



APPENDIX 3

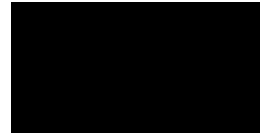
The Alternative Site Assessment report
in relation to Layer De La Haye

Response to Environmental Statement
in relation to
Berden Hall Solar Farm
(Pelham Solar)

PINS Reference: S62A/22/0006



6 New Bridge Street
London EC4V 6AB



LOW CARBON

LAYER SOLAR FARM

COLCHESTER, ESSEX

ALTERNATIVE SITE ASSESSMENT

Date: November 2020

DWD Ref: 14604

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Revision	Description	Originated	Checked	Reviewed	Authorised	Date
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Overview

- 1.1 This Alternative Site Assessment has been prepared on behalf of Layer Solar Farm Limited (the 'Applicant') to support of a planning application for the development of a solar photovoltaic ('PV') farm and other associated infrastructure. The Applicant is a special purpose vehicle ('SPV') currently owned by Low Carbon Limited ('Low Carbon').
- 1.2 The proposal is hereafter collectively referred to as the 'Proposed Development'. The project is known as the 'Layer Solar Farm'.

Site Summary

- 1.3 The 'Proposed Site' comprises approximately 96.8 hectares ('ha') of agricultural land located south west of Colchester, Essex. The Site has been deliberately placed in close proximity to an electricity substation, as this is one of the few places where such plants can connect efficiently to the electricity distribution network.
- 1.4 The majority of the Proposed Site is Grade 3b land (moderate quality), with a small section of Grade 3a land (good quality) to the north. It follows that the Site is farmed as a unit of Grade 3b land and is classed as such for the purposes of this planning application.

Low Carbon

- 1.5 Low Carbon, the owner of the Applicant, is a UK company committed to making a positive and significant impact on the causes of climate change. The company has funded the development of more than 322 megawatts ('MW') of UK solar, generating enough clean energy to power more than 100,000 UK homes and saving in excess of 143,600 tonnes of CO² each year. A further 100MW of consented UK solar farms are due to go into construction next year.

Purpose and Structure of this Report

- 1.6 The assessment set out in this report seeks to identify if there are any potentially more suitable sites situated on:
 - previously developed and or/non-agricultural land (hereafter referred to collectively as 'previously development land'); or
 - lower grade agricultural land (i.e. Grade 4 or 5).
- 1.7 The assessment is carried out to support the planning application. The overall aim of the assessment is to demonstrate that the Applicant has given due consideration to the benefits and

constraints associated with the Proposed Site, when compared and considered with potential alternative sites.

- 1.8 Importantly, it should be noted that there is no statutory or defined policy requirement to carry out an 'alternative site assessment' or similar. The Applicant has adopted a policy to carry out alternative site assessments for solar farm proposals located on greenfield sites.
- 1.9 Commercial rooftops are not considered in this assessment because (i) there are no known rooftops of sufficient size in the local area; and (ii) assessing the potential for development of multiple rooftops is not comparable or realistic, relative to a ground-mounted solar PV farm. Furthermore, the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance on renewable and low carbon energy sets out in paragraph 013 regarding ground-mounted solar farms (see para 3.12 below) that the focus should be on the effective use of previously developed and non-agricultural land or agricultural land where it can be justified, however, rooftops are not mentioned.
- 1.10 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:
- Section 2 – key features of the site and proposed development;
 - Section 3 – relevant planning policy;
 - Section 4 – the methodology applied to identify and assess alternative sites;
 - Section 5 – application of the methodology and assessment of alternative sites; and
 - Section 6 – summary and conclusions.

2.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Proposed Site

- 2.1 The Proposed Site measures approximately 96.8 ha and comprises two parcels of agricultural land, separated by Birch Road, located directly west of Layer de la Haye and to the south-west of Colchester.
- 2.2 For the purposes of this assessment, the Proposed Site comprises the area of land required for the main solar farm and infrastructure, and highway accesses.
- 2.3 The northern parcel is surrounded almost entirely by woodland apart from to its south west where it is bound by Birch Road and Birch Park Road. A small part of its south eastern boundary is bound by a small agricultural field. The parcel is bordered to the west by an isolated residential property known as the Bungalow, and Woodhouse farm is located within the parcel.
- 2.4 The southern parcel is located immediately south of the northern parcel and Birch Road. It is surrounded by a mixture of roads, agricultural fields, woodland, Layer de la Haye Treatment Works, scattered residential properties and agricultural buildings. Abberton Reservoir is located to the south west.
- 2.5 There is a Public Right of Way ('PRoW') which runs through the middle of the northern parcel (PROW 124_24) and further PRoW that runs adjacent to part of the north eastern boundary (PROW 141_4). No PRoWs cross the southern parcel of land.
- 2.6 The land is Grade 3 (moderate quality) and is currently in arable rotation.
- 2.7 The location of the Proposed Site is shown below in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Site Location Plan



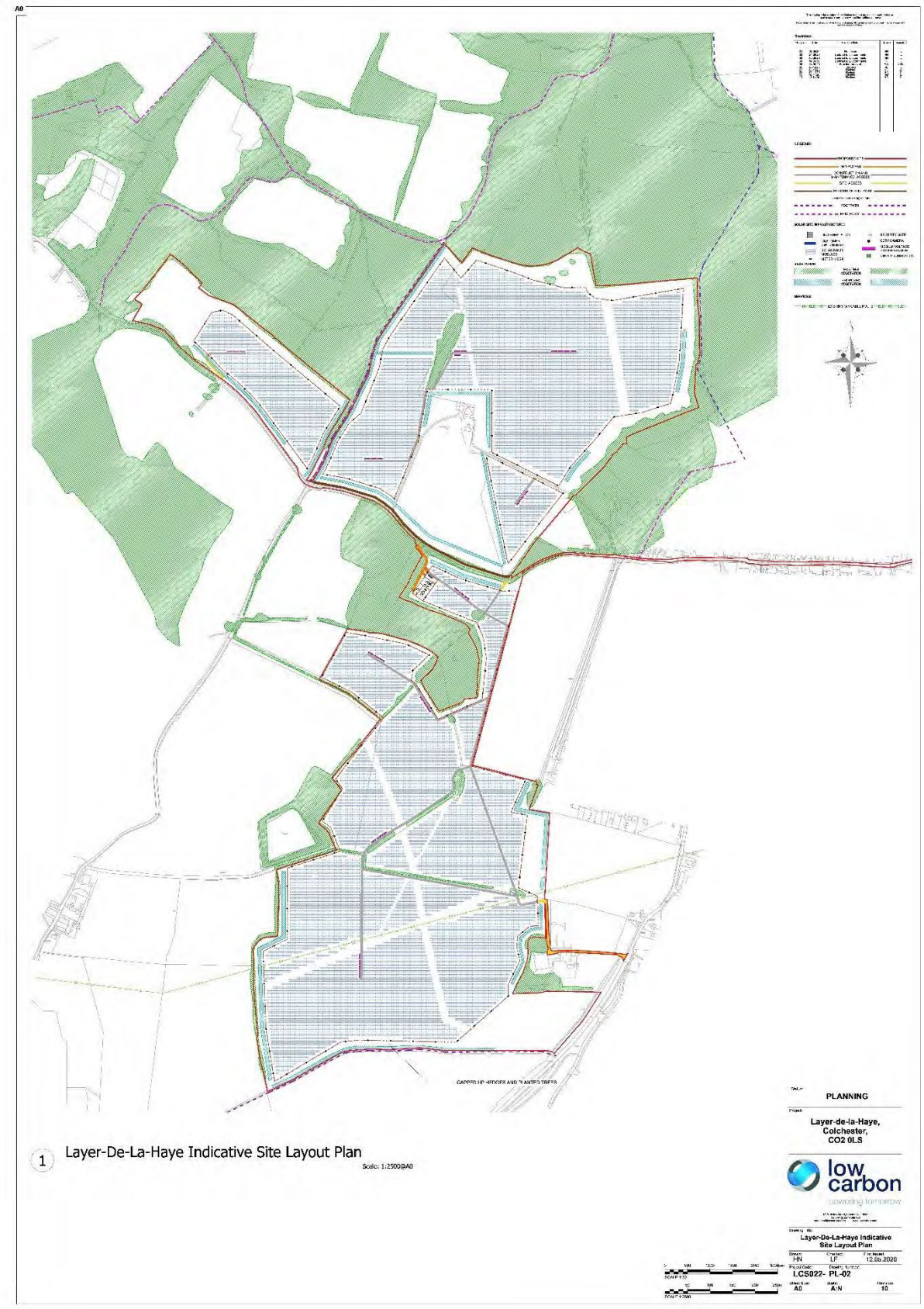
- 2.8 The Site lies within a predominantly agricultural landscape. Layer de la Haye and Layer Water Treatment Works are located directly to the east. Other individual residences and farmsteads are also present within the local landscape.
- 2.9 The northernmost point of the Site is approximately 2km south of the edge of Colchester’s urban area. There are a number of other villages within the vicinity of the Site including Heckfordbridge to the north-west and Birch, Birch Green and Layer Breton to the west and south-west.
- 2.10 There are a number of existing solar farms within the surrounding area including at Birch Estate, land adjacent to Claypits Farm (approx. 2km to the west); Birch Airfield on Blind Lane (approx. 4km to the west) and Langenhoe Solar Farm (approx. 6.3km to the south-east).

The Proposed Development

- 2.11 The Proposed Development would consist of arrays of solar PV panels up to 2.8 metres (‘m’) high with separation distances of approximately 3m. Associated infrastructure includes inverters, substations and internal site access roads.

- 2.12 Planning permission will be sought for the development to operate for 40 years, at which point it would be decommissioned and the land returned to its previous state.
- 2.13 The indicative layout of the Proposed Development is illustrated in Figure 2.2 below. The Proposed Development benefits from an agreed point of connection ('POC') to the local electricity distribution network via a substation located approximately 2.7km to the east of the Proposed Site.

Figure 2.2: Indicative Site Layout



3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1 The planning policy most relevant to the consideration of alternative sites in the context of this assessment is considered to comprise the following:

- Colchester Borough Council ('CBC') Core Strategy (adopted 2008 and revised in 2014);
- CBC Site Allocations Development Plan Document ('DPD') (2010);
- CBC Development Policies DPD (adopted 2010 and revised 2014);
- National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (2019);
- National Planning Practice Guidance ('NPPG') (online resource); and
- Overarching National Policy Statement ('NPS') for Energy Planning ('EN-1') (2011).

3.2 The Council is also in the process of developing the Colchester Borough Local Plan 2017 – 2033 (the 'Emerging Local Plan'). The Publication Draft was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 9 October 2017 and the Council has most recently held a six week consultation on proposed main modifications following recommendations from the Inspector. The consultation ran between 27 August 2020 and 9 October 2020.

3.3 For more detail relating to planning policy and the compliance of the Proposed Development with it, please refer to the Planning Statement that forms part of the application submission.

3.4 The specific guidance set out in each of the above documents is summarised below.

CBC Core Strategy

3.5 Policy ER1 (Energy, Resources, Waste, Water and Recycling) of the Core Strategy states that *"the Council will encourage the delivery of renewable energy projects, including micro-generation, in the Borough to reduce Colchester's carbon footprint."*

CBC Site Allocations DPD

3.6 The Site Allocations DPD also forms part of the development plan for the district, however, there are no saved policies considered to be of relevance to site selection for renewable energy developments.

CBC Development Policies DPD

3.7 Policy DP25 (Renewable Energy) states the Council will support renewable energy schemes and goes on to state that *"schemes should be located and designed in such a way to minimise increases*

in ambient noise levels and visual impacts should be mitigated through siting, design, layout and landscaping measures.”

CBC Emerging Local Plan

- 3.8 Emerging policy OV2 (Countryside) of the Emerging Local Plan acknowledges that *“proposals for... renewable energy generation... may require a countryside location.”* Emerging policy DM25 (Renewable Energy, Water, Waste and Recycling) states renewable energy schemes with potential for adverse effects on international or nationally designated sites will only be supported in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that the designations objectives for the area will not be comprised and that adverse impacts can be adequately mitigated. It goes on to state *“all applications for renewable energy proposals should be located and designed in such a way to minimise increases in ambient noise levels.”*

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.9 The NPPF was published in March 2012 and most recently updated in June 2019. The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are to be applied, including in respect of the development of agricultural land and renewable energy.
- 3.10 Paragraph 170 states that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Furthermore, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

National Planning Practice Guidance

- 3.11 The policies contained within the NPPF are expanded upon and supported by the NPPG, which was originally published in March 2014 and has been updated periodically since.
- 3.12 With regards to the location of solar farms, paragraph 013 (Ref: 5-013-20150327) cites the following factors that local planning authorities should consider:
- encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value;
 - where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land.

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy Planning

- 3.13 NPS EN-1 is a material consideration for planning applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and has been included because it is the only policy document that provides any practical guidance in terms of alternative site assessments for energy projects.
- 3.14 The principles set out at paragraph 4.4.3 of EN-1 provide useful guidance, as follows:
- the consideration of alternatives should be carried out in a proportionate manner;
 - there should be a realistic prospect of the alternative delivering the same infrastructure capacity (including energy security and climate change benefits) in the same timescale as the proposed development;
 - alternative proposals which mean the necessary development could not proceed, for example because the alternative proposals are not commercially viable (e.g. on the market and available), should be excluded on the grounds that they are not important and relevant; and
 - alternative proposals which are vague or inchoate can be excluded on the grounds that they are not important and relevant.
- 3.15 The above principles are effective provisions in terms of scoping the assessment; although, as previously stated, it is important to note that there is no statutory or specific planning policy requirement to consider alternative sites in relation to the development of BMV (or other) agricultural land in EN-1 or in other planning policy document.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Overview

- 4.1 This section sets out the qualitative, sequential methodology utilised to carry out the assessment. It should be noted that this type of methodology has been utilised to support many planning applications relating to solar farms in the UK.
- 4.2 The assessment is split into two parts:
1. Previously developed land – to establish whether there are any potential alternative sites located on previously developed land that could be utilised (note: the Proposed Site is not previously developed land); and
 2. Lower grade agricultural land – to establish whether there are any potential alternative sites located on lower grade land that could be utilised (note: the Proposed Site is classed as Grade 3 for the purposes of this assessment).
- 4.3 As previously stated, commercial rooftops have not been considered because (i) there are no known rooftops of sufficient size in the area and (ii) it is considered that assessing the potential for development of multiple rooftops is not comparable or realistic when considered relative to a ground-mounted solar farm. Furthermore, as previously stated, the NPPG states that in considering ground-mounted solar farms, the focus should be on the effective use of previously developed and non-agricultural land. Rooftops are not mentioned.
- 4.4 The methodology utilised to carry out the assessment is sequenced as follows:
- definition of a search area;
 - analysis of previously developed land;
 - analysis of lower grade agricultural land;
 - establishment of a long-list;
 - long-list filtering to create a short list of sites; and
 - assessment of the shortlist.
- 4.5 The above are explained in turn in the remainder of this section.

The Search Area

- 4.6 It is important to identify a proportionate and appropriate area of search (hereafter referred to as the 'Search Area') from which potential alternative sites are identified for assessment. However,

there is no specific guidance in relevant planning policy documents to determine the geographic area that should be applied.

- 4.7 The Search Area for this assessment has therefore been based on the requirement to connect the Proposed Development to the Grid and the parameters associated with this, because any solar farm without a feasible grid connection is not viable.
- 4.8 To define the Search Area, the Applicant undertook a high-level assessment of connection costs against possible output and determined that connection up to 4.5 km from the POC would be feasible. Although, sites in closer proximity to the POC can be more feasible; owing to, amongst other things, connection costs, obstacles may exist (e.g. roads, railway lines and rivers) and encroaching on third party land.
- 4.9 The Search Area for alternative sites has therefore been defined to include an area of 4.5 km around the POC – please refer to Figure 1 at Appendix 1, which illustrates the Search Area.

Analysis of Previously Developed Land

- 4.10 Relevant publicly available data was reviewed to identify previously developed land within the Search Area that could potentially be available for the Proposed Development.
- 4.11 The data included what are considered to comprise the most up-to-date, relevant adopted and/or emerging Development Plan Documents ('DPD') produced by the Council. The following types of allocation/sites were added to a 'long-list' of potentially suitable sites:
- land allocated for renewable energy or similar development; and
 - land allocated for employment, or another land use potentially compatible with energy development.
- 4.12 To further supplement the DPDs, the following were also reviewed:
- the Estates Gazette website (<http://propertylink.estatesgazette.com>) where a search for commercial/industrial land can be carried out within a defined search area; and
 - the most recent version of the Colchester Council Brownfield land register which was published on the Council's website in accordance with government guidelines.

Analysis of Lower Grade Agricultural Land

Scope – ALC grades considered in the assessment

- 4.13 The ALC system classifies land into five grades (1-5), with Grade 3 subdivided into sub-grades 3a and 3b. The BMV land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a and is the land which is most flexible,

productive and efficient in response to inputs and which can best deliver food and non-food crops for future generations.

4.14 The nationally available (or 'Preliminary') ALC survey data obtained from Natural England does not distinguish between Grade 3a and 3b). There are small areas within the Search Area where the subdivision data is available from Natural England and, where available, this has been applied.

4.15 The majority of the Proposed Site is Grade 3b land (moderate quality), with a small section of Grade 3a land (good quality) to the north, as established by the Agricultural Land Classification Survey that forms part of the planning application submission. It follows that the Proposed Site is farmed as a unit of Grade 3b land and is classed as such for the purposes of this planning application. Therefore, the assessment set out in this report focuses on considering whether there are any potential alternative Grade 4 or 5 sites, i.e. lower grade agricultural land than the Proposed Site.

Site Identification Criteria

4.16 In order to identify potentially suitable sites, the first stage of the identification process utilised a Geographical Information Systems ('GIS') to discount constrained sections of land from within the Search Area. The definition of 'constrained' land was determined by reference to the planning policy set out earlier in this report, with particular focus on environmental considerations.

4.17 The criteria applied to rule out constrained land are as follows:

- slope and gradient – sites where the topography is unsuitable (note: small areas of adverse topography can be dealt with via engineering adjustments to the solar arrays);
- designated sites/assets – land within designated sites/assets avoided (including National Parks; Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; World Heritage Coast; Special Protection Areas ('SPA'); Special Areas of Conservation ('SAC'); Ramsar Sites (International Wetlands Designation); Sites of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSI'); National Nature Reserves; Local Nature Reserves; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Reserves; Important Bird Areas; Listed Buildings; Scheduled Monuments; Registered Battlefields; and Registered Parks and Gardens);
- Green Belt – land within the Green Belt avoided where more viable non-Green Belt land is available;
- flood risk – areas dominated by Zone 2 and 3 discounted (the zones with the highest risk of flooding); and
- PRoW – areas crossed by a significant number of PRoWs avoided, where possible.

4.18 The second stage of identification process comprised splitting any remaining ‘unconstrained’ areas/tracts of land into potential sites for assessment. The sites were defined through the application of professional judgement and having regard to the following:

- irregular areas discounted;
- any urban/built up areas removed;
- clear and continuous area of land (e.g. avoiding woodland);
- avoiding sites split by roads, railway lines and water bodies, where possible; and
- boundaries defined by man-made and natural features (e.g. roads, properties and woodland).

4.19 Any identified sites were then added to the long-list.

Filtering of the Long-list

4.20 The long list was then ‘filtered’ to remove any sites below 96.8 ha (the approximate area of land required for the Proposed Development). Any sites that did not meet this criterion were filtered out.

4.21 Multiple sites equating to a total of 96.8 ha were not considered in the assessment, because a scheme comprising of multiple sites is not considered to represent a comparable alternative. This is because in comparison to a single, continuous site, multiple sites would have other potentially limiting factors, including, but not limited to, legal agreements with multiple land owners; the complexity of connecting multiple sites to the electricity distribution network; and the potential for intensified disruption associated with the development of multiple sites.

4.22 For the above reasons, the consideration of multiple sites is not considered proportionate, realistic or deliverable as an alternative when considering, amongst other things, the principles set out in paragraph 4.4.3 of NPS EN-1.

Assessment of the Short-list

4.23 The remaining sites were added to a ‘short-list’ and assessed against a range of policy, environmental and viability criteria (determined with reference to relevant planning policy), as follows:

- Is the land likely to be available, e.g. on the market or proposed for another use?
- Distance from the potential point of connection – is the potential point of connection on site or further away?

- Are there obstacles between the site and potential point of connection?
- Shape of the site – is it regular/irregular?
- Is the land clear and developable?
- Are there any footpaths crossing the site?
- Flood risk areas – Flood Zone 1 favoured.
- Any other relevant considerations, such as, for example, whether the site benefits from a suitable highway access?

4.24 The assessment of the short-list determined whether there are any potential feasible alternative sites. The assessment utilised professional experience and judgement to draw conclusions.

4.25 It should be noted that the consideration of some criteria is repeated at the short-list stage, in order to apply the criteria to sites generated by the search of previously developed land or non-agricultural land, as these sites were not subjected to the GIS exercise utilised by the search for lower-grade agricultural land (where these criteria has previously been applied).

5.0 ASSESSMENT

5.1 This section sets out the following parts of the assessment:

- previously developed land search;
- lower grade agricultural land search;
- long-list and filtering; and
- assessment of sites on the short-list.

Previously Developed Land

5.2 The Search Area lies entirely within the administrative area of Colchester Borough Council. Development Plan Documents and supporting evidence base documents (including the latest Strategic Land Availability Assessment) produced by the Council were reviewed to search for previously developed land for the long-list. The Colchester Borough Council brownfield land register and the Estates Gazette were also reviewed.

5.3 69 sites were added to the long-list following analysis of previously developed land.

Lower Grade Agricultural Land

5.4 The GIS criteria set out in Section 6 of this report were applied. The sequential application of the GIS criteria is illustrated in Figures 1-9 Appendix 1 of this report. Figure 9 shows the unconstrained land.

5.5 48 sites were added to the long-list following the analysis of lower grade agricultural land.

5.6 The long-list (with application of the filtering criterion) is set out in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 – Long-list and filtering

Site Reference	Site Address	Approx Area (ha)	Source	Filtering – 96.8ha or above?
COL04	Catkins Mews, Berechurch Hall Road, Colchester	1.4	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL09	Irvine Road, Colchester	0.8	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL13	Oxley Parker Drive, Mill Road, Colchester	1.5	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL14	Arena Site, Abbey Fields, Colchester	1.6	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL17	Gosbecks Phase 2, Colchester	6.8	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size

COL22	Rowhedge Road, Colchester	0.7	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL23	Gosbecks Farm Road, Gosbecks Road, Colchester	1.4	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL41	Allotments between Maldon Road and Drury Road, Colchester	1.5		No – insufficient size
COL43	Open Space between Mersea Road and Holt Drive, Colchester	1.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL45	Woodlands, Distillery Lane, Colchester	0.9	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL46	Residential caravan park, Whitehall Road, Colchester	1.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL47	Commercial land adjacent River Colne, Haven Quay, Colchester	1.6	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL57	Allotment, Norman Way, Colchester	3.0	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL58	274 Straight Road and land to the rear, Colchester	0.5	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL59	Open space fronting Layer Road, Colchester	0.5	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL60	Open space fronting Messines Road, Colchester	0.6	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL61	Open space fronting Elmwood Avenue, Colchester	0.7	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL71	Middlewick Ranges, Colchester	63.5	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL72	Land off King George Road, Colchester	0.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL73	Land rear of 60 to 68 Blackheath, Colchester	0.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL74	The Willows shopping parade, Mersea Road, Colchester	0.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL77	The Laurels, Distillery Lane, Colchester	0.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL83	Land rear of 74 To 78 Military Road, Colchester	0.5	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL87	Open space at Camulodunum Way, Colchester	0.4	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL88	Open space south of 41 Berechurch Road, Colchester	0.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size

COL89	Land at 300 rear of 284 to 288 Shrub End Road, Colchester	0.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL95	Melville, Layer Road, Colchester	0.7	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL98	DSG, Flagstaff Road, Colchester	4.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL99	MCTC, Berechurch Hall Road, Colchester	30	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL100	RFCA, Berechurch Road, Colchester	1.9	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSW10	Zoo site, Maldon Road, Colchester	173.5	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	Yes – added to shortlist
RSE01	Peldon Road, Abberton	4.6	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE02	Glebe Lane, Abberton	1.0	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE03	Battlewick Farm, Rowhedge	12.2	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE04	Mersea Road, Peldon	1.2	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE05	Lower Road, Peldon	1.1	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE06	Lower Road, Peldon	1.6	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE07	Malting Green Road, Layer de la Haye	1.4	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE08	Rowhedge Business Park, Fingringhoe Road, Rowhedge	3.7	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE09	Malting Green, Abberton Road, Layer-de-la-Haye	0.8	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE10	Peldon Road, Abberton	0.2	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE11	Ashpark House, Peldon Road, Abberton	0.8	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE12	Cross House Cottage, Layer-de-la-Haye	0.4	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE13	The Folley, Layer-de-la-Haye	5.1	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE15	Clay Barn, Abberton Road, Fingringhoe	0.9	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size

RSE16	Kingsland, Abberton Road, Fingringhoe	1.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE18	Black Barn, The Folley, Layer de la Haye	0.9	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE19	Chestnut Farm, Abberton Road, Layer de la Haye	2.2	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE21	Lower Road, Peldon	0.8	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE22	Wigborough Road, Peldon	0.6	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE24	Hosplant, St Ives Road, Peldon	2.9	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE26	Abberton Lodge, Layer Road, Abberton	0.9	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE28	Harveys Farm, Wigborough Road, Peldon	1.3	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE30	Land east of Greensleeves, Malting Green, Layer de la Haye	0.6	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE34	Land north of Birch Road adjacent to Bolls Lane, Layer de la Haye	2.1	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE35	Recreation ground, High Road, Layer de la Haye	1.6	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE36	Rowhedge Wharf, Rowhedge	7.9	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE39	St Ive's Road, Peldon	1.7	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE40	Nightingale Corner, Layer de la Haye	0.4	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
RSE44	Kingsford Business Centre, Layer Road, Layer de la Haye	1.0	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
STN41	Fiveways Fruit Farm, Stanway	17.05	Colchester Strategic Land Availability Assessment	No – insufficient size
COL/09	Land and Buildings Between King Edward Quay and Haven Road South of Distillery Lane	5.4	Colchester Brownfield Land Register	No – insufficient size
COL/11	Land, Buildings and Former Cbt Bus Depot Fronting Magdalen Street and Military Road	0.5	Colchester Brownfield Land Register	No – insufficient size
COL/13	Garage 74 To 78 Military Road and Land to Rear	0.5	Colchester Brownfield Land Register	No – insufficient size
COL/17	Gasworks and Former Timber Dock, Land North and South of Whitehall Road	6.5	Colchester Brownfield Land Register	No – insufficient size
COL/26	Residential Garages Rear Of 1 Stalin Road	0.1	Colchester Brownfield Land Register	No – insufficient size

RHE/01	Rowhedge Port, Southern End of Highstreet, Rowhedge	8	Colchester Brownfield Land Register	No – insufficient size
EG1	Old Heath Church, Fingringhoe Road, Colchester, Essex, CO2 8DZ	0.07	Estates Gazette	No – insufficient size
EG2	Unit 5 Wild Close, 211 Shrub End Road, Colchester, CO3 4RN	0.3	Estates Gazette	No – insufficient size
ALS01	Land north-east of Rowhedge Road	17.1	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS02	Land south-west of Rowhedge Road	11.9	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS03	Land between Furneaux Lane and Roman River	18.8	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS04	Land west of Furneaux Lane	44.2	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS05	Land north of Weir Lane	61.7	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS06	Land south of Weir Lane	23.5	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS07	Land at Ball Lane	20.1	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS08	Land north of South Green Road	58.3	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS09	Land south of High Park Corner	86.9	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS10	Land between Haye Lane and Chapel Road	41.4	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS11	Land between Mersea Road (B1025) and Haye Lane	49.9	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS12	Land west of Mersea Road (B1025)	10.2	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS13	Land south-west of South Green Road	32.6	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS14	Land north of Lodge Lane	32.6	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS15	Land at Black Bond Hall B&B	4.81	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS16	Land south-east of Lodge Lane	20.7	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS17	Land west of Fingringhoe	10.1	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS18	Land north of Upper Haye Lane	19.0	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS19	Land north east of Rectory Bus Stop, Colchester Road (B1025)	13.5	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS20	Land between Langenhoe Hall Lane and Lodge Lane	46.3	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS21	Land at corner of Colchester Road (B1025) and Langenhoe Hall Lane	12.3	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS22	Land south of Langenhoe Hall Lane	91.9	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS23	Land between Peldon Road and Colchester Road (B1025)	98.3	Agricultural Land Search	Yes – added to shortlist
ALS24	Land between Peldon Village and Colchester Road (B1025)	121	Agricultural Land Search	Yes – added to shortlist
ALS25	Land between Abberton Reservoir and Abberton Village	78.5	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS26	Land east of Newpost Lane	11.6	Agricultural Land Search	No – insufficient size
ALS27	Land south of Lower Road	104	Agricultural Land Search	Yes – added to shortlist

ALS28	Land between Peldon Road and Abberton Reservoir	107	Agricultural Search	Land	Yes – added to shortlist
ALS29	Land north-west of Wigborough Road	100	Agricultural Search	Land	Yes – added to shortlist
ALS30	Land at corner of Layer Breton Hill and Layer Road	82.7	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS31	Land between Wigborough Road (B1026) and Abberton Reservoir	23.8	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS32	Land between Layer Breton Hill and Wigborough Road (B1026)	106	Agricultural Search	Land	Yes – added to shortlist
ALS33	Land between Layer Breton, Birch Green and Wigborough Road (B1026)	117	Agricultural Search	Land	Yes – added to shortlist
ALS34	Land east of Birch Street	26.5	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS35	Land south of Layer de la Haye	85.9	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS36	Land between Malting Green and Abberton Reservoir	49.9	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS37	Land between Abberton Reservoir and Abberton Road	8.9	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS38	Land between Abberton Road and Bounstead Road	5.9	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS39	Land between Roman River and Layer Brook	12	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS40	Land between Mill Lane and Bounstead Road	5.5	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS41	Land between Roman River and Malting Green	13	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS42	Land west of Bounstead Road	48.1	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS43	Land west of Layer Road	24.6	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS44	Land west of Olivers Lane	22.2	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS45	Land east of Leas Lane	20.5	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS46	Land south of Colchester Zoo	24.8	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS47	Land east of Birch Park Road	30	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size
ALS48	Land east of Orpen's Hill	20.1	Agricultural Search	Land	No – insufficient size

Assessment of the Short-list

5.7 **8 sites** were added to the short-list, as follows:

- RSW10 – Zoo Site, Maldon Road, Colchester;
- ALS23 - Land between Peldon Road and Colchester Road (B1025);
- ALS24 - Land between Peldon Village and Colchester Road (B1025);
- ALS27 - Land south of Lower Road;
- ALS28 - Land between Peldon Road and Abberton Reservoir;

- ALS29 - Land north-west of Wigborough Road;
- ALS32 - Land between Layer Breton Hill and Wigborough Road (B1026); and
- ALS33 - Land between Layer Breton, Birch Green and Wigborough Road (B1026).

5.8 Figure 10 at Appendix 2 illustrates the location of the short-listed sites.

5.9 The criteria set out in section 4 of this report are first applied to the Proposed Site (to provide context) and then to the other short-listed sites. The assessment was desk-based; carried out with reference to amongst other things, available aerial imagery and Figures 1-9 at Appendix 1.

The Proposed Site

5.10 The Proposed Site comprises agricultural land located to west of Layer de la Haye. It covers an area of approximately 96.8ha and consists of two parcels of land directly adjacent to each other on either side of Birch Road.

Table 5.2 – Assessment of the Proposed Site

Criteria	Assessment
Is the land likely to be available, e.g. on the market or proposed for another use?	The Proposed Site is available to the Applicant, is ready for development and is subject to no other proposed uses or allocations that might be considered incompatible.
Is the topography favourable?	The Proposed Site benefits from favourable topography for the purposes of a solar farm.
Distance from the potential point of connection – is the potential point of connection onsite or further away?	The point of connection ('POC') is located 2.7 km east of the Proposed Site.
Are there obstacles between the site and point of connection?	There are no known significant obstacles between the Proposed Site and the POC. The route would be almost entirely along highway and/or verge.
Shape of the site – is it regular/irregular?	The Proposed Site is made up of a number of fields considered to be of regular shape for a solar farm.
Is the land clear and developable?	The land is clear of built development and considered to be developable.
Are there any PRoWs crossing the site?	There is a PRoW which runs through the middle of the northern parcel and further PRoW that runs adjacent along part of the north eastern boundary. No PRoWs cross the southern parcel of land. The Proposed Development, however, contains screening between the footpaths and infrastructure.

Flood risk areas – Flood Zone 1 – favoured.	The land that is to be developed is all located in Flood Zone 1. However, as the site is greater than 1 hectare a Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted with the application.
Any other relevant considerations?	There are no designated ecology or biodiversity assets located within the Proposed Site. The Proposed Site is abutted to the north by areas of woodland (designated as a Local Wildlife Site) some of which is Ancient Woodland. There are Grade II Listed Buildings located to the east and west of the Proposed Site and a Scheduled Ancient Monument is located to the north. The ALC survey submitted with the application found that the majority of the Proposed Site is Grade 3b land (moderate quality), with a small section of Grade 3a land (good quality) to the north.

5.11 Summary and discussion: The Proposed Site is immediately available to the Applicant for the development of a solar farm and is located in an area where the principle of solar farms is already established. The Proposed Site is entirely within Flood Zone 1 and both the site shape and topography are suitable. The majority of the Proposed Site is Grade 3b land which is classed as moderate quality.

5.12 There are heritage assets in close proximity, consisting of Grade II Listed Buildings a Scheduled Ancient Monument however these are located at a sufficient distance from the Proposed Site and are separated by existing woodland and trees which will be enhanced by the Proposed Development so as to ensure it would not affect their settings. The designated Local Wildlife Site to the north consistent of areas of woodland would not be affected by the Proposed Development.

[RSW10 – Zoo Site, Maldon Road, Colchester](#)

5.13 The site is comprised of land currently occupied by Colchester Zoo and agricultural fields, which make up the vast majority of the site.

Table 5.3 – Analysis of Zoo Site, Maldon Road, Colchester

Criteria	Assessment
Is the land likely to be available, e.g. on the market or proposed for another use?	The site is not currently known to be available.
Is the topography favourable?	The site benefits from favourable topography for the purposes of a solar farm, aside from insignificant areas of the site to its south west.
Distance from the potential point of connection – is the potential point of connection onsite	The site is located 2.5 km north west of the POC.

or further away?	
Are there obstacles between the site and point of connection?	There are two roads and woodland located between the site and POC.
Shape of the site – is it regular/irregular?	The site consists of agricultural fields and previously developed land that is considered to be regular in shape.
Is the land clear and developable?	A significant portion of the site is currently occupied by a working zoo. The agricultural portion of the site is, however, clear and developable.
Are there any PRowS crossing the site?	The site is crossed by a number of bridleways and footpaths in all directions.
Flood risk areas – Flood Zone 1 – favoured.	The site is largely located in Flood Zone 1. However, a small area of Flood Zone 3 runs north to south through the centre of the site.
Any other relevant considerations?	The site includes and is adjacent to areas of Ancient Woodland. A large portion of the site, particularly to its north, is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Furthermore, there is a Grade II* Listed Building within Colchester Zoo and groupings of Grade II Listed Buildings adjacent to the sites east and west. According to the nationally available Provisional ALC survey the land is largely Grade 2 (Very Good Quality) agricultural land, with a section of Grade 3.

5.14 Summary and discussion: the site complies with the main criteria and is comparable to the Proposed Site in some respects. However, it is heavily constrained by the fact that it is currently occupied by a working zoo and the much of the agricultural section of the site is designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument and Grade 2 agricultural land. Furthermore, it is not currently known to be available to be available to the Applicant.

5.15 For these reasons, the site is not considered a more feasible alternative to the Proposed Site.

[ALS23 – Land between Peldon Road and Colchester Road \(B1025\)](#)

5.16 The site is comprised of agricultural fields between Peldon Road and Colchester Road (B1025), to the south of Abberton and Lagenhoe and north east of Peldon.

Table 5.3 – Analysis of land between Peldon Road and Colchester Road (B1025)

Criteria	Assessment
Is the land likely to be available, e.g. on the market or proposed for another use?	The site is not currently known to be available.

Is the topography favourable?	The site benefits from favourable topography for the purposes of a solar farm.
Distance from the potential point of connection – is the potential point of connection onsite or further away?	The site is located 2.4 km south east of the POC.
Are there obstacles between the site and point of connection?	A mixture of a road, Abberton Reservoir and Abberton Village are located between the site and POC.
Shape of the site – is it regular/irregular?	The site consists of agricultural fields that are considered to be regular in shape.
Is the land clear and developable?	The site is clear and developable.
Are there any PRowS crossing the site?	Two public footpaths cross each other within the north of the site.
Flood risk areas – Flood Zone 1 – favoured.	The site is located almost entirely in Flood Zone 1. However, very small areas of Flood Zone 3 cross into the site at its boundaries.
Any other relevant considerations?	There are individual Grade II Listed Buildings located adjacent to the site's boundary to its south east and south west. According to the nationally available Provisional ALC survey the land is Grade 3.

5.17 Summary and discussion: the site complies with the main criteria and is comparable to the Proposed Site in some respects. However, it is not currently known to be available to be available to the Applicant.

5.18 It follows that the site is not considered to comprise a more feasible alternative to the Proposed Site.

[ALS24 – Land between Peldon Village and Colchester Road \(B1025\)](#)

5.19 The site is comprised of a number of agricultural fields located directly adjacent to Peldon.

Table 5.4 - Analysis of land between Peldon Village and Colchester Road (B1025)

Criteria	Assessment
Is the land likely to be available, e.g. on the market or proposed for another use?	The site is not currently known to be available.

Is the topography favourable?	The site benefits from favourable topography for the purposes of a solar farm.
Distance from the potential point of connection – is the potential point of connection onsite or further away?	The site is located 2.9 km south of the POC.
Are there obstacles between the site and point of connection?	Abberton Reservoir is located between the site and POC.
Shape of the site – is it regular/irregular?	The site consists of agricultural fields that are considered to be regular in shape.
Is the land clear and developable?	The site is clear and developable.
Are there any PRowS crossing the site?	Two public footpaths cross each other within the west of the site.
Flood risk areas – Flood Zone 1 – favoured.	The site is located almost entirely in Flood Zone 1. However, very small areas of Flood Zone 3 cross into the site to its south and north east.
Any other relevant considerations?	There are a number of Grade II Listed Buildings located adjacent to the sites north western, western, southern and eastern boundaries. According to the nationally available Provisional ALC survey the land is Grade 3.

5.20 Summary and discussion: the site complies with the main criteria and is comparable to the Proposed Site in some respects. However, Abberton Reservoir is considered to be a fairly significant obstacle between the site and point of connection. Furthermore, the site is located directly adjacent to the village of Peldon and it is not currently known to be available to be available to the Applicant.

5.21 It follows that the site is not considered to comprise a more feasible alternative to the Proposed Site.

ALS27 – Land south of Lower Road

5.22 The site is comprised of agricultural fields located south of Lower Road, Peldon and north east of Little Wigborough.

Table 5.5 – Analysis of land south of Lower Road

Criteria	Assessment
Is the land likely	The site is not currently known to be available.

to be available, e.g. on the market or proposed for another use?	
Is the topography favourable?	The site benefits from favourable topography for the purposes of a solar farm.
Distance from the potential point of connection – is the potential point of connection onsite or further away?	The site is located 3.9 km south of the POC.
Are there obstacles between the site and point of connection?	Abberton Reservoir is located between the site and POC.
Shape of the site – is it regular/irregular?	The site consists of agricultural fields that are considered to be regular in shape.
Is the land clear and developable?	The site is clear and developable.
Are there any PRoWs crossing the site?	The site is not crossed by any PRoWs.
Flood risk areas – Flood Zone 1 – favoured.	The site is located almost entirely in Flood Zone 1. However, a small area of Flood Zone 3 crosses into the site to its east.
Any other relevant considerations?	The site is located directly adjacent to a number of Grade II Listed Buildings, particularly in Peldon to its north and Little Wigborough to its south west. Furthermore, the site is adjacent to some Ancient Woodland to its south. According to the nationally available Provisional ALC survey the land is Grade 3.

5.23 Summary and discussion: the site complies with the main criteria and is comparable to the Proposed Site in some respects. However, Abberton Reservoir is considered to be a significant obstacle between the site and point of connection, along with the distance. Furthermore, the site is located directly adjacent to the villages of Peldon and Great Wigborough, and directly adjacent to a number of Grade II Listed Buildings in both. The site is not currently known to be available to be available to the Applicant.

5.24 It follows that the site is not considered to comprise a more feasible alternative to the Proposed Site.

ALS28 – Land between Peldon Road and Abberton Reservoir

5.25 The site is comprised of agricultural fields located south east of Abberton Reservoir, to which they are almost directly adjacent, and located between it and Peldon Village and Peldon Road.

Table 5.6 – Analysis of Land between Peldon Road and Abberton Reservoir

Criteria	Assessment
Is the land likely to be available, e.g. on the market or proposed for another use?	The site is not currently known to be available.
Is the topography favourable?	The site benefits from favourable topography for the purposes of a solar farm.
Distance from the potential point of connection – is the potential point of connection onsite or further away?	The site is located 2.3 km south of the POC.
Are there obstacles between the site and point of connection?	Abberton Reservoir is located between the site and POC.
Shape of the site – is it regular/irregular?	The site consists of agricultural fields that are considered to be regular in shape. However, the site wraps around a number of residential and agricultural properties on Lodge Lane.
Is the land clear and developable?	The site is clear and developable.
Are there any PRowS crossing the site?	The site is not crossed by any PRowS.
Flood risk areas – Flood Zone 1 – favoured.	The site is located almost entirely in Flood Zone 1. However, a small area of Flood Zone 3 crosses into the site to its north.
Any other relevant considerations?	The site is located adjacent to some Grade II Listed Buildings on Peldon Road and is directly adjacent to Abberton Reservoir which is designated as a Ramsar Site, a Site of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSI') and a Special Protection Area ('SPA'). According to the nationally available Provisional ALC survey the land is Grade 3.

5.26 Summary and discussion: the site complies with the main criteria and is comparable to the Proposed Site in some respects. However, it is located directly adjacent to Abberton Reservoir which is designated as a Ramsar Site, a SSSI and a SPA and forms a significant obstacle between it

and the point of connection, and the site wraps around residential properties on Lodge Lane. Furthermore, it is not currently known to be available to be available to the Applicant.

5.27 It follows that the site is not considered to comprise a more feasible alternative to the Proposed Site.

ALS29 – Land north-west of Wigborough Road

5.28 The site is comprised of agricultural fields located between Peldon, Little Wigborough and Abberton Reservoir.

Table 5.7 – Analysis of Land north-west of Wigborough Road

Criteria	Assessment
Is the land likely to be available, e.g. on the market or proposed for another use?	The site is not currently known to be available.
Is the topography favourable?	The site benefits from favourable topography for the purposes of a solar farm.
Distance from the potential point of connection – is the potential point of connection onsite or further away?	The site is located 3.3 km south of the POC.
Are there obstacles between the site and point of connection?	Abberton Reservoir is located between the site and POC.
Shape of the site – is it regular/irregular?	The site consists of agricultural fields that are considered to be regular in shape.
Is the land clear and developable?	The site is clear and developable.
Are there any PRoWs crossing the site?	The site is not crossed by any PRoWs.
Flood risk areas – Flood Zone 1 – favoured.	The site is located entirely in Flood Zone 1.
Any other relevant considerations?	The site is located adjacent to a number of Grade II Listed Buildings in Peldon and Little Wigborough, including one at Harvey’s Farm which it wraps around. The site is also located directly adjacent to a number of residential properties in Peldon and Abberton Reservoir which is designated as a Ramsar Site, a SSSI and a SPA. According to the nationally available Provisional ALC survey the land is Grade 3.

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5.29 Summary and discussion: the site complies with the main criteria and is comparable to the Proposed Site in some respects. However, it is located directly adjacent to a number of Grade II Listed Buildings, including one that it wraps around, and residential properties in Peldon. It is also located directly adjacent to Abberton Reservoir which is designated as a Ramsar Site, a SSSI and a SPA, and forms a significant obstacle between it and the point of connection. Furthermore, it is not currently known to be available to be available to the Applicant.

5.30 It follows that the site is not considered to comprise a more feasible alternative to the Proposed Site.

ALS29 – Land between Layer Breton Hill and Wigborough Road (B1026)

5.31 The site is comprised of a number of agricultural fields located between Layer Breton Hill and Wigborough Road (B1026) beyond which is Abberton Reservoir.

Table 5.8 – Analysis of land between Layer Breton Hill and Wigborough Road (B1026)

Criteria	Assessment
Is the land likely to be available, e.g. on the market or proposed for another use?	The site is not currently known to be available.
Is the topography favourable?	The site benefits from favourable topography for the purposes of a solar farm.
Distance from the potential point of connection – is the potential point of connection onsite or further away?	The site is located 3.5 km south west of the POC.
Are there obstacles between the site and point of connection?	Abberton Reservoir and roads are located between the site and POC.
Shape of the site – is it regular/irregular?	The site consists of agricultural fields that are considered to be regular in shape.
Is the land clear and developable?	The site is clear and developable.
Are there any PRoWs crossing the site?	The site is crossed by two public footpaths.

Flood risk areas – Flood Zone 1 – favoured.	The site is located entirely in Flood Zone 1.
Any other relevant considerations?	The site is adjacent to Grade II Listed Buildings on Layer Breton Hill, including Layer Breton Hall. The site is also located adjacent to Abberton Reservoir which is designated as a Ramsar Site, a SSSI and a SPA . According to the nationally available Provisional ALC survey the land is Grade 3.

5.32 Summary and discussion: the site complies with the main criteria and is comparable to the Proposed Site in some respects. However, the site is further away from the point of connection and Abberton Reservoir forms an obstacle between both. Furthermore, it is not currently known to be available to be available to the Applicant.

5.33 It follows that the site is not considered to comprise a more feasible alternative to the Proposed Site.

[ALS32 – Land between Layer Breton, Birch Green and Wigborough Road \(B1026\)](#)

5.34 The site comprises a number of agricultural fields east of Birch Green, Layer Breton and Layer Breton Hill and west of Wigborough Road (B1026) and the Proposed Site.

Table 5.9 – Analysis of land between Layer Breton, Birch Green and Wigborough Road (B1026)

Criteria	Assessment
Is the land likely to be available, e.g. on the market or proposed for another use?	The site is not currently known to be available.
Is the topography favourable?	The site benefits from favourable topography for the purposes of a solar farm.
Distance from the potential point of connection – is the potential point of connection onsite or further away?	The site is located 3 km west of the POC.
Are there obstacles between the site and point of connection?	A number of roads are located between the site and the POC.
Shape of the site – is it regular/irregular?	The site consists of agricultural fields that are considered to be regular in shape.

Is the land clear and developable?	The site is clear and developable.
Are there any PRowS crossing the site?	The site is crossed by two public footpaths.
Flood risk areas – Flood Zone 1 – favoured.	The site is located entirely in Flood Zone 1.
Any other relevant considerations?	The site is directly adjacent to a number of Grade II Listed Buildings and residential properties in Birch Green and Layer Breton, and further Grade II Listed Buildings at Garlands Farm. According to the nationally available Provisional ALC survey the land is Grade 3.

5.35 Summary and discussion: the site complies with the main criteria and is comparable to the Proposed Site in some respects. However, the site is slightly further away from the point of connection and, it is not currently known to be available to be available to the Applicant.

5.36 It follows that the site is not considered to comprise a more feasible alternative to the Proposed Site.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

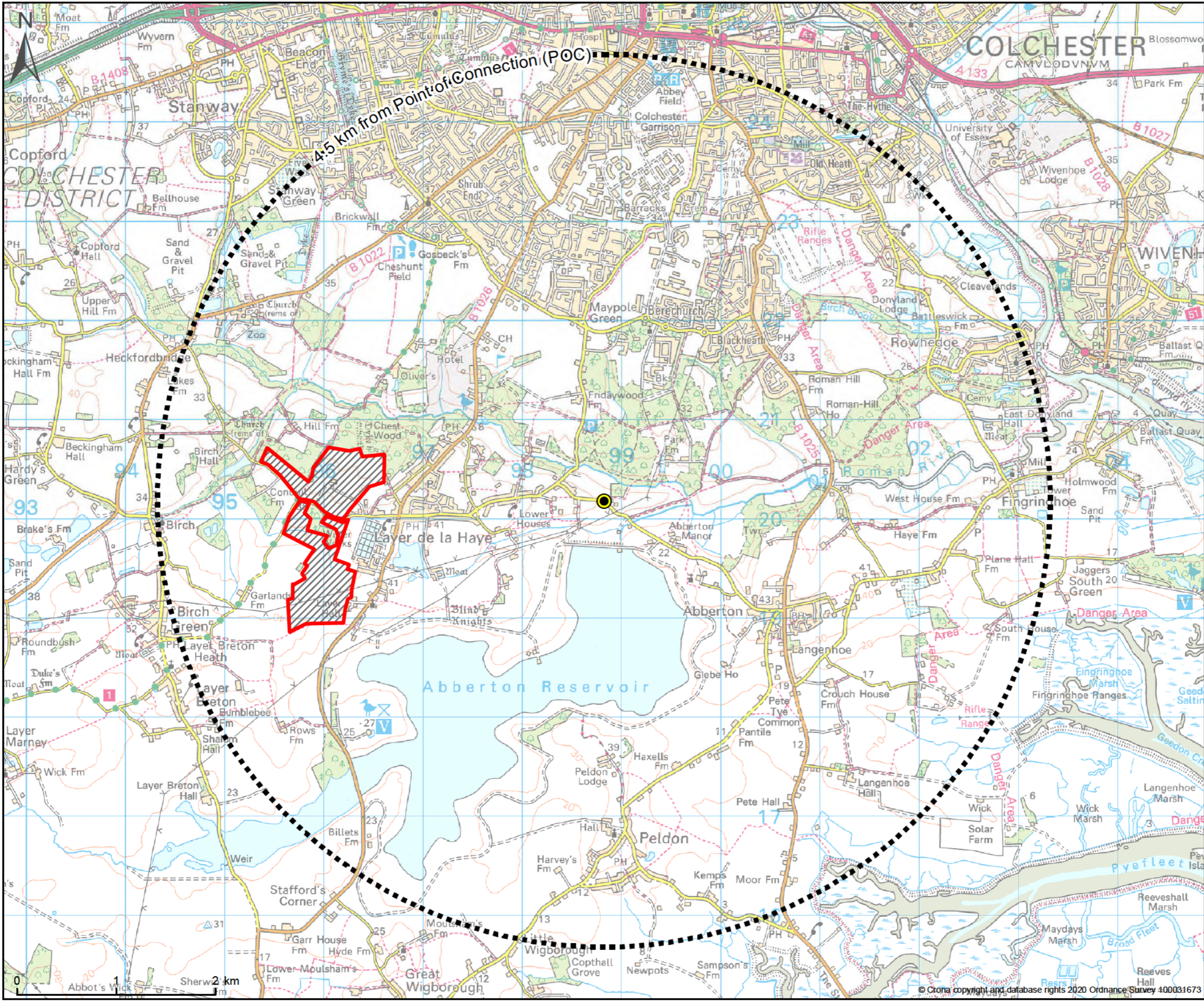
6.1 The Search Area features a lot of heavily constrained land in its northern extent, located in and around Colchester, in addition to Abberton Reservoir to the south west. The remainder comprises predominantly agricultural land. A number of previously developed and strategic sites were identified in and around the urban area but all (with the exception of one) were too small to be considered as feasible alternatives to the Proposed Site. The vast majority of the agricultural land was unconstrained, but due to the presence of physical features such as roads, woodland and residential areas much of this agricultural land was divided into plots too small to be considered as feasible alternative sites however 7 possible alternative sites were identified through the agricultural land search. The filtering exercise therefore reduced the long-list down to a short-list of 8 sites, namely:

- RSW10 – Zoo Site, Maldon Road, Colchester;
- ALS23 - Land between Peldon Road and Colchester Road (B1025);
- ALS24 - Land between Peldon Village and Colchester Road (B1025);
- ALS27 - Land south of Lower Road;
- ALS28 - Land between Peldon Road and Abberton Reservoir;
- ALS29 - Land north-west of Wigborough Road;
- ALS32 - Land between Layer Breton Hill and Wigborough Road (B1026); and
- ALS33 - Land between Layer Breton, Birch Green and Wigborough Road (B1026).

6.2 The majority of the sites are comparable to the Proposed Site in many respects, particularly regarding favourable topography and being clear and developable. However, in many instances there are unknowns regarding land availability. In addition, Abberton Reservoir forms a significant obstacle between a number of sites and the respective point of connection resulting in protracted and potentially unfeasible underground connections. Furthermore, there are other potential constraints including close proximity to residential areas and properties and in some cases Grade II Listed Buildings without screening.

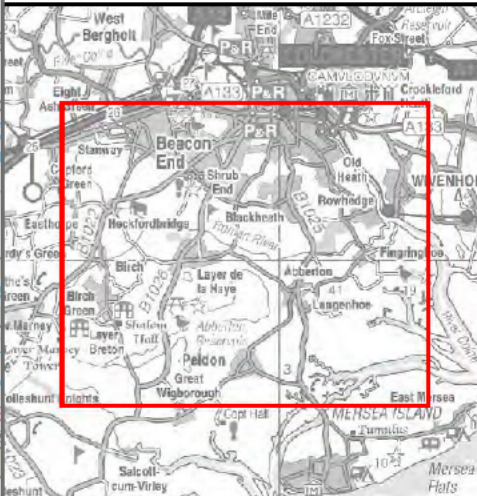
6.3 It is therefore concluded that, whilst many of the sites comply with the main criteria and are comparable to the Proposed Site, none comprise a more feasible alternative.

APPENDIX 1: FIGURES 1-9 (GIS FIGURES)



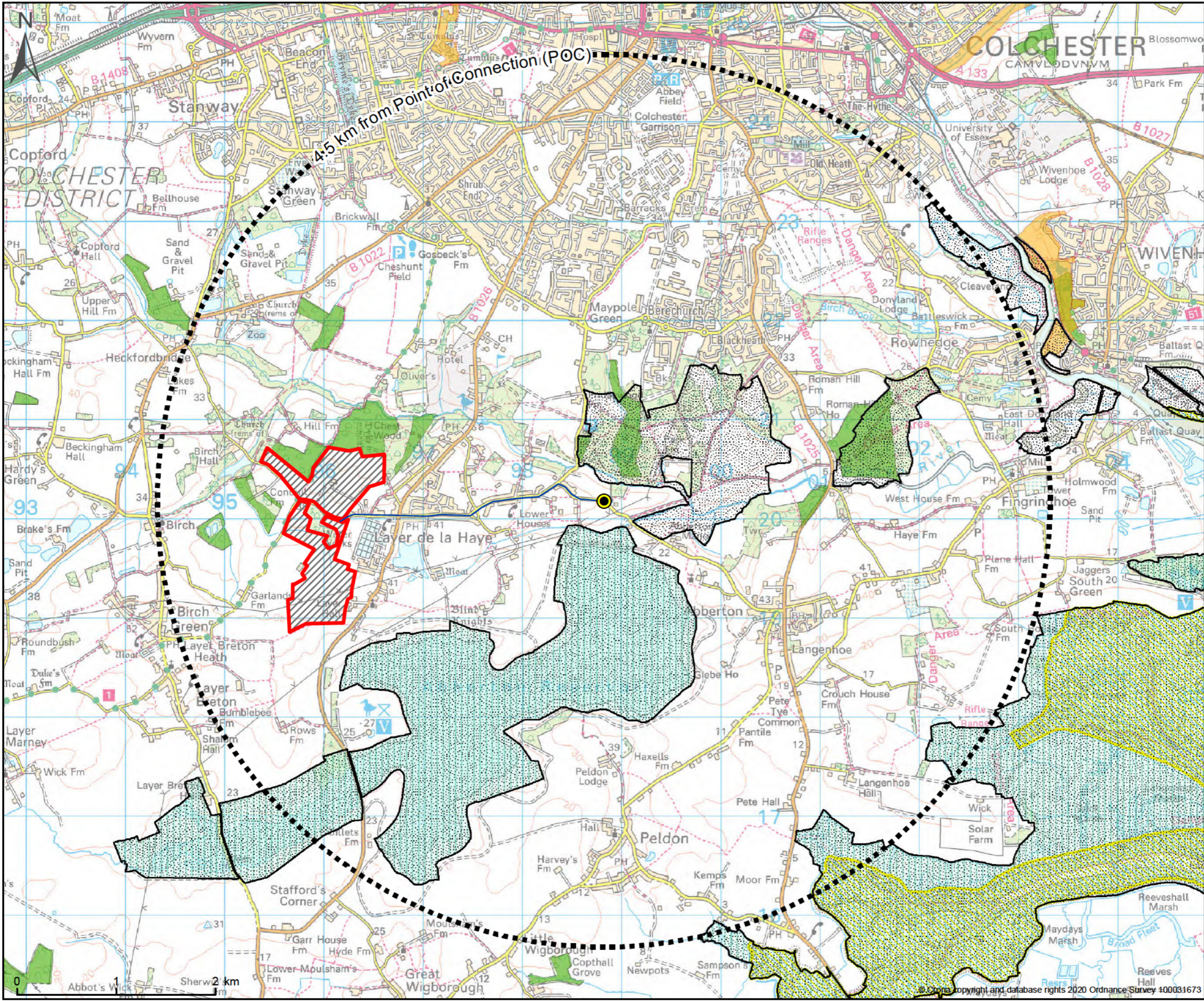
PROJECT NAME:
Abberton Solar Farm

- KEY:
- Point Of Connection (POC)
 - Planning Application Boundary
 - Search Area Boundary (4.5 km from POC)



TITLE:
Figure 1
Search Area

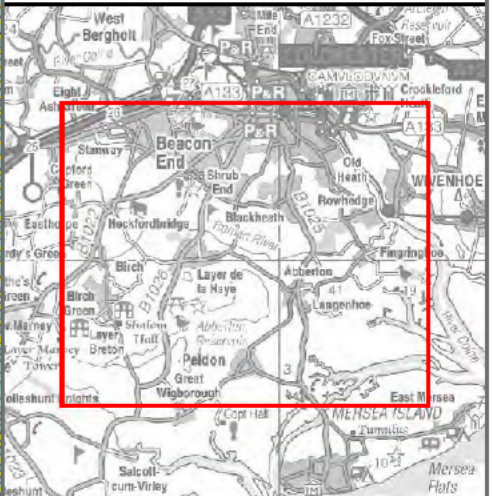
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PROJECT NAME:
Abberton Solar Farm

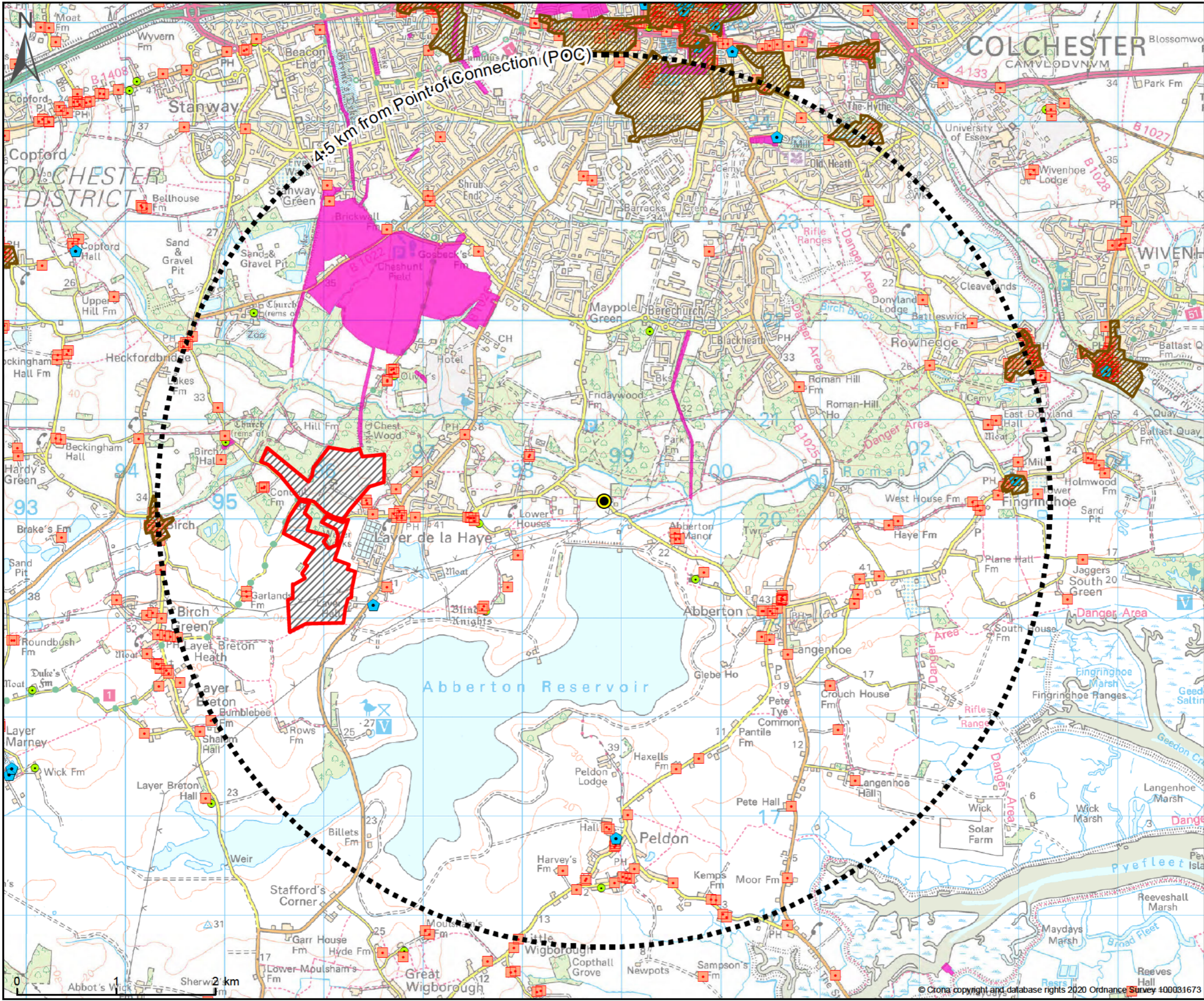
- KEY:
- Point Of Connection (POC)
 - Planning Application Boundary
 - Search Area Boundary (4.5 km from POC)
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest
 - Local Nature Reserve
 - Special Area of Conservation
 - Ancient Woodland
 - SPA, Ramsar and IBA

A search for RSPB Reserves, Greenbelt, Country Parks AONBs and National Nature Reserves was also undertaken. None were found within the map extent.



TITLE:
**Figure 2
 Environmental Designations**

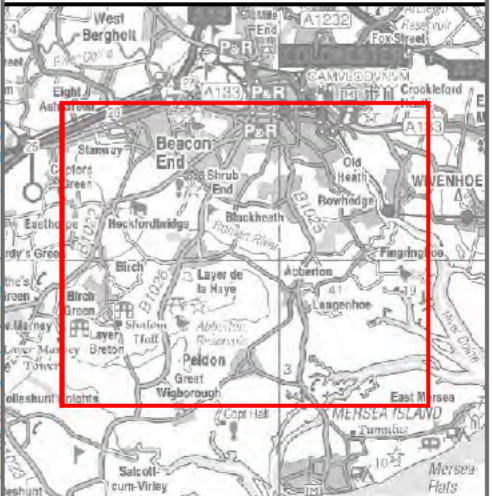
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SCALE: 1:35,000	CO-ORD SYSTEM: BNG



PROJECT NAME:
Abberton Solar Farm

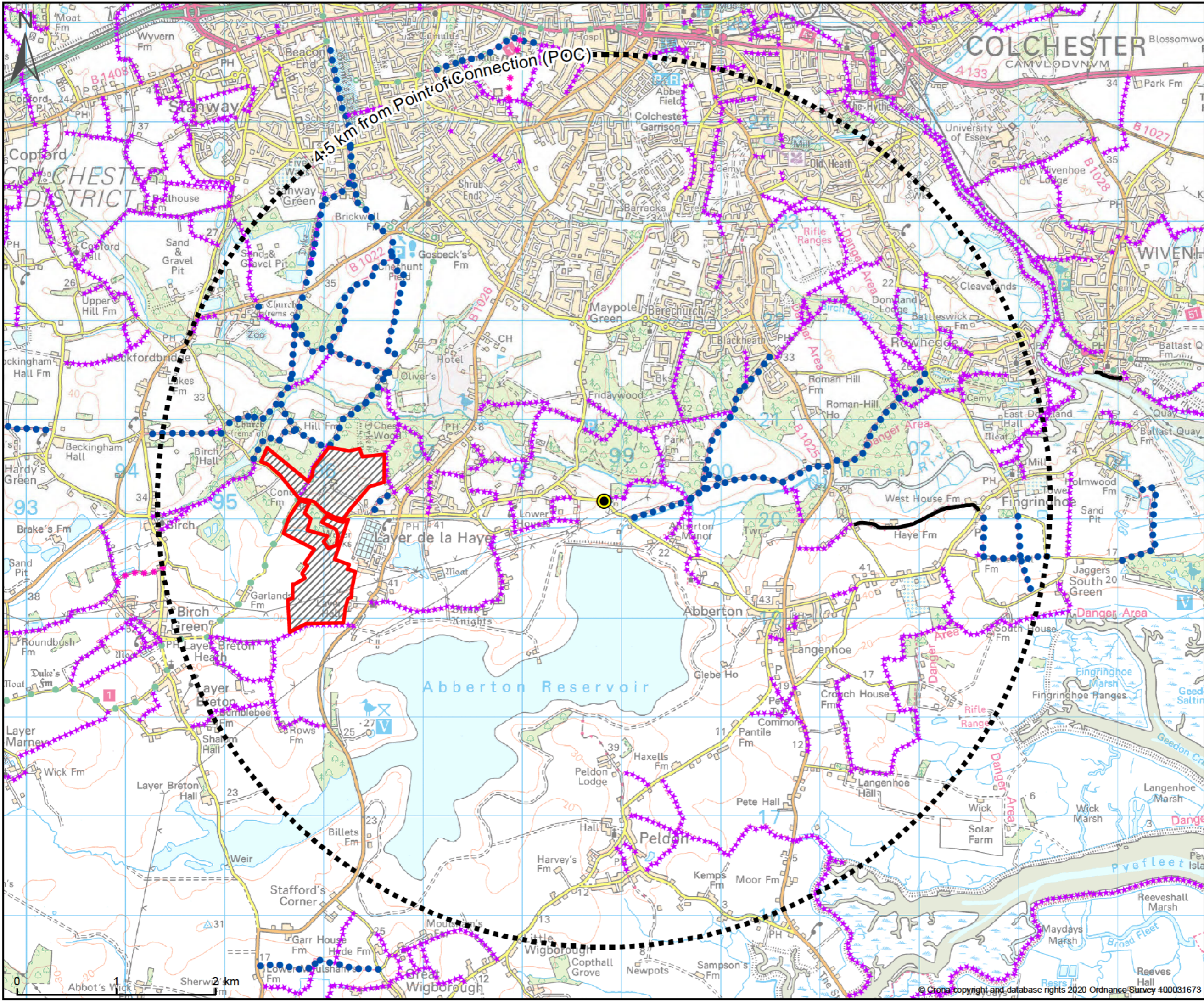
- KEY:
- Point Of Connection (POC)
 - Planning Application Boundary
 - Search Area Boundary (4.5 km from POC)
 - Abberton conservation areas
- Listed Buildings
- Grade I
 - Grade II
 - Grade III
 - Scheduled Ancient Monument

Only Conservation Areas that are close to or fall within the Search Area are shown. WHS, Registered Battlefields and Parks and Gardens were also searched and none were found within the map extent.



TITLE:
Figure 3
Archaeology and Built Heritage

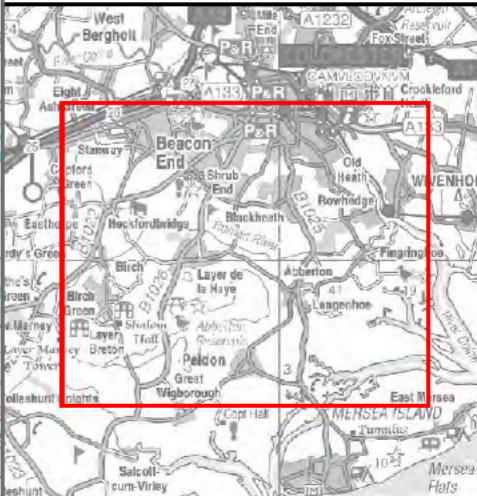
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SCALE: 1:35,000	CO-ORD SYSTEM: BNG



PROJECT NAME:
Abberton Solar Farm

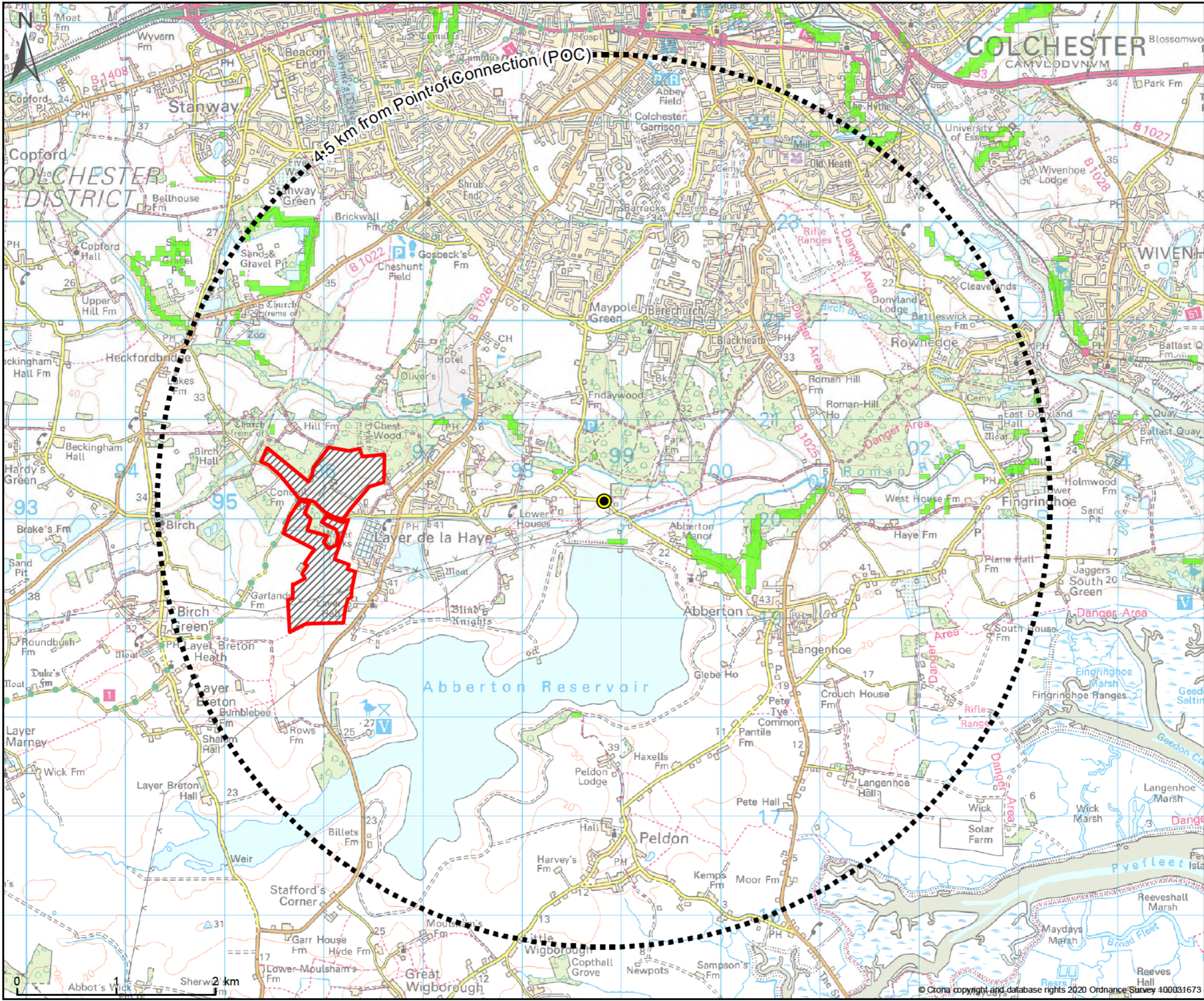
- KEY:
- Point Of Connection (POC)
 - Planning Application Boundary
 - Search Area Boundary (4.5 km from POC)
 - Bridleway
 - ***** Footpath
 - ***** Restricted Byway
 - Byway

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TITLE:
Figure 4
Public Rights of Way

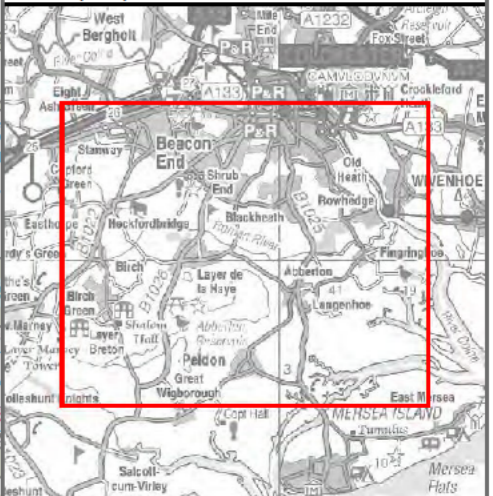
DATE: 25/09/2020	DRAWN BY: CH
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SCALE: 1:35,000	CO-ORD SYSTEM: BNG



PROJECT NAME:
Abberton Solar Farm

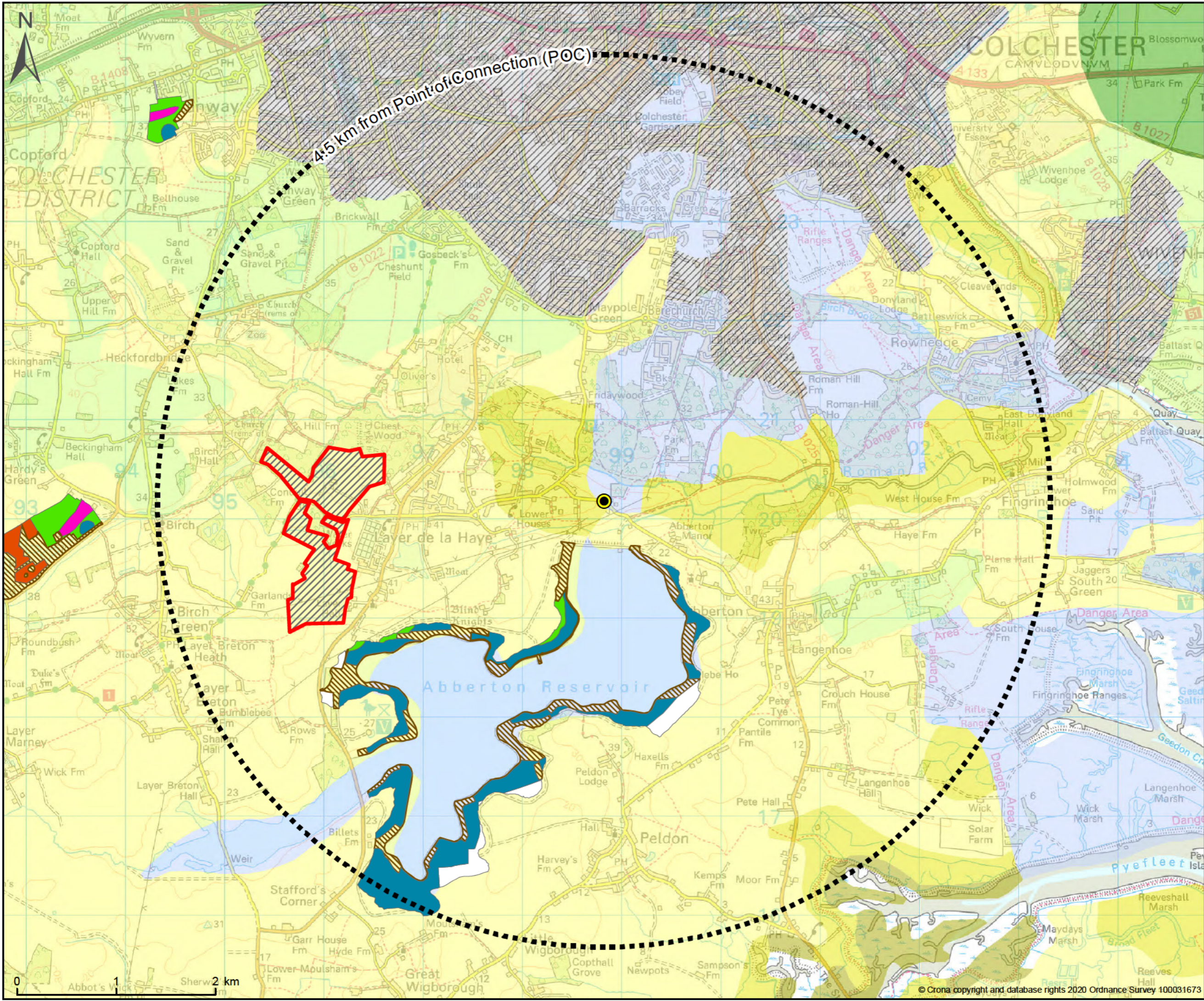
- KEY:
-  Point Of Connection (POC)
 -  Planning Application Boundary
 -  Search Area Boundary (4.5 km from POC)
 -  Slope > 10%

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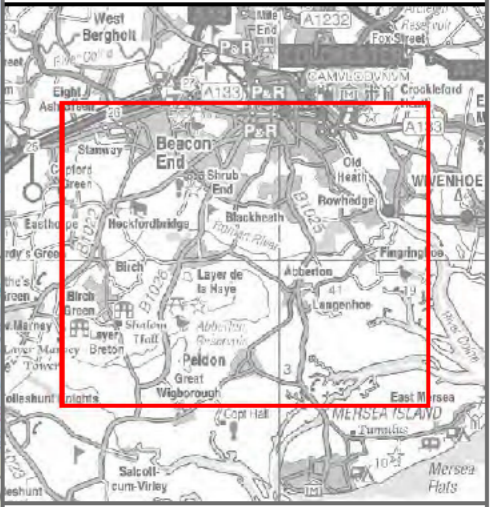
TITLE:
**Figure 5
 Slope Analysis**

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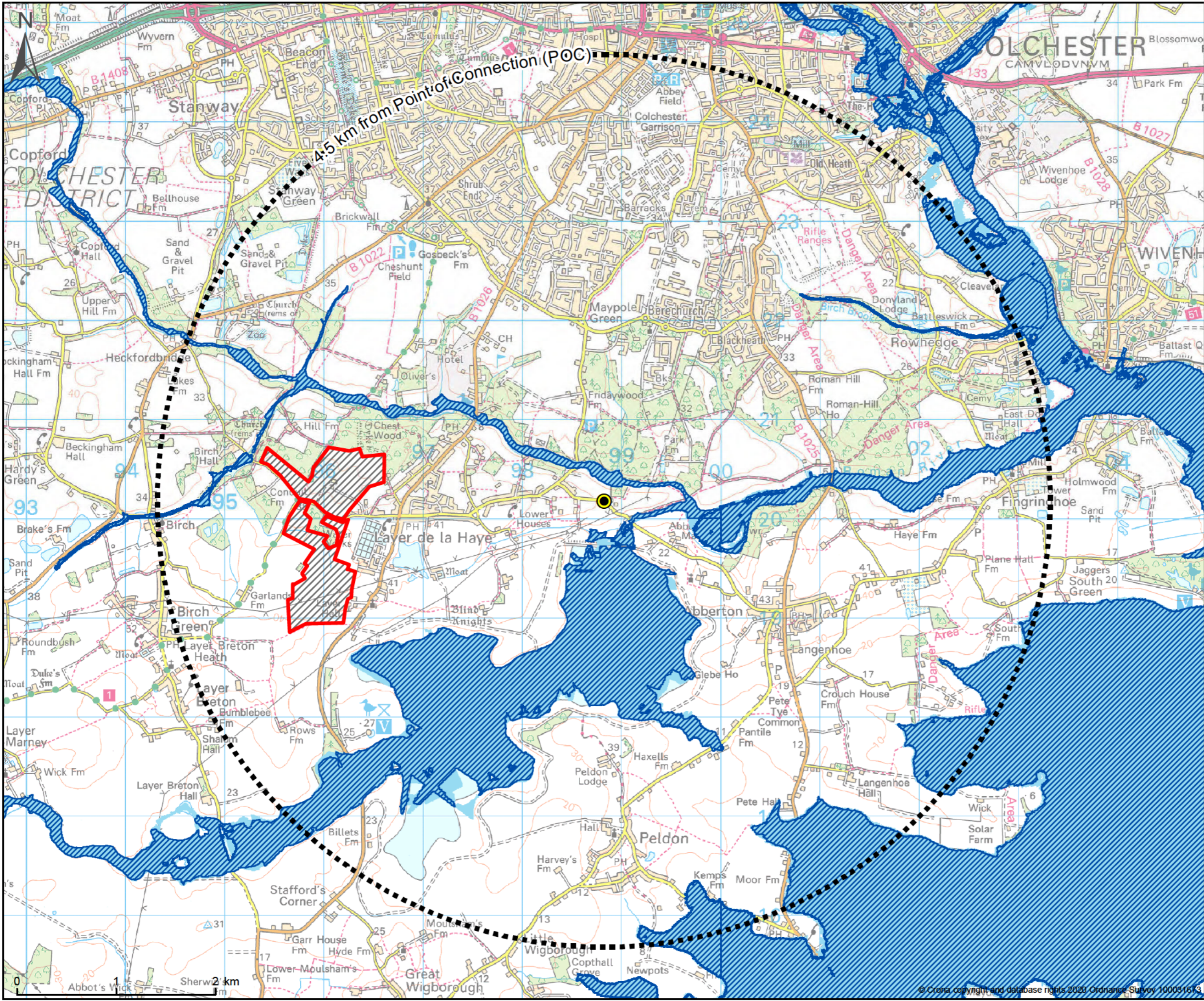
PROJECT NAME:
Abberton Solar Farm

- KEY:
- Point Of Connection (POC)
 - Planning Application Boundary
 - Search Area Boundary (4.5 km from POC)
- ALC Grade - Post 1988:
- Grade 1
 - Grade 2
 - Grade 3a
 - Grade 3b
 - Grade 4
 - Grade 5
 - Not Surveyed
 - Other
- ALC Grade - Provisional:
- Grade 1 - Excellent Quality
 - Grade 2 - Very Good Quality
 - Grade 3 - Good to Moderate Quality
 - Grade 4 - Poor Quality
 - Grade 5 - Very Poor Quality
 - Non Agricultural
 - Urban



TITLE:
Figure 6
Agricultural Land Classification

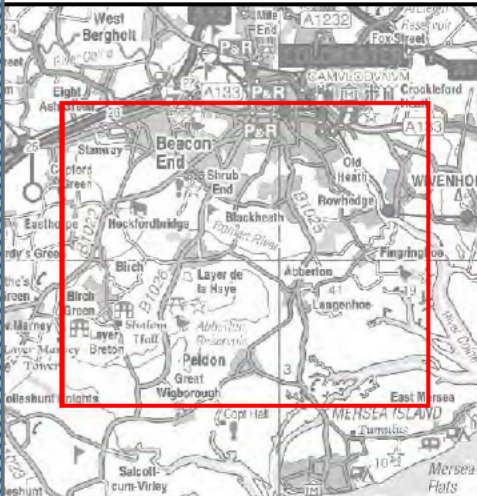
DATE: 19/07/2020	DRAWN BY: CH
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SCALE: 1:35,000	CO-ORD SYSTEM: BNG



PROJECT NAME:
Abberton Solar Farm

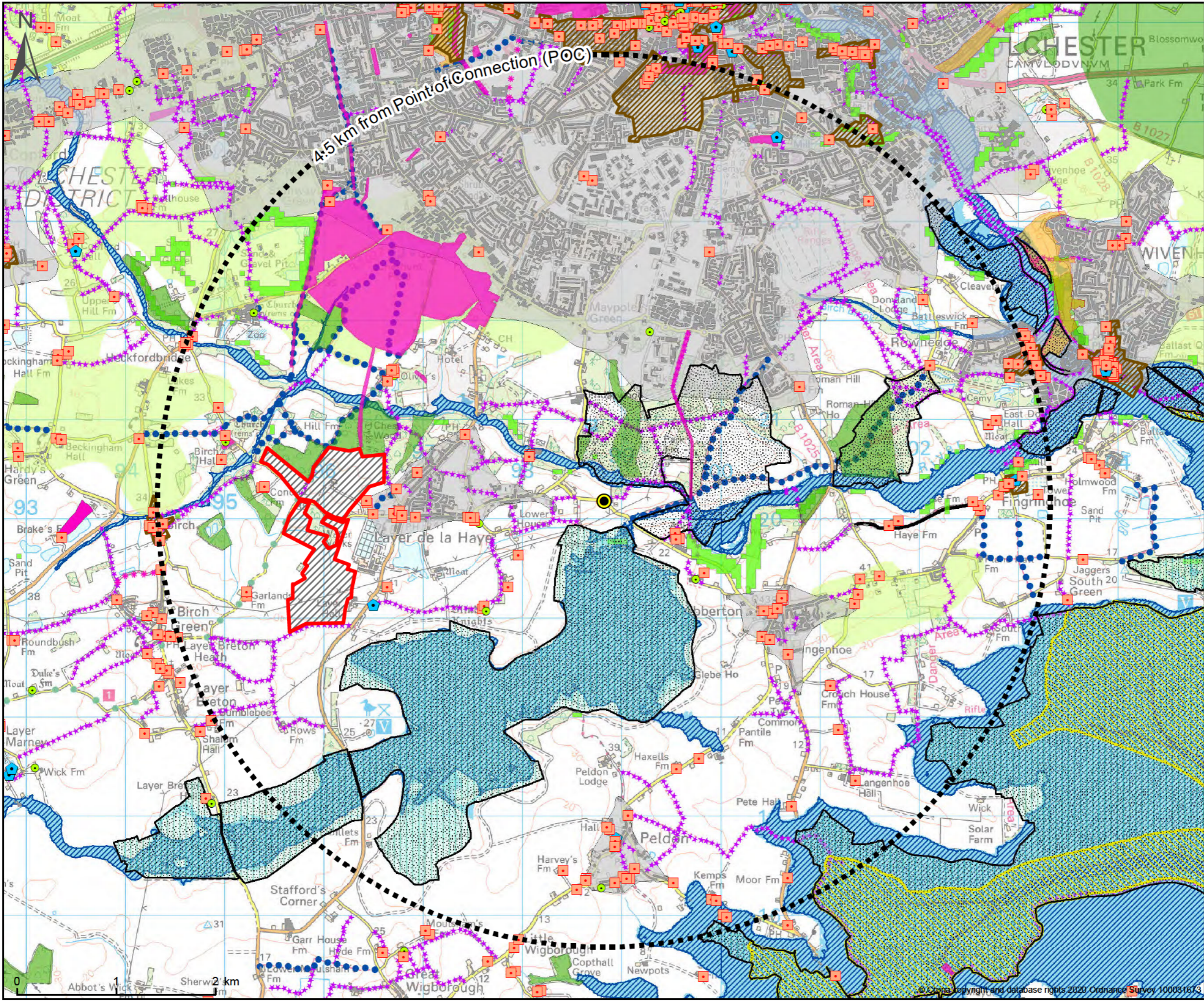
- KEY:
- Point Of Connection (POC)
 - Planning Application Boundary
 - Search Area Boundary (4.5 km from POC)
 - Flood Zone 3
 - Flood Zone 2

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TITLE:
**Figure 7
 Flood Risk Zones**

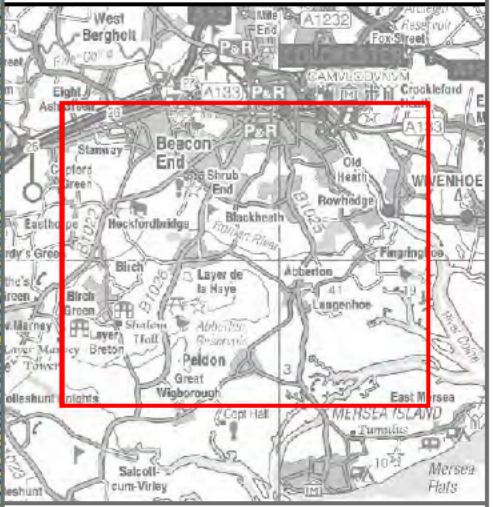
DATE: 25/09/2020	DRAWN BY: CH
SIZE: A3	CHECKED BY: CH
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PROJECT NAME:
Abberton Solar Farm

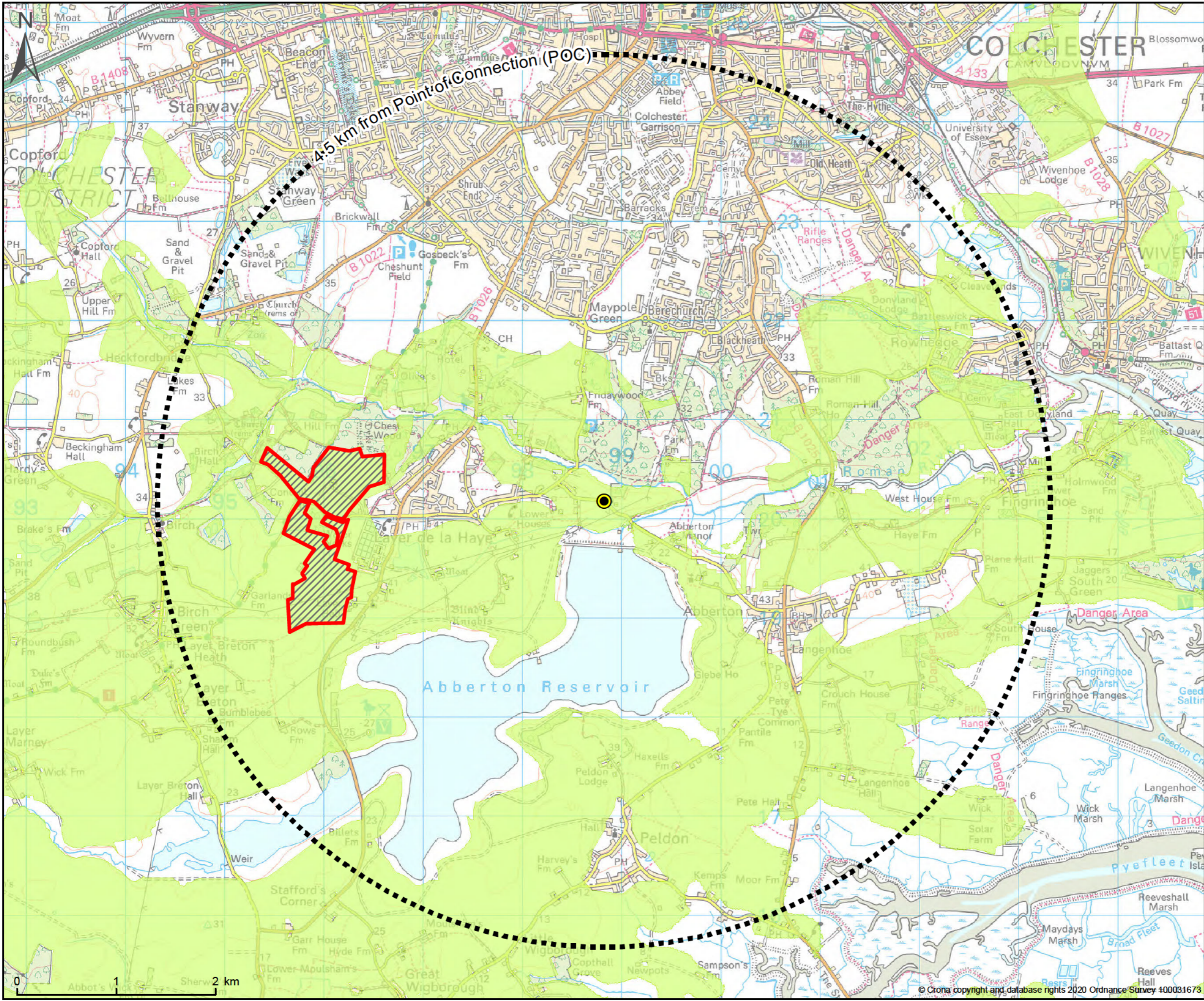
- KEY:**
- Point Of Connection (POC)
 - Planning Application Boundary
 - Search Area Boundary (4.5 km from POC)
 - Buildings
 - Urban
 - Listed Buildings**
 - Grade I
 - Grade II
 - Grade III
 - Abberton conservation areas
 - Scheduled Ancient Monument
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest
 - Local Nature Reserve
 - Special Area of Conservation
 - Ancient Woodland
 - SPA, Ramsar and IBA
 - Slope > 10%
 - Public Rights of Way**
 - Bridleway
 - Footpath
 - Restricted Byway
 - Byway
 - Flood Zone 3
 - Flood Zone 2
 - ALC Grade - Post 1988:**
 - Grade 1
 - Grade 2
 - ALC Grade - Provisional:**
 - Grade 1 - Excellent Quality
 - Grade 2 - Very Good Quality

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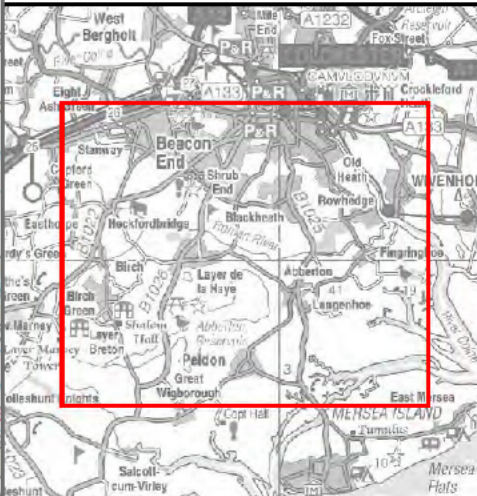
TITLE:
**Figure 8
Combined Constraints**

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PROJECT NAME:
Abberton Solar Farm

- KEY:
- Point Of Connection (POC)
 - Planning Application Boundary
 - Search Area Boundary (4.5 km from POC)
 - Unconstrained Land

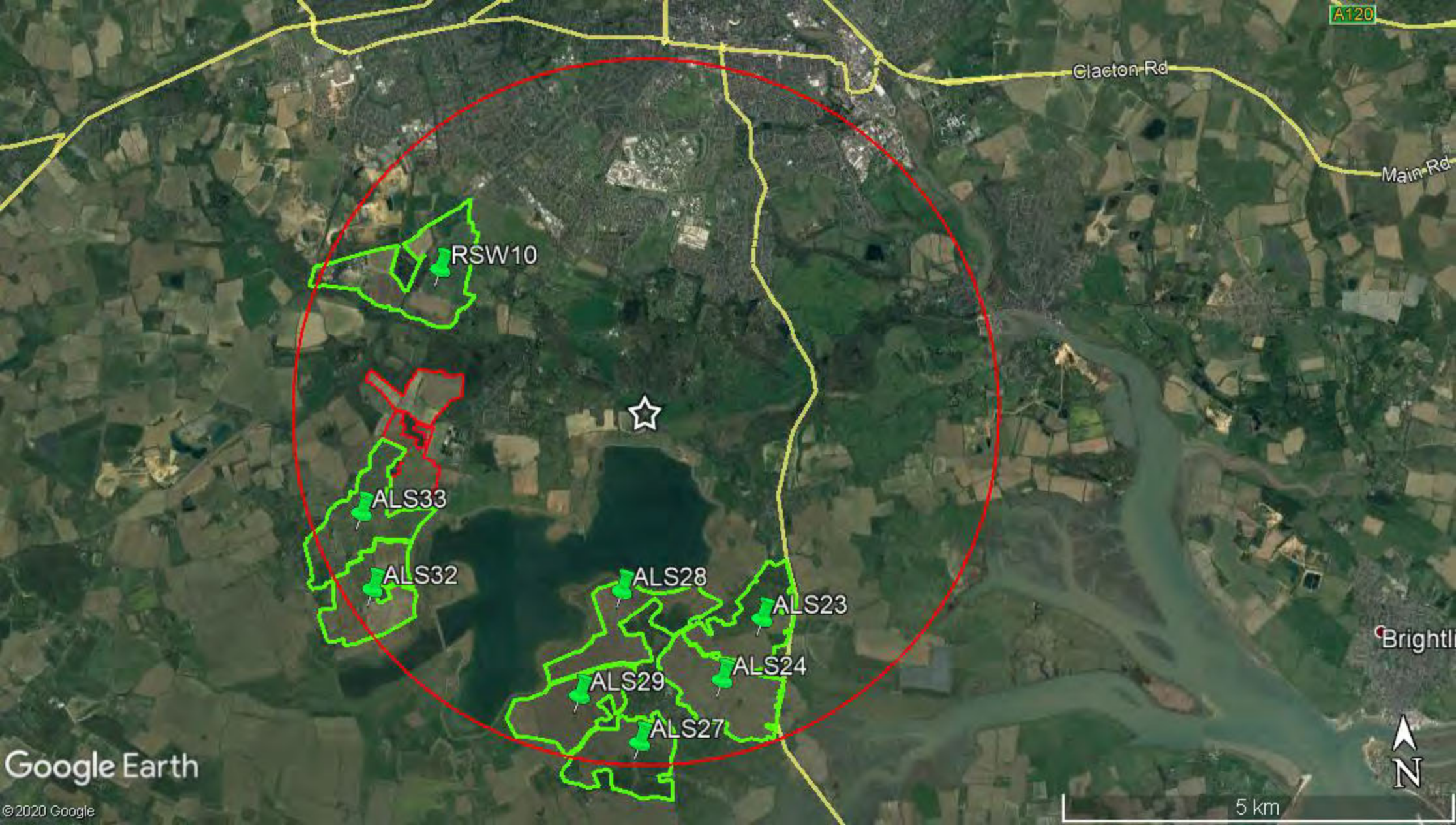


TITLE:
**Figure 9
Unconstrained Land**

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SCALE: 1:35,000	CO-ORD SYSTEM: BNG

0 1 2 km

APPENDIX 2: FIGURE 10 (SHORT-LISTED SITES)



A120

Glacton Rd

Main Rd

RSW10



ALS33

ALS32

ALS28

ALS23

ALS29

ALS24

ALS27

Brightli

Google Earth

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5 km

