

Guidance on applications for solar farms in the Uttlesford district.

Solar farms can provide valuable sources of renewable energy and so Uttlesford District Council supports them in principle. However, the council also recognises that there are potential issues regarding matters such as visual impact and potential loss of best and most versatile agricultural land that need to be considered.

In determining planning applications for new solar farms, the council must have regard to the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) and planning legislation. While the NPPF contains an expectation that all areas contribute to renewable energy generation, an argument at the other end of the scale, such as "there are just too many in the district" is unable to be considered by a planning authority as a stand-alone planning consideration, unless for instance the cumulative visual impact or loss of best and most versatile agricultural land is also a consideration. Solar farms must always be determined in accordance with national planning policy

Uttlesford District Council will include a policy on solar farms as part of the [Local Plan](#). In the interim, national planning policy and guidelines apply to all planning applications for solar farms.

National planning policy and guidelines for solar farm planning applications

Uttlesford District Council takes into account national planning policy and guidance in considering planning applications for solar farms. This includes the National Planning Policy Framework, the ministerial speech and written statement and planning policy guidance. The council also has regard to good practice guidelines published by BRE and Natural England. PPG [Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 5-013-20150327](#) summarises the requirements and reads:

Particular factors a local planning authority will need to consider include:

- encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value;
- where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays. See also a [speech by the Minister for Energy and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP, to the solar PV industry on 25 April 2013](#) and [written ministerial statement on solar energy: protecting the local and global environment made on 25 March 2015](#).
- that solar farms are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use;

- the proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare (see [guidance on landscape assessment](#)) and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;
- the extent to which there may be additional impacts if solar arrays follow the daily movement of the sun;
- the need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing;
- great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large scale solar farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset;
- the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges;
- the energy generating potential, which can vary for a number of reasons including, latitude and aspect.