

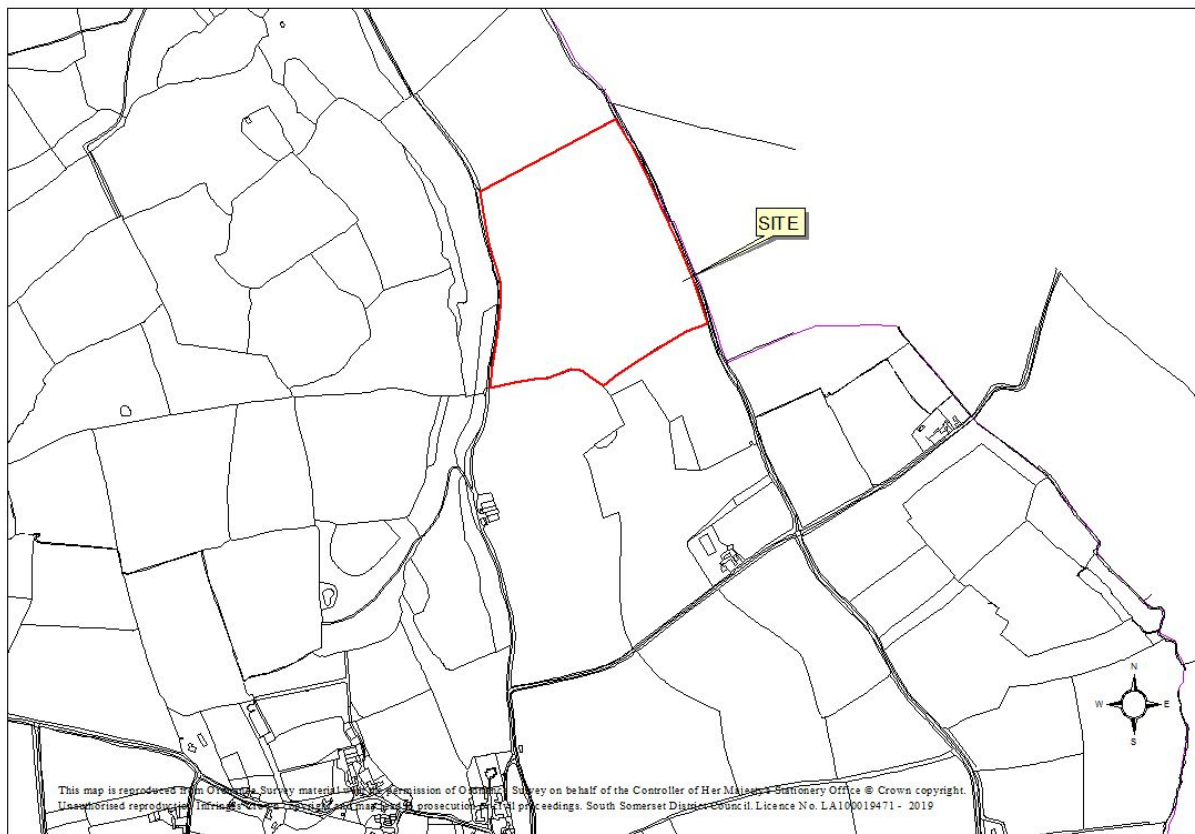
## Officer Report on Planning Application: 19/01786/FUL

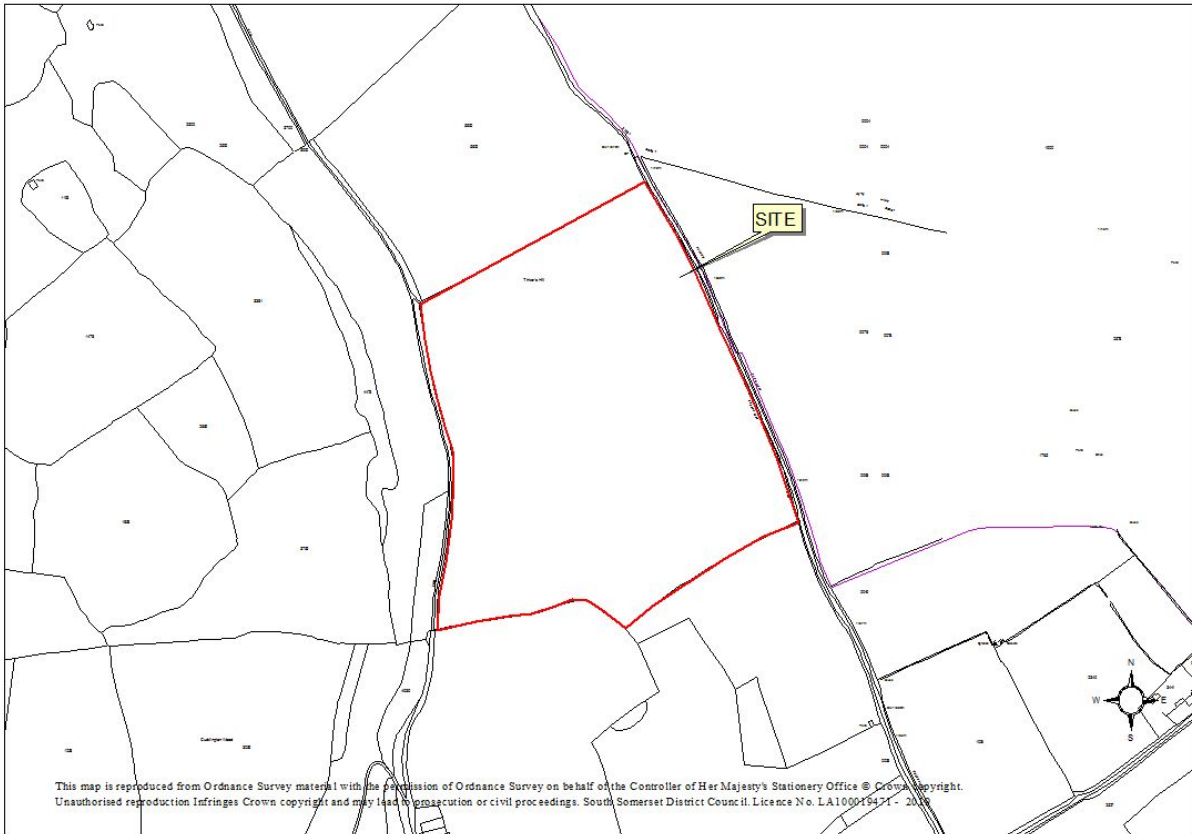
<b>Proposal :</b>	Installation of a CCTV camera system comprising of a network of wooden pole mounted cameras, related cabinets and ducting, plus ancillary and related equipment.
<b>Site Address:</b>	Clapton Farm Solar Park, Land At Clapton Farm House, Tinkers Lane, Cucklington
<b>Parish:</b>	Cucklington
<b>TOWER Ward (SSDC Member)</b>	Cllr R Bastable
<b>Recommending Case Officer:</b>	David Kenyon Tel: 01935 462091 Email: david.kenyon@southsomerset.gov.uk
<b>Target date :</b>	26th September 2019
<b>Applicant :</b>	Clapton Farm Solar Park Ltd
<b>Agent: (no agent if blank)</b>	Mr Philip Saunders Savills Wessex House Wimborne Minster BH21 1PB
<b>Application Type :</b>	Major Other f/space 1,000 sq.m or 1 ha+

### REASON FOR REFERRAL

The application is referred to Committee in terms of the Council's Scheme of Delegation as it comprises a large scale major development proposal ("Major"). Third party objections have been received.

### SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL





The application site is located within open countryside, a little less than 1 km north of Cucklington and 1 km south of the A303's interchange with the B3081. The application site comprises a single agricultural field with its eastern boundary adjacent to Tinker's Lane. The site's north eastern corner is close to Tinker's Lane junction with the B3081. The site's western boundary aligns with a Restricted Byway, an historic drove way.

The site is enclosed by established hedgerow and located on a plateau falling in a west to east direction. The land to the west beyond the site slopes steeply down, whereat there are extensive views out over the Blackmore Vale, whereas to the east and south is undulating with a gradual slope eastward and again, extensive views.

Planning permission was granted, on 17th November 2015, for the erection of a 5 MW solar photovoltaic array and associated works and infrastructure for a temporary period of 25 years (application ref. 15/03373/FUL). The works included:

- o Framework and solar panels 0.5m to 2.8m in height with up-right piled supports to a depth of 1.2m.
- o 4 no. inverter stations comprising several different structures having an overall area extending to 14.7m by 4.6 and height of 2.3m.
- o 2 no. switchgear 6m by 3m and 3.27 above ground level.
- o Spares container 2.3m by 1.2m and 2.9m high.
- o Access arrangements off the existing field access from Tinker's Lane.
- o 2m high security fencing around the boundaries of the solar array.
- o 5 no. CCTV on 6m high pole mounted - 4 no. thermal imaging cameras and 1 no. fixed day/night camera. To date, these cameras have not been erected / installed.

A subsequent S73 application permitted the 25 years to run from the connection date (31st March 2017) rather than from the date of the 2015 permission. This means the solar park shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition by 31st March 2042.

The actual extent of the solar panels is contained within the eastern half of the field and covers 5.3 hectares. The majority of the site is classed Grade 3b agricultural land while 2 hectares (out of 5.3 hectares on which the solar array has been erected) is classed 3a agricultural land.

To date, the approved development has been implemented and completed except for the approved 5 no. CCTV; these cameras have not been erected / installed. The original permission allowed for the siting of 4 no. thermal imaging cameras and 1 no. fixed day/night camera around the peripheries of the site, mounted on 6 metres high galvanised steel poles. Amendments to slightly vary the siting of the 5 no. camera positions and to erect said cameras on 3 metres high posts constructed of solid timber (oak) have been agreed as non-material amendments on 28th November 2019. The cameras that were approved as part of the original 2015 permission are not going to be installed.

The current application seeks full planning permission to install a CCTV camera system comprising of fifteen wooden poles, each measuring three metres in height, around the perimeter of the solar array site on which an infrared camera system and ancillary equipment would be installed, together with ducting linking to a CCTV control cabinet to be located within the solar array site itself. These proposed 15 no. cameras would be in addition to the 5 no. cameras approved on 28th November 2019. The proposed control cabinet would measure 0.6m x 0.6m x 0.58m high, coloured light grey, and designed to fit under an existing solar panel.

Development would be located entirely within the site's existing boundaries and there would be no impact on trees or hedgerows.

No external lighting is proposed that would be visible to the naked eye (infrared, non-visible lighting is proposed at night time). The location of the camera columns has been designed to ensure perimeter coverage of this large site. The submitted drawings nos. 26377-1-B and 26377-1-C show that the visual recording envelope of the proposed 15 no. cameras, as well as the 5 no. cameras approved in November 2019, would not extend outside the immediate boundaries of the solar park site. Only once an intruder has been identified by the infrared camera detection system could a verbal challenge be made via a speaker mounted on the camera pole. This would act as a real time response to any unauthorised access.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

15/01091/EIASS - Proposed Installation of a photovoltaic array - EIA not required.

15/03373/FUL. The erection of solar photovoltaic panels and associated works and infrastructure, including switchgear, inverter stations, access tracks, security fencing, security cameras, grid connection, together with temporary construction access, compound and unloading area.

Conditional approval 17.11.2015 - 25 years temporary permission.

15/04696/FUL. Cable route application in association with the solar farm application 15/03373/FUL at Clapton Farm (cable connection between the solar park and national grid connecting point).

Conditional approval 10.12.2015.

16/04071/NMA. Application for a non-material amendment to planning application 15/03373/FUL (Solar PV panels) with amended drawings 1171-0201-00 issue 13 (layout) 1171-0205-03 issue 01 (fencing detail) 1171-0206-09 issue 01 (mounting detail) and 1171-0207-14 issue 01 (inverter station).

This application sought to alter the approval by:

- o Reducing the number of panels from 21,978 panels to 19,008;
- o Altering the degree of the panels to 22 rather than 15- 20 degrees;
- o Varying spacing of the rows 2.47m to 2.95m rather than the fixed 2m spacing gaps; and
- o Two inverters rather than 4 being more than halved in length, 6.06m rather than 15.18m, but slightly higher 2.9m rather than 2.4m and wider 2.44m rather than 2.05.

Agreed 10.10.2016.

17/00372/NMA. Application for a Non Material Amendment to planning permission 15/03373/FUL for amendments to the inverter stations, panel angles and spares container.

This application sought to alter the approval by:

- o Reducing the number of inverters stations from four to three, with two placed in the same location;
- o Confirming panel angles at a 15 degree angle and up to a height of 2.4m; and
- o Providing spares container details.

Agreed 27.01.2017.

17/00512/S73. S73 application to vary the wording of Condition 4 of approval 15/03373/FUL to provide a time frame of 25 years.

Temporary permission for 25 years had been given from the date of the original permission, i.e. 17 November 2015 application ref 15/03373/FUL. This S73 application sought to vary condition 4 so that the 25 years would run from the connection date, namely 31 March 2017, rather than the date of the original planning permission.

Conditional approval 18.04.2017 subject to a condition that the development shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition within 25 years of 31 March 2017 (i.e. by 31st March 2042) or within 6 months of the cessation of the use of the solar farm for the generation of electricity, whichever is the sooner, in accordance with a restoration plan to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

17/02841/FUL. Buried high voltage connection cable for solar farm (revision to approval 15/04696/FUL) - retrospective.

Conditional approval 06.10.2017.

17/02943/NMA. Application for a Non Material Amendment to 15/03373/FUL for the installation of a farmer's gate and change of design to perimeter fencing.

This application sought to alter the approval by:

- o Inserting a farmer's gate at the north-east corner of solar farm; and
- o Changing the design of the perimeter fencing from deer mesh to panel mesh.

Agreed 11.08.2017.

18/03338/S73A. Application to vary conditions 02 (approved plans), 03 (Landscape and Ecology Management Plan) and 10 (landscape planting scheme) on 15/03373/FUL to allow changes to landscaping as shown on drawing number 694-03S.

Conditional approval 14.12.2018.

19/03213/NMA. Non Material Amendments to planning approvals 15/03373/FUL and 18/03338/S73A to allow for the relocation of the 5 approved security cameras and their reduction in height and change in materials/ appearance.

This application sought to alter the approvals by:

- o Slightly varying the siting of the 5 camera positions; and
- o Erect said cameras on 3 metres high posts constructed of solid timber (oak) instead of the approved 6 metres high galvanised steel poles.

Agreed 28.11.2019.

## **POLICY**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), and Paragraphs 2, 11, 12, and 14 of the NPPF states that applications are to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of determining current applications the Local Planning Authority considers that the adopted development plan comprises the policies of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006 2028 (adopted March 2015).

### **Policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 -2028)**

SD1 - Sustainable Development  
EQ1 - Addressing Climate Change in South Somerset  
EQ2 - General Development  
EQ4 - Biodiversity  
EQ5 - Green Infrastructure  
EQ7 - Pollution Control  
EP5 - Farm Diversification  
TA5 - Transport Impact of new development  
TA6 - Parking Standards

### **National Planning Policy Framework - February 2019**

Chapter 2 - Achieving sustainable development  
Chapter 4 - Decision-making  
Chapter 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy  
Chapter 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities  
Chapter 11 - Making effective use of land  
Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed places  
Chapter 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change  
Chapter 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

### **National Planning Practice Guidance**

#### **Policy-related Material Considerations**

Somerset County Council Parking Strategy (September 2013)  
Somerset County Council Highways Development Control - Standing Advice (June 2017)

## **CONSULTATIONS**

**Cucklington Parish Meeting:** No observations to make.

**Pen Selwood Parish Council:** No objections.

**Bourton Parish Council:** No comments made.

**Dorset Council:** No objections.

#### **SDDC Environmental Protection Unit:**

It is understood that there have been concerns regarding noise from the on-site audio challenge system. Having reviewed the system and it is extremely unlikely to cause a nuisance to the nearest residential property.

**Highways Authority:** Standing advice applies.

**SDDC Highway Consultant:** No highways issues - no objection.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

58 third parties have been notified, a site notice displayed and an advertisement has been placed in the local newspaper. Six representations objecting to the application have been received and are set out in full on the website. The objections can be summarised as follows, in no particular order:

- No identified need to add another pole mounted camera and loudspeaker security system.
- Increased detriment to visual amenity. The erection of 20 poles of 3 metres in height along with cameras etc. will undoubtedly have a greater impact on the local landscape and will make the solar park appear industrialised and like a prison camp.
- The raised cameras and the loudspeakers would be intrusive. There is no guarantee as to what would be recorded on the cameras and how the data would be handled once captured and volume from the loudspeakers would represent a noise nuisance.
- Any permission for this proposal would set a precedent for more additions to be applied for.
- Natural darkness and silence at night must be retained in the interests of wildlife.

An additional representation has been submitted from an adjoining landowner wishing to be assured that there will be no overlooking of his land by the CCTV system and thus an invasion of privacy.

## **RESPONSE TO REPRESENTATIONS**

In response to the objections that have been raised, the agent has provided the following comments:

### *The need for CCTV / security measures*

Clapton Solar Farm is permitted to operate until 2042 and the owners wish to install security measures given the recent increase in thefts from solar farms nationwide. The measures being proposed seek to deter intruders, ensure public safety and meet new insurance requirements. The introduction of such a security system is now commonplace across many solar farms in the UK. Indeed, CCTV measures (6 metre high galvanised steel poles) were previously approved in the original application 15/03373/FUL, Therefore there is a precedent for this application to be found acceptable.

In order to meet stringent insurance requirements it is now necessary to ensure that the CCTV system proposed provides full perimeter coverage, hence the number of poles around the perimeter of the site. Insurance requirements also necessitate that an audio challenge facility be installed (loudspeakers) which would only be activated upon unauthorised entry by an intruder.

### *Camera and loudspeaker operation details*

Submitted drawing no. 26377 shows that the recording envelope of the CCTV cameras would not penetrate outside of the immediate solar farm boundaries and therefore there would be no risk of privacy infringement. The nearest house lies approximately 380 metres away. The nearest public right of way lies 150 metres to the west of the site and walkers would be unaffected. The proposed cameras would have a fixed field of vision directed along the perimeter and inwards towards the solar farm.

The audio challenge facility would only be used when the CCTV system has identified an unauthorised intruder, hopefully an infrequent / non-occurring event. Therefore the risk of any noise pollution is minimal.

Information on the audio challenge facility:

Audio Challenge Facility - This system will also include an on-site audio challenge facility. This part of the system would be used should persons be seen on the site, enabling the control room to warn potential intruders or vandals that they are being viewed on a live CCTV system and, if necessary, the relevant authorities will be called. This is not a pre-recorded system and is a controller speaking to the site.

1 x 70 Watt Amplifier with 100 Volt output, including three independent inputs.  
9 x IP66 rated external 100 Volt Horn PA speakers not exceeding 84dB. The volume can be controlled remotely and will be set at commissioning. They do not emit an alarm, only used for voice challenge upon detecting intruders. This is an insurance requirement.

Recordings: Footage will be recorded 24/7, and stored for 31 days, after which it will be overwritten.

#### *Camera pole visibility*

The poles have purposefully been selected to be 'green oak', which will be light brown / grey in colour. Wooden posts have been chosen given that they will better blend into the landscape compared with a galvanised steel alternative. There is also a degree of landscaping / screening between the solar farm and the nearest houses minimising views of the solar farm.

#### *Lighting*

No lighting visible to the naked eye is proposed. Infrared lighting, which is invisible to the naked eye, is proposed for CCTV intruder detection purposes only.

#### *Proximity to housing*

The nearest isolated house appears to be approximately 380 metres away and is surrounded by mature trees / vegetation. Otherwise, the nearest villages of West Bourton and Cucklington are located approximately 600 metres and 780 metres away respectively. At these distances, and with intervening landscaping / trees, any views would be minimal.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Principle of Development**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that, when determining planning applications for renewable and low-carbon development, local planning authorities should approve the application if the impacts are (or can be made) acceptable (paragraph 154 of the NPPF).

Local Plan Policy EQ1 is applicable in considering renewable energy proposals. Bullet point 3 states that 'Development of renewable and low carbon energy generation will be encouraged and permitted, providing there are no significant adverse impacts upon residential and visual amenity, landscape character, designated heritage assets, and biodiversity.' Policy EQ2 also refers to the need to safeguard landscape character of the area and visual appearance is clearly a weighty matter in considering environmental harm.

Permission exists for the establishment and operation of a solar array on the application site until 31st March 2042. This includes, not only the solar panels, associated switchgear and inverter buildings associated with such operations and 2 metre high security fencing around the solar site, but also 4 thermal imaging cameras and a fixed day/night camera, each installed on 6 metres high galvanised steel poles. Amendments have subsequently been agreed to slightly vary the siting of the 5 no. camera positions and to erect said cameras on 3 metres high posts constructed of solid timber (oak). None of the cameras and poles have to date been installed.

Mindful that it has been established that a solar array and its associated infrastructure are

acceptable in this location and that such development has now been implemented, it is considered that further items and equipment associated with the solar array, such as that currently being proposed, are also acceptable in principle. Nevertheless, any permission granted for the proposed CCTV camera system should not be permanent but should reflect the same temporary time period as currently exists for the solar farm as a whole, i.e. to be removed by 31st March 2042. Similar to conditions relating to the main solar farm itself, a condition can be imposed to require the site's restoration following cessation of its approved use should the site become redundant.

On this basis the principle of the proposed development is considered acceptable. Accordingly the main considerations for this application relate to landscape character and visual appearance and residential amenity.

### **Landscape Character and Visual Amenity**

The current proposal seeks the erection of a greater number of cameras than originally approved in November 2015. However, notwithstanding the numbers being proposed, this proposal seeks consent for the cameras to be fixed on poles which would be half the height of what has been previously approved and using poles constructed of timber, rather than steel.

Whilst these poles would be visible within the landscape, it is considered that their impact would not be so significant, when viewed alongside the 2 metre high security fencing and solar array as a whole, as to cause a demonstrable harm to the rural character and appearance of the immediate locality in general. In addition there would be negligible, if any, impact on the landscape within the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Beauty which is slightly more than 1 km away from the application site.

The proposed CCTV control cabinet, by virtue of its size and siting within the solar area itself, would have little or no visual impact on the wider landscape character.

As such, it is considered that the proposed wooden poles and cameras and the control cabinet would be viewed in the context of the solar farm as a whole and would not, by themselves, cause significant and demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area as to justify a refusal of planning permission. As stated above, a condition is recommended requiring their removal at the same time as the rest of the solar park development.

### **Residential amenity**

There are no dwellings in close proximity to the site so that it is not considered that harm would result for the amenity of the residents.

Concerns have been raised about possible invasion of privacy for adjoining landowners if the cameras are angled to view onto surrounding land and possible noise pollution as a result of loudspeakers.

In response to the first concern the agent has stated categorically that the recording envelope of the CCTV cameras would not penetrate outside of the immediate solar farm boundaries and therefore there would be no risk of privacy infringement. Also, that the proposed cameras would have a fixed field of vision directed along the perimeter and inwards towards the solar farm. This is indicated on the submitted drawings nos. 26377-1-B and 26377-1-C. It is recommended that a condition is imposed ensuring that the field of vision of each camera is fixed as indicated on said submitted drawings and there is no subsequent variation to allow a greater field of vision for any of the cameras without the prior written approval of the LPA.

Regarding the second concern, again the agent has responded to this by stating that the audio challenge facility would only be used when the CCTV system has identified an unauthorised intruder. Hopefully this would not be on a regular basis but rather an infrequent / non-occurring



event. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has been consulted. Whilst noting the concerns expressed regarding noise from the on-site audio challenge system, having reviewed the system he advises that the proposed CCTV system would be extremely unlikely to cause a nuisance to the nearest residential property.

Mindful of the comments of the Environmental Health Officer, it is considered that the proposal would not cause unacceptable noise detriment to the area. Nevertheless, a condition is recommended permitting the proposed on-site audio challenge facility but to ensure that no other form of audible alarm shall be installed on the site without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

### **Other matters**

This proposal does not raise any material concerns in relation to highway safety, flood risk or biodiversity. Nor would there be any harm caused to any designated heritage assets.

Concern has been raised by third parties as to how data recorded by the cameras would be handled. This is not considered to be an overriding material planning consideration and, indeed, was not considered to be an overriding consideration when permission was granted in 2015 for cameras to be installed at the site.

### **Conclusion**

The proposal to install a CCTV camera system, comprising of a network of 20 wooden pole mounted cameras, a control cabinet, ducting and other small ancillary and related equipment, all in association with the existing solar array development for the same temporary period as the solar park itself would respect the character of the area and would cause no demonstrable harm to landscape character and visual amenity, neighbour amenity, highway safety, flood risk or biodiversity. As such, the proposal is in accordance with the aims and objectives of the NPPF and Policies SD1, EQ1, EQ2, EQ4, EQ5, EQ7, TA6 and TA6 of the South Somerset Local Plan and the application is recommended for approval.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Permission be granted for the following reason:

01. The proposal to install a CCTV camera system, comprising of a network of 20 wooden pole mounted cameras, a control cabinet, ducting and other small ancillary and related equipment, all in association with the existing solar array development for the same temporary period as the solar park itself would respect the character of the area and would cause no demonstrable harm to landscape character and visual amenity, neighbour amenity, highway safety, flood risk or biodiversity. As such, the proposal is in accordance with the aims and objectives of the NPPF and Policies SD1, EQ1, EQ2, EQ4, EQ5, EQ7, TA6 and TA6 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

### **SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:**

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

Reason: To accord with the provisions of section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:

Drawing no. 1088-0200-01: Site Boundary Plan

Drawing no. 26377-1-B: CCTV Layout - Site Layout - Planning Application (Proposed Additions)

Drawing no. 26377-1-C: CCTV Layout - Site Layout - Planning Application (Overall Security Design)

Drawing no. GBSG SD-1B: GBSG Standard Detail - Wooden Post Detail

Brochure: IP55 Outdoor Wall Mounting Cabinets, DS-CW55 Series

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

03. The development hereby permitted shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition within 25 years of 31 March 2017 or within 6 months of the cessation of the use of the solar farm for the generation of electricity, whichever is the sooner, in accordance with a restoration plan to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The restoration plan will need to include all the works necessary to revert the site to open agricultural land including the removal of all the structures, materials and any ancillary equipment which shall be removed from the site.

Reason: In the interests of character and appearance further to Policy EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006- 2028.

04. No CCTV equipment or other cameras shall be installed on the site other than those shown on the submitted drawings nos. 26377-1-B and 26377-1-C, in accordance with the CCTV design details submitted with the application.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to safeguard the character and appearance of the landscape in accordance with the aims of the NPPF and Policy EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

05. Each camera hereby permitted shall have a fixed field of vision, being angled and of a visual range as indicated on the submitted drawings nos. 26377-1-B and 26377-1-C and there shall be no subsequent variation to allow a greater field and range of vision for any of the camera without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity and to safeguard the rural character of the setting in accordance with the aims of the NPPF and Policy EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

06. Other than the on-site audio challenge facility (described in the agent's email dated 5th November 2019) forming part of the security system hereby permitted, no other form of audible alarm shall be installed on the site without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to safeguard the rural character of the setting in accordance with the aims of the NPPF and Policies EQ2 and EQ7 of the South Somerset Local Plan.