



## **SETTINGS IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

BURSTEAD SOLAR FARM AND BATTERY STORAGE 'FREE GO'  
LAND SOUTH AND EAST OF GREAT BURSTEAD, BILLERICAY, ESSEX

NOVEMBER 2023



Burstead Solar Farm, Free Go,  
Billericay, Essex  
Settings Impact Assessment

# Burstead Solar Farm, Free Go, Billericay, Essex

## Settings Impact Assessment

LANDGAGE HERITAGE LIMITED

Company registration Number: 12993775

### Project Details

Landgag Heritage Project Reference	PR0071
Commissioning Client	Enso Green Holdings J Limited
Local Planning Authority	Basildon Council and Rochford District Council
Site grid reference	The eastern parcel: 569873, 193027 and western parcel: 568647, 191902

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# Burstead Solar Farm, Free Go, Billericay, Essex – Settings Impact Assessment

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## Non-technical summary

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This report has been prepared in relation to the land at south and east of Burstead, Billericay, Essex (the study site) on behalf of Enso Green Holdings J Limited. This land is proposed for development as a solar farm and battery storage facility with all associated infrastructure. This assessment has been produced to inform a free go planning application for the proposed development of the study site.

This report has been produced in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessments (CIfA 2014), as well as Historic England (HE) guidance on the assessment of the significance and setting of heritage assets (HE 2015 and 2017, respectively). The assessment provided in this report has been informed by a review of data from the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) held by Historic England, a site visit and walk over, and a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) which modelled the potential visibility of the proposed development in the surrounding area.

The setting and significance of designated heritage assets in the wider area around the study site has been assessed in accordance with best practice, to determine the potential effects the proposed development would have on the significance of those heritage assets due to changes to their setting. The assessment found that the proposed development would not affect the setting or the significance of any of the designated heritage assets in the wider area around the study site.

The assessment considered designated heritage assets within 5km of the study site for potential effects, in accordance with a detailed methodology for assessment set out in section 3 of this report. A total of 22 listed buildings and 4 scheduled ancient monuments are located within the search areas. This assessment concluded that the proposed development would not harm the significance of any designated heritage asset in the wider area around the study site due to effects to their setting.

This assessment also demonstrated that there would be no cumulative heritage setting impacts or effects when combined with the successful appeal of the solar farm at Crays Hall Farm, immediately to the east of the study site (Basildon Council reference: 22/00296/FULL) (3318171). This is due to the fact that this development does not impact any heritage assets in the search areas; therefore any effects are not considered cumulative.

On this basis it is clear that the impact of the proposed development on the heritage potential of the study site could be adequately mitigated, and the development made acceptable in terms of archaeological impacts. It therefore accords with the requirements in paragraph 203 of the NPPF and policy ENV1 of the local adopted and emerging Rochford District Council plans and of the adopted Basildon Local Plan.

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 The Study Site

1.1.1 This settings impact assessment considers land to the south and east of Great Burstead (Fig. 1). It has been prepared by Landgage Heritage Ltd on behalf of Enso Green Holdings J Limited. This land is proposed for development as a solar farm and battery storage facility with all associated infrastructure.

1.1.2 The site (hereafter referred to as the study site) is located at grid references – the eastern parcel: 569873, 193027 and western parcel: 568647, 191902. No development is proposed within the western parcel of the study site. The proposed development also includes a cable connection to a substation at the National Grid Rayleigh substation. This connection route will be referred to as the cable route.

### Site Conditions

1.1.3 The study site comprises 7 arable fields, while the cable route is located primarily along existing roads (see Plate 1 below).

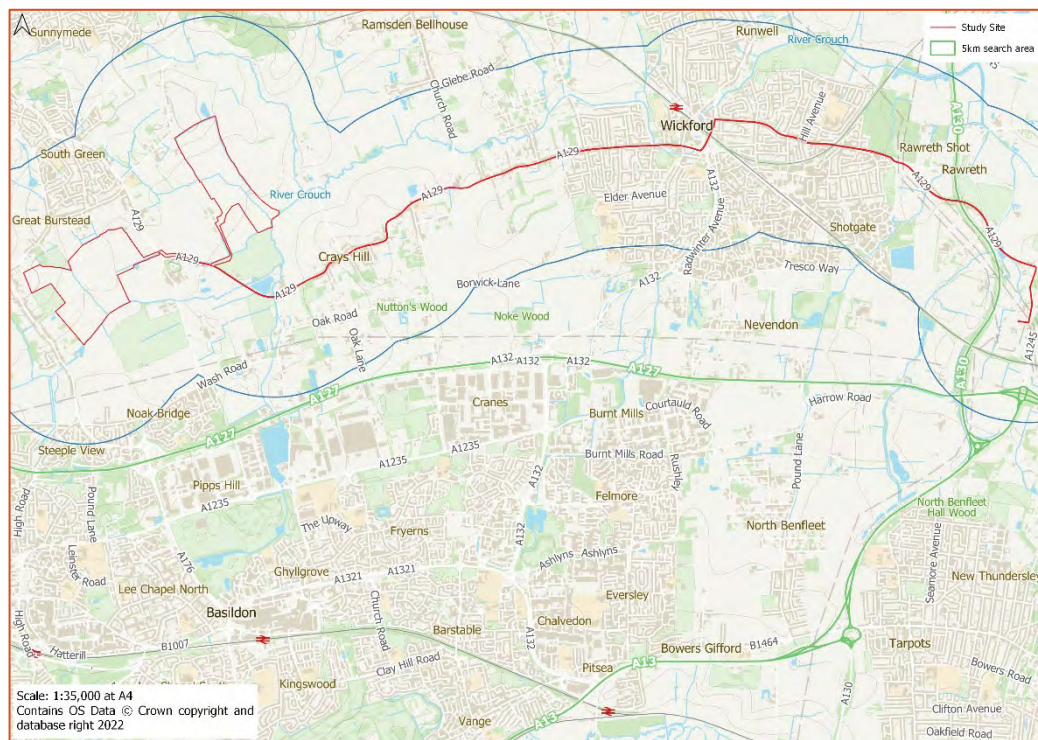


Plate 1 Study Site Location

### Location and Topography

1.1.4 The eastern parcel of the study site occupies a south facing slope, with a height above ordnance survey (aOD) of 53m at the northern boundary, falling to 15m aOD at the southern boundary.

1.1.5 Plate 2, provided overleaf, illustrates a topographic model of the study site which has been generated using Environment Agency lidar data.

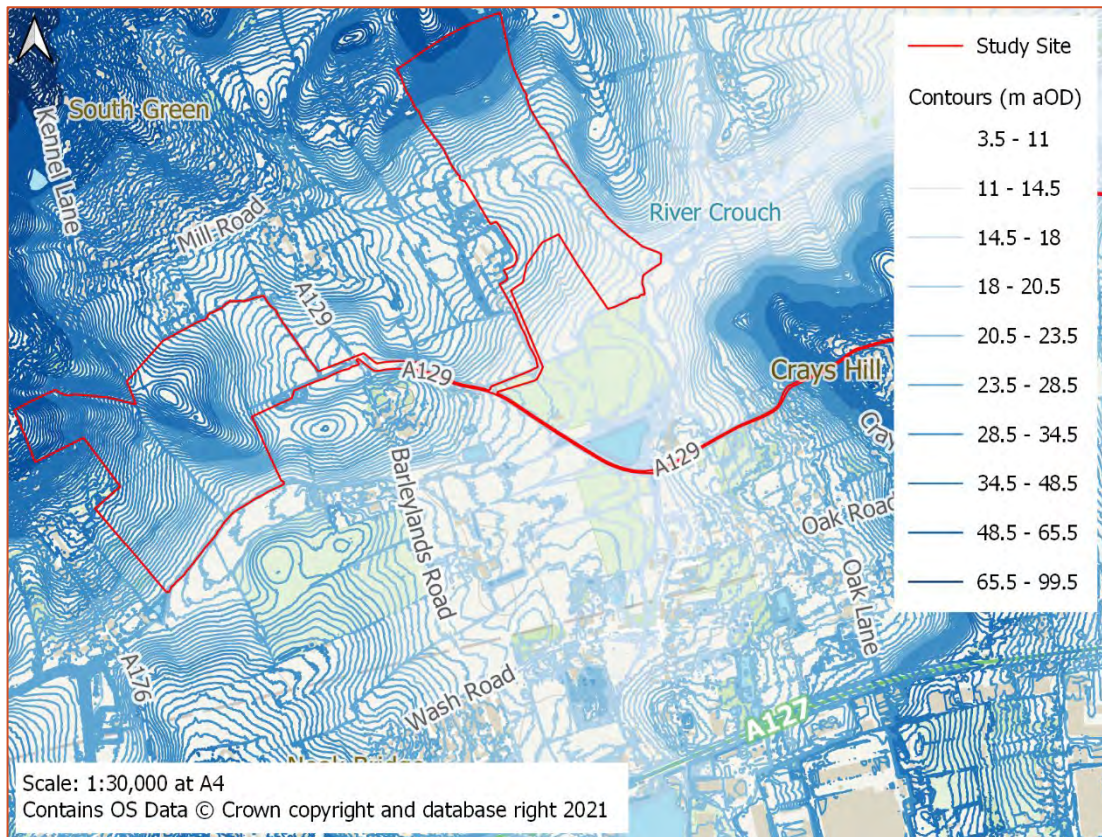


Plate 2 Topographic model of study site

## 1.2 The Proposed Development

1.2.1 The proposed development comprises a solar farm and battery storage facility, consisting of arrays of photovoltaic panels throughout the study site. The panels would be set at a maximum height of 3m. The panels would be supported by small, fixed pile foundations, which would be driven into the ground and would each measure 0.01m<sup>2</sup> in area. The proposed development would also include access tracks, small buildings to contain electrical inverters, transformers and batteries, fencing and trenches for cabling. Foundations for the buildings would be modest, and further details are provided on the accompanying plans. This free go planning application has removed any development within the western parcel of land in response to the refusal of a previous planning application (22/00411/FULL Basildon) and (22/00359/FUL Rochford). The extent of the development area within the study site is shown in figures 2 and 3 of this report.

1.2.2 The historic buildings and conservation advice, written by Sam Davis of Place Services Essex County Council, received in response to the previous planning application stated (emphasis added) (Appendix 1):

*The eastern parcel of land is located close to an existing solar farm, approximately 95m to the north-east. In addition, there is a live application for an additional solar farm to the east and north-east of the eastern parcel of land (along its east boundary; ref 22/00296/FULL). This application has not yet been decided. However, the cumulative impact and potential cumulative impact will be discussed within this letter...*

***...It is agreed that the proposals would not harm the grade II\* the Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm and the Church of St Mary in Ramsden Bellhouse, as well as the other listed buildings located close to this part of the site. This is due to the distance and lack of intervisibility between the heritage assets and site.***

*Currently there would also not be a cumulative impact with the existing solar farm to the north-east. However, if application 22/00296/FULL is granted the cumulative impact would be far greater, as it would mean that a significantly large area of agricultural land would become solar farms eroding the rural setting of the heritage assets, causing a low level of 'less than substantial' harm to the grade II\* the Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm.*

*The proposals (considering together both the western and eastern parcels of land) are considered to be contrary to Sections 72(1) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. They will cause 'less than substantial' harm to the grade II\* Church of St Mary Magdalene due to the impact on the contribution the site makes to the listed building's significance as part of its setting and also cause 'less than substantial' harm to Great Burstead Conservation Area. Therefore, paragraph 202 of the NPPF is relevant.*

1.2.3 The Church of St Mary, highlighted above in the response from Sam Davis, is closest to the western parcel of the study site – an area that will not be subject to development.

1.2.4 The cumulative impact of the developments will be addressed in section 5 of this report.

### **1.3 Purpose and Scope of Assessment**

1.3.1 This report assesses the effect the proposed development would have on the significance of heritage assets through changes to their setting. This assessment is made in the context of the statutory and policy framework set out in section 2. It follows best practice, and the approach to the assessment is set out in section 3. It has also been produced in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment (CIfA 2017).

1.3.2 Section 4 of the report provides:

- An assessment of which heritage assets have the potential to be affected by the proposed development, through indirect effects due to changes to their setting;
- An assessment of the setting and significance of the heritage assets which could be affected;
- An assessment of the relationship of the study site to the heritage assets whose setting could be affected, to determine whether the study site makes a specific contribution to their significance by forming part of their setting; and
- An assessment of the effect the proposed development would have on the significance of the heritage assets, including a consideration of any mitigation measures and residual effects.

1.3.3 Finally, section 5 provides a summary of the results of the report.



## 2.0 Legislative, Planning and Development Plan Framework

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### 2.1 Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979

2.1.1 The Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended) protects the fabric of Scheduled Monuments, but not their settings.

### 2.2 Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

2.2.1 The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 enacts special controls for the protection of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas and their settings. Of particular relevance to this assessment are the general duties set out in relation to listed buildings and conservation areas in the exercise of planning functions in sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Act.

2.2.2 Section 66(1) states:

*“In considering whether to grant planning permission [or permission in principle] for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”.*

2.2.3 Section 72(1) states:

*In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any [functions under or by virtue of] any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.*

2.2.4 The Act does not make specific provisions to protect the setting of conservation areas.

### 2.3 National Planning Policy Framework & Planning Practice Guidance

#### Introduction and General Overview

2.3.1 Government policy in relation to the historic environment is set out in section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), entitled ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment’. This provides policy for local planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on how effects to heritage assets which would result from a proposed development should be weighed and considered in plan-making and planning decisions.

2.3.2 The NPPF is supported by guidance provided in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which helps to clarify some terms and requirements within the NPPF. The PPG has a category on the historic environment, which provides specific guidance in relation to heritage policies in section 16 of the NPPF.

2.3.3 In paragraph 189, the NPPF describes heritage assets as an irreplaceable resource, which should be “conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations”.

#### Key Heritage Policies

2.3.4 Section 16 of the NPPF contains a number of key policies in relation to decision-making and the historic environment. These are briefly described below and are referenced to the NPPF by paragraph number.

- 2.3.5 Paragraph 194 provides policy on the level of information required to inform a planning application which affects the historic environment. It states that developers must describe the significance of any heritage assets which would be affected by a proposed development, and specifies that the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is required to understand the impact the development would have on the significance of the asset.
- 2.3.6 Paragraph 199 requires that decision makers give great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets when considering applications that could affect an assets' significance. It also makes clear that great weight must be given irrespective of the degree of harm which would result.
- 2.3.7 Paragraph 200 states that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset must be supported by a clear and convincing justification. It then goes on to differentiate between designated heritage assets, and designated heritage assets of the highest significance while setting policy in relation to substantial harm:

*Substantial harm to or loss of:*

- (a) *grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*
- (b) *assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional*
- 2.3.8 The NPPF does not provide a definition of substantial harm, however the Planning Practice Guidance on the historic environment provides guidance on how to identify substantial harm in paragraph 18a-018:

*Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision-maker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset's significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.*

*While the impact of total destruction is obvious, partial destruction is likely to have a considerable impact but, depending on the circumstances, it may still be less than substantial harm or conceivably not harmful at all, for example, when removing later additions to historic buildings where those additions are inappropriate and harm the buildings' significance. Similarly, works that are moderate or minor in scale are likely to cause less than substantial harm or no harm at all. However, even minor works have the potential to cause substantial harm, depending on the nature of their impact on the asset and its setting.*

- 2.3.9 Paragraph 201 then states that where a development would result in substantial harm or loss to a designated heritage asset the local planning authority should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed development would provide substantial benefits that clearly outweigh the harm, or specific circumstances apply.

- 2.3.10 Paragraph 202 specifies that where a development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, then this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 2.3.11 Paragraph 203 specifies that effects of a proposed development on the significance of non-designated heritage assets should be taken into account in the determination of the planning application, and requires that a balanced judgement is had having regard to both the scale of any harm or loss, and the significance of the asset.
- 2.3.12 Paragraph 205 requires that developers record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost, in a manner proportionate to the significance of the asset to be lost, and to make this evidence publicly available.
- 2.3.13 Paragraph 206 requires that local planning authorities treat favourably planning applications that preserve elements of the setting of a heritage asset that contribute positively to its significance, or better reveal or enhance the significance of the heritage asset.

### **Key Definitions**

- 2.3.14 Annex 2 of the NPPF provides a number of key definitions in relation to the historic environment:
  - **Heritage Assets:** A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
  - **Archaeological Interest:** A heritage asset which holds or potentially could hold evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.
  - **Designated Heritage Assets:** World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Protected Wreck Sites, Registered Park and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and Conservation Areas.
  - **Significance:** The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. This interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
  - **Setting:** The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
  - **Conservation (for heritage policy):** The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
- 2.3.15 In addition to the definitions provided in Annex 2 of the NPPF, the PPG also provides important definitions of what is meant by architectural, artistic and historic interest in paragraph 18a-006:

- **Architectural and artistic interest:** These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.
- **Historic interest:** An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

## 2.4 Local Planning Policy

2.4.1 Local planning policy is provided by the adopted 1998 (remaining saved policies) Basildon local plan and the Rochford District Council adopted core strategy 2011. This, for RDC, has the following policy relevant to this assessment.

***Policy ENV1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Landscape and Habitats and the Protection of Historical and Archaeological Sites***

*The Council will maintain, restore and enhance sites of international, national and local nature conservation importance. These will include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Ramsar Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Ancient Woodlands, Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Local Wildlife Sites (LoWSs). In particular, the Council will support the implementation of the Crouch and Roach Management Plan.*

*The Council will also protect landscapes of historical and archaeological interest.*

## 3.0 Assessment Methodology

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### 3.1 Scope of Study

#### For the Assessment of Setting Impacts

- 3.1.1 This assessment will also consider the potential effects of development within the study site on the significance of heritage assets, through effects to their settings. This will include any heritage assets within the study site, and those in the surrounding area, whose setting may be affected. The heritage assets which require assessment have been selected with reference to the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) database held by Historic England, as well as information held by the LPA on conservation areas and heritage assets.
- 3.1.2 A basic search radius of 5km from the study site boundary was used to establish which heritage assets required assessment for impacts. This is normally sufficient to ensure all assets which require consideration are properly assessed, as beyond this distance the residential development is rarely discernible to the degree that it would affect the heritage value of a view.
- 3.1.3 Designated heritage assets of the highest significance, comprising listed buildings and registered parks and gardens graded I and II\*, scheduled ancient monuments, world heritage sites and battlefield sites within the whole 5km search radius are assessed for potential impacts from the proposed development. This is because such assets tend to either be prominent or have heightened sensitivity to change before their significance is affected.
- 3.1.4 Other designated heritage assets, such as grade II listed buildings and registered parks and gardens and conservation areas are assessed for impacts within a standard 1km search radius from the study site boundary. This is because assets at this level of designation tend to have a lower sensitivity to change than higher graded assets.
- 3.1.5 Any non-designated built heritage assets will be considered for impacts within 500m of the study site boundary. This is because such assets generally have a low sensitivity to change.
- 3.1.6 Finally, not all designated heritage assets within this radius will require full assessment for impacts; as set out in paragraph 194 of the NPPF, the level of detail will be sufficient to inform the nature and degree of effect of development within the study area on the significance of the heritage asset in question. When a heritage asset has been excluded, a clear justification will be provided, for example if the asset is sufficiently far, and well screened from the study site.

### 3.2 Methodology for Assessment of the Significance and Setting of Heritage Assets

- 3.2.1 The significance and setting of the heritage assets considered within this report will be assessed using the methodology set out below. The methodology has been informed by Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning notes 2 and 3, which provide guidance on the assessment of the significance and the setting of heritage assets.
- 3.2.2 This section will therefore firstly summarise the methods set out in the Historic England guidance notes. This will be followed by a description of how the Historic England methods will be applied within this report.

#### Methodology for Assessment of Significance of Heritage Assets

- 3.2.3 Ultimately the assessment of the significance of archaeological remains and other heritage assets is a matter of professional judgement, having regard to the available evidence,

including research priorities, guidance, as well as any designation the asset may have. However, assessments of significance should follow Historic England's Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2, Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (GPA 2). This sets out that, when assessing the significance of a heritage asset, the nature, extent and level of the significance should be considered.

- 3.2.4 The **nature** of the significance refers to a heritage asset's archaeological, architectural, historic or artistic interest (NPPF annex 2), and to what extent its significance is derived from one or more of these. For example, a buried archaeological site may have high archaeological interest, but limited artistic interest.
- 3.2.5 The **extent** of the significance refers to the area in which the significance resides, which includes the setting of a heritage asset.
- 3.2.6 The **level** of significance refers to the heritage asset's importance; for example scheduled archaeological remains are considered to be of the national significance. For the purposes of this assessment, the significance of the heritage assets will be assessed to determine whether they are of the highest national, national, regional, local or limited significance. The distinction between heritage assets of national, as opposed to those of the highest national significance has been made to reflect the distinction made in paragraph 200 of the NPPF.
- 3.2.7 The assessment will be made with reference to the Principles of Selection for Scheduled Monuments provided in Annex 1 of the DCMS policy statement on Scheduled Monuments, Historic England designation guidance and research priorities set out in the relevant regional and local archaeological research frameworks, as appropriate.
- 3.2.8 The levels of significance used in this assessment are briefly defined below.
- **National (highest significance)** - Scheduled monuments (and archaeological remains of demonstrably equivalent significance), protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites.
  - **National** - Grade II listed buildings, grade II registered parks or gardens and conservation areas.
  - **Regional** - Archaeological remains which have considerable archaeological interest, but which do not meet the criteria for designation. Remains which contain evidence that would make a substantive contribution to regional research objectives. A historic building with considerable architectural and historic special interest, but which does not meet the criteria for listing.
  - **Local** - Archaeological remains which have clear archaeological interest, and which preserve evidence that would contribute to local research priorities. Such remains would make a limited contribution to regional research objectives. Locally listed historic buildings identified by the LPA, for example in a conservation area appraisal.
  - **Limited** - Archaeological remains which have limited evidence that would not meaningfully contribute to local or regional research objectives. A historic building which retains limited original fabric, and/or whose historic interest has been largely compromised.

## Methodology for Assessment of Setting of Heritage Assets

3.2.9 The setting of heritage assets will be assessed in line with Historic England's Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (GPA 3). This sets out a five-step process for the assessment of the setting of a heritage asset (Historic England, 2017, p 8):

Step 1. Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected.

Step 2. Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated.

Step 3. Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it.

Step 4. Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm.

Step 5. Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

3.2.10 This assessment will consider Steps 1 through 3 for all heritage assets which require assessment. Step 4 may be considered on a case by case basis as required. Step 5 is beyond the remit of the assessment.

3.2.11 The guidance also sets out the “twin roles” of setting in relation to the significance of heritage assets. It states that the setting can either contribute to the significance of a heritage asset, or provide an ability to appreciate that significance (Historic England, 2017, p 1 and 4).

### Application of methods within this report

3.2.12 A full assessment of the potential impacts and effects of a proposed development on the significance of a heritage asset must incorporate the approaches in both GPA 2 and GPA 3, as it is necessary to understand both the setting and the significance of a heritage asset in order to understand what effect a development proposal would have on the significance of the heritage asset in question.

3.2.13 This report has therefore been structured to ensure that each step within both guidance notes is undertaken consistently for each heritage asset assessed. Table 1, below, sets out where each step of GPA 2 and 3 are found within this report. The table is organised around the first four steps in GPA 3, as the assessment of significance outlined in GPA 2 forms part of step 2 of the approach set out in GPA 3.

Table 1: Summary of application of Historic England guidance within report	
GPA 3 Steps	Location within report and descriptions
Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section 3.1: Sets out the search areas used to determine which heritage assets may require further assessment.</li> <li>- Section 4: Describes any refinements to the scope of the assessment, and confirms which heritage assets require assessment.</li> </ul>
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section 4: Contains descriptions of all the heritage assets which have been confirmed as requiring further assessment, consisting of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o An assessment of the significance of the heritage asset, in accordance with the approach set out in Historic England’s Good Practice Advice in Planning note 2, and summarised above; and</li> <li>o A description of the setting of the heritage asset, and of the role the asset’s setting plays in its significance.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section 4: For each heritage asset assessed, there will also be an assessment of the role the study site plays within its setting and</li> </ul>

Table 1: Summary of application of Historic England guidance within report	
GPA 3 Steps	Location within report and descriptions
	<p>significance, confirming whether the study site forms part of or is within the setting of the heritage asset, and whether it is a positive, negative or neutral aspect of its setting and / or significance. This helps to inform the impact assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section 4: Provides an assessment of the impacts and effects of the proposed development on the significance of the heritage asset. This is undertaken in accordance with the approach set out in sections 3.3 and 3.4, below.</li> </ul>
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If appropriate, additional mitigation measures may be suggested to further reduce any harm identified in section 5.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Assessment of Impacts

3.3.1 As is confirmed by the PPG: “What matters in assessing whether a proposal might cause harm is the impact on the significance of the heritage asset” (PPG 18a-018). The NPPF uses the term “harm”, when discussing the impacts of a development on the significance of a heritage asset. The assessment of the overall impacts of the proposed development on the significance of heritage assets is evaluated by taking into account both the significance of the heritage asset, and the nature and extent of the predicted impact on that significance. If a proposal would change the setting of a heritage asset in a way which is considered harmful, it is essential that clear reasoning is provided on why the change would lead to harm. That reasoning must explain how the change to the setting of the heritage asset would either affect some element of its setting which contributes to its significance or hinder the appreciation of the asset’s significance.

3.3.2 The NPPF identifies only three levels of harm, substantial harm, less than substantial harm and no harm in the wording of the policies set out in paragraphs 200-202. However, as is noted above, the PPG states that substantial harm is a “high test” (PPG Paragraph 18a-018). This means that less than substantial harm can encompass impacts that range from just below substantial harm, down to just above negligible, which is a considerable range of impacts. Furthermore, in paragraph 18a-018 the PPG also clarifies that:

*Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.*

3.3.3 Therefore, to ensure the impacts are clearly articulated, where a finding of less than substantial harm is identified it will be categorised as either medium or low depending on the degree of harm. This results in a spectrum of potential impacts on the significance of heritage assets which ranges from no impact up to substantial harm. This spectrum of impacts is summarised in Table 1, below, along with brief descriptions of the terms used.

Table 2: Criteria for determining the degree of harm on the significance of heritage assets	
Level of impact	Description
Substantial harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Total or substantial loss of the significance of a heritage asset.</li> <li>- Harm to a heritage asset through effects to its setting, such that the significance of the asset would be totally lost or substantially reduced (e.g. the significance of a designated heritage asset would be reduced to such a degree that its designation would be questionable; the significance of an undesignated heritage asset would be reduced to such</li> </ul>



**Table 2: Criteria for determining the degree of harm on the significance of heritage assets**

Level of impact	Description
	a degree that its categorisation as a heritage asset would be questionable).
Less than substantial harm - medium	- Moderate harm to a heritage asset, such that the asset's significance would be materially affected/considerably devalued, but not totally or substantially lost.
Less than substantial harm - low	- Low level of harm to the significance of a heritage asset. - This could include the removal of fabric that forms part of the heritage asset, but that is not integral to its significance (e.g. the demolition of later extensions/additions of little intrinsic value). - Low level of harm to the heritage asset's significance through effects to its setting.
Negligible	- A change to a heritage asset or its setting that involves no loss of significance or harm.
No Impact	- No change to a heritage asset or its setting.

3.3.4 Assessments of the degree of harm on the significance of heritage assets are based on the extent to which the proposed development would affect the nature, extent and level of significance of the asset. By nature this process is not quantitative but relies on professional judgement. However, this judgment is informed by accepted, observable facts, such as spatial relationships and designations.

#### **Zone of Theoretical Visibility**

3.3.5 This assessment has been informed by a model Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), which provides an estimate of the extent to which the proposed development would be visible from the surrounding area. This has been overlaid onto a map which contains the location of designated heritage assets within the 5km search area around the study site, whose setting may be affected by the proposed development (see figures 2 and 3). This was used to inform the site visit of the study site and surrounding area, and to ensure that areas of potential intervisibility were not overlooked in the assessment of potential impacts.

3.3.6 The ZTV analysis was carried out by Briarwood Landscape, their methodology is available under a separate cover.

3.3.7 The site visit confirmed that the ZTV model produced for the study site represents a “safe” representation of potential intervisibility, with several areas indicated as tentatively intervisible, which in practice were well screened.

#### **Impacts other than visual**

3.3.8 Once operational, the proposed solar farm would not produce harmful noise or significant light pollution, or generate increased traffic during operation, or other impacts which could adversely affect these assets in a way unrelated to visibility. Therefore, where these assets fall outside the ZTV it is considered that the proposed development would not affect their significance.

### **3.4 Assessment of Heritage Benefits**

3.4.1 There are no criteria within the NPPF or in the PPG for the assessment of beneficial effects to the significance of heritage assets. However, the NPPF does make it clear that enhancements to the significance of heritage assets are desirable (paragraph 197) and that

developments that enhance the significance of heritage assets should be treated favourably (paragraph 206).

3.4.2 The National Planning Policy Guidance defines public benefits, and also provides examples of heritage benefits in Paragraph 18a-020:

*The National Planning Policy Framework requires any harm to designated heritage assets to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.*

*Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 8). Public benefits should flow from the proposed development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be visible or accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed private dwelling which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit.*

*Examples of heritage benefits may include:*

- *sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting*
- *reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset*
- *securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long term conservation*

3.4.3 Furthermore, there are often instances where the effects of a development on the significance of a heritage asset are multifaceted, with both harmful and beneficial effects. In these instances it is necessary to come to an overall understanding of the impact of a proposed development, which considers both positive and negative effects. To inform such a judgment, it is not sufficient to understand that an effect is beneficial, it is also necessary to understand the scale of the benefit in order to understand how a harmful effect compares to a beneficial one.

3.4.4 Therefore, where a beneficial effect to a heritage asset is identified it will be categorised as either substantial, moderate or low, mirroring the degrees of harm set out in table 1. Where a benefit is categorised, this will be justified within the assessment. The categorisation of a benefit will follow the broad criteria set out below in table 2.

Table 3: Scale of heritage benefits	
Level of effect	Description
Substantial benefit	- Benefits that enhance key elements of a heritage asset's significance to a substantive degree. This would include effects such as substantial repairs or restoration of original fabric of a listed building which is at risk, or works that allow a central part of an asset's special interest to be appreciated or understood where this was not previously possible.
Moderate benefit	- Benefits that provide a moderate enhancement to important elements of a heritage asset's significance. Examples would be realising the research value of remains of archaeological interest through archaeological investigation, modest repairs and restoration of key parts of the fabric of a heritage asset, and works that better reveal key elements of the significance of a listed building, either by removing unsympathetic extensions or by sympathetically modifying the building's setting.

Table 3: Scale of heritage benefits	
Level of effect	Description
Low benefit	- Benefits that either provide minor enhancements to important elements of a heritage asset's significance, or which benefit more peripheral elements of the asset's significance. Examples would include removing unsympathetic elements from the setting of a heritage asset which allow for generally enhanced appreciation of the asset's significance, or minor repairs and restoration of a historic building's fabric.

3.4.5 It is important to note that the descriptions and categories above are for guidance, and that assessments of benefits must ultimately be based on professional judgment which is informed by a thorough understanding of the heritage asset's significance, and of the effects of the proposed development.

### 3.5 Photography

3.5.1 Photographs taken to illustrate the scale of a heritage asset from a particular viewpoint have been taken with a Canon EOS 6D camera with a 24-105mm lens. The camera has a 20.2 megapixel full-frame CMOS sensor.

3.5.2 Research has found that images taken with a focal length of between 70mm and 80mm provide the most realistic representation of landscape features in terms of their scale within the photograph, with shorter focal lengths (i.e. 50mm or 60mm) found to exaggerate the distance of the object (Hunter 2012). While this chapter does not consider landscape impacts, it does consider views of heritage assets within their setting, including distant key views, in which similar considerations to those studied by Hunter's research apply (for instance, one of the receptors considered in the 2012 study was Urquhart Castle, a scheduled monument in Scotland).

3.5.3 Therefore, photographs of heritage assets within this assessment, such as a church tower seen from a specific viewpoint, will be taken at focal lengths of between 70mm to 80mm, to provide an accurate representation of the scale of the heritage asset within any view presented. Lower focal lengths (which provide a more wide-angle view) may be used in certain circumstances, for example in urban contexts or for general site or location photographs, to provide better context for a view, or understanding of the setting of a heritage asset, if appropriate. The focal length of the image will be provided with all photographs.

3.5.4 Care has also been taken to ensure that the images presented are of a good quality. Photographs are taken in clear weather wherever possible. Finally, photographs within the body of this assessment are provided for illustrative purposes only and are not sized within the assessment for viewing to scale as is done in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). If it is necessary to provide such a scaled view, it will be clearly labelled with specific viewing instructions.

## 4.0 Heritage Assets, including Assessment of Significance, Setting and Effects

### 4.1 Introduction and scope of assessment

- 4.1.1 As the development area would be restricted to the eastern parcel of the study site, the search areas used to inform this assessment were based on the boundary of that land parcel.
- 4.1.2 A total of 22 listed buildings and 4 scheduled ancient monuments are located within the search areas described in Section 3.1, above. These will be assessed below by type of designation, in accordance with the methodology set out in section 3. No registered parks and gardens, world heritage sites or registered battlefield sites were located within 5km of the study site boundary.
- 4.1.3 The cable route was reviewed, and the route does not cross any designated heritage assets. The cable installation will be within the existing road or roadside, and the works would only last a few weeks, after which the cable route would be restored to its previous appearance. As such it is not considered that the installation of the proposed development within the cable route would result in any adverse effects to the setting of any heritage assets, and it is not necessary to consider it further.

### 4.2 Listed Buildings

#### Listed Buildings Designated at Grade I and II\*

- 4.2.1 Listed buildings designated at grades I and II\* within 5km of the study site boundary have been considered for assessment. A total of 11 such buildings are located within this search area. These are listed in table 3, below, and their location can be seen in figure 2.

List Entry	Name	Location	Grade
1122255	CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE	250m N of study site	I
1338377	CHURCH OF ST NICHOLAS	1.8km S of study site	I
1122231	BURGHSTEAD HOUSE	2.35km N of study site	II*
1122250	CHURCH OF ST PETER	3.5km SE of study site	II*
1122251	CHURCH OF ST MARY	0.75km E of study site	II*
1122252	CHURCH OF HOLY CROSS	3km SE of study site	II*
1122254	CHURCH OF ST MARY	2.2km E of study site	II*
1122207	STOCKWELL HALL	1.6km NW of study site	II*
1170075	CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE	2.375km N of study site	II*
1170867	CHURCH OF ST MARY	1.2km W of study site	II*
1338399	6, 8 AND 10, NORSEY ROAD	2.4km N of study site	II*

- 4.2.2 Of these, the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Great Burstead (NHLE1122255), the Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm (NHLE 1122251) are modelled as being potentially intervisible with the proposed development. Therefore, these are assessed in full below.

- 4.2.3 The remaining listed buildings listed in Table 3 would not have any intervisibility with the proposed development according to the ZTV. Furthermore, none of these buildings is located within 2km of the study site. On this basis it is clear that the proposed development would not affect the setting or significance of these buildings, and it is not necessary to assess them further.

*Church of St Mary Magdalene in Great Burstead*

- 4.2.4 The Church of St Mary Magdalene is grade I listed and seems to have Norman origins, with most of the building dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (NHLE). The NHLE has the following description of the church (NHLE 1122255):

*A random stone rubble Church of Norman origin, the nave has 1 Norman window on the north side. The remainder of the church is mainly of the C14 and C15. The north and south porches and the South Chapel are early C16 additions. The north porch has heavy timber arches. The west tower has angle buttresses and a castellated parapet and is surmounted by a shingled spire. The west end, the former reredos of the Church of St Christopher-le-Stocks in the City of London, with Corinthian pilasters and a segmental pediment. The C18 alter rail, also came from a church in the City of London. There are C18 wall monuments, one to James Fishpoole (D 1767). The church has a fine oak dugout chest of the C12, it is said to have been used to collect money from the Crusades in the reign of Henry I. (RCHM 4)*

*Seating is C20 except for restored C15 benches in the south aisle. Fine crown-post roofs to nave and south aisle. North and south porches also have crown-post roofs. Remains of C14 and C15/16 wall paintings on south wall of south aisle.*

*Level of significance*

- 4.2.5 As a grade I listed building, the Church of St Mary Magdalene is a heritage asset of the highest national significance as defined in section 3.2.8 of this assessment.

*Nature of significance*

- 4.2.6 The significance of the church is multi-faceted, with high architectural and historic interest, as well as archaeological interest noted by the Essex historic environment record.

*Extent of significance, including setting*

- 4.2.7 The church is located within a churchyard, to the south of Church Street, with a number of historic buildings located to the north. The setting of the church largely consists of views of the building provided within the churchyard (see plate 3, overleaf), and in views along Church Street in which the tower is prominent. In these views and setting the architectural interest of the church, as well as its historic interest are best appreciated. The character of these views is that of an intimate village setting.
- 4.2.8 In addition to the views provided within the immediate vicinity of the church, the church tower and spire are also visible from the surrounding area due to the prominence of the tower. A number of views of the church spire are also afforded from the footpaths within the study site (see plate 4, overleaf). These longer views of the church spire provided only a limited appreciation of the architectural and historic interest of the church, however they do provide an appreciation of the church's prominence and central role within the local community over time.



*Plate 3 Looking W towards Church of St Mary Magdalene (28mm)*



*Plate 4 Looking north towards tower of the Church of St Mary Magdalene from within the western field of the study site (88mm)*

*Relationship with the study site and impact assessment*

- 4.2.9 While the top of the church tower is visible from the westernmost field of the study site, there is no intervisibility with the development areas within the eastern part of the study site. Therefore, the proposed development would not be intervisible with the churchyard, or with the immediate setting of the church, for example on key approaches along Church Road. While the ZTV suggested that the proposed development could be visible from some

nearby locations to the church, the site visit confirmed that in practice the intervening landscape is well screened. Furthermore, the proposed development would not affect views of the church spire from the surrounding fields. As such the proposed development would not materially affect the key elements of the church's setting, or the appreciation this setting provides of the contextual relationship between the church and the nearby historic buildings.

- 4.2.10 It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not affect the heritage values of the church. Key elements of the church's setting and significance would be unaffected, as would the church's prominence in the local landscape. There would therefore be no impact on the heritage asset, as defined in table 2 of this assessment.

*Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm*

- 4.2.11 The Church of St Mary is grade II\* listed and dates to the 15<sup>th</sup> century (NHLE). The NHLE has the following description of the church (NHLE 1122251):

*Apart from the bell tower and broach spine the church was entirely rebuilt in 1871 in random stone and flint, with a tiled roof. Some of the features of the C15 church are incorporated in the rebuilding. The frame of the bell tower is of the C15, weatherboarded and surmounted by a shingled broach spire. The frame has heavy brace timbers from north to south. (RCHM1).*

*Level of significance*

- 4.2.12 As a grade II\* listed building, the Church of St Mary is a heritage asset of the highest national significance as defined in section 3.2.8 of this assessment.

*Nature of significance*

- 4.2.13 The significance of the church is multi-faceted, with high architectural and historic interest, as is evidenced by its designation.

*Extent of significance, including setting*

- 4.2.14 The church is located within a small churchyard, at the end of Church Lane, to the northeast of a farmstead. The setting of the church largely consists of views of the building provided within the churchyard (see plate 5, provided overleaf), and in the near vicinity. The church is not readily discernible from the wider area. Due to the modest scale of the church's tower, and the presence of substantive vegetation around the churchyard, and also in the landscape in the immediate vicinity.

- 4.2.15 The churchyard setting is enclosed by mature vegetation, providing a secluded character to the setting, with limited views or appreciation of the wider rural landscape.

*Relationship with the study site and impact assessment*

- 4.2.16 While the ZTV suggests that there could be some intervisibility with some areas close to the church, the site visit found that in practice the church is completely screened from the study site. It is therefore clear that the proposed development would not be intervisible with the churchyard, or with the immediate setting of the church, or on any approach to the church.

- 4.2.17 On this basis it is clear that the proposed development would result in no impact to the significance of the church, as defined in table 2 of this assessment



Plate 5 Looking south at Church of St Mary, near Crays Hill Farm (29mm)

### Listed Buildings Designated at Grade II

- 4.2.18 Listed buildings designated at grade II within 1km of the study site boundary have been considered for assessment. A total of six such buildings are located within this search area. The wider area around the 1km search area was also reviewed and no additional grade II listed buildings are present that would require detailed assessment.
- 4.2.19 These buildings are listed in table 4, below.

Table 4: Grade II listed buildings within 2km of study site			
List Entry	Name	Location	Grade
1122246	SOUTHEND FARMHOUSE	675m N of study site	II
1122247	ELM COTTAGES	950m N of study site	II
1170931	BARN TO THE NORTHEAST OF SOUTHEND FARMHOUSE	675m N of study site	II
1275848	89, GRANGE ROAD	620m N of study site	II
1338382	COXES FARMHOUSE	250m W of eastern field of study site	II
1391396	OAK HILL FARM BARN	400m N of eastern field of study site	II

- 4.2.20 Of these Elm Cottages (NHLE 1122247), Southend Farmhouse (NHLE 1122246), no. 89 Grange Road and the Barn NE of Southend Farmhouse (NHLE 1170931), are all modelled by ZTV as having no intervisibility with the proposed development, and are also located at some distance from any areas of intervisibility. On this basis it is clear that the proposed development would not affect the setting or significance of these buildings, and it is not necessary to assess them further.



4.2.21 The ZTV suggests that the proposed development could be visible from the setting of the Oak Hill Farm Barn, however the site visit confirmed that in practice the barn is completely screened by substantive planting both surrounding the grounds of the building, but also in the immediate intervening landscape. Given this it is clear that the proposed development would not harm the significance of this building, and it is not necessary to assess it further.

4.2.22 The remaining buildings are considered further below.

#### *Coxes Farmhouse*

4.2.23 Coxes Farmhouse is located approximately 250m to the west of the eastern field of the study site (see figure 3). The NHLE has the following description of the house (NHLE 1338382):

*2. A C16.C17 timber-framed and plastered house built on an L shaped plan with wings extending to the north and east. The north wing has exposed timber-framing with plaster infil. The east wing is later. The windows are casements with lattice leaded lights. Roof tiled. (RCHM 10).*



*Plate 6 Looking NE towards Coxes Farmhouse (28mm)*

#### *Level of significance*

4.2.24 As a grade II listed building, Coxes Farmhouse is a heritage asset of national significance as defined in section 3.2.8 of this assessment.

#### *Nature of significance*

4.2.25 The significance of the house is derived from its architectural and historic interest.

#### *Extent of significance, including setting*

4.2.26 The setting of the house consists of the experience provided from the nearby road, as well as from within the grounds of the property. The house is surrounded by mature vegetation and hedgerows, limiting any experience of the house from the wider area, and also views out from the house to the surrounding landscape.

4.2.27 The ZTV model highlights areas of potential intervisibility with the proposed development, however the site visit confirmed that in practice the study site is completely screened from the setting of the farmhouse by substantive intervening vegetation. The areas of potential intervisibility highlighted by the ZTV are in fact the tops of tree canopies present around the building. As such the proposed development would not change the setting of the house, which is focussed on the immediate surroundings of the house. It is therefore clear that the proposed development would not harm the significance of this building, and it is not necessary to assess it further.

### 4.3 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

4.3.1 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within 5km of the study site were assessed for potential effects due to changes to their setting. A total of 5 scheduled monuments are present within this area. They are listed in table 5, below, together with their distance and bearing in relation to the study site.

Table 5: Scheduled Ancient Monuments within 5km of study site		
List Entry	Name	Location
1002162	Moat at Basildon Hall	4km S of study site
1002186	Moated site and fishponds at Botelers	3km S of study site
1016803	Chitham's Farm moated site	2.3 km NE of study site
1016861	Moated site immediately east of Heron Hall	4km W of study site
1019485	Multi-period site at Norsey Wood	2km N of study site

4.3.2 All of these scheduled monuments are located completely outside of the ZTV for the proposed development, and are all at some distance from any areas of modelled intervisibility.

4.3.3 Furthermore all of these monuments are located more than 2km from the study site. Given this, and the lack of modelled intervisibility with the proposed development, it is clear that the proposed development would not affect their setting or significance, and they do not require further assessment.

## 5.0 Potential Cumulative Effects

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### 5.1 Proposed Solar Development at Crays Hall Farm

5.1.1 Another solar development has been granted on appeal at Crays Hall Farm, immediately to the east of the study site (Basildon Council reference: 22/00296/FULL). This development would be located closer to the Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm, and also to the Church of St Mary in Ramsden Bellhouse.

5.1.2 The following is taken from Sam Davis of Place Services at Essex County Council's letter produced in response to the original planning application for a solar development within the study site (provided in Appendix 1 of this report):

*It is agreed that the proposals [of the study site] would not harm the grade II\* the Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm and the Church of St Mary in Ramsden Bellhouse, as well as the other listed buildings located close to this part of the site. This is due to the distance and lack of intervisibility between the heritage assets and site...*

*...However, if application 22/00296/FULL is granted the cumulative impact would be far greater, as it would mean that a significantly large area of agricultural land would become solar farms eroding the rural setting of the heritage assets, causing a low level of 'less than substantial' harm to the grade II\* the Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm.*

5.1.3 This assessment has demonstrated that the proposed development would not harm the Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not result in cumulative effects on the Church of St Mary near to Crays Farm.

### 5.2 Operational Solar Development at Outwood

5.2.1 This assessment has not found any additional effects as a result of the operational solar farm at Outwood, to the north west of the western parcel of study site. The Outwood Solar Farm can therefore be discounted for this assessment.

## 6.0 Summary and Conclusions

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- 6.1.1 This historic environment desk-based assessment considers land south and east of Burstead, Billericay, Free go, Essex which is proposed for development as a solar farm and battery storage facility with all associated infrastructure.
- 6.1.2 The setting and significance of designated heritage assets in the wider area around the study site has been assessed in accordance with best practice, to determine the potential effects the proposed development would have on the significance of those heritage assets due to changes to their setting. The assessment found that the proposed development would not affect the setting or the significance of any of the designated heritage assets in the wider area around the study site.
- 6.1.3 The assessment considered designated heritage assets within 5km of the study site for potential effects, in accordance with a detailed methodology for assessment set out in section 3 of this report. A total of 22 listed buildings and 4 scheduled ancient monuments are located within the search areas. This assessment concluded that the proposed development would not harm the significance of any designated heritage asset in the wider area around the study site due to effects to their setting.
- 6.1.4 This assessment also demonstrated that there would be no cumulative impacts or effects when combined with the successful appeal of the solar farm at Crays Hall Farm, immediately to the east of the study site (Basildon Council reference: 22/00296/FULL) (3318171). This is due to the fact that this development does not impact any heritage assets in the search areas; therefore any effects are not considered cumulative.
- 6.1.5 On this basis it is clear that the impact of the proposed development on the heritage potential of the study site could be adequately mitigated, and the development made acceptable in terms of archaeological impacts. It therefore accords with the requirements in paragraph 203 of the NPPF and policy ENV1 of the local adopted and emerging Rochford District Council plans and of the adopted Basildon Local Plan.

## 7.0 Bibliography

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## Appendix 1 – Conservation consultation response from original application

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*Inserted overleaf*



FAO:  
Planning Department,  
Basildon Council

Ref: 22/00411/FULL  
Date: 13/05/2022

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

### **RE: Land West of Southend Road (A129) and South East of Coxes Farm Road, Billericay**

The application is for: Installation of a solar farm and battery storage facility with associated infrastructure on land at Barleylands, South of Great Burstead on Land West of Southend Road (A129) and South East of Coxes Farm Road, Billericay; and installation of underground cabling from proposed solar farm along A129 (London Road/Southend Road, Wickford) to eastern borough boundary to link to Rayleigh Main Substation, Rawreth.

The site includes two parcels of land, one to the west that is south of Great Burstead and one to east that is south-east of Coxes Farm Road. The site also includes a section of cabling. The cable would be underground and its route would not cross any designated heritage assets. As the cable installation would be within the existing road or roadside, and the works would only last a few weeks, it would not have an effect on any heritage asset, and so this letter will focus on the east and west parcel of lands.

A 5km study area has been used to assess the impact of the proposals on heritage assets. Within this study area are 12 grade I and grade II\* listed buildings and 11 grade II listed buildings. Of these the grade I Church of St Mary Magdalene in Great Burstead (List Entry ID: 1122255), and the grade II\* the Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm (List Entry ID: 1122251) and the Church of St Mary in Ramsden Bellhouse (List Entry ID: 1122254) could be affected by the proposals through a change in their setting, as well as the grade II 124 and 126 Church Street (List Entry ID: 1122256), 120 Church Street (List Entry ID: 1170008), 89 Grange Road (List Entry ID: 1275848), The Village Stores (List Entry ID: 1338381), Coxes Farmhouse (List Entry ID: 1338382), Brick Farm Building North-North West of the Grange (List Entry ID: 1338400), and Oak Hill Farm Barn (List Entry ID: 1391396). The west parcel of land is also located close to Great Burstead Conservation Area.

### Planning Context

The eastern parcel of land is located close to an existing solar farm, approximately 95m to the north-east. In addition, there is a live application for an additional solar farm to the east and north-east of the eastern parcel of land (along its east boundary; ref 22/00296/FULL). This application has not yet





been decided. However, the cumulative impact and potential cumulative impact will be discussed within this letter.

### **Western Parcel of Land**

#### **Church of St Mary Magdalene**

The Church of St Mary Magdalene is a random stone rubble church, with Norman origins. It is located approximately 165m north of the site though its churchyard and cemetery are closer. The site has been part of the rural setting of the church for centuries and is part of a historic route from Barleylands Farm to the church, although the right of way now follows a different route than shown on historic OS Maps. Therefore, it is considered that the site does contribute to the significance of the Church of St Mary as part of its rural setting adding an isolated feel to the churchyard and cemetery.

The proposals will mean that the quiet, rural approach from Barleyland Farm will instead run adjacent to a renewable energy station, altering the rural feeling of the approach. In addition, historic views of the spire from within the site will be altered with the modern solar panels being visible in them. Consequently, it is considered that the proposals would cause 'less than substantial' harm to the listed building through the change in its setting. This harm would be a low level, reduced by that fact that the spire would remain visible in many positions, that the view itself is not included in the most significant of the church, and that the public footpath now follows a different route.

It is agreed that there will be no harm caused to the other listed buildings located close to the western parcel of land. The parts of their setting that contribute to the listed buildings would be unaffected as would any important views. The solar farm may be glimpsed from the farmstead containing the grade II Brick Farm Building North-North West of the Grange, but the change would be negligible and mitigated by the proposed planting as part of the landscape plan.

#### **Great Burstead Conservation Area**

The site is part of the rural setting of the conservation area, located close to the large cemetery that once served the entirety of Billericay and is noted within Great Burstead Conservation Area (November 2011) as being an open space. The solar farm would reduce the rural and isolated feel of the cemetery, although the impact would be somewhat mitigated by the proposed planting. The proposals would cause the lowest level of 'less than substantial' harm to the conservation area through the change in its setting.

### **Eastern Parcel of Land**

It is agreed that the proposals would not harm the grade II\* the Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm and the Church of St Mary in Ramsden Bellhouse, as well as the other listed buildings located close to this part of the site. This is due to the distance and lack of intervisibility between the heritage assets and site.

Currently there would also not be a cumulative impact with the existing solar farm to the north-east. However, if application 22/00296/FULL is granted the cumulative impact would be far greater, as it would mean that a significantly large area of agricultural land would become solar farms eroding the rural setting of the heritage assets, causing a low level of 'less than substantial' harm to the grade II\* the Church of St Mary near to Crays Hill Farm.

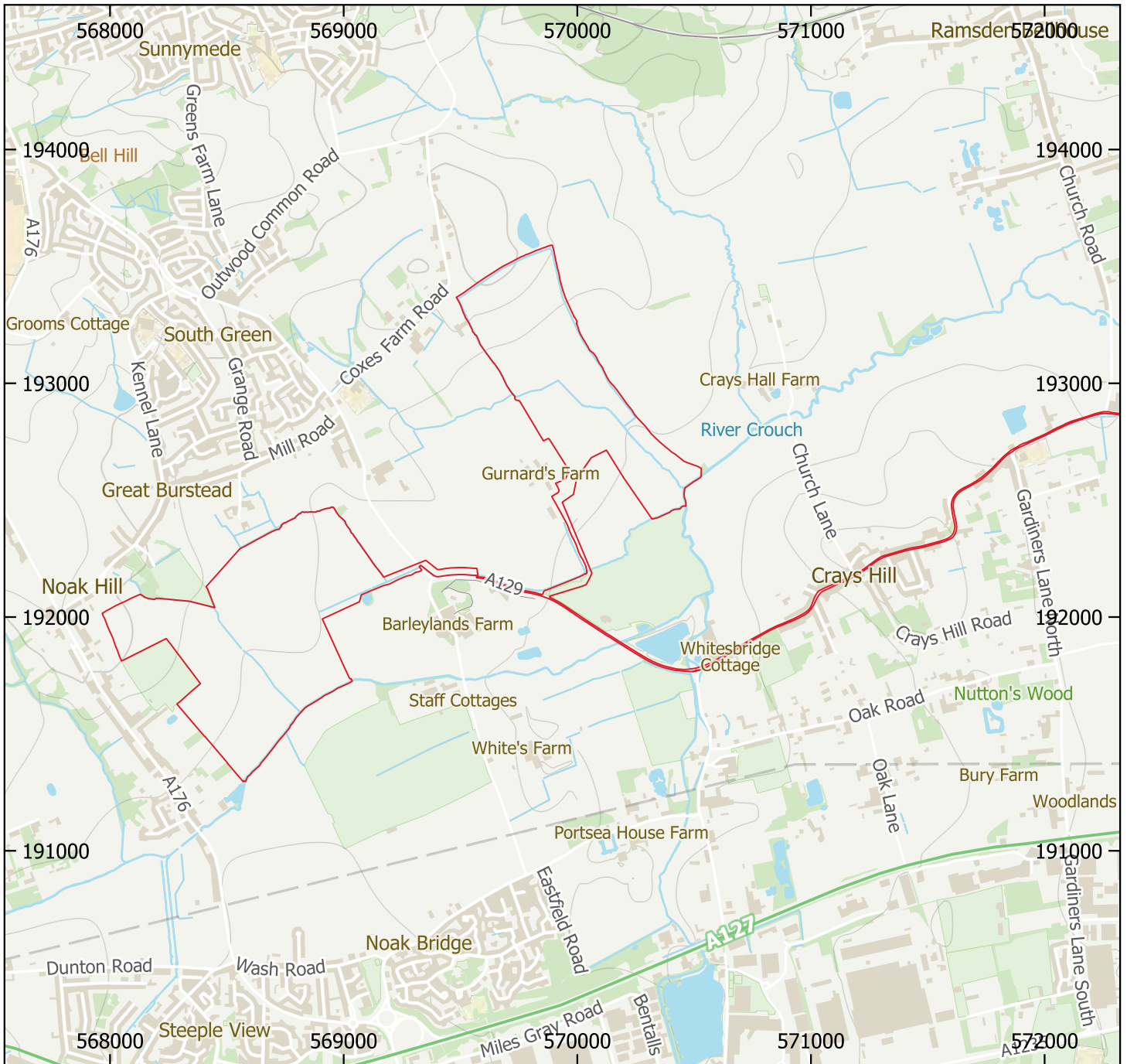
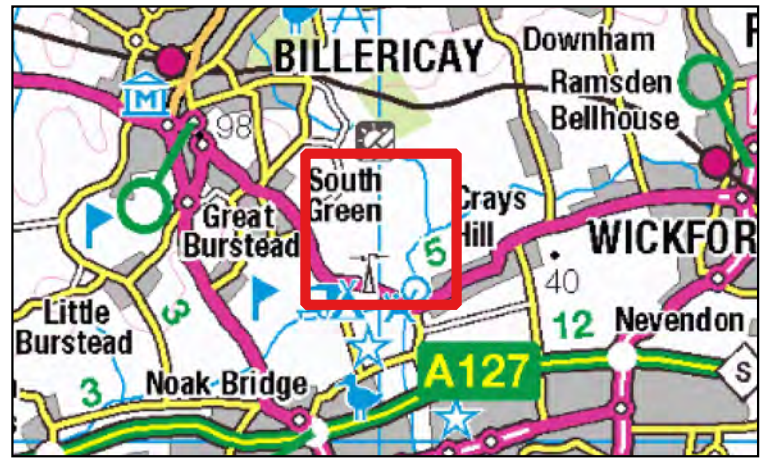
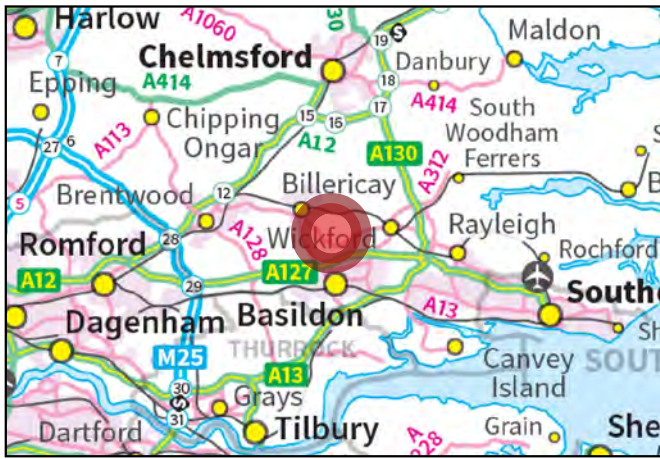
The proposals (considering together both the western and eastern parcels of land) are considered to be contrary to Sections 72(1) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. They will cause 'less than substantial' harm to the grade II\* Church of St Mary Magdalene due to the impact on the contribution the site makes to the listed building's significance as part of its

setting and also cause 'less than substantial' harm to Great Burstead Conservation Area. Therefore, paragraph 202 of the NPPF is relevant.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Davis BA (Hons) MA  
Built Heritage Consultant  
Place Services

*Note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter*



**Legend**

 Study Site

0 250 500 750 1,000 m



Scale at A4: 1:25,000



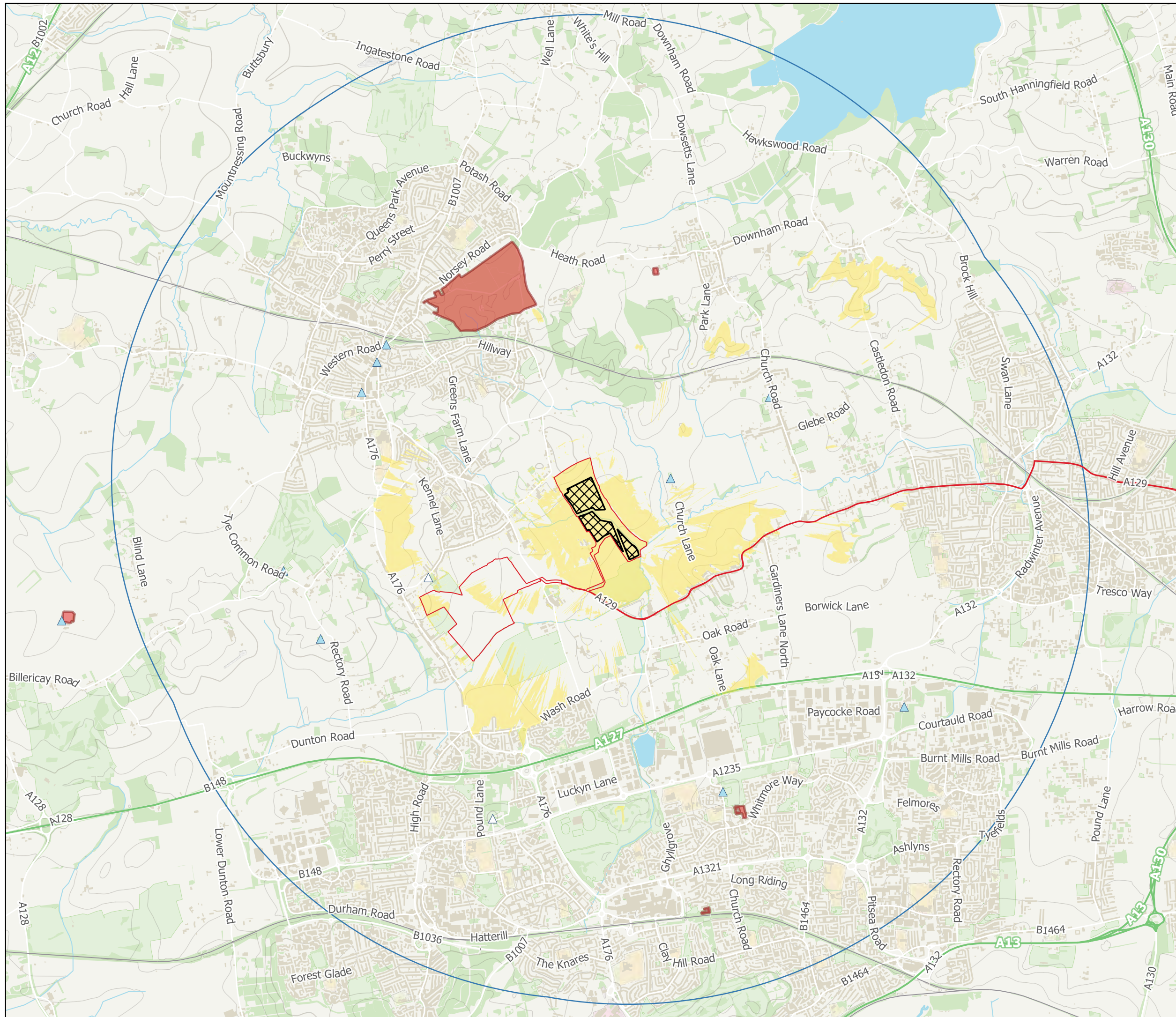
**Address:**

Burstead Solar Farm, Billericay,  
Essex

**Title:**

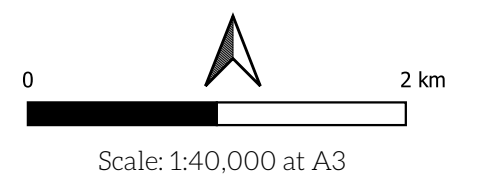
Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Project Number: PR0071 Date: 09 NOV 2023  
Drawing Number: PR0071-01



**Legend**

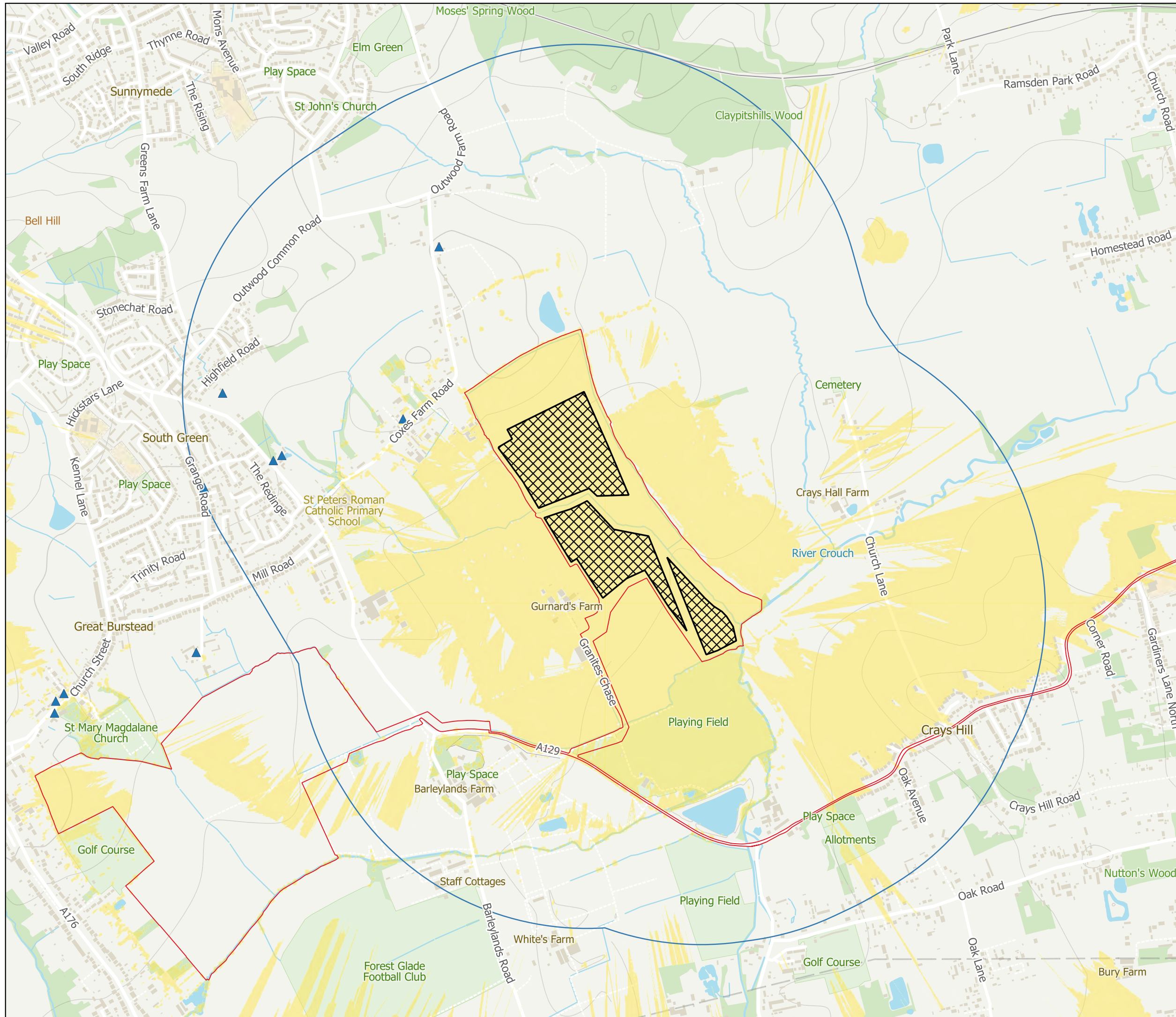
- Study Site
- Development Areas
- 5km search area
- Listed Buildings**
- △ Grade I
- △ Grade II\*
- ▲ Grade II
- Scheduled Monuments
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility**
- Areas in which the proposed development may be visible



Project Number: PR0071 Date: 09 NOV 2023  
 Drawing Number: PR0071-02

**Address:**  
 Burstead Solar Farm, Billericay, Essex

**Title:**  
 Figure 2: Higher graded designated heritage assets within 5km of the study site

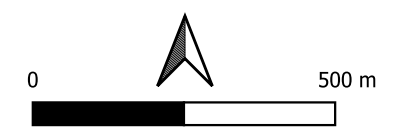


**Legend**

- Study Site
- Development Areas
- 1km search area
- Listed Buildings**
- ▲ Grade II

**Zone of Theoretical Visibility**

- Areas in which the proposed development may be visible



Scale: 1:12,500 at A3



Project Number: PR0071 Date: 09 NOV 2023  
 Drawing Number: PR0071-03

**Address:**  
 Burstead Solar Farm, Billericay, Essex

**Title:**  
 Figure 3: Grade II listed buildings within 1km of the study site