

Grahame French  
Shropshire Council  
The Gateway  
The Auction Yard  
CRAVEN ARMS  
SY7 9BW

Your Ref: 15/01238/FUL  
Our Ref: ph\_230415\_15\_01238 Whitton solar

23 April 2015

Dear Grahame

**15/01238/FUL Erection of ground mounted solar farm along with associated infrastructure, landscaping and ancillary structures on agricultural land, Whitton Solar Farm, Caynham, Shropshire**

**The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership objects to this application.**

Though the site lies outside the AONB, its closest point is around 500m from the AONB boundary. We do not accord with the judgements regarding impact on the AONB set out in the application's supporting documents. In addition, we believe the development would have a substantial direct impact on the countryside between the AONB and Ludlow, which is valuable to the setting of both. The Shropshire Hills and Ludlow are of great importance to tourism in the county, and through our involvement in sustainable tourism in the area, we believe this development could have a detrimental effect, as evidenced by the comments of others. We would draw attention to the letter of 27 March 2015 from Brandon Lewis MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning at DCLG to the Planning Inspectorate highlighting the importance of landscape character and the intrinsic beauty of the countryside, both within and outside designated areas. This comes in addition to recent Ministerial guidance not favouring large ground-mounted solar developments.

The following policies support the position that this application should be refused:

Shropshire Core Strategy Policy CS17: Environmental Networks states:

*Development will identify, protect, enhance, expand and connect Shropshire's environmental assets, to create a multifunctional network of natural and historic resources. This will be achieved by ensuring that all development:*

- *Protects and enhances the diversity, high quality and local character of Shropshire's natural, built and historic environment, and does not adversely affect the visual, ecological, heritage or recreational values and functions of these assets, their immediate surroundings or their connecting corridors. Further guidance will be provided in SPDs concerning the natural and built environment;*
- *Contributes to local distinctiveness, having regard to the quality of Shropshire's environment, including landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets, such as the Shropshire Hills AONB, the Meres and Mosses and the World Heritage Sites at Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal and Ironbridge Gorge.*

Shropshire Council SAMDev Policy MD12: The Natural Environment states:

*In accordance with Policies CS6, CS17 and through applying the guidance in the Natural Environment SPD, the conservation, enhancement and restoration of Shropshire's natural assets will be achieved by:*

**1. Ensuring that the social or economic benefits of development can be demonstrated to clearly outweigh the harm to natural assets where proposals are likely to have an unavoidable significant adverse effect, directly, indirectly or cumulatively, on any of the following:**

- i. the special qualities of the Shropshire Hills AONB;*
- ii. locally designated biodiversity and geological sites;*
- iii. priority species;*
- iv. priority habitats*
- v. important woodlands, trees and hedges;*
- vi. ecological networks*
- vii. geological assets;*
- viii. visual amenity;*
- ix. landscape character and local distinctiveness.** (emphasis added)

The need to take into account the setting of the AONB is set out in Shropshire Council SAMDev Policy MD13: The Historic Environment, which states:

*In accordance with Policies CS6 and CS17 and through applying the guidance in the Historic Environment SPD, Shropshire's heritage assets will be conserved, sympathetically enhanced and restored by:*

- 1. Ensuring that proposals which are likely to either *directly or indirectly affect the significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, are accompanied by a Heritage Assessment.***
- 2. Ensuring that the social or economic benefits of a development can be demonstrated to clearly outweigh any adverse effects on the significance of a heritage asset, **or its setting**, taking into account the degree of harm, the importance of the asset and any potential beneficial use of the asset. Where such proposals are permitted, measures to offset and record the loss of significance to the heritage asset and to advance understanding in a manner proportionate to the asset's importance and the level of impact, will be required.*
- 3. Encouraging development which delivers positive benefits to heritage assets, as identified within the Place Plans. Support will be given in particular, to proposals which appropriately conserve, manage or enhance the significance of a heritage asset **including its setting**, especially where these improve the condition of those assets which are recognised as being at risk or in poor condition.*

*Explanation*

*4.132 Whilst this policy is closely related to sustainable design (CS6 and MD2) and the conservation of Shropshire's natural environment (CS17 and MD12) it sets out specific guidance on the protection of Shropshire's historic environment, including the requirements that need to be met for those development proposals which are likely to have either a direct or indirect impact on the significance, including the setting, of a heritage asset;*

*4.133 **Heritage assets** are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes which have a degree of significance and heritage interest that merit consideration as part of the planning process. **The term includes all designated assets**, namely Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, World Heritage Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, **and nationally protected landscapes such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;** (emphasis added)*

Yours sincerely

Phil Holden  
AONB Partnership Manager