

PROPOSED SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC FARM,
WICKHAM HALL,
BISHOP'S STORTFORD

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment
Uttlesford

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been appointed to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) relating to the detailed application seeking the development of solar photovoltaics and associated infrastructure (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development') on land at Wickham Hall Estate, (hereafter referred to as the 'Site'). The location and context of the Site is illustrated on **ASP1** Site Location Plan and **ASP2** Site and Setting Plan.
- 1.2. This LVIA relates to a planning application within the jurisdiction of Uttlesford District Council (UDC). Previously it formed part of an earlier, much larger planning application for a solar farm (ref: UTT/2131/08/FUL) that spanned the neighbouring authority, East Hertfordshire Council (EHC). EHC approved their application at the committee meeting of 11 January 2023, subject to a Unilateral Undertaking to deal with the provision of permissive paths. However, UDC refused the application on 13 April 2022.
- 1.3. Following the refusal by UDC, the proposal has been carefully reconsidered and amendments have been made, resulting in the application now presented. This LVIA sets out these changes and the effects they have so that a comparison with the refused scheme can be made, in order to assist the determination process.
- 1.4. The previously submitted LVIA has now been thoroughly reviewed in terms of all data so that Aspect can analyse the landscape character and visual environment of the local area and determine the extent and significance of any potential landscape and visual effects regarding Uttlesford.
- 1.5. The assessment of effects has been derived from guidance provided within Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3) published by the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) in April 2013. The methodology is contained within **Appendix 1** of this document.
- 1.6. It should be noted that GLVIA3 is not prescriptive and recognises the role of professional judgement in the process.

1.7. The LVIA will take the following format:

- Review of landscape related policy – national and local policy context reviewed with any designations identified (Section 2);
- Baseline assessment – review of the existing landscape character and visual environment (Section 3);
- Description of the proposals – introducing the Proposed Development and the associated landscape proposals and associated mitigation (Section 4);
- Assessment of effects – using an established methodology based on the guidance of GLVIA3, the potential effects of the proposals upon the existing landscape character and visual environment will be assessed (Section 5);
- Conclusions will be drawn (Section 6).

1.8. This assessment should be read alongside the other supporting material which accompanies this application.

2. LANDSCAPE RELATED POLICY

2.1. The Site lies within the countryside, separated from the settlement of Bishop's Stortford by the recently completed A120 Little Hadham By-Pass that loops around the Site to the west, south and east. The Site is covered by the policies of the adopted Uttlesford Local Plan (LP) 2005.

2.2. The Site is not subject to any national or local qualitative landscape designations.

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)

2.3. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions and outlines the Government's planning policies for England, setting out how these are expected to be applied. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Footnote 7 at Paragraph 11 indicates those designated areas where development should be restricted, namely:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Green Belt;
- Local Green Space;
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Heritage Coasts;
- National Parks;
- Designated Heritage Assets; and
- Areas at Risk of Flooding or Coastal Erosion.

2.4. The Site is washed over by the Green Belt (GB).

2.5. Paragraph 7 states that: ***“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner.”***

2.6. Paragraph 8 states that: ***“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 3 overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways”*** (...) including ***“an***

environmental objective – 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. (Aspect emphasis)

- 2.7. Paragraph 11 states that: ***“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.”***
- 2.8. The NPPF sets out the importance and fundamental aims of the GB policy in Chapter 13 to ensure the overarching objectives are met by preventing urban sprawl and keeping land permanently open. Five GB purposes are set out in paragraph 143.
- 2.9. Regarding GB use, paragraph 150 encourages local planning authorities to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access, outdoor sport and recreation and to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity and to improve damaged and derelict land. Paragraph 152 goes on to state that: ***“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.”***
- 2.10. Paragraph 156 refers to elements of many renewable energy projects as being inappropriate development in the GB, in which case ‘*very special circumstances*’ will need to be demonstrated. These may include the wider environmental benefits associated with the increased production of energy from renewable sources.
- 2.11. Chapter 14 deals with meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. Paragraph 157 states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. Amongst other initiatives it should support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 2.12. In line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008 (footnote 56) paragraph 158 states that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- 2.13. Paragraph 160 seeks to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, where plans should:

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

2.14. Paragraph 163 states that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:

- a) ***“not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to significant cutting greenhouse gas emissions;”***
and
- b) ***“approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.”***

2.15. Chapter 15 deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. In particular paragraph 180 requires that:

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

- a. ***protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);***
- b. ***recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; and***

- d. minimising impacts and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.”***

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 2.16. Those categories within the NPPG that are of relevance to landscape and visual matters in relation to this site are set out below.

Design: Process and Tools

- 2.17. The NPPG states that well-designed places can be achieved by taking a pro-active and collaborative approach at all stages of the planning process. The guidance sets out processes and tools that can be used through the planning system. The guidance is to be read alongside the National Design Guide.

National Design Guide

- 2.18. The importance of design is a key focus within the guide as is the local and wider context and character of the site.

Green Infrastructure

- 2.19. The NPPG highlights the multifaceted benefits delivered through Green Infrastructure and recognises how it can be used to reinforce and enhance local landscape character and contribute to a sense of place.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

- 2.20. In considering impacts, NPPG states that assessments can use tools to identify where impacts are likely to be acceptable. For example, landscape character areas could form the basis for considering which technologies at which scale may be appropriate in different types of location.

Landscape

- 2.21. The NPPG refers to the NPPF and the recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the provision of strategic policies to provide the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. Adverse landscape impacts are to be avoided and mitigation measures employed where necessary.

- 2.22. Landscape Character Assessment is a process used to explain the type and characteristics of landscape in an area. Natural England has used Landscape Character Assessment to identify 159 National Character Areas in England which provide a national level database. Landscape Character Assessment carried out at a county or district level may provide a more appropriate scale for assessing the likely landscape and visual impacts of individual proposals.
- 2.23. The NPPF and NPPG have been of material consideration as part of our assessment of the site and its setting, and the proposals shall take on board the overall framework guidance and principles contained within them. Renewable energy schemes are generally supported in principle at national and local levels, provided impacts are acceptably mitigated.

Local Planning Policy

Local Policy: Uttlesford Local Plan 2005

- 2.24. Policies of relevance to the Site and this LVIA are:
- 2.25. **Policy S6 Metropolitan Green Belt:** The Site lies within the GB. Any development permitted is to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and its scale, design and siting should be such that the character of the countryside is not harmed.
- 2.26. **Policy S7 The Countryside:** This policy applies to all areas beyond the Green Belt, as the Site lies within the GB this policy does not apply.
- 2.27. **Policy ENV7 The protection of the natural environment – Designated Sites:** Development that harms areas of nationally important nature conservation will not be permitted. While lying outside of the Site, two areas of Ancient Woodland, namely Bloodhound's Wood to the south and Bailey Hills Wood to the northeast are close by as shown on the Council's constraints map.
- 2.28. **Policy ENV8 Other landscape elements of importance for nature conservation:** As for policy ENV7, the Site is close to two areas of woodland shown on the Council's constraints map as important woodlands.
- 2.29. **Policy ENV 15: Renewable Energy.** Small scale operations that lie close to groups of buildings or settlements, meeting local needs are preferred provided they do not

adversely affect the character of sensitive landscapes, nature conservation interests or residential or recreational amenity.

2.30. **Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy SPD October 2007**

This guidance note supports the LP by providing measures to reduce energy use for new development while supporting a number of policies which include ENV15. UDC are signed up to a protocol on climate change, its causes and effects.

2.31. **Uttlesford Green Belt Review March 2016 (Arup)**

Arup have undertaken a GB review as part of the evidence base to support the recently withdrawn Uttlesford LP and to provide evidence of the performance of different areas against the five purposes. This may enable the Council to take decisions to amend the GB through a future new LP.

2.32. The Proposed Development does not seek or propose any alteration to the Green Belt, but it is accepted that the proposals will need to demonstrate '*very special circumstances*' to the Council, and it is noted in the pre-application meeting by the landscape officer that the impact of the scale of development on the openness of the GB would be an issue to address.

2.33. The Site lies within parcel 7 of the Review, and was assessed against the relevant purposes, namely 1, 2, 3 in respect of changes to boundaries that would permit permanent development. The overall strength of the general area against each criterion was scored from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong) and both purposes 4 and 5 were agreed **not** to be relevant to UDC. Parcel 7 scored as follows:

- **Purpose 1** – rated 3.
- **Purpose 2** – rated 0;
- **Purpose 3** – rated 5:
- and overall summary "strong."

2.34. In scoring '0' against the purpose '*to prevent neighbouring towns from merging*' the area fails to provide a gap between any settlements and makes no contribution to separation.

2.35. The high score of '5' relating to purpose 3 '*to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*' reflects the lack of development across this area (less than 5%) and therefore it possesses a strong rural character.

3. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

- 3.1. The Site is located on arable land formed of a single broadly rectangular-shaped field. The Site is located to the north west of Bishop's Stortford (500m at the nearest point) and generally to the north of the A120 Little Hadham bypass and flood alleviation scheme as it loops around Bishop's Stortford (430m to the west and 465m to the southeast). The location and setting of the Site are illustrated on **ASP1** Site Location Plan and **ASP2** Site and Setting Plan.
- 3.2. The immediate context to the Site comprises an agricultural landscape of mostly intensely farmed arable land. However, there are a number of notable features and land uses within the setting that are not agriculturally associated:
- woodland is a strongly represented feature that provides a good level of containment and abuts the north eastern and south western boundaries;
 - numerous large scale high voltage electricity pylons and cables on a north to south axis occur nearby just 45m to the west and one smaller pylon indents directly into the western boundary; and
 - commercial and other activities associated with Wickham Hall Business Park lie just 100m to the south east of the Site with a number of high quality office and business premises.
- 3.3. Areas of woodlands are notable features, and these include the Ancient and other woodlands close to the Site boundaries such as Bloodhound's Wood and Bailey Hills. Plantations, copses, groups of trees and woodlands are important features within the local landscape which break up the more expansive and open arable landscapes they surround. Pockets of smaller and irregularly shaped pasture fields of a more intimate scale and nature contrast with the larger scale arable fieldscape.
- 3.4. Parkland landscapes are represented in the wider context by the nearby Hadham Hall, Hadham Park and Hadham Lodge to the south, Wickham Hall to the south east and Upwick Hall to the north.
- 3.5. The Ash Valley lies further to the west of the Site on a north to south alignment passing to the west of Clapgate and Upwick Green through Little Hadham and on south to Ware where it joins the River Lea.

- 3.6. The combination of the landform and mature vegetation structure within the immediate and local area provide a significant degree of separation from the local settlements and wider landscape.
- 3.7. Other than the presence of mature field boundary vegetation there are no internal landscape features, and the arable landscape is a typical feature within the immediate and local area.

Public Rights of Way

- 3.8. A number of public rights of way (PRoW) are located within the vicinity of the Site and passing along its western, southern and part of the eastern boundaries. These are shown on Plan **ASP1**.
- 3.9. The Proposed Development incorporates the permissive public footpaths created in Uttlesford by means of a Unilateral Obligation (numbered 2 and 4 on **plate 1** below) in respect of the solar farm scheme granted permission by EHC. They result in new and better connected footpath routes through the immediate and wider landscape. The new permissive paths are numbered 1-4 on **plate 1** below:

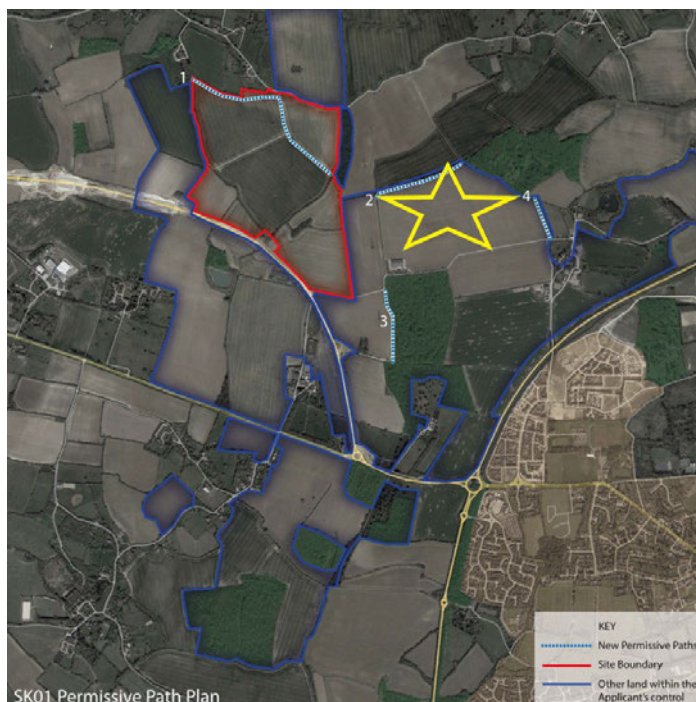


Plate 1: The site to which this LVIA refers is the field starred yellow, the approved scheme area in EHC is outlined in red and the land within the applicant's control is shown in blue. Permissive paths are numbered 1-4.

- 3.10. The long-distance Hertfordshire Way passes further to the west linking Upwick Hall (and beyond) with Hadham Hall and Bishop's Stortford to the south. This is a 195-mile-long circular route within the county passing through varied landscapes.

Topography

- 3.11. The Site is located on land that sits generally on a plateau of high ground that falls westwards to River Ash and eastwards towards Bourne Brook. Local dips and rises occur within the context of the plateau land where the Site occupies an area around the 105m contour Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), with gentle slopes.

National Landscape Character

- 3.12. Natural England have produced a countrywide landscape character assessment resulting in the National Character Areas (NCA's). The Site lies within the western part of the **NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland**. It provides context at a high level and covers a wide geographic area between Stevenage and Ipswich. In common with this NCA, arable land use dominates as it occupies 84% of this NCA.
- 3.13. A summary of key characteristics relevant to this Site are listed as being:
- *“An undulating chalky boulder clay plateau is dissected by numerous river valleys, giving a topography of gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrow upper parts.*
 - *The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving...*
 - *Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by ditches, wider verges and strong hedgerows.*
 - *A strong network of PRow provides access to the area's archetypal lowland English countryside.”*
- 3.14. These regional characteristics are widely replicated in the more detailed county and district character assessments as set out below.

County Landscape Character

- 3.15. The Site lies within UDC (in Essex county). However, it abuts EHC district (in Hertfordshire county) and the EHC approved Wickham Hall solar scheme lies just to the west of the Site and therefore within its setting.
- 3.16. Landscapes are not defined by county / district boundary lines and it is considered that the Site broadly displays the characteristics of the adjacent Landscape Character Area (LCA) defined in the Hertfordshire county and East Hertfordshire district assessments, as well as those of the LCAs that cover the Site in the Essex County and Uttlesford district assessments summarised below.

Essex Landscape Character Assessment 2003

- 3.17. At a county level, the Essex Landscape Character Assessment, prepared by Chris Blandford Associates in 2003, assesses the character of the Essex landscape and the Site is located within the north-western extents of the county, covered by Landscape Character Type (LCT) Chalk Upland Landscape and **Landscape Character Area (LCA) A1 North West Essex Chalk Farmland**.
- 3.18. The key characteristics of LCA A1 are provided below:
- *“Strongly rolling landform of broad roundbacked ridges.*
 - *Large scale arable farmland.*
 - *Distinctive elevated, expansive and generally open character.*
 - *Panoramic views from ridgetops.*
 - *Dispersed blocks of woodland and isolated copses.*
 - *Sparse settlement pattern, small linear villages alongside stream courses, and hamlets with greens.*
 - *Mostly tranquil and remote character.”*

Hertfordshire County Council Landscape Character Assessment 2004

- 3.19. At a county level, the 2004 assessment places the EHC approved Wickham Hall solar scheme within **LCA 150 Hadham Plateau**, while the Site itself is located adjacent to this LCA. Clearly, the landscape flows over the border into UDC and Essex where the Site’s setting as a whole broadly aligns with the characteristics and features identified.
- 3.20. The key characteristics of LCA 150 are included below:
- *“Arable farming in large geometric fields often unenclosed.*

- *Intermittent hedgerows.*
- *Long distance views across open fields.*
- *Large, isolated halls or farms.*
- *Quiet area with few roads.*
- *Scattered woodland blocks.”*

3.21. LCA 150 also contains a set of ‘Distinctive Features’, with those highlighted in **bold** considered to be relevant to the Site’s setting:

- **“High voltage electricity pylons.**
- *Distant views to electricity transformer station.*
- **Hertfordshire Way and Harcamlow Way long distance footpaths.**
- **Bloodhound’s Wood and High Wood.**
- *Hadham Hall.*
- **Extensive open arable area – Upwick Green Common.”**

3.22. The relevant detractors are identified as the A120 corridor and associated engineering structures, and the associated high voltage cable lines and pylons which cut across the landscape and are highly visible from most of the area.

District Landscape Character

Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment 2006

3.23. This assessment places the Site within LCT H Chalk Upland Landscapes and at a finer scale within **LCA H4 Berden and Farnham Chalk Upland**. The Site occupies a small area in the southern extents of this LCA.

3.24. **Key characteristics.**

- *Broad undulating upland slopes that flatten at the highest elevations;*
- *Distinctly elevated, open, arable fields;*
- *Field patterns mainly regular, with large farms and becoming smaller and more organic in shape in the valleys and around villages;*
- *Scrubby, often fragmented hedgerows or scattered tree groups, with distant blocks of trees framing views, particularly towards the middle and southern part of the area, where it is dissected by Bourn Brook;*
- *A complex array of pylons leading to electricity substation near Berden dominates views in the high plateau; and*
- *Few roads; sense of emptiness and openness.*

- 3.25. It is interesting to note that the LCA is very varied in terms of field pattern, landform, landcover and either a sense of enclosure or of openness. It is noted that the scattered woodland and changing undulations provide a sense of 'moving up and down' and 'in and out' from closed to open views.
- 3.26. **Sensitivity.** LCA H4 is described as having sensitive characteristics and landscape elements, which include small areas of woodland and several springs. The open nature of the skyline on the ridges of the upland landscape is described as being visually sensitive to new development. The tranquillity within the LCA is also sensitive to change. It is concluded that the LCA displays a **moderate to high sensitivity**. This equates to a medium / high sensitivity as per Aspect's methodology.
- 3.27. **Strategy objectives.** The strategy is to '**conserve and restore**' this landscape.
- 3.28. **Landscape planning guidelines.** These are to:
- Conserve the rural character of the area;
 - Ensure any new development responds to historic settlement pattern, scale, density, and colours and materials are appropriate locally. Development must be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
 - Use colour and tree planting to mitigate the visual effects of larger modern farm buildings; and
 - Small scale development should be carefully located in relation to existing farm buildings.
- 3.29. **Land management guidelines.** These include the following:
- Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted;
 - Conserve and manage areas of ancient/semi-natural woodland (they lie close to the Site where the proposal could deliver connectivity benefits);
 - Conserve and restore areas of unimproved grassland (not relevant);
 - Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges (not relevant)
 - Strengthen/enhance species rich grassland on thin chalk soils (not present but species rich grassland will be reintroduced).

East Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment SPG 2007

- 3.30. This assessment, produced by The Landscape Partnership, assesses the character of the landscape across the EHC district, including land to the south and west of the Site covered by **LCA 150 Hadhams Plateau**, which is described as displaying an open rural character with few roads or settlements.
- 3.31. The key characteristics and distinctive features of LCA 150 correspond with those of the 2004 county level assessment.
- 3.32. **Sensitivity.** It is noted that LCA 150 is considered to be of moderate 'Condition' and moderate 'Strength of Character', and that the impact of built development is also moderate, while the impact of land-use change is low. The LCA is described as being mostly tranquil and with a coherent, open and distinctly rural character. It is implied that this landscape would typically be of **moderate sensitivity**. This equates to a medium sensitivity as per Aspect's methodology.
- 3.33. **Strategy objectives.** The strategy is to '**improve and conserve**' this landscape.
- 3.34. **Guidelines.** Regarding the strategies and guidelines for this LCA, those considered relevant in relation to the application are provided below:
- *"Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats.*
 - *Promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas [...]*
 - *Native tree and shrub species, preferably of local provenance to be planted in area [...]*
 - *Provide new uncropped or grass field margins to link areas of wildlife importance and/or existing and proposed rights of way."*

Aspect Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.35. The suite of published landscape character assessments provides a very good characterisation and overview of the landscape within which the Site lies (up to 2007). These assessments do not reflect the large-scale changes introduced since

2007, however. Changes notably include the A120 bypass, flood alleviation scheme, and the development of the Wickham Hall Business Park nearby (100m to the south east of the Site). In addition, the settlement edge of Bishop's Stortford has been gradually expanding to the A120 extents.

3.36. However, there is a generally good level of consistency across the suite of published assessments and while the Site and its setting are relatively very small geographic areas, it is useful to reiterate those common characteristics that are most clearly distilled into **LCA H4 Berden and Farnham Chalk Upland**.

3.37. **Key Features**. In terms of distinctive features, the following are relevant to the Site and its setting:

- *Elevated arable farming in large geometric fields, often unenclosed intermittent hedgerows;*
- *Long distance views across open fields (**from the setting**);*
- *Large, isolated halls or farms;*
- *Quiet area with few roads;*
- *Scattered woodland blocks;*
- *Undulating plateau and gentle slopes;*
- *Winding narrow lanes;*
- *Strong PRow network;*
- *Scrubby, often fragmented hedgerows or scattered tree groups with distant blocks of trees framing views;*
- *A complex array of pylons dominates views in the high plateau; and*
- *Few roads, sense of emptiness and openness.*

3.38. While the major road infrastructure (A120 bypass and flood alleviation infrastructure) lies to the south west, there is no visual connectivity with the new bypass and the Site. The urban influences arising from the settlement edge of Bishop's Stortford and the Wickham Business Park add to the developed character of the setting and wider landscape.

3.39. In order to assist the assessment of effects on the landscape resource, GLVIA3 provides a number of useful definitions for landscape susceptibility, landscape value and finally landscape sensitivity, as follows:

- Landscape Susceptibility: *“the ability of a defined landscape to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences;”*
- Landscape Value: *“the relative value that is attached to different landscape by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons;”* and
- Landscape Sensitivity: *“a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.”*

3.40. In terms of landscape sensitivity, there are a number of factors that both influence and affect the value of the landscape character of the Site and its setting, and their susceptibility to change. The sensitivity of a particular landscape in relation to new development can be categorised as “very high, high, medium, low or negligible.” This takes into account the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of development proposed and the value attached to different landscapes by society.

Landscape Susceptibility

- 3.41. In terms of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to accommodate change of the type proposed, it is considered that the proposals are temporary, reversible and would not permanently damage or remove any of the existing features within the Site. In addition to this, the presence of the existing woodland and mature boundary vegetation in combination with subtle landform changes, effectively provides a good level of containment which reduces its susceptibility to change resulting from the type of development proposed.
- 3.42. The close proximity of the dominating overhead transmission lines and their pylons, represent an intrusion in the landscape (refer to viewpoints 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, in **Appendix 2**). In addition, Bishop’s Stortford settlement has expanded to the A120 (refer to viewpoint 4 in **Appendix 2**) 500m to the south east and Wickham Hall Business Park is undergoing phased development 100m to the south east, and collectively with the strong presence of the pylons dilutes the agricultural character of the setting and wider landscape.
- 3.43. The Site will benefit from a range of proposed new typologies, such as woodland planting, hedgerow planting, wildflower seeding, a wildlife area and scrub planting

that will aid integration and add value. It is therefore considered that the landscape character of the Site has capacity to accommodate the Proposed Development. The susceptibility of the landscape resource to change of the type proposed is considered to be **medium**.

Landscape Value

3.44. The Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact (GLVIA 3) sets out at Box 5.1 a range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes. This has been reviewed in the light of the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 'Assessing landscape value outside national designations.' These factors include:

- Landscape condition (physical condition and intactness);
- Perceptual (visual scenic quality);
- Perceptual (tranquillity, wildness and remoteness);
- Natural heritage (ecological, geological, geomorphological);
- Cultural heritage (archaeological or cultural);
- Recreational (offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important);
- Distinctiveness (strong landscape character, features, making a contribution to character or settlement identity);
- Associations (with the arts, notable people, historic events); and
- Functional (landscape that performs a function i.e., floodplain, pollinator – rich wildflower meadows, GI).

3.45. Table 1 below seeks to assess the value of the Site based on the amended Box 5.1 criteria.

Table 1: Assessment of Landscape Value of the Site

Criteria	Assessment of Value
Landscape condition	High – The Site reflects that of its arable locality, comprising intensively farmed land mostly enclosed by woodland and some mature field boundary hedgerows.
Perceptual - scenic quality	Medium/Low – The arable use of the Site is negatively influenced by the presence of the transmission lines and pylons that detract from scenic quality. The woodland elements provide significant enclosure and truncate views.
Perceptual – tranquillity/wildness/remoteness	Low – The Site is not particularly remote, wild or tranquil. The edge of Bishop's Stortford lies 500m to the south east and Wickham Hall Business Park is undergoing phased development

	100m to the south east.
Natural heritage- ecological	Low – The intensive arable agriculture land use is of a low value.
Cultural heritage	Medium/Low – Refer to Heritage report.
Recreation Value	High – The Site lies within a wider PRow network with additional permissive routes added, but none cross the Site.
Distinctiveness	Medium/Low – Landform and landcover reduce visibility to a visual envelope close to the Site boundaries. While the Site is located within the countryside the pylons and cables represent detracting features and the arable fields are typical. Nearby woodlands Bailey Hills and Bloodhound’s Wood are local features. Most of these features reflect landscape character.
Associations	None – There are no known associations with the Site.
Functional	None – There are no known landscape functions.

3.46. In terms of value, the landscape of the Site and its setting is not washed over by any value designation. Furthermore, the pylons and overhead cables are dominant detracting features and Bishop’s Stortford and Wickham Business Park lie nearby. It is considered that the Site and its immediate setting represents a landscape that is not elevated beyond being ‘ordinary’. Aspect concludes that the overall landscape value of the Site and its immediate setting is **medium**.

Landscape Sensitivity

3.47. **Site and setting.** The Site and its setting are considered to be consistent in terms of its land use, features, and elements with that of the immediate surrounding area and is not remarkable nor does it include any features which elevate it above an ‘ordinary’ landscape. The Site is not considered to represent a ‘valued landscape’ in relation to the NPPF. When both value (medium) and susceptibility (medium) of the landscape resource are considered together, it is considered that the Site would typically be of **medium** landscape sensitivity.

3.48. **Wider setting.** With regard to the wider rural landscape, the mixed plateau and rolling topography alongside the established vegetation structure represent positive landscape features to the north and west of the Site. However, the presence of the pylons, Bishop’s Stortford and Wickham Hall Business Park to the south and east reduce landscape sensitivity. The introduction of low height solar panels (and necessary infrastructure) would sit within a wider landscape context already supporting built form. It is considered that, on the whole, the wider landscape setting would be of **medium** sensitivity based on a medium value and medium susceptibility as described.

- 3.49. **Landscape features within the Site and setting.** The main features within or adjacent to the Site are boundary hedgerows and adjacent woodlands (including ancient semi-natural woodland), which are local features visible from local PRoW network. All would be of **medium to high** sensitivity.

Visual Baseline Assessment

- 3.50. In order to understand the Site and its wider setting, a number of site visits have been undertaken by two experienced and fully qualified landscape practitioners who are Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute (CMLI). Site visits have been conducted at different times of the year and over several years in order to fully appreciate the local and site-specific landscape and visual environment. This has taken place on a number of occasions and has included the EHC approved scheme area. During the site visits, a number of photographic records have been taken and a representative number selected for inclusion within this LVIA. While the Landscape Officer for UDC has approved the locations relating to the refused application, this has been supplemented by additional viewpoint locations for robustness.
- 3.51. Viewpoints have been identified in order to demonstrate the visibility of the Site within the localised and wider setting. The views to be assessed are taken from publicly accessible viewpoints and also from what will be permissive routes in order to provide a fair representation of the visual environment within which the Site is set. The visual analysis seeks to identify the views that will, potentially, experience the greatest degree of change as a result of the proposals.
- 3.52. The photographs were taken during a number of Site visits, between April 2020 and July 2022 using a 35mm equivalent digital SLR camera at a 50mm focal length in line with LI Technical Guidance Note 06/19. The weather provided good visibility on all occasions. The visual assessment is included within **Appendix 2** and has fully considered the various factors required, as detailed in Section 6 of GLVIA3 and the Landscape Institute Technical Note 06/19.
- 3.53. The full assessment of effects upon the visual environment and each viewpoint is detailed in Section 5 of this LVIA and Table 2 below identifies the locations of the viewpoints, together with the key receptors and their considered sensitivity.

Table 2: Baseline Visual Assessment

Viewpoint	Location	Distance and Direction from Application Site (<i>nearest boundary</i>)	Receptors	Sensitivity
1	PRoW	On PRoW looking north west. 135m	Walkers	High
2	PRoW	On site boundary looking west	Walkers	High
3	On permissive footpath/PRoW corner	On site boundary looking south	Walkers	High
4	On permissive footpath	On site boundary looking south	Walkers	High
5	PRoW	On site boundary looking south	Walkers	High
6	PRoW	On site boundary looking north	Walkers	High
7	On permissive footpath	On permissive footpath looking north. 90m	Walkers	High
8	PRoW	On site boundary looking west	Walkers	High
9	PRoW Hertfordshire Way	On PRoW looking east. 1.2km	Walkers	High
10	PRoW Hertfordshire Way	On PRoW looking east. 880m	Walkers	High
11	PRoW	On site boundary looking south. 240m	Walkers	High
12	Upwick Road	On road looking south.512m	Road Users	Medium

3.54. The panoramas demonstrate that the Site is not clearly visible from publicly accessible locations much beyond close views near to the boundaries. In middle distance and longer distance views, the Site either barely registers or is not visible. Clearly those close views will experience the greatest degree of change, in contrast to those located further away that benefit from intervening vegetation and topographical variations.

3.55. There is no visibility with the Site and no potential visibility of the Proposed Development from the following viewpoint locations:

- Viewpoint 7
- Viewpoint 9
- Viewpoint 11

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSALS

4.1. The Proposed Development comprises a solar PV farm, with the site layout illustrated on **ASP3** – Landscape Strategy Plan. The following is proposed within a central compound:

- DNO Substation
- Customer Sub-station
- MV Power Station
- Storage Container
- Battery Storage Units
- Battery Storage Transformers
- Fencing with security cameras
- Access (via the existing tarmac and stoned track)

4.2. The solar farm development also incorporates the solar PV panels themselves and, perimeter deer proof fencing up to 2m high, a number of CCTV cameras and access into the solar farm from the existing farm track. The solar arrays will be set out in a linear format end to end in a west-east orientation over the Site as illustrated on **ASP3** – Landscape Strategy Plan. Security weldmesh fencing will be provided only around the central compound.

4.3. The solar arrays are generally no more than 3m in height and will be angled at about 25 degrees to the horizontal, all facing south to maximise the capture of sunlight. The bottom edge clearance is approximately 1m above ground, and row to row clearance 4.4m. The panels are non-reflective and incorporate a matte finish to the cells to ensure that glare from the sun is avoided. As such the panels adopt a dark grey / blue appearance that will change subtly depending on the atmospheric conditions.

4.4. The chosen angle and position above ground is to minimise the vertical height and to optimise the position in relation to the sun. The other infrastructure associated with the development will be of a maximum 3m height and full dimensions and details of the proposed panels, fencing and associated infrastructure are included within the planning submission package.

- 4.5. The currently arable field will be returned to pasture for potential sheep grazing and restored to arable use upon decommissioning.
- 4.6. **Landscape and Ecology Strategy.** Plan **ASP3** incorporates both ecology and landscape initiatives to demonstrate how the integration of the Proposed Development into the receiving landscape can be achieved while delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and community benefit.
- 4.7. In the first instance the following buffers to development are proposed:
- Any existing tree cover is buffered to 10m to allow for shading and Root Protection Areas (RPA's);
 - Any ancient semi-natural woodland is buffered to 15m;
 - Any existing hedgerows are buffered to 5m to allow for maintenance;
 - All footpath corridors around the Site (permissive and PRow) are to be approximately 10m wide wildlife corridors with native hedgerows, native grasslands and native flowers (refer to section **ASP5**); and
 - All fencing buffered to 5m to proposed panels.
- 4.8. Several permitted footpaths are deliverable as part of the EHC approved development (ref: 3/21/2601/FUL), and although in Uttlesford, will be delivered irrespective of the result of this planning application. Refer to **plate 1** for permissive paths in respect of the solar farm scheme granted permission by EHC. For the wider network refer to plan **ASP1**. This delivers a number of rational new options for footpath users with informal access through a new wildlife area.
- 4.9. A new wildlife area is provided within the eastern extents of the Site. This will include the creation of a number of new habitats to support a wide variety of species. It delivers native scrub areas, grasslands, wildflowers, foraging areas for skylarks, hibernacula, and native tree planting. This will be a multi-functioning space for wildlife with access for people to pass through and enjoy the new features. With the addition of the 30m wide woodland belt to the south (amounting to 1.72 hectares of new woodland), it will provide beneficial woodland connectivity between Bloodhound's Wood and Bailey Hills woodland. The new woodland planting will provide further visual containment from the south. The wildlife area will be connected to the existing PRow network via a new permissive footpath.

- 4.10. Interpretation boards are to be used as a useful tool to explain the components and function of both the wildlife area (**plate 2**) and the solar farm (**plate 3**).

Plate 2: Wildlife Board



Plate 3: Solar Information Board



- 4.11. A window will be created within the new hedgerow boundary for a board to explain the function of the solar farm as a clean renewable energy resource.
- 4.12. All species will be native and local to the area.
- 4.13. The proposed 2km of new hedgerows, which will enhance the existing network of hedgerow that encircles the Site boundary, will deliver landscape, wildlife and visual amenity benefits and provide a continuous natural buffer that forms an attractive green backdrop for footpath users, separating them visually and physically from the fence line and the arrays of the Proposed Development (refer to **ASP5**). Given the proven growing conditions that support arable production, there is no reason to suspect that the establishment of hedgerows, trees, scrub, meadow land and other vegetation would not be straightforward and effective. Given the beneficial ground conditions, the establishment of an effective hedgerow feature (for example) would be expected to be robust within 5 years.
- 4.14. In terms of mitigation, the approach of the applicant and technical team has been to 'design-in' mitigation both in terms of designed and created solutions and long-term management to minimise the overall effects.
- 4.15. An appropriate management regime that is ecologically sympathetic will be adopted for all vegetation to ensure the establishment and long-term success of the landscape and ecology framework.
- 4.16. With regard to landscape in general, it is considered that specific planting details and management regimes would be controlled by an appropriately worded condition as part of a planning permission. As a result, there would be a positive legacy for the

landscape as the new and enhanced features continue to contribute to it long after the temporary solar farm has gone.

5. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

- 5.1. To assess the nature of the change as a result of the proposals, it is appropriate to appraise the impact of the Proposed Development upon the existing landscape character and visual environment within which the Site is situated.
- 5.2. In order to assess the effect of a development on the receiving environment, it is important to understand the quality and sensitivity of the landscape, the sensitivity of visual receptors, and the magnitude of change.
- 5.3. The assessment of effects has been derived from guidance provided within GLVIA3 and the methodology is contained within **Appendix 1** of this document.

Effect upon Landscape Character

- 5.4. It is considered that the Proposed Development could be integrated without detriment to the character or qualities of the area, given the temporary and reversible nature of the proposed built form and the mitigation and enhancement measures employed.

Site and Setting

- 5.5. The scale, massing and layout of the Proposed Development alongside the retention of the existing vegetation, and in combination with the enhancement measures, would assist in providing a robust setting for the proposals. This would ensure that the proposals are not overly prominent within the Site's setting. The proposals have been designed to retain the existing landscape character and features associated with the Site and the effects arising from the proposals are considered to be reversible in the long term. The Proposed Development can be removed from the Site and returned to the current arable use.
- 5.6. The Proposed Development would have very little effect on the landscape features within the Site and the chosen angle and position of the above ground arrays leaves space for the landcover to pass beneath, without affecting the panels.
- 5.7. The proposed temporary buildings (storage container, switchgear, DNO substation, customer substation, a MV power station, area of battery storage and transformer, (deer proof) fencing, security camera, and access gate) are located so as to relate

to the existing modern agricultural barn building that indents into the Site. In addition, this built form benefits from a location close to the proposed woodland and Bloodhound's Wood.

- 5.8. The scale, massing and layout of the Proposed Development respects the fieldscape within which it is proposed and it is highlighted that this would be entirely in the context of the approved solar farm scheme to the west. The retention and enhancement of the existing vegetation along the field boundaries combined with the landscape proposals (**ASP3**), would provide a robust landscape setting, ensuring that the proposals are not overly prominent within the context of the Site's localised setting.
- 5.9. As is typical of greenfield site's it is acknowledged that there would initially be a high magnitude of change within the Site itself, which has been assessed to be of medium sensitivity. As such it is considered that the significance of the effect would be **Major/Moderate Adverse** at year 1. However, as the mitigation and enhancement initiatives establish and develop by year 10, a raft of benefits would result in the reduction of effects towards the **lower end of Moderate Adverse**, this is not considered to be a significant effect in landscape terms. Given the nature of the proposals and the contained character of the Site, the geographical extent of this change will be localised only. Furthermore, the change is temporary and reversible and would result in a meaningful beneficial legacy upon the decommissioning of the solar farm.

Wider Landscape Setting

- 5.10. Looking at the context, prevailing landform, and landcover, combined with the relatively low overall height of the development (less than 3m) and mitigation measures proposed, the proposals would not be readily apparent, nor would they adversely affect the character and qualities of the wider landscape setting. In addition to this, as recorded, the existing transmission towers and cables, the new bypass, the close proximity of the Wickham Hall Business Park, and the settlement extents of Bishop's Stortford, all exert urban influences on the surrounding landscape. This affects its character and appearance. The introduction of the low-level solar farm into this context would not be a jarring addition given its low overall height and temporary life span as this would sit quietly and without movement over the existing landform and within the existing field pattern of a single field. It is

highlighted this would be in the immediate context of the approved solar farm scheme to the west.

- 5.11. Therefore in terms of determining the effect of the Proposed Development on the wider landscape character, it is considered that this would remain mostly unchanged by the Proposed Development at this scale, resulting in a negligible / no change magnitude of change.
- 5.12. This low carbon renewable energy proposal is temporary, reversible and the Green Infrastructure (GI) legacy in the long term is beneficial. Given the scale, massing and layout of the proposals and the urbanising components identified in the wider setting, along with existing infrastructure and the EHC approved solar scheme to the west, the Proposed Development would neither add nor detract from the character of the wider landscape. It is therefore considered that the significance of effect on the Site's wider landscape setting would be **Negligible Neutral**, with no adverse effects anticipated. Upon decommissioning of the solar development, this would revert to an enhanced baseline that is beneficial in nature, providing a meaningful legacy.

Effects on LCA H4 Berden and Farnham Chalk Upland and LCA 150 Hadhams Plateau

- 5.13. From the published character assessments at district level, it is concluded that LCA H4, in which the Site is located, typically displays a Medium / High sensitivity, while the adjacent LCA 150 landscape to the south and west would typically be of Medium sensitivity. In relation to these LCAs, it is considered that the temporary and reversible installation of a solar scheme on the Site and the scale, massing and layout of the proposals would result in a negligible / no change magnitude of change on these LCAs.
- 5.14. Table 3 below assesses the Proposed Development against the key characteristics (and relevant key features where applicable) of LCA H4 and LCA 150 to further establish the likely effect of the proposals on these LCAs. It is also stated how the proposals comply with the key relevant guidelines for both LCA H4 and LCA 150.

Table 3: Effect on published LCA characteristics and guidelines.

Key characteristics of LCA H4 Berden and Farnham Chalk Upland	Potential Effect of the Proposals
<i>Broad undulating upland slopes that flatten at the highest elevations</i>	Effect: None The size, scale and type of proposals ensure that this key characteristic would remain unchanged, with limited groundworks that would not affect the topography of the Site or its setting.
<i>Distinctly elevated, open, arable fields</i>	Effect: Minor / Negligible Adverse The proposals would be sensitive to the elevated character of this LCA and would be well contained by the retained and strengthened field boundary vegetation. A new linear woodland belt would be introduced along the southern boundary but this would be entirely in the context of the adjacent areas of woodland and would improve connectivity between these once established. It is noted that the proposals would result in the loss of an arable field but this would be temporary and reversible.
<i>Field patterns mainly regular, with large farms and becoming smaller and more organic in shape in the valleys and around villages</i>	Effect: Minor / Negligible Adverse The field pattern of the Site and wider LCA would remain mostly unchanged, noting the temporary and reversible change in land use of the Site itself. Landscape enhancements are proposed to the existing boundary vegetation of the Site itself, including the introduction of a linear woodland belt along the southern boundary.
<i>Scrubby, often fragmented hedgerows or scattered tree groups with distant blocks of trees framing views, particularly towards the middle and southern part of the area, where it is dissected by Bourn Brook</i>	Effect: Minor Beneficial A new linear woodland along the southern Site boundary would be introduced. Hedgerows would be retained, and gaps made good with native trees and shrubs. A substantial quantum of new hedgerows would be introduced to create a native species green ring around the edge of the proposals. In addition, more trees and shrubs would be included within the undeveloped area to the east. All would be sensitively managed to ensure positive GI is delivered and wildflower edges introduced. Proposed native hedgerows 2.026 km, proposed native broadleaved woodland 1.717 ha, proposed 1.104 ha native scrub and 29.146 ha of neutral grassland.
<i>A complex array of pylons leading to electricity substation near Berden dominates views in the high plateau</i>	Effect: None These detracting elements that pass close to the western Site boundary in the localised setting would remain unchanged as a result of the Proposed Development.
<i>Few roads; sense of emptiness and openness</i>	Effect: None Despite the introduction of a new linear woodland belt along the southern Site boundary, this forms the southern extents of the LCA and would not impact the sense of openness of the wider LCA to the north. The proposals would be well

	contained within the Site as a result of their scale, massing and layout along with the retained and strengthened field boundaries, and would not be typically perceived in the wider LCA to the north, therefore having no effect on the sense of emptiness.
LCA LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES – relevant to the proposal Landscape Strategy for LCA H4 = “conserve and restore”	
Key planning guidelines	Proposal compliance
<i>Conserve the rural character of the area</i>	Yes: The solar farm would sit upon the rural landscape and while the appearance changes from arable use to solar arrays this is only temporary and is reversible. Planting initiatives will strengthen the rural character.
<i>[...] Development must be well integrated into the landscape</i>	Yes: The replenishment of existing and introduction of new landscape features particularly along the boundaries and with the new woodland and wildlife area, would ensure the proposals integrate well into the receiving landscape context. While the appearance would change from arable use to solar arrays this would be temporary and is reversible.
<i>Use colour and tree planting to mitigate the visual effects of larger modern farm buildings</i>	Yes: The retained and reinforced field boundary hedgerow and areas of woodland, along with the provision of a new linear woodland belt along the southern boundary would further contain the existing modern farm building on the Site within its setting.
<i>Small scale development should be carefully located in relation to existing farm buildings</i>	Yes: The siting of the solar panels and proposed temporary buildings are sensitive to the identified landscape features of the Site and its setting and respect the existing farm building on the Site, ensuring this would remain functional.
Key land management guidelines	Proposal compliance
<i>Strengthen and enhance hedgerows with hawthorn where gappy and depleted</i>	Yes: The proposal would retain and restore existing hedgerows and sensitively manage boundary planting and provide wildflower edges.
<i>Conserve and manage areas of ancient/semi-natural woodland</i>	Yes: Ancient semi-natural woodland associated with Bailey Hills and Bloodhounds Wood would be respected through the provision of appropriate offsets (15m) and the immediate setting of these will be enhanced through wildflower edges. A new linear woodland belt (30m wide) along the southern boundary along with proposed woodland blocks within the new wildlife area would provide enhanced connectivity and links between these existing woodlands.
<i>Strengthen/enhance species rich grassland on thin chalk soils</i>	Yes: Species-rich wildflower is proposed along hedgerow and woodland margins and within a new wildlife area in the eastern extents of the Site.

Key characteristics of LCA 150 Hadhams Plateau (adjacent to the Site to the south and west)	Potential Effect of the Proposals
<i>Arable farming in large geometric fields often unenclosed</i>	Effect: Negligible / None Adverse The arable field pattern of the adjacent LCA would remain unaltered with hedgerows enhanced and buffered. Solar arrays would sit within the field temporarily. Effects are reversible.
<i>Intermittent hedgerows</i>	Effect: Negligible / None Beneficial The proposals would retain and strengthen the Site boundary hedgerow, which would bring about some beneficial, localised change albeit with the wider extents of this LCA remaining unchanged.
<i>Long distance views across open fields</i>	Effect: None Long-distance views towards the Proposed Development would remain unaffected. Views from the PRow network close to the Proposed Development are limited to VP3 and this is a short view truncated by Bloodhound's Wood and the Bishop's Stortford skyline.
<i>Large, isolated halls or farms</i>	Effect: Negligible / None Adverse The Proposed Development would be in the setting of Wickham Hall but the solar arrays would be highly contained as a result of the landscape proposals, which include a new wildlife area in the eastern extents of the Site and a linear woodland block partly along its southern boundary. These, would be beneficial GI additions to the landscape setting of this hall once established.
<i>Quiet area with few roads</i>	Effect: None Upwick Road is the key single-track lane in the vicinity, narrow, and quiet. There would be no change. Site access is from the south rather than the more rural and quiet areas.
<i>Scattered woodland blocks.</i>	Effect: Negligible / None Adverse The woodland edge to Bloodhound's Wood would be enhanced by a wildflower margin, along with a new linear woodland belt adjacent to this woodland block. The further introduction of solar arrays into the setting of this ancient woodland would cause little to no adverse effects on this key characteristic as a whole.
Relevant key features	Potential Effect of the Proposals
<i>High voltage electricity pylons</i>	Effect: None No change is anticipated as a result of the Proposed Development on this detracting element of the LCA.
<i>Hertfordshire Way [...] long distance footpath</i>	Effect: None The setting of this way-marked long distance route would remain entirely unaffected by the Proposed Development and the EHC approved Wickham Hall solar scheme lies in between the Site and this route.

<i>Bloodhound's Wood, Bailey Hills</i>	Effect: Negligible Adverse These woodlands would likely experience some beneficial change with the additional woodland planting and wildflower margins, albeit with the built form development adversely effecting their setting.
<i>Extensive open arable area</i>	Effect: Negligible / None Adverse The introduction of solar arrays on land adjacent to the LCA would have little to no adverse effect on the open arable character of the wider LCA. The EHC approved Wickham Hall solar scheme would characterise the localised setting to the west.
LCA LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES – relevant to the proposal	
Landscape strategy for LCA 150 “improve and conserve”	
Key guidelines	Proposal compliance
<i>Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and important semi-natural habitats and the creation of links between semi-natural habitats.</i>	Yes: The proposals would enhance, strengthen and sensitively manage boundary planting and provide wildflower edges to woodlands and hedgerows. Ancient semi natural woodland would be respected by offsets that include wildflowers. Greater connectivity would be achieved.
<i>Promote hedgerow restoration and creation throughout the area to provide visual and ecological links between existing and proposed woodland areas [...]</i>	Yes: Existing hedgerows would be appropriately restored and gapped up to ensure intact features are maintained and the beneficial woodland link (see above) is delivered.
<i>Native tree and shrub species, preferably of local provenance to be planted in area [...]</i>	Yes: See above (new native woodland trees and hedgerows are proposed).
<i>Provide new uncropped or grass field margins to link areas of wildlife importance and/or existing and proposed rights of way.</i>	Yes: The existing hedgerow and woodland features would be buffered and wildflower margins introduced, in particular along the PRoW and new permissive routes where new hedgerow corridors would be installed and by the new wooded area.

5.15. In terms of the overall effect on **LCA H4 Berden and Farnham Chalk Upland**, it is considered that the proposals would result in little to no change on the key characteristics or identified sensitivities of this LCA and would neither add nor detract from the character of the wider LCA to the north. Given the scale, massing and layout of the proposals it is considered that there would be little effect on the character of this LCA and it is noted that these would be temporary and reversible. It is therefore considered that the medium / high sensitivity of this LCA when

combined with a negligible / no change magnitude of change would likely result in a **Negligible Neutral** effect at year 10.

- 5.16. Regarding the effect of the proposals on **LCA 150 Hadhams Plateau**, it is considered that similarly, a negligible / no change magnitude of change would occur on what is considered to be a landscape that displays a medium sensitivity overall and that the proposals would neither add nor detract from the character of this LCA by year 10. This would typically result in a likely Negligible Neutral effect. However, given that the identified key sensitivities and characteristics would remain largely unaffected by the proposals and these would be entirely in the context of the EHC approved scheme to the west, it is considered that a **Negligible / None Neutral** effect is more likely to occur on the wider LCA once professional judgement is applied.
- 5.17. In summary, in reviewing effects upon the landscape characteristics set out above and within the Site, its setting and wider landscape, it is acknowledged that some localised adverse effects to the immediate landscape character of the Site itself would arise. However, beyond the Site, this reduces in the wider setting where the change is not readily perceived, and the key characteristics are unaltered, with neutral effects anticipated at most. Furthermore, as assessed, the landscape enhancements will endure beyond the lifespan of the Proposed Development and the Site would return to agricultural use. Overall, it is considered that by year 10, the proposals would not give rise to any significant adverse effects in terms of landscape character, nor would they result in any adverse effects on the landscape character of the wider area.

Effect upon the Visual Environment

- 5.18. A number of viewpoints have been identified in order to demonstrate the visibility of the Site and the Proposed Development within the localised and wider setting. The visual analysis seeks to identify those views that will, potentially, experience the greatest degree of change as a result of the proposals and the selected viewpoints are considered to be representative of existing views of the Site and its immediate context.

5.19. The viewpoints considered with the previous planning application are illustrated on **Plate 4** below:

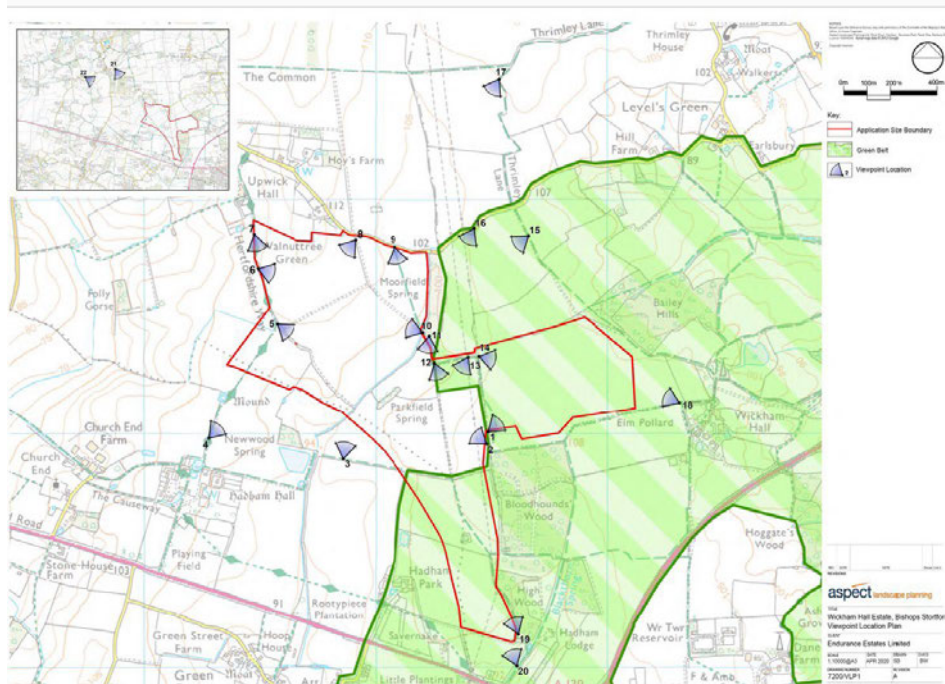


Plate 4: Viewpoint location of original planning application across EHC and UDC.

5.20. The viewpoints for this UDC application are illustrated on the Viewpoint Location Plan within **Appendix 2**, as shown on **Plate 5** below:

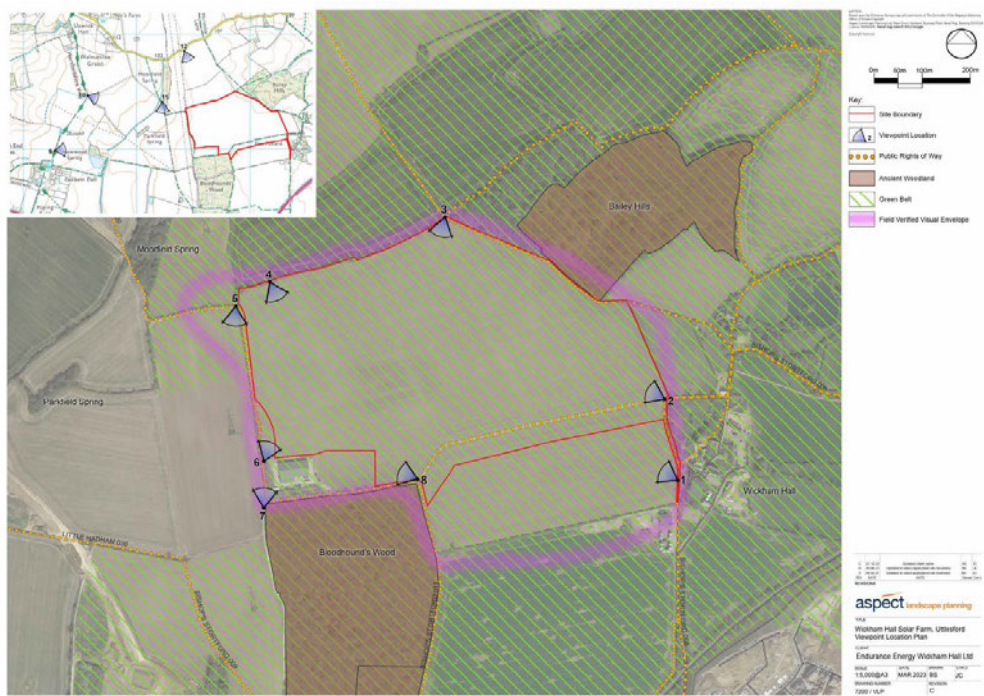


Plate 5: Viewpoint location for this UDC application.

- 5.21. A field verified visual envelope is shown on the VLP plan to indicate the approximate extent of visibility and this confirms the visual containment of the Site is limited to areas very close to the boundaries and not in mid or longer distances from public places. There are no residential receptors identified as being potentially affected and only a short section of public road along the single track Upwick Lane affords any visibility from the road network.
- 5.22. In addition to the identified viewpoints, several photomontages have also been produced for Viewpoint 2 (a and b) and Viewpoint 10 to illustrate the likely changes to these views at years 1, 5 and 10. These are also included within **Appendix 2**.

Table 4: Effect upon the Visual Environment

Viewpoint	Location	Receptor	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Effect
1	PRoW	Walkers	High	Low Negligible	Y1 Moderate Adverse Y10 Minor Neutral
<p>NOTES: PRoW users south of the Site boundary look across an arable field that occupies the foreground. The solar panels would lie in a thin strip towards Bailey Hills woodland. The strip of panels that sit low, would be fully screened from view by the introduction of the 30m wide band of woodland across the entire view which is further strengthened by the planting of the wildlife area that would occupy part of the view. In addition, another layer of planting in the form of new boundary native hedgerow would be introduced around the perimeter fence and collectively this would deliver full mitigation of the proposal well within 10 years.</p> <p>The introduction of a 30m wide linear woodland belt would be characteristic of the woodland areas that are key components of the view and once established, would serve to contain views of the proposed built form and the electricity pylons in the distance that are detracting features. It is acknowledged that this planting would foreshorten views, though the prevailing woodland context would ensure that this neither adds nor detracts from the visual amenity along this stretch of PRoW. It is therefore considered that the magnitude of change would reduce from low at year 1 to negligible at year 10 given that the new woodland planting would be a barely perceived change in the context of the existing visual amenity from this footpath. As the landscape proposals establish, views of the proposed built form would be highly contained beyond the woodland and hedgerow planting, reducing any initial adverse effects to neutral effects. It is considered that this would be on the lower end of a Moderate / Minor effect, therefore resulting in an overall 'Minor Neutral' effect at year 10.</p>					

2	PRoW	Walkers	High	Low Medium	Y1 Moderate Adverse Y10 Moderate Beneficial
<p>NOTES: REFER TO PHOTOMONTAGE PRoW users at the south eastern corner of the Site would look directly into the new wildlife area that would be populated with trees, scrub and wildflowers. The solar arrays would lie much further back in the view and would occupy only part of it. From the existing context and angle looking along the PRoW track, the characteristic pylons and cables sit on the skyline that rises and truncates views of the wider landscape beyond. The barn that indents into the Site is visible and the area to the left of the PRoW track would support the 30m wide woodland belt with edge species typology included for interest and biodiversity value.</p> <p>The combination of the planting within the new wildlife area, the woodland and the new boundary native hedgerow around the perimeter fence would deliver effective mitigation well within 10 years to highly contain the solar panels from view. Refer to the photomontage. Prior to year 10 it is considered that the landscape enhancements in the foreground of views would form a minor component of the view and therefore would result in a low magnitude of change at year 1 and a Moderate Adverse effect given the solar panels would remain visible. As this planting establishes, this would result in a perceived change albeit with the built form proposals increasingly integrated into the view, with highly filtered views of this by year 10. It is considered that the planting and landscape enhancements associated with the new wildlife area and linear woodland belt would enhance the visual amenity of this section of PRoW once established. Given the anticipated medium magnitude of change, it is considered effects would be on the lower end of a Major / Moderate effect and would not be significant. As such, the proposals would likely result in a 'Moderate Beneficial' effect on this receptor by year 10.</p>					
3	PRoW	Walkers	High	High Low	Y1 Major Adverse Y10 Moderate Adverse
<p>NOTES: PRoW users would be able to circuit the field boundary fully along the proposed permissive paths that allow additional connectivity. The view is not wide and expansive but is truncated by the rising landform and by Bloodhound's Wood. The characteristic pylons are evident and the barn that indents together with the water tower in Bishop's Stortford and the edge of the settlement is visible on the skyline. Initially, the rear of the foreground panels and fencing would be highly visible and close but with the introduction of the landscaped PRoW corridor, which would comprise a native hedgerow with wildflower margins, this would provide an effective level of mitigation. Prior to year 10, the magnitude would likely reduce as the proposed mitigation planting establishes and by year 10 it is considered that there would be a low magnitude of change on this receptor. The significant effect forecast at year 1 would therefore likely reduce to a non-significant, 'Moderate Adverse' effect. This would be temporary and reversible given the nature of the proposals and would result in some beneficial long term landscape, visual, biodiversity and footpath accessibility effects.</p>					

4	Permissive Path	Walkers	High	High Low	Y1 Major Adverse Y10 Moderate Adverse
<p>NOTES: THIS IS PERMISSIVE. Footpath users would be able to circuit the field boundary fully along the proposed permissive paths that allow additional connectivity to the wider PRoW network. The view is not wide and expansive but is truncated by the rising landform and by Bloodhound's Wood. The barn that indents together with the water tower in Bishop's Stortford and the edge of the settlement is visible on the skyline. Initially, the rear of the foreground panels and fencing would be highly visible and close but with the introduction of the landscaped PRoW corridor, which provides a native hedgerow with wildflower margins, the hedgerow feature would deliver an effective level of mitigation. Prior to year 10, the magnitude would likely reduce as the proposed mitigation planting establishes and by year 10 it is considered that there would be a low magnitude of change on this receptor. The likely significant effect at year 1 would therefore reduce to a non-significant, 'Moderate Adverse' effect. This would be temporary and reversible given the nature of the proposals and would result in some beneficial long term landscape, visual, biodiversity and footpath accessibility effects.</p>					
5	PRoW	Walkers	High	No Change	None
<p>NOTES: PRoW users at this location are fully screened by the boundary hedgerow close to the north western Site corner. This defines the extent of the visual envelope and illustrates the containing effect of the boundary hedgerow which runs along the length of the PRoW. This viewpoint location is close to VP4 and illustrates the setting of the Site and dominant visual effect of the pylons and towers that are notable detractors in the landscape. While the Proposed Development would not be visible even at this close distance, VP4 clearly shows the different situation on the other side of the hedgerow and the mitigation proposed. This field would remain in arable production. The effect would therefore be 'None' at year 1 and year 10.</p>					
6	PRoW	Walkers	High	High Low	Y1 Major Adverse Y10 Moderate Adverse
<p>NOTES: For PRoW users, the view is not wide and expansive but is truncated by the hedgerow that runs along the track to the west and the layers of intervening boundary vegetation to the immediate north of the Site boundary and beyond. The flatter landform reduces visibility beyond. Initially, the frontages of the foreground panels and fencing would be highly visible and close but with the introduction of the native hedgerow with wildflower margins, the hedgerow feature would deliver an effective level of mitigation. Prior to year 10, the magnitude would drop to low as the landscape mitigation proposals mature. The significance of effect at year 10 would therefore likely reduce to a non-significant, 'Moderate Adverse' effect. This would be temporary and reversible given the nature of the proposals and would result in some beneficial long term landscape, visual and biodiversity effects.</p>					
7	PRoW	Walkers	High	No Change	None
<p>NOTES: PRoW users at this location are fully screened by the existing barn that indents into the south western Site corner and the boundary hedgerow that follows the PRoW track along the western boundary. This is a location at the junction of the PRoW that follows the southern Site boundary. This defines the extent of the visual envelope which is close to the Site boundary itself at this location. This viewpoint location also illustrates the setting of the Site and dominant visual effect of the pylons and towers that are notable detractors in the landscape. The field below these would remain in arable production and the Proposed Development would not be perceived. The effect would therefore be 'None' at year 1 and year 10.</p>					

8	PRoW	Walkers	High	High Low	Y1 Major Adverse Y10 Moderate Adverse
<p>NOTES: For PRoW users, the view contains the detracting elements of the towers and cables and the modern barn that indents into the Site. The skyline is for the most part comprising the intervening vegetation to the west of the Site boundary, the view otherwise being dominated by the arable crops and shortened by the barn and vegetation. Initially, the oblique view of the frontages of the foreground panels and fencing would be highly visible and close but with the introduction of the native hedgerow with wildflower margins the hedgerow feature would deliver an effective level of mitigation. Prior to year 10, the magnitude would drop to low as the landscape mitigation proposals mature. The significance of effect at year 10 would therefore likely reduce to a non-significant, 'Moderate Adverse' effect. This would be temporary and reversible given the nature of the proposals and would result in some beneficial long term landscape, visual and biodiversity effects.</p>					
9	PRoW	Walkers	High	No Change	None
<p>NOTES: PRoW users on the Hertfordshire Way have a panoramic view looking across the arable field in the foreground and the A120 corridor towards a skyline that is formed by intervening vegetation, including Bloodhound's Wood. The characteristic dominant pylons and cables interrupt the view and the roof top of the barn that indents into the Site is just visible. There would be no change to this view. The magnitude would be no change and the Proposed Development would not register. The effect would therefore be 'None' at year 1 and year 10.</p>					
10	PRoW	Walkers	High	No Change	None
<p>NOTES: REFER TO THE PHOTOMONTAGE. PRoW users on the Hertfordshire Way have a panoramic view looking across the foreground arable field and hedgerow boundary towards a skyline that is formed by intervening vegetation, including Bloodhound's Wood. The characteristic dominant pylons and cables interrupt the view and the upper part of the roof of the barn that indents into the Site is just visible.</p> <p>The foreground field forms part of the EHC approved solar scheme and development on this field would ensure that the Proposed Development would not be perceived. The effect therefore would be 'None' at year 1 and year 10. Even without the intervening EHC approved solar scheme, the proposals would be barely perceived from this location and would be further integrated into the view by the enhanced boundary vegetation and perimeter hedgerow proposed along the western Site boundary.</p>					
11	PRoW	Walkers	High	No Change	None
<p>NOTES: PRoW users have a relatively enclosed view looking along the PRoW. The edge of Bloodhound's Wood is just visible, but the heavily wooded Moorfield Spring linear woodland intervenes to the left and continues into the view as a well treed hedgerow boundary that curves both across and into the view. The result is a heavily filtered view in the direction of the Proposed Development that would not be visible. The effect would therefore be 'None' at year 1 and year 10.</p>					
12	Upwick Road	Road Users	Medium	Negligible Negligible/ No Change	Y1 Minor Adverse Y10 Negligible Neutral
<p>NOTES: Road users have a view towards the Site as they travel along the minor road. The very large scale foreground arable field dominates the view together with the significant presence of the detracting towers and cables that cross the road nearby and close to the receptor. Bloodhound's Wood forms the skyline together with boundary trees. The skyline is not distant. The barn that indents into the Site is a feature and a small patch of the dark coloured rear of the panels would be barely discernible as a darker patch in the distance. They would not be clearly visible and would just register but only in part, not as a whole. By the time the perimeter hedgerow planting has developed, the panels would be highly contained and would barely register, neither adding nor detracting from the existing view. The effect at year 10 would therefore reduce to 'Negligible Neutral'.</p>					

- 5.23. As an overview, the Site is well contained visually by the combination of landform and intervening mature vegetation associated with the setting of the Site in its local context. The proposal sits low in the landscape at or around hedgerow height in general. As illustrated within the visual assessment, views of the Proposed Development would be limited to those public locations passing close to its boundaries. In this respect the effects will be localised, with no significant effects arising and no change registering in the mid or long distance.
- 5.24. The primary visual receptors would be users of the PRow network passing along the perimeter of the Site, very close to it along the western, southern and part of the eastern boundaries. It is acknowledged that the proposal would lead to unavoidable significant adverse effects on PRow users at year 1 as a result of the proximity of the solar panels to these routes and the foreshortening of views. However, as the proposed landscape mitigation establishes in the form of a new native hedgerow running along the perimeter of the development with wildflower margins, this would reduce the overall effects to non-significant effects by year 10 and bring about some beneficial change and an enriched walking experience for this receptor. It is highlighted that the proposal would be temporary and reversible.
- 5.25. The proposals include the provision of permissive paths to form a full loop and include a route through the proposed wildlife area, which is provided as a resource for people to walk through and enjoy new and enhanced typologies such as woodland, grassland scrub and meadows, introduced as legacy features that replace the low value arable use. This also delivers improved connectivity opportunities with the wider PRow network for this user group.
- 5.26. The boundary route will sit within a landscaped corridor of new native planting of wildflowers and hedgerows that will be visually attractive and add to biodiversity value. Within a relatively short period of time (within 7 years approximately) the hedgerow planting will be a sufficiently established hedgerow feature that is managed as a tall hedgerow at 3m height (above eye level and above panel height) to ensure the landscaped corridor and adjacent setting of the woodlands and hedgerows is enjoyed.

- 5.27. The 30m wide proposed woodland beneficially links Bloodhound's Wood to Bailey Hills, an important link in the woodland chain, and this provides an attractive woodland feature outlook for PRow users directly.
- 5.28. Together with the proposed perimeter native hedgerow, wildlife area and woodland belt, the visual amenity of this arable landscape has been sensitively enriched.
- 5.29. In order to provide an explanation about the function and purpose of the solar farm and also the wildlife area, two interpretation boards are proposed and a window into the solar farm maintained permanently for viewers to look into.
- 5.30. The assessment confirms that the visual impact of the proposal would be confined to areas close to the Site boundaries and would not adversely affect the wider landscape and people's enjoyment of it.
- 5.31. The characteristic electricity transmission infrastructure crossing through the landscape is a dominant feature close to the Proposed Development and would continue to represent a key detracting feature in the visual environment.
- 5.32. Overall, within the context of the existing visual environment, it is considered that the type of development proposed can be accommodated within the Site and integrated into the immediate setting without compromising the visual amenities or qualities of the Site's setting while having greatest effect on those sensitive receptors passing around the Proposed Development at close quarters. However, the measures employed to mitigate the initial significant adverse effects are considered to be effective and it is noted that this would be a temporary and reversible development, whereupon the arable field would be restored.
- 5.33. The legacy benefits are considered to be significant and include the woodland, the hedgerows, the wildlife area and the landscaped footpath corridors. The permissive footpaths extend opportunities to enjoy wider connectivity with the PRow network within an enriched visual, landscape and biodiversity environment. A betterment over the baseline situation.

Effect upon landscape-related policy

- 5.34. Paragraph 180 of the NPPF is a general policy relating to those landscapes outside statutorily designated landscapes and it is set out within this assessment that this is not a “valued” landscape in this context. Beyond this, there needs to be a recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is noted that this Proposed Development is in any event temporary and reversible, and it brings with it biodiversity benefits in a longer-term legacy over the baseline situation.
- 5.35. The NPPF sets out the importance and fundamental aims of the GB policy in Chapter 13 to ensure the overarching objectives are met by preventing urban sprawl and keeping land permanently open.
- 5.36. Regarding GB use, paragraph 150 encourages local planning authorities to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access, outdoor sport and recreation and to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and in terms of biodiversity. In this instance any change is temporary and reversible and a legacy that boosts the PRoW network introduces new permitted footpaths and biodiversity, and landscape benefits will be delivered.
- 5.37. With regard to ‘very special circumstances’ in paragraph 156 that may allow development in the GB, this is being addressed in the Planning Statement supporting the application. It is noted that paragraph 157 states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. Amongst other initiatives, it should support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. In line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008 (footnote 56) paragraph 158 states that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change and paragraph 160 seeks to help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat.
- 5.38. The NPPG recognises the multifaceted benefits delivered through Green Infrastructure and how it can be used to reinforce and enhance local landscape character. The Proposed Development delivers a plethora of initiatives, such as the legacy of new permitted footpath routes linking existing PRoWs, enhanced footpath corridors with new hedgerows and wildflower planting, new woodland, a new multi-functional wildlife area (with many GI benefits), enhanced wildflower grasslands and gapped up hedgerows.

Bishop's Stortford Town Council Neighbourhood Plan for Silverleys and Meads
Wards 2014-2031 (Made).

- 5.39. **Policy GIP4 Protect wildlife and increase biodiversity.** The quantum of proposed tree, hedgerow and wildflower meadow creation exceeds the baseline situation. Woodlands, footpath corridors and the wildlife area deliver a significant benefit for biodiversity and much improved connectivity, in particular between Bloodhound's Wood and Bailey Hills and around the perimeter of the Site.

Uttlesford Local Plan 2005

- 5.40. **Policy S6 Metropolitan Green Belt:** The Site lies within the UDC GB where development that preserves the openness of the GB such that its scale, design and siting does not harm the character of the countryside will be permitted. This is considered in detail within the planning statement and also below with regard to the GB Review.
- 5.41. **Policy S7 The Countryside:** This policy applies to all areas beyond the Green Belt, as the Site lies within the GB this policy does not apply.
- 5.42. **Policy ENV7 The protection of the natural environment – Designated Sites:** Two areas of Ancient Woodland and Semi Natural Woodlands, namely Bloodhound's Wood to the south and Bailey Hills Wood to the northeast are close to the Site boundary but not within it. Appropriate care in the offsetting of any development proposals by 15m is proposed. Beneficial connectivity is proposed to link both through a meaningful native woodland belt that is 30m wide.
- 5.43. **Policy ENV 15: Renewable Energy.** Small scale operations are supported provided they do not adversely affect the character of sensitive landscapes or recreational amenity. This is considered to be of a larger scale, albeit the parcels are defined by the field boundaries into smaller compartments. The landscape benefits and the appropriate treatment of the PRoW corridors including the introduction of new permitted footpaths deliver a legacy over the baseline situation.

Uttlesford Green Belt Review March 2016

- 5.44. It is accepted that the Proposed Development will need to demonstrate 'very special circumstances' to UDC.
- 5.45. The Site lies within parcel 7 of the GB Review and was assessed against purposes, namely 1, 2 and 3 in relation to its suitability for permanent urban development. The overall strength of the general area against each criterion was scored from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong). Parcel 7 scored "0" against the purpose "*to prevent neighbouring towns from merging*" the area fails to provide a gap between any settlements and makes no contribution to separation. It only scored highly (5) relating to purpose 3 "*to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*" which reflects the lack of development across this area (less than 5%) and therefore possesses a strong rural character.
- 5.46. With regard to the scale of the Proposed Development, the LVIA shows that by respecting the existing field pattern, enhancing its hedgerow boundaries and introducing new landscape elements such as woodlands and the wildlife area, the scale of the proposal is small and confined to one field. It is temporary, reversible, and leaves a beneficial legacy both during operation and following decommissioning.
- 5.47. Solar farms are not uncommon features in the GB where many developments have been allowed, based on their 'very special circumstances'.

Cumulative Effects

- 5.48. This LVIA considers the cumulative effect of the approved EHC scheme with this Proposed Development. The composite Aspect plan **ASP4** shows the location of both schemes within their landscape contexts.
- 5.49. GLVIA3 in table 7.1 states that **combined effects** "*occur where the observer is able to see two or more developments from one viewpoint.*" *This is within the observers arc without moving and is "in combination." Or it can be where the observer has to move their head to see all developments and this is "in succession."*

- 5.50. GLVIA3 in table 7.1 states that **sequential effects** “*occur when the observer has to move to another viewpoint to see the same or different developments. This involves travelling between viewpoints.*”
- 5.51. Aspect has undertaken a number of visits to both the EHC and UDC sites and the wider surrounding landscapes over several years, establishing a very good understanding of the areas and Aspect confirms that both enjoy a high level of visual containment. This arises from the interplay of landform with landcover combined with the low height of the panels in the landscape.
- 5.52. The smaller UDC proposal is a single field on land that falls away from the EHC site and is beneficially contained by the presence of mature woodlands (Bailey Hills and Bloodhound’s Wood) and other woody vegetation close to and around the boundaries. Proposed mitigation and enhancement measures ensure that the visual containment is further achieved by the introduction of the 30m wide woodland belt, other planting and new perimeter hedgerows (maintained as high hedgerows at 3m height above eye level and panel height). The field verified visual envelope lies close to the boundary and does not extend into the EHC scheme (refer to VLP).
- 5.53. The larger EHC proposal occupies 7 fields of varying sizes on land that undulates locally with a general fall away from UDC sloping down towards the bypass for the most part. Similarly, it also enjoys the containing benefit of existing woodlands (Moorfield Spring and Parkfield Spring) and other boundary vegetation. Again, proposed mitigation and enhancement measures ensure that a high level of effective mitigation is delivered.
- 5.54. In both cases, the landscape, visual amenity, and biodiversity legacies delivered during the life of the schemes and following decommissioning, results in a much stronger local landscape framework with an improved connectivity for features, creatures and users of the PRow network and along the new permissive routes.
- 5.55. The UDC photo record contains 12 viewpoint locations and is shown in **plate 5** and **Appendix 2**. There were 22 viewpoint locations considered within the planning documents relating to the application across both EHC and UDC and this is shown in **plate 4**.
- 5.56. The 12 viewpoint locations for this Proposed Development (UDC) record that the only location where both schemes are visible are at viewpoint 10. However, the

foreground is set to change as a result of the EHC approved scheme and the solar panels associated with that development would ensure that the proposal is not perceived from this location. The photomontage of this viewpoint clearly demonstrates this (refer to **Appendix 2**).

- 5.57. As the composite Aspect plan **ASP4** shows, both proposals are physically separated from each other in the landscape by the arable field that lies between them, and this is reinforced by the subtle changes in topography as the EDC scheme drops down the contours. The tall, mature hedgerow that sits along the boundary of the arable field and western Site boundary in UDC, adds another layer to the immediate visual separation and containment between the two. For users of the PRow that lies to the east it means that when looking in both directions even at such close quarters, a cumulative appreciation is not achieved. In addition, both schemes include the planting of woodlands and bolstering of boundary hedgerows to be managed at a higher height of 3m to ensure that an even greater level of separation in landscape and visual terms is reached and effective mitigation and enhancement delivered. This in turn means that the full scale of either or both proposals is not experienced at any location.
- 5.58. Having undertaken assessments at all viewpoint locations for both applications, Aspect confirms there are no sequential views afforded when moving between viewpoints, and (with the exception of VP10 that is effectively mitigated by the EHC scheme), there are no combined views due to the interplay of intervening landform and landcover. No cumulative landscape or visual effects arise.

Landscape Mitigations to address Reasons for Refusal (UTT/21/3108/FUL)

- 5.59. The following landscape related reasons for refusal were provided following the previous application in April 2022.

“The site is identified within the area in Uttlesford’s adopted local plan as Metropolitan Green Belt. The Framework defines inappropriate development as being harmful to the Green Belt and further defines exceptions which would not be inappropriate. Consequently, in not complying with the list of exceptions, the proposals would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very exceptional circumstances.”

By reason of the inappropriate site and sizing, the proposals by way of the long rows of panels, ancillary buildings and infrastructure would comprise a rather utilitarian form of development not typical of its agricultural context. It would contrast awkwardly with the unspoilt open qualities of the site and would introduce a discordant element of significant scale that would encroach into the local landscape contrary to one of five purposes set out in paragraph 138 (now para 143) of the Framework. As such, the proposal would have an adverse effect of moderate significance on the local landscape and a significant adverse effect on the visual amenity of the area.

It is considered that the 'very special circumstance' in this case either individually or collectively do not clearly outweigh the harm that has been identified, and the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development do not exist. The proposals are thereby contrary to policy S6 of the Adopted Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework."

Impact of the Proposed Development upon the Green Belt

- 5.60. The following definition of Green Belt land is included in paragraphs 142 & 143 the NPPF (revised December 2023).

"142. The Government attached great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence."

"143. Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."*

Green Belt Purpose	Assessment
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	This purpose is not relevant as the development is in the countryside and not on the edge of a large built-up area.
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	The Site lies to the northwest of Bishop's Stortford which has no nearby neighbouring towns, and development of the nature proposed would not cause - or contribute to - the merging of two or more towns.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	<p>The Proposed Development is a temporary, renewable energy development which rises to a height of approx. 3m. The land will be returned to its arable farmland use after the 43-year lifespan. While it is accepted that any development of Green Belt land results in a degree of encroachment, in this case this is limited to highly localised locations within the landscape.</p> <p>The proposals seek to introduce a series of landscape mitigation which provide overall betterment to the wider area, including a 30m woodland belt and biodiversity enhancement area, notably beyond the minimum landscape mitigation required to visually contain the proposals. The proposals would fit into and enhance the existing key hedgerows and trees which define the countryside. There would be very little perceived alteration to the existing character, other than the wider benefits mentioned, and as such the proposals would not harm the Green Belt's ability to safeguard the countryside from encroachment.</p>
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.	The Conservation Area of Bishop's Stortford is approximately 1.5km southeast of the Site and is separated from the Site by significant residential development abutting the A120. The Site is not considered to be within the setting of the Conservation Area and does not contribute to the setting and special character of the town. As such, the Proposed Development is compliant with this purpose.
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	The purpose is not relevant to the Proposed Development as it is not within an urban area. As such, this purpose has not been assessed against.

5.61. In light of the above assessment, it is considered that the proposals comply with the main purposes and functions of the Green Belt, as set out within the NPPF.

5.62. Planning Practice Guidance provides advice when specifically assessing the impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt. (Ref ID: 64-001-20190722, revision date 22.07.2019):

“Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account on making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- *Openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposals may be relevant, as could its volume;*
- *The duration of the development, and its remediality – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and*
- *The degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.”*

Openness characteristic	Assessment
Openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects... the visual impact of the proposals may be relevant, as could its volume	<p>Due to the low development height associated with solar panels, the volume is not considered to be unacceptable in terms of impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.</p> <p>As confirmed in the visual assessment, Aspect considers that the type of development proposed can be accommodated within the Site and integrated into the immediate setting without compromising the visual amenities or qualities of the Site setting. Impacts upon visual amenity will be limited to the sensitive receptors passing around the Proposed Development at close quarters. However, due to the nature of the proposals, they would not experience a loss of openness and no longer distance views across the wider Green Belt would be obstructed.</p> <p>Due to the limited height of the proposals, there will be very little increase in the overall quantum / volume of development over the baseline conditions. It is considered therefore that the proposals would have a highly limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt in both spatial and visual terms.</p>
The duration of the development, and it's remediality	The Proposed Development is a temporary renewable energy development, with a proposed lifespan of approximately 43 years. The land will be returned to its existing arable farmland use following the lifespan of the development, with the proposed landscape mitigations to be retained, providing ecological and landscape betterment as a legacy of development.
The degree of activity likely to be generated	The Proposed Development is an unmanned solar farm, and away from the construction phase (and dismantling phase at the end of its lifespan) will not result in a notable increase in traffic movements in the area, with occasional maintenance vehicles using existing access tracks. The neighbouring proposals approved in East Herts will include the introduction and maintenance of several permitted footpaths which surround the Site, increasing accessibility to the countryside and footfall in the area.

5.63. When assessed against the three established and accepted characteristics of openness, as identified by Planning Practice Guidance, the Proposed Development does not significantly impact upon the defined characteristics. The spatial and visual impact of the solar installation has been outlined above, and it is considered that the undulating landform and landscape mitigation proposed will ensure that the Proposed Development is only glimpsed from specific locations. The installation is

temporary, and the land will be returned to its existing land use after the lifespan of the development ends. The installation is unmanned, and away from the installation (and deconstruction at life-end), will result in a very small number of vehicle movements to the Site and in the wider area.

- 5.64. It is considered that the Proposed Development can be accommodated on Site without having a significant detrimental effect upon the openness or permanence of the Green Belt.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

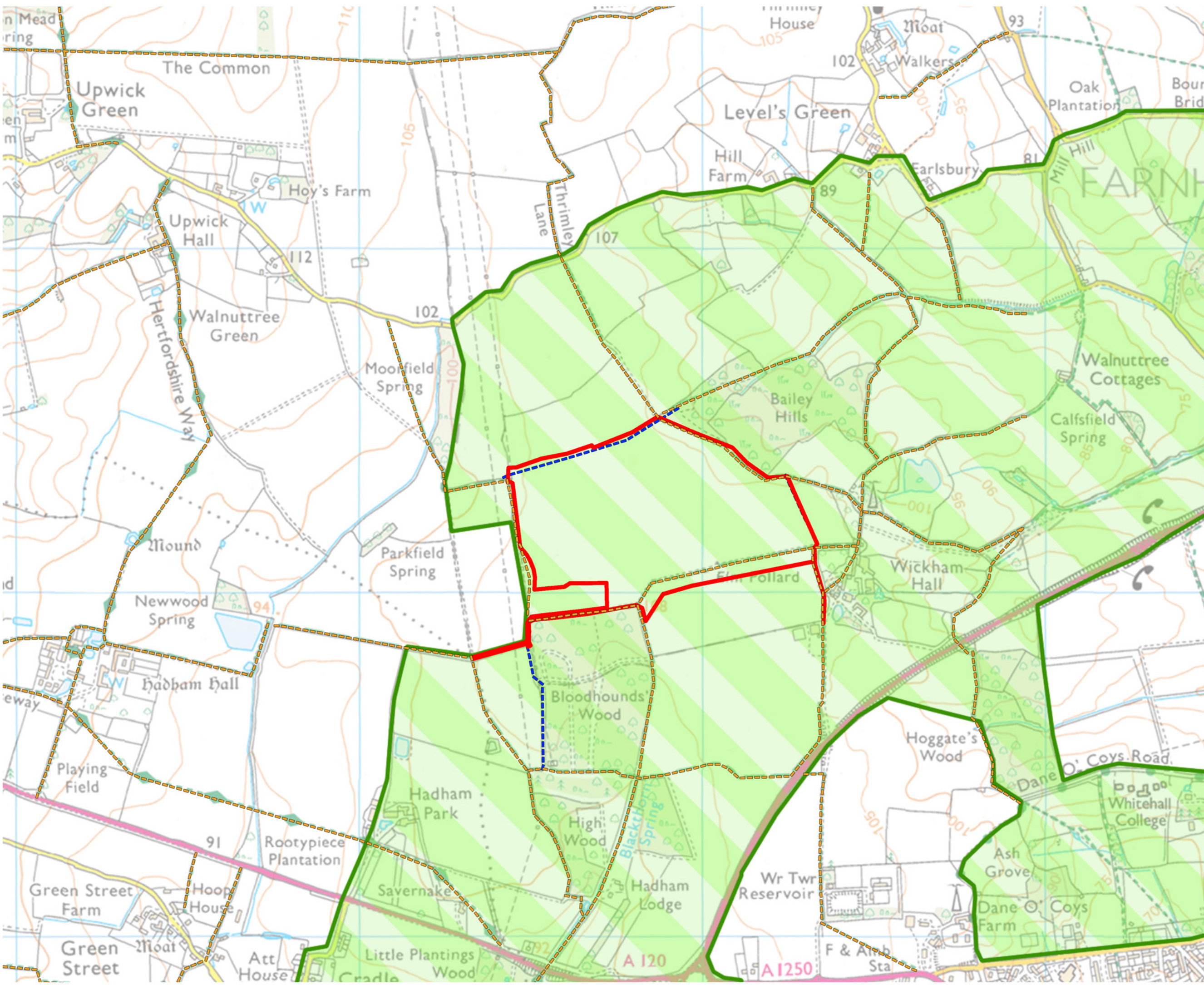
- 6.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been appointed to undertake an LVIA relating to the planning application seeking the development of solar photovoltaics and associated infrastructure on land at Wickham Hall Estate near Bishop's Stortford in Essex.
- 6.2. In reviewing effects upon the landscape character, it is considered that whilst some adverse effects are acknowledged to the immediate landscape character of the Site itself by way of the replacement of arable land with the solar farm, any adverse effects would be limited to the Site and its immediate setting, with the wider landscape remaining materially unchanged as a result of the size, scale and type of the proposals. As the mitigation and enhancement initiatives establish and develop by year 10, a raft of benefits would result in non-significant effects on the Site and its setting.
- 6.3. It is considered that the proposals will not materially affect the landscape character of the receiving environment, the field structure, topography and existing vegetation framework that form key characteristic components of the landscape setting would remain.
- 6.4. The new landscape elements will enrich the baseline by the introduction of different typologies into the single arable field to become more multi-functional, for example:
- native woodland (1.717 ha new broadleaved woodland);
 - native hedgerows (2.026 km new native hedgerows);
 - permissive footpaths;
 - new wildlife area (including new habitats such as wildflower meadow);
 - scrub planting (1.104 ha new native scrub);
 - swale features;
 - new landscaped footpath corridors throughout; and
 - neutral grassland (29.146 ha).
- 6.5. An explanation of the workings of the solar farm and the new wildlife area will be set out for the public within interpretation boards in order to convey the benefits of the low carbon scheme.

- 6.6. Detracting elements within the landscape close to the Site, such as the transmission towers and cables, the relative closeness of the Wickham Business Park, the A120 bypass and the edge of Bishop's Stortford, are all relevant to the prevailing character of the Site's context and all negatively affect landscape value. With regard to the Site, they are all strongly represented characteristics that detract from the rural character of the Site and its setting. Such influences confirm that the Site and its setting are not elevated above being ordinary and do not form part of a "valued" landscape. The LVIA has demonstrated that the Site has the capacity to support the Proposed Development and that this can be successfully integrated within the receiving landscape.
- 6.7. The Proposed Development is temporary and reversible and once removed the landscape could return to the current arable use, albeit within an enhanced landscape framework. Therefore, it is considered that the type of development proposed can be accommodated within the Site and integrated into the immediate setting without compromising the landscape characteristics or qualities of the localised or wider setting. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposals provide a meaningful benefit to the existing landscape structure as a legacy.
- 6.8. As illustrated within the visual assessment, the Site's setting is well contained by landform and landcover. In wider views, the Proposed Development would either not register at all or only in heavily filtered views, appearing as a very minor component within the landscape and in the context of the approved solar farm scheme to the west, which reduces the susceptibility of the receiving landscape and the Site itself to change of this type. As concluded, views of the Proposed Development are confined to those close to the Site boundaries and no adverse effects are anticipated on receptors in the wider landscape.
- 6.9. The primary visual receptors are the PRoW users along the Site boundaries. Unavoidable significant effects at year 1 on PRoW users on-Site and in its immediate setting would be reduced by the proposed landscape mitigation hedgerow planting as this establishes, resulting in non-significant effects by year 10, and with the visual amenity of these PRoW routes enhanced as a result of this new hedgerow and wildflower margin planting.
- 6.10. Upon decommissioning of the Uttlesford solar array, there would be beneficial long-term change to the receiving landscape resource and visual environment as a result

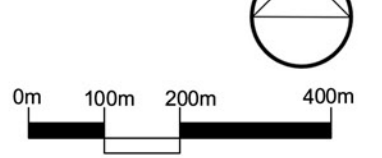
of the proposed mitigation measures and the temporary nature of development that is inherent to solar farm schemes.

- 6.11. It is considered that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives of the NPPF and other policies outlined within this LVIA. In terms of achieving the 'very special circumstances' for permission of development within the GB, the accompanying planning statement sets out this case very clearly. In essence, the NPPF recognises the challenge of meeting climate change and the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate and demonstrates the support of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 6.12. It is not uncommon to see solar farms in GB locations in England. The 'openness' of the GB at this location is already affected by the enclosing elements in the landscape which restrict visibility and potential visual effects to the Site itself. This is reinforced by the appropriate strengthening of boundary and woodland planting in line with published landscape character guidelines.
- 6.13. Paragraph 150 of the NPPF encourages the enhancement and beneficial use of GB's, such as looking for opportunities to provide access, outdoor recreation and to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and in terms of biodiversity. This is achieved within this planning application with long-term meaningful benefits accruing.
- 6.14. It is concluded that the Site and receiving environment have the capacity to accommodate the Proposed Development. The proposals will not result in long lasting significant harm to the landscape character or visual environment and, as such, it is considered that the Proposed Development can be successfully integrated in this location and is supportable from a landscape and visual perspective.

ASPECT PLANS



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- Key:
- Application Site Boundary
 - Public Right of Way
 - Green Belt

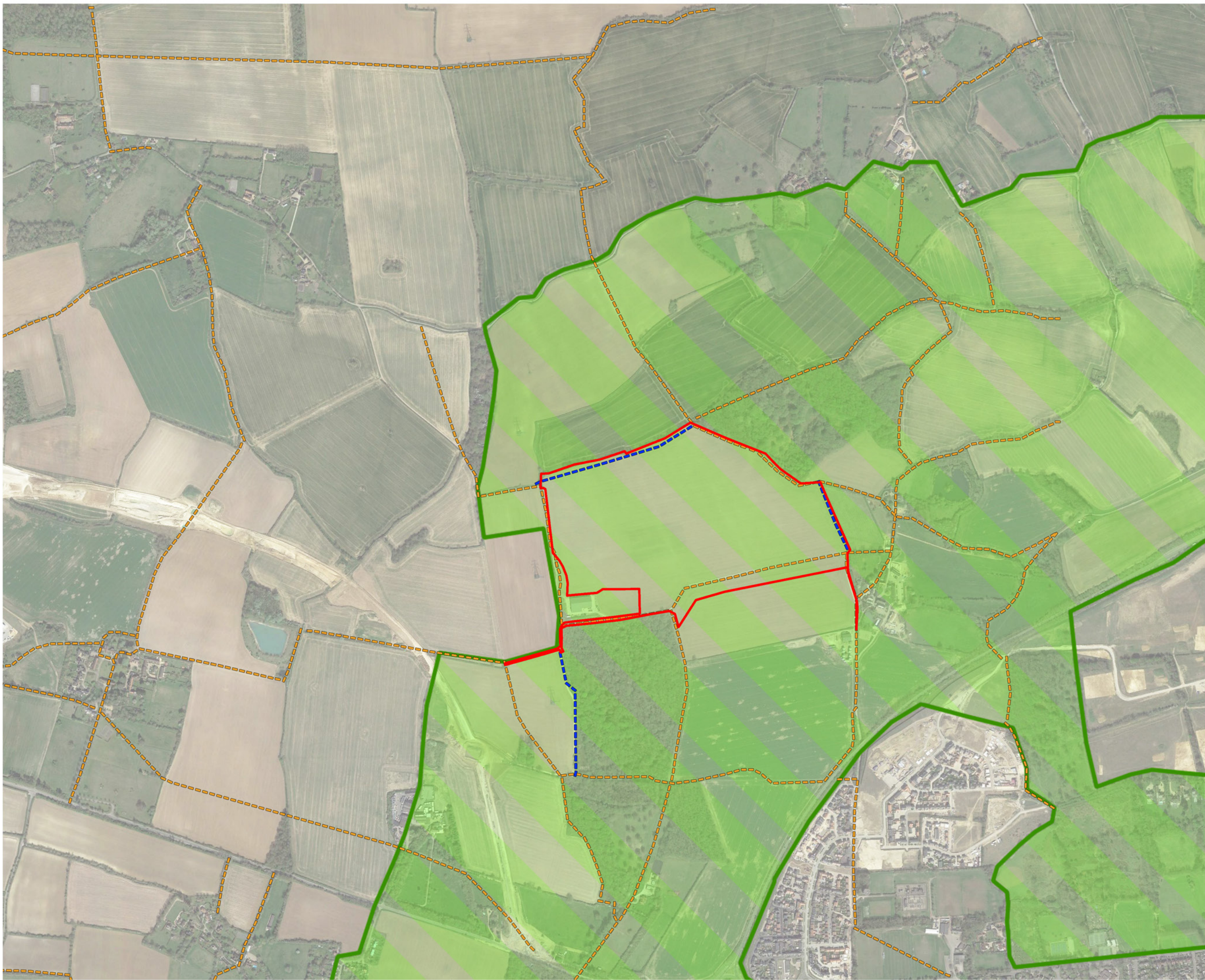
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F	15.05.24	Updated latest redline boundary	BS	AJ
E	02.04.24	Updated latest redline boundary	BS	AJ
D	21.12.23	Updated client name	AS	IC
C	20.06.23	Update to latest Application Site Boundary	BS	JC
B	20.04.23	Update to latest Application Site Boundary	BS	JC
A	16.03.23	Update to latest Application Site Boundary	BS	JC

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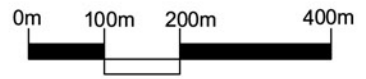
TITLE
 Wickham Hall Solar Farm, Uttlesford
 Site Location Plan

CLIENT
 Endurance Energy Wickham Hall Ltd

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
1:10,000@A3	APR 2020	SB	BW
DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION		
7200/ASP1/ SLP	F		



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Key:

- Application Site Boundary
- Public Right of Way
- Green Belt

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D
F	15.05.24	Updated to latest redline boundary	BS	AJ
E	02.04.24	Updated to latest redline boundary	BS	AJ
D	21.12.23	Updated client name	AS	IC
C	20.06.23	Updated to latest Application Site Boundary	BS	JC
B	20.04.22	Updated to latest Application Site Boundary	BS	JC
A	16.03.23	Updated to latest Application Site Boundary	BS	JC

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TITLE
Wickham Hall Solar Farm, Uttlesford Site & Setting Plan

CLIENT
Endurance Energy Wickham Hall Ltd

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
1:10000@A3	APR 2020	SB	BW
DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION		
7200/ASP2/SS	F		

NATIVE HEDGEROW PLANTING

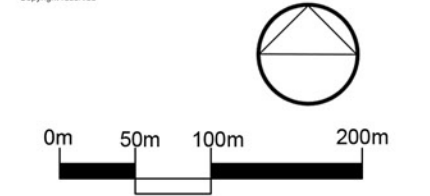


NATIVE WOODLAND PLANTING



INTERPRETATION BOARD

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Key:

- Site Boundary
- Existing Public Right Of Way
- Permissive Footpath
- Informal Path
- Proposed Woodland Planting
- Hedge lined Green Corridor along Fenceline
- Proposed Scrub Planting
- Proposed Tree Planting
- Existing Hedgerow
- Existing Woodland Planting
- Proposed Species Rich Wildflower Mix
- Development Window with Interpretation Solar Boards
- Interpretation Board for Wildlife Area

- 1** Wildlife area with informal public access where new habitats have been created for a wide variety of species.
- 2** Proposed woodland belt (30m wide)

REV	DATE	NOTE	BS	AJ
M	15.05.24	Updated to latest redline boundary	BS	AJ
L	01.05.24	Updated to latest layout	AS	AJ
K	26.03.24	Updated to latest comments	BS	AJ
J	22.03.24	Updated to latest layout	BS	AJ
I	22.02.24	Updated to latest layout	BS	AJ
H	21.12.23	Updated client name	AS	IC
G	20.06.23	Updated to latest comments	BS	JC
F	07.06.23	Updated to latest layout	BS	JC
E	23.05.23	Updated to latest comments	BS	JC
D	10.05.23	Updated to latest layout	BS	JC
C	20.04.23	Updated to latest comments	BS	JC
B	28.03.23	Updated to latest comments	BS	JC
A	16.03.23	Updated to latest comments	BS	JC



WILDLIFE AND WILDFLOWER PLANTING

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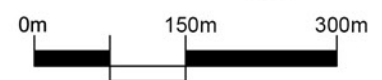
TITLE
Wickham Hall Solar Farm, Uttlesford
Landscape Masterplan

CLIENT
Endurance Energy Wickham Hall Ltd

SCALE 1:5000@A3	DATE AUG 2022	DRAWN SB	CHK'D JC
DRAWING NUMBER 7200 / ASP3 / LMP		REVISION M	



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- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - Existing Public Right Of Way
 - Permissive Footpath
 - Proposed Woodland Planting
 - Existing Woodland Features
 - New Native Hedgerow Planting
 - Existing Hedgerow intact
 - Existing Hedgerow infilled with Native Species
 - New Wildflower Seeding
 - Proposed Wildlife Area

NATIVE WOODLAND PLANTING



NATIVE HEDGEROW PLANTING



REV	DATE	NOTE	BS	AS	IC	CHK'D
E	15.05.24	Updated to latest redline boundary	BS	AS	IC	AJ
D	21.12.23	Updated to latest layout	BS	AS	IC	IC
C	21.12.23	Updated client name	BS	AS	IC	IC
B	20.06.23	Updated to latest comments	BS	AS	IC	JC
A	07.06.23	Updated to latest comments	BS	AS	IC	JC

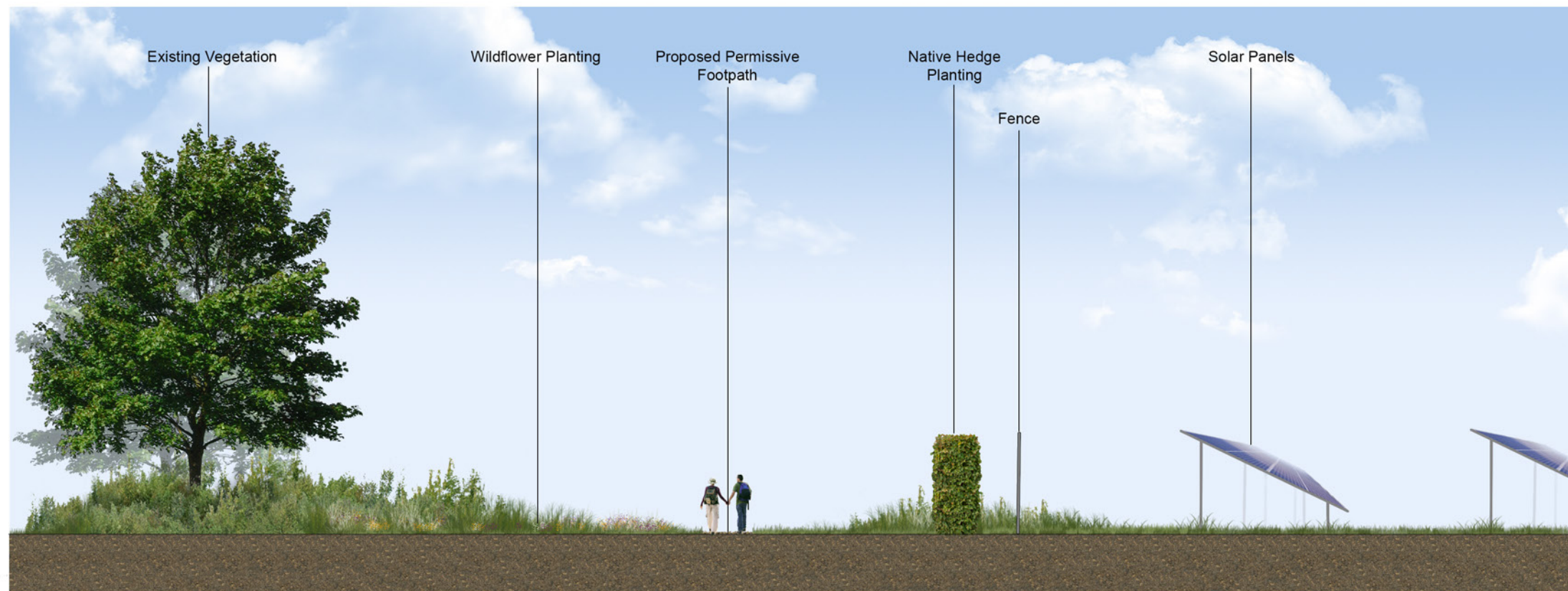
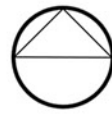
REVISIONS

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TITLE
 Wickham Hall Solar Farm, Uttlesford
 Combined Landscape Masterplan

CLIENT
 Endurance Energy Wickham Hall Ltd

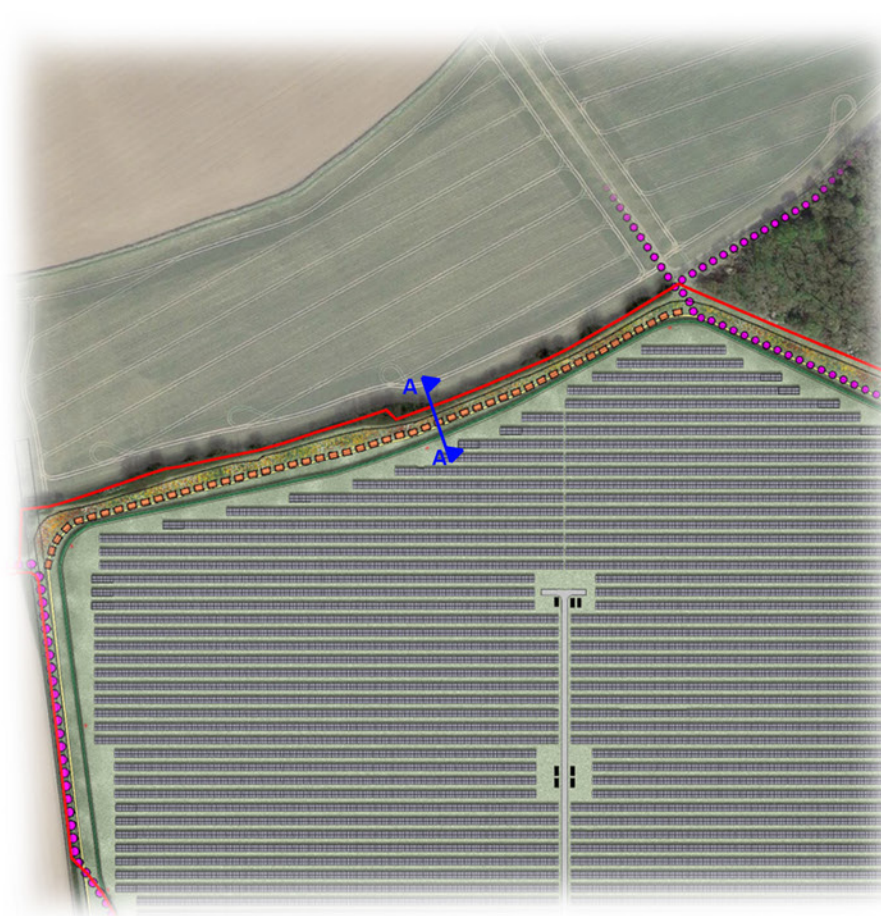
SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
1:7500@A3	APR 2023	BS	JC
DRAWING NUMBER	REVISION		
7200 / ASP4 / CLMP	E		



Cross Section A-A



Full Landscape Strategy Plan



Cross Section A-A

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D
D	15.05.24	Updated latest strategy Plan Inset	BS	AJ
C	01.05.24	Updated latest layout	AS	IC
B	02.04.24	Updated latest layout	BS	AJ
A	21.12.23	Updated client name	AS	IC



TITLE
 Wickham Hall Solar Farm, Uttlesford
 Cross Sections

CLIENT
 Endurance Energy Wickham Hall Ltd

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN	CHK'D
1:N/A @ A3	MAY 2023	BS	JC
DRAWING NUMBER		REVISION	
7200 / ASP5 / CS		D	

APPENDIX 1

ASPECT LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT METHODOLOGY

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 1.1. The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment have jointly published Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition 2013 (GLVIA3) that gives guidance on carrying out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), either as a standalone appraisal or part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This methodology takes on board the above guidance.
- 1.2. When assessing character within an urban context, this methodology can be applied to Townscape Assessments and how the development will affect the elements that make up the townscape and its distinctive character.
- 1.3. The main stages of the LVIA process are outlined below. This process will identify and assess the potential effects of a development on the landscape resource and the visual environment.

1. Baseline study

Landscape

- Define the scope of the assessment.
- Outline the planning policy context, including any landscape designations.
- Establish the landscape baseline through a site visit and an assessment of published Landscape Character Assessments to identify the value and susceptibility of the landscape resource (receptor), at community, local, national or international levels where appropriate.

Visual

- Define the scope of the assessment.
- Identify the extent of visual receptors within the study area, with the use of Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) where appropriate, and establish the number and sensitivity of the representative viewpoint and/or groups of people (receptors) within the study area whose views may be altered as a result of the proposals.

2. Project description

The baseline study highlights clear opportunities and constraints for the integration of the proposals into the receiving environment. The aspects of the scheme at each phase that will potentially give rise to effects on the landscape and visual amenity will need identifying. At this time, the proposals can be modified to ensure that further mitigation measures are incorporated into the design as a response to the local landscape and visual environment.

3. Description of Effects

The level of effect on both landscape and visual receptors should be identified in respect of the different components of the proposed development. In order to assess the significance of the effect on the receiving environment, it is necessary to consider the **magnitude**, i.e. the degree of change, together with the **sensitivity** of the receptor.

This will identify whether the effects are:

Adverse or Beneficial - beneficial effects would typically occur where a development could positively contribute to the landscape character or view. Neutral effects would include changes that neither add nor detract from the quality and character of an area or view. Adverse effects would typically occur where there is loss of landscape elements, or the proposal detracts from the landscape quality and character of an area or view.

Direct or Indirect – A direct effect will be one where a development will affect a view or the character of an area, either beneficially or adversely. An indirect effect will occur as a result of associated development i.e. a development may result in an increase of traffic on a particular route.

Short, Medium or Long Term – this relates to the expected duration and magnitude of a development. Within this assessment the potential effects are assessed during the Construction Phase, then at Years 1 and 10, following completion of the development.

Reversible or Irreversible – can the resulting effect of a development be mitigated or not, and whether the result of the mitigation is beneficial or adverse.

4. Significance of Effects (EIA only)

A final judgment on whether the effect is likely to be significant, as required by the Regulations. The summary should draw out the key issues and outline the scope for reducing any negative / adverse effects. Mitigation measures need to be identified that may reduce the final judgement on the significance of any residual negative effects in the long term.

Assessing effects

Landscape Sensitivity

- 1.4. The sensitivity of a particular landscape in relation to new development is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible. This takes into account the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of development proposed and the value attached to different landscapes by society. The following table explains each threshold and the factors that make up the degree of sensitivity.

Table 1: Landscape Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
High	Landscape resource where there is a high susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of high value, have a high degree of intimacy, strong landscape structure, relatively intact and contain features worthy of protection. Townscapes may include a high proportion of historic assets. Typical examples may be of National or County importance e.g. within the setting of National Parks, National Landscapes (AONB's), Conservation Areas etc.
Medium	Landscape resource where there is a medium susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of medium value, good landscape structure, with some detracting features or evidence of recent change. Townscapes may include a proportion of historic assets or of cultural value locally. Typical examples may be designated for their value at District level.
Low	Landscape resource where there is a low susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of low value, and contain evidence of previous landscape change.
Negligible	Landscape resource where there is little or no susceptibility to change. Typical landscapes are likely to be degraded, of weak landscape structure, intensive land uses, and require landscape restoration.

Visual Sensitivity

- 1.5. The sensitivity of the visual receptor will be assessed against the magnitude of visual change, and is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible. Each receptor should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views.

Table 2: Visual Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
High	Viewers on public rights of way whose prime focus is on the landscape around and are often very aware of its value. Occupiers of residential properties with primary views affected by the development. Examples include users of National Trails, Long Distance Routes or Sustrans cycle routes, or within the setting of a listed building.
Medium	Viewers engaged in outdoor recreation with some appreciation of the landscape, occupiers of residential properties with oblique views affected by the development, and users of rural lanes and roads. Examples include viewers within moderate quality landscapes, local recreation grounds, and outdoor pursuits.
Low	Viewers engaged in outdoor sport or recreation whose prime focus is on their activity, or those passing through the area on main transport routes whose attention is focused away from an appreciation of the landscape.
Negligible	Viewers whose attention is focused on their work or activity, and not susceptible to changes in the surrounding landscape.

Effect Magnitude

- 1.6. The magnitude of change relates to the degree in which proposed development alters the fabric of the landscape character or view. This change is categorised as high, medium, low, or negligible.

Table 3: Magnitude of Change

Magnitude	Effect Definition
High	Change resulting in a high degree of deterioration or improvement, or introduction of prominent new elements that are considered to make a major alteration to a landscape or view.
Medium	Change resulting in a moderate degree of deterioration or improvement or constitutes a perceptible change within a landscape or view.
Low	Change resulting in a low degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape or view or constitutes only a minor component within a landscape or view.
Negligible	Change resulting in a barely perceptible degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape or view.
No Change	It is also possible for a landscape or view to experience no change due to being totally compatible with the local character or not visible due to intervening structures or vegetation.

Significance Threshold

- 1.7. The magnitude of change is then considered against the sensitivity of the landscape resource as a receptor or the existing character of the panorama / view. In formulating the significance of effect, reasoned professional judgement is required which is explained within the assessment. This is carried out both in terms of the predicted effects on landscape character or on visual amenities. The significance thresholds are predicted as Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible and None, and can be either beneficial or adverse. Unless otherwise stated, all effects are predicted in the winter months. The extent of mitigation measures should be clearly stated, and in the case of planting proposals, the contribution to reducing adverse effects should be demonstrated at different stages (construction stage, operational stage year 0, and year 10).

Table 4: Significance of Effect

Significance	Threshold Definition
Major	A high magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view, that has little or no ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a damaged landscape or view.
Moderate	A medium magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view that may have the ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Minor	A low magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view that has the ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Negligible	A negligible magnitude of change that has little effect on a landscape or view that has the ability to accommodate change.
None	It is also possible for a magnitude of change to occur that results in a neutral effect significance due to the change being compatible with local character or not visible.

- 1.8. The significance of the effect is measured on the ability of a landscape or view to accommodate the change. In assessing the significance of effects, the following matrix will be used to determine the significance thresholds, through determining the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change.
- 1.9. In terms of assessing whether the effects are significant or otherwise, it is noted that para 5.56 of GLVIA3 states that there are no “hard and fast rules” about what makes a significant effect. For the purposes of this assessment significant landscape or visual effects are those effects considered to be greater than moderate, shaded below in Table 5.

Table 5: Measuring Significance of Effect

		Sensitivity of Receptors			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
	Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible/ None

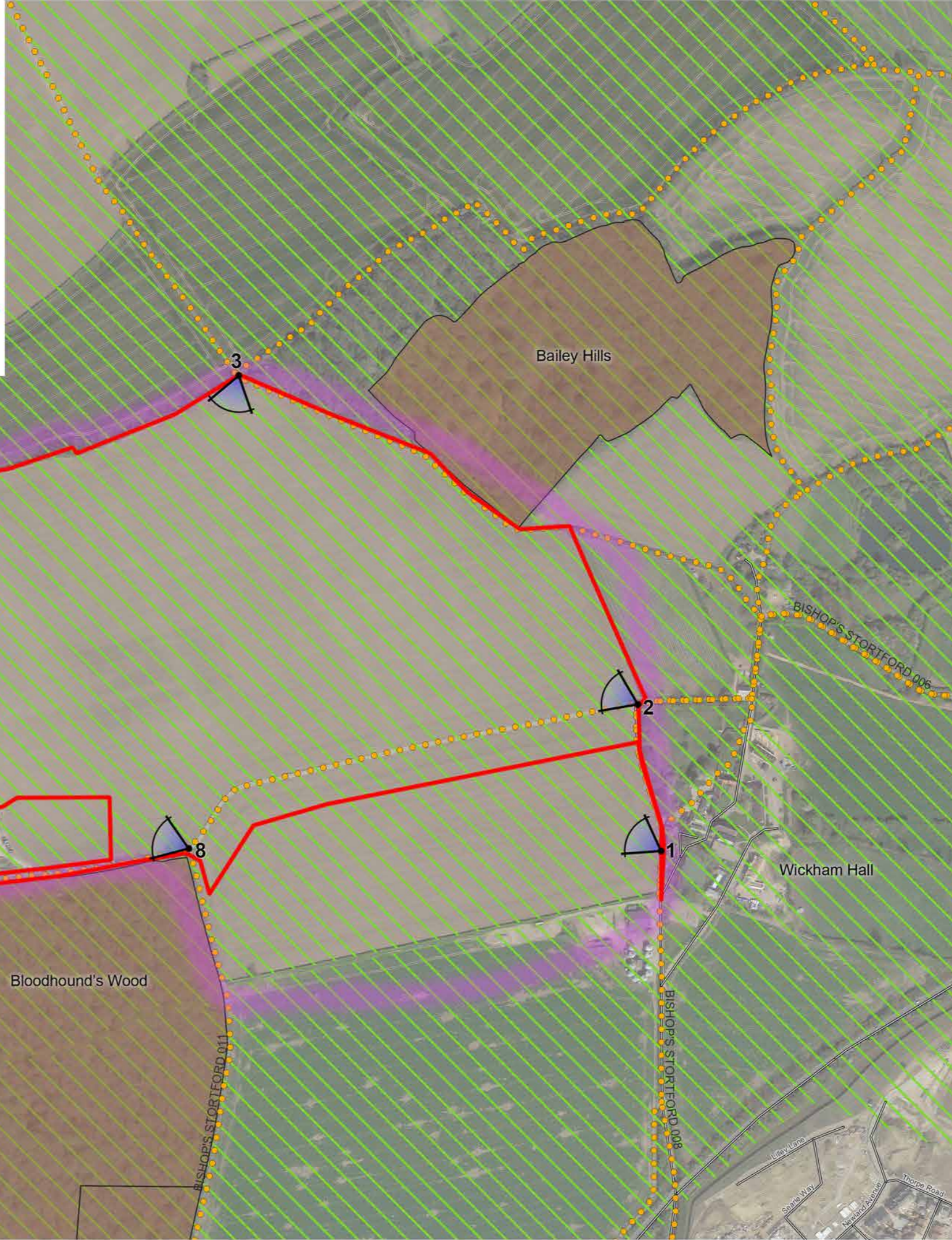
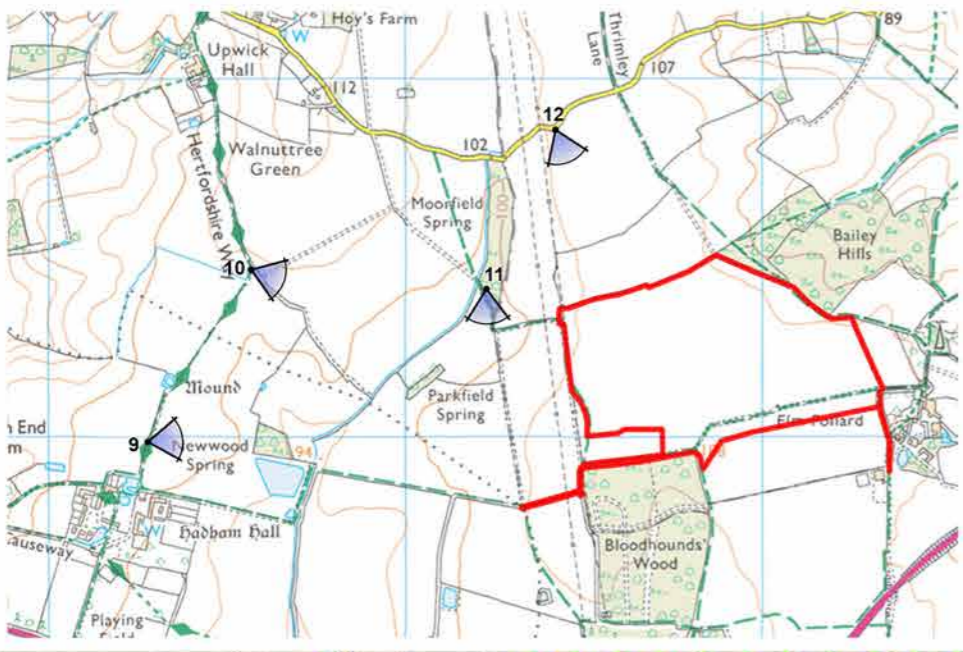
- 1.10. It should be noted that where there is no perceptible change in terms of the effect magnitude regardless of the sensitivity of the receptor, the significance of the effect on a landscape or view will be none.
- 1.11. A written statement summarising the significance of effects is provided, assisted by the tables and matrices. The final judgement relies on professional judgement that is reasonable, based on clear and transparent methods, suitable training and experience, and a detached and dispassionate view of the development in the final assessment.

Assessing cumulative effects

- 1.12. Cumulative effects are additional effects caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments. This can be cumulative landscape effects on the physical fabric or character of the landscape, or cumulative visual effects caused by two or more developments being visible from one viewpoint and/or sequence of views. The scope of cumulative effects should be agreed at the outset to establish what schemes are relevant to the assessment, and what planning stage is appropriate. It is generally considered that existing and consented developments and those for which planning applications have been submitted but not yet determined should be included.

APPENDIX 2

VISUAL ASSESSMENT



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0m 50m 100m 200m

Key:

- Site Boundary
- 2

 Viewpoint Location
- Public Rights of Way
- Ancient Woodland
- Green Belt
- Field Verified Visual Envelope

REV	DATE	NOTE	DESIGN	CHK'D
E	15.05.24	Updated to latest redline boundary	BS	AJ
D	02.04.24	Updated to latest redline boundary	BS	AJ
C	21.12.23	Updated client name	AS	JC
B	20.06.23	Updated to latest application site boundary	BS	JC
A	20.04.23	Updated to latest application site boundary	BS	JC

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TITLE
 Wickham Hall Solar Farm, Uttlesford
 Viewpoint Location Plan

CLIENT
 Endurance Energy Wickham Hall Ltd

SCALE 1:5,000@A3	DATE MAR 2023	DRAWN BS	CHK'D JC
DRAWING NUMBER 7200 / VLP	REVISION E		



Viewpoint 1 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



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Weather conditions:

Clear, good visibility.

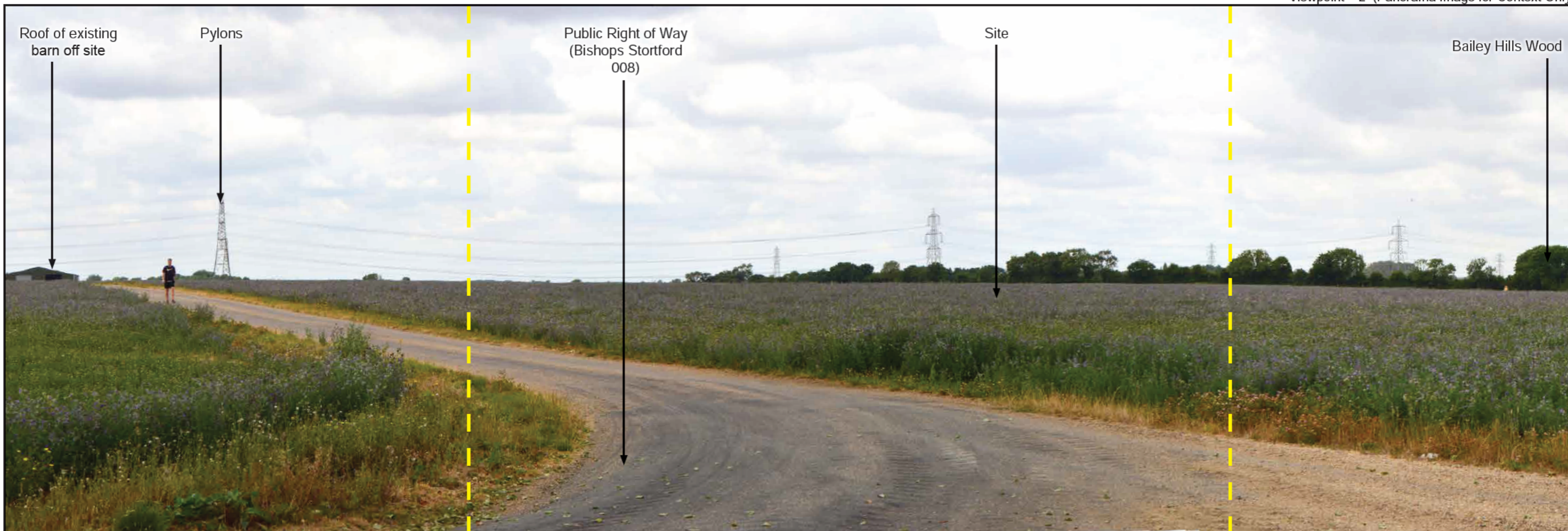
Viewpoint 1 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 1 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 2 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint Coordinates: E 547333, N 223137

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Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 2 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)



Viewpoint 2 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 3 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



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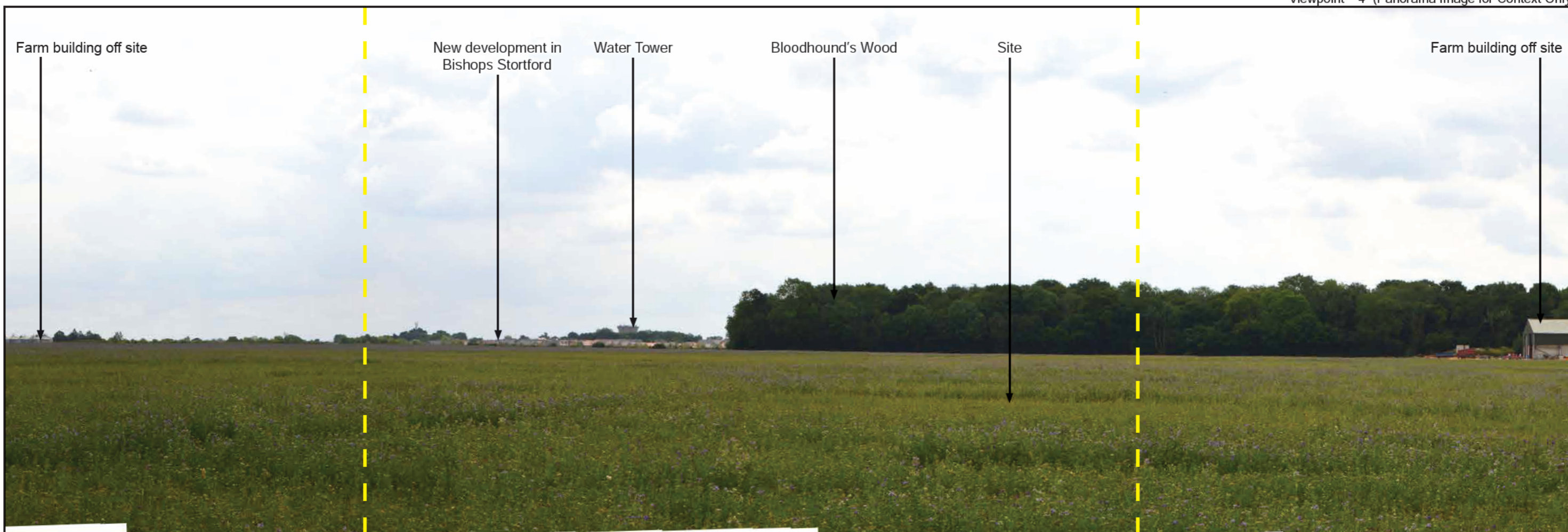
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Viewpoint 3 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 4 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



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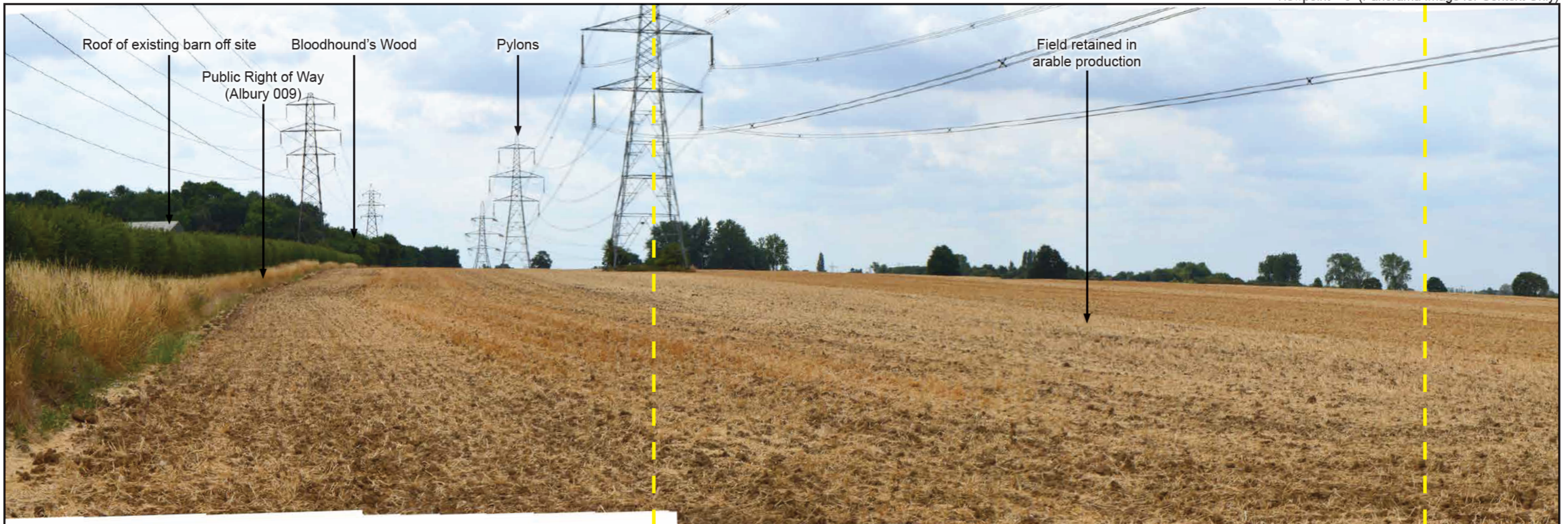
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Viewpoint 4 (Single Frame Image)



Viewpoint 5 (Panorama Image for Context Only)



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AOD & Viewing height: c. 102.7m AOD 1.6m

Weather conditions: Clear, good visibility.

Viewpoint 5 (Annotated Panorama Image for Context Only)