

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

15 October 2024

Item 8 - Wiltshire Local Plan Review - Submission of Draft Plan

From Nick Stokes (Worton Parish Council)

**To Cllr Nick Botterill - Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management,
and Strategic Planning**

Preamble

While I welcome WCC's brownfield focus on solar power being generated from roofs of commercial and domestic property, in Wiltshire we are faced with a profusion of solar farm applications to be built on good agricultural land particularly north of the M4 and to the south and west of Devizes. These applications are causing much concern, and strong opposition, from local communities.

Question (P24-24)

- a) What is WCC's policy regarding these applications and are they intending to resist them, which is likely to lead to appeals, or do they consider that they are in line with national policy?
- b) Furthermore, what questions are they asking the applicants to find out how speculative the proposals may be. For example, can the solar farm be linked to the National Grid?

Response

- a) Solar farm applications will be considered against the Council's policies in its adopted Local Plan as well as other material considerations including the National Planning Policy Framework and associated planning guidance. Policy 42 'Standalone renewable energy installations' of the Wiltshire Core Strategy specially covers renewable energy and requires the impact on several factors to be taken into account when assessing proposals. These include those relating to landscape, biodiversity, historic environment, local transport, residential amenity and use of best and most versatile agricultural land.

Each application will be considered on its merits against all relevant development plan policies and material considerations including those in the Wiltshire Core

Strategy (the adopted Local Plan for Wiltshire). While we cannot prejudge the outcome of these, the decision-making process will carefully consider all matters before coming to a view. The planning application process also allows for local communities and parish councils to comment on any applications, and we would encourage them to fully engage so that their views can be taken into account as part of the decision-making process.

Policy 42 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy will be replaced by Policy 86 of the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan review once that plan is adopted.

- b) Any application for renewable energy development will need to be supported by evidence to address all technical matters including details regarding grid connection (either to the National Grid, or a Point of Interconnection with the Distribution Network Operator – e.g. Scottish and Southern Electricity Network).

Question (P24-25)

- a) If so, where will the energy generated be used (almost certainly not in Wiltshire)?
- b) Who will be responsible for the maintenance and safety of the site, and how will it be restored and by whom at the end of the 40 year period?

Response

- a) All energy generation that connects to the national grid, contributes to meeting national requirements. However, there may be cases where the energy being generated may be to serve a building/development via a direct connection.
- b) This is not a matter for the Local Planning Authority. Renewable energy installation owners will, as part of their business model, employ an Operation and Maintenance Contractor who will routinely visit the site during its operational life.

If site restoration is a conditional matter on a planning permission it will be the site owner's responsibility to undertake these works in accordance with a scheme approved by the Local Planning Authority.