

Item No.	Application and Parish	No.	Statutory Date	Target	Proposal, Location, Applicant
(1)	24/02810/FULMAJ Hungerford		20 th May 2025 ¹		The installation of 4860 ground mounted photovoltaic panels, in an equine field, to provide power to the commercial buildings within the grounds and to export to the Local Grid Hungerford Park Mr Toby Hunter
¹ Extension of time agreed with applicant until 25 th July 2025.					

The application can be viewed on the Council's website at the following link:

<https://publicaccess.westberks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=SP065LRD09N00>

Recommendation Summary: The Development Control Manager be authorised to GRANT conditional permission.

Ward Member(s): Councillor Gaines
Councillor Benneyworth
Councillor Vickers

Reason for Committee Determination: Member Call In

Committee Site Visit: 17th July 2025

Contact Officer Details

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Committee to consider the proposed development against the policies of the development plan and the relevant material considerations, and to make a decision as to whether to approve or refuse the application.
- 1.2 This application seeks planning permission for the installation of 4860 ground mounted photovoltaic panels, in an equine field, to provide power to the commercial buildings within the grounds and to export to the Local Grid
- 1.3 The application site lies within Hungerford Park. It is also outside of any settlement boundary and within the North Wessex Downs National Designated Landscape (NWDNDL). To the west of the site is a public right of way HUNG/21/5.
- 1.4 The proposal includes the solar panels, along with associated works including the underground cabling, fencing, security cameras, inverters, transformer station and battery storage system.

2. Planning History

- 2.1 There is no relevant planning history for the application site however there is for the wider site located to the north where there are several barns and other buildings.

3. Legal and Procedural Matters

- 3.1 **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA):** The proposed development falls within the column 1 description at paragraph 3(a) (Energy Industry) of Schedule 2. Although it does not meet/exceed the relevant threshold in column 2, it is located in a sensitive area, namely the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The proposal is therefore “Schedule 2 development” within the meaning of the Regulations.
- 3.2 However, taking into account the selection criteria in Schedule 3, it is not considered that the proposal is likely to have significant effects on the environment. Accordingly, the proposal is NOT considered “EIA development” within the meaning of the Regulations. An Environmental Statement is not required
- 3.3 **Publicity:** Publicity has been undertaken in accordance with Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, and the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement. Site notices were displayed on 17th April at the entrance to the site and long the public right of way, with a deadline for representations of 12th May 2025. A public notice was displayed in the Newbury Weekly News on 6th March 2025. Notification letters were sent to 3 neighbouring properties.
- 3.4 **Local Financial Considerations:** Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) provides that a local planning authority must have regard to a local finance consideration as far as it is material. Whether or not a ‘local finance consideration’ is material to a particular decision will depend on whether it could help to make the development acceptable in planning terms. It would not be appropriate to make a decision based on the potential for the development to raise money for a local authority or other government body. No local financial considerations are material to this application.

Consideration	Applicable to proposal	Material to decision	Refer to paragraph(s)
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Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	No	No	3.5
New Homes Bonus	No	No	N/a
Affordable Housing	No	No	N/a
Public Open Space or Play Areas	No	No	N/a
Developer Contributions (S106)	No	No	N/a
Job Creation	No	No	N/a

- 3.5 **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a levy charged on most new development within an authority area. The money is used to pay for new infrastructure, supporting the development of an area by funding the provision, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure. CIL will be used to fund roads and other transport facilities, schools and other educational facilities, flood defences, medical facilities, open spaces, and sports and recreational areas. Subject to the application of any applicable exemptions, CIL will be charged on residential (Use Classes C3 and C4) and retail (former Use Classes A1 – A5) development at a rate per square metre (based on Gross Internal Area) on new development of more than 100 square metres of gross internal area (including extensions) or when a new dwelling is created (even if it is less than 100 square metres). CIL liability, and the application of any exemptions, will be formally confirmed by the CIL Charging Authority under separate cover following any grant of planning permission. More information is available at <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/community-infrastructure-levy>
- 3.6 **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED):** In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The Council must have due regard to the need to achieve the following objectives:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.7 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—
- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
 - (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
 - (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- 3.8 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or

belief. Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage, the duty is to have regard to and remove or minimise disadvantage. In considering the merits of this planning application, due regard has been given to these objectives.

- 3.9 There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.
- 3.10 **Human Rights Act:** The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act, including Article 1 of the First Protocol (Protection of property), Article 6 (Right to a fair trial) and Article 8 (Right to respect for private and family life and home) of the Act itself. The consideration of the application in accordance with the Council procedures will ensure that views of all those interested are taken into account. All comments from interested parties have been considered and reported in summary in this report, with full text available via the Council's website.
- 3.11 Any interference with property rights is in the public interest and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 regime for controlling the development of land. This recommendation is based on the consideration of the proposal against adopted Development Plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the Human Rights of the applicant or any third party.
- 3.12 **National Landscapes (AONB):** Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 (as amended) provides a general duty for public bodies: "Any relevant authority exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to effect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty)." AONBs have been rebranded to be known as National Landscapes, although their legal AONB status continues.

4. Consultation

Statutory and non-statutory consultation

- 4.1 The table below summarises the consultation responses received during the consideration of the application. The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report.

Hungerford Town Council:	Objection - Does not believe a Solar Farm in Hungerford Park, close to Hungerford's environmentally managed Common to be appropriate and concerns raised regarding highways impact.
Adjacent Kintbury Parish Council:	No Response
Adjacent Inkpen Parish Council:	No Response
Highways:	Conditional Approval
Ecology:	Conditional Approval

North Wessex Downs:	No Response
Public Protection:	Conditional Approval
Public Rights of Way:	No Response
Trees:	Conditional Approval
Thames Water:	No Response
Ramblers Association:	No Response
Police:	No Objections – comments made regarding security of the site
EA:	No Response
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue:	No Response
Spokes:	No Response
Archaeology:	No Objections
SUDS:	No Objections
Waste:	No Response
Newts:	No Response
Economic Development:	No Response
Transport Policy:	No Response
Environment:	No Response
Active Travel:	No Comment

Public representations

4.2 No representations have been received.

5. Planning Policy

5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following policies of the statutory development plan are relevant to the consideration of this application.

Development Plan Document	Relevant Policies
West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041	SP1, SP2, SP5, SP7, SP8, SP11, SP19, DM4, DM5, DM7, DM30, DM35, DM36

5.2 The following material considerations are relevant to the consideration of this application:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Quality Design SPD (2006)
- North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-24

6. Appraisal

Principle of development

- 6.1 Planning Policy SP1 (Spatial Strategy) of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR) states that development will meet the social and economic needs of the District while conserving and enhancing the environmental assets of the District and meet the objective to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and minimise demand for energy and other resources. The policy states that outside of settlement boundaries, land will be treated as open countryside where development will be more restricted, as set out in policies DM1 (Residential Development in the Countryside) and DM35 (Sustaining a Prosperous Rural Economy). The North Wessex Downs National Landscape will have appropriate and sustainable growth that conserves and enhances its special landscape qualities as set out in policy SP2.
- 6.2 Planning Policy SP2 (North Wessex Downs AONB) of the LPR states that development in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape must be appropriate and sustainable, conserving and enhancing the area's natural beauty, landscape character, and special qualities like tranquillity and dark skies. Proposals must be sensitive to local context, support local communities and the rural economy, and avoid adverse impacts on the landscape. Major development will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and when clearly in the public interest. The Council will assess whether a proposal constitutes major development based on its scale, character, nature, and potential impact, including cumulative effects. Whilst the application is considered major it terms of site area the proposal itself is not considered major development in terms of its scale, character, nature, and potential impacts as discussed in details below.
- 6.3 Planning Policy SP5 (Responding to Climate Change) of the LPR states that the principles of climate change mitigation and adaptation will be required to be embedded into new development, improving the resilience of land, buildings and existing and future communities to the opportunities and impacts arising from climate change. All development should contribute to West Berkshire becoming and staying carbon neutral by 2030. Depending on the nature and scale of proposals, development will be expected to satisfy the set-out criteria.
- 6.4 The proposal is for a solar array to provide sustainable energy to Hungerford Park and the National Grid; in principle this is supported by policy subject to other considerations below.

Character and appearance

- 6.5 Planning Policy SP7 (Design Quality) of the LPR is relevant in this instance. Policy SP7 states that new development must use high-quality, locally distinctive design to create a strong sense of place and support healthy, well-functioning communities. Proposals should conserve and enhance the area's character and appearance, and demonstrate alignment with national design principles (e.g., the National Design Guide) and local guidance, including neighbourhood plans and community-led documents that reflect local identity.
- 6.6 Planning Policy SP8 (Landscape character) of the LPR supports development that conserves and enhances the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape character across the District. Development should take a holistic view of the natural, cultural, and perceptual aspects of the landscape.
- 6.7 Key considerations include:
- Valued landscape features and qualities
 - Sensitivity and capacity of the area to accommodate change
 - Appropriateness of location, scale, and design in relation to the existing settlement's form and character
- 6.8 Development proposals must:
- Be clearly informed by and responsive to the distinctive landscape character areas identified in the West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment (2019) and other relevant assessments
 - Include a proportionate landscape assessment, following guidance from the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment
 - Use the landscape assessment to shape the detailed design, layout, form, scale, and appearance of the development, in line with Policy SP7
- 6.9 Whilst overall the landscape and visual impact may be low given the location and mature vegetation around the application site there are small breaks in which there may be some visual impacts; this is important given that the application site is located within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
- 6.10 A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) has been submitted as part of the application; this sets out that with solar array development that is considered temporary development with a lifespan of approx. 40 years, with the development intended to be reversible when no longer required.
- 6.11 The LVIA demonstrates that the proposal responds to the landscape character defined in the West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment (2019) and the North Wessex Downs AONB Integrated Character Assessment. It also acknowledges that the site lies in LCA FC1: *Hungerford Farmed Chalk Mosaic* and exhibits features typical of this area. The assessment includes perceptual, natural, and cultural components per GLVIA3 guidelines and goes on to acknowledge the key features such as mature hedgerows, woodland, and the tranquillity of the area. With the site-specific sensitivity classed as *medium*, localised landscape as *low*, and wider AONB as *low*, acknowledging both intrinsic value and development susceptibility.
- 6.12 The LVIA states that the proposed design avoids major landform alteration and retains key features. The proposed mitigation includes hedgerow enhancement, wildflower seeding for biodiversity gain, and targeted tree planting to reduce visual impact from the Public Right of Way (PRoW).

6.13 The key points for consideration are;

- The development *is located within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape*, which has the highest landscape protection status.
- While the LVIA justifies a “Low” sensitivity rating due to limited visibility and temporary impacts, this designation may be challenged given national policy emphasis on “great weight” for conserving AONB character (NPPF para 182).
- Visibility is mostly limited to *oblique glimpses* from PRoW HUNG/21; however, PRoW users are high-sensitivity receptors.
- The proposal’s success depends heavily on *effective and timely implementation* of proposed landscape mitigation (e.g., hedgerow enhancement, new copse planting).

6.14 However overall, the LVIA provides a comprehensive and policy-compliant assessment. The proposal is a landscape-led development that demonstrates appropriate site selection, sensitive design, and mitigation consistent with the local and national landscape character objectives.

6.15 The proposed solar panels are fitted with an anti-glare film therefore there are no concerns regarding glare impact on visual impact on the National Landscape.

6.16 Subject to planning conditions securing mitigation planting, and end-of-life decommissioning, the application aligns with the policy requirement to conserve and enhance the local landscape character and respects the sensitivities of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

6.17 For these reasons, it is considered that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance on the area including the sensitive North Wessex Downs National Landscape and is in accordance with the NPPF and Policies SP2, SP7 and SP8 of the Local Plan Review.

Town/Parish Council representations

6.18 Below is the full Hungerford Town Council response -

6.19 **Application - AONB.** HTC objects to the installation of 4860 ground mounted photovoltaic panels, in an equine field, to provide power to the commercial buildings within the grounds and to export to the Local Grid which is in the North Wessex Downs AONB. At HTC’s February Planning Meeting, the committee was required to comment on a proposed Solar Park known as Lime Down in Wiltshire. This enormous park was outside the AONB. HTC does not believe a Solar Farm in Hungerford Park, close to Hungerford’s environmentally managed Common to be appropriate. We request Ward Councillors ‘Call In’ this application should Planning Officers be minded to Grant the application.

6.20 **Routes onto Hungerford Park.** In addition, HTC objects to the logistics plan proposed by Graham Welchman Taylor, the Renewable Energy Consultant. The Main Accessible Route proposed is one that had planning permission rejected in 2013 due to the dangerous junction onto the Inkpen Road. It states – “**13/02003/PACOU.** *The highway authority has objected to the application on the basis that if the southern access to Hungerford Park onto the Inkpen Road were to be used, the resultant increase in traffic generation serving the new use proposed would be harmful to road safety, given the poor nature of the access track into the site and the pull forward visibility to the South at the junction of the farm track with the Inkpen Road. Accordingly, to approve this prior notification would be contrary to policy CS14 in the West Berkshire core strategy 2006 to 2026*”. The junction has not been improved since then and Hungerford Park have increased usage of this route by the businesses that it permits to use its Barns. Neither

route is suitable but the least problems for traffic, pedestrian safety and the least damage would be to travel from the A4, through Hungerford on the A338 up to the roundabout at the entrance to Kennedy Meadows and return into Hungerford to the small Park Street roundabout where a right turn is made. This allows long vehicles to make the turn onto Park Street with minimal hindrance from having to cross onto the opposite side of the road if this turn is attempted while heading south. The route then follows the proposed Secondary Access across Hungerford Common onto Hungerford Park land. **See logistics plan.** All vehicles conducting business at Hungerford Park henceforth should use this route and the track entrance from the Inkpen Road should only be used by farmers to access their fields. HTC strongly believes the logistics plan should have included:

- 6.21 Escort vehicles for every 40ft long semi-trailer delivery to ensure no route deviation, to minimise disruption in Hungerford, to avoid vehicles getting stuck at difficult junctions, to warn drivers of a large load on the narrow route(s) and particularly to ensure no damage to the verges by the vehicle having to allow on-coming vehicles to pass whilst crossing the Common.
- 6.22 A road condition survey to be provided by Hungerford Park (at the appropriate time) of any proposed route so the Highway Authority have a before and after report to allow them to recover expenses to repair, as necessary, damage to verges, paths and the highway. A copy of the surveys to be placed on the WBC Planning Portal.
- 6.23 Highways required the number and size of vehicles. This has not been provided.
- 6.24 Highways indicated swept path analysis may be required. This has not been answered.
- 6.25 There is no mention of Working Hours. The current site working hours, specified in **17/02411/FUL** is 10am – 3pm *‘in order to limit the use of accommodation to one suitable for its rural location’*. This has been ignored and breached by Hungerford Park and the businesses on the site for many years. Hungerford Park are seeking an extension to this through a retrospective application, as yet undecided. In an AONB, this site should not be turned into a mini-industrial estate, which is the direction it is heading and the WBC mandated hours, in this AONB, should be enforced.
- 6.26 **Railway Carriage.** Clarification is required if Hungerford Park are using the Railway Carriage as the site office? It is referred to as Existing Building on Site Plan 1 of 9. Hungerford Park failed to adhere to any of the Conditions imposed on the 2017 application (**17/02411/FUL**) and no decision has been made by WBC regarding (**24/02027/FUL**) where Hungerford Park are seeking a further 5-year extension for the Railway Carriage to remain on site. HTC strongly objected to both applications, it is a blight on the AONB, should be removed and planning permission sought for a more suitable building. Application 24/02027/FUL was approved on the 4th April 2025.
- 6.27 **Containers.** There are 6 Containers, subject to a retrospective planning application (**24/02027/FUL**) used by businesses on the site. This area has been designated Storage and Material Laydown Area and Store and Secure Compound. Where will the existing containers be put and will a planning application be forthcoming for this? Application 24/02027/FUL was approved on the 4th April 2025; the relocation of the existing containers cannot be considered as part of this application. However, if they are to be re-sited then a new application will be required, and this will be considered on its own merits.
- 6.28 The above comments by Hungerford Town Council are noted. The reference to application 13/02003/PACOU was for a farm shop which would attract a number of vehicle movements from suppliers/deliveries as well as visitors, the proposal here is for a solar array which would not attract high level of vehicles outside of the construction phase.

- 6.29 Mention of working hours there would not be anyone on site at all times, however there maybe times when constructed that monitoring would be carried out however this is likely to be during working hours unless security related.
- 6.30 There is also reference to a number of other applications on the site which have now received decision notices; these applications are not considered to have an impact on the current application proposal.

Residential amenity

- 6.31 LPR Policy DM5 (Environmental Nuisance and Pollution Control) states that development will be supported if it avoids causing environmental pollution and ensures site suitability. Proposals must prevent harm to nearby residents and future occupants from pollution (light, noise, dust, odour, vibration), be compatible with surrounding uses, and avoid air, soil, and water contamination. Where land contamination is likely, assessments and remediation are required. Developments should not disturb tranquil areas, must limit intrusive lighting, and protect areas with biodiversity or geological value. Pollution-generating activities should be located in the least sensitive parts of a site, and necessary assessments (e.g. noise or lighting) must accompany applications.
- 6.32 LPR Policy DM30 (Residential Amenity) states that all development must ensure a high standard of amenity for both current and future users. Proposals will be supported if they avoid unacceptable harm to living conditions, including significant loss of daylight or privacy, overbearing impact, loss of outlook, and issues related to noise, dust, fumes, or odours.
- 6.33 The proposal has been carefully considered by the Council's Environmental Health Officer and comments were raised initially regarding the potential noise as the only noise details submitted were in the design and access statement that "operational noise levels will comply with regulatory requirements, with mitigation measures such as restricted working hours and optimized equipment placement to minimize disturbance." Further information was submitted by the agent responding to the initial comments from environmental health. The Council's Environmental Health Officer have raised comments stating that there have been noise complaints at other sites however they are willing to accept a noise limit condition to ensure that any noise generated from the site is at an acceptable level and can be pursued by enforcement if the levels are breached.
- 6.34 The proposed solar panels are fitted with an anti-glare film therefore there are no concerns regarding glare impact on amenity.
- 6.35 The proposed development is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the site occupant's and neighbouring residential amenity due to the proposed development's location and nature of the proposal.

Highways

- 6.36 The NPPF states that decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people. Policies SP19 (Transport), DM42 (Transport Infrastructure) and DM44 (Parking), set out highway and parking requirements.
- 6.37 A haul route plan has been submitted as well as further information regarding number of vehicles required during the construction phase which is stated at around 20 hgv's over the course of the installation.
- 6.38 The proposal has been carefully considered by the Council's Highway Officer and no objections have been raised to the proposal subject to conditions regarding the haul

route and swept paths being submitted. A condition has been added to ensure that the submitted haul route is secured and a further condition relating to swept paths has been added.

- 6.39 For these reasons, it is considered that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on highway safety or local highways infrastructure due to the main impact on the highway network being short term during the construction phase.

Ecology

- 6.40 LPR Policy SP11 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) states that Development must conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, ensure long-term management, and deliver Biodiversity Net Gain where required. Proposals should protect important habitats and species, enhance ecological connectivity, avoid habitat fragmentation, and incorporate climate-resilient conservation features. A 10m buffer zone should be maintained around designated sites and key habitats.
- 6.41 Development must follow a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation, and compensation, with the level of protection reflecting the site's importance (international, national, or local). Loss of irreplaceable habitats (e.g., ancient woodland or grasslands) will only be allowed in exceptional cases with clear justification and commensurate compensation.
- 6.42 For locally important sites, developers must first consider alternative locations, then on-site mitigation, and finally, compensation with long-term maintenance if loss is unavoidable. Proposals must align with strategic conservation plans and relevant nature recovery strategies.
- 6.43 The proposal is BNG applicable and information relating to BNG has been submitted as part of the application for consideration by the Councils Ecologist.
- 6.44 The proposal seeks to enhance the grassland surrounding the solar array by sowing a diverse mix of locally native wildflower and grasses, other biodiversity enhancement measures include the installation of bird and bat boxes.
- 6.45 The proposal has been carefully considered by the Councils Ecologist and no objections have been raised to the proposal. However, a condition has been added to decision notice to secure the ecological mitigation and enhancement measures.

Trees

- 6.46 LPR Policy DM15 (Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows) states that development that conserves and enhances trees, woodland, and hedgerows is encouraged. Proposals must include appropriate arboricultural assessments and show early integration of these natural features into site design. Loss of trees must be justified, especially if protected by a Tree Preservation Order, and suitable replacements will be required. Irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland and veteran trees will be assessed under stricter policies, with compensation measures required where loss occurs. Any unavoidable loss of non-protected trees must also include replanting and long-term maintenance. New planting should suit the site, use native species, reflect local character, and support habitat connectivity.
- 6.47 There will be some minor hedgerow loss for some works however this will be replaced. Majority of trees and hedgerow will be retained and protected during construction.
- 6.48 The proposal has been carefully considered by the Councils Tree Officer and deemed acceptable subject to a condition securing the works to be carried out in accordance with the submitted arboricultural method statement.

Other matters

- 6.49 The proposal has been carefully considered by the Thames Valley Police Designing Out Crime Officer and no objections have been raised to the proposal. However, comments have been made regarding the security of the site and measures that could be carried out to improve this. The suggestion for a 2m high fence is noted however this has not been proposed and there is concern that this fencing would have a visual impact on the sensitive National Landscape. The proposal includes security measures of infrared sensors and CCTV which is appropriate for this rural location.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 7.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions. It includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development which means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. However, where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not usually be granted.
- 7.2 For the reasons given in this report it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with current development plan policies and material considerations do not indicate that planning permission should otherwise be refused. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

8. Full Recommendation

- 8.1 To delegate to the Development Manager to GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the conditions listed below.

Conditions

1.	<p>Commencement of development</p> <p>The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.</p> <p>Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).</p>
2.	<p>Approved plans</p> <p>The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents listed below:</p> <p>Site Location Plan RL194-L01 Rev PL2 received 16th January 2025; Site Plan 1 of 2 RL194-L04 Rev PL1 received 23rd December 2024; Site Plan 2 of 2 RL194-L05 Rev PL1 received 23rd December 2024; Site Plan 1 of 9 RL194-L07 Rev PL1 received 5th February 2025; Site Plan 2 of 9 RL194-L08 Rev PL1 received 23rd December 2024; Site Plan 3 of 9 RL194-L09 Rev PL1 received 23rd December 2024; Site Plan 4 of 9 RL194-L10 Rev PL1 received 23rd December 2024; Site Plan 5 of 9 RL194-L11 Rev PL1 received 23rd December 2024; Site Plan 6 of 9 RL194-L12 Rev PL1 received 23rd December 2024; Site Plan 7 of 9 RL194-L13 Rev PL1 received 23rd December 2024; Site Plan 8 of 9 RL194-L14 Rev PL1 received 23rd December 2024;</p>

	<p>Site Plan 9 of 9 RL194-L15 Rev PL1 received 23rd December 2024; Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement 12271-AIA.001 received 23rd December 2024; Ecological Impact Assessment 1427.EcIA.002 received 23rd December 2024; Installation Details Elevations and Layouts RL194-D02 Rev PL3 received 5th February 2025; Installation Details Contractors Compound Details RL194-D03 Rev PL2 received 5th February 2025; Solar Logistics Site Access Routes Plan received 4th March 2025.</p> <p>Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning.</p>
3.	<p>Materials</p> <p>The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall be as specified on the plans and/or the application forms. Where stated that materials shall match the existing, those materials shall match those on the existing development in colour, size and texture.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the appropriate use of external materials. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy SP7 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041, and Supplementary Planning Document Quality Design (June 2006).</p>
4.	<p>Haulage Route</p> <p>The construction/delivery vehicles accessing the site shall be in accordance with the agree site access route plan received 4th March 2025. With the primary route to be used in the first instance (blue); secondary route to be used if there is an issue with the primary route.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure that construction/delivery vehicles accessing the site do not have a negative impact on the highway network. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policy SP19 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041.</p>
5.	<p>Swept Paths</p> <p>Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, no construction activities shall take place until the swept path analysis details have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure there is adequate space for the vehicles to safely manoeuvre, in the interests of highway safety. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policy SP19 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041. A pre-commencement condition is required because insufficient information has been submitted to assess.</p>
6.	<p>Arboricultural Method Statement</p> <p>The Arboricultural Method Statement and tree protection measures within report ref: 12271_AIA.001 dated Dec 2024 shall be implemented in full and tree protection measures and works carried out in accordance with the Assessment. No changes shall be made to the works unless amendments have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall include details of any changes to the implementation, supervision and monitoring of all temporary tree protection and any special construction works within any defined tree protection area.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the protection of trees identified for retention at the site in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies SP8, SP10 and DM15 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041.</p>

7.	<p>Compliance with existing detailed biodiversity method statements, strategies, plans and schemes</p> <p>All ecological measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in “Ecological impact assessment” (December 2024, Blackstone ecology) and “Biodiversity Statement” (December 2024, Blackstone Ecology) as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the Local Planning Authority prior to determination.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure biodiversity enhancements are incorporated into the development. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policy SP11 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041.</p>
8.	<p>Construction Environmental Management Plan</p> <p>No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP shall include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities. (b) Identification of “biodiversity protection zones”. (c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements). (d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features. (e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works. (f) Responsible persons and lines of communication. (g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person. (h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs. <p>The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.</p> <p>Reason: To avoid harm to protected species during demolition/construction and preparatory operations. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SP11 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041. A pre-commencement condition is required because the CEMP will need to be adhered to throughout construction.</p>
9.	<p>Biodiversity measures</p> <p>The solar farm hereby permitted shall not become operational until the following biodiversity measures have been installed/constructed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four bat boxes; - Ten bird nesting opportunities in accordance with details that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. <p>Reason: To ensure biodiversity enhancements are incorporated into the development. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policy SP11 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041.</p>
10.	<p>BNG Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan</p> <p>The development shall not commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP), prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The HMMP shall be prepared to accompany the Biodiversity Gain Plan, and shall be submitted for approval alongside or after the submission for the BGP.</p>

	<p>(NOTE: In accordance with Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, this planning permission is subject to the condition (“the biodiversity gain condition”) that the development may not be begun unless (a) a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and (b) the planning authority has approved the plan. This is deemed to be applied by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and is not replicated on this decision notice. Full details are set out in the informative below.)</p> <p>The HMMP shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) a non-technical summary; (2) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP; (3) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan; (4) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and (5) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority, <p>The details provided in relation to point (5) shall ensure that, as a minimum, monitoring takes place in 2 years, 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, 25 years, 30 years following completion of the development. For the purposes of this condition, completion of development shall be taken as the ‘the installation of 4860 ground mounted photovoltaic panels’</p> <p>No development shall take place until:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (6) the habitat creation and enhancement works set out in the approved HMMP have been completed; and (7) a completion report, evidencing the completed habitat enhancements, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. <p>Notice in writing shall be given to the Council when the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (8) HMMP has been implemented; and (9) habitat creation and enhancement works as set out in the HMMP have been completed. <p>The created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved HMMP shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved HMMP.</p> <p>Monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.</p> <p>Where monitoring identifies the required habitat condition is not being maintained in accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Plan, the submission to the Local Planning Authority shall include any necessary remedial measures, and thereafter any such measures shall be carried out within a timescale agreed with the Local Planning Authority. Supplemental reports may be required pursuant to this condition where necessary.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. A pre-commencement condition is required because the habitat and management arrangements need to be determined before existing habitats are affected.</p>
11.	<p>Lighting strategy (National Landscape/Ecology)</p> <p>No external lighting shall be installed until a lighting strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall:</p>

	<p>(a) Identify those areas on the site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance.</p> <p>(b) Show how and where external lighting will be installed so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species.</p> <p>(c) Include isolux contour diagram(s) of the proposed lighting.</p> <p>(d) Ensure all lighting levels are designed within the limitations of Environmental Lighting Zone 1, as described by the Institute of Lighting Engineers.</p> <p>No external lighting shall be installed in relation to the solar development except in accordance with the above strategy.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure the conservation and enhancement of the biodiversity assets of the site and to conserve the dark night skies of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-24, and Policies SP2, SP8 and SP11 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041.</p>
12.	<p>Soft landscaping</p> <p>The development shall not be brought into use until a detailed soft landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The soft landscaping scheme shall include detailed plans, planting and retention schedule, programme of works, and any other supporting information. All soft landscaping works shall be completed in accordance with the approved soft landscaping scheme within the first planting season following completion of building operations. Any trees, shrubs, plants or hedges planted in accordance with the approved scheme which are removed, die, or become diseased or become seriously damaged within five years of completion of this completion of the approved soft landscaping scheme shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees, shrubs or hedges of a similar size and species to that originally approved.</p> <p>Reason: Landscaping is an integral element of achieving high quality design. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies SP7, SP8 and SP10 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041, and the Quality Design SPD.</p>
13.	<p>Removal when no longer required (restoration)</p> <p>When the development is no longer required all development including buildings, structures, materials and equipment brought on to the land, or works undertaken to it in connection with the use, shall be removed and the land restored to its condition before the development took place.</p> <p>Reason: To preserve the sensitive National Landscape from development when no longer required. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies SP7 and SP8 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041</p>
14.	<p>Plant, machinery and equipment</p> <p>All plant, machinery and equipment installed or operated in connection with the carrying out of this permission shall be so enclosed and/or attenuated that the rating level therefrom does not exceed the existing background noise level when measured in accordance with BS4142:2014+A1:2019.</p> <p>Reason: To protect the occupants of nearby residential properties from noise. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policies DM5 and DM30 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041.</p>
15.	<p>Hours of work</p>

	<p>No demolition or construction works shall take place outside the following hours, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority: 7:30am to 6:00pm Mondays to Fridays; 8:30am to 1:00pm Saturdays; No work shall be carried out at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays.</p> <p>Reason: To safeguard the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers. This condition is applied in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, and Policies DM5 and DM30 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041.</p>
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Informatives

1.	This decision has been made in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development having regard to Development Plan policies and available guidance to secure high quality appropriate development. In this application whilst there has been a need to balance conflicting considerations, the local planning authority has secured and accepted what is considered to be a development which improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.
2.	The development hereby approved results in a requirement to make payments to the Council as part of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) procedure. A Liability Notice setting out further details, and including the amount of CIL payable will be sent out separately from this Decision Notice. You are advised to read the Liability Notice and ensure that a Commencement Notice is submitted to the authority prior to the commencement of the development. Failure to submit the Commencement Notice will result in the loss of any exemptions claimed, and the loss of any right to pay by instalments, and additional costs to you in the form of surcharges. For further details see the website at www.westberks.gov.uk/cil
3.	BNG required
4.	HI3
5.	HI4
6.	I10
7.	I12
8.	I14