

SOLAR PV DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LANDSCAPE, SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Cabinet Member Cllr Richard Chesterton
Responsible Officer Head of Planning and Regeneration, Jenny Clifford

Reason for Report: To approve the Solar PV Developments in the Landscape Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

RECOMMENDATION: That the attached Solar PV Developments in the Landscape SPD is approved for implementation.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Adoption of the Solar PV Developments in the Landscape SPD will contribute to the key objective of protecting the environment.

Financial Implications: The Solar PV Developments in the Landscape SPD provides consistent guidance to assist in the consideration of planning applications for solar PV developments. The status as a Supplementary Planning Document gives greater weight to the document and will provide a sound basis of evidence in a case of appeal.

Legal Implications: The process of preparing the SPD has complied with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2012). Adoption of the Solar PV Developments in the Landscape SPD will provide a sound basis to inform decision making.

Risk Assessment: If the document was not adopted we could continue to rely on the advice as technical guidance which can still be a material consideration in planning decisions. However this would potentially leave the authority more vulnerable to successful challenge at appeal.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Solar PV Developments in the Landscape SPD provides guidance on key landscape issues associated with solar photovoltaic (PV) developments. It provides guidance on the relative landscape sensitivities of different areas within Mid Devon to solar developments and offers advice with regard to the good siting and design of solar PV schemes including guidance on how potential impacts could be minimised.

1.2 This latest public consultation version of the draft SPD document follows on from previous extensive work undertaken with respect to landscape sensitivity and an initial scoping consultation held in 2014. A Landscape Sensitivity Assessment was initially commissioned in response to members' concerns over the number of renewable energy planning applications being submitted and lack of consistent landscape related advice available to inform planning decisions. Land Use Consulting (LUC) was commissioned to prepare this

evidence which was to be based on Mid Devon's own published Landscape Character Assessment and provided guidance on landscape implications of wind and solar PV developments. The methodology used by LUC drew on its extensive experience of preparing such studies, including one for Torridge District Council, and the study builds on the Devon Landscape Policy Group's Advice Note 2 on accommodating solar PV developments in Devon's landscape. Previous to this study consultants had been commissioned on a case-by-case basis to advise on landscape sensitivity in a particular location.

- 1.3 Following further consideration, the Council resolved to consult on the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment with a view to adopt it as a supplementary planning document to afford the guidance greater weight in the decision making process.

2.0 Consultation

- 2.1 A scoping consultation was undertaken in July 2014. The results of this consultation have informed the latest draft SPD. A total of 13 valid representations were received and have been considered when producing the draft landscape SPD.

- 2.2 In accordance with Policy SCI/14 of the Statement of Community Involvement, a second phase of consultation was undertaken in February 2016. There was a significant delay in reaching this stage in the process owing largely to changes in national planning policy which resulted in this latest version of the SPD relating solely to solar energy rather than including wind energy development as originally intended. A total of 18 valid representations were received and have been considered when producing the proposed Solar PV developments in the landscape SPD.

- 2.3 A summary of the main issues raised during both the SPD Scoping and Draft Consultations and how they have been addressed is provided in a Consultation Statement.

3.0 Planning Policy Advisory Group

- 3.1 The Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) has considered the proposed SPD and the group have recommended that Cabinet approve the document for adoption.

Contact for any more information	Forward Planning Officer Miss Poie Li 01884 234 922 pli@middevon.gov.uk
Background Papers	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment
Circulation of the Report	Cabinet Members Chair of Planning Committee