

West Wickham Parish Council response to Kingsway Solar EIA Scoping Report

Background about West Wickham

Character and nature of our community

The Parish of West Wickham has a population of approximately 440 people. It has a distinctive rural character¹. The residents enjoy pervasive access to the countryside through an extensive public right of way network and have a continuous connection to the natural and agricultural landscape that surrounds the settlement areas.

West Wickham has few amenities and community life is centred around St Mary's Church ([///walked.pursue.canoe](#)) and the Village Hall ([///space.intervals.nooks](#)). The Village Hall hosts a range of village clubs, societies and regular social events.

Residents of West Wickham feel strongly about protecting their Parish and community from inappropriate development and enthusiastically supported their Neighbourhood Development Plan which was adopted in September 2022. The vision of the plan included *“protecting the rural character of the Parish of West Wickham, the balance of built, agricultural and natural landscapes, its diverse wildlife and its tranquillity.”*

The landscape of West Wickham and the development area

The main village settlement is in the centre of the parish and is situated along a ridge running north-east/south-west with gently sloping valleys on either side. This elevated location means West Wickham is particularly sensitive to damage to the quality and character of the landscape. The entirety of the northern boundary of the West Wickham and Burton End settlement areas are in the zone of theoretical visibility due to the proximity of Area C of the application.

Responses to the EIA Scoping Report

Biodiversity, habitats and wildlife

The scoping report repeatedly states for various scoped out species that *“Developable Area C and Inter Array Connection Corridors have not been surveyed but habitats appear to be similar to those present within Developable Areas A and B”*. We object to this generalisation and the applicant should complete the necessary due diligence for Area C before requesting to scope out various species and habitats.

¹ West Wickham Character Assessment, 2018

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/19315/west-wickham-character-assessment.pdf>

Devana Centre for Wildlife Recovery

The Devana Centre for Environmental Recovery² covers approximately 100 acres between West Wickham and the southern sections of Area C. The site boundary is less than 300m from Area C and entirely contained by the 1km distance radii. This is a rapidly improving habitat area which will include woodland, scrub, grassland, ponds and other high value habitats. We request that the impact of the proposed development on this important site should be scoped into the EIA.

Landscape and Visual Amenity

The southern part of Area C of the proposed development and West Wickham are contained in the “4E West Wickham Wooded Claylands” landscape area identified by the Greater Cambridge Landscape Assessment³. It has specific sensitivities of “distinctive open, panoramic views towards wooded horizons” and we welcome its recognition in the Baseline conditions in 6.2.5 and its inclusion in scoping in 6.2.8.

Public Rights of Way

We support section 6.2.8 scoping in ProW users within 3km of the development area, This includes the majority of the ProW network in West Wickham Parish.

Dark Skies and Light Pollution

We strongly object to the de-scoping of lighting impacts on landscape character and visual amenity in section 6.2.6. The landscape around West Wickham is some of darkest in South Cambridgeshire. It is very sensitive to light pollution⁴. Neighbourhood Plan Policy WWK/6 explicitly seeks to protect the night sky from light pollution. Construction and intermittent security lights could have adverse impacts if their design and installation does not consider the minimising of light pollution.

Cultural Heritage

West Wickham Parish has a rich development history with two Conservation Areas, over thirty Listed Buildings and one Scheduled Monument.

Section 2.4.26 overlooks the conservation area in West Wickham High Street which includes the Grade II* St Mary’s Church.

² Ground Control, The Devana Centre for Environmental Recovery

<https://www.ground-control.co.uk/insights/news/the-devana-centre-for-environmental-recovery/>

³ Greater Cambridge Shared Partnership, 2021

https://consultations.greatercambridgeplanning.org/sites/gcp/files/2021-08/LandscapeCharacterAssesment_GCLP_210831_Part_A.pdf

⁴ West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan 2022, Section 4.62 - 4.63

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/21611/the-west-wickham-neighbourhood-plan.pdf>