

PLANNING STATEMENT

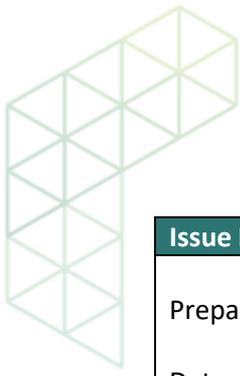
MEERDYKE SOLAR FARM & BATTERY STORAGE DEVELOPMENT

Land at Blunts Drove, Walton Highway,
Norfolk

DOWNING RENEWABLE DEVELOPMENTS
LLP

October 2022



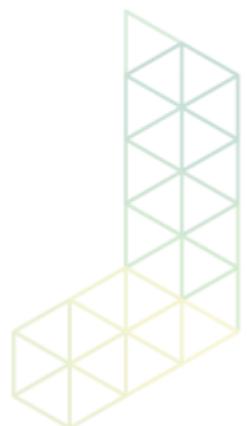


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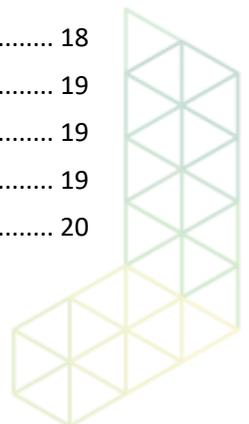
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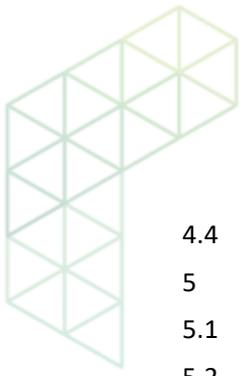




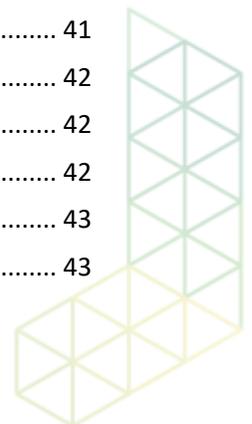
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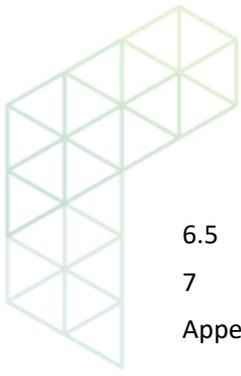
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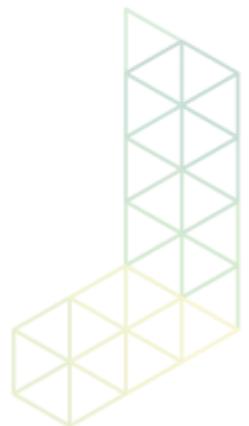


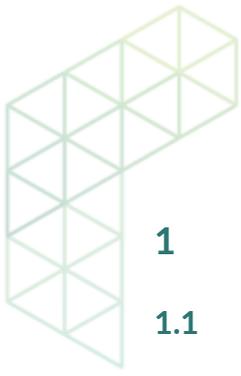
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This Planning Statement ('the Statement') has been prepared to accompany a planning application submitted to the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk ('the Council') by Downing Renewable Developments LLP ('the Applicant') for *the installation, operation and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) farm with associated infrastructure, including battery storage for a period of 30 years* ('the Development'), on land at Blunts Drove, Walton Highway, Norfolk ('the Site').

Figure 1.1 demonstrates the context of the Site in relation to the wider surrounds.

1.2 The Applicant

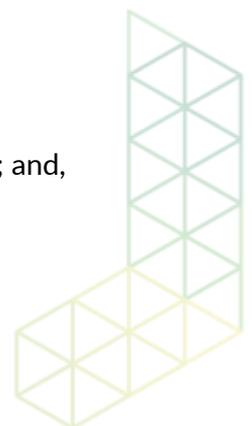
Downing LLP was formed in 1986; not only are we an experienced investment company but also a renewable energy developer and operator that generate 259,000 Megawatts per hour (MWh) of renewable energy each year with an installed capacity of over 400MW. Over the last decade, we have invested in more than 140 projects encompassing UK energy infrastructure and similar renewable ventures overseas. In line with the changing emphasis of the Government's Climate Change Act 2008, and to help with the immediate Emergency Climate Change required, one of Downing LLP's core objectives is to identify and develop solar and energy storage. Downing LLP are leading the way into tackling the Emergency Climate Change globally in order to reduce and hit UK's net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Downing Renewable Developments LLP is part of the Downing LLP group who solely develop and construct new renewable energy projects in the UK and overseas.

This Statement is authored in partnership with JLL. JLL has consented in excess of 3.5GW's of installed renewable energy capacity across the UK over the last 10 years, sufficient to power more than 1 million homes. They are currently advising on a further 600 MW's and are a specialist provider of energy planning services, helping developers and landowners identify opportunities and secure consent for clean and renewable energy developments.

1.3 Overview of Planning Submission

Given the generating capacity of the Development falls below 50MW, the application is governed by the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The planning application is supported by a number of technical reports which have informed the site selection and design process. These comprise:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (June 2022), including Biodiversity Metrics Assessment and Protected Species Survey (Ramboll, October 2022);
- Breeding Bird Survey Report (RSK, August 2022);
- Heritage Impact Statement (AOC Archaeological Group, September 2022);
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (Ramboll, September 2022);
- Transport Statement (Systra, October 2022);
- Agricultural Land Classification Report (Askew Land and Soil, September 2022); and,
- Glint and Glare Assessment (Forge Solar, September 2022).





The Development also falls under Schedule 21 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations') and as such was screened for EIA on 28th April 2022. A subsequent Screening Opinion was received on 26th May 2022 confirming an Environmental Statement (ES) would be required in relation to the proposed development.

An EIA Scoping Report was subsequently submitted to the Council in July 2022 providing detailed consideration of the potential impacts of the Development on the environment. With due consideration of assessments already undertaken and the Council's Screening Opinion, the Scoping Report concluded that a proportionate and focussed EIA should be carried out, concentrating on environmental effects relating to Landscape, Visual, Traffic and Transport and the associated cumulative effects of these. The Council subsequently responded with a Scoping Opinion on 3rd October 2022 and the advice received has been taken into account in the planning submission.

In light of the above, the planning application is also supported by an ES which comprises the following:

- Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary (NTS);
- Volume 2: Main Report;
 1. Introduction.
 2. Development Description.
 3. Alternatives and Design Evolution.
 4. Planning Policy.
 5. Landscape and Visual.
 6. Traffic and Transport.
- Volume 3: Figures.

Volume 2, Chapter 1 of the ES considers the advice provided in the Council's Scoping Response and provides clarity as to where specific issues are addressed in the submission.

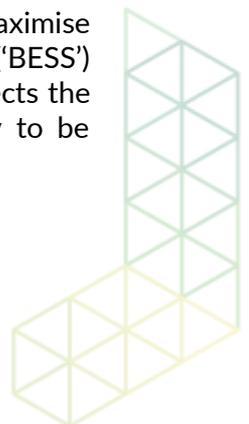
The conclusions of the ES and associated technical reports discussed above are referenced throughout this Statement with respect to consideration of the Development against key planning policy objectives.

1.4 Site Selection and Feasibility

The purpose of the Development is to harness the maximum solar power possible to generate electricity without comprising the environment or surrounding amenity.

Downing Renewable Developments LLP has a portfolio of renewable energy generation developments throughout the UK and has been reviewing the suitability of existing assets as well obtaining new assets to accommodate further energy developments to maximise renewable energy potential. Co-locating solar and battery energy storage systems ('BESS') within existing assets is a direction that Downing Renewable Developments LLP expects the electricity industry to move towards given the limited environmental effects likely to be created.

1 (3a industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water (unless included in Schedule 1).





Not every asset will be suitable for accommodating solar and BESS, and therefore Downing Renewable Developments LLP has been through a thorough feasibility exercise to assess whether the site is suitable for collation. The potential for installing a solar development at the Site has been assessed through feasibility work, which assessed technical and environmental issues to derive the most appropriate scale, location and infrastructure layout.

Key factors for developing solar and battery at the Site include:

- Solar irradiation levels;
- Proximity to an available grid connection;
- Separation from sensitive receptors such as residential dwellings;
- Topography;
- Field size / shading;
- Access to the site for construction;
- Agricultural land classification;
- Landscape designations;
- Nature conservation designations; and,
- Flood risk and drainage.

Following consideration of the above factors and the existing infrastructure within the wider area, the Site was identified as having very good potential for development. The site selection process and subsequent design approach is discussed further in Chapter 3 of the ES, 'Design Evolution'.

1.5 Benefits of the Development

1.5.1 Benefits of Solar Energy

One of the most sustainable forms of energy production worldwide is the production of solar energy through the use of solar PV arrays. Solar energy generation does not require fossil fuel use during generation and although there is variability in the amount and timing of sunlight over the day, season and year, a properly sized and configured system can be designed to be highly reliable. In the case of this Development, the proposed 49.9MW Megawatt (MW) array would provide enough renewable to power approximately 12,000-14,000 average UK households.

Solar power production also generates electricity with a limited impact on the environment as compared to other forms of renewable electricity production, as there is no need for extensive ground disturbing foundations, there are no tall vertical structures or moving parts involved and there is no noise associated with solar PV arrays during operation.

1.5.2 Benefits of Battery Storage Development

Renewable technologies are intermittent as the amount of energy generated is dependent on weather conditions. It is therefore necessary to balance demand and supply in order to prevent shortages and blackouts.

As such, there is a growing demand by network operators for a broad range of services such as battery energy storage systems (BESS) and management. The Development is designed to





support the flexible operation of the National Grid and decarbonisation of electricity supply by including battery provision.

1.5.3 Benefits of the Development

In summary, the Development offers the following principal benefits:

- Significant contribution to clean energy and climate change targets by maximising the power output from the land resource available;
- Flexible management of output to the grid through provision of non-intrusive battery storage;
- Positive impact on the local economy with a commitment by the Applicant to utilise the local workforce to develop, construct and operate the project during its lifespan;
- A one-off Community Benefit cost, approved and distributed via the Local Parish Council;
- Approximately 54 hectares of the Site will be dedicated to biodiversity enhancement measures, plus the retention of 0.9Ha of retained bramble scrub.

1.6 Overview of Pre-Application Engagement

Downing Renewable Developments LLP has sought to front-load the design process at the Site by engaging with the Council, key stakeholders and the wider community. The feedback received across this consultation has informed design development. An overview of the pre-application consultation is summarised below and discussed further in Chapter 4:

- Pre-Application Inquiry with the Council (12th January 2022);
- EIA Screening Response (26th May 2022) and Scoping Response (3rd October 2022);
- Parish Council Meeting (25th May 2022); and,
- Community Exhibition (22nd August 2022).

1.7 Purpose and Structure of the Planning Statement

The Development will be submitted for consent through a planning application, under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Section 70 (2) states in relation to the consideration of a planning application that, *“in dealing with such an application the authority shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.”*

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides an amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that: *“If regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”*

The statutory Development Plan relevant to the Development comprises the King’s Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Local Plan. This plan includes two policy frameworks:

- The Core Strategy (July 2011); and,
- The Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (September 2016).



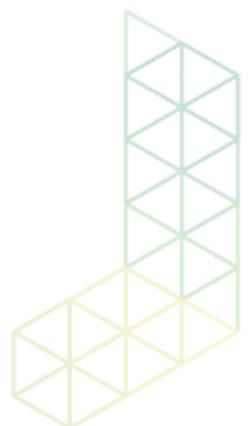


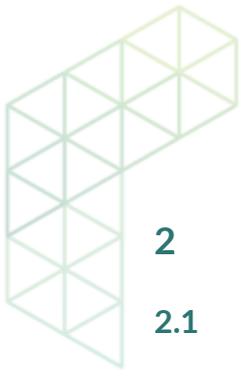
With regards to the emerging local plan, the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council Local Plan Review (2016-2036) was submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 29th March 2022 for examination. The examination is expected to finish by the end of 2022. Given the advanced progress of the Local Plan Review, it is considered material to the planning decision-making process. Note however, there are no completed Neighbourhood Plans covering the Parish area and the Norfolk County Council Mineral and Waste Plan is not considered relevant to this type of development.

Considering the requirement to determine applications with due regard to the Development Plan, this Planning Statement provides an assessment of the Development against the relevant Development Plan policies, as well as wider material considerations, including national planning policy and associated energy and climate change policy and legislation.

The case is presented within the following Chapters, ultimately providing a robust justification that the Development accords with the Development Plan:

- **Chapter 2:** Provides further detail of the Site and surrounds;
- **Chapter 3:** Provides and overview of the Development itself;
- **Chapter 4:** Provides an assessment of the pre-application engagement carried out as part of the Development and how this has informed the design approach;
- **Chapter 5:** Assesses the Development against relevant Development Plan policy and associated material considerations;
- **Chapter 6:** Details the 'Needs Case' for the Development in this location in the context of wider energy and climate change policy; and,
- **Chapter 7:** Sets out overall conclusions.





2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 Location

As demonstrated in Figure 1.1, the Site is located 1.3 kilometres (km) east of Wisbech and 500 metres (m) to the east of the A47 trunk road within the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The Site lies entirely within the Parish of West Walton, however the western extent is immediately adjacent to the boundary with the Walsoken Parish Council area.

Figure 2.1 presented in Volume 3 of the ES demonstrates the existing site plan, while Figure 2.2 details the proposed development layout.

2.2 Site Description

The Site is located in a rural location with the surrounding area characterised largely by flat, arable farmland fields punctuated with a low density of farmstead-style dwellings.

Extending to ~87 hectares, the Site forms two parcels of land (East and West Arrays) intersected by Harp's Hall Road and is currently used for agricultural purposes. The land falls within a complex mix of Agricultural Land Classification Grades 3A and 3B, with small pockets of Grade 2 and has a very flat topography, consistently lying below 10m above ordnance datum (AOD). Overhead powerlines (11kv) intersect the eastern corner of the East Array and the central section of the West Array.

The Walton Highway Public Right of Way lies approximately 1.4km south of the Site beyond the A1122.

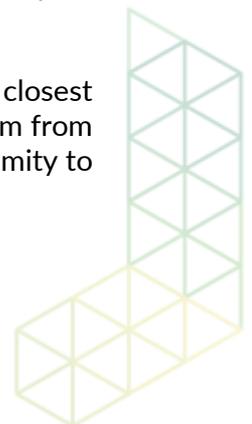
2.3 Statutory Designations

There are no statutory designated sites within the site boundary or within 2km of the Site. The closest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is Islington Heronry SSSI which is situated 8.1km away and comprises a small, isolated Oak woodland designated for its significant breeding grey heron population.

The Site does fall within the Impact Risk Zone for Islington Heronry SSSI. Impact Risk Zones are defined zones around each SSSI which reflect the sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicates the types of developments that could potentially have adverse impacts. The types of development in this instance includes 'Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals'.

The Natural Nature Reserve (NNR), Special Protection Area (SPA) and SSSI associated with 'The Wash' lie approximately 20km to the north of the Site. The Site lies within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone associated with The Wash SSSI.

There are no other ecological or heritage designations within the Site boundary. The closest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to the Site is Ouse Washes which is situated 10.7km from the Site. The Site is not located within any landscape designations nor is it within proximity to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or a Special Landscape Area (SLA).





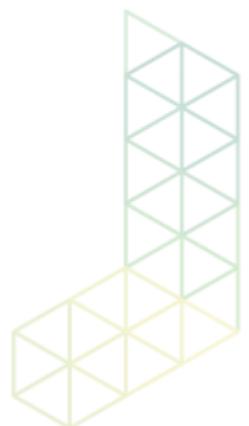
2.4 Proximity to other Solar Development

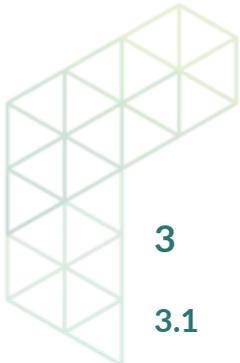
Table A1.4 of the Scoping Report (JLL, July 2022) identifies 9 other solar developments in proximity to the Site which were considered with respect to the potential cumulative landscape and visual effects. It was confirmed in the Scoping Report that due to the distance from the Site and lack of intervisibility, only one of these – Mill Road, Ingleborough – would be taken forward to the assessment phase. This is considered further in Chapter 5 of the ES.

It should be noted that while the site at Mill Road has been considered, this was under advice provided by the Planning Authority and no formal pre-application or EIA screening submission has been made with respect to this proposed development. The cumulative assessment considered as part of the EIA therefore represents an absolutely worst-case scenario with respect to potential effects as the Mill Road development is not committed and may not come forward at all.

2.5 Planning History of the Site

No significant or relevant planning history or existing consents have been identified across the Site.





3 THE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Overview

The Development comprises the installation, operation and decommissioning of a solar farm comprising an array of ground mounted solar PV panels and BESS with associated infrastructure including inverters and a substation compound as well as fencing, security cameras and cabling. The planning application boundary totals an area of approximately 87 hectares, and the solar panels and associated compound and access tracks would cover an area of approximately 33 hectares. Approximately 54 hectares of the Site will be dedicated to biodiversity enhancement measures and 0.9 hectares of bramble scrub will be retained.

The existing site plan is demonstrated on Figure 2.1. The proposed layout of the arrays is demonstrated in Figure 2.2. The following additional drawings relevant to the Development are outlined below:

- Figure 2.3: Typical Array Details;
- Figure 2.4: Typical Substation and Battery Storage Details;
- Figure 2.5: Typical Switchgear and Transformer Housing; and,
- Figure 2.6: Typical Fence and CCTV Details.

The Site will be encompassed by a 2.5m deer fence around the perimeter, with additional 3m palisade fencing providing further internal security to the proposed battery and substation compound. Appropriate boundary planting will be installed to mitigate the visual effects from particularly sensitive viewpoints and to promote biodiversity enhancement. This is discussed further in Chapter 5 of the ES, and is demonstrated on Figure 5.5, Landscape Mitigation Plan. CCTV cameras mounted on poles measuring no more than 3.3 m in height facing into the Site are proposed, as demonstrated on Figure 2.6. The exact location of CCTV will be clarified at detailed design stage.

The export capacity of the Development would not exceed 49.9MW. All cabling from the Site to the substation will be installed underground so that the electricity generated can be fed into the national grid network. The infrastructure required for the grid connection point will be managed under a separate consenting regime and as such does not form part of this planning application or the EIA.

No lighting will be required around the perimeter of the Site, however passive infrared sensor (PIS) lighting will be installed around the substation and battery compound. This lighting will be installed using fence-mounted LEDs and will be set at a low angle view to mitigate any effects on surrounding amenity. The exact location of lighting will be determined at detailed design stage, and it is expected that this could be appropriately controlled through a planning condition.

Planning permission is sought for a temporary operational period of 30 years. The Site would be fully decommissioned and restored at the end of the time-period of the temporary planning permission.



3.2 Proposed Solar PV Layout

The Development would consist of rows of PV solar panels known as strings. The panels are composed of PV cells and are designed to maximise the absorbency of the sun's rays and minimise solar glare. Therefore, they are dark in hue and recessive in the landscape. Appropriate buffers have been maintained to surrounding residential receptors, transmission lines and ecological sensitivities.

Each string of panels would be mounted on a rack comprising metal poles on concrete footings.

Between each string of panels there would be a distance of approximately 3.5m to avoid inter-panel shading. The panels would be tilted at typically 15 to 25 degrees from the horizontal and would be orientated to face south-westwards toward the sun. There would be approximately 125,000 panels which would be rise to approximately 3.1m at the highest point (the northern edge).

3.3 Proposed Substation and BESS Compound Layout

To reduce the proposed cabling infrastructure required for the installation of the BESS technology it shall be located adjacent to the proposed substation to provide the most efficient use of space within the Site and facilitate an effective route to grid connection. The BESS, control building and substation will be constructed on an area of proposed hardstanding which will be kept minimal to reduce disturbance to the existing land.

The proposed compound will be located on the western boundary of the western array, adjacent to Meer Dyke Lane. Using solar and BESS is intended to maximise the grid output to provide an integrated energy solution so that a relatively stable supply of energy can be generated in varied weather conditions.

The substation and battery compound comprises an approximate area of 390m² and will contain the following infrastructure at the associated maximum design parameters (l/b/h):

- Security Fencing: 3.3m maximum height;
- Substation: 12x2.5x4.8m expected maximum height from ground level;
- BESS Container Units (10 no.): 12.2x2.5x4.8m maximum height; and,
- Transformer and Switch Gear Kiosks: 5x5x5m maximum height.

The above dimensions are inclusive of a 0.8m void at ground level to allow for maintenance access underneath all equipment except the Transformer and Switchgear Kiosks.

Note the landscape and visual assessment carried out as part of the EIA assesses the substation at a maximum height of 8m to provide a worst-case scenario assessment and allow flexibility in detailed design approach.

It is envisaged that the battery containers will be grey in colour (RAL 9035), but it is expected that this would be controlled by an appropriate planning condition.

The battery manufacturing industry is continually evolving and designs continue to improve, both technically and economically. The most suitable technology can change with time and therefore the final technical choice for the Development would be made before construction.





It is expected however, that the preferred battery choice will be within the design parameters discussed above and assessed through the EIA and technical assessments.

The Applicant would welcome discussion around appropriate planning conditions which provide an element of flexibility around battery choice and the benefits that evolving and improving battery technology will bring to the efficient operation of this Development and the wider electricity grid.

3.4 Access

In terms of access, the primary route into the site would be the A47 heading northeast from Wisbech. The East and West Arrays will be accessed separately via existing entrance points on Harp's Hall Road which will be formalised as part of the Development and will connect to internal site maintenance roads (totalling ~9km) which will be 5m wide with a 0.5m buffer either side.

On-site access tracks shall be constructed of a suitable permeable granular material (e.g. gravel medium) to match existing conditions (such as Type 3 aggregate).

Please refer to Chapter 6 of the ES and the Transport Statement for further details on vehicle movements and access arrangements.

3.5 Construction Management

The Principal Contractor would be responsible for implementing site-specific environmental management procedures included in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). A detailed CEMP would be agreed with the Local Authority and relevant statutory consultees prior to construction commencing and a typical structure of the CEMP is shown in Table 2.1 of Volume 2 of the ES.

The CEMP would provide details of the construction programme and key activities within each phase and outline the mitigation measures that would be employed during the construction period to avoid or reduce potential environmental impacts. A summary of the key aspects of construction management are provided below.

3.5.1 Construction Activities

The construction and installation of the Development will take up to approximately 9 months and is expected to commence early 2024, although this is indicative only. The construction process would consist of the following principal activities:

- Establish temporary site compounds and staff welfare facilities;
- Construct access track and site preparation;
- Provision of boundary treatment, landscaping and biodiversity enhancement measures;
- Delivery of materials;
- Construction of the solar PV arrays, substation compound, transformers, switchgear, BESS, underground cables etc.;
- Testing and commissioning; and,
- Site restoration and landscaping.





Most of these operations would be carried out concurrently to minimise the overall length of the construction programme.

3.5.2 Construction Compound

Two temporary construction compounds would be required to enable construction of the Proposed Development. The two compounds would be located towards the centre of the Site adjacent to Harp's Hall Road, with a larger compound located in the West Array and a smaller compound within the East Array as shown on Figure 2.1. The compounds would include:

- Access tracks and internal circulation routes for vehicles and pedestrians;
- Lighting for security and safety during hours of darkness;
- Surface water management measures;
- Temporary office accommodation and welfare buildings (toilets, kitchen/ canteen, drying rooms);
- Equipment storage;
- A receiving area for incoming vehicles;
- Maintenance and refuelling facilities;
- Waste, recycling and materials management facilities; and,
- Parking.

The approximate dimensions of the western compound are 100m x 50m while the eastern compound would be approximately 50m x 30m in size.

3.5.3 Traffic Management

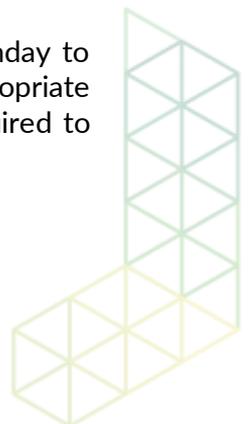
Vehicle movements associated with construction works would include:

- Cars and minibuses for transporting construction personnel to the Site;
- HGVs for pre-construction delivery of site offices, construction equipment and materials;
- HGV abnormal load vehicles for delivery of solar panels and associated infrastructure; and,
- Small/ medium delivery vans.

There are expected to be a total of approximately 100 Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) deliveries over the course of the approximately 34-week construction period. A Traffic Management Plan would be agreed in consultation with the Council and Highways England. This would address the scheduling, routing and overall management of abnormal load movements along with the programming and management of all other HGV movements.

3.5.4 Working Hours

Standard daytime working hours are likely to be utilised, between 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 7am to 1pm on Saturdays. It is expected this would be controlled by an appropriate planning condition. Depending on the time of year, some work lighting may be required to facilitate construction during these hours.





3.5.5 Waste Management

Any topsoil not stockpiled for later reinstatement will be spread over adjacent land as agreed with landowners. The topsoil shall consist of friable surface soil reasonably free of grass, roots, weeds, sticks, rocks or other unsuitable materials.

Any non-hazardous waste produced is likely to be primarily packaging and cable off cuts. This waste will be stored in a covered skip and recycled or appropriately disposed of. Re-vegetation of working areas will occur as soon as naturally possible after construction.

3.6 Grid Connection

The electricity produced by the Development would be exported to the electricity network. The proposed point of connection to the wider electricity network is at Walsoken approximately 2km southwest of the Site. The grid connection would be the responsibility of the transmission operator (UK Power Networks) and would be subject to a separate consenting process and as such does not form part of this planning application.

3.7 Operational Safety Overview

The Development will have an operational period of 30 years during which time it will be unmanned and monitored remotely. Maintenance would be overseen by suitably qualified contractors who would visit the Site as required but typically less than twice per month. Activities would be restricted principally to vegetation management, equipment/infrastructure maintenance, servicing and monitoring to ensure the continued effective operation of the Development.

There are several safety measures that will be installed at the Site in line with good practice and associated legislative protocols. All equipment includes Supervisory Control & Data Acquisition (SCADA) software and monitoring that allows the Operator to constantly monitor the equipment 24 hours a day. Any alarms/issues will be shown via the software to the office-based team where they can remotely operate the facility and shutdown all components if necessary.

Only Senior Authorised Persons will be allowed in any of the site equipment. If for any reason a fire were to happen on site, an internal fire suppression system would be enabled. This is done either with water or gases that will extinguish the fire and limit thermal runaway whilst the local fire services are alerted to attend the incident.

As previously detailed, the Applicant currently operates assets generating over 259,000MWh of renewable energy each year and has well-established expertise in the management and operation of such facilities. As a result, the Applicant fully understands the importance of efficient health and safety procedures and effective maintenance and will manage the Site responsibly and in line with the procedures already established across their renewable portfolio.

3.7.1 Operational Noise

Solar development does not typically generate a perceptible level of noise or vibration outside of the construction period. The components of the Development which have the potential to



give rise to noise during the operational period are the substation and the battery cooling equipment within the BESS. It is envisaged that these components would have a maximum external predicted output of 75 decibels (dBs) at 3m distance. The substation and battery compound will be located within container units to suppress this noise and have been located approximately 270m from the nearest dwelling. As such no potential amenity effects have been identified with respect to noise.

However, the potential for noise generation during the operational phase can be addressed through an appropriately worded condition restricting noise levels. The Applicant would accept a noise condition limiting noise levels from on site equipment in line with the requirements of BS4142:2014, which is considered to be good practice within the industry.

Construction-related noise will be considered and mitigated appropriately through a CEMP to be prepared after the application is determined.

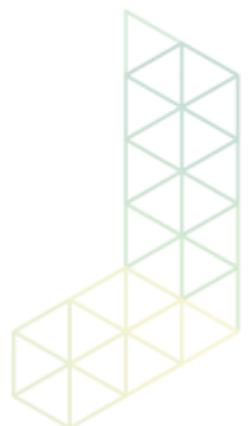
3.8 Decommissioning Overview

When the operational phase ends, the Development will require decommissioning. The operational phase is limited to 30 years therefore decommissioning must be considered as part of the planning application process. All solar PV array and BESS infrastructure including modules, mounting structures, cabling, inverters and transformers would be removed from the Site and recycled or disposed of in accordance with good practice and market conditions at that time.

Decommissioning would be expected to take approximately 9 months. The effects of decommissioning are similar to, or often of a lesser magnitude than construction effects and have been considered where possible in the relevant technical assessments and EIA. However, there can be a high degree of uncertainty regarding decommissioning as engineering approaches and technologies are likely to change over the operational life of the Development.

Notice will be given to the Council in advance of commencement of the decommissioning works, with all necessary licenses or permits being acquired. Decommissioning will be timed to minimise environmental impact.

The Applicant will develop a decommissioning plan, and the works will be undertaken in accordance with a statement of operations, covering safety and environmental issues during decommissioning. It is expected that the decommissioning phase will be controlled by an appropriate planning condition.



4 PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

4.1 Overview of Pre-Application Engagement

As detailed in Section 1.6 above, the Applicant has engaged extensively with the Local Planning Authority, Parish Council and local community during design development. The feedback received from the Council and associated stakeholders during the formal pre-application process framed the approach to the proposed layout, while engagement with the local community has refined the overall design.

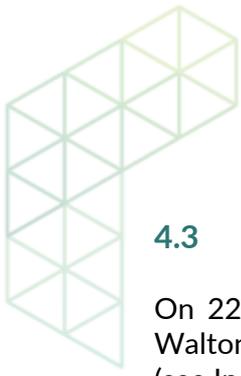
Feedback received during the EIA Scoping process is discussed in detail in Volume 2, Chapter 1 of the ES, which provides clarity as to where specific issues are addressed in the submission. This Chapter of the Statement therefore focuses primarily on feedback received during community consultation, where relevant demonstrating how this has been addressed in the design refinement.

4.2 West Walton Parish Council Meeting

On 25th May 2022, the Applicant Team met with the West Walton Parish Council in relation to the proposed Development. Discussions were largely positive and the primary themes discussed in relation to the Development were as follows:

- **Traffic and Transport:** The primary focus of conversation was with respect to traffic management and access to the Site and various options were discussed. Assurances were made that the largest component of the Site would be a shipping container size and analysis will be carried out to inform the most appropriate route. This is discussed further in Chapter 6 of the ES and the associated Transport Statement.
- **Flood Risk:** While it was highlighted that there were no anecdotal records of significant flooding on the Site, the Applicant iterated that appropriate studies would be carried out to determine the potential flood risk and appropriate flood protection measures would be installed where necessary.
- **Engagement approach:** It was highlighted that the Site is directly adjacent to Walsoken Parish Council who may have an interest in the Development. Members of the Walsoken Parish Council were subsequently invited to come to the community consultation event and their feedback was recorded.
- **Grid Connection Network:** The Parish Council sought assurances that the Development would not require large pylons or overhead cables installed. It was clarified that the transmission network would be underground cabling only.
- **Construction Employment:** There was an enquiry as to whether construction workers would be living on site during construction/operation. The Applicant clarified that the intention was to procure a workforce in the local area, however no accommodation would be provided on site.

No specific design amendments were required to be carried out as a result of the feedback received during this meeting.



4.3 Overview of Community Consultation Event

On 22nd August 2022, the Applicant facilitated a community consultation event at West Walton Village Hall between 6pm and 8pm. The event was promoted in various public buildings (see Inset 4.1) as well as in the Fenland Citizen on 17th August 2022 (see Appendix 1).

The event was led by the Applicant and members of the Applicant’s Planning and Environmental Design Team and a range of presentation material was provided, including:

- An overview of the Applicant and their experience in delivering development of this nature;
- An overview of the key benefits of solar development in the context of energy security and climate change;
- Potential opportunities for ecological enhancement;
- An overview of the technical reporting being carried out to inform the design approach; and,
- Detail on the next steps and proposed programme.



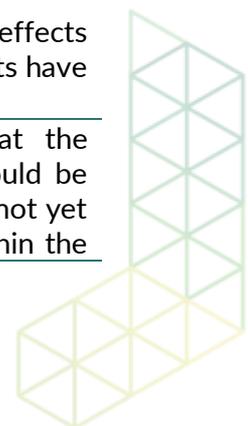
Inset 4-1: Example Community Consultation Advert

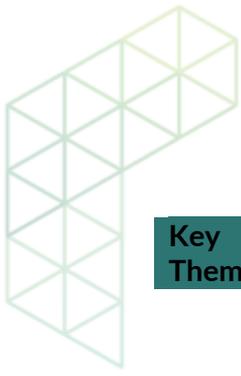
The event was attended by approximately 30 people and attendees were invited to provide written responses on key issues via formal feedback forms, or via email. Following discussions at the event, one written representation providing further feedback on the EIA Scoping Report was also submitted directly to the Local Planning Authority on 15th September 2022.

The key themes collated during the consultation period are discussed further in Table 4-1 below, along with the Applicant’s response.

Table 4-1 Consultation Feedback Themes

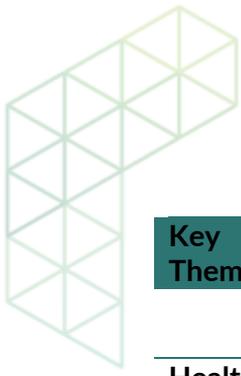
Key Theme	Planning	Applicant Response
Landscape and Visual / Panel Height		<p>The panel height which was demonstrated at the public exhibition was 3.45m. This was originally established in order to maximise energy yield. Based on feedback received during the public exhibition event, the solar panels have been reduced in height to 3.1m in order to minimise visual effects without overly comprising energy yields.</p> <p>As discussed further in Chapter 5, the Landscape and Visual effects have been minimised as far as possible and no significant effects have been determined.</p>
Noise		<p>As discussed under Chapter 3, it is not anticipated that the Development would give rise to noise of a volume that would be audible from residential properties. The exact noise levels are not yet known as the specifications of the equipment to be used within the</p>





Key Theme	Planning Applicant Response
	<p>substation and BESS have not been finalised. However, the potential for noise generation during the operational phase can be addressed through an appropriately worded condition restricting noise levels. The Applicant would accept a noise condition limiting noise levels form on site equipment in line with the requirements of BS4142:2014, which is considered to be best practice within the industry.</p>
Security and Lighting	<p>The Site will be encompassed by a 2.5m deer fence around the perimeter, with additional 3m palisade fencing providing further internal security to the proposed battery and substation compound.</p> <p>CCTV cameras mounted on poles measuring no more than 3.3m in height will be installed facing into the Site. The exact location of CCTV will be clarified at detailed design stage.</p> <p>No lighting will be required around the perimeter of the Site, however passive infrared sensor (PIS) lighting will be installed around the substation and battery compound. This lighting will be installed using fence-mounted LEDs and will be set at a low angle view to mitigate any effects on surrounding residents. The exact location of lighting will be determined at detailed design stage and it is expected that this could be appropriately controlled through a planning condition.</p>
Boundary Planting	<p>Appropriate boundary planting will be installed to mitigate the visual effects from particularly sensitive viewpoints and encourage biodiversity enhancement. This will comprise a mix of evergreen and native hedgerows and trees.</p>
Impact on Telecomm/Internet Services	<p>It is envisaged that there will be no telecoms or internet services required to facilitate the Development and as such no effects have been identified. Underground utility surveys on and adjacent to the Site have been carried out. Third party utility assets have been identified and consultation with the utility providers will be carried out prior to construction activities commencing.</p>
Land and Soil	<p>An Agricultural Land Classification Report has been carried out to inform the design development and this is discussed further under Chapter 5 below in the context of the relevant Development Plan policy.</p>
Flood Risk and Drainage	<p>A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been carried out to inform the design development and this is discussed further under Chapter 5 below in the context of the relevant Development Plan policy.</p>
Climate Change and Energy	<p>The minimised extent of environmental effects which have been determined through the EIA process and technical reporting, as well as the careful design approach has resulted in a 'sustainable development' which reflects the aspirations of the NPPF and the associated presumption in favour of such schemes.</p> <p>Accordingly, the current climate emergency, the scale of the challenge and the contribution that the Development can make must be a</p>





Key Theme	Planning	Applicant Response
Health and Safety/Fire Risk		<p>significant consideration weighed in favour of consenting the Development.</p> <p>As discussed in Chapter 3, there are a number of safety measures that will be installed as part of the Development. All equipment includes SCADA software and monitoring that allows the Operator to constantly monitor the equipment 24hrs a day. Any alarms/issues will be shown via the software to the office-based team where they can remotely operate the facility and shutdown all components if necessary.</p> <p>Only Senior Authorised Persons will be allowed in any of the site equipment. If for any reason a fire were to happen on site, an internal fire extinguishing system will be enabled. This is done either with water or gases that will extinguish the fire and limit thermal runaway whilst the local fire services are alerted to attend the Site.</p>

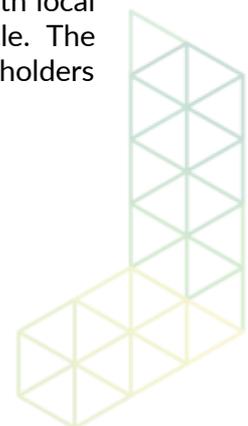
4.4 Summary and Conclusions

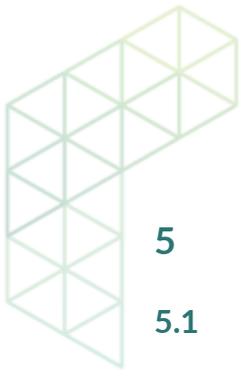
The Applicant has carried out meaningful engagement at appropriate times with key stakeholders regarding the Development. A successful community consultation was held where feedback on the proposals was gathered, analysed, and taken into consideration in the design development. The final layout has been directly informed by this consultation and a robust design iteration process, exemplified by key changes including, for example, reducing the overall panel height and providing appropriate boundary treatment to mitigate potential visual effects.

As with any development, a balance needs to be agreed in terms of the ability to incorporate suggested comments received during pre-application consultation, whilst being able to bring forward a viable and deliverable proposal. The potential effects on the surrounding environment and local amenity were identified as a fundamental design consideration during consultation and the Applicant is committed to addressing any impacts via the implementation of mitigation measures as set out in the ES and associated technical reporting.

The approach to the preparation of the planning application has sought to ensure that all those with an interest in the proposals have had an opportunity to review and comment through appropriate channels.

From project inception through to submission, the Applicant has been openly available to discuss the project with the local community and associated stakeholders, proactively building local relationships and seeking to understand views and address questions about the proposals. Overall, significant efforts have been made by the Applicant to proactively engage with local Parish Councils and the wider community throughout the project design life-cycle. The Applicant is committed to ongoing engagement and consultation with key stakeholders throughout all phases of the development and operational process.





5 DEVELOPMENT PLAN ASSESSMENT

5.1 Introduction

This section of the Statement reviews the key Development Plan policies and guidance which cover the Site and relate specifically to the Development. The aim of this section is to establish the land use implications of the Development, consider its compliance with the Development Plan, and identify other material considerations to be taken into account during the determination process.

5.2 Legislative Background

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 70(2) states that:

“In dealing with such an application the authority shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.”

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 forms an amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that:

“If regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

5.3 Local Development Plan

The Site is located within the jurisdiction of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council. The Development Plan therefore consists of:

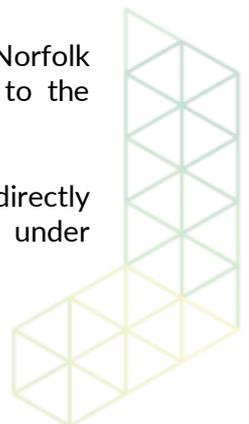
- The King’s Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Local Development Framework - Core Strategy (adopted July 2011) (‘the Core Strategy’); and,
- The King’s Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (adopted September 2016) (‘SADMP’).

Other relevant local strategies and plans which have been considered through the environmental assessment and design process include:

- Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan (1999);
- Greater Norfolk Green Infrastructure Strategy;
- King’s Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment;
- Norfolk Local Transport Plan; and,

Draft Kings Lynn Area Transport Strategy. The policies contained within the adopted Norfolk Minerals and Waste Development Framework are not considered to be relevant to the Development.

The Site does not lie within any Neighbourhood Plan area. The Site lies outside but directly adjacent to the Marshland St. James Neighbourhood Plan Area which is currently under preparation.



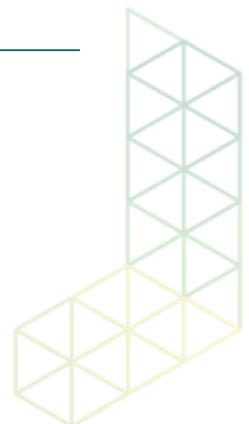


With regards to the emerging local plan, the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council Local Plan Review (2016-2036) was submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 29th March 2022 for examination. The examination is expected to finish by the end of 2022. Given the advanced progress of the Local Plan Review, it is considered material to the EIA and planning decision-making process. This is considered further below.

Table 5-1 below sets out the policies which are considered to be relevant to the Development, and the topic headings they are assessed under in the remainder of this Chapter.

Table 5-1 Relevant LDP Policies

Topic Heading	Policy	Paragraph Reference
Principle of Development, including agricultural land.	DM02 - Development Boundaries DM20 - Renewable Energy CS08 - Sustainable Development CS01 - Spatial Strategy	5.4
Landscape and Visual	CS06 - Development in Rural Areas CS08 - Sustainable Development CS12 - Environmental Assets DM15 - Environment, Design and Amenity	5.5
Transport	CS11 - Transport DM12 - Strategic Road Network	5.6
Historic Environment	CS12 - Environmental Assets DM15 - Environment, Design and Amenity	5.7
Flood Risk	CS01 - Spatial Strategy CS08 - Sustainable Development DM21 - Sites in Areas of Flood Risk <i>(noting that this primarily relates to allocated sites).</i>	5.8
Ecology	CS12 - Environmental Assets	5.9
Other Material Considerations, including impact on amenity	DM 15 - Environment, Design and Amenity	5.10



5.4 Principle of Development

Policies DM2, Development Boundaries, DM20, Renewable Energy and CS08, Sustainable Development are considered key in the assessment of the principle of renewable energy development in this location and are considered below.

5.4.1 Principle Policy Considerations

The Site is located outwith a recognised development boundary and as such for the purpose of LDP policy is considered ‘Countryside’. Development in areas of Countryside is limited to that identified as suitable in rural areas by other policies of the Development Plan, including... “Renewable energy generation” (under Policy DM20...)”.

It can therefore be concluded that provided any development coming forward for renewable energy provision within designated Countryside is deemed to accord with the principle of **Policy DM20**, it can be considered to be an appropriate land use for the purposes of the development boundaries established in the Local Plan and the overall strategic objectives of development delivery in the region. Policy DM20 includes a number of factors for determining the acceptability of renewable energy as detailed below:

“Proposals for renewable energy (other than proposals for wind energy development) and associated infrastructure, including the landward infrastructure for offshore renewable schemes, will be assessed to determine whether or not the benefits they bring in terms of the energy generated are outweighed by the impacts, either individually or cumulatively, upon:

- Sites of international, national or local nature or landscape conservation importance, whether directly or indirectly, such as the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Ramsar Sites;
- The surrounding landscape and townscape;
- Designated and un-designated heritage assets, including the setting of assets;
- Ecological interests (species and habitats);
- Amenity (in terms of noise, overbearing relationship, air quality and light pollution);
- Contaminated land;
- Water courses (in terms of pollution);
- Public safety (including footpaths, bridleways and other non-vehicular rights of way in addition to vehicular highways as well as local, informal pathway networks);
- Tourism and other economic activity.

Development may be permitted where any adverse impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated against, and such mitigation can be secured either by planning condition or by legal agreement.

Policy DM20 is further re-enforced and supported by **Policy CS08, Sustainable Development** which states:

“... The Council and its partners will support and encourage the generation of energy from renewable sources. These will be permitted unless there are unacceptable locational or other impacts that could not be outweighed by wider environmental, social, economic and other benefits.



Renewable projects should be assessed accordingly (where necessary by project level Habitat Regulation Assessment) to ensure minimal ecological impact and should undergo a detailed cumulative impact assessment”.

Policy CS08 is also utilised to implement **Policy CS01, Spatial Strategy** which provides the means to delivering the overarching vision and objectives in the borough. Relevant to the Development, **Policy CS08** seeks to “*encourage economic growth and inward investment*” and ensuring that that investment is “*directed to the most sustainable places*”.

Policies DM02, DM20 and CS08 are inter-related and ultimately require a balance to be struck between the clear benefits derived from renewable energy generation and the impacts (either individually or cumulatively) of a Development on the surrounding environment. This decision-making balance is considered further below.

5.4.2 Assessment of Principle of Development

Firstly, the benefits that the Development brings in terms of energy are clear. Solar is one of the most sustainable and reliable forms of energy production worldwide and does not require fossil fuel use during generation. In the case of this Development, the proposed 49.9MW Megawatt (MW) array would provide enough renewable to power approximately 12,000-14,000 average UK homes. This will make a significant contribution to UK Government Renewable Energy and climate change targets as well as playing a longer-term strategic role in enhancing energy security and associated pricing instabilities. The Development has been designed to extract the maximum possible energy output from the land, making the most efficient use of the resource available. The need for solar development in the UK and the national and local government policy backing for such development is discussed further in Chapter 6, but it is clear that the Development provides significant benefit in terms of clean energy production.

It is recognised that development of this scale and nature in a largely rural location is likely to have some effects on the receiving environment. The specific environmental and amenity criteria established through **Policy DM20** are considered in further detail throughout this Chapter. In principle however, it can be concluded that through iterative design, extensive consultation with key stakeholders and the local community and a commitment to appropriate environmental mitigation, environmental effects have been minimised to an extent that they are significantly outweighed by the benefits of the Development.

5.4.3 Assessment of Agricultural Land Classification

A key aspect of delivering renewable energy under **Policy DM20** relates to the quality of agricultural land, with the policy stating that the Council will “*seek to resist proposals*” where “*a) There is a significant loss of agricultural land; or b) Where land in the best and most versatile grades of agricultural land (i.e., Grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification).*”

An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Report (July 2022) has been carried out to determine the quality of agricultural land across the Site in the context of the policy framework in the NPPF and associated DEFRA Good Practice Guidance.

The ALC survey has determined that agricultural land at the Site is limited by soil wetness and draughtiness to Grade 2, Subgrade 3a and 3b. The proportion of land in each ALC grade has





been measured with respect to the overall area (ha) and proportion of the Site (%) as detailed in Table 5-2 below:

Table 5-2 Relevant LDP Policies

ALC Grade	Area (Ha)	Area (%)
Grade 1 (Excellent)	0	0
Grade 2 (Very Good)	12.0	13.6
Subgrade 3a (Good)	36.5	41.2
Subgrade 3b (Moderate)	40.0	45.2
Grade 4 (Poor)	0	0
Grade 5 (Very Poor)	0	0
Other Land / Non-agricultural	0	0
TOTAL	88.5 ²	100

It is demonstrated from the above, that just over half of the Site is considered to be ‘most versatile’ agricultural land for the purposes of **Policy DM20**. No Grade 1 Agricultural Land will be affected by the Development. While there are pockets of Grade 2 and 3a land within the Site boundary, as a whole it is not considered ‘best and most versatile’ when considered holistically as an agricultural unit.

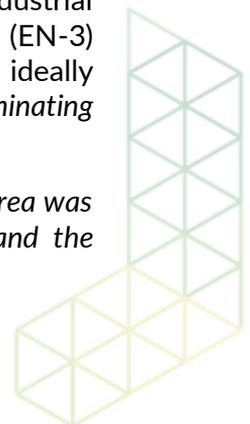
The ALC Report highlights that King’s Lynn and West Norfolk District region already has a significantly higher proportion of Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land compared to both the national and Norfolk County-wide average. This suggests that there is already a significant quantum of high-quality agricultural land available in the region. It is therefore considered that the relative impact in losing approximately 48.5 Ha of Grade 2 and 3a land (considered most versatile under DM20) is unlikely to have a significant impact on the overall level of agricultural production in the region, particularly when weighed against the overall benefits that the Development facilitates in terms of clean energy and biodiversity enhancement.

It should also be noted that a significant proportion of crops grown on the Site are presently used for energy through anaerobic digestion, as opposed to food. As such, the Site already supports sustainable energy production and will continue to do so without significant impact on food-crop yield.

It is also highlighted that solar development is relatively unobtrusive and entirely reversible, meaning the agricultural land can be returned to its former agricultural productivity once the generation of renewable electricity has ceased, and the solar panels and associated infrastructure is removed. In many respects, the management of the land under solar PV panels as grassland can benefit soil health in the long term, as described in detail in Appendix 4 of the ALC Report.

The Applicant would also highlight the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy’s Draft National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (September 2021) which, while recognising that ground-mounted solar panels should ideally be directed towards areas of ALC 3b, 4 and 5 states that “*land type should not be a predominating*

² A slightly larger area of 88.5 ha was surveyed during the ALC survey while the final site area was determined to be 87.53 ha hence the discrepancy between the total area surveyed and the established site area.





factor in determining the suitability of the site location". This policy debate is particularly pertinent in the current 'Climate Emergency' debate and advice from Defra that climate change, not solar development, presents the "*biggest medium- to long-term risk*" to the nation's domestic food supply³.

Overall, while it is recognised that there will be an impact on an area of versatile agricultural land, in the context of the significant agricultural land available in the local and regional area, it is considered that this loss can be absorbed without a significant effect on overall agricultural yield. The temporary and unobtrusive nature of the Development is also a material consideration and when weighed against the overall benefits of the scheme in terms of maximising the production of clean energy and contribution to climate change objectives, it is considered on balance that the Development meets the overall objective of **Policy DM20** in relation to agricultural land.

5.4.4 Summary of Consideration on the Principle of Development

Overall, as demonstrated in the technical assessments and ES which has been submitted with this application package, the individual and cumulative impacts of the Development are minimal and no residual significant adverse effects have been identified, with the exception of potential effects on agricultural land. Only around half of the site is considered to be Grade 2 or 3a (most versatile) agricultural land and due to the temporary and unobtrusive nature of the Development, it is not considered that the agricultural potential of the area will be diminished in the long-term.

It is clear therefore that the benefits the Development in terms of energy generation significantly outweigh the potential effects on the environment (either individually or cumulatively). The Development is therefore considered to be commensurate and indeed can draw support from **Policies DM20, CS08** and therefore **Policy DM02**.

In summary, the Development is considered to be an appropriate land use for the purposes of the development boundaries established in the Local Plan and meets the overall strategic objectives for development delivery in the region. The Development also therefore reflects the aspirations of **Policy CS01**.

5.5 Landscape and Visual

5.5.1 Landscape and Visual Policy Considerations

Policy CS06, Development in Rural Areas primarily focuses on rural settlements but sets out an overall strategy for rural areas within the borough, seeking to "*maintain local character and a high-quality environment*". Further, it is stated that "*beyond the villages and in the countryside, the strategy will be to protect the countryside for its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes ...*"

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-theme-2-uk-food-supply-sources#united-kingdom-food-security-report-2021-theme2-indicator-2-1-1>





Policy CS12, Environmental Assets provides specific focus on landscape and visual effects resulting from new development, stating:

“Proposals to protect and enhance our ... landscape character ... will be encouraged and supported ...Proposals for development will be informed by and seek opportunities to reinforce the distinctive character areas and potential habitat creation areas identified in the King’s Lynn and West Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment, the West Norfolk Econet Map and other character assessments.

Development proposals should demonstrate that their location, scale, design and materials will protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the special qualities and local distinctiveness of the area ... gaps between settlements, landscape setting, distinctive settlement character, landscape features ...”.

Policy DM15, Environment, Design and Amenity also states that *“Development must protect and enhance the amenity of the wider environment ...Proposals will be assessed against their impact on neighbouring uses and their occupants as well as the amenity of any future occupiers of the proposed development. Proposals will be assessed against a number of factors including Visual impact”.*

5.5.2 Landscape and Visual Policy Assessment

Chapter 5 of the ES reports on the outcome of a robust Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) which has been carried out to inform the Development. A combination of photography from a range of locations and contexts, alongside desk-top analysis, site visits and professional judgement, has enabled a comprehensive understanding of how the Development would affect the landscape character and impact on local views.

These are considered separately below in the context of the associated Development Plan policies.

Informed by baseline analysis, the nature of the Development and landscape context, the study area for the LVIA extends approximately 2km from the outermost solar panel. Within the study area there are several scattered settlements within a flat landscape with scattered vegetation, leading to open and exposed views. Significant impacts to landscape and visual amenity are unlikely to occur beyond 2km. This is due to the low sensitivity of the landscape character and low-lying landscape with vegetation blocks, hedgerows around villages and towns and other screening vegetation blocking views beyond this point.

Landscape Assessment

Existing landscape character assessments are in place for the whole study area. These studies and the character areas defined within them form the basis of the landscape baseline and are demonstrated in Figure 5.3. The landscape character types identified have been supplemented by site visits by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute in May 2022 and comprise the following:

- National Character Area Profile: 46. The Fens; and,
- King’s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Landscape Character Area (LCA) D4, The Fens – Settled Inland Marshes, Emneth, West Walton and Walsoken.





The key characteristics of these landscape characters are described further in Chapter 5 of the ES but generally comprise large-scale, flat, open landscapes with extensive vistas to level horizons, generally encompassing a mix of arable fields, fruit orchards, plantations and pasture.

Overall, it is judged through the landscape assessment that the Development will alter the landscape with the addition of hedgerows, closing in the open landscape character. It is also deemed that the Development will alter the current land use and the addition of new building structures will be visible within the landscape. The existing land pattern and historic field pattern will however remain the same, along with the retention of dykes that are important and typically characteristic of this landscape character area.

It is accepted that the Development is anticipated to diminish the landscape character and aesthetics and amenity of the Site within the context of the LCA, increasing vegetation in character area which is largely open. However, the assessment concludes that overall there will be no significant effect on LCA (D4 The Fens) as a whole.

Overall, it is considered that the Development has been cited and designed to minimise potential landscape effects and this is reflected in the outcome of the landscape assessment. In the context of **Policies CS06 and CS12** therefore, it can be concluded that while the open nature of the Site itself will be altered by the addition of boundary planting, the overall intrinsic character of the wider landscape will not be unduly affected by the Development.

This is further strengthened by the Applicant's commitment to a series of mitigation measures aimed at enhancing biodiversity opportunities which will seek to re-enforce the special qualities and local distinctiveness of the area in direct response to the objectives of **Policy CS12**.

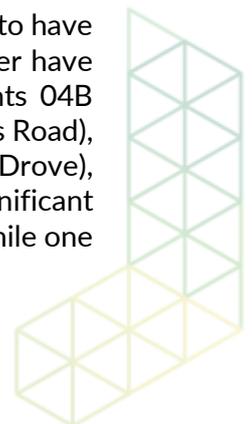
Visual Assessment

The study area primarily consists of transport and amenity receptors. Visual detractors in the area include overhead lines for power transmission and distribution, and existing wind turbines, two of which are located on the south the Site. The overhead lines cut across fields at a diagonal and intrude upon the open skies in an otherwise agricultural setting.

As demonstrated in Figure 5.1, a total of 14 viewpoints were considered as part of the visual assessment, representing the following key receptors:

- Views experienced by people from Public Rights of Way (PROW), bridleways, restricted byways and open spaces;
- Views experienced by people within residential properties, open spaces and road corridors within and surrounding the Site; and,
- Views from transport routes including A47.

Understandably, a development of this scale and nature in this location is always going to have some element of visual impact. The receptors assessed are largely anticipated to either have neutral or minor adverse effects on visual amenity with the exception of Viewpoints 04B (south-west of the Site from Harps Hall Road), 06 (south-west of the Site from St. Pauls Road), 07 (north-west o the Site from Goose Lane), 08 (north-east of the Site from Long Lots Drove), and 09 (north-west of the Site from Cow Lake Drove) which are considered to have significant adverse effects. Four of these receptors are representative of residential properties, while one





represents a Public Right of Way. Mitigation efforts will screen the Site partially, but this has been balanced against altering the open nature of the Site.

Of the 14 indicative viewpoints identified, only 5 are considered to represent a significant effect and the assessment represents a worst-case scenario in terms of the height of the proposed sub-station building. While it is accepted that the Development will have a significant visual impact on 4 (no.) properties and on part of a Public Right of Way, it has been clearly demonstrated that these effects have been minimised through effective siting and design, particularly given the open nature of the landscape. The impact on neighbouring uses and surrounding occupants has therefore been significantly reduced through the design process and overall has sought to protect the amenity of the wider environment as is required by **Policy DM15**

Cumulative Landscape and Visual Considerations

As previously discussed, only the potential solar development at Mill Road, Ingleborough has been considered as part of the cumulative consideration under advice provided by the Planning Authority. No formal pre-application or EIA screening submission has been made with respect to this proposed development and therefore it's inclusion in the cumulative consideration represents an absolute worst-case scenario with respect to potential cumulative landscape and visual effects.

The LVIA concludes that this development, should it come forward, is likely to add to the alteration of certain views and impact the landscape character along Cow Lake Drove, Biggs Road and Fengate Road, in particular viewpoints 4, 9 and 14. This is due to likely additional building and fencing infrastructure and associated mitigation planting reducing the open and relatively uninterrupted views across the flat agricultural landscape. The landscape currently lacks vegetated or fenced boundary treatments, so the addition of these with any other developments could have an incremental adverse impact on the landscape character, and appropriate mitigation measures should be considered.

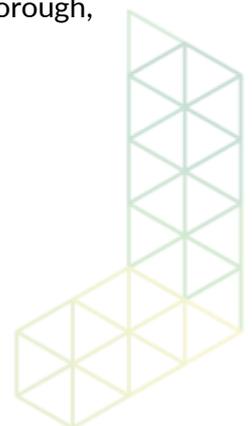
While this assessment has been included in the EIA for completeness, it is not considered that the proposed Mill Road scheme represents a committed development and as such the potential effects identified are materially reduced. Should any development at this site come forward in the future, potential effects should be re-visited with due consideration of the Development being proposed under this submission and once further design details are more fully understood.

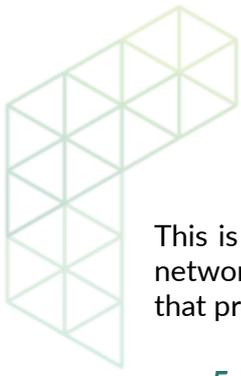
5.6 Transport

5.6.1 Transport Policy Considerations

Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy covers a range of strategic transport issues for the borough, but most relevant to the Development are the objectives to:

- *Foster economic growth and investment;*
- *Reduce the need to travel;*
- *Promote sustainable forms of transport; and,*
- *Provide for safe and convenient access for all modes”.*





This is supported by **Policy DM12** of the SADMP which seeks to protect the strategic road network and ensure that an appropriate Transport Assessment is submitted to demonstrate that proposals can be accommodated on the local road network.

5.6.2 Transport Policy Assessment

The Transport Statement (October 2022) submitted as part of the application evaluates the existing transport infrastructure in the vicinity of the Site and seeks to set out and mitigate for the key transportation impacts that could occur during the construction and operational phases of the Development. The Transport Statement informs and associated EIA Chapter, which further considers the potential environmental effects related to traffic and transport. These assessments are informed by both pre-application discussion with the Council and the associated EIA scoping process.

The Transport Statement confirms that the main transport impacts will occur during construction stage and it is expected that approximately 100 HGV movements will be required across the indicative approximate 34-week construction period. This equates to an average of approximately 1.7 movements across a 5-day working week. Peak staff vehicle movements (assuming an average car occupancy of 2) are expected to be in the region of 10 inbound trips in the AM period, and 10 outbound trips in the PM period across the same period.

The operational stage of the development will not give rise to a significant number of additional vehicle trips. As such, the impact on traffic levels on the road network surrounding the Site will be negligible.

The Transport Statement establishes appropriate protocols to manage construction traffic (particularly HGVs) to ensure safe passage to the Site along the local road network during the predicted approximate 34-week construction period and it is expected that these would be further controlled through an appropriate planning condition.

Chapter 6 of the EIA further assesses the potential environmental effects associated with the traffic and transport associated with the Development and concludes no significant effects across key criteria including severance, driver delay, pedestrian delay and amenity, accidents and safety, and dust and dirt. Notwithstanding this, further mitigation is proposed in the form of an appropriate Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Potential cumulative effects during construction have been scoped out of the assessment as no significant developments have been identified which have the potential to generate cumulative construction impacts. However, the Applicant will continue to liaise with the Council regarding potentially significant construction projects coming online in tandem with this proposed Development to ensure that construction traffic is managed strategically across the region.

The policy framework relating to transport within the Development Plan primarily relates to operational access. While operational traffic movements will be limited as a result of the Development, it has been demonstrated that construction traffic will be appropriately monitored and managed in line with a robust CEMP. Overall therefore, the Development does not conflict with the policies relevant to transport as established through the Development Plan.





5.7 Historic Environment

5.7.1 Historic Environment Policy Considerations

Policy CS12, Environmental Assets of the Core Strategy seeks to protect the significant number of natural and historic assets in the borough. Provisions of the Policy relevant to the Development are as follows:

“Proposals to protect and enhance our historic environment ... will be encouraged and supported ...

The historic and built environment play a crucial role in delivering environmental quality and well-being. Therefore the Council will preserve and where appropriate enhance its qualities and characteristics ...

The Council will protect and enhance ... ancient woodlands ... and designated sites of historical value from development which damages their interest or significance unless the need for, and public benefits of the development outweigh the loss of interest or significance.

Development should seek to avoid, mitigate or compensate for any adverse impacts on ... heritage as well as seeking to enhance sites through the creation of features of new ... heritage interest. The design of new development should be sensitive to the surrounding area, and not detract from the inherent quality of the environment ...

Development proposals should demonstrate that their location, scale, design and materials will protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the special qualities and local distinctiveness of the area (including its historical ... and cultural character) ...”.

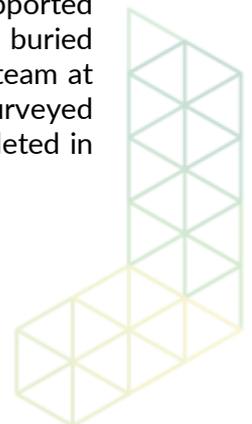
Policy DM15, Environment, Design and Amenity also considers potential effects on heritage and cultural assets, confirming that

“Development must protect and enhance the amenity of the wider environment including its heritage and cultural value ... Proposals will be assessed against a number of factors including: ...Heritage impact”.

Historic England Guidance on the Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (2017)) has also been considered as part of the heritage assessment.

5.7.2 Historic Environment Policy Assessment

The Historic Impact Assessment (HIA) (September 2022) submitted as part of the application package provides a detailed summary of the relevant statutory background and tests when considering developments affecting the historic environment. This assessment was supported by a Geophysical Survey Report (August 2022) which investigated the potential for buried archaeological remains within the Site in consultation with the historic environment team at Norfolk County Council. It should be noted that 13 Hectares of the Site has not been surveyed due to crop planting, however this has already been commissioned and will be completed in autumn 2022.





A 1km study area was utilised for the identification of all known heritage assets and known previous archaeological interventions in order to determine the potential for direct impacts and in order to predict whether any similar hitherto unknown archaeological remains are likely to remain within the Site. One non-designated heritage asset was identified in the western part of the site and six in the eastern portion.

No World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields or Conservation Areas were recorded with 2km of the Site and as such the Development will have no effects on these assets. Furthermore, no ancient woodland would be affected as a result of the Development.

In terms of built heritage, there are a 12 National Heritage List records within 2km of the Site, including the Grade I Listed Church of All Saints located 1.75km west of the Site and a further 11 Grade II Listed Buildings. The assessment carried out concludes no predicted harm to these assets or their setting and the policy tests as set out in NPPF are not invoked.

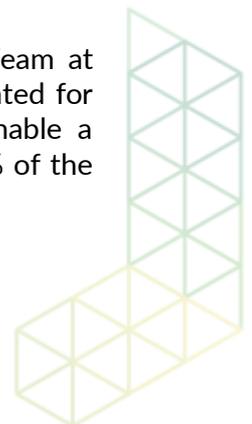
The only exception to this is the potential impact upon the setting of the Grade II Listed Trinity Hall (Asset 8, Listing Number 1264136) which is a private residence and has been judged to be impacted, at worst, as Low. Where Low impacts are predicted the harm to the asset is considered to be less than substantial and therefore requires to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal in line with Paragraph 202 of the NPPF which states, *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use”*.

The optimum viable use of the Grade II Listed Trinity Hall will not be affected by the Development, nor will the overall integrity of the asset itself. The potential effects on its setting are considered to be outweighed by the overall public benefit of the Development, the need for which is discussed in further detail under Chapter 6.

The Development is therefore in accordance with key Development Plan policies and the relevant provision of the NPPF in relation to protection of heritage assets.

In terms of potential impacts on known or unknown buried archaeological remains, this HIA recognises that the Site was predominantly used for agricultural purposes, potentially from as early as the pre-historic period. Notwithstanding this, the assessment judges there to be low potential for remains of pre-historic date due to the relative paucity of heritage assets identified within the study area. This is potentially due to the area being too wet and low lying for anything other than seasonal exploitation rather than permanent settlement. The assessment also judges there to be a high potential for post-medieval and modern remains associated with agricultural activities, with the Site facilitating mixed pastoral and arable use throughout these periods. The geophysical survey did not identify any anomalies or features of a definitive archaeological nature; however, three clusters of anomalies were identified as being of possible archaeological interest in the northern part of the survey area.

The Applicant has been in continual consultation with the Historic Environment Team at Norfolk County Council and has established that should planning permission be granted for the proposed Development, an archaeological condition would be imposed to enable a programme of archaeological mitigation which will include trial trenching across 3.5% of the Site prior to construction.





In light of the above, it has been demonstrated that the Development will have no effect on designated heritage assets and as such the qualities and characteristics of the local area will not be impacted. Any potential effects on archaeological features can be appropriately managed through a scheme of mitigation which will be executed in full consultation with the County Archaeologist. Overall therefore, the Development will not compromise the aspirations of **Policy CS12** or **DM15**.

5.8 Flood Risk and Drainage

5.8.1 Flood Risk and Drainage Policy Considerations

In terms of managing flood risk in the region, **Policy CS01, Spatial Strategy** explicitly confirms that “*Development priorities for the borough will be to...seek to avoid areas at risk of flooding*”. This is further explained under **Policy CS08, Sustainable Development** which details that

“...The Council’s Strategic Flood Risk Assessment outlines potential flood risk throughout the borough. In order to ensure future growth within the borough is sustainable:

- the findings of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will be used to guide planned growth and future developments away from areas of high flood risk;
- the Council will work in conjunction with the Environment Agency and ensure that decisions take into account coastal flooding and climate change adaptation issues”.

In terms of drainage, **Policy CS08** also promotes “integration of water saving devices and Sustainable Drainage Systems”.

According to the Environmental Agency’s (EA) fluvial and tidal flood map for planning, the whole Site is located in Flood Zone 3 (High Probability) although it is also within an area classified by the EA as an Area Benefitting from Defences (ABD) such that the actual flood risk may be less than typically associated with Flood Zone 3. **Policy DM21** relates primarily to allocated sites, however the following provisions are considered relevant:

“Where the Borough Council has allocated sites in flood risk Zones 2 and 3 or flood defence breach Hazard Zones identified by the Council’s Strategic Flood Risk Assessment or more recent Environment Agency mapping:

1. These will be subject to (and no relevant planning permission will be granted before):
 - a site-specific flood risk assessment satisfactorily demonstrating the development will be safe for its lifetime, taking climate change into account, and with regard to the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere and, where possible, reducing flood risk overall; and,
 - satisfactory demonstration that any design or development features necessary to address flood risk issues are compatible with heritage assets in the vicinity (including conservation areas and listed buildings), local visual amenity and (where relevant) the landscape and scenic beauty of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Borough Council will take into account advice from the Lead Local Flood Authority and the King’s Lynn and West Norfolk Settlements Surface Water Management Plan to ensure that where a serious and exceptional risk of surface water flooding exists adequate and appropriate consideration has been given to mitigating the risk. Mitigation measures should minimise the risk of flooding on the development site and within the surrounding area”.



5.8.2 Flood Risk and Drainage Policy Assessment

As detailed in the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (September 2022) submitted in support of the application, taking in to account the potential for increases in sea levels due to climate change (up to the year 2115), were defences maintained to their current standard the Site would not be affected by the climate change adjusted 1 in 200 (0.5%) Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) flood. Furthermore, there would be no flood risk elsewhere. It should also be noted that the Site is not occupied and therefore there is no vulnerable users affected.

The Development is therefore commensurate with the provisions of **Policy DM21** in principle.

Were a breach in the defences to occur, the majority of the Site would not be affected by flooding during a climate change adjusted 1 in 200 (0.5%) AEP flood. However, a limited area in the northwest of the Site could be at risk of shallow flooding during this event. In order to protect against such an event, the following mitigation is proposed:

- The raising of Site infrastructure (including the battery array and substation) above modelled flood depths through the use of open water compatible footings by 0.8m above ground levels;
- The use of flood resilient design for switching and control kiosks (watertight design);
- Raising of PV arrays through integral stand design by 0.6m above ground levels; and,
- The use of sub-surface cabling that would be resistant to any flooding.

Overall therefore, it is considered that the design of the Development goes beyond the policy minimum for flood risk and provides enhanced protection to the Site in the event of a breach of defences which is considered to be of a very low probability, taking into account ongoing inspection and maintenance of defences by the EA.

In terms of drainage, there is the potential that the compound area could lead to increased rates of surface water runoff. The implementation of SuDS at the Site, incorporating the use of a swale and shallow detention basin to support infiltration to shallow groundwater (in line with existing conditions at the Site) would ensure that, during events with up to a 1 in 100 (1%) AEP, no runoff would leave the Site in excess of greenfield conditions. The detailed design of the drainage measures would seek for all discharge during events up to the climate change adjusted 1 in 100 (15) AEP event to be to ground. It is expected that this will be developed further at detailed design stage.

In terms of protection of the water environment during construction, Table 1.1 in Chapter 1 of the ES details the primary mitigation measures proposed, which would ultimately form part of the CEMP. The reduced application of fertilizers and pesticides shall also reduce the potential for pollution or eutrophication of watercourses and shall represent an improvement from baseline conditions. In summary therefore the Development complies with the relevant Development Plan policies in relation to flood risk and drainage.

5.9 Ecology

5.9.1 Ecology Policy Considerations

In terms of ecology, **Policy CS12, Environmental Assets** seeks to encourage and support “proposals to protect and enhance our ... biodiversity”. In addition, the Council will seek to “protect



County Wildlife Sites, ancient woodlands, Biodiversity Action Plan species and Habitats...from development which damages their interest or significance unless the need for, and public benefits of the development outweigh the loss of interest or significance”

The Policy also states that development should seek to “avoid, mitigate or compensate for any adverse impacts on biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage as well as seeking to enhance sites through the creation of features of new biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage interest. The design of new development should be sensitive to the surrounding area, and not detract from the inherent quality of the environment”.

The Council will require development proposals to be accompanied by an ecological impact study and assessment proportionate to the degree of the impact and importance of the species affected ...

Development proposals should demonstrate that their location, scale, design and materials will protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the special qualities and local distinctiveness of the area (including its ..., biodiversity ...) ... and ecological networks”.

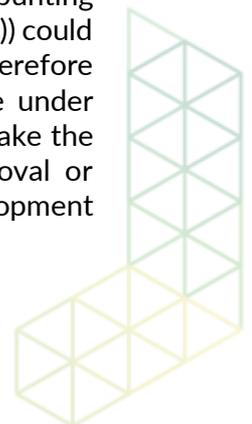
5.9.2 Ecology Policy Assessment

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been carried out on the Site, comprising a desk study, extended UK Hab Habitat Survey, bat survey and assessment of important ecological features. The extended UK Hab Habitat Survey and desk study confirmed that the Site is of nature conservation importance up to the Local Level and potentially contains protected species including reptiles, badger, water vole and nesting birds.

The Site is not within or adjacent to any County Wildlife Site and no ancient woodland will be affected by the Development. It is noted that trees are present adjacent to the Site boundary namely at the orchard located adjacent to the western array and adjacent to the Site access points of Harp’s Hall Road. In both locations the nature of the Development is not considered to impact the protection of trees. Notwithstanding this, the principles of British Standard 5827:2012 ‘Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction’ will be applied where applicable.

Significant alterations were carried out during the design process in order to provide appropriate buffers for ecological receptors identified within the Site. Notwithstanding this, Table 5.1 in the PEA Report (June 2022) summarises additional mitigation measures which the Applicant is committed to in order to further manage potential effects on ecology within the Site. Provided these measures are appropriately implemented, no significant adverse effects have been identified with regard to impacts on biodiversity within the Site.

A Breeding Bird Survey Report (August 2022) is also submitted with the application and presents the results of surveys for breeding birds between March and July 2022 inclusive. The Report concludes that the breeding bird assemblage of district level importance (reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)) could be affected during construction and operation. Mitigation measures are therefore recommended to minimise the potential for adverse effects and avoid any offence under current habitat and ecological legislation. The mitigation recommendations primarily take the form of habitat creation and enhancement measures to compensate for any removal or alteration of habitat from the Development, in turn ensuring that the proposed Development has a positive effect on breeding birds.





In response to this, the Applicant has committed to implement additional measures to enhance biodiversity across approximately 54 hectares of the Site. This is further demonstrated through the Biodiversity Metrics Assessment which demonstrates that the current calculated change is 176.12% (329.20 Biodiversity Units) net gain for area-based habitats and a 1100.96% net gain (13.17 Hedgerow Units) for hedgerows. It is also established that there is the opportunity for a further 29.05% net gain (1.74 River Unit) for through further additional enhancements.

In summary, by specifically designing the scheme around potential effects on ecological receptors and committing to a series of biodiversity enhancement measures, the Applicant has clearly demonstrated that the Development will protect, conserve and where possible enhance the biodiversity of the Site. The Development therefore reflects the key aspirations of **Policy CS12** with regard to ecology and biodiversity.

5.10 Other Material Considerations

Policy DM 15 – Environment, Design and Amenity seeks to ensure that development protects and enhances the amenity of the wider environment including its heritage and cultural value. Specifically, it states that “*proposals will be assessed against their impact on neighbouring uses and their occupants as well as the amenity of any future occupiers of the proposed development. Proposals will be assessed against a number of factors including: Heritage impact; Overlooking, overbearing, overshadowing; Noise; Odour; Air quality; Light pollution; Contamination; Water quality and Visual impact*”.

Issues around overbearing, overlooking, odour and contamination are not considered relevant to the Development and heritage, lighting, water quality and visual impact are discussed elsewhere in this Statement.

In terms of air quality, no emissions will be produced during operation. Emissions during construction will be limited to vehicle exhausts. There is no local Air Quality Management Area within or in the immediate surrounds of the Site, therefore emissions wouldn't result in the failure of air quality objectives. The proposed CEMP will include mitigation in accordance with guidance from the Institute of Air Quality Management with respect to managing construction traffic.

As previously discussed, the only noise emission from the Site will be from the batteries, transformers and inverters which will have a maximum predicted noise output of 75 decibels (dBs) at 3m distance. The closest residential property is situated approximately 270m away and as such no significant effects on amenity are predicted in terms of noise. The Applicant would accept a noise condition limiting noise levels from on site equipment in line with the requirements of BS4142:2014, which is considered to be the industry standard.

The only additional consideration with respect to amenity effects therefore relates to glint and glare from the proposed array. A Glint and Glare Assessment has been carried out which considers effects to potential flight paths, the adjacent main road, the A47 and 5 (no.) residential properties within the area which represent the worst-case assessment scenario.

No effects on flight paths have been identified and it is predicted that existing screening and topography will protect the majority of residential receptors in the locality and transport routes from significant impact. However, a potential impact (albeit for a short duration each day) has been identified at a small collection of dwellings on Harp's Hall Road (ref: OP5) where existing





screening is relatively informal and disjointed. The results indicate this would mean across the year, the maximum amount of glare in a day is approximately 40 minutes in total. This is a worst case figure based on clear skies and no obstructions. Additionally the amount of time of glare per day does vary throughout the year with many days experiencing significantly less than this 40-minute time period. Overall, this is not considered to be significant in terms of impact on amenity of these properties.

Notwithstanding this, the Applicant is committed to enhancing the screening within these properties should this be required. In addition, the Applicant will implement a formal grievance mechanism, whereby community members can continue to liaise with the project team in relation to the performance of the Development through a formal set of protocols.

Overall and with due regard to the environmental and technical assessments carried out to inform the finalised layout, it can be concluded that potential impact on amenity has been significantly reduced through the design development and as a result, the proposal is commensurate with the objectives set out in **Policy DM15**.

5.10.1 Local Plan Review

The King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council Local Plan Review (2016-2036) was submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 29th March 2022 for examination. The examination is expected to finish by the end of 2022. Given the advanced progress of the Local Plan Review, it is considered material to the planning and EIA process.

Strategic Policy LP16, Sustainable Development of the Local Plan Review outlines that the generation of energy from renewable sources will be supported, stating:

"The Council and its partners will support and encourage the generation of energy from renewable sources. These will be permitted unless there are unacceptable locational or other impacts that could not be outweighed by wider environmental, social, economic and other benefits".

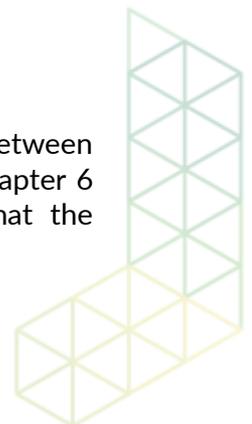
Policy LP24, Renewable Energy of the Local Plan Review states:

"Proposals will be supported and considered in the context of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and adapting to climate change".

It is established that proposals for renewable energy will be assessed to determine whether or not the benefits they bring in terms of the energy generated are outweighed by the impacts, either individually or cumulatively, upon the same criteria already established under extant **Policy DM20**. As such, no further assessment of the principle of development against the Local Plan Review is considered necessary. However, the continued support or the delivery of renewable energy in the right locations within the borough should be recognised

5.11 Summary of Development Plan Assessment

Considering the relevant policies above, it is apparent there is a balance to be struck between the LDP's objectives. The LDP (as well as the NPPF which is further discussed in Chapter 6 below) encourages and supports renewable energy generation and recognises that the





countryside is a suitable location for such development provided effects on the receiving environment are not outweighed by the energy benefits produced.

By its nature, the Development requires a rural location to accommodate its scale and maximise the energy output. In considering various alternative sites, the Applicant chose this location primarily due to the capacity of the receiving environment to facilitate such development.

The ES and supporting technical studies provide a comprehensive and robust assessment and demonstrates that the Development would not result in any unacceptable or adverse impacts upon the environment, or on the character, appearance or amenity of the surrounding area.

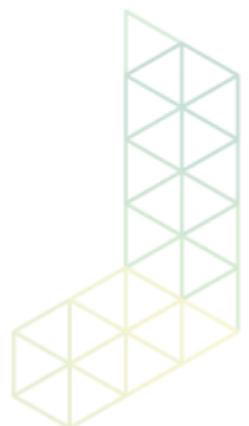
The Site is therefore extremely conducive to delivering an important and significant source of clean energy which will make a valuable contribution towards the reduction of carbon emissions in line with the changing emphasis of the Government's Climate Change Act 2008, and the immediate Climate Emergency context.

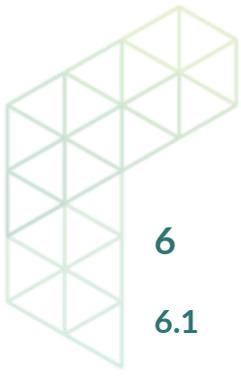
The Applicant highlights **SADMP Policy DM1, Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development**, which states:

“When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work proactively and jointly with applicants to find solutions that allow proposals to be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

It has been clearly demonstrated through this submission that any adverse impacts of granting permission would be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the benefits of the Development and there are no specific policies or material considerations which indicate that the Development should be restricted. The Development is therefore considered ‘Sustainable Development’ and benefits from the ‘presumption in favour’ established through **Policy DM1** and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

In summary, given the limited impacts of the Development on the surrounding area against its valuable benefits and reversibility (which thereby mitigates against the loss of agricultural land), the Development is considered to comply with, and draw support from the relevant policies within the Development Plan.





6 THE NEED FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

6.1 Introduction

The UK's commitment to the development of renewable energy, including solar, in response to the global climate emergency is evident through energy policy and legislation at national and domestic levels. Chapter 4 of the ES provides an overview of the key legislative and policy provisions that have informed the EIA and design process in this regard.

This Chapter explains the planning policy, strategy and guidance that should be considered as an important material consideration that requires to be weighed in the decision-making balance for the Development.

The energy and climate change policy and legislative framework set the 'Needs Case' for the Development, which is ultimately aimed at addressing the impacts of climate change through renewable energy generation in a sustainable manner, whilst also maintaining energy security.

This Statement will seek to focus purely on the most recent and relevant policy, strategy and legislation pertinent to demonstrating the need for continuing the enhancement of renewable energy provision in the UK.

6.2 The Climate Change Act 2008

The Climate Change Act 2008 introduced legally binding targets to reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions. This represented the first global legally binding climate change mitigation target set by a country. The Act committed the UK to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050, compared with 1990 levels.

The Climate Change Act was amended in 2019 to commit the UK to 'net zero' by 2050. In 2019, the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019 was passed which increased the UK's commitment to a 100% reduction in emissions by 2050.

In aiming to meet this target, the UK has committed to major investment in new technologies, the electrification of heating, industry and transport, prioritisation of sustainable energy and cleaner power generation. These targets underpin the approach to decarbonisation across key energy and climate change policy and strategy across England.

6.3 National and Local Energy and Climate Policy and Strategy

6.3.1 The Climate Change Committee and Net Zero (2019 and 2020 Update)

The Climate Change Committee (CCC) published its landmark report entitled 'Net Zero - UK's Contribution to Stopping Global Warming' in May 2019. The report responded to requests from the Governments of the UK, Wales and Scotland, asking the CCC to reassess the UK's long-term carbon emissions targets.

The Foreword of the report (Page 8) sets out that the CCC has "*reviewed the latest scientific evidence on climate change, including last year's [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] IPCC special report on global warming of 1.5°C and considered the appropriate role of the UK in the global*





challenge to limit future temperature increases". It adds, "Net Zero is a more fundamental aim than previous targets. By reducing emissions produced in the UK to zero, we also end our contribution to rising global temperatures".

The Foreword also sets out that *"we must now increase our ambition to tackle climate change. The science demands it; the evidence is before you; we must start at once; there is no time to lose"*. This emphasises the urgent nature of the response required to address the UK's contribution to global climate change.

The CCC published a progress report to Parliament in June 2020 ('Reducing UK emissions: 2020 Progress Report to Parliament') which assesses progress in reducing UK emissions across the UK throughout the previous year. The Report provides important new advice to Government on framing a recovery from Covid-19 that both accelerates the transition to net zero and strengthens resilience to the impacts of climate change, whilst driving new economic activity. The Report reiterates the importance of a fast response to the climate emergency, stating *"we must seize the opportunity to make the COVID-19 recovery a defining moment in tackling the climate crisis. We say to the Government: "act courageously - it's there for the taking"*.

6.3.2 Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future (2020)

In November 2020, the UK Government published its 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution', which the Government confirm will allow the UK to forge ahead with eradicating its contribution to climate change by 2050.

The publication of the 10 Point Plan was followed by the 'Energy White Paper: Powering our net zero future' in December 2020. In it, the UK Government highlights the intention to continue to hold regular Contracts for Difference (CfD) auction rounds every two years to bring forward a range of low-cost renewable technologies. While a key focus on investment for the UK Government is in offshore wind it states at page 45 that solar development will be a *"key building block of the future generation mix...We will need sustained growth in the capacity of these sectors in the next decade to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions in all demand scenarios."*

6.3.3 The British Energy Security Strategy (2022)

The UK Government published its 'British Energy Security Strategy' in April 2022. The Strategy seeks to accelerate the UK's energy transition to improve energy security and independence in the long term. To this end, large capacity increases are targeted in nuclear, renewables and hydrogen along with supporting domestic production of natural gas.

With regards to solar energy, a key objective of the strategy is to ramp up solar energy deployment on both roof spaces and on the ground. Page 19 highlights that solar is a globally abundant resource which has reduced significantly in cost over the past decade. As such the UK Government expect a five-fold increase in solar deployment by 2035, and the Government will continue to support well-designed large scale solar projects on suitable sites.

6.3.4 Borough Council Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

In September 2021, King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council announced a 'climate change emergency' and adopted their Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2024). The





Council also adopted a corporate climate change policy in October 2020 which guides climate change work and provides a framework for the wider Council operation. The policy works alongside the council's corporate priority of 'protecting and enhancing the environment including tackling climate change'.

The Council have also brought their net zero target forward to 2035 from 2050 and have committed to reviewing the possibility of bringing this forward further to 2030.

The Climate Change strategy and action plan highlights the Council's approach to reducing emissions and tackling climate change. Phase 1 of the plan focuses on reducing corporate emissions to meet the 2035 net zero target. Phase 2 focuses on the Council's role and scope of influence in helping to reduce emissions across the district.

As part of the Action Plan, the Council recognises the importance of transitioning their gas heating and electricity usage to more renewable alternatives. This emphasises the importance of delivering renewable energy infrastructure to facilitate a reduction in gas and fossil fuel reliance and address the impacts of the 'climate emergency'.

6.4 National Planning Policy

6.4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF (last updated July 2021) sets out Central Government's planning policies for England and how these are to be applied. The NPPF reiterates that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF also identifies that national planning policy is a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications. The most relevant aspects of national planning policy contained within the NPPF are as follows:

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

The NPPF sets out the economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. Central to these main themes is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and that development should be planned positively. In achieving sustainable development, three overarching objectives are identified for the planning system; economic, social and environmental. The environmental objective includes "mitigating and adapting to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy".

Renewable Energy

The NPPF is clear that planning has a key role in supporting renewable energy and associated infrastructure. Whilst there is no specific policy for solar energy development contained in the NPPF, it states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.

"The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure."





In order to increase the supply of renewable and low carbon energy, the NPPF states that plans should provide a positive strategy for renewable energy development and consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy.

The NPPF is also clear that LPAs should not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

Applications for renewable and low carbon development should be approved if the impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

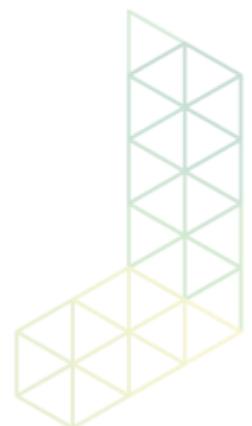
6.5 Conclusions on the Need for the Development

The UK Government renewable energy policy documents and associated renewable energy and climate change targets, all provide considerable support in favour of renewable energy development, and it is clear that solar plays an important part of this mix.

Since 2019, the UK Government have acted on the stark warnings issued by the Climate Change Commission who had stated that by 2030 it would be too late to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees. Owing to the clear recognition at national and local level of the climate emergency that we are in and the urgent response required; the need case for the Development must be considered significant and a material consideration of significant weight.

The Development has a capacity in the region of 49.9MW of clean energy, including associated battery storage. It is therefore estimated to be capable of powering enough renewable energy to power approximately 12,000-14,000 homes. It would make a valuable contribution to legislated climate change targets and government policy objectives; thereby implementing Government policy, which encourages more electricity generation from renewable sources.

If consented, the Development would contribute to the delivery of international, national and local policy objectives and legislative targets in relation to energy and climate change, as well as diversifying the energy mix, promoting security of supply and facilitating the transition to a low carbon economy.





7 CONCLUSION

Planning approval is sought for *the installation, operation and decommissioning of a solar PV farm with associated infrastructure, including battery storage for a period of 30 years* on land at Blunts Drove, Walton Highway, Norfolk.

The need for the Development is clear and established. The UK Government renewable energy policy documents, and associated renewable energy and climate change targets, all provide considerable support in favour of renewable energy development, and solar plays an important part of this mix. While it is recognised that the Development must be sustainable and that potential environmental effects must not demonstrably outweigh the potential benefits, it is clear that significant weight must be attributed in favour of the Development's contribution to the established 'climate emergency'.

The Applicant has carried out meaningful engagement at appropriate times with key stakeholders regarding the Development. Successful community consultation was held where feedback on the proposals was gathered, analysed, and taken into consideration in the design development. The final layout has been directly informed by this consultation and a robust design iteration process, exemplified by key changes including, for example, reducing the overall panel height and providing appropriate boundary treatment to mitigate potential visual effects.

Considerable care has been taken in the site selection process and the ultimate design of the Development to avoid unacceptable environmental and amenity effects, whilst ensuring that the Development can make the maximum possible contribution to the UK's requirement for renewable energy generation.

Overall, as demonstrated in the technical assessments and ES which have been submitted with this application package, the potential environmental and amenity impacts of the Development are significantly outweighed by the benefits of the Development in terms of energy generation, local economic impact and net biodiversity gain. The Development is therefore considered to be commensurate and indeed can draw support from key Development Plan policies which govern decision-making with respect to development of this nature.

In light of the above, the Development is considered 'sustainable' and crucially therefore responds positively to the key aspects of the NPPF and **Policy DM1, Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** which recommends that such development should be "*approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise*".

The Applicant re-iterates that the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) states that: "*If regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*"

In this instance, it had clearly been established that the Development accords with the Development Plan and there are no material considerations to indicate otherwise. As such, we would respectfully request that the application be approved.



Appendix 1 – Fenland Citizen Advert

Wednesday, August 10, 2022 www.fenlandcitizen.co.uk

Fenland Citizen

17

1,000 kids looking for loving homes

By SARAH CURRIE
sarah.currie@fenlandcitizen.co.uk
@fenlandcitizen

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service currently needs to find homes for more than 1,000 children and young people in care, including more than 30 groups of brothers and sisters, and more than 100 young people aged 11-18.

With fewer than 300 carers currently fostering for the local authority and around 90 new children and young people being referred to the service each month, the need to

find more local Foster Carers cannot be overstated.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service is a not-for-profit organisation whose priority is to find safe, local homes for the children and young people in its care.

As a child-centred service, the wellbeing of each child and young person is kept at the heart of everything it does, which will be reflected in the service's new digital campaign aimed at encouraging residents who are considering fostering to do so with their local authority.

As part of the local authority, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Ser-

vice prioritises keeping both the support it provides its carers with and the children and young people in its care local. This helps to create a local community of Foster Carers who can provide each other with additional support and helps keep the children and young people close to their friends, their schools and their support networks.

Coun Bryony Goodliffe, chair of Cambridgeshire's children and young people's committee, said: "We truly hope that this campaign will help raise awareness of the fact that fostering with your local authority is in the best interest of the children in our care and will help inspire



There are more than 1,000 children who need a loving home

more people to become Foster Carers.

"If you're able to join Tracey and our other amazing Foster Carers in their efforts to give local children and young people the best possible start in

life, we urge you to get in touch with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service."

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fostering Service will share a series of mes-

sages explaining the benefits of fostering with the local authority via social media and other digital platforms throughout August and September – search for the hashtag #ChildrenAtTheHeart.

MEERDYKE SOLAR PROJECT
TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Downing Renewable Developments is hosting an open community engagement evening to discuss the proposed solar renewable energy project, West of Marshland St James. The project address is Blunts Drove, Walton Highway, Norfolk.

The session will take place at West Walton Village Hall, West Walton, Wtbech, PE14 7EU on Monday 22nd August 2022, 6pm-8pm.

We are keen to listen to voices in the local community so please drop by to share your views. Refreshments will be provided on the evening.

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