

Chicklade Solar Farm, Wiltshire
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This LVIA report has been prepared by LHC Design, on behalf of Enviromena Project Management UK Ltd, in relation to a planning application for a solar farm with associated infrastructure and landscaping on land to the north of the A303 road, approximately 600m west of the village of Chicklade in Wiltshire.
- 1.2 The report has been undertaken in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition 2013).
- 1.3 The proposed site comprises of a single field currently in arable use. Key changes to the site resulting from the proposal include:
 - New vehicle access from an adjacent field to the south and connecting to an existing vehicular junction with the A303, shared with Chicklade Service Station.
 - Stock proof fencing 2m in height, surrounding the Solar PV Arrays.
 - Solar PV Modules (located in the southern portion of the field only) offset from field boundaries and with transformer stations and CCTV located as required and shown on the site layout plan.
 - New mixed native hedgerows, wildflower and woodland tree planting, reinforcement of existing gappy hedgerow boundaries in the south and east, orchard trees in the south west and new lowland meadow in the north.
- 1.4 This LVIA should be read in conjunction with the planning application drawings and especially DWG: 25138-LHC-00-XX-DR-L-9401 Landscape Framework Plan.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The methodology used in the preparation of this LVIA is in accordance with the published Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd. Ed.2013 GLVIA) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment. The methodology and criteria used for assessment are detailed in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The assessment approach first examines the baseline conditions, considering the national and local policy framework, site-specific factors, and relevant published landscape character assessments. These conditions are documented below and illustrated in the diagrams provided in Appendix 2.
- 2.3 Landscape and visual impact assessment is undertaken by combining judgements on the sensitivity of the receiving landscape or visual receptors with those on the magnitude of the change proposed.
- 2.4 For the purposes of this study, discussions of landscape sensitivity have included consideration of landscape value, landscape condition and the susceptibility of the receiving landscape to the type and scale of the change proposed. Sensitivity is recorded on a scale of high, medium or low, with gradations between where necessary.
- 2.5 Visual sensitivity is assessed through consideration of the value of a particular view and the susceptibility to change of people experiencing the view. For example, a popular viewpoint experienced by people out walking in the countryside will be more sensitive to change than a view glimpsed through a gap in the hedgerow experienced by people travelling on a major trunk road.
- 2.6 Judgements on the scale of the change proposed, the duration of the effect and the geographical influence (extent) of the change are combined to assess the magnitude of landscape or visual effect. Magnitude of change is related to a scale of high to negligible. Effects are considered beneficial where they strengthen baseline characteristics or contribute to landscape strategies and policies and adverse where they result in the dilution of positive baseline characteristics or work against strategies. Neutral effects have neither positive nor negative effects on character and no impact on landscape strategies.
- 2.7 The attached viewpoint photographs (Appendix 3) have been presented in line with the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 6/19 "Visual Representation of Development Proposals". The guidance proposes a proportionate approach to the complexity of visualisation presented, based upon factors such as the scale and complexity of development proposal, the sensitivity of the receptor and the context for the proposal. The proposal assessed here is for a solar farm approximately 3.01ha in size, within a red line boundary of 12.29ha, including associated infrastructure plus proposed landscape features. In this case, type 1 visualisations have been considered appropriate (annotated photographs presented at 100% scaling).

3. Study Area

- 3.1 The proposed site for the new solar farm with associated servicing and landscaping is located on arable farmland just off the A303 road, approximately 600m west of the village of Chicklade in Wiltshire.
- 3.2 A 5km radius was used to establish the study area for the LVIA (Appendix 2, Figure 1). Solar arrays with a height of approximately 2.5m from existing ground levels were used to test the potential Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), shown on Figure 2. This was produced using Digital Surface Modelling (DSM) information which includes trees, hedges, buildings and other structures to produce an estimate for the potential visual effects of the development. As can be seen the expected visibility is constrained due to the enclosed valley location, with the majority of predicted visibility located within a few kilometres of the site. Therefore, a revised study area radius of 3km has been used (shown in Figure 3) which shows the local topography constraining potential visibility close to the site, with a single outlying visual receptor located approximately 4.2km to the east. This visual receptor has been included within the study (see Figure 6).
- 3.3 The proposals and entire study area lie within National Character Area (NCA) 132 – Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs. The NCA description notes that Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs to the south is designated as a National Landscape (formally Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONB) for its *rich chalk down, whaleback ridges, wooded valleys and deeply rural, agricultural character and rich archaeological resource*. It is noted for a sense of *remoteness and generally dark skies*.
- 3.4 The site sits within local landscape character area 2A West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland. The Heritage Lottery funded Cranborne Chase and Chalke Valley Landscape Partnership scheme has supported a more detailed Landscape Assessment (Sept 2024) of this part of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. This contains fourteen local landscape character areas, which nest within the broader character areas of the earlier assessment. The site, and entire ZTV, lies within the landscape character type ‘Wooded Downland’ (Refer to Figures 4 & 5, Appendix 2).

4. Baseline Conditions

- 4.1 Relevant national and local planning policies, including the strategic objectives in the Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan (2015) and the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessments are highlighted below. In considering the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development, this LVIA report will refer to these and identify whether the proposals meet the requirements of the relevant policies.

National Planning Policy Framework, NPPF (2024)

- 4.2 The following NPPF paragraphs are applicable to the consideration of the landscape and visual appraisal of the proposal:

Paragraph 165

To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should:

- a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, and their future re-powering and life extension, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed appropriately (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);*
- b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and*
- c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.*

Paragraph 187

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.

The Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted January 2015) sets out the approach to managing planning development in the district.

4.3 The following local plan policies are considered to be relevant to the consideration of the landscape and visual impacts of the proposal:

The Core Strategy provides a spatial expression of the Wiltshire Community Plan 2011-2026: People, places and promises, and will be focused on delivering the three overarching priorities and the 17 key objectives of the Community Plan. The overarching priorities are to help build and protect resilient communities, through:

- creating an economy that is fit for the future*
- reducing disadvantage and inequalities*
- tackling the causes and effects of climate change.”*

4.4 Core Policy 42 Standalone renewable energy installations

Proposals for standalone renewable energy schemes will be supported subject to satisfactory resolution of all site specific constraints. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate how impacts on the following factors have been satisfactorily assessed, including any cumulative effects, and taken into account:

i. The landscape, particularly in and around AONBs

ii. The Western Wiltshire Green Belt

iii. The New Forest National Park

iv. Biodiversity

v. The historic environment including the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site and its setting

vi. Use of the local transport network

vii. Residential amenity, including noise, odour, visual amenity and safety

viii. Best and most versatile agricultural land.

4.5 Core Policy 51 Landscape

Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals should be informed by and sympathetic to the distinctive character areas identified in the relevant Landscape Character Assessment(s) and any other relevant assessments and studies. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate that the following aspects of

landscape character have been conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures:

- i. The locally distinctive pattern and species composition of natural features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and waterbodies.*
- ii. The locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings.*
- iii. The separate identity of settlements and the transition between man-made and natural landscapes at the urban fringe.*
- iv. Visually sensitive skylines, soils, geological and topographical features.*
- v. Landscape features of cultural, historic and heritage value.*
- vi. Important views and visual amenity.*
- vii. Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.*
- viii. Landscape functions including places to live, work, relax and recreate.*
- ix. Special qualities of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the New Forest National Park, where great weight will be afforded to conserving and enhancing landscapes and scenic beauty.*

Proposals for development within or affecting the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), New Forest National Park (NFNP) or Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site (WHS) shall demonstrate that they have taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in the relevant Management Plans for these areas. Proposals for development outside of an AONB that is sufficiently prominent (in terms of its siting or scale) to have an impact on the area's special qualities (as set out in the relevant management plan), must also demonstrate that it would not adversely affect its setting.

Landscape Character and Sensitivity

- 4.6 The LVIA considers the effect of development on the characteristics of the site and its surroundings, and on the landscape character of the area. The assessment judges the degree to which the development integrates into the local landscape character. Landscape effects are judged against the landscape character and management objectives for the relevant landscape character areas.

The Site and Immediate Surroundings

- 4.7 The site comprises a single arable field located approximately 80-140m north of the A303 road, within a valley location. The field slopes gently upwards to the north and slopes downwards again in the north-east of the site, following the local rolling landscape characteristic. There are several commercial, agricultural and residential buildings to the south west, separating the site from the A303 road. The site is approximately 600m west of the small village of Chicklade. A close service station, between the site and the A303, is currently being redeveloped as a new electric vehicle charging service station. A public bridleway runs alongside the west boundary of the site, separated from it by a gappy hedgerow, which has recently been strengthened with new native hedge planting to create a continuous hedge. The other boundaries, similarly, have gappy hedgerows, although some new hedge planting is

evident. This provides the opportunity to strengthen hedgerows and create new ones as part of a landscape framework.

- 4.8 The site lies within a landscape characterised by a patchwork of arable farmland and pasture. Fields are generally enclosed by hedgerows of low condition, interspersed with groups of trees and areas of woodland, predominantly located on ridges or along the A303 transport corridor. In the immediate vicinity of the site, field boundary hedgerows are fragmented or absent in places, presenting opportunities for landscape enhancement. The site sits within a relatively limited visual envelope within its valley location, with visibility largely constrained by ridges to the north, west and south. The exception to this is in the east, where longer distance views are possible, looking along the valley and transport corridor.
- 4.9 The village of Chicklade lies east of the site and comprises an attractive cluster of dwellings and farm buildings set within a dense framework of mature trees and hedgerows. Properties on the western edge of the village have some open views towards the site, although the village's Grade II Listed buildings have no intervisibility of the site due to location and vegetation. The landscape character of Chicklade is adversely affected by the presence of the busy A303 corridor, which forms a dominant and incongruous feature in the surrounding landscape. Associated infrastructure, including overhead telecommunications lines and road signs, further detract from landscape quality and contributes to a significant localised reduction in tranquillity and visual sensitivity.

National Character Areas

- 4.10 The site is situated wholly within the Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs National Character Area (NCA) which is summarised as a *"sparsely settled, predominantly agricultural area with a strong sense of remoteness and openness. The dominant element in the landscape – apart from the expansive sky – is the gently rolling chalk downland. Around one third of this NCA is also designated as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The fields here are seemingly endless. With hedgerows rare, they often lack clearly visible boundaries. Most of the NCA lies within the county of Wiltshire. The NCA contains significant historical and cultural assets, including a wealth of buried and above-ground archaeological remains of international importance, and many historic houses and estates. There is a strong sense of historical continuity underpinned by the prehistoric landscape features identified in the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site at Stonehenge in the southern part of the Plain, along with many other prehistoric monuments."*
- 4.11 The NCA lists four statements of environmental opportunity which are: *protection and enhancement of chalk grassland to support biodiversity, improving the river system, conserving the rich historic and archaeological resource and protecting the agriculture interest, while working in harmony with the nationally recognised and distinctive character of the landscape, its natural beauty and scenic quality.*

Local Landscape Character Types (LCTs)

- 4.12 **The Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment** characterises the county by local character type profiles, identifying 16 different typologies in total. The more recent Cranborne Chase National Landscape has identified fourteen Local Landscape Character Areas (2024), which nest within the broader character areas of the earlier Wiltshire assessment.

- 4.13 The proposed development site, and all the predicted visibility, lies wholly within the **Open Chalk Downland** Landscape Character Type (LCT), and in particular the **West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland** Landscape Character Area (LCA).

Key Characteristics of the West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland LCA

- *A large-scale landscape of broad rolling hills and undulating land separated by dry river valleys.*
- *Dominated by an Upper Chalk surface geology with drift clay with flints capping on higher ground.*
- *Straight-sided fields representing late 18th/early 19th century Parliamentary enclosure, with large-scale fields resulting from 20th century boundary loss.*
- *Large-scale agricultural landscape with open skies and long views*
- *Settlement pattern comprising small villages, dispersed hamlets and isolated farmsteads.*
- *Villages tend to be located on the south facing slopes where the landform offers increased shelter.*
- *Broadleaved copses and clumps (round stands) are eye catching features on the hilltops.*
- *Isolated Neolithic long barrow burial monuments, and Bronze Age round barrows are visible in this ancient landscape.*
- *Series of Iron Age hillforts and defended enclosures including the localised preserved prehistoric/Romano-British landscapes at White Sheet Hill*
- *Prehistoric/Romano-British landscape and cross-ridge dykes.*
- *The Roman road between Old Sarum and the Mendips follows the top of the downs.*
- *Fast moving transport corridors, A303 and A350, running across and through the landform in cuttings and on embankments.*

- 4.14 Management Objectives for the West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland LCA are:

- *Conserve the open character of the downs and retain the simple land cover.*
- *Encourage restoration of chalk grassland particularly in areas that are connected to existing SSSI sites. Habitats should be managed and enhanced in line with the emerging Cranborne Chase Nature Recovery Plan.*
- *Promote appropriate management of arable farmland to create a wildlife-rich habitat supporting farmland birds. This will include retaining areas of fallow land and maintaining an unploughed margin around fields plus management of hedgerows.*
- *Discourage unsympathetic ribbon development and associated planting (such as Leylandii hedges) along transport corridors in order to conserve open views and safeguard the character of the built environment.*
- *Manage the distinctive deciduous woodland clumps and consider a programme of replanting to maintain these as features. Tree and hedgerow planting should follow the key principles and guidance set out in the Cranborne Chase 'Right Tree, Right Place' guidance document.*
- *Ensure that the development of tall structures, such as communication masts and wind energy developments, are in scale with the landscape.*
- *Ensure development of any structures do not threaten the setting of important archaeological earthwork features.*

Cranborne Chase National Landscape (formally Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONB)

- 4.15 Cranborne Chase is a National Landscape, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and covers 380 square miles of countryside, overlapping the boundaries of Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset. The long-distance footpaths of the Wessex Ridgeway, Jubilee Trail and the Monarch's Way all criss-cross the National Landscape.
- 4.16 The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Management Plan (2019-2024) presents objectives and policies that partners can apply to help conserve and enhance this nationally important landscape.
- 4.17 It is stated that the *"primary purpose of AONB designation is 'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area', but that 'account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of economic and social development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.'"*
- 4.18 The Management Plan also notes that *"high levels of tranquillity comprise important elements of the natural beauty of the AONB"* and *"views across and along these landscapes can be wide and expansive **whilst in the valleys they are more focussed and channelled. Unspoilt and panoramic views are characteristics of this AONB.**"*
- 4.19 Section 5 outlines that the AONB document is not prepared in isolation and there are other factors which have influence. Some notable items include:
- "Climate change mitigation describes measures or actions aimed at reducing the long-term risk and hazards of climate change. Climate change adaptation describes measures or actions that help individuals, groups and natural systems to prepare for and respond to changes in the climate. Alongside other organisations and individuals, the AONB Partnership will seek to build resilience and will **support and promote mitigation and adaptation measures** wherever practicable." (Paragraph 5.18).*
- The landscapes of the AONB provide us with many 'goods and services' these need sustaining. They range from measurable things, like fresh food, clean water, healthy soils, **sustainable energy** and clean air; and less easily defined benefits, such as inspiration, awareness, health and wellbeing, and;*
- 'Development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This means that within this AONB, great weight is given to conserving and enhancing natural beauty. Development has to be **in the right location, at the right scale** and of the right design using the right materials. (Paragraph 5.45).*
- 4.20 Policy PT16, Renewable Energy Generation within the AONB says:
- Policy PT16 "Support renewable energy generation by technologies that integrate with the landscape character, are **neither visually intrusive to the AONB or its setting**, nor impair significant views to or from it, are not harmful to wildlife, and are **of an appropriate scale to their location and siting.**"*

Wiltshire Council Renewable Energy Study. Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2023)

- 4.21 A 2023 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment categorises the Wiltshire landscape by local character area (according to the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment) with a rating for sensitivity of an area for solar (or wind) farm developments in general terms – i.e. without specific sites analysed. The introduction to this report describes this as follows:

*“1.2 This Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for wind energy and solar photovoltaic (PV) schemes provides judgements on the landscape sensitivity of different parts of Wiltshire to these forms of development. The findings of this study will allow the Council to **identify broad areas for renewable energy development and establish a local policy framework for such development, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework.**”*

- 4.22 The area which includes the proposed site has been assessed for sensitivity as level 1 – Greater landscape impact (from a scale of 1 – Greater to 5 – Lesser landscape impact).

Appendix A (User Guide) describes that:

*“A.9 Priority should be given to views from distances of **less than 3km** and from sensitive locations (e.g. residential areas, areas popular with visitors or for outdoor recreation where **views may be focussed on the landscape and recognised/iconic views**).”*

And sites should demonstrate how they enhance the landscape:

*“A.11 Enhancement aims to improve the character and quality of the landscape. It may take many forms, including **improved land management** or creation of new landscapes or features. **Landscape enhancement, as part of a proposal, will be looked upon favourably.**”*

- 4.23 The LVIA report will utilise the procedures for analysis listed within Appendix A and describe the perceived landscape and visual effects likely due to the site-specific proposals within Sections 6 (Landscape) and 7 (Visual).

Heritage Assets

- 4.24 There are several historic assets within the study area, including Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. These are shown on Figure 4, Appendix 2 and those with potential relevance to the proposed development described below.
- 4.25 The closest historic asset to the site is the scheduled monument, an historic Bowl Barrow located approximately 700m away from the site to the south-west. From the Historic England website, bowl barrows are described as follows: *“Bowl barrows the most numerous form of round barrow, are funerary monuments dating from the Late Neolithic period to the Late Bronze Age.”* The text goes on to say that *“Often occupying prominent locations, they are a major historic element in the modern landscape and their considerable variation of form and longevity as a monument type provide important information on the diversity of beliefs and social organisations amongst early prehistoric communities. They are particularly representative of their period and a substantial proportion of surviving examples are considered worthy of protection”*. There is no predicted visibility between this scheduled monument and the proposed development, which was confirmed with a field visit. The scale of the proposals and lack of intervisibility will therefore not have any impact on the monument or its setting.

- 4.26 A number of other scheduled monuments are shown Figure 4 (Appendix 2). These are generally located over 2km away from the site in the west, north and north east and include an Earthwork enclosure in Penning Wood, a Scrubbed Oak enclosure and an Earthwork enclosure in Great Ridge wood and a Long and Oval barrow on Keysley Down. There is no visibility between these monuments and the site, so the proposed development will not have any impact on their settings.
- 4.27 A section of Roman Road on Pertwood Down is situated approximately 2.5km away north west of the site. There is no intervisibility between the site and this monument due to the undulating landscape, therefore the proposals will not have an impact on its setting.
- 4.28 Hindon village, approximately one mile south of the A303 has a conservation area covering a large part of the village centre which includes many Grade II listed buildings, including the Church of St John the Baptist. There is no predicted visibility between this area and the site, which was confirmed with a field visit. The proposals will not have any impact on this conservation area or the listed buildings within it.
- 4.29 There are several other listed buildings within the study area, dotted across the area, mainly to the north, west and south. There are three listed buildings within Chicklade village, the closest (Chicklade House, Grade II) approximately 700m away. The Grade II Church of All Saints Anglican Parish Church and the Burnett Monument in the Churchyard (Grade II) are situated a further 100m away to the east. All three buildings are set back from the A303 road with dense vegetation surrounding them. They have no visibility of the site, and their settings will not be adversely impacted by the proposals.

Visual Baseline

- 4.30 The LVIA considers the effect of development on identified visual receptors within the ZTV. The assessment makes judgements on the effect of the proposed development on these receptors based on their sensitivity and the likely magnitude of effect. Several receptors are located outside of the ZTV, close to long distance footpaths or historic assets, in order to confirm lack of visibility between them and the site.
- 4.31 Key receptor groups identified are:
- Users of main road A303 south of the site (Viewpoints, VPs 1, 2, 10)
 - Users of minor road, south east of the site (VP3)
 - Users of Public Right of Way (PROWs) and Restricted Byway south of the site (VPs 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)
 - Users of PROW bridleway on the western site boundary (VP 11)
 - Users of PROW bridleway north of the site (VP 12)
 - Users of PROW bridleways north east of the site (VPs 13, 14, 15, 16)
 - Users of PROW Monarch's Way long distance path (VPs 17, 20)
 - Users of PROW Wessex Ridgeway long distance path (VP 18)
 - Users of PROW bridleway south of the site (VP19)
- 4.32 Photographs from representative viewpoints were recorded on 11th December 2025 and 9th January 2026 and are shown in Appendix 3 with the impacts upon these receptor groups set out in Section 7 of this report.

- 4.33 The site is located on gently sloping farmland, on the side of a valley containing the busy A303 transport corridor. The boundaries feature gappy and varying quality hedges, many of which have been observed to be recently reinforced with new planting. There are agricultural, commercial and residential buildings nearby, and the A303 has associated telecommunications poles and wires and signage, leading to a sense of clutter and activity. Above the site, on rising slopes, arable fields give way to wooded areas and a greater sense of tranquillity and quiet. The small village of Chicklade is located east of the site and there are several public rights of way nearby, mostly public bridleways, with many appearing to have low or no use, and are difficult to use due to extremely busy road crossings, a lack of joined-up-ness and overgrown vegetation. The Monarch's Way and Wessex Ridgeway long distance footpaths pass through the local area.
- 4.34 The site's visibility is constrained by its location on low valley slopes, with wider views constrained by nearby ridges and clumps of woodland. The majority of the proposed development's visibility is situated well within 3km of the site, apart from longer views out towards the east along the transport corridor.

5. Site Proposals & Mitigation

- 5.1 The site proposals seek the delivery of a new solar PV farm upon an arable field, with associated deer proof stock fencing, access track and transformers. The landscape framework plan (DWG: 25138-LHC-00-XX-DR-L-9401) shows the proposed layout which includes new landscape features which will help to mitigate visual impact resulting from the changes and enhance ecological habitat.
- 5.2 The existing field currently has gappy hedge boundaries which will be planted with new native hedge planting to strengthen them. The solar PV panels will sit approximately 2.5m in height at their highest point, surrounded by a 2m high stock proof fence. The panels are located in the lower portion of the site, close to the A303 traffic corridor, Chicklade Service Station and several agricultural buildings adjacent to the south west corner of the site. Two new mixed native hedgerows will be planted along the north and south of the fenced off solar arrays, with the northern hedge line, to include hedgerow trees.
- 5.3 An area of native woodland will be planted to the east of the solar arrays which will create new habitat and help to mitigate views of the panels from public rights of way located on higher ground in the north east. Proposed wildflower grass will be sown in southern areas of the field, outside the fenced solar panel area. New orchard trees will be planted in the south west area of the site and lowland meadow is proposed in the north.

6 Landscape Effects

- 6.1 A combination of fieldwork and photography has been used to assess the scale of effect that the proposals are likely to have upon the important attributes of the existing landscape fabric and character within the site surroundings and study area and an assessment of whether the proposals accord with the main objectives of the affected landscape character areas and types.

- 6.2 The duration of change and extent of effect have been considered in order to assess the magnitude of the effect on landscape qualities, characteristics and designations. This in turn has informed the assessment of the effects, and judgements against these individual criteria used to reach an overall conclusion on the significance of these, and whether they have an adverse, beneficial, or neutral effect.

Site and Immediate Surroundings

- 6.3 The proposed development will introduce new boundary fencing, solar PV modules an associated transformer, CCTV posts, a new site entrance track and new native hedge and woodland planting which will significantly alter the current intensively farmed arable use.
- 6.4 The site is located within a rural setting, however one that is significantly impacted by the busy A303 transport corridor which has been observed with almost constant traffic flow, including many HGV vehicles, resulting in a significant level of noise and disturbance in the landscape. As it passes the site, the A303 runs along a valley with rising land to the north and the south. A commercial business, agricultural buildings and a couple of houses are situated next to the road and south west of the site. Chicklade Service Station is situated next to the road to the south of the site. This is currently undergoing redevelopment, and it is proposed that the solar access track will share the service station access. The small village of Chicklade is located approximately 600m east of the site, with most houses and a church located to the north of the road, the majority surrounded by trees, although some homes do have west facing views towards the site.
- 6.5 The farmed valley slopes, leading away from the transport corridor is characterised rolling pastoral and arable fields with some small clumps of woodland and a few isolated trees dotted across the landscape. Field boundaries are generally low in height and many are incomplete or have frequent gaps, leading to a sense of openness. Ridges to the north and south of the A303, form a barrier to long distance views, as is illustrated on the ZTV diagrams (Figures 2 and 3, Appendix 2).
- 6.6 Existing hedge boundaries around the site will be retained, apart from a gap in the southern hedge to create vehicular access to the development. Additional planting is proposed to reinforce the existing hedges, helping to create a continuous vegetated boundary. New hedge planting will connect existing hedges, and the proposed area of woodland planting will reflect the local landscape characteristics and help to visually enclose the site from views from the east.
- 6.7 The following features of the proposed development reflect the landscape character of the local area and will help with mitigation:
- New native hedges which connect to existing hedgerows and the northern hedge to include hedgerow trees.
 - Proposed solar PV modules are offset from existing retained hedges to maintain the legibility of field patterns and assist with hedgerow management.
 - Areas of wildflower meadow grass and new lowland meadow will enhance species diversity.

- New orchard tree planting will enhance biodiversity and soften views from the south west.
 - Existing field boundaries are enhanced with new hedge planting and tree planting.
 - An area of new woodland will enhance ecology and reflects local landscape character.
- 6.8 The proposals will result in a change of land use, however the ecological and landscape assets within the site are to be enhanced. The nature of the proposed development will retain the current levels of landscape tranquillity once constructed. The existing quality of the site and immediate surroundings has been assessed as medium to low (Table 1, Appendix 1). There are few landscape elements intact and in good repair and there are many detracting elements evident.
- 6.9 The landscape value is concerned with the relative value that is attached to different landscapes. The site and immediate surrounding landscape value is assessed as high, based on the criteria shown in Table 2, Appendix 1. The site is located within a Nationally recognised landscape, despite its location close to the transport corridor and associated detracting elements from this. The site is in use for intensive arable farming with low quality hedgerows, offering potential for improvement.
- 6.10 The proposed development involves low impact construction meaning that landscape elements will overall not be lost and there is a moderate level of containment due to topography and vegetation, plus the character is noticeably influenced by some detracting features. The site and immediate surroundings is therefore judged to have a medium level of ability to accept the type of development proposed and there are opportunities for mitigation. Combining assessments of quality, value and susceptibility to change, results in a landscape sensitivity of medium. This is the degree to which this particular landscape area can accommodate change without unacceptable detrimental effects on its character.
- 6.11 The scale of landscape effect on the site and immediate surroundings resulting from the proposed development is judged as large, due to the proposals describing a fundamental change to the baseline situation. The field boundaries will remain, with enhancements, however the introduction of solar panels and new fencing will change the site considerably. The duration of effect is long term and the extent of effect is localised (limited to the site and surroundings up to approximately 2km). The magnitude of effect is determined as high.
- 6.12 Some of the changes resulting from the development will have an adverse effect on the landscape character of the site due to new fencing, solar modules, a new site entrance track and transformers on a site currently without any structures. Mitigation design measures include new hedgerows, enhancement of existing hedgerows, new woodland planting, new orchard tree planting and meadow seeding. Combining the magnitude of effect with existing quality and sensitivity, results in an overall significance of landscape effect upon the site and immediate surroundings of major to moderate adverse.

Landscape Character Areas

- 6.13 The site is located within National Character Area (NCA) 132 – Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs. The main characteristics of this NCA are a sparsely settled landscape with a strong sense of remoteness and gently rolling chalk downland. The area has a strong sense of

historical continuity with many prehistoric monuments. Noted opportunities within the NCA include protection and enhancement of chalk grassland, conservation of the rich historic resource and protection of the agricultural interest in harmony with the character and natural beauty of the landscape.

- 6.14 The proposals include the retention of existing hedgerows which will be strengthened with new native planting. The solar array will be a physically low impact, temporary intervention within the landscape, albeit long term. There would be loss of part of an arable field, however new hedges and woodland and orchard planting forms part of the mitigation and integration. The location of the site, close to existing busy road infrastructure and nearby buildings, forms part of the mitigating factors for the site, avoiding more tranquil and popular and picturesque rural landscapes within this NCA (and National Landscape).
- 6.15 The proposed development alters the site, but within the NCA the scale of change would be small, much of it positive, offering landscape enhancement to improve existing assets, and without adversely impacting the opportunities and objectives set out for the NCA.
- 6.16 The quality of the NCA is assessed as medium to high as the much of the character demonstrating landscape elements appear intact and good repair. The value is national scale, therefore rated high, and the receptor has a medium level of ability to accept the type of development proposed, with some good opportunities for mitigation.
- 6.17 The scale of change on the NCA is small, long term and the effect would be seen and experienced within an intermediate (approx. 2-4km) area. The magnitude of effect is determined by combining the scale, duration and extent of effect, in this case providing a result of low. The significance of effect upon the NCA (magnitude combined with sensitivity) is overall slight to moderate adverse.

Cranborne Chase National Landscape and associated Local Landscape Character Area

- 6.18 The site is located within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The National Landscape Character Assessment defines the local area as the West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland which covers much of the same area as the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Wooded Downland in the Wiltshire Landscape Assessment (2005), so these will be treated as one.
- 6.19 Key characteristics listed in the Cranborne Chase National Landscape Assessment include *'large-scale landscape of broad, rolling hills and undulating land, divided by dry river valleys.'* It is *'predominantly an agricultural landscape, characterised by open skies and long-distance views.'* *'The settlement pattern consists of small villages located where the landform provides natural shelter, while copses and clumps of woodland are a feature on hilltops. Fast-moving transport corridors also run through the landscape, adversely influencing its character.'*
- 6.20 The sensitivity of this landscape receptor is classified as high, due to its national designation. The scale of change due to the proposals is small, in scale with its landscape setting and does not threaten the setting of important archaeological earthwork features. Field boundaries to be retained and enhanced with proposed landscape enhancements accord with the LCAs management objectives of *'creat[ing] a wildlife rich habitat – including management of*

hedgerows. The duration of change is long term and the extent over which the proposals will have effect is intermediate. The magnitude of change is therefore low with an overall significance of effect as moderate adverse.

7 Visual Effects

- 7.1 Approximate theoretical visibility was calculated within the study area using LiDAR data and based on the maximum height of the proposed solar PV modules (Figures 2 and 3, Appendix 2). Viewpoint locations were selected within the ZTV to provide an understanding about the potential visibility of the proposals and these are assessed based on the methodology laid out in Appendix 1. Photograph locations are shown in Figure 6, Appendix 2. Publicly accessible land with predicted visibility was visited in order to complete the photography. Viewpoint photographs are shown in Appendix 3.
- 7.2 Judgements about the likely residual impact upon visual receptors is provided in this section. The visibility, scale and massing of the proposals is assessed taking account of the mitigation measures and landscape proposals.
- 7.3 The assessment of visual effects has been consolidated into the following visual receptor groups:
- Users of main road A303 south of the site (Viewpoints, VPs 1, 2, 10)
 - Users of minor road, south east of the site (VP3)
 - Users of Public Right of Way (PROWs) and Restricted Byway, south of the site (VPs 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)
 - Users of PROW bridleway on the western site boundary (VP 11)
 - Users of PROW bridleway north of the site (VP 12)
 - Users of PROW bridleways north east of the site (VPs 13, 14, 15, 16)
 - Users of PROW Monarch's Way long distance path (VPs 17, 20)
 - Users of PROW Wessex Ridgeway long distance path (VP 18)
 - Users of PROW bridleway south of the site (VP19)

Users of main road A303 south of the site (VPs 1, 2, 10)

- 7.4 Viewpoint 1 shows the view from the pavement on the south side of the main A303 road passing through Chicklade, just east of the junction for Hindon Village. This busy road corridor is bordered by mature deciduous trees, road signs and telecommunications wires. Looking along the road corridor towards the site, fields prior to the site are visible, with the site itself forming a very small part of the view beyond.
- 7.5 Viewpoint 2 shows the view from the A303 near Chicklade Service Station, looking west. Road activity and associated infrastructure along the valley road corridor is a very large part of the view with constant traffic movement and telecommunications posts and wires. Views out to the surrounding landscape are constrained by landform, existing vegetation and existing development. The site is located behind a gappy hedge at a higher elevation than the road and the proposed reinforced boundary hedges will help to limit visibility of the proposals for road users further.

- 7.6 Viewpoint 10 shows the view from the southern side of the A303 road looking west opposite a commercial garage 'Classic Vehicle Restorers'. The view shows the road with trees and hedgerows to both sides and telecommunications posts and cables running along the north edge of the road. The garage buildings are located to the left of the view, with a vehicle access directly from the A303. Other houses and agricultural buildings to the rear of the vehicle repair building are not visible, nor is the site.
- 7.7 The sensitivity to visual change for users of roads south of the site is valued as medium.
- 7.8 The scale of the effect on these visual receptors resulting from the proposals is judged to be negligible (very hard to discern) to none. This stretch of road has constrained views out into the landscape, due to the local landform, plus activity and distracting elements. There are not extensive views across the landscape and the high level of activity at the roadside level, the proposed height of the development is relatively low and located behind hedgerows. The magnitude of change found by combining assessments of scale, duration and extent, is assessed to be negligible. This results in an overall significance of effect of minimal adverse.

Users of minor road to the south east of the site (VP3)

- 7.9 Viewpoint 3 is taken from a farm gate providing a view across fields towards the site, approximately 800m away. Much of the site is behind a clump of mature woodland with filtered views through the trees (especially during winter) into the site. The proposed development extends to the right of the trees allowing a direct view from this field gate. The majority of this stretch of road is bounded by tall hedgebanks, with many large trees within, meaning this field gateway is the sole location providing a view for road users.
- 7.10 Proposed mitigation measures include strengthening the field boundaries around the site to create continuous hedges and some hedgerow trees. Once established, this mitigation planting will help to soften the view of the development from this viewpoint. Views of the site from road users will be transient by nature and almost imperceptible by most road users. The scale of change due to the proposals, considering the lack of views from anywhere else along the road apart from this sole field gate is a small to minor alteration to features of the view, but with some discernible differences. Duration is long term and the extent of effect is limited. This results in magnitude of effect as negligible. The overall significance of effect is minimal adverse.

Users of Public Rights of Way (PROWs) and Restricted Byway south of the site (VPs 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)

- 7.11 Viewpoints 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 represent users of the public bridleway and Ox Drove restricted byway on a ridge to the south of the site and the A303 road. The majority of this track is bounded to both sides by dense hedgerow and trees, which offers little or no views though it, even during winter months, when site visits were undertaken. Despite this, there are several gaps at field entrances and a few gaps in the otherwise dense planting. Several photographs taken along this route are included to illustrate differing views along it.
- 7.12 Viewpoint 4 shows one such gap at a field entrance, looking towards the site. The view includes the existing Chicklade Service Station on the A303 road. The remainder of the view

shows rolling fields with clumps of woodland dotted across the landscape. As well as the service station, there are several houses and farm buildings visible, and telecommunications posts and wires running across the landscape. Despite this viewpoint being on an elevated position and approximately 600m away from the road, constant traffic noise was audible, significantly reducing feelings of tranquillity.

- 7.13 Viewpoints 5 and 6 demonstrate glimpsed views towards the site at gaps in the otherwise dense vegetation bounding the track. The site can be seen from these viewpoints. The proposals would introduce a built element into this landscape, however only effecting a small part of the view. This track is not a named long-distance path (of which there are two nearby) nor does this section offer the best local views of the rural countryside nearby.
- 7.14 Viewpoints 7 and 8 demonstrate views at a field entrance and a large gap in a field boundary hedgerow from the public bridleway connecting to Ox Drove track. Both photographs include a clear view of the site, set amongst rolling fields and low hills with wooded summits. The traffic noise is evident from these locations reducing the tranquillity slightly.
- 7.15 The views from this public right of way are not identified as viewpoints of importance and there are many locations with countryside views nearby, offering greater tranquillity (the further away from the transport corridor they are). The sensitivity of users of PROW and restricted byway south of the site is classed as high. The scale of effect is judged to be medium as the views will be noticeably changed with new features introduced. The long-term duration and localised extent of this effect give rise to a medium magnitude of effect. Combining assessment of the sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of effect, provides an overall significance of effect as major-moderate adverse.

Users of PROW bridleway on the site boundary (VP 11)

- 7.16 Viewpoint 11 is taken from a bridleway adjacent to western boundary of the site, looking south east across the site. The site is separated from the bridleway by an existing native hedgerow which is dense in places, but with large gaps. New saplings have been recently planted to strengthen this field boundary and create a continuous hedgerow. The view is dominated by the existing arable field, planted with crops, which slopes gently downwards to the A303 road corridor. Beyond this point, the terrain rises as a succession of fields interspersed with small woodland clusters. Constant traffic noise reduces the tranquillity from here significantly, with large vehicles visible on the road. Small groups of farm buildings and houses on the edge of Chicklade village, can be seen on the left of the view.
- 7.17 The proposals have concentrated the solar panels development to the south-eastern part of the field. Mitigation includes a new mixed native hedgerow across the north or the solar panel area and across the south west part of the field. Lowland meadow in the north of the site would have little visual effect, however new orchard trees in the south west will have a positive effect. There would be a large change experienced by this receptor due to the proposals, although the mitigation planting and site layout would help to minimise the impact of this, especially once new hedge planting and trees have established.

- 7.18 The sensitivity of this receptor is high and the scale of effect is assessed as large, due to the fundamental change post development. The scale of development and mitigation measures would see this reduce to medium once planting has fully established. The changes are long term in duration and localised in extent, providing a magnitude of change of high, becoming medium in time. The significance of effect for this receptor is major adverse, becoming major to moderate adverse once hedge planting has established after around five years.

Users of PROW bridleway north of the site (VP 12)

- 7.19 Viewpoint 12 is taken from a public bridleway north of the site. The ZTV suggested that proposals may be visible from here, however woodland on the intervening ridge between this location and the site completely blocks any views. Therefore, the significance of visual effect on this receptor is none.

Users of PROW bridleways north east of the site (VPs 13, 14, 15, 16)

- 7.20 Users of public bridleways on the hillside to the north east of the site have been grouped together. Four photographs represent these users. Viewpoint 13 is taken from a bridleway which ascends Cratt Hill, looking south west towards the site, approximately 840m away. The view across the landscape is extensive with a wide expanse of rolling landscape leading to wooded hilltops stretching into the distance. A sloping arable field in the foreground leads to views of pastoral fields bounded by hedges on valley slopes. Vehicles on the A303 road (particularly HGVs or coaches) can be seen, although traffic noise is quiet from this distance. The existing Chicklade Service Station can be seen, as can agricultural buildings located adjacent to the site. The site is visible from here, seen as a large hedge bounded field, although the hedge boundary on the eastern site edge can be seen with many gaps. The area of the site proposed to contain solar PV panels is seen as a very small part of the field from this location.
- 7.21 Viewpoint 14 is taken further south on the bridleway, closer to Chicklade village, and approximately 650m away from the site. The view again consists of rolling fields which are a combination of arable and pastoral. Nearby hedgerow field boundaries are low, or gappy, becoming more substantial around distance fields. Blocks of woodland are visible, mainly on the top of hills, however small clumps are present along the valley corridor. Large vehicles, signage and telecommunications infrastructure can be seen along the road corridor and the background noise of passing vehicles has increased compared to VP13. Chicklade Service Station roof is visible in the distance and the site is visible, however the southern portion of the site which is to be altered with the addition of solar panels, landscaping and associated infrastructure, forms a very narrow part of the view. Proposed reinforcement to boundary hedges, woodland planting and a new hedge along the northern edge of the fenced solar array will further enclose and screen the proposals from this location once planting has established.
- 7.22 Viewpoint 15 is taken from another bridleway approximately 1.47km away from the site on the hillside leading to Great Ridge and large areas of woodland. The view consists of sloped arable fields with some hedgerow planting leading towards the valley's transport corridor containing glimpses of vehicles travelling along the A303. Beyond the road the landscape the rises as pastoral fields and in the far distance wooded hilltops can be seen. The transport corridor forms a distinctive part of the view, due to travelling vehicles and associated

infrastructure and noise. Agricultural barns beyond the site can be seen, although the site itself forms a very small strip of land from here and is difficult to determine. Proposed reinforced hedge boundaries as part of the proposals will hinder views of the site from here further. Once woodland and hedgerow planting has established, it is expected that the proposals would be hard to see from here.

- 7.23 Viewpoint 16 is taken from a public bridleway above Chicklade Dairy and approximately 1.29km away from the site. Much of the view is of pastoral rolling fields with gappy hedgerow boundaries leading to areas of woodland on hilltops. The A303 road corridor is visibly prominent and audible, with continual traffic observed passing thorough. Chicklade Service Station can be seen, as can agricultural buildings and houses located next to the site. The site is clearly visible from here, and the northern half is quite prominent seen as rolling fields in the middle distance. The bottom section of the field, proposed to contain the solar arrays and associated landscaping, forms a small section of the view. With proposed planting on the northern and eastern boundaries, the solar development will be screened from here to some extent, however still visible.
- 7.24 The overall scale of change experienced by users of bridleways north east of the site, is assessed as small, due to a minor alteration to key elements within the view and discernible differences against the baseline situation, although the character of views will be largely unchanged. Higher up the hillside the solar arrays would be less visible, even very difficult to see once mitigation planting has established, however lower slopes would have clearer views. These, however, coincide with an increase in traffic noise, visual clutter along the road corridor and less tranquillity due to the closer proximity of the busy A-road. The duration of effect due to the proposals is long term, with a limited extent of effect. The magnitude of effect is negligible, resulting in an overall significance of effect of minimal adverse.

Users of PROW Monarch's Way long distance path (VPs 17, 20)

- 7.25 Viewpoints 17 and 20 have been taken at points on the Monarch's Way long distance footpath. The Way is based on the route taken by King Charles II during his escape after defeat by Cromwell in the final battle of the Civil Wars at Worcester in 1651. Viewpoint 17 is located on elevated ground, approximately 4.52km east of the site and offers a panoramic view of the open countryside. There are several detracting factors including the nearby presence of the busy A303 road with associated signage and noise which significantly reduces tranquillity at this point of the path. Looking west across the landscape, along the valley corridor and nestled amongst clumps of woodland, characteristic of this locality, the site can be seen above the snaking A-road.
- 7.26 Viewpoint 20 is from further west along the Monarch's Way, approximately 2.47km away from the site. The wider landscape is hidden from users of the footpath due to dense hedgerow vegetation to both sides of the path along this stretch, although a small gap near the A350 road allowed views across the landscape towards the site. The character of the view is farmed landscape of arable and pastoral fields and come hedged boundaries with associated farm buildings and homes. In the distance wooded hilltops can be seen, however the site is not visible from here due to landform.

- 7.27 The proposed solar development, with associated landscaping and fencing covering the lower part of the existing field, would be visible in the distance from Viewpoint 17. The scale of the visual effect experienced by users of the path will result in a very minor alteration to features and characteristics, such that the post development baseline will have barely perceptible differences. This is due to the substantial distance from the site, comparative to the scale of the proposed changes, and due to mitigation planting, hedgerow management and the very small portion of the view effected. The overall character of the view will remain the same: a vast panoramic rural landscape with only a minor change occurring within an already developed transport corridor.
- 7.28 The duration of the effect will be long term and the extent will be intermediate. The resulting magnitude of the effect is low and the overall significance of effect on this receptor is moderate to slight-adverse.

Users of PROW Wessex Ridgeway long distance path (VP 18)

- 7.29 Viewpoint 18 is taken from the Wessex Ridgeway, a historic, 138-mile long-distance path linking Marlborough in Wiltshire, to Lyme Regis in Dorset, offering ancient history, varied landscapes, and connecting to the Greater Ridgeway for a much longer journey to Norfolk. The ZTV predicts no views of the site which has been confirmed by a field visit. The view looks up an arable field towards its wooded top with Hawking Down house located amongst the trees. The site is approximately 1.50km away in the north, however there is no visibility of the site.

Users of PROW bridleway south of the site (VP19)

- 7.30 Viewpoint 19 is taken from a public bridleway approximately 1.52km away from the site to the south. There is no predicted visibility of the site, which was confirmed during field studies, as its visibility is constrained by a ridge which blocks views any further south than around half a kilometre.

8 Summary

- 8.1 This report has outlined the landscape and visual impacts possible due to the development proposals set out in the planning application and the layout shown in landscape framework plan (DWG: 25138-LHC-00-XX-DR-L-9401). The landscape plan outlines enhancements to the site's landscape, including new hedgerows with trees, native woodland planting, orchard tree planting and meadow grass seeding which accords with NPPF paragraph 187 that a development should 'improve local environmental conditions' and demonstrates that the natural pattern of features such as hedgerows and field boundaries will be 'conserved and enhanced' in alignment with Wiltshire Core Policy 51 Landscape.
- 8.2 The NPPF and Wiltshire Core Strategy seek to '*increase the use and supply of renewable energy*' and '*tackle the causes and effects of climate change*' while '*ensuring adverse (landscape and visual) impacts are addressed accordingly*'. This report has shown how mitigation measures will lessen the landscape and visual impact from the proposals and how the visibility of the proposals is constrained due to layout size, mitigation measures and location, reducing potential impact within the National Landscape and in particular within the tranquil rural landscape and from popular and important viewpoints.
- 8.3 The LVIA report shows that '*landscape features of cultural, historic and heritage value*' (Core Policy 51) will not be adversely impacted. The site layout, location and mitigation measures have sought to *protect important views and visual amenity* and maintain the tranquillity (Core Policy 51) of the National Landscape though the proposed development's location within a busy transport corridor with limited visibility into the wider countryside.
- 8.4 The Wiltshire Renewable Energy Landscape Sensitivity Assessment identifies broad areas for *renewable energy development, without specific sites analysed*. The site is within an area classed as having *greater landscape impact* for solar on the proposed scale, however this designation includes the entirety of Landscape Character Area 2A (Open Chalk Downland) and does not distinguish between the A303 trunk road corridor, with nearby associated commercial and residential development and a distinct lack of tranquillity, and the wider National Landscape countryside. This is crossed with PROWs and offering many panoramic long distance views across rolling landscape and a great sense of tranquillity, where landscape and visual impact may be much greater than the proposals here.

Landscape Effects

- 8.5 The assessment evaluates the landscape effects of the proposed solar development using fieldwork and photography, considering the scale, duration, extent and magnitude of change. The scheme will introduce solar PV modules, fencing, access tracks, transformers and associated infrastructure, replacing intensively farmed arable land. While the proposed development represents a fundamental long-term change at the site level, existing field boundaries will be retained and enhanced through new native hedgerow planting and an area of orchard and woodland planting and wildflower meadow will be created. The surrounding landscape is heavily influenced by the A303 transport corridor and nearby development, with moderate containment from landform and vegetation. Overall, the site and immediate surroundings are assessed as having medium landscape sensitivity, a high magnitude of change, and a resulting major to moderate adverse landscape effect.

- 8.6 At a wider scale, the site lies within National Character Area 132 (Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs). Although the NCA has high value and medium to high quality, the development would result in only a small-scale change within the broader landscape context. The solar array is considered a low-impact, temporary (albeit long-term) intervention, located close to existing infrastructure and away from more tranquil parts of the NCA. Proposed mitigation aligns with the NCA's objectives by strengthening hedgerows and enhancing landscape and ecological assets. The magnitude of effect on the NCA is assessed as low, with an overall significance of slight to moderate adverse.
- 8.7 The site is also within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape (AONB), and the West Wiltshire Downs Open Chalk Downland character area. Much of this covers the same area as shown in the older Wiltshire Landscape Assessment (2005), so they are treated as one. This nationally designated landscape has high sensitivity, although the site location is already influenced by fast-moving transport corridors. The proposals are small in scale relative to the wider landscape, they retain and enhance field boundaries, and do not affect key archaeological features. The changes are long term and experienced over an intermediate area resulting in an overall moderate adverse effect on the National Landscape.

Visual Effects

- 8.8 The visual effects assessment used ZTV modelling, fieldwork and photography to evaluate potential visibility of the proposed solar development from roads, public rights of way and long-distance trails. Overall visibility is constrained by landform, existing vegetation and the presence of the A303 corridor, with views often intermittent or distant. For users of the A303 and nearby minor roads, visibility is negligible to very limited due to hedgerows, roadside activity and transient views, resulting in minimal to minor adverse effects.
- 8.9 The greatest visual effects occur for users of public rights of way closest to the site, particularly the bridleway along the western site boundary and the bridleway/restricted byway south of the site. Here, the development would introduce noticeable new built elements into currently open farmland, leading to major to moderate adverse effects, reducing over time as mitigation planting establishes. Users of bridleways further north and north-east experience small to negligible changes, as the solar array occupies a minor part of wider views already influenced by road infrastructure and traffic.
- 8.10 At a wider scale, effects on long-distance routes such as the Monarch's Way are limited, with the development visible only as a very small and distant element within expansive panoramic views, resulting in slight to moderate adverse effects. No visual effects are predicted for the Wessex Ridgeway or bridleways further south, where landform and woodland block any views of the site.