

# Milford Road Planning Statement

Proposed Solar Photovoltaic Array at Pennington  
Wastewater Treatment Works  
March 2024



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

JLL are providing consultancy services to Downing Renewable Developments LLP who are working in partnership with Southern Water Services Ltd ('the Applicant') to provide renewable electricity to the Pennington Wastewater Treatment Works (WTW).

To tackle climate change, Southern Water has a net zero target to achieve by 2050. Part of the strategy is to use renewable electricity to power their sites at source and thereby reduce their electricity demand on the local electricity network within the communities they operate. Southern Water's customers have told them that tackling climate change is important to them and the regulator Ofgem wants Southern Water to do more, going further and faster on renewable energy.

The existing WTW has a sustained high energy use to power treatment processes. The installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, covering approximately 1.8 hectares (ha) and generating up to 860 kilowatts (kW) of renewable energy will be directly fed into the facility to help reduce the current energy demand on site.

This Planning Statement ('the Statement') has been prepared to accompany a planning application submitted to New Forest District Council ('the Council') for:

*"The proposed installation, operation and decommissioning of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) array with associated infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement ('the Development') at Pennington WTW, Milford Road, Pennington, Hampshire, SO41 8QZ ('the Site')."*

## 1.2 The Applicant

Southern Water is the private utility company responsible for the public wastewater collection and treatment in Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, West Sussex, East Sussex and Kent, and for the public water supply and distribution in approximately half of this area.

Southern Water is a 'Statutory Undertaker' for planning purposes and as such does hold certain powers to develop operational land without requiring planning consent under Part 13, Class A - 'Water or hydraulic Power Undertakings' of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO). The Applicant has developed similar types of solar schemes on existing operation land under Permitted Development Rights, however in this instance, it is considered appropriate to pursue the Development through the planning process.

## 1.3 Site Selection and Feasibility

Southern Water own and operate a number of WTW and Water Supply Works (WSW) across south-east England and has been reviewing the suitability of existing assets to accommodate solar photovoltaic (PV) development to contribute to their climate change agenda.

The Site has been selected on the basis that:

- The proposed solar installation can be connected to the existing infrastructure connection points where minimal works are only required to be undertaken.
- There is sufficient space within the landholding to deliver a meaningful clean energy supply;
- The nature of the receiving environment is such that it can accommodate renewable development without significant effects;

- There are limited residential receptors within proximity of the Development and as such there is no significant impact on amenity.

#### **1.4 Site Location**

The Development is proposed to occupy land in the freehold ownership of Southern Water and forms part of the operational land associated with the WTW.

As demonstrated on Drawing Number DOWN-SW-MR-001 E - 'Site Location Plan', the Site lies on land to the east of the existing Pennington WTW, to the east of Milford Road, on land totalling 1.8ha in size.

The Site is bound to the north by agricultural land; to the west by scrubland and the WTW (this includes concrete structures including settlement tanks, aeration lanes, kiosks, and areas of hardstanding); to the south by an existing solar farm; and to the east by a Public Right of Way (PRoW) and

hedgerow along Milford Road. The PRoW (Footpath 84b) is located along the eastern boundary of the Site and enters the Site via the field access gates to land in Southern Water's ownership. A post and wire fence along with some sections of hedge separate the Footpath from the field.

The wider surrounding area comprises a mix of uses including ground mounted solar PV development, commercial development, Efford Household Waste Recycling Centre, NMS Waste Management Services, with areas of woodland and agricultural fields in all directions. The settlement edge of Pennington and nearest residential property is approximately 820m to the north-east, while the settlement boundary of Everton is approximately 1.5km to the north-west.

The Site is located within designated green belt.

The Avon Water is circa 300m to the west of the Site. The coastal fringe (Solent & Isle of Wight Lagoons Special Area of Conservation (SAC)) is circa 1.7km to the south-east of the site.

Site access is via the existing gate in the north-east corner of the field, which forms a junction with Milford Road. Milford Road provides access on to the A337 to the north.

#### **1.5 Proposed Development**

As demonstrated on Drawing Number DOWN-SW-NR-002 - 'Outline Design Layout', the Development comprises an array of free-standing solar panels to generate approximately up to 860kW of electricity from a renewable source to feed directly into the WTW to meet 25% of its annual electricity demand.

The solar panels would be arranged in rows comprising a series of panels facing west and east to ensure maximum on-site consumption. Each panel would be inclined to between 20 and 30 degrees with the lower part approximately 60-80cm from ground level, and the highest part up to 3m from ground level. The panels would be mounted on aluminium frames supported by upright poles which would be driven into the ground. No concrete foundations are required, and little excavation is therefore necessary. The distance between each row of panels would be between 4m and 6m to avoid the potential for overshadowing.

CCTV cameras will be positioned at regular intervals along the Site boundaries on 5m high poles, typically every 100 metres overlooking the panels only. For security 1.8 deer high fencing would be erected around the Site along existing perimeters where possible to take advantage of existing boundary lines

and features. This is shown on Drawing Number DOWN-SW-GEN-001 – ‘Generic Typical Equipment and Materials Details’.

Site access is via the existing gate in the north-east corner of the field, which forms a junction with Milford Road. Milford Road provides access on to the A337 to the north. A new access track would be created connecting the existing WTW access track to the site.

Access to the site for construction would be via the existing access gate from Milford Road in the north-east corner of the field. Construction of the solar PV array will take approximately 12 weeks. The panels and their supporting frames will be lightweight fabrications and hence heavy plant and machinery will not be required.

A temporary construction compound will be required for the duration of the works, to provide for office and welfare facilities, vehicle parking, and storage of machinery, plant, and materials. The temporary construction compound is to be located within the Site.

The solar array is expected to have an operational life of approximately 30 years and would be un-manned during typical day to day operation. It is expected that decommissioning will be controlled through an appropriate planning condition.

Appropriate landscaping will be carried out in line with the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (ILMP) demonstrated in Figure 1.7 of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal submitted in support of the application. Appropriate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will be achieved through the implementation of the recommendations of the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report (Ramboll, December 2023).

The proposed construction compound layout as well as a typical solar panel, inverter, CCTV and fencing elevation is demonstrated in Drawing Number DOWN-SW-GEN-001, ‘Generic Typical Equipment & Material Details’.

## **1.6 Overview of Transport Considerations**

### **Highway Network**

The site is accessed off Milford Road, which runs in a north-south direction immediately east of the site and joins the A337 (also called Milford Road) at a T-junction approximately 650m north of the site. Milford Road comes to a dead-end at Efford Household Waste Recycling Centre, located immediately south of the site. Accordingly, vehicles using Milford Road are limited to those travelling to and from the recycling centre and the Water Treatment Works itself.

The site lies south-west of the town of Lymington and south of the residential area of Pennington. The A337 is the main road running through Lymington and connects Cadnam (at a junction with the A31 off the M27) and Christchurch (at a junction with the A35). The site is therefore well-served by the strategic highway network.

### **Pedestrian and Cycle Network**

Milford Road, from which the site is accessed, operates a 20mph speed limit, is not lit and does not have pedestrian walkways on either side of the road. Where the road joins the A337 to the north, the speed limit increases to 40mph and 30mph to the west and east respectively. To the west of the T-junction, the A337 has a pedestrian path on the south side of the road and to the east has pedestrian walkways on both the north and south side of the road. There are no pedestrian crossings on the A337 near the T-junction with Milford Road, and the A337 does not have any dedicated cycle lane in the site’s vicinity.

## Public Transport

The closest railway station to the site is Lymington Town, which is located on the east side of Lymington, approximately 3.4km from the site by road. It has regular train services running to and from Brockenhurst and Lymington Pier. There are numerous bus stops along the A337, in Lymington and in Pennington, the closest to the site being at Haglane Copse (one serving each direction of travel) approximately 50m from the T-junction between Milford Road and A337 (and 700m from the site access point). Two bus services run via Haglane Copse, connecting Lymington and Bournemouth via Milford-on-Sea (X1), and Lymington and New Milton (119). Both bus services stop at Lymington Town train station and operate an hourly service.

It is considered that the site is reasonably accessible by public transport, however given the lack of pedestrian facilities in the vicinity of the site, it is likely that the majority of staff travelling to and from the site during construction and operation would do so by private car.

## Construction Traffic

Construction traffic would access the site via the A337 to the north. A new access track would be created connecting the existing WTW access track to the site. A construction compound would be located within the site.

Construction of the proposed development is anticipated to require approximately 40 deliveries to the site and is therefore expected to generate a total of 80 Heavy Good Vehicles (HGV) movements across the construction period. HGV vehicles would likely comprise 10-12m rigid trucks, 16.5m articulated trucks and other construction vehicles such as loaders, all of which can be accommodated on the surrounding road network. Construction is expected to take place over a 12-week duration. This would equate to a typical rate of around three deliveries per week, with a maximum of three deliveries on a peak day.

No more than 15 construction staff would access the site per day during peak construction. Consequently, it is expected that a maximum of 30 associated staff vehicle movements per day would occur during the construction stage (15 in the AM period and 15 in the PM period), assuming a worst-case scenario where no staff travel to site via carshare, public transport or active transport.

Typical site working hours would be Monday to Friday 0700 – 2000 and 0700 – 1600 on a Saturday. There will be no Sunday working, unless authorised by the local authority. All deliveries will take place within standard hours. Staff will be expected to arrive on site by 0700 and will typically depart between 15:00 and 18:00. This means that staff will generally arrive and depart outside the peak hours associated with the surrounding road network (typically 08:00 to 09:00 and 17:00 to 18:00).

Given the expected level of traffic generation, it is not anticipated that the proposed development will create any noticeable additional congestion or delay on the strategic or local road network. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will however be implemented as a 'good practice' measure and will form part of the wider Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). The CTMP will set out the mitigation measures that should be implemented during the construction stage to minimise traffic and transport impacts and associated effects on receptors (such as users of the local road network, the local community and the environment). Such measures would include:

- Minimising the number of construction vehicles accessing the site by consolidating deliveries;
- Minimising the number of construction staff vehicles accessing the site by implementing a travel plan that discourages single occupancy private vehicle trips;



- Management of deliveries by the appointed contractor, including scheduling deliveries outside of road network peak hours as far as practicable;
- Installation of a wheel washing facility, to prevent the deposition of dust, mud or debris on the surrounding road network; and
- Full induction and enrolment into a code of conduct for all drivers accessing or delivering equipment and materials to site, including but not limited to guidance on:
  - Traffic management arrangements;
  - Emergency procedures;
  - Licence requirements;
  - Vehicle operation;
  - Highway code;
  - Health and safety policies; and
  - Behavioural expectations.

### **Operational Traffic**

Once operational, there is expected to be a minimal number of vehicle trips associated with the proposed development. These would be limited to monthly maintenance visits. Operation and maintenance of the site would occur during normal daylight working hours.

In the context of the existing vehicle movements associated with the operational WTW, the operational stage of the proposed development would not give rise to a material number of additional vehicle trips or create any noticeable additional congestion or delay on the strategic or local road network. Accordingly, it is not considered that any mitigation in relation to transport and access is required for the operational stage.

### **1.7 Overview of EIA Screening**

Southern Water has sought to front-load the design process at the Site by engaging with the Council and key stakeholders. The feedback received across this consultation has informed design development. An overview of the pre-application consultation is summarised below:

- The Applicant previously sought an EIA screening opinion for a similar scheme on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2016. Hampshire County Council issued its screening opinion by letter on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016 confirming that an EIA was not required for the proposed development.
- On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016, New Forest District Council stated that the council had no objection to the installation of a 200Kw ground mounted solar PV array and associated infrastructure (planning ref: 16/11533). This application was subsequently withdrawn.
- The Applicant sought an EIA screening opinion for the Development on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Hampshire County Council issued its screening opinion by letter on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 confirming that an EIA was not required for the proposed development (planning ref. SCR/2023/0030).

The planning history for the Site reflects the above screening applications.

### **1.8 Benefits of the Development**

The benefits of the Development are outlined below:

- 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 Development would act to diversify the energy mix, promote security of supply for Southern Water assets through diversification and decentralisation, and accelerate the transition to a low carbon economy.

- The Development will deliver 12.79% net gain (1.35 biodiversity units) for area-based habitats. In addition, there will be an overall increase in hedgerow units (1.15 hedgerow units based on the current landscape designs and outline parameter plans).
- Solar power generates electricity with a limited impact 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.

## 1.9 Overview of Planning Submission

The planning application is supported by a number of technical reports which have informed the design process. These reports are referenced throughout this Statement where appropriate and comprise:

- Landscape and Visual Appraisal (Ramboll, December 2023);
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report (Ramboll, December 2023);
- Ecological Impact Assessment (Ramboll, December 2023);
- Flood Risk Assessment (Ramboll, January 2024);
- Glint and Glare Assessment (Metrica, November 2023);
- Habitat Management Plan (Ramboll, December 2023); and,
- Heritage Impact Assessment (AOC Archaeology Group, January 2024).

A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) (Ramboll, December 2023) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 has also been carried out and considers potential effects on the following designated assets within the study area:

- Solent and Southampton Water SPA 225 m south-west;
- Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar 225 m southwest.
- Solent and Dorset Coast SPA 2 km south;
- The New Forest SPA 4.8 km north;
- The New Forest Ramsar 4.7 km north;
- The New Forest SAC 2.1 km north-west;
- Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC 1.9 km east;
- Solent Maritime SAC 1.5 km south-east;
- Isle Of Wight Downs SAC 8.1 km south; and
- South Wight Maritime SAC 7.6 km south.

The HRA concludes that after the implementation of mitigation, comprising appropriate timing of works for construction/installation of the solar panels and cabling, it is not considered that the Development (alone or in combination with any other plans or projects) will result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the designated sites.



## 2. Development Plan Policy

### 2.1 Introduction

This section of the Statement reviews the key Development Plan policies and guidance which are applicable 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.

### 2.2 Legislative Background

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.”*

### 2.3 Local Development Plan

The Site is located on land adjacent to the operational Pennington WTW and as such the Waste Planning Authority (Hampshire County Council) is the determining authority. The site also lies within the district boundary of New Forest District Council as such this local plan will also be considered.

The statutory Development Plan comprises:

- Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (HMWP) (2013).
- New Forest District Council (NFDC) Development Plan, comprising:
  - Local Plan 2016-2036 part 1: Planning strategy (July 2020).
  - New Forest District Local Part 2: Sites and Development Management (April 2014).
  - New Forest District Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2009 (October 2009) (NB Most of the policies have been replaced by new policies in The Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy. No remaining policies are relevant to the Development).
  - New Forest District Local Planning Alteration 2005 (August 2005) (NB only one policy of the plan remains as a ‘saved’ policy and is still a part of the statutory Development Plan; Policy DW-E12: Protection of Landscape features as considered below).

The site is allocated as green belt within the Local Plan 2016-2036 part 1: Planning strategy.

The statutory development plan, together with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other statutory and non-statutory guidance documents have informed the design of the scheme.

### 2.4 Overview of Policy Framework

The Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (HMWP) (2013) is a joint plan prepared by Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council, the New Forest National Park Authority and the South Downs National Park Authority for all minerals and waste development in Hampshire. The

Plan forms part of the development plan for Hampshire and sets out a vision, objectives, Spatial Strategy, and policies to enable the delivery of sustainable minerals and waste development that is right for Hampshire up to 2030. The Vision is as follows, *“Protecting the environment, maintaining communities and supporting the economy”*. To achieve this vision, a key objective of the HMWP is, *“Helping to mitigate the causes of, and adapt to, climate change by developing more energy recovery facilities and the appropriate restoration of mineral workings.”*

New Forest District Council Local Plan 2016-2036 part 1: Planning strategy (July 2020) sets out a strategy and policies for the use, development or protection of land and buildings in the Plan Area for the period 2016 to 2036. The Local Plan forms part of the statutory development plan for the Plan Area (together with any Neighbourhood Plans and the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan). The Local Plan is a response to the specific issues facing the Plan Area and sets out several ‘Key Issues’ that the Local Plan must address if it is to be successful which includes, *“Key Issue 11: Meeting the challenge of climate change - How can the Local Plan respond to the risks posed by climate change including rising sea levels and increased likelihood of flooding, and help to minimise the harmful impacts of development activity and promote renewable resource use within the Plan Area?”*

New Forest District Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (April 2014) sets out the detailed proposals and policies required to implement the planning strategy for the area agreed through the Core Strategy 2009. The planning strategy (as set out in the Core Strategy) aims to *“protect and, where possible, enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the various parts of the Plan area, and to avoid adding to harmful pressures on the sensitive and nationally important areas in and near to the Plan area. But it also recognises the local need to provide for a limited amount of necessary new development to help maintain the economic vitality of the area, to provide for community needs and to make some impact on the need for housing which is affordable to local people.”*

New Forest District Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2009 (October 2009) sets out the planning strategy for the area up until 2026. Most of the policies have been replaced by new policies in the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy within only Policies CS7: Open spaces, sport and recreation, CS19 Tourism and CS21 Rural economy remaining saved. The Core Strategy sets out key objectives including, *“Climate change and environmental sustainability - To minimise the impact of local factors contributing to climate change, including minimising the use of non-renewable energy and natural resources; and to assess the implications on the Plan Area of climate change and develop appropriate local responses that minimise any harmful local impacts.”*

New Forest District Local Planning Alteration 2005 (August 2005) has now been superseded by the Core Strategy (adopted in 2009, Part 1 of the new Local Plan) and the Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management document (adopted April 2014). (NB only one policy of the plan remains as a ‘saved’ policy and is still a part of the statutory Development Plan; Policy DW-E12: Protection of Landscape features as considered below).

## **2.5 Development Plan Assessment**

Table 2.1 below discusses the relevant Development Plan policies per theme and provides a policy assessment.

Table 2.1 – Policy Assessment

Policy	Assessment
<b>Principle of Development</b>	
<p><b>HMWP</b></p> <p><b>Policy 1: Sustainable minerals and waste development</b> states, “The Hampshire Authorities will take a positive approach to minerals and waste development that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Minerals and waste development that accords with policies in this Plan will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”</p> <p><b>Policy 2: Climate change – mitigation and adaptation</b> states, “Minerals and waste development should minimise their impact on the causes of climate Change and where applicable, reduce vulnerability and provide resilience to impacts of climate change by: a. being located and designed to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the more sustainable use of resources; or b. developing energy recovery facilities and to facilitate low carbon technologies; and c. avoiding areas of vulnerability to climate change and flood risk or otherwise incorporate adaptation measures.”</p> <p><b>Policy 6: South West Hampshire Green Belt</b> states, “Within the Green Belt, minerals and waste developments will be approved provided that they are not inappropriate or that very special circumstances exist. As far as possible, minerals and waste developments should enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt. The highest standards of development, operation and restoration of minerals or waste development will be required.”</p> <p><b>Policy 26: Safeguarding – waste infrastructure</b> states that, “Waste management infrastructure that provides strategic capacity is safeguarded against redevelopment and inappropriate encroachment unless specific criteria are met.</p> <p><b>NFDC Local Plan 2016-2036 part 1: Planning strategy (2020)</b></p> <p><b>Policy ENV2: The Southwest Hampshire Green Belt</b> states, “The openness and permanence of the South West Hampshire Green Belt will be preserved with particular regard to its stated purposes and those of national policy for the Green Belt. Development proposals in the Green Belt will be determined in accordance with national planning policy.”</p> <p>NPPF 2019 (para 156) states that, “When located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy</p>	<p>The policy framework in the HMWP focuses primarily on facilitating new waste and minerals development proposals. While the Development is not strictly a waste development, it is directly related to the function of the WTW and as such ‘HMWP Policy 1: Sustainable minerals and waste development’ and the positive policy approach is relevant. The Development also safeguards the sustainable long-term operation of the WTW in line with ‘HMWP Policy 26: Safeguarding – waste infrastructure.’</p> <p>Similarly, ‘HMWP Policy 2: Climate change – mitigation and adaptation’, requires that waste developments demonstrate that they have been designed to minimise their impact on climate change and improve their resistance to its impact. The Development responds directly to this provision by the installation of clean energy provision. The Development would generate 860 kW of renewable electricity to the WTW, reducing the site’s environmental footprint by providing 25% of on-site electricity demand. The Applicant aims to use renewable electricity to power their sites at source and thereby minimise their carbon footprint, reduce their electricity demand on the local electricity network and crucially provide improved resilience to the impacts of climate change. No unacceptable impacts are identified within the remainder of this policy chapter as a result of the Development. The Development draws strong support from ‘HMWP Policy 1: Sustainable minerals and waste development’, ‘HMWP Policy 2: Climate change – mitigation and adaptation’ and ‘NFDC Policy DM4: Renewable and low carbon energy generation.’</p> <p>These policy objectives are also reflected in ‘NFDC Policy STR1: Achieving Sustainable Development’ which dictates that new development should make a positive environmental or other contribution to places. The policy support developments which result in net environmental gain and climate change adaptation.</p> <p>The Site is located within the green belt as designated by the New Forest District Council Local Plan 2016-2036 part 1: Planning strategy. The Development, within this specific location, is not considered to undermine the strategic objectives of the green belt which aim to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and includes (NPPF 2019 paragraph 143):</p> <p>“(a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;  (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;  € to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;  (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;  and  € to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”</p>

Policy	Assessment
<p><i>projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.”<sup>1</sup></i></p> <p><b>Policy STR1: Achieving sustainable development</b> states, “All new development will be expected to make a positive social, economic and environmental contribution to community and business life in the Plan Area by: Meeting most development needs within settlement boundaries, in a manner that is appropriate for and proportionate to the nature and size of the settlement, and where there is or will be sufficient supporting infrastructure and service.” Other key elements include consideration of landscape context, achieving an environmental net gain, and climate change adaptation.</p> <p><b>Policy STR3: The strategy for locating new development</b> states, “The strategy is to locate and direct new development to accessible locations that help to sustain the vitality and viability of the towns and villages of the Plan Area as the focal points of commercial activity and community life, and as safe, attractive and accessible locations to use and visit. Beyond settlements, the primary objective is to conserve and enhance the countryside and natural environment.</p> <p><b><u>NFDC Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (2014)</u></b></p> <p><b>Policy DM4: Renewable and low carbon energy generation</b> states, “The benefits associated with development proposals relating to renewable energy schemes will be given significant weight, provided that they avoid unacceptable impacts on: (i) land uses, including all nature conservation designations (with particular regard to any impacts on international designations within, or near to, the Plan area) and heritage assets, including the setting of heritage assets; (ii) the immediate and wider landscape, giving particular importance to impacts on the New Forest National Park and the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB; (iii) residential amenity both during and after construction; and (iv) the road network.”</p>	<p>The Site is considered appropriate as the Development is an ancillary use which supports the long-term sustainable operation of the existing WTW adjacent to the Site. The Development should be viewed in the context of the Applicant’s existing facility and the wider industrial character of the landscape which includes a solar farm, recycling centre and Waste Management Services uses. The Site is surrounded by existing industrial/energy uses including the WTW as such the Development will act as an infill development within this industrial pocket of the wider green belt. The Development will not result in any urban sprawl, encroachment, merging of settlements or impact upon any historic towns.</p> <p>The Site is of a small scale (1.8ha) in the context of the wider green belt, and is surrounded by existing industrial uses, as such the Development is not considered to detract from the special qualities and openness of the green belt in this location or cause any sprawl of built-up areas.</p> <p>The Development is an unobtrusive use and not permanent. The Site will be decommissioned and returned to grassland following the proposed operational life of approximately 30 years.</p> <p>As discussed further below, the Development brings significant benefits in terms of renewable energy generation and reducing the carbon footprint of the WTW which in turn will reduce the Applicant’s electricity demand on the local electricity network.</p> <p>The Development will also deliver 12.79% net gain (1.35 biodiversity units), resulting in a biodiversity improvement on the Site.</p> <p>The Development will result in significant environmental and renewable energy benefits which carries significant weight in line with ‘NFDC Policy DM4: Renewable and low carbon energy generation’. As outlined below, no unacceptable impacts are identified on ecology, heritage, amenity, or the road network.</p> <p>The Development will not undermine the special qualities and objectives of the green belt and is considered an acceptable use in this location as it supports the continued sustainable operation of the WTW. On balance, the Development is considered to be commensurate with ‘HMWP Policy 6: South West Hampshire Green Belt’ and ‘NFDC Policy ENV2: The Southwest Hampshire Green Belt’ and NPPF.</p> <p>Whilst not entirely relevant to renewable energy infrastructure, the Development will not conflict with the objectives of ‘NFDC Policy STR3: The strategy for locating</p>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/13-protecting-green-belt-land>

Policy	Assessment
	<p>new development', as it does not undermine the value of the green belt.</p> <p>In summary therefore, it is concluded that, in principle, the Development is in accordance with the primary policy, strategy and vision of the Development Plan.</p>
<b>Landscape and Visual</b>	
<p><b>HMWP</b>  <b>Policy 4: Protection of the designated landscape</b> states, <i>“Major minerals and waste development will not be permitted in local the National Parks, or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty except in exceptional circumstances. Minerals and waste development should reflect and where appropriate enhance the character of the surrounding landscape and natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the designated area.”</i></p> <p><b>NFDC Local Plan 2016-2036 part 1: Planning strategy (2020)</b>  <b>Policy ENV4: Landscape character and quality</b> states, <i>“Where development is proposed there is a requirement to retain and/or enhance landscape features and characteristics through sensitive design, mitigation and enhancement measures, to successfully integrate new development into the local landscape context.”</i></p> <p><b>NFDC Local Plan First Alteration 2005</b>  <b>Policy DW-E12: Protection of Landscape Features</b> states, <i>“Development will not be permitted which would cause the loss of, or irreparable damage to, open areas or other landscape features...which: a contribute to the character or setting of a defined built-up area or defined New Forest village by reason of visual amenity; and/ or b screen development which would otherwise have an unacceptable visual impact”.</i></p>	<p>A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared to inform the design process and address potential effects arising from the Development.</p> <p>There are no statutory landscape designations present within the Site. The Site is located within the South West Hampshire Green Belt. Very localised effects are anticipated on the green belt given the scale and size of the Development. However, the rural character of the green belt would not be unduly impacted. Moderate/minor adverse residual effects are anticipated due to the sensitivity of the designation.</p> <p>The Site is located approximately 650m from the New Forest National Park boundary. The LVA notes that effects on this asset will be very localised given the scale of the Development, the distance from the National Park boundary and the intervening vegetation that prevents intervisibility. Operational effects on the special qualities such as tranquillity, and beauty will therefore be minimised. Moderate/minor adverse residual effects are anticipated due to the sensitivity of the designation.</p> <p>The site is located within 131 New Forest National Character Area (NCA). A Key Characteristic of the NCA describes the area as enclosed 'back-up' farmland, mixed woodland, heath-associated pasture and dispersed farmsteads, villages and hamlets with small pastures and paddocks, enclosed by high hedgerows with many mature hedgerow trees. This NCA was scoped out of the LVA due to the limited intervisibility with the wider character area.</p> <p>Hampshire County Integrated Character Assessment designates the site as Landscape Character Area (LCA) 9A: South West New Forest Coastal Plain with the Landscape Character Type: Coastal Plain Open. This is characterised by an extensive and flat or gently sloping plain, with tree shelter belts, often associated with arable land uses. The scale of the Development, coupled with its existing landscape context means that the operational effects on the South West New Forest Coastal Plain Landscape Character would be minimal and highly localised, with minor adverse residual effects predicted.</p>



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	<p>Effects on the landscape fabric would primarily be associated with modest losses of existing vegetation during construction, which would be offset by new plantings that forms part of the embedded mitigation for the Development. Following cessation of construction works and all reinstatement landscaping works there will be very little additional change to the landscape fabric of the Site during operation, resulting in minor adverse residual effects.</p> <p>As demonstrated in Figure 1.4 of the LVA a total of nine viewpoints were considered as part of the visual assessment to illustrate the impacts on viewers from different directions, distances, and elevations, in order to judge the effect upon the landscape and visual amenity.</p> <p>The LVA states that construction effects experienced at assessment viewpoints would be temporary and of limited duration and would be superseded by the operational aspect of the Development.</p> <p>Minor adverse residual visual effects are anticipated on users of Milford Road during operation due to the screening effect of intervening hedgerow vegetation which will make views barely visible from the road.</p> <p>Major/Moderate Adverse residual visual effects are identified for Recreational users of ProW 149 passing the eastern boundary of the site, solely in the short to medium term until established structural vegetation has sufficiently matured and constrains views into the Site.</p> <p>Moderate/Minor Adverse residual visual effects are identified for the wider ProW due to lack of glimpsed views of the Site reducing to 'None' once intervening structural vegetation has matured.</p> <p>Moderate/Minor Adverse residual visual effects are anticipated for recreational users of the Byway Open to All Traffic (149 501/1) due to the screening effect of existing intervening vegetation.</p> <p>Overall, the LVA concludes that the Development would have limited and highly localised effects on the visual amenity of the area despite the relatively extensive ProW network within the Study Area, due to the level of screening and enclosure provided by existing extensive structural vegetation within the landscape and around the Site. Key effects on visual amenity would be confined to the ProW running along the edge of the Site itself. Such effects would</p>

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	<p>not be experienced from the majority of this right of way, however.</p> <p>Mitigation is proposed to minimise potential landscape and visual impacts. This includes, retaining vegetation across the Site as much as feasible to screen views and designed landscape features as set out in the illustrative landscape masterplan in Figure 1.7 of the LVA which includes hedgerow planting and tree/scrub understorey planting.</p> <p>It14 is accepted that the Development is anticipated to somewhat impact the landscape character, aesthetics and amenity of the Site and surrounds. However, the Development should be considered in the context of similar industrial features within the existing landscape including the WTW and a solar farm and overall, the Development would not alter the underlying characteristics of the surrounding landscape. The LVA concludes that following mitigation, the Development could be accommodated within the existing landscape without undue effects on landscape fabric, character or visual amenity.</p> <p>The Development is commensurate with the policy provisions of 'HMWP Policy 4: Protection of the designated landscape', 'NFDC Policy ENV4: Landscape character and quality' and 'NFDC Policy DW-E12: Protection of Landscape Features'.</p>
<b>Ecology</b>	
<p><b>HMWP</b></p> <p><b>Policy 3: Protection of habitats and species</b> states, <i>“Minerals and waste development should not have a significant adverse effect on, and where possible, should enhance, restore or create designated or important habitats and species.”</i></p> <p><b>NFDC Local Plan 2016-2036 part 1: Planning strategy (2020)</b></p> <p><b>Policy ENV1: Mitigating the impacts of development on International Nature Conservation sites</b> states, <i>“development will only be permitted where the Council is satisfied that any necessary mitigation, management or monitoring measures are secured in perpetuity as part of the proposal and will be implemented in a timely manner, such that, in combination with other plans and development proposals, there will not be adverse effects on the integrity of any International Nature Conservation sites.”</i></p>	<p>An Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) has been prepared to identify likely impacts on ecological receptors associated with the construction and operation of the Development and to provide details of mitigation measures where appropriate. A Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) has also been prepared to further assess any potential implications of the Development on designated sites.</p> <p>Eight statutory designated sites have been identified within 2km of the Site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solent &amp; Isle of Wight Lagoons Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) – 1.9km east.</li> <li>• Solent &amp; Southampton Water Special Protection Areas (SPA) - 225 m south-west.</li> <li>• Solent &amp; Southampton Water Ramsar - 225 m south-west.</li> <li>• Solent and Dorset Coast SPA - 2km south.</li> <li>• Solent Maritime SAC - 1.5km southeast.</li> <li>• Hurst Castle and Lymington River Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - 232m south-west.</li> </ul>



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<p><b>NFDC Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (2014)</b></p> <p><b>DM2 Nature conservation, biodiversity, and geodiversity</b> states that, <i>“Development proposals which would be likely to adversely affect the integrity of a statutory designated site will not be permitted unless there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest which would justify the development....Development proposals will be expected to incorporate features to encourage biodiversity and retain and, where possible, enhance existing features of nature conservation value within the site.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lymington- Keyhaven Marshes Local Nature Reserve (LNR) - 1.3km south-east.</li> </ul> <p>It is noted that fields on the opposite side of Milford Road identified are identified as Core Areas for the bird populations for which the Solent &amp; Southampton SPA and Ramsar Site are designated.</p> <p>There are 29 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) within 2km of the site, comprising local wildlife sites designated for a range of criteria.</p> <p>There are no priority or irreplaceable habitats within the Site boundary itself. There is no ancient woodland within the Site, the closest approximately 365m north-west.</p> <p>The 2km study area potentially contains other neutral grassland habitats alongside the following protected species: invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds, bats, dormice, badgers, water voles, otters, and hedgehogs/other small mammals.</p> <p>Embedded mitigation is proposed including the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which will include measures to reduce surface water run-off, noise, lighting, and dust impacts caused during the construction period, to avoid impacts on surrounding habitats and species. Further mitigation includes a Habitat Management Plan which provides detail on management activities necessary to ensure the proposed habitats reach their target condition (as estimated within the BNG assessment) within the first 30 years of creation.</p> <p>Additional mitigation includes appropriate timing of works outside of the wintering bird season to ensure that significant negative effects on the designated sites are avoided and checking vegetation for the presence of nesting birds by an ecologist prior to removal during the nesting bird season.</p> <p>Additional enhancement measures are proposed for protected species including creation of reptile/amphibian hibernacula, deadwood piles and insect hotels.</p> <p>The HRA concludes that in the absence of mitigation, a likely significant effect on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA is anticipated during the construction stage, due to increased disturbance pressure on qualifying features (specifically over-wintering brent geese, teal and black-tailed godwit)</p>

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	<p>using fields adjacent to the Site, which have been identified as Core Areas in the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy. However, after the implementation of mitigation (comprising appropriate timing of works for construction / installation of solar panels and cabling), it is not considered that the Development will result in an adverse effect on the integrity of relevant designated sites.</p> <p>Following mitigation, no adverse residual effects have been identified with regards to any designated sites, habitat, or species as a result of the Development.</p> <p>Positive residual impacts are identified on the Site for habitats, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, breeding birds and dormice as a result of the Development.</p> <p>The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report concludes that based on the current landscape designs and future aspirations of the Site, with recommendations from a suitably qualified ecologist, it would be possible to achieve 12.79% net gain (1.35 biodiversity units) for area-based habitats. There are zero baseline units for hedgerows so the percentage net gain cannot be calculated however, there is an increase in hedgerow units of 1.15 within the Site. This represents an enhancement and goes beyond the baseline policy requirement.</p> <p>In summary, by specifically designing the scheme around potential effects on ecological receptors and committing to a series of biodiversity enhancement and mitigation measures, the Applicant has clearly demonstrated that the Development will protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the natural environment of the Site and its surrounds. No significant adverse residual ecological effects have been identified and beneficial residual effects will be delivered for habitats and several protected species.</p> <p>The Development therefore reflects the key aspirations of the relevant ecology policies; 'HMWP Policy 3: Protection of habitats and species', 'NFDC Policy ENV1 Mitigating the impacts of development on International Nature Conservation sites', and 'NFDC Policy: DM2 Nature conservation, biodiversity, and geodiversity'.</p>
<p><b>Transport</b></p> <p><b>HMWP</b>  <b>Policy 12: Managing traffic states, "Minerals and waste development should have a safe and suitable access to the highway network and where possible"</b></p>	<p>The main transport impacts will occur during the construction stage. It is expected that approximately 40 HGV deliveries over the 12-week construction period, arriving at an average rate of three deliveries per week, with a maximum of three deliveries on a peak day.</p>

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<p><i>minimise the impact of its generated traffic through the use of alternative methods of transportation.”</i></p> <p><b><u>NFDC Local Plan 2016-2036 part 1: Planning strategy (2020)</u></b></p> <p><b>Policy CCC2: Safe and sustainable travel</b> states, <i>“New development will be required to... vi. Provide, or contribute proportionately to the provision of, any highways or public transport measures necessary to enable the development to be accommodated in a safe and sustainable manner.”</i></p>	<p>The Site is well-located to enable vehicle access during the construction stage, being within close proximity to the strategic road network, and having suitable HGV access routes via local roads. The Site is considered to be reasonably accessible by public transport, however given the lack of pedestrian facilities in the vicinity, it is likely that the majority of staff travelling to and from the Site during construction and operation would do so by private car.</p> <p>No more than 15 construction staff would access the site per day during peak construction. Consequently, it is expected that a maximum of 30 associated staff vehicle movements per day would occur during the construction stage, as a worst-case scenario.</p> <p>Typical site working hours would be Monday to Friday 07:00 – 20:00 and 07:00 – 16:00 on a Saturday, with no Sunday working, unless authorised by the local authority. All deliveries will take place within standard hours. Generally, staff would arrive and depart outside the peak hours associated with the surrounding road network.</p> <p>It is not anticipated that the Development will create any noticeable additional congestion or delay on the strategic or local road network during construction. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be implemented as a ‘good practice’ measure and will set out mitigation measures including minimising the number of construction vehicles and staff accessing the Site by implementing a travel plan and consolidating deliveries, management of deliveries by an appointed contractor and installation of a wheel washing facility to prevent debris on the surrounding road network.</p> <p>During operation, the Development will be largely autonomous with no resident staff required. Vehicle trips would be limited to monthly maintenance visits during normal daylight working hours. During operation, the Development would not give rise to a material number of additional vehicle trips or create any noticeable additional congestion or delay on the strategic or local road network and accordingly no mitigation in relation to transport and access is required for the operational stage.</p> <p>It is clear therefore that the Development can be accommodated without detriment to the local road network during the construction and operation of the development. The CTMP would minimise and manage any traffic impacts during the construction phase.</p> <p>While operational traffic movements will be limited as a result of the Development, it has been demonstrated that any potential construction traffic impacts on the road network will be appropriately mitigated in line with a robust CTMP. The Development is considered to comply with ‘HMWP Policy 12: Managing traffic’ and NFDC Policy CCC2: Safe and</p>

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	sustainable travel', insofar as relevant to renewable energy infrastructure with no public access.
<b>Flood Risk</b>	
<p><b>HMWP</b></p> <p><b>Policy 11: Flood risk and prevention</b> states, <i>“Minerals and waste development in areas at risk of flooding should: a. not result in an increased flood risk elsewhere and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall; b. incorporate flood protection c. have site drainage systems d. not increase net surface water run-off; and e. if appropriate, incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems to manage surface water drainage, with whole-life management and maintenance arrangements.”</i></p> <p>NFDC will apply national flooding policy guidance set out in NPPF.</p>	<p>A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been undertaken to assess any potential flooding risks as a result of the Development. The Site is located in Flood Zone 1 with a low probability for fluvial and tidal flooding. The Site is also assessed as having a low risk of surface water flooding.</p> <p>The Development would be constructed such that solar panels are raised from the ground on stilts circa 0.6m above ground level, and underground cabling would be sealed and waterproofed. As such, the FRA states that the Development is not considered vulnerable to minor flooding and no further mitigation would be required at the Site.</p> <p>The FRA notes that no impermeable surfacing is proposed at the Site and runoff from PV panels would be to the underlying grassed surface. Therefore, the Proposed Development would not lead to increased rates of surface water runoff and would not increase flood risk elsewhere.</p> <p>Overall, the Site is located in a low-risk river, sea and surface water flooding zone and has been carefully designed, including raised infrastructure, to ensure that no increase in flood risk would occur elsewhere. The Development is considered commensurate with the flood risk policy guidance within 'HMWP Policy 11 Flood risk and prevention' and NPPF.</p>
<b>Heritage</b>	
<p><b>HMWP</b></p> <p><b>Policy 7: Conserving the historic environment and heritage assets</b> states, <i>“Minerals and waste development should protect and, wherever possible, enhance Hampshire’s historic environment and heritage assets, both designated and non-designated, including the settings of these sites.”</i></p> <p><b>NFDC NFDC Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (2014)</b></p> <p><b>Policy DM1 Heritage and Conservation</b> states, <i>“Development proposals and other initiatives should conserve and seek to enhance the historic environment and heritage assets, with particular regard to local character, setting, management and the historic significance and context of heritage assets.”</i></p>	<p>A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) has been prepared in support of the planning submission.</p> <p>The HIA concludes that given the modern activity within the Site; including agriculture, quarry and landfill uses, there is no potential for remains of any period to survive within the Site, and no potential for the Development to cause further direct impacts on archaeological remains.</p> <p>14 Grade II Listed buildings are identified within circa 1km of the Site. While intervisibility has been established between Lower Pennington Farmhouse (Asset 11) and the Site, the HIA assessment concluded that visibility would be very limited, and the Development would not diminish the significance of the setting of the Listed Building which would remain legible as an incomplete example of a traditional farmstead within an evolving, but still largely rural, setting. It is considered the Development would result in a Neutral impact upon the setting of the Lower Pennington Farmhouse (Asset 11). There is no potential intervisibility with the remaining listed buildings within the study area, and therefore, no impacts upon their settings.</p> <p>Overall, it is concluded that there is no potential for archaeological remains to survive on the Site and that there</p>

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	<p>would be no harm to the settings of any nearby designated heritage assets. As such no mitigation is required. The Development is considered acceptable against 'HMWP Policy 7 Conserving the historic environment and heritage assets' and 'NFDC Policy DM1 Heritage and Conservation'.</p>
<b>Other</b>	
<p><b>HMWP</b></p> <p><b>Policy 10: Protecting public health, safety and amenity</b> states, <i>“Minerals and waste development should not cause adverse public health and safety impacts, and unacceptable adverse amenity impacts. Minerals and waste development should not: a. release emissions to the atmosphere, land or water (above appropriate standards); b. have an unacceptable impact on human health; c. cause unacceptable noise, dust, lighting, vibration or odour; d. have an unacceptable visual impact; e. potentially endanger aircraft from bird strike and structures; f. cause an unacceptable impact on public safety safeguarding zones... h. cause an unacceptable impact on coastal, surface or groundwaters; i. cause an unacceptable impact on public strategic infrastructure; j. cause an unacceptable cumulative impact arising from the interactions between minerals and waste developments.”</i></p> <p><b>Policy 13: High-quality design of minerals and waste development</b> states, <i>“Minerals and waste development should not cause an unacceptable adverse visual impact and should maintain and enhance the distinctive character of the landscape and townscape. The design of appropriate built facilities for minerals and waste development should be of a high-quality and contribute to achieving sustainable development.”</i></p> <p><b>NFDC Local Plan 2016-2036 part 1: Planning strategy (2020)</b></p> <p><b>Policy CCC1: Safe and healthy communities</b> states, <i>“Development should not result in pollution or hazards which prejudice the health and safety of communities and their environments, including air quality and the water environment. Where necessary to enable development to take place, appropriate measures will be required to prevent, control, mitigate or offset the impacts or risks of development on community health and safety.”</i></p>	<p>Relevant amenity and public safety considerations are outlined below.</p> <p>There will be some noise during construction, however this will be temporary, and all operations will be carried out during working hours. Operation of the solar panels is limited to daylight hours. Operational noise will also be limited to this time and is likely only to occur from the inverter which will be located within an acoustically insulated structure which will limit noise from the inverter to 35db at the site boundaries. The noise will not be perceptible over background at the nearest sensitive receptor. No significant noise impacts are therefore anticipated.</p> <p>A Glint and Glare Assessment has been undertaken to assess the effects caused by the reflection of sunlight from the solar PV panels on residential receptors, road/rail infrastructure and aerodromes/aviation receptors. The assessment concludes that no glint and glare receptors have been identified within the respective study area and as such there is no reasonable prospect of adverse glint and glare impacts.</p> <p>Flood risk is fully addressed above. The Site is in a low-risk flood area and no adverse flooding or water environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of the Development.</p> <p>In terms of air quality, no emissions will be produced during operation.</p> <p>The potential for pollution events occurring during construction would be addressed through the CEMP and no adverse pollution impacts are anticipated.</p> <p>The development would not generate waste when operational. Minimal waste will be generated during construction, but this is not considered to be significant and would be addressed in the CEMP.</p> <p>No risk to human health has been identified for the Development.</p> <p>Overall, the Development is considered to be commensurate with the relevant amenity and public safety elements of 'HMWP Policy 10 Protecting public health, safety and amenity', 'NFDC Policy CCC1 Safe and healthy communities' and 'NFDC Policy ENV3: Design quality and local distinctiveness', insofar as it is relevant.</p> <p>With regards to design, the nature and characteristics of the Development is such that it is not designed or intended for</p>

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<p><b>Policy ENV3: Design quality and local distinctiveness</b> states, <i>“All development should achieve high quality design that contributes positively to local distinctiveness, quality of life and enhances the character and identity of the locality... New development will be required to: ii. Avoid unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion or overbearing impact, overlooking, shading, noise and light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character or residential amenity”</i>.</p>	<p>use by the public, nor would it be accessible to the public. Hence the design principles of the solar development have been largely technically driven, however certain design principles have been adopted to ensure the Development is sensitively sited and designed. As discussed above, the LVA concludes that following mitigation, the Development could be accommodated within the existing landscape without undue effects on landscape fabric, character, or visual amenity. Moreover, the Development supports sustainable development through providing renewable electricity to the WTW and helping the Applicant to reduce their electricity demand on the local electricity network and to aid climate change adaptation. The Development is therefore commensurate with the provisions of ‘HMWP Policy 13: High-quality design of minerals and waste development’ and ‘NFDC Policy ENV3: Design quality and local distinctiveness’, insofar as they are relevant to renewable energy infrastructure.</p>

## 2.6 Development Plan Conclusion

The design process and supporting technical studies provide a comprehensive and robust assessment of the capability of the Site to facilitate renewable development and demonstrates that overall, 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.

Indeed, the Development will respond directly to a key aim of the HMWP to improve Hampshire’s resilience to climate change by (Page 14), *“Helping to mitigate the causes of, and adapt to, climate change by developing more energy recovery facilities”*.

Although the proposal comprises development in the green belt, it is considered to be a compatible use in this location as the Site is surrounded by existing industrial uses including the WTW, and it is considered that the Development can be accommodated into this industrial pocket of the green belt without comprising the special qualities and openness of the wider designation. In this case, special circumstances have been identified including the environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources which reduces the Applicant’s carbon footprint and reliance on the local electricity network, the biodiversity enhancements the Development will bring on the Site and that the Site is operational land reserved for use to facilitate the WTW’s operation.

Further, the Development will not compromise the spatial strategy for New Forest District Local Plan which centres upon achieving sustainable development.

The Site is therefore 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 2019 update) and the immediate Climate Emergency context.



## 3. The Need for Renewable Energy

### 3.1 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. 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.

### 3.2 The Climate Change Act 2008 and 2019 Amendment

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.

In May 2019, the UK Parliament declared an 'Environment and Climate Emergency', which marked a renewed sense of urgency in tackling climate change.

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.

### 3.3 The Climate Change Committee and Net Zero

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 language is stark



and emphasises the urgent nature of the response required to address the UK's contribution to global climate change.

The route to 100% reduction in emissions by 2050 is controlled and managed through Carbon Budgets, which places a restriction on the total amount of greenhouse gases the UK can emit over a 5-year period. The carbon budgets are set 12 years in advance and define a cost-effective but progressive path towards the 2050 objective.

All six carbon budgets have been put into law and run up to 2037. The UK is currently in the Fourth Carbon Budget period (2023 to 2027). The first two carbon budgets were met and the third is under review. In the CCC 2023 Report to Parliament, 'Progress in Reducing Emissions' it is emphasised on page 14 that *"While the policy framework has continued to develop over the past year, this is not happening at the required pace for future targets. The Net Zero target was legislated in 2019, but there remains a lack of urgency over its delivery. The Net Zero transition is scheduled to take around three decades, but to do so requires a sustained high-intensity of action. This is required all the more, due to the slow start to policy development so far. Pace should be prioritised over perfection"*.

With specific reference to carbon budgets, the CCC emphasise that *"Our confidence in the achievement of the UK's 2030 target and the Fifth and Sixth Carbon Budgets has markedly declined from last year"* (page 8).

This re-emphasises the urgency and scale of response required to meet legally binding commitments with respect to net zero.

### **3.4 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.

The British Energy Security Strategy includes on page 30 the establishment of a target of delivering up to 70GW of solar by 2035. The 'UK Government Department for Energy Security and Net Zero' publish monthly deployment figures of all solar photovoltaic capacity across the UK. In October 2023, it was reported that there is a total of 15.6GW of solar capacity in the UK across all installations<sup>2</sup>. There is clearly therefore an urgent need to deploy renewable assets, including solar, at a faster pace than the current rate in order to match national Government expectations.

### **3.5 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The NPPF (last updated December 2023) 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

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<sup>2</sup> [Solar Photovoltaics Deployment \(Department of Energy and Net Zero, November 2023\). Access at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/solar-photovoltaics-deployment](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/solar-photovoltaics-deployment)

determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF 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”* (Paragraph 8c).

### **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, paragraph 157 states, *“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 (paragraph 160a) that plans should *“provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources that maximises the potential for suitable development, and their future re-powering and life extension, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed appropriately (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts)”*

Paragraph 163 is a crucial consideration in the decision-making process stating: *“When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should: a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to significant cutting greenhouse gas emissions; b) approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable”*. This is a clear direction in favour of renewable schemes where impacts can be made acceptable.

## **3.6 Local Response to the Climate Emergency**

In June 2019 Hampshire County Council declared a climate emergency. The Hampshire 2050 Commission of Inquiry recognised the changing climate as the biggest long-term issue facing Hampshire, as such action on climate change is being embedded across the County Council's services, influencing the way decisions are made and policies are delivered in shaping a healthy and prosperous future in Hampshire.

In 2020 Hampshire County council published their Climate Change Strategy 2020-2050 which states: *“Recognising the changing climate as the biggest threat, a well-adapted and resilient Hampshire will be essential to ensure that Hampshire's economy, environment, and society continues to thrive and prosper”*. The Climate Change Strategy is underpinned by two overall aims which apply to Hampshire as a whole, namely, to be carbon neutral by 2050 and to be resilient to the impact of a 2°C temperature rise. To achieve this the Council are promoting joined-up partnership working, for example through nature-based solutions to flooding, looking after public health, woodland creation and generating local renewable energy.

New Forest District Council declared a climate and nature emergency in October 2021 and subsequently committed to an annual report with an action plan that will be reviewed and aligned with the 5-year climate change and nature emergency strategy 2023-2028. The Climate Change and Nature Emergency Strategy 2023-2028, proposes that climate action is focused on three main programmes of work: Carbon Reduction,

Carbon Adaptation and Nature Recovery. The Carbon Reduction programme seeks to *'encourage carbon reduction in all activities will slow the rate of emissions, embed sustainable behaviour change and give projects the best chance of success.'* Within this broad theme Renewable energy development is supported.

### **3.7 Conclusions on the Need for 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 would make a valuable contribution to legislated climate change targets and respond to national, county and district authority policy and strategy objectives by diversifying the energy mix, promoting security of supply and facilitating the transition to a low carbon economy.

## 4 Conclusion

Southern Water has a net zero target to achieve by 2050. Part of the strategy is to use renewable electricity to power their sites at source and thereby reduce their electricity demand on the local electricity network within the communities they operate. This strategy and approach are in line with national and local government legislation, policy and guidance with respect to renewable and energy and the response to climate change.

As a 'Statutory Undertaker' for planning purposes, the Applicant owns the Site in order to respond to the operational need of the WTW. The Development is considered crucial to the overall sustainability of the wider facility and the acceptability of the scheme in planning terms should be considered in this overall context.

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 'climate emergency' which has been established at national, county and district council levels.

The final location, scale and layout of the Development has been directly informed by a robust design iteration process, fully informed by a suite of environmental surveys. Considerable care has been taken in the site selection process and the ultimate design of the Development to avoid unacceptable environmental and amenity effects and maximise the contribution to the WTW requirement for renewable energy generation.

In summary, the overall benefits of the Development are clear:

- 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 Development would act to diversify the energy mix, promote security of supply for Southern Water's asset through diversification and decentralisation, and accelerate the transition to a low carbon economy.
- The Development will deliver 12.79% net gain (1.35 biodiversity units) for area-based habitats. In addition, there will be an overall increase in hedgerow units (1.15 hedgerow units based on the current landscape designs and outline parameter plans).

The Development is 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.

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.

## **JLL**

Sentinel,  
103 Waterloo Street,  
Glasgow, G2 7BW

**Leah Watton**  
Senior Planner

**[Leah.Watton@jll.com](mailto:Leah.Watton@jll.com)**

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