

Kingsway Solar

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Cambridge Past, Present & Future

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Response to consultation on Kingsway Solar Farm in the vicinity of Balsham, West Wratting, Weston Colville and Weston Green.

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.
- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxtton Watermill.

Cambridge Past, Present and Future support solar farms in principle but have concerns about the scale, visual impact and loss of agricultural land of this proposal.

The landscape around Balsham, West Wratting and Weston Colville is gently undulating. The Western Area A is on land sloping down from the trig point (95m). The Central Area B incorporates the existing wind farm and is therefore on one of the highest parts of the landscape and land sloping down to the north east. The Eastern Area C extends up to the edges of West Wratting, Weston Colville and Willingham Green and close to Brinkley and is on the gentle slopes of the River Stour and its tributaries.

A landscape visual impact assessment needs to consider the individual field parcels for each area and omit those which are prominent in long distance views and highly sensitive to change. Consideration needs to be given to the impact of the proposals on the communities it abuts and views from the two long distance footpaths, the Icknield Way and the Harcamlow Way which cross the site. The assessment needs to consider the in-combination effect of the proposal with the existing solar farm to the north of Area B and the wind turbines within Area B.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the boundary treatment. Solar Farms with closely packed panels create a very 'flat' and monochrome landscape. We would support a solar farm where the panels are well spaced, creating light and shade of the panels and land beneath, and breaking up the areas by retaining and enhancing the current field boundaries with hedges.

We object to the loss of high-quality agricultural land and therefore would support the multi-functional use of the land such as creating a meadow habitat and using it as grazing land. This would also mean that the land is not sterilised and allow it to return to agriculture in the long term.

We are concerned about the visual impact of the proposed pylons connecting to the Burwell substation. We note that there are already pylons running through the site to the existing substation at Burwell. A second line of pylons would be significantly harmful on the landscape. We would like to know whether the existing line can be upgraded and used. Otherwise, we support the undergrounding of the line.

Your proposal is a large scheme and therefore must be delivered to high landscape and ecological standards. As you develop your plans, we request that you restrict the location of the pylons to areas with the least visual impact and omit the areas of greatest impact, and that the agricultural use of the land is retained by creating chalk meadow for grazing.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer