

Cobwood Solar Voltaic Farm Proposals – Joint Response



We fully support renewable energy projects in principle and recognise their importance to our environment. However, this is provided that any such projects are sited in an appropriate location and include suitable mitigations so as to minimise any impact during the construction, operational and reinstatement phases.

We recognise that the proposals are situated on land that is classified as 3B and so is not prime agricultural land.

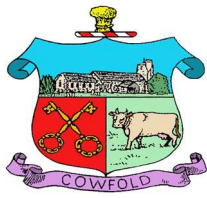
We recognise too that the applicants did request an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion from HDC and that they responded that an EIA was not required. That was very disappointing, particularly as an EIA would almost certainly have been required if the capacity of the scheme had been 50MW or more. There must therefore be a suspicion that the applicant has deliberately limited the capacity of the scheme, in so far as they have actually done so, save on paper, specifically to avoid the need for an EIA. That does not sit well with local residents.

Our concerns primarily relate to traffic management during the construction phase and the environmental impact during the operational life of the project. We note that access to the sites is via the A272 and minor roads. Littleworth Lane and Stonehouse Lane to the Southern Location and Burnthouse Lane to the Northern Location. It should be noted that the A272 in this area has been subject to numerous accidents, some fatal, over past years, the last one, thankfully not fatal, as recent as 18 January 2024.

We ask for specific assurances on the following points: -

Construction phase

1. A detailed traffic management plan should be provided as part of the initial submission and that this should include concise information as to how;
 - a. Vehicles will be controlled on Littleworth Lane, Stonehouse Lane and Burnthouse Lane.
 - b. Vehicle access to and from the A272 will be managed.
2. A commitment that there will be no construction activity outside the hours stated on the initial planning application.
3. A full plan as to how the roads will be kept clean including the management of any run off water as a result of any cleaning processes.
4. Ensure that no Heavy Goods Vehicles associated with the project enter the Cowfold Air Quality Management Area.



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Operational Phase

1. The applicant to volunteer a full independent EIA, whether or not this is a requirement, with evidence-based projections giving the specific levels of biodiversity net gain to be achieved.
2. Specific screening proposals to provide for minimal loss of amenity for those properties in the immediate vicinity.
3. Consideration to be given to securing free electricity for the benefit of those few properties most directly impacted by the proposed development in that they are surrounded on at least three sides by this proposed solar farm. We would suggest that for the avoidance of doubt, the properties should be identified at the outset.
4. Carry out and publish an independent full 24hour/7day acoustic assessment , prior to commencement, to establish a true ambient noise baseline.

Reinstatement Phase

1. The land to be reinstated, at the end of service or at the end of the term, whichever is the sooner, to its former state. The performance of this to be guaranteed by a Dynamic Decommissioning Bond.
2. The land then to revert to agricultural use.

Long Term Benefit

We propose that a commitment is given to fund the installation of a permanent 40mph speed limit. Specifically, along the A272 starting to the West of Park Lane, running Eastwards to meet the 30MPH limit at Cowfold. This should be in place before any construction can commence.

Cowfold Parish Council
West Grinstead Parish Council