

PELHAM SPRING SOLAR FARM

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

MAIN STATEMENT

**CHAPTER 3 – THE DEVELOPMENT SITE AND ITS
ENVIRONS**

On behalf of Low Carbon Solar Park 6 Limited

Date: January 2023



Document Management.

Version	Date	Author	Checked/ Approved by:	Reason for revision

3 THE DEVELOPMENT SITE AND ITS ENVIRONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 This chapter provides a description overview of the development site and its environs.

3.1.2 The development site is located on agricultural managed fields located between Stocking Pelham to the north west, Berden to the north, and Manuden to the south east. The nearest group of dwellings is located in the hamlet of Brick House End to the west. Battles Hall and other properties in Maggot's End sit to the south east of the site, and along Maggot's End Road leading west from Manuden to East End and then Stocking Pelham. Blaking's Lane forms, in part, the site's northern edge and coincides with Public Right of Way (PRoW) Public Footpath FP 5-12. A number of other PRoWs cross the site or pass in very close proximity, linking Battle's Hall and Maggot's End Road with Brick House End. The agricultural fields are partially bounded by a network of hedgerows, ditches and broadleaved woodland.

3.1.3 Broadly speaking, the site is enclosed to the north by Blaking's Lane and associated vegetation, Battle's Wood to the east, boundary hedgerows and hedgerow trees to the south, and Pump Spring woodland, which compartmentalise the site and visually separates its western most part. The Pelham Spring Electricity Substation is located to the west. Tree vegetation that encloses the Substation provides screening to the west.

3.1.4 The proposed development, broadly speaking, can be divided into two areas which reflects the compartmentalised character of the site. The eastern part is largely located between The Crump, Brick House End, and Battle's Hall; with its western part located between Pump Spring woodland and the Pelham Spring Electricity Substation.

3.1.5 The eastern part of the proposed development is enclosed to the west and east by tree and hedgerow vegetation, effectively preventing any views in or out. Furthermore, the northern perimeter of the site is marked by a strong line of vegetation associated with Blaking's Lane, which coupled with the gently rising topography completely separates the site from the landscape to the north and the neighbouring The Crump.

3.1.6 The development site falls across two parish councils. Most of the site, comprising the southern section, is located within the Manuden Parish. The northern part of the site is located within Berden Parish.

3.2 HIGHWAYS

3.2.1 In the context of the local highway network, the site is currently accessed via Manuden Road. It connects Bishop's Stortford in the south to Clavering in the north. Manuden Road serves the village of Manuden¹ and a small number of residential properties and farmland. Manuden Road connects to the B3108. The B3108 is the main road through Clavering to the north of the site. The B3108 measures around five metres wide and is subject to 30mph within Clavering and a 60mph speed limit outside of the confines of Clavering. The B3108 is routed through Wicken Bonhunt to the east, subsequently providing access to Newport,

¹ Constriction traffic associated with the development would not be routed through Manuden village.

and to Buntingford to the west. It forms a priority junction with the B1833 at Newport.

3.2.2 There are a number of public rights of way that cross the site, and in the surrounding area. Footpaths PROW 39_34, PROW 5_14, and PROW 39_4 pass through the site. A footpath also runs along the northern and western site boundaries. The revised scheme presented as part of this planning application has since sought to remove areas of panels from particular areas of the site which are crossed or lie in close proximity to the existing PROWs.

3.2.3 PROW 39_4 is located around 826 metres to the west of the proposed construction access with Manuden Road. The footpath starts from Maggots End Lane and runs parallel to an existing agricultural farm track, which extends north west from Maggots End Lane towards the south of the application site, before joining the agricultural track to the north of Battles Hall Barns.

3.3 DESIGNATIONS

3.3.1 There are no internationally designated sites located within 10km of the development site. There are no nationally designated sites located within 2km of the development site. The closest designated site is the Hillcollins Pit Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which lies approximately 2.2km to the south-west, designated due to its geological interest.

3.3.2 Local and non-statutory designated sites located in the vicinity of the development site are:

- Battle's Wood Local Wildlife Site, adjacent to the development site.
- Park Green Local Wildlife Site, adjacent to development site
- Pelham Centre Meadow Local Wildlife Site, 200m to the west of the development site
- Stocking Pelham Fields Centre Local Wildlife Site, 340m to the west of the development site
- Ley Wood Local Wildlife Site, 980m to the south of the development site.

3.4 DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

3.4.1 No designated heritage assets are located within the development site. The Scheduled The Crump: a ringwork 600m south of Berden lies c. 35m north of the site and the Grade II Listed The Crump and former barn (now room) adjoining to north-west lies c. 120m north of the site. The Scheduled Moated site at Battles Manor lies c. 150m south of the development site. The Grade II Listed Battles Hall lies c. 150m south of the development site and is associated with the Grade II Listed Cart Lodge and Grade II Listed Dovecote. A number of further Grade II Listed Buildings are recorded in the surrounds of the development site.

3.4.2 Turning to archaeological resource, no anomalies suggestive of earlier prehistoric activity were identified during the geophysical survey within the development site. There is some evidence for earlier prehistoric activity within the wider area in the form of cropmarks indicative of features of this date, and a small quantity material of this date within the development site. A Bronze Age Beaker burial was recorded at Berden to the north and prehistoric pottery was identified during evaluation at Manuden. On this basis, the potential for significant archaeological remains of earlier prehistoric date within the site is considered to be low².

² Heritage Statement, prepared by Pegasus Group, page 46.

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3.4.3 During the mid-19th century, the land within the site was utilised as a mixture of arable, grass and woodland, and its arable use has continued into the 21st century. Cropmarks of field boundaries are visible within the site on modern aerial imagery which are depicted on mapping from the 19th century.

3.5 LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

3.5.1 The site is not adjacent to any statutory or non-statutory landscape designations.

3.5.2 Regarding local designations, the site is not within a Countryside Protection Zone or any other protected landscape designation.

3.5.3 The site is located within National Landscape Character Area No. 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. The NLCA86 is an expanse of an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau.

3.5.4 The Proposed Development would provide opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and provide a biodiversity net gain (BNG) through the provision of new hedgerows and trees, the retention of field margins, and wildflower meadow habitats. It will also enable the fields to rest and recover from continuous farming.

3.6 HYDROLOGY AND LAND CONDITIONS

3.6.1 The Environment Agency flood map for Planning shows the entire development site as lying entirely within Flood Zone 1 (<1:1000 year probability of flooding). an area described as "low probability" of flooding in Table 1: Flood Zones of the "Planning Practice Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework".

3.6.2 A few existing field ditches lie within the southern part of the site and flow in a southerly direction and are assumed to flow into the Bourne Brook further south past the site boundary. There are no known existing sewer system networks within the vicinity of the site. Geological data held by the British Geological Survey (BGS) indicates that the bedrock geology underlying the site is "Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation (undifferentiated) - Chalk".

3.7 AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

3.7.1 A detailed Agricultural Land Classification survey has been undertaken at the development site and it determined the following grades: (i) approximately 42.7ha of Grade 2 (53.8% of the Site); (ii) approximately 21.8ha of Subgrade 3a (27.5%); (iii) approximately 13.1ha of Subgrade 3b (16.5%), and (iv) approximately 1.7ha of non-agricultural land (2.2%) along a track.

3.7.2 MAFF provisional (pre-1988) ALC information indicates shows that Uttlesford District has a high proportion of agricultural land in Grade 2, i.e., 80.4% compared with 14.2% in England as a whole.

3.8 PLANNING HISTORY

3.8.1 A search of the Local Authority's online planning records identified one historical application for the site, this relates to the previously refused scheme (Decision Notice UTT/21/3356/FUL) and EIA Screening Request (Screening Opinion Ref: UTT/21/3379/SCO) submitted by the applicant in November 2021. The application was determined by the Council within the statutory 13-week period. The council swiftly determined the scheme before they were placed on special measures under

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Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The application was refused as the applicant was not given the opportunity to resolve the holding objections put forward by consultees. A total of 8 reasons for refusal were listed on the Council's Decision Notice, largely relating to the holding objections made by statutory consultees which had requested further information to be provided.

3.9 RELEVANT OFF-SITE APPLICATIONS

3.9.1 Planning permission was granted in October 2016 for the development of a 49.9MW battery storage facility on land immediately to the north of Pelham Substation (ref. UTT/16/2316/FUL). This development was to support Enhanced Frequency Response (EFR) which is a service required by National Grid to help it balance the frequency fluctuations on the grid system. This battery storage technology is a crucial element in the delivery of reliable solar-generated electricity. As such, this planning permission is deemed relevant and establishes that Pelham Substation is a well-equipped electricity generating station for accommodating a solar farm of this scope as proposed.

3.9.2 A further application for the construction of ground mounted Solar Farm with a generation capacity of up to 49.99MW, together with associated infrastructure and landscaping was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for determination under Section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in July 2022. The above application was registered by the Planning Inspectorate under reference S62A/22/0006 (Uttlesford Reference: UTT/22/2046/PINS) at land at Berden Hall Farm, Dewes Green Road, Berden, directly to the north east of Pelham Substation. The land subject to this application is situated approximately 500m to the north west of the site.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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