DWD

Property & Planning Consultants

Helping Solar contribute to Net Zero

March 2022

Contributing to Net Zero

Working with solar farm developers

The DWD Infrastructure and Energy consenting practice has long-held expertise in the large scale planning sector for traditional and renewable energy.

Originally securing many consents for clients under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989, we are now experts in the Development Consent Order (DCO) process and have acted on many Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, including a number of solar farms, since the inception of the Planning Act 2008.

We are often instructed at the very start of the process, assisting clients in structuring their teams to successfully deliver solar farm planning, using our experience across a wide range of different projects, and continue to advise throughout the preparation and submission of the application. This ranges from advice on consultation, programme, policy and process to internal governance.

We can act with a wider team to deliver documents for consultation and can prepare the planning documents which typically include the Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, and Consultation Report. We frequently support clients during the examination, including at the hearings.

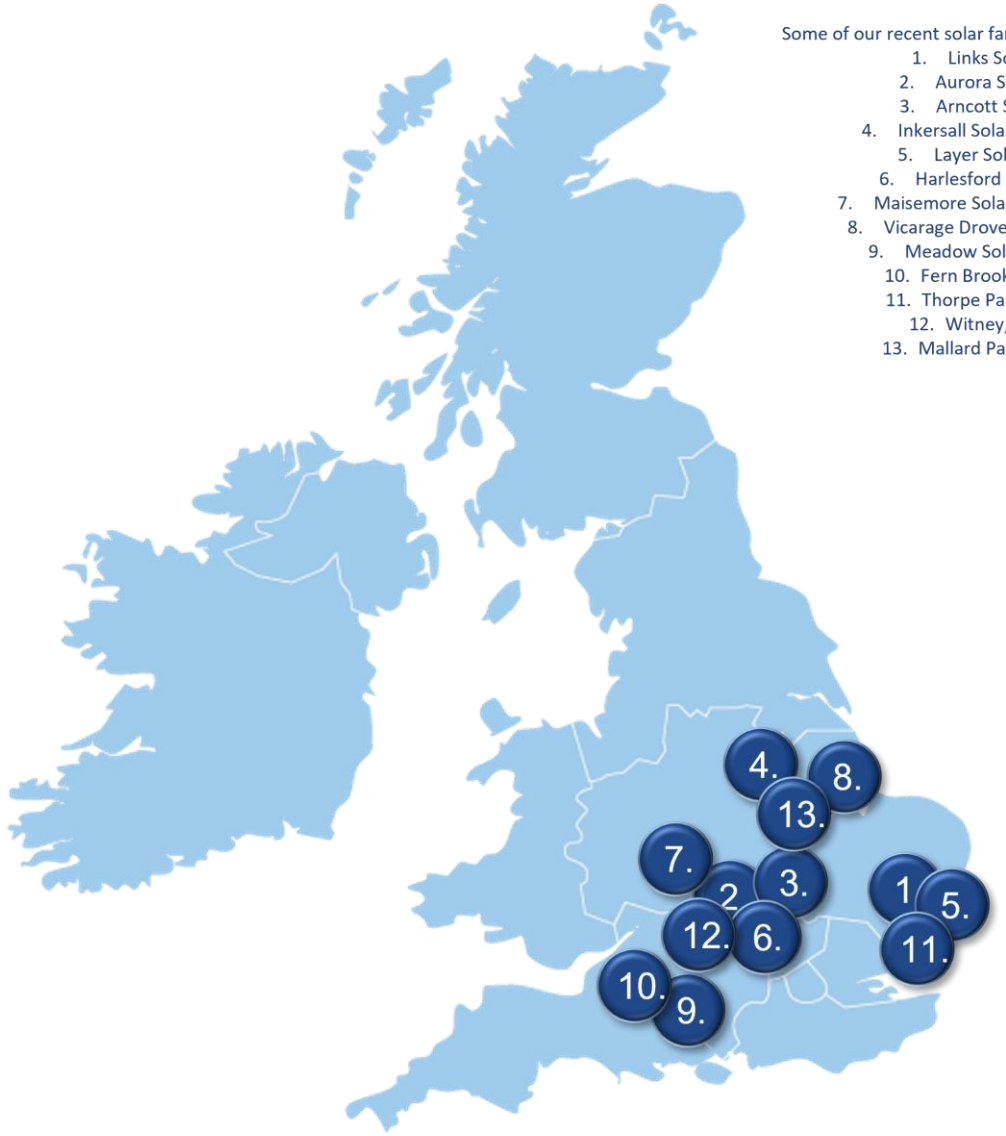
The DWD team have significant expertise in delivering solar consenting and planning applications for energy infrastructure projects across the UK.

Sharing our solar experience

National expertise

The DWD Planning team have worked on a wide range of solar farms, from individual projects through to large scale developments.

The team is able to provide a flexible tailored approach appropriate to the client's requirements.



Some of our recent solar farm projects include:

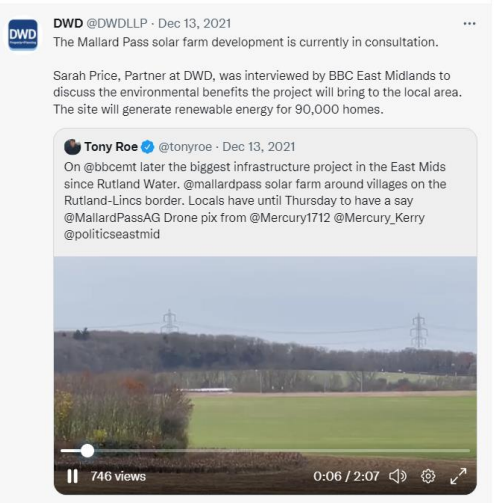
1. Links Solar Farm, Braintree
2. Aurora Solar Farm, Eynsham
3. Arncott Solar farm, Arcncott
4. Inkersall Solar Farm, Chesterfield
5. Layer Solar Farm, Colchester
6. Harlesford Solar Farm, Cowley
7. Maisemore Solar Farm, Tewkesbury
8. Vicarage Drove Solar Farm, Boston
9. Meadow Solar Farm, Test Valley
10. Fern Brook Solar Farm, Dorset
11. Thorpe Park Solar Farm, Essex
12. Witney, South Oxfordshire
13. Mallard Pass, Essendine (NSIP)

Contributing to the renewables debate

Providing an expert opinion

Our experience of the solar sector means that the DWD Planning team are often involved in public events. Our Planning consultants regularly contribute to conferences and events, talking on topics such as the need for large-scale developments.

We are seen as knowledgeable experts and are contacted by the media and journalists for our insights into the solar industry.



Cornwell Solar Farm

Client: Low Carbon

Industry: Renewables

Services: Planning

Background:

Cornwell solar farm is a 67 hectare site of Grade 3b farmland within South Oxfordshire. The county council had declared a target to be a carbon neutral district by 2030. The developer, Low Carbon, wanted to develop a solar photovoltaic farm that would operate for 40 years and provide clean, renewable energy for over 15,000 local homes.

Challenge:

As the site was farmland, the planning application required the scheme to demonstrate how habitats would be protected, to prevent an impact on the biodiversity and to minimise landscape and visual impacts. The planning application also needed to include the associated infrastructure such as inverters, substation compound, security cameras, fencing, access tracks and landscaping.

DWD services:

The solar planning team at DWD provided the expert planning advice and project management required to take the project from the pre-app and consultation stages through to the grant of planning permission which required careful negotiation with the SODC and technical consultees. The planning application was supported by an Environmental Statement and the team was required to address a number of sensitive landscape and heritage issues.

Benefits:

The Cornwell Solar Farm will generate enough renewable power to provide over 15,000 homes in South Oxfordshire while achieving a biodiversity net gain. The scheme will help to meet national and local objectives for reducing carbon emissions and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Harlesford Solar Farm

Client: Low Carbon

Industry: Renewables

Services: Planning

Background:

Harlesford Solar Farm is a 78 hectare site on farmland at Harlesford Farm near Tetsworth, South Oxfordshire. The South Oxfordshire District Council has declared a climate emergency. The developer, Low Carbon, wanted to develop a solar photovoltaic farm with battery storage that would operate for 40 years and provide clean, renewable energy for over 15,000 local homes.

Challenge:

As the site was farmland, the planning application required the scheme to demonstrate how habitats would be protected, to prevent an impact on the biodiversity and to minimise landscape and visual impacts.

DWD services:

The solar planning team, led by Nick Bowen, provided the expert planning advice and project management required to take the project from the pre-app, EIA Screening and consultation stages through to the grant of planning permission.

This required careful negotiation with both South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and technical consultees. The planning application was supported by an Environmental Statement and the team was required to address a number of sensitive landscape, heritage and archaeological issues.

Benefits:

The Harlesford Solar Farm will generate enough renewable power to provide over 15,000 homes in South Oxfordshire while achieving a biodiversity net gain. The scheme will help to meet national and local objectives for reducing carbon emissions and reducing reliance on fossil fuels

Links Solar Farm

Client: Low Carbon

Industry: Renewables

Services: Planning

Background:

Links Solar Farm is a 65 hectare site on farmland at Braintree, Essex. The Braintree District Council has declared a climate emergency. The developer, Low Carbon, wanted to develop a solar photovoltaic farm with battery storage that would operate for 40 years and provide clean, renewable energy for over 11,000 local homes.

Challenge:

As the site was farmland, the planning application required the scheme to demonstrate how habitats would be protected, to prevent an impact on the biodiversity and to minimise landscape and visual impacts.

The planning application also needed to include the associated infrastructure associated with the battery storage.

DWD services:

The solar planning team at DWD worked closely with both Braintree District Council and Essex County Council in addition to other statutory consultees in order to fully address the minor technical issues that were raised throughout the course of the application.

The team provided the expert planning advice and project management required to take the project from the pre-app and consultation stages through to the grant of planning permission.

Benefits:

The Links Solar Farm will generate enough renewable power to provide over 11,000 homes in Essex while achieving a biodiversity net gain. The scheme will help to meet national and local objectives for reducing carbon emissions and reducing reliance on fossil fuels

Mallard Pass Solar Farm DCO

Background:
Mallard Pass is a 880 hectare site predominantly on farmland adjacent to Essendine, Lincolnshire. The project falls across two local authority boundaries (Rutland and South Kesteven) who have both declared climate emergencies. The developer, Windel Energy, are proposing a 350MW solar photovoltaic farm with the potential for inclusion of battery storage to deliver clean, renewable energy to around 92,000 homes.

Challenge:
The project is currently at scoping stage and DWD has worked with the project team to deliver a Stage One non-statutory consultation and is working closely with the local authorities, communities and other consultees. Whilst the project is currently being refined to take account of the first stages of consultation, the key challenges for the team is articulating the reasons for a project of this scale in this location and addressing concerns about developing solar on what is seen by the community as prime agricultural land. Parts of the solar farm boundary are also located close to people's homes and the team has been focusing on refining the design to ensure that the panels are an acceptable distance from where people live and deliver wider biodiversity and landscape benefits.

Most people understand the benefits of solar in terms of climate change, however the increasing number of large scale solar projects in the UK is drawing public attention and each project will need to do more to explain why it should succeed and to articulate the wider benefits, not just in terms of climate change.

DWD services:
DWD's role in Mallard Pass is a much wider one than the traditional planning consultant role. We are a key member of the project team, working with the wider consortium to make key project decisions, advise on strategy and direction and are driving the programme to submission. As the public face of the project we also have a responsibility not just to ensure we have a consentable and deliverable project, but that we are able to genuinely show we are listening to consultation and able to articulate the benefits.

Benefits:
When built, the Mallard Pass Solar Farm will generate enough renewable power to provide the equivalent of 92,000 homes with power while achieving a biodiversity net gain. The scheme will provide a significant contribution to national and local objectives for reducing carbon emissions and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Layer Solar Farm

Client: Low Carbon

Industry: Renewables

Services: Planning

Background:

Layer Solar Farm is a 97 hectare site of Grade 3 farmland at Layer-de-lay-Haye in Colchester, Essex. The Colchester Borough Council had declared a target to be a carbon neutral district by 2030. The developer, Low Carbon, wanted to develop a solar photovoltaic farm that would operate for 40 years and provide clean, renewable energy for over 16,000 local homes.

Challenge:

As the site was farmland, the planning application required the scheme to demonstrate how habitats would be protected, to prevent an impact on the biodiversity and to minimise landscape and visual impacts.

The planning application also needed to include the associated infrastructure such as inverters, substation compound, security cameras, fencing, access tracks and landscaping.

DWD services:

The solar planning team at DWD provided the expert planning advice and project management required to take the project from the pre-app and consultation stages through to the grant of planning permission. The team worked hard to put together a well-considered proposal to provide much needed renewable energy and a biodiversity net gain in addition to preserving and enhancing the setting of a Scheduled Monument which was designated by Historic England during the planning application stage.

Benefits:

The Layer Solar Farm will generate enough renewable power to provide over 16,000 homes in Essex while achieving a biodiversity net gain. The scheme will help to meet national and local objectives for reducing carbon emissions and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. It will save 11.210 tonnes of C2 each year and is the equivalent of 5,175 cars taken off the road.

Solar projects – Renewable Connections

Client: Renewable Connections

Industry: Renewables

Services: Town planning

Background:

LDWD have been engaged with Renewable Connections since late 2020 on a number of solar PV and battery storage facilities across the UK. At present, we have 10 applications at various stages of development (concept, pre-application, application and post-application)across Cornwall, Dorset, Somerset, Oxfordshire, Kent, Rutland, Suffolk and Essex.

Challenge:

The challenges we face are many, not least the varying approaches to renewable development encountered across the UK. While the thrust of key government policy around renewables is very clear, it does not always translate to effective policy making, delivery and decision making at local levels. In addition, the landscapes and places that the schemes are being developed are unique with no set of circumstances definitely transferable from one scheme to another. The constant flux requires bespoke strategies and a set of skills that go beyond basic planning knowledge.

DWD services:

DWD act as both planning lead and project managers on our work with Renewable Connections. Jonathan and DWD source, engage and manage the relevant teams of sub-consultants as well as provide the planning strategy which includes working closely with the client and communications consultants to devise appropriate community engagement and communications strategies. We manage relationships with the relevant Local Planning Authorities and work hard to understand both the technical and political challenges that proposals will face.

Benefits:

At DWD we understand the value of learning through experience and reflecting honestly and openly on our work. Within our work with Renewable Connections, this has helped not only build a strong relationship with our client but it has enabled us to build our own portfolio of best practice and help tailor approaches which fit the circumstances. We create clear channels of communication and work hard to define scope and deliverables to ensure the client has absolute certainty of expectation.

Our Solar team

Dedicated experts

The DWD Planning team has experience of solar and other renewable projects. The key team members have a strong working knowledge of the energy sector, working on large-scale and individual projects to help successfully deliver the planning elements of a solar project.

Geoff Bullock
Partner – Planning
020 7489 4892
geoff.bullock@dwdllp.com

Sarah Price
Partner – Planning
020 7332 2111
sarah.price@dwdllp.com

Colin Turnbull
Partner – Planning
020 7489 4897
colin.turnbull@dwdllp.com

Nick Bowen
Senior Associate
020 7489 1175
nick.bowen@dwdllp.com