



**The Town and Country Planning Act 1990**  
**Refusal of Full Planning Permission**  
**Application Reference Number: PL/2024/04926**  
**Decision Date: 30/05/2025**

<b>Applicant:</b>	Mr David Ring Gridiron Building, 1 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG
<b>Particulars of Development:</b>	Installation and operation of a renewable energy generating station comprising ground-mounted PV solar arrays, together with switchgear container, inverter/transformer units, site access, internal access tracks, security measures, access gates, other ancillary infrastructure and landscaping and biodiversity enhancements
<b>At:</b>	Land East Of Blounts Court Farm, Potterne, Devizes, Wilts, SN10 5PH

In accordance with paragraph 39 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), this planning application has been processed in a proactive way. However, due to technical objections or the proposal's failure to comply with the development plan and/or the NPPF as a matter of principle, the local planning authority has had no alternative other than to refuse planning permission.

In pursuance of their powers under the above Act, the Council hereby **REFUSE TO GRANT PERMISSION** for the development referred to in the above application and plans submitted by you, for the following reason(s):

**Refusal Reason(s)**

- 1 The proposed development would result in significant and unacceptable harm to the character, quality, and visual amenity of the local and wider landscape. The site is a valued landscape, including heritage value, located in a prominent and elevated position within a sensitive rural setting, forming part of the setting of a designated National Landscape. The introduction of a large-scale solar installation,

along with associated infrastructure and extensive mitigation planting, would create a conspicuous and urbanising form of development that is out of keeping with the prevailing landscape character.

The proposed landscape mitigation measures, including substantial hedgerow and tree planting, would not sufficiently reduce the visual impact of the scheme and, in some cases, would contribute further to the erosion of the area's open and rural character. The development would be visible from multiple public vantage points, including rights of way and nearby settlements, resulting in a medium to large adverse magnitude of change and a moderate to significant level of landscape effect.

As such, the proposal is contrary to Core Policies 51 and 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015), which require that development should protect, conserve, and where possible enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness. The scheme also fails to comply with Core Policy 42, which supports renewable energy development only where it can be demonstrated that there would be no unacceptable landscape harm.

Furthermore, the proposal conflicts with paragraph 180 and paragraph 165(a) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), which require that planning decisions recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and give particular weight to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes. The identified harm to landscape character and visual amenity is considered to carry significant weight and is not outweighed by the benefits of renewable energy generation in this instance.

- 2 The proposed development would result in the long-term loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, which is a finite and valuable resource. The site is predominantly classified as Grade 3a agricultural land, which falls within the BMV category as defined by the Agricultural Land Classification system. The development would remove this land from productive agricultural use for a period of approximately 40 years, significantly undermining its contribution to local and national food security.

The proposal does not demonstrate that the use of BMV land is necessary or that alternative, less sensitive sites have been adequately considered. Nor does it provide sufficient justification to demonstrate that the benefits of the scheme clearly outweigh the loss of this high-quality agricultural resource. The development would therefore conflict with Core Policy 42 (criterion viii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015), which requires that renewable energy proposals avoid the use of BMV land unless it can be clearly shown to be necessary and justified.

Furthermore, the proposal is contrary to paragraph 180 and footnote 63 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), which state that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of BMV agricultural land and seek to avoid its development unless there is no reasonable alternative. In this instance, the long-term loss of productive land is not considered to be outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme, particularly given the availability of alternative sites with lower agricultural value.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to result in unjustified and avoidable harm to agricultural land resources and is recommended for refusal on this basis.

- 3** The proposed development is considered to result in unacceptable harm to biodiversity and ecological assets, contrary to both local and national planning policy. The site includes or is adjacent to sensitive ecological features, including ancient woodland, County Wildlife Sites, and habitats of principal importance. The application fails to demonstrate that these features will be adequately protected or that the impacts can be effectively mitigated.

Specifically, the development does not provide sufficient buffers to ancient woodland, contrary to Natural England standing advice and national guidance. The use of a byway within 15 metres of ancient woodland is likely to result in degradation of this irreplaceable habitat. Furthermore, the application lacks adequate survey data and mitigation strategies for protected species, including bats (notably Barbastelle), breeding birds (including red-listed species), and hazel dormice. The proposed Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric is incomplete and does not account for the loss of high-value habitats, nor does it provide a robust plan for long-term habitat management.

As such, the proposal is contrary to Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015), which requires that development proposals protect features of nature conservation interest and ensure that biodiversity is maintained, enhanced, and restored. The scheme also fails to comply with paragraphs 180 and 185 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), which require that planning decisions contribute to and enhance the natural environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains where possible.

In the absence of sufficient ecological information and mitigation, the proposal is considered to result in significant and unjustified harm to biodiversity and is therefore recommended for refusal.

- 4** The proposed development fails to demonstrate that it can be safely accessed and operated without causing unacceptable impacts on the local highway network. The application does not provide sufficient evidence to confirm that the site can accommodate all necessary vehicular movements, particularly during the construction phase, without compromising the safety of existing highway users. In particular, there is a lack of clarity regarding the interaction between construction traffic and vulnerable road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians, especially where the access route involves the use of a byway and narrow rural lanes.

The development also fails to incorporate appropriate mitigation measures to address the anticipated increase in traffic volumes and associated risks during both the construction and operational phases. As such, the proposal is contrary to Core Policies 60, 61, and 62 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015), which require that development proposals demonstrate safe and suitable access, minimise the impact of traffic, and promote sustainable transport.

Furthermore, the proposal does not comply with Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), particularly paragraphs 115 and 116, which require that developments ensure safe and suitable access for all users and that any significant impacts on the transport network can be cost-effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

In the absence of adequate access arrangements and mitigation, the proposal is considered to result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety and the efficient operation of the local transport network, and is therefore recommended for refusal.

- 5** The proposed development, when considered cumulatively with other existing, and consented solar farm developments in the surrounding area, would result in significant and unacceptable cumulative harm across multiple planning considerations, including landscape character, biodiversity, highway safety, and the loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land.

The cumulative landscape impact would lead to a substantial erosion of rural character and visual amenity, particularly given the site's prominent and elevated location within a sensitive landscape setting. The introduction of further large-scale solar infrastructure would contribute to a perception of industrialisation of the countryside, contrary to the objectives of Core Policies 51 and 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and paragraphs 180 and 185 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

Ecologically, the cumulative pressure on sensitive habitats, including ancient woodland, County Wildlife Sites, and habitats of principal importance, has not been adequately assessed or mitigated. The proposal fails to demonstrate that it would not contribute to the incremental degradation of ecological networks and species populations, contrary to Core Policy 50 of the WCS and paragraph 180 of the NPPF.

From a highways perspective, the cumulative impact of construction traffic associated with multiple solar developments in the area has not been fully considered. The proposal does not demonstrate that the local highway network can safely accommodate the additional traffic without adverse effects on highway safety, particularly for non-motorised users. This is contrary to Core Policies 60, 61, and 62 of the WCS and paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF.

Furthermore, the cumulative loss of BMV agricultural land across the area has not been justified. The proposal would remove high-quality land from productive use for an extended period (approximately 40 years), contributing to a broader pattern of agricultural land loss without sufficient evidence that alternative, less sensitive sites have been considered. This is contrary to Core Policy 42 (criterion viii) of the WCS and paragraph 180 and footnote 63 of the NPPF, which require that the economic and environmental value of BMV land be taken into account and protected where possible.

In the absence of a comprehensive cumulative impact assessment and appropriate mitigation measures, the proposal is considered to result in significant and unjustified harm. The cumulative impacts across landscape, ecology, highways, and agricultural land are not outweighed by the benefits of renewable energy generation in this instance, and the development is therefore recommended for refusal.

*Parvis Khansari* - Corporate Director, Place

## NOTES

1. **Appeals.** If the applicant is aggrieved by the decision of the local planning authority to refuse permission, they may appeal to the Secretary of State for the Environment in accordance with Section 78(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 within six months of the date of this decision. (Information and forms relating to the appeals process can be found at the Planning Portal - [Appeal a planning decision: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appeal-a-planning-decision-overview)).