

Fields Farm solar farm (ref. SMD/2015/0394)

Green Belt Statement – Addendum



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1. Renewable energy in the Green Belt

- 1.1 This note has been prepared as an addendum to the submitted Green Belt Statement (2 October 2015) and provides an overview of the renewable energy schemes that have been approved in the Green Belt in Staffordshire, as well as the very special circumstances that have been accepted by decision makers.
- 1.2 It is relevant to consider all renewable energy schemes (not just solar) that have been approved in the Green Belt in light of paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which refers to renewable energy projects generally. The following table provides details of renewable energy schemes that have been approved at local authority level in the Staffordshire Green Belts:

Table 1

Site name	Planning authority	Type of development	LPA reference number
Heywood Grant	Staffordshire Moorlands	4.9MW to 5.7MW Solar farm	SMD/2015/0088
Poplars Landfill Site	Staffordshire County	Anaerobic Digestion facility	CH.09/03/721 MW
Four Ashes EFW	Staffordshire County	Energy for Waste (EFW) facility	SS.08/10/636 W
Cocksparrow Lane (Brookfield Farm)	Staffordshire County	Biomass and Anaerobic Digestion facility	SS.08/25/613 W
Land at Pennwood Farm	South Staffordshire	250KW solar farm	15/00518/FUL
Land at Smestow Road	South Staffordshire	250KW solar farm	15/00479/FUL
Land adjacent to Barr Far	South Staffordshire	1.81MW solar farm	14/00406/FUL
Huddlesford House	Lichfield	1MW solar farm	14/00513/FULM
Thickbroom Farm	Lichfield	250KW solar farm	14/00730/FUL

- 1.3 Further to the above, the following table provides details of renewable energy schemes that have been approved at appeal in Staffordshire Green Belts:

Table 2

Site name	Planning authority	Type of development	LPA / DCS reference number
Fields Farm	Staffordshire Moorlands	1 wind turbine	400-005-676
The Bungalow	Staffordshire Moorlands	1 wind turbine	400-005-591
Land off Blakeley Lane	Staffordshire Moorlands	1 wind turbine	13/00279/FUL
Higher Overton Farm	Staffordshire Moorlands	1 wind turbine	12/00085/FUL
The Sands	Staffordshire Moorlands	1 wind turbine	11/00529/FUL
South Staffordshire College	South Staffordshire	2 wind turbines	09/00524/FUL
Chapel Glassworks	Staffordshire Moorlands	2 wind turbines	09/00524/FUL
Thickbroom Farm	Lichfield	2 wind turbines	13/00405/FUL
Land South Of Hademore House Bridge	Lichfield	1 wind turbine	13/00555/FUL

- 1.4 In considering the above, it is clear that a number of renewable energy schemes have been approved in the Green Belt in Staffordshire, including those determined at local authority level and at appeal. These examples supplement the examples of approved solar farms in the Green Belt nationally, as noted within Appendix D of the submitted Green Belt Statement.
- 1.5 Of the approved schemes, applicants have put forward a number of very special circumstances that have been accepted by decision makers in their balancing exercise in determining whether or not to allow such 'inappropriate developments' to be approved in the Green Belt. A summary of these very special circumstances is listed below.
- The proposal would contribute towards meeting the UK's international obligations to reduce carbon emissions. The benefits are not insignificant, and although small in terms of total national electricity useage, are an important contribution toward the Government's targets
 - The proposal would make a significant contribution toward meeting regional and local targets
 - Need for significant additional renewable energy within the area
 - The scheme would provide for the electricity needs of the local area and will power a large number of households

- The proposal would reduce the amount of electricity drawn from power stations
- This local generation and use of electricity reduces the amount of electricity lost in carrying electricity long distances through the national grid
- The only occasion upon which the electricity would be transported away from the local area would be if the amount of electricity being generated exceeded the amount being used locally
- The solar park will contribute to reducing CO₂ emissions
- Any surplus electricity would be exported to the National Grid
- The electricity produced would assist in the financial viability of the farm and can be regarded as a farm diversification measure
- The proposal would be temporary and would be removed when the development ceases to operate and the land restored to its previous use
- The local biodiversity and environmental benefits would be significant
- The proposal includes targeted plans to provide places for nature and wildlife, both by preserving the ecological assets onsite and by seeking to increase the biodiversity of the site in the future through sensitive management methods. These factors represent net gains for biodiversity
- The visual impact is not considered to be significant
- Continuing agricultural usage
- Limitations of other sites in the area
- The scheme is a simple and proven passive technology providing a source of safe, locally produced renewable energy for many years after construction, with no by-products

- 1.6 Many of these very special circumstances are relevant and have been put forward in support of the proposal at Fields Farm.
- 1.7 As set out in our statement on the Green Belt (dated 2 October 2015) and resubmitted with the Alternative Sites Assessment, case law has established that, when considering very special circumstances it is appropriate to consider the cumulative benefits rather than individual benefits in isolation.