

Dear Members

Special Planning Committee (Large Scale Major Application)

A special meeting of the Planning Committee will be held in the **Craddock Room, Civic Suite, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford** on **Thursday 25 June 2026** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded.

The Committee will meet at the rear of the Civic Centre and depart at **9.30am** to visit the site(s) as set out in the agenda and re-convene at the Civic Centre at approximately **11.30am** to determine the application(s).

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown in each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.



Head of Law and Governance

**SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
(LARGE SCALE MAJOR APPLICATION)
25 JUNE 2026**

**Chairman - Councillor B McKeown
Vice-Chairman - Councillor S N Spencer**

AGENDA

1	Apologies	
2	Declaration of Member's Interests/Lobbying	
3	Planning Applications	Page Nos 3 - 81

MEMBERSHIP

Chairman - Councillor B McKeown

B M Cross
P C Edgeller
A D Hobbs
J Hood
R A James
P W Jones

B McKeown
A R McNaughton
D M McNaughton
A J Sandiford
S N Spencer

SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2026

Ward Interest - Nil

Planning Applications

Report of Head of Economic Development and Planning

Purpose of Report

To consider the following planning applications, the reports for which are set out in the attached **APPENDIX**:-

		Page Nos
23/37149/FUL	Land East of Horsley Hall Wincote Lane, Wootton	4 - 81
	This application has been referred to the Planning Committee because the development is a large scale major application	
	Officer Contact - (Richard Wood, Development Lead) Telephone 01785 619324	

Previous Consideration

Nil

Background Papers

Planning application files are available for Members to inspect, by prior arrangement, in the Development Management Section. The applications including the background papers, information and correspondence received during the consideration of the application, consultation replies, neighbour representations are scanned and are available to view on the Council website.

Application:	23/37149/FUL
Case Officer:	Ed Handley
Date Registered:	21 February 2023
Target Decision Date:	23 May 2023
Extended To:	28 June 2024
Address:	Land East of Horsley Hall, Wincote Lane, Wootton
Ward:	Eccleshall
Parish:	Eccleshall
Proposal:	Construction of a ground mounted solar farm with associated infrastructure
Applicant:	GSI Wincote Ltd
Recommendation:	Approve, subject to conditions

Reason for Referral to Committee

This application has been referred to the Planning Committee because the development is a large-scale major application which the Council's Constitution specifies is to be determined by the Planning Committee.

Context

1 Site and surroundings

- 1.1 The application site comprises agricultural land to the southwest of Eccleshall which extends approximately 43 hectares in area which has been used for arable farming. The site is made up of six distinct fields which are generally bound by hedgerows; the five fields to the north of Wincote Lane are hereafter referred to as parcel A and the field to the northeast of Cash Lane is hereafter referred to as parcel B. With regard to the application site boundary, parcels A and B are joined by a thin strip of land which would contain the connecting cabling and a temporary construction access route.

- 1.2 The site contains ponds as well as small areas of woodland; and numerous hedgerows containing trees as well as a small number of isolated trees within the fields. Parcel A is described as flat to gently sloping with a drop of around 13m across the site towards the southwest. Parcel B generally slopes down to the northwest by approximately 12m across the site.
- 1.3 The application site includes area which are classified as having varying degrees of impact risk for great crested newts; green, amber, and red.
- 1.4 The site is within 2km of Cop Mere, part of the Midland Meres and Mosses RAMSAR site; and is within impact risk zones for various Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Cop Mere, Loynton Moss, Doley Common, Doxey and Tillington Marshes, Allimore Green Common, Aqualate Mere, Newport Canal, Bishops Wood, and Burnt Wood are all within 10km).
- 1.5 The site is wholly within flood zone 1 and contains a parcel of land which is included within the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record (ridge and furrow earthworks);
- 1.6 The site is located in National Character Area 61 (Shropshire, Cheshire, and Staffordshire Plain), an expanse of flat or gently undulating lush, pastoral farmland. Characteristic features of the of the surroundings include the irregular pattern of fields with generally well-maintained boundaries (predominantly hedgerows), contributing to a particularly rural character with features including small winding country lanes, large farmsteads, and mature hedgerow oaks.
- 1.7 Two public rights of way intersect the site, one (Eccleshall 149) adjacent to the northwest boundary of parcel A and one (Eccleshall 118) adjacent to the southeast boundary of parcel B.
- 1.8 An overhead line also runs through both parcels of land.
- 1.9 There are four listed buildings within the vicinity of the application site: Cash Farmhouse, Hill Crest, and Johnson Hall and the associated lodge building.
- 1.10 The site is within the area covered by the Eccleshall Neighbourhood Plan.

2 Proposed development

- 2.1 This application is for a 44MW (DC peak) solar farm with an export capacity of 30.25MW (AC output). Solar Voltaic (SV) panels would be arranged in rows facing south, supported on galvanised steel frames with a maximum height of 2.7m above ground. Each row would be separated by between 2.5m - 3.5m.
- 2.2 A single gated access would be provided into each parcel of land, with a crushed stone access track leading to each separate field.

- 2.3 The access track in parcel A would lead to a site compound containing a control building, two substations, and a spare parts container, as well as 6 transformers within the various fields - 4 in Parcel A and 2 in Parcel B.
- 2.4 The existing ponds would be retained and five attenuation basins would be provided alongside landscaping comprising new tree and hedgerow planting with a mix of grass, general purpose meadow mix, and scrub planting. Grassland corridors would be provided around the perimeter of each field and on the line of public rights of way and overhead lines.
- 2.5 A temporary construction access route would be provided between the two parcels of land to facilitate a one-way system for traffic entering and leaving the site.
- 2.6 The Distribution Network Operator (DNO) substation would house a metering room and electrical gear whilst the customer substation would house electrical switch gear and auxiliary transformer. The transformer housing units across the site would each house a low voltage switchboard, medium voltage switchboard, and data station. The applicant states that these elements of infrastructure would be constructed from steel or glass reinforced polyester (GRP) in a recessive colour; dimensions of the proposed infrastructure would be as follows;
- Customer substation: 8.4m (L) x 2.7m (W) x 2.3m (H)
 - Spare parts container: 12.2m (L) x 2.45m (W) x 2.8m (H)
 - DNO substation: 3.9m (L) x 3.3m (W) x 2.6m (H)
 - Control building: 4.8m (L) x 2.8m (W) x 2.85m (H)
 - Transformer unit: 6.3m (L) x 2.7m (W) x 3.2m (H)
- 2.7 The two parcels of land would be connected via underground cables.
- 2.8 Fencing is proposed to the perimeter of the parcels of land, comprising 2m high deer fencing.
- 2.9 Remote monitored CCTV cameras are proposed around the perimeter of the two parcels of land, separated by 50m-100m intervals; these would be directed to face internally into the site.
- 2.10 The application is supported by the following documents:
- Covering letter
 - Design and access statement
 - Design and access summary

- Decommissioning plan
- Ecological impact assessment
- Ecological addendum note
- Flood risk assessment and drainage management strategy
- Sustainable drainage system (SuDS) maintenance and management plan
- Glint and glare assessment
- Historic environment assessment
- Landscape visual impact assessment (LVIA)
- Noise assessment
- Preliminary geotechnical assessment
- Transport assessment
- Transport technical note
- Agricultural land assessment
- Agricultural best and most versatile (BMV) land summary
- Biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment
- Statement of community involvement
- Arboricultural impact assessment
- Various statements from the applicant written in response to representations made by consultees

3 Legislation and planning policy framework

- 3.1 The proposal would generate less than the 50MW of electricity which comprises the threshold for the development to be determined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

- 3.2 The proposal also falls within the threshold under Schedule 2, 3 (a) Energy Industry of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017 as the site exceeds 0.5 hectares. An assessment of the proposal has been undertaken following its validation. On the basis of the application details submitted, it is concluded that the proposal is not likely to have significant effects on the environment having regard to the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the Regulations and the proposal is therefore not considered to represent EIA development.
- 3.3 The Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended) sets a legally binding target to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions 100% from their 1990 level by 2050, this is known as the net zero target. During 2021 the Government made a commitment to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 when compared with 1990 levels, in part through the provision of up to 70GW of capacity in solar energy production.
- 3.4 Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that decisions are made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.5 For the purposes of consideration of this application, the development plan comprises The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 (TPSB) and the Eccleshall Neighbourhood Plan.

4 Other guidance

- 4.1 There have been a number of Government policy statements and commitments produced in relation to energy and climate change in recent years. These include the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021), which sets an ambition for the UK to be powered entirely by clean energy by 2035, subject to security of supply. This is against the background of a predicted 40-60% increase in demand.
- 4.2 There is also a need to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels in the interests of energy security and to ensure less volatile energy prices for UK consumers. The British Energy Security Strategy (2022) sets out the strategy to achieve this. It notes the expectation of increasing solar power fivefold by 2035.
- 4.3 Design Midlands have been commissioned by the Council to provide advice on the merits of the proposed development; their comments are given consideration throughout this report.
- 4.4 Other guidance documents relevant to the proposal includes the following:
- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)
 - National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)

- BRE Planning guidance for the development of large-scale ground mounted solar PV systems
- BRE agricultural good practice guidance for solar farms
- BRE National Solar Centre biodiversity guidance for solar developments
- House of Commons Library: Planning and solar farms (July 2023)
- House of Commons Library: Planning for solar farms (February 2024)

Officer Assessment - Key Considerations

5 Principle of development

- 5.1 The Energy White Paper (December 2020) sets the aim of a fully decarbonised, reliable and low-cost power system by 2035. A net-zero consistent electricity system is most likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar power, although these renewable sources would likely need to be supplemented with other technologies such as nuclear, gas with carbon capture, storage, and batteries.
- 5.2 According to the House of Commons Library: Planning and solar farms (July 2023), 'The British Energy Security Strategy' (April 2022) provided further detail on the last government's proposals for reducing its reliance on imported fossil fuels and accelerating its deployment of domestic sources of energy. One of the aims set out in the Strategy was to "ramp up" the deployment of both rooftop and ground-mounted solar systems. That government said it intended to achieve a fivefold increase in solar power by 2035 (from a capacity of 14GW to 70GW).
- 5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 11 requires decision-taking to be made without delay where proposals accord with an up-to-date development plan. Paragraph 124 also recognises that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.
- 5.4 Paragraph 161 of the NPPF states that:

"The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure".

- 5.5 Paragraph 168(a) of the NPPF then explains that local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy developments when determining planning applications.
- 5.6 The Plan for Stafford Borough contains overarching policies and principles, all of which are set under the umbrella of the purpose of the planning system being able to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as set within Spatial Principle (SP) 1 and section 2 of the Framework.
- 5.7 SP6(v) gives support to rural sustainability through protecting and enhancing the environmental assets and character of the Borough whilst sustaining the social and economic fabric of its communities that can be achieved by promoting use of sources for renewable energy.
- 5.8 Furthermore, policy E2(ix) explains that support will be given to rural sustainability by encouraging provision for renewable energy generation in rural areas outside of settlements identified in SP3 and outside the green belt, in accordance with policy N3. However, policy E2 seeks the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV) by using areas of poorer quality land in preference to higher quality land for new development as stipulated under criterion (xi). Further to this, policy E2 (v) seeks to support the diversification of the agricultural economy.
- 5.9 Policy N3 states that the development of schemes for the generation of renewable energy will be supported where there is no harm to residential amenity; limited adverse impacts on townscape, landscape, and heritage assets; no harmful environmental impacts such as emissions, noise, or water environment; and where the application is accompanied by decommissioning conditions to allow the site to be restored following cessation of energy production.
- 5.10 The NPPF defines the best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV) as being in grades 1, 2, and 3a. Poorer agricultural land is defined within grades 3b, 4, and 5. The National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3) advises that poorer quality of land should be preferred to higher quality land and that BMV should be avoided where possible.
- 5.11 Government guidance, set out in the National Policy Statement for renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3), advises that solar farms are one of the most established renewable electricity technologies in the UK and the cheapest form of electricity generation; furthermore, they can be built quickly and therefore are likely to play a key role in Government's net zero target. EN-3 advises that the key considerations involved in the siting of a solar farm are likely to be influenced by the following:
- Irradiance and site topography.

- Proximity of a site to dwellings (visual amenity and glint and glare).
- Accessibility (access routes).
- Public rights of way (retain routes and, where possible minimise impacts on visual outlook).
- Security and lighting.
- Network connection.

- 5.12 In addressing the house of Commons on 18 July 2024, the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero stated that credible external estimates suggest that ground mounted solar used just 0.1% of the nation's land in 2022 and that the biggest threat to nature and food security was not solar panels or onshore wind, but the climate crisis which threatens the country's best farmland and food production. Furthermore, Government plans to upscale solar in line with net zero targets are expected to bring land take up to just 0.3% of the UK land area (approximately 0.5% of agricultural land).
- 5.13 It is noted that EN-3 states that the capacity of the local grid or transmission networks to accept the likely output from a proposed solar farm is critical to the technical and commercial feasibility of a proposal; however, the connection voltage, availability of network capacity, and the distance from the proposed solar farm to the existing network can have a significant effect on the commercial feasibility of a proposal. In order to maximise grid infrastructure, minimise disruption to existing local community infrastructure or biodiversity, and reduce overall costs, developers are likely to choose a site based on nearby available grid export capacity; where this is the case, the developer should consider the cumulative impacts of situating a solar farm in proximity to other energy generating stations and infrastructure. It is acknowledged that the proposed network connection is Eccleshall primary substation, approximately 800m northeast of the application site.
- 5.14 Reference is made to the land type not being a predominating factor in determining the suitability of a site, however where agricultural land is shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land.
- 5.15 The National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) states that although the impacts of the development of ground mounted solar arrays on BMV agricultural land must be considered, such development is not prohibited.

- 5.16 Planning practice guidance states that the effective use of land should be encouraged by focussing large scale solar farms on previously development and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value. Where a proposal involves greenfield land, the use of agricultural land should be shown to be necessary and poorer quality land should be used in preference to higher quality land, and furthermore, the proposal should allow for continued agricultural use and/or encourage biodiversity improvements around arrays. This approach is reflected in the NPPF, which states where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality. Furthermore, paragraph 187 of the NPPF requires the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile land to be recognised in planning decisions.
- 5.17 This application is supported by an agricultural land classification (ALC) survey which identifies the following grades within the site:
- 1.7ha of grade 2 (4% of the site).
 - 29.4ha of grade 3a (69% of the site).
 - 6.2ha of grade 3b (14% of the site).
 - 5.1ha of grade 4 (12% of the site).
 - 0.6ha of non-agricultural land (1% of the site).
- 5.18 The design and access statement (DandA) advises that the landowner owns approximately 152ha of agricultural land and that the 43ha which would be taken out of arable production during the operation of the solar farm represents 28% of the landowner's total land holding. The site has been put forward for solar development as it is the lowest yielding land with crop yields 20-30% lower than other land within the holding.
- 5.19 The DandA continues to state that the BMV land (grades 2 and 3a) within the site equates to 20% of the landowner's total landholding and the lower quality land equates to 8% of the total holding. Of the BMV land within the application site, 4% is grade 2, equating to 1.1% of their total landholding.
- 5.20 Stafford Borough has approximately 52,896ha of recognised agricultural land and, therefore, the proposed development would utilise only 0.08% of the total agricultural land in the Borough.
- 5.21 Stafford Borough Council is currently considering, or has recently considered, applications for seven solar farms; the cumulative land take should all be approved or allowed on appeal would comprise 440ha, 0.83% of the agricultural land across the Borough.

- 5.22 Furthermore, it is noted that Stafford Borough's agricultural land is predominantly (85.4%) grade 2 and 3, thereby further limiting site selection.
- 5.23 It should be noted that there is no legal or policy requirement to consider alternative sites and that planning practice guidance does not mandate the consideration of alternatives with regard to BMV.
- 5.24 In determining appeals (APP/W1525/W/24/3344509 and APP/B1550/W/24/3344510) at Runwell, Essex, with regard to a 66ha site in the green belt and in the setting of numerous listed buildings, the Inspector gave substantial weight to the generation of renewable energy, as well as the contribution towards ensuring low cost and secure energy, advising that:

"...there is an urgent need for renewable energy to mitigate the climate emergency, achieve net zero targets and enable energy security and lower energy bills..."

Also, that there was no evidence that taking such a proportion of land out of agricultural production for 40 years would result in any significant negative impact on the nation's food security.

- 5.25 It is accepted that the nature of any particular agricultural use cannot be controlled by a local planning authority; for example, the use of land for arable farming or pastoral farming is not distinguishable within planning law and therefore a landowner cannot be forced to use land for food production. It is acknowledged that the majority of the application site could be retained for the use of sheep grazing and planting for biodiversity improvements which are both within the definition of agricultural practices.
- 5.26 It is considered that the national need for renewable energy, in light of the legally binding target set by Climate Change Act 2008, should be afforded more weight in the planning balance than the loss of 0.08% of the Borough's agricultural land with regard to land use.
- 5.27 The application documents indicate that the applicant proposes to offer a grazing licence to the current landowner or other local farmers who may wish to utilise the land in that manner. BRE guidance states that "hardy livestock breeds are better suited to autumn and winter grazing, when the forage is less nutritious and the principal aim is to prevent vegetation from overshadowing the leading (lower) edges of the PV modules (typically about 800-900mm high)"; the lowest part of the proposed panels would be 0.8m above ground, providing adequate clearance for animal grazing in accordance with this guidance.
- 5.28 It is indicated that the landowner uses sustainable farming practices which can be more costly than more intensive farming; the revenue stream from the proposed diversification of the farming enterprise would assist in subsidising these methods.

- 5.29 Conditions to ensure grazing use would not meet the test of necessity given the lack of a policy basis. However, any grazing of the land would, alongside the proposed development, not be comparable to the more intensive farming practices possible without the development and therefore this possibility of continuing food production should carry little weight.
- 5.30 Notwithstanding this, it is not considered that the economic benefits of retaining this modest area of BMV for food production would outweigh the facilitation of net zero energy security.
- 5.31 Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the operation of the proposed solar farm would last for 40 years, following which the land is expected to be returned to full agricultural use. On this basis, the proposal is considered to be generally accordant with the aims and objectives of policy E2(xi) in that the BMV agricultural land could continue in agricultural use and it could be protected for future use via appropriately worded conditions to secure decommissioning and site restoration.
- 5.32 It is considered that a condition to ensure that grazing would ensue between and under the solar panels would be ultra vires and therefore should not be attached to any approval; this is not considered to be in the remit of planning control and furthermore, it is in the landowner's interests to manage the site effectively and offering grazing licences to interested farmers forms part of the current plans.
- 5.33 Natural England advise that the proposed development is likely to affect 31.1ha of BMV agricultural land. As the proposed solar panels would be secured to the ground by steel piles with limited soil disturbance and could be removed in the future, the proposed development is unlikely to lead to significant permanent loss of BMV agricultural land. Some elements of the proposed development, such as the substations may more substantially impact agricultural land, however these elements are limited to very small areas of BMV agricultural land and the impacts would be reversible. Natural England acknowledge that it is likely that there would be a reduction in agricultural production over the application site during the life of the proposed development and advise that the local planning authority should consider whether this is an effective use of land in line with planning practice guidance which encourages the siting of large-scale solar farms on previously development land and non-agricultural land in the first instance. Notwithstanding this, should the application be approved, Natural England recommend conditions to secure appropriate soil management to safeguard soil resources and agricultural land, including a commitment for preparation, restoration, and aftercare plans which would return the land to no less than its current ALC graded land quality, and to ensure appropriate agricultural land management and/or biodiversity enhancement during the lifetime of the development.

- 5.34 In accordance with policy N3, the application is supported by a decommissioning plan and a condition should be attached to any approval to ensure that the site is appropriately decommissioned at the expiration of the permitted period.
- 5.35 The provision of renewable energy at a scale to provide electricity for approximately 9,677 homes (offsetting 12,900 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year) should be afforded very substantial weight in favour of the proposal as a public benefit. This includes the benefits of addressing the negative impacts of climate change and addressing UK energy security which aligns with both national and local strategy and policies to move towards low carbon energy generation.
- 5.36 The principle of development is considered to be acceptable, in that the proposed development accords with the overarching policies and principles of the NPPF and The Plan for Stafford Borough, subject to the impact of the proposed development upon the character of the site and surrounding area, heritage assets, residential amenity, highway safety, and natural environmental factors (biodiversity, flooding, and drainage) being acceptable.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 7, 8, 10, 11, 119, 124, 161, 165, 168, 187

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: SP1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development; SP3 Stafford Borough sustainable settlement hierarchy; SP6 Achieving rural sustainability; E2 Sustainable rural development; N3 Low carbon sources and renewable energy

The Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2

Policies: SB1 Settlement boundaries

Other guidance:

- Overarching National Policy Statement for energy (EN-1)
- National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3)
- BRE (2014) Agricultural Good Practice Guidance for Solar Farms
- House of Commons Library: Planning and solar farms - July 2023
- Solar and protecting our Food Security and Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land - Statement made on 15 May 2024

6 Impacts on the character and appearance of the surrounding area

- 6.1 Section 12 of the NPPF seeks to achieve well-designed places; the principles of the NPPF are also supported by the National Design Guide (NDG).
- 6.2 Policies N1 and N8 of The Plan for Stafford Borough seek to secure enhancements in design quality by meeting principles concerning use, form, space, and movement, as well as expectations for new development to reinforce and respect the character of a settlement or landscape setting through a design and layout which includes the use of sustainable building materials and techniques that are sympathetic to the landscape.
- 6.3 The site would be enclosed by perimeter fencing which comprises timber posts with stockproof galvanised steel mesh to a height of 2.0m and which would include mammal gates. Where gates are required, these would be of galvanised steel to match on galvanised steel posts. The fencing is considered to be of an appropriate design for a rural location. The fence is sited, for the majority, within the existing hedgerows which are to be maintained to a height of at least 3.0m, thereby providing a visual screen to the fence.
- 6.4 CCTV posts to a height of 3.0m would be provided around the perimeter of the site. These are considered to be a functional necessity of the site and would be both limited and reversible in their visual impact.
- 6.5 A fenced compound is proposed within parcel A which would contain a DNO substation, customer substation, a control building, and a spare parts container. The transformer units would be located across the site.
- 6.6 The compound would be enclosed within 'perimeter fencing' and sited in a location within the application site which would be relatively well screened from public views given its location adjacent to a field-boundary hedge and with larger, more mature tree cover in intervening locations between it and any public vantage points from public rights of way or other public highways. The largest of the structures proposed within the compound would be customer substation at 3.0m above ground level. Whilst the compound site would not retain the agrarian character of the site, the siting of infrastructure such as substations is not uncommon within rural areas. On balance, the appearance of the compound is considered to be acceptable, and no further screen planting is recommended.

- 6.7 Seven transformer units are proposed, located in various fields within the application site; these units would have a height of 3.2m, 0.5m taller than the top of the solar panels. It is not considered that the transformer units, would be particularly prominent in wider views of the development and it is not likely that they would have any significance in the cumulative visual impact of the proposed solar farm. A condition should, however, be attached to any approval to ensure that the ancillary structures have a recessive colour finish.
- 6.8 The proposed solar arrays clearly constitute the majority of the proposed development by way of site area. At 2.7m in height they would be lower than the perimeter hedgerows which would be maintained at a minimum of 3m in height. Whilst this would mitigate the visual impact of the solar panels when viewed from many vantage points immediately outside of the application site, it is accepted that the solar farm would be readily visible from further afield as well as from public rights of way which run through the application site.
- 6.9 Landscape mitigation is proposed; this would predominantly comprise infilling of gaps in existing hedgerows and the planting of new hedgerows to the perimeter of the site where they do not exist – the majority of this being to the northeast of parcel A. Hedge planting would follow a native mix.
- 6.10 The planting of new Oak trees is proposed to the perimeter of the site, predominantly to the northern and eastern boundaries of parcel A and the southwest boundary of parcel B.
- 6.11 The areas within which solar panels are to be planted would be seeded in a grass mix and the perimeters of fields, as well as public and private routes through the site would be bound by land seeded in a meadow mix.
- 6.12 Paragraph 105 of the NPPF states that:
- “...planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks”.*
- 6.13 Two public rights of way (PROW) run within the application site; Eccleshall 118 runs adjacent to the southeastern boundary of parcel B northeast of Cash Farm. Eccleshall 149 also runs adjacent to the northwestern boundary of parcel A east of Horsley Hall. A number of other public rights of way run through the surrounding countryside, many of which offer views towards the application site.

- 6.14 The Ramblers' Association made a representation in response to the application, which states that it is difficult to ascertain the exact route of the footpaths which bound the site (Eccleshall 149 and Eccleshall 118) and that it appears that mitigation screening is proposed on the outside of the path rather than between the path and the proposed solar panels which would be counterproductive in terms of enhancing, or even not detracting from the amenity value of these two routes. Whilst a further plan is requested to show the route of the public rights of way and proposed screening vegetation it is considered that these are clearly shown on the general arrangement and landscape mitigation drawings respectively.
- 6.15 Design Midlands advise that the impacts on the PROWs not only concern views from a PROW but also the experience of using that route, how it relates to the character and nature of the site, and how users experience the walk and feel part of the broader landscape. Design Midlands advise that the proposal would result in a negative impact on users of the PROWs due to the channelling created by the presence of solar panels and fencing.
- 6.16 The LVIA submitted in support of the application considers 12 viewpoints, including from Cash Lane, Wincote Lane, the A519, the junction of Cash Lane and Mere Rise, and the following public rights of way: Eccleshall 114, Eccleshall 115, Eccleshall 118, Eccleshall 148, Eccleshall 149, and Gnosall 1.
- 6.17 Whilst it is accepted that the supporting LVIA is a comprehensive document which considers the landscape at a site and wider level, Design Midlands advise that it does not clearly demonstrate how the recreational and amenity value of the PROWs would be protected and how the impact on enjoyment of walking these routes would be avoided or mitigated.
- 6.18 The LVIA does, however, fairly identify the landscape as being of community value rather than having national or county level significance.
- 6.19 During construction, the LVIA states that there would be a negative effect on the site and its immediate surroundings at the lower end of the scale and for a short period of time.
- 6.20 The overall effect of the proposed development would then be a moderate negative impact, reducing in significance with distance from the site. The combination of distance, subtle variations in landform, and screening by built form and vegetation would assist in limiting the impact of the proposal on the wider landscape.

- 6.21 It is noted that a 10m buffer would be provided around the edge of most fields and along the routes of PROWs and overhead lines. It is considered that whilst there would be an element of channelling from the presence of the solar panels and perimeter fence it should be acknowledged that a public right does not exist to access the remainder of the field but to walk across a designated route. Visually, views would be channelled to some extent, however this would not be unlike walking a route adjacent to a bund or particularly high crops such as maize or rapeseed. An offset of 10m is considered reasonable to minimise the experience of enclosure and, furthermore, it is accepted that these impacts would be felt only for distances of 250m and 400m, which are considered to be relatively short in terms of the expanse of the rural network of footpaths. Furthermore, it is not considered that any particularly important vistas, with regard to important features or heritage assets, would be impacted. It is considered that an appropriate balance between screening and retaining a sense of openness along the rights of way would be achieved.
- 6.22 With regard to the enhancement of public rights of way, it is noted that the applicant has made a commitment to improving accessibility, with particular focus on signage and accessibility at Cash Lane (Eccleshall 118) which was poor at the time of the Officer's site visit. The maintenance and enhancement of the public rights of way could be ensured through a landscape environmental management plan to be secured by condition which would also detail the enhancement and management opportunities for existing and proposed landscaping across the site.
- 6.23 Whilst it is understood that Wincote Lane and Cash Lane provide relatively quiet routes along which pedestrians may walk in order to access the wider network of footpaths, they are predominantly public roads whose function is to carry vehicular traffic rather than to provide visual amenity and public enjoyment. The proposed solar farm would be readily visible from these roads adjacent to the site, however it is not considered that localised changes to the character of views from these locations would alone justify the refusal of this application.
- 6.24 The Planning for Landscape Change supplementary planning guidance to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan (1996-2001) remains the most up-to-date published landscape character assessment of Staffordshire. It offers a helpful characterisation of the various landscapes within the wider area and in the case of the ancient clay farmlands landscape character type within which the application site falls this guidance states that the landscape is particularly sensitive to the impacts of development and land use change and that landscape objectives included the planting of species-rich hedges to maintain and manage ancient and diverse hedgerows and to maintain, improve, and restore arable field margins.

- 6.25 It is accepted that the impacts of the development and the change of use of the land hereby proposed would have an impact to which the landscape is sensitive, however these impacts would be temporary given the lifespan, and reversibility, of the proposed development. However, the landscape mitigation plan of planting new English Oak trees and infilling the existing hedgerow boundaries with new mixed-species planting would be a significant positive in the long-term landscape character, provided that they are allowed to establish appropriately.
- 6.26 As part of the application submission package the applicant has provided a decommissioning plan. This plan proposes a project condition survey prior to the commencement of development in order to establish a baseline of the existing condition of the land, to which level (or greater) the developer shall return the site upon decommissioning of the proposed solar farm.
- 6.27 The decommissioning plan sets out the restoration of the site to its pre-development condition following the cessation of the use of the site as a solar farm following its 40 year lifespan. This is to include removal of all energy facilities, structures and equipment, including any subsurface wires and footings to a depth of 1m; the removal of access roads created for construction/maintenance of the system and replanting with appropriate species; and the retention of enhancement landscaping.
- 6.28 Decommissioning is to be undertaken in accordance with appropriate ecological advice at the time and in accordance with a decommissioning environmental management plan and decommissioning transport management plan.
- 6.29 In order to ensure that the land is in a condition whereby it remains best and most versatile agricultural land and that the proposed development does not prejudice the long-term future agricultural use of the site any approval should be subject to a condition to ensure that the site is decommissioned in accordance with the decommissioning plan following the end of the permitted period of 40 years.
- 6.30 It is considered that any approval should be subject to a condition to ensure that, prior to their installation on the site, precise details of the CCTV system and the materials and colour finish of the 'infrastructure buildings' should be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 105, 131, 135, 137 and 139

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: N1 Design; N8 Landscape character; N9 Historic environment

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Design

7 Impacts on heritage assets

- 7.1 Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as amended, sets out that special regard should be had to the desirability of preserving listed buildings including their settings.
- 7.2 Policy N8 of The Plan for Stafford Borough seeks to ensure that development is designed in a way which protects, conserves, and enhances the landscape character, in particular historic elements of the present-day landscape which contribute significantly to this character; as well as the setting or, and views from, heritage assets.
- 7.3 Policy N9 provides support for proposals where they sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets and their setting, including significant views and vistas and the setting of heritage assets.
- 7.4 Policy 5 of the Eccleshall Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) requires that new development is designed to respect the existing heritage of Eccleshall.
- 7.5 Cash Farmhouse, a grade II listed building, is located immediately southwest of parcel B, on the opposite side of Cash Lane and situated behind a range of large modern agricultural buildings.
- 7.6 Hill Crest, a grade II listed building, is located near to the junction of Wincote Lane and the A519, approximately 250m east of parcel A.
- 7.7 Johnson Hall and the associated lodge, both separately grade II listed buildings, are located to the northeast of parcel A; the lodge being the nearest at approximately 415m from the application site.
- 7.8 Horsley Hall and its landscaped parkland, non-designated heritage assets, lie to the northwest of the application site (parcel A). These are listed on the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record, as are elements of parcel A as ridge and furrow earthwork remains. Other examples in the vicinity include the landscape park associated with Johnson Hall and a possible Roman road in the vicinity of Wincote Lane.
- 7.9 The proposed development would not result in direct harm to any designated heritage asset, however both the applicant and the Council's Conservation Officer accept that there is a level of intervisibility between the application site and the various listed buildings themselves.

- 7.10 The Conservation Officer, when initially making a representation, advised that the proposed solar farm would constitute an incongruous intrusion into the rural and agrarian setting of the listed buildings, causing less-than-substantial harm (serious harm) to their historic and architectural interest.
- 7.11 Following the amendment of the proposed development, the Conservation Officer continues to raise objection.
- 7.12 Whilst the revised heritage impact assessment (HIA) which concludes the impact to the setting of Johnson Hall to be moderate adverse is welcomed, as is the additional screen planting along the northeastern boundary of parcel A and the relocation of ancillary buildings to a more discrete location in parcel A, the Conservation Officer's concerns remain with regard to the proposed landscape mitigation.
- 7.13 In particular, the Conservation Officer recommends additional soft landscaping adjacent to the ancillary buildings and attenuation basins to soften their appearance and improve screening. Furthermore, it is recommended that historic field boundaries be reinstated with native species hedgerow planting.
- 7.14 It must be acknowledged that the setting of a listed building is not itself a heritage asset, but elements of its setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset. Consequently, harm to the setting will not always equate to harm to the significance of a heritage asset. The glossary to the NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset as:
- “The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”*
- 7.15 The setting of a listed building is a concept recognised by statute, however it is not statutorily defined, nor does it lend itself to a precise definition (*Catesby Estates Ltd v Steer* [2018] EWCA Civ 1697 and *R. (Williams) v Powys CC* [2017] EWCA Civ 427). Whilst no universal principles have been set down for defining ‘setting’ some guiding factors have been set out by the Court of Appeal, that there must be a distinct visual relationship of some kind between the two - a visual relationship which is more than remote or ephemeral, and which in some way bears on one's experience of the listed building in its surrounding landscape or townscape.

- 7.16 Planning Practice Guidance on the Historic Environment (paragraph 13) further addresses ‘setting’ and states that “all heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. The setting of a heritage asset and the asset’s curtilage may not have the same extent”. The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to the visual relationship between the asset and the proposed development and associated visual/physical considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part in the assessment of impacts on setting, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust, smell, and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection which amplifies the experience of the significance of each.
- 7.17 The extent of a setting is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. The consideration to be made is one of where, when and how any effect is likely to be perceived, whether or not it will preserve the setting of the listed building, and whether under government policy in the NPPF it will harm the significance of a listed building.
- 7.18 There is no defined linkage between the heritage assets, except for Johnson Hall and the associated lodge which would not be affected by the proposal.
- 7.19 Notwithstanding the acceptance that there would be “little intervisibility between the buildings and parklands” of the listed buildings and the application site, the Conservation Officer’s initial view detailed the concerns as the industrialisation of the character of the historic open and rural landscape setting of the listed buildings resulting in an incongruous intrusion into the agrarian setting of the listed buildings which would result in less-than-substantial harm.
- 7.20 It is acknowledged that views of listed buildings and back to the application site would be possible from some vantage points, however large tracts of open countryside would continue to remain around the listed buildings and between them and the application site, except for Cash Farmhouse which would remain visually separated from the application site by a range of large modern agricultural buildings.
- 7.21 There is no evidence that the application site makes any meaningful contribution to the significance of the listed buildings other than the contribution it makes to the contextual agrarian landscape. However, it is not possible to ascertain how much the area of the application site has changed over the intervening years with changes in agricultural technology and farming practices.

- 7.22 It is considered that the historic and structural integrity of the listed buildings would remain undiminished and, whilst there would be some changes in their context, there would remain large parts of that unaffected and, consequently, it is considered that their settings would only be minimally impacted. Given the distances involved, it is not considered likely that how the listed buildings are experienced in their respective contexts would be materially affected. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that any perceived impacts would be temporary for the duration of the development and wholly reversible.
- 7.23 Notwithstanding this, less-than-substantial harm does not equate to a less than substantial planning objection and great weight must be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF indicates that where less-than-substantial harm is found it must be weighed against the benefits of the proposal.
- 7.24 The Council's Conservation Officer advises that the proposal would result in less-than-substantial harm, albeit 'serious' harm without further landscape mitigation; that this harm requires clear and convincing justification; and that where harm is deemed to be justified by balancing against the public benefits of a proposed development every effort should be made as part of the proposals to mitigate that harm as far as possible. Paragraph 213 of the NPPF states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (including from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Furthermore, paragraph 215 of the NPPF states 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.
- 7.25 It is considered that the public benefits, amounting to the provision of renewable electricity for approximately 9,677 homes whilst offsetting 12,900 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year are very substantial and clearly outweigh the less-than-substantial harm identified.
- 7.26 The listed buildings are not experienced as isolated architectural features and varying levels of views to and from the listed buildings across the agrarian landscape are present. It is not considered that such views would justify the refusal of the application and that the glimpsed views which would be possible would be experienced in the context of temporary changes to the agricultural landscape which provides the setting. It is considered that the provision of screening to wholly block out such views would likely further impact the experience of the listed buildings and, furthermore, as the identified harm is considered to be outweighed by the public benefits, it is not considered that further screening is justified.

- 7.27 Additionally, it is considered that the recommendation of the Conservation Officer that historic hedgerows be reinstated would likely result in impacts to future farming practices on this land given that their removal has likely arisen in order to more efficiently farm the land. Such an obligation in site restoration would potentially impact the long-term sustainability of the agricultural operation on the site.
- 7.28 The comments of the Conservation Officer regarding the proposed access tracks are noted, however the application documents do clearly state that these would comprise crushed stone which is considered to be acceptable within the agrarian landscape. Furthermore, due to the nature of the vehicles which would be required to access the site for routine maintenance and repairs it is considered that the extent of the access tracks proposed is appropriate. The use of crushed stone for this purpose should be secured by condition.
- 7.29 The recommendation of the Conservation Officer that tree planting specification should include heavy standard planting to provide reasonable screening from the outset should be secured by condition.
- 7.30 The application is supported by a historic environment desk-based assessment (HEDBA) which concludes low potential for heritage assets within archaeological potential to survive from the prehistoric, Roman, early-medieval, and medieval periods; with high potential for heritage assets with archaeological potential to survive from the post-medieval period on the basis of recorded evidence of findspots in the area and ridge and furrow cultivation remains.
- 7.31 The HEDBA identifies that there would be a direct impact on the earthworks within the site and any unknown heritage assets with archaeological interest; whilst limited in scope, the groundworks would have potential to cause partial loss of any archaeological remains within the site resulting in a moderate direct effect before mitigation.
- 7.32 Recommendations are made to avoid or minimise any such harm; to include additional evaluation (likely staged evaluation) to understand the impacts of the proposed development upon any as yet unknown buried remains.
- 7.33 The County Archaeologist confirms that the HEDBA is suitably comprehensive and that the conclusions are generally supported. A condition is recommended to ensure that a staged archaeological evaluation is undertaken in advance of any groundworks in order for the results to inform the need for further staged works.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 202, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: N1 Design; N8 Landscape character; N9 Historic environment

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Design

Eccleshall Neighbourhood Plan

Policies: 5 Historic environment

8 Residential and visual amenity

- 8.1 Whilst the application site is in a relatively sparsely populated rural area its size results in it being oriented adjacent to a number of residential properties.
- 8.2 Potential impacts arise relating to noise and visual amenity.
- 8.3 The application is supported by a noise assessment which identifies noise from string inverters and transformers. There would be approximately 90 string inverters attached to the back of the panels and seven transformers. A string inverter is used to convert direct current (DC) electricity into alternating current (AC) electricity.
- 8.4 The noise assessment concludes that the impact of the proposed development would be below the lowest observed adverse effect at nearby sensitive receptors and, therefore, no noise mitigation measures are proposed.
- 8.5 Solar panels, by their nature, are designed to absorb sunlight in order to convert it into electricity and the glass used (with a low iron content) is less reflective than glass seen in conventional windows; however, there may still be a small unavoidable reflective component present.
- 8.6 The application is also supported by a glint assessment which identifies ground receptors which have potential to receive glint and a zone of theoretical visibility to determine whether local topography would screen these receptors; based on a computer model the likely impact of glint is calculated.
- 8.7 Glint is defined as being ‘a specular reflection produced as a direct reflection of the sun on the surface of a solar panel, which also occurs with the reflection of light from smooth surfaces such as glass, steel, and calm water’.
- 8.8 The assessment sets out that on flat ground, ground based glint would normally only occur from fixed panels in the early morning or evening when the sun appears low in the sky; glint does not usually occur during mid-winter due to the sun’s low height in the sky; and glint will only occur in a relatively small area in an approximate ‘bow tie’ shape with the solar panels in the centre.

- 8.9 The applicant's assessment concludes that for receptors to the west of the proposed development glint is predicted in the early morning between 05:21 and 06:59 and to the east glint is predicted in the early evening between 17:27 and 19:19. It is, however, noted that these are the earliest and latest times glint could theoretically occur and glint would not occur continuously during these times at a fixed receptor.
- 8.10 Local weather conditions and screening from existing buildings and vegetation would also further mitigate these theoretical results.
- 8.11 Taking into account existing and proposed screening it is considered that most of the receptor points are too distant to have direct visibility of the panels due to the topography of the land and the level of intervening vegetation and other screening. Glint impacts to the closest properties are likely to be restricted to upper floor windows which could overlook the enhanced hedges only for a limited proportion of the day and, in the morning, generally at a time when most people are asleep.
- 8.12 Glint impacts to road receptor points are to be avoided via mitigation measures including the provision of 3m high perimeter hedgerows and the planting of new hedgerows to offer enhanced screening. It is concluded that glimpses of the solar farm, if possible, from the perspective of a motorist is likely to pass very quickly, be weak, and not have any material effect on driving ability.
- 8.13 With regard to public rights of way in the vicinity, the report indicates that, should effects be visible, the impact of glint is likely to be less problematic than a body of water with sun glistening on it or walking towards the sun at dawn or dusk.
- 8.14 No glint impacts are modelled with regard to rail lines, the nearest of which is 4km from the site.
- 8.15 Consequently, subject to conditions to ensure the provision of the landscape mitigation measures, including the retention of hedgerows to a minimum height of 3m it is not considered that the proposed solar farm is likely to result in glint issues which would justify the refusal of this application.
- 8.16 With regard to amenity, the Council's Environmental Health Officer raises no objection.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph: 135

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: N1 Design

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Design

9 Highway network, access, and parking

- 9.1 The application site is split into two parcels, bisected by Wincote Lane. Parcel A would be accessed from a field gate off Wincote Lane and parcel B would be accessed via a field gate on its southern boundary, off Cash Lane. Both Wincote Lane and Cash Lane link into the wider highway network via the A519 to the east.
- 9.2 Both Wincote Lane and Cash Lane are single lane, two-way roads with a typical carriageway width of 3.5m and subject to national speed limits.
- 9.3 The supporting transport assessment indicates that the construction period would last approximately four to five months with the vast majority of vehicular movements comprising light goods vehicles (LGVs); heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) with cranes would be required to transfer panels from trucks to the ground. It is anticipated that there would be an average of approximately 8 HGVs and 27 LGVs per day for the four month construction period.
- 9.4 During operation it is expected that a single LGV would be required to access the site each fortnight for routine maintenance. Some agricultural vehicles may be required to access the site should selective grazing continue. Consequently, it is clear that any significant vehicular movement is only like to occur during the construction phase.
- 9.5 On the basis of the initial submission, the local highway authority raised concerns regarding the routes which construction traffic would utilise and recommended refusal on the basis that there was insufficient information regarding vehicle movements, taking into account the width of local roads and the number of additional HGVs using the surrounding highway network which may result in vehicles being unable to enter or exist the site safely and consequently result in an increased likelihood of highway danger.
- 9.6 The local highway authority recommended that a full route assessment be submitted to determine the suitability of any routing and the road safety implications of using Wincote Lane and Cash Lane.
- 9.7 In response to this, the applicant has provided a transport technical note which presents automated traffic counts on both Wincote Lane (14 eastbound and 15 westbound) and Cash Lane (105 southeast-bound and 112 northwest-bound) and sets out a proposed traffic routing strategy.

- 9.8 The traffic routing strategy is centred on a one-way access strategy with vehicles arriving via Wincote Lane and departing via Cash Lane, utilising an internal connection within the site boundary. The associated drawings illustrate existing areas along the route where vehicles could wait to pass an HGV and the report states that providing formal passing places would constitute over-engineering; a highway condition survey is proposed and the applicant would 'make good' any damaged verges following completion of the construction phase.
- 9.9 The technical note indicates that Wincote Lane can only be accessed by a HGV from the A519 from the north, whilst Cash Lane can be egressed to both north and south onto the A519. The advisory signage on Green Lane is noted, and the applicant sets out reasoning for use of Green Lane as a preference over routing to the south, pointing out that the impacts would be lesser and the signage is not enforceable.
- 9.10 The applicant has considered revised access points, however such work would require the removal of significant sections of hedgerow and trees, resulting in ecological harm and potential locations would be near to residential properties causing conflict and amenity considerations. The time (and consequent traffic conflict) benefits are not considered, by the applicant, to outweigh the anticipated harm.
- 9.11 In response to the technical note which provides more detail on the likely impacts of the proposed construction traffic, the local highway authority raise no objection to the proposed development, subject to conditions.
- 9.12 The local highway authority note that the proposal is likely to result in approximately 705 additional two-way movements of HGVs and 11,750 additional two-way movements for light vehicles during the construction period, amounting to 16 HGV and 52 LGV movements per working day. Once operational it is acknowledged that the site would be largely unmanned and generate limited vehicle movements with only maintenance vehicles accessing the site on an infrequent basis.
- 9.13 The route along Wincote Lane and Cash Lane would be single track and two-way roads with a typical carriageway width of 3.5m, subject to national speed limits. In order to avoid HGVs passing on these roads, it is acknowledged that a one-way route is proposed for construction traffic, utilising an internal connection, but other road users could continue to utilise the roads in both directions. Whilst conflict between HGVs and other private vehicles along these routes are considered likely to be minimal, the highway authority recommend, that in order to further mitigate the risk of vehicular conflict, a suitable escort vehicle be provided for all HGV movements along Cash Lane and Wincote Lane. Furthermore, signage should be provided to direct vehicular flow. These measures should be secured as part of a transport management plan to be secured by condition.

- 9.14 The highway authority accept that relocation of the access and egress junctions would have no material effect on potential vehicular conflict.
- 9.15 Visibility is considered to be acceptable at the Cash Lane/A519 junction. As the junction would be used for a limited number movements during construction, a speed limit reduction should be introduced during this phase and should be included with a transport management plan.
- 9.16 The highway authority advise that most of the measures to be implemented to control construction traffic could form part of a transport management plan which would form part of contractor agreements. Such measures should include:
- No more than one HGV generated by the proposed development to be on Cash Lane and Wincote Lane at any time.
 - Appropriate traffic management scheme, including a speed limit reduction on the A519 at the access and egress points shall be agreed and in place before development commences.
 - Appropriate traffic management scheme, including a possible speed limit reduction and signage on Cash Lane and Wincote Lane between the A519 and the site shall be agreed and in place before development commences.
 - All construction-related vehicles (HGV and LGV) shall comply with a one-way system to access the site from the A519 via Cash Lane and egress to the A519 via Wincote Lane.
 - A suitable escort vehicle shall be provided for all HGVs between the A519 and the site.
 - A construction compound will be provided within the site for loading and unloading, and turning of vehicles.
 - All vehicles shall enter and exit the site in a forward gear.
 - Banksmen to be provided to facilitate reversing within the site.
 - Banksmen or stop/go procedures in place for all vehicle movements to/from the substation access.
 - A waiting area to be left clear so that vehicles arriving at the site can drive directly onto the site to avoid tailback to the site access.
- 9.17 Pre- and post-construction highway condition surveys shall be carried out to ensure that the developer repairs any damage on the highway caused by vehicles associated with the development. This should be secured by condition.

- 9.18 Further conditions recommended by the highway authority, and considered to be acceptable and appropriate, include the following:
- Visibility splays to be provided and thereafter maintained.
 - Site access to be provided prior to the commencement of development.
- 9.19 Whilst it is considered that conditions relating to access points and visibility are necessary, it is considered that their provision should be made in accordance with details to be secured by condition on the basis that there is no detail of any alterations required to the existing field access into parcel B off Wincote Lane.
- 9.20 Further to conditions, an informative should be attached to any approval to bring to the attention of the applicant the requirement that any off-site highway works are subject to a highway works agreement with Staffordshire County Council.
- 9.21 The local public rights of way network crosses the site in two locations as illustrated at paragraph 1.7. These routes are shown to remain in situ within the general arrangement plans and the impacts of the proposed development upon the experience of using these routes is considered within section 6 of this report.
- 9.22 Furthermore, it is considered that accessibility would be maintained and enhanced via a landscape management plan to be secured by condition.
- 9.23 The County Rights of Way Officer raises no objection to the proposed development, stating that any grant of planning permission would not constitute authority for interference with the public rights of way or their obstruction, and that users of the routes must be able to exercise their public rights safely at all times. Furthermore, it is stated that where any private rights exist which allow the use of vehicles along a footpath drivers must give way to pedestrians and that this may need to be reflected in signage on site. It is considered that an informative should be attached to any approval to bring the comments of the County Rights of Way Officer to the attention of the applicant.
- 9.24 Policy 3 of the Eccleshall Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) requires that applications for major development are supported by information which identifies the realistic level of traffic which they are likely to generate and assesses the potential impact on the local highway network whilst maximising opportunities to walk and cycle within the parish area. It is considered that the conclusions of the transport assessment, to which the local highway authority raise no objection, and the commitment to enhancing and maintaining the public rights of way network through the site demonstrate compliance with the ENP in this regard.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 105, 111, 112, 113, 116

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: T1 Transport; T2 Parking and manoeuvring facilities; Appendix B – Car parking standards

Eccleshall Neighbourhood Plan:

Policies: 3 Traffic and parking

10 Ecology and biodiversity

- 10.1 There are elements of the red, amber, and green impact risk zones for Great Crested Newts across the application site. It also lies within 5km of Cop Mere (SSSI and Ramsar), Loynton Moss (SSSI), and Doley Common (SSSI). Two sites of biological importance lies immediately adjacent to the site: The Dingle and Large Covert (both to the north).
- 10.2 The application is supported by an ecological impact assessment which identified several native species-rich hedgerows within the site, numerous trees with bat roost potential, three ponds, and semi-natural woodland. A BNG Assessment report accompanies the ecological impact assessment indicating proposed net gain for the development; and a landscape mitigation plan indicates proposed habitat enhancement across the site.
- 10.3 The ecological assessment report recommends the following mitigation measures to ensure that the proposed development remains compliant with relevant legislation and planning policy:
- Retain all woodland, trees, hedgerows, and ponds.
 - Mitigate any indirect impacts to designated wildlife sites within a construction environmental management plan (CEMP).
 - Ensure the provision of root protection areas for all retained trees and hedgerows
 - Ensure that development is carried out in accordance with an ecological precautionary working method statement.
 - Ensure that any works undertaken between March and August are preceded by a nesting bird check to include ground nesting species.
- 10.4 The report goes on to conclude that there is not likely to be any significant ecological impact beyond the application site arising from the proposed development, and that the anticipated impacts are temporary and reversible.

- 10.5 The report identifies a low risk of the presence of great crested newts within the application site, along with the presence of badgers, bats, nesting birds, and other notable species in the surrounding area.
- 10.6 The application was made before the BNG became mandatory and, therefore, is considered to be exempt from national BNG requirements. Notwithstanding this, the application is supported by a BNG assessment which concludes that the proposed development would result in on-site net changes (plus off-site surplus) comprising:
- Habitat units: 39.58%
 - Hedgerow units: 29.67%
 - River units: 0.00%
- 10.7 In the absence of mandatory BNG, the NPPF and The Plan for Stafford Borough both seek to ensure net gains for biodiversity; the proposed development is therefore acceptable in this regard.
- 10.8 The Council's Biodiversity Officer raises no objection to the proposed development, recommending a number of conditions to ensure that the proposed development does not result in harm to badgers, great crested newts, or bats; and that appropriate habitat improvements are made with regard to birds and bats.
- 10.9 Furthermore, the Biodiversity Officer recommends that a CEMP is secured by condition, to include pollution prevention and dust control measures, and which shall be informed by an ecological precautionary working method statement for the protection of habitats and species.
- 10.10 The landscaping of the site, set out within a mitigation plan, is to include native tree, and mixed-species hedgerow, planting with grass mix planting beneath the proposed solar array; meadow mix planting around the edges of fields, along rights of way, and along easements; and two areas of scrub mix planting.
- 10.11 It is considered likely that the proposed development would result in an enhancement with regard to the ecological value of the area given the creation of wildflower meadows, the provision of new hedgerows, and the formation of wildlife corridors.

- 10.12 It is noted that the Council's Biodiversity Officer raises no concerns regarding the proposed landscaping and recommendations are made with regard to BNG requirements. However, given that the application is exempt from national BNG requirements and would easily surpass relevant policy requirements it is not considered that all measures, such as a detailed 30-year management plan would be reasonable. It is considered that conditions should be attached to any approval to ensure that the landscape mitigation plan is carried out across the site in accordance with an implementation and management plan set out within a Landscape Environmental Management Plan.
- 10.13 The Newt Officer raises no objection to the proposed development, acknowledging that the application site is within a red impact risk zone for great crested newts and that there a number of ponds and connectivity in the vicinity. The supporting information identifies that, whilst on-site habitat is poor for newts, there is potential for newts on the site and recommends that the proposed development is carried out in accordance with reasonable avoidance measures (or a non-licensed method statement), to be secured by condition. The Newt Officer confirms that the results and proposed mitigation measures are satisfactory.
- 10.14 Furthermore, it is recommended that an informative should be attached to any approval to bring to the attention of the applicant the protected status of GCN and the potential need for a works licence, as well as the possibility of applying to the district licensing scheme at any time should they wish to avoid risk or should newts be encountered on the site.
- 10.15 The supporting arboricultural impact assessment identifies 141 individual trees, 35 groups of trees, 1 woodland compartment, and 24 hedges within influencing distance of the application site. It acknowledged that tree cover is predominantly around field boundaries and within boundary hedgerows, with occasional trees located internally, characteristic of the agricultural landscape.
- 10.16 One group tree preservation order is in place which covers T79, T83, T85, T87, and G20.
- 10.17 It is stated that the trees within the site are largely middle-aged or mature with the most common species being English Oak, Common Ash, and Sycamore; condition is variable, however, many of the Ash trees are displaying symptoms of Chalara Ash Dieback disease.
- 10.18 One wild cherry tree (T92) and part of one hedgerow (14m) would be removed to accommodate the proposed working width of an electricity cable linking the two parcels of land.

- 10.19 A total of 53 new English Oak trees and 367m of native hedgerow would be planted; it is considered that this adequately resolves any concerns held by the Forestry Commission regarding replacement planting.
- 10.20 The Council's Tree Officer initially raised concern regarding the potential for shading of the proposed panels by existing trees and the consequent pressure to fell trees due to this conflict. Due to the omission of a shading assessment, the Tree Officer took the view that the issue of shading had not been considered and it should be demonstrated that the proposed panels are far enough from trees to avoid any conflict. The applicant has subsequently clarified that a detailed analysis is carried out to produce the proposed layouts and this flags no concerns regarding shading; furthermore, it is stated that although the panels may perform better, they do not require direct sunlight to function as they are designed to absorb radiated light.
- 10.21 A holding objection was issued by the Tree Officer in August 2024, to be lifted should one solar panel (southwest of T63) be omitted from the scheme. T63 is a highly rated (category A) Sycamore and the stand-off between tree and panel had been reduced from 14-15m to 9.6m which would result in a clear arboricultural impact which would likely require installation works within the root protection area and is likely to result in the need to remove this tree. Given the increased stand-offs the amendments to the scheme are generally welcomed by the Tree Officer, who accepts that the trees are a reasonable distance from the proposed solar panels to minimise conflict both now and in the future as the trees grow.
- 10.22 The Council's Tree Officer advised that the arboricultural information within the AIA and tree protection plan is adequate.
- 10.23 Following the August 2024 representation, the applicant has further amended the scheme to omit the panel nearest to tree T63 and, subsequently, the Tree Officer confirms that his objection is removed.
- 10.24 The Tree Officer recommends that the following be secured by condition, prior to the commencement of development:
- Arboricultural method statement, to define a timetable of actions, responsible persons, and suitable specifications to ensure that tree protection measures are observed.
 - Details of soft landscaping works, to include proposed planting specification, maintenance schedule, and provision for root growth
 - Replacement of any trees, plants, shrubs, detailed as part of the landscaping scheme which dies or is lost for any reason.

- 10.25 Design Midlands comment that the established and historical field patterns would remain so the landscape would be legible. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are some areas within parcel A where hedgerows do not run to the ends of fields and link to other hedgerows, it is noted that the proposal design priorities the use of existing access point and it is not considered that the reduction in width of the access ways to better correlate with historic field patterns would be absolutely necessary in order for the proposal to be acceptable on balance.
- 10.26 The application site is within 15km of the Cannock Chase SAC (special area of conservation) and 2.1km from Cop Mere which is a constituent part of the Midlands Meres and Mosses RAMSAR site.
- 10.27 The ecological assessment submitted in support of the application states that there is no hydrological connectivity between the application site and any Habitat sites, including Cop Mere which forms part of the Midlands Meres and Mosses RAMSAR site. An addendum to this report clarifies this by stating that the drainage strategy would result in discharge to the River Sow 1.7km northwest of the site. The River Sow flows in the opposite direction to Cop Mere and therefore there are no anticipated impacts on the designated site. Furthermore, the drainage management strategy is designed to ensure that surface water run-off is to mimic the existing drainage regime utilising storage channels to manage the rate of discharge during extreme rainfall events.
- 10.28 It is considered that the evidence available to the local authority indicates that the development would not result in any negative impact to the Cannock Chase SAC.
- 10.29 Consequently, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in any negative impact to any Habitat sites and the development is screened out in the local planning authority's habitat regulations assessments.
- 10.30 With regard to impacts upon sites of special scientific interest, it is noted that Natural England raise no objection.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 8, 125, 162, 163, 164, 187, 192, 193, 194 and 195

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: N2 Climate change; N4 The natural environment and green infrastructure; N5 Sites of European, national and local nature conservation importance; N6 Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation

11 Other

- 11.1 The application site is wholly within flood zone 1 - land which is at low risk of flooding. The proposed development is classified as 'essential infrastructure' under the flood risk vulnerability classification at annex 3 of the NPPF, which is considered to be appropriate within flood zone 1 provided that it does not result in increased flood risk elsewhere.
- 11.2 The application is supported by a flood risk assessment which concludes that the proposed development would be at low risk from flood sources, however it identifies some surface water flood risk onsite associated with natural conveyance routes on site. It concludes that infiltration is not likely to offer a means of managing surface water run-off in its entirety and that the drainage design would seek to mimic the existing drainage regime and continue to discharge to existing land drainage networks on site.
- 11.3 With regard to the initial submission the LLFA (lead local flood authority) raised objection to the proposed development, advising that a viable drainage strategy should be demonstrated prior to the determination of this application.
- 11.4 Following the submission of several iterations of the drainage management strategy and supporting information, the applicant has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the LLFA, that an appropriate drainage strategy can be implemented.
- 11.5 The latest version of the applicant's drainage management strategy demonstrates, through capacity assessment and hydraulic modelling, that the proposed development would not increase flood risk offsite.
- 11.6 Cross-contour interception drains would be provided to encourage natural losses to occur and to prevent soil erosion through channelling of run-off from the proposed panels. These drains would then intercept overland flow generated during extreme and prolonged rainfall events and safely convey to attenuation features.
- 11.7 Attenuation basins would be provided for the storage of stormwater for extreme events in order to restrict the rate of discharge to the greenfield rate (4.0l/s/ha).
- 11.8 The LLFA raise no objection to the proposed development, subject to three conditions; these conditions are designed to ensure that a detailed drainage scheme (in accordance with the principles of the FRA and drainage management document) is submitted and consequently implemented and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

- 11.9 The Environment Agency has confirmed that they do not wish to provide a representation with regard to the proposed development on the basis that it lies within flood zone 1 and is not EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) development. The Environment Agency's consultation matrix confirms that no further action is required with regard to their contribution to the consideration of this application.
- 11.10 The application is supported by a geo-technical desktop assessment which concludes that there is no contaminative source-pathway-receptor linkage identified within the site. The report also states that should there be a need to remove soil from site, contamination testing should be undertaken to be presented to the proposed landfill site; not only is there no proposal to remove soil from site, it is considered that waste acceptance criteria is controlled under separate legislation and would not be appropriately controlled under planning condition. No ground investigation for contamination purposes is recommended. Topsoil would be scraped from areas where temporary structure and infrastructure are required, appropriately stored, and re-used during decommissioning; whilst a soil management strategy has been submitted, with regard to which Natural England raise no concern, a detailed soil management plan should be secured by condition prior to the commencement of development as set out in the strategy and as recommended by Natural England.
- 11.11 The Council's Environmental Health Officer raises no objection on the basis that the conclusions of the geo-technical report are accepted; no further action is required and no conditions are recommended in this regard.
- 11.12 Design Midlands make reference to the risk of rural crime and that solar farms are increasingly being targeted by thieves resulting in recommendations for 2.4m high security fencing. The applicant, however, proposes a 2.0m stock-proof fence which they evidently consider to be secure enough; it is not considered that a requirement to increase the height of the fencing by 0.4m would be necessary.
- 11.13 It is acknowledged that National Grid, whilst raising no objection to the proposed development, indicate that they have high voltage assets within the development area; an informative should be attached to any approval to advise the applicant to contact National Grid regarding any diversions which may be required.

- 11.14 During the course of consideration of the application the applicant requested that any permission to be granted be subject to a time limit condition allowing development to commence within five years due to ongoing reforms with regard to connections to the grid. The Town and Country Planning Act (1990), at section 91, allows for the local planning authority to grant permission subject to shorter or longer time periods than the 'applicable period' which the authority consider appropriate having regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. It is not considered that any element of the local plan dictates that this scheme must be commenced within three years should it be approved and, furthermore, it is considered that the fundamental reforms to the way solar farms achieve connection to the grid is a material consideration which justifies the time period for any approval of this application to extend to five years.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 102, 103, 162, 163, 164, 170, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 181, 182, 187, 196, 197, 198, 201

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: N2 Climate change; N4 The natural environment and green infrastructure; N9 Historic Environment, I1 Infrastructure delivery policy

12 Conclusion and planning balance

- 12.1 The proposed development of a 44MW solar energy scheme would help to further the Government's intentions towards achieving a five-fold increase in solar power by 2035 (from a capacity of 14GW to 70GW); to create a full decarbonised, reliable, and low-cost power system by 2035; and to meet net zero targets by 2050.
- 12.2 With regard to Government intentions, noting the expectation of the use of approximately 0.5% of agricultural land nationwide, it is not considered that the proposal would result in the loss of a significant amount of BMV agricultural land, with this comprising 0.08% of the Borough's agricultural land. Furthermore, selective grazing could continue within the site around the proposed panels.
- 12.3 Whilst it is acknowledged that the 40-year lifespan of a solar energy development is a relatively long period of time it is, nonetheless, a temporary development and the construction methodology would allow the land to wholly revert back to its agricultural nature following decommissioning.

- 12.4 It is accepted that there would be a visual impact upon the public rights of way which intersect the site and which would be unfavourable, however such impacts are considered to be unavoidable and, when viewed in the whole, would not result in a refusal of this application being justified. Mitigation measures are proposed through improvements to accessibility and signage and the offsetting of panels to reduce the effects of channelling both physically and of views.
- 12.5 There is no concern raised with regard to residential amenity, provided that landscape management ensures the retention of hedgerows to 3m in height; similarly, no concern is raised with regard to noise on the basis of the supporting information.
- 12.6 Following the submission of additional supporting information, the local highway authority raise no objection to the proposed development, subject to conditions to avoid and mitigate harm to the local highway network.
- 12.7 Similarly, following the submission of further information, the LLFA raise no objection to the proposed development, being satisfied that the proposal would not increase flood risk elsewhere and that the principles of an appropriate drainage strategy have been demonstrated.
- 12.8 Whilst it is noted that the proposed groundworks, without mitigation, would have potential to cause partial loss of any archaeological remains within the site, the County Archaeologist is satisfied that the recommended avoidance and mitigation measures with regard to what remain, as yet, unknown buried remains, would be acceptable. Further to this, whilst the Council's Conservation Officer advises that the proposal would result in less-than-substantial harm to heritage assets, it is considered that this harm is outweighed by the public benefits to energy security in light of the Government's commitment to promote clean energy. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed landscaping approach would achieve sufficient mitigation to the harm. It is considered that further reinstatement of historic hedgerows would be overly onerous, unjustified, and possibly result in implications for the ongoing financial sustainability of the agricultural operations.
- 12.9 The applicant has demonstrated that there would be no likely significant ecological impacts beyond the application site, that potential impacts to protected species on site could be appropriately avoided and mitigated, and that the proposal would result in a significant enhancement in biodiversity within the site. Consequently, subject to conditions, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in this regard. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed planting regime would outweigh the loss of trees and hedgerows necessary to facilitate the development.

12.10 In the planning balance, the benefits of the proposed development in supporting the Government's approach to energy security and climate change are afforded greatest weight. It is not considered that the harm identified in consideration of the application would outweigh these public benefits.

12.11 Consequently, and on balance, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable and the application should, therefore, be approved, subject to conditions.

Consultations

Design Midlands:

The summary is outlined below:

- The site covers good quality agricultural land currently being used, including grade 3a and 3b, which appears to be contrary to national policy.
- The proposed development would result in a negative impact on the public rights of way. Two rights of way run adjacent to and within the site. A 10m grassland corridor would be provided, however boundary fencing and solar panels would be clearly visible, and channelling of users would be detrimental to the experience of these users, affecting the openness, character, views, and nature of the walk.
- The nature and character of the adjacent quiet rural lanes would be adversely affected by the proximity and height of boundary fencing.
- Strong field patterns, defined by hedgerows, would be maintained.
- Trees, hedgerows, and ponds are to be retained, however there is little indication as to the management or enhancement of the semi-natural woodland on site. Opportunities arise to improve these small blocks of semi-natural mixed woodland.
- Mitigation relies primarily on existing hedgerows and trees which seem unlikely to screen fully. The mitigation plan identifies existing hedgerows, however it is unclear on the proposed treatment/improvements to some of these; further clarity is required.
- Root protection zones are identified, however in some instances gravel paths seem to cross them.
- Opportunities arise to narrow gateways using extended hedgerows during the life of the solar farm and certainly during decommission.
- A strategy for the main entrance ways to the site and how improvements would contribute to the long-term enhancement of the prominent areas in line with the character of the area should be considered.

- Security issues may require that the fencing be higher and more substantial than the lower deer proof fencing indicated.
- The LVIA is comprehensive and considers the landscape wider area and at immediate site level. Whilst it presents a best-case scenario in terms of the extent of screening provided by existing vegetation, seasonal differences have been taken into consideration.

The relevant issues are identified as being:

- Future of cumulative impacts and precedents.
- Rationale and justification for sites.
- Complimentary approaches to sustainable energy.
- Policy preferences for sites and locations - rural, brownfield, industrial, housing, etc.
- Efficiency of solar panels and future technological advances.
- Decommissioning and guarantees in the event companies cease trading.
- Recyclability of panels.
- Benefits to the community.
- Ability of the national grid network.

Highway Authority:

(Comments dated 11 September 2024):

No objection.

- To avoid HGVs passing on Wincote Lane and Cash Lane, ingress from Wincote Lane and egress from Cash Lane is proposed, both ingress and egress being approximately 850m from the A519.
- There are no HGV passing places on the lanes and whilst the figures suggest the likelihood of conflict is minimal, a suitable escort vehicle would be provided for all HGVs along the lanes between the site and the A519.
- A one-way system would be operated, this could be included in a construction environment management plan (CEMP), however at this stage it is suggested that making all of Cash Lane and Wincote Lane into a one-way system could prove difficult, especially for business located between the site and the A519.

- It has been shown that relocating access closer to the A519 would have no effect on potential vehicular conflict.
- The existing achievable visibility splays from Cash Lane onto the A519 demonstrate that 50mph can be achieved for vehicles heading southbound and 30mph splays for vehicles heading northbound. However, the use of Cash Lane/A519 junction would be for a limited number of movements for the construction period only and a speed limit reduction should be introduced during the construction phase. This could be included in a CEMP.
- Most of the measures to be implemented to control construction vehicular traffic can be achieved through a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) which would form part of the contractor agreements offering a means of enforcement by the Site Manager. Measures to be included within a CTMP include:
 - Only one HGV generated by the proposed development to be on Cash Lane and Wincote Lane at any time.
 - Appropriate traffic management scheme, including speed limit reduction on the A519 at the access and egress points.
 - Appropriate traffic management scheme, including a possible speed limit reduction and signage on Cash Lane and Wincote Lane between the site and the A519.
 - All vehicles generated by the proposal to operate a one-way system to reduce HGV conflict.
 - A suitable escort vehicle to be provided for all HGVs entering and leaving the site.
 - A construction compound area to be provided for loading and unloading, as well as provision for turning.
 - Site manager to have responsibility for supervising, controlling, and monitoring vehicle movements to and from the site. If required, banksmen will be provided to give drivers guidance when reversing within the site.
 - There shall be no reversing manoeuvres within the public highway.
 - Banksmen or stop/go procedures provided for all vehicle movements to and from the substation access.
 - A waiting area (exclusion zone) to be left clear so that vehicles arriving on site can drive directly onto the site with appropriate areas for parking to avoid tailback to the site access.
- Other measures which cannot form part of the CTMP include:

- Pre and post development highway condition surveys are to be carried out; the developer shall repair any damage on the highway caused by their vehicles.
- Routing options could be finalised as part of a CTMP.
- Conditions are recommended to secure the following:
 - Provision of visibility splays.
 - Provision of access to the sites.
 - Development to be carried out in accordance with a CEMP to be submitted prior to commencement of development.
 - Dilapidation surveys and provision for necessary repair works.
- Off-site work within the adopted highway would require a works agreement with Staffordshire County Council.

(Comments dated 30 November 2023):

Objection.

- Over a 4-5 month construction period there would be approximately 705 two-way HGV movements and 11,750 two-way cars/LGV movements; equating to approximately 16 HGV and 52 LGV movements per working day.
- In operation the site would be largely unmanned and would generate limited vehicle movements. Only infrequent maintenance vehicles would access the site, equating to less than one trip per day on average.
- The route between the application site and the A519 is mainly along Wincote Lane and Cash Lane; both are single lane, two-way roads with a typical carriageway width of approximately 3.5m, and both are subject to national speed limit.
- As the development phase would require the same route for traffic entering and exiting the site to reach the A519 it is unclear how additional vehicles, including HGVs would pass each other. A full route assessment is required before any decision can be made as to the suitability and the road safety implications of using Wincote Lane and Cash Lane. The route assessment should include the number, location, and dimensions of passing places; full details of visibility splays at junctions; and forward visibility splays along the route.
- It is unclear whether the proposed site can accommodate more than one HGV at a time and the effects of stacking would be.

- It should be noted that Green Lane, part of the proposed routing to and from the M6 is unsuitable for long vehicles and is signed to indicate this.
- The application should be refused on the basis that there is insufficient information with regard to vehicle movements, taking into account the width of roads, layout, and the number of additional HGVs using the surrounding highway network, resulting in an increase in the likelihood of highway danger due to the likelihood of vehicles being unable to access and egress the site safely.

County Rights of Way Officer:

(Comments dated 19 July 2024):

Previous comments remain applicable.

(Comments dated 13 June 2023):

No objection.

- Two public footpaths cross the site (Eccleshall 149 and Eccleshall 118).
- Planning permission would not constitute authority for any interference with the public rights of way or their obstruction.
- The NPPF states that planning decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing networks.
- Users of the routes must be able to exercise their public rights safely at all times.
- Maintenance and liability responsibilities for any vegetation within 3m of the public right of way lie with the landowner.
- Where private rights exist which allow the use of vehicles along a footpath drivers must give way to pedestrians; this may need to be reflected in signage on site.

Ramblers' Association:

(Comments dated 25 September 2024):

- The application site is bounded by Eccleshall FP 149 on the north of the Wincote Lane parcel and by FP 118 on the south of the Cash Lane parcel.

- It is difficult to see the exact route of the two rights of way on the plans. It appears from annotation on the plans that mitigating screening does not lie between the path and the solar panels but between the path and open country which would be counter-productive in terms of enhancing or not detracting from the amenity value of these two routes.
- A more detailed plan should be provided which shows the route of the two paths and screening vegetation as proposed.

Natural England:

(Comments dated 9 October 2024):

No objection.

- The advice provided in our previous response applies equally to this amendment. The proposed amendments are unlikely to have significantly different impacts on the natural environment.

(Comments dated 1 August 2024):

No objection.

- Please refer to the representation dated 29 April 2024.

(Comments dated 29 April 2024):

No objection.

- Based on the plans submitted, it is not considered that the proposed development would have significant adverse impacts on designated sites.
- The proposed development is likely to affect 31.1ha of BMV agricultural land. If temporary, the proposed development is unlikely to lead to significant permanent loss of BMV agricultural land as a resource for future generations as solar panels would be secured to the ground by steel piles with limited soil disturbance and could be removed in the future.
- Some components, such as the substation, may permanently impact agricultural land, however, this would be limited to small areas of BMV agricultural land.
- Appropriate soil management is required.

- During the life of the development, it is likely that there would be a reduction in agricultural production over the whole development area, it should be considered whether this is an effective use of land in line with planning practice guidance which encourages the siting of large scale solar farms on previously developed land and non-agricultural land.
- Conditions are recommended to safeguard soil resources and agricultural land, including a required commitment for the preparation, restoration, and aftercare plans; normally this would include the return to the former land quality (ALC grade).
- Appropriate agricultural land management and/or biodiversity enhancement during the lifetime of the development should be secured by condition.

(Comments dated 30 March 2023):

No objection.

- Without appropriate mitigation the proposed development would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Cannock Chase SAC. In order to mitigate these recreational impacts contributions towards the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring measures (SAMMMs) should be secured.
- Natural England concurs with the conclusion of the Council's habitat regulation assessment.
- The proposed development would not result in damage to, or destruction of, the interest features for which the Cannock Chase SSSI has been notified.
- The proposal is likely to affect 5ha of BMV agricultural land. Should the proposal be temporary, as described, it is unlikely to lead to significant permanent loss of BMV agricultural land as a resource for future generations as solar panels would be secured to the ground by steel piles with limited soil disturbance and could be removed in the future with no permanent loss of agricultural land quality provided the appropriate soil management is employed.
- Whilst some components of the development, such as construction of a sub-station, may permanently affect agricultural land this would be limited to small areas.
- During the life of the proposed development it is likely that there would be a reduction in agricultural production over the whole development area.
- Stafford Borough Council should consider whether this is an effective use of land in line with planning practice guidance, which encourages the siting of large-scale solar farms on previously development and non-agricultural land.

- Soil is a finite resource which plays an essential role within sustainable ecosystems, performing an array of functions. Careful soil management and appropriate soil use is required to ensure that adverse impacts on soils can be avoided or minimised. Should permission be granted, conditions to safeguard soil resources and agricultural land, including a commitment for the preparation of reinstatement, restoration, and aftercare plans should be attached.
- Conditions to secure appropriate agricultural land management and/or biodiversity enhancement during the lifetime of the development, and to require the site to be decommissioned and restored to its former condition when any permission expires should be attached to any approval.

Biodiversity Officer:

(Comments dated 3 September 2024):

No objection.

- The amendments to the scheme result in no further implications regarding habitats or BNG.
- Please refer to previous comments.

(Comments dated 21 June 2023):

No objection.

- An Ecological Impact Assessment with surveys was carried out during 2022.
- Works should not be undertaken in the nesting season (March to August), unless it can be demonstrated that breeding birds will not be affected.
- 5x Schwegler 1B bird boxes should be installed in suitable locations around the site.
- 5x woodcrete bat boxes should be installed in suitable locations on mature trees on site.
- Bird and bat box location should be indicated by the applicant's ecologists.
- Recommendations made in the Badger Report should be undertaken as stated.
- Reasonable Avoidance Measures for Great Crested Newts should be set out within a Precautionary Working Method Statement.
- A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) should be secured by condition; it must include standard pollution prevention and dust control measures.

- It is recommended that an ecological precautionary working method statement (PWMS) for the protection of habitats and species is drafted to inform ecological input into the contractors' CEMP. The PWMS will also identify any further measures to ensure that impacts on nearby designated sites or priority habitats are reduced to a reasonable minimum such that the qualifying features of such designations are not negatively affected by the proposed development.
- All hedgerows should be retained and enhanced where necessary with locally appropriate native species. New hedgerows will also act as screening for the site.
- The Landscape Mitigation Plan indicates habitat enhancement across the site, as set out in the Biodiversity Net Gain report and metric. Plans indicate a measurable net gain in biodiversity.
- A detailed 30-year management and monitoring plan along with an implementation strategy will be required to ensure habitats and target conditions are met. It is anticipated that this may be secured via condition due to the precautionary approach taken to this assessment when assigning habitats and target conditions, and the retention of higher distinctiveness habitats within the design. The plan will include the following details:
 - o An implementation plan aligned with the BNG management plan, including planting schedule, construction handover checklist, timescale for implementation, and responsibility.
 - o Detailed management and maintenance information for years 1 - 5 with set targets.
 - o Broader management aims for the remaining lifetime of the BNG commitment.
 - o Methods and reporting processes to be used for monitoring the success of habitat enhancement and creation along with options for remedial intervention where needed if a habitat is not achieving its targeted condition.
 - o Roles and responsibilities, along with financial and legal requirements will also be included.

Newt Officer:

(Comments dated 20 September 2023):

No objection.

- The application site is within the red impact risk zone for great crested newts (GCN) where there is highly suitable habitat and a high likelihood of GCN presence.

- There are 38 ponds within 500m of the application site and four ponds within the site boundary. There is some connectivity between the application site and surrounding features in the landscape in the form of hedgerows.
- The ecological report contains details of eDNA surveys for ponds within 250m of the site, only one of which was found to contain a positive result for GCN; this pond would not be directly impacted by the proposed development.
- Although there is some doubt over results due to a lack of access, indeterminate results, or dry ponds (which may have been temporary due to conditions in June 2022), this is acknowledged and the recommendation of RAMs is made.
- The habitat on-site is all poor quality for newts (arable) and the on-site ponds were either negative, indeterminate, or dry.
- The results and conclusion of the ecological report are satisfactory.
- A precautionary working statement in the form of reasonable avoidance measures (RAMs) / non-licenced method statement (NLMS) strategy documents completed by a suitably qualified ecologist should be secured by condition to show that the works would be carried out following best practice.
- An informative should be attached to any permission to bring to the attention of the applicant the protected status of GCN and the potential need for a works licence.
- The applicant could apply to the district licensing scheme at any time should they wish to avoid any risks or should newts be encountered on the site.

Tree Officer:

(Comments dated 6 September 2024):

No objection.

- There would now be a significant standoff between solar panels and T63, removing concerns regarding future growth and problems for the adjacent panels as well as issues during installation which would have likely led to negative impacts for this tree.
- Given the large extent of the site, a simplistic AMS is required prior to commencement which defines a clear timetable of actions, responsible persons being defined, and suitable specifications in order to help ensure that tree protection measures are observed.
- All planting will require a formal specification and maintenance schedule to be submitted.
- Any planting which is lost for any reason within five years shall be replaced.

(Comments dated 18 August 2024):

Holding objection, to be lifted following the omission of the proposed solar panel southwest of T63 (Sycamore)

- The arboricultural consultant states that the latest amendments would not impact upon any existing tree or hedgerow and that the original arboricultural impact assessment (AIA) remains accurate.
- The detail necessary to protected existing trees is within the AIA and the tree protection plan (TPP) is adequate, although amendments to the scheme require a number of these plans to be amended.
- The trees may be just about a reasonable distance from the proposed solar panels to minimise conflict both now and in the future.
- The latest amendments show a slightly altered arrangement in respect of many of the trees on site, with greater stand-offs from existing trees. The stand-offs in some instances are now substantial, and generally stand-offs are increased from trees to the south and east.
- T63 (Sycamore) is highly rated (category A) and the stand-off has been reduced from 14-15m to approximately 9.6m. This would be a clear arboricultural impact and it is likely that works would be required within the root protection area to install the closest panel, contradictory to the tree protection plan. This panel is likely to result in the removal of this tree and the panel should, therefore, be omitted.
- Given the increased stand-off, the amendments are welcomed (except the proximity to T63).
- A simplistic arboricultural method statement will be required prior to commencement of development which defines a clear timetable of actions, responsible persons, and suitable specifications to ensure that tree protection measures are observed.
- All planting will require a formal specification and maintenance schedule to be submitted.
- Subject to the omission of the panel closest to the southwest of T63, there would be no objection to the proposed development.
- Conditions are recommended to secure AMS, landscaping scheme, and replacement of any trees detailed in the landscaping scheme.

(Comments dated 27 March 2024):

Objection.

- There are potential conflicts with trees in terms of shading. Whilst the applicant states that this is not an issue there is no evidence to demonstrate that as fact.

(Comments dated 2 October 2023):

Objection.

- An arboricultural impact assessment in accordance with British Standards should demonstrate all constraints created by trees and whether or not these would be problematic in terms of the proposed development.
- As a result of poor development, adverse shading impact can result in tree loss either immediately or over time, lead to unrealistic pressures on retained trees on or adjacent to the site, and make a development unsustainable. Usually this is in relation to the conflict created by development being located close to trees where there can be an unrealistic pressure to have full sunshine for all daylight hours.
- Whilst it is stated in the feedback from the applicant that the proposed solar panels do not require direct sunlight, I believe that installing them in areas where there would be a significant amount of shading from trees now or in the future would put an unrealistic pressure on these trees. Therefore, in this instance shading is a valid arboricultural constraint and so is a valid tree protection issue. The request is to show some form of shading assessment in terms of the trees for existing and future crown growth.
- As the applicant has been unwilling to demonstrate that shading has been taken account of, the worst is assumed that realistically there would be tree loss as a result. It is not accepted that the position of trees and woodlands has been taken into account and it is not accepted that the impact assessment has taken this into account as there are some panels proposed in close proximity to existing tree canopies which would be expected to get significantly larger and overhang some of the panels. In the absence of such information the existing tree cover should be conserved on this site.
- The application should be refused on the grounds of the negative impact on tree cover on the site and on land adjacent to the site.

(Comments dated 25 June 2023):

Objection.

- There are a number of trees on the site and the application is supported by an in-depth AIA (arboricultural impact assessment).
- Most of the trees on site would be retained.

- The tree constraints plan shows the root protection areas and crown spreads but they do not show any shading (current or future). Whilst this is not a normal requirement, the proposed development (a solar farm) requires sunlight to function correctly. Trees will compete for sunlight and will clearly provide a constraint to development and a potential conflict.
- Due to the omission of details of tree shading from future growth it is believed that this has not been considered. Given the large number of trees on this site, demonstration of such an assessment should have been provided. The trees may just be a reasonable distance from the solar panels to minimise conflict (now and in the future), however this requires clarification. Once clarification is provided, the arboricultural information would be adequate to condition.
- The AIA refers to the absence of details of proposed service runs; this issue can be mitigated by adherence to the submitted tree protection plan or by requiring an arboricultural method statement.
- The detail necessary to protect the existing trees is contained within the AIA, however it could easily be overlooked by contractors. The tree protection plan has clearly identified areas of tree protection and is adequate to implement.
- Subject to evidence being submitted regarding shading impact being at sustainable levels, conditions would be recommended to ensure the following:
 - o Compliance with the arboricultural impact assessment and tree protection plan.
 - o Details of soft landscaping works, to include proposed planting, maintenance, provision for root growth, and replacement of any plants lost.

Forestry Commission:

(Comments dated 23 June 2023):

No objection.

- There is no ancient woodland affected and consequently we have no comment to make on this application.
- However, it is government policy to replace any trees lost through development and we trust that the local planning authority will take this into account during their decision-making process.

Lead Local Flood Authority:

(Comments dated 4 March 2026):

No objection, subject to conditions:

- 1) Detailed drainage scheme to be in accordance with approved principles.
- 2) Detailed drainage scheme to include further information.
- 3) Detailed drainage scheme to include management and maintenance plan.

(Comments dated 10 February 2026):

No objection.

- Having reviewed the response and updated model results from the applicant, it is requested that the agreed details be incorporated in an updated FRA/DS to refer to within a condition.

(Comments dated 19 November 2025):

Objection.

- The modelling demonstrates increased flood risk to third part land as a result of the proposed development.
- Further clarification is required regarding catchments 1 and 2 in the modelling.

(Comments dated 23 September 2025):

Objection.

- Further detail is required to demonstrate acceptable drainage principles.
 - o Further modelling is required to establish that the proposal would not increase flood risk elsewhere.

(Comments dated 7 July 2025):

Objection.

- Further detail is required (relating to modelling and attenuation) in order to demonstrate acceptable drainage principles.

(Comments dated 7 October 2024):

Objection.

- Further detail is required to demonstrate acceptable drainage principles:
 - o Further detail is required relating land drainage/ephemeral ditches.
 - o Source control alongside the capacity evaluation of the ditches is required within the drainage calculations.

(Comments dated 10 September 2024):

Objection.

- There is currently not a viable drainage strategy. Discharge to watercourse/ditches is proposed but there is insufficient information to demonstrate that the proposed approach is viable.
- The following key issues need to be resolved:
 - Ensure there is a viable point of discharge for surface water on the site.
 - Some proposed ditches are outside of the site boundary.
 - It is unknown whether drainage routes have sufficient capacity to convey surface water as there is no modelling or calculations.
 - The condition of the ditches is unknown.
 - There appears to be a conflict between proposed underground cabling between the two parcels of land and the existing culverted watercourses. Without survey this cannot be confirmed and the cable connection may not be viable.
 - Culverting is not acceptable, except for access. The applicant has not demonstrated what piping is required for.
 - Drainage of access tracks and buildings is unclear.
 - Exceedance plans are required as there is limited formal drainage.
 - Infiltration testing could be secured by condition as permeable surfacing could be lined in the event that infiltration is not possible. These lined features would need to be included in the detailed modelling to show their contribution to the drainage network should infiltration not be possible.
 - Calculations are required to demonstrate that the strategy would work as proposed.

(Comments dated 7 August 2024):

Objection.

- Further information is required in relation to site drainage.
- All drainage ditch routes should be surveyed to ensure viable points of discharge, sufficient capacity, and adequate condition.

- Confirmation that all land drainage ditches are under the control of the applicant or evidence of agreements in principle with alternative riparian owners.
- Surveys should confirm no conflicts between existing culverted watercourses and the proposed underground cabling.
- Details are required of the proposed diversion of the land drainage ditch in the parcel A.
- Proposed piping features will only be acceptable if they are required to maintain access (culverting is not acceptable).
- Plans of buildings and supporting infrastructure areas should be provided, including details of how they would be drained and their surfacing details.
- Plans to illustrate flooded areas and flow paths in the event of exceedance of the drainage system post-development are required.
- Detailed design of the proposed features (conveyance features, piped connections, attenuation features) to be created are required.
- Detailed design calculations are required to demonstrate the performance of the designed system for a range of return periods and storm durations.
- The need for infiltration testing for permeable paving could be secured by condition.

(Comments dated 27 June 2023):

Objection.

- The site is within flood zone 1, mainly in an area of very low risk of surface flooding; there are some areas of low risk in relation to the drainage routes associated with the ordinary watercourse.
- No known past flooding issues within 20m of the site.
- There is an unnamed ordinary watercourse flowing west away from the site (parcel A).
- There is a second unnamed ordinary watercourse on the northern tip of parcel B before going into culvert, crossing the proposed underground cable route, and re-emerging to the west of the site and joining the northern tributary to the north of Wincote Lane.
- A third unnamed ordinary watercourse being to the north of parcel B before entering into culvert and crossing the proposed underground cable route before emerging and joining the second.

- There are ponds within parcel A and a further pond adjacent to the cable route on the northern tip of parcel B.
- There are 2 sites of biological interest (The Dingle and Large Covert) bordering the northern boundary of parcel A, and a third (Lake Covert) located to the west of the site.
- Further information is requiring with regard to the site drainage proposals.
- The flood risk assessment references that points will be addressed at detailed design stage; as this is a full application we require the detailed drainage design at this stage. Any strategy presented should be commensurate with the requirements of the Staffordshire SuDS handbook.
- Specific details which are outstanding include:
 - Detailed design in support of any surface water drainage scheme, including details of attenuation systems and outfall arrangements.
 - Evidence of infiltration testing to establish if permeable or porous paving will be used for the proposed access tracks.
 - Evidence of investigation of existing ditches to confirm location, routing, and conditions to ensure that the site has a viable point of discharge and that there are no conflicts between existing culverted watercourses and proposed underground cabling.
 - Plans of the buildings and supporting infrastructure areas, including how these would be drained and their surfacing details.
 - Demonstration of how channelling of surface water caused from water dropping off solar panels would be prevented using appropriate erosion protection.
 - Plans illustrating flooded areas and flow paths in the event of exceedance of the drainage system post-development.
 - Provision of an acceptable management and maintenance plan for surface water drainage to ensure that surface water drainage systems shall be maintained and managed for the lifetime of the development.
 - Provision of supporting information to demonstrate that sufficient water quality measures have been incorporated into the design.
- We would support a discharge rate equivalent to greenfield QBAR.

Historic England:

(Comments dated 22 July 2024):

- Please seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisors.

(Comments dated 14 June 2023):

- Please seek the views of your specialist conservation and archaeological advisors.

Conservation Officer:

(Comments dated 5 September 2024):

Objection.

- The latest heritage impact assessment (HIA) considers the new grade II listed status of Johnson Hall to the northeast, assessing its significance and the impact of the proposed development of its setting and the associated non-designated parkland.
- The HIA concludes that there is intervisibility between the application site and Johnson Hall and its parkland. Johnson Hall is clearly visible from the northeastern boundary of parcel A even in the height of summer when trees are in full leaf. The HIA assesses the impact to Johnson Hall's setting as moderate adverse, which I am inclined to agree with.
- As a result of this re-assessment, additional screen planting in the form of scattered native tree planting along the north-eastern boundary of parcel A and some additional hedgerow planting is proposed. There is no specification; this should be heavy standard to provide reasonable screening from the outset.
- The relocation of the ancillary buildings to parcel A, in a more discreet location and away from the access on Wincote Lane is welcomed. More soft landscaping around these should be provided to soften their appearance and improve screening.
- There appears to still be landscape mitigation within parcel B, only some tree planting to the boundary with Cash Lane. Historic field boundaries should be reinstated with native species hedgerow planting and a meadow seed buffer to the proposed access track similar to that shown on parcel A.
- 4 attenuation basins have been added to parcel A and 1 to parcel B but no soft landscaping has been included around these which would appear as man-made ponds. Additional landscape planting around these could make them appear more natural, blending better with the surrounding rural landscape and existing natural ponds and making a more valuable contribution to landscape mitigation.

- No material is specified for the access tracks running through the sites' these should not be tarmac which would be too flat and dark in appearance and an incongruous material in the rural landscape. The access tracks should ideally be with unobstructed grass corridors as far as possible and where hard surfaces are a necessity (proven with justification) they should be compacted hardcore.
- Whilst the assessment of the impacts of development on the wider setting of, and views from, the grade II listed Johnson Hall and the landscape mitigation measures are welcomed, further landscape mitigation is required, particularly with regard to the proposed new attenuation basins and parcel B. The development would still result in less than substantial harm (serious harm) without adequate mitigation.

(Comments dated 26 March 2024):

Objection.

- Whilst no amendments have been received in relation to earlier conservation comments, a rebuttal statement has been submitted. This does not alleviate the conservation concerns, and it is considered that the proposed landscape mitigation does not go far enough in reducing the impact of the proposed solar farm on the setting of the heritage assets and views across the landscape.
- I concur with the comments of Design Midlands.
- Since comments made in June 2023 Johnson Hall (to the northeast of the application site) has been designated grade II listed (list entry 1489184, 15 March 2024).
- There is clear intervisibility between Johnson Hall and the Wincote Lane parcel of the application site, as demonstrated in figure 5 of the HEDBA. However, the assessment was carried out prior to Johnson Hall being listed and so was assessed as a non-designated heritage asset of low local heritage significance which is now incorrect. The HEDBA must be amended to address the impact of the proposed development on the listed building and recognise its special historic and architectural interest, and detail what additional mitigation would be put in place to reduce the impact upon its setting.
- The development is considered to cause less than substantial harm (to the degree of serious harm) with insufficient mitigation proposed.

(Comments dated 15 June 2023):

Objection.

- Horsley Hall (west of parcel A) is an unlisted 19th Century Victorian manor house, constructed circa. 1883 and originally set in its own landscaped park (identified within the Staffordshire HER). Whilst it has been significantly extended the historic main part of the original house remains and retains most of its original external features and character. It contributes to the character of the area as a focal point in the landscape and as a local landmark.
- The 18th Century landscape park of Johnson Hall is to the north of parcel A. Johnson Hall dates back to the early 16th Century; the hall and its landscape park are identified within the Staffordshire HER. The lodge of Johnson Hall is grade II listed and the estate is marked on Yates' map of 1775. The parkland was established around the hall and a few features survive, notably the fishpond and at least one covert.
- Cash Farmhouse (adjacent to parcel B) is a grade II listed red brick and stucco farmhouse of circa. 1849 date in Regency Gothic style.
- The proposed solar farm would comprise 2.7m high ground mounted panels and other associated development including 3.2m high transformer stations.
- The transformer housing would be placed centrally in the fields and require vehicular access tracks cutting through the landscape. Other infrastructure would primarily be focused to the perimeter of the sites.
- Infrastructure at the south-western end of parcel A with the junction of Wincote Lane would be prominently visible in views from Wincote Lane due to the flat nature of the landscape.
- Whilst fewer buildings are proposed within parcel B, the landscape is very flat in this area with a very low boundary hedge; parcel B would be visible in its entirety from Cash Lane and the public right of way which runs along its south-eastern boundary.
- The swathes of solar panels, CCTV poles at regular intervals, and the 2m high perimeter fence would present a very visually obtrusive feature in the rural landscape.
- Whilst there would be little intervisibility between the buildings and parklands of Horsley Hall and Johnson Hall and parcel A and between the grade II listed Cash Farmhouse and parcel B, the proposed solar farm would form an incongruous intrusion into their rural and agrarian setting, causing less than substantial harm (to the degree of serious harm) to their historic and architectural interest.
- Whilst a landscape mitigation strategy has been submitted in support of the application, this seems to rely heavily on retention of existing boundary hedges and trees (which are sparse and low in many sections of the perimeter) and some additional wild meadow planting. This would do little to screen and mitigate against the serious harm an installation of this scale would cause to the rural landscape and the wider setting of the heritage assets.

- By virtue of the industrialisation of the character of the historic open and rural landscape setting of the grade II listed Cash Farmhouse and Horsley Hall, a non-designated heritage asset, the proposed solar farm would result in less than substantial harm (to the degree of serious harm) to the setting of the heritage assets.
- The proposed development is contrary to the provisions of policies N1, N8, and N9 of The Plan for Stafford Borough and paragraphs 200, 202, and 203 of the NPPF. In addition, the proposal fails to satisfy section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which places particular emphasis on the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their setting.
- Under paragraph 200 of the NPPF, any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification. Where it is deemed that harm is justified by balancing against the public benefits of a proposed development every effort should be made as part of the proposals to mitigate that harm as far as possible.
- Whilst re-consultation would usually be advised should amendments be forthcoming, it is not considered that any amendments would be able to resolve the conservation objection to the principle of a development of this enormous scale in this very open and visually sensitive landscape setting. The application should be refused.

County Archaeologist:

(Comments dated 3 April 2024):

No objection.

- The application is supported by a suitably comprehensive HEDBA with regard to the below ground archaeological resource.
- The supporting documents recommend a staged programme of archaeological evaluation as a condition of any approval.
- This approach is considered to be necessary due to the high potential for post-medieval archaeology being encountered on the application site and there is some potential for previously unknown archaeological features for earlier periods to be encountered in this landscape too.
- There has not been a great deal of previous development in the area and consequently our understanding of the archaeological potential is not comprehensive.

- There are hints to earlier activity recorded on the HER, including Roman finds and a potential road, and a potential medieval settlement and moated site. Some nearby settlements are recorded in the Domesday Book, suggested that the area had been settled by at least the Anglo-Saxon period. There is evidence of Bronze Age activity in the wider landscape and the Historic Environment Assessment suggests that the area had been largely cleared by this time. There is a small watercourse nearby and it is noted that elsewhere in the county such places are often the focus of later prehistoric settlement of activity.
- It should be noted that later landscape features have been demonstrated to have previously been visible across a substantial part of the site and these have the potential to mask earlier features.
- A staged archaeological evaluation should be secured by condition, to comprise a geophysical survey followed by archaeological evaluation trenching which would further characterise potential below-ground archaeological features. The evaluation should be undertaken in advance of any groundworks in order for the results to inform the need for further staged works and their scale and extent.

AONB Officer:

Does not wish to provide comment.

Campaign to Protect Rural England:

(Comments received 15 June 2023):

Objection.

- It is recognised that solar energy has an important role to play in meeting future energy needs, helping to increase energy security and diversity, and contributing to meeting the UK's target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- However, the environmental objection of developing renewable energy through large solar farms should not come at the expense of the beauty, character, and tranquillity of Staffordshire's countryside. The impacts of large-scale commercial photovoltaic farms with associated infrastructure are difficult to mitigate in rural landscapes; the large size of the development would have an adverse impact on the landscape character, natural beauty, and tranquillity of what is currently a quiet rural area. We are extremely concerned that this large development would have an unacceptably adverse impact on the landscape and on people's ability to enjoy the countryside in the vicinity.
- The proposed development is contrary to the provisions of paragraphs 174-188 of the NPPF (2021)

- The preferred options policies map does not show this location as one where applications for solar PV development would be supported.
- Solar farm developments should avoid harm to views from publicly accessible land. The proposal would substantially change the experience of people using this land. As well as the panels themselves, the security and perimeter fencing can be visually intrusive.
- The proposal would involve the loss of a substantial amount of high-quality productive arable farmland. Grades 1, 2, and 3a agricultural land should not be used for solar farms as it is, in itself, a major renewable energy resource and is defined as the best and most versatile agricultural land. It is undesirable to take one renewable energy resource out of effective use in order to develop another. 73% of the site is grade 2 or 3a land.
- The most suitable location for solar technologies is on industrial and other buildings with major roof surfaces, as well as car parks. The potential of brownfield sites to generate renewable energy is dramatically underused. Such provision could contribute more than half of the total national target of 70GW by 2035.

Environment Agency:

(Comments dated 19 September 2023):

- Does not wish to comment as the site is within flood zone 1 and is not EIA development.

Environmental Health Officer:

(Comments dated 7 October 2024):

No objection.

- The ground investigation report is satisfactory for our purposes and the conclusions are accepted. No further action is recommended.

(Comments dated 29 September 2024):

No objection.

- The nearest noise sensitive receptors would not be affected by noise from the proposed development. External and internal noise levels would be within the recommended noise levels.

(Comments dated 6 June 2023):

No objection.

- The acoustic report by Bureau Veritas UK indicates that the noise produced by the site shall not exceed the existing background noise levels and in most cases will be below the background level.
- If noise levels from the proposed development do not exceed the levels set out in this report I would have no objections to the development.

(Comments dated 13 April 2023):

No objection.

Ministry of Defence:

There are no safeguarding objections. The application site is outside of MoD safeguarding areas.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service:

(Comments dated 17 May 2023):

No objection.

- Appropriate vehicular access and supplies of water for fire fighting should be provided at the site.
- Roads and drives upon which appliances would have to travel in order to proceed to within 45m of any point within the property should be capable of withstanding the weight of a Staffordshire firefighting appliance.
- Consideration should be given to the installation of automatic water suppression systems as part of a total fire protection package.

Staffordshire Police:

(Comments dated 25 May 2023):

No objection.

- In light of the rapid rate of increase in energy costs there is risk of theft at the site, as well as criminal damage and harm to offenders. With that borne in mind, security at the site is paramount.
- There is a trend in thefts from solar farms. The often-permitted deer fencing is not sufficient in deterring thieves and does not prevent access.
- 2.4m high perimeter fences are recommended, to include defensive planting to restrict access.

- CCTV should be monitored and be motion sensitive so that unauthorised access to the site is noted and police called before any theft is successful.
- Gates in the perimeter fences should meet the same standards as the proposed 2.4m fencing with restricted access.
- The perimeter fencing should be colour coded, expanded metal or welded mesh; the top horizontal bar could be left off in order to leave the fence topping spiked; the base should preferably be surrounded with well-compacted gravel.
- Recommendations are made with regard to alarm and CCTV systems, and security during the construction phase.

National Grid:

No objection.

- National Grid has high voltage assets within the development area.
- The developer should contact National Grid regarding any diversions that may be required.

Eccleshall Parish Council:

(Comments dated 29 August 2024):

Objection.

- The amended proposal fails to address the objections of the Conservation Officer and Design Midlands.
- The proposed drainage infrastructure suggests that the proposal is not temporary in nature.
- It is acknowledged that the site is in an appropriate location to connect to the grid and there is a national need for renewable energy.
- Should the application be approved, conditions should be considered to secure the following:
 - o Archaeological investigation.
 - o Impacts to biodiversity should be mitigated appropriately.
- Local residents should be compensated for disruption to their lives and share in profits.

(Comments dated 19 July 2024):

The Parish Council's objection remains.

(Comments dated 23 June 2023):

Objection.

- The representations made from Conservation Officer, Historic England, CPRE, Natural England, and local residents are endorsed.
- The proposal is contrary to policies N1, N8, and N9. It would cause serious harm to the setting of the nearby heritage assets and no measures could be proposed to mitigate this harm.
- The proposal would have a substantial impact on the landscape and its character, contrary to the provisions of policies N3 and N8.
- The proposed development would not contribute to, or enhance the, natural and local environment, contrary to the provisions of paragraphs 174-188 of the NPPF.
- The proposed development would encroach upon two public rights of way and would have an adverse impact upon routes which are popular with local residents.
- The local highway network is not suitable for the vehicles which would be required to have access during the construction which would have a great impact on the area and its residents.
- The increased potential of theft from the site and surroundings which is close to isolated dwellings.

Neighbours:

109 representations received in total, as summarised below.

1 broadly in support, yet raising concerns regarding highways matters:

- Increased traffic .
- Road safety implications due to narrow lanes.
- There are no passing places on the lanes.
- There are no turning space for vehicles.
- Impacts on emergency access.
- Poor visibility at the junction of A519 and Wincote Lane.

108 in objection, raising the following concerns:

- Solar energy is efficient
- Public benefits of energy generation wouldn't outweigh harm
- Loss of best and most versatile agricultural land
- Impact on national food security
- Loss of greenfield land
- Brownfield land and commercial rooftops should be utilised for solar generation
- Setting a precedent for further non-agricultural development in the area
- The site is not allocated for renewable energy generation development
- The proposal is not in accordance with local planning policy
- Excessive use of water for cooling
- National targets are met for solar schemes
- No nearby connections to the grid
- Harm to the rural character of the area
- Development should be screened from public rights of way
- Views from public rights of way should be protected
- Supporting infrastructure (including CCTV) should be in keeping with the agrarian character of the surrounding area
- Introducing an incongruous feature in the natural landscape
- Development would materially change the landscape
- CPRE are against such proposals
- Loss of trees and hedgerows.
- Application not supported by sufficient arboricultural information
- Harm to protected species
- Loss of biodiversity
- Application not supported by sufficient ecological information

- Loss of habitat
- Disturbance of local wildlife
- External lighting would impact wildlife
- Insufficient ecological enhancement measures
- Harm to public rights of way
- Impact amenity of public rights of way (acoustic and visual)
- Larger gaps should be provided between public rights of way and the proposed development
- Public rights of way must be kept open
- Heavy vehicles are likely to damage the drainage features of the local highway network
- Local highway network is not suitable for large vehicles/construction traffic
- Increased risk of damage to property from large vehicles using small lanes
- Access should be via the farm driveway on Horsley Lane
- No safe passing points for vehicles on these lanes
- Noise from additional traffic would disturb animals kept adjacent to the public highway
- The transport report ignores previous serious accidents
- Vehicle movements should be restricted
- Increased risk to highway safety
- Increased noise pollution
- Amenity impacts during construction
- Concerns regarding glint and glare
- Increased rural crime
- Unknown health implications from electromagnetic radiation
- Risk of fire and consequent toxic smoke

- Potential contamination during construction, installation, and ongoing use
- Risk of pollution - air, ground, and water
- Increased hazardous waste from batteries
- The development must be reversible
- Restoration must be ensured
- Panels must be recycled at the end of their life
- Land won't be restored due to degradation
- Soil quality would not be restored for a significant period of time
- Permanent loss of soil
- No local benefit
- Impacts on mental health of local residents
- Lack of engagement with local community
- Surface water runoff will degrade soil
- Loss of vegetation will increase flood risk
- Application not supported by sufficient drainage information
- Development would worsen drainage issues in locality
- Potential to damage archaeological features.

Site notice expiry date:

14 August 2024

Newsletter advert expiry date:

21 August 2024

Relevant Planning History

None.

Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

1. The Development hereby permitted shall commence no later than the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.
2. This permission relates to the submitted details, specification and the following drawings, except where indicated otherwise by a condition attached to this consent, in which case the condition shall take precedence:-
 - G9386.010 A sheets 1-5 (Location plan)
 - D9386.004 H (General arrangement overview)
 - D9386.005 H (General arrangement inset A)
 - D9386.006 H (General arrangement inset B)
 - D9386.007 I (Landscape mitigation plan)
 - 1012-D01 A (Solar PV array)
 - 1012-D02 A (Perimeter fence CCTV detail)
 - 1012-D03 A (Internal access track)
 - 1012-D04 A (Transformer station)
 - 1012-D05 A (DNO substation)
 - 1012-D06 A (Customer substation)
 - 1012-D07 A (Control building)
 - 1012-D08 A (Spare parts container)
3. The local planning authority shall be notified in writing of the First Export Date within 21 days of that event occurring. The development hereby permitted shall cease on or before the expiry of a 40-year period from the date of the first export of electricity and the Local Planning Authority shall be notified of the cessation of electricity generation and storage in writing no later than 5 working days after the event.
4. No development shall commence unless and until a pre-development condition survey of the site has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The decommissioning and restoration of the site shall thereafter be informed by the approved pre-development condition survey.

5. Within three months of the date of cessation of the export of electricity from all of the site, or within a period of 39 years and 9 months following the First Export Date, whichever occurs first, a site decommissioning and restoration plan shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval in writing. The plan for the site shall be informed by the pre-development condition survey of the site and include the following:
 - a) programme and timetable for decommissioning works for the development, including measures to secure the removal of all PV modules and racks, any foundations or anchor systems, plant, equipment, fencing, and ancillary structures and equipment.
 - b) restoration works to return the land to agricultural use, retained landscape, and ecological features and habitats.

The decommissioning of the development and restoration of the site shall be implemented in strict accordance with the approved plan and the timescales therein.

6. No development shall commence unless and until a written scheme of archaeological investigation (WSI) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The WSI shall provide details of the programme of archaeological works to be carried out within the site, including post-excavation reporting, analysis, and appropriate publication. The archaeological site work shall thereafter be implemented in full in accordance with the approved WSI and the timescales therein.
7. No development shall commence unless and until a detailed soil management plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved soil management plan.
8. No CCTV system shall be installed except in accordance with details of their precise location and external appearance (to include colour finish) which shall have first been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.
9. Notwithstanding any detail or description within the application documents, the CCTV units shall only use infra-red lighting and shall be directed inwards into the site.
10. No 'infrastructure building' (to include: transformer stations, DNO substations, customer substations, control buildings, and spare parts containers) shall be installed/erected except in accordance with details of their colour finish which shall first have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.

11. No development shall commence and no construction traffic shall enter the site unless and until a full condition survey of the existing road network (Wincote Lane and Cash Lane) between Newport Road (A519) and the application site entrance/exit, to be used by construction vehicles, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Within three months of construction finishing, a post construction condition survey across the same extent of adopted highway shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. Any highways defects identified in the survey resulting from construction activities relating to the development, shall then be corrected in accordance with a schedule of works and timetable that has first been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.

12. No development shall commence unless and until a construction transport management plan (CTMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The CTMP shall include details of the following but not be strictly limited to:
- (a) Construction access
 - (b) Delivery times
 - (c) Location of contractor's compounds, cabins, and parking areas
 - (d) Location of material storage areas, loading areas, and vehicle turning areas
 - (e) Management scheme for the suppression of dust and mud from construction activities
 - (f) No more than 1 HGV generated by the development on Cash Lane at any one time
 - (g) No more than 1 HGV generated by the development on Wincote Land at any one time
 - (h) Traffic management scheme, including potential speed limit reduction, for the A519 at the access and egress points
 - (i) Traffic management scheme, including any necessary speed limit reduction, for Cash Lane and Wincote Lane between the A519 and the application site
 - (j) All vehicle movements generated by construction activities to operate a one-way system to access the site from the A519 via Cash Lane and egress to the A519 via Wincote Lane
 - (k) Provision of a signage scheme to identify and define the one-way system

- (l) Provision of an escort vehicle for all HGV movements between the A519 and the application site during construction
- (m) Provision of banksmen to guide vehicles when reversing within the site
- (n) Provision of banksmen or stop/go procedures for all vehicle movements to/from the substation access
- (o) Provision of a waiting area to be left clear so that vehicles arriving to the site can drive directly onto the site, avoiding tailback onto the public highway
- (p) Provision of signage to warn motorists of the site entrance and HGV movements

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved CTMP.

13. All construction activities shall only take between the hours of 08.00 and 18.00 hours Monday to Friday, 08.00 and 14.00 hours on Saturdays, and not at all on Sundays, Public, and Bank Holidays.
14. No development (except for works in the pursuance of providing the vehicular accesses) shall commence unless and until the vehicular access and egress points have been provided in accordance with details which shall first have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.
15. Except for the provision of the vehicular access to the site, no development shall commence unless and until the associated visibility splays have been provided at the access and egress points off Wincote Lane and Cash Lane in accordance with details which shall first have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The visibility splays shall thereafter be kept free of all obstructions to visibility over a height of 600 mm above the adjacent carriageway level.
16. Prior to the commencement of development, a landscaping and planting scheme (broadly in accordance with drawing D9386.007 I) shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The landscaping and planting scheme shall include the following details:
 - (a) all trees, hedgerows and other planting to be retained
 - (b) a planting specification to include numbers, density, size, species, and positions of all new trees, hedgerows and other planting, to include heavy standard trees
 - (c) Planting methodology to ensure the provision of sufficient ground for unrestricted root growth

The landscaping and planting scheme shall thereafter be implemented within eight months of the development first being brought into use.

Any plants, trees or hedgerows planted as part of the approved landscape and planting scheme that are removed, die or become seriously damaged or diseased within a period of 5 years from the date of first planting shall be replaced with others of similar size and species in the next planting season, unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

17. No development shall commence unless and until a landscape ecological management plan (LEMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The LEMP shall comprise the following elements:

- Baseline conditions
- Programme of implementation; description and evaluation of features to be established and managed
- Ecological trends and constraints on site that could influence management,
- Aims and objectives of management,
- Management plan for the lifetime of the development
- Ongoing monitoring, reporting, and remedial measures
- Responsibilities and governance of site

The development shall thereafter be carried out and operated in accordance with the approved LEMP.

18. Notwithstanding any description or detail in the application documents, the LEMP to be submitted in pursuance of the previous condition to this permission shall include the following measures:

- Retention of hedgerows to a minimum height of 3m
- Maintenance and enhancement of public rights of way and adjacent landscaping
- Provision of a minimum of 5 Schwegler 1B bird boxes
- Provision of a minimum of 5 woodcrete bat boxes

19. The development shall be carried out in accordance with an ecological Precautionary Working Method Statement for the protection of habitats and species (to include avoidance measures relating to nearby designated sites and priority habitats, and those on site) which has first been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.
20. The development shall be carried out in accordance with a construction environmental management plan (CEMP) which shall first have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The CEMP shall be informed by the Precautionary Working Method Statement submitted, and approved, in pursuance of the previous condition to this permission. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved CEMP.
21. No development shall commence (including deliveries to the site) unless and until an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) covering all aspects of development within the root protection areas of retained trees, or that have the potential to result in damage to retained trees, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved AMS.
22. No development shall commence unless and until a drainage scheme has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The drainage scheme shall be in accordance with the National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (DEFRA, 2025) and the principles contained within the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Management, Revision 9.0, (HYD756_WINCOTE.SOLAR.SITE_FRAandDMS, Betts Hydro Consulting Engineers, 18.02.26). The Drainage Scheme shall also include the following details:
 - Full design calculations for which the range of results shall include the 100-year plus climate change, 30-year return and 1/2year periods for a range of event durations.
 - Details of new connections (including flow control devices) to existing private sewers including levels.
 - Detailed design of all drainage elements including long sections and cross sections.
 - Design of cross-contour interception drains to demonstrate runoff from the panels is adequately conveyed to the proposed attenuation basins.
 - Detailed levels and exceedance plan, including cross-contour interception drains, to ensure any exceedance route with the existing topography is intercepted by the existing on-site land drainage ditches.

- Details to demonstrate that sufficient water quality measures are incorporated into the design in accordance with CIRIA SuDS Manual Simple Index Approach and SuDS treatment design criteria.
- Provision of a detailed ground investigation to demonstrate whether infiltration is viable for the permeable paving provision in accordance with BRE365 methods.
- A Construction Surface Water Management Plan (CSWMP) to demonstrate that surface water runoff and contaminants are intercepted, treated, stored, and appropriately discharged as part of any temporary works
- Programme, and timing of works, for the clearance of debris and vegetation from all on-site land drainage ditches.
- The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved drainage scheme.

23. The development shall not be brought into use unless and until a management and maintenance plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The management and maintenance plan shall include the following details to augment the drainage scheme approved pursuant to the preceding condition.

- Details of the maintenance arrangements, including a schedule of activities with frequencies, for all existing waterbodies, ditches, drainage features and drainage infrastructure including erosion protection measures.
- The name and contact details of the party or parties responsible for the construction phase maintenance strategy and subsequent ongoing maintenance.

The approved management and maintenance plan shall be fully implemented and subsequently maintained for the lifetime of the development or within any other period as may be subsequently agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

24. If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development shall be carried out until a remediation strategy detailing how this contamination shall be dealt with has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved, and a written verification report submitted thereafter to the local planning authority for approval in writing.

25. Except for temporary construction lighting provided in accordance with the CEMP to be submitted in pursuance of conditions of this permission, no permanent external lighting shall be installed within or on the boundary of the site unless the local planning authority has first approved in writing details of:

- (a) the location of all units of external illumination
- (b) the height, design, beam orientation, and measures to control light spillage and intensity of illumination.

The approved external illumination shall thereafter be provided and maintained in accordance with the approved details for the lifetime of the development.

The reasons for the Council's decision to approve the development subject to the above conditions are:

1. To comply with the requirements of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. To define the permission.
3. To ensure that the site is returned as close as possible to its original condition on expiry of this permission, in accordance with Policy N1 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.
4. To ensure that the site is returned as close as possible to its original condition on expiry of this permission, in accordance with Policy N1 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.
5. To ensure that the site is returned as close as possible to its original condition on expiry of this permission, in accordance with Policy N1 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.
6. To ensure that the development does not adversely impact on archaeology, in accordance with Policy N9 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.
7. In the interests of biodiversity. (Policy N4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough).
8. To ensure that a secure environment is provided, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.
9. To ensure that a secure environment is provided, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.
10. To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development (Policies N1 g and h of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
11. In the interest of highway safety and to ensure that safe and suitable access to the site is provided during the construction phase, in accordance with Policy T2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

12. In the interest of highway safety and to ensure that safe and suitable access to the site is provided during the construction phase, in accordance with Policy T2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.
13. To safeguard the occupiers of nearby residential properties from undue noise and general disturbance. (Policy N1e of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
14. In the interest of highway safety and to ensure that a safe and suitable access to the site is provided in accordance with Policy T2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.
15. In the interest of highway safety and to ensure that a safe and suitable access to the site is provided in accordance with Policy T2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.
16. To preserve landscape character, in accordance with Policies N1, N4 and N8 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.
17. To ensure that the required biodiversity enhancements are provided, in accordance with Policy N4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.
18. To ensure that the required biodiversity enhancements are provided, in accordance with Policy N4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.
19. In order to ensure that the development does not result in damage or harm to legally protected species or their habitat/roost. (Paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework).
20. In order to ensure that the development does not result in damage or harm to legally protected species or their habitat/roost. (Paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework).
21. To enable the Local Planning Authority to consider the scheme of development and the landscaping proposals in relation to the existing trees and hedges. (Policy N4 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
22. To prevent the increased risk of flooding both on and off site (Policy N2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough).
23. To prevent the increased risk of flooding both on and off site (Policy N2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough).
24. To prevent increased risk from land contamination both on and off site (Paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework).
25. To safeguard the amenities of the area (Policy N1e of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

Informatives

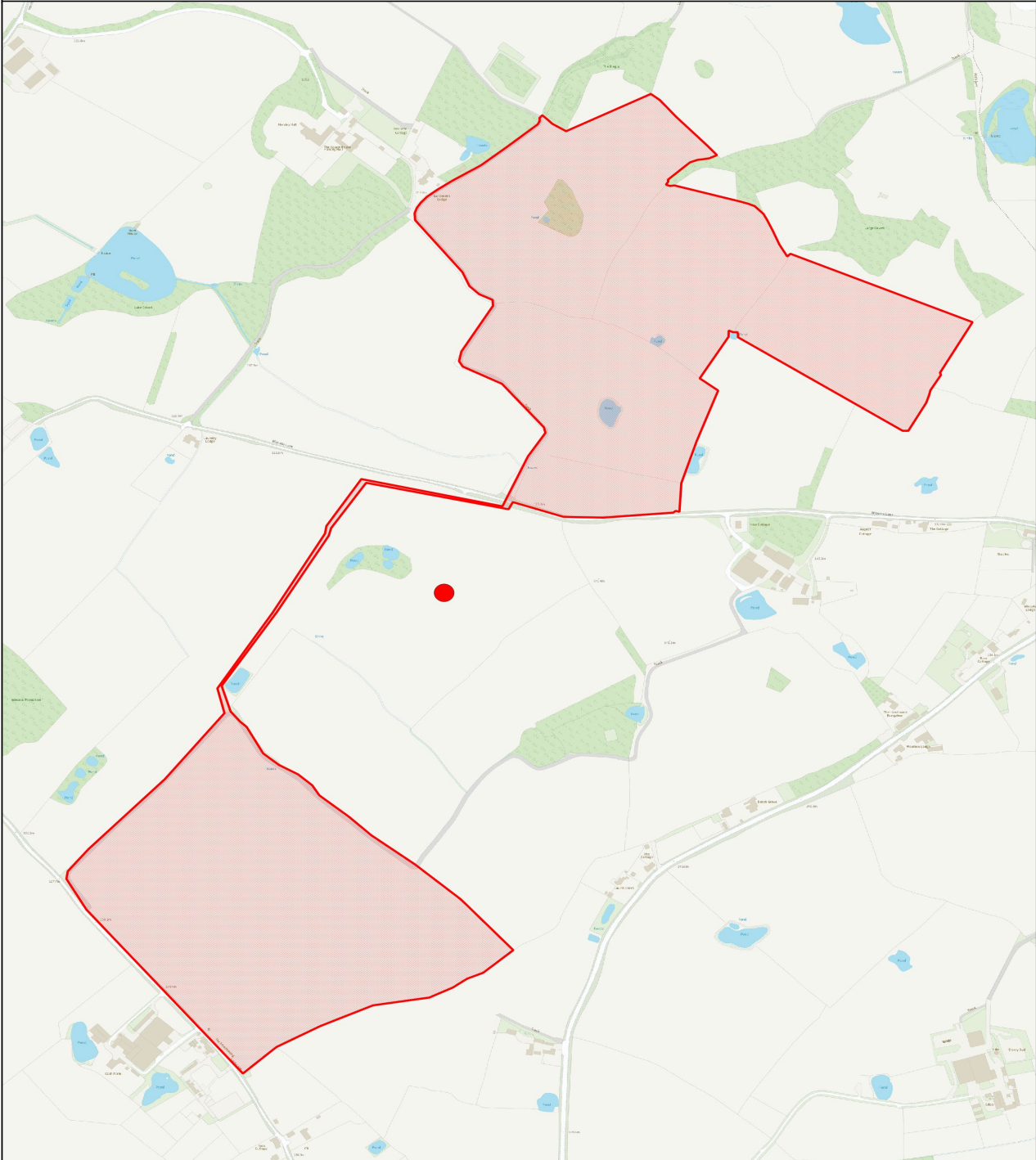
- 1 In accordance with the requirements of Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Order) 2015, as amended, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2024, the Council has worked in a positive and proactive way in determining the application and has granted planning permission.
- 2 The applicant is advised that any detailed drainage scheme submitted in pursuance of conditions of this permission should be informed by the comments of the Lead Local Flood Authority dated 4 March 2026. All comments are available to view online at www.staffordbc.gov.uk/planning-public-access
- 3 The applicant's attention is drawn to the requirement for Land Drainage Consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority for any structures proposed within a watercourse or any work within a watercourse.
- 4 The applicant is advised to contact National Grid regarding the presence of high voltage assets within the development area and the potential need for their diversion.
- 5 The applicant is reminded that, under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is an offence to (amongst other things): deliberately capture, disturb, injure, or kill great crested newts; damage or destroy a breeding or resting place; intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a resting or sheltering place. Planning permission for a development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation. Should great crested newts be found at any stage of the development works, then all works should cease, and a professional and/or suitably qualified and experienced ecologist (or Natural England) should be contacted for advice on any special precautions before continuing, including the need for a licence
- 6 The applicant's attention is drawn to the protected status of nesting birds and the requirement that they are not disrupted during the nesting season (March to August).
- 7 The applicant's attention is drawn to the comments of the local highway authority (dated 11 September 2024) with regard to off-site highway works. All comments are available to view online at www.staffordbc.gov.uk/planning-public-access
- 8 The applicant's attention is drawn to the protected status of public rights of way. The granting of planning permission does not constitute authority for any interference with the public right of way and associated items or its obstruction (temporary or permanent), including the provision of licenced obstructions such as gates or stiles.

Users of the paths must be able to exercise their public rights safely and at all times and the paths must be reinstated if any damage to their surface occurs as a result of the proposed development.

23/37149/FUL
Land East of Horsley Hall
Wincote Lane
Wootton

1:7000

Stafford Borough Council Plan
23/37149/FUL



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