



# EAST PARK ENERGY

**East Park Energy**

EN010141

**Preliminary Environmental Information Report  
Volume 1 – Main Report**

Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual

**September 2024**

Version 01

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## **Preliminary Environmental Information Report Volume 1 – Main Report**

### **Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual**

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## 5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) reports the approach and findings of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) undertaken for the Scheme. Details of the Scheme are provided within **PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 2**.

5.1.2 The landscape assessment has considered the potential effects of the Scheme on the landscape as an environmental resource and the visual assessment has considered the potential effects on people's views, such as residents, users of publicly accessible routes, visitors to community facilities, road users and people working in the area.

5.1.3 Landscape and visual effects have been considered for the construction, operational, post-mitigation (i.e. residual effects once mitigation has reached maturity) and decommissioning phases of the Scheme. However, operational effects of the grid connection route have been scoped out and therefore only the construction and decommissioning phases have been considered.

5.1.4 The landscape and visual assessments have been undertaken in parallel, and have been informed by a combination of desk and site-based appraisal techniques and professional judgement.

5.1.5 This chapter is supported by the following Appendices in **PEIR Volume 2**:

- Appendix 5-1: Assessment Methodology;
- Appendix 5-2: ZTV and Visualisation Methodology;
- Appendix 5-3: Landscape Character Assessment;
- Appendix 5-4: Effects at Viewpoints;
- Appendix 5-5: Effects on Visual Receptors; and
- Appendix 5-6: Glint and Glare Assessment.

5.1.6 This chapter is supported by the following Figures in **PEIR Volume 3**:

- Figure 5-1 Topography;
- Figure 5-2a National Character Areas;
- Figure 5-2b Local Landscape Character Areas;
- Figure 5-3a 5km ZTV (Solar Array and Transformers);
- Figure 5-3b 3km ZTV (Solar Array and Transformers);
- Figure 5-3c ZTV (percentage of solar array and transformers visible);
- Figure 5-3d ZTV (BESS & Substation Option 1);
- Figure 5-3e ZTV (BESS & Substation Option 2);
- Figure 5-4a Visual Receptors - Representative Viewpoints & Rights of Way; and
- Figure 5-4b Visual Receptors - Residential, Community, Roads and Commercial Receptors.
- Figure 5-5 to Figure 5-86 comprise the Viewpoint Plates

5.1.7 The following sections of this chapter include:

- A summary of relevant planning policy.
- A summary description of the methodology for the assessment, including details of the study area and the approach to the assessment of effects.
- A summary of consultation with stakeholders.
- A review of baseline (existing) conditions.
- Details of the measures proposed as part of the Scheme to avoid or reduce environmental effects, including mitigation and design measures that form part of the Scheme.
- An assessment of the likely effects for the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Scheme, taking into account the mitigation measures proposed.
- Identification of any further mitigation measures or monitoring required in relation to likely significant effects.
- Assessment of any cumulative effects with other proposed developments.

## Statement of Competence

- 5.1.8 Drawing on published standards and guidance, landscape and visual assessment relies on an element of reasoned professional judgement. This assessment has been undertaken by Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) with experience of assessing the landscape and visual effects of large-scale infrastructure developments.
- 5.1.9 The landscape competent expert holds a master's degree in landscape architecture and CMLI status. The competent expert has 20 years' experience working in the field of landscape assessment and design and has worked on numerous large-scale infrastructure projects across the UK, including electrical grid connections and solar arrays. The competent expert has experience representing landscape and visual issues at topic hearings as part of the nationally significant infrastructure project application process.

## 5.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

### Introduction

5.2.1 National and local policy relevant to the LVIA is summarised within the subsequent sections.

### Policy

#### National Planning Policy

5.2.2 National-level planning policy for NSIPs is set out in a series of National Policy Statements (NPSs). Those of relevance to the Scheme are:

- Overarching NPS for Energy (NPS EN-1)<sup>1</sup>.
- NPS for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3)<sup>2</sup>; and
- NPS for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5)<sup>3</sup>.

5.2.3 NPS EN-3 comprises technology-specific guidance which includes solar photovoltaic generation.

5.2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>4</sup>, and the accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)<sup>5</sup> are also relevant material considerations, however the Scheme will be determined in accordance with the NPSs.

5.2.5 Relevant policies from the relevant national policy documents are summarised in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1 – Summary of National Planning Policy**

Document	Policy / Paragraph Reference	Summary of Policy / Paragraph
NPS EN-1 (November 2023)	Section 4.7	Gives an overview of 'good design' for energy infrastructure
	Section 5.10	Addresses issues to be covered in LVIA. Requires that LVIA should take account of local planning policy. States that, having regard to siting, operational and other relevant constraints, the aim should be to

Document	Policy / Paragraph Reference	Summary of Policy / Paragraph
		<p>minimise harm to the landscape, providing reasonable mitigation where possible and appropriate.</p> <p>Acknowledges that all proposed energy infrastructure is likely to have visual effects for many receptors around proposed sites and that the Secretary of State will judge whether the visual effects on sensitive receptors, such as local residents, and other receptors, such as visitors to the local area, outweigh the benefits of the Scheme.</p>
<p>NPS EN-3 (November 2023)</p>	<p>Section 2.10</p>	<p>Addresses large solar farms that may have a significant zone of visual influence and states that the two main impact issues that determine distances to sensitive receptors are likely to be visual amenity and glint and glare.</p> <p>Applicants are encouraged where possible to minimise the visual impacts of the development for those using existing public rights of way, considering the impacts this may have on any other visual amenities in the surrounding landscape.</p> <p>Applicants should consider the need to minimise the impact on the landscape and the visual impact of security measures, such as security lighting.</p> <p>The approach to assessing cumulative landscape and visual impact of large-scale solar farms is likely to be the same as assessing other onshore energy infrastructure.</p> <p>Solar farms are likely to be in low lying areas of good exposure and as such may have a wider zone of visual influence than other types of onshore energy infrastructure. However, whilst it may be the case that the development covers a significant surface area, in the case of ground-mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography, the area of a zone of visual influence could be appropriately minimised.</p> <p>Applicants should carry out a landscape and visual assessment and report it in the ES. Visualisations may be required to demonstrate the effects of a proposed solar farm on the setting of heritage assets and any nearby residential areas or viewpoints.</p> <p>Applicants should follow the criteria for good design set out in Section 4.7 of EN-1 when developing projects and will be expected to direct considerable effort towards minimising the landscape and visual impact of solar PV arrays especially within nationally designated landscapes.</p> <p>Whilst there is an acknowledged need to ensure solar PV installations are adequately secured, required security measures such as fencing should consider the</p>



Document	Policy / Paragraph Reference	Summary of Policy / Paragraph
		<p>need to minimise the impact on the landscape and visual impact (see paragraphs 2.10.46 – 2.10.48 ).</p> <p>The applicant should consider as part of the design, layout, construction, and future maintenance plans how to protect and retain, wherever possible, the growth of vegetation on site boundaries, as well as the growth of existing hedges, established vegetation, including mature trees within boundaries. Applicants should also consider opportunities for individual trees within the boundaries to grow on to maturity.</p> <p>The impact of the proposed development on established trees and hedges should be informed by a tree survey and arboricultural/hedge assessment as appropriate.</p> <p>Applicants should consider the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges, trees and woodlands.</p> <p>Applicants should aim to minimise the use and height of security fencing. Where possible applicants should utilise existing elements, such as hedges or landscaping, to assist in site security, or screen security fencing.</p> <p>Applicants should minimise the use of security lighting. Any lighting should utilise a passive infra-red (PIR) technology and should be designed and installed in a manner which minimises impact.</p> <p>Applicants should map receptors qualitatively to identify potential glint and glare issues and determine if a glint and glare assessment is necessary as part of the application.</p>
NPS EN-5 (November 2023)	Section 2.11	<p>Addresses issues to be covered in LVIA in relation to the East Park Substation and the underground grid connection.</p> <p>Identifies potential mitigation options.</p>
	Section 2.9.9	<p>Acknowledges that new electrical infrastructure, including substations, can give rise to adverse landscape and visual impacts.</p>

## Local Planning Policy

5.2.6 Local planning policy relevant to the LVIA is set out in the following documents:

- i) Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036<sup>6</sup>; and

ii) Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030<sup>7</sup>.

5.2.7 Relevant policies from the above documents are summarised in Table 5.2:

**Table 5.2 – Summary of Local Planning Policy**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Policy / Paragraph Reference</b>	<b>Summary of Policy / Paragraph</b>
Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036	Policy LP2	Sets the strategy for development in Huntingdonshire, including that development should protect the character of existing settlements, and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of surrounding countryside, whilst providing complementary green infrastructure enhancement for recreational, biodiversity and climate change benefits.
	Policy LP10	Requires development in the countryside to seek to use land of lower agricultural value where possible, recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and not give rise to impacts that would adversely affect the use of the countryside.
	Policy LP11, LP12 & LP13	Require the design of development proposals to be informed by their context, and large-scale developments to undergo a masterplanning process that includes demonstrating how good design has been achieved.
	Policy LP14	Requires development to protect the amenity of nearby users.
	Policy LP31	Requires development proposals to protect trees and hedgerows.
	Policy LP35	Provides support for renewable energy projects provided the impacts can be made acceptable. Reference is made to the Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD.
Bedford Local Plan 2030	Policy 3S	Requires development to safeguard the intrinsic character of the countryside.
	Policy 28S	Expects development to contribute to good place making by promoting local distinctiveness, having a positive relationship with the surrounding area, enhancing the landscape, and including appropriate landscaping.
	Policy 29 & 30	Requires development proposals to be of a high design quality informed by design codes, that respects the character and quality of the area in which it is located.

	Policy 37	Requires development proposals to protect and enhance the key landscape elements and visual sensitivities of the area, as informed by the Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment.
	Policy 38	Requires new development to provide landscaping that supports multiple benefits.
	Policy 39 & 40	Requires development proposals to protect trees and hedgerows.
	Policy 57	Provides support for renewable energy projects provided the impacts have been addressed, including the landscape and visual impact.
	Policy 91	Requires development to safeguard public rights of way

## Guidance

5.2.8 The methodology and criteria used for this assessment of landscape and visual effects has been developed based on the non-prescriptive Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, 2013 (GLVIA3). The GLVIA3 sets out the principles that underpin landscape and visual assessment but does not provide a formulaic recipe for reaching judgements about significance. Such judgements instead rely on reasoned and experienced professional judgement.

5.2.9 The following additional guidance has also informed detailed aspects of the approach taken to the assessment of the Scheme:

- Natural England (2014) *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*<sup>8</sup>;
- The Landscape Institute (2016) *Technical Guidance Note 08/15: Landscape Character Assessment*<sup>9</sup>;
- The Landscape Institute (2017) *Technical Information Note 01/2017: Tranquillity – An Overview*<sup>10</sup>;
- The Landscape Institute (2019) *Technical Guidance Note 02/19: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)*<sup>11</sup>;

- The Landscape Institute (2019) *Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals*<sup>12</sup>;
- The Landscape Institute (2020) *Technical Guidance Note 04/2020: Infrastructure*<sup>13</sup>; and
- The Landscape Institute (2021) *Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations*<sup>14</sup>.

## 5.3 Assessment Methodology

5.3.1 The methodology used for this assessment has been tailored to the specific requirements of the Scheme and its location to ensure proportionate assessment and a focus on its likely most significant landscape and visual effects. The adopted assessment methodology has specifically focused on providing appropriate environmental information regarding the following potential landscape and visual impacts of the Scheme:

- The construction of sections of underground cabling;
- The landscape and visual implications of a limited extent of hedgerow removal to enable access and construction of the cable route;
- The construction of the solar array and associated infrastructure including the East Park BESS and Substation; and
- The permanent landscape and visual effects of installing solar array infrastructure within an area of predominantly rural countryside.

### Structure of the LVIA

5.3.2 This LVIA comprises:

- Identification of landscape and visual receptors and a description of current baseline conditions.
- An assessment of the sensitivity of the receptors to change (taking account of both receptor susceptibility and receptor value).
- An assessment of the potential impacts associated with the Scheme, i.e. a description of how the introduction of the Scheme will alter the baseline landscape and visual conditions.
- An assessment of the magnitude of change to the receptors (taking into account the scale, extent, duration and potential reversibility of the change).
- An assessment of the level and significance of the effect on the receptor, based on the assessments of the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of change that they are subject to.

- Identification of measures to mitigate adverse landscape and visual effects.
- Report on the residual landscape effects once mitigation has been taken into account.

## Approach to Assessment

### Receptors

- 5.3.3 The approach to assessment comprises desktop studies and walkover surveys. Its purpose is to establish the nature and extent of potential receptors, to identify the likely sensitivity of receptors, and to record the potential landscape and visual effects of the Scheme on the receptors.
- 5.3.4 The landscape receptors with potential to experience change as a result of the Scheme comprise landscape elements (i.e. woodland, individual trees, hedgerow, landform, field pattern, etc) and landscape character. The description of the change to landscape elements caused by the Scheme informs the overall assessment of the significance of the effects on landscape character.
- 5.3.5 The visual receptors with potential to experience change as a result of the Scheme include people in specific locations such as their homes, public areas or places of work with potential to experience views of the Scheme. An assessment of effects on representative viewpoints is presented in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4** and provides an illustration of typical views of the Scheme which informs the assessment of visual effects on the visual receptors within the study area which is presented in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-5**.

### Assessment Stages, Seasons and Planting Heights

- 5.3.6 The assessment of landscape and visual effects includes consideration of the following:

- Seasonal differences with or without the Scheme including summer with foliage and winter without foliage.
- The change to, or loss of, existing landscape elements (e.g. loss of existing trees and hedgerow).
- Temporary construction activity (e.g. presence of plant, temporary buildings, materials storage, and construction traffic parking and movements).
- The introduction of the solar and battery infrastructure, grid connection, and other associated development needed to operate and maintain the Scheme.

5.3.7 The assessment considers the effects of the Scheme at the following points in time:

- Construction: the assessment of the Construction Phase of the Scheme assumes that construction is taking place across the whole Site during winter when visibility is greatest.
- Year 0 of operation: the assessment of the Operational Phase considers the opening year of the Scheme prior to the maturing of any mitigation planting. The visual assessment considers both winter and summer effects and the description of each effect includes reference to key differences in seasonal effects where applicable. However, the judgement with regards the level and significance of effect on each visual receptor refers to winter. Visual effects experienced during winter months are considered to be the 'worst-case' in assessment terms as trees are without leaf and visibility tends to be more open.
- Year 10 of operation: the assessment of the Operational Phase also considers the effects of the Scheme once planting has established and increased in maturity. Similar to the Year 0 assessment, reference has been made to visual effects during both summer and winter and the focus of this Year 10 assessment is the extent to which proposed mitigation planting would have established and the subsequent change in effects

during both seasons, albeit with the level and significance of effect on each visual receptor assessed as a worst-case during winter.

- Decommissioning: the assessment of the Decommissioning Phase assumes that operations to remove the Scheme from the Site would take place across the whole Site during winter when visibility is greatest.

5.3.8 The Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (*PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2*) has been developed to mitigate effects during both summer and winter, albeit it is acknowledged that this tends to be more effective during summer when trees are in leaf.

5.3.9 The landscape assessment does not take into account seasonality; however reference may be made to the seasons where seasonal changes over a calendar year form a distinct part of the landscape character.

5.3.10 The assessment considers the following timescales:

- Start of construction works – Summer 2027;
- Estimated duration of construction – 30 months;
- Opening year (Year 0) – 2029 / 2030; and
- Decommissioning year – 2069 / 2070.

5.3.11 All proposed landscape and visual mitigation measures would be implemented by the year of opening (Year 0 in 2029 / 2030), with a mitigation design year of 2039 / 2040 (Year 10), which is the date by which proposed planting would have established to a point of relative maturity in contributing to mitigation objectives. For the purpose of assessment, mitigation planting growth and height assumptions have been defined in Table 5.3 subsequently. The figures set out in Table 5.3 are based on experience of the competent expert and colleagues, including previous DCO and public inquiry experience. They are reasonable estimates of growth rates which are subject to the variables of ground conditions, general climatic influences and individual species growth rates).



**Table 5.3 – Mitigation planting growth and height assumptions**

Planting type	Year 0	Year 10
Individual trees (12-14cm heavy standard)	3.5m	7.5m
Woodland	0.6m	5.5m
Hedgerow (maintained)	0.6m	2.5-3.5m
Hedgerow (unmaintained)	0.6m	3-5m

## Decommissioning

5.3.12 **PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 2** contains a full description of the decommissioning of the Scheme. However key assumptions regarding the decommissioning stage which are relevant to the assessment of landscape and visual effects are:

- After 40 years, the Scheme would no longer be operational, and all solar PV modules, mounting structures, cabling, inverters, transformers, BESS equipment, the East Park Substation, and fencing would be removed from the Site. The Site will be returned to a condition suitable for return to its original use after decommissioning.
- Decommissioning is expected to take between 12 and 24 months and would be undertaken in phases.
- The proposed planting would remain with hedgerows remaining at a height of between 2 and 3m in height, dependent on management approaches by landowners, and new trees would have reached substantial levels of maturity and therefore height over 40 years.
- The meadows and grassland would be removed, and the fields returned to agricultural use.
- The underground cable within the Grid Connection Route would be removed but the conduit left in-situ such that there would not be any excavation on the cable route.
- The East Park BESS and Substation will be removed.

- The LVIA is undertaken for the winter season with the duration of the decommissioning phase being between 12 and 24 months.

5.3.13 There is a high degree of uncertainty regarding decommissioning as engineering approaches and technologies evolve over the operational life of the Scheme. However, the landscape and visual effects of decommissioning would likely be similar to the construction effects and therefore a comparatively brief assessment has been carried out of decommissioning effects within this chapter.

### Study Area

5.3.14 The study area for the Scheme has been established with reference to guidance in GLVIA3. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) has been established using computer modelling to help identify the potential extent from which the Scheme may be visible (refer to **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-3a** for the extent of the ZTV and **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-2** for the approach to ZTV modelling).

5.3.15 An initial ZTV was carried out to a radius of 5km from the Scheme Boundary (**PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-3a**) to ensure a large extent of coverage prior to the selection of a study area. The ZTV was also produced using both DTM (digital terrain model) and DSM (digital surface model) data. The DTM based ZTV presents a worst-case scenario in terms of theoretical visibility, while the DSM based ZTV presents a more realistic theoretical visual envelope as surface screening features are taken into account. Refer to **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-2** for further description of the approach taken to ZTV production.

5.3.16 The main ZTVs produced comprise the solar array panels, which would be a maximum of 3m above ground level (AGL) and the transformer units which would be a maximum of 3.5m AGL (**PEIR Volume 3 Figures 5-3a and 5-3b**). Additional ZTVs have been produced which illustrate the theoretical visibility of the taller elements of the Scheme, namely the East Park Substation and BESS which are a maximum of 13.6m AGL for the substation and 4.5m AGL

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for the BESS (*PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-3d* and *5-3e*). These components of the Scheme would each be located in one location and therefore have less influenced the overall study area than the solar array.

- 5.3.17 The extent of potential visibility has then been reviewed and verified in the field to determine how visible the Site and in turn the Scheme would actually be.
- 5.3.18 Taking account of the above, the study area for the LVIA extends to 3km from the Scheme Boundary. This distance is sufficient for the LVIA given the limited vertical height of the elements of the Scheme and the screening provided by the gently rolling and reasonably well-wooded surrounding landscape. The ZTV illustrated on *PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-3a* demonstrates that the theoretical visibility of the Scheme is suitably contained within a 3km radius.
- 5.3.19 The area within the Scheme Boundary is hereafter referred to as ‘the Site.’ The study area is 3km in both the landscape and visual assessments, however this has not been taken as a fixed boundary which cannot be exceeded, and reference has been made to receptors beyond 3km where applicable.

### Assessment Criteria

- 5.3.20 Refer to *PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-1* for a detailed methodology which sets out the approach taken to the assessment of landscape and visual effects and how conclusions have been reached regarding the level and significance of effects.
- 5.3.21 The level and significance of landscape effect has been determined by combining the sensitivity of the affected landscape with the magnitude of change associated with the introduction of the Scheme. The evaluation of the sensitivity of the landscape resource is based on factors and attributes which affect the susceptibility of the landscape to change and its value. Magnitude of change to a landscape receptor due to the Scheme, typically a landscape

character area, is assessed in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced, its duration and its reversibility.

- 5.3.22 The level and significance of visual effect has been determined by combining the sensitivity of the visual receptor with the magnitude of change associated with the introduction of the Scheme. The visual sensitivity of individual receptors depends upon the susceptibility of the specific receptor type to change, and the value attributed to the view. Magnitude of change to a view experienced by a visual receptor, due to the Scheme, is assessed in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced, its duration and its reversibility.
- 5.3.23 Qualitative judgements used in landscape and visual impact assessment include reference to evidence to support any professional judgements that have been made, including how thresholds in significance have been determined.
- 5.3.24 The assessment of the level and significance of residual effects takes into consideration mitigation measures implemented as part of the Scheme.

## 5.4 Assumptions and Limitations

- 5.4.1 Access to private properties within the study area has not been requested and therefore it has not been possible to exactly define the nature of views from all private locations. The Site surveys were carried out from publicly accessible locations near to private properties, such as roads and rights of way, and the assessment of visual effects therefore reflects the best estimate of those effects.
- 5.4.2 Photography was undertaken during winter months when weather and light conditions are less favourable than summer months. This is sometimes evident in photography at viewpoints . However, the advantage of surveying during winter months is that trees have shed their leaves, and this results in greater visibility across the landscape and a reasonable ‘worst-case’ appraisal of effects can be undertaken. Summer photography is expected to be provided with the ES. This will ensure that views have been presented which provide a fair representation of year-round visual effects.

## 5.5 Stakeholder Engagement

5.5.1 Preliminary scoping of the LVIA was undertaken as part of a wider EIA scoping exercise, the findings of which were recorded in the Scoping Report. A Scoping Opinion was issued by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) in December 2023.

5.5.2 Table 5.4 below summarises the issues relevant to this chapter which have been highlighted by consultees and indicates how these issues have been addressed within this chapter.

**Table 5.4 – Summary of consultation relating to the LVIA**

<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Key issues raised</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Location of response in chapter</b>
<b>The Planning Inspectorate Scoping Opinion, December 2023</b>			
PINS	Regional Landscape Character Types.  The Inspectorate is content that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment.	No further response required.	N/A
PINS	Effects on designated landscapes.  The Inspectorate is content that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment.	No further response required.	N/A
PINS	Standalone glint and glare assessment.  The applicant proposed that this assessment would be carried out and form a technical appendix to the LVIA chapter with significant effects and any mitigation measures proposed reported within the ES.  The Inspectorate is content with this approach subject to cross references being made where appropriate.	No further response required.	<b>PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-6</b>

Consultee	Key issues raised	Response	Location of response in chapter
PINS	<p>Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA).</p> <p>The Scoping Report notes that a RVAA is proposed to be scoped into the ES at this stage on the basis that the layout of the Proposed Development and proposed mitigation is not yet fixed. The RVAA may be subsequently scoped out following consultation with stakeholders, and an evidence-based appraisal will be provided to justify this. The Inspectorate welcomes this approach.</p>	<p>The Scheme has been designed to provide suitable offsets and/or visual screening from the properties located in close proximity to the Site and it is considered unlikely at this stage that any residential receptors would exceed the threshold of acceptability for residential visual amenity as outlined in the Landscape Institute's TGN 02/2019. However, in advance of submission of the application for development consent, the applicant will provide a RVAA which will be appended to the LVIA chapter of the ES.</p>	N/A
PINS	<p>Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA).</p> <p>PINS note that the Scoping Report refers to the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note TGN 2/19: 'Residential Visual Amenity Assessment'. The Inspectorate understands that in this guidance the requirement for an RVAA is generally dependent on the outcome of a LVIA. In the absence of an LVIA for the construction and decommissioning phases, the Inspectorate does not have sufficient evidence to agree to scope this matter out of further assessment. Construction and decommissioning effects should therefore be assessed within any subsequent RVAA, or justification should be provided why significant effects would not occur,</p>	<p>The applicant notes the comment with regards construction and decommissioning effects and will consider these stages of the Scheme within the RVAA.</p>	N/A

Consultee	Key issues raised	Response	Location of response in chapter
	supported by evidence of agreement with the relevant consultation bodies.		
PINS	<p>Night-time effects – operation.</p> <p>The Inspectorate is content that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment for the operational phase. Nevertheless, the ES should clarify the likely frequency of maintenance activities occurring outside of daylight hours and provide details of the proposed operational lighting strategy, such as measures to prevent impacts from lighting during emergency or maintenance events.</p>	<p>Further information regarding lighting design for the operational stage is included within <b>PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 2</b> and covered within the outline Operational Environmental Management Plan at <b>PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 2-4</b>.</p>	<b>PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 2</b>
PINS	<p>Night-time effects – construction and decommissioning.</p> <p>Given that lighting would be required, the Inspectorate does not agree that this matter can be scoped out at this stage. Accordingly, the ES should provide an assessment of these matters, or the information demonstrating agreement with the relevant consultation bodies and the absence of LSE.</p>	<p>Further information regarding lighting design for the operational stage is included within <b>PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 2</b> and covered within the outline Operational Environmental Management Plan at <b>PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 2-4</b>.</p>	<b>PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 2</b>
PINS	<p>Study area.</p> <p>The Inspectorate is broadly content with the 3km study area proposed.</p> <p>However, the ZTV included in the Scoping Report are based on the 3m maximum height of PV panels. The Proposed Development involves additional infrastructure exceeding 3m</p>	<p>The applicant notes that the Inspectorate is broadly content with the 3km study area.</p> <p>With respect to comments on ZTVs, additional ZTVs have been produced illustrating the solar array (<b>PEIR Volume 3 Figures 5-3a and 5-3b</b>) substation and BESS Option sites (<b>PEIR Volume 3 Figures</b></p>	<b>PEIR Volume 3 Figures 5-3a to 5-3d</b>



Consultee	Key issues raised	Response	Location of response in chapter
	<p>in height, such as elements of the substation up to 12m in height, switchgear up to 8m in height, and battery storage facility up to 4.5m in height.</p> <p>Although it is noted that fieldwork was undertaken in June 2022 to establish the maximum extent of visibility of the site, the detail of this fieldwork is not provided, and it is unclear whether this is based on the maximum height of components or the 3m high PV panels.</p> <p>The ES should clearly justify the study area(s) used and should ensure that a worst-case scenario is assessed. Where there are elements of the Proposed Development which exceed 3m, the Applicant should consider using multiple ZTVs to assess the potential visibility for all components of the Proposed Development.</p> <p>The Applicant should make effort to agree the study area for LVIA with relevant consultees and provide evidence of this within the ES.</p>	<p><b>5-3c and 5-3d</b>). These ZTVs are based on the maximum height parameters of the Scheme.</p>	
PINS	<p>Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs)</p> <p>The Scoping Report states that LLCAs will be defined for the site and its immediate context but not for the full extent of the LVIA study area. It is not clear on what basis this has been established. The Inspectorate is of the opinion that the study area should reflect the extent of likely significant landscape effects. The study area represents</p>	<p>The applicant notes the comments made by the Inspectorate and has since amended the approach taken to the landscape character assessment to ensure that landscape character within the entire study area is addressed. The applicant has taken the local landscape character assessments published by the host authorities as the focus of the landscape character</p>	<p>Section 5.8 of this PEIR Chapter</p>

Consultee	Key issues raised	Response	Location of response in chapter
	<p>the extent to which effects could occur and therefore all the LLCAs within the study area should be defined.</p>	<p>assessment. LVIA site surveys have established that the scale and detail of the assessments, which were relatively recently produced, is appropriate as the basis of the character assessment. The landscape character assessment has been carried out for the entire 3km study area.</p>	
PINS	<p>Viewpoints.</p> <p>There is discrepancy within the Scoping Report about the number of viewpoints selected. Paragraph 7.4.64 states that a provisional list of 79 viewpoints has been selected, however, Table 7.3 and Figure 7-7 identify 82 viewpoints. Although the Inspectorate recognises that these are still subject to finalisation in consultation with relevant consultees, the ES should be consistent with the number of viewpoints selected. Evidence of the consultation with relevant bodies regarding the viewpoints selected should be provided within the ES.</p>	<p>The applicant notes the discrepancy and can confirm that 82 viewpoints were provisionally identified within the Scoping Report.</p>	<p>Table 5.6 of this PEIR Chapter</p>
PINS	<p>Mitigation.</p> <p>The Scoping Report states that changes to the layout of the proposed solar panels and ancillary structures would occur in order to mitigate landscape and visual effects.</p> <p>Where flexibility is sought, the ES should clearly set out the maximum design parameters that have been assessed and how these have been used to inform an</p>	<p>Refer to <b>PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 2</b> for the Scheme Description.</p> <p>This LVIA chapter has set out clearly the parameters of the Scheme which have been assessed.</p>	<p><b>PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 2</b></p>

Consultee	Key issues raised	Response	Location of response in chapter
	adequate assessment in the ES.		
PINS	<p>Assessment scenarios.</p> <p>The Scoping Report states that landscape and visual effects will be assessed during summer of Year 10 of operation. It is unclear how a scenario within the summer would represent a worst-case scenario in terms of landscape and visual effects given the potential screening effect from deciduous vegetation in leaf.</p> <p>It is also stated in that summer and winter photography will be used “as far as practicable.” The reasoning behind this statement is unclear considering paragraph 7.7.2 states that all photography will be from publicly accessible locations.</p> <p>The Applicant should provide photographs during winter as well as in summer to allow an assessment of the maximum visibility scenario and illustrate the seasonal differences in screening provided by mitigation planting in line with the GLVIA3.</p>	<p>The applicant notes these comments and has taken an approach regarding the assessment of seasonal effects which focuses on the worst-case scenario at each stage of the visual assessment, including construction, operation (Year 0 and Year 10) and decommissioning.</p> <p>This does not apply to the landscape assessment which is not typically considered seasonally.</p> <p>With regards winter photography, the applicant can clarify that “as far as practicable” was intended to refer to the Scheme timeframe and the time available during that programme to take winter photographs. However, since the Scoping Opinion was issued the applicant has carried out winter photography (January and February 2024) at the preliminary 82 viewpoint locations.</p>	Section 5.3 of this PEIR Chapter and <b>PEIR Volume 3 Figures 5-5 to 5-86.</b>
Letter from Natural England (Betsy Brown, Sustainable Development Lead Advisor), 29 February 2024			
Natural England	<p>Statutory Landscape Designations.</p> <p>The letter states: “<i>We discussed Statutory Landscape Designations and were in agreement that the proposed project does not trigger any Statutory Landscapes and that this</i></p>	No further response required.	N/A

Consultee	Key issues raised	Response	Location of response in chapter
	<p><i>can be screened out of the EIA.”</i></p> <p><i>“Further consultation was taken with Natural England’s Senior Landscape advisor. It was confirmed post meeting that taking the distance and intervening infrastructure into consideration we are confident that any impact on protected landscapes will be negligible.”</i></p> <p><i>“In terms of Local Landscape Designations, it was agreed that these discussions would be held between the applicant and the Local Planning Authority.”</i></p>		

5.5.3 The Scheme extends across two administrative areas: Bedford Borough Council, and Huntingdonshire District Council. A Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) is in the process of being agreed with the local authorities and consultation on the scope of the final LVIA will be carried out once the PPA is in place.

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## 5.6 Baseline Conditions

### Introduction

5.6.1 A complete study of the baseline landscape and visual conditions is provided in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-3, Appendix 5-4 and Appendix 5-5** and a summary of the most relevant baseline information is provided here. In describing the existing environment, the Site and study area has been referred to in a west-east direction i.e. broadly from the vicinity of Swineshead across to Eaton Socon.

### General Context

5.6.2 The Site is located on the south side of a broad shallow clay vale landform formed by a number of west-east tributaries to the River Great Ouse, which flows north-south to the east of the study area through the town of St Neots.

5.6.3 **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-1** demonstrates that the landscape context within the study area is generally more undulating than the Site which is located predominantly in a low-lying area with relatively limited topographic variation. The landform rises across the northern extent of the study area towards Grafham Water, in the western extent of the study area towards a ridgeline beyond Swineshead and in the southern extent of the study area towards a high point around the Bedford Aerodrome.

5.6.4 The landscape pattern across the study area is broadly consistent, comprising medium to large scale arable farmland interspersed with blocks of woodland, particularly in the more elevated parts of the landscape in the northern extent of the study area. The woodland in the north of the study area towards Kimbolton and Grafham Water is generally ancient woodland, as is the woodland located around Bushmead Priory in the southern extent of the study area. The Site comprises occasional small blocks of woodland and there is no ancient woodland within the Scheme Boundary.

- 5.6.5 Hedgerow cover across the study area is varied although the higher ground in the southern, western and northern extents of the study area have a more robust network of hedgerows on field boundaries and alongside roads with intermittent hedgerow trees evident. The eastern extent of the study area is more open with less hedgerows on field boundaries and beside roads.
- 5.6.6 The settlement pattern in the study area is dispersed and typically rural in character comprising occasional distinct village settlements. From west to east the principal settlements within the study area are Riseley, Swineshead, Pertenhall, Keysoe, Keysoe Row, Little Staughton, Stonely, Great Staughton, Staughton Highway, Hail Weston, and Duloe. The town of St Neots lies east of the A1 in the east of the study area and is the largest settlement local to the Site. Outside of the settlements there are occasional individual properties and farmsteads.
- 5.6.7 There are several existing solar farms within the study area, which are located:
- To the south of Pertenhall (adjacent to East Park Site A).
  - At Little Staughton Airfield (1.2km south-west of East Park Site C).
  - At High Wood to the west of Hail Weston (0.1km south of East Park Site D).
- 5.6.8 Other notable non-residential or arable land uses include: Thurleigh Airfield (Bedford Aerodrome) in the south-western extent of the study area; the Sunny Farm poultry facility west of Pertenhall; and HM Littlehey Prison in the northern extent of the study area.
- 5.6.9 The study area is crossed by a network of public rights of way including footpaths, bridleways and byways open to all traffic. There are three long distance recreational trails in the study area, albeit none of which cross into the Site: the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail which passes through Riseley and Keysoe Row in the south-west of the study area; the Three Shires Way north of Great Staughton in the north of the study area that provides a circular

route around Grafham Water; and the Ouse Valley Way which follows the River Great Ouse through St Neots in the east of the study area. There are occasional small areas of public space located around villages and the largest area of accessible natural green space is Swineshead Wood open access land which is located to the north of Swineshead in the north-western extent of the study area.

## Landscape Designations

5.6.10 There are no landscape designations within the study area.

## Landscape Elements

5.6.11 Consideration has been given to the direct, physical loss of existing landscape elements as a result of the Scheme. Landscape elements within the Site contribute to the landscape character of the wider area. The following provides a summary of the principal existing landscape elements within the Site.

### Landform

5.6.12 The following is a summary description of landform within the Site which comprises a baseline landscape element:

- The landform within the Site is broadly flat with minimal undulation, which is typical of a landscape which is largely used for arable farmland.
- Referring to **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-1** there are some minor undulations within the Site, notably:
  - a. A low ridge at the south-western extent of Site A which broadly runs from Riseley through to Pertenhall.
  - b. An area of slightly higher ground at the southern extents of Sites B, C and D which subtly raise it above the northern extents of those parts of the Site.

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## Ditches and Watercourses

- 5.6.13 There are no main rivers within the Site, however there are small brooks and ditches, which are designed to drain farmland. The Site is located within the wider catchment of the River Great Ouse, which is located outside the study area, and several tributaries drain the Site, including the Pertenhall Brook, Duloe Brook, South Brook and the River Kym.
- 5.6.14 For a full description of the hydrological baseline conditions refer to ***PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 8***.

## Land cover

- 5.6.15 Land within the study area consists primarily of medium to large scale, rectilinear, fields which is planted with arable crop. The landcover therefore has a varying appearance over the year, with crop evident in summer, while in winter the fields are generally without vegetation cover and are bare, ploughed soil.
- 5.6.16 The condition and quality of the agricultural landscape is good and typical of the area. Its value associates with its contribution to the consistency in appearance of the character of the area. An agricultural soils assessment has been provided within ***PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 13*** which provides detailed description of soils within the Site.

## Trees and Hedgerows

- 5.6.17 The site largely comprises open, large-scale arable farmland and so there is a relatively low level of tree and hedgerow cover, with the Scheme Boundary excluding most woodland cover which is in the vicinity of the Scheme. However, there is hedgerow cover throughout the Site, located on most field boundaries, and intermittent hedgerow tree cover. With regards woodland cover, there are small blocks or belts of tree cover within or directly adjacent to the Site and the following are some notable tree groups:



- A small block of woodland at the south-western extent of Site A, ‘Willow Spinney’;
- Tree cover around the village of Pertenhall, directly to the north of Sites A and B;
- Tree cover around the village of Brook End, directly to the west of Site B;
- Tree cover around the village of Little Staughton, directly to the south-east of Site B;
- Tree cover along the River Kym and around the village of Great Staughton, directly to the north of Site C;
- Two woodland blocks, located directly to the south and south-east of Site B, respectively;
- ‘New Wood’ which sits centrally within Site C;
- Little Paxton Wood located approximately 1km north-east of Site D, screens views in that direction.

5.6.18 An arboricultural survey in accordance with BS:5837 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction will be undertaken in advance of submission of the application for development consent, and the conclusions of the survey will further supplement the landscape baseline.

## Landscape Character

### National Character Areas

5.6.19 The majority of the study area lies within National Character Area (NCA) 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands. This is a broad-scale landscape character study and as such provides a high-level understanding of the landscape character of the study area, with the local (District and Borough) character assessments providing greater detail. The key characteristics of NCA 88 are:

*“Gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east.”*

*The River Great Ouse and its tributaries meander slowly across the landscape, and the River Nene and the Grand Union Canal are also features. Three aquifers underlie the NCA and a large manmade reservoir, Grafham Water, supplies water within and outside the NCA.*

*Brickfields of the Marston Vale and Peterborough area form distinctive post-industrial landscapes with man-made waterbodies and landfill sites. Restoration of sand and gravel workings has left a series of flooded and restored waterbodies within the river valleys.*

*Variable, scattered woodland cover comprising smaller plantations, secondary woodland, pollarded willows and poplar along river valleys, and clusters of ancient woodland, particularly on higher ground to the north west representing remnant ancient deer parks and Royal Hunting Forests.*

*Predominantly open, arable landscape of planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows which contrast with those fields that are irregular and piecemeal.*

*Wide variety of semi-natural habitats supporting a range of species – some notably rare and scarce – including sites designated for species associated with ancient woodland, wetland sites important for birds, great crested newt and species of stonewort, and traditional orchards and unimproved grassland supporting a rich diversity of wild flowers.*

*Rich geological and archaeological history evident in fossils, medieval earthworks, deserted villages and Roman roads. A number of historic parklands, designed landscapes and country houses – including Stowe House and Park, Kimbolton Park, Croxton Park, Wimpole Hall and Wrest Park – combine with Bletchley Park,*

*Second World War airfields, the Cardington Airship Hangars and brickfields to provide a strong sense of history and place.*

*Settlements cluster around major road and rail corridors, with smaller towns, villages and linear settlements widely dispersed throughout, giving a more rural feel. Small villages are usually nucleated around a church or village green, while fen-edge villages are often in a linear form along roads.*

*Major transport routes cross the area, including the M1, M11, A1, A6, A5 and A14 roads, the East Coast and Midlands mainline railways, and the Grand Union Canal.*

*Recreational assets include Grafham Water, the Grand Union Canal, Forest of Marston Vale Community Forest, Chilterns AONB, woodland and wetland sites, an extensive rights-of-way network and two National Cycle Routes. The cities of Cambridge and Peterborough and several of the historic market towns in the NCA are popular tourist destinations.”*

5.6.20 A small proportion of the very western extent of the study area is located within NCA 91 Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge. Referring to **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-2a** (National Character Areas) and the ZTV shown on **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-3a**, given the negligible extent of theoretical visibility from that area NCA 91 has been scoped out of further consideration in this chapter.

### **Local Character Areas**

5.6.21 The Scheme and study area are located within two local authority boundaries and each authority has produced a landscape character assessment, which are:

- Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2020<sup>15</sup>.
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document 2022<sup>16</sup>.

- 
- 5.6.22 Refer to **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-2b** (Local Landscape Character Areas) for the extent of the LCAs.
- 5.6.23 The following five LCAs have been used as the basis for assessment of the Scheme landscape effects (taken from west to east within the Study Area) and are therefore the 'assessment LCAs':
- Bedford character areas:
    - c. LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland (Clay Farmland Landscape Type)
    - d. LCA 1D Thurleigh Clay Farmland (Clay Farmland Landscape Type); and
    - e. LCA 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley (Clay Valley Landscape Type).
  - Huntingdonshire character areas:
    - f. Southern Wolds LCA; and
    - g. Northern Wolds LCA.
- 5.6.24 East Park Site A and Site B are located within Bedford LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland. East Park Site C and D are located within Huntingdonshire Southern Wolds LCA. The 400 kV Grid Connection crosses Huntingdonshire Southern Wolds LCA and Bedford LCA 1D Thurleigh Clay Farmland, with the point of connection at the Eaton Socon Substation in Bedford LCA 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley.
- 5.6.25 Three LCAs which are located within the Study Area have been scoped out of the assessment:
- Huntingdonshire character areas:
    - h. Great Ouse Valley LCA.
    - i. South East Claylands LCA.
  - Bedford character areas:
    - j. LCA 5F Biggin Wood Clay Vale (Clay Vale Landscape Type).
- 5.6.26 The Site does not directly fall within these LCAs and both the ZTV and Site studies have identified that there would be no intervisibility between these LCAs and the Scheme.

5.6.27 Baseline descriptions of each of the five LCAs scoped into the assessment are presented in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-3**. Each of the baseline landscape descriptions includes a summary of the key characteristics of landscape within the extents of the study area that have a bearing on the sensitivity of the LCA to the Scheme (i.e. the key characteristics and attributes that are likely to be indicators of the sensitivity of each LCA to the addition of a solar array and associated infrastructure). Each description includes the identification of a sensitivity rating of the landscape area relative to the Scheme. Subsequent Table 5.5 summarises the key characteristics and sensitivities of each assessment LCA.

**Table 5.5 – Assessment LCAs baseline summary**

<b>LCA Reference</b>	<b>LCA Summary Description</b>
LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland	A low-lying landscape with subtly varied topography. The area is dominated by arable farmland but scattered woodlands give variety, often crowning the horizon in long views across the level fields. The large and medium fields are bounded by hedges and ditches, the former in mixed condition. Smaller fields and occasional horse pastures are clustered around settlements. Hedgerow trees, usually ash or oak are present, many mature and sometimes within fields marking lost hedgerows. This is a rural area with a dispersed but regular pattern of scattered farmsteads and small villages with frequent medieval earthworks and tall stone churches.
Northern Wolds LCA	A broad north-south strip on the western edge of Huntingdonshire, extending from the Nene Valley in the north to the Southern Wolds to the south east with the Central Claylands to the east. The area contains the highest land in Huntingdonshire with a distinctive ridged topography formed by streams flowing down from this higher land towards the Fens and Central Claylands. The streams have eroded pronounced valleys which are very different in character from the intervening higher land. Medieval influence is still strongly visible in the landscape of the Northern Wolds.
Southern Wolds LCA	The Southern Wolds forms a transition area between the Northern Wolds which lie to the north west and the Great Ouse Valley which is to the east. The Central Claylands is also situated to the north of part of this area. The topography of the Southern Wolds is similar to that of the Northern Wolds in comprising ridges and valleys but given the greater scale of the rivers here it consists of just two broad valleys with very gently undulating ground divided by the steep ridge that contains Grafham Water. Settlements are more scattered in this area and parishes larger suggesting a more dispersed pattern of historic development. However, there are several ancient monuments including medieval moats and sites of Roman buildings.

LCA Reference	LCA Summary Description
LCA 1D Thurleigh Clay Farmland	A low-lying landscape with largely level topography with subtly undulating tributary valleys to the east. It is dominated by arable farmland with a few scattered woodlands giving some variety, and crowning the horizon in long views across the level fields. The large fields are bounded by hedges and ditches, the former sometimes in poor condition or lost altogether causing the visual merging of individual fields into large open areas. Hedgerow trees, usually ash or oak are present, many mature and sometimes within fields marking lost hedgerows. A network of quiet rural lanes connects the settlements and provide an important resource for informal recreation. On the higher ground to the west, the presence of Thurleigh Airfield creates a less rural landscape with industrial fencing and large-scale airfield buildings visible on the skyline plus extensive loss of field boundaries making a more open landscape.
LCA 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley	A level and broad valley, low lying at 15m AOD rising to 30m AOD, and following the course of the River Great Ouse as it flows out of Bedford to leave the county to the north east above Little Barford. The open, gently rising slopes of the Great Ouse Clay Valley have strong visual links with the surrounding higher ground of Clay Farmland and Clay Vales character areas particularly the large-scale arable fields for instance to the north west of Wyboston. The course of the river is also marked by narrow woodland belts and willow trees. In some sections the river retains a highly rural character but in other areas the leisure use of the land (for instance for the golf course at Wyboston) gives a more manicured, urbanised appearance. There are smaller pastoral fields along the valley floor with historic parklands sited on the valley side slopes at Little Barford with scattered parkland trees and small woods. Hedgerows are often gappy or lost but hedgerow trees are present in some sections along with poplar shelter belts. Nurseries are common particularly around Wyboston with many of them now disused. This mixture of land uses plus the presence of the major roads outside the character area/ borough (the A1 and A421) and the eastern edge of Bedford creates a fragmented urban fringe landscape.

## Visual Baseline

### Zone of Theoretical Visibility

5.6.28 As shown on **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-1** the Site is located on the south side of a broad shallow clay vale landform formed by a number of west-east tributaries to the River Great Ouse, which flows north-south to the east of the study area through the town of St Neots. The landform rises across the northern extent of the study area towards Grafham Water; in the western extent of the study area towards a ridgeline beyond Swineshead; and in the

southern extent of the study area towards a high point around the Bedford Aerodrome.

5.6.29 **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 5-1** demonstrates that the landscape context beyond the Site within the wider study area is generally more undulating, as opposed to the Site located at a relatively low-lying and less undulating area than the wider study area and landscape beyond the study area.

5.6.30 The extent of each ZTV of the Scheme is primarily influenced by subtle topographical variations and tree cover. Given the relatively low amount of built form within the study area, this has less of an influence on the ZTV, however there is some localised screening afforded by built form and associated garden tree and hedge cover within the villages throughout the Study Area. Refer to **PEIR Volume 3 Figures 5-3a to 5-3d** for the extent of ZTV of the solar array, transformers, substation and BESS components of the Scheme (noting that two potential locations for the East Park BESS and East Park Substation are being considered: Site C, which is Option 1; and Site D, which is Option 2).

5.6.31 Notable landform and vegetation elements which influence the extent of intervisibility across the landscape are:

- A small block of woodland at the south-western extent of Site A, 'Willow Spinney';
- Tree cover around the village of Pertenhall, directly to the north of Sites A and B;
- Tree cover around the village of Brook End, directly to the west of Site B;
- Tree cover around the village of Little Staughton, directly to the south-east of Site B;
- Tree cover along the River Kym and around the village of Great Staughton, directly to the north of Site C;
- Two woodland blocks, located directly to the south and south-east of Site B, respectively;
- 'New Wood' which sits centrally within Site C;

- Tree cover on the south-western extent of Hail Weston.
- Tree cover beside the A1 road, at the eastern extent of the study area, which screens views further east, including from Eaton Socon and St Neots.
- Little Paxton Wood located approximately 1km north-east of Site D, screens views in that direction.

### Representative viewpoints

5.6.32 82 representative viewpoint locations have been selected to assist in understanding the appearance and visual effects of the Scheme. The locations of representative viewpoints are shown on **PEIR Volume 3 Figures 5-4a to 5-4b**.

5.6.33 Viewpoints are ‘representative’ and as such, whilst taken from a fixed point, are intended to reflect the range of visual aspects experienced by the receptors they represent. The interpretation of the significance of visual effects on individual representative viewpoints should therefore be recognised as more widely informing the assessment of effects on the visual receptors identified in this assessment.

5.6.34 The following Table 5.6 lists the representative viewpoints, identifying the key receptors that each represents.

**Table 5.6 – Representative viewpoints baseline summary**

Viewpoint reference	Location	Reason for selection
1	Bridleway M8 (Parish of Melchbourne and Yelden)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
2	Bridleway 6 (Parish of Swineshead)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
3	BOAT 7 (Parish of Swineshead) near Swineshead Wood	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
4	Church of St Nicholas in Swineshead	Specific view from church, and representative of views available from within Swineshead



<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Reason for selection</b>
5	Junction between Swineshead Road and Melchbourne Road	Representative of views for local road users
6	Footpath A4 (Parish of Swineshead)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
7	Footpath A3 (Parish of Swineshead)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
8	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
9	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
10	Bridleway 44 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
11	Footpath 12 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
12	Footpath 34 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
13	Bridleway 40 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
14	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
15	Footpath 29 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
16	Footpath 11 (Parish of Pertenhall) at the Chadwell Spring	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
17	Footpath 12 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside, and local road users
18	Bridleway A1 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
19	Footpath 138/32 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Reason for selection</b>
20	Junction between Kimbolton Road and Wood End Lane in Pertenhall	Representative of views available to residents in Pertenhall, and local road users
21	Footpath 5 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
22	Church of St Peter in Swineshead	Specific view from church
23	Footpath 20 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
24	Great Staughton Road	Representative of views for residents and local road users
25	Footpath 26 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
26	Footpath 35 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
27	Footpath 112 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to residents, people walking in the countryside, and local road users
28	Footpath 6 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to residents and people walking in the countryside
29	Church of St Mary the Virgin in Keysoe	Specific view from church
30	Footpath 64 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
31	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
32	Footpath 47 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
33	Footpath 13 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
34	Footpath 4 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
35	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
36	Footpath 10 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Reason for selection</b>
37	Footpath 3 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
38	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
39	West End Road to the west of Little Staughton	Representative of views available to road users
40	Bridleway 23 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
41	Bridleway 13 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside and users of the green space at Little Staughton
42	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
43	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to residents and people walking in the countryside
44	Green End at the Crown Inn in Little Staughton	Representative of views available to residents
45	Spring Hill in Little Staughton	Representative of views available to residents
46	The Kangaroo at the junction between Little Staughton Road and Great Staughton Road	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
47	Footpath 138/5 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
48	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
49	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
50	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
51	Footpath 5 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
52	Church of All Saints at Little Staughton	Specific view from church

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Reason for selection</b>
53	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
54	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
55	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
56	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
57	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
58	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
59	Footpath 213/23 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
60	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
61	Church of St Andrew in Great Staughton	Specific view from church
62	View across Birds Meadow from The Causeway towards River Kym	Representative of views available to road users and people walking in the countryside
63	Footpath 219/9 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
64	Footpath 213/3 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
65	Footpath 213/28 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
66	Moor Road near Mill View	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
67	Moor Road near Roman Field Cottage	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
68	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside

Viewpoint reference	Location	Reason for selection
69	Footpath 213/12 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
70	Bridleway 27 (Parish of Staploe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
71	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
72	Unnamed road, part of the Three Shires Way	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
73	Bridleway 213/4 (Parish of Great Staughton), part of the Three Shires Way	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
74	Bridleway 207/12 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
75	Bridleway 207/13 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
76	B645 near Wood View	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
77	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
78	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
79	Junction between B645 and High Street at Hail Weston	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
80	Duloe Road	Representative of views available to local road users
81	Footpath 23 (Parish of Staploe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
82	Footpath 8A (Parish of Staploe) at the Eaton Socon Substation	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside

5.6.35 A description of the existing view at each viewpoint location is provided in ***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4***. Baseline photographs of the view from each

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representative viewpoint location are presented in **PEIR Volume 3 Figures 5-5 to 5-86**.

### Visual Receptors

5.6.36 The locations of visual receptors are identified on **PEIR Volume 3 Figures 5-4a** and **5-4b** (Visual Receptors - Representative Viewpoints & Rights of Way).

Visual receptors typically associate with the following outlooks:

- Views experienced by people in residential properties;
- Views from people on public rights of way;
- Views from people using community facilities such as churches;
- Views from employment sites, i.e. people at their places of work; and
- Views from people in vehicles when travelling along roads.

5.6.37 A thorough selection of viewpoints forms the basis of the visual assessment, as is set out in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4** which includes a description of the existing view and the likely visual effects of the Scheme. To ensure there is a documented list of individual receptors throughout the Study Area, **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-5** provides a schedule of visual receptors with a cross reference to the relevant viewpoint assessment provided in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4**.

5.6.38 A summary of the type and location of the main visual receptor groups is provided below. For each group of receptors, a standardised judgement on sensitivity to change has not been applied. For example, residential receptors are typically considered to be of high sensitivity to the type of change proposed, however this is not always the case, and some residential receptors may be judged to be of medium sensitivity to the type of change proposed dependent on the characteristics of the view they currently experience. Refer to **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4** which defines the levels of susceptibility, value and overall sensitivity for each representative viewpoint.

### ***People in Residential Properties***

- 5.6.39 The study area is predominantly rural and residential receptors generally comprise isolated farmsteads or small clusters of properties throughout the areas. There are eight villages in proximity to the Scheme: Swineshead, Riseley, Pertenhall, Keysoe, Little Staughton, Great Staughton, Hail Weston and Duloe.
- 5.6.40 Views out from the villages are generally screened by surrounding tree cover, subtle landform undulations and tree cover on their perimeter. Occasional, glimpsed views are likely from some upper storey windows; however ground level views are generally screened.
- 5.6.41 People's views from residential properties associate with their sense of identity and place and people tend to spend longer durations of time within their homes than in other locations, such as recreational locations or their workplace. The susceptibility of such views to change is therefore typically considered to be higher, subject to the influence of what is present in the existing view. It therefore follows that the visibility of existing infrastructure, such as a solar array or electricity pylons, may reduce susceptibility where similar features are proposed.

### ***Users of Public Rights of Way***

- 5.6.42 Various public rights of way (e.g. footpaths and bridleways) coincide with the extent of the study area, which are shown on ***PEIR Volume 3 Figures 5-4a to 5-4b***. Some public rights of way are enclosed by landform undulations and tree cover. ***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-5*** identifies visual receptors, however the following is a high-level summary of groups of routes which are most relevant to the assessment of effects of the Scheme:
- Footpaths and bridleways which pass across the site, generally along field boundaries, connecting farms and small settlements;

- Footpaths, bridleways and byways located within the wider study area which are on more elevated ground, and which afford views across the Kym Valley, within which the Site is located;
- The North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail, which is a designated trail within the south-west of the Study Area; and
- Three Shires Way, which is a designated trail within the north of the study area around Grafham Water.

5.6.43 The susceptibility of views from recreational receptors varies depending on the nature of the recreational activity and therefore how much attention is given to the view. Where the activity is focussed, such as an organised sport, or has some active engagement such as allotments, or is within an area attributed to function, such as around large-scale agricultural buildings, then the surrounding view is less important than where the purpose of the recreation is specific to the enjoyment of the setting.

5.6.44 The susceptibility of views to change is therefore variable and is further influenced by what is present in the existing view such that the visibility of existing infrastructure, such as roads, solar farms, pylons or large-scale agricultural buildings, may reduce susceptibility where similar features are proposed.

### ***Users of Community Facilities***

5.6.45 Churches have been identified as the main type of community facility within the Study Area. Seven churches have been identified within the study area: All Saints Church in Riseley; Church of St Nicholas in Swineshead; Church of St Peter in Swineshead; Church of St Mary the Virgin in Keysoe; Church of All Saints at Little Staughton; Little Staughton Baptist Church; and Church of St Andrew in Great Staughton. There are various churches and other community facilities within St Neots at the eastern extent of the study area. However, they are set away from the main part of the Site and have therefore been excluded as receptors that have the potential to experience visual effects of the Scheme.



- 5.6.46 The susceptibility of views from community receptors, in this case specifically church attendees, would typically be limited where the focus of the individual would be on the immediate location rather than the wider outlook, in this case the church service. However, church attendees would experience views when entering and exiting church, albeit for a relatively short duration.
- 5.6.47 Detailed information regarding the setting of churches in relation to the Scheme is included within ***PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 6***.

### ***People Using Roads***

- 5.6.48 Views of the Scheme would be experienced by road users of various minor roads within the Study Area. These tend to be rural roads which connect small settlements and isolated properties. The A1 is located at the eastern extent of the Study Area, however this is scoped out of the assessment as there would be no views of the Scheme.
- 5.6.49 The susceptibility of views from road receptors would typically be limited where the focus of the view would not be fixed on a particular outlook or visual relationship. As the receptor outlook is inherently that of the road along which they are travelling, the susceptibility of views is typically low.

### ***People at Employment Sites***

- 5.6.50 Views of the Scheme would be experienced by people working at occasional employment sites throughout the Study Area. These tend to be agricultural related businesses such as a chicken farm at the north-western extent of the Study Area (Sunny Farm Poultry Farm).
- 5.6.51 The susceptibility of views from employees would typically be limited as the focus of the view would be internal to the employment site and as people would be focused on their job, as opposed to the wider views. The susceptibility of views to change is therefore low.

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## 5.7 Design, Embedded Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

### Design

#### Illustrative Environmental Masterplan

- 5.7.1 The Illustrative Environmental Masterplan accompanying this PEIR is provided on **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2** and illustrates the likely proposed landscape and visual mitigation of the Scheme. The Outline Landscape and Ecological Environmental Management Plan (oLEMP) at **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 2-2** comprises the delivery mechanism through which the mitigation will be delivered, and which will be secured by the provisions of the DCO in a final version, i.e. the LEMP.
- 5.7.2 The Illustrative Environmental Masterplan on **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2** is annotated to set out the purpose of the landscape proposals to meet the design objectives and mitigate for the impacts of the Scheme, these include:
- Retention of existing woodland, hedgerows, individual trees, ditches and watercourses across the Site as far as practicable;
  - Retention of all existing public rights of way across the Site along their current alignment;
  - Creation of ‘Green Lanes’ through the Site where public rights of way are set within open 20m wide corridors bounded by hedgerows and woodland blocks for visual screening, landscape integration and habitat connectivity purposes;
  - Sensitive design of landscape treatment alongside public rights of way on more elevated ground such as west of Little Staughton to ensure footpaths are not enclosed by vegetation and intermittent views out across the Kym Valley to the north are available;
  - Enhancement of waterside meadows along the Pertenhall Brook and a brook through Site B by creating riparian woodland blocks, meadows, hedgerows and intermittent riparian tree groups for ecosystem benefits,

habitat connectivity, and to reduce visual impact on public rights of way alongside watercourses;

- Provision of permissive paths west of Little Staughton to increase access to the local public right of way network and create the opportunity for new circular routes;
- Setting back of fence lines from field boundaries and public rights of way in areas of high ground such as west of Little Staughton and at the southern end of Site C to avoid the solar array breaking skylines, and to allow views out looking 'over' the solar array to retain panoramic vistas where available;
- Proposed hedgerows with trees for landscape integration, visual screening and habitat connectivity. In parts of the Site these have been provided to restore historic field boundaries;
- Creation of species-diverse grassland meadows and corridors as buffers to existing landscape elements (such as hedgerows and woodland), as buffers to residential properties, and for ecological mitigation and benefits.

5.7.3 The Illustrative Environmental Masterplan has also included mitigation proposed by the Glint and Glare Assessment, which is identified in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-6**. This includes native hedgerows to be planted and maintained to a height of at least 3.5m along the following parts of the Site (the following site references to Arrays 1 to 13 are specific to the Glint and Glare Assessment and are shown in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-6 Appendix A, Figure 4**):

- The norther/southern/south-western boundary of Array 1;
- The eastern/northern/north-western boundary of Array 2;
- The eastern/south-eastern boundary of Array 5;
- North-eastern/western/north-western/eastern/south-eastern boundary of Array 6 and beside the roads that cross the Scheme Boundary in their vicinity;
- Western/south-western/north-eastern/eastern boundary of Array 7;
- Western boundary of Array 9;

- Southern boundary of Array 10;
- North-eastern/southern/south-eastern boundary of Array 11;
- South-western boundary of Array 12; and
- The northern/north-western/eastern boundary of Array 13.

5.7.4 The Illustrative Environmental Masterplan will continue to evolve in advance of submission of the application for development consent, and whilst the detailed layout of specific landscape elements may be subject to changes, the principle of the proposals as shown on the illustrative masterplan will eventually be secured by the provisions of the DCO and the oLEMP.

## Embedded Mitigation

### Site Selection

5.7.5 A consideration of alternative sites was undertaken from the outset of the Scheme through the site selection process which is considered part of the embedded mitigation as a first step in avoiding significant landscape and visual effects. The site selection process followed two broad stages:

- The first stage, set out in the Site Identification Report in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 3-1** identified a 'Search Zone' for the most appropriate location for a large-scale solar NSIP capable of utilising the available grid capacity within the Eaton Socon Substation.
- The second stage, set out in the Land Identification Report (LIR) in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 3-2** follows on from the first stage and comprised a high-level review of the land offered to BSSL to establish constraints to development of the Scheme and refine the overall landholding to be taken forward. This second stage considered the design principles set out above as key design guidelines used to determine the Site location.

5.7.6 By considering the design principles at the outset of the Scheme, the Site location benefits from detailed work to avoid or reduce the most significant landscape and visual effects, and this embedded mitigation is the first stage in following the mitigation hierarchy.

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## Construction Phase

### *General*

5.7.7 Embedded mitigation during construction would be secured by the adoption of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). An Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) is included at **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 2-3** with specific measures that include:

- Sensitive colouring of welfare facilities and temporary office units within site compounds.
- Keeping a tidy and organised site.
- Materials delivered on an 'as needed' basis to prevent unnecessary stockpiles.
- Protection of retained vegetation in accordance with British Standard (BS) 5837:2012. Hedgerow and trees located in proximity to the working areas will be protected from disruption and if necessary, protection fences will be erected to ensure that roots remain undisturbed.

5.7.8 If the DCO is granted, the oCEMP will be developed into a detailed CEMP once a contractor is appointed. The CEMP will be in substantial accordance with this oCEMP and will be a requirement of the DCO for submission and approval by the Local Planning Authorities (LPA) prior to construction.

### *Construction of the Cable Route*

5.7.9 The design of the cable route has avoided notable landscape elements, such as groups of trees and hedgerows, where possible. Where loss of a landscape element is unavoidable, the loss has been kept to a practical minimum and the Scheme has been designed such that it is currently anticipated there will be no tree loss and minimal hedgerow loss along the cable route.

5.7.10 The working width during the construction phase is expected to be confined to a corridor of no greater than 20m to minimise the construction footprint on the landscape.

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- 5.7.11 A pre-construction walkover survey of the working area will be undertaken by an appropriately experienced arboricultural consultant and the guidance set out in BS 5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Construction will be adhered to where applicable. The survey will define specific mitigation measures required for all trees situated in or adjacent to the working width, including measures such as the erection of protective fencing in order to minimise the impacts on trees and their roots.
- 5.7.12 In addition, hedgerow in proximity to the working width will be protected from disruption and if necessary, protection fences will be erected to ensure that roots remain undisturbed.
- 5.7.13 Trenchless techniques (Horizontal Drilling or Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD)) will be adopted at the location of certain sensitive landscape elements, e.g. for certain lines of trees. Drilling under such elements avoids the loss or damage to these elements.
- 5.7.14 Following completion of construction operations all agricultural land will be restored to its previous condition. Topsoil will be prepared and seeded using an appropriate seed mix or returned to arable cultivation.
- 5.7.15 Land drains within agricultural land on the cable route, which may be temporarily affected by construction operations, will also be restored following completion of construction. This is important to ensure that the growth of trees and hedgerows is not affected by changes to the surface water drainage system.
- 5.7.16 Hedgerows which will have been removed during the construction period will be replanted, including on the cable route. Trees will not be planted on or within 6 m of the edge of the cable trench to avoid the risk of damage to the cable by tree roots. However, the route has sought to avoid trees, and it is currently anticipated there will be no tree loss along the cable route.
- 5.7.17 Considering the connection to the existing Eaton Socon Substation, the cable route location and extent has been proposed to avoid loss of existing tree

planting which is located on the periphery of the existing Substation compound. The entry of the cable route into the western extent of the existing Substation compound will utilise HDD underneath the existing (albeit relatively recently planted) tree planting to avoid losses.

- 5.7.18 Restoration will seek to replace vegetation lost with the same species which are removed, as far as is practicable.

### **Operational Phase**

- 5.7.19 The management and maintenance of the Scheme’s proposed landscaping and green infrastructure would be secured by the requirements of the oLEMP (***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 2-2***). This would ensure the proposed landscaping is successful in establishing and can be relied on as embedded mitigation for the Landscape and Visual impact Assessment.

- 5.7.20 With reference to the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan on ***PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2***, the following habitat types are expected to be created within as part of the Scheme:

**Table 5.7 – Landcover Types Created in the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan**

<b>Landcover Type</b>	<b>Total Amount Created (Area/Number/Length)</b>
Native Species Woodland or Woodland Belt	Approx. 13 hectares
Native Species Hedgerow	Approx. 17 kilometres
Native Species Individual Tree	Approx. 350 number
Grazing Pasture or Neutral Grassland	Approx. 464 hectares
Species-Diverse Grassland	Approx. 197 hectares

### **Decommissioning Phase**

- 5.7.21 At decommissioning the proposed planting implemented as part of the Scheme would be retained.

5.7.22 A Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP) would be developed to manage decommissioning activities, with an Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (oDEMP) provided at ***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 2-5***.

### Enhancement

5.7.23 The Illustrative Environmental Masterplans on ***PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2*** provide for a Scheme intended to not only avoid, reduce and mitigate for landscape and visual effects, but with the additional aspiration (following decommissioning) of leaving the landscape in a better condition than it is now.

5.7.24 The proposed woodland belts, woodland, hedgerows and trees would be retained post-decommissioning. The design of these features as shown on the Illustrative Environmental Masterplans is intended to reinforce the existing landscape characteristics, restore historic field boundaries, and provide enhanced recreational opportunities through features such as the 'green lanes'. Whilst these proposals will mitigate for the Scheme during its Operational phase, they will also provide enhancement beyond the operational life of the Scheme.



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## 5.8 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

### Introduction

- 5.8.1 This section assesses the level and significance of the landscape and visual effects of the Scheme during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases. The assessments follow the iterative design development process and incorporation of the mitigation and enhancement measures set out in the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (***PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2***) and oLEMP (***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 2-2***). The assessment of operational effects is separated out into Year 0, or the 'opening year' of the Scheme and Year 10, when proposed mitigation planting would have reached a reasonable level of maturity, as was set out in Section 5.3.
- 5.8.2 Where relevant, reference is made to the potential differences in effects between the two locations being considered for the East Park BESS and East Park Substation: Site C, which is Option 1; and Site D, which is Option 2.

### Construction Phase Effects

- 5.8.3 Construction would result in temporary disruption within the Site and Study Area. This would include a limited amount of vegetation clearance and localised earthworks, particularly in relation to the underground cable route, and the presence of site compounds and construction plant, vehicles and machinery.

### Landscape Assessment

#### ***Effects on Landscape Elements***

- 5.8.4 The presence of construction plant, materials, machinery, and construction compounds would have an adverse effect on the composition of local landscape elements. Construction operations would be temporary and the residual effect on landscape character due to minor vegetation loss, is factored into the assessment of operational phase effects.

- 5.8.5 No tree removal is expected to be required as part of the construction operations and only a small extent of hedgerow loss, approximately 54m in length, which is limited in the context of the extent of the overall Site. With reference to Section 2.5 of **PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 2**, only 17m of this hedgerow would be removed across the full operational phase of the Scheme, with the remainder replanted alongside the wider landscape proposals at the end of the Construction Phase.
- 5.8.6 There would be no fundamental change to the underlying landform during construction, with only very minor intervention required to establish foundations at the East Park BESS, East Park Substation and solar transformers, and in the provision of drainage retention basins and access tracks. However, in the most part there would be no change required to the underlying landform given that the solar array can be secured to the ground using soft-piling techniques which would follow the existing contours.

### ***Effects on Landscape Character***

- 5.8.7 The detailed assessment of construction stage effects on landscape character is set out in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-3**. The conclusions of the landscape character assessment are summarised in Table 5.8 below.

**Table 5.8 – Construction effects on landscape character areas**

<b>Landscape Character Area (LCA)</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland	Medium (Medium susceptibility and Low value)	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
Northern Wolds LCA	Medium (Medium to High susceptibility and Low value)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
Southern Wolds LCA	Low (Low to Medium susceptibility and Low value)	Moderate Adverse (Significant)

Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Sensitivity	Level of Effect and Significance
LCA 1D Thurleigh Clay Farmland	Low (Low susceptibility and Low value)	Negligible (Not Significant)
LCA 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley	Low (Low to Medium susceptibility and Low value)	Negligible (Not Significant)

5.8.8 The landscape character of the Site and its immediate setting would be affected to the greatest degree within the two central character areas within the study area: LCA 1B and Southern Wolds LCA and the primary impacts which would cause these adverse effects would be:

- The construction of the substation and BESS (Options 1 and 2).
- The delivery and installation of the solar panels.
- The construction operations associated with the cable corridor.

5.8.9 These aspects of the Scheme would vary perceptions of tranquillity locally within the Study Area due to the movement and possible noise created by construction activity. However, perceived variations in tranquillity would be at most medium-term due to the temporary nature of construction works.

5.8.10 The construction of substation and BESS Options 1 and 2 would have broadly similar landscape effects on the Southern Wolds LCA in which they would be located and, while the construction of these components would require more plant equipment and operational activity than for the solar arrays, which in each case would be constructed in the option site not selected (i.e. if Option 1 is selected for the substation and BESS, the Option 2 part of the Site would contain solar array, and vice versa), each Option area is located in open areas of farmland with no difference in impact on landscape elements during construction. The Option 1 site benefits from screening by New Wood directly to its north, while the Option 2 site is in a slightly larger scale landscape and

existing pylons reduce the susceptibility of this part of the LCA very slightly. However, overall, construction activity within Option 1 and Option 2 sites would contribute a similar amount to the overall level of landscape effect on this LCA during the construction phase.

- 5.8.11 Overall, the presence of construction plant, materials, machinery, construction compounds and construction lighting, in addition to the small extent of removal of existing vegetation would have a **Moderate Adverse** (Significant) effect on the host LCAs during construction.

## Visual Assessment

### *Visual Effects at Viewpoints*

- 5.8.12 The detailed assessment of construction phase effects on representative viewpoints is set out in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4**. The conclusions of the visual assessment are summarised in Table 5.9 below and those receptors which have been identified as being subject to a significant visual effect during construction are shaded grey.

**Table 5.9 –Effects on representative viewpoints during construction**

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
1	Bridleway M8 (Parish of Melchbourne and Yelden)	Medium-High	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
2	Bridleway 6 (Parish of Swineshead)	Medium-High	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
3	BOAT 7 (Parish of Swineshead) near Swineshead Wood	Medium-High	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
4	Church of St Nicholas in Swineshead	High	No change
5	Junction between Swineshead Road and Melchbourne Road	Low	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
6	Footpath A4 (Parish of Swineshead)	Medium-High	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
7	Footpath A3 (Parish of Swineshead)	Medium-High	Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant)
8	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (Significant)
9	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant)
10	Bridleway 44 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	High	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
11	Footpath 12 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	High	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
12	Footpath 34 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (Significant)
13	Bridleway 40 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (Significant)
14	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
15	Footpath 29 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (Significant)
16	Footpath 11 (Parish of Pertenhall) at the Chadwell Spring	Medium	Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant)
17	Footpath 12 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
18	Bridleway A1 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Medium-High	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
19	Footpath 138/32 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Medium-High	Moderate Adverse (Significant)

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
20	Junction between Kimbolton Road and Wood End Lane in Pertenhall	Low	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
21	Footpath 5 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Medium-High	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
22	Church of St Peter in Swineshead	Medium	No change
23	Footpath 20 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Medium-High	Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant)
24	Great Staughton Road	High	Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant)
25	Footpath 26 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Major Adverse (Significant)
26	Footpath 35 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
27	Footpath 112 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium	Major Adverse (Significant)
28	Footpath 6 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Negligible (Not Significant)
29	Church of St Mary the Virgin in Keysoe	High	No change
30	Footpath 64 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Negligible (Not Significant)
31	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium	Negligible (Not Significant)
32	Footpath 47 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (Significant)
33	Footpath 13 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium	Major Adverse (Significant)
34	Footpath 4 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
35	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Major Adverse (Significant)
36	Footpath 10 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (Significant)
37	Footpath 3 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (Significant)
38	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (Significant)
39	West End Road to the west of Little Staughton	Low	No change
40	Bridleway 23 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	No change
41	Bridleway 13 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	No change
42	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Major Adverse (Significant)
43	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Major Adverse (Significant)
44	Green End at the Crown Inn in Little Staughton	Low	Negligible (Not Significant)
45	Spring Hill in Little Staughton	Low	Negligible (Not Significant)
46	The Kangaroo at the junction between Little Staughton Road and Great Staughton Road	High	Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant)
47	Footpath 138/5 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Medium	Negligible (Not Significant)
48	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
49	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Major Adverse (Significant)

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
50	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
51	Footpath 5 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (Significant)
52	Church of All Saints at Little Staughton	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
53	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium-High	Negligible (Not Significant)
54	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Medium-High	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
55	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
56	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium-High	Major Adverse (Significant)
57	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium-High	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
58	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Medium-High	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
59	Footpath 213/23 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium-High	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
60	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
61	Church of St Andrew in Great Staughton	Medium	Negligible (Not Significant)
62	View across Birds Meadow from The Causeway towards River Kym	Low	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
63	Footpath 219/9 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium	Negligible (Not Significant)



<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
64	Footpath 213/3 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
65	Footpath 213/28 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
66	Moor Road near Mill View	Low	Minor-Moderate Adverse (Significant)
67	Moor Road near Roman Field Cottage	High	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
68	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Medium	Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant)
69	Footpath 213/12 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium	Minor Adverse (Significant)
70	Bridleway 27 (Parish of Staploe)	Medium	Negligible (Not Significant)
71	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Medium	Moderate Adverse (Significant)
72	Unnamed road, part of the Three Shires Way	High	Negligible (Not Significant)
73	Bridleway 213/4 (Parish of Great Staughton), part of the Three Shires Way	Medium	Negligible (Not Significant)
74	Bridleway 207/12 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Medium	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
75	Bridleway 207/13 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Medium	Negligible (Not Significant)
76	B645 near Wood View	Low	Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
77	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Medium	Major Adverse (Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Sensitivity	Level of Effect and Significance
78	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Medium	Major Adverse (Significant)
79	Junction between B645 and High Street at Hail Weston	Low	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
80	Duloe Road	Low	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
81	Footpath 23 (Parish of Staploe)	Medium	No change
82	Footpath 8A (Parish of Staploe) at the Eaton Socon Substation	Medium	Negligible (Not Significant)

5.8.13 Of the 82 viewpoints, 38 have been assessed as likely experiencing significant visual effects during construction. The largest construction effects on representative viewpoints would associate with those locations in closest proximity to the Scheme, particularly users of footpaths, with the following significant visual effects noted:

- Viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and bridleways which are located directly adjacent to Site A. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site A.
- Viewpoints 17, 18 and 19 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and bridleways within 0.8km north of Site A. These viewpoints are on slightly elevated, large-scale fields to the north-west of Pertenhall and users would experience views in a southerly direction, down onto the construction operations within Site A. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site A and the extent of view from slightly elevated ground.

- Viewpoints 21 and 23 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths within 0.8km north of Sites A and B. These viewpoints are on slightly elevated, large-scale fields to the east of Pertenhall and users would experience views in a south-westerly direction, down onto the construction operations within Sites A and B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Sites A and B and the extent of view from slightly elevated ground.
- Viewpoints 24 and 25 are representative of views experienced by residential properties on Great Staughton Road and users of footpaths respectively, and are located in close proximity to the north of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoint 27 is representative of views experienced by users of a footpath located in close proximity to the west of Site B. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect given its proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoints 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 and 38 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths which are located directly adjacent to the southern extent of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoints 42 and 43 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths directly to the west of Little Staughton and in close proximity to the eastern extent of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoint 46 is representative of views experienced by residential properties at the junction between Little Staughton Road and Great Staughton Road, and is located in close proximity to the north of Site B. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given its proximity to the construction operations within Site B.

- Viewpoints 48 and 49 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths which are located directly adjacent to the eastern extent of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoints 51 and 54 are representative of views experienced by users of a footpath within 0.9km south-east of Site B. This viewpoint is within slightly elevated fields to the east of Little Staughton and users would experience views in a north-westerly direction, down onto the construction operations within Site B. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect given its proximity to the construction operations within Site B and extent of view from slightly elevated ground.
- Viewpoints 56, 57, 58, 67 and 68 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and a small number of residential properties within close proximity to the boundary of Site C. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site C.
- Viewpoint 60 is representative of views experienced by users of a footpath located in close proximity to the north of Site C. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect given its proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoints 71, 77 and 78 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and a bridleway which are located directly adjacent to the southern and central extents of Site D. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site D.

### **Visual Effects on different Receptor Groups**

5.8.14 The effects on visual receptors within the study area are reported in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4** (Effects at Viewpoints) and **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-5** (Effects on Visual Receptors), however they are based on the detailed assessment of visual effects on the 82 representative viewpoints, as summarised in the previous section. The following provides a general

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overview of the effects on each receptor type based on the detailed appendices:

### ***People in Residential Properties***

- 5.8.15 Given the low density of settlement within the study area and the visual containment provided by subtle landform undulations, a relatively small number of residential receptors have been identified as experiencing significant visual effects during construction. All residential receptors identified as experiencing significant visual effects are either individual properties or small groups of properties which are located in close proximity to the Scheme Boundary. No significant visual effects have been identified on the villages located within the Study Area.
- 5.8.16 The residential receptors that would be subject to a significant visual effect during construction are as follows:
- R4 - Grange Farm, a small group of properties.
  - R8 - Gunnersby Cottage, an individual property.
  - R9 - Properties on Great Staughton Road, east of Green End, a small group of properties.
  - R10 – Hoo Farm, a small group of properties.
  - R12 – The Grange, an individual property.
  - R17 – Northern Extent of Green End (road), a small group of properties.
  - R19 - Lodge Farm, an individual property.
  - R20 - Rectory Farm, an individual property.
  - R21 - Little Hollow Cottage, an individual property
  - R22 - The Kangaroo, an individual property.
  - R23 – New Farm, an individual property.
  - R25 - Garden Farm and Garden Cottage, a small group of properties.
  - R27 - Rushey Farm and Roman Field Farm, a small group of properties.
  - R31 - The Cottage and Pastures Farm, a small group of properties.

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### ***Users of Public Rights of Way***

5.8.17 The rights of way receptors that would be subject to a significant visual effect during construction are as follows:

- Footpaths A3, 2, 32, 11 and 12, which are located directly within the northern extent of Site A.
- Bridleway 40 and Footpaths 34, 35 and 37, which are located directly within the southern extent of Site A.
- Footpaths 4, 8, 13, 26, 47, which are located directly within Site B.
- Footpath 5 and 20 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Pertenhall, at least 1km north of Sites A and B;
- Footpaths 1, 5, 19, which pass directly within the eastern extent of Site B.
- Footpaths 213/2, 213/3, 213/23 and 213/28, which are located on the perimeter of Site C.
- Footpaths 5 and 213/1 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Little Staughton, within 1km south of Site B;
- Footpaths 112/5, 112/6, 112/7 and 112/8, which are located within Site D.

5.8.18 There are few designated trails which have a formal recreational purpose within the study area, i.e. designated trails. Two designated trails are located within Study Area, The North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail and The Three Shires Way and it is concluded that:

- With regards users of The North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail, based on an assessment of Viewpoints 10, 11 and 40 (***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4***) and the assessment of visual receptors (***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-5***), that there would be a worst-case Minor Adverse level of effect on users of North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail during construction in a relatively small number of locations along the route.
- With regards users of The Three Shires Way, based on an assessment of Viewpoints 72, 73, 74 and 75 (***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4***) and the assessment of visual receptors (***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-5***), there would be a worst-case Minor Adverse (Not Significant) level of effect on

users of The Three Shires Way during construction in a relatively small number of locations along the route.

5.8.19 Similar to the assessment of effects on residential receptors, all right of way receptors identified as likely experiencing significant visual effects due to the construction of the Scheme are located on or in close proximity to the Scheme. There are a relatively high number of rights of way identified as being subject to significant visual effects during construction as there is a relatively dense network of rights of way within the Study Area which provide connections between farms and small settlements.

5.8.20 Some routes are located outside the Scheme Boundary on slightly elevated ground and users would experience occasional views down onto the Site, at the shallow base of a section of the Kym Valley. In these views, the Scheme construction would largely be set below the visible horizon on the opposite side of the valley, whether views are from the northern or southern extents of the Study Area. However, such significant effects are less frequently identified than from footpaths directly within or adjacent to the Site and these elevated areas are largely contained to the ground to the north, west and south of Sites A and Sites B. The area within which Sites C and D are located, is broader and flatter, with less topographic variation.

### ***Users of Community Facilities***

5.8.21 No community receptors have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the temporary construction works.

### ***People Using Roads***

5.8.22 No road receptors have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the temporary construction works.

### ***People at Employment Sites***

5.8.23 No receptors at their place of work have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the temporary construction works.

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### ***Substation and BESS Options 1 and 2***

5.8.24 Consideration has been given to the potential for the substation and BESS components of the Scheme to be located within either Site C (Option 1) and Site C (Option 2). A worst-case assessment has been carried out within **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4** and **Appendix 5-5** with regards the potential for the substation and BESS to be located within either of these locations when assessing effects from representative viewpoints and on visual receptors during construction. In addition, and as was noted in the landscape assessment, solar array would be constructed in the option site not selected (i.e. if Option 1 is selected for the substation and BESS, the Option 2 part of the Site would contain solar array, and vice versa), and, while the construction of these components would require more plant equipment and operational activity than for the solar arrays, it remains that there would be construction activity throughout Sites C and D, regardless of the option selected.

5.8.25 The following are the noted differences in visual effects between the two options during the construction phase:

- Option 1 in Site C would be more evident from the following viewpoints and receptors:
  - k. Viewpoints 57 and 58, which are located on Footpath 213/1 at the south-western boundary of Site C and comprise short-distance views towards Site C.
  - l. Viewpoint 62, which is located on the pavement beside Causeway Road and comprises a short-distance view towards Site C.
  - m. Viewpoint 64, which is located on Footpath 213/3 at the northern boundary of Site C and comprises a short-distance view towards Site C.
  - n. Viewpoint 65, which is located on Footpath 213/28 close to the northern boundary of Site C and comprises a medium-distance view towards Site C.
- Option 2 in Site D would be more evident from the following viewpoints and receptors:



- o. Viewpoint 69, which is located on Footpath 213/12 and comprises a long-distance view towards Site D.
  - p. Viewpoint 74, which is located on Footpath 207/12 and comprises a long-distance view towards Site D.
  - q. Viewpoint 76, which is located on the B645 near Wood View and comprises a medium-distance view towards Site D.
  - r. Viewpoint 77, which is located on Bridleway 112/7 and comprises a short-distance view towards Site D.
- From Viewpoints 67, 68 and 69, which represent a road (Viewpoint 67 is on Moor Road) and rights of way (Bridleway 112/7 and Footpath 213/2) which are located between Sites C and D, both options would be evident in views, albeit in different directions, and construction would give rise to similar levels of effect.

5.8.26 Overall, the visual effects of the construction of Option 1 and 2 would be broadly similar, albeit experienced from different receptors. While there are slightly fewer receptors close to Site D and Option 2 and it is located closer to existing pylons, indicating a slightly lower level of effect due to this option, there would be construction activity throughout each site regardless of the option chosen and the differences in effect are limited.

### Operational Phase Effects

5.8.27 The following section considers the landscape and visual effects of the Scheme during operation. As is defined in the methodology, the operation assessment is in two stages: in the year of opening (Year 0); and ten years following opening (Year 10). As was also stated in the methodology, the assessment of visual effects has adopted a worst-case approach with regards seasonal change throughout the year, with a worst-case of winter effects assumed throughout.

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## Landscape Effects

### *Effects on Landscape Elements*

- 5.8.28 As stated in the baseline section, this is largely a gently undulating arable landscape which has a low level of tree and hedgerow cover. The Scheme would not require any fundamental change to the underlying landscape elements, including landform and tree cover, with minimal hedgerow loss to facilitate the creation of some access tracks and the cable route. While the fields under which the solar arrays will be located will not comprise arable crop during operation of the Scheme, they will be seeded with a mix suitable for use as grazing pasture or to create neutral grassland.
- 5.8.29 There would be no trees lost due to the Scheme and only minimal hedgerow loss to facilitate wider access in certain locations and to construct the cable route.
- 5.8.30 Overall, at Year 0 of operation the following would be evident with respect of landscape elements:
- There would be no change to the underlying landform.
  - There would be minimal loss of vegetation due to the Scheme.
  - The underlying landcover of fields would be altered to remove crop planting and to introduce grassland to enhance biodiversity.
- 5.8.31 With reference to Section 5.7 and also the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (*PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2*), at year 10 of operation the establishment of Scheme woodland, individual trees and hedgerows would notably contribute to the reinforcement and enhancement of landscape elements and contribute to integration of the Scheme into its setting. There would be an overall long-term enhancement in the landscape elements within the Site due to the Scheme.

### ***Effects on Landscape Character***

5.8.32 The detailed assessment of operation effects on landscape character is set out in ***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-3***. The conclusions of the landscape character assessment are summarised subsequently in Table 5.10.

**Table 5.10 – Operation effects on landscape character areas**

<b>Landscape Character Area (LCA)</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland	Medium (Medium susceptibility and Low value)	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
Northern Wolds LCA	Medium (Medium to High susceptibility and Low value)	Years 0 and 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
Southern Wolds LCA	Low (Low to Medium susceptibility and Low value)	Year 0 Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10 Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
LCA 1D Thurleigh Clay Farmland	Low (Low susceptibility and Low value)	Years 0 and 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
LCA 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley	Low (Low to Medium susceptibility and Low value)	Years 0 and 10: No Change (Not Significant)

5.8.33 The majority of the Proposed Scheme would be located within Bedford LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland and Huntingdonshire Southern Wolds LCA. While there are evident differences between the two host character areas, as described in ***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-3***, and their baseline sensitivity,

they are both landscapes which are dominated by large-scale arable fields, with subtly varied topography within shallow valleys.

- 5.8.34 With regards LCA 1B, overall there are some distinct indicators of higher susceptibility to change, such as views across the landscape to church spires and the general lack of built form, however the LCA is large in scale, with a dominance of arable fields, and it is affected by some declining condition which detracts from the rural character, in particular the hedgerows and hedgerow and field trees. The susceptibility of LCA 1B is therefore considered to be Medium. LCA 1B doesn't associate with any landscape designations and is of Low landscape value. The overall sensitivity of LCA 1B has therefore been assessed as Medium.
- 5.8.35 Southern Wolds LCA has been assessed as being of slightly lower susceptibility than LCA 1B. While there are some distinct landscape characteristics indicating higher susceptibility to change, the LCA is large in scale, with a dominance of arable fields and it is affected by the presence of modern built influences such as power lines and airfields which detracts from the rural character. There is also less woodland cover in the southern extent of the LCA, where the Site is located. The susceptibility of the LCA is therefore considered to be Low to Medium. Southern Wolds LCA doesn't associate with any landscape designations and is of Low landscape value. The overall sensitivity of LCA 1B has therefore been assessed as Low to Medium.
- 5.8.36 Changes in landscape character during operation would principally associate with:
- The introduction of solar arrays within Sites A, B, C and D. Site A is located 0.7km to the west of Swineshead with Pertenhall located directly to the east. Site B is located between Keysoe to the west and Little Staughton the east. Site C is located 0.2km to the south of Great Staughton and Site D is more separated from settlement and is located 1.1km west of Hail Weston. Solar panels will have a maximum height of 3m above ground level.

- Transformer units would be located throughout the solar arrays, at a maximum height of 3.5m above ground level.
- The introduction into either Site C (Option 1) or D (Option 2) of the Substation and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) which are a maximum of 13.6m AGL for the substation and 4.5m AGL for the BESS.
- Associated access tracks, CCTV units and a palisade fence.

5.8.37 For both LCA 1B and Southern Wolds LCA, the Scheme would largely comprise the introduction of a solar array into large-arable fields, outside the settlement boundary of small rural villages. The array would be relatively low-level, at a maximum of 3m above existing ground-level, and would have a generally uniform appearance, albeit given the orientation of the panels to face south, there would be some variation in how it is perceived throughout the landscape.

5.8.38 The solar array would mostly be located on the lower ground within both LCAs, albeit Southern Wolds LCA is broadly flatter than the western extent of the Study Area and LCA 1B. The Scheme would follow the contours and would not alter the underlying topography. The southern extent of the array would be slightly more elevated than the northern extent which would orientate the Scheme to face slightly more towards the north. However, this comprises a subtle change in levels.

5.8.39 The Scheme would not alter the pattern of fields with the Site. The solar array would be contained within existing fields and not cross existing field boundaries or require removal of hedgerow which define those boundaries.

5.8.40 Sites C and D would have a slightly less extensive ZTV than Sites A and B as is illustrated by **PEIR Volume 3 Figures 5-3a and 5-3b**, given their smaller scale and the screening effect of occasional woodland blocks. This is particularly evident within the south-eastern extent of the Study Area.

5.8.41 Associated infrastructure within Sites A and B would be relatively subtle in comparison to the broader footprint of the solar array. Transformers and

CCTV columns would be located throughout the Site and, while protruding slightly above the solar array, they would be broadly contained by the broader solar array as an influence on the underlying landscape character. Access tracks would be surfaced with a bound material, similar to existing farm tracks, and would therefore not be uncharacteristic of the existing landscape.

5.8.42 The Substation and BESS components of the Scheme would be directly located within the Southern Wolds LCA in Sites C (Option 1) or D (Option 2) and, given their taller vertical scale than the solar array (13.6m for the Substation and 4.5m for the BESS) and utilitarian appearance, would contribute to a slight increase in landscape change within the vicinity of Sites C and D. However, these components would be set within the wider solar array, which would partially reduce their influence on the character area and there is precedent nearby at Eaton Socon Substation, which is located at the very eastern extent of the Site, albeit in the adjacent LCA.

5.8.43 With regards the potential differences in landscape effects between substation and BESS Options 1 and 2 on Southern Wolds LCA, each would have broadly similar landscape effects as the other and, in each case, solar array would be located in the option site not selected (i.e. if Option 1 is selected for the substation and BESS, the Option 2 part of the Site would contain solar array, and vice versa). Each Option area is located in open areas of farmland with no difference in impact on landscape elements. The Option 1 site benefits from screening by New Wood directly to its north, while the Option 2 site is in a slightly larger scale landscape and in closer proximity to existing electrical infrastructure which reduces the susceptibility of this part of the LCA very slightly. However, overall, the location of the substation and BESS elements within the Option 1 and Option 2 sites would contribute a similar amount to the overall level of landscape effect on this LCA.

5.8.44 The Scheme would alter some of the key characteristics within this both LCA 1B and Southern Wolds LCA, however in the most part it would retain their overall characteristics and not fundamentally alter the nature of landscape character within the study area. These are large-scale, very gently undulating

and open LCAs which can accept a development of this scale and low-level height. The Scheme would not alter the underlying pattern of the landscape, and the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (*PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2*) has been designed to enhance and strengthen field boundaries through the additional planting of hedgerow and hedgerow trees. The Scheme would not require the removal of trees and there would be minimal loss of hedgerow to facilitate the underground cable connections. All hedgerows would be replanted following the completion of construction of the cable route.

- 5.8.45 The Scheme would be suitably low-level such that the characteristic of open views across the landscape would be retained and there would be no loss of the scattered trees and woodland blocks that fragment the large-scale arable landscape.
- 5.8.46 While there would be retention of the structure of fields, there would be a partial tonal change in the appearance of fields within the broader context of the landscape character of the study area and it would be evident that there has been a change in land use from arable crop to solar panels. This change would alter a relatively large extent of each LCA, however due to the gently undulating nature of the landscape and the presence of hedgerow and intermittent blocks of woodland on field boundaries, the Scheme would not be seen in its entirety, which would reduce its perceived scale.
- 5.8.47 The presence of existing built influences on the Southern Wolds landscape, such as lines of pylons and airfields, one of which now comprises a solar farm at the former RAF Little Staughton Airfield, would also reduce the perceived change due to the Scheme.
- 5.8.48 In summary of the level of effect during operation on the two host landscape character areas:
- On LCA 1B, the level of effect during Year 0 of operation of the Scheme would be Moderate Adverse which is Significant in EIA terms. At Year 10, mitigation planting would have established to an extent that the Scheme would assimilate further within the LCA. Linear belts of planting beside the

Scheme, specifically on field boundaries, would reduce its visibility within the wider landscape and enhance an existing characteristic of LCA 1B. At Year 10 there would be a Minor to Moderate Adverse level of effect which is Not Significant.

- On Southern Wolds LCA, the level of effect during operation of the Scheme would be Minor to Moderate Adverse which is Not Significant. At Year 10, mitigation planting would have established to an extent that the Scheme would assimilate further within the LCA. Linear belts of planting beside the Scheme, specifically on field boundaries, would limit its visibility within the wider landscape and enhance an existing characteristic of Southern Wolds LCA. However, at Year 10 there would remain a Minor Adverse which is Not Significant.

5.8.49 No significant effects have been identified on other LCAs within the study area, with at most a partial visual influence on areas which are located outside the Site.

## Visual Assessment

### *Visual Effects on Representative Viewpoints*

5.8.50 The detailed assessment of operational phase effects on representative viewpoints is set out in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4**. The conclusions of the visual assessment are summarised in Table 5.11 below and those receptors which have been identified as being subject to a significant visual effect during both Year 0 and Year 10 of operation are shaded grey (with a lighter shade of grey when effects are significant at Year 0 but not at Year 10).

**Table 5.11 – Effects on representative viewpoints during operation**

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
1	Bridleway M8 (Parish of Melchbourne and Yielden)	Medium-High	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)



Viewpoint reference	Location	Sensitivity	Level of Effect and Significance
			Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
2	Bridleway 6 (Parish of Swineshead)	Medium-High	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
3	BOAT 7 (Parish of Swineshead) near Swineshead Wood	Medium-High	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
4	Church of St Nicholas in Swineshead	High	No change
5	Junction between Swineshead Road and Melchbourne Road	Low	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
6	Footpath A4 (Parish of Swineshead)	Medium-High	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
7	Footpath A3 (Parish of Swineshead)	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
8	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
9	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse

Viewpoint reference	Location	Sensitivity	Level of Effect and Significance
			(Not Significant)
10	Bridleway 44 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	High	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
11	Footpath 12 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	High	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
12	Footpath 34 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
13	Bridleway 40 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
14	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
15	Footpath 29 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
16	Footpath 11 (Parish of Pertenhall) at the Chadwell Spring	Medium	Year 0: Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
17	Footpath 12 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Medium	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant)

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
			Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
18	Bridleway A1 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
19	Footpath 138/32 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
20	Junction between Kimbolton Road and Wood End Lane in Pertenhall	Low	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
21	Footpath 5 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
22	Church of St Peter in Swineshead	Medium	No change
23	Footpath 20 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
24	Great Staughton Road	High	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
25	Footpath 26 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse

Viewpoint reference	Location	Sensitivity	Level of Effect and Significance
			(Significant)
26	Footpath 35 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
27	Footpath 112 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
28	Footpath 6 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
29	Church of St Mary the Virgin in Keysoe	High	No change
30	Footpath 64 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
31	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
32	Footpath 47 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
33	Footpath 13 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)

<b>Viewpoint reference</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Level of Effect and Significance</b>
34	Footpath 4 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Medium-High	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
35	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
36	Footpath 10 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium-High	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
37	Footpath 3 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium-High	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Major Adverse (Significant)
38	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium-High	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Major Adverse (Significant)
39	West End Road to the west of Little Staughton	Low	No change
40	Bridleway 23 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	No change
41	Bridleway 13 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	No change
42	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Major Adverse (Significant)
43	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Sensitivity	Level of Effect and Significance
			Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
44	Green End at the Crown Inn in Little Staughton	Low	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
45	Spring Hill in Little Staughton	Low	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
46	The Kangaroo at the junction between Little Staughton Road and Great Staughton Road	High	Year 0: Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
47	Footpath 138/5 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Medium	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
48	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
49	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
50	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
51	Footpath 5 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate-Major Adverse

Viewpoint reference	Location	Sensitivity	Level of Effect and Significance
			(Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
52	Church of All Saints at Little Staughton	Medium	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
53	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium-High	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
54	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
55	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Medium	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
56	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium-High	Year 0: Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
57	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium-High	Year 0: Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
58	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Medium-High	Year 0: Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse

Viewpoint reference	Location	Sensitivity	Level of Effect and Significance
			(Not Significant)
59	Footpath 213/23 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium-High	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
60	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
61	Church of St Andrew in Great Staughton	Medium	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
62	View across Birds Meadow from The Causeway towards River Kym	Low	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
63	Footpath 219/9 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
64	Footpath 213/3 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
65	Footpath 213/28 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
66	Moor Road near Mill View	Low	Year 0: Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)



Viewpoint reference	Location	Sensitivity	Level of Effect and Significance
			Year 10: Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
67	Moor Road near Roman Field Cottage	High	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
68	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Medium	Year 0: Moderate-Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
69	Footpath 213/12 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Medium	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Significant)
70	Bridleway 27 (Parish of Staploe)	Medium	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
71	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Medium	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
72	Unnamed road, part of the Three Shires Way	High	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
73	Bridleway 213/4 (Parish of Great Staughton), part of the Three Shires Way	Medium	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Sensitivity	Level of Effect and Significance
74	Bridleway 207/12 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Medium	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
75	Bridleway 207/13 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Medium	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
76	B645 near Wood View	Low	Year 0: Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor-Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
77	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Medium	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
78	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Medium	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Significant)
79	Junction between B645 and High Street at Hail Weston	Low	No change
80	Duloe Road	Low	No change
81	Footpath 23 (Parish of Staploe)	Medium	No change
82	Footpath 8A (Parish of Staploe) at the Eaton Socon Substation	Medium	No change

5.8.51 Of the 82 viewpoints, 35 have been assessed as likely experiencing significant visual effects at Year 0 and this reduces to 18 viewpoints at Year 10. The largest effects on representative viewpoints would associate with

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those locations in closest proximity to the Scheme, particularly users of footpaths, with the following significant visual effects noted:

- Viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and bridleways which are located directly adjacent to Site A. Of these viewpoints 12 and 16 are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site A. However, the effects on Viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 13, 14 and 15 are assessed as being Not Significant at Year 10 due to the establishment of the mitigation planting at that stage.
- Viewpoints 17, 18 and 19 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and bridleways within 0.8km north of Site A. These viewpoints are on slightly elevated, large-scale fields to the north-west of Pertenhall and users would experience views in a southerly direction, down onto the section of the Scheme which is within Site A. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site A and the extent of view from slightly elevated ground. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoints 17, 18 and 19 to Not Significant effects.
- Viewpoints 21 and 23 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths within 0.8km north of Sites A and B. These viewpoints are on slightly elevated, large-scale fields to the east of Pertenhall and users would experience views in a south-westerly direction, down onto the section of the Scheme which is within Sites A and B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Sites A and B and the relatively wide extent of the view of the Scheme from slightly elevated ground.
- Viewpoints 24 and 25 are representative of views experienced by residential properties on Great Staughton Road and users of footpaths respectively, and are located in close proximity to the north of Site B.

Viewpoint 25 is assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoint 24 to Not Significant.

- Viewpoint 27 is representative of views experienced by users of a footpath located in close proximity to the west of Site B. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect at Year 0 given its proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoint 27 to Not Significant.
- Viewpoints 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 and 38 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths which are located directly adjacent to the southern extent of Site B. The majority of these viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. However, the effects on Viewpoints 32 and 35 are assessed as being Not Significant at Year 10 due to the establishment of the mitigation planting at that stage.
- Viewpoints 42 and 43 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths directly to the west of Little Staughton and in close proximity to the eastern extent of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B.
- Viewpoints 48 and 49 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths which are located directly adjacent to the eastern extent of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoints 48 and 49 to Not Significant effects.

- Viewpoints 51 and 54 are representative of views experienced by users of a footpath within 0.9km south-east of Site B. This viewpoint is within slightly elevated fields to the east of Little Staughton and users would experience views in a north-westerly direction, down onto the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect at Year 0 and Year 10 given its proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B and extent of view from slightly elevated ground.
- Viewpoints 56, 67 and 68 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and a small number of residential properties within close proximity to the boundary of Site C. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site C. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoint 67 to Not Significant, while Viewpoints 56 and 68 would be subject to a residually significant effect.
- Viewpoint 60 is representative of views experienced by users of a footpath located in close proximity to the north of Site C. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect at Year 0 given its proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoint 60 to Not Significant.
- Viewpoints 71, 77 and 78 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and a bridleway which are located directly adjacent to the southern and central extents of Site D. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site D.

5.8.52 Residually significant effects at Year 10 therefore remain on the following viewpoints:

- Viewpoint 12, which represents a specific view from Footpath 34.

- Viewpoint 16, which represents a specific view from Footpath 11.
- Viewpoint 21, which represents a specific view from Footpath 5.
- Viewpoint 23, which represents a specific view from Footpath 20.
- Viewpoint 25, which represents a specific view from Footpath 26.
- Viewpoint 33, which represents a specific view from Footpath 13.
- Viewpoint 36, which represents a specific view from Footpath 10.
- Viewpoint 37, which represents a specific view from Footpath 3.
- Viewpoint 38, which represents a specific view from Footpath 11.
- Viewpoint 42, which represents a specific view from Footpath 4.
- Viewpoint 43, which represents a specific view from Footpath 11.
- Viewpoint 51, which represents a specific view from Footpath 5.
- Viewpoint 54, which represents a specific view from Footpath 213/1.
- Viewpoint 56, which represents a specific view from Footpath 213/2.
- Viewpoint 68, which represents a specific view from Footpath 112/7.
- Viewpoint 71, which represents a specific view from Footpath 112/5.
- Viewpoint 77, which represents a specific view from Footpath 112/7.
- Viewpoint 78, which represents a specific view from Footpath 112/5.

5.8.53 These viewpoints represent specific views and not the entire right of way upon which they are located. Overall, they typically represent residual significant effects from public rights of way which either cross into the Site or are located in very close proximity. However, the following are two exceptions to this pattern:

- Viewpoints 21 and 23 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, at least 1km north of Sites A and B and the residually significant effect on each of these viewpoints is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Sites A and B; and
- Viewpoints 51 and 54 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, within 1km south of Site B and the residually significant

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effect on each of these viewpoints is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Sites C and D.

### **Visual Effects on Different Receptor Types**

- 5.8.54 The effects on visual receptors within the study area are reported in ***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4*** and ***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-5***, however they are based on the detailed assessment of visual effects on the 82 representative viewpoints, as summarised in the previous section.
- 5.8.55 In relation to the assessment of operational visual effects at Year 0, it is note that that the Scheme would not require notable change to the underlying landform, nor the removal of trees. The relatively small extent of hedgerows impacted by the cable route would be replanted following the completion of construction. It is therefore the case that the majority of visual effects at Year 0 would arise due to the introduction of new elements, i.e. a solar array, substation, BESS and other associated infrastructure, and not the removal of existing features.
- 5.8.56 The following provides a general overview of the effects on each receptor type based on the detailed appendices (***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4*** and ***Appendix 5-5***).

### ***People in Residential Properties***

- 5.8.57 Given the low density of settlement within the study area and the visual containment provided by subtle landform undulations, a relatively small number of residential receptors have been identified as experiencing significant visual effects during operation of the Scheme. All residential receptors identified as experiencing significant visual effects during the operational phase are either individual properties, or small groups of properties, located in close proximity to the Scheme Boundary. No significant visual effects have been identified on residential receptors located directly within the villages located within the Study Area.

5.8.58 The residential receptors that would be subject to a significant visual effect at Year 0 during operation are as follows:

- R4 - Grange Farm, a small group of properties.
- R8 - Gunnersby Cottage, an individual property.
- R9 - Properties on Great Staughton Road, east of Green End, a small group of properties.
- R10 – Hoo Farm, a small group of properties.
- R12 – The Grange, an individual property.
- R17 – Northern Extent of Green End (road), a small group of properties.
- R19 - Lodge Farm, an individual property.
- R20 - Rectory Farm, an individual property.
- R21 - Little Hollow Cottage, an individual property
- R22 - The Kangaroo, an individual property.
- R23 – New Farm, an individual property.
- R25 - Garden Farm and Garden Cottage, a small group of properties.
- R27 - Rushey Farm and Roman Field Farm, a small group of properties.
- R31 - The Cottage and Pastures Farm, a small group of properties.

5.8.59 These residential receptors are broadly spread throughout the Study Area and in all cases comprise individual properties, or small groups of properties, which are located in relatively close proximity to the Scheme Boundary and, either outside the villages and small settlements, or are located within open farmland. No significant visual effects have been identified on properties directly within the villages located throughout the Scheme, with sufficient separation included in the Scheme design to avoid significant effects on those locations.

5.8.60 It has also been identified within the visual assessment that, while all parts of the Proposed Scheme, i.e. Sites A to D, would contribute to some significant visual effects at Year 0, prior to the establishment of mitigation planting, there are no instances where more than two would contribute to a notable change



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in the view. Typically either one or, at most, two of the solar arrays forming Sites A to D, would be evident within the view.

- 5.8.61 At Year 10, the mitigation proposed, shown on the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (*PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2*), would have established to a reasonable level of maturity such that the Proposed Scheme would be more suitably integrated into the view from the majority of visual receptors, including residential properties. The mitigation has been designed to enhance and strengthen field boundaries through the additional planting of hedgerow and hedgerow trees, which would assist in screening the solar array and associated components such as the substation and BESS (Options 1 and 2).
- 5.8.62 The establishment of mitigation would give rise to a reduction in the level of effect from visual receptors, with some residential receptors experiencing a reduction in the change such that the residual effect at Year 10 is Not Significant, despite being Significant at Year 0. The proposed mitigation, in particular hedgerow planting on field boundaries, would be effective in screening a relatively low-level solar array at a maximum of 3m above ground level and would integrate it into the view overall.
- 5.8.63 The residential receptors that would be subject to a residually significant visual effect at Year 10 during operation, following the establishment of mitigation planting, are as follows:
- R10 – Hoo Farm, a small group of properties.
  - R19 - Lodge Farm, an individual property.
  - R20 - Rectory Farm, an individual property.
  - R31 - The Cottage and Pastures Farm, a small group of properties.
- 5.8.64 In the case of R10 – Hoo Farm, the receptors are slightly elevated and would be subject to views of the solar array in both Sites A and B. While the mitigation planting within the Scheme would reduce the level of effect, the residual effect at Year 10 would remain significant given the extent of the Scheme evident in the view. However, in all other instances, where residually

significant effects remain on residential receptors at Year 10, the properties are located in close proximity to the Scheme Boundary and a wide extent of the view is likely to be altered by the Scheme at close-distance, whether that is the visibility of the solar array and associated infrastructure, or mitigation planting.

### ***Users of Public Rights of Way***

5.8.65 The groups of rights of way receptors that would be subject to a significant visual effect during Year 0 of operation are as follows:

- Footpaths A3, 2, 32, 11 and 12, which are located directly within the northern extent of Site A;
- Bridleway 40 and Footpaths 34, 35 and 37, which are located directly within the southern extent of Site A;
- Footpaths 4, 8, 13, 26, 47, which are located directly within Site B.
- Footpath 5 and 20 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Pertenhall, at least 1km north of Sites A and B and the residually significant effect on each of these of these rights of way is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Sites A and B;
- Footpaths 1, 5, 19, which pass directly within the eastern extent of Site B.
- Footpaths 213/2, 213/3, 213/23 and 213/28, which are located on the perimeter of Site C.
- Footpaths 5 and 213/1 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Little Staughton, within 1km south of Site B and the residually significant effect on each of these rights of way is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Site B; and
- Footpaths 112/5, 112/6, 112/7 and 112/8, which are located within Site D.

5.8.66 Similar to the analysis of the significant visual effects on residential receptors, these receptors which are located within open farmland in relatively close proximity to the Scheme Boundary. Also, similar to the findings of the

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assessment of effects on residential receptors, typically either one or, at most, two of the solar arrays forming Sites A to D, would be evident within the view.

- 5.8.67 There is a relatively high number of rights of way identified as being subject to significant visual effects during Year 0 of operation as there is a relatively dense network of rights of way within the Study Area which provide connections between farms and small settlements. Significant visual effects at Year 0 of operation therefore typically relate to relatively short distance footpaths which form part of a network of rights of way in and around fields and small settlements within the Site.
- 5.8.68 Some rights of way assessed are located further away from the Scheme Boundary on slightly elevated ground and users would experience occasional views down onto the Site, at the shallow base of a section of the Kym Valley. In these views, the Scheme would largely be set below the visible horizon on the opposite side of the valley, whether views are from the northern or southern extents of the Study Area. However, significant effects are less frequently identified on rights of way located towards the periphery of the Study Area than from rights of way directly within or adjacent to the Site. Rights of way located on elevated ground are largely contained to the ground to the north, west and south of Sites A and Sites B. The area within which Sites C and D are located, is broader and flatter, with less topographic variation.
- 5.8.69 There are few designated trails which have a formal recreational purpose within the study area, i.e. designated trails. Two designated trails are located within Study Area, The North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail and The Three Shires Way and it is concluded that:
- With regards users of The North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail, based on an assessment of Viewpoints 10, 11 and 40 (**PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4**) and the assessment of visual receptors (**PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-5**), that there would be a worst-case Minor Adverse (Not Significant) level of effect on users of North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail during Year 0 of

operation in a relatively small number of locations along the route. At Year 10, following the establishment of tree and hedgerow planting on the southern boundary of Sites A and B in particular, the Scheme would be further integrated into the view, particularly during summer months. While the mitigation planting would benefit the Scheme and reduce the change to this view, the worst-case level of effect at Year 10 would remain as Minor Adverse which is Not Significant.

- With regards users of The Three Shires Way, based on an assessment of Viewpoints 72, 73, 74 and 75 (**PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4**) and the assessment of visual receptors (**PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-5**), there would be a worst-case Minor Adverse (Not Significant) level of effect on users of The Three Shires Way during Year 0 of operation in a relatively small number of locations along the route. At Year 10, following the establishment of tree and hedgerow planting on field boundaries within Sites C and D in particular, the Scheme would be further integrated into the view, particularly during summer months. While the mitigation planting would benefit the Scheme and reduce the change to this view, the worst-case level of effect at Year 10 would remain as Minor Adverse which is Not Significant.

5.8.70 At Year 10, the mitigation proposed, shown on the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (**PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2**), would have established to a reasonable level of maturity such that the Proposed Scheme would be more suitably integrated into the view from the majority of visual receptors, including rights of way users. With regards the design of the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan, careful consideration has been given to potential views of the Scheme from rights of way located in close proximity to the Scheme Boundary.

5.8.71 Some significant visual effects on users of rights of way within the Study Area would mostly remain at Year 10, following the establishment of mitigation. In some cases, particularly from rights of way directly adjacent to the Site, while the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (**PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2**)

illustrates the proposed enhancements in the level of planting on the site and the creation of better defined field boundaries with tree and hedgerow planting, there would be a residual change to the level of openness in views and as such the significant visual effects would remain. However, in many cases the level of effect reduces to being Not Significant at Year 10 as the mitigation planting would have established and would integrate the Scheme into the view, or screen it entirely.

5.8.72 The following are rights of way receptors which have been identified as experiencing a residually significant visual effect at Year 10:

- The group comprising Footpaths 4, 8, 13, 26, 47, which are located directly within Site B.
- The group comprising Footpaths 112/5, 112/6, 112/7 and 112/8, which are located within Site D.

5.8.73 In each of these cases, a residually Significant effect remains at Year 10 due to the extent of enclosure of the footpath network through the Scheme, however views would typically be of hedgerow lined 'green lanes' and not of infrastructure.

5.8.74 In addition, the following groups of rights of way:

- Footpath 5 and 20 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Pertenhall, at least 1km north of Sites A and B and the residually significant effect on each of these rights of way is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Sites A and B;
- Footpaths 5 and 213/1 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Little Staughton, within 1km south of Site B and the residually significant effect on each of these rights of way is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Site B.

### ***Users of Community Facilities***

5.8.75 No community receptors have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the operation of the Scheme.

### ***People Using Roads***

5.8.76 No road receptors have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the operation of the Scheme.

### ***People at Employment Sites***

5.8.77 No receptors at their place of work have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the operation of the Scheme.

### ***Substation and BESS Options 1 and 2***

5.8.78 Consideration has been given to the potential for the substation and BESS components of the Scheme to be located within either Site C (Option 1) and Site C (Option 2). A worst-case assessment has been carried out within ***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-4*** and ***Appendix 5-5*** with regards the potential for the substation and BESS to be located within either of these locations when assessing effects from representative viewpoints and on visual receptors during operation of the Scheme. In addition, solar array would be located in the option site not selected (i.e. if Option 1 is selected for the substation and BESS, the Option 2 part of the Site would contain solar array, and vice versa), and, while the solar array would be lower in height than the substation and BESS, it remains that there would be new built form within the option sites, regardless of which one is selected.

5.8.79 The following are the noted differences in visual effects between the two options during the operational phase:

- Option 1 in Site C would be more evident from the following viewpoints and receptors:

- Viewpoints 57 and 58, which are located on Footpath 213/1 at the south-western boundary of Site C and comprise short-distance views towards Site C.
- Viewpoint 62, which is located on the pavement beside Causeway Road and comprises a short-distance view towards Site C.
- Viewpoint 64, which is located on Footpath 213/3 at the northern boundary of Site C and comprises a short-distance view towards Site C.
- Viewpoint 65, which is located on Footpath 213/28 close to the northern boundary of Site C and comprises a medium-distance view towards Site C.
- Option 2 in Site D would be more evident from the following viewpoints and receptors:
  - Viewpoint 69, which is located on Footpath 213/12 and comprises a long-distance view towards Site D.
  - Viewpoint 74, which is located on Footpath 207/12 and comprises a long-distance view towards Site D.
  - Viewpoint 76, which is located on the B645 near Wood View and comprises a medium-distance view towards Site D.
  - Viewpoint 77, which is located on Bridleway 112/7 and comprises a short-distance view towards Site D.
- From Viewpoints 67, 68 and 69, which represent a road (Viewpoint 67 is on Moor Road) and rights of way (Bridleway 112/7 and Footpath 213/2) which are located between Sites C and D, both options would be evident in views, albeit in different directions, and would give rise to similar levels of effect.

5.8.80 Overall, the visual effects of the substation and BESS components within Option 1 and 2 would be broadly similar at Year 0 of operation, albeit experienced from different receptors. While there are slightly fewer receptors close to Site D and Option 2 and it is located closer to existing pylons, indicating a slightly lower level of effect due to this option, there would be

development of solar array in the option site which is not selected for the substation and BESS, albeit at a lower height.

5.8.81 Referring to the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan on **PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2**, mitigation planting at each Option site would notably reduce the visual effects of the substation and BESS whichever site is selected. Proposed tree and hedgerow planting would limit the visibility of these components at Year 10 and beyond.

### Operational Glint and Glare Effects

5.8.82 A separate Glint and Glare Assessment is included as **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-6**. This considers effects on ground-based receptors (residential, rail, road, and bridleway) within 1km, whilst a 30km study area is considered for aviation receptors.

5.8.83 Geometric analysis was conducted at 177 individual residential receptors, including 20 residential areas, 171 road receptors, and 88 bridleway receptors. Also, geometric analysis was conducted at four runway approach paths at Old Warden Airport and Sackville Farm Aerodrome.

5.8.84 The Glint and Glare Assessment concludes that:

- Once mitigation has been taken into consideration the overall impacts on residential, road and bridleway receptors are identified in **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-6** would be acceptable.
- No impact on train drivers or railway infrastructure is predicted.
- Four runway approach paths were assessed in detail at Old Warden Airport and Sackville Farm Aerodrome. **PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 5-6** identifies that overall impacts on these aviation assets would be acceptable.

5.8.85 The glint and glare assessment reports that due to the existing screening and / or proposed screening in the landscape, glint and glare impacts would be



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acceptable. There is therefore no additional mitigation proposed to reduce glint and glare effects over and above the embedded landscape proposals.

## Decommissioning Effects

- 5.8.86 As was stated in Section 5.3.12, the activities involved in decommissioning of the Scheme would be similar to those involved in the construction stage with respect to the temporary disruption to the Site and Study Area. However, the key difference between construction and decommissioning stages is that proposed vegetation implemented at the end of construction of the Scheme would have reached a high level of maturity, leaving the Site and Study Area enhanced through the improvement to field structure due to increased hedgerow and tree planting.
- 5.8.87 Decommissioning would largely involve the presence of site compounds and construction plant, vehicles and machinery and would be for a duration of up to two years, which is considered to be Short-term in assessment terms.
- 5.8.88 With regards the impact on landscape elements, any infrastructure that is more than 1m below ground level, such as cable conduit and casing, would be left in situ at decommissioning. The majority of the Scheme comprises the solar array which would be removed without any alteration to the underlying landform or landcover, albeit there is an assumption that the fields would be returned to arable crop by the landowner. As stated previously, there would be a net benefit on landscape features at the decommissioning stage as all hedgerow and tree planting located on field boundaries would be retained by the Scheme.
- 5.8.89 In relation to landscape character, there would be temporary adverse effects during the removal of the Scheme which would be similar to those reported during construction, i.e. that there would be Minor Adverse levels of effect on the two main host LCAs, LCA B1 and Southern Wolds LCA. However, at the end of decommissioning there would likely be a residual Minor Beneficial

effect on landscape character as there would be enhanced field structure within the Site due to the mature hedgerow and tree cover left by the Scheme.

5.8.90 With regards visual effects, there would be temporary adverse effects during the removal of the Scheme which would be similar to those reported during construction. This essentially comprises some temporary significant visual effects on residents of properties and users of public rights of way which are either within or directly adjacent to the Site. However, at the end of decommissioning, there would likely be a residual Negligible effect overall on visual receptors as the Scheme would be removed from views. The Scheme would leave enhanced field structure within the Site due to the mature hedgerow and tree cover left by the Scheme, which would primarily comprise a benefit to landscape character, while, aside from users of footpaths in close proximity to the Site, in the most part this would not alter the view experienced by receptors.

## 5.9 Additional Mitigation and Monitoring

- 5.9.1 The Scheme design has undergone a series of design iterations to embed mitigation measures into the design, as detailed in Section 5.7 and, given that all mitigation is embedded in the Scheme design, no additional mitigation measures are proposed.
- 5.9.2 With regards monitoring of mitigation measures, an oCEMP (***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 2-3***) and oLEMP (***PEIR Volume 2 Appendix 2-2***) has been prepared which includes outline measures to protect retained vegetation. The monitoring requirements include an arboricultural survey to be conducted in line with BS5837:2012 pre-construction to consider trees that may be affected by construction.
- 5.9.3 The oLEMP would be approved prior to implementation in accordance with requirements of the DCO. The oLEMP includes a five-year establishment aftercare period during which landscape and ecological mitigation would be managed and monitored to ensure the successful establishment of the proposed planting. Additionally, a post-construction monitoring programme would require walkover surveys of the Scheme Boundary at set intervals post construction.
- 5.9.4 No further monitoring is required.

## 5.10 Residual Effects

5.10.1 This section summarises the residual significant effects of the Scheme on landscape and visual receptors following the implementation of mitigation, i.e. long-term effects from Year 10 of operation of the Scheme. Significant residual effects are defined as those which are deemed to be Significant in EIA terms.

### Residual Landscape Effects

5.10.2 As there are no mitigation measures proposed in addition to those which are embedded within the Scheme design, including the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (*PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2*), the residual landscape effects remain as reported in Section 5.8. The residual construction effects are as reported, and the residual operational effects comprise the Year 10 assessment.

### Residual Visual Effects

5.10.3 As there are no mitigation measures proposed in addition to those which are embedded within the Scheme design, including the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (*PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2*), the residual visual effects remain as reported in Section 5.8. The residual construction effects are as reported, and the residual operational effects comprise the Year 10 assessment.

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## 5.11 Conclusions

- 5.11.1 The LVIA chapter comprises a description of the existing environment and identification of the potential effects of the Scheme on landscape and visual receptors within the Study Area. The landscape receptors with potential to experience change as a result of the Scheme comprise landscape character areas. The visual receptors with potential to experience change as a result of the Proposed Scheme comprise people in their homes, using rights of way, using roads, visiting community facilities and in attending places or work. The range of visual receptors within the Study Area are represented by a comprehensive set of 82 viewpoints.
- 5.11.2 The assessment of landscape and visual effects includes consideration of the effect of change to existing landscape elements, the effect of temporary construction works and the effect of the introduction of a solar array and associated infrastructure.
- 5.11.3 As was described in Section 5.7 and separately in **PEIR Volume 1 Chapter 3**, the Scheme has been through an iterative design process from an early stage such that the final design of the solar array, associated infrastructure and the Environmental Masterplan (**PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2**) includes embedded landscape and visual mitigation which reduces landscape and visual effects. This includes setting back the Scheme from settlements such as Little Staughton to avoid the solar array breaking skylines by creating views out looking ‘over’ the solar where possible. These design considerations are therefore taken into account in the assessment of both Year 0 and Year 10 landscape and visual effects. At Year 10 of operation, the proposed planting embedded within the Scheme design would have reached a reasonable level of maturity such that it would further reduce the long-term effects of the Scheme on landscape and visual receptors through integration of the Scheme into the existing landscape and effective screening.
- 5.11.4 The Scheme would involve minimal change to landscape elements within the Site with very little vegetation removal and no change to the underlying

landform upon which the Site is located. The landscape character of the Site and its immediate setting would be affected to the greatest degree within the two central character areas within the study area: LCA 1B and Southern Wolds LCA and significant landscape effects have been identified on these host character areas during construction.

- 5.11.5 Significant visual effects have been identified on some residential and rights of way receptors located in close proximity to the Site. However, these effects would be for the short-term duration of construction (30 months).
- 5.11.6 With regards operational effects on landscape character, the majority of the Scheme would be located within Bedford LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland and Huntingdonshire Southern Wolds LCA. While there are evident differences between the two host character areas, they are both landscapes which are dominated by large-scale arable fields, with subtly varied topography within shallow valleys. The Scheme would largely comprise the introduction of a solar array into large-arable fields, outside the settlement boundary of small rural villages. The array would be relatively low-level and would have a generally uniform appearance, albeit given the orientation of the panels to face south, there would be some variation in how it is perceived throughout the landscape. The Scheme would follow the contours and would not alter the underlying topography, nor would it alter the pattern of fields with the Site.
- 5.11.7 The Substation and BESS components of the Scheme would contribute to a slight increase in landscape change within the vicinity of Sites C (Option 1) and D (Option 2) given their taller vertical scale than the solar array. However, these components would be set within the wider solar array, which would partially reduce their influence on the Southern Wolds LCA.
- 5.11.8 In summary of the level of effect during operation on the two host landscape character areas:
- On LCA 1B, the level of effect during Year 0 of operation of the Scheme would be Moderate Adverse which is Significant in EIA terms. At Year 10, mitigation planting would have established such that there would be a

Minor to Moderate Adverse level of effect which is Not Significant in EIA terms.

- On Southern Wolds LCA, the level of effect during operation of the Scheme would be at Years 0 and 10 would be Minor to Moderate Adverse which is Not Significant in EIA terms.

5.11.9 No significant effects have been identified on other LCAs within the study area, with at most a partial visual influence on areas which are located outside the Site.

5.11.10 The Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (**PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2**) has been designed to enhance and strengthen field boundaries through the additional planting of hedgerow and hedgerow trees. The effective integration of the Proposed Scheme into the host landscape due to the mitigation proposals, results in no residual significant landscape effects at Year 10.

5.11.11 At Year 0 there would be significant visual effects on some residents of residential properties and users of rights of way located in proximity to the Scheme. Given the low density of settlement within the study area and the visual containment provided by subtle landform undulations and intermittent tree and hedgerow cover, a relatively small number of residential receptors have been identified as experiencing significant visual effects during operation of the Scheme. All residential receptors identified as experiencing significant visual effects are either individual properties, or small groups of properties, which would be subject to close-distance views of the Scheme. No significant visual effects have been identified on visual receptors located directly within the villages located within the Study Area.

5.11.12 Similar to the assessment of effects on residential receptors, all right of way receptors identified as likely experiencing significant visual effects due to the operation of the Scheme are located in close proximity to the Scheme. There is a relatively high number of rights of way identified as being subject to significant visual effects during Year 0 of operation as there is a relatively

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dense network of rights of way within the Study Area which provide connections between farms and small settlements.

- 5.11.13 The number of significant visual effects on users of footpaths within the Study Area would notably reduce at Year 10, following the establishment of mitigation. While the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (*PEIR Volume 3 Figure 2-2*) illustrates the proposed enhancements in the level of planting on the site and the creation of better defined field boundaries with tree and hedgerow planting, there would remain a residual change from the baseline situation in the openness of views from locations in proximity to the Site and as such some significant long-term visual effects would remain. However, as already stated, these effects are mostly on a small number of rights of way which cross into the Site or are directly adjacent to it and a small number of individual residential properties located in close-proximity to the Scheme Boundary.
- 5.11.14 Overall, this assessment concludes that the Scheme would result in relatively few significant landscape and visual effects. Proposed mitigation would integrate the Scheme into the existing landscape and visual setting by year 10 of operation, with no residual significant effects on landscape character identified. Residually significant visual effects that have been identified at Year 10 predominantly associate with those locations in closest proximity to the Scheme, particularly users of the high number of footpaths and individual residential properties located in or adjacent to the Scheme Boundary and also a small number of rights of way located on slightly elevated ground within 1km of the Scheme from which it would be evident within a wide extent of the view.
- 5.11.15 At decommissioning stage, at Year 40 of the Scheme, there would be no residually significant landscape or visual effects and overall the planting implemented as part of the Scheme would leave a Site which would appear similar to the baseline situation, albeit with enhanced field structure planting which would comprise a residually beneficial change to landscape character.



## Further Work

5.11.16 Further work which will be undertaken in advance of submission of the application for development consent includes:

- Photography at selected viewpoint locations during summer months, i.e. before the end of September 2024.
- Production of a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA).
- Further refinement of the Landscape and Visual Assessment based on the further work identified here and consultation responses received.
- Further refinement of the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) based on consultation responses received.

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## 5.12 References

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