



Stratford-upon-Avon Midlands Weekly Newspaper of the Year

HERALD

£2.15

Thursday, September 3, 2026

It sells no other Herald, no other member of the Herald's family.

WE BUY ANY CAR

Cash, Sale or Return or
Auction Disposal
Arden Garages
01789 267446

THIS WEEK

**Woman, 62,
loses fight for
life after
police chase
crash**

| page 7

**What can
you still
buy for
£1 in
Stratford?**

| page 3

**Banned –
teacher
tried to film
pupil with
secret
camera**

| page 9

**Camper
Calling pix**

| pages 20-21

Fear and loathing over super-sized solar farm

Shakespeare's England is under threat by miles and miles of solar panels, according to South Warwickshire's rural communities, and they're feeling powerless to protect it.

In a special in-depth report, the *Herald* has spoken to villagers who fear thousands of acres of countryside near Stratford could be swallowed up by solar panels as part of the proposed Arrow Valley Solar development. It could cover an area of more than 2,000 football pitches, spanning four square miles, if given the go-ahead.

Residents are concerned for the countryside, farming, their businesses, and in some cases, their land.

Full report | pages 4-5



THE HERALD: THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1860

**BUCKINGHAM
WAY**

SW SALON

SWI STYLE WITHOUT LONDON PRICES

**7 Buckingham Way, Stratford Upon Avon,
Warwickshire, CV37 0RJ**

t: 07904278171

www.swhairsalon.com



STEPHEN WALTON

SDC'S ROLE

Can Stratford District Council stop this solar farm?

■ The land earmarked for the solar farm spans two counties – Warwickshire and Worcestershire – as well as three district councils and at least 11 parishes.

But because of the size of the project, the solar farm is classed as a nationally significant infrastructure project and will need a special type of planning permission known as a development consent order (DCO).

The planning application will be examined via the national planning process, with the final decision made by the secretary of state for energy security and net zero, not Stratford District Council.

OTHER DETAILS

What else do I need to know about this giant solar development?

■ The Arrow Valley Solar (AVS) development has a 60-year lifespan and during that time the solar panels, made in China, could need replacing and the battery energy storage systems could also need to be replaced up to four times, according to AVS's own reports.

■ Parish councils point out the AVS development is actually four separate solar schemes connected by seven stretches of cabling – totalling more than 20km of 40-metre wide track through the countryside and across the River Avon.

■ Abbot's Moreton Parish Council has raised worries that large-scale lithium-ion battery energy storage systems are known to carry a risk of 'thermal runaway' leading to uncontrollable fires. Battery fires can be almost impossible to extinguish, with potential for explosions and toxic emissions.

■ Concerns have been raised about glints and glare on sunny days reflecting from solar panels and temporarily dazzling or blinding drivers, riders or horses.

■ Wellesbourne Mountford Airfield, a busy hub for flight training and private pilots, Stratford and Bidford gliding clubs and Arrow Mill heliport could be affected.

■ Tenant farmers and farm workers could lose their livelihoods and jobs, if agricultural land is turned into solar fields.

■ Grid connections have been secured at Feckenham, AVS says, and the project has priority connection rights, as an infrastructure of national significance (NSIP) project.

■ The A46 will be the main access corridor for lorries travelling around the site and network.

'We're being swamped

It's the size of 2,000 football pitches and would be one of the biggest solar farms in the country. But will this green energy project, which is still in the planning stage, ruin farmland, landscapes and livelihoods? Many people think so, as GILL OLIVER has been finding out.

Villagers have shared their shock, fear and anger that thousands of acres of countryside near Stratford could be swallowed up by solar panels.

The sheer size and scale of the proposed Arrow Valley Solar development has left many reeling.

Covering an area of more than 2,000 football pitches, the giant scheme will span four square miles across south Warwickshire and east Worcestershire, if given the go-ahead.

Some of the areas most affected by this development are Abbots Moreton, the Bevingtons, Dunnington, Wixford, Broom, Salford Priors, Bidford, Cleeve Priors and Pebworth.

The 1,700-hectare site will generate up to 500 megawatts of renewable energy and include solar panels up to 4.5 metres high – the height of a double-decker bus – plus a battery energy storage system, substations and an underground cable route linking the four main solar sites with one another and with the National Grid at Feckenham substation.

Developer Island Green Power has already delivered a scoping report for Arrow Valley Solar farm, which will have a 60-year lifespan, to the national planning inspectorate and has started carrying out surveys locally.

Worried residents have formed an opposition group, labelling the solar farm a fire hazard, because of its large-scale lithium-ion battery energy storage systems.

They also cite glint and glare, possible harm to birds and wildlife, loss of prime agricultural-grade land and disruption to hedgerows and public rights of way as concerns.

Parish councils say pubs, hotels, cafés, farm shops, riding schools and tourism firms are all likely to suffer, and the many walkers and cyclists who regularly come to the area would likely go elsewhere.

Gabrielle Leese, a musician who lives in Dunnington and has worked with the RSC, described the proposals as "horrible".

She said: "No one realises the scale of this... they think it's just a few fields of solar panels and we're being very Nimby-ish, but it isn't."

"It's an absolutely huge installation of solar panels and batteries and there'll be three-metre-high fencing around it all."

Ms Leese, who is in her late 70s, added: "We in Dunnington are worst affected because it's going to be all round us. It's going to completely ruin the whole life of our village and all the villages around, and the farming land. The scale of it is frightening."

"Everybody else seems to be protecting their countryside, we seem to be destroying it."

Angela Ballard, 71, a retired librarian living in Wixford, is concerned by the size of the area covered, the batteries and miles of underground cabling.

"It's so worrying," she said. "There is a lot of history here. It's an area that tourists visit and there's so much walking country."

"The developer tells us we'll still have the right of way footpaths but either side of the paths will be huge fences, so it's hardly going to be a pleasant walking area."

She added: "It's not just the fact that it's going to be there allegedly for 60 years, it's also that you've got two years' worth of build process, and the dust and chaos that will be



■ Protesters against Arrow Valley Solar outside Wixford Village Hall.

'COURT ORDER THREAT TO ENTER MY LAND'

An Olympic horse rider has been told she can't stop the solar farm developers from digging up her land.

Professional Olympic eventer and trainer, Carolyne Ryan-Bell lives in Abbots Morton where she also runs an equestrian centre.

Ms Ryan-Bell, a member of the 2012 GB eventing squad who now trains young Olympic hopefuls, says she was "shocked" to receive a letter from Arrow Valley Solar (AVS) asking to survey her land, with a view to laying cables underneath.

She ignored the first couple of letters, then replied denying access and explained she has valuable, highly strung

horses on site, including breeding mares and foals.

AVS recently sent a legal notice threatening her with certain sections of the Housing and Planning Act, if she does not comply.

Although she still hasn't given permission, because this is a nationally significant infrastructure project, a development consent order can be used to access her land and AVS says its team will turn up on her doorstep anyway.

Worries that her foals could panic and injure themselves have been dismissed, with a suggestion to try and claim compensation.

She said: "These horses are

not like [any] horses – you can't just walk around them in a hi-vis jacket and fiddle about. They're highly strung and incredibly sensitive."

"We maintain a very structured, calm routine so we can't have people with mechanical stuff trudging up and down my fields, digging a six-metre wide hole for cabling."

"These horses are not like a motorbike, where I can just replace one with another."

She added: "They've said they will get a court order, so therefore can come onto my land."

"This disrupts my training massively with their threats to just turn up here – it's outrageous."

appropriate for this area.

"It is absolutely horrific and it will take up valuable farmland."

"We understand that the battery storage system is going to be enormous – it's a huge fire risk and rural fire services have been run down, so we are worried."

Mr Reekes said: "These are the areas tourists come and see to get a flavour of Shakespeare's England, and here we are, very close to Stratford, threatened with miles and miles of solar panels."

"For goodness sake, this is a rural attraction for American visitors who come over to Shakespeare's England."

"They come to the villages

where Shakespeare lived and drank – Wixford, Broom and Temple Grafton where he was married – and these areas are going to be affected by these solar panels in their thousands."

Many are critical of the Ragley estate, which is providing much of the land for the solar farm.

David Smith, a retired electricity board worker who lives in Abbots Moreton, said: "What legacy is Harry Seymour leaving? His predecessors rebuilt the home, landscaped the gardens and renovated the property."

"What's he doing? He's destroying this corner of Warwickshire."

"How will he be remembered for this?"

"Landowners like the marquess are custodians, it is only his house for his duration."

"Ragley are proud of having a LEAF certificate for good husbandry of land and forestry and have boasted about it but what does this do? It covers their land in glass."

"It's totally against what Ragley are promoting if hundreds – if not thousands – of their acres go under glass panels."

"He [the marquess] attends all the events in Alcester, he's part of the court leet and attends Remembrance Sundays every November, so he is a big part of the community, but what is he doing to our community by covering his fields in glass panels?"

"I'm disappointed Ragley would even consider this."

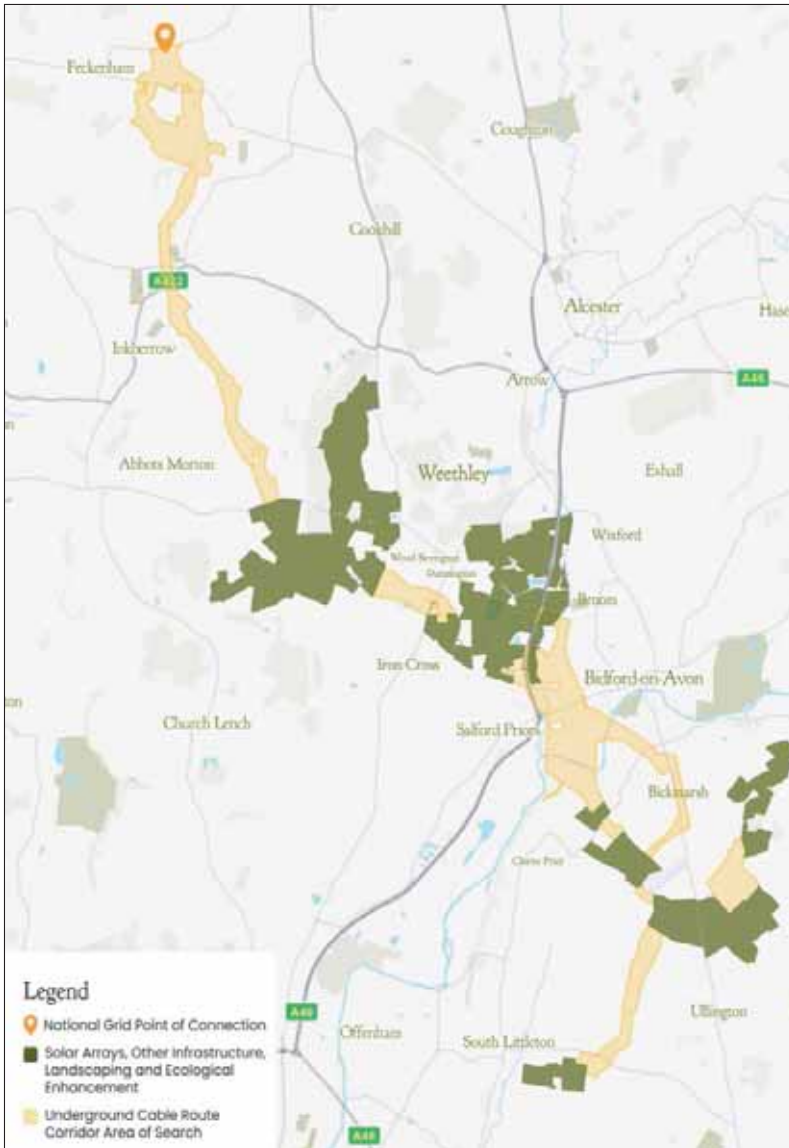
He added: "Something this size is going to devastate the rural communities around here – devastate Dunnington and devastate Broom."

"It is massive, and I don't think people realise how big it really is."

Sign up to our daily newsletters



by solar farm'



The *Herald* has approached the Ragley estate for comment.

Arrow Valley Solar told the *Herald* that the project is at an early stage of development, and no final design has been confirmed.

It says its project team is carrying out environmental and technical assessments and engaging with local authorities, statutory consultees and community stakeholders.

And it says safety is a key consideration and that modern battery energy storage systems include thermal management systems, built-in sensors, continuous monitoring and fire safety measures.

Arrow Valley Solar project development manager Jamie Gleeson said: "Arrow Valley Solar is at an early stage of development, and our proposals will be sympathetic to the local area's environment, character and history as well as ensuring the project can be delivered safely and effectively."

"We will be running a public consultation later this year so local communities' views can help refine our plans."

For more information, visit <https://arrowvalleysolar.co.uk>. For information about the AVS opposition group, visit avsoption.co.uk.

TIMELINE

NOW: The project is still at pre-application stage. AVS is carrying out surveys of ancient woodland, traffic, environmental habitats and biodiversity and consulting.

END OF SEPTEMBER: A public consultation is expected to begin.

APRIL 2027: An application to the Planning Inspectorate is expected to be submitted in the second quarter of next year, so April to June 2027.

MAY-JULY 2027: Following submission, the Planning Inspectorate has 28 days to decide whether the application meets the necessary standard to continue to formal examination.

2029: If planning is approved, construction could start.

2031: The solar farm could be up and running.

WHO ARE ARROW VALLEY SOLAR?

Arrow Valley Solar (AVS) is owned by Island Green Power (IGP), a UK renewables business.

IGP is owned by Macquarie Group, an international financial services group with headquarters in Australia.

Macquarie, previously a majority stakeholder in Thames Water, holds stakes in Southern Water and Birmingham, Bristol and London City airports.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

As well as the Arrow Valley project, IGP projects is linked to at least 12 other developments across the UK.

These include: Norfolk (two), Wiltshire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Yorkshire (two), Staffordshire, Aberdeenshire, Conwy & Denbighshire and Devon.

'OUR LIVELIHOOD COULD GO DOWN THE PAN'

Sonia Palmer, 58, lives in a barn conversion in Tothall Lane, Dunnington, with husband Adam.

The couple, who have two holiday let properties on site, are worried their business will suffer if the solar farm goes ahead.

They fear noise and disruption while it's being built, and rows of solar panels spoiling the stunning views once it's complete.

Ms Palmer said: "People come here because they love that it's so idyllic and peaceful, with views of open countryside. "It could really affect our business."

"There's talk of the solar panels being four-and-a-half metres high and they'll be just 10 metres from our property. "All our properties face the fields, so you'll be able to see the solar panels."

Citing the large fire on 13th August, declared a major incident by the fire service and resulting in the temporary closure of the A46, as reported in the *Herald*, Ms Palmer said she was worried.

She pointed out: "If we've got big solar panels right up close to the village, and there's a fire – because these dry, hot summers are only going to get worse – one of my major concerns is how is the fire brigade and farmers going to be able to get in to protect our properties and put out the fire?"

"It is totally unacceptable for a solar farm to be that close to people's property. "When we found out about it, we were heartbroken."

She is angry with Ragley estate bosses for agreeing to allow their land to be used.

"We bought our barns, which were being used for cows, eight years ago from the Ragley estate," she explained.

"We've built up a business and a home here... but now the

property is going to be worth less and obviously our livelihood is going to go down the pan."

"We're not sure what we're going to do, because we're both semi-retired and this is our livelihood. There's no care or thought for the community at all... they don't care that it's right up against people's back gardens."

"The solar panels need to be moved back from where they are to give us all some space."

They're going to look horrendous with three-metre-high fences... it's not fair on the village."

She added: "Our best hope is we can force them to rethink how far up they're going to put the solar panels. I'd say there isn't one person in the village who's for this, but some have to be careful what they say because they live in one of Ragley's houses. Everybody I've spoken to is totally against it."

CENTURIES-OLD VIEWS COULD BE LOST

Stratford MP Manuela Perteghella, pictured, is concerned about the scale of the solar scheme and its spread.

In a letter to the energy secretary, sent in April, she told him residents are worried about the effect on views "which have been like this for centuries".

She added: "Matters such as tranquillity and dark skies are part of what defines the landscape".

But in his reply on 13th July, energy secretary Michael Shanks wrote that "all solar projects are subject to a rigorous planning process, in which the views and interests of the local community and local authority are considered".

He added: "Once built, solar farms can usually be screened by hedges and other vegetation, and visual impact is carefully considered during the planning process."



LOOKING AFTER A LOVED ONE?

Are you caring for someone living with **dementia**? We can help you.

We have a **FREE 6 week Carers' Information Programme** "Looking After A Loved One (LAALO) living with dementia (1 session per week)

Topics and speakers include
What is Dementia?
Specialist Dementia Nurse
Legal information from a local solicitor

Stratford Sports Club

Dates: 15th Sept - 20th Oct

3-5pm

PLEASE ASK FOR DETAILS & TO BOOK

If you would like more information or would like to register please contact

01789 261061

info@reminiscence.org.uk

Company No: 00582711; Charity Number: 1135981