way of Judicial Review must be a) promptly and b) in any event not later than three months after the grounds to make the claim first arose.

Both of these risks need to be balanced against the risk of not proceeding to determine the application. In this scenario there is also a right of appeal against non-determination for application for which costs can also be awarded.

8.2 Human Rights

Article 8 give the right to respect for private and family life and First Protocol Article 1 allows for the peaceful enjoyment of possessions. These have to be balanced against the rights and freedoms of others and the orderly development of the County in the interests of the Community.

First Protocol Article 1 requires that the desires of landowners must be balanced against the impact on residents.

This legislation has been taken into account in arriving at the above recommendation.

8.3 Equalities

The concern of planning law is to regulate the use of land in the interests of the public at large, rather than those of any particular group. Equality will be one of a number of 'relevant considerations' that need to be weighed in planning committee members' minds under section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1970.

9. Financial Implications

There are likely financial implications of the decision and/or imposition of conditions if challenged by a planning appeal or judicial review. The costs of defending any decision will be met by the authority and will vary dependant on the scale and nature of the proposal. Local financial considerations are capable of being taken into account when determining this planning application – in so far as they are material to the application. The weight given to this issue is a matter for the decision maker.

10. Background

10.1 Relevant Planning Policies

10.1.1 Shropshire Core Strategy

This promotes a low carbon Shropshire by promoting the generation of energy from renewable sources (Strategic Objective 1)

- Policy CS5 (Countryside and Green Belt)
- Policy CS6 (Sustainable Design and Development Principles)
- Policy CS8 (Facilities, Services and Infrastructure Provision)
- Policy CS13 (Economic Development, Enterprise and Employment)
- Policy CS17 (Environmental Networks) – to identify, protect, enhance, expand and connect Shropshire’s environmental assets
- Policy CS18 (Sustainable Water Management)

10.1.2 Bridgnorth District Local Plan ‘saved’ policies

- Policy D11 (Renewable Energy) – proposals should minimise impact on the landscape; avoid impacts on heritage/nature conservation assets; not detract from the residential or recreational amenities of the area; provide for removal of structures and site restoration when they become redundant

10.2 Central Government Guidance:

10.2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): Amongst other matters, the NPPF: encourages the use of renewable resources (para. 17 - Core Planning Principles); promotes good design as a key aspect of sustainable development (Chapter 7); supports the move to a low carbon future as part of the meeting of the challenges of climate change and flooding (Chapter 10); advises that lpa’s recognize that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and approve applications if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable (Chapter 10); states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by preventing development from contributing to unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution (Chapter 11).

10.2.2 Planning practice guidance for renewable and low carbon energy (March 2014) states (para. 001) that 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.

The PPG states that:

- All communities have a responsibility to help increase the use and supply of green energy, but that this does not mean that the need for renewable energy automatically overrides environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities (para. 003).
- The need for renewable or low carbon energy does not automatically override environmental protections

- cumulative impacts require particular attention, especially the increasing impact that wind turbines and large scale solar farms can have on landscape and local amenity as the number of turbines and solar arrays in an area increases
- local topography is an important factor in assessing whether wind turbines and large scale solar farms could have a damaging effect on landscape and recognise that the impact can be as great in predominately flat landscapes as in hilly or mountainous areas
- great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting
- protecting local amenity is an important consideration which should be given proper weight in planning decisions.

In relation to proposals for large scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic farms, the 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.

Particular factors the local planning authority will need to consider in relation to solar farms include:

- encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value
- •where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.
- Planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use
- the proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare (see guidance on landscape assessment) and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety
- the need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing
- great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large scale solar farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset;
- the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges
- the energy generating potential, which can vary for a number of reasons including, latitude and aspect

The PPG refers to a speech by the Minister for Energy and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP, to the solar PV industry on 25 April 2013. This commented that, the Government will focus deployment of solar panels on buildings and brownfield land, not

greenfield, and that “where solar farms are not on brownfield land, you must be looking at low grade agricultural land which works with farmers to allow grazing in parallel with generation, incorporating well thought out visual screening, involving communities in developing projects and bringing them with you”.

The PPG gives guidance in relation to assessing cumulative landscape and visual impact, and states that in the case of ground-mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography the area of a zone of visual influence could be zero.

10.3 Emerging policy:

10.3.1 Site Allocations and Development Management (SAMDev) document: The SAMDev has been submitted to the Secretary of State and is currently being examined. The SAMDev will allocate sites for various types of development and will set out detailed policies to guide future development in the county. At this stage, the site and surrounding area are not subject to any specific allocations in the SAMDev.

10.3.2 Draft Development Management policies: Relevant draft Development Management policies include:

- MD2 (Sustainable Design)
- MD8 (Infrastructure Provision)
- MD12 (Natural Environment)
- MD13 (Historic Environment)

10.4 Relevant Planning History:

- BR/98/0095 additional use of farm for equestrian accommodation and grazing, Manor Farm, Sheriffhales, permitted 1998

11. **Additional Information**

<http://planningpa.shropshire.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage>

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information) The application ref. 14/03444/FUL and supporting information and consultation responses.
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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Cllr M. Price
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Local Member Cllr Kevin Turley (Shifnal North)

Appendices APPENDIX 1 - Conditions

APPENDIX 1 - Conditions**STANDARD CONDITION(S)**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 (As amended).

2. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plans and drawings.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.

CONDITION(S) THAT REQUIRE APPROVAL BEFORE THE DEVELOPMENT COMMENCES

3. No development shall take place until details of the proposed construction traffic route have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. No construction or decommissioning work shall take place other than in accordance with the traffic management measures set out in the submitted Construction, Decommissioning, and Traffic Management Method Statement, and in accordance with the construction traffic route to be agreed as part of this condition..

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to protect the amenities of the local area.

4. No development approved by this permission shall commence until the applicant, or their agent or successors in title, have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work that makes provision for a limited programme of trial trenching and watching briefs in areas of significant ground disturbance that should be in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI). This written scheme shall be approved in writing by the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works. Non-intrusive construction methods (concrete shoes and above ground cable trays) or realignment of the arrays to avoid archaeological remains should be applied in all areas where significant archaeological remains are identified and tested by evaluation. Such alternative construction methods shall not be used other than as agreed by the local planning authority.

Reason: To provide satisfactory investigation and protection of any archaeological interest at the site.

5. Prior to the commencement of development, facilitation tree works and road refurbishment shall be undertaken and tree protection measures installed to the written satisfaction of the LPA, as specified in chapter 5 (sections 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.5) and Appendix 4 (Tree Protection Plan) of the Arboricultural Appraisal (ref: 001-UA007275-EECR-02-Arb, Hyder Consulting, 18th August 2014). Thereafter the tree protective barriers shall be maintained in a satisfactory condition throughout the duration of the development, in accordance with section 5.4 of the Arboricultural Appraisal.

Reason: to protect retained trees and hedges from damage during implementation of the development.

CONDITION(S) THAT REQUIRE APPROVAL DURING THE CONSTRUCTION/PRIOR TO THE OCCUPATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

6. Within two months of the commencement of the development, a planting plan shall be submitted for the approval of the local planning authority. The plan shall include details of the size, type of planting stock and means of protection and support of the trees and shrubs to be planted in association with the development. It shall also include measures for the maintenance of the trees and shrubs and replacement of any losses, during the first three years post-planting. The approved planting plan shall be implemented in full within the first planting season (November - February inclusive) following approval of the plan.

Reason: to ensure a satisfactory form of landscaping to enhance the development and contribute to the long-term continuity of tree and hedge cover at the site.

7. Notwithstanding the submitted details, within three months of the commencement of the development a biodiversity management plan shall be submitted in writing for the approval of the local planning authority. The submitted details shall specify the biodiversity enhancement measures proposed for the site, and set out the management regime to develop and maintain wildlife habitats at the site throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure the protection and enhancement of species and habitats on site.

8. Within two months of the commencement of the development details of 10 bat boxes suitable for nursery or summer roosting for small crevice dwelling bat species shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. All boxes must be at an appropriate height above the ground with a clear flight path and thereafter be permanently retained. The approved details shall be implemented in full prior to first operation of the solar farm.

Reason: To ensure the provision of roosting opportunities for bats, which are European Protected Species.

9. No trees shall be removed to facilitate the construction of the access track until details of an assessment undertaken to check these for bat roosting potential have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted details shall include measures to prevent disturbance to bats. Trees shall not be removed other than in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To prevent disturbance to bats, a protected species.

CONDITION(S) THAT ARE RELEVANT FOR THE LIFETIME OF THE DEVELOPMENT

10. The external materials and colour specification of the buildings hereby permitted shall conform to the details as set out in the table included in the email from Mr J Mellor of Lightsource Renewable Energy Ltd. Dated 26th November 2014.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory design and appearance of the buildings to protect the visual character of the area.

11. No construction or decommissioning works shall be undertaken outside of the following hours: 0800 and 1800 Monday to Friday; and 0800 to 1300 on Saturdays. No such works shall take place on Sundays or bank or public holidays.

Reason To protect the amenities of the local area.

12. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the Badger Appendix by Avian Ecology, and Appendix 2 of the Ecological Appraisal dated July 2014, and the Biodiversity Management Plan dated July 2014, unless as otherwise superseded by an approved biodiversity management plan.

Reason: To ensure the protection of badgers, great crested newts, and to protect features of recognised nature conservation importance.

13. All CCTV cameras shall be orientated so that they do not face directly towards the route of the public rights of way adjacent to the site.

Reason: To minimise adverse intrusion and protect privacy.

14. (a) Within one week of the completion of the construction of the solar panels, written notice of the date of completion shall be given to the local planning authority
- (b) Within 6 months of the cessation of energy generation from the site, or a period of 30 years and 6 months following completion of construction, whichever is the sooner, all infrastructure associated with the solar farm will be removed from the site.

Reason: To ensure that the solar farm development is removed from the site following the end of its operational life or within a reasonable period of time to protect the landscape character of the area.

Informatives

1. Your attention is specifically drawn to the conditions above that require the Local Planning Authority's approval of materials, details, information, drawings etc. In accordance with Article 21 of the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2010 a fee is required to be paid to the Local Planning Authority for requests to discharge conditions. Requests are to be made on forms available from www.planningportal.gov.uk or from the Local Planning Authority. The fee required is £97 per request, and £28 for existing residential properties.

Failure to discharge pre-start conditions will result in a contravention of the terms of this permission; any commencement may be unlawful and the Local Planning Authority may consequently take enforcement action.

2. The applicant should contact Graham Downes, Shropshire Council's Highways Manager for the area prior to commencement of development to discuss the highway condition survey.
3. For the transformer installation, the applicant should consider employing measures such as the following: surface water soakaways; water butts; rainwater harvesting system; permeable surfacing on any new driveway, parking area/ paved area; greywater recycling system.

Watercourses are present within the development site. A 3m wide easement from the top of each watercourse bank, is required for maintenance purposes.

4. The active nests of all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (As amended). An active nest is one being built, containing eggs or chicks, or on which fledged chicks are still dependent.

All clearance, conversion and demolition work in association with the approved scheme shall be carried out outside of the bird nesting season which runs from March to September inclusive

Note: If it is necessary for work to commence in the nesting season then a pre-commencement inspection of the vegetation and buildings for active bird nests should be carried out. If vegetation cannot be clearly seen to be clear of bird's nests then an experienced ecologist should be called in to carry out the check. Only if there are no active nests present should work be allowed to commence.

Great Crested Newts are protected under the European Council Directive of 12 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (known as the Habitats Directive 1992), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

If a Great Crested Newt is discovered on the site at any time then all work must halt and Natural England should be contacted for advice.

5. The local planning authority has worked in a positive and proactive way in determining this planning application, as required by paragraph 187 of the NPPF, in order to address issues raised and secure an acceptable development.