



The countryside charity
Hampshire

VERSION 1 as at Sept 2021

Position Statement

Renewable Energy

CPRE Issue

CPRE generally supports the principle of renewable energy. However renewable energy generation schemes can have serious impacts on the landscape, especially large wind turbines and large solar farms.

Inevitably, large wind turbines inevitably have significant adverse impacts on the landscape over a very wide area, and so all schemes proposed within Hampshire have been opposed by CPRE Hampshire, and none have gained approval to date. Wind speeds within the county are understood to be marginal for profitable generation in the absence of government subsidy, which at present is not available for onshore wind turbines in England.

Accordingly, these Guidelines concentrate on solar farms, for which there are widespread applications, and which can be profitable without subsidy. They would apply also to battery storage schemes and small scale (less than 100kw) individual wind turbines associated with serving individual properties or small groups of properties.

It may be possible to hide smaller solar farms within the landscape, but large areas of solar panels are likely to have significant adverse impacts on the landscape. This is of particular concern where proposed to be located within national parks, AONBs, NPPF Valued Landscapes, or their settings; also if within the setting of public viewpoints or adjoining roads or public rights of way - especially national trails or regional long distance routes. A solar farm designed for 49.9mw output will avoid being classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project but will occupy some 240 hectares of land.

There may also be impacts on heritage assets.

Solar Farms are not confined to solar panels, but will include some or all of: 2 metre high perimeter fencing, communication masts and buildings, metal clad inverter cabins, shipping containers for battery units, roads, and substation equipment and switchgear, all of which



The countryside charity
Hampshire

when combined with the solar panels will markedly change the character and appearance of any agricultural site.

For all these reasons, CPRE considers that, in principle, solar energy arrays should be on brownfield sites or on the roofs of large industrial or agricultural buildings rather than on agricultural land; but where a countryside location is justified, an acceptable location within the landscape is essential. In any event they should not be located on Grade 1,2 or 3a agricultural land

CPRE Guidance

Under current planning rules, there is no need for the applicant to demonstrate need for renewable energy, which is assumed. The CPRE focus therefore has to be on the impact of the proposed scheme on landscape and public enjoyment of the landscape from public viewpoints and rights of way. Also on heritage assets. Where this is acceptable, CPRE should raise no objection or support the application.

A crucial document in any application will be the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or, where this is not required, then the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). It is critical that the Local Plan requires an LVIA in all cases, which should identify the degree of impact on landscape and visual amenity. Cumulative and intervisibility impacts may need to be considered, as well as impacts on relative tranquillity and dark night skies.

The applicant should be required to justify the proposed location as against alternative sites, including urban sites, brownfield sites and, in the case of solar panels, on the roofs of large industrial or agricultural buildings

Sample Policy

1. Development proposals for renewable energy schemes outside settlement policy boundaries that contribute towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions will be permitted where the proposal:

(a) is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment demonstrating compliance with landscape and visual amenity policies in this Plan

(b) does not result in loss of Grade 1, 2 or 3a agricultural land



The countryside charity
Hampshire

(c) ensures existing access is not impeded

(d) will only utilise lighting in emergencies

(e) makes provision for the removal of the facilities and reinstatement of the site, should it cease to be operational

NB In considering the wording of individual policies in Local Plans, it is important to bear in mind that Local Plans must be looked at as a whole. This means, for example, that policies for the protection of landscape must be applied when considering each and every planning application; and accordingly, there is generally no need for other policies to refer specifically to landscape matters, but here the need for an LVIA in all cases would need to be specified.