

# Planning Statement

Planning Application for a Solar Farm and Ancillary  
Infrastructure

at

**Studley Grange Landfill Site  
Hay Lane, Lydiard Tregoze,  
Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire  
SN4 9QT**

on behalf of



by

---

**H e a t o n s**  
Planning Environment Design

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## APPENDICES

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| Revision | Author | Checked by | Date       |
|----------|--------|------------|------------|
| A        | GN     | SG         | 30/03/2026 |
|          |        |            |            |
|          |        |            |            |

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1.1 This document is a Planning Statement (PS) prepared by Heaton's on behalf of Biffa Waste Services Ltd (the applicant) to support a planning application for the construction and operation of a small-scale solar farm on land at the former Studley Grange Landfill Site, Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire (the site). The proposed development is temporary in nature and would be operational for a period of approximately 25 years from the date of first operation.
- 1.1.2 This PS accompanies the planning application and sets out the relevant planning policies to be considered as part of the application determination. The PS also considers the potential for environmental effects arising from the proposed development and any mitigation measures considered necessary to remove or minimise such effects.
- 1.1.3 The proposal seeks to utilise an area of land which has limited alternative uses due to historic landfill operations.
- 1.1.4 To assist Wiltshire Council, the Local Planning Authority (LPA), in arriving at a considered view, details of the proposed development and a site description are outlined below along with a broad assessment of any potential environmental effects and their significance. In addition to environmental matters, other considerations material to the preparation and consideration of the planning application are also set out below.
- 1.1.5 This PS should be read in conjunction with the following documents:
- Design and Access Statement;
  - Ecological Reports (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, BNG Report and Matrix and Protected Species Report);
  - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment;
  - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA);
  - Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study;
  - Transport Statement;
  - Preliminary Geoenvironmental Investigation;
  - Heritage Statement; and
  - Construction Traffic Management Plan.

1.1.6 In addition, the following plans accompany this planning application:

- Site Location Plan;
- Site Plan;
- Proposed Illustrative Site Layout;
- Indicative Solar Panel Detail;
- Indicative Compound Layout and Sections;
- Details (Security Fence, CCTV, Unbound Stone Road); and
- Proposed Illustrative Landscaping Plan.

## **1.2 The Applicant**

- 1.2.1 Biffa is a sustainable leader in the UK's waste and recycling industry. Founded in London in 1912, Biffa employs 10,000 people and collects waste from thousands of businesses and millions of households across the UK each day.
- 1.2.2 By growing their collections business, building their plastic recycling capacity, and investing in energy-from-waste, Biffa are on a mission to enable the UK circular economy by changing the way businesses and people think about waste.
- 1.2.3 Biffa's surplus food redistribution partnership with Company Shop Group, and their environmental work with Biffa Award and Waste Aid, also have wider benefits for the UK and beyond. Since 2002 Biffa have reduced their carbon emissions by 70 per cent and aim to be net zero by 2050.

## **2 SITE APPRAISAL**

### **2.1 Site Location**

- 2.1.1 The site location is shown on accompanying Drawing Number HEA064-001 (Site Location Plan).
- 2.1.2 The proposed application site is located within the curtilage of the former Studley Grange Landfill Site approximately 3km to the east of Wootton Bassett and 6km west of Swindon. The area which would accommodate the solar array is centred on National Grid Reference SU 1018481780.

### **2.2 Site Description**

- 2.2.1 The site, a former landfill site, has been capped and restored. The landfill includes leachate wells and landfill gas extraction infrastructure. The restored land now features modified grassland, wildflower strips, woodland areas, ponds, and low-grade agricultural grazing land, designed to increase biodiversity and create ecological corridors.
- 2.2.2 The site is accessed from a shared private access lane that leads onto Wharf Road (B4005) and then further to the north provides access to Junction 16 of the M4. This is shown on the plans Ref: HEA064-001 (Site Location Plan), Ref: HEA064-002 (Site Plan) and HEA064-003 (Proposed Illustrative Site Layout).
- 2.2.3 The site area is approximately 6.5ha and includes the landfill gas control and electricity generating compound associated with the now restored landfill site. The existing compound houses two generating engines, two gas flares and associated equipment all surrounded by a palisade fence. The site is bordered by restored landfill, the access track to the north, agricultural fields and woodland planting.
- 2.2.4 The main area proposed for the solar arrays would be located on the southern restored areas of the former landfill on south facing restored flanks, approximately 130m to the south of the proposed solar site compound area.
- 2.2.5 In terms of the surroundings, there are no occupied properties within a 500m radius of the perimeter of the site. The closest building is Grade II listed Studley Grange Farmhouse with associated outbuildings approximately 100m to the north of the site, which is unoccupied.

- 2.2.6 There are three statutory designated sites within the 2km desk study area:
- Bincknoll Dip Woods SSSI (5.54 ha) – Ancient semi-natural woodland of biological interest;
  - Goldborough Farm Meadows SSSI (10.26 ha) – Noted for species-rich grassland; and
  - Wootton Bassett Mud Spring SSSI (0.78 ha) – A rare geological feature supporting unique biological communities.
- 2.2.7 There are three non-statutory designated Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 2km of the site:
- Monks Rest Wood Woodland Trust Reserve (39.6 ha) - The wood part of the Great Western Forest was planted with a mixture of native broadleaves including oak ash field maple birch and lime along with woody shrubs such as hazel and guelder rose;
  - Morningside Farm Local Wildlife Site (25.87 ha) - A complex of species rich meadows either side of the Wilts and Berks canal; and
  - Hagbourne Copse Local Wildlife Site (2.09 ha) - A small urban woodland reserve managed as high forest and coppice with standards. Supports an abundant Bluebell population.
- 2.2.8 The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at lowest risk of flooding. The site also lies within an area which is at low to medium risk of surface water flooding.
- 2.2.9 There are watercourses located in the wider vicinity of the site; however, no open watercourses pass directly through the application boundary. There are two ponds located within the Studley Grange Farm site approximately 250m to the northeast and the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal is situated 200m to the south.
- 2.2.10 There are a number of listed buildings within 750m of the site:
- 2.2.11 Studley Grange Farmhouse (Grade II Listed) located approximately 100m further north from the closest boundary;
- Upper Studley Farmhouse (Grade II Listed) located approximately 500m further north from the closest boundary; and
  - Can Court Farmhouse (Grade II Listed), located approximately 575m further south from the closest boundary.

- 2.2.12 The nearest scheduled monument is 1.7km west of the site, a Medieval rural settlement 240m south of Lower Woodshaw Farm (list entry 1018388). There are no Grade I or Grade II\* designated assets within 3km of the Site. The nearest Registered Park and Garden is Grade II Lydiard Park, 2.2km north of the site, and to the north of the M4.
- 2.2.13 There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) crossing the solar panel development area. There are two Public Rights of Way which are situated towards the northeastern boundary of the site:
- 2.2.14 Footpath Ref: LTRE 1 is located at the northeastern edge of the site and heads northwards to connect with footpath Ref: LTRE 59 that follows the Great Western Main Line railway line.
- 2.2.15 Footpath Ref: LTRE 5 is located further to the northeast and leads to the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal to the south and also further north to footpath Ref: LTRE 59 that follows the Great Western Main railway line.

## 2.3 Background and Planning History

- 2.3.1 The application site has a longstanding history of waste management uses. The site has historically been used as a landfill since the 1990s. The landfill has now been restored, and the site is currently in the aftercare phase in accordance with planning permission 21/00655/WCM.
- 2.3.2 These consents reflect the incremental development and diversification of activities that have taken place over several decades, shaping the current character and operational use of the site. The relevant and most recent planning permissions are listed below:

| Application Reference | Description                                                                                                                                    | Decision                                       |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| PL/2022/06399         | Planning Application for the Replacement of an Electricity Generating Engine with a Storage Battery.                                           | Approved, dated 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2022 |
| 21/00655/WCM          | Variation of condition 3 of 17/12378/WCM to continue development without complying with Condition 3 (completion of restoration).               | Approved, dated 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2021     |
| 17/12378/WCM          | Variation of conditions 8 and 18 of planning approval 15/12577/WCM to allow for amendments to the landscaping and approved restoration scheme. | Approved, dated 2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2018       |
| 15/12577/WCM          | Variation of condition 3 (completion date) of planning permission reference N/12/03270/CM to extend the end date for restoration.              | Approved, dated 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2016      |

| Application Reference | Description                                                                                                                                       | Decision                                       |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| N/12/03270/WCM        | Variation of condition 3 relating to N/05/07038/FCM – Extension of time to allow for site restoration by 31st December 2015.                      | Approved, dated 30 <sup>th</sup> January 2013  |
| N/05/07038/CM         | Landfill redesign, revised restoration and landscaping scheme, installation of recycling facility without compliance with condition 2 of N991696. | Approved, dated 16 <sup>th</sup> November 2005 |

### **3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

3.1.1 The proposed development comprises the installation of a solar farm on approximately 6.5ha of land within the former Studley Grange Landfill Site. The proposed indicative layout has been informed primarily by the site topography, restoration planting and the location of sensitive receptors. The proposed indicative layout is illustrated on drawing HEA064-003 (Proposed Illustrative Site Layout). The key design principles and considerations that have influenced the proposed masterplan (HEA064-002) are set out in the Design and Access Statement at Appendix 1.

3.1.2 Individual elements of the proposed development are set out in further detail below.

#### **3.2 Solar Panels**

3.2.1 The solar panels would be located on two parcels of southern facing flanks of the former landfill, which has now been restored.

3.2.2 The photovoltaic (PV) panels, each measuring approximately 0.8m to 1.2m wide and 1.6m to 2m in length, would face south and be installed in arrays orientated east to west across the site. The panels would be fixed to a simple mounting framework and angled between 15 and 35 degrees to the horizontal.

3.2.3 The mounting structure for the panels is to be installed in non-penetrative ballast either solid cast concrete "Sleeper style" or with filled cages with crushed stone as illustrated on plan reference HEA064-004 (Indicative Solar Panel Detail).

3.2.4 The PV panels would be a standard polycrystalline type designed for the daylight levels at this site.

#### **3.3 Supporting Equipment**

3.3.1 The following infrastructure would be required to operate the solar farm:

- Mounting frames – matt finished galvanised steel;
- Inverters, control cabin and transformers / switchgear (housed in prefabricated containers) and associated cabling;
- Security deer fencing around the perimeter of the solar farm, sympathetic to the area at a maximum height of 2m, with access gates to solar panel areas;

- Infra-red CCTV cameras at a maximum height of 3m. In addition to the perimeter fencing, pole mounted CCTV are to be positioned at intervals facing into the site to protect privacy and ensure security;
- Internal service track;
- Temporary set down and construction compounds; and
- Scheme of landscaping and biodiversity enhancement.

3.3.2 The solar farm would have the capacity to export up to approximately 2.2 Megawatts (MW) of electricity for distribution within the local energy network. There is an existing electrical grid connection point within the existing landfill gas compound. The existing grid connection has sufficient capacity to accommodate the solar farm due to landfill gas generated electricity output reducing. All inverters, switch gear, control cabins etc would be sited within the existing compound rather than on the landfill site.

### **3.4 Layout**

3.4.1 The site layout would be split into two areas of solar arrays, designed around the site topography and existing access track. The two sections of solar arrays are separated by existing tree planting which forms part of the restoration scheme. 5.2ha of modified grassland enhancement is proposed around the field margins and below / in-between the panels. In addition, within the 5m space between the panels and the security fencing, other neutral grassland planting is proposed.

3.4.2 The existing landfill gas compound would be utilised as part of the proposals. A control building, transformer and switchgear would be established within the compound which is located on an area of hardstanding adjacent to the weighbridge, to the north of the proposed solar arrays along the access track.

3.4.3 The existing access track, which runs from the site boundary in a north easterly direction connecting to the private access lane which leads to the B4005 (Wharf Road) would be utilised for construction and ongoing monitoring purposes.

3.4.4 Once installed, the solar farm would only require minimal periodic monitoring and maintenance and therefore would not result in the use of significant resources or generate measurable quantities of waste.

### **3.5 Site Access**

3.5.1 The proposed development would utilise an existing access point from the private lane which leads to the B4005 (Wharf Road). The access lane is shared with the Studley

Grange Garden and Leisure Park as well as with the Studley Grange Farmhouse site. This lane previously served the landfill and is now used for maintenance and monitoring of the landfill and the gas compound area.

- 3.5.2 The access would require improvement to allow the delivery of panels up to the landfill. A temporary laydown area may also be formed in the vicinity of the compound adjacent to the access track. The construction of the solar farm would result in a relatively small number of vehicles travelling to and from the site over a period of approximately 2-3 months.
- 3.5.3 A Construction Traffic Management Plan is provided within Appendix 9, which sets out a proposed route for construction traffic. Once operational, traffic movements to and from the site would be minimal, with only access for routine maintenance being required.

### **3.6 Timescales**

- 3.6.1 The construction phase would typically take around 2-3 months, and would include ground preparation, installation of the security features and erection of the solar panels.
- 3.6.2 The proposed development is temporary in nature and would be operational for approximately 25 years.

### **3.7 Employment**

- 3.7.1 Following the construction phase, the proposed development would require periodic monitoring by a very small number of site staff or specialist contractors.

### **3.8 Security**

- 3.8.1 A security gate will be installed on the north eastern perimeter / entrance to the site in the interests of public health and safety with 2m high security deer fencing around the site perimeter and CCTV coverage, as shown on Drawing Numbers HEA064-003 (Proposed Illustrative Site Layout), HEA064-005 (Indicative Compound Layout and Sections) and HEA064-006 (Details (Security Fence, CCTV, Unbound Stone Rd)).

### **3.9 Hours of Operation**

- 3.9.1 The PV panels would operate during daylight hours, 7 days a week. Any general maintenance and monitoring (other than in an emergency) would be undertaken within normal working hours.

### **3.10 Decommissioning**

- 3.10.1 The use of the land is entirely reversible, with the PV panels and associated infrastructure being removed from the site and the land returned to its former condition at the end of the facility's lifespan.

## **4 PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that determination by the relevant LPA, in this instance, Wiltshire Council, must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.1.2 In reaching a decision on this application the first consideration is therefore whether the proposals accord with the Development Plan. Having done this, it is then necessary to have regard to all other material considerations, which include all relevant policy considerations contained in the emerging Development Plan as well as national planning policy and guidance.
- 4.1.3 This chapter of the Planning Statement focuses on the key planning policy considerations including the acceptability of the proposed development. Consideration of the relevant planning policies provides a reasoned justification for granting planning permission.

### **4.2 The Development Plan**

- 4.2.1 The Development Plan for the area consists of the Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted January 2015).
- 4.2.2 Material considerations include:
- National Planning Policy Framework (last amended December 2024);
  - Planning Practice Guidance;
  - Speech by the Minister for Energy and Climate Change to the Large-Scale Solar Conference (April 2013); and
  - Written Ministerial Statement on solar energy: protecting the local and global environment (March 2015).
- 4.2.3 The adopted Local Plan Core Strategy forms the statutory Development Plan for Wiltshire Council and provides a policy framework for all new developments. This sets out the Council's vision and strategy for the area until 2026 and provide the basis for decision making on planning applications.

### Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015-2026)

- 4.2.4 The Core Strategy (CS), which was adopted in January 2015, sets out the long-term vision and objectives for the whole of the area up to 2026 including strategic policies for steering and shaping development. It identifies specific locations for strategic new housing and employment and changes to transport infrastructure and other supporting community facilities, as well as defining areas where development will be limited.
- 4.2.5 In Autumn 2023, a new Local Plan was consulted upon, which when adopted will provide detailed policies against which development proposals will be considered.
- 4.2.6 Key policies of relevance to the determination of the proposal are summarised below:
- **Core Policy 42:** Standalone Renewable Energy Installations. This policy details that 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 any impacts have been satisfactorily assessed and taken into account, including any cumulative effects.
  - **Core Policy 50:** 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity'. This details that all development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Major development in particular must include measures to deliver biodiversity gains through opportunities to restore, enhance and create valuable habitats, ecological networks and ecosystem services.
  - **Core Policy 51:** 'Landscape' states that development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character. It states that this is to be achieved through sensitive design features paying particular attention to:
    - The locally distinctive pattern and species composition of natural features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and waterbodies.
    - Landscape features of cultural, historic and heritage value.
    - Important views and visual amenity.
    - Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.

- **Core Policy 56:** 'Contaminated Land' outlines that development proposals which are likely to be on or adjacent to land which may have been subject to contamination will need to demonstrate that measures can be taken to effectively mitigate the impacts of land contamination on public health, environmental quality, the built environment and amenity. Developers may be asked to include documents including a detailed site history, site characterisation, and remediation schemes, depending on the specific site.
- **Core Policy 58:** 'Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment' ensures that development protects, conserves and where possible enhances the historic environment. It states that designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- **Core Policy 61:** 'Transport and New Development' states that new development should be located and designed to reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives.
- **Core Policy 67:** 'Flood Risk' details that all new development will include measures to reduce the rate of rainwater run-off and improve rainwater infiltration to soil and ground (sustainable urban drainage) unless site or environmental conditions make these measures unsuitable.

#### **4.3 Supplementary Planning Documents**

- 4.3.1 There are no relevant Supplementary Planning Documents in relation to the proposed development.

#### **4.4 Emerging Local Plan**

- 4.4.1 Wiltshire Council are currently in the process of creating a new Local Plan for the area, which will guide planning decisions up to 2038. The draft Local Plan has undergone consultation under Regulation 19 in Autumn 2023 and was submitted for the examination to the Secretary of State in November 2024.
- 4.4.2 On Friday 27 February 2026, Wiltshire Council received the response from the Inspectors, appointed by the Government, to examine the Local Plan, to the proposed programme of work submitted to them on 30 January 2026.

4.4.3 Having reviewed the Council's proposed work programmes, the Inspectors set out two options for the Council, to either:

- (i) Withdraw the Local Plan from examination; or
- (ii) Request that the Inspectors draft a final report (which would recommend non-adoption). Wiltshire Council are planning to take a report (recommending proceeding with one of these two options) to the scheduled Cabinet (6 May) and Council (19 May) meetings in May 2026.

4.4.4 Although there is currently uncertainty regarding the adoption of the proposed draft plan, the advanced stage of the draft plan means it carries some weight in the decision-making process. As such, the most relevant policies are outlined below:

**Wiltshire Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft 2020-2038 (Regulation 19)** (September 2023)

- 4.4.5 **Policy 4:** 'Addressing Climate Change' states that all proposals must support a move towards carbon neutrality by incorporating several key features into all forms of development, including: reducing the need to travel, increasing the use of active travel to reduce reliance on the private car, maximising biodiversity and green infrastructure, adhering to an energy hierarchy, mitigating flood risk and incorporating renewable energy generation into schemes.
- 4.4.6 **Policy 86:** 'Renewable Energy Installations'. It is detailed that proposals will need to demonstrate the satisfactory resolution of all site-specific constraints. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate how impacts have been assessed, including any cumulative effects. Proposals will also need to demonstrate that there are appropriate plans or a planning mechanism in place requiring the removal of the equipment/ancillary infrastructure on cessation of energy generation, and/or storage, and restoration of the site back to its original use or an acceptable alternative countryside use for sites in countryside locations.
- 4.4.7 **Policy 88:** 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' details that all development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development.
- 4.4.8 **Policy 89:** 'Biodiversity Net Gain' states that Development must achieve a minimum net gain of 20% or higher.
- 4.4.9 **Policy 91:** Conserving and Enhancing Wiltshire's Landscapes' goes through points of how development should conserve and, where possible, enhance Wiltshire's landscapes.

- 4.4.10 **Policy 95:** 'Flood Risk' states that all new development, including where appropriate retrofitting proposals, will include measures to reduce the rate of rainwater run-off and incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- 4.4.11 **Policy 97:** 'Contaminated Land' establishes that proposals suspected to be within areas of contaminated land will need to demonstrate measures can be taken to effectively mitigate the impacts of land contamination.
- 4.4.12 **Policy 99:** 'Ensuring the Conservation and Enhancement of the Historic Environment' sets out that heritage assets such as listed buildings should be preserved and enhanced where possible. Any harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, which will result from development proposals, will be required to be justified and outweighed by public benefits (including heritage benefits) at a level appropriate to the significance of the asset and the harm caused.

## 4.5 Material Considerations

### The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – last amended, December 2024

- 4.5.1 The NPPF is the primary national planning policy document and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The NPPF has been subject to amendments since its initial publication in 2012, the most recent amendments being published in December 2024, with minor clarifications in February 2025. The document sets out the overarching planning policy that shall be implemented through the Development Plan and determination process. Key paragraphs of relevance to the determination of the proposal are summarised below.
- 4.5.2 **Paragraph 8** of the NPPF outlines the three overarching objectives for achieving sustainable development:
  - a. An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
  - b. A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*

*c. An environmental role – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*

4.5.3 The economic, social and environmental objectives should be pursued in mutually supportive ways. **Paragraph 11** constitutes the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system. In terms of decision taking, this means:

*'c) Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*

*d) Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*

*i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

*ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination'.*

4.5.4 **Paragraph 39** of the NPPF is clear that *"Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way"*. In accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, LPAs should *"work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area... Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible"*.

4.5.5 **Paragraph 109** sets out the importance of considering transport issues at an early stage in order to address potential impacts of development on existing transport networks. Early consideration may highlight opportunities to develop existing transport infrastructure and technology and enable any potential environmental impacts to be appropriately avoided or mitigated.

- 4.5.6 **Paragraph 116** states that development should only be refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.
- 4.5.7 **Paragraph 118** states that all developments that will generate significant amounts of traffic movements should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment so that the likely impacts of the proposal can be assessed.
- 4.5.8 **Paragraph 161** of the NPPF sets out that *“The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.”*
- 4.5.9 **Paragraph 168** of the NPPF goes on to state that when determining planning applications for *“all forms of renewable and low carbon energy development and their associated infrastructure”* local planning authorities should *“not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal’s contribution to a net zero future.”*
- 4.5.10 **Paragraph 187** of the NPPF sets out that *“planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by... protecting and enhancing valued landscapes... recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.”* Similarly, paragraph 185 of the NPPF states that *“decisions should ensure that the new development is appropriate for its location taking into account likely effects.”*
- 4.5.11 This paragraph seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment through, inter alia, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, minimising impacts and providing net gains for biodiversity and preventing new development from contributing to, or being affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.
- 4.5.12 **Paragraph 201** states that the focus of planning decisions should be on whether the proposed development is an acceptable use of land, rather than the control of processes. Planning decisions should assume that these regimes will operate effectively.

### Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 4.5.13 The Government's PPG should be read alongside the NPPF and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. PPG on 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy' was published in June 2015. Paragraph 1 refers to improving the UK's energy security through increasing the amount of renewable and low carbon technologies in operation.
- 4.5.14 The Guidance states that, for large scale ground mounted solar PV development, considerations will include:
- 'Encouraging the effective use of land by focusing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value.'*
- 4.5.15 The proposed development is located on a former landfill site which has been restored and is classed predominantly as poor semi-improved grassland. The site is not in active use and is not of high environmental value. The site is of a scale which is able to accommodate a significant ground mounted solar PV installation in proximity to a sufficiently sized and available grid connection.
- 4.5.16 Where a proposal for solar development involves greenfield land, the LPA should consider whether the installation would allow for continued agricultural use and/or whether the proposals include biodiversity improvements around the arrays.
- 4.5.17 In terms of the visual impact of the proposed development, the PPG goes on to advise that one of the factors an LPA will need to consider is:
- '...the effect of glint and glare and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety.'*
- 4.5.18 It is recognised that, with effective screening and appropriate land topography, the zone of visual influence for ground mounted solar PV installations could be zero.
- 4.5.19 The PPG also advises that when considering such development, care should be taken with the design of security features, such as lighting and fencing. Great care should be taken to avoid any impacts on views of heritage assets where this may affect the significance of those assets.

## 4.6 National Policy Statements on Energy & Renewable Energy

### Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (November 2023)

- 4.6.1 Policy Statement EN-1 was revised and presented to the Houses of Parliament in November 2023 to set out national policy for energy infrastructure in the UK. The NPS came into effect on the 17th January 2024.
- 4.6.2 EN-1's primary purpose is in relation to decisions for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, which does not relate to the proposed development. It is however confirmed that this document can be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications (Paragraph 1.2.1), and the extent to which the policies in EN-1 are material, and to what extent, will be judged on a case-by-case basis and will depend upon the extent to which the matters are already covered by applicable planning policy.
- 4.6.3 It is noted that fossil fuels still accounted for just over 76% of energy supply in 2020, and that the Government states:
- 'We need to dramatically increase the volume of energy supplied from low carbon sources'.*
- 4.6.4 EN-1 also highlights in several places that demand for electricity is likely to increase and could more than double by 2050 as large parts of transport, heating and industry decarbonise by switching from fossil fuels to low carbon electricity.
- 4.6.5 The consequence of this is that if demand for electricity doubles by 2050, EN-1 states that:
- 'We will need a fourfold increase in low carbon generation... In addition, we committed in the Net Zero Strategy to take action so that by 2035, all our electricity will come from low carbon sources, subject to security of supply, whilst meeting a 40-60% increase in electricity. This means that the majority of new generating capacity needs to be low carbon'.*
- 4.6.6 The Applicant considers that this statement again reinforces the messages from the plethora of recent Government announcements that there is a need to substantially increase low-carbon energy generation beyond current rates of deployment. The proposed development would make a meaningful and material contribution.
- 4.6.7 As to the types of new generating capacity needed, EN-1 states that 'Wind and solar are the lowest cost ways of generating electricity, helping reduce costs and providing a clean and secure source of electricity supply' (as they are not reliant on fuel for generation).

- 4.6.8 This highlights that a secure, reliable, affordable, net zero consistent system in 2050 is likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar.

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (November 2023)

- 4.6.9 Policy Statement EN-3 was revised and presented to the Houses of Parliament in November 2023. This came into effect on the 17th January 2024.
- 4.6.10 Under the specific heading of Solar Photovoltaic Generation at Section 2.10, EN3- confirms that: *'The Government has committed to sustained growth in solar capacity to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions by 2050. As such, solar is a key part of the Government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector'*
- 4.6.11 It is noted that the Government affirms that *'solar also has an important role in delivering the government's goals for greater energy independence'* and the British Energy Security Strategy states that Government expects a five-fold increase in combined ground and rooftop solar development by 2035 (up to 70GW)'.
- 4.6.12 Policy Statement EN-3 further explains that solar farms are one of the most established renewable electricity technologies in the UK, the cheapest form of electricity generation, can be built quickly and with consistent reductions in the cost of materials and improvements in efficiency, are now in some cases, viable to deploy subsidy-free.
- 4.6.13 It then explains a number of key considerations involved in the siting of a solar farm, and also technical considerations for the Secretary of State to consider.
- 4.6.14 In the section entitled 'Project lifetime and decommissioning', EN-3 advises that *'the time limited nature of the solar farm, where a time limit is sought as a condition of consent, is likely to be an important consideration for the Secretary of State'*. The proposed development is likely to be limited for an operational period of up to 25 years from the date of the first commercial export of electricity, and therefore this project lifetime consideration should be given significant weight in the decision.

Revised Draft National Policy Statements for Energy Infrastructure (April 2025)

- 4.6.15 In April 2025, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero published consultation draft updates to, inter alia, Policy Statements EN-1 and EN-3. The Consultation Paper published alongside the draft NPSs explains that in July 2024 the Government launched a review of the energy NPSs to ensure that they reflected the Government's energy priorities as set out in the Clean Power mission and enable a planning policy framework

which can deliver investment in the infrastructure needed to achieve Clean Power by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050.

- 4.6.16 The policy, through the Draft Policy Statement EN-1, has been updated to bring Clean Power 2030 at the forefront, being the primary policy that the NPSs enable. It points towards the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, which contains the capacity ranges for technologies in 2030 that the NPSs support. Successfully delivering Clean Power 2030 will require rapid deployment of new clean energy capacity.
- 4.6.17 Furthermore, the Draft Policy Statement EN-3 recognises that the UK has huge potential for solar power. Solar is at the heart of the Clean Power 2030 mission and reaffirms the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan target of deploying between 45-47GW of solar PV by 2030.

#### **4.7 UK Energy Legislation and Policy**

##### The Seventh Carbon Budget (February 2025)

- 4.7.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 detailed below also established an independent non-departmental public body named the Climate Change Committee ('CCC') whose job it is to advise the Government on tackling and preparing for climate change. Section 34 of the Climate Change Act requires the CCC to periodically publish a carbon budget which is the total amount of greenhouse gases that the UK can emit over a 5-year period to keep track with the 2050 net zero targets. In February 2025, the latest budget was published detailing the targets for the period 2038-2042 as well as a review of the current position of the UK in relation to previous targets.
- 4.7.2 This shows that at present the UK is in line with targets set for the year 2025. However, there remains a steep decline in greenhouse gas emissions required if the 2050 target is to be met. The latest Carbon Budget states:

*"Our recommended level for the Seventh Carbon Budget, a limit on the UK's greenhouse gas emissions over the five-year period 2038 to 2042, is 535 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e, including emissions from international aviation and shipping. This would be an ambitious target, reflecting the importance of the task. But it is deliverable, provided action is taken rapidly."*

- 4.7.3 It goes on to note in relation to renewable energy projects, that:

*"In many key areas, the best way forward is now clear. Electrification and low-carbon electricity supply make up the largest share of emissions reductions in our pathway, 60% by 2040."*

- 4.7.4 It is also noted that there needs to be a step up in the support within the processes needed to deliver such projects, stating:

*“The UK must also step up actions to adapt to the climate change that is already happening. The investments, infrastructure, and land use changes required to deliver the Seventh Carbon Budget must be designed to be well-adapted to current and future climate change.”*

- 4.7.5 It is therefore clear that the planning process must play a role in ensuring suitable projects are supported and granted permission without unnecessary delay in order to ensure that the infrastructure is in place so that the UK can continue to meet the Carbon Budget targets and remain on track for the 2050 net zero targets.

Clean Power 2030 Action Plan (December 2024)

- 4.7.6 In December 2024 the Government published the ‘Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A new era of clean electricity’ which outlines how the Government’s target of ensuring that by 2030, Great Britain will produce at least as much power as it consumes in total over the year through clean energy sources in order to drastically reduce fossil fuel dependency in the strive for reaching net zero by 2050.
- 4.7.7 In the action plan it is stated that to do so, the country will require, alongside the energy generation infrastructure, 23-27 GW of battery capacity for energy storage to improve the flexibility of the electricity system. It pledges a “once-in-a-generation” energy investment to achieve this, alongside planning reforms to facilitate what it calls “2030 critical projects”.
- 4.7.8 This latest publication further underlines the step change in direct Government action to ensure that the means are in place to implement proposals for development, such as this proposed solar farm, that incorporate both renewable energy generation and storage as a result of their importance in meeting national targets.

Energy Security Plan (ESP) (March 2023)

- 4.7.9 In March 2023, the Government published its Powering Up Britain suite of documentation including the Energy Security Plan (“the ESP”). It is pertinent to note that the Government states that ‘*Low-cost renewable generation will be the foundation of the electricity system and will play a key role in delivering amongst the cheapest wholesale electricity in Europe*’.

- 4.7.10 The ESP continues to examine the role of solar, and it reaffirms the Government's commitment to aim for 70GW of ground and rooftop capacity by 2035. It again states that this amounts to a fivefold increase on current installed capacity. The ESP then concludes:

*"We need to maximise deployment of both types of solar to achieve our overall target."*

- 4.7.11 Considerable importance should be attached to this statement, in that the Government is clear that the deployment of ground mounted solar (as well as roof mounted solar) needs to be maximised if the fivefold increase in solar PV deployment is to be met.

British Energy Security Strategy (April 2022)

- 4.7.12 In response to the rising cost of energy and the crisis associated with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Government updated its British Energy Security Strategy ("the ESS") in April 2022. When discussing solar technology, the ESS notes that the Government expects a fivefold increase from the current 14GW of solar capacity in the UK by 2035. Specifically in respect of ground-mounted solar, the ESS explains that consultation on amending planning rules will take place to strengthen policy in favour of development of non-protected land, while ensuring communities continue to have a say and environmental protections remain in place.

Decarbonisation of the UK Power System (October 2021)

- 4.7.13 In October 2021, the UK Government set out plans to decarbonise the UK power system by 2035. The plans will focus on building a secure, home-grown energy sector that reduces reliance on fossil fuels and exposure to volatile global wholesale energy prices.
- 4.7.14 The commitment to decarbonise the UK's electricity system by 2035 brings forward by 15 years the Government's commitment to a fully decarbonised power system by 2050, set out in the Energy White Paper, and builds on the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution to secure a future clean electricity supply, that is generated in the UK, for the UK.
- 4.7.15 To ensure this ambition becomes a reality, the Government will double down on efforts to deploy a new generation of home-grown technologies – from offshore wind, hydrogen and solar, to nuclear, onshore wind and carbon capture and storage.
- 4.7.16 Since the Labour Government came into power in July 2024, the target for decarbonising the electricity system has been brought forward from 2035 to 2030.

#### Net Zero Strategy (October 2021)

- 4.7.17 The Government published its Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener in October 2021 which establishes that the UK will be powered entirely by clean energy by 2035, subject to security of supply.
- 4.7.18 Specifically in respect of the 'Power' sector, the Net Zero Strategy affirms that one of the Government's key commitments is to accelerate the deployment of low-cost renewable generation, such as wind and solar.
- 4.7.19 Another of the key commitments is:  
  
*'to ensure the planning system can support the deployment of low carbon energy infrastructure'.*
- 4.7.20 The National Audit Office has stated that the challenge presented here is colossal. They state that on one hand, the Government requires that by 2035 all our electricity will need to come from low carbon sources, subject to security of supply, bringing forward the Government's commitment to a fully decarbonised power system by 15 years from the previous target of 2050, which was envisaged in the Energy White Paper only 10 months previously. While on the other hand, the Government is at the same time forecasting a 40-60% increase in demand over the same period.
- 4.7.21 To meet this challenge, the Government states that a low-cost, net zero consistent electricity system is most likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar generation, whether in 2035 or 2050 (paragraph 11, page 98). It affirms that we need to continue to drive rapid deployment of renewables so we can reach substantially greater capacity beyond 2030. The Government further indicates that a sustained increase in the deployment of land-based renewables (and specifically identifying solar) will be required in the 2020s and beyond.
- 4.7.22 Given the size of the challenge, the Government states 'we will need to consider how low carbon energy infrastructure can be deployed at an unprecedented scale and pace sympathetically alongside the interests of our communities and consistent with our obligations to a sustainable environment, both land-based and marine.'

#### Energy White Paper (December 2020)

- 4.7.23 The Government published the Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future in December 2020. The white paper puts net zero and our effort to fight climate change at its core.

- 4.7.24 The foreword to the document explains that the way we produce and use energy is key to achieving net zero and our success will rest on a decisive shift away from fossil fuels to using clean energy for heat and industrial processes, as much as for electricity generation. The shift to net zero will affect us all and the White Paper presents a vision of how we make the transition to clean energy by 2050.
- 4.7.25 The White Paper recognises the progress made to increase deployment of renewables and sees the expansion of renewable technologies as a key contributor to achieving an affordable clean electricity system by 2050. The White Paper at Page 45 states:

*"Onshore wind and solar will be key building blocks of the future generation mix, along with offshore wind. We will need sustained growth in the capacity of these sectors in the next decade to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions in all demand scenarios."*

- 4.7.26 The White Paper explains that the UK Government is committed to ending coal in the electricity mix no later than 2025 but the retiring capacity will need to be replaced to keep pace with existing levels of demand and forecasted demand which is expected to double by 2050. This is driven by the electrification of cars and vans and the increased use of clean electricity replacing gas for heating. As a result, electricity could provide more than 50% of final energy demand in 2050, up from 17% in 2019. This would require a four-fold increase in clean electricity generation with the decarbonisation of electricity increasingly underpinning the delivery of the net zero target.

#### Clean Growth Strategy (October 2017)

- 4.7.27 The 'Clean Growth Strategy' was published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in October 2017. In respect of the power sector, the Strategy anticipates that by 2050 emissions from this sector need to be close to zero. In the meantime, the Strategy indicates one possible pathway to the interim step of 2032 is for power emissions to fall by 80% compared to 2017 levels which could be achieved by, inter alia, growing low carbon sources such as renewables and nuclear to over 80% of electricity generation, and phasing out unabated coal power. The Strategy also confirms that the *"Government want to see more people investing in solar without government support"*. Attention is drawn in particular to Pages 95 – 96 of the Strategy.
- 4.7.28 The clear and explicit need to introduce a step change in how the UK reacts to climate change has been recognised by UK Parliament who, on 1st May 2019, declared an Environmental and Climate Change Emergency.

Written Ministerial Statement on solar energy: protecting the local and global environment (March 2015)

- 4.7.29 This Written Ministerial Statement is referred to in the PPG. In March 2015, the Secretary of State (Eric Pickles) provided a statement supporting the Government's solar PV strategy. The sequential approach was highlighted as an important factor in determining the location of solar farms. High quality agricultural land should be avoided, and the use of previously developed land was supported. Any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by compelling evidence.

Speech by the Minister for Energy and Climate Change to the Large-Scale Solar Conference (April 2013)

- 4.7.30 This speech is referred to in the PPG on renewable and low carbon energy. The speech sets out the need for solar PV and the requirement to place it at the heart of the UK's energy mix. The speech refers to a sequential approach to ground-mounted projects where, in the absence of brownfield land, installations should be on low grade agricultural land which will allow grazing in parallel. Well thought out visual screening is also referred to.
- 4.7.31 The PPG generally reflects this approach of encouraging and requiring large scale solar schemes to be developed in a sustainable manner. The Minister's speech is a material consideration in determining planning applications for solar PV.

The Climate Change Act 2008 (c. 27)

- 4.7.32 The Climate Change Act (the 2008 Act) brought in the legislative basis for the United Kingdom (UK) to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 from their 1990 levels. The target included in the 'Climate Change Act 2008' was strengthened in June 2019 to be a 100% reduction relative to 1990 levels by 2050 (known as "net zero").
- 4.7.33 In April 2021, the UK Government committed to set in law by end of June 2021 the world's most ambitious climate change target, cutting emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.
- 4.7.34 This target was amended from 80% to 100% in June 2019 following the Committee on Climate Change publishing 'Net Zero – The UK's Contribution to Stopping Global Warming' report. The Government is required to set 5 yearly binding budgets based on, inter alia, the latest scientific knowledge, technology and economic circumstances.

- 4.7.35 The 2008 Act requires the Government to develop an adaptation programme on matters for which it is responsible. The programme must contribute to sustainable development.
- 4.7.36 At the local level, Wiltshire Council declared a Climate Emergency in February 2019, and they resolved to acknowledge a climate emergency and to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. A Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group was set up to gather evidence and come up with recommendations on achieving this. Their Cabinet subsequently committed to make the council carbon neutral by 2030.
- 4.7.37 A climate strategy has been adopted to enable the Council to meet these commitments. The plan is evidence and data led, and includes a community led approach which engages, empowers, enables and communicates with Wiltshire communities and businesses.

#### **4.8 Planning Policy Conclusions**

- 4.8.1 The proposed development aims to deliver a sustainable energy supply through the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on land formerly used for waste management activities. It seeks to establish a renewable energy source on a restored, under-utilised site that benefits from an existing electricity grid connection with sufficient capacity to accommodate the solar farm as landfill gas generated electricity output reduces. The proposals are temporary in nature and will incorporate measures to enhance biodiversity within the site's habitats and as such, the scheme is considered to align with policies in the Development Plan, national guidance, and other relevant material considerations.
- 4.8.2 Guidance within the NPPF and PPG are supportive of ground mounted solar PV installations within suitable and sustainable locations, taking into consideration the need to avoid siting such development on high value agricultural land. Material considerations, including the Written Ministerial Statements, support the sequential approach to ground mounted solar PV installations on previously developed land, or greenfield land of low agricultural value. Opportunities to continue agricultural uses in tandem with solar farms and providing biodiversity improvements are also supported. Best and Most Versatile agricultural land must be avoided, unless compelling evidence is provided to justify its use as a solar farm.
- 4.8.3 The proposed development would contribute to the national aims of increasing solar PV capacity in the UK. Any potential environmental impacts associated with the proposals would be made acceptable through the implementation of appropriate mitigation, where required. The application demonstrates that the proposals would be sensitively

sited, would not result in the loss of high value agricultural land or give rise to any unacceptable environmental impacts.

- 4.8.4 The proposals are expected to deliver approximately 2.2 MW of renewable energy capacity, supporting the Government's objective of achieving a 100% reduction in UK greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Furthermore, the proposals are framed within the context of the Government's Build Back Greener strategy (October 2021) and the broader commitment to meeting the UK's legally binding net zero target by 2050. Part 3 of the strategy outlines the pathway to a fully decarbonised power system by 2035, with key policy drivers including the accelerated deployment of low-cost renewable generation such as wind and solar (Build Back Greener, October 2021).
- 4.8.5 The proposals are also in line with the Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan, updated in April 2023 which sits alongside the Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener policy paper. This plan sets out the steps the Government is taking to ensure the UK is more energy independent, secure and resilient. The plan outlines the UK's strategy for a secure, low-cost, and low-carbon energy system, building upon previous strategies such as the Ten Point Plan (which is the foundation for a green economic recovery and sets out the UK's approach to reaching net-zero emissions by 2050). It emphasises the role of both domestic production and imports of oil and gas during the transition to a low-carbon future. In essence, this strategy focuses on bolstering energy security and accelerating the transition to clean energy.
- 4.8.6 The Government also publishes regular reports on energy trends, such as the Energy Trends report, which provides updates on energy production, consumption, and prices. The latest Energy Trends report (March 2025) shows a significant drop in overall energy production, with record lower levels recorded for coal, oil, and gas.
- 4.8.7 The proposed solar farm represents a forward-thinking step towards aiding the Government's strategic energy objectives—ensuring a secure energy supply, lowering costs for households and businesses, and decarbonising the economy in a cost-effective, economically beneficial way. As outlined in the Clean Growth Strategy, solar energy is a key enabler of this transition, and while this development may be modest in scale, its contribution is both meaningful and timely.
- 4.8.8 If consented, the proposed development would contribute to the deployment of low carbon energy infrastructure in the immediate future and therefore contribute to the scale and pace of deployment that is needed, whilst also being sympathetic to both the interests of the local community and the sustainability of the environment at this location.

- 4.8.9 By harnessing clean, renewable energy, this project strengthens energy resilience, will reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and aligns with the UK's commitment to climate leadership.
- 4.8.10 It is considered that the proposed development accords with both national planning policy and the Development Plan for Wiltshire and meets the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development.

## **5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **5.1 EIA Screening**

- 5.1.1 The applicant made a formal Screening Request to Wiltshire Council on the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2025 in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.
- 5.1.2 The Council's Screening Opinion was received on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025. The Council concluded that, based on consideration of the description of the proposed development and the site and against the selection criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Regulations, that the proposal is not EIA Development and therefore an Environmental Impact Assessment for the development is not required.

## **6 ENVIRONMENTAL AND TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **6.1 Summary**

6.1.1 The proposed development is evidenced by assessments which consider the potential environmental impacts of development and assess the proposal's compliance with local and national policy. The following assessments have been prepared in support of this application:

- Ecological Reports (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, BNG Report and Statutory Metric and Protected Species Report (bird, bat and newt));
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study;
- Transport Statement;
- Preliminary Geoenvironmental Investigation; and
- Heritage Statement.

6.1.2 In addition, a Construction Traffic Management Plan has been prepared and accompanies this planning application.

6.1.3 The site and surrounding area have a history of both mining and waste management operations. The application site itself does not include any designations of relevance to landscape and visual features, such as a National Landscape or National Park, and no designated heritage assets are situated within the site boundary.

## **7 ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY**

### **7.1 Introduction**

7.1.1 The Development Plan and national planning policy contain guidance on the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. An emerging statutory requirement (Environment Act 2021) is for a net gain in biodiversity to be generated as part of development proposals. The documents which contain policies of relevance to ecology and biodiversity are set out below:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015-2026), adopted in January 2015;
- National Planning Policy Framework (last amended, December 2024) section 15 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment); and
- Planning Practice Guidance.

7.1.2 Policies concerned with biodiversity contained within the above documents have been written to ensure that biodiversity is protected and enhanced, and development proposals provide net gains for biodiversity.

7.1.3 This planning application is supported by the following:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, dated March 2026 (Appendix 2A);
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment - assessment data UK Habitat Survey collected on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2025 for mapping the habitats and recording any evidence of protected species. As the majority of the habitats were grassland it was recommended that a further site visit was undertaken in the optimal season for grassland to ensure habitat condition assessment data was accurate. A further site visit to carry out habitat condition assessments was undertaken on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2025 (Appendix 2B); and
- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric, which calculates the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitats was completed on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026 (Appendix 2B); and
- Protected Species Report, dated March 2026 (Appendix 2C).

7.1.4 Preliminary and detailed assessments were undertaken by Peach Ecology and AB Ecology to determine the ecological status of the site, potential ecological impact of the proposed development and identify potential mitigation and enhancement measures that might be required. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) included an initial

assessment of the potential ecological impact of the proposals, a desk study, phase 1 habitat survey (See Appendix 2A PEA). In addition, a preliminary protected species assessment has been undertaken (see Appendix 2C).

- 7.1.5 The planning application is also supported by a BNG assessment (located in Appendix 2B) which details that the proposals will result in an 21.04% increase in habitat units.

## **7.2 Baseline**

### ***Statutory Designated Sites***

- 7.2.1 There are three statutory designated sites within the 2km desk study area:

- Bincknoll Dip Woods SSSI (5.54 ha) – Ancient semi-natural woodland of biological interest;
- Goldborough Farm Meadows SSSI (10.26 ha) – Notified for species-rich grassland; and
- Wootton Bassett Mud Spring SSSI (0.78 ha) – A rare geological feature supporting unique biological communities.

- 7.2.2 There are three non-statutory designated Local Wildlife Site (LWS) within 2km of the site:

- Monks Rest Wood Woodland Trust Reserve (39.6 ha) - The wood part of the Great Western Forest was planted with a mixture of native broadleaves including oak ash field maple birch and lime along with woody shrubs such as hazel and guelder rose;
- Morningside Farm Local Wildlife Site (25.87 ha) - A complex of species rich meadows either side of the Wilts and Berks canal; and
- Hagbourne Copse Local Wildlife Site (2.09 ha) - A small urban woodland reserve managed as high forest and coppice with standards which supports an abundant Bluebell population.

### ***Habitat***

- 7.2.3 The site comprises agriculturally modified pasture (Modified Grassland) dominated by a short, uniform sward of broadleaf grasses resulting from consistent grazing pressure. The field exhibits signs of severe trampling and poaching, particularly around the entrance and in localised patches. In these areas occasional forbs such as ribwort

plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Dandelion (*Taraxicum officinale agg.*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*) further demonstrate the site's nutrient enrichment.

- 7.2.4 The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of arable farmland and permanent pasture to the south, west and east, industrial and commercial development to the northeast, and the M4 motorway forming a significant linear boundary to the north. Beyond this is the town of Swindon. To the south the site is bordered by the Wilts & Berks Canal with a poplar plantation on the far bank and the northern border is a train track. Both these features allow movement of wildlife east/west.
- 7.2.5 The desk study records suggest that the site might support a range of species with legal protections and are of conservation concern.

### **7.3 Consideration of Potential Impacts**

#### ***Statutory Designated Sites***

- 7.3.1 Due to the relatively small scale and extent of the proposals it is unlikely that the development will impact upon any site of importance for nature conservation. It was detailed however, that the proposals follow appropriate pollution prevention and drainage guidelines.
- 7.3.2 The boundaries, habitats, features and wildlife corridors on site all need to be protected from light spillage associated with any external lighting on buildings or elsewhere as there are several known bat roosts located nearby, and other light sensitive species are present locally including Dormice. A lighting scheme will need to be agreed as a condition of planning if external lighting is proposed.

#### ***Habitats***

- 7.3.3 Although structurally homogenous and species-poor overall, the main field retains some ecological value due to its marginal features and wetter microhabitats especially along the southern boundary towards the canal. It may support low-density foraging by invertebrates, birds, and potentially small mammals.
- 7.3.4 Overall, the ecological value of this habitat is considered to be low due to the paucity of native flora and limited habitat structure. However, its proximity to more ecologically valuable habitats such as hedgerows, scrub, and grassland may support some limited use by more mobile species including birds and foraging bats.

### **Bats**

- 7.3.5 The desk study detailed bat records within 4 km of the site include a diverse range of species, notably lesser horseshoe bat, noctule, serotine, and myotis species. The wider site itself contains several features of ecological value for bats, including the canal along the southern boundary, a network of intact hedgerows, and old farm buildings offer potential roosting and foraging opportunities. The grassland area where the panels are proposed has less value.
- 7.3.6 Subsequently, the Phase 2 bat surveys recorded a diverse assemblage of bat species using the landscape, with activity strongly focused around the woodland block, ponds, farmhouse roost and the Wilts & Berks Canal. These features form the core ecological resources for foraging and commuting, supporting species such as common and soprano pipistrelle, Myotis spp., noctule, brown long-eared bat (BLE), and both lesser and greater horseshoe bats. The farmhouse supports a BLE maternity roost and a lesser horseshoe day roost, confirmed during the initial visit and early-night activity recorded at nearby static detectors.
- 7.3.7 Across the six Night-time Bat Walks, activity was consistently greatest along linear vegetated features, particularly the western woodland edge and its connecting hedgerow, while the interior of the development field supported only low levels of use. This pattern was reinforced by the static detector dataset, which recorded highest activity at Positions 1, 4 and 5 - locations associated with boundary vegetation, woodland edges and the farmhouse roost complex. In contrast, the central field proposed for development supported comparatively limited activity and no roosting features.
- 7.3.8 The proposed solar array avoids the key roosting and foraging areas, with the principal ecological risk arising from potential impacts on the western hedgerow, which forms part of the connective network between the woodland and canal corridors. With a 10m buffer, a dark corridor, and sensitive lighting design, these risks can be effectively mitigated. Bat-friendly lighting will be used and the dark corridors around the site will be maintained below 1lux. Lighting will be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night.
- 7.3.9 Grassland enhancement within and around the array area presents an opportunity to increase foraging value for generalist bat species. Further enhancements including woodland management, hedgerow improvement, refined grazing regimes, pond management and protection of the farmhouse roost offer additional potential to strengthen the site's ecological function.

- 7.3.10 Overall, the development is not expected to result in significant impacts on bats, provided the recommended mitigation and enhancement measures are implemented. The survey evidence demonstrates that the key bat features lie outside the development footprint and that the proposed scheme can be delivered while maintaining ecological connectivity and supporting opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.

### ***Birds***

- 7.3.11 The desk study research detailed birds of farmland and woodland edges, including several of conservation concern. The heavily grazed modified grassland offers limited structural diversity but in the damper areas may provide open foraging and nesting areas for species such as skylark and meadow pipit. Hedgerows and scrub along field boundaries potentially offer nesting and foraging resources for species like yellowhammer and house sparrow. The presence of old farm buildings provides potential nesting sites for house martins, swifts, and barn owls.
- 7.3.12 Subsequently, a breeding bird survey was instructed due to the potential impacts on birds and their nesting habitats associated with the solar PV scheme.
- 7.3.13 Six breeding-season visits (Apr–Jul 2025) recorded 41 species, with mapped territories concentrated along the northern hedgerow/woodland belt. Under the revised red line (one field of Modified Grassland), there is no direct loss of territories: Buzzard (nest ~500 m), Tawny Owl and Green Woodpecker (~350 m) are confirmed off-site; Skylark territories lie outside the boundary; a small rookery is present nearby.
- 7.3.14 With a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) that details seasonal timing and habitat management, significant adverse effects are unlikely, and residual effects are predicted to be neutral to minor beneficial for edge-associated passerines.

### ***Great Crested Newts***

- 7.3.15 The site lies within the Naturespace Partnership Amber Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts. No ponds were present on site within the red line boundary. The wider Biffa site includes ponds, a ditch network and areas of seasonally wet grassland and rough marginal habitat, which may support foraging or dispersing amphibians. Six ponds within 1km were surveyed in total for eDNA and three of these were positive for Great Crested Newts. These were all on Wiltshire Wildlife Trust land nearly 1km to the west, surrounded by optimal GCN habitat and separated by a road and grazed fields from the site.

- 7.3.16 The distance between the site and the nearest positive record for GCN, and the low levels of disturbance during construction, means that the impact from the solar panels would be low to negligible in the absence of mitigation. There is no cover in areas impacted by the proposals and the field is grazed. It is considered that there is no need for a District Level Licence. With habitat management improvements, there will be improvements in commuting and foraging habitat due to the more diverse sward and improved grassland management. The grassland on site should be maintained short prior to the works being undertaken.

### ***Amphibians***

- 7.3.17 Amphibian records of common toad and GCN were detailed. The presence of a canal along the southern boundary, ponds on site and nearby and the surrounding terrestrial habitat, particularly areas of undisturbed vegetation along field margins and hedgerows, may provide valuable foraging and hibernation opportunities for amphibians.

### ***Reptiles***

- 7.3.18 Reptile records for slow worm and grass snake within the local area suggest that the site may support these species. On-site, the intensively grazed modified grassland offers limited refuge or basking habitat, reducing its suitability for reptiles. However, the hedgerows, damp field edges, and canal margins may offer structurally diverse microhabitats with cover, thermal opportunities, and prey availability. These areas, particularly if unmanaged or lightly vegetated, may support low to moderate numbers of reptiles, and their potential presence should be considered in areas of suitable edge habitat or where grazing pressure is reduced. Only the grassland will be impacted by the proposals.

### ***Mammals***

- 7.3.19 Mammal records including those of [REDACTED] in the local area, combined with suitable on-site features such as hedgerows, broadleaf woodland, and embankments, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
- 7.3.20 Brown hare is also recorded locally, and the open modified grassland may offer appropriate foraging and shelter opportunities for this UK Priority Species.
- 7.3.21 Records of otter and water vole in the vicinity indicate that the canal corridor may support these species, with water vole potentially utilising vegetated banks for burrowing and foraging, and otters using the watercourse for movement and feeding.

Dormice have been noted within 2km and there is habitat on the wider site and connectivity to the site for this species.

## **7.4 Consideration of Mitigation Measures**

### Inbuilt Mitigation Measures

#### ***Bats***

- 7.4.1 Retaining and strengthening the eastern boundary hedgerow, the southern canal corridor and the central strip of vegetation will address the principal connectivity risk and will maintain connectivity for bats moving between the farmhouse, woodland and canal.
- 7.4.2 The following measures are recommended:
- A minimum 10m buffer between the development and the hedgerow to avoid root damage, shading alteration or vegetation loss;
  - A minimum 20m buffer between the development and canal enhanced with scrub planting and management;
  - Increased scrub planting and management in the central strip; and
  - Maintaining the 3 linear features as dark corridors, with no direct or spill lighting.
- 7.4.3 If lighting is required, a sensitive lighting scheme should be implemented to ensure:
- No illumination of the western hedgerow, farmhouse, woodland edge or canal direction.
  - Use of directional, low-intensity, warm-spectrum lighting where lighting is required.
  - Avoidance of column lighting and unnecessary night-time illumination.
- 7.4.4 Bat-friendly lighting will be used and the dark corridors around the site will be maintained below 1lux. Lighting will be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night.
- 7.4.5 The grassland beneath and between the solar arrays offers an opportunity to improve foraging conditions. Managing this area as a wildflower-rich grassland or low-intensity

meadow would increase invertebrate abundance and complement the retained hedgerow corridors.

### ***Birds***

- 7.4.6 In relation to disturbance, any off-site vegetation works should be avoided and within the site itself, any shared boundary features (fences/ditches/hedge bases) should be retained and buffered to prevent indirect damage and maintain connectivity.
- 7.4.7 For vegetation clearance within the array field, this should be undertaken outside March–August where feasible. If works must occur during this window, pre-works nesting checks should be implemented and any active nests protected with standby buffers until fledging.
- 7.4.8 In terms of noise, the noisiest tasks should be kept to daytime hours, they should be clustered away from the field edge nearest the known off-site nests and any area adjoining previous Skylark activity. A quiet corridor should be maintained on that edge during the core breeding months.
- 7.4.9 A small rookery is present within woodland/treeline west of the array field (confirmed by occupied nests). No tree works in this area are proposed; however, disturbance should be avoided during colony establishment and breeding (Feb–Jun) and high-noise activities and compounds should be located away from the rookery edge. A quiet working corridor will be maintained along this boundary.
- 7.4.10 Standard spill prevention and silt control measures would be implemented to protect ditches/low spots used for foraging.
- 7.4.11 New boundary fencing would be offset from retained hedgerows.

### ***Newts***

- 7.4.12 The grassland on site would be kept short before any work is undertaken and should a Great Crested Newt be found at any stage then Natural England or the consultant ecologist will be called. Details of this are be set out in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

### ***Amphibians***

- 7.4.13 Whilst habitats within the proposed site boundary are generally unsuitable for amphibians, as a precaution, it is recommended that reasonable avoidance measures

are undertaken to ensure no amphibians are harmed during the works. These are recommended to be set out with a CEMP.

- 7.4.14 Vegetation clearance works in areas suitable for these species should avoid the hibernation period where possible (i.e. avoid November to February).

### ***Reptiles***

- 7.4.15 As a precaution, it is recommended that reasonable avoidance measures are undertaken during the construction phase to ensure no reptiles are harmed during the works. These should be fully set out within a CEMP.
- 7.4.16 Vegetation clearance works in areas suitable for these species should avoid the hibernation period where possible (i.e. avoid November to February).

### **Additional Mitigation Measures**

- 7.4.17 For bats, there are several opportunities for site-wide ecological enhancement which would reinforce the site's existing ecological functions and support the bat assemblage documented through the surveys: These include:
- Grazing management in adjacent fields to promote a more varied sward structure, supporting broader invertebrate communities; and
  - Hedgerow management across the wider site to increase connectivity and shelter.
- 7.4.18 For birds, in terms of operational habitat management, it is recommended to convert the tightly grazed sward to a varied, invertebrate-rich grassland with a spring cut if needed for establishment. Thereafter a late-summer hay cut would be carried out with arisings removed, plus rotational autumn/winter topping of narrow access strips only.
- 7.4.19 Flower-rich tussocky margins (1–2 m) would be introduced around the fence base and along the least-shaded internal tracks, leaving micro-patches uncut each year.
- 7.4.20 Around inverter cabins or fence posts, small-holes and terrace boxes would be added to support confirmed passerines (e.g., House Sparrow, Blue/Great Tit) alongside dense shrub planting where shading would not conflict with generation.
- 7.4.21 All vegetation clearance will take place outside the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive). If clearance is required during this period, it will be carried out under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist following a nesting bird check.

- 7.4.22 Continuation of grazing on site to prevent longer grassland and scrub encroachment. Small area of scrub and longer grassland can be cleared under a two-stage cut and watching brief by an ecologist.
- 7.4.23 It is important that the proposals follow appropriate pollution prevention guidelines (PPG 6) and drainage guidelines (Defra guidelines for Sustainable Urban Drainage) to protect habitats connected hydrologically (ponds and canal).
- 7.4.24 A CEMP will be provided to the site contractors along with the PEA/protected species report to show the areas of ecological value on site and set out working practices to prevent harm to ecological receptors. This will include details on storage of equipment and timing of works.
- 7.4.25 Furthermore, a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) will be produced during the detailed design stage. This will ensure ecologically sensitive practices are used and that the long-term ecological value and condition of the habitat types is met and maintained.
- 7.4.26 The proposals do not include any increase in external lighting. If external lighting is required a sensitive lighting scheme that adheres to BCT guidelines would be prepared, which would ensure that lighting would not impact on the woodland to the west of Studley Grange Farmhouse. Lighting would be directed away from the boundary vegetation and will be kept to below 1 lux within at least 5-10m from the mature trees, hedgerows and existing buildings.
- 7.4.27 A range of wildlife boxes for bats, birds and invertebrates will be installed over the site in suitable locations.

#### Residual Impact

- 7.4.28 No significant residual adverse impacts are anticipated upon ecology or biodiversity as a result of the proposed development. A minor beneficial impact is anticipated as the mainly modified grassland will be improved due to management of the habitat to improve its condition.
- 7.4.29 The proposed development has been carefully designed to make use of areas that comprise low-value habitats, such as modified grassland and arable fields, which support limited ecological diversity. By focusing the layout within these already-disturbed or intensively managed areas, the scheme avoids encroaching on habitats of higher ecological importance, including woodland blocks, ponds, streams and

areas of scrub. These more sensitive habitats provide greater biodiversity value and support a wider range of species, and their avoidance ensures that the development minimises ecological impact while retaining the most valuable natural features of the site and its surroundings.

- 7.4.30 A minor beneficial impact is anticipated for birds through habitat creation and management.

#### Compensation

- 7.4.31 No significant residual negative effects on important ecological features are anticipated to result from the proposed development, following the inclusion of impact avoidance and mitigation measures described above. As such, no compensatory measures are proposed.

#### Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.4.32 Based on calculations within the BNG assessment at Appendix 2B, the overall biodiversity net score shows a net gain (21.04 %) in habitat biodiversity units. No hedgerows or watercourses were present on site therefore no targets for these habitats are required.
- 7.4.33 It should be noted that this figure derives from the majority of existing habitat (mainly modified grassland) of low ecological value being improved to neutral grassland. No irreplaceable habitats are being lost. Small areas of poor condition habitats are being lost but these are being offset by the proposed enhancements.
- 7.4.34 There is no known degradation of habitats that has occurred since these assessments were undertaken and there are no irreplaceable habitat or statutory designated sites that are impacted by the proposed development.

## **7.5 Conclusions**

- 7.5.1 The proposed development would not result in any significant residual negative effects on important ecological features due to the embedded and additional mitigation measures outlined in this chapter. Furthermore, the enhancement and creation of existing and new habitats on site is calculated to provide 21.04% net gain in biodiversity.
- 7.5.2 The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the Development Plan and national planning policy concerning the protection and enhancement of ecology and biodiversity.

## 8 WATER ENVIRONMENT

### 8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 The Development Plan and national planning policy contain policies of relevance to the water environment. Development should, where possible, be directed away from areas of flood risk, following the sequential approach. The LPA should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere and, where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment. Sustainable drainage strategies should be in place for major development unless clearly evidenced that it would be inappropriate. The following documents apply to the proposed development:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015-2026), adopted in January 2015;
- National Planning Policy Framework (last amended December 2024), Section 14 (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change); and
- Planning Practice Guidance.

8.1.2 A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment have been prepared to support the planning application. The report can be found at Appendix 3, and a summary is included below.

### 8.2 Baseline

8.2.1 There are watercourses located in the wider vicinity of the site; however, no open watercourses pass directly through the application boundary. There are two ponds located within the Studley Grange Farm site approximately 250m to the northeast and the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal is situated 200m to the south.

#### Fluvial Flood Risk

8.2.2 The Environment Agency's flood risk data indicates that the entire site is within Flood Zone 1 (low probability), which is land having a less than 0.1% annual probability of river or sea flooding.

#### Surface Water Flood Risk

8.2.3 The risk of surface water flooding has been assessed by viewing the Environment Agency's Flood Risk from Surface Water Mapping. The mapping indicates that the majority of the site has a very low chance of surface water flooding (i.e. less than 0.1% annual exceedance probability). There are several small areas of the site that are at risk

of surface water flooding. However, a surface water strategy will be produced to mitigate the risk of pluvial flooding in these areas.

- 8.2.4 Therefore, the risk posed by surface water flooding is considered negligible.

#### Groundwater Flooding

- 8.2.5 Subject to completion of site investigation to confirm, it is assumed that the natural ground water level is located well below the site surface, and the nature of the strata means it is unlikely that there will be perched water above this level.

- 8.2.6 It is therefore considered that there is no risk of groundwater flooding affecting the development subject to final confirmation upon completion of a suitable site investigation.

#### Sewer Flooding

- 8.2.7 The development is proposed on a former landfill site and there are no surface water or foul sewers present on the site. There are also no public foul or surface water sewers known to pass through the application boundary. As such, the development is not considered to be at risk from sewer flooding.

#### Artificial Sources

- 8.2.8 Reservoir failure flood risk mapping has been prepared by the Environment Agency, which shows the largest area that might be flooded if a reservoir were to fail and release the water it holds. The map displays a worst-case scenario and is only intended as a guide. Reservoir flood mapping published by the Environment Agency indicates that the site lies outside of any significant reservoir flood inundation extents.

- 8.2.9 The mapping confirms that neither the site nor its access routes are affected by the predicted maximum extent of reservoir flooding. The proposed development is therefore not considered to be at risk from reservoir failure.

#### Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification

- 8.2.10 Planning Practice Guidance on flood risk and coastal change sets out flood risk vulnerability and flood zone 'incompatibility'. Buildings are classified depending on their uses and are placed in vulnerability classes depending on flood risk sensitivity. The solar array and associated buildings are classified as 'less vulnerable' and comprise an appropriate development in Flood Zone 1.

### **8.3 Consideration of Potential Impacts**

#### Flood Risk

- 8.3.1 The proposed development is located in Flood Zone 1 and is considered to be appropriate development for its location, according to national planning guidance. The FRA, which has been carried out as part of this planning application, concludes that the risk of flooding from all sources is either low or very low. Therefore, no flood risk is anticipated.

#### Surface Water Management

- 8.3.2 The site is currently naturally drained and infiltrated. Any surface water run-off that may occur will tend to follow the natural topography of the land. It is likely that the flow of surface water will be towards one of the adjacent watercourses located around the site which are viable for discharge.
- 8.3.3 The site is classified as greenfield, and the extent of impermeable surfaces will change as a result of the proposed development. A surface water drainage system will be designed in accordance with Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) principles, ensuring that discharge is limited to greenfield runoff rates. Consequently, the wider development is considered to be at negligible risk from flooding as a result of the proposed development.
- 8.3.4 The site naturally slopes from north to south and covers a total area of approximately 6.5 hectares. The site benefits from historic engineered drainage infrastructure associated with the landfill restoration.
- 8.3.5 Existing surface water drainage arrangements will be reviewed and incorporated into the detailed drainage design where appropriate. The site currently operates as permeable grassland and restored landfill, with established drainage pathways. The baseline runoff regime is therefore considered to reflect greenfield behaviour.
- 8.3.6 It is detailed within the FRA that given the predominantly permeable nature of the development, rainfall will continue to infiltrate and discharge in accordance with the existing site drainage regime. Surface water will continue to drain via the established historic landfill drainage infrastructure and natural ground infiltration, as occurs under the current baseline condition.

- 8.3.7 As such, the proposed development does not significantly alter catchment characteristics and therefore does not require additional attenuation or artificial flow restriction measures.
- 8.3.8 The proposal for the site is a series of ground-mounted solar panel arrays. Each solar array will comprise a series of short narrow aluminium posts supporting the modules. The surface area of the panels is not considered to be an impermeable area that prevents direct infiltration to ground. In accordance with BRE “Planning guidance for the development of large-scale ground mounted solar PV systems” as solar panels will drain to the existing ground the impact in general will not be significant. Rainwater falling on to each of the solar panels will drain freely into the ground both between and beneath the panels.
- 8.3.9 The site is to remain ‘soft’ landscaped with neutral and modified grassland enhancement surrounding and beneath the arrays to provide interception to run-off. Whilst there may be a concentration of rainwater at the front of each panel, this will naturally migrate to beneath the next panel array following the fall of the land. There will be no decrease in permeable area and no increase in run-off, thus mimicking the existing hydrological characteristics of the site.
- 8.3.10 Surface water will continue to drain via the established historic landfill drainage infrastructure and natural ground infiltration, as occurs under the current baseline condition.
- 8.3.11 The proposed development does not introduce extensive areas of hardstanding or impermeable surfacing. The limited areas of hardstanding (access tracks and compound area) represent a very small proportion of the total site area and do not materially alter the overall hydrological response of the site. As such, the development will maintain the existing greenfield runoff characteristics, and there will be no measurable increase in runoff rates or volumes to the wider catchment.
- 8.3.12 During construction, unnecessary soil disturbance and trafficking would be avoided to prevent compaction.
- 8.3.13 As detailed above, there is not anticipated to be any foul water from the development.

## **8.4 Consideration of Mitigation Measures**

- 8.4.1 No significant adverse impacts are anticipated on the water environment as a result of the proposals. Therefore, no mitigation measures are required in order to reduce flood risk or improve drainage.

### Surface Water Management

- 8.4.2 The following good practice recommendations are set out in the assessment:

- During construction, unnecessary soil disturbance and trafficking should be avoided to prevent compaction;
- The ground roughness should be maintained below and between panels to aid infiltration; and
- Existing drainage should be maintained to ensure they continue to function adequately.

- 8.4.3 The application area is predominantly permeable in nature, with approximately 95% of the site remaining as grassland beneath and between solar arrays. The limited hardstanding areas do not materially alter the hydrological response of the site. As such, surface water will continue to drain in accordance with the existing greenfield regime and existing landfill drainage infrastructure.

- 8.4.4 Any surface water run-off that occurs will follow the natural topography of the land.

### Foul Drainage

- 8.4.5 No foul drainage is required on site.

## **8.5 Conclusions**

- 8.5.1 The FRA concludes that as there is no material increase in runoff rates or volumes, additional attenuation or flow restriction measures are not required. The development will not increase flood risk on or off site and is therefore considered acceptable in drainage and flood risk terms.

## **9 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT**

### **9.1 Introduction**

9.1.1 The Development Plan and national planning guidance contain policies of relevance to conserving and enhancing natural landscapes. Policies of particular relevance to landscape and visual matters are set in the documents below:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015-2026), adopted in January 2015;
- National Planning Policy Framework (last amended December 2024); and
- Planning Practice Guidance.

9.1.2 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken to accompany the planning application for the proposed development and can be found at Appendix 4 of this PS. The purpose of the LVIA is to appraise the potential landscape and visual impacts associated with the proposed development, in order to determine the likely effects to the landscape and visual character of the area, with recommendations where necessary for mitigation measures to be incorporated into the scheme.

9.1.3 The scope of the assessment has been determined through a combination of professional judgement and reference to relevant guidance documents and consultation with stakeholders through a formal EIA Screening process.

### **9.2 Baseline**

9.2.1 There are no national landscape designations within the site or immediately surrounding area. The site is within c. 1.8km of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

9.2.2 The nearest Listed Building is Grade II listed 'Studley Grange Farmhouse' (Ref 1022664, Grade II) which is adjacent to the Site boundary, to the north of the existing gas compound.

9.2.3 There are several Listed Buildings within 500m including Upper Studley Farm (Ref 1022662, grade II) c. 250m to the north, Stable Range Immediately northwest of Great Chaddington Farm (Ref 1363675, grade II) c. 400m to the south, Great Chadderton Farm (Ref 1199821, grade II) c. 430m to the south and Can Court Farmhouse (Ref 1022663, grade II) c. 500m to the south. There is also a Scheduled Monument, Medieval Rural Settlement (Ref 1018388) c. 800m to the west.

- 9.2.4 In terms of landscape value, the site is not considered to be part of a valued landscape, for the purposes of paragraph 187 of NPPF. As set out in Appendix 3, there is little to no natural or cultural heritage interest which contributes positively to the landscape of the site (being mainly restored grassland in a moderate condition, with vegetation to the boundaries), although Studley Grange Farmhouse Listed Building is just north of the Site compound. Experience of the landscape contributes to the recreational use and enjoyment of the public rights of way which cross the Site. The Site and study area have a variable perceptual (scenic) quality and are part of a settled urban fringe landscape, which is influenced by transport infrastructure and commercial development. There are several existing small-scale solar projects in the wider area.
- 9.2.5 There are recreational users of the PRoW network within the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) of the site. These are recreational users of the PRoW network and footpaths LTRE1, LTRE5 and LTRE59 extending across part of the Site and more distant elevated positions at Basset Down, such as LTRE56, as well as visitors to the permissive access along the Old Canal towpath and also to the garden centre.
- 9.2.6 The Site is located within the northern part of National Character Area (NCA) 108 - Upper Thames Clay Vales, which comprises “broad belt of open, gently undulating lowland farmland on predominantly Jurassic and Cretaceous clays.”
- 9.2.7 At a more local level the Site is located within Landscape Character Area (LCA) “11a Swindon-Calne Rolling Clay Lowland” in the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (2005). This area is described as:

*“a long, narrow gently undulating area sandwiched between the uplands of 4A: Avebury Plain and 8A: Swindon-Lyneham Limestone Ridge. Views to the surrounding hills and chalk scarp emphasise the comparatively level and open character of the area. The Swindon-Calne Rolling Clay Lowland is a mix of arable and pasture with the former more prominent to the north above Swindon. The arable fields tend to be large scale and rectangular with a mix of medium sized irregular fields and small regular strips to the south. Fields are bounded by hedgerows although these have been replaced by fences in some areas and hedgerow trees are sparse. The hedges, scattered small woodland blocks (some ancient) and riparian vegetation particularly willows, give a more enclosed and rural feel to the landscape in some sections. There are also remnant areas of hay meadow of high ecological value such as Goldburgh Farm SSSI. Around Swindon large scale buildings on the outskirts dominate immediate views but the area to the north which is very sparsely settled retains a rural remote feel. To the south views of the*

*modern built edges of Calne influence the surrounding landscape, although this is mitigated to some extent by woodland cover. Elsewhere there is little settlement and rural roads criss cross the area giving access to the uplands to east and west.”*

9.2.8 Overall, it is detailed that the landscape strategy for Rolling Clay Lowland is:

*“to conserve the peaceful rural landscape with its hedgerow network, rich riparian vegetation, remnant meadows ancient woodlands and pattern of small villages and scattered farmsteads and to strengthen its character through measures to minimise the urbanising influence of large towns, new settlement and transport routes and to improve the woodlands and farmlands by encouraging management to retain or enhance their biodiversity and historic character”.*

9.2.9 This has been incorporated into the proposals, with new scrub planting to strengthen the perimeter vegetation and field pattern. The overall character of the existing Site is of a series of broad grassland mounds, with some vegetation to the boundaries and a small compound, connected to the Site access. The wider area is undulating settled urban fringe, with farmland and woodland blocks, transport infrastructure and commercial development.

#### Planning Permissions

9.2.10 The site is located within the former Studley Grange Landfill. The Site covers a single field parcel which is restored to agricultural grassland, with hedgerows and trees around the boundaries, managed as per the approved landfill restoration scheme. Vehicular access from the public highway is restricted, however there is a public right of way which extends alongside the access track.

9.2.11 The Site also includes part of the electricity generating compound associated with the restored landfill site. In 2023 planning permission was granted for the Replacement of an Electricity Generating Engine with a Storage Battery (Ref: PL/2022/06399). The installation of a compound for the generation of electricity through the utilisation of landfill gas was originally established through the grant of planning permission in 2005 (N/05/07038/FCM).

### **9.3 Consideration of Potential Landscape Effects**

#### Potential Direct Effects

9.3.1 The main landscape and visual components of the proposed development include:

- Construction activity, including ground preparation, limited vegetation clearance prior to the installation of the security features, solar panels and associated infrastructure. Development of the landscape buffers, including habitat creation and management of perimeter hedgerows, with ecological enhancement of species-rich grassland and new tree and shrub planting;
- Operation of the solar farm and continuing landscape management of grassland and other habitats between, beneath and around the structures; and
- Decommissioning of the security features, solar panels and associated infrastructure, followed by the restoration broadly in accordance with the agreed landfill scheme (grassland, with hedgerows and trees around perimeters), but with integration of the new habitats.

9.3.2 These components would result in direct effects upon landscape elements and features within the application site itself. The above changes would also influence the application site's appearance, aesthetic and perceptual aspects and therefore may also have potential effects on landscape character and the visual amenity of offsite receptors in the immediately surrounding area. The spatial extent of landscape and visual effects of this proposal are principally local.

9.3.3 For the purposes of this assessment, the development considers construction and decommissioning as part of the long-term operational phase, followed by final restoration as a separate permanent phase.

#### Potential Indirect Effects

9.3.4 The main potential indirect effects would be from traffic generated from the development, as this would have a potential visual impact for other users of the local road network, and a general impact on the scenic quality of local views.

9.3.5 However, the vehicle movements associated with the project would be relatively limited, utilise an established access and would quickly disperse across the highway network. It is not envisaged that the proposals represent a significant additional indirect adverse visual impact for receptors positioned along the access routes.

- 9.3.6 Table 9.1 presents a summary of the above landscape receptors and assessment of sensitivity, magnitude of change and effects, during operational phases.
- 9.3.7 Moderate adverse effects are identified on aesthetic and perceptual aspects, with moderate-minor adverse effects upon landcover.
- 9.3.8 Following decommissioning and restoration, broadly in accordance with the approved scheme and the integration of mitigation planting, the effects would become negligible and neutral upon all receptors, except for field boundaries, hedgerows and trees which would be beneficial.

**Table 9.1:** Summary of Landscape Effects, During operational phases

| Receptor                                                                               | Sensitivity | Magnitude  | Effects            | Nature of Effect |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 11a Swindon-Calne<br>Rolling Clay<br>Lowland                                           | Medium      | Slight     | Minor              | Adverse          |
| Landform: Gently<br>sloping<br>mound at former<br>landfill<br>site                     | Low         | Negligible | Negligible         | Neutral          |
| Landcover:<br>Restored<br>grassland and<br>hardstanding<br>within<br>landfill compound | Medium-Low  | Medium     | Moderate-<br>Minor | Adverse          |
| Access: Former<br>landfill<br>access track                                             | Low         | Slight     | Minor              | Neutral          |
| Field Boundaries:<br>Mixed<br>native vegetation                                        | Medium-Low  | Slight     | Minor              | Neutral          |
| Aesthetic:<br>Medium scale,<br>moderate<br>complexity and<br>enclosure                 | Medium      | Medium     | Moderate           | Adverse          |

9.3.9 Overall, the LVIA has not identified any major or moderate/major landscape effects as a result of the proposed development.

#### **9.4 Consideration of Potential Visual Effects**

9.4.1 A study area extending to c. 1.5km around the site has been adopted for this assessment.

9.4.2 Following the initial desk-based modelling of theoretical visibility, fieldwork was carried out to verify the ZTVs and review the degree of additional screening provided by vegetation and/or built-up areas and buildings. This identified that the existing Site is visually well enclosed by undulating topography, in combination with intervening vegetation (hedgerows, trees and woodland), which restrict views to varying degrees. Glimpsed views of the restored landfill mounds are characterised by grassland, amongst hedgerows and trees. Potential changes to views would vary depending on the position and orientation of the viewer, with wider views over the surrounding area anticipated to be generally unrestricted / unaltered.

9.4.3 Four existing small-scale solar projects have been incorporated into the baseline appraisal:

- 9ha project south of Swindon Road (A3102) at c. 800m north of the site;
- 20ha project north of Swindon Road (A3102) at c. 1.7km to the northwest of the site;
- 11ha project east of Marlborough Road / Broadtown Road at c. 2km to the west of the site; and
- 18.5ha project east of Hay Lane at c. 1.3km to the southeast of the site.

9.4.4 Each project is less than 20ha in size and range between 800m and 2km away from the Site. They are wholly separate elements, within an urban fringe context.

9.4.5 Whilst there is potential for combined visibility of the other projects in conjunction with the proposed solar panels from elevated ground around Basset Down to the south, the distances away and between the projects are such that it would not be perceived as introducing a noticeably higher density or cluster. The proposals would be a small standalone addition, barely perceptible and located within a discrete and visually contained parcel of land.

- 9.4.6 Any potential sequential visibility would also be limited by the distances between the projects, as well as the influence of topography, vegetation and built forms, which provide substantial breaks along the road corridors and footpath.
- 9.4.7 No other proposed or consented developments were identified within the study area and potential cumulative visual effects have therefore not been considered any further in this assessment.
- 9.4.8 The general theoretical visibility of the proposed solar panels can be summarised as follows:
- The area of visible vertical angle above 3 degrees is restricted to within c. 200m of the panels and covering the adjacent restored /former landfill, canal and footpaths;
  - The area of visible vertical angle between 1 and 3 degrees typically extends for c. 500m to the east, south and west and covers additional parts of the adjacent restored / former landfill, canal and footpaths and Studley Grange Farm, Can Court Farm and Great Chaddington Farm; and
  - The areas of visible vertical angle of between 0.25 and 1 degree extends for over 1km to the southeast and southwest (including garden centre further and Hays Lane further east and Chaddington Lane to the west) and over 2km to the south (including the elevated ground around Basset Down).
- 9.4.9 Key potential visual receptors in the area covered by the ZTVs include the following:
- Local residents within properties at The Wharf, Can Court Cottage and Hay Lane Chapel at c. 700m to the east, Can Court Farm, Lower Salthorpe, Great Chaddington Farm, Little Chaddington Farm and Vowley Farm at over 450m away to the south;
  - Users of the local road network, such as Hay Lane to the east and Chaddington Lane to the west; and
  - Recreational users of the PRow network and footpaths LTRE1, LTRE5 and LTRE59 extending across part of the Site and more distant elevated positions at Basset Down, such as LTRE56., as well as visitors to the permissive access along the Old Canal towpath and also to the garden centre.

9.4.10 Table 9.2 presents a summary of the above individual representative viewpoints and visual receptors and assessment of sensitivity, magnitude of change and effects during operational phases.

**Table 9.2:** Summary of Visual Effects, During Operational Phases

| Receptor                                                                                                            | Sensitivity | Magnitude  | Effects          | Nature of Effects |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Viewpoint 1 – Hay Lane, by entrance to Can Court Farm                                                               | Medium      | Slight     | Minor            | Adverse           |
| Viewpoint 2 – PRoW LTRE56, Basset Down, southeast of site                                                           | High        | Negligible | Minor            | Adverse           |
| Viewpoint 3 – PRoW LTRE59, within landfill site                                                                     | Medium      | Slight     | Minor            | Adverse           |
| Viewpoint 4 – PRoW LTRE5, within landfill site, near Studley Grange Farm                                            | Medium      | Slight     | Minor            | Adverse           |
| Viewpoint 5 – Chaddington Lane, adjacent to Old Canal footpath                                                      | Medium      | Negligible | Minor-negligible | Neutral           |
| Viewpoint 6 – Old Canal footpath, south of Studley Grange Farm                                                      | Medium      | Medium     | Moderate         | Adverse           |
| Viewpoint 7 – PRoW LTRE59, within landfill site at northwest corner                                                 | Medium      | Negligible | Minor-negligible | Neutral           |
| Local residents at The Wharf, Can Court Cottage and Hay Lane Chapel to the east                                     | Medium      | Negligible | Minor-negligible | Adverse           |
| Local residents at Can Court Farm, Lower Salthorpe, Great Chaddington Farm and Little Chaddington Farm to the south | Medium      | Negligible | Minor-negligible | Adverse           |
| Users of the local road network - Hay Lane                                                                          | Medium-low  | Negligible | Minor-negligible | Adverse           |
| Users of the local road network - Chaddington Lane                                                                  | Medium-Low  | Negligible | Minor-negligible | Adverse           |
| Recreational users of the PRoW footpaths LTRE1, LTRE5 and LTRE59 extending across part of the Site                  | Medium      | Medium     | Moderate         | Adverse           |
| Recreational users of PRoW at more distant elevated positions at Basset Down, such as LTRE56                        | High        | Negligible | Minor            | Adverse           |

| Receptor                                                   | Sensitivity | Magnitude  | Effects          | Nature of Effects |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Visitors to the permissive access to the Old Canal towpath | Medium      | Medium     | Moderate         | Adverse           |
| Visitors to the garden centre                              | Medium-low  | Negligible | Minor-negligible | Neutral           |

9.4.11 Overall, the LVIA has not identified any major or major/moderate landscape and visual effects as a result of the proposed development.

## 9.5 Consideration of Mitigation Measures

### Design Development and Built-in Mitigation

- 9.5.1 The development proposals seek to mitigate any potentially adverse landscape and visual effects, either by avoidance, reduction or replacement / compensation; this is often referred to as the mitigation hierarchy.
- 9.5.2 The approach to design development and mitigation developed as part of the landscape strategy includes siting the PV panels on previously developed land (a former landfill site) and incorporating standoffs to the Site perimeters for hedgerow and tree retention and beneficial management.
- 9.5.3 All grassland around the field margins and beneath and between the proposed solar panels would be enhanced for biodiversity interest (e.g. with additional wildflowers).
- 9.5.4 The proposal would ensure a minimum 700m standoff from the solar panels to the nearest residential properties at The Wharf, Can Court Cottage and Hay Lane Chapel to the east, 450m away from Can Court Farm and Great Chaddington Farm to the south and 350m away from Padbrook Farm to the west. These stand-offs would reduce potential visual impacts by providing foreground corridors of undulating farmland, hedgerows and trees.
- 9.5.5 The proposed solar compound would be located on the lower part of the landfill site on an area of existing compound and hardstanding at c. 103m AOD.
- 9.5.6 The inverters and transformers would be housed in prefabricated containers and there would be perimeter security deer fencing with mounted CCTV, which would introduce localised vertical elements and forms. The colours and finish of the structures can be agreed via planning condition, if necessary, but in general, would be intended to be a dark green or grey colour with matt finish. The matt finished, galvanized steel or

aluminium mounting frames of the Photo Voltaic (PV) panels would assimilate with the natural muted greens and browns of the grassland and tree belts in the local area, reducing any potential visual contrasts. However, depending on weather conditions there would be times when the panels may reflect light and be more obvious in the landscape.

- 9.5.7 No significant landscape or visual impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed development. Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required.
- 9.5.8 Potential cumulative landscape effects have been considered and the proposed addition of 4.6ha of solar panels at the site would not result in a noticeably higher density or cluster that would transform the area into a different landscape character sub-type; it would be a small standalone addition, located within a discrete parcel of land.

## **9.6 Conclusions**

- 9.6.1 This LVIA has assessed the potential landscape and visual implications of the proposed development of a small-scale solar farm at the former Studley Grange Landfill. This has included a baseline study of the existing Site and its surroundings, a study of the landscape and visual characteristics of the proposed development, and an assessment of the residual landscape and visual effects likely to be generated after mitigation has been considered.
- 9.6.2 The Site does not form part of any national landscape designation and is not considered to be a valued landscape for the purposes of NPPF, paragraph 187.
- 9.6.3 North Wessex Downs National Landscape is located to the south of the Site at c. 1.8km away at its nearest point. Most of the designated area is not covered by the ZTV, with the exception of a small area on the elevated north-facing slopes around Basset Down. However, this is of a low vertical angle and is likely to have visibility further restricted by intervening vegetation (as was noted during fieldwork). As such, there are little to no changes predicted to the character and limited changes to outward views predicted from only localised parts of the designated area. For example, views were noted at Viewpoint 2 on a short section of PRoW LTRE56, Basset Down, to the southeast of site.
- 9.6.4 The addition of the proposed solar farm would alter only a small part of the published character area 11a Swindon-Calne Rolling Clay Lowland and would not introduce a new key characteristic or change in its overall composition / balance. The potential changes to aesthetic and perceptual aspects resulting from the proposed solar farm would be limited to the Site and its immediate surrounding area.

- 9.6.5 Recreational users of the footpaths LTRE1, LTRE5 and LTRE59 extending across part of the Site and the permissive access to the Old Canal towpath would, in certain sections, have clear views of the solar panels, although the overall effect for these receptors would be no more than moderate and adverse.
- 9.6.6 The visual effects for local residents and road users during operational phases would be no more than minor-negligible and adverse, due to the limited visibility of the development from intervening vegetation.
- 9.6.7 All adverse effects would be limited to the operational period, and there would be little to no perceptible change after decommissioning and restoration.
- 9.6.8 There are four existing small-scale solar projects which have been incorporated into the baseline appraisal. Each project is less than 20ha in size range between 800m and 2km away from the Site. They are wholly separate elements within an urban fringe context. The proposed addition of 4.4ha of solar panels at the Site would not result in a noticeably higher density or cluster that would transform the area into a different landscape character sub-type; it would be a small, standalone addition, located within a discrete and visually contained parcel of land.
- 9.6.9 Overall, there are no major or major/moderate landscape and visual effects predicted as a result of the proposed development and it is not anticipated that the proposed development would give rise to unacceptable effects on the landscape character of the locality or on the visual amenity of nearby receptors.
- 9.6.10 Therefore, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the Development Plan and national planning policy guidance concerning the protection of both landscape character and the amenity of sensitive receptors.

## 10 GLINT AND GLARE ASSESSMENT

### 10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy sets out particular factors that a local planning authority should consider in relation to large scale ground-mounted solar PV farms. These include:

- The proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare (see guidance on landscape assessment) and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;
- The extent to which there may be additional impacts if solar arrays follow the daily movement of the sun.

10.1.2 PPG goes on to state that:

*'in the case of ground-mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography the area of a zone of visual influence could be zero'.*

10.1.3 A Glint and Glare Assessment has been prepared to support this planning application and can be found at Appendix 5 of this PS. The assessment looks at roads and dwellings within the zone of visual influence that could be affected by the proposed development. A summary of the assessment findings is included below.

### 10.2 Baseline

10.2.1 A 1km assessment area is considered appropriate for glint and glare effects on ground-based receptors. Receptors within this distance are identified based on mapping and aerial photography of the region. The assessment area is bounded by the orange outline in Figure 10.1 below. Receptors to the north of the development are not included because solar reflections would not be geometrically possible towards the north when the azimuth angle is considered.

**Figure 10.1:** Glint and Glare assessment area



#### Road Receptors

- 10.2.2 The assessment has considered major, national and regional roads within 1km of the assessment area, and which have potential views of the panels. Local roads are not generally considered within glint and glare analysis where traffic densities are likely to be relatively low.
- 10.2.3 A section of Hay Lane, totalling 0.59km, has been identified within the assessment with potential views of the panels and has been taken forward for technical modelling. Receptors 1 to 7 are placed circa 100m apart along this road. A height of 1.5 metres above ground level has been taken as the typical eye level of a road user (where views for elevated drivers are also considered where appropriate). Figure 4 of the assessment shows the identified road receptors.

#### Dwelling Receptors

- 10.2.4 The assessment has identified dwellings within 1km of the assessment area that have a potential view of the panels. In residential areas with multiple layers of dwellings, only the outer dwellings have been considered for assessment. This is because they will mostly obscure views of the solar panels to the dwellings behind them, which will therefore not be impacted by the proposed development because line of sight will be removed, or they will experience comparable effects to the closest assessed dwelling.

- 10.2.5 Additionally, in some cases, a single receptor point may be used to represent a small number of separate addresses. In such cases, the results for the receptor will be representative of the adjacent observer locations, such that the overall level of effect in each area is captured reliably.
- 10.2.6 Dwelling receptors that have been considered are shown in Figure 6 of the assessment. In total, 10 dwellings have been assessed. An additional 1.8m height above ground is used in the modelling to simulate the typical viewing height of an observer on the ground floor.

#### Reflector Area

- 10.2.7 The bounding coordinates for the proposed development have been extrapolated from the site plans. The data can be found in Appendix G of the assessment. The assessed reflector area is shown in Figure 10.2 below.

**Figure 10.2: Assessed reflector area**



- 10.2.8 A resolution of 15m was chosen for this assessment. This means that a geometric calculation is undertaken for each identified receptor every 15m from within the defined area. This resolution is sufficiently high to maximise the accuracy of the results – increasing the resolution further would not significantly change the modelling output. If a reflection is experienced from an assessed panel location, then it is likely that a

reflection will be viewable from similarly located panels within the proposed solar development.

#### Aviation

- 10.2.9 Glint and glare assessment for aviation receptors is typically undertaken for licensed aerodromes within 10km of a proposed solar development. Geometric modelling for unlicensed general aviation aerodromes is typically required within 5km of a proposed development. At ranges of 10 - 20km, the requirement for assessment is much less common, with typically assessment only being undertaken for licensed aerodromes at these ranges.

### **10.3 Consideration of Potential Impacts**

#### Road Receptors

- 10.3.1 7 receptors that may experience solar reflections were assessed and evaluated against the following factors:

- Whether the solar reflection originates from directly in front of a road user;
- Whether visibility is likely for elevated drivers (applicable to dual carriageways and motorways only);
- The separation distance to the panel area; and
- The position of the sun.

- 10.3.2 The modelling has shown that solar reflections are geometrically possible towards all of the 7 assessed road receptors, although the assessment noted that 6 of these solar reflections would be from outside a road user's primary field of view.

- 10.3.3 Following assessment against the above factors, all receptors are predicted to be screened from solar reflection by intervening vegetation and terrain and as such, no impact is predicted.

#### Dwelling Receptors

- 10.3.4 10 receptors that may experience solar reflections were assessed and evaluated against the following factors:

- The separation distance to the reflecting panel area. Larger separation distances reduce the proportion of an observer's field-of-view that is affected by glare;

- The position of the Sun. Effects that coincide with direct sunlight appear less prominent than those that do not. The Sun is a far more significant source of light;
- Whether solar reflections will be experienced from all storeys. The ground floor is typically considered the main living space and therefore has a greater significance with respect to residential amenity;
- Whether the dwelling appears to have windows facing the reflecting areas. An observer may need to look at an acute angle to observe the reflecting areas.

10.3.5 The modelling has shown that solar reflections are geometrically possible towards 6 of the assessed dwellings:

- For 1-2 dwellings, solar reflections are geometrically possible for less than three months per year and less than 60 minutes per any one day; and
- For Nos 3 and 8-10 dwellings, solar reflections are geometrically possible for more than three months per year and less than 60 minutes per any one day.

10.3.6 For these dwellings it is detailed that there will be no impact and existing vegetation, and terrain screening is predicted to significantly obstruct views of reflecting panels such that views are not predicted to be possible in practice.

10.3.7 Therefore, no impact is predicted, and no mitigation is required.

#### Aviation Runway

10.3.8 Lotmead Farm Airfield and Draycott Farm are unlicensed airfields approximately 9.9km and 8.5km northeast of the proposed development, respectively. They both have one operational runway and no ATC Tower.

10.3.9 For aviation activity associated with Lotmead Farm airfield and Draycott Farm, the following can be concluded:

- Solar reflections originating from the proposed development towards the 1-mile splayed approach path for runway threshold 18 and 02 will be outside a pilot's primary field-of-view, and would therefore not be considered significant, considering the associated guidance (Appendix D) and industry best practice pertaining to approach paths; and
- Solar reflections towards the 1-mile splayed approach path for runway thresholds 36 and 20 will have glare intensities no greater than 'low potential for

temporary after-image'. Considering the associated guidance (Appendix D) and industry best practice pertaining to approach paths, the glare intensity is considered acceptable, and therefore, it can be reliably concluded that this level of glare is also acceptable for the visual circuits.

- 10.3.10 As a result, no significant impacts are predicted upon aviation activity associated with Lotmead Farm Airstrip and Draycott Farm and mitigation is not required and detailed modelling is not recommended.

#### **10.4 Consideration of Mitigation Measures**

##### **Road Receptors**

- 10.4.1 Solar reflections are geometrically possible towards a 0.59km section of Hay Lane.
- 10.4.2 For all sections of road where solar reflections are geometrically possible, screening in the form of existing vegetation is predicted to significantly obstruct views of reflecting panels such that solar reflections will not be experienced by road users in practice.
- 10.4.3 No impact is predicted, and mitigation is not required.

##### **Dwelling receptors**

- 10.4.4 Solar reflections are geometrically possible towards six of the 10 assessed dwellings.
- 10.4.5 For all six of these dwellings, screening in the form of existing vegetation is predicted to significantly obstruct views of reflecting panels.
- 10.4.6 No impact is predicted, and mitigation is not required.

##### **10.4.7 Aviation receptors**

- 10.4.8 No significant impacts are predicted upon aviation activity associated with Lotmead Farm Airfield and Draycott Farm, and mitigation is not required. Detailed modelling is not recommended.

#### **10.5 Conclusions**

- 10.5.1 No significant impacts associated with glint and glare are predicted upon road safety, residential amenity or aviation activity. As such, no mitigation is recommended.
- 10.5.2 Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development accords with Planning Practice Guidance concerning the impact of glint and glare associated with ground-mounted solar PV installations.

## **11 TRANSPORT**

### **11.1 Introduction**

11.1.1 The Development Plan and national planning policies provide guidance on ensuring that development proposals do not give rise to any significant impacts on the road network or road safety. The following documents are of relevance to determining transport matters in planning applications:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015-2026), adopted in January 2015;
- National Planning Policy Framework (last amended December 2024) section 9 (Promoting sustainable transport); and
- Planning Practice Guidance;

11.1.2 A Transport Statement (TS) has been prepared to support this planning application and is enclosed at Appendix 6. The TS includes an assessment of the predicted traffic flows, the corresponding impact on the surrounding highway network and matters associated with accessibility and connectivity.

11.1.3 The TS should be read in conjunction with the Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) which has been prepared and is included at Appendix 9. The CTMP provides information on the planned haulage routes to the construction site and the associated traffic management proposals required to ensure the existing public road infrastructure is maintained in an acceptable condition.

11.1.4 The CTMP is also intended to provide clear guidance to all staff, site users and material suppliers regarding access routes to the site, maintenance requirements for the existing public road and restrictions for vehicle access.

### **11.2 Baseline**

#### Accident Analysis

11.2.1 There have only been 2 slight, and 1 serious accident recorded on the B4005 (Wharf Road), with 1 reported at the existing site access.

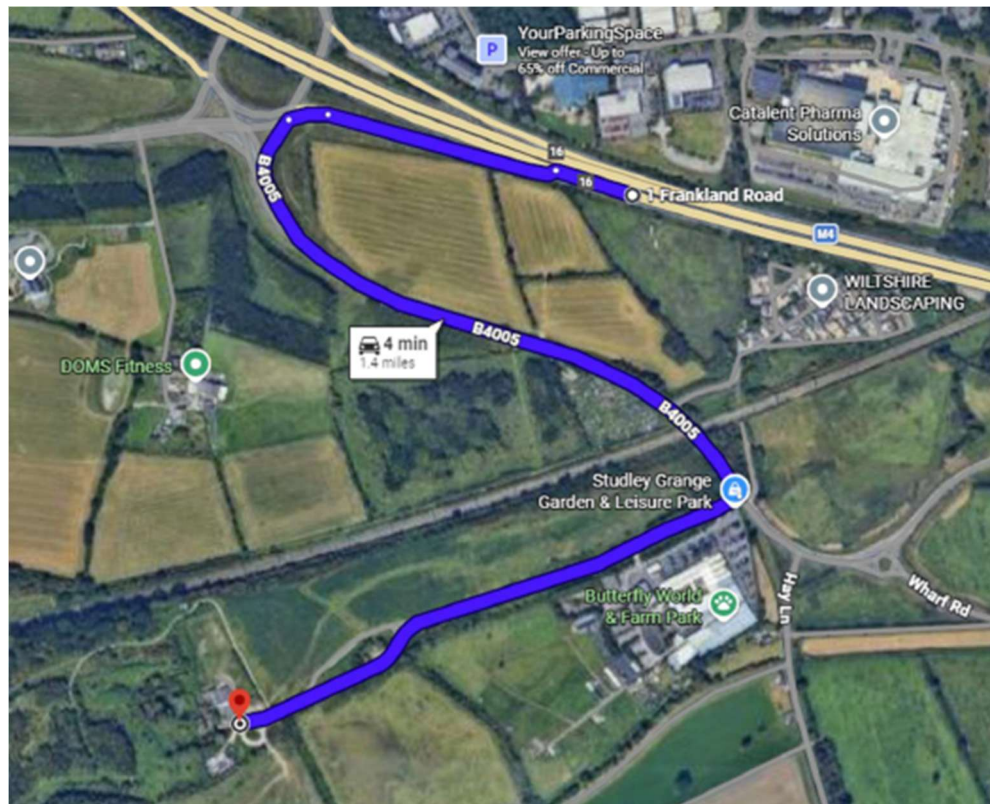
11.2.2 One slight accident was reported along Hay Lane.

11.2.3 The severity / frequency of accidents across the latest 5-year period does not indicate any potential safety issues within the vicinity of the development site and it can be concluded that further detailed accident analysis is not required.

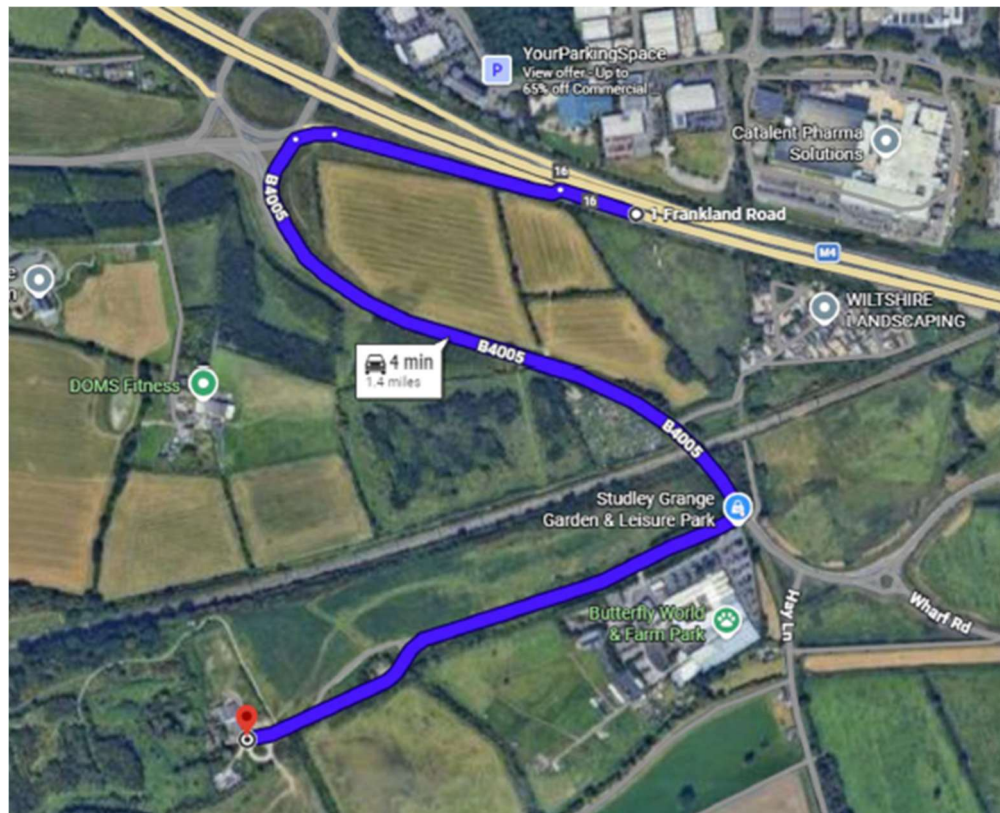
### Access Arrangements

- 11.2.4 Access to the site is proposed via the existing ghost-island right-turn junction on the B4005 (Wharf Road). Internal access to the solar panel areas will be provided by making use of the existing internal tracks.
- 11.2.5 An area of hardstanding will be provided within and adjacent to the existing compound to enable all vehicles, including articulated lorries, to manoeuvre safely and enter and leave the site in a forward gear. This hardstanding will also serve to minimise the risk of mud and debris being tracked onto the public highway, thereby reducing potential safety issues and nuisance to other road users.
- 11.2.6 It is proposed that all HGV construction traffic will route to the Site via the M4 Junction 16 just to the north of the development and the B4005 (Wharf Road).
- 11.2.7 Figures 11.1 and 11.2 show the proposed construction routes from the east and west respectively.

**Figure 11.1: Construction Route (from the east)**



**Figure 11.2: Construction Route (from the west)**



### **11.3 Consideration of Potential Impacts**

#### Construction Trip Generation

- 11.3.1 The development is anticipated to be constructed over an 8-week period (2 months), generating a total of approximately 50 HGVs, or 100 two-way (to and from the site) movements during the construction period.
- 11.3.2 Assuming that the construction would be operating on a 5-day working week, this would equate to 2 deliveries per day, or 4 two-way daily movements.
- 11.3.3 It is estimated that on average there would be an additional 10 staff movements, or 20 two-way movements each day during the construction period.
- 11.3.4 The total vehicles trips generated by the site during the construction period would therefore be approximately 12 per day. There are no abnormal loads proposed.
- 11.3.5 Therefore, the TS concludes that during construction there would be negligible traffic impacts on the local highway network.

### Operational Trip Generation

- 11.3.6 During the operational phase, traffic movements are expected to be minimal equating to approximately three visits to the site per year for equipment monitoring and maintenance. These would typically be made by light van or 4x4 type vehicles. Therefore, no traffic impacts are anticipated during the operational period.

### **11.4 Consideration of Mitigation Measures**

- 11.4.1 No existing highway safety patterns or problems have been identified and there are no significant impacts anticipated on the road network as a result of the proposed development. Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required.

### **11.5 Conclusions**

- 11.5.1 A TS has been prepared to support this planning application and assess the potential for adverse impacts on road safety and/or the road network. The TS has concluded that the proposed development is not anticipated to result in any significant adverse impacts in relation to transport and that any effects would be negligible.
- 11.5.2 The proposed development is in accordance with the Development Plan and national planning guidance and acceptable in highways and transportation terms. There are no highways or transport-related reasons upon which a refusal of the planning application for these proposals would be justified.

## **12 CONTAMINATED LAND**

### **12.1 Introduction**

12.1.1 The Development Plan and national planning policies contain guidance on development of brownfield land and how the potential for contamination should be addressed in the determination of planning applications. The following documents are of particular relevance:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015-2026), adopted in January 2015;
- National Planning Policy Framework (last amended December 2024) section 11 (Making effective use of land); and
- Planning Practice Guidance.

12.1.2 A Preliminary Geoenvironmental Investigation (PGI) has been prepared to support this planning application due to the former use of parts of the site for landfilling with waste material and subsequent restoration. The report was commissioned to assess any land contamination sources and geotechnical constraints to the proposed development. The full PGI report can be found at Appendix 7, and a summary of the findings is provided below.

### **12.2 Baseline**

12.2.1 The site is underlain by a historic landfill, which is understood to have taken special waste and waste that could degrade and therefore could pose a hazardous gas risk.

12.2.2 The landfill creates gas and leachate, which is currently monitored and controlled by Biffa. The landfill is expected to have a formal engineered capping layer, although no details are available at this stage. Given the current agricultural use, some form of cover soils are anticipated, but details of the depths across the landfill are unknown.

### **12.3 Consideration of Potential Impacts**

12.3.1 From an assessment of the current and historic site uses, the PGI has identified potential sources of contamination including:

- The presence of hazardous gas (methane and carbon dioxide) - The site might be affected by sources of hazardous gas generation as it is a recorded landfill site, is located within 250m of other known former and current landfill sites and it is anticipated to be underlain by significant areas of deep made ground;

- Presence of Radon - The HSA website radon map indicates that the site is in an area where 1% to 3% of homes are estimated to be above the radon action level; and
- Ground contamination associated with historic landfilling activities. The waste mass, overlying soils and/or groundwater may contain contaminants including inorganics, volatile organic compounds, total petroleum hydrocarbons etc.

#### Geo-environmental Assessment

- 12.3.2 It is noted that in relation to contamination, the site's environmental setting is considered to be of moderate sensitivity. Based on observations made during the site walkover and given the site's former use as a landfill, deep made ground is anticipated across the site and it is considered that the landfill cap is expected to be largely uncontaminated.
- 12.3.3 At this stage, it is anticipated significant abnormalities relating to geoenvironmental issues at the site are:
- Deep Made Ground (landfill waste) is present across much of the site (grassed area), the made ground and associated capping layer will need to be considered when designing the foundation solution; and
  - A vast array of wells and boreholes are present across the grassed area, this will likely need to be maintained throughout the ground investigation, construction and life span of the solar PV array. The location of these systems (include pipework and services) will need to be known and designed around at all stages.
- 12.3.4 The proposed control and switchgear will be housed in a container within the site compound, therefore, will not have foundations that will penetrate the ground, even outside of the former landfill area.
- 12.3.5 It is known that a considerable number of utilities and pipework (associated with the gas and leachate operations) are present at relatively shallow depth beneath the entire site. The exact depths and routes of this infrastructure is not known, with only indicative routes provided.

#### **12.4 Mitigation**

- 12.4.1 The landfilling beneath and adjacent to the site appear to have taken special waste and waste that could degrade and therefore pose a hazardous gas risk. Given the types of

waste deposited, risks surrounding installation and maintenance of the proposed solar PV panels should be considered.

- 12.4.2 All of the solar PV panels will be situated within the former landfill/waste management facility (grassed area). It is understood that the capping layer cannot be pierced, therefore, the solar PV panels will be placed on concrete mounting bases at or close to the ground surface.
- 12.4.3 Calculations for the size of the concrete mounting bases will need to take into account the load of the PV panels, wind loading and underlying CBR/ground stiffness.
- 12.4.4 The site is considered highly likely to be affected by hazardous gas. However, given the likely presence of an engineered capping layer and proposed redevelopment with solar PV panels (an open-air structure) and all control gear to be housed in a container, the capping layer will not be penetrated, therefore, gas monitoring will not be required.
- 12.4.5 The site is considered suitable for its current and proposed use, the proposed change in use will require some intrusive investigation. This would include:
  - Plate load testing (PLT) to provide CBR/stiffness values and Modulus of Subgrade Reaction, with Hand Pitting to allow for the collection of near surface soils to allow for appropriate geotechnical and chemical testing (recommended to assess risk to construction and site workers); and
  - In addition, PLTs could be employed beneath haul roads and areas of hardstanding subject to proposed finishes and usage.

## **12.5 Conclusions**

- 12.5.1 The PRA has provided an assessment of the potential risks associated with the existing site and the proposed development of a solar farm. The site's environmental setting is considered to be of moderate sensitivity.
- 12.5.2 Given the site's former use as a landfill (including historic landfill), deep made ground of a highly variable nature is anticipated across the majority of the site, and it is considered likely that some (possibly significant) ground contamination will be present in shallow soils beneath the engineered capping system, which is expected to be present.
- 12.5.3 Ground investigation and installation of the solar PV panels will need to take account of the pipework associated with the control systems (i.e. manifolds) to avoid damaging the pipe network.

12.5.4 The site is considered suitable for its current and proposed use, although it is detailed that the proposed change in use will require intrusive investigation. This would include:

- Plate load testing (PLT) to provide CBR/stiffness values. In addition, PLTs could be employed beneath haul roads and areas of hardstanding subject to proposed finishes and usage.
- Geotechnical soils analysis; and
- Chemical testing on shallow soil.

12.5.5 Taking the above information into consideration, the proposed development is considered to accord with the Development Plan and national planning policy guidance concerning the approach to contaminated land.

## **13 CULTURAL HERITAGE**

### **13.1 Introduction**

13.1.1 The Development Plan and national planning policy provide guidance on how heritage assets and their setting should be assessed as part of the planning application process. Applicants are required to provide a description of the significance of any heritage assets affected by proposed development, including any contribution made by the assets' setting. Policies of relevance to cultural heritage are included within the documents detailed below:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015-2026), adopted in January 2015;
- National Planning Policy Framework (last amended December 2024), Section 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment); and
- Planning Practice Guidance.

13.1.2 A Heritage Statement has been prepared to support the planning application which presents the findings of a cultural heritage assessment. The Heritage Statement is enclosed at Appendix 8, and a summary of the findings is provided below.

### **13.2 Baseline**

13.2.1 There are a number of listed buildings within 750m of the site. The closest of these are as follows: Studley Grange Farmhouse (Grade II Listed) located approximately 100m further north from the closest boundary;

- Upper Studley Farmhouse (Grade II Listed) located approximately 500m further north from the closest boundary; and
- Can Court Farmhouse (Grade II Listed), located approximately 575m further south from the closest boundary.

13.2.2 The nearest scheduled monument is 1.7km west of the Site, a Medieval rural settlement 240m south of Lower Woodshaw Farm (list entry 1018388). There are no Grade I or Grade II\* designated assets within 3km of the Site. The nearest Registered Park and Garden is Grade II Lydiard Park, 2.2km north of the Site, and to the north of the M4.

13.2.3 Given the local topography created by landfilling, and the influences of infrastructure such as the Great Western Railway main line and M4 motorway, a study area of 750m

from designated assets was considered appropriate for assessing a low elevation solar development.

- 13.2.4 Upper Studley Farmhouse and Can Court Farmhouse were scoped out of detailed assessment.
- 13.2.5 Upper Studley Farmhouse is separated from the site by the Great Western Railway main line and Can Court Farmhouse sits within a context of modern farm buildings that block the view towards the site. Furthermore, distance from the site would ensure that there could be no effect upon their setting,
- 13.2.6 Studley Grange Farmhouse is scoped into the assessment.

#### Studley Grange Farmhouse

- 13.2.7 Studley Grange Farmhouse is an unoccupied farmhouse, dating to the late 18th or early 19th century, according to the listing description. However, Save Britain's Heritage website suggests an earlier origin:

*'This site was the medieval grange of Stanley Abbey from at least 1460. It remained in the possession of the Abbey until the Dissolution when it came into the ownership of Sir Edward Seymour. It is likely that the original farmhouse was built in this period. Interior photographs show that the building is cruck-framed, and recent dendrochronology studies by the Wiltshire Buildings Record have shown that crucks are not found in Wiltshire after c.1530. There are other features which suggest an earlier date, such as a finely moulded beam.'*

### **13.3 Consideration of Potential Impacts**

#### Studley Grange Farmhouse

- 13.3.1 The assessment is summarised in Table 13.1 below:

**Table 13.1:** Effects and Evaluation of Significance (Studley Grange Farmhouse)

|                                                                                       | Type of effect     | Probability of Effect Occurring | Sensitivity   | Magnitude of change caused by the proposed development | Significance of change (effect) caused by the proposed development | Rationale                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adverse direct effects upon statutorily designated assets of the historic environment | None               | Certain                         | High / Medium | No change                                              | Neutral                                                            | There will be no direct adverse effects upon statutorily designated assets                                                                                          |
| Indirect effects upon statutorily designated assets of the historic environment       | Neutral            | Certain                         | Medium        | No change                                              | Neutral                                                            | There will be no effect upon the setting of designated assets or our appreciation of their significance from the proposed development.                              |
| Adverse direct effects upon archaeology                                               | Adverse if present | Unlikely                        | No known      | Not known                                              | Not known                                                          | Other than the location of the proposed control building and potentially the route of the cable connection, there would be no construction within undisturbed land. |

13.3.2 In summary, the assessment determined that the immediate setting of the listed building has been significantly degraded over a period of 40 years. The site has been landfilled and restored at a higher level. The Farmhouse is orientated to the east. There are no views from the listed building of either the proposed solar park or the proposed control buildings due to trees and vegetation. The proposed control buildings will be constructed adjacent to an existing gas installation. It is stated that there would be no effect upon appreciation of the significance of the asset, the test set by NPPF.

13.3.3 Furthermore, there would be no adverse effects upon the setting of Studley Grange Farmhouse from other factors such as odour or noise, from lighting, tranquillity or remoteness.

### Archaeology

- 13.3.4 Other than the location of the proposed control building (an area of 0.03ha) and potentially the route of the cable connection between there and the solar park, there would be no construction within undisturbed land.
- 13.3.5 It is suggested that an archaeological watching brief could be held during these works; however, it is detailed that findings are highly unlikely given the extent of disturbance that the site and surrounds have been previously subjected to due to landfilling and restoration works.

## **13.4 Consideration of Mitigation Measures**

- 13.4.1 This assessment has concluded that no significant effects are anticipated on cultural heritage or archaeology and therefore mitigation of a watching brief is only suggested as a cautious approach and is not considered necessary.

## **13.5 Conclusions**

- 13.5.1 This assessment has concluded that there would be no adverse effects upon the significance of designated heritage assets and as such, the proposed development therefore accords with the Development Plan and national policies relating to cultural heritage.

## 14 CONCLUSIONS

### 14.1 Summary

- 14.1.1 The NPPF states in paragraph 8 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives; economic, social and environmental. The environmental objective is to:

*‘Protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy’.*

- 14.1.2 The proposed development satisfies these objectives including enhancing the existing habitats on site and creating new habitats, making effective use of land which has limited alternative uses, using natural resources prudently by providing an alternative renewable energy source and minimising waste and pollution through providing clean energy.
- 14.1.3 This planning application is supported by comprehensive technical assessments which demonstrate that the proposed solar farm would not give rise to any unacceptable effects on people or the environment. Embedded and additional mitigation measures are proposed to ensure that the proposed development can be managed and maintained effectively. A CTMP supports the planning application (see Appendix 9) and provides detailed guidance to ensure that traffic associated with the construction phase of the development would not give rise to any unacceptable highway or amenity effects.
- 14.1.4 Guidance within the NPPF and PPG are supportive of ground mounted solar PV installations within suitable and sustainable locations, taking into consideration the need for agricultural land. Material considerations including the Written Ministerial Statements support the sequential approach to locating ground mounted solar PV installations on previously developed land or greenfield land of low agricultural value. Opportunities to continue agricultural uses in tandem with solar farms and providing biodiversity improvements are also supported.
- 14.1.5 The proposed development would contribute to the national aims of increasing solar PV capacity in the UK. The application demonstrates that the proposals will be sensitively sited, will not give rise to any unacceptable environmental impacts.

- 14.1.6 The proposals would provide approximately 2.2 MW of renewable energy which would contribute to the Government's targets of a 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the UK by 2050. The proposed development seeks to establish a renewable energy source within a poorly utilised, restored site which has an existing grid connection point. The proposals comprise temporary development and would result in biodiversity improvements to the habitats within the site.
- 14.1.7 At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development for proposals which are in accordance with the Development Plan. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 14.1.8 In conclusion, this Planning Statement and supporting assessments have demonstrated that the proposed development of a solar farm on part of the former Studley Grange Landfill site is, on balance, in accordance with the Development Plan for Wiltshire and there are no material considerations which indicate otherwise.



## **Appendix 1 – Design and Access Statement**



## **Appendix 2 – Ecological Reports**



## **Appendix 2A – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)**



## **Appendix 2B – Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report and Matrix**



## **Appendix 2C – Protected Species Report**



## **Appendix 3 – Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy**



## **Appendix 4 – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**



## **Appendix 5 – Glint and Glare Assessment**



## **Appendix 6 – Transport Statement**



## **Appendix 7 – Preliminary Geo-environmental Report**



## **Appendix 8 – Heritage Statement**



## **Appendix 9 – Construction Traffic Management Plan**