



**Land at
Bumpers Farm
Phase 2, Ilmer**

**Landscape and
Visual Appraisal**

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Dimension
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On behalf of:
Harmony Energy Ltd

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Section 1

Introduction, Purpose and Methodology

Introduction

- 1.1 The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) has been commissioned by Harmony Energy Ltd ('the applicant') to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of the proposals at Land at Bumpers Farm, Phase 2, Ilmer ('the site') to inform planning proposals and accompany a full planning application.
- 1.2 EDP is an independent environmental planning consultancy with offices in Cirencester, Cheltenham and Cardiff. The practice provides advice to private and public sector clients throughout the UK in the fields of landscape, ecology, archaeology, cultural heritage, arboriculture, rights of way and masterplanning. Details of the practice can be obtained at our website (www.edp-uk.co.uk).
- 1.3 **Plan EDP 1** illustrates the location of the site and its boundaries. The site is located approximately 520m to the north of the hamlet of Ilmer, Buckinghamshire, and is within the Wycombe District Council (WDC) Local Planning Authority (LPA) area.
- 1.4 The proposed development is for a battery storage plant, as described in more detail within the accompanying Planning Design and Access Statement (PDAS). The site comprises an area of approximately c.2.7 hectares (ha) for a *"Proposed energy storage facility to provide energy balancing services to the National Grid"*. The proposals are illustrated on the Layout Plan at **Appendix EDP 1**.

Planning History

- 1.5 The scheme at hand is separate to the previous applications and consequent planning approvals at Bumpers Farm. For context, the proposals for 'Phase 1' underwent a refining exercise following council feedback, which can be summarised below, before gaining planning consent via a revised scheme:
- 1.6 A previous version of the proposals was submitted to WDC on 26 March 2017 via planning application reference 17/05825/FUL. The Landscape Officer raised an objection to the proposals at this point, to which EDP provided a full response.
- 1.7 In light of this objection, the proposals had been refined, and the LVA updated. The revisions pertinent from a landscape and visual perspective included:
 - The overall height of the battery storage units had been reduced to 2.2m, less than half that of the previously proposed units;

- The accompanying inverters had been reduced in height to 2.5m, from the c.4m high previously proposed; and
 - As a result of the above, the smaller equipment would be much easier to screen and will benefit from the perimeter planting at a much earlier stage.
- 1.8 In light of the revised application, the above amendments were received positively by the Landscape Officer, who has subsequently revised their opinion¹, concluding that *“the amended development would have a permanent Moderate/Minor Adverse visual effect on users of local PRow’s LCI/12/1 and LCI/34/1 and a Minor/Negligible Adverse effect on landscape character”*.
- 1.9 The Landscape Officer also noted there could be further reduction of landscape and visual impacts if the *“transformer apparatus was located in the southern corner of the site, where it could be set against some existing tree cover and the railway embankment”*. In the absence of such rearrangement, the Landscape Officer notes that *“Either way, a high quality planting scheme would be required as a condition of any permission”*.
- 1.10 A robust, detailed landscape plan was submitted as part of the application, addressing concerns in detail before permission was granted on 26 July 2018.

Purpose of this LVA

- 1.11 The purpose of this LVA is to identify the baseline conditions of the site and its surrounding area, to inform the design layout and appearance, and provide an assessment of the effects predicted to arise from the development on the landscape and visual baseline conditions.
- 1.12 In compiling the assessment, EDP has undertaken the following key tasks:
- Reviewed the updated planning policy context for the site;
 - Undertaken an updated desktop study and web search of relevant background documents and maps. EDP’s study included reviews of aerial photographs, web searches, LPA publications and landscape character assessments. EDP has also obtained, where possible, information about relevant landscape and other designations such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), conservation areas and gardens and parks listed on Historic England’s ‘Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England’ (RPG);
 - Undertaken an updated field assessment of local site circumstances, including a photographic survey of the character and fabric of the site and its surroundings, using

¹ Case Officer Report, Planning Committee (Item 88) 17/05825/FUL https://publicaccess.wycombe.gov.uk/idxopa-web/files/5E2EDC27AB7DA72477F4A39F1275BA43/pdf/17_05825_FUL-COMMITTEE_PAPERS-3507826.pdf [accessed 04.04.2018]

photography from a number of representative viewpoints. The field assessment was undertaken by a qualified landscape architect; and

- Provided an analysis of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed scheme, which is determined by combining the magnitude of the predicted change with the assessed sensitivity of the identified receptors. The nature of any predicted effects is also identified (i.e. positive/negative, permanent/reversible).

Methodology Adopted for the Assessment

- 1.13 This proposal does not fall within the thresholds for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development described in Schedules 1 and 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. The LVA has, therefore, been undertaken in accordance with the '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013)*' (GLVIA3), insofar as it is relevant to non-EIA schemes. The criteria referred to, but not defined within the guidelines, have been defined by EDP as set out in **Appendix EDP 2**.

Study Area

- 1.14 To establish the baseline and potential limit of material effects, the study area has been considered at two geographical scales.
- 1.15 A broad study area was adopted, as shown on **Plan EDP 1**, enabling the geographical scope of the assessment to be defined and provided the wider geographical context of the study. The search focussed on the local planning policy context, on identifying national and local landscape and other associated designations (e.g. AONB, historic parks and gardens) and providing a general geographical understanding of the site and its broader context (for example, in relation to landform, transport routes and the distribution and nature of settlement).
- 1.16 Following initial analysis and subsequent field work, and having an appreciation of the development proposed, a refinement of the study area has been undertaken that focuses on those areas and features that are likely to be affected by the proposals. The extent of this detailed study area is 1km from the site boundary, although occasional reference may be made to features beyond this area where appropriate. This detailed study area is illustrated on **Plan EDP 1**.

Description of the Development and Proposed Mitigation

Development Description

- 1.17 It is proposed to develop an energy storage facility comprising 56 blocks of high efficiency battery energy storage units. In addition, there would be 28 low-lying transformers and

control/switchgear equipment. The proposed site layout is shown in the Location Plan and Block Plan (**Appendix EDP 1**). Landscaping in the form of a high quality, mixed native hedgerow with tree planting would be as illustrated in **Plan EDP 3**.

1.18 Access to the site would be via the existing access track that links to the road to the east. The constructed solar farm development (see **Image EDP 1.1**) will use this track for maintenance access after construction and also the connection to the electricity network. An alternative northern route is favoured for the construction access route, which links the site to the layby, adjacent to A4129 Risborough Road. The maintenance route is still proposed to be utilised through the existing eastern route.

1.19 The aerial photograph provided as **Image EDP 1.1** below illustrates the site's character.

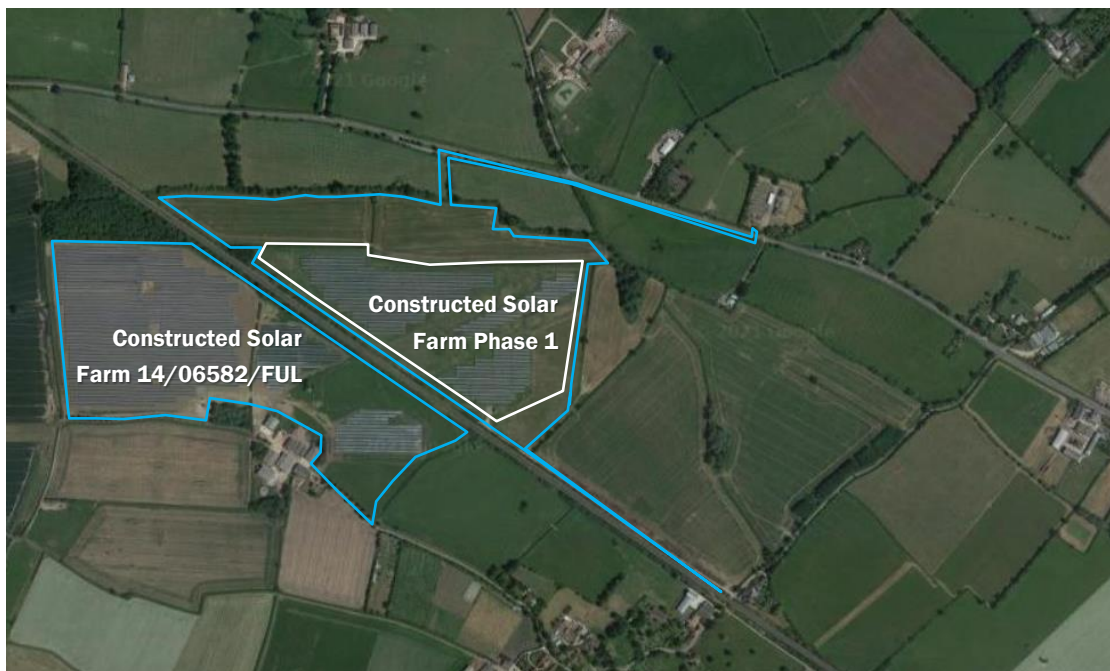


Image EDP 1.1: Site Character and Context.

1.20 It is proposed by Harmony Energy Ltd to accept a time limiting condition on any permission given for the proposal, with full reversion back to arable uses after 25 years of operation. This is the same principle as the adjacent consented solar farm, which, importantly, was deemed acceptable in landscape and visual terms.

Proposed Mitigation

1.21 The following landscape and visual mitigation measures (in reality these are largely factors of the site and the proposal, rather than measures in their own right) have been taken into account in the subsequent identification of environmental effects, where they are discussed in relation to the different receptors identified:

- The proposals are located near to an existing mature hedgerow on its eastern boundary which serves to screen views;

- The battery storage facility avoids the mature trees within the area and along hedgerow boundaries; and
- The battery storage facility is sensitively sited, and in an environment where it represents a component consistent with the immediate environment and the local landscape character presented.

1.22 In addition to the inherent mitigation identified above, a Landscape Strategy (**Plan EDP 3**) has been produced for the proposals to aid with visual screening of the proposals from close and more distant range. The Landscape Strategy ensures there is a species mix and specification that will have notable screening and filtering effects from day one of completion. The key elements of this Landscape Strategy are summarised below, whilst the planting specification itself is detailed on **Plan EDP 3**:

- High quality, double staggered, mixed native hedgerows and tree planting are proposed on the sites southern and eastern perimeters to aid in the visual enclosure of the proposed development and screen views from Footpath LCI/12/2;
- Specimen trees consisting of heights between 400-500cm are located along the northern part of the eastern site boundary to aid in breaking up views of the site transformer from the east and north-east;
- Planting areas are located at both the central parcel and south-eastern corner of the development, comprising areas of high quality, mixed native structure planting and specimen trees of c.400-500cm to aid in breaking up views of the site from the north and south; and
- The planting specified within this Landscape Strategy will assist in filtering and screening views during the early stages of completion.

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Section 2

Landscape Planning Policy and Designations

- 2.1 An appreciation of the ‘weight’ to be attributed to any landscape or visual effects arising from development starts with an understanding of the planning context within which any such development is to be tested for its acceptability. The site falls within the WDC LPA area. The site’s relevant planning context is illustrated on **Plan EDP 1** and summarised below.

Landscape Related Designations

- 2.2 The site is not located within a landscape designation, nor are there any located within the 2km broad study area. The Chilterns AONB is located c.4.4km to the east of the site.

Other Relevant Considerations

Heritage Matters

- 2.3 While these are not landscape designations, they do on occasion serve to influence the value of the landscape, which is a consideration within this report. Where this is the case, it is noted in the relevant assessment.
- 2.4 Within the broad study area there are two Conservation Areas (CAs), including Ilmer CA (c.270m to the south of the site) and Aston Sandford CA (c.1.95km to the north-west of the site).
- 2.5 One Scheduled Monument (SM) is located within the broad study area, this being the ‘Nucleated medieval settlement east of Walldridge Manor’ c.1.75km north-east of the site.
- 2.6 A small number of Listed Buildings are located within the broad study area, the majority of which are Grade II clustered around the CAs mentioned above. One Grade II* Listed Building is located within the broad study area, ‘Church of St Peter’ (c.505m south-east of the site).

Tree Preservation Orders and Ancient Woodland

- 2.7 No Ancient Woodland is located within the broad study area. There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) located on or adjacent to the site.

Public Rights of Way

- 2.8 A number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) pass in close proximity to the site and the broad study area, as illustrated on **Plan EDP 1**, whilst one footpath (LCI/12/2) runs through the site’s eastern boundary as illustrated on **Plan EDP 2**.

- 2.9 A number of Promoted Routes run through the broad study area, including Swan's Way and Midshires Way, which at their closest point fall c.495m to the south-east of the site. The Swan's Way is a long-distance bridleway and footpath running from Salcey Forest, Northamptonshire to Goring-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. Within the detailed and broad study area, it shares the same route as the Midshires Way, which again is a long-distance footpath and bridleway route running from the Chiltern Hills near Bledlow, Buckinghamshire through Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire before concluding at Stockport, Greater Manchester. Further afield within the broad study area is the Outer Aylesbury Ring, which at its closest falls c.500m north-east of the site.
- 2.10 National Cycle Route 57 is located c.1.9km south of the site. However, this route is further south of the railway adjacent to the south of the site and on lower ground with intervening mature vegetation forming field boundaries and lining the railway. It is unlikely given the scale of the proposed development that there would be any visibility from this route, therefore effects on National Cycle Routes (NCR) are scoped out of this appraisal.

National Planning Policy

- 2.11 At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a presumption in favor of sustainable development, this being the underlying theme throughout the document. For landscape, this means recognising the intrinsic beauty of the countryside (paragraph 174) and balancing any 'harm' to the landscape resource with the benefits of the scheme in other respects. This balancing exercise is to be undertaken by the decision taker (in this case the LPA) and falls outside the remit of this report. The benefits of the scheme are to be weighed against the effects on the landscape character and visual amenity as set out in this report, as detailed in the Planning Statement accompanying this application. The policy framework is supported by the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) where relevant.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.12 The relevant Development Plan Documents that form part of the Wycombe development Framework for Wycombe District are listed below:
- Wycombe District Local Plan 2019 (adopted August 2019);
 - Wycombe District Adopted Core Strategy 2006-2026; and
 - Delivery and Site Allocations Plan 2013.
- 2.13 The Wycombe District Local Plan lists the policies that are saved (2007) and those which are not replaced by the Core Strategy or the Delivery and Site Allocations Plan.

2.14 A review of the local planning policy circumstances, including relevant supplementary planning documents, evidence base documents and associated guidelines relevant to this assessment is contained below. A detailed review of planning policy is undertaken within the Planning Statement accompanying this application.

2.15 The following policies in the adopted local plan are considered relevant for this LVA.

Wycombe District Local Plan 2019

2.16 Policy CP10 – Green infrastructure and the natural environment: states that detailed proposals for the initial or subsequent development of individual sites should look to conserve and enhance the natural environment. This includes existing GI assets and the features of the landscape character.

1. DM32 – Landscape Character and Settlement Patterns: *“Development is required to protect and reinforce the positive key characteristics of the receiving landscape and existing settlement patterns; and*
2. *Development is required to evidence a thorough understanding of the landscape and demonstrate a positive response to its attributes, taking account of:*
 - a) *Existing landscape/townscape character appraisals and design guidance; and*
 - b) *The existing and historic pattern of fields, hedgerows, woodlands, trees, water bodies, the underlying topography, and other landscape features on and around the site.*
3. *Development is required to demonstrate that a mitigation hierarchy has been followed in a cumulative way, to avoid, minimise and mitigate harm; and that opportunities for enhancement have been taken.”*

2.17 DM34 – Delivering Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in Development: relates to the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure in development.

Wycombe Core Strategy 2006-2026 (Adopted July 2008)

2.18 Core Policy CS7 – Rural Settlements and the Rural Areas: states that rural settlements and rural areas of the District will be sustained by *“strictly controlling development in the open countryside”*. It also states that rural areas of the District will be sustained through supporting the rural economy by *“Facilitating and encouraging appropriate farm diversification schemes.”*

2.19 Core Policy CS17 – Environmental Assets: The Wycombe District Core Strategy contains one key policy that comprises several relevant criteria, which are listed below:

- Criteria 1: Conservation and enhancement of setting to AONB; and

- Criteria 5: Conservation and enhancement of landscape character with regard to published character assessments.

Delivery and Site Allocations Plan 2013 (Adopted July 2013)

2.20 No policies within this plan are considered relevant in terms of landscape.

Summary

2.21 The review of planning policy at a national and local level indicates that the sites location within the countryside is an important consideration in terms of its acceptability. There are also policies relating to landscape and visual impact that the proposed development will be assessed against, and which will be considered as part of this LVA.

Section 3

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Introduction

- 3.1 The appraisal of effects on landscape and visual amenity is aided through consideration of a series of viewpoints, consideration of published landscape character assessments and through field work. The viewpoints referenced have been selected to be representative of the visual sensitivities of the study area, and publicly accessible locations in the general vicinity of the viewpoint from which clear views of the development may be obtained. The viewpoint locations are illustrated on **Plan EDP 2** and detailed in **Table EDP 3.1**.

Table EDP 3.1: Selected Representative Viewpoints.

No.	Viewpoint Name and Location	Grid Reference	Distance to Site
01	Swan's Way/Midshires Way	477237, 205731	c.520m
02	Footpath LCI/12/2, east of site	476840, 206063	c.10m
03	Footpath LCI/12/2, south-east of site	476888, 205861	c.175m
04	Footpath LCI/13/1 Bumpers Farm	476442, 205802	c.320m
05	Footpath LCI/12/2, north-east of site	476926, 206304	c. 80m

- 3.2 In many areas with theoretical visibility in and around the site, views of the development would be either completely or partially screened by hedges, trees, and buildings. The viewpoints therefore represent specific locations from which the maximum effect on landscape and visual receptors can be assessed.
- 3.3 Of importance to the assessment of landscape and visual effects, in addition to the policy appraisal provided above as part of **Section 2**, are the development description and mitigation proposals set out in **Section 1**. The Landscape Strategy (**Plan EDP 3**) forms an integral part to reducing the potential of visual effects from the assessed receptors whilst also contributing to the site landscape fabric and overriding landscape character.

Effects upon the Landscape Resource

- 3.4 Effects upon the landscape resource are concerned with those effects upon landscape fabric, landscape character and landscape designations at a national, regional or local level. For the proposed development at Bumpers Farm, and in response to the small scale of the proposed development and planning policy, the following receptors have been identified as having the potential to experience effects:
- The landscape fabric, including trees, hedgerows and agricultural land in the immediate vicinity of the site; and
 - Landscape Character Area (LCA) 'Longwick Vale', as defined within 'Wycombe District Landscape Character Assessment' 2011.

Effects upon Landscape Fabric

- 3.5 The battery storage plant is sited in a wider sense within a predominantly agricultural vale landscape, defined by mainly enclosed, medium scale agricultural field parcels with occasional woodland blocks of mature mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland.
- 3.6 The proposed battery storage plant itself would be located on the eastern edge of a consented (and now under construction) solar farm (ref: 14/06582/FUL), located within the same field parcel (see **Image EDP 3.1** below).
- 3.7 The consented solar farm (20MW) comprises of ground mounted solar panels with a height of 2.1m, and 14 inverter cabin enclosures distributed within the site, which appear as steel shipping containers (**Photoviewpoint EDP 2**) of approximately 2.2m in height, control room of 2.6m, DNO substation of c.3.5m and CCTV of c.2.5m in height.
- 3.8 In terms of the heights of the proposed energy storage units are 3m in height, with the accompanying transformers of 3.7m and customer switchroom 3.6m in height CCTV columns will also be placed around the perimeter of the compounds and will be 6m in height. The max heights of the transformers located in the southern part of the site would be c.6.7m.
- 3.9 The proposed battery storage facility would accommodate 56 blocks of high-efficiency energy storage units and 28 low-lying transformers within the development footprint. The eastern and southern field boundaries are formed by tall, mature hedgerows, whilst the western site boundary abuts the edge of the solar farm.
- 3.10 The landscape value of the site landscape fabric and features is considered to be low.
- 3.11 As is described previously, the small scale of the proposed development is such that changes to the landscape as a result of the proposal would be limited to a small area located at the eastern and south-eastern extent of an existing field parcel primarily containing ground mounted solar panels and its infrastructure.
- 3.12 There will be no hedgerows or trees removed, and the proposals commit to providing a new high quality, mixed native hedgerow strategically placed within the development footprint. In addition, there will be provision of native structure planting to the south-east and central-southern parts of the development footprint alongside mature specimen trees. In the context of the wider agricultural landscape, the loss predicted, which amounts to a small corner of a mostly developed field, in combination with the provision of new planting, leads to a low magnitude of change, and a **minor/negligible beneficial** effect.

Effects upon Landscape Character

- 3.13 The area containing the site is classified as lying within LCA 'Longwick Vale', as defined in 'Wycombe District Landscape Character Assessment' 2011. This LCA exhibits the following key characteristics:

- *“Largely covered by the Gault Clay Formation, which extends into Aylesbury Vale to the North and West, with linear pockets of alluvium and river terrace deposits associated with the small network of rivers and streams;*
- *Gently undulating low lying topography. Easily viewed from adjacent landscapes, particularly from the elevated chalk escarpment to the east;*
- *Large to medium scale open and expansive arable fields, with a mosaic of smaller scale paddock and pasture fields associated with farmsteads;*
- *A low density of dispersed settlement pattern characterised by occasional scattered farmsteads and small hamlets, often situated at the end of small narrow rural lanes, or nucleated around crossroads;*
- *Parliamentary field enclosures, generating a strong geometric landscape pattern. A strongly uniform and simple landscape character;*
- *A strong network of dense hedgerows and scattered deciduous trees enclose the larger arable fields, with wooden post and wire fencing dividing up pasture and paddocks;*
- *Relatively straight rural roads and smaller winding lanes, bordered by rough grass verges and tall hedgerows. Road side ditches form a distinctive feature of these landscapes, with occasional flowing water;*
- *Two railway lines cut transversely across the area in the south, one in use and one dismantled, with occasional viaducts forming distinctive features in the landscape;*
- *A good network of public footpaths and bridleways. Long distance footpaths cross the area, including the North Buckinghamshire Way and the Midshires Way;*
- *Long views across open fields to a wooded or open skyline, with important views stretching out across into the Aylesbury Vale to the north west, and east towards the Chiltern escarpment, including important landmarks of Whiteleaf Cross and Coombe Hill Monument. In more enclosed areas, views are short and contained by high hedgerows and trees;*
- *Sense of tranquillity and calm, despite accessibility of public roads (A4129) and railway. A still and calm environment;*
- *Linear belts of poplar trees act as shelter belts and are frequently found close to farmsteads; and*
- *A dispersed medieval settlement pattern represented by moated sites and shrunken hamlets.”*

- 3.14 Although defining the character type as a whole, the descriptions provided relate well to the site's wider context at the local level, especially concerning *"In more enclosed areas, views are short and contained by high hedgerows and trees"*. In terms of the site itself, being a small section of an existing field taken up mostly by energy production in the form of ground mounted solar panels and its associated infrastructure, the site is entirely unrepresentative of the character described within the LCA, which is not unsurprising.
- 3.15 The detailed study area is evidently influenced by energy infrastructure, as pylons run in all directions, a large solar farm is located adjacent to the site and an electricity substation is located c.510m north-east of the site. Whilst the solar farm is a horizontal feature, it undeniably contains a number of vertical features, and conflicts with the agricultural character in the local area. It is clearly a solar farm, and its function is clearly that of producing electricity. In terms of baseline, therefore, the proposed development is consistent with the general character of the locality (albeit different from the agricultural character further afield). In fact, the proposed development, being energy storage, is of a nature that would be entirely consistent with the character in which it is proposed to be sited. The presence of the railway line to the south, road to the north and power lines in close proximity are all present as baseline features, and all influence in some way the perception of value of the local landscape, whether they are consistent with local character or not.
- 3.16 The actual change, to both perceptual characteristics and those physical changes described above, would only result in a very low magnitude of change to landscape character. This would render an effect of **negligible** on LCA 'Longwick Vale'.
- 3.17 It is also the case, as described within the viewpoint assessment below, that there are very few publicly accessible locations where the change in usage of this discrete area of landscape would be apparent. This confirms the limited extent of landscape change as appreciated by local people.

Effects on Visual Amenity

Results of the Viewpoint Assessment

- 3.18 As described previously, the use of representative viewpoints aids the assessment of both landscape and visual receptors. An assessment of the effects at each viewpoint has been undertaken, and the results of this assessment are provided in summary within **Table EDP 3.2**.

Table EDP 3.2: Summary of Effects at Representative Viewpoints.

No.	Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Predicted Effect
01	Swan's Way/Midshires Way	Very High (Residential Receptors) High (PRoW users) Medium (Road users)	Low (Y1) Very Low (Y15)	Moderate (Y1) Moderate/Minor (Y15) Moderate/Minor (Y1) Minor (Y15) Minor (Y1) Minor/Negligible (Y15)
02	Footpath LCI/12/2, east of site	Medium (PRoW users)	Medium (Y1) Low (Y15)	Moderate/Minor (Y1) Minor (Y15)
03	Footpath LCI/12/2, south-east of site	Medium (PRoW users)	Low (Y1) Very Low (Y15)	Minor (Y1) Minor/Negligible (Y15)
04	Footpath LCI/13/1 Bumpers Farm	High (PRoW users)	Very Low (Y1) No Change (Y15)	Minor (Y1) No Effect (Y15)
05	Footpath LCI/12/2, north-east of site	Medium (PRoW users)	Low (Y1) Very Low(Y15)	Minor (Y1) Minor/Negligible (Y15)

3.19 Visual effects relate to changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes, and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity. Effects upon these receptors are derived through the changes to the views experienced, and through this the change to the overall visual amenity of the study area as brought about by the proposed proposals. Assuming a study area of 2km, and with reference to **Plan EDP 1**, the following receptors are considered within the assessment:

- Users of bridleways and footpaths within the immediate vicinity of the site;
- Users of the local road network; and
- Private residences at Five Bars, The Rosary, The Sidings and Bridge House located along Ilmer Road.

General Visibility

3.20 The development represents a small-scale energy infrastructure development, incorporating features that would only ever be visible within a very discrete geographical area, even where extensive outward or inward visibility is available. Due to the small scale and height of the proposals in the context of the wider landscape, and the abundance of landscape features such as hedgerows and trees that screen or fragment views, it is concluded that visibility would be limited as illustrated by the Zone of Primary Visibility and Secondary Visibility on **Plan EDP 2**.

Discussion on Visual Effects

- 3.21 Based upon the description and assessment of the list of Photoviewpoints provided in **Table EDP 3.2**, this section provides a review of the potential visual effects that are considered to arise from the proposals. In essence, there would be limited visibility of the proposals from the vast majority of publicly accessible roads and rights of way within the study area. Due to the flat topography of the Longwick Vale, only occasional glimpsed or fragmented views of small sections of the site would be available within the detailed study area.
- 3.22 In the study area, many of the nearest PRoW align with hedgerows and thus screening will be available in many situations. Furthermore, many of the local PRoW are located adjacent to the existing phases of the adjacent solar farm, which would itself screen many views of the proposed development (where open views remain). In addition, the Landscape Strategy proposed (**Plan EDP 3**) as part of the development mitigation will provide robust filtering and screening of the development during the early stages of completion.
- 3.23 The greatest potential for effects arises along public footpath LCI/12/2, which runs from the north and directly adjacent to the site's eastern boundary before travelling south-eastwards and crossing the railway line as illustrated on **Plan EDP 2**. Views from this route are represented by **Photoviewpoints EDP 2** (just east of the proposals), **3** (south-east of the site) and **5** (to the north-east of the site). As **Photoviewpoint EDP 2** illustrates, there are primarily open, close-range views over the site and the adjacent solar farm. The southern and eastern field boundaries consist of mature vegetation, which serve to screen and filter views from further south-east along this route (**Photoviewpoint EDP 3**) and Ilmer to the south. **Photoviewpoint EDP 5** illustrates semi-screened, close-range views of the site, with existing vegetation hiding the western parts of the proposed development. The eastern side will be partially exposed to this viewpoint, though overhead cables already detract from the spot's tranquillity and character. These routes, due to the existing solar farm in the view, are considered at this point to have a reduced susceptibility to change to the type of development proposed, and thus a medium sensitivity (reduced from the normal level of high for PRoW users).
- 3.24 Whilst planting heights of the landscape strategy are to be substantial in year 1, (details specified in **Plan EDP 3**), the newly planted mixed native hedgerows, native structure planting and specimen trees, will appear stark in the early stages of development, but will still provide screening and filtering of the proposed development. After year 15, once the mitigation planting has time to establish itself and become more mature, it is expected that the battery storage plant will be mostly screened from much of this route, but perhaps not so at very close range as the PRoW passes adjacent to the site. Such usage of the land would also be consistent in character with existing viewing experiences, with ground mounted solar panels and inverter enclosures located just west (and north) of the site boundary within the same field parcel.
- 3.25 In addition, due to the low-lying nature of the battery storage facilities, the proposed development will benefit from the mitigation planting, particularly along the south-eastern boundary, with the introduction of a mixed-native hedgerow introduced in between the

PRoW and the site. Therefore, the magnitude of change is expected to be medium for the revised proposals (**Photoviewpoint EDP 2**) at year 1 leading to an effect of **moderate/minor**. The change will reduce to low once the mitigation planting has had sufficient time to mature, resulting in visual effects after year 15 of **minor**. These effects will be extremely localised and as indicated by **Photoviewpoint EDP 3**, (taken from the same route) located to the south-east of the site, by where the change at year 1 is expected to be very low, leading to a **minor** effect, which is expected to reduce to **minor/negligible**, following further maturation of the eastern site boundary and mitigation planting.

- 3.26 With regard to the 132/33kV Transformer located to the south of the development, which comprises the tallest elements of the proposals, this is 6.9m high (a scaffold of 8.6m is needed at construction which is temporary) and is not a solid block structure up to this height, such as a building might be. Instead, the majority is fragmented and would blend in with existing and proposed vegetation from distance. These features, given their lack of 'solidity', are not expected to be obtrusive or visually prominent, and would not be too dissimilar from existing overhead power lines in appearance (and would be much lower). As stated above and within **Appendix EDP 3** by the landscape officer, *"The power lines, a common and accepted feature of many rural landscapes, are not obtrusive"*. Furthermore, the railway embankment to the south along with the vegetation that aligns it will break up more distant views towards the Transformer from the PRoW network to the south, even during the early stages of completion.
- 3.27 **Photoviewpoint EDP 1** represents views from where public footpath LCI/34/1 meets Ilmer Road and Swan's Way and Midshires Way promoted routes east of the site. This mid-range view provides filtered views towards the site provided by the field boundary just east of the site boundary. As the majority of the revised proposals are low-lying, most of the proposed development would visually sit behind and beneath the hedgerow line just east of the site boundary. With the proposed mitigation planting in place at year 15, it is expected that there will be a very low magnitude of change, which in combination with a high sensitivity for PRoW users, leads to an overall effect of **minor**. This is reduced from an effect of **moderate/minor** at year 1, where the magnitude of change would be low. For minor road users with a medium sensitivity, these effects are considered to be **minor** at year 1 and **minor/negligible** at year 15 respectively.
- 3.28 To the south, **Photoviewpoint EDP 4** provides views from footpath LCI/13/1 just east of Bumpers Farm complex and has filtered and mostly screened views towards the site. As can be seen, the site is well screened and filtered, as is the wider, adjacent Solar Farm by existing vegetation on the southern site boundary. The scheme may be more visible during winter months. However, given that the majority of the proposals are so low-lying they would be screened (with the exception of the fragmented Transformer elements that will be filtered by tree canopies), and that views already contain existing ground mounted solar panels with inverters, the change is expected to be very low. When combining a very low magnitude of change and a high sensitivity for this footpath at year 1, the overall effect is considered to be **minor**. With further maturation of vegetation in the landscape expected to screen the battery storage facility entirely, the effect is expected to reduce to **no effect** by year 15.

- 3.29 **Photoviewpoint 5** demonstrates views from the public footpath to the north-east of the site, along footpath LCI/12/2 and looks south-west, towards the development. The view itself is heavily influenced by existing overhead cables. The mature hedgerow running east west, within a close proximity to this viewpoint intercepts views from the north towards the existing development. This is also likely to be the case with the battery storage facility. Only a small glimpse of development will be seen from **Photoviewpoint 5**, likely to be the features to the east of the development, beyond the north-south existing hedgerow alignment. The development in this case will be low-lying and will not be prominent in the view. A native hedgerow has been proposed along the eastern boundary of the proposed development, which will also partially screen the views in from Photoviewpoint 5. With the proposed mitigation planting in place at year 15, it is expected that there will be a very low magnitude of change, which in combination with a Medium sensitivity these PRow users, leads to an overall effect of **minor/negligible**. This is reduced from an effect of **minor** at year 1, where the magnitude of change would be low.
- 3.30 As the viewpoint assessment illustrates, effects on visual amenity from surrounding rights of way and roads, including those in close proximity, would be minimal, with the vast majority of routes containing views that are filtered or screened by intervening landscape features, primarily hedgerows. In winter, there may be a slight increase in infrastructure within some views experienced from PRow. However, these would remain fragmented by hedgerows forming intervening field boundaries. Given the type of change (i.e. one that is largely consistent with local character), the limited extent of visual change, and the spread of visual effects, changes to surrounding PRow would not be unacceptable for the development proposed.
- 3.31 As detailed above, it is only residential receptors at Ilmer Road to the south-east, and only those north of the railway bridge that might experience effects. These are considered below.
- 3.32 Group A - Five Bars, The Rosary, The Sidings and Bridge House located along Ilmer Road: This group of dwellings all are orientated to the north-west in the direction of the site. Ground level views are restricted by front garden curtilage and the mature hedgerow lining part of Ilmer Road for most of these properties, whilst Five Bars (the northernmost dwelling) has more open views across the field between these properties and the site boundary.
- 3.33 The field boundary just east of the site comprises a tall mature hedgerow, which serves to screen most of the site. With regard to upper storey views from these dwellings, glimpses and filtered views towards the site would be possible, but these are already largely characterised by the adjacent solar farm, of which the proposed battery storage facility would not appear too dissimilar to the existing inverter stations, thus reducing the susceptibility of these residential receptors marginally. It is likely that some change could be experienced from this location, however, due to intervening vegetation along Ilmer Road, front garden curtilages and the field boundary just east of the site, any change would be expected to be low, leading to a **moderate** effect. This would reduce to **moderate/minor** following further maturation of intervening vegetation and the Landscape Strategy (**Plan EDP 3**).

- 3.34 On the basis of the above assessment, impacts on private residences will be *de minimis* for the proposed development, and not a reason for planning permission to be refused.

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Section 4

Discussion and Opinion

The Development Proposed

- 4.1 This report has reviewed the findings of a LVA of a battery storage facility at Land at Bumpers Farm, Ilmer. This report has assessed the likely landscape and visual effects arising from the revised development, and also the implications in a landscape sense upon the openness of the countryside, key conclusions of which can be considered in three general respects, each of which is discussed in turn below:
- In terms of compliance with relevant policy;
 - In terms of the potential effects on the character of the landscape; and
 - Effects on visual amenity, including views from local roads, footpaths and surrounding dwellings.

Compliance with Policy

- 4.2 With regard to the Wycombe District Local Plan, and in particular Policy CP10, the site takes account of and retains existing hedgerows and trees across the site whilst also incorporating new planting around the perimeter of the development footprint, thus conforming to the criteria set out in the above policy, to look to conserve and enhance the natural environment. This provision of substantial new mixed native hedgerow, structure planting and trees similarly contributes to the enhancement of the site's existing Green Infrastructure, and therefore contributing to the site's landscape character as well as its biodiversity.
- 4.3 In relation to Saved Policy C10 'Development in the Countryside' and Core Policy CS7 'Rural Settlements and the Rural Areas', these are not specifically landscape policies but are landscape related, dealing more with whether the development would be appropriate use of land in the 'countryside' areas. This is a planning balance issue and will be discussed within the PDAS by PWA Planning.
- 4.4 With regards to the relevant criteria detailed in Policy CS17, the site does not result in any material effects on landscape and visual amenity within the 1km detailed study and thus is considered not to affect in anyway the setting of the Chilterns AONB (Criteria 1) some 4.4km to the east. Considering Criteria 5, the site does not exhibit a material change to landscape character area, 'Longwick Vale' identified in the Wycombe District Landscape Character Assessment. Criteria 5 broadly aligns with the aims of Policy DM32 'Landscape Character and Settlement Patterns' from the emerging Wycombe District Local Plan and thus the proposals are considered to not conflict with this policy, nor DM34 - Delivering

Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in Development: relates to the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure in development.

Landscape Character

- 4.5 As a result of the construction of the battery storage facility, there would be no loss of hedgerows or trees, and only a very minor loss of agricultural land. In consideration of the mitigation proposed as part of the development, and the use proposed, changes to landscape fabric, and resultant changes to the underlying landscape character area, would be minimal and result in negligible landscape effects upon the 'Longwick Vale', and a negligible beneficial effect upon landscape fabric and features.
- 4.6 For these reasons, the characteristics of the site and of the wider landscape do not present an inherent conflict, nor should they prevent the site from coming forward as land for the development of a battery storage facility. The landscape character is such that the development would respect the local character (and only differ very slightly from the existing), and if undertaken sensitively, protect the most valuable landscape elements within and surrounding the site whilst mitigating any loss accordingly. There would also be a net increase in the number of trees and hedgerows in the immediate locality.

Visual Amenity

- 4.7 The limited size of the elements of the revised proposed development, the mature landscape context within which it is located, the combination of subtle local topography, and the interrelationship of all these facets, ensures that in no instance would there be any visual effects greater than moderate/minor in magnitude in the longer term. In consideration of the use proposed, such effects would be largely neutral in nature, confirming that the development would represent an acceptable addition to the local landscape, and would not detract from local visual amenity.
- 4.8 The interests of surrounding residential receptors have also been assessed, and although there are instances where intervisibility with the proposed development may be intermittently apparent, the receptors in question are already located in what is a landscape context, where such change would not be out of character nor represent a prominent force for change. As a result, there are not considered to be any material adverse effects upon the visual amenity of residential receptors, and certainly not any that could be considered to result in an effect upon a community.

Overall Summary

- 4.9 This report has undertaken a review of the circumstances of the revised proposed Battery Storage Facility at Land at Bumpers Farm, Ilmer, in order that an assessment can be made on the potential effects on the underlying landscape and visual resource. A review of national and local policy, landscape character and visual amenity has been undertaken,

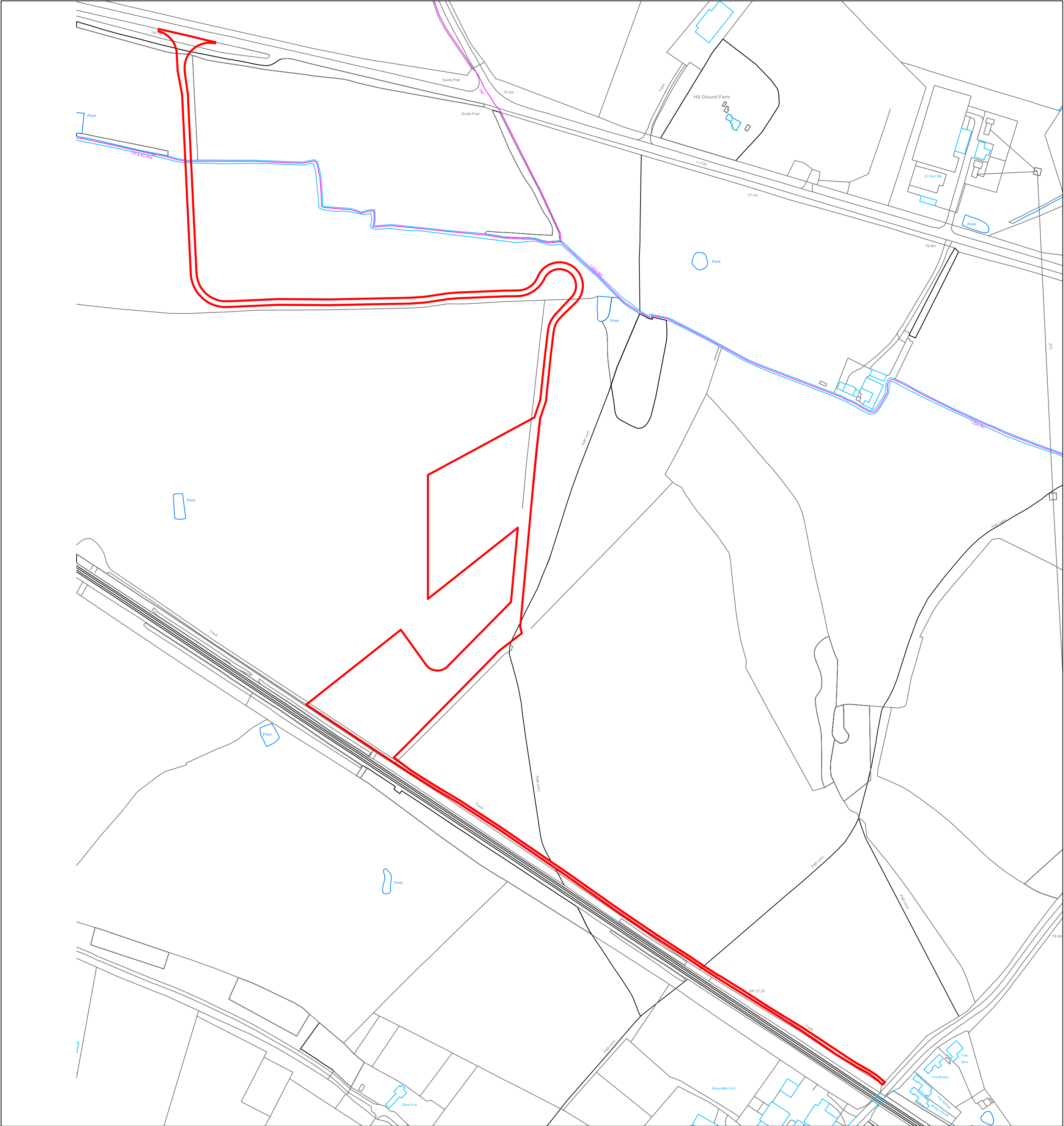
and the findings confirm that the site relates very well in both landscape and visual terms to the existing landscape, and that the site represents a logical and easily assimilated development into this part of the countryside.

- 4.10 There are no anticipated material adverse effects upon landscape designations or the underlying landscape character, nor any material visual effects upon PRow, minor roads or residential receptors. There may be some very limited intervisibility experienced by some limited receptor groups, but the existing nature of the landscape, and the use proposed, would serve to moderate any effect accordingly.
- 4.11 As with the previously consented scheme in this location., the loss of a small area of agricultural land to facilitate the battery storage facility would create a negligible and localised effect. When this effect is considered with the immediate and local context, it would not constitute an unacceptable impact on landscape fabric or character.
- 4.12 For the reasons outlined within the report, the revised battery storage plant represents a small-scale and visually discrete feature, which is entirely in keeping with the landscape character and would not therefore result in any long-term material landscape or visual effects or policy contraventions.

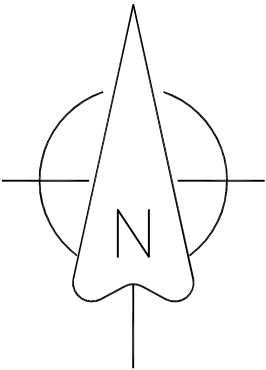
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Appendix EDP 1
Location Plan (Bumpers, Rev A) and Block Plan (Bumpers, Rev J)

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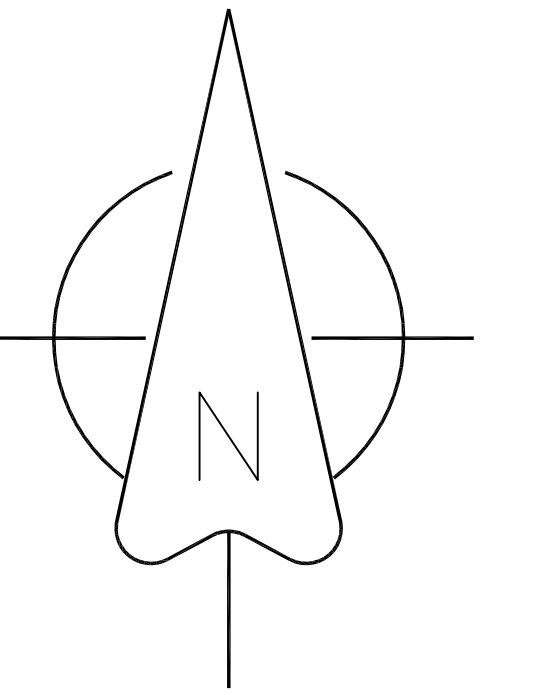
[BUMPERS]






RED LINE

SCALE— A2@1:2500
RevA

[BUMPERS]



KEY

- | | |
|---|---|
|  | Temporary Construction Access |
|  | New Access for Construction & Maintenance |
|  | Existing Maintenance Access |

BLOCK PLAN

SCALE— A0@1:1250

RevJ

Appendix EDP 2

LVA Methodology

Recording the Baseline

Landscape Resource

- A2.1 A description of the baseline character and condition of the different landscape receptors (topography and hydrology; landscape fabric and habitats; cultural and historic landscape; perceptual and sensory) with comparison against adopted character assessment, other published characterisations or, in the absence of these, EDP's own landscape characterisation. Considerations on the value of the landscape are drawn from Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) v3 Box 5.1.

Visual Amenity

- A2.2 Visual receptors are identified through theoretical visibility testing, followed by site-based recording of actual views and visual amenity. Visual amenity is described from specific locations that may also be represented by photoviewpoints. Visual amenity may also be described for part or all of a route with reference made to viewpoints that do not have views.

The Proposed Development

- A2.3 Description of the proposed development including – but not limited to – its scale, siting, layout and characteristics. This description also includes landscape mitigation measures, derived from published landscape character guidelines and, if available, as an illustrated plan.

Mitigation

- A2.4 Mitigation measures will be described, where relevant, to demonstrate how adverse effects can be prevented/avoided, offset or remedied. These may be primary, i.e. embedded into the design, part of construction and/or long term operational management practices, and/or secondary measures.

EDP Assessment of Effects

Landscape

- A2.5 Description of the interactions likely to be experienced by the individual dimensions of landscape character and how this affects overall landscape character.

Visual

- A2.6 Description of the interactions likely to be experienced by visual receptors at a specific point and/or in the broader context or along a route.

Definition of Effects	
Substantial:	Changes resulting in a complete variance with the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Major:	Changes resulting in a fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Moderate:	A material but non-fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Minor:	A slight but non-material change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Negligible:	A detectable but non-material change to the landscape resource of visual amenity.
None:	No detectable change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
Consequence:	Effects can be positive, adverse or neutral i.e., if no change arises
Duration:	Long term (20+ years); Medium-long term (10-20 years); Medium term (5-10 years); Short term (1 – 5 years); Temporary (>12 months); Construction.

EDP Assessment Terminology and Definitions	
Landscape Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
Very High	Value: Nationally/Internationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features; strong/distinctive landscape characteristics; absence of landscape detractors.
	Susceptibility: Strong/distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; absence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in excellent condition. Landscapes with clear and widely recognised cultural value. Landscapes with a high level of tranquillity.
High	Value: Locally designated/valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas) and landscape features; many distinctive landscape characteristics; very few landscape detractors.
	Susceptibility: Many distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; very few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in good condition. The landscape has a low capacity for change as a result of potential changes to defining character.
Medium	Value: Undesignated countryside and landscape features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors.
	Susceptibility: Some distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in fair condition. Landscape is able to accommodate some change as a result.

EDP Assessment Terminology and Definitions	
Landscape Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
Low	Value: Undesignated countryside and landscape features; few distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors.
	Susceptibility: Few distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in poor condition. Landscape is able to accommodate large amounts of change without changing these characteristics fundamentally.
Very Low	Value: Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; despoiled/degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors.
	Susceptibility: Absence of distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of many landscape detractors; landscape receptors in very poor condition. As such landscape is able to accommodate considerable change.

Visual Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
Very High	Value/Susceptibility: view is designed/has intentional association with surroundings; is recorded in published material; from a publicly accessible heritage asset/designated/promoted viewpoint; national/internationally designated right of way; protected/recognised in planning policy designation.
	Examples: may include views from residential properties, National Trails; promoted holiday road routes; designated countryside/landscape features with public access; visitors to heritage assets of national importance; Open Access Land.
High	Value/Susceptibility: view of clear value but may not be formally recognised e.g. framed view of scenic value or destination/summit views; inferred that it may have value for local residents; locally promoted route or PROW
	Examples: may include from recreational locations where there is some appreciation of the visual context/landscape e.g. golf, fishing; themed rights of way with a local association; National Trust land; panoramic viewpoints marked on OS maps; road routes promoted in tourist guides and/or for their scenic value.
Medium	Value/Susceptibility: view is not widely promoted or recorded in published sources; may be typical of those experienced by an identified receptor; minor road routes through rural/scenic areas.
	Examples: may include people engaged in outdoor sport not especially influenced by an appreciation of the wider landscape e.g. pitch sports; views from minor road routes passing through rural or scenic areas.
Low	Value/Susceptibility: view of clearly lesser value than similar views from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible.
	Examples: may include major road routes; rail routes; receptor is at a place of work but visual surroundings have limited relevance.
Very Low	Value/Susceptibility: View may be affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.
	Examples: may include people at their place of work, indoor recreational or leisure facilities or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little of no importance.

Magnitude of Change	
(Considers Scale of Proposal/Geographical Extent/Duration and Reversibility/Proportion)	
Very High	Landscape: total loss/major alteration to key receptors/characteristics of the baseline; addition of elements that strongly conflict or integrate with the baseline.
	Visual: substantial change to the baseline, forming a new, defining focus and having a defining influence on the view.
High	Landscape: notable loss/alteration/addition to one or more key receptors/characteristics of the baseline; or, addition of prominent conflicting elements.
	Visual: additions are clearly noticeable, and part of the view would be fundamentally altered.
Medium	Landscape: partial loss/alteration to one or more key receptors/characteristics; Addition of elements that are evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.
	Visual: the proposed development will form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor.
Low	Landscape: minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape receptors/characteristics; Additional elements may not be uncharacteristic within existing landscape.
	Visual: proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.
Very Low	Landscape: barely discernible loss or alteration to key components; addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.
	Visual: proposed development will form a barely noticeable component of the view, and the view whilst slightly altered would be similar to the baseline.
Imperceptible	<i>In some circumstances, changes at representative viewpoints or receptors will be lower than 'Very Low' and changes will be described as 'Imperceptible'. This will lead to negligible effects.</i>

Effects Matrix

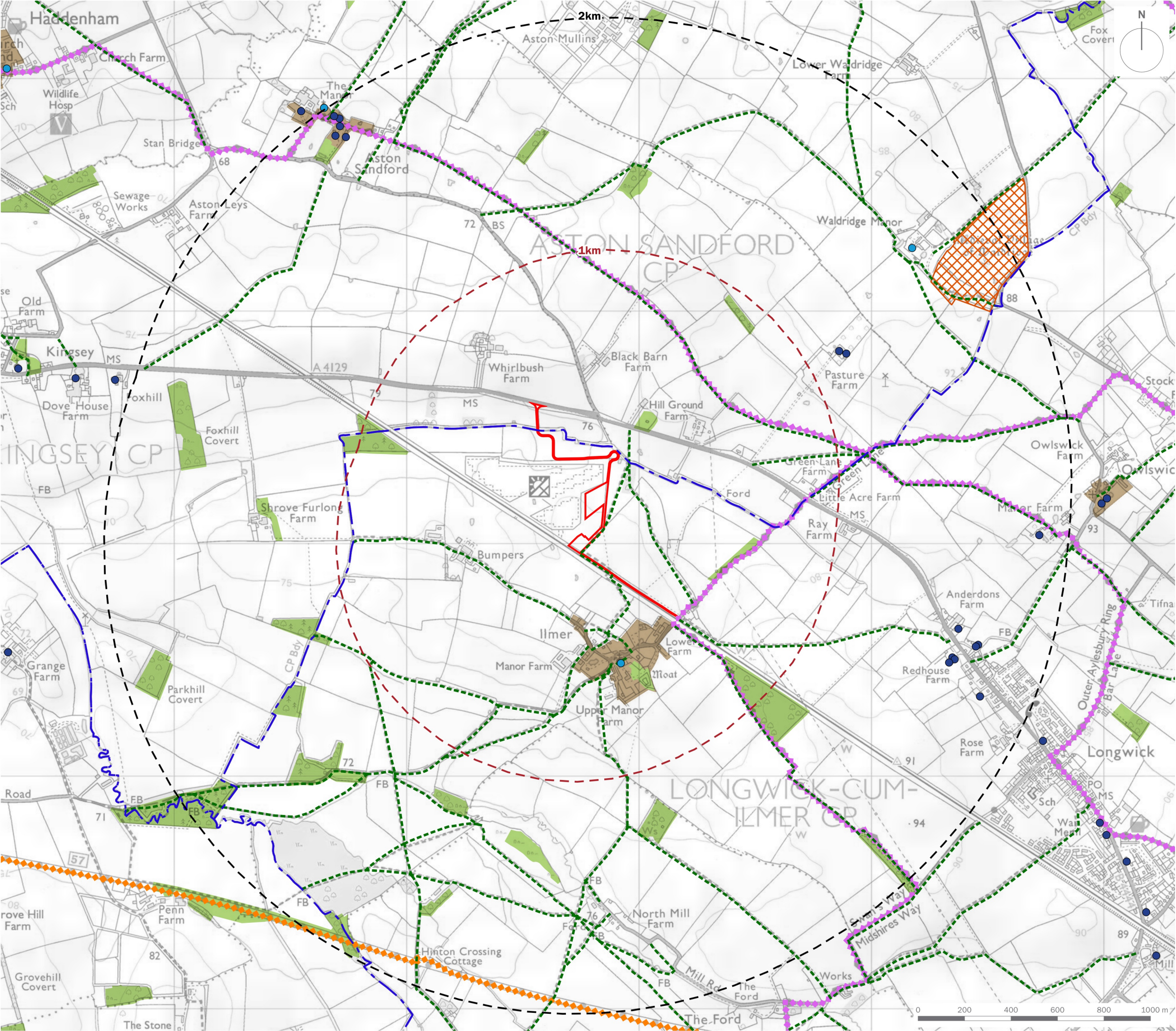
- A2.7 Based on the judgements above and the description of mitigation, the level of effect is assessed in the first year after completion of the development (year 1). This is 'the worst case' and, if necessary at 15+ years when landscape proposals function more effectively. Effects of moderate or higher may be a material consideration.

Overall Sensitivity	Overall Magnitude of Change				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Very High	Substantial	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
High	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
Medium	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible	Negligible
Very Low	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible	Negligible	Negligible/ None

Plans

- Plan EDP 1** Landscape Designations and Other Considerations
(edp6085_d001b 13 October 2021 JTF/JH)
- Plan EDP 2** Findings of Visual Appraisal
(edp6085_d002b 17 August 2021 JF/JH)
- Plan EDP 3** Landscape Strategy
(edp6085_d004c 19 October 2021 JH/OK)

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- Site Boundary
- Range Rings (at 1km intervals)
- 1km Detailed Study Area
- Local Authority District Boundary
- Public Right of Way
- Promoted Route
- National Cycle Route
- National Forest Inventory
- Other Considerations
 - Scheduled Monument
 - Conservation Area
 - Grade I Listed Building
 - Grade II* Listed Building
 - Grade II Listed Building

client	Harmony Energy Ltd		
project title	Bumpers Lane Battery Storage, Phase II		
drawing title	Plan EDP 1: Landscape Designations and other Considerations		
date	13 OCTOBER 2021	drawn by	JTF
drawing number	edp6085_d001b	checked	JH
scale	1:16,000 @ A3	QA	RB



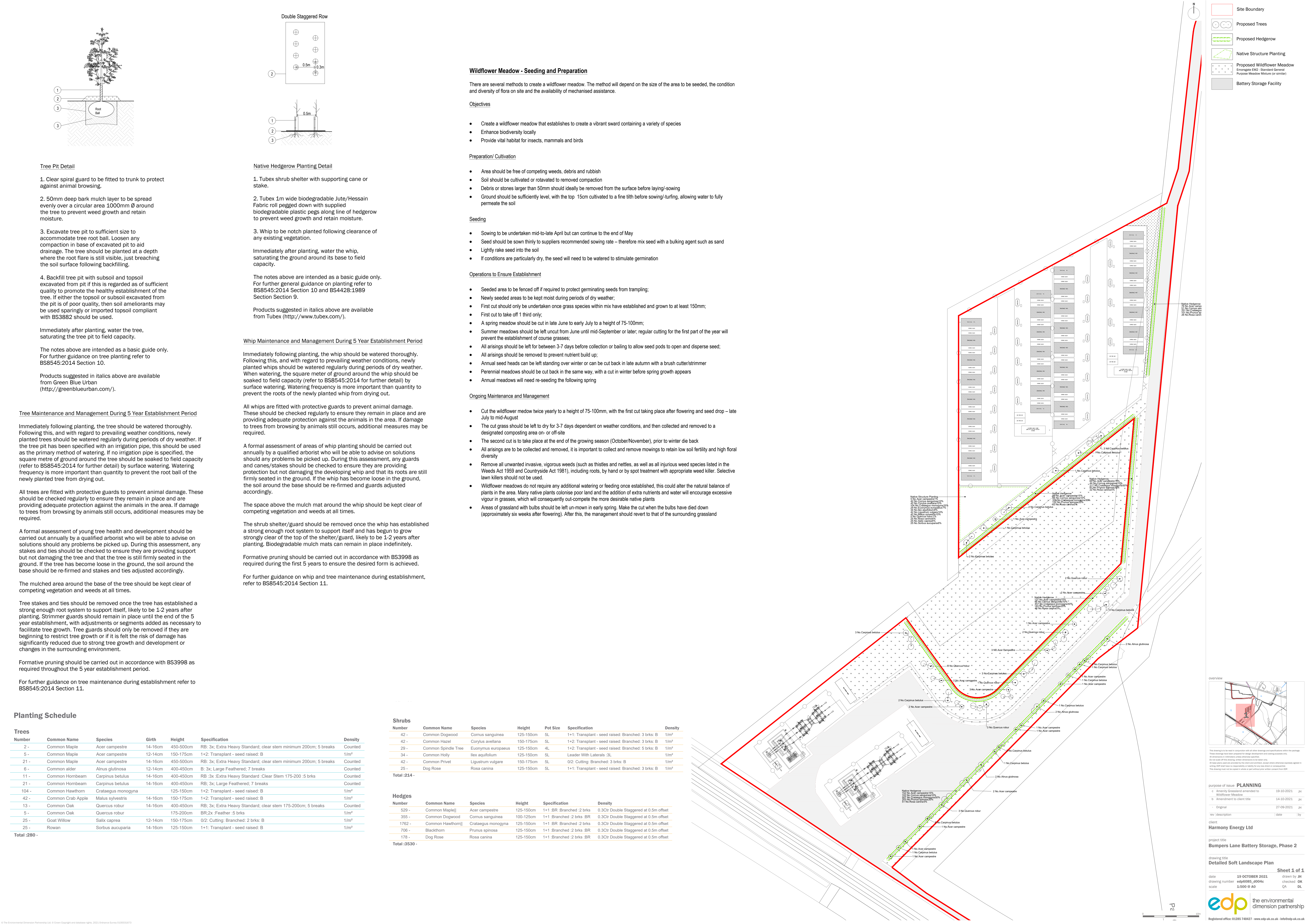
- client
Harmony Energy Ltd

project title
Bumpers Lane Battery Storage, Phase II

drawing title
Plan EDP 2: Findings of Visual Appraisal

date	17 AUGUST 2021	drawn by	JTF
drawing number	edp6085_d002b	checked	JH
scale	1:9,000 @ A3	QA	RB





Photoviewpoints

(edp6085_d003b 13 October 2021 JTF/JH)

Photoviewpoint EDP 1	Swan's Way/Midshires Way
Photoviewpoint EDP 2	Footpath LCI/12/2, east of site
Photoviewpoint EDP 3	Footpath LCI/12/2, south-east of site
Photoviewpoint EDP 4	Footpath LCI/13/1, Bumpers Farm
Photoviewpoint EDP 5	Footpath LCI/12/2, north of site

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To be viewed at comfortable arm's length



To be viewed at comfortable arm's length



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dimension partnership

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Grid Coordinates: 476896, 206387
Date and Time: 29/07/2021 @ 10:16
Projection: Cylindrical
Visualisation Type: 1

Horizontal Field of View: 90°
Height of Camera: 1.6m
Make, Model, Sensor: Canon 5D Mk1, FFS
Enlargement Factor: 96% @ A1 width

Direction of View: 240°
Distance: 80m
aOD: 78m
Focal Length: 50mm

date
drawing number
drawn by
checked
QA
13 OCTOBER 2021
edp6085_d003c
JTF
JH
RB

client
project title
drawing title
Harmony Energy Ltd
Bumpers Lane Battery Storage, Phase II
Photoviewpoint EDP 5



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