

Speech to Lime Down Solar Open Hearing on Tuesday 21st April 2026 by Cllr Martin Smith, Wiltshire Councillor for Sherston, Wiltshire Council Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Board Member for the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Good afternoon everyone.

I'm Cllr Martin Smith - Wiltshire Councillor for the Sherston Division, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, and a Board Member of the Cotswolds National Landscape. I represent the area of Wiltshire most affected by this project.

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Let me start with something I hope we can all agree on:

We need renewable energy.

And let me be clear: our local community is not saying *no* to solar.

We're saying *yes*.

Yes to solar that is sensitive in scale, smart in setting, and sympathetic to surroundings.

Yes to solar that works *with* communities, not against them.

And yes to solar that protects the very landscapes that climate action seeks to preserve.

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Here in Wiltshire, we're prepared to do our bit.

In 2023, there were already 42 solar farms across the county - with 12 more in development.

But Lime Down and its cumulative impact is unlike anything that's come before.

And it will fundamentally - and forever - change the character of this area.

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People love this area because of its stunning and unspoilt natural beauty.

It's why tourists, in their thousands, choose to visit each year.

And why so many of us are proud to call it home.

But Lime Down threatens to transform this picture-perfect paradise, into a mechanical maze.

The peace and quiet of rural life, replaced, by the ceaseless clang and hum of electrical machinery.

The proposed development is so vast, it will take half an hour to drive from one side to the other. I know....I do it all the time.

And a sea of black glass will be visible from most of our roads, many of our rural footpaths, and from within the Cotswolds National Landscape.

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But it's not just the aesthetics of it that concern me.

It's the logistics, too.

We've estimated that nearly 60,000 HGV movements will be needed to install the panels, and another 13,000 to construct the cable route.

Anyone who's driven through this area will know that our narrow country lanes - with their twists and bends - are utterly unsuitable for this size of vehicle, or level of traffic.

The applicant knows this, which is why they plan to change the road layouts in so many places.

As Cabinet Member for Highways, I've seen what happens when road closures and traffic are poorly managed.

Local roads are quickly brought to a stand still.

Roads that - in areas like this - are lifelines.

Connecting our rural communities to the wider world - to schools, workplaces, hospitals and other vital services.

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I could say a lot more, but let me end by saying this:

Yes - we need renewable energy.

But we must do it responsibly and intelligently.

Because if we get this wrong, we won't just damage landscapes.

We'll damage livelihoods.

Damage communities.

And damage trust, in the very transition we're trying to achieve.

Thank you.