

Flaxlands Solar Farm

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Ampyr Solar Europe

Project number: 60727989

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Prepared for:

Ampyr Solar Europe

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) presents the findings of an appraisal of the likely effects of the proposed Flaxlands Solar Farm, (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development) with respect to landscape character and visual amenity. Landscape effects relate to changes in the landscape as a resource, including physical changes to the fabric or individual elements of the landscape, its aesthetic or perceptual qualities and landscape character. Visual effects are closely related to landscape effects, but concern changes in views and visual amenity experienced by people living, visiting or working (visual receptors) within the Study Area.
- 1.1.2 The LVA is supported by and should be read in conjunction with the following Appendices:
- Appendix A: Landscape and Visual Appraisal Methodology;
 - Appendix B: Supporting Figures and Representative Viewpoint Photography;
 - Appendix C: Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Outline LEMP); and
 - Appendix D: Concept Design
- 1.1.3 The LVA is supported by the following figures (refer to Appendix B):
- Figure 1: Solar Panels, Bare Earth Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV);
 - Figure 2: Solar Panels, Vertical Features ZTV;
 - Figure 3: Substation and BESS, Bare Earth ZTV;
 - Figure 4: Substation and BESS, Vertical Features ZTV;
 - Figure 5: Topography;
 - Figure 6: National Landscape Character Areas;
 - Figure 7: Local Landscape Character Areas;
 - Figure 8: Public Rights of Way and Promoted Routes;
 - Figure 9: Designations relevant to Landscape;
 - Figure 10: Viewpoint Locations;
 - Figure 11: Outline Landscape Masterplan;
 - Figure 12: Cumulative Developments;
 - Figures 13: Photomontages (Viewpoints 1-5 & 10 Cumulative); and
 - Figures 14: Representative Baseline Winter Photography.

The Site

- 1.1.4 The Proposed Development is located within the administrative area of Wiltshire Council (WC), approximately 1.7km north of the town of Royal Wootton Bassett and 3.2km west of Swindon, and is centred on National Grid reference SU 06868 85146. The footprint of the Proposed Development (hereafter referred to as the Site) covers an area of approximately 87.09 hectares (Ha) and is composed of greenfield, agricultural land.

The Proposed Development

- 1.1.5 The Proposed Development would include the construction of 49.9 megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic (PV) arrays and a 49.9 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) to allow for the creation, storage and exportation of energy to the National Grid, with associated access, landscaping and other infrastructure works within an area of approximately 87.09ha. The solar panels would be mounted on metal piles driven into the ground typically between 1m and 2m deep, depending on ground conditions.

- 1.1.6 The panels would maintain a ground clearance of at least 0.6m Above Ground Level (AGL) and the maximum panel height would be approximately 3m AGL. The indicative dimension of a single panel is 2.28m x 1.13m x 0.3m (L x W x D).
- 1.1.7 Other infrastructure on-site would include inverters, transformers, an onsite substation, and cabling (largely buried services). The proposed BESS consists of 14 battery storage units set in two separate banks. The transformers and switchgear would be located between the two battery banks. The anticipated dimensions of the individual elements are:
- Individual battery storage unit up to 12m x 3m x 3m (L x W x H);
 - Inverter substations up to 7m x 2.5m x 3m;
 - Telecommunications tower up to 15m in height; and
 - Onsite substation (centred on NGR SU 06848 85506; Field 12) approximately 3.65m x 2.75m x 3.1m (L x W x H).
- 1.1.8 The land to the south and north of Flaxlands Lane would be connected via an access road running alongside to Flaxlands Lane. Internal access tracks would be established within the Site itself comprising of main access tracks approximately 5m wide and perimeter routes. Internal access tracks are anticipated to be constructed through the stripping of approximately 0.10m of topsoil and installation of membrane and hardcore. Track routes would be designed to avoid any hedge or tree removal as far as practicable. Unavoidable impact would be minimised.
- 1.1.9 The Site would be enclosed with stock proof mesh fencing to a maximum height of 2.5m with limited access points. Fencing would be sited inside the outermost hedges/ trees/ vegetation along existing field boundaries, ensuring that the fence is visually obscured, and that access is available for hedge trimming and maintenance. Gates would be installed at the highway access point for maintenance access. The gates would be the same design, material and colour as the security fencing. CCTV would be mounted on the perimeter fence to allow remote monitoring, which typically comprises cameras on 3m high poles.
- 1.1.10 A diversion of two existing Public Right of Way (PRoW) (Wiltshire ref. LTRE 26 and LTRE 28), which pass through the Site.

Study Area

- 1.1.11 The extent of the Study Area is determined by a combination of the potential visibility of the Proposed Development in the surrounding landscape, and the potential extent of the wider landscape in which the Proposed Development is likely to influence. The Study Area is defined by analysis of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (refer to Figures 1-4) and refined during site surveys using professional judgement.
- 1.1.12 Field work was undertaken to verify the findings of the desk-based study. Beyond a distance of 3km, it is anticipated that the Proposed Development is unlikely to give rise to important landscape or visual effects.
- 1.1.13 The Study Area extends to a 3km radius from the Site boundary, and includes an additional area from the elevated promoted route on the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape where elevated, panoramic and long distance views are available. The scarp slopes are located approximately 8km to the south and southeast from the Site.

Appraisal Stages and Limitations

- 1.1.14 This LVA considers the landscape and visual impacts of the Proposed Development during construction, operation (Year 1) and operation (Year 15).
- 1.1.15 The construction appraisal is based on the construction information that is available at the time of report preparation. As with all construction appraisals, the exact details of construction activities would not be fully known before a specific contractor is appointed to complete the works and would determine their exact construction methods and programme during the detailed design stage.

- 1.1.16 No technical difficulties or practical problems were encountered in carrying out the LVA presented in this document. All survey work and photography were undertaken from publicly accessible locations only.
- 1.1.17 The visual appraisal is based on a series of representative viewpoints related to key receptor groups. The on-site evaluation of magnitude of impact and importance of effects has been undertaken from the nearest publicly accessible location, and as such, assumptions as to the orientation of the main views from receptor locations have been made.
- 1.1.18 The appraisal of potential effects on receptors is made based on a worst-case approach of a clear bright day in winter as per best practice. Any appraisal of effects on these and all other receptors is based on summer at year 15 of operation. This approach is consistent with best practice and allows proposed mitigation planting to be taken into consideration in the appraisal of long-term impacts.
- 1.1.19 This LVA has been undertaken in accordance with:
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment and Management, 2013)¹;
 - Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute, 2024)²;
 - Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals (The Landscape Institute, 2019)³ (currently under review);
 - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014)⁴;
 - Technical Information Note 01/2017: Tranquillity (The Landscape Institute, 2017)⁵; and
 - Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations (The Landscape Institute, 2021)⁶.

Consultation

- 1.1.20 Pre-application advice was sought from Wiltshire Council in July 2024 (application ref: 60727989), including comments on the proposed representative viewpoint locations. A response dated 16th September 2024, from Mark Goodwin CMLI (Senior Landscape Officer) highlighted areas for further discussion, leading to a meeting on 18th November 2024. During the meeting, the proposed viewpoints were confirmed as acceptable and others were discussed and included. A lettered response was sent on 6th December 2024 from Gen Collins (Principal Planning Officer), providing guidance on the relevant points. A summary of comments and responses is shown in Table 2-1 to Table 2-4 overleaf.

¹ Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). *Guidelines and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition*.

² The Landscape Institute (2024). *Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third editions (GLVIA3)*. Available at: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/LITGN-2024-01-GLVIA3-NC_Aug-2024.pdf

³ The Landscape Institute (2019). *Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals*. Available at: https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2019/09/LI_TGN-06-19_Visual_Representation.pdf

⁴ Christine Tudor, Natural England (2014). *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf

⁵ The Landscape Institute (2017). *Tranquillity – An overview, Technical Information Note 01/2017 (Revised)*. Available at: <https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2017/02/Tranquillity-An-Overview-1-DH.pdf>

⁶ The Landscape Institute (2021). *Assessing landscape value outside national designations*. Available at: <https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2021/05/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations.pdf>

Table 1-1: Pre-Application letter Consultation Responses dated 05.09.2024

Consultee	Summary of comments from the Pre-Application Response	Resulting actions carried out by the applicant
Mark Goodwin CMLI (Senior Landscape Officer, Wiltshire Council) Response dated 05.09.2024	<i>I believe the proposed development would not significantly impact the landscape or visual setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB, located 5.75 km southeast.</i>	The setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB (NL) would be considered as part of the LVA, represented in Viewpoint 10 (refer to Figure 13).
	<i>There is potential for cumulative landscape and visual effects from this development combined with similar projects in the Wiltshire area.</i>	Cumulative effects with projects of a similar nature are considered and referenced within the LVA, (refer to Section 7 Cumulative Appraisal of this LVA).
	<i>The development is likely to significantly alter the local character of the site and its surroundings due to its industrial nature, and the more elevated areas of the site may be visible from greater distances due to the site's topography, which is part of a larger rolling hill feature in the wider landscape.</i>	A series of representative viewpoints were proposed for agreement, ranging from short-distance views to reflect the local character of the site, and middle-distance views to assess the visibility of the more open, elevated parts of the site and new development from greater distances.
	<i>The development is likely to cause the greatest visual impacts for local residents (including those at Hook and potentially Green Hill) and users of rural roads and Public Rights of Way near the site.</i>	A series of representative viewpoints were proposed for agreement, including views from local settlements and the PRoW network.
	<i>I do not consider this development as EIA development from a landscape and visual perspective; however, if the LPA deems it non-EIA, this advice should not be taken as approval of the proposal's location or its ability to be mitigated in a future application.</i>	The Secretary of State Screening Direction / Written Statement, dated 17 th March 2025, concludes that " <i>this development does not constitute a positive screening as EIA development</i> ". Hence, a landscape and visual appraisal has been carried out.

Table 1-2: Pre-Application letter Consultation Responses dated 16.09.2024

Consultee	Summary of comments from the Pre-Application Response	Resulting actions carried out by the applicant
Mark Goodwin CMLI (Senior Landscape Officer, Wiltshire Council) Response dated 16.09.2024	<i>The assessment should consider the combined effects of this solar development with other existing and planned solar projects to demonstrate an understanding of the impact on landscape character and meet planning policy requirements.</i>	Cumulative effects with projects of a similar nature are considered and referenced within the LVA.
	<i>Any subsequent full planning application should include a comprehensive landscape strategy that conserves important landscape and ecological features, including Green/Blue Infrastructure and BNG policy requirements, while supporting the local landscape character.</i>	A outline Landscape Masterplan and outline Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Plan is supporting the application. The documents were developed in collaboration with BNG and Ecology specialists, and with input from the wider project team. GLVIA3 states that the appraisal is a crucial and iterative part of the design process, and both the design and appraisal were carried out using this approach.
	<i>The landscape strategy should illustrate existing retained vegetation and proposed removal, show important landscape features such as ponds, and indicate sustainable drainage proposals. It should provide standoffs to PRoW and any proposed closures or diversions, as well as standoffs to watercourses, field boundaries, and ponds. The strategy should detail access tracks, roads, hard surfaces, and temporary compounds, and show cable routes, security fencing, lighting, and CCTV/IR poles. It should also indicate temporary storage areas, haul roads, and parking, propose reuse or disposal of waste soils, and include utility/service routes and easement corridors.</i>	The Landscape Masterplan and outline Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Plan, developed with BNG and Ecology specialists and input from the wider project team, support the application.

Consultee	Summary of comments from the Pre-Application Response	Resulting actions carried out by the applicant
	<i>The strategy should distinguish between essential mitigation measures and enhancement proposals to clarify actions that address harm versus those that provide environmental improvements.</i>	Mitigation measures and enhancement proposals are clearly defined in the appraisal and outline Landscape Masterplan (refer to Figure 11), and outline Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Plan (refer to Appendix C).
	<i>An LVIA should be required with any full planning application, including an assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects from existing, approved, or proposed renewable energy developments within an agreed study area. The current list in the pre-app letter (Appendix C) is insufficient for this purpose.</i>	Information which is pertinent to ensure cumulative effects with projects of a similar nature are considered appropriately within the LVA.
	<i>The landscape officer can provide feedback on the draft methodology proposed by the applicant's landscape practitioner, starting with agreeing the extent of the LVIA study area, including for the cumulative assessment.</i>	Draft methodology was provided, to be reviewed and any guidance provided actioned. The final methodology was amended again once it became clear that the development would not require EIA standard.
	<i>The landscape officer can provide feedback on proposed provisional viewpoints for assessment, provided a 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility' (ZTV) Map is included with a clear rationale for each representative visual receptor. They can also agree on which viewpoints should be used for photomontages or other visualisation types.</i>	A Zone of Theoretical Visibility was prepared ahead of the meeting to give Mark Goodwin an opportunity to review and provide guidance on the proposed methodology.
	<i>The loss or closure of a historic public footpath should be assessed as a loss of landscape value. Proposed closures or diversions should be justified as necessary, with standoff buffers to retained PRoW ensuring continued access, amenity value, and views.</i>	The existing PRoW would be addressed in the appraisal, with any proposed alterations for ecological and experiential benefits justified in the Landscape Masterplan and outline Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Plan. The client has, and would continue to, seek input from the local community regarding the PRoW network.
	<i>Details of any proposed hedgerow/tree removals for highway visibility splays or road upgrades should be provided upfront, rather than through a planning condition, to ensure the LVIA fully evaluates the resulting landscape and visual effects.</i>	Transport specialists have been consulted on potential road layout changes and vegetation removal, and this information has been included in the appraisal.

Table 1-3: Meeting with Mark Goodwin CMLI (Senior Landscape Officer, Wiltshire Council) - 18th of November 2024

Meeting Agenda Item	Discussion Summary	Resulting actions carried out by the applicant
Viewpoint locations	Potential viewpoints were reviewed, along with bare earth and screened ZTV, as part of the selection process. Local views, including those from the village hall at Hook and PRoW entry points, were also discussed.	The merits of these viewpoints were agreed.
	It was agreed that viewpoints should focus on publicly accessible locations, with concerns raised about medium to long-distance views where the site's elevated plateau might be visible.	AECOM agreed to ensure a proportionate spread of viewpoints were undertaken to capture medium to longer distance views from publicly accessible locations (refer to Figure 10)
	A viewpoint at the PRoW entrance to Webb's Wood was discussed, with limited views expected due to vegetation, to be confirmed during the site visit. The same was	AECOM agreed to review the proposed viewpoints on site and where no view is anticipated, this should be recorded with a comment in the appraisal. Viewpoint 6 has been added and is located at PRoW LMIL130 leading to Webb's Wood.

Meeting Agenda Item	Discussion Summary	Resulting actions carried out by the applicant
	considered for Lydiard Park. Mark Goodwin emphasized that the assessment should be proportionate, avoiding unnecessary viewpoints with little value.	Lydiard Park was surveyed and ruled out as location for viewpoints due to substantial intervening vegetation screening the Proposed Development.
	A viewpoint from the scarp slope at the North Wessex Downs boundary was discussed. Mark highlighted its popularity and the setting's importance, advising the location to be confirmed during the site visit.	It was agreed to review the proposed viewpoint along the White Horse Trail to ensure the location is representative and provides views that align with the viewpoint's intent. Viewpoint 10 at PRoW BTOW38 was included offering an expansive panoramic view to the west, north and northeast.
Cumulative assessment	AECOM proposed a cumulative assessment approach for Landscape Character and Visual Amenity, focusing on solar development and landscape character, particularly experiential and perceptual qualities. It was agreed Mark Goodwin would provide GIS layers to support the cumulative assessment, focusing on solar PV.	AECOM to place a strong focus on landscape character both within the landscape appraisal and the cumulative appraisal sections.
Partial relocation of PRoW (LTRE26 and LTRE28)	A discussion on relocating PRoW (LTRE 26 & LTRE 28) focused on improving their visual and experiential quality. AECOM proposed design changes for better integration into the landscape, and Mark was open to relocation if it ensured a lasting landscape legacy.	AECOM to ensure the relocation design of LTRE 26 & LTRE 28 leaves a future landscape legacy, with mitigation and enhancements outlined in the Landscape Masterplan. It incorporates feedback from local consultations and supports community ownership.
Methodology	Further time was requested to review the methodology. Mark Goodwin agreed to highlight any areas needing additional work. It was also suggested to review work by Cornwall Council, where twelve principles for Solar PV development were developed ⁷ .	Landscape character has been assessed in accordance with GLVIA3 (page 84 Box 5.1) ⁸ and with consideration of Natural England's "An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment" (Ref) ⁹ , Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 08/2015 'Landscape Character Assessment' ¹⁰ .
Landscape Masterplan	A Landscape Masterplan and outline Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Plan would be provided to support the application, developed with BNG and Ecology specialists, and input from arboricultural, drainage, and transport experts. These plans would be developed iteratively alongside the assessment, as per GLVIA3. Mark Goodwin cautioned against focusing solely on Landscape and Visual Amenity if it conflicts with ecological advice.	AECOM to provide a Landscape Masterplan and outline Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Plan to support the application, developed with BNG and Ecology specialists, and input from the wider project team, including arboricultural, drainage, and transport experts.

Table 1-4: Pre-Application letter Consultation Responses dated 06.12.2024

Consultee	Summary of comments from the Pre-Application Response	Resulting actions carried out by the applicant
Gen Collins (Principal Planning Officer, Wiltshire Council) Response dated 06.12.2024	In reference to the Pre-Application enquiry <i>ENQ/2024/01008</i> , the lettered response addresses the questions above and provides further guidance on previous points raised.	AECOM would address all relevant points regarding the LVA and cumulative effects raised in the application, including the outline landscape masterplan, viewpoint photography, and outline Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan.

⁷ BRE National Solar Centre (2014). Planning guidance for the development of large scale ground mounted solar PV systems [Withdrawn]. Available at: <https://www.thenbs.com/PublicationIndex/documents/details?Pub=BRENSC&DocId=307858>

⁸ Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). Guidelines and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition

⁹ Natural England (2014). An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5aabd31340f0b64ab4b7576e/landscape-character-assessment.pdf>

¹⁰ Landscape Institute (2015). Technical Guidance Note 08/2015 - Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Landscape-Character-Assessment-TIN-08_15-20160216.pdf

2. Relevant Legislation and Policy Context

2.1 National Planning Policy

- 2.1.1 The Site and the Study Area are not covered by any statutory landscape designations (e.g. National Parks or National Landscapes, formerly Areas Outstanding Natural Beauty); or any international designations that may inform landscape value, such as World Heritage Sites. The cumulative appraisal (refer to Section 7) includes the northern fringe of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, which is located outside of the 3km Study Area radius and approximately 6.2km southeast of the Proposed Development boundary at its closest point.

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 2.2.1 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹¹ was published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in December 2024 and amended on the 7th of February 2025. The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England and provides guidance on how these should be applied. It has a strong emphasis on sustainable development, with a presumption in favour of such development. It sets out requirements for planning policies and decisions to ensure developments are well designed, including through appropriate landscape design, are sympathetic to the local character and landscape setting, and create or maintain a strong sense of place.

- 2.2.2 The NPPF contains statements which are relevant to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and the assessment/appraisal of impacts. Paragraph 187 states:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate".

- 2.2.3 Paragraph 189 relates to National Landscapes and states that:

¹¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024). National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues”.

- 2.2.4 The NPPF also contains statements which are relevant to achieving well-designed and beautiful places. Relevant policies within paragraph 135 include:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)”.

2.3 Local Policy and Guidance

- 2.3.1 Local planning policy documents concerning matters relevant to LVA and the Proposed Development are outlined below. For further details, alongside relevant National Planning Policy and Guidance, reference should be made to the accompanying Planning Statement.

2.4 Wiltshire current Local Plan

- 2.4.1 Wiltshire's current Local Plan was adopted in January 2015 (the Wiltshire Core Strategy¹²) and incorporates saved policies from former District Local Plans. The Local Plan, together with Made plans (neighbourhood plans) form the development plan for Wiltshire. In conjunction with the accompanying Policy Map¹³, it sets out the Council's development strategy, planning policies and proposals to guide land use and planning decisions over the plan period to 2026. A summary of relevant Policies, with specific reference to the Site and the type of development proposed, is provided below:
- 2.4.2 **Strategic Objective 5: protecting and enhancing the natural, historic and built environment** states that key outcomes should include the following:
- *“Where possible, development will have been directed away from our most sensitive and valuable natural assets, habitats and species, towards less sensitive locations;*
 - *Local biodiversity and wildlife corridors will have been incorporated into new development, maintaining and enhancing this resource for the future; and*
 - *The landscape character of Wiltshire will have been protected and enhanced, particularly the special qualities and scenic beauty of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty”.*
- 2.4.3 **Strategic objective 6: to ensure that infrastructure is in place to support communities** states that the *“provision of new or improved infrastructure will have been positively supported provided there is no detrimental environmental impact”.*
- 2.4.4 **Core Policy 3: Infrastructure Requirements** considers that low carbon and renewable energy is essential infrastructure. The provision of new and improved infrastructure would be *“positively supported... provided that this has no detrimental impact on the environment and contributes towards mitigation and adaptation to climate change”.*
- 2.4.5 **Core Policy 19: Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Area Strategy** states that *“the long-established policy of protecting the distinct character and identity of the villages and settlements remains a priority for local communities”* and that *“open countryside should be maintained to protect the character and identity of the area in accordance with Core Policy 51”.* It also states that all relevant

¹² Wiltshire Council (2015). Wiltshire Core Strategy. Available at: <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/372/Wiltshire-Core-Strategy-adopted-2015/pdf/Wcs.pdf?m=1574343137353>

¹³ Wiltshire Council (2015). Interactive Policy Map. Available at: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/88c3030c2e864645aaec7dc3e0ac4cb6/page/Page/>

development “will need to conserve the designated landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB and its setting”.

CP 19 also states that “the Great Western Community Forest will also be maintained and enhanced as a significant infrastructure resource within and beyond the Community Area”.

- 2.4.6 **Core Policy 42: Standalone renewable energy installations** “identifies how standalone renewable energy installations, of all types, will be encouraged and supported”. The policy states that “The development of most standalone renewable energy installations within Wiltshire will require careful consideration due to their potential visual and landscape impacts, especially in designated or sensitive landscapes, including AONBs and 239 the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site, and their setting”.

It also states that “The size, location and design of renewable energy schemes should be informed by a landscape character assessment” and that “Cumulative effects should be addressed as appropriate”.

- 2.4.7 **Core Policy 48: Supporting rural life** has the following key objectives:

- “Protecting the countryside and maintaining its local distinctiveness; and
- Supporting the community in taking ownership of local services”.

- 2.4.8 **Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and geodiversity** states that “Sustainable development also provides opportunities to enhance the natural environment for wildlife and Wiltshire’s communities, particularly through landscaping”.

- 2.4.9 **Core Policy 51: Landscape** states that “the principal pressure on the landscape arising from new development is erosion of the separate identity, character, visual and functional amenity of settlements and their setting, and impacts on the open countryside”. As such Core Policy 51 states that development “should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character”.

Core Policy 51 states that any development affecting the setting of a National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) “should demonstrate that they have taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in those current or any other revised or replacement management plans”.

It is noted that “Core Policy 51 refers to development within the setting of an AONB ... is considered to be all of the surroundings from which a designated landscape can be experienced, or which can be experienced from the designated landscape”.

Core Policy 51 also highlights the importance of protecting “the distinct character and identity of the villages and settlements in Wiltshire, and a particular issue has been highlighted in those parts of the Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Community Area”.

Any development proposals would need to demonstrate conservation and enhancement of landscape elements that contribute to landscape character including:

- “The locally distinctive pattern and species composition of natural features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and waterbodies;
- The locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings;
- Visually sensitive skylines; and
- Important views and visual amenity”.

- 2.4.10 **Core Policy 52: Green infrastructure** states that development should:

- “retain and enhance existing on site green infrastructure;
- put measures in place to ensure appropriate long-term management of any green infrastructure directly related to the development; and
- identify and provide opportunities to enhance and improve linkages between the natural and historic landscapes of Wiltshire”.

- 2.4.11 **Core Policy 58 Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment** highlights the importance of protecting “*Wiltshire’s important monuments, sites and landscapes*” and specifically references Registered Parks and Gardens for which the “*heritage assets and their setting will be conserved*”.
- 2.4.12 The following saved policies¹⁴ from the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011¹⁵- Adopted June 2006 are incorporated into the Wiltshire Core Strategy and are relevant with specific reference to the Site and the type of development proposed:
- 2.4.13 **NE12 WOODLAND** states that “*Woodlands are a very important element within the landscape of the district. They enhance urban areas and edges and the wider countryside. They have landscape, visual and nature conservation value*”.
- 2.4.14 **NE 14 TREES, SITE FEATURES AND THE CONTROL OF NEW DEVELOPMENT** states that “*Permission will not be granted for proposals that would result, or be likely to result, in the loss of trees, hedges, lakes/ponds or other important landscape or ecological features that could be successfully and appropriately incorporated into the design of a development*”.
- 2.4.15 Wiltshire Council submitted the Wiltshire Local Plan to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government for independent examination on 28 November 2024.

2.5 ‘Made’ Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.5.1 The Wiltshire Core Strategy states that Made plans (neighbourhood plans) form the development plan for Wiltshire. Within the Study Area there are the following Made neighbourhood plans:
- *Lydiard Millicent Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2036*¹⁶. Made 19 May 2021;
 - *Royal Wootton Bassett Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017-2026*¹⁷. Made 24 April 2018;
 - *Purton Neighbourhood Plan 2017 to 2026*¹⁸. Made November 2018; and
 - *The Winterbournes Neighbourhood Plan 2019 to 2026*¹⁹. Made May 2021.

Lydiard Millicent Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2036

- 2.5.2 The Lydiard Millicent Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2036 identifies areas of importance within the area such as the Grade II listed Registered Park and Garden Lydiard Park. The Plan also “*highlights the special character of this agricultural landscape around Lydiard Millicent*”. The importance considers the avoidance of coalescence and retaining the rural landscape as well as defining key local views. View 5 is a view looking southwest toward the eastern part of the site albeit screened by intervening landform and vegetation.

Royal Wootton Bassett Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017-2026

- 2.5.3 The Royal Wootton Bassett Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017-2026 “*encourage only development which is sympathetic to our landscape setting*” and generally focuses on the integrity of the rural landscape as defined by Policy 10: Landscape Setting by which development “*should*

¹⁴ Wiltshire Council (2015). Appendix d: Saved Policies and policies replaced. Available at: <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/446/Appendix-D-Wiltshire-Core-Strategy/pdf/Appendix-d-wcs.pdf?m=1731680246693>

¹⁵ <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/5718/North-Wiltshire-Local-Plan-2011>

¹⁶ Lydiard Millicent Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (2018). Lydiard Millicent Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2036. Available at: https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/6638/Lydiard-Millicent-Neighbourhood-Plan/pdf/Lydiard_Millicent_Neighbourhood_Plan_2018-2036_Made_-_May_2021.pdf?m=1732538767307

¹⁷ RWB Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (2017). Royal Wootton Bassett Neighbourhood Development Plan 2017-2026. Available at: <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/583/Royal-Wootton-Bassett-Neighbourhood-Development-Plan/pdf/sppnp-rwb-neighbourhood-plan-made-2018-april.pdf?m=1574693316980>

¹⁸ Purton Parish Council (2018). Purton Neighbourhood Plan 2017 to 2026. Available at: <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/581/Purton-Neighbourhood-Plan/pdf/sppnp-purton-neighbourhood-plan-made-november-2018.pdf?m=1574693140417>

¹⁹ The Winterbournes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (2021). □ The Winterbournes Neighbourhood Plan 2019 to 2026. Available at: https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/6640/The-Winterbournes-Neighbourhood-Plan-2019-2026/pdf/The_Winterbournes_Neighbourhood_Plan_2019-2026_Made_-_May_2021.pdf?m=1732538772653

safeguard the separate identity and locally distinctive character of Royal Wootton Bassett and its unique landscape setting”.

Purton Neighbourhood Plan 2017 to 2026

- 2.5.4 The Purton Neighbourhood Plan 2017 to 2026 lists environment policies with a series of objectives including *“To protect and enhance the historical environment and landscape setting of the villages and of the parish”* and *“To protect and conserve the key sensitive landscape and views around the village”*.
- 2.5.5 **Purton Policy 5: To protect key local landscapes** designates locally important views. These views look to the west, north and east of Purton and not in the direction of the Site which is located to the south and southwest.

Designated Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.5.6 The following neighbourhood plan areas within the Study Area are currently designated and the neighbourhood plans are in the process of being developed and made:
- *Lydiard Tregoze*²⁰;
 - *Brinkworth*²¹. Note the neighbourhood plan is at Regulation 16 (publicising a plan proposal) stage of the process.

2.6 North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024²²

- Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy states that any development affecting the setting of a National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Beauty) *“should demonstrate that they have taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in those current or any other revised or replacement management plans”*. A summary of relevant key issues, objectives, policies and actions, with specific reference to the Site and the type of development proposed, is discussed below:
- One of the key issues cited is *“The potential for development beyond the AONB boundary to visually damage or undermine the scale and critical qualities of landscape character areas”*. Another listed is the *“Intense pressure for development throughout the AONB and its setting that threatens the character and quality of its landscape”*.
- This is acknowledged in the following strategic objective for the landscape under **Theme 1 Landscape** which states:
- *“S.01 Maintain and enhance the tranquillity and distinctive landscape character of the North Wessex Downs and its setting...”*.
- It also translates into AONB Policy LA 06 which states *“Ensure that all development in or affecting the setting of the AONB conserves and enhances the character, qualities and heritage of the North Wessex Downs landscape”*.
- **Theme 6 Development** discusses the changing landscape and an overall strategy for development within the National Landscape and its setting. Remoteness and Tranquillity are discussed as *“special perceptual qualities are fragile and under threat from a combination of factors, including major development”*.

²⁰ Wiltshire Council (2017). Designation of Lydiard Tregoze Neighbourhood Area. Available at:

https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/8812/Lydiard-Tregoze-Neighbourhood-Area-Designation/default/Lydiard_Tregoze_Neighbourhood_Area_Decision_Report_23.03.17.odt?m=1646057140530

²¹ Wiltshire Council (2019). Designation of Brinkworth and Grittenham Neighbourhood Area. Available at:

<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/4139/SPPNP-Brinkworth-Area-Designation-decision/pdf/sppnp-brinkworth-area-designation-decision.pdf?m=1729868106037>

²² North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. Available at: https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NWDAONB_Management_Plan_2019-24_low_res_32Mb.pdf

- Renewable energy (including photovoltaic installations) is specifically discussed in the North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement on Renewable Energy²³. Whilst the focus of the entry on Solar / PV farms is on development within the National Landscape, it does state that solar / PV farms in the wrong location (such as *“hillside, open vale, open valley and open downland”*) could be harmful, they do *“have the advantage of not requiring any great height and therefore there may be more concealed locations”*
- The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 discusses development generally stating that *“Any new uses or development proposed outside, but within the setting of the area should consider the North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement on Setting”*. This document²⁴ defines in part, the setting and its importance as *“The surroundings of the North Wessex Downs AONB and the protected landscape of the AONB add value to each other as the landscape and landforms link visually and functionally, joining the surroundings to the AONB”*.
- It further states that *“Proposals for change in the setting should, therefore, have regard to the inter-relationship with the AONB and the landscape character and special qualities”*. With specific reference to the Site and the type of development proposed it indicates examples that would have adverse impacts as:
 - *“development which would have a significant visual impact on views in or out of the AONB;*
 - *loss of tranquillity through the introduction or increase of lighting, noise, or traffic movement or other environmental impact like dust, vibration, spatial associations and historic relationships;*
 - *introduction of abrupt change of landscape character; and*
 - *change of use of land such that to cause harm to landscape character”*.
- The position statement notes that *“Adverse impacts might not be visual, as listed above tranquillity, a special quality of the North Wessex Downs AONB can be affected by a development.... even if not visible from the AONB”*.
- When considering the avoidance of harm to the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape the position statement acknowledges that the precise extent of the setting of the National Landscape is not *“judged”*. It does however state that the *“scale, height, siting, use, materials or design”* are important factors, and that *“distance away from the AONB will obviously be a material factor in forming a decision on any proposals, in that the further away a development is from the AONB boundary the more the impact is likely to be reduced”*.
- AONB Policy DE05 reiterates the importance of robust assessment by stating it will:

“Encourage the consideration of landscape, including historic landscape, impacts at the earliest opportunity in the planning process through preparation of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Environmental Impact Assessment reports as appropriate to the location”.

2.7 Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- 2.7.1 The Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy²⁵ maps the important habitats to be *“conserved, restored and connected”* within the county area. The Site and Study Area fall within the ‘Woodland and Associated Habitats’ and ‘Woodland, Neutral Grassland and Mosaic’ landscape types. This guidance has been considered within the appraisal used to deliver the landscape Masterplan and outline Landscape and Environment Maintenance Plan.

²³ North Wessex Downs National Landscape Council of Partners (2012). NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AONB POSITION STATEMENT RENEWABLE ENERGY. Available at <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ApprovedRenewableEnergyPositionStatementOctober2012.pdf>

²⁴ North Wessex Downs National Landscape Council of Partners (2012). NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AONB POSITION STATEMENT SETTING. Available at : https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Setting_Position_Statement_2019_Final.pdf

²⁵ Wiltshire Council (2024). Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Available at: <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/local-nature-recovery-strategy>

3. Methodology

- 3.1.1 As the Proposed Development is non-EIA, the form of this report is an appraisal rather than an assessment. The methodology adopted for this appraisal is based upon guidance as listed in Section 1.
- 3.1.2 Following appraisal of the baseline landscape and visual context of the Proposed Development, this LVA assesses the:
- *Nature of the receptor based on sensitivity of both landscape and visual receptors derived from susceptibility and value;*
 - *Nature of effect based on magnitude derived from scale/extent, duration and reversibility, whether adverse or beneficial (if applicable).*
 - *Importance of the effects based on a combination of the nature of the receptor and nature of the effect using professional judgement and supported by reasoned evidence.*
- 3.1.3 In addition, photography accompanying this appraisal has been undertaken in accordance with guidance given in Technical Guidance Note 06/19. Photographs included in the figures are stitched panoramas taken with a Canon 6D full frame sensor digital single-lens reflex (SLR) with a 50mm lens giving an equivalent focal length of 50mm on 35mm film, generally regarded as the nearest equivalent to human view.
- 3.1.4 The detailed description of the appraisal methodology is included in Appendix A.

4. Baseline Conditions

4.1 Landscape Baseline

- 4.1.1 With reference to Figures 5-9, the following section sets out the landscape and visual context of the Site and the Study Area.

Site Context

- 4.1.2 The Site is located on a low hill which is part of elevated grounds in the upper Thames vales. The eastern section and northern sections of the Study Area consists of gently rolling hills, while the southern and eastern sections becoming flatter or gently undulating. Most of the Site is located on prolonged sloping ground to the south and west, and on a shorter slope facing north. The Site is located north of Royal Wootton Bassett (by approximately 1.2km), beyond the M4 motorway (north of J16), which provides access to the Site via the A3102 to the north-east of Royal Wootton Bassett, whilst to the east is the town of Swindon (by approximately 3.2km). Flaxlands Lane runs through the middle of the Site joining the two fields. Lydiard Green is located to the north-east by approximately 2km, with the village of Hook located beyond the site to the east by approximately 0.2km. Lydiard Park is located approximately 2km to the east of the eastern site boundary.
- 4.1.3 The Site is bounded to the west and northwest by woodland (which is ancient woodland), to the north by agricultural land and to the east by agricultural land, highways including the B4042 Brinkworth Road to the south and the B4696 Lydiard Plain / Brayton Road to the west, commercial and residential properties associated with the village of Hook and to the south by agricultural land, woodland and beyond, the M4.
- 4.1.4 The Site forms part of the agricultural land use which extends across most of the Study Area. This comprises irregular shaped medium sized fields generally delineated by hedgerows, and woodland blocks. There are a number of scattered farms and individual properties in the vicinity of the Site, including Flaxlands Manor Farm (70m to the southeast), Flaxlands Farm located approximately 60 m northeast at its closest point, Koff's Farm located approximately 115m north. Shepherds Rest adjacent to the western parcel of the Site and Four Acre Farm adjacent to the western parcel of the Site.
- 4.1.5 There is an underground reservoir located to the east of the Site along with two masts. These correspond with the higher area of terrain at the Site at approximately 157m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The terrain falls down to approximately 105 – 110m AOD at the lower points to the west of the Site.
- 4.1.6 The Site is representative of the general vegetation patterns associated with the agricultural land use. It comprises medium-scale grazed fields which are open in character. Fields contained within the Site are bound, or partially bound, by hedgerows and marked by scattered trees. There is no ancient woodland located within the Site, however, there are trees subject to Tree Protection Orders within the west portion of the Site as well as adjacent to the Site boundary to the west.
- 4.1.7 There are several minor roads within the immediate vicinity of the Site. Flaxlands Lane passes through the Site from the southwest at the junction with the B4696 through to the centre of the Site before ending to the east of the Site at the junction with Greatfield Road. There are also numerous private access roads to a small number of scattered farms and individual properties within the vicinity of the Site.
- 4.1.8 Visually detracting infrastructure is limited to a line of overhead pylons that pass through the western part of the Site, and two masts located to the east of the Site.
- 4.1.9 The local PRoW network within the immediate vicinity of the Site includes a number of PRoW (LTRE 26, 28 & 30 and 29) that intersect the Site. Sections of PRoW LTRE 27 and 31 run along the southern, western boundaries of the Site respectively.

National Level Published Landscape Character Assessments

- 4.1.10 Natural England produces mapping and written descriptions of the landscape character of England, based on National Character Areas (NCA). The aim is to assist those who make decisions regarding local plans to consider how best to enhance and respect local distinctiveness. Each published description includes Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO), which relate to the key characteristics of the NCA and provide guidance on critical issues that could help to achieve sustainable growth and a more secure environmental future. Further 'landscape opportunities' are also listed.
- 4.1.11 The Site and Study Area lies within NCA 108 Upper Thames Clay Vales²⁶ (see Figure 6: National Landscape Character Areas). NCA 108 *"covers an extensive area of low-lying land extending from Wiltshire and Gloucestershire to the west of Swindon through to Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire in the east"*. and exhibits some of the key characteristics of the NCA:
- *"Low-lying clay-based flood plains encircle the Midvale Ridge. Superficial deposits, including alluvium and gravel terraces, spread over 40 per cent of the area, creating gently undulating topography.;*
 - *Woodland cover is low at only about 3 per cent, but hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees are frequent;*
 - *Major routes include mainline rail, canals, a network of roads including the M40 and M4"*.
- 4.1.12 A section of focus in terms of cumulative effects lies outside of the Study Area, approximately 7km to the southeast, and within NCA 116 Berkshire and Marlborough Downs²⁷ with extensive views from the escarpment and *"Huge arable fields managed in very large holdings stretch across the chalk soils of the uplands"* being typical of the NCA.
- 4.1.13 The Proposed Development would not have significant effects on Landscape character at the NCA scale.

Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.1.14 At the unitary level, the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment²⁸ defines landscape character types (LCT) and landscape character areas (LCA) (refer to Figure 7A Wiltshire Landscape Character Areas). Wiltshire Council describes this as a character assessment that covers *"the whole of the county at 1:50,000 scale"*. And that *"Beneath this assessment nest more detailed 1:25,000 Landscape Character Assessments"*.
- 4.1.15 The baseline analysis of landscape character will therefore be performed using the more detailed 1:25,000 Landscape Character Assessment of North Wiltshire, the area in which the Study Area is located.

North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.1.16 At the local level, within the North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment²⁹ the Site lies within the Swindon Fringe LCA. The western boundary of the site lies at the boundary of the Braydon Wooded Plateau LCA, the Minety and the Malmesbury Rolling Lowland LCA (refer to Figure 7B: North Wiltshire Landscape Character Areas).
- 4.1.17 Key characteristics of LCA 3 - Swindon Fringe include:

²⁶ Natural England (2014) National Character Area 108 Upper Thames Clay Vales. Available at: <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/Upper-Thames-Clay-Vales/>

²⁷ Natural England (2015) National Character Area 116 Berkshire and Marlborough Downs. Available at: <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/Berkshire-and-Marlborough-Downs/>

²⁸ Land Use Consultants (2005). Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-landscape-conservation>

²⁹ White Consultants (2004). North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/9712/North-Wiltshire-Landscape-Character-Assessment-1-25-000/pdf/north_wiltshire_landscape_character_assessment_2004.pdf?m=1732541995230

- *“Elevated ground with rolling hills;*
 - *Degraded agricultural landscapes, including arable and by pasture some of which is for equestrian use, and small irregular fields of medieval origin, with gappy hedgerows, boundaries in poor condition;*
 - *Presence of power lines;*
 - *Areas of woodland including ancient woodland; and*
 - *A comprehensive network of public footpaths”.*
- 4.1.18 A part of the west of the Site lies within the Braydon Wooded Plateau LCA of which *“Straight roads or edges to woodland blocks, and medium to large, regular field patterns”* is typical of the LCA adjacent to the Site boundary.
- 4.1.19 A small part of the south-west of the Site lies within the Minety and the Malmsbury Rolling Lowland LCA of which the *“Patchwork of irregular, small to medium sized fields, mainly pasture but with arable on the richer soils”* is typical of the LCA adjacent to the site boundary.
- 4.1.20 The key characteristics of LCA 4 - Braydon Wooded Plateau include:
- *“Straight roads or edges to woodland blocks, and medium to large, regular field patterns;*
 - *A variety of woodland sizes and types, from large mixed plantations to small coppice woods and mature belts of oak;*
 - *Predominantly pasture with some arable;*
 - *Very sparse settlement in the form of dispersed farms and houses; and*
 - *Few footpaths”.*
- 4.1.21 The key characteristics of LCA 5 - Minety and the Malmsbury Rolling Lowland include:
- *“Rolling or undulating lowland hills between 70-100m AOD;*
 - *Patchwork of irregular, small to medium sized fields, mainly pasture but with arable on the richer soils; and*
 - *Dispersed small villages or hamlets”.*
- 4.1.22 The Study Area to the southwest of the site is located within LCA 11 - Avon Valley Lowland. Key characteristics of this LCA include:
- *“Low-lying river landscape, between 70m and 30m AOD;*
 - *Dominant presence of water in the form of ditches, streams and river with related riparian vegetation and structures;*
 - *Strong rural sense of place;*
 - *Scattered settlements and dwellings; and*
 - *Significance of electricity transmission lines”.*
- 4.1.23 A small section of the southern extent of the Study Area is located within LCA 14 - Hilmarton Rolling Lowland. Key characteristics of this LCA include:
- *“Low lying mixed agriculture, between 70m AOD and 130m AOD;*
 - *Broad expansive views; and*
 - *Peaceful rural character”.*
- 4.1.24 Outside of the 3km Study Area to the south, the northern fringe of the North Wessex Down National Landscape (as described herein), which has been included in the baseline, is located within LCA 16 - Liddington Scarp, and LCA 17 - Avebury Plain. Key characteristics of the Liddington Scarp LCA include:
- *“West facing Scarp slope;*
 - *Heavily wooded especially on upper fringes; and*

- Series of footpath bridleways, and minor roads running up to higher ground”.
- 4.1.25 Key characteristics of the Avebury Plain LCA include:
- *“An open landscape of exposed downland;*
 - *High intervisibility across the open gently rolling or level landscape;*
 - *Views out to the west on the edge of the scarp slope only; and*
 - *Feeling of isolation, particularly to the north because of scarcity of settlement and roads, exposure and lack of significant landscape features”.*
- 4.1.26 It should be noted that these two LCAs cross over with LCA that lie within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. As such, they will not be assessed as part of this report. The LCA listed within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Integrated Landscape Character Assessment will be assessed in their place.

North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Integrated Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.1.27 As the proposed Site has the potential to affect the setting of the North Wessex Downs National landscape, a review of the perceptual characteristics of LCA within the extended cumulative effect Study Area has been undertaken using the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Integrated Landscape Character Assessment³⁰ (refer to Figure 9: Designations relevant to Landscape). The extended cumulative effect Study Area lies within the 5E: Clyffe Pypard – Badbury Wooded Scarp as described below.

Character Area 5E: Clyffe Pypard – Badbury Wooded Scarp

- 4.1.28 This scarp defines the northwest boundary of the National Landscape located at the foot of the scarp. “It is distinguished by its wooded character, with long sinuous, continuous belts of woodland such as Clyffe Hanging and Binknoll Wood, clinging to the almost vertical upper slopes”. Key characteristics include:
- *“steep scarp slope rising abruptly from the lower lying clay Vale;*
 - *almost vertical upper slopes with continuous belts of woodland;*
 - *small fields, bounded by hedgerows which, combined with the high woodland cover and parkland, create an enclosed intimate landscape;*
 - *crossed by a large number of rights of way which originate on the lower lying Vales and terminate on the Plain at the scarp top, plus distinctive sunken lanes; and*
 - *the wooded skyline is an important feature in views from surrounding land”.*

International and National Designations

- 4.1.29 The Site and the Study Area are not covered by any statutory landscape designations (e.g. National Parks or National Landscapes, formerly Areas Outstanding Natural Beauty); or any international designations that may inform landscape value, such as World Heritage Sites. The extended cumulative effect Study Area is within the western boundary of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and the southeastern part of the extended cumulative effect Study Area is within the setting of the Nation Landscape.

North Wessex Downs National Landscape

- 4.1.30 *“The North Wessex Downs National Landscape is a designated protected landscape. It straddles the boundaries of Berkshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire and covers 173 parishes and it is the*

³⁰ Land Use Consultants (2002). North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Integrated Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Landscape-Character-Assessment-Full-report1.pdf>

*third largest National Landscape in the country covering an area of 668 square miles (1,730 square kilometres)*³¹.

4.1.31 Chapter 2: Landscape of the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 lists the special landscape qualities of the National Landscape. These include:

- *“The sense of remoteness and tranquillity that comes from an undeveloped and rural quality with only limited human intervention;*
- *The distinctive northern Downs Plain and Scarp plunges down from the chalk plain to the Vale of White Horse, creating a dramatic recognisable horizon;*
- *In the Downs Plain and Scarp character area, attractive springline villages cluster along the base of the northern ridge or along the valley of Avebury Plain;*
- *Steeply rising slopes create an intimate and enclosed character;*
- *An extensive rights of way network offering many opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside; and*
- *Some of the finest cultural landscape in England including chalk downland, river valleys, ancient woodland, historic sites. There is recognition of the landscape in literature and the arts, with locations such as Watership Down, Uffington White Horse and the Wittenham Clumps inspiring well known works”.*

4.1.32 It also states one of the key issues faced is the *“potential for development beyond the AONB boundary to visually damage or undermine the scale and critical qualities of landscape character areas”.*

Local Designations

4.1.33 The Site and Study Area does not include any areas subject to policies in the Wiltshire Local Plan, or identified on the Proposals Map, that serve to protect landscape of an identified quality, condition or value.

4.1.34 There is a Grade II Listed Registered Park and Garden to the east of the Study Area. Lydiard Park is *“a good example of a mid C18 park where the layout clearly reflects its original design, and which contains archaeological evidence of its earlier, C17 formal layout”*³².

Other Designations Influencing Landscape Value: Heritage

4.1.35 Scheduled Monuments listed buildings and conservation areas, whilst not specific landscape designations, may reflect landscape and architectural quality and can be relevant to development proposals that may impact upon them. The presence of such features can inform landscape and visual value and hence sensitivity. Further details are provided in the Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment (DBA).

4.1.36 There are no heritage designations of this nature within the Site, but within the Study Area there are numerous Listed Buildings, including the grade II listed Manor Farmhouse adjacent to the site boundary.

4.1.37 The closest Scheduled Monument is the Ringsbury Camp Hillfort approximately 1.2km to the north of the Site.

4.1.38 The closest Conservation Areas within the Study Area are located at Lydiard Millicent approximately 1.1km to the east, and Royal Wootton Bassett approximately 1.7km to the south.

³¹ North Wessex Downs AONB (2024). The North Wessex Downs- About Us. Available at: <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/about-us/>

³² Historic England (2013). Lydiard Park Official List Entry. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001238?section=official-list-entry>

Other Designations Influencing Landscape Value: Nature and Biodiversity

- 4.1.39 National and local designations provide protection to areas of biodiversity value, which may inform landscape condition, quality and value. There are no nature and biodiversity designations of this nature within the Site, but within the Study Area there are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and Local Nature Reserves (LNR). These include the Restrop Farm and Brockhurst Wood SSSI approximately 500m to the north of the Site, and Jubilee Lake LNR approximately 800m to the South of the Site.
- 4.1.40 The nearest non-statutory sites designated for nature conservation include the Great Western Community Forest Area of which the Site and Study Area lies within, and small areas of Traditional Orchard approximately 3km in all directions from the Site.
- 4.1.41 The Site does not include any areas of ancient or semi-natural woodland. The nearest areas of ancient woodland including Morris Copse; Frith Copse; Flaxlands Wood; Cowleaze Copse, and Midgehall Copse are adjacent to the north, south, and west of the Site.

4.2 Landscape Value

- 4.2.1 Landscape value is appraised both at the site of the proposed development scale and for the wider landscape of the Study Area as a whole, taking the site of the Proposed Development's contribution to overall character and value into account.
- 4.2.2 The site does not lie within any area designated in terms of specific national statutory landscape designation such as National Park or any local designation relating to value.

North Wiltshire Landscape Character Areas

LCA 3 - Swindon Fringe

- 4.2.3 The Site is entirely located within this LCA and covers a large proportion of the Study Area to the immediate north, east and south. A relatively commonplace agricultural landscape albeit with some landscape elements of value such as hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees. The LCA is also influenced by the presence of modern and urban interventions from the western extent of Swindon.
- 4.2.4 The LCA offers recreational and scenic value at a local level and has some perceptual aspects of tranquillity although limited by the proximity of large urban and infrastructure elements. The LCA is considered to be of low value.

LCA 4 - Braydon Wooded Plateau

- 4.2.5 The Site is located adjacent to this LCA. Within the Study Area the LCA is predominantly rural with representative landscape elements including regular field patterns, woodland blocks and intact hedgerows that are commonplace but of local value in the LCA. The LCA also has sparse settlement offering perceptual characteristics of tranquillity and remoteness with few detracting elements. Views are generally constrained by woodland and hedgerows. Access is limited by the few available PRow.
- 4.2.6 The LCA is considered to be of medium value due largely to the rural and low inhabitation.

LCA 5 - Minety and Malmsbury Rolling Lowland

- 4.2.7 A relatively commonplace agricultural landscape with a strong riparian influence within the Study Area. The LCA is rural with low-lying small to medium sized fields with hedgerows that offer long views along the river valley. Settlement is generally small and dispersed, located along transport routes. The riparian willow is a rarer and more representative landscape element along the waterway.
- 4.2.8 The LCA is of local value and is considered to be of low value.

LCA 11 - Avon Valley Lowland

- 4.2.9 Within the Study Area the landscape is largely comprised of medium scale fields. The terrain is flat and characterised by open water ditches. The area has a rural character with small, scattered settlements and individual dwellings. There are few footpaths and recreational access is limited. The railway lines

are a notable detracting piece of infrastructure with the western extent of Royal Wooten Bassett also reducing the perception of tranquillity.

- 4.2.10 The LCA is of local value and is considered to be of low value.

LCA 14 - Hilmarton Rolling Lowland

- 4.2.11 Within the Study Area the landscape is largely rural with small to medium sized fields bound by well-defined hedgerows and hedgerow trees. There are some larger woodland blocks to the east, and the managed landscapes of the golf course at Bassett Down. Settlement is limited and often present along major transport routes. Recreational access through the network of PRow offers broad views under large skies across the gently undulating terrain. Detracting infrastructure elements include the several solar farms located to the south of Swindon.

- 4.2.12 The LCA is of local value and is considered to be of low value.

North Wessex Downs National Landscape LCA

- 4.2.13 Although the North Wessex Downs National Landscape lies outside the Study Area, it has been included in the appraisal due to its close proximity and the elevated views it provides towards the Site. The Site is visible in panoramic views from the scarp ridges.
- 4.2.14 Landscape Character Area (LCA) 5E: Clyffe Pypard – Badbury Wooded Scarp has been included in the landscape appraisal and from Viewpoint 10 for the visual appraisal (refer to Figures 10 & 13) to determine any potential effects. The location of this landscape character area is shown in Plate 1 overleaf.
- 4.2.15 While this LCA is of national value and therefore considered to be of high sensitivity and high value.

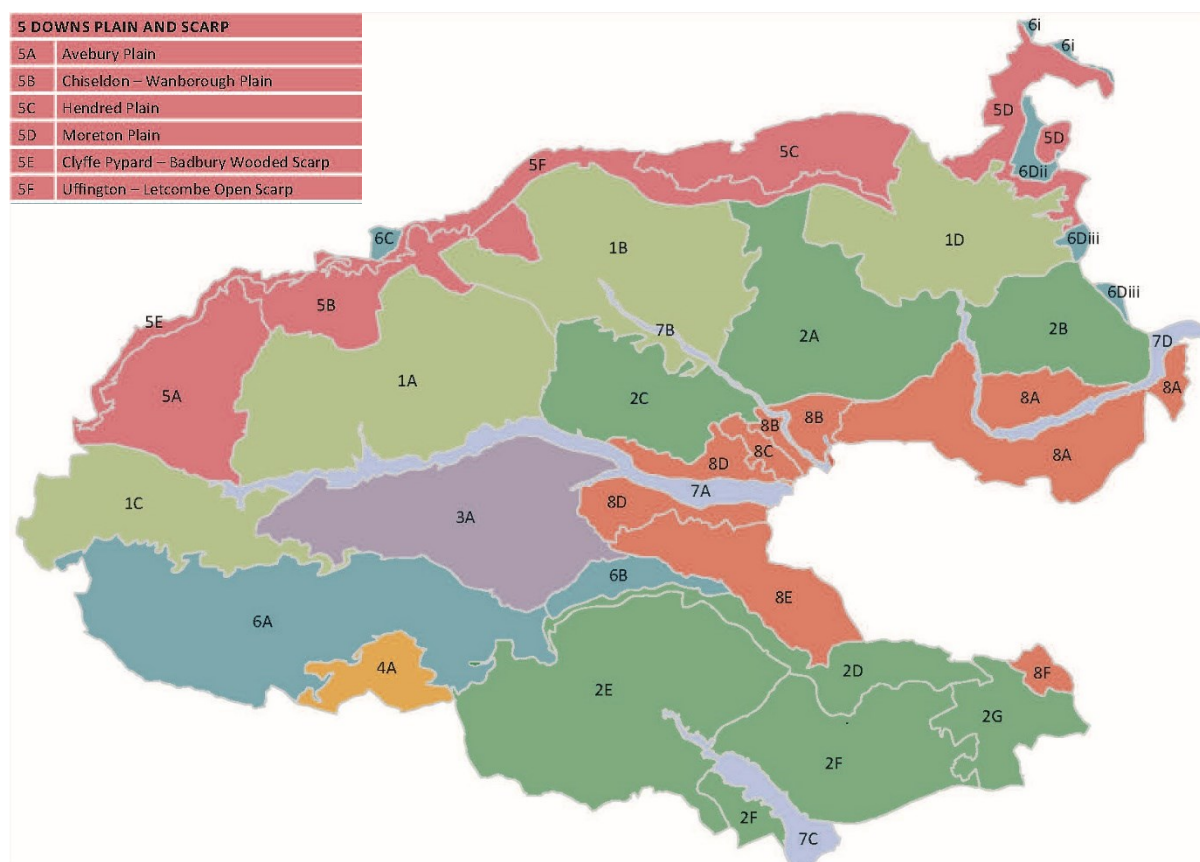


Plate 1: Landscape Character Types and Areas in the North Wessex Downs (Extract only)³³

³³ North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024. Chapter 2, Theme 1, Figure 4. Landscape Character Types and Areas in the North Wessex Downs AONB. Available at: <https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/our-work/management-plan/>

4.3 Interactions between the Proposed Development and Landscape Receptors

- 4.3.1 Interactions between proposed developments and landscape receptors potentially occur in two ways; through direct loss of landscape elements (i.e. subtractive changes which change landscape character) or through additions which change landscape character (additive). provides a summary of potential effects likely to arise from the Proposed Development.
- 4.3.2 Effects on landscape character beyond the Site would be dependent on inter-visibility and perceptual changes within the wider Study Area.
- 4.3.3 The table below summarises the key elements during each phase that are likely to give rise to landscape effects. It is possible for the Site to be retained in agricultural use for the life of the Proposed Development, should an arrangement be agreed for sheep grazing. This would include land between and underneath panels.

Table 4-1: Operations Likely to Result in Landscape Effects

Phase	Summary	Duration
Construction	Localised clearance of vegetation to access locations.	6 months / 24 weeks
	Erection of temporary fencing or hoarding, including tree and hedgerow protection.	
	Installation and presence of contractor welfare and office facilities, along with parking and storage/laydown areas.	
	Increased movement of HGVs into the site.	
	Increased plant/vehicle movement and presence of personnel on-site, with low-level lighting during the winter months.	
	Installation of gravel access tracks within infrastructure areas	
	Soil stripping, excavation, bunding and presence of soil storage mounds.	
	Excavation and ground levelling for the substation, BESS and ancillary equipment	
	Progressive installation of the solar racks, panels, substation, BESS and ancillary equipment.	
	Progressive installation of site fencing and CCTV poles/cameras.	
	Excavation and/or underground drilling for internal cable installation.	
	Planting of new native hedgerows and strengthening of existing hedgerows.	
Operation	Seeding of regraded and/or exposed soil areas.	40 years
	Operation of the solar PV arrays, substation, BESS and ancillary equipment.	
	Presence of site fencing and CCTV poles/cameras.	
	Presence of maintenance access routes into and within the Site area.	
	Ongoing establishment of planting as woodland, isolated trees, hedges and areas of grassland (including species-rich); management operations including mowing and hedge cutting as required.	
	Presence of occasional personnel/vehicles for maintenance and inspection purposes.	
	Low-level motion-sensor lighting at gates, critical infrastructure and key access points	
	Operational noise from electrical equipment.	

Phase	Summary	Duration
Decommissioning	Removal and decommissioning of solar racks, panels, energy infrastructure and ancillary equipment.	6 months /
	Erection of temporary fencing or hoarding, including tree and hedgerow protection.	24 weeks
	Installation and presence of contractor welfare and office facilities, along with parking and storage/laydown areas.	
	Increased movement of HGV and other vehicles	
	Increased plant/vehicle movement and presence of personnel on-site, with low-level lighting.	
	Regrading and cultivation of land.	
	Return to agricultural land use.	

4.4 Visual Baseline

Zone of Theoretical Visibility Analysis

- 4.4.1 The Study Area of the appraisal has been defined in part by the ZTV of the Proposed Development. The ZTV has been established by initial analysis of topographic maps, 3D digital modelling and terrain analysis and is based on the theoretical visibility of the tallest elements of the Proposed Development, which in this case is taken as a maximum height of 3.5m for the solar arrays and 15m for the telecommunication tower. Four ZTVs have been prepared:
- a 'bare earth' ZTV (refer to Figures 1 and 3); and
 - a 'screened' ZTV (refer to Figures 2 and 4).
- 4.4.2 Site observations during winter (when deciduous trees are not in leaf and visibility is greater) indicated that appreciable visibility of the Site would not be expected beyond approximately 3km. Site surveys were carried out on the 27th and 28th March 2024 and on the 30th January 2025. The Study Area was therefore set to a 3km radius from the Site as a worst-case scenario, beyond which it is not considered that the Proposed Development would give rise to important landscape or visual effects. The ZTV mapping extends beyond a 3km radius to indicate whether views from the elevated promoted route on the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs will be relevant for both visual and cumulative effects.
- 4.4.3 Although the ZTV indicates views are theoretically possible from large parts of the Study Area, observations indicated that these views are subject to extensive screening by hedgerows, hedgerows with trees, bands of trees and woodland blocks particularly to the north and west of the Site. These features are characteristic and structural elements of the landscape.
- 4.4.4 Visual receptors within the Study Areas include, but are not limited to, the following:
- settlements and residential receptors;
 - recreational receptors associated with tourism;
 - users of National Cycle Routes and those using PRow; and
 - receptors using 'major' (A and B) roads; and receptors using the local 'minor' road network.

4.5 Visual Value

Range of People and Places Potentially Affected

4.5.1 Based on the ZTV (as shown in Figures 1 - 4) and site observations, theoretical views may be expected for the following receptors (all distances are approximate and to the closest point of the Site). This list is not exhaustive.

- *Residential receptors at properties close to the Proposed Development, including those along Flaxlands Lane.*
- *Residential receptors at Hook approximately 120m to the east.*
- *Community users of the Church of God Swindon along Flaxlands Lane approximately 100m to the southeast.*
- *Community users of Hook Village Hall approximately 180m to the east.*
- *Residential receptors at Greatfield approximately 390m to the northeast.*
- *Residential receptors at Green Hill approximately 380m to the north.*
- *Residential receptors at The Marsh approximately 950m to the south at the border to Royal Wootton Bassett along the B4042 Brinkworth Road.*
- *Residential receptors at Ballard's Ash close the M4 along the B4042 Brinkworth Road.*
- *Recreational receptors using Public Rights of Way (PRoW) (refer to Figure 8) of which several pass through or close to the site as follows:*
 - *Footpath LTRE26 starts at the Village Hall at Hook, runs northwest and through the Site until Flaxlands Lane and then further north between the boundary of the Site and Frith Copse joining LMIL13.*
 - *Footpaths LTRE24A and LTRE24 connect to Flaxlands Lane and to the northeastern section of the Site boundary.*
 - *Footpath LTRE28 runs through the Site from Flaxlands Lane in the north to the south joining LTRE27 which runs along the southern boundary of the Site starting in the village of Hook in the east and joins LTRE29 in the west.*
 - *Footpath LTRE29 connects from LTRE27 to Flaxlands Lane and runs through the site in the south.*
 - *Footpath LTRE30 starts within the Site at a junction with LTRE28 and runs north through Morris's Copse, across Flaxlands Lane and through the Site again joining LMIL13 and LTRE22.*
 - *Footpath LTRE31 runs adjacent to the western boundary of the Site between Flaxlands Lane, through Flaxlands Woods, and the B4696.*
 - *Sections of Footpath LTRE52 run close to the northern boundary of the Site between LTRE31 in the west and LMIL8 in the north connecting to other footpaths south of Green Hill such as LMIL7, 10 & 13.*
 - *Footpath LMIL13 starts at the northeastern corner of the Site at Frith Copse and runs northwest / north crossing LMIL8 towards Green Hill.*
- *Recreational users (walkers, cyclists and horse riders), alongside with those in vehicles using quiet country lanes and the local road network, including Flaxlands Lane, Greatfield and the B4696. Users of Lydiard Park. Recreational users also include anglers at the Flaxlands Fishery along Flaxlands Lane.*
- *Employees and visitors to commercial businesses at Greatfield (including Greatfield Nurseries and Garden Centre); and agricultural workers at local farms.*

4.5.2 Beyond these locations, visibility is expected to be limited through a combination of distance and screening by a combination of topography; woodland, tree belts, hedgerows and individual trees

(frequently in hedgerows); and built form, particularly in Lydiard Plain, Lydiard Green, Lydiard Park, Lydiard Millicent and Royal Wootton Bassett.

- 4.5.3 Longer distance views from the North Wessex Downs indicate potential visibility from the ridge of the elevated scarp slope, however beyond this, there would be no views from the plain due to intervening vegetation, topography and built form.
- 4.5.4 Site observations also indicated no views would be available from north and west of the site from The Common, Callow Hill, and Purton, due to intervening vegetation, topography and built form. No views were available to the north from the Blakehill Farm Nature Reserve near Leigh.
- 4.5.5 In all cases, views during the summer months - when trees and hedges are in leaf and frequently left to grow taller - would be appreciably reduced.

Representative viewpoints and Baseline Descriptions

- 4.5.6 Ten representative viewpoints have been chosen to represent the typical range of views of the Site from within the Study Area. This photography forms the basis of the representative viewpoints and visual appraisal.
- 4.5.7 With reference to Landscape Institute (2019) Technical Guidance Note 06/19: *Visual Representation of Development Proposals*, Viewpoints 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 & 10 have been displayed as 'Type 3' (Photomontage / Photowire). Viewpoints 3, 4, 6 & 9 remain as baseline images only. Viewpoint 10 has also been displayed as 'Type 1' (Photomontage / Photowire & annotations) with notes on cumulative projects. Baseline views are presented for the winter season, thus presenting a 'worst-case' view when deciduous trees are not in leaf. Photomontages are included in Figure 13 (refer to Appendix B) and Representative Baseline Winter Photography is included in Figure 14 (refer to Appendix B).
- 4.5.8 The baseline view for all viewpoints is described in Table 4-2 below, including an appraisal of value based on the methodology provided in Appendix A.

Table 4-2: Baseline Views and Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint number	Grid Reference	Location	Baseline View and Nature of Receptor	Value
1	E: 407766 N: 184883	View west from car park at Hook Village Hall, Hook and PRoW LTRE 26	Recreational users, Users of Village Hall (Local Community) This viewpoint is located in the car park of the single-story Hook Village Hall. This is also the start of PROW LTRE26. A grass strip and tall continuous hedgerow line the narrow verge to the car park and PROW boundary foreshortening the view of lower ground beyond to the southwest. A wooden pole and overhead line cross the middle ground following the line of the hedgerow. The terrain rises up as grassland to the west beyond the hedgerow until it meets a field boundary consisting of a hedgerow with large hedgerow trees including a field gate. The hedgerow with trees form the background of this view and foreshorten any longer distance views as the terrain slopes down beyond the hedgerow.	Low An ordinary agricultural landscape view with typical rural landscape elements including overhead line (OHL) timber posts.
2	E: 407344 N: 185261	View south from Flaxlands Lane at turnstile of PRoW junctions LTRE 26 & LTRE 28	Recreational users, Road users This view has been taken from the turnstile at the meeting point of PRoW LTRE26 and LTRE28 at Flaxlands Lane. The hedgerow with trees running along the southern side of Flaxlands Lane to either side of this view is not visible. A large open field stretches from the fore to middle ground. The terrain rises up to the horizon and foreshortens any longer distance views as the terrain slopes down beyond. The field is bound by woodland blocks and trees in hedgerows to the east and west with an open horizon to the south. The earthen banks of two reservoirs can be seen through the trees in the east in the background. A line of wooden poles and overhead line run along the western field boundary. Upper sections of lattice towers of overhead lines appear above the field line in the background.	Low An ordinary open view across an agricultural landscape with wooded edges and typical rural landscape elements including OHL elements.
3	E: 406985 N: 185343	View northeast near turnstile of PRoW LTRE 30	Recreational users This is an enclosed rural view to the northeast near the turnstile of PRoW LTRE 30 near to Flaxlands Lane east of Four Acre Farm. A small, enclosed field stretches from the fore to middle ground with the terrain falling down gently to the north. A large woodland block, Frith Copse which is an ancient & semi-natural woodland, to the northwest screens and foreshorten views in this direction forming a wooded horizon. Hedgerows with trees run along the remaining boundaries and partially filter views of the adjacent fields to the north and east as well as Flaxlands Lane to the south. As the terrain slopes north, subsequent field boundaries form a wooded horizon. A tall transmission tower is breaking the skyline and is the only detracting element in an otherwise rural view.	Low A view across an ordinary agricultural field bounded by woodland in the background. An existing telecommunication mast provides a focus point.

Viewpoint number	Grid Reference	Location	Baseline View and Nature of Receptor	Value
4	E: 406861 N: 185867	View south / southwest from PRoW LMIL8 close to junction with PRoW LMIL13 along the access road to Koffs Farm, Green Hill	Residents on approach to their home, Recreational users, Farm workers This is a rural view to the south from PRoW LMIL8 close to LMIL13 which follow the access road to Koffs Farm, south of the village of Green Hill. The crushed aggregate access road and adjacent grassland fields define the fore- and middle ground. They are separated by a boundary consisting of a low hedgerow around a timber post and wire fence. The terrain of these fields slopes from east to west. A hedgerow with trees in the higher middle ground to the east screens views of the small fields beyond. These hedgerows, and woodland blocks (including Frith Copse) to the southeast combine to form a wooded horizon for much of the view to the southeast. A tall transmission tower in the middle ground breaks the skyline as a detracting element in the view. The terrain slopes down to the southwest and views are more open as the hedgerow trees become more sporadic and only partially screen views beyond. Buildings related to Koffs Farm become visible in the middle distance to the right. Beyond this the terrain rises up and views of several fields in the background are visible bound by well-defined hedgerows. Two large barn buildings of the Shepherds Rest located on a local ridge become visible in middle of the background. Woodland blocks in the far distance towards the horizon are perceptible in periods of good visibility.	Low An ordinary agricultural landscape view with typical undulating rural landscape elements including pockets of woodland and barns.
5	E: 406628 N: 185767	View south / southeast from PRoW LMIL 8 west of Koffs Farm, Green Hill	Recreational users, Farm workers This viewpoint is located along PRoW LMIL8 and west of Koffs Farm south of the village of Green Hill. A large gently undulating field stretches from fore to middle ground. The field is open with a low hedgerows along the boundary. Beyond this the landform changes with the terrain rising up with two further fields split by a low hedgerow with a solitary hedgerow tree that rises up receding from the middle ground to the horizon. The easternmost field rises up to a broad summit on the horizon where two large agricultural buildings related to Shepherds Rest are prominent focus points in the view. An overhead line on timber poles crosses the elevated middle ground. The woodland block of Firth Copse is visible in the east on higher ground in the background. Other clusters of trees are visible in the middle- and background on the left. The terrain in the background slopes west and the fields are bounded by hedgerows with few trees providing an open horizon. Beyond this, large woodland (Flaxlands Woods, which contains ancient & semi-natural woodland, pockets of ancient woodland, ancient replanted woodland, and young trees) screens any views beyond.	Low An ordinary agricultural landscape view with typical undulating rural landscape elements including pockets of woodland, overhead line, and barns.
6	E: 405675 N: 185946	View southeast from the entrance to PRoW LMIL130	Recreational users, Road users	Medium

Viewpoint number	Grid Reference	Location	Baseline View and Nature of Receptor	Value
		and Webbs Wood at crossing point with B4696 Lydiard Plain	A rural view looking southeast from the entrance to PRoW LMIL130 near Webb's Wood along B4696 Lydiard Plain. The B4696 defines the immediate foreground of the view with a narrow grass verge with low vegetation form a boundary to the large flat field beyond. The field stretches from fore to middle ground and is bound by a band of largely tall mature trees that heavily filter views of the fields beyond. Large woodland blocks consisting of Plain Copse, Flaxlands Wood and Morris's Copse (which contain ancient & semi-natural woodland, pockets of ancient woodland, ancient replanted woodland, and young trees) combine to form a wooded horizon screening views beyond. The upper section of a telecommunication tower is visible on the horizon.	A view across the B4696 and an agricultural field with mature bands of trees and woodland in the middle distance and background. The upper section of an existing telecommunication mast is discernible in the background. No other detracting features.
7	E: 406462 N: 184815	View west / northwest from Flaxlands Lane near to Shallow Croft (5 Flaxlands Lane)	Road users One of the very few partially open views from publicly accessible locations along Flaxlands Lane at a farm gate near Shallow Croft (5 Flaxlands Lane). Flaxlands Lane is generally bounded by tall hedgerows and trees between the B4696 and the Four Acre Farm. This view from a farm gate is framed by tall hedgerows to either side allowing a narrow but open view to the west. A large overhead metal lattice tower breaks the skyline above the hedgerow. Beyond the gate is a rural track bound by wooden post and rail fencing. The terrain falls away with a series of small fields in the foreground defined by further wooden post and rail fencing. A larger open field in the middle ground is bound by a hedgerow with trees. Beyond this further fields with well-defined hedgerows and tree boundaries as well as blocks of woodland combine to form a wooded horizon.	Low An ordinary agricultural landscape view with typical rural landscape elements and a prominent OHL pylon.
8	E: 407252 N: 184048	View north from car park edge across playing fields at the Royal Wootton Bassett Sports Association	Recreational users (including visitors) This viewpoint is located at the playing fields at the Royal Wootton Bassett Sports Association. The flat, open playing fields stretch from the fore to middle ground. A line of individual trees just below the horizon form the boundary to the field with occasional gaps providing glimpsed views beyond. The slopes down into a cutting with the overhead highway signage being the only indication of the M4 motorway in the cutting. In the distance, the rooftops of houses to the southern extent of Hook are visible. In the far distance the terrain rises up with fields visible with well-defined hedgerow with trees and blocks of woodland combine to form a wooded horizon. Detracting elements include a row of overhead lines that break the skyline passing through the middle ground of the view. Two telecommunication towers are also visible focus points on high ground in the background.	Low An ordinary view across sporting grounds in the foreground, a prominent OHL and pylons as well as a uniform boundary tree planting and gantries of the M4 in the middle distance. The background contains considerable sections of woodland or bands of mature

Viewpoint number	Grid Reference	Location	Baseline View and Nature of Receptor	Value
				deciduous trees as well as telecommunication towers.
9	E: 405576 N: 182919	View north / northeast from Whitehill Lane northwest of Royal Wootton Bassett close the junction with PRoW WBAS4	Road users, Recreational users This viewpoint is located on the grass verge along Whitehill Lane which is flanked by a continuous hedgerow in this sections. This location is close to the junction with PRoW WBAS4, which runs across the field in the foreground. This large field stretches into the middle ground gently sloping from northeast to northwest. The field is bound by a low hedge with occasional trees partially filtering the views of the fields beyond. Beyond this, the terrain becomes gently undulating and rises up with small-scale fields with well-defined hedgerows and bands of trees as well as blocks of woodland. A small number of scattered farms and individual properties and overhead lines with metal lattice towers in the very distance form built elements in an otherwise rural landscape.	Low An ordinary agricultural landscape view with typical rural landscape elements including overhead lines, farms and houses.
10	E: 409663 N: 177727	View north / northwest from the ridge of a steep scarp relating to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape along BTOW38 (White Horse Trail) near the B4041 Broad Town Road	Recreational users This is an open and expansive view to the north / northwest from the ridgeline along the northern boundary of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The steep scarp slopes provide elevated panoramic views across a lowland landscape in the fore- and middle ground, which is largely defined by a mix of agricultural field patterns and small to medium sized settlements, farmsteads, solar farms, warehouses, OHL and telecommunications towers. The largest settlement is Royal Wootton Bassett which located in the middle distance. The landscape becomes more undulating further north with an increasing density of woodland. Field boundaries are generally lined with hedgerows and bands of trees. The area around Flaxlands Lane and the village of Hook become visible as the first noticeable elevation beyond the settlement of Royal Wootton Bassett in the far middle distance. The woodland cover increases beyond Wootton Bassett in the middle distance and extents to the horizon. It is interspersed with small settlements, farmstead and individual houses.	Medium A wide open, elevated and panoramic view looking down from the scarps along the northern boundary of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. The view is across a rural landscape interspersed with small and medium sized settlements as well as existing solar farms. The viewpoint is not waymarked or publicised.

5. Landscape Mitigation

- 5.1.1 The primary aims of the landscape mitigation are to reduce the visual prominence of the Proposed Development and assimilate it into the landscape context, while providing an enhancement to the provision for biodiversity. The design of the Proposed Development considers the existing conditions.
- 5.1.2 Good design has been a key consideration from the outset. The LVA has informed the iterative design process, guided by design principles and in response to policy requirements, published landscape character assessment guidance and fieldwork analysis. The following design mitigation has been embedded in the Proposed Development to minimise effects on landscape character and visual amenity.
- 5.1.3 For the purposes of the LVA, the following landscape proposals have been incorporated into the design as embedded mitigation or enhancement and, where appropriate, are accounted for in the appropriate stages of the assessment. The proposed landscape design considers the existing conditions, the development and associated constraints. It is also informed by the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements of the development, as outlined in reports that accompany this application.
- 5.1.4 The landscape mitigation, embedded mitigation, and enhancement design has been prepared to accompany the application is shown in Figure 11 Outline Landscape Masterplan, which is included in Appendix B. Due to constraints set by existing and retained vegetation, opportunities for new planting are limited. Proposals include:
- The removal of solar panels and ancillary infrastructure from the eastern boundary of the fields closest to the settlement of Hook. Setting back the panel area from this boundary by 10 m would reduce visibility for a large number of sensitive receptors (residents, users of recreational routes) in Hook.
 - Locating the compound containing the BESS, substation and ancillary equipment, to minimise wider visibility of the taller infrastructure.
 - Diversion of PRoW LTRE 26 that would otherwise run partially through a proposed solar array area. The diversion, which would provide a route around the eastern perimeter of the solar arrays, would be slightly longer but would run alongside belts of woodland and hedgerows. PRoW LTRE 26 would reconnect with the network of PRoW that link up along Flaxlands Road.
 - Diversion of PRoW LTRE 28 that would otherwise run through a large area of solar arrays. The diversion around the perimeter of the southeastern field of the solar array area would be slightly longer but it would run alongside pockets of native woodland, bands of mature trees and hedgerows. PRoW LTRE 28 would reconnect with the network of PRoW that link up along Flaxlands Road and remain accessible from LTRE 27 and LTRE 30.
 - Retain the strong tree/hedgerow shelter boundary across the Site.
 - Enhance existing sections of hedgerows and bands of trees with native species to improve the conditions of existing hedgerows, species diversity and to close off gaps.
 - Change hedgerow management along the upper section of Flaxlands Lane to increase their height in order to screen solar arrays at either side of the road.
 - Provision of 'Other Neutral Grassland' (semi-improved) of moderate species richness within the fence line of Solar PV areas (including under the Solar PV panels) to increase species biodiversity.
 - Provision of 'Lowland Meadow' (neutral) grassland with moderate to high species diversity within the field margins outside the Solar PV fence line, BNG areas, and PRoW buffers to encourage development of a diverse sward of grasses, sedges and broadleaved herbs for pollinators and birds.

Landscape Strategy

- 5.1.5 The overall objective of the landscape design is to integrate the Proposed Development into its landscape setting and avoid or minimise adverse landscape and visual effects as far as practicable. The design has been developed in collaboration with the wider design team and other specialists to achieve a solution that meets this objective. This includes the review of the Glint & Glare Study (AECOM and PagerPower 2025)³⁴. Accordingly, the landscape design aims to achieve the following:
- To integrate the Proposed Development into the existing landscape pattern as far as practicable by retaining and following existing features, including vegetation;
 - To replace vegetation lost during construction of the Proposed Development through areas of new planting; and
 - To filter and screen more prominent components of the Proposed Development in views from visual receptors.

Landscape Design Principles

- 5.1.6 This section describes the landscape design principles which underpin the landscape design strategy and explains how they have been applied to the design of the Proposed Development.

Conserving the Existing Vegetation Patterns

- 5.1.7 The layout of the Proposed Development has been designed to minimise the loss of, and avoid significant impacts on, existing landscape features, where possible. This includes minimum offsets of:
- 30m from Ancient Woodland (as feasible);
 - 15m from existing woodland and tree groups;
 - 10m from hedgerows with trees;
 - 10m from hedgerows without trees;
 - 10m from proposed or strengthened hedgerows with trees;
 - Individual Trees: Root Protection Area (RPA) to be protected for individual trees and those within hedgerows;
 - Watercourses: 10m from watercourses; and
 - Ditches: Minimum 10m from ditches.
- 5.1.8 The layout of the Proposed Development would use existing farm tracks and field openings as the preferred routes for construction access, minimising loss of hedgerows, where possible.

³⁴ AECOM & PagerPower (2025) Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study

6. Appraisal of Effects

6.1 Landscape Appraisal

- 6.1.1 The appraisal of likely effects on the published LCA for the LCA described in Section 2 at the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development are set out below.

Table 6-1: Appraisal of Landscape Effects on LCA 3 - Swindon Fringe

Typical Criteria Descriptions

LCA 3 - Swindon Fringe

Relationship to LCA:

The majority of the Site is located within the LCA and occupies a significant portion of the Study Area, resulting in direct landscape effects.

Susceptibility:

Medium

Sensitivity:

Medium

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction

The construction of the Proposed Development would result in the loss of a medium area of grazed farmland. While the physical extent of this loss is notable within the local context, it represents a perceptual change when considered in relation to the overall scale of the LCA.

Construction activities would introduce increased movement and disturbance from plant and vehicles; however, this visual disruption would be confined to a limited area within the LCA. The overall impact on the key characteristics of the LCA is expected to be minimal and largely restricted to the Site and its immediate setting.

This is primarily due to the limited intervisibility with the surrounding ancient woodlands to the north, east, and west of the site, which act as visual buffers. From the south, glimpsed views of the site may be possible from the M4 corridor, though these are filtered by gapped hedgerows and intervening vegetation. Collectively, these factors help reduce both the visibility and the perceived extent of construction-related effects.

Although construction activity would be more intense than typical agricultural operations, its visual influence would be temporary, reversible, and confined to a small geographic area within the LCA. Given the limited intervisibility, localised nature of the works, and the presence of screening vegetation, the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Low**. When combined with the **Medium** sensitivity of the LCA, this results in an overall **Minor Adverse** effect.

Importance of Landscape Effect

Minor Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 1)

The operation of the Proposed Development would introduce a change in land use from arable farmland to a solar energy facility, with solar panels forming a new feature within the landscape. While this results in a noticeable change in the view—particularly a reduction in perceived openness—the existing field pattern would be retained. Additionally, the development would be visible from only a very small proportion of the LCA, limiting its overall impact on landscape character.

Despite this localised change, the Proposed Development would not alter the defining perceptual qualities or key characteristics of the LCA which is open arable land with hedgerows. Although the proposed mitigation planting and vegetation replacement would not be fully established at the time of operation, the overall influence on the wider LCA landscape would remain limited.

The magnitude of effect is appraised to be **Low** over a small geographical extent, long-term, and reversible, which when combined with the **Medium** sensitivity results in a **Minor Adverse** effect.

Importance of Landscape Effect

Minor Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)

The landscape effects in the long term are consistent with those identified for Operation Year 1, with the key exception that mitigation planting would have matured sufficiently to provide effective screening. As a result, the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Very Low**, affecting a small geographical extent, and being long-term and reversible. When combined with the **Medium** sensitivity of the receptor, this results in an overall **Negligible Adverse** effect.

Importance of Landscape Effects

Negligible Adverse

Table 6-2: Appraisal of Landscape Effects on LCA 4 - Braydon Wooded Plateau

Typical Criteria Descriptions

LCA 4 - Braydon Wooded Plateau

Relationship to LCA:

The western edge of the Proposed Development is located within the LCA and occupies a significant portion of the Study Area, resulting in direct landscape effects on the character and features of the LCA.

Susceptibility:

Low

Sensitivity:

Medium

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction

The construction of the Proposed Development would result in the loss of a medium area of grazed farmland. While the physical extent of this loss is notable within the local context, it represents a perceptual change when considered in relation to the overall scale of the LCA. This land would accommodate the installation of solar PV panels, fencing, a BESS, access tracks, and a TCC which is more developed and structured a change from the open agricultural land in its current state.

Construction activities would introduce increased movement and disturbance from plant and vehicles; however, this visual disruption would be confined to a limited area within the LCA. The overall impact on the key characteristics of the LCA is expected to be minimal and largely restricted to the Site and its immediate setting behind Flaxlands Wood acting as a visual buffer to help reduce both the visibility and the perceived extent of construction-related effects.

Given the limited intervisibility, localised nature of the works, and the presence of screening vegetation, the magnitude of effect of the construction activity is assessed as **Low**. When combined with the **Medium** sensitivity of the LCA, this results in an overall **Minor Adverse** effect.

Importance of Landscape Effect

Minor Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 1)

The operation of the Proposed Development would introduce a change in land use from grazed farmland to a solar energy facility, with solar panels becoming a new element within the landscape. While this results in a perceptible change, the Proposed Development is largely screened by the mature vegetation of Flaxlands Wood, and the existing field pattern remains intact. As a result, visibility from within the LCA is minimal, significantly limiting the impact on landscape character.

Despite this localised change, the Proposed Development would not alter the defining perceptual qualities or key characteristics of the LCA, which include open arable fields, hedgerows, woodland blocks, and minimal scattered development. Although mitigation planting would not yet be fully mature at the time of operation, its absence would have little influence on the broader landscape, and the overall impact on the LCA would remain limited.

The magnitude of effect is appraised to be **Low** over a small geographical extent, long-term, and reversible, which when combined with the **Medium** sensitivity results in a **Minor Adverse** effect.

Importance of Landscape Effect

Minor Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)

The landscape effects in the long term are consistent with those identified for Operation Year 1. As a result, the magnitude of effect is assessed as **Very Low**, affecting a small geographical extent, and being long-term and reversible. When combined with the **Medium** sensitivity of the receptor, this results in an overall **Negligible Adverse** effect.

Importance of Landscape Effects

Negligible Adverse

Table 6-3: Appraisal of Landscape Effects on LCA 5 - Minety and Malmsbury Rolling Lowland

Typical Criteria Descriptions

LCA 5 - Minety and Malmsbury Rolling Lowland

Relationship to LCA:

The western edge of the Proposed Development is located within a very small area the LCA and occupies a small portion of the Study Area.

Susceptibility:

Low

Sensitivity:

Low

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction

The construction of the Proposed Development would result in no loss of arable farmland.

Typical Criteria Descriptions

Given the limited intervisibility, localised nature of the works, and the presence of screening vegetation, the magnitude of effect of the construction activity is assessed as **Very Low**. When combined with the **Low** sensitivity of the LCA, this results in an overall **Negligible Adverse** effect.

Importance of Landscape Effect	Negligible Adverse
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 1)	
The operation of the Proposed Development would introduce a change in land use from scrubland to wildflower meadow.	
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Very Low as change in land use is over a small geographical extent when combined with the Low sensitivity results in a Negligible Adverse effect.	
Importance of Landscape Effect	Negligible Adverse
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
The landscape effects in the long term are consistent with those identified for Operation Year 1. As a result, the magnitude of effect is assessed as Very Low , affecting a small geographical extent. When combined with the Low sensitivity of the receptor, this results in an overall Negligible Adverse effect.	
Importance of Landscape Effect	Negligible Adverse

Table 6-4: Appraisal of Landscape Effects on LCA 11- Avon Valley Lowland

Typical Criteria Descriptions

LCA 11 - Avon Valley Lowland

Relationship to LCA:

The Proposed Development is not directly located in the LCA; however, it does occupy a portion of the Study Area to the southwest.

Susceptibility: Low	Sensitivity: Low
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction	
The construction of the Proposed Development would result in no direct change to the LCA and given the limited intervisibility, localised nature of the works, and the presence of screening vegetation and the presence of the M4 motorway to the north, the magnitude of effect of the construction activity is assessed as Very Low . When combined with the Low sensitivity of the LCA, this results in an overall Negligible Adverse effect.	
Importance of Landscape Effect	Negligible Adverse
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 1)	
The Proposed Development would have a negligible impact on the LCA due to limited visibility, localised works, existing screening vegetation, and the nearby M4 motorway.	
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Very Low . Given the area's Low sensitivity, the overall effect is assessed as Negligible Adverse .	
Importance of Landscape Effect	Negligible Adverse
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
The landscape effects in the long term are consistent with those identified for Operation Year 1.	
Importance of Landscape Effect	Negligible Adverse

Table 6-5: Appraisal of Landscape Effects on LCA 14 - Hilmarton Rolling Lowlands

Typical Criteria Descriptions

LCA 14 - Hilmarton Rolling Lowlands

Relationship to LCA:

The Proposed Development is located outside the LCA but within the southeastern portion of the Study Area resulting in the potential for indirect impacts.

Susceptibility: Low	Sensitivity: Low
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction	
The construction of the Proposed Development would result in no direct change to the LCA and	

Typical Criteria Descriptions

given the limited intervisibility, localised nature of the works, and the presence of existing solar infrastructure the magnitude of effect of the construction activity is assessed as **Very Low**. When combined with the **Low** sensitivity of the LCA, this results in an overall **Negligible Adverse** effect.

Importance of Landscape Effect	Negligible Adverse
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 1)	
The Proposed Development would have a negligible impact on the LCA due to limited visibility, localised works, and existing solar infrastructure to the north.	
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Very Low . Given the area's Low sensitivity, the overall effect is assessed as Negligible Adverse .	
Importance of Landscape Effect	Negligible Adverse
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
The landscape effects in the long term are consistent with those identified for Operation Year 1.	
Importance of Landscape Effect	Negligible Adverse

Table 6-6: Appraisal of Landscape Effects on NCA Berkshire and Marlborough Downs - LCA 5E Clyffe Pypard – Badbury Wooded Scarp

Typical Criteria Descriptions

LCA 5E – Clyffe Pypard – Badbur Wooded Scarp (part of northern fringe of North Wessex Downs National Landscape)	
Relationship to LCA:	
The Proposed Development would be located outside the NCA Berkshire and Marlborough Downs, and outside LCA 5E. The LCA is located outside the 3km Study Area but on prominent elevated ground including steep scarp ridges between approximately 6 - 7.5km south of the Site. Landscape effects would be indirect.	
Susceptibility:	Sensitivity:
High	High
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction	
The Proposed Development would be located outside this LCA and at a long distance away from the Site, therefore, there would be no change to the key characteristics and potential change would be indirect and related to the perceptual attributes of the LCA.	
Construction activity associated with the Proposed Development and the progressive installation of infrastructure would likely to be partially screened from the majority of this LCA by intervening vegetation associated with field margins and areas of woodland. Considering this and the long distance between the Site and this LCA, there would be no change in the landscape character of LCA5E expected during construction works. Construction works would not impact on the NCA and this LCA nor would there be any perceived difference in the setting of this LCA due to the presence of construction works at the Site. The perception of additional movement and disturbance in the distance would not be immediately apparent and depend on clear weather conditions.	
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be No Change over a small geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity results in a No Change effect.	
Importance of Landscape Effect	No Change
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 1)	
Changes to the landscape character at the Site would be barely perceptible from LCA 5E and not result in indirect effects due to the scale and distance of the Proposed Development. There would be no change to the characteristics of perceptual qualities of the NCA and LCA 5E as a result of the Proposed Development.	
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be No Change over a small geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity results in a No Change effect.	
Importance of Landscape Effect	No Change
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
The landscape effects in the long term would be consistent with those identified for Operation Year 1.	
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be No Change over a small geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity results in a No Change effect.	

Typical Criteria Descriptions

Importance of Landscape Effect

No Change

6.2 Visual Appraisal

Introduction

- 6.2.1 Changes in views may give rise to adverse or beneficial visual effects through obstruction in views, alteration of the components of the view and the opening up of new views by the removal of landscape elements. The Proposed Development would not entail any substantial removal of landscape elements other than loss of agricultural land and localised removal of boundary vegetation to facilitate access roads to the Site and internal access roads. Hence, visual effects would almost exclusively arise from the construction and decommissioning works and the presence of new landscape elements, both infrastructure and planting, during the operational phase.
- 6.2.2 Examples of visual category descriptions used in this appraisal are provided in Appendix A.

Visual appraisal of representative viewpoints

- 6.2.3 A total of 10 viewpoints were visited and the views recorded as part of this visual appraisal. The extent to which the Proposed Development would give rise to change in the existing views has been considered, as set out in Tables 6-2 to 6-16 overleaf. The distances to Site stated in the tables refer to the nearest part of the Site boundary from the viewpoint. Viewpoint photography has been taken during the winter season and illustrates the worst case scenario. Visual effects during the winter season have also been used as baseline for the visual appraisal.
- 6.2.4 Where a representative viewpoint has multiple receptor types, the most sensitive receptor has taken precedence within the visual appraisal.
- 6.2.5 Photomontages (Type 4 & Type 1) of Viewpoints 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 & 10 are shown Figure 13 (refer to Appendix B).
- 6.2.6 Representative Baseline Winter Photography of Viewpoints 3, 4, 6 & 9 are shown in Figure 14 (refer to Appendix B), which are provided for illustrative purposes only.

Table 6-7: Visual Appraisal of Representative Viewpoint 1

Viewpoint 1: View west from car park at Hook Village Hall, Hook and PRoW LTRE 26

Grid reference	Receptor type	Elevation (m AOD)	Approx. distance from the Proposed Development (km)	Direction of view
E: 407766 N: 184883	Recreational users, Users of Village Hall (Local Community)	145.9m	0.19km	West
Value of view		Visual susceptibility to change		Sensitivity of receptor
Low		Medium		Medium
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction				
The majority of the Proposed Development would be fully screened in this view due to topography and intervening hedgerow and tree planting along the field boundary in the background. Sections of solar panels and fencing could become visible through existing hedgerows during the winter season and at a farm gate resulting in mostly obscured middle distance views towards the Proposed Development across the field in the middle ground. For car park users, users approaching Hook Village Hall, and recreational receptors using PRoW LTRE26, the Proposed Development would be located at an oblique angle to the direction of travel and set behind an existing hedgerow with several mature scattered trees. There is the potential for filtered views of construction activity to the west but this activity would be mostly concealed by topography and intervening vegetation. The movement of vehicles and low-level operations may not be immediately perceptible in this view. The availability of alternative views, including mid distance views to the south, and the presence of other detracting features, such as the overhead electricity lines and associated towers would reduce the impact on the visual amenity. The effects of construction activity on residential receptors located opposite Hook Village Hall along Greatfield Road close to the junction with Hook Street would likely to be similar to the effects experienced at the car park resulting in filtered views from these properties or curtilage. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Low, over a small to medium geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Minor Adverse.				
Importance of effect at construction				Minor Adverse
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 1)				
Views of the solar PV panels and fencing would be largely obscured by intervening existing hedgerow and trees. No views of the BESS, substation, and the taller elements such as the telecommunication tower and electrical equipment would be possible due to intervening topography and vegetation. At operation, the grazed land of the Site would be replaced with grassland, however, replacement and mitigation planting would be immature and offer little to no additional screening. There would be little to no change to the key characteristics or views experienced by car park users, recreational users of PRoW LTRE26 of Hook Vi residential receptors and users of the village hall. For recreational receptors using PRoW LTRE 26 westward views would initially be screened by hedgerow, with filtered views to sections of solar panels during the winter season, The Proposed Development would not alter the overall context of the existing view. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Low, over a medium geographical extent, long-term and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Minor Adverse.				
Importance of effect at operation				Minor Adverse
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)				
Proposed mitigation planting to close off the farm gate and to strengthen the existing hedgerow planting would screen views of the Proposed Development. The proposed mitigation measures would not be uncharacteristic to the setting and would not alter the character of the view. Visual effects for car park users, recreational, and residential receptors remain unchanged. By Year 15, the additional vegetation would be effective, resulting in a Very Low magnitude of effect over a medium geographic extent. The impact is considered long-term and reversible. When combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Negligible Beneficial.				
Importance of effect at operation				Negligible Beneficial

Table 6-8: Visual Appraisal of Representative Viewpoint 2

Viewpoint 2: View south from Flaxlands Lane at turnstile of PRoW junctions LTRE 26 & LTRE 28

Grid reference	Receptor type	Elevation (m AOD)	Approx. distance from the Proposed Development (km)	Direction of view
E: 407344 N: 185261	Recreational users, Road users	149.5m	0.0km	South
Value of view		Visual susceptibility to change		Sensitivity of receptor
Low		High		Medium
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction				
There would be direct and open views at the Proposed Development from this viewpoint, which is located at the access road entrance to the solar farm at Flaxlands Lane. The Proposed Development would be prominently visible from this location and the junction of PRoW LTRE26 and LTRE28. The development would occupy the foreground of this view and obscure a longer distance view, with construction activity clearly observable from this viewpoint and sections along Flaxlands Lane due to the currently low hedgerow height and rising field elevation. Vehicle movement and low-level construction operations would be readily perceptible. Visual effects of construction activity are expected to be more pronounced for recreational receptors using the PRoW LTRE26 & 28. These receptors are more likely to experience sustained exposure to the Proposed Development as the solar panels would accompany their views on one side when approaching the PRoW junction at Flaxlands Lane. In contrast, views for road users along Flaxlands Lane would be transient while passing, resulting in lesser but nevertheless recognisable visual effects due to the currently low hedgerow along the southern side of Flaxlands Lane in that section. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be High, over a medium geographical extent, although temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse.				
Importance of effect at construction				Moderate Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation	
The development would continue to occupy the foreground of this view from PRoW LTRE26 and LTRE28 as the access road to the Proposed Development from Flaxlands Lane would remain in place. Solar arrays would remain prominently visible. They would also clearly be seen along Flaxlands Lane due to low hedgerows and the rising topography of the fields. During the operational phase, grazed land would be converted to grassland. The existing hedgerows would be strengthened and managed to grow taller (similar to the hedgerow height along the northern side of Flaxlands Lane in this section). This view illustrated in this photomontages would therefore only be available at the access road entrance to the Proposed Development. However, at this stage, the mitigation planting and hedgerow management would not yet able to provide additional screening for road users. It is therefore recommended to change the management of the existing hedgerow and the application of additional planting in advance of construction works in the first planting season if planning consent can be obtained. The Proposed Development would be clearly perceptible in the foreground, altering the overall context and character of the existing view. The magnitude of effect is assessed as High, occurring over a medium geographical extent, long-term in duration, and reversible. When combined with a receptor sensitivity assessed as Medium, the overall importance of effect is determined to be Moderate Adverse.	
Importance of effect at operation	Moderate Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
Proposed landscape mitigation would have established and screen views of the Proposed Development for road users along Flaxlands Lane until reaching the gap in the hedgerow at the access road to the Proposed Development which is shown in this view. The view at the access road opening would remain similar to Year 1, and so would the views for recreational users along PRoW26 & 28 in this section. The proposed mitigation is expected to reduce visual impacts for road users, which would experience the illustrated view only oblique and for a moment when driving by. Consequently, the magnitude of effect would be highest for recreational users and less for road users. For recreational users it is assessed as High, over a medium geographical extent, long-term in duration, and reversible. When combined with a receptor sensitivity assessed as Medium, the overall importance of effect is determined to be Moderate Adverse.	
Importance of effect at operation	Moderate Adverse

Table 6-9: Visual Appraisal of Representative Viewpoint 3

Viewpoint 3: View northeast near turnstile of PRoW LTRE 30

Grid reference	Receptor type	Elevation (m AOD)	Approx. distance from the Proposed Development (km)	Direction of view
E: 406985 N: 185343	Recreational users	150.5m	0.0km	Northeast
Value of view		Visual susceptibility to change		Sensitivity of receptor
Low		Medium		Medium
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction				
There would be an enclosed view of the Proposed Development to the northeast from this viewpoint and along PRoW LTRE30. The solar arrays and fencing would be visible in front of Frith Copse, which is located in the background, and become prominent features in this view. For recreational receptors using PRoW LTRE 30, the Proposed Development would be positioned at an oblique angle to the direction of travel. Construction activity to the northeast would be visible, with vehicle movement and low-level operations clearly perceptible at this close distance. However, the presence of alternative views—such as mid-distance views to the north and east - and existing detracting features, including a telecommunications mast visible above Firth Copse, reduce the overall impact on visual amenity. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Medium, over a small geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse.				
Importance of effect at construction				Moderate Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation	
The development would occupy the foreground of views from PRoW LTRE 30, with solar arrays prominently visible. During the operational phase, arable land would be converted to grassland, and mitigation planting would be introduced to strengthen the hedgerow along Flaxlands Lane. Users of LTRE30 would experience the solar arrays and fencing on the southeastern side for approximately 150m. The development would result in alterations to the key characteristics of the rural fields, leading to changes in the views experienced by recreational users. The Proposed Development would be visible altering the overall context of the existing view. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Medium, over a small geographical extent, long-term and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse.	
Importance of effect at operation	Moderate Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
Open views from PRoW LTRE30 of the solar arrays would remain similar. Proposed mitigation measures, including strengthening of existing hedgerows along Flaxlands Lane would not affect this view. As a result, the magnitude of effect would remain the same as in Year 1, and is appraised to be Medium, over a localised geographical extent, long-term and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse.	
Importance of effect at operation	Moderate Adverse

Table 6-10: Visual Appraisal of Representative Viewpoint 4

Viewpoint 4: View south / southwest from PRow LMIL8 close to junction with PRow LMIL13 along the access road to Koffs Farm, Green Hill

Grid reference	Receptor type	Elevation (m AOD)	Approx. distance from the Proposed Development (km)	Direction of view
E: 406861 N: 185867	Residents on approach to their home, Recreational users, Farm workers	142.6m	0.25km	South
Value of view		Visual susceptibility to change		Sensitivity of receptor
Low		Medium		Medium
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction				
There would be mid ground to distance views of sections of solar arrays and the upper sections of the substation including telecommunication tower from this viewpoint across medium scale farmed fields. The Proposed Development would be located to the south of this viewpoint, positioned on elevated ground behind an existing hedgerow with several mature, scattered trees. While these landscape features provide some screening, there is potential for unfiltered views of construction activity to the south-west, where vegetation is sparse. Movement of vehicles and low-level construction operations would be visible at this distance, though perceived within the context of an existing agricultural landscape. Alternative views to the south-east are largely screened by intervening vegetation. In addition, the presence of detracting features such as two large agricultural barns on the horizon and to the right of the view further diminishes the overall impact on visual amenity. Construction effects are likely to be more pronounced for residential receptors on their approach home to Koffs Farm and for recreational users than for individuals working outdoors in the landscape where views are not the main focus of their work. This is due to the closer proximity and reduced screening in some areas. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Medium, over a medium to large geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse.				
Importance of effect at construction				Moderate Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation	
Views at operation would include the solar arrays on the sloping ground up to Shepherds Rest to the south (location of 2 existing barn buildings), and on the sloping ground down to the west towards Flaxlands Wood. The upper sections of the substation, including telecommunication tower, would become visible beyond the partially screening bands of trees in the middle ground to the southeast. At operation, the grazed land would be replaced with grassland, however no mitigation planting is proposed along the southern boundary edge as further planting along the northern boundary of the Proposed Development would not achieve additional screening due to topography. The Proposed Development would result in an alteration to some components of the view experienced by residents and workers approaching Koffs Farm and recreational users of PRow LMIL8 and LTRE 13. While the development would become partially visible to the south, it would not alter the overall context of the view. The magnitude of effect is assessed as Low-Medium, occurring over a medium to large geographical extent, and considered long-term but reversible. When combined with a Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Minor Adverse.	
Importance of effect at operation	Minor Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
The view at year 15 remains largely unchanged from operational Year 1 and is therefore appraised the same. The magnitude of effect is assessed as Low-Medium, occurring over a medium to large geographical extent, and considered long-term but reversible. When combined with a Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Minor Adverse.	
Importance of effect at operation	Minor Adverse.

Table 6-11: Visual Appraisal of Representative Viewpoint 5

Viewpoint 5: View south / southeast from PRoW LMIL 8 west of Koffs Farm, Green Hill

Grid reference	Receptor type	Elevation (m AOD)	Approx. distance from the Proposed Development (km)	Direction of view
E: 406628 N: 185767	Recreational users, Farm workers	122.7 m	0.04km	West
Value of view		Visual susceptibility to change		Sensitivity of receptor
Low		Medium		High
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction				
This viewpoint is located within a small valley between Koff's Farm in the north and Shepherds Rest (including the visible large barn buildings) to the south. There would be an open view along the northern boundary of the Proposed Development from this viewpoint at PRoW LMIL8. Similar views along PRoW LMIL8 can be experienced for approximately 300m. The solar panels would be located on rising ground to the south and southeast. The substation, including telecommunication tower, and sections of the BESS containers would become partially visible to the left on elevated ground. The solar panels descent on sloping ground to the west towards Flaxlands Wood. For recreational receptors using PRoW LMIL8, the Proposed Development would be prominently visible at an oblique angle to the direction of travel, with open views to the east toward Firth Copse. Construction activity would be visible, with vehicle movement and low-level operations clearly perceptible at this distance. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Medium, over a confined geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse.				
Importance of effect at construction				Moderate Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation				
The Proposed Development would occupy the foreground and middle ground of views from PRoW LMIL8, with solar arrays prominently visible. During the operational phase, grazed land would be converted to grassland. Existing hedgerow boundaries would be retained. An increase in their height would not change visual effects resulting from the Proposed Development along this section of PRoW LMIL8 due to the nature of rising topography. The development would result in alterations to the key characteristics of the rural fields, leading to changes in the views experienced by recreational receptors. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Medium, over a localised geographical extent, long-term and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse.				
Importance of effect at operation				Moderate Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)		
Open views from PRoW LMIL8 across the solar arrays and towards the substation would remain similar. Proposed mitigation measures, including new hedgerow planting and strengthening of existing hedgerows, along the substation boundary and along the ridge of Shepherds Rest would not alter views along this section of PRoW LMIL8. As a result, the magnitude of effect would remain the same as in Year 1, and is appraised to be Medium, over a localised geographical extent, long-term and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse.		
Importance of effect at operation		Moderate Adverse

Table 6-12: Visual Appraisal of Representative Viewpoint 6

Viewpoint 6: View southeast from the entrance to PRoW LMIL130 and Webb's Wood at crossing point with B4696 Lydiard Plain

Grid reference	Receptor type	Elevation (m AOD)	Approx. distance from the Proposed Development (km)	Direction of view
E: 405675 N: 185946	Recreational users, Road users	105.2m	0.6km	Southeast
Value of view		Visual susceptibility to change		Sensitivity of receptor
Low		Medium		Medium
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction				
There would be no direct views of the Proposed Development from this viewpoint due to the intervening vegetation in the middle-ground provided by Plain Copse and mature bands of trees along field boundaries as well as Flaxlands Wood in the background. There is a potential that the construction of the proposed telecommunication tower of the substation would become discernible in the background during the winter season due to the absence of foliage on intervening mature trees.				
For recreational receptors using the PRoW LMIL130 and road users along the B4696 Lydiard Plain the construction works of the Proposed Development would be barely discernible in this section.				
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Very Low , as the majority of views of the construction works would be screened, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Negligible Adverse .				
Importance of effect at construction				Negligible Adverse
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation				
At operation, the Proposed Development would remain mostly screened from this viewpoint with the potential for a slight view of the upper section of the telecommunication tower of the proposed substation development during the winter season. It would be fully screened during the summer season.				
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Very Low , as the majority of views would be screened, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Negligible Adverse .				
Importance of effect at operation				Negligible Adverse
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)				
The Proposed Development would remain barely discernible from this viewpoint with the potential for a slight view of the upper section of the telecommunication tower of the proposed substation development.				
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Very Low , as the majority of views would be screened, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Negligible Adverse .				
Importance of effect at operation				Negligible Adverse

Table 6-13: Visual Appraisal of Representative Viewpoint 7

Viewpoint 7: View west / northwest from Flaxlands Lane near to Shallow Croft (5 Flaxlands Lane)

Grid reference	Receptor type	Elevation (m AOD)	Approx. distance from the Proposed Development (km)	Direction of view
E: 406462 N: 184815	Road users	123.7m	0.27km (northwest) 0.02km (southeast)	Northwest
Value of view		Visual susceptibility to change		Sensitivity of receptor
Low		Medium		Low
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction				
There would be no direct views of the Proposed Development from this viewpoint due to the intervening roadside vegetation.				
Road users would not experience visibility of construction works at this sections of Flaxlands Lane.				
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be No Change , as the majority of views of the construction works would be screened, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, results in a No change effect.				
Importance of effect at construction				No Change

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation	
At operation, the Proposed Development would remain screened from this viewpoint.	
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be No Change , as the majority of views would be screened, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, results in a No Change effect.	
Importance of effect at operation	No Change

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
The Proposed Development would remain screened from this viewpoint.	
The magnitude of effect is appraised to be No Change , as the majority of views would be screened, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, results in a No Change effect.	
Importance of effect at operation	No Change

Table 6-14: Visual Appraisal of Representative Viewpoint 8

Viewpoint 8: View north from car park edge across playing fields at the Royal Wootton Bassett Sports Association

Grid reference	Receptor type	Elevation (m AOD)	Approx. distance from the Proposed Development (km)	Direction of view
E: 407252 N: 184048	Recreational users (including visitors)	132.36m	0.67km	North
Value of view		Visual susceptibility to change		Sensitivity of receptor
Low		Medium		Medium
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction				
There would be direct views towards sections of solar arrays located in the eastern part of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would be embedded into fields with mature tree boundaries. Intervening vegetation location along the M4 motorway as well as Morris's Copse and topography would screen views of the western part of the Proposed Development including the substation and BESS compound. There is the potential for open and filtered middle distance views of construction activity to the north in between mature vegetation. The movement of vehicles and low-level operations would be most perceptible at the more openly visible field to the right of the existing overhead line lattice tower in this view. The availability of alternative views, and the presence of other detracting features, such as the overhead electricity lines and associated towers, two telecommunication masts reduces the impact on visual amenity. While the visibility of construction works would be perceptible for recreational users of the sports grounds, it would not be a prominent focus point considering the nature of available middle distance views, screening provided by intervening mature vegetation, and the nature of activity at the playing fields which is not focused primarily on available views. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Low, over a small to medium geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Minor Adverse.				
Importance of effect at construction				Minor Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation	
The Proposed Development would occupy a small section in middle ground of views from the sporting grounds. The mature tree canopy would remain unchanged and provide considerable screening of the majority of the solar arrays in the eastern parcel of the Proposed Development. The western parcel including substation and BESS compound would remain screened by topography and intervening vegetation. The visibility of solar arrays would be noticeable in the middle distance but it would not alter the overall character of the view. The existing lattice tower of the overhead line and the telecommunication masts would remain the most prominent focus points in this view. The development would result in limited alterations to the characteristics of the setting, leading to localised changes in the view experienced by recreational receptors. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Low, over a localised geographical extent, long-term and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Minor Adverse.	
Importance of effect at operation	Minor Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
The view at Year 15 would remain largely unchanged from operational Year 1 and is therefore appraised the same. However, there is a likelihood that existing intervening vegetation would have matured further and provide additional screening of visible sections of the solar arrays reducing visual effects further. The magnitude of effect is assessed as Low, occurring over a medium to large geographical extent, and considered long-term but reversible. When combined with a Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Minor Adverse.	
Importance of effect at operation	Minor Adverse

Table 6-15: Visual Appraisal of Representative Viewpoint 9

Viewpoint 9: View north / northeast from Whitehill Lane west of Royal Wootton Bassett close the junction with PRoW WBAS4

Grid reference	Receptor type	Elevation (m AOD)	Approx. distance from the Proposed Development (km)	Direction of view
E: 405576 N: 182919	Road users, Recreational users	89.8m	1.97km	North
Value of view		Visual susceptibility to change		Sensitivity of receptor
Low		Medium		Medium
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction				
The undulating nature of the topography and significant intervening vegetation between would screen views of the solar arrays, BESS and substation compounds. However, there is a likelihood that the construction of the upper most section of the proposed telecommunication tower of the substation would become discernible in the background above the canopy of intervening mature trees. The construction works of the telecommunication tower would be unlikely to be discernible for road users as they travel at speed and the view would be oblique to the direction of their travel. For recreational users of PRow WBAS4 the visibility of construction works of a small section of the telecommunication tower above the tree canopy would not change the perception of this view. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Very Low, as views of the construction works would be mostly screened, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, results in a Negligible Adverse effect.				
Importance of effect at construction				Negligible Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation	
At operation, the Proposed Development would remain mostly screened from this viewpoint with the potential for a slight view of the upper section of the telecommunication tower on the horizon. The upper section of the telecommunication tower would be visible in conjunction with other more prominent vertical infrastructure such as lattice towers of overhead lines and other telecommunication masts. It would therefore not be out of character and given the distance, barely discernible for road users and recreational users. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Very Low, as the majority of views would be screened, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, results in a Negligible Adverse effect.	
Importance of effect at operation	Negligible Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
The Proposed Development would remain barely discernible from this viewpoint with the potential for a slight view of the upper section of the telecommunication tower of the proposed substation development. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Very Low, as the majority of views would be screened, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Negligible Adverse.	
Importance of effect at operation	Negligible Adverse

Table 6-16: Visual Appraisal of Representative Viewpoint 10

Viewpoint 10: View north / northwest from the ridge of a steep scarp relating to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape along BTOW38 (White Horse Trail) near the B4041 Broad Town Road

Grid reference	Receptor type	Elevation (m AOD)	Approx. distance from the Proposed Development (km)	Direction of view
E: 409663 N: 177727	Recreational users	194.67m	7.3km	Northeast
Value of view		Visual susceptibility to change		Sensitivity of receptor
High		Medium		High
Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at construction				
The Proposed Development would be located within a section of the background in a wide panoramic view. Sections of the eastern parcel and western parcel within fields can be identified among a mature tree canopy at the low hill in the far distance just north of Royal Wootton Bassett. Visibility would require clear weather conditions. There is the potential for long distance views of construction activity. However, the movement of vehicles and low-level operations would not be immediately perceptible at this distance within the context of an abundance of other features between the viewer and the Proposed Development location. The availability of alternative views and focus points in the fore-, middle- and background up to the horizon would not result in the in the construction works to become a point of focus. The effects of construction on recreational receptors at this location are considered barely discernible in the far distance. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be Very Low, over a small geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity results in Negligible Adverse effect.				
Importance of effect at construction				Negligible Adverse

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation	
At operation, sections of the Proposed Development would be merely perceptible as a change of colour in the field pattern in the far distance. The majority would be embedded in a canopy of mature trees. The Proposed Development would not be immediately apparent in this view due to the long distance and a large amount of other elements and points of focus between the viewer and the Proposed Development including other existing solar farms, which are located closer to the viewer. Visibility of the Proposed Development in clear weather conditions would not change the perception of this wide panoramic view nor would the visibility of the sections of the Site be uncharacteristic due to a number of other existing solar farm developments in this view. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be No Change, due to the distance and visible extent of the Site, which when combined with the High sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is No Change.	
Importance of effect at operation	No Change

Size/scale, duration and reversibility of effect at operation (Year 15)	
The view at Year 15 would remain largely unchanged from operational Year 1 and is therefore appraised the same. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be No Change, due to the distance and visible extent of the Site, which when combined with the High sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is No Change.	
Importance of effect at operation	No Change

Visual appraisal of receptor groups

- 6.2.7 The 3km radius Study Area hosts a range of receptors and receptor groups. Therefore, the visual appraisal at construction and operation takes a targeted approach, focusing on those visual receptors where the potential for visual effects is greatest.

Residential receptors

- 6.2.8 Construction activity would not be visible to all of the visual receptors, as identified in the visual baseline of this appraisal due to intervening landform, vegetation and distance from the boundary of the Proposed Development. Visibility of construction would typically extend up to approximately 500m to the north and east and up to 1km to the south from the boundary of the Proposed Development. Views of construction works from the west would be limited by intervening mature woodland.
- 6.2.9 Operational effects can result in less visual effects due to the absence of moving construction machinery and vehicles along access roads. Existing intervening vegetation and topography can

- screen partially or fully the Proposed Development. Proposed landscape mitigation measures would enhance the screening of the Proposed Development where feasible but would require time to establish and mature in order to reach their full screening potential.
- 6.2.10 Residential receptors in close proximity to the Site are limited and are located mainly along Flaxlands Lane, north of the Site close to Green Hill, along the western section of the village of Hook, and at locations at Marsh Farm just north of Royal Wootton Bassett.
- 6.2.11 Available views from the north would include Koffs Farms, which would experience partial views of the construction activities including moving machinery (refer to Viewpoint 4 in Figure 14, Appendix B). The magnitude of effects is appraised to be Medium, over a medium to large geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse. Effects at operation would be similar as landscape mitigation would not be able to screen solar arrays, substation and BESS elements including a telecommunication tower located on rising ground, which would be partially discernible from Koffs Farm.
- 6.2.12 Adjacent residents include residents at Shepherds Rest where open view of construction works and the temporary construction compound would be experienced in close proximity in often open views. The magnitude of effect is appraised to be High, over a medium to large geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is High Adverse. Effects at operation would reduce following the removal of the temporary construction compound. The magnitude of effects is appraised to be Medium, over a medium to large geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse. Proposed landscape mitigation (as indicated in Figure 11, Appendix B) includes the provision of new native hedgerow planting along boundaries adjacent to residences and the strengthening of existing hedgerows and trees along boundaries. Following the establishment of the proposed mitigation measures the importance of visual effects would reduce further to Minor adverse.
- 6.2.13 Other residents along Flaxlands Farm including Flaxlands Wood Farm, Four Acre Farm, Flaxlands Manor, Swallow Croft, the Bungalow, and community users of the Church of God Swindon would experience a range of open and filtered views of construction works due to intervening vegetation along field boundaries as well as open views of construction works in close or middle distance views up to approximately 300m. The magnitude of effects is appraised to be Medium, over a medium to large geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse. The importance of effects at operation would reduce to Minor Adverse in locations where existing screening provided by intervening vegetation can filter views of the Proposed Development. Proposed landscape mitigation (as indicated in Figure 11, Appendix B) includes the provision of new native hedgerow planting, the strengthening of existing hedgerows and trees as well as a change in management of existing hedgerows to increase their height in order to maximise the screening potential particular along the southern boundaries of the western development parcel (west of Flaxlands Lane), which would reduce visual effects in currently open views or views with little screening to Minor Adverse. Considering the rising nature of the ground at the western parcel of the Site, not all sections of the Site could be fully screened.
- 6.2.14 Flaxlands Fishery would unlikely experience visual effects resulting from construction works due to intervening vegetation along Flaxlands Lane as well as intervening built structures. Willow Stable and Cottage Farm would also not experience visual effects during construction works due to intervening mature vegetation along field boundaries.
- 6.2.15 Views from Hook Village Hall during construction and operation have been described in Viewpoint 1 above (refer also to Viewpoint 1 in Figure 13, Appendix B). View from residences located along the western fringes of Hook, including along Windsor Close and Dianmer Close are likely to experience filtered views of construction works in the middle distance, particularly from upstairs windows facing towards the Site (where available). Intervening mature vegetation in gardens and along the Proposed Development boundary would filter the majority of views or screen views entirely. The magnitude of visual effects at construction is appraised to be Low, over a small geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Minor Adverse.

The importance of effects at operation would reduce to Minor or Negligible Adverse in locations where existing screening provided by intervening vegetation can filter views of the Proposed Development. Proposed landscape mitigation (as indicated in Figure 11, Appendix B) includes the strengthening of existing hedgerows and trees along the eastern boundary of the southeastern parcel to fill in gaps and to increase the density and height of the existing hedgerow to maximise the screening potential. This would lead to a further reduction in the visual importance to Negligible Adverse for additional residential receptors.

- 6.2.16 Residential receptors in Green Hill and Greatfield to the north and northeast of the site would unlikely experience visual effects arising from the Proposed Development at construction and operation due to intervening topography and mature vegetation.
- 6.2.17 Residential receptors along B4696 Lydiard Plain would unlikely experience visual effects arising from the Proposed Development at construction and operation due to intervening topography and mature vegetation as described in Viewpoint 6 above (refer also to Viewpoint 6 in Figure 14, Appendix B).
- 6.2.18 The majority of residential receptors located along the B4042 Brinkworth Road would not experience visual effects due to intervening vegetation and topography, including in the area of Ballards Ash close to the M4 bridge over the B4042. However, residents of upper floors at Marsh Farm, and Marsh Farm Manor Care Home at the roundabout of B4042 / A3102 (approximately 1km south of the Site), and other adjacent properties with upper floors along the B4042 in this sections, would experience partially filtered and open middle distance views of construction works within the eastern parcel of the Proposed Development. Their view would be across fields, the M4 motorway and be partially filtered by intervening vegetation. The magnitude of visual effects at construction is appraised to be Low, over a small to medium geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the High sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Minor Adverse.
The importance of effects at operation is likely to remain the same as for construction due to the availability of open views of the sections of the Site and its solar panels.

Road users

- 6.2.19 The majority of views during construction would be experienced along Flaxlands Lane, and in particular along the elevated northern section where mostly open views of construction works would be visible due to a low hedgerow height to either side of the road. The magnitude of effects is appraised to be High, over a small geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Low sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse.
Effects at operation would reduce slightly but would stay overall similar until the proposed landscape mitigation would have established. It is proposed to strengthen the existing hedgerows and trees and supplement these with additional species mixes where there are gaps. It is also proposed to increase the hedge height to approximately 2.5-3m in order to screen the majority of the Proposed Development from views along Flaxlands Lane apart at access road entrances / gates. Views of the Site would be mostly oblique to the direction of travel at speed.
The importance of visual effects following the establishment of landscape mitigation measures would reduce to Minor and Negligible Adverse.
- 6.2.20 Views from other roads within the study area would be limited or screened due to intervening vegetation and topography. These roads include the B4696 Lydiard Plain, the M4, B4042 Brinkworth Road, A3102 Swindon Road, Greatfield Road between Royal Wootton Bassett and Hook. Available views at gaps or sections of low roadside vegetation would be experienced at speed and are oblique to the direction of travel. The magnitude of effects at construction and operation is appraised to be Low to Very Low, over a small to medium geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Low sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects would range from Minor to Negligible Adverse.

Recreational receptors

- 6.2.21 The 3km Study Area contains a large number of PRoW. The majority of receptors along these PRoW would not experience visual effects resulting from the Proposed Development due to intervening mature vegetation and topography. However, a number of PRoW located in close proximity to the Proposed Development (approximately within 250-300m) or adjacent to the site boundary would experience either open or partially filtered views of the Proposed Development.
- 6.2.22 A number of visual effects on the PRoW network have already been described above in Viewpoints 1 (LTRE24), 2 (LTRE24 & 28), 3 (LTRE30), 4 (LMIL8 & 13), 5 (LMIL8), 6 (LMIL130), 9 (WBAS4) and 10

(BTOW38). Please refer to Figures 8, 13 & 14 for locations of these PRow and baseline photography / photomontages.

- 6.2.23 Higher visual effects would be experienced by users of PRow which are located within the Site such as LTRE26 and 28. It is proposed that sections of these would be diverted around the solar arrays in order to avoid locating solar arrays on either side of the PRow. While the receptor would still have solar panels on one side, the other side would remain undeveloped, containing hedgerows and trees. The magnitude of visual effects at construction is appraised to be High, over a medium geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is Moderate Adverse. At operation, the importance of visual effects reduce to Moderate Adverse due to the removal of construction machinery and the reinstatement of ground cover.
- 6.2.24 LTRE27 along the southern boundary of the eastern parcel of the Proposed Development would be mostly screened by existing intervening boundary vegetation. Glimpses of construction works or the solar arrays during operation would be possible but are limited. The magnitude of effects at construction and operation is appraised to be Low or Very Low, over a small to medium geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects would range from Minor to Negligible Adverse.
- 6.2.25 The section of LTRE 29 crossing the site in the southern section of the eastern parcel would experience changes to the type of grassland used but stay otherwise unaffected by construction works. The magnitude of effects at construction and operation is appraised to be Very Low, over a small to medium geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Medium sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects would be Negligible Adverse.
- 6.2.26 It is not anticipated that recreational users of the Flaxlands Fishery would experience adverse visual effects due to the construction or operation of the Proposed Development due to intervening mature vegetation.
- 6.2.27 Lydiard Park is also considered not to experience visual effects from the Proposed Development due to intervening topography and significant intervening mature vegetation.

Workers including farm workers

- 6.2.28 Workers include employees and visitors to commercial businesses, for example at Greatfield (including Greatfield Nurseries and Garden Centre), and agricultural workers at local farms. Available views would not be the primary concern for staff at their place of work. The majority of available views of the Proposed Development during construction and operation could be experienced in premises or fields adjacent to the Site. Middle distance views or longer distance views are limited due to changes in topography as well as intervening vegetation. The magnitude of effects at construction and operation is appraised to be Low to Medium, over a small to medium geographical extent, temporary and reversible, which when combined with the Low sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects would range between Minor and Negligible Adverse.

7. Cumulative Appraisal

Introduction

Purpose of Cumulative Assessment

- 7.1.1 The purpose of this cumulative landscape and visual appraisal is to evaluate the potential landscape and visual effects and their importance of the Proposed Development when considered in combination with other existing and planned solar farms and battery substation / energy storage systems (BESS).
- 7.1.2 Best practice guidance states that a landscape and visual cumulative appraisal should focus on the most significant cumulative effects and conclude with a clear assessment of those which are likely to influence decision making. Therefore, only the relevant cumulative schemes related to solar, substation and BESS developments have been considered within this appraisal.

Study Area

- 7.1.3 The study area of the cumulative appraisal is defined by a 3km radius from the redline boundary of the Proposed Development. Additionally, an area of approximately 5km (outside the 3km Study Area) to the south and southeast has been reviewed to capture specifically long distance views along the ridge escarpment of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. These elevated views include operational, consented, and live planning applications for solar and battery energy storage developments (refer to Figure 12 in Appendix B). The appraisal is to ensure a comprehensive understanding of cumulative effects within the region.

Existing Solar Developments (Built Out and Operational)

- 7.1.4 Existing infrastructure solar farms in proximity to the Study Area are illustrated on Figure 12, Appendix B, and set out in the table overleaf.

Table 7-1: Existing solar farm infrastructure

Location	Name	Address location	Approximate distance from Site boundary	Description	Visual Reference (Google Maps Imagery)
Easting 408556 Northing 180370	Rookwood Solar Farm	Goldborough Farm Goldborough Broad Town Swindon SN4 7QX	4.2km, south	Solar: 4.7MW	
Easting 408938 Northing 183455	Spittleborough Solar Farm	Spittleborough Farm Swindon Road Wootton Bassett SN4 8ET	1.6km, southeast	Solar: 12MW	
Easting 409423 Northing 182751	Wickfield Solar Farm	Wickfield Farm Royal Wootton Bassett Swindon SN4 8QR	2.5km, southeast	Solar: 5MW	
Easting 404752 Northing 187310	Braydon Manor Solar Farm	The Common Braydon Purton SN5 0AW	2km, northwest	Solar: 5MW	
Easting 407276 Northing 189476	Bentham Solar Farm	Bentham Farm, Bentham Lane, Bentham, Purton, Swindon, Wiltshire	3.6km, north	Solar: 8MW	
Easting 411809 Northing 181019	Lower Basset Down Farm Solar Farm	Land at Lower Basset Down Farm Hay Lane Bassett Down Swindon SN4 9QP	5.4km, southeast	Solar: 10.5MW	
Easting 412404 Northing 186192	Barnfield Solar Park	Former Landfill Site Galton Way Kendrick Industrial Estate Swindon SN2 2YN	4.8km, east	Solar: 2.5MW	
Easting 407734 Northing 192137	Chelworth Industrial Solar Park	Land at Chelworth Industrial Estate, Braydon Lane, Nr Cricklade, Wiltshire	6.5km, north	Solar: 1MW	
Easting 412784 Northing 181561	Common Farm (Solar Farm)	Common Farm, Wharf Road, Wroughton, Swindon SN4 9QJ	6.6km, southeast	Solar: 4.8MW	

Consented and Under Construction

- 7.1.5 At the time when this appraisal was written (April 2025), there are no solar farms under construction or consented in the 3km study area or the 8km extended study area between the Proposed Development and the northern boundary of North Downs National Landscape.

Live Planning Applications

- 7.1.6 Similarly to the above, there are no live planning applications of solar farms in the 3km study area and within the 8km Study Area between the Proposed Development and the North Downs National Landscape, beyond the Proposed Development. However, one live planning application is located to the northeast of the Site and outside of the 3km Study Area as listed in the table below.

Table 7-2: Live Planning Applications

Planning Application Number	Site Address	Proposal	Application Type	Decision	Decision Date	Approximate distance from Site boundary
PL/2024/08441	Land at Bentham House Farm, Mopes Lane, Swindon, SN5 4HS	Proposed Solar Farm development comprising solar arrays, equipment housing, switchroom, fencing, CCTV, ancillary equipment, landscape, hydrology and biodiversity enhancements	Full planning permission	PENDING	01/04/2025	4km

Battery Energy Storage System

- 7.1.7 At the time when this appraisal was written (April 2025), no built out, under construction, consented or live planning applications for BESS projects are located in the 3km study area. However, one live planning application is located to the northwest of the Site and outside of the 3km Study Area as listed in the table below.

Table 7-3: Live Planning Applications for Associated Energy Projects

Planning Application Number	Site Address	Proposal	Application Type	Decision	Decision Date	Approximate distance from Site boundary
PL/2024/11662	Land to the west of Ravensroost Road, Minety, Wiltshire, SN16 9RJ	Installation of a new Point of Connection compound on land to the west of Ravensroost Road to support a recently approved Battery Energy Storage System.	Full planning permission	PENDING	18/04/2025	4.2km

Cumulative Landscape Appraisal

- 7.1.8 Potential cumulative landscape effects during operation would occur where the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline would increase the prominence of energy infrastructure to the extent that they would potentially become either an influential landscape characteristic or landscape character-defining feature of a landscape.

- 7.1.9 As a result of the restricted nature of potential visibility and the limited nature of change resulting from the Proposed Development identified in the LVA, it is considered that there is very limited potential for cumulative landscape effects of considerable importance on the landscape receptors found within the Study Area. The cumulative landscape assessment therefore takes a targeted approach, focusing on those landscape designations and LCAs where the potential for cumulative landscape effects is greatest. This includes the following North Wiltshire 1:25,000 LCA:

- *LCA 3 - Swindon Fringe;*
- *LCA 4 - Braydon Wooded Plateau; and*
- *LCA 14 – Hilmarton Rolling Lowland.*

- 7.1.10 LCA 5E - Clyffe Pypard – Badbury Wooded Scarp at the northern fringe of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape has been included in the appraisal due to the elevated nature of this LCA.

- 7.1.11 Other LCAs would not experience any perceptible cumulative effects.

LCA 3 – Swindon Fringe

- 7.1.12 Landscape Sensitivity has been identified as Medium within the non-cumulative appraisal.

- 7.1.13 The existing solar farms at Rook Wood / Splittleborough Farm and Wickfield Farm are located southeast from the Proposed Development in this LCA. The addition of Flaxlands Solar Farm would add to the overall presence of electrical infrastructure within the Swindon Fringe LCA and increase in the perception of electrical infrastructure confined to a small area of the overall LCA. The potential for in-combination views with the Proposed Development is limited due to significant intervening vegetation from publicly accessible locations between the existing solar farms and the Proposed Development. It would not alter the more valued characteristics of this LCA.

- 7.1.14 Considering this, the cumulative magnitude of landscape effects is Low. The cumulative level of effects is therefore judged to be Minor Adverse.

LCA 4 – Brayton Wooded Plateau

- 7.1.15 Landscape Sensitivity has been identified as Medium within the non-cumulative appraisal.

- 7.1.16 The existing solar farm at Braydon Manor Farm is located to the northwest of the Proposed Development in this LCA. The proposed BESS development would be located west of Ravensroost Road, Minety approximately 4.2km northwest of the western boundary of the Proposed Development.

- 7.1.17 The addition of Flaxlands Solar Farm would increase the overall presence of electrical infrastructure within the Brayton Wooded Plateau LCA and add to the perception of electrical infrastructure confined to local areas within the overall LCA. The potential for in-combination views from publicly accessible locations with the Proposed Development is limited due to significant intervening woodland parcels and other vegetation between the existing solar farms and the Proposed Development. Therefore, the Site would not alter considerably the valued characteristics of this LCA.

- 7.1.18 Considering this, the cumulative magnitude of landscape effects is Low. The cumulative level of effects is therefore judged to be Minor Adverse.

LCA 14 – Hilmarton Rolling Lowland

- 7.1.19 Landscape Sensitivity has been identified as Low within the non-cumulative appraisal.

- 7.1.20 The existing solar farm at Rock Farm / Goldborough Farm is located within this LCA approximately 4.3km south of the Proposed Development. The proposed Flaxlands Solar Farm itself is not located within this LCA. The potential for in-combination views from publicly accessible locations with the Proposed Development is limited due to significant intervening vegetation between the existing solar

farms and the Proposed Development reinforced by the lowland topography of this LCA. The Site would not alter the valued characteristics of this LCA.

- 7.1.21 Considering this, the cumulative magnitude of landscape effects is Very Low. The cumulative level of effects is therefore judged to be Negligible Adverse.

LCA 5E – Clyffe Pypard – Badbury Wooded Scarp

- 7.1.22 Landscape Sensitivity has been identified as High within the non-cumulative appraisal.

- 7.1.23 There is no solar farm development located within this LCA. The Proposed Development is located approximately 6 - 7.5km to the north and outside of this LCA. There would be no direct cumulative change to this LCA. However, there would be intervisibility across LCA 14 - Hilmarton Rolling Lowland and LCA 3 – Swindon Fringe from elevated sections of LCA 5E. Existing solar farms, namely at Rock Farm / Goldborough Farm, Common Farm, Lower Basset Down Farm, Wickfield Farm and Rook Wood / Spittleborough Farm would be discernible in combination with sections of the Proposed Development in clear weather conditions considering the distance of the existing solar farms. Given the scale of the panoramic intervisibility and the visible scale of the solar farms, key characteristics would remain similar. However, the Proposed Development would add indirectly to the perception of electrical infrastructure within LCA 5E.

- 7.1.24 Other existing solar developments at Barnfield Park, Chelworth Industrial Estate Solar Park, Bentham Manor Farm, and Braydon Manor Farm would either be not visible due to intervening topography and vegetation or only sections in very clear weather conditions considering their long distance from this LCA (between approximately 9km – 14km). Presence of sections of these solar farms, if visible, would not alter the character of LCA 5E further.

- 7.1.25 The proposed BESS development at Bentham House Farm and the consented BESS development at Ravensroost Road would either be not visible due to their distance, intervening topography and vegetation or only sections in very clear weather conditions. Presence of sections of these developments (if consented / built), would not alter the character of LCA 5E further.

- 7.1.26 Considering this, the cumulative magnitude of landscape effects is Low. The cumulative level of effects is therefore judged to be Minor Adverse.

Cumulative Visual Appraisal

- 7.1.27 Potential significant cumulative visual effects during operation would occur where the addition of the Proposed Development to the cumulative baseline would increase the prominence of energy infrastructure to the extent that they would potentially become either a visual or an influential visual character-defining feature in views across the visual amenity of the Study Area and beyond.

- 7.1.28 The 3km Study Area contains a number of existing solar farms such as at Wickfield Farm, and Rook Wood / Spittleborough Farm located to the southeast of the Proposed Development as well as Braydon Manor Farm located to the northwest of the Proposed Development. Other existing solar farms are located beyond the Study Area and between a radius of approximately 3km and 6km from the Proposed Development. They include Rock Farm / Goldborough Farm to the south and Common Farm and Lower Basset Down Farm to the southeast, Barnfield Solar Park to the east in the outskirts of Swindon as well as Bentham Solar Farm to the north.

- 7.1.29 Solar farm development is therefore one element of the visual character within the Study Area and beyond. However, their location, and for most of them due to the distance to each other, they are not a defining element in the visual character. The Study Area and beyond contains a considerable number of infrastructural elements such as a network of overhead transmission lines, telecommunication masts, the M4 motorway and train lines. As well as that it contains a variety of settlements, small towns, the outskirts of Swindon including warehouses, farmsteads with barns etc. Despite that, the overall visual character outside of the main settlements of Swindon and Royal Wootton Bassett, has retained a rural appearance. Solar farm developments are recognisable when travelling through the area but they are not a prominent visual feature. This is best illustrated in Viewpoint 10, taken at the scarp ridgeline of the North Wessex Down National Landscape, which itself contains a large solar farm development at Wroughton Airfield Solar Park. The extensive panoramic view from at Viewpoint 10 shows the variety of landscape and visual components over a large area including the study area.

Existing solar farm developments are noticeable, mainly due to the colour differences when compared to adjoining fields. However, the recognition of these becomes more difficult with distance and dependence on clear weather conditions.

- 7.1.30 The addition of Flaxlands Solar Farm north of Royal Wootton Bassett and west of the village of Hook would increase the overall presence of solar farm developments in these elevated views but it would not add a prominent point of focus or visual feature. As described in Section 6 / Viewpoint 10, the Proposed Development would be merely perceptible as a change of colour in the field pattern in the far distance. The majority would be embedded in a canopy of mature trees. The Proposed Development would not be immediately apparent in this view due to the long distance and a large amount of other elements and points of focus between the viewer and the Proposed Development including other existing solar farms, which are located closer to the viewer. Visibility of the Proposed Development in clear weather conditions would not change the perception of this wide panoramic view nor would the visibility of the sections of the Site be uncharacteristic due to a number of other existing solar farm developments in this view.
- 7.1.31 The magnitude of effect is appraised to be No Change, due to the distance and visible extent of the Site, which when combined with the High sensitivity of receptors, the importance of effects is No Change.
- 7.1.32 On a local level, within the Study Area, intervisibility between the Proposed Development and other existing solar farms would be limited due to intervening topography and extensive screening provided by intervening vegetation including areas of woodland. The addition of the proposed Flaxlands Solar Farm in terms of cumulative visual effects on a local level is considered low and given the on average Medium Sensitivity of the area considered of Minor Adverse Importance.
- 7.1.33 The addition of proposed and consented BESS projects, such as west of Ravensroost Road, Minety, and at Bentham House Farm would reinforce the prevalence of electricity infrastructure beyond the study area but not alter the visual character further due to the distance between individual solar farm and BESS developments.
- 7.1.34 The Site is located on a low hill which is part of elevated grounds in the upper Thames vales. The eastern section and northern sections of the Study Area consists of gently rolling hills, while the southern and eastern sections becoming flatter or gently undulating. Most of the Site is located on prolonged sloping ground to the south and west, and on a shorter slope facing north.
- 7.1.35 The Site is bounded to the west and northwest by woodland (which is ancient woodland), to the north by agricultural land and to the east by agricultural land, highways including the B4042 Brinkworth Road to the south and the B4696 Lydiard Plain / Brayton Road to the west, commercial and residential properties associated with the village of Hook and to the south by agricultural land, woodland and beyond, the M4.
- 7.1.36 The scale and location of the Proposed Development would integrate into its localised context, the layout taking advantage of surrounding existing mature screening vegetation where possible.

8. Conclusions

Landscape Effects

- 8.1.1 The introduction of the Proposed Development into LCA 3 - Swindon Fringe and LCA 4 – Wooded Plateau will increase the prevalence of electricity infrastructure in these landscape character areas (refer to Figure 7B, Appendix B for their location). The Importance of landscape effects is considered Minor Adverse. The Proposed Development is not uncharacteristic when considering other existing solar farms located within the same LCA and adjoining LCA's.
- 8.1.2 Nevertheless, the Proposed Development would introduce a change in land use from farmland to a solar energy facility, with solar panels forming a new feature within the landscape locally. While this results in a noticeable change in the view—particularly a reduction in perceived openness—the existing field pattern would be retained. Additionally, the change in character would be visible from only from a limited number of viewpoints within the 3km Study Area, limiting its overall impact on the landscape character.
- 8.1.3 The Study Area extends to a 3km radius from the Site boundary, and includes an additional area from the elevated promoted route on the scarp slope of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape where elevated, panoramic and long distance views are available. The scarp slopes are located approximately 8km to the south, southeast from the Site.

Visual Effects

- 8.1.4 A total of 10 representative viewpoints were visited. All photography shows the winter season which is considered to illustrate the worst case scenario in terms of visibility of the Proposed Development. Six photomontages (Type 4 & Type 1) of Viewpoints 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 & 10 have been produced and are shown in Figure 13, Appendix B. Four representative Baseline Winter Photography of Viewpoints 3, 4, 6 & 9 are shown in Figure 14, refer to Appendix B.
- 8.1.5 Visual receptors include residents, road users, recreational users and workers. The Site would not be visible to all of the visual receptors due to a dense network of existing vegetation including hedgerows and tree as well as areas of mature woodland (including ancient woodland). Within the Study Area, the majority of visibility would typically extend up to approximately 500m to the north and east and up to 1km to the south from the boundary of the Proposed Development. Views from the west would be limited by intervening mature woodland.
- 8.1.6 The majority of visual effects would be experienced along the elevated section of Flaxlands Lane, starting at Four Acre Farm for approximately 600m to the east. The importance of effects for visual receptors along this section is considered Moderate Adverse.
- 8.1.7 Views from other roads within the study area would be limited or screened due to intervening vegetation and topography. These roads include the B4696 Lydiard Plain, the M4, B4042 Brinkworth Road, A3102 Swindon Road, Greatfield Road between Royal Wootton Bassett and Hook. Available views at gaps or sections of low roadside vegetation would be experienced at speed and are oblique to the direction of travel. The importance of effects for visual receptors along this section is considered Minor to Negligible Adverse.
- 8.1.8 Residential receptors in close proximity to the Site are limited and are located mainly along Flaxlands Lane, north of the Site close to Green Hill, along the western section of the village of Hook, and at locations at Marsh Farm just north of Royal Wootton Bassett. The importance of visual effects ranges between Moderate Adverse and Negligible Adverse depending on the extent of intervening mature vegetation.
- 8.1.9 The 3km Study Area contains a large number of PRoW (refer to Figure 8, Appendix B). The majority of receptors along these PRoW would not experience visual effects resulting from the Proposed Development due to intervening mature vegetation and topography. However, recreational users along sections of LTRE26 & 28, LTRE 30 & LMIL8 would experience higher visual effects as they are running through the Proposed Development or in close proximity to it, and experience prolonged open views of the Site. It is proposed that sections of LTRE26 & 28 would be diverted around the proposed solar

arrays in order to avoid solar arrays on either side of the walking routes. While the receptor would still have solar panels on one side, the other side would be natural with hedgerows and trees. The importance of effects is Moderate Adverse along sections where open views from the PRoW network of the solar arrays can be obtained.

- 8.1.10 Workers include employees and visitors to commercial businesses, and agricultural workers at local farms. Available views would not be the primary concern for staff at their place of work. The majority of available views of the Proposed Development during construction and operation could be experienced in premises or fields adjacent to the Proposed Development boundaries. Middle distance views or longer distance views are limited due to changes in topography as well as intervening vegetation. The importance of effects would range between Minor and Negligible Adverse.

Landscape Mitigation

- 8.1.11 The primary aims of the landscape mitigation are to reduce the visual prominence of the Proposed Development and assimilate it into the landscape context, while providing an enhancement to the provision for biodiversity. Good design has been a key consideration from the outset. The LVA has informed the iterative design process, guided by design principles and in response to policy requirements, published landscape character assessment guidance and fieldwork analysis.
- 8.1.12 A range of measures would be implemented to reduce moderate effects further, which are set out in the Outline Landscape Masterplan (refer to Figure 11, Appendix B) and Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (refer to Appendix C). This has been achieved through the following key landscape mitigation measures:
- Retention of existing vegetation where possible;
 - Introduction of minimum offsets from hedgerows, trees, and woodland;
 - Conservation of existing vegetation patterns;
 - Planting of new hedgerow and trees, strengthening of existing hedgerows and trees, establishment of new grassland areas; and
 - Change in hedgerow maintenance along sections of Flaxlands Lane to increase the height of hedgerows to screen open views of the Proposed Development as appropriate.

Cumulative Effects

- 8.1.13 The 3km Study Area contains a number of existing solar farm developments. Cumulative developments located within the Study Area and beyond are shown in Figure 12, Appendix B. Photomontage 10 (refer to Figure 13, Appendix B) illustrates and annotates cumulative visual effects of the Proposed Development in conjunction of existing solar farms and indicates to location of proposed / consented BESS developments.

Cumulative Landscape Effects

- 8.1.14 The addition of Flaxlands Solar Farm would add to the overall presence of electrical infrastructure within LCA 3 - Swindon Fringe and LCA 4 – Brayton Wooded Valley, and increase in the perception of electrical infrastructure confined to a small area of the overall LCAs. The potential for in-combination views with the Proposed Development is limited due to significant intervening vegetation from publicly accessible locations between the existing solar farms and the Proposed Development. It would therefore not alter the more valued characteristics of these LCAs. The importance of cumulative landscape effects is considered Minor Adverse.
- 8.1.15 The remaining LCA's within the Study Area, in which the Proposed Development is not located, would experience cumulative landscape effects of Negligible Adverse Importance due to the increase in overall electricity infrastructure.
- 8.1.16 Considering the currently spread out locations of existing solar farm developments (refer to Figure 12, Appendix B) throughout the 3km Study Area and the wider landscape character areas, solar farm development will not become a prominent or dominating feature in these LCAs.

Cumulative Visual Effects

- 8.1.17 Existing solar farm developments within the 3km Study Area include Wickfield Farm, and Rook Wood / Spittleborough Farm approximately 2.5km and 1.6km to the southeast of the Proposed Development as well as Braydon Manor Farm approximately 2km to the northwest of the Proposed Development. Other existing solar farms are located beyond the Study Area and between a radius of approximately 3km and 6km from the Proposed Development. They include Rock Farm / Goldborough Farm to the south and Common Farm and Lower Basset Down Farm to the southeast, Barnfield Solar Park to the east in the outskirts of Swindon as well as Bentham Solar Farm to the north.
- 8.1.18 On a local level, within the 3km Study Area, intervisibility between the Proposed Development and other existing solar farms would be limited due to intervening topography and extensive screening provided by intervening vegetation including areas of woodland. The importance of visual effects due to the addition of the proposed Flaxlands Solar Farm is considered of Minor Adverse.
- 8.1.19 The addition of proposed and consented BESS projects, such as west of Ravensroost Road, Minety, and at Bentham House Farm would reinforce the prevalence of electricity infrastructure beyond the study area but not alter the visual character further due to the distance between individual solar farm and BESS developments.
- 8.1.20 Viewpoint 10, taken at the scarp ridgeline of the North Wessex Down National Landscape, which itself contains a large solar farm development at Wroughton Airfield Solar Park, can illustrate that. The extensive panoramic view from at Viewpoint 10 shows the variety of landscape and visual components over a large area including the study area. Existing solar farm developments are noticeable, mainly due to the colour differences when compared to adjoining fields. However, the recognition of these becomes more difficult with distance and dependence on clear weather conditions. The Proposed Development would be merely perceptible as a change of colour in the field pattern in the far distance. The majority would be embedded in a canopy of mature trees. The Proposed Development would not be immediately apparent in this view due to the long distance and a large amount of other elements and points of focus between the viewer and the Proposed Development including other existing solar farms, which are located closer to the viewer. Visibility of the Proposed Development in clear weather conditions would not change the perception of this wide panoramic views. The importance of visual effects a 'No Change' scenario.

Appendix A

Landscape and Visual Appraisal Methodology

Flaxlands Solar Farm

Appendix A: Landscape and Visual Appraisal Methodology

Ampyr Solar Europe

Project number: 60727989

May 2025

Prepared for:

Ampyr Solar Europe

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited

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Appendix A Landscape and Visual Appraisal Methodology

A.1 Appraisal Criteria

- 1.1 Landscape and visual effects are interrelated but appraised separately.
- 1.2 Landscape effects relate to changes to the landscape as a resource, including physical changes to the fabric or individual elements of the landscape, its aesthetic or perceptual qualities and landscape character. Visual effects relate to changes to existing views of identified visual receptors (people), from the loss or addition of features within their view due to the Proposed Development.
- 1.3 This LVA has been undertaken following relevant guidance, including:
 - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment and Management, 2013)¹;
 - Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals (The Landscape Institute, 2019)² (currently under review);
 - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014)³;
 - Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations (The Landscape Institute, 2021)⁴;
 - Technical Guidance Note 04/20: Infrastructure (The Landscape Institute, 2020)⁵;
 - Technical Information Note 01/2017: Tranquillity (The Landscape Institute, 2017)⁶; and
 - Technical Guidance Note 02/19: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (The Landscape Institute, 2019)⁷.
- 1.4 GLVIA3 places a strong emphasis on the importance of professional judgement in Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA). Much of the appraisal relies on qualitative judgements, particularly with reference to the importance of effects; and whether effects are adverse or positive.
- 1.5 The LVA has been undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect experienced in undertaking assessments and appraisals of similar types and scale. Professional judgement has been used in combination with the methodology and criteria presented below to determine the sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors (informed by their value and susceptibility to change), the magnitude of effect (change) on those receptors and the significance of effects.
- 1.6 The LVA methodology involves the following stages:
 - A baseline review of published landscape character assessments, studies, relevant supporting evidence base documents, aerial photography, mapping, and fieldwork to determine the extent of the study area in which there is potential for the Proposed Development to impact the landscape and visual resource;

¹ Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition

² Landscape Institute (2019) Visual Representation of Development Proposals – Technical Guidance Note 06/19. Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/visualisation/>

³ Natural England (2014). An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5aabd31340f0b64ab4b7576e/landscape-character-assessment.pdf>

⁴ Landscape Institute. (2021). TGN 02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations. Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/>

⁵ Landscape Institute (2020). Infrastructure Technical Guidance Note 04/20. Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/infrastructure-guidance/>

⁶ Landscape Institute (2017). Tranquillity Technical Guidance Note. Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/tranquillity/>

⁷ Landscape Institute (2019). Residential Visual Amenity Assessment. Available at: <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/rvaa/>

- Identify the landscape and visual baseline and the landscape and visual receptors. Following the identification of the landscape and visual receptors, these were presented to the LPA for agreement, along with the extent of the LVA study area;
- Ongoing review of the emerging design, seeking to embed mitigation measures into the Proposed Development in order to reduce or eliminate adverse landscape and visual effects;
- An appraisal of the sensitivity (nature of the receptor) of landscape and visual receptors, via an appraisal of their value and susceptibility to change as set out below; and
- An appraisal of the magnitude of effect (nature of effect) of the Proposed Development during the construction, Year 1, and Year 15 phases. The magnitude of effect has been appraised in relation to the size, scale, duration, and reversibility of the effect.

1.7 An appraisal of the Proposed Development has been undertaken for:

- Peak construction activity in winter;
- Year 1 of operation, assuming the Proposed Development is built out (winter season); and
- Year 15 of the operation, assuming the proposed planting has established (winter season).

A.2 Methodology for the appraisal of receptor sensitivity

Study Area

- 1.8 The LVA study area extends 3 kilometres (km) from the Red Line Boundary.
- 1.9 This was informed by consideration of the Proposed Development and desk-based analysis of mapping and aerial photography. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) was used to determine the potential visibility of the Proposed Development. Fieldwork was subsequently undertaken to verify the findings of the desk study. This analysis determined the study area.
- 1.10 Extensive review of the study area was then undertaken in order to identify landscape and visual receptors that have potential to be affected by the Proposed Development.

Establishing the baseline

Desk study

- 1.11 Reference has been made to the prevailing policy framework including local plans and evidence base documents to identify any designated landscapes or features of value and their relationship to the Proposed Development.
- 1.12 Other information sources referenced as part of the baseline review includes 1:25,000 and 1:10,000 scale Ordnance Survey mapping, 3-dimensional topographical data, site photographs and aerial photography.

Fieldwork surveys

- 1.13 Fieldwork surveys have been undertaken by qualified and experienced landscape architects to record the winter season conditions. Fieldwork was undertaken between March 2024 and January 2025. The purpose of this fieldwork was to review the boundaries and key characteristics defined in the published landscape character assessments and to identify, record and map the following aspects and characteristics of the landscape:
- Landcover, pattern and texture;
 - Scale and appearance;
 - Tranquillity;
 - Cultural associations; and
 - Human interaction.

- 1.14 Attributes recorded as part of the fieldwork surveys included features and elements associated with the built environment and historic landscape and areas of managed landscape. Perceptual qualities of the landscape, such as background noise and tranquillity have also been considered.
- 1.15 Fieldwork surveys have also been used to identify visual receptors and representative viewpoints and to clarify the extent of views, taking account of the effect of intervening features such as buildings and vegetation.

Landscape baseline

- 1.16 Landscape is defined by the European Landscape Convention⁸ as “*an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors*” (Council of Europe, 2000).
- 1.17 GLVIA3 defines landscape receptors as “*aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by a proposal*”. Landscape receptors have been identified via a review of published landscape character assessments, maps and aerial photography, relevant planning policy and fieldwork surveys.
- 1.18 Landscape character is defined by GLVIA3 as “*a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse*”.
- 1.19 Published landscape character assessments at the national, regional and district level have been reviewed and used as a basis of this appraisal.

Visual baseline

- 1.20 Visual receptors are defined in GLVIA3 as “*individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal*”. This includes residents, users of public rights of way (PRoW) and motorists.
- 1.21 A computer-generated zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) has been prepared based on 3-dimensional models of existing terrain and the Proposed Development. The purpose of the ZTV is to:
- Identify the theoretical extents of the Proposed Development’s visibility i.e. the locations from which the receptor could potentially appear in existing views;
 - Assist in the identification of the study area;
 - Identify visual receptors likely to be affected by the Proposed Development;
 - Identify locations that are representative of the views experienced by visual receptors at different locations within the study area (representative viewpoints); and
 - Inform the design, including the extent and type of proposed mitigation.
- 1.22 GLVIA3 defines the ZTV as “*a map, usually digitally produced, showing areas of land within which a development is theoretically visible*”. The ZTV was updated as the design of the Proposed Development progressed.

Visual receptors and representative viewpoints

- 1.23 Visual receptors likely to experience views of the construction or operation of the Proposed Development have been identified through interrogation of the ZTVs and fieldwork surveys, and subsequently categorised into the following types:
- Residents;
 - Road users;
 - Recreational users; and
 - Workers.
- 1.24 Where a collection of visual receptors in the same category are likely to experience similar views, they have been grouped.

⁸ Council of Europe (2000). *European Landscape Convention*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/european-landscape-convention-book-text-feb-2008-en/16802f80c6>

- 1.25 A total of 10 representative viewpoints have been identified based on the ZTV to assist in describing the baseline view and the effects likely to be experienced by visual receptors. These representative viewpoints have been selected on the basis that they cover a range of viewing distances, elevations, and orientations from locations with different viewing experiences of the Proposed Development. The selection of representative viewpoints has been informed by the following criteria:
- Accessibility to the public;
 - Number and sensitivity of viewers who can be affected;
 - Viewing direction, distance (i.e. short, medium, or long-distance views) and elevation;
 - Nature of the viewing experience; and
 - View type.
- 1.26 Photographs and visualisations have been prepared to either help demonstrate the nature of baseline views and the extent of the Proposed Development, or to illustrate a particular matter such as the effectiveness of the planting strategy.
- 1.27 These photographs and visualisations have been prepared in accordance with best practice guidance published by the Landscape Institute.

A.3 Sensitivity of Receptors

Landscape Sensitivity

- 1.28 Paragraph 5.39 of GLVIA3 states that “*landscape receptors need to be assessed firstly in terms of their sensitivity, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape*”.
- 1.29 The judgement for the value of each landscape receptor has been informed by the information set out in the baseline, including any relevant landscape designation and geographic criteria.

Landscape Value

- 1.30 Landscape value is frequently addressed by reference to international, national, regional, and local designations. Absence of such a designation does not necessarily imply a lack of quality or value. Factors such as accessibility and local scarcity can render areas of nationally unremarkable quality highly valuable as a local resource.
- 1.31 With reference to GLVIA 3, landscape value refers to the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. The definition and application of landscape value has also been informed by the ‘Landscape value and valued landscapes’ Technical Guidance Note published by the Landscape Institute in the table below lists the classifications of landscape value used within this appraisal, alongside a brief description of typical criteria.

Table 1: Landscape Value Criteria

Value Classification	Typical Criteria Descriptions
Very High	A landscape with elements of national or international designation / importance and / or which is characterised by key characteristics and/or rare features.
High	A landscape with elements of national or regional designation / importance and / or which is characterised mainly by positive characteristics and/or rare features.
Medium	A landscape with elements of local or neighbourhood designation / importance and / or a landscape with some positive characteristics and/or distinctive features.
Low	A landscape with elements of community designation / importance and / or commonplace features and / or few positive characteristics.
Very Low	Landscape with weak or discordant elements and characteristics that detract from the quality of the area.

Landscape Susceptibility

1.32 GLVIA3 paragraph 5.40 defines landscape susceptibility as:

“The ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be overall character or condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or features, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies”.

1.33 The following aspects of the landscape are considered to be particularly susceptible to the change proposed:

- Overall agricultural character of the landscape;
- Sense of separation between existing settlements; and
- Vegetation pattern formed by the network of hedgerows and blocks of woodland.

1.34 Landscape susceptibility has been assessed with reference to the criteria set out in the table below.

Table 2: Landscape Susceptibility Criteria

Susceptibility Classification	Typical Criteria Descriptions
Very High	The landscape receptor largely exhibits key landscape character attributes and there is very limited opportunity for change.
High	The landscape receptor largely exhibits key landscape character attributes and there is limited opportunity for change.
Medium	The landscape receptor exhibits some key landscape character attributes and there is some opportunity for change.
Low	The landscape receptor exhibits very few key landscape character attributes and there is an opportunity for change.
Very Low	The landscape receptor exhibits none of the key landscape character attributes and there is a high degree of opportunity for change.

Landscape Sensitivity

1.35 Landscape value and landscape susceptibility have been appraised separately and then combined to define the sensitivity of the landscape receptor, with reference to the criteria set out in the table below.

Table 3: Criteria for the Appraisal of Landscape Sensitivity (Landscape Value and Susceptibility)

Susceptibility Classification	Typical Criteria Descriptions
Very High	Landscapes of international or national value with distinctive and rare elements with a very high susceptibility to the Proposed Development.
High	Landscape of national or regional value with distinctive elements and characteristics, with a high susceptibility to the Proposed Development. Typically, these would be landscape receptors: – With distinctive elements and features making a positive contribution to character and sense of place. – Likely to be designated or are adjacent to the designated area but exhibit elements which underpin the designation, especially at the local scale. – Areas of special recognised landscape value through use (e.g. visitors), perception or historic and cultural associations. – Likely to contain features and elements that are rare and could not be replaced.
Medium	Landscape of local or community value, with mostly common elements and characteristics, which by nature of their character would be able to accommodate some change. Typically, these would be landscape receptors: – Comprised of mostly common elements and features, creating a generally unremarkable character but with some sense of place. – Locally designated, or value may be expressed through non-statutory local publications. – Containing some features of value through use, perception, or historic and cultural associations. – Likely to contain some features and elements that could not be replaced.

Susceptibility Classification	Typical Criteria Descriptions
Low	Landscape of community or limited value and relatively inconsequential elements and characteristics, the nature of which is potentially tolerant of substantial change of the type proposed. Typically, these would be; – Comprised of some features and elements that are discordant, derelict or in decline, resulting in indistinct character with little or no sense of place. – Not designated. – Containing few, if any, features of value through use, perception, or historic and cultural associations. – Likely to contain few, if any, features, and elements that could not be replaced.
Very Low	Landscape of very low or limited value, which is damaged, degraded or a substantially modified landscape pattern with few or no natural or original features remaining, such that it is tolerant of change.

Visual Sensitivity

1.36 Paragraph 6.31 of GLVIA3 states that “*each visual receptor, meaning the particular person or group of people likely to be affected at a specific viewpoint, should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views*”. The sensitivity of visual receptors results from a combination of parameters, such as:

- the activity/occupation/ pastime of the receptors at particular locations;
- the extent to which their attention or interest may be focused on the views; and
- the visual amenity they experience.

1.37 Consideration has been given to the:

- location, relative focus, and orientation of particular views;
- quality or importance of the existing view and its attractiveness / or scenic quality;
- principal or secondary interest in that particular view;
- static or sequential nature of views;
- ability of the view to accommodate the type of development and the frequency; and
- duration of the view.

Value attached to views

1.38 GLVIA3 stresses the importance of considering the value attached to views, for example in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations. It provides a list of indicators of the value of views in paragraph 6.37, including:

- appearance in guidebooks or tourist maps;
- provision of facilities, such as parking places, sign boards and interpretive materials; and
- references in literature or art.

1.39 The judgement of the value of views is also informed by the location of the viewing place and the quality or designation of the existing elements in the view, with reference to the criteria set out in the table below.

Table 4: Criteria for the Classification of the Value of Views

Classification	Typical Criteria Descriptions
Very High	Recognised or iconic views within nationally/internationally designated landscapes, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and/or national/international landmarks with views recognised in planning policy and/or management plans.
High	Views or viewing places identified in regional strategies.
Medium	Views across high quality landscape which might include features of interest, such as landmarks, which may be identified in the Local Plan.

Classification	Typical Criteria Descriptions
Low	Views of relatively common landscape elements, likely to be valued by the communities which experience the view.
Very Low	Views across poor quality landscape with a high degree of detracting or common elements.

Susceptibility of visual receptors to change

- 1.40 GLVIA3 notes that visual receptors “*most susceptible to change*”, include residents and visitors engaged in outdoor recreation “*whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views*” (para 6.33).
- 1.41 Table 5 sets out the criteria referenced in determining the susceptibility of visual receptors to the change proposed.

Table 5: Criteria for the Classification of the Visual Susceptibility

Classification	Typical Criteria Descriptions
Very High	People specifically visiting an area where the view is central to the experience and/or the view is the specific reason for visiting the area.
High	People living in the area, where views are likely to be experienced daily, or people visiting the area for the high landscape value or landscape features with designated views, where views are an important part of the experience of the landscape and/or are likely to be open and/or experienced for long periods of time.
Medium	People passing through the area on designated routes such as PRowS or people engaged in work or recreation, where views are relevant to the experience or activity but not central to it, and/or are framed, partially screened, or filtered, and/or where views may be fleeting or experienced as part of a sequence while moving through the area.
Low	People engaged in work or recreation which does not involve the appreciation of views of the landscape, or people passing through the area on public roads or railway lines, where receptors are likely to be focused on their work/activity rather than the view, and/or where views are likely to be limited to glimpses or are heavily screened, and/or where views are likely to be short-term.
Very Low	People engaged in indoor work where the view is not relevant to the activity and/or views are limited, or people passing through the area on main roads.

Sensitivity of visual receptors

- 1.42 The following criteria, as set out in
- 1.43 Table 6 below, has been referred to in determining the sensitivity of visual receptors from the combination of value and susceptibility.

Table 6: Criteria for the Appraisal of Visual Sensitivity (Value of Views and Susceptibility)

Classification	Typical Criteria Descriptions
Very High	People specifically visiting a designated view or highly promoted view of a designated landscape or international or national feature.
High	People undertaking activity with particular interest or appreciation of the view (e.g. residents with principal private views, or people engaged in outdoor recreation whose attention is focused on the landscape and where people might visit purely to experience the view, such as promoted viewpoints) and/or a view of national value (e.g. within/towards a designated landscape).
Medium	People undertaking activity with general interest or appreciation of the view (e.g. residents or people engaged in outdoor recreation that does not focus on an appreciation of the landscape, outdoor workers, people in schools or other institutional buildings and hotels and people passing through the landscape on defined scenic routes) and/or a view of local or community value (e.g. suburban residential areas, or agricultural land or urban areas).
Low	People undertaking activity where interest or appreciation of the view is secondary to the activity or the period of exposure to the view is limited (e.g. people at work, motorists travelling through the area or people engaged in outdoor recreation that does not focus on an appreciation of the landscape) and/or a view of limited value (e.g. featureless agricultural landscape, poor quality urban fringe).

Classification	Typical Criteria Descriptions
Very Low	People undertaking activity where interest or appreciation of the view is inconsequential (e.g. people at work with limited views out, or drivers of vehicles on main roads) and/or very low value of existing view (e.g. industrial areas or derelict land).

Magnitude of Effects

- 1.44 GLVIA3 notes that magnitude is informed by combining considerations relating to the “*scale, extent and duration*” of effect (para 3.28). This includes the geographical extent of influence, the spatial extent of the effect, the level of integration of new features with existing elements, its duration and degree to which the effect is reversible.
- 1.45 The appraisal considers the duration of the change and whether it is short term (up to 2 years), medium term (between 2 and 10 years), or long term (over 10 years), and its reversibility (whether it is permanent, temporary, or partially reversible).

Magnitude of Landscape Effects

- 1.46 The criteria applied to determine the magnitude of landscape effects are set out in the table below.

Table 7: Criteria for Magnitude of Landscape Effects

Magnitude	Typical Criteria Descriptions
High	Large alteration to the landscape receptor or may impact an extensive area or unique characteristics at a local level. May be longer term effects, temporary, permanent or reversible.
Medium	Partial alteration to the landscape receptor may impact a wide area or characteristics at a local level. May be medium term effects, temporary, permanent or reversible.
Low	Slight alteration to the landscape receptor or may impact a restricted area and few key characteristics. May be short to medium term effects, temporary, permanent or reversible.
Very Low	Very slight alteration to the landscape receptor or may impact a limited area or no key characteristics. May be short term effects, temporary, permanent or reversible.
None	No change to the landscape receptor.

Magnitude of Visual Effects

- 1.47 The magnitude of visual effect results from changes in the composition of views or changes to the overall visual amenity. It includes combinations of the degree of change, the extent over which the changes will be visible, the period of exposure to the view and reversibility or permanence of the change and is classified in the table below.

Table 8: Criteria for Magnitude of Visual Effects

Magnitude	Typical Criteria Descriptions
High	The Proposed Development will cause a pronounced change to the composition of the view or may be viewed in the foreground or directly. May be longer term effects, temporary, permanent, or reversible.
Medium	The Proposed Development will cause a noticeable change to the composition of the view or may be viewed in the middle ground or indirectly. May be medium term effects, temporary, permanent, or reversible.
Low	The Proposed Development will cause an unobtrusive change in the composition of the view or may be viewed in the background or obliquely. May be short to medium term effects, temporary, permanent, or reversible.
Very Low	The Proposed Development will cause a barely perceptible change in the composition of the view or may be viewed in the background and very obliquely. May be short term effects, temporary, permanent, or reversible.
None	No change to the view.

Importance of Effect

- 1.48 The importance of landscape and visual effects has been determined by considering the relationship between the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of effect.
- 1.49 A guide to this relationship is set out in the matrix in the table overleaf. However, should professional judgement consider that the effect is different to that in the matrix, then a reasoned justification is presented in the LVA. Similarly, where the matrix allows for different levels of importance of effect (e.g. major or moderate) a reasoned explanation is provided in the appraisal as to the conclusion.

Table 9: Sensitivity of Receptor in Relation to Magnitude of Effect

Sensitivity or value of resource/ receptor *Magnitude of Effect*

	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	None
Very High	Major	Major or Moderate	Moderate or Minor	Minor or Negligible	Neutral
High	Major or Moderate	Moderate	Moderate or Minor	Minor or Negligible	Neutral
Medium	Major or Moderate	Moderate or Minor	Minor or Negligible	Negligible	Neutral
Low	Moderate or Minor	Minor	Minor or Negligible	Negligible	Neutral
Very Low	Minor	Minor or Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Neutral

