

Sequential Site Selection Report

Proposed 30 MW Solar PV Array on land south of Berrington, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY5 6HA

Econergy International Limited

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Quality Assurance

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Version History

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Sequential Site Selection Report has been prepared by ADAS Planning (Agent) on behalf of Econergy International Ltd (Applicant) in support of a planning application for a 30MW Solar PV development on land south of Berrington, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY5 6HA.

1.1.2 The Site measures 44.09 hectares in size and is located in an area of open countryside to the southwest of the village of Berrington, Shropshire. The Site is formed of two field parcels, separated by a single-track road. The site is not subject to any national or local designations for landscape or ecology and is not subject to any site-specific designations or allocations in the Local Plan.

1.1.3 This report provides an assessment of sequentially preferable sites to accommodate a solar PV development of the type and size proposed. This report considers the relevant planning policy and guidance, and assesses sites against the following site selection criteria:

- Previously Developed Land
- Agricultural Land Classification
- Grid Connections
- Suitable Size and Orientation
- Statutory Designations
- Solar Irradiation
- Compatible Neighbouring Uses
- Flood Risk

1.1.4 This Sequential Site Selection Report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 – Background and Development Proposals
- Section 3 – Planning Policy, Case Law and Assessment Methodology
- Section 4 – Identified Sequential Sites and Assessment
- Section 5 – Conclusions

2 Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Site and Surrounding Area

2.1.1 The Site measures 44.09 hectares in size and is located in an area of open countryside to the south-west of the village of Berrington, Shropshire. The Site is formed of two field parcels, separated by a single-track road.

2.1.2 The location of the site is indicated below in Figure 1.

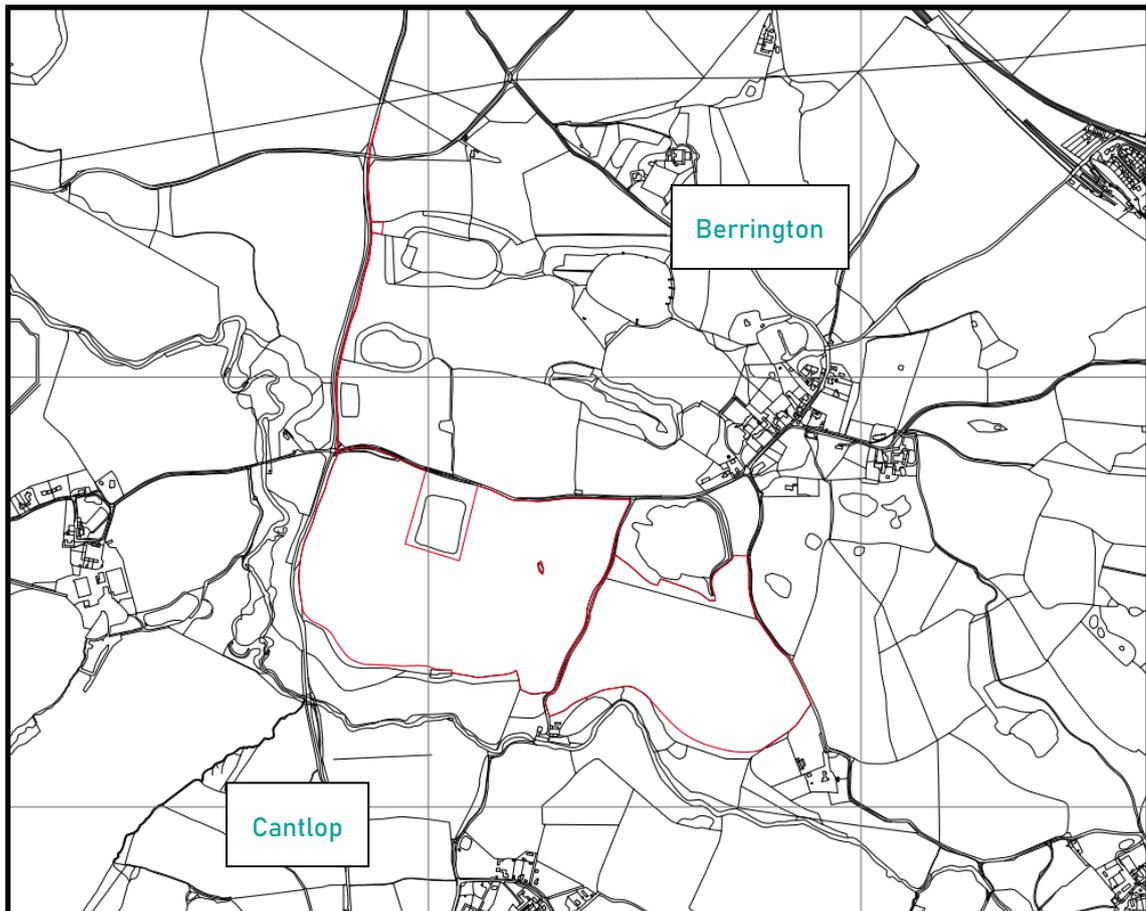


Figure 1. OS Plan indicating location of the site

2.1.3 The Site is currently in agricultural use and is bound on all sides by mature hedgerow and occasional trees. The village of Berrington is located circa 250m to the north of the Site, and immediately to the west of the Site is the Boreton 'Motocross' Track. Candover Solar Farm is also located circa 670m to the west of the Site (approved under Application Ref. 13/03519/FUL).

2.1.4 The topography of the land is gently undulating, with the area of highest ground in the northern parts of the site. There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) on site, however there are several within the surrounding area with some views towards the site.

2.1.5 The site is not subject to any local or national landscape or ecological designations. The nearest statutory designated sites are as follows:

- Berrington Pool (SSSI) – 0.4 km north.

- Bomere, Shomere and Betton Pools (SSSI) – 1.1 km north west.
- Attingham Park (SSSI) – 3.1 km north.
- Coundmoor Brook (SSSI) – 3.6 km south east.

2.1.6 The Site is located wholly within Flood Risk Zone 1, at the lowest risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. The Site is also at very low risk of flooding from surface water.

2.1.7 The Application Site is not located within a Conservation Area. This planning application is also accompanied by a Built Heritage statement to confirm that the proposed Solar PV development will result in no negative impact on the heritage significance of the nearest designated heritage assets (as outlined below) via any change to their setting. The nearest designated Heritage Assets to the Site are as follows:

- Church of All Saints, Grade I (Ref. No. 1176997)
- Boreton Farmhouse and Attached Stable Blocks, Grade II (Ref. No. 1175180)
- Berrington Farmhouse, Grade: II (Ref. No. 1177114)
- 69 And 70, Grade: II (Ref. No. 1055548)
- Newman Hall Cottages, Grade II (Ref. No. 1176937)

2.1.8 Therefore we have taken into account to screen out land areas/site which may otherwise if developed for solar PV have the potential to cause a level of harm to heritage assets by a change to their setting.

2.1.9 An Agricultural Land Classification Survey has been undertaken, which has found the site to comprise predominantly land of Grade 2 and 3a, which constitutes Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land. The proposal is, however, temporary for a period of 40-years, so will not result in the permanent loss of agricultural land on the site. Furthermore, the application is submitted with a Soil Resource Management Plan, to ensure the protection and conservation of soil resources on site for the duration of the development.

2.2 Planning History

2.2.1 A search of the Council's Public Access System returns a number of minor applications on the site, but none that are relevant to the proposed development.

2.2.2 In the wider area, Candover Solar Farm is located circa 670 m to the west of the Site (Application Ref. 13/03519/FUL). This was approved at Planning Committee on the 9th of January 2014 and has since been built out.

2.3 Details of the Proposed Development

2.3.1 The proposal is for the erection of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array, with a total export capacity of up to 30MW.

2.3.2 Also included as part of the proposed layout:

- Boundary Fencing

- Customer Sub-Stations
- MV Power Stations
- Fencing and CCTV Cameras
- Landscaping Works
- Internal Access Tracks
- Welfare Units
- Compound Area/Track Type 1
- Waterless Toilet
- Britcabs x 3
- Set Down Area
- Other associated infrastructure

2.3.3 The panels are covered by high transparency solar glass with an anti-reflective coating which minimises glare and glint, whilst also ensuring the maximum absorption of the available sunlight. Visually, the panels are dark blue in colour.

2.3.4 The solar PV panels will be erected on posts and the soil beneath will still be available for the infiltration of rainwater and for any livestock grazing should it be required.

2.4 Access and Traffic Management

2.4.1 Access to the site, during both the construction and operational phase, will be gained via the installation of a new access point off the unnamed highway (locally referred to as 'Shrewsbury Road') running along the western boundary of the site. The site access will be maintained for the life of the development.

3 National Commitments, Policy and Guidance

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This section summarises the planning policies of relevance to the proposed development and the application site. It refers to national planning policy and guidance and the relevant policies within the Local Plan.
- 3.1.2 The Site falls within the planning jurisdiction of Shropshire Council; therefore, the Local Plan is comprised the Shropshire Core Strategy (2011) and the Shropshire Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan (2015).

3.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 3.2.1 Providing the national framework for planning, the NPPF is an important material consideration in the taking of planning decisions. The Framework confirms the statutory presumption in favour of the development plan and sets out the Government's national planning policies for the achievement of sustainable development.
- 3.2.2 There is strong support in the NPPF for renewable energy development. Paragraph 155 makes clear that when determining applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities "should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable".
- 3.2.3 NPPF paragraph 152 also confirms the central role of the planning system in transitioning to a low carbon future, stating that the planning system should help to contribute to a radical reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, including by supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 3.2.4 Paragraph 11 also re-affirms the statutory presumption in favour of the development and confirms that proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.3 Planning Practice Guidance – Climate Change

- 3.3.1 This PPG addresses the role that the planning system can play in addressing climate change. Specifically, it refers to the importance of supporting the delivery of appropriately sited green energy. Furthermore, it states that LPAs should ensure that protecting the local environment is properly considered when factoring in the broader issue of protecting the global environment.
- 3.3.2 It is noted that the PPG also reiterates that responding to climate change is central to the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

3.4 Planning Practice Guidance – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

- 3.4.1 This PPG states that planning has an important role in the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure, specifically stating that increasing the amount of energy from renewable sources is a key aspect in ensuring that the UK has a secure

energy supply, as well as also slowing down the negative impacts of climate change and stimulating investment in new jobs and businesses.

- 3.4.2 Further to this, this planning practice guidance also specifically discusses larger scale ground-mounted solar PV farms. It notes the importance of assessing a proposal's visual impact, the effect of the development on the landscape, and the impact of potential glint and glare.

3.5 Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019

- 3.5.1 The increasing Climate Crisis has been highlighted as a key ongoing concern, and there are a large number of international, national and local drivers for renewable energy, all of which could be material considerations when making decisions on planning applications that encourage the development of renewable energy generation. The proposal is considered imperative to secure the carbon reductions which is a legislative requirement by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019. This act introduced the UK's statutory target to reduce its' carbon dioxide emissions to below 80% of the country's 1990 levels by 2050.
- 3.5.2 The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 is a legislative requirement which seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from at least 80% to 100%, this significant reduction will be assisted by allowing renewable energy projects such as this to be built out. This legal requirement needs to be taken into account during the decision-making process and indeed it needs to be given significant weight.
- 3.5.3 The main energy generation production in the UK is still dependent on Coal, Oil and Gas, the need to comply with the legal requirement to become carbon neutral by 2050 places a statutory requirement on the planning system to deliver a greater number of renewable energy generation sources.

3.6 Shropshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (adopted February 2011)

- 3.6.1 The Shropshire Core Strategy was adopted in 2011 and sets out the Council's strategic planning policies for the period 2006-2026. This Section sets out the most relevant policies for a solar proposal in this location.
- 3.6.2 The key Core Strategy Policies for this proposal are set out below:
- CS Policy CS5 'Countryside and the Green Belt'
 - CS Policy CS8 'Facilities, Services and Infrastructure Provision'
 - CS Policy CS13: 'Economic Development, Enterprise and Employment'
- 3.6.3 In addition, the following policies are also relevant within the context of this proposal:
- CS Policy CS6 'Sustainable Design and Development Principles'
 - CS Policy CS17 'Environmental Networks'
 - CS Policy CS18 'Sustainable Water Management'
 - CS Policy CS20 'Strategic Planning for Minerals'

3.6.4 CS Policy CS5 states that new development will be strictly controlled in accordance with national planning policies protecting the Countryside and Green Belt. Subject to the further controls over development that apply to the Green Belt, development proposals on appropriate Sites which maintain and enhance countryside vitality and character will be permitted where they improve the sustainability of rural communities by bringing local economic and community benefits, particularly where they relate to:

- Small-scale new economic development diversifying the rural economy, including farm diversification schemes;
- Required community uses and infrastructure which cannot be accommodated within settlements;

3.6.5 CS Policy CS8 states that the development of sustainable places in Shropshire with safe and healthy communities where residents enjoy a high quality of life will be assisted by:

- Positively encouraging infrastructure, where this has no significant adverse impact on recognised environmental assets, that mitigates and adapts to climate change, including decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy generation, and working closely with network providers to ensure provision of necessary energy distribution networks.

3.6.6 CS Policy CS13 states that Shropshire Council, will plan positively to develop and diversify the Shropshire economy, supporting enterprise, and seeking to deliver sustainable economic growth and prosperous communities. In doing so, particular emphasis will be placed on:

- In rural areas, recognising the continued importance of farming for food production and supporting rural enterprise and diversification of the economy, in particular areas of economic activity associated with agricultural and farm diversification, forestry, green tourism and leisure, food and drink processing, and promotion of local food and supply chains. Development proposals must accord with Policy CS5.

3.7 Site Allocations and Management of Development Plan (adopted December 2015)

3.7.1 The Site Allocations and Development Management Plan was adopted in December 2015 and sets out development management policies to guide planning decisions in the district over the plan period.

3.7.2 The key SAMDev Policies for this proposal are set out below in the following list:

- Policy MD8 'Infrastructure Provision'
- Policy MD16 'Mineral Safeguarding'

3.7.3 In addition the above, the following policies are also relevant within the context of this proposal and have been set out in Appendix A of this Statement:

- Policy MD2 'Sustainable Design'
- Policy MD12 'Natural Environment'
- Policy MD13 'Historic Environment'

3.7.4 SAMDev Policy MD8 states that applications for new strategic energy infrastructure “will be supported in order to help deliver national priorities and locally identified requirements, where its contribution to agreed objectives outweighs the potential for adverse impacts” in relation to a number of criteria.

3.7.5 SAMDev Policy MD16 states that applications for non-mineral development which fall within Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSA) and which could have the effect of sterilising mineral resources will not be granted unless:

- The applicant can demonstrate that the mineral resource concerned is not of economic value; or
- The mineral can be extracted to prevent the unnecessary sterilisation of the resource prior to the development taking place without causing unacceptable adverse impacts on the environment and local community; or
- The development is exempt as set out in the supporting text below.

3.8 Summary

3.8.1 Overall, there is strong support in the NPPF for renewable energy development. Paragraph 155 makes clear that when determining applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities “should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable”.

3.8.2 Paragraph 152 of the NPPF also confirms the central role of the planning system in transitioning to a low carbon future, stating that the planning system should help to contribute to a radical reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, including by supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

3.8.3 Further to this, relevant Planning Practice Guidance, as well as the Climate Change Act 2008, clearly set out the need to be positive and proactive in supporting renewable energy schemes in order to address the ongoing climate crisis.

3.8.4 There is clear support in the Local Plan for Solar PV development. Policy CS8 'Facilities, Services and Infrastructure Provision', states that the Council will support infrastructure where this has no significant adverse impact on recognised environmental assets and where it mitigates and adapts to climate change, including decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy generation.

3.8.5 There are no policies in the Local Plan that preclude solar development in this location, provided it maintains and enhances countryside vitality and character. The Planning, Design and Access Statement, and accompanying technical reports, provide a full assessment of any potential impacts.

4 Site Selection Criteria and Assessment

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 This section of the report provides an assessment of sequentially preferable sites against a site selection criterion, informed by the planning policy and guidance discussed above in Section 3.

4.2 Catchment

- 4.2.1 This report has been prepared in relation to an area of open countryside to the south-west of the village of Berrington, Shropshire.
- 4.2.2 There is no Government guidance on the reasonable search area for renewable energy development sites. It has been recognised in appeal decisions (APP/D3503/A/13/2204846) that there is no policy guidance that advocates restricting searches to within a Local Authority's administrative area. The above decision found that each case should be considered on its own merits taking account of operational constraints.
- 4.2.3 Given that a renewable energy scheme of this type must achieve a viable connection to the existing grid network, it is essential that there is a connection point with sufficient capacity before any potential site areas can be reviewed, as grid connection availability and capacity are the key requirements to site selection.

4.3 Suitable Site Criteria

- 4.3.1 The site selection process is guided by development control considerations laid out through the relevant national and local planning policy guidance as set out within Section 3 along with the operational needs and requirements of the proposed development. The site selection criteria are presented within Table 1 below.

Table 1. Site Selection Criteria

Criteria	Description
Previously developed land	Policy CS10 prioritises the re-use and development of brownfield sites and sets an aim of achieving 60% of 'overall development' on brownfield land. Policy CS10 is however a housing policy.
Agricultural land classification – avoiding 'Best and Most Versatile agricultural land	Policy CS6 requires that development makes the best use of available land and safeguards natural resources including high quality agricultural land, geology, minerals, air, soil and water.
A site with suitable grid connectivity	Connectivity to the grid is an essential requirement of a development of this nature. Cable trenching costs and thermal power losses limit the distance of a site from a suitable grid connection to 3km.
A site of suitable size and orientation that can accommodate the proposed development	Small to medium solar sites (i.e. under 25 MW) are not usually viable due to the removal of the Government subsidy. In order to become viable a solar site must reach a critical mass and will therefore be larger in size, typically 40 – 50 MW. For solar schemes over 25 MW, the

Criteria	Description
	average site area requirement to accommodate 1MW of power is 3.7 acres (NERL). This size requirement only applies when the site is characteristically clear of obstructions (or can be made clear of obstructions) and benefits from a level or gentle sloping topography. Importantly where potential sites contain physical obstructions that cannot be removed (such as public footpaths, historical field boundaries, woodland, rivers, streams, highways etc.) the site area requirements can be significantly increased. Additionally, a site positioned on a north-facing slope would require a greater development footprint.
A suitable site that is available for the duration of the solar development's operational life	The site must be available for the duration of the proposed lifespan of the proposed energy generation project (40 years).
Statutory designations	Ability to accommodate the proposed development in this location without causing unacceptable harm to statutory designated sites, such as Green Belt or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
Solar irradiation	It is important that development of this nature is located in an area with sufficient levels of solar irradiation, including locations where there is limited overshadowing from buildings or trees.
Compatible neighbouring uses	Sites should not be situated near incompatible forms of development unless suitable mitigation can be provided.
Flood risk	The NPPF states that preference should be given for development located within Flood Risk Zone 1 (the sequential test).

4.4 Previously Developed Land

4.4.1 Policy CS10 is a housing policy, however it does include a general preference for development to take place on brownfield sites, including a target for 60% of 'overall development' to take place on previously development land.

4.4.2 A desktop search for brownfield sites was undertaken using the Estates Gazette Property Link website. The following viable criteria were applied to undertake a search for applicable sites:

- Site Area – Over 100 Acres
- Within 100 miles of Berrington, Shropshire
- Available for rent of the lifetime of the energy project

4.4.3 The search found the following sites that meet these criteria.

Table 2. Available Brownfield Sites

Site Name	Location	Site Area	Comment
Severbanks Industrial Estate, Avonmouth, Bristol	Severbanks, Central Avenue, Avonmouth, Bristol, BS10 7SD	2-100 acres	Open storage plots to let between 2-100 acres in size in a prominent location with good access to Junction 18 of the M5.

Site Name	Location	Site Area	Comment
Segro Park, Coventry Gateway	Segro Park, Coventry Gateway, Coventry, CV8 3BB	215 acres	215 acre industrial and logistics park currently under construction with planning permission for B2, B8 employment uses.
Midlands Logistics Park, Northampton	Midlands Logistics Park, Northamptonshire, NN18 8ET	115 acres	Site with planning permission for 2.6 million sq ft and access to its own dedicated rail terminal.
Chellaston Business Park, Derby	Infinity Park Phase 1 (Chellaston Business Park), Wilmore Road, Sinfin, Derby, Derbyshire, DE24 9QC	100 acres	Site with Outline planning permission for logistics, with largest single units up to 500,000 sq ft.
IPort Ontario Way, Doncaster	IPort Ontario Way, New Rossington, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN11 0BF	337 acres	Site on Junction 3 of the M18 motorway with Outline planning permission for 6 million sq ft of logistics floor space.
Deeside Airfields, Deeside	The Airfields Design and Build, Deeside, CH5 2RD	140 acres	Site on Junction 16 of the M56 motorway with Outline planning permission for B2 and B8 commercial uses.

- 4.4.4 Each of these sites has an end use established through the planning system and were advertised for commercial use and warehousing and distribution. Therefore, it is apparent that no suitable brownfield sites are currently being marketed through the mainstream property market. It should also be noted, that building a large-scale Solar PV development on brownfield land is considered to be an inefficient use of land which can otherwise be used for the construction of new homes, employment and infrastructure purposes. We acknowledge that Policy DM20 requires brownfield sites to be considered first, however, when this policy requirement is actually assessed, it does not support all of the requirements of sustainable development.
- 4.4.5 We consider the above as brownfield sites are generally located within or adjacent to urban areas where other types of development as named above are required, and this causes an inflationary pressure on land price and land use, especially where such sites are well connected by existing road infrastructure access points. Also such brownfield sites may not have the required Grid availability or capacity which is required for the proposed Solar PV and battery storage development.
- 4.4.6 We are of the professional and considered opinion that using brownfield sites for large scale Solar PV schemes is an inefficient use of land when other sites such as the one for this proposal exist and where the landowner will benefit from a secure income provided by the development. Brownfield sites which are designated for employment or commercial uses will create significant employment opportunities and therefore are more efficient when used for job creation or new home provision, therefore Solar PV on these types of sites has the potential to undermine the overall objectives of the Council's local plan.
- 4.4.7 It is confirmed, therefore, that there are no alternative available brownfield sites that could accommodate a solar PV and battery storage development of this scale.

4.5 Agricultural Land Classification

- 4.5.1 As set out above in Table 1, Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy requires that development makes the best use of available land and safeguards natural resources including high quality agricultural land.
- 4.5.2 Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land is classified as Grades 1, 2 and subgrade 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC), whereas subgrade 3b, 4 and 5 are not considered BMV. It is noted that Shropshire includes large areas of potential BMV – as indicated on the below excerpt of the Natural England ALC map for West Midlands.

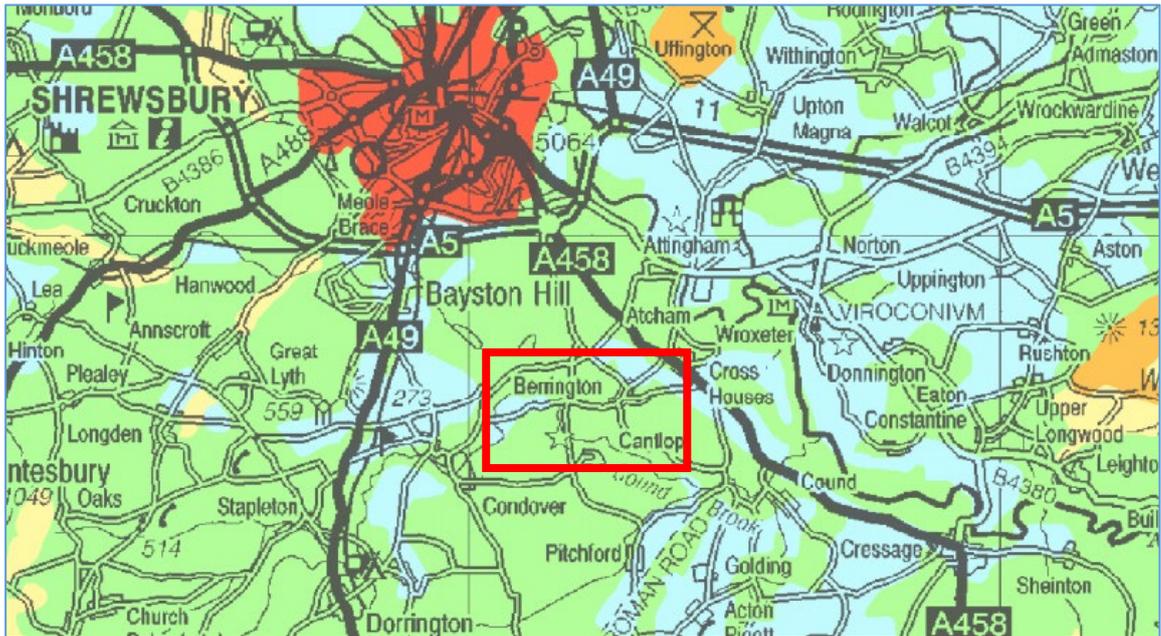


Figure 2. Natural England ALC Map - West Midlands

- 4.5.3 An Agricultural Land Classification Survey has been completed, which has found the site to be a mix of Grade 2, Grade 3a and Grade 3b, in line with the above expectations for sites within Shropshire District.
- 4.5.4 Due to the presence of some BMV land on the site, a Soil Resource Management Plan will be prepared to safeguard the soils on the site for the duration of the development, in accordance with Policy CS6.

4.6 Grid Connection

- 4.6.1 Connectivity to the grid is an essential requirement of a development of this nature. As a result, identifying a suitable area in which a grid connection can be achieved is the principal technical consideration for solar farm development.
- 4.6.2 The further the distance from a suitable grid access a site is located, the greater the challenge of transferring generated electricity to the grid. Increased cable trenching and thermal power losses, as well as potential third party land easements increase costs dramatically and can render a project uneconomical.

- 4.6.3 Where a site is more than 1km from grid access, it usually makes it uneconomical. However, for the purposes of this study the site search has set out to identify sites within a 3km distance of grid access.
- 4.6.4 The ability to connect to the grid represents the most significant benefit of the proposed site and is not achievable for an energy generation project of this scale in most other locations within the plan area or even at the national level. Given that the site benefits from an on-site grid connection, the proposed development is therefore not reliant on securing access through third party land which is an additional benefit of this proposed site.

4.7 Suitable Size and Orientation

- 4.7.1 In order to accommodate an energy generation project of this scale, a large area of suitable land is required. A project of this scale and the area of land it necessitates is required to achieve a critical mass of energy generation to ensure its viability without Government subsidies. The site is largely unobstructed and can be developed in a manner which retains the existing field boundaries and sensitive habitats.
- 4.7.2 Very few alternative areas exist that would provide a site of sufficient scale and size to accommodate the proposed development. Where such areas have been identified, these have not been deliverable for other reasons, including the lack of a suitable grid connection or planning and amenity constraints.

4.8 Statutory Designations

- 4.8.1 The site is not subject to any national or international designations for landscape or ecology.
- 4.8.2 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) includes recommendations to safeguard habitats and species present including the bats, birds, hedgehogs, hazel dormouse, badgers and reptiles both during construction and post-development. Furthermore, the proposal will result in significant Biodiversity Net Gains, as set out within the Biodiversity Net Gain Report submitted with the planning application.

4.9 Solar Irradiation

- 4.9.1 The site's undulating topography and the fact that it is not shaded by any nearby features in the landscape make it highly suitable for this type of development.
- 4.9.2 The Met Office sunshine duration data (2020) confirms that the area in which the site is located receives high levels of sunshine when compared to the country as a whole. This provides a clear benefit for solar PV development in this location.

4.10 Compatible Neighbouring Uses

- 4.10.1 The site is located within the countryside, with several individual rural houses in the surrounding area. The proposal includes mitigation to ensure any impacts on neighbouring residents are minimised. The application is supported by a comprehensive suite of technical assessments which have informed the layout, including a Noise Impact

Assessment and a Glint and Glare Study. These confirm that the proposal will not result in any unacceptable adverse impacts on any sensitive receptors. The layout has also been designed to include setbacks of solar panels from nearby houses to minimise views of the development.

4.11 Flood Risk

- 4.11.1 Mapping from the Environment Agency shows the site to lie within Flood Risk Zone 1, at the lowest risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. The site is therefore considered to be an acceptable location in terms of flood risk.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1.1 This Sequential Site Selection Report has taken a robust approach to identify sequentially preferable alternative sites for the proposed development. The search covers a wide search area and has been refined to take account of brownfield land and constraints, including agricultural land classification and proximity to grid connection, which is essential for the scheme to be viable.
- 5.1.2 At the national level, there is strong support in the NPPF for renewable energy development. Paragraph 155 makes clear that when determining applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities “should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable”.
- 5.1.3 Furthermore, the Planning Practice Guidance as well as the Climate Change Act 2008, clearly confirm the need to be positive and proactive in supporting renewable energy through the planning process.
- 5.1.4 There is clear support in the Local Plan for Solar PV development. Policy DM20 ‘Renewable and Low Carbon Energy’, states that such proposals will be permitted where they meet a number of criteria, including that for schemes on agricultural land, it has been demonstrated that poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality.
- 5.1.5 A key aspect of this proposal is that it is a temporary installation, with a proposed lifetime of 40 years. Following this, the site can be returned back to its existing agricultural use. Furthermore, the Council should also acknowledge the fact that the land on which the solar PV development will be built upon will be taken out of intensive crop production for this period, meaning there will be a significant reduction of nitrate, phosphates (fertiliser), herbicide and pesticide input into the land and a consequential reduction of the chemicals leaching into the watercourses.
- 5.1.6 The proposal will play a significant part in aiding carbon reduction and improving green power generation capacity, with it being stressed that this can play a significant and an important tangible role in ensuring the district is playing an important part in carbon reduction.
- 5.1.7 The proposed development will also contribute to key employment objectives supported by the local authority, and other key partners as highlighted by the relevant rural diversification and renewable energy policies set out at Section 3.
- 5.1.8 The proposed development is temporary and reversible, and significant biodiversity improvements are possible as set out in detail in the submitted Biodiversity Net Gain Report.
- 5.1.9 There are only several existing brownfield sites identified within the search area, however none of these are sequentially preferable or available as each has an end use established through the planning system and were advertised for commercial use and warehousing and distribution and as stated above in Section 4, we consider that the use of brownfield land is an inefficient use of land for Solar PV development when otherwise it can be better utilised for employment creation and for new homes.

5.1.10 Overall, this Sequential Site Selection Report confirms that the site is suitable and that there are no suitable alternatives within the search area which meet the criteria required for a successful solar PV scheme of this scale.