

Ms Chloe Timm,
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please contact

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Environment Team

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our ref

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230800

Dear Ms Timm,

Development: Construction and operation of a solar photovoltaic farm with battery energy storage and associated infrastructure including transformers, inverters, DNO Substation, customer switchgear, security cameras, fencing, access tracks, landscaping, and safeguarding of land for potential pedestrian/cycle link.

Location: Land south of Cross Levels Way, Eastbourne

With reference to your email asking for comments on the above planning application. I have reviewed the submissions and have the following comments regarding the potential landscape and visual implications. This advice is provided to the Local Planning Authority by the County Landscape Architect in line with the Service Level Agreement and is not a statutory consultation response.

Summary Recommendation

Recommend for approval subject to the imposition of conditions	It is recommended that the proposed development can be supported as it could have acceptable effects on local landscape character and views subject to the imposition of conditions outlined below.
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Reason for Recommendation

1. The NPPF (2021) Section 15 provides policies for conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 180 states that:

'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*

1. The site and surrounding area would not be considered valued landscape in the context of NPPF policy. The site is grazed and could be considered countryside as part of the Eastbourne levels landscape. In the context of Eastbourne Park the site is urban fringe landscape and the character is influenced by the surrounding urban land uses and main roads.
2. A Landscape, Ecology and Arboricultural Management Framework (EDP Ltd. Nov 2023) has been submitted to support the application. This sets out the landscape design and mitigation measure that have been incorporated into the layout for the proposed solar panels and these include:
 - a. Retaining open buffers between Cross Levels Way and surrounding residential areas.
 - b. Retaining the existing field structure by retaining existing ditches and hedges.
 - c. Retaining and protecting existing trees, hedges and other scrubby vegetation where possible.
 - d. Replacing lost hedgerows and reinforcing remnant hedges with new tree and shrub planting
 - e. Plantations of trees and shrubs as landscape buffers between the development and neighbouring residential areas.
3. The landscape strategy aims to retain, manage and enhance the green infrastructure elements of this part of Eastbourne Park.
4. A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been submitted to inform of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The LVA provides an accurate description of the baseline landscape and visual context for the site and surrounding area.
5. The LVA assesses that the landscape effects of the proposed solar farm on the site and immediate surroundings would be major/moderate and adverse on completion reducing to moderate adverse once the mitigation planting has matured at year 15.
6. The likely landscape character effects on the wider Eastbourne Park and levels are assessed to be moderate/ minor adverse reducing to minor adverse by year 15.
7. There would be views towards the development from the elevated areas of the South Downs National Park. The LVA assesses that there would be no direct landscape effects on the SDNP and the visual effects on views from the SDNP would be moderate to minor adverse at worst.
8. The LVA assesses the likely effects on local views and visual amenity. This suggests that effects on views from public areas, roads and residential areas closer to the site would be major/moderate adverse, reducing to minor/ moderate adverse by year 15 as the worst case scenario from these locations .

9. The conclusions of the LVA are that the potential significant adverse landscape effects would be restricted to the site and immediate surroundings. These effects would reduce as the proposed mitigation planting matures.
10. The conclusions of the LVA are not disputed.
11. The potential perceptual effects on the SDNP would be limited due to distance and the intervening urban areas. As the closest elevated areas of the SDNP would be a minimum of 2km distance away the effects on the visual amenity of the park would be limited.
12. The proposed tree retention and protection report is acceptable and should ensure that retained trees are adequately protected during construction and in the longer term.
13. Should the planning authority be minded to support the application it is recommended that this be subject to a condition requiring the submission of the following:
 - a) Satisfactory detailed planting plans.
 - b) Details of tree protection measures during construction.
14. It is recommended that the proposed development can be supported as it could have acceptable effects on local landscape character and views subject to the imposition of conditions outlined above.

Yours Sincerely,

Virginia Pullan

County Landscape Architect

Environment Team, Communities, Economy and Transport

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