

COXS BROOK SOLAR FARM

Size and location of the development

The proposed size of the Solar Farm development is 23.5 hectares but the overall proposed land ownership is considerably larger at 26 hectares (approx 64 acres or 48 Football pitches) and is totally inappropriate for a site so close to residential properties in the rural village of Twigworth.

The visual impact of such a huge industrial solar farm would fundamentally change the tranquil character of the area.

Consideration should be given to locate solar farms on already industrialised land, or on building roof tops or adjacent to motorways, not on productive agricultural land, or in an area which will cause significant visual impact to the residents and those further afield who visit the area.

Significant negative visual impact for residents living adjacent to the site boundary

There are a number of residential properties located close to the site boundary along each side of the A38.

The development will have a significant adverse visual impact to these properties, especially from first floor windows; this includes existing and new housing along the Tewkesbury Road.

The proposed development contravenes Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-23 Policy H2

Negative impacts on landscape character

The solar farm would significantly and adversely, impact the character and appearance of the local landscape.

The expansive tranquil landscape of open green fields with far reaching views would turn into a semi-industrial, utility-grade power complex, with fields of 4-6m high dark solar panels, shipping containers containing electrical equipment, CCTV and security fencing.

We consider the proposed development contravenes Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-23 Policy H2

Negative visual impact for users of the footpath and bridleway across the site

The site is close to two Public Rights of Way;

1. Footpath running across from the A38 access gate (nr Oakwood Hotel) to the Nature in Art access lane; which would be part of the Land Ownership Plan
2. Footpath running from Nature in Art lane (nr Coxs Brook), along brook then around the perimeter of Wallsworth Hall

These are both well used by dog-walkers from the local area, ramblers as well as people from further afield.

Currently there are extensive open views of green fields and agricultural farmland.

The development with panels and fencing, would create significant adverse visual impact along the footpath, with arrays of 4-5 m high dark coloured solar panels which would tower above walkers blocking those views, degrading the amenity value.

The footpath would be separated from the site by a 2.5m high security fence.

We consider the proposed development contravenes Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-23 H2

Loss of productive arable land

It is very important to prevent arable land being lost to development, which would otherwise allow food to be grown in the UK and thereby reduce the reliance on imported food.

Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is a system used in England and Wales to grade the quality of land for agricultural use. The proposed site is Grade 3b Land and is capable of producing moderate yields of a narrow range of crops, principally: cereals and grass, lower yields of a wider range of crops. high yields of grass which can be grazed or harvested over most of the year.

We consider the proposed development contravenes Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-23 H2 Policy

Unacceptable negative impact on local heritage

Given the extent of the proposed solar array site and similar sites proposed Bengrove Farm (nearby), Maisemore and Highnam, these developments are likely to be visible across a very large area and could negatively impact heritage assets in the surrounding areas.

We consider the proposed development contravenes Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-23 H2 Policy

Loss of local wildlife habitats

Large solar farms such as that being proposed for Coxs Brook, have the potential to have a transformative effect on the land which could have consequences for local wildlife.

For example, studies have suggested that birds can mistake the mirror like glare from solar panels for water, and collide into the panels when trying to land with deadly consequences.

The RSBP have reported that insects that lay eggs in water may mistake solar panels for water bodies due to reflection of polarised light.

Under certain circumstances insects have been found to lay eggs on the panel surfaces which has the potential to impact their reproductive biology.

In addition, security fencing around the site could become a barrier to the movement of wild mammals and amphibians, and represent a collision risk for some bird species.

Extensive traffic and transport impact

The proposed development will create a significant impact on the A38 during development.

The construction stage is stated to be 4 months and will involve the delivery of solar panels and mounting infrastructure, as well as shipping containers containing electrical equipment via articulated lorries, HGV's, and vans.

The proposed access route to the site is via the A38, near St Matthews Church, which is located on a bend in the road, the A38 is a busy road, this section of the road is within a 40mph limit, heavy lorries will undoubtedly bring mud and debris onto this section of road, presenting a serious traffic safety issue.

The village is popular with walkers, cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders and are already overburdened and totally unsuitable for large vehicles.

The access route will be significantly impacted by the noise and vibration caused by the very large increase in HGV traffic during the construction phase.

The development is not temporary

The proposed site would be for a period of 40 years which is a considerable period of time.

The construction of a solar farm, the size of the proposed development at Cox's Brook will cost PS Renewables millions of pounds and it is very unlikely that the site will ever be returned to its current agricultural use, therefore there is no weight to any claims that the development is temporary and can be reversed.

Emergency Response at time of potential flooding

Concern that Emergency Response vehicles would not be able to attend any potential emergency at the Solar Farm when fields are flooded, particularly within the Inverter/Control rooms (3nr) where there would be a electrical equipment with fire risk.

There is a National Grid Oil and Gas line which traverses the fields adjacent to proposed development.

No direct benefit to the local community

The proposed development will not directly benefit the local community.

The power generated by the solar panels will go straight to the national grid – this will not be a source of cheap electricity for people living in the vicinity of the solar farm.

Residents living adjacent to the site will have a significant adverse visual impact from the site, whilst there will also be a loss of the rural amenity of the extensive open views along the footpath crossing the site. The village is popular with walkers, cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders and are already overburdened and totally unsuitable for large vehicles.

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Twigworth is one of the smallest Parishes within the Tewkesbury Borough; back in 2021 the population was about 350, now, with the new housing developments, that number has more than doubled already and will continue to increase further over the coming years.

Much of that development has been within the settlement boundary which is outlined in the NDP.

One of the main reasons that I moved to Twigworth in late 2021, was to be able to have the opportunity to enjoy the countryside on my doorstep.... that is now all at risk with the latest planning applications which are before us today.

The proposed Solar Farm on land west of Twigworth Court Farm and the proposed housing development on land at Chestnut Tree Farm will consume what little land Twigworth has left.

Indeed, I believe that these two planning applications need to consider the joint effect that they will have on losing this land.