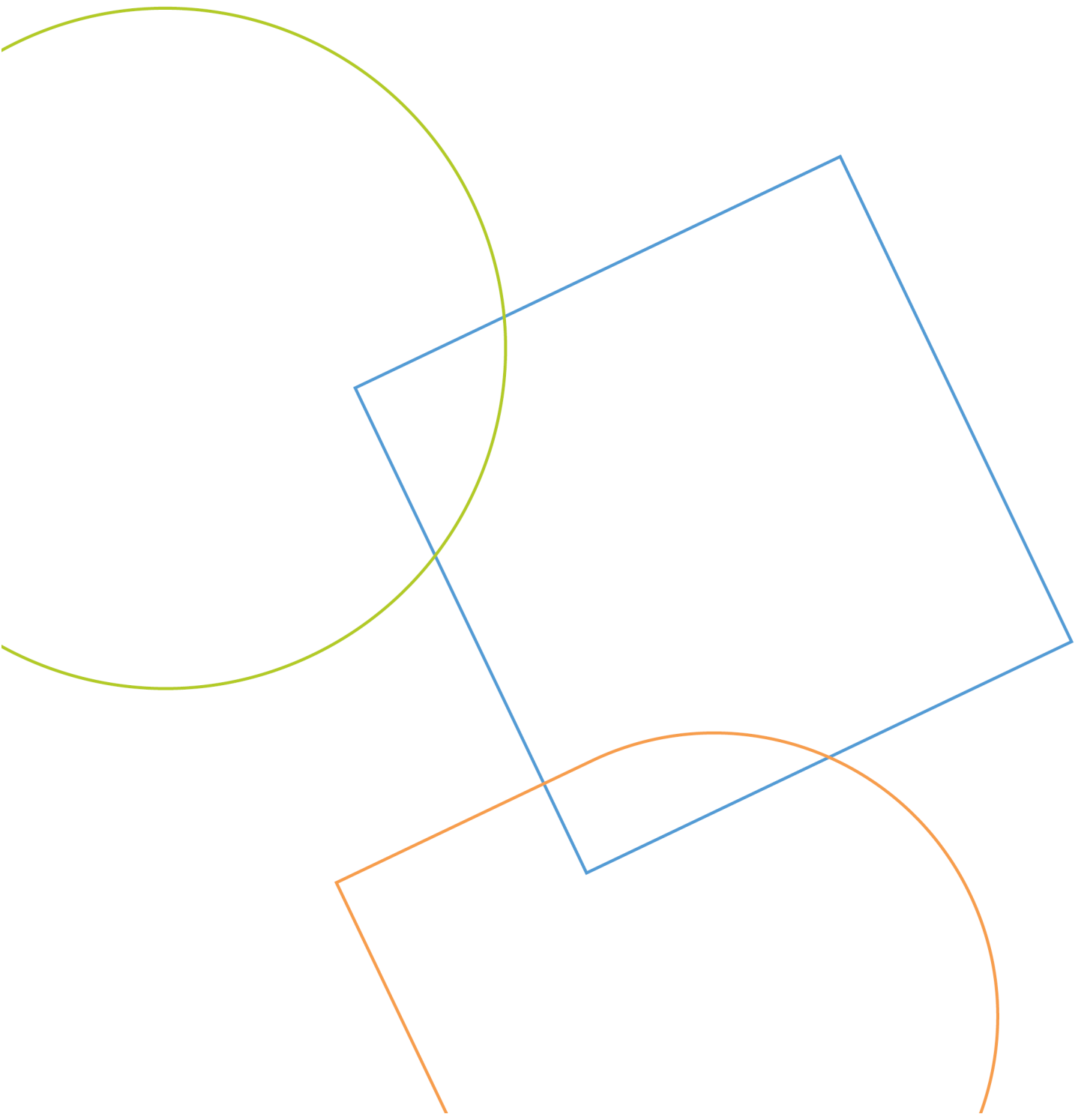




Westfield Energy Conservation Park
Environmental Statement – Volume 1 Main Report



Environmental Statement Volume 1 Main Report

Westfield Energy Conservation Park

Lightrock Power Limited



July 2025

Office Locations

Cambridge

1A Clifton Court, Clifton Road,
Cambridge, CB1 7BN
01223 776740

London

Moor Place, 1 Fore Street Avenue,
London, EC2Y 9DT
020 3011 0820

Norwich

Brettingham House, 98 Pottergate,
Norwich, NR2 1EQ
01603 631319

Bath

Newark Works, 2 Foundry Way,
South Quays, Bath,
BA2 3DZ
01225 690119

Manchester

One St Peter's Square,
Manchester,
M2 3DE
01617 111740

Edinburgh

1 Lochrin Square,
92-98 Fountainbridge,
Edinburgh, EH3 9QA
01316 000319

York

Stanley Harrison House, The Chocolate Works,
Bishophthorpe Road,
York, YO23 1DE
01904 803800

Issue Sheet

Document Prepared for: Lightrock Power Limited

Environmental Statement Volume 1 Main Report

Westfield Energy Conservation Park

Prepared by:

Name: Jane Crichton, Davd Bolt

Title: Associate Director, Technical Director

Date: July 2025

Approved by:

Name: Mark Topping CMLI

Title: Director

Date: July 2025

Revision: V1

Volume 1: Main Report

1	INTRODUCTION	7
1.2	SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT	7
1.3	STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT	8
1.4	STATEMENT OF COMPETENCY AND DETAILS OF CONSULTANTS	8
1.5	AVAILABILITY OF THE PREVIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION	10
2	EIA METHODOLOGY	11
2.2	ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS	13
2.3	ADDITIONAL MITIGATION	15
2.4	RESIDUAL EFFECTS	15
2.5	CUMULATIVE EFFECTS	15
3	THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS	16
3.1	SITE DESCRIPTION	16
3.2	ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT	17
4	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	19
4.2	BATTERY STORAGE	20
4.3	SUBSTATION COMPOUND	21
4.4	OTHER ANCILLARY INFRASTRUCTURE	22
4.5	SOLAR PANELS	22
4.6	FENCING, CCTV AND LIGHTING	23
4.7	SITE ACCESS	23
4.8	INTERNAL ACCESS TRACKS	24
4.9	LANDSCAPING AND BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS	24
4.10	BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN	26
4.11	CONSTRUCTION	26
4.12	OPERATION	26
4.13	DECOMMISSIONING	27
5	CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES	28
6	PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	30
6.1	INTRODUCTION	30
6.2	PLANNING POLICY DESIGNATIONS	30
6.3	DEVELOPMENT PLAN	31
6.4	OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS	31
7	LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT	32
7.1	INTRODUCTION	32
7.2	METHODOLOGY	32
7.3	SITE CONTEXT	40

7.4	BASELINE APPRAISAL	42
7.5	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	61
7.6	ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS	65
7.7	ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS	72
7.8	CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF RESIDUAL EFFECTS	89
8	CUMULATIVE LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT	93
8.1	INTRODUCTION	93
8.2	METHODOLOGY	95
8.3	THE CUMULATIVE STUDY AREA CONTEXT	99
8.4	BASELINE APPRAISAL	100
8.5	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	110
8.6	ASSESSMENT OF CUMULATIVE VISUAL EFFECTS	116
8.7	SUMMARY OF RESIDUAL CUMULATIVE EFFECTS	123
8.8	CONCLUSIONS	124

Volume 2: Appendices

APPENDIX 1.1	LOCATION PLAN
APPENDIX 4.1	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT DRAWINGS
APPENDIX 7.1	LVIA FIGURES
APPENDIX 7.2	PHOTOGRAPHY
APPENDIX 7.3	METHODOLOGY
APPENDIX 7.4	ENVIRONMENTAL MASTERPLAN

Volume 3: Non-Technical Summary

1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Environmental Statement ('ES') has been prepared by Lanpro Services Limited ('Lanpro') on behalf of our client, Lightrock Power Limited ('Lightrock Power' 'the Applicant'), in respect of an Application for Full Planning Permission for Westfield Energy Conservation Park which incorporates a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), co-located ground-mounted solar farm, associated infrastructure, access, biodiversity enhancements and landscaping (the 'Proposed Development') on land south of A507 at Westfield Common ('the Site'). The Site is within the jurisdiction of North Hertfordshire District Council ('the Council').
- 1.1.2 The land which is subject to this planning application comprises 187.3 ha. The Proposed Development comprises a number of fields which will accommodate ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels (the solar arrays); substation infrastructure to facilitate connection to the grid and energy storage. It is expected that a Point of Connection (POC) will be achievable to the 400kV overhead power line that runs from Stocking Pelham to Wymondley. The power line crosses the Site in the southeastern corner, in an northeast-southwest direction.
- 1.1.3 The operational life of the Proposed Development is anticipated to be 40 years. Once the Proposed Development ceases to operate, it will be decommissioned. A 40-year period for the operational phase of the Proposed Development will be assessed in the EIA and reported in this ES.
- 1.1.4 An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion request was submitted to the Council in February 2025 (Ref. 25/00446/SO) to confirm whether the Proposed Development requires an EIA. The screening opinion was adopted by the Council on the 24th June 2025 (issued to the Applicant on the 3rd July 2025) and determined to be EIA Development for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011, as amended ('the 2011 EIA Regulations').
- 1.1.5 This chapter is accompanied by the Site Location Plan in **Appendix 1.1 (Volume 2)**.

1.2 Scope of the Environmental Statement

- 1.2.1 The screening opinion adopted by the Council states that they consider a single topic ES to be appropriate, with landscape and visual being the only matter that needs to be assessed. The majority of environmental impacts arising from the proposal have the potential to be avoided or mitigated through the planning application process.
- 1.2.2 The Applicant has therefore not submitted an EIA scoping opinion to the Council as it was considered that due to the ongoing dialogue between the Applicant, the planning officer and the Council's appointed landscape consultant, there was no need for this to take place as the scope and extent of the Applicant's assessment would be sufficient to meet the requirements needed in the Environmental Statement. There is no legislative requirement for the Applicant to submit a scoping opinion under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011.

1.3 Structure of this Report

1.3.1 This ES comprises three volumes:

- Volume 1: **Main Report** (this document) which provides the main assessment with a chapter addressing landscape;
- Volume 2: **Appendices** (referred to within the relevant chapter of this document);
- Volume 3: **Non-Technical Summary** of the ES.

1.3.2 The details of the consultancy responsible for the authoring of each chapter is set out at Table 1.1 and detailed further in the relevant chapter, along with their appendices which are clearly identified and included within Volume 2.

Table 1.1: ES Update Chapter Authors

Chapter	Author
1. Introduction	Lanpro
2. EIA Methodology	Lanpro
3. The Site and Surrounding Area	Lanpro
4. The Proposed Development	Lanpro
5. Consideration of Alternatives	Lanpro
6. Planning Policy Context	Lanpro
7. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	Lanpro
8. Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	Lanpro

1.3.3 Environmental impacts arising from the Proposed Development have been studied systematically as part of the EIA process, and the results are presented within this ES. The baseline for the assessment has been derived from surveys and studies within and around the Site. The assessment methodology is explained in Chapter 2 of this ES including the approach to cumulative assessment, and, where relevant, in the methodology section of the technical assessment, Chapter 7.

1.3.4 The EIA process has considered impacts resulting from the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, and considers measures to avoid, reduce or mitigate any significant adverse effects on the environment and where possible, enhance the environment. Where applicable, the ES also identifies ‘residual’ impacts, defined as impacts remaining following the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures.

1.4 Statement of Competency and Details of Consultants

1.4.1 The ES has been co-ordinated, managed, compiled and authored by Lanpro.

1.4.2 The authors of Chapters 1 – 8 of the ES have extensive experience and involvement in EIA.

- 1.4.3 Lanpro Services Ltd. is a multi-disciplinary planning, environmental and design consultancy with over 17 years' experience of landscape, masterplanning, urban design, architecture, archaeology, heritage, ecology, planning, and environmental impact assessment. The company is a registered practice of the Landscape Institute.
- 1.4.4 Dermot Scanlon has over 30 years of experience in environmental assessment and planning, covering a wide range of infrastructure project from energy and water resources through to transport, residential and industrial schemes. Since the inception of the DCO regime, he has advised on consenting and implementing Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, including Thames Tideway, HS2 and Lower Thames Crossing.
- 1.4.5 Jane Crichton is an Associate Director of Planning Planner at Lanpro and has over 16 years of private sector experience. Jane has worked on a variety of projects of differing scales including small-scale residential to infrastructure projects including Development Consent Orders. Her experience includes project management, undertaking EIAs and leading the planning process, from feasibility through to planning permission.
- 1.4.6 The experience of the authors of Chapter 7 (Landscape and visual) and 8 (Cumulative Landscape and Visual) are provided below.
- 1.4.7 Mark Topping has over 23 years' experience as a landscape architect and project manager in private consultancy and third sector organisations. He has undertaken many LVIA's as part of EIAs and standalone assessments for planning applications and has successfully represented clients at several public inquiries and hearings. He is currently working on several large-scale projects and completed the first Solar & BESS NSIP project in the UK (Masterplan, LVIA and DCO hearing) as part of the EIA for Cleve Hill Solar Park in Kent.
- 1.4.8 Mark was the Project Director for Landscape Architecture and Arboriculture for the West Burton and Cottam NSIPs, responsible for the review and submission of the LVIA chapters, for the largest solar farm and battery storage facility in the UK covering an area of 5,000 acres. His role included undertaking landscape- and biodiversity-led masterplans and assessing landscape character and visual receptors as part of the NSIP process. He has worked on large-scale Solar & BESS projects including West Burton and Cottam (NSIPs), Cleve Hill (NSIP), Lime Down (NSIP), Green Hill (NSIP), Dogger Bank (NSIP), Beatrice (Electricity Act, Section 36) and TCPA applications at, amongst others, Lapwing Fen II, Canadian Solar portfolio, Cayton, Lullington, East Hanningfield and Kemble.
- 1.4.9 David Bolt is a Chartered Landscape Architect, expert witness and qualified PRINCE2 project manager, with over 35 years' experience in private consultancy in the UK and abroad, having been resident in - and regularly visiting - France, Kenya, Russia, the Middle East, the USA and most recently, Ireland. His track record includes leading multi-disciplinary teams and managing complex projects across a wide range of sectors and scales. David has experience both as a small consultancy business owner and as part of larger, multi-disciplinary practices. Project sectors include renewable energy, highways infrastructure, rail, tourism, city-wide public realm strategies, and urban design guidance. He has also delivered designs for numerous private residential developments, estate masterplans, and commercial, corporate, education, religious, and healthcare campuses. His work encompasses public parks, golf courses, and leisure facilities. The scope of

David's services spans all Landscape Institute and RIBA work stages—from strategic visioning and master planning through to detailed design, site supervision, and ongoing facility management and maintenance. Notable projects have included Rowan Solar Farm and BESS LVIA, Co. Meath, Ireland; Cheverton Down Wind Farm Public Inquiry, Isle of Wight, England; the US Embassy in Doha, Qatar; HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid's Zabeel Place in Dubai; the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library in Georgia, USA; the regeneration of St Andrews Square, Edinburgh; and visitor centres for Caol Ila and Cardhu whisky distilleries, also in Scotland.

1.5 Availability of the Previous Environmental Information

1.5.1 All volumes of this ES can be viewed on the Council planning database website under the relevant planning application reference number. Lanpro will be able to assist in providing electronic or hard copies at a cost. Please contact Lanpro via the following:

- Address: Lanpro Services, Brettingham House, 98 Pottergate, Norwich, NR3 1EQ
- Telephone: 01603 631319

2 EIA Methodology

- 2.1.1 This chapter outlines the approach that will be applied to assess and understand the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development. This chapter sets out relevant standard methodology used in the EIA.
- 2.1.2 EIA is the process undertaken to identify and evaluate the likely significant effects of a proposed development on the environment and to identify measures to mitigate or manage any significant adverse effects. As good practice, the EIA should be informed by consultation with statutory consultees, other interested bodies and members of the public. The purpose of identifying likely significant effects is to provide environmental information for decision makers to make an informed judgement on the environmental impacts.
- 2.1.3 This ES provides an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development. It has been prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations which implement the EU Council Directive 2014/52/EU and relevant guidance, including:
- EIA Guide to Delivering Quality Development (Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) 2016);
 - EIA Guide to Shaping Quality Development (IEMA 2015);
 - National Planning Practice Guidance (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG 2019); and
 - Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment, (IEMA 2004).
- 2.1.4 The 2017 EIA Regulations set out a series of requirements of EIA generally and for the ES document. This section describes the approach to key elements of the requirements in this ES.

Table 1.2: EIA Requirements

EIA Requirements	Relevant section of the ES
A description of the development, including in particular: (a) a description of the location of the development; (b) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole development, including, where relevant, requisite demolition works, and the land-use requirements during the construction and operational phases; (c) a description of the main characteristics of the operational phase of the development (in particular any production process), for instance, energy demand and energy used, nature and quantity of the materials and natural resources (including water, land, soil and biodiversity) used;	The description of the Site and its location is provided at Chapter 3 and the Proposed Development is described at Chapter 4. Whilst a number of topics as noted at (d) are scoped out, the planning application is supported by a number of technical reports including the following: • Noise Impact Assessment; • Flood Risk Assessment and Sustainable Drainage Strategy; • Geoenvironmental Desk Study Report; • Agricultural Land Classification Report; • Ecological Impact Assessment; • Arboricultural Impact Assessment;

EIA Requirements	Relevant section of the ES
(d) an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (such as water, air, soil and subsoil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation and quantities and types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases.	Transport Statement.
A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.	This is provided at Chapter 5.
A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (baseline scenario) and an outline of the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the development as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of environmental information and scientific knowledge.	This is provided in each Chapter topic (7 and 8).
A description of the factors specified in regulation 4(2) likely to be significantly affected by the development.	This is provided in each Chapter topic (7 and 8).
A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from, the construction and existence of the development, including, where relevant, demolition works.	N/A
A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from, the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity, considering as far as possible the sustainable availability of these resources.	This is provided at Chapter 7.
A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from, the emission of pollutants, noise, vibration, light, heat and radiation, the creation of nuisances, and the disposal and recovery of waste.	Topics including noise, air, and transport have been scoped out of this ES.
A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from, the risks to human health, cultural heritage or the environment (for example due to accidents or disasters).	Human health and cultural heritage have been scoped out of this ES.

EIA Requirements	Relevant section of the ES
A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from, the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources	This is provided in Chapter 8.
A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from, the impact of the project on climate (for example the nature and magnitude of greenhouse gas emissions) and the vulnerability of the project to climate change.	Climate change has been scoped out of this ES.
A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment resulting from, the technologies and the substances used.	This has been scoped out of this ES.
A description of the forecasting methods or evidence, used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved.	The EIA Methodology is provided at Chapter 2 and the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment methodology in Appendix 7.3 Volume 2.
A description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements.	Chapter 7 specifies mitigation and monitoring.
A description of the expected significant adverse effects of the development on the environment deriving from the vulnerability of the development to risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned.	This has been scoped out of this ES.
A non-technical summary of the information.	This is provided at Volume 3.
A reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the environmental statement.	References are provided at the end of each Chapter and assessments used are appended, where necessary.

2.2 Assessment of Impacts

2.2.1 Each of the technical assessments for the environmental topics has been undertaken using the following approach and structure which is further detailed below:

- Introduction;

- Consultation;
- Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance;
- Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria;
- Assessment Assumptions and Limitations;
- Baseline Conditions;
- Embedded Mitigation Measures;
- Assessment of Impacts and Effects;
- Additional Mitigation Measures;
- Residual Effects; and
- Summary.

2.2.2 The cumulative effects are covered separately in chapter 8.

Baseline Conditions

2.2.3 In order to evaluate likely significant environmental effects, existing baseline conditions have been identified through a combination of desktop and physical surveys, and monitoring. This involves the Site boundary as well as the surrounding area where appropriate. Once the baseline conditions have been established, this is used to assess the sensitivity of receptors on and near the Site and what changes may take place during the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning of the Proposed Development. Any effects on these receptors will be assessed in full in this ES.

2.2.4 The data collected to establish the baseline conditions has been gathered from a variety of sources, including the following:

- Physical surveys and monitoring;
- Publicly accessible records and databases; and
- Environmental survey information that has been made publicly available through applications for consent for other development in the area.

2.2.5 The methods of data collection have been shared and discussed with statutory and non-statutory consultees as part of the pre-application process. The technical chapter sets out where methodology has been discussed and agreed to date with the relevant consultees.

2.2.6 Consideration has also been given to how the baseline conditions will evolve (the ‘future baseline’) over the period during which the Proposed Development would be constructed, operated and decommissioned. Chapter 7 provides a description of the future baseline scenario and the data sources that have informed it (where relevant).

Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

- 2.2.7 As the ES only deals with a single environmental topic (landscape and visual) the methodology used is set out in section 7.2 and Appendix 7.3 in Volume 2.

2.3 Additional Mitigation

- 2.3.1 Additional mitigation measures are measures introduced to reduce or mitigate likely significant impacts resulting from the Proposed Development. Measures could include, for example:

- Planting and hedgerow management to reduce glint and glare impacts; and
- Additional planting and hedgerow improvements to reduce visual impacts.

- 2.3.2 Additional mitigation measures are set out fully within Chapter 7 of this ES. The mechanism by which the measures are to be secured and implemented and the party responsible for their delivery is outlined within Chapter 7.

2.4 Residual Effects

- 2.4.1 Chapter 7 and 8 of the ES has a residual effects section that will outline the significance of each environmental effect resulting, after the implementation of the embedded and additional mitigation measures.

2.5 Cumulative Effects

In-Combination Effects and Cumulative Effects

- 2.5.1 The 2017 EIA Regulations require an ES to consider the “cumulation of effects with other existing and / or approved projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources.”

- 2.5.2 There is no universally agreed methodology; however, IEMA Impact Assessment Outlook Journal have provided a useful thought piece to follow titled ‘Demystifying Cumulative Effects: Thought Pieces from UK Practice’ (Volume 7, July 2020). It provides the definition of cumulative impacts as the following:

“Impacts that result from incremental changes caused by other past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions together with the projects” (May 1999).

- 2.5.3 The ES is only considering a single environmental topic (landscape and visual) and is only considering the cumulative impacts of the Proposed Development and the identified cumulative project (Beane Solar Farm East Herts Council planning reference 3/24/2245/FUL). This is fully considered in Chapter 8 of this ES and includes the methodology used.

3 The Site and Surroundings

3.1 Site Description

- 3.1.1 The Site comprises predominantly agricultural fields and parcels of woodland and totals 187.3ha. Within the Site there will be 12.2ha (60%) of built electrical infrastructure (i.e. panels, BESS and substation), the remaining 75.1ha(40%) will be used for ecological, biodiversity and landscaping enhancements. However, part of the grassland matrix would coexist as underplanting to solar arrays themselves.
- 3.1.2 Munches Farm, comprising an agricultural farm building and associated access, is situated outside the Site but is associated with the agricultural land under its existing use. An electricity pylon is located within the southeast corner of the Site, with the associated National Grid 400kV overhead line transcending in a northeast-southwest direction. The Site Location Plan is provided at **Appendix 1 (Volume 2)**.
- 3.1.3 Immediately north of the Site is the A507 with agricultural fields, woodland and a farm beyond. Mill End Plants and Café, and the village of Rushden, are situated approximately 1km to the northeast. The Site is immediately west of an unnumbered classified road named Cromer Heath, southwest of Cumberlow Green and further agricultural fields. To the south of the Site are agricultural fields and woodland along with the River Beane and the Weston Tributary approximately 0.25km south. To the west of the Site are a number of residential properties, agricultural fields and woodland. The Site is located wholly within the North Hertfordshire District Council, although it abuts the East Hertfordshire District Council boundary on its eastern edge.
- 3.1.4 The Site is situated southwest of the village of Cumberlow Green, approximately 3km northeast of Stevenage. Letchworth Garden City is located approximately 3.7km northwest.
- 3.1.5 The surrounding area of the Site is largely rural with a number of villages including:
- Shaw Green approximately 1.2km north;
 - Rushden approximately 1km northeast;
 - Southern Green approximately 1.6km northeast;
 - Cottered approximately 1.3km east;
 - Hare Street approximately 1.25km southeast;
 - Cromer approximately 1.2km south;
 - Luffenhall approximately 0.65km south;
 - Halls Green approximately 1.3km southwest;
 - Warren's Green approximately 2.15km southwest;
 - Weston approximately 1.4km west; and

- Clothall approximately 1.25km northwest.

3.2 Environmental Context

- 3.2.1 There are no known ecological designations associated with the Site. The nearest statutory designated site comprises Moor Hall Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) approx. 3.7km southeast. Other designations in the surrounding area include Hill Local Nature Reserve (LNR) approx. 3.8km northwest, and Blagrove Common SSSI approx. 3.9km northeast.
- 3.2.2 The Site is not within a National Park or National Landscape Area. It is classified as being within the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area of the East Anglian Plain.
- 3.2.3 There are a number of parcels of ancient and semi-natural woodland and ancient replanted woodland in the vicinity of the Site, including Rydal's Wood and Coldash Wood, which are located adjacent to the Site (offset with a 15m development buffer). There are also a number of parcels of ancient woodland in the surrounding area of the Site, including Munches Wood and Baskets Wood ancient and semi-natural woodland directly north of the Site, but separated from the Site by the A507.
- 3.2.4 The Site is predominantly within Flood Zone 1, with areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 located through the central section of the Site and which branch off east and west from the central swathe (associated with unnamed watercourse). The areas in Flood Zone 2 and 3 will not house any electrical infrastructure. There are also areas of high and low surface water flood risk.
- 3.2.5 There are no Scheduled Monuments on Site; however the Site of Cumberlow Manor House, (List entry number 1,003,551) lies to directly northeast of the Site, beyond the A507. A Scheduled Monument, Enclosure and Earthworks southeast of Clothallbury House (List entry number 1,003,540), is located 745m north of Site. Lammas Field Roman Villa, 680m northeast of Western Bury (List entry number 1,015,489), is located 610m to the northwest of the Site. Additionally, a moated site and associated remains, west of Hooks Green Farm (List entry number 1,010,912), is located 1km to the west of Site.
- 3.2.6 Further to the above, there is one Grade II* and 25 Grade II listed buildings within 1km of the Site. The Grade II* listed Cromer Windmill is located approx. 1km to the south of the Site.
- 3.2.7 The Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (Lanpro, June 2025), which is supported by a geophysical survey, identifies that there is potential for below-ground archaeological remains from the prehistoric, Roman, medieval, and post-medieval periods to be present within the Site. These include anomalies that are likely to represent settlement evidence, including enclosures, field systems and ring-ditches potentially dating to the Iron Age and/or Roman periods. These features are located in proximity to the conjectured line of the Baldock to Braughing Roman Road, as well as an area where a Late Bronze Age hoard and Roman finds have been recorded, further suggesting an increased likelihood of archaeological survival. Two Public Rights of Way (PRoW) (HD|CLOTHALL|019 and

HD|CLOTHALL|020) cross the Site from east to south and north to south. There are various other PRowS, and a national cycle network, in the immediate surroundings of the Site.

- 3.2.8 The Applicant has undertaken Agricultural Land Classification testing of the Site which has determined that the Site is in its majority Grade 3b or lower (61.9%). Approximately 38.1% of the Site is located on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land (Grades 2 and 3a).

- 4.1.5 The Proposed Development will provide essential energy infrastructure to support the growth of renewable energy generation in the UK by increasing the capacity of the National Grid that is available to store such renewable energy, which can be intermittent. The Proposed Development will therefore further aid the advancement of local and national renewable energy and carbon reduction policies and objectives.
- 4.1.6 The Site has been subject to a comprehensive set of environmental surveys and assessments which have been used to refine the layout design. The design has evolved to avoid potentially significant environmental effects and incorporate feedback from both the pre-application submission and the community consultation process.
- 4.1.7 The Proposed Development will broadly comprise of the following:
- A BESS compound;
 - A substation compound;
 - Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels;
 - Associated infrastructure such as Medium Voltage Stations (MVS), welfare facilities, operational rooms and storage containers;
 - Water tanks;
 - Car parking;
 - Fencing;
 - CCTV;
 - Highway site accesses;
 - Access tracks; and
 - New landscaping and ecological enhancements.
- 4.1.8 Further detail on each of these elements is set out in the following sections.

4.2 Battery Storage

- 4.2.1 The BESS will be located within a compound in the southeast part of the Site. The compound measures approximately 500m by 180m and covers an area of approximately 6.9 hectares.
- 4.2.2 The layout of the BESS compound is shown in drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-1004-P06**.
- 4.2.3 Within the compound there are 216 groups of four battery cabinets. Each battery unit measures approximately 6.1m in length, 2.4m in width and 3.1m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3004-P03**). The groups of battery units are distributed according to manufacturer and fire safety guidelines. .
- 4.2.4 Each group of four battery units is associated with a Medium Voltage Station (MVS) unit. The MVS typically includes a transformer, switchgear, and protection systems, all

packaged together to ensure efficient, reliable, and safe delivery of solar energy to the grid. The MVS have dimensions of approximately 6.1m in length, 2.4m in width and 2.9m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3005-P02**).

4.2.5 Along the northern roadway within the BESS compound there are a number of ancillary buildings, including:

- 2no control rooms, with dimensions of approximately 6.2m in length, 3.2m in width and 2.8m in height (see drawing ref 5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3024-P01).
- A welfare facility with dimensions of approximately 6.2m in length, 3.2m in width and 2.8m in height (see drawing ref 5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3022-P01). This will not be permanently staffed.
- An operations office with dimensions of approximately 6.2m in length, 3.2m in width and 2.8m in height (see drawing ref 5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3023-P01). This will not be permanently staffed.
- 2no spares containers, with dimensions of approximately 12.2m in length, 2.4m in width and 2.8m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3009-P03**).

4.2.6 The BESS compound is surrounded on all sides by an acoustic barrier of 4m in height and by a palisade fence.

4.3 Substation Compound

4.3.1 A 400kV customer substation for the Proposed Development will be located on the eastern edge of the Site. The area provided for the substation measures approximately 200m by 120m and covers approximately 2.4 hectares.

4.3.2 The layout of the substation is shown in drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-1005-P07**. Elevations of the substation are provided in drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3001-P02**.

4.3.3 The substation will include:

- 3no transformers measuring approximately 15m in length and 11m in width, with busbars of up to 12m in height (see layout and elevation drawings for the substation, referred to above);
- 2no relay and control rooms (one for outgoing and one for incoming metering), each measuring approximately 25m in length, 13m in width and 5m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3016-P03**);
- a 33kv metered switchroom measuring approximately 50m in length, 14m in width and 5m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3017-P02**);
- a Statcom building measuring approximately 16m in length, 5m in width and 5m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3012-P01**);
- 3no harmonic filters with housing, each measuring approximately 15m in length, 15m in width and 5m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3014-P02**);

- 6no aux transformers of approximately 2.7m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3018-P02**).

4.3.4 Parking will be provided within the compound for substation maintenance operatives.

4.4 Other Ancillary Infrastructure

4.4.1 Around the edge of each solar panel area are a total of 46 Medium Voltage Station (MVS) units. On a solar farm, a MVS collects the electricity produced by the solar panels, transforms it to a higher voltage suitable for the grid, and safely connects and protects the solar farm's power as it flows onto the local or national electricity network. The MVS typically includes a transformer, switchgear, and protection systems, all packaged together to ensure efficient, reliable, and safe delivery of solar energy to the grid. Each MVS unit is sited on a concrete pad and measures approximately 6.1m in length, 2.4m in width and 2.9m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3005-P02**).

4.4.2 Immediately to the south of the substation compound, provision is made for five parking spaces for maintenance vehicles.

4.4.3 Also, to the south of the substation compound there are two water tanks to provide water in case of incident within the BESS. Each water tank has a capacity of 228,000 litres and measures approximately 10m in length, 10m in width and 2.7m in height along with an attached pumphouse (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3011-P03**). These are connected to a number of hydrants located within the BESS compound.

4.4.4 Two LV units will be located Immediately to the north of the substation. The larger LV unit will measure approximately 5.1m in width, 4.7m in length and 4m in height. The smaller LV unit will measure approximately 2.8m in width and length, and 2.6m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3013-P01**).

4.5 Solar Panels

4.5.1 The solar areas comprise photovoltaic (PV) panels arranged in arrays (or rows), on fixed mounted frames and secured to the ground with posts. The panels are dark in hue and are designed to maximise the absorbency of the sun's rays and minimise solar glare by incorporating an anti-glare coating. The panels will be tilted at 20 degrees from the horizontal to face south towards the sun. There is typically a distance of between 2 and 6 metres between rows of panels in order to avoid inter-panel shading, but this distance is influenced by slope and aspect, so does vary across the Site. The height of the panels above the immediate ground level will typically be a maximum of 3m, including a minimum clearance of 0.8m above the ground, depending on ground conditions, with a maximum height above ground level of 3m. Panel mounting structure can vary depending on ground conditions and will be confirmed following detailed design prior to construction. Detail of the solar panels is provided in drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3019-P02**).

4.6 Fencing, CCTV and Lighting

- 4.6.1 The solar panels will be surrounded by perimeter fences enclosing one or more of the fields. Given the countryside setting of the Site, the fencing will consist of mesh wire fence supported by wooden poles and is circa 2.4m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3020-P05**). Where gate access is necessary, these will comprise weldmesh gates (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3021-P02**). To allow free movement of small mammals across the Site there will be scrapes under fences (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3020-P05**).
- 4.6.2 The BESS compound and the substation will be surrounded on all sides by an acoustic barrier of 4m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3010-P03**).
- 4.6.3 In addition, the BESS compound will be surrounded by security palisade fencing of approximately 2.4m in height with 6m wide gates (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3007-P01**). The substation will be surrounded by Cat2 mesh electric fencing of approximately 3.4m in height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3003-P02**), with access via 6m wide security gates of the same height (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3002-P02**).
- 4.6.4 A number of motion sensor-based CCTV cameras, up to 4m in height, will also be provided across the Site to mitigate risk of theft and criminal damage (see drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3006-P03**). These will face inwards.
- 4.6.5 Limited external lighting will be required for temporary use only in the event there is an emergency out of daylight hours. No other permanent external lighting is required. It is proposed that a lighting scheme that minimises ecological disturbance, in particular in relation to potential impacts on bats, be agreed with the Council prior to commencement via a planning condition.

4.7 Site Access

- 4.7.1 There are three points of access for the Proposed Development, all existing and in use currently.
- 4.7.2 The primary access for construction will be off the A507 / Cromer Heath (at Field 7). Swept Path Analysis of the existing access has confirmed that this can accommodate the construction vehicles without any further widening works required. During operation, this will continue to be the main access and will principally be used for light vehicle access to the substation and BESS for routine maintenance. However access does link through to the wider energy conservation park allowing for maintenance of the solar arrays and the majority of the proposed biodiversity areas.
- 4.7.3 The second access point is to the northeast of the Site (at Field 6). This is the secondary access point and will principally be used for light operational maintenance but also provides emergency access to the Site in the event that the primary access becomes unavailable. This complies with the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) guidance for BESS facilities in respect of access. To ensure the site is accessible for emergency vehicles when

operational, the internal layout and turning heads have been tracked using a DB32 Fire Tender. This represents the largest vehicle that is likely to access the Site during operation.

- 4.7.4 From here, access can be afforded to the substation compound and the BESS as well as providing more direct access to the solar arrays and skylark mitigation in Field 11. Other than in the event of an emergency vehicle attending the Site, this access will only be used by light vehicles (small 4x4 or van) approximately once a week. During construction, this access will only be used occasionally by small goods vehicles and cars.
- 4.7.5 The tertiary access point will be off the A507 to the north of the Site and will only be used by light vehicles to maintain fields 1, 2, 11 and 16 during operation. This access will not be used for construction.
- 4.7.6 Traffic effects would largely be limited to the 12-18 month construction period when materials and equipment are delivered and installed at the Site although the latter part of the construction period will largely be testing and commissioning.
- 4.7.7 Once operational, given the Proposed Development will be remotely operated and unmanned, traffic volumes would typically be limited to circa 1 van or 4x4 per week for maintenance purposes. An outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) accompanies this planning application with final details to be secured by a planning condition, once a construction contractor is appointed.

4.8 Internal Access Tracks

- 4.8.1 With the exception of the substation compound, new internal cellular access tracks will consist of a three-dimensional cellular confinement system with an aggregate infill which can be seeded with grass for operation. Where new access tracks are planned, the footprint will be 4m-6m wide and excavated down to approximately 450mm depth, depending on the underlying formation.
- 4.8.2 For the substation compound the access tracks will be a 'made track' constructed using Type 2 aggregate and will be 4m wide with an excavation down to approximately 450mm depth, depending on the underlying formation.
- 4.8.3 Indicative cross-sections of the new access tracks are shown in drawing ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-3008-P03**.

4.9 Landscaping and Biodiversity Enhancements

- 4.9.1 The submitted Environmental Masterplan ref **5686-LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-1003-P09** illustrates the significant landscape mitigation measures and biodiversity measures which are embedded within the proposed design. These seek to screen the potential views of the Proposed Development, and reinforce and enhance the character of the Site and local context, as well as augment the ecological habitats on the Site. These features will act as wildlife corridors to provide further enhance the biodiversity of the Site.
- 4.9.2 The proposed enhancements within the Site include:

- A total of 6.27 hectares of new woodland planting, including:
 - Approximately 1,200 linear meters of woodland belt along the north boundary of the Site providing screening of the panels from the A507;
 - Approximately 1,200 linear meters of woodland belt along the eastern side of public footpath HD|CLOTHALL|019 that runs through the centre of the Site;
 - A woodland belt approximately 20m wide running for approximately 600m along the southern boundary of the BESS compound;
 - Woodland belts, each of approximately 500 linear meters, running on either side of public footpath HD|CLOTHALL|020 through the eastern part of the Site;
 - Woodland belts along the southern and eastern side of the substation;
 - A block of woodland linking the two existing ancient woodlands adjacent to the Site;
 - Blocks of woodland between field 10 and fields 3 and 4, linking existing woodland to create a longer corridor;
- Approximately 3.6 hectares of shrub planting and approximately 0.4 hectares of scrub planting in strategic locations across the Site;
- Approximately 1.14km of new species-rich native hedgerow with trees across the Site;
- Approximately 102.2 hectares of native species grassland within the solar panel areas;
- Approximately 21.25 hectares of new meadow planting in areas outside the solar panel fence line;
- Approximately 26.5 hectares of tussocky grassland and wildflower planting in fields 1, 2, 11 and 16, particularly suited for skylark mitigation;
- Within field 10, the creation of a shallow-sided wildlife pond with wetland seed mix with an area of 175m², surrounded by 1,350m² of regeneration grassland. This is particularly targeted at providing habitat for turtle dove; and
- Existing hedgerows to be gapped up and maintained to height of 4.5m and width of 3-4m.

4.9.3 The contribution of the proposed mitigation to the landscape and visual impact of the Proposed Development is set out in Chapter 7 of this Environmental Statement.

4.9.4 Lightrock were the first solar developer to have a partnership with the RSPB. Through their corporate partnership they work together to ensure that biodiversity is prioritised throughout the development design.

4.10 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.10.1 The application is accompanied by a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Metric Assessment, which demonstrates that the Site will achieve an increase of 73.3% BNG in habitat units, 16.57% BNG in hedgerow units and 22.34% in watercourse units. This is reflective of the significant landscaping and ecology mitigation that has been embedded into the Proposed Development's design.

4.11 Construction

- 4.11.1 Construction of the Proposed Development would likely be completed within 12-18 months and so any effects arising from this are considered short term and reversible upon completion.
- 4.11.2 At this stage it is proposed that construction activities on Site would take place between the hours of 08:00 – 18:00 on weekdays, and between 08:00 – 13:00 on Saturdays, with no activities on Sundays or Bank Holidays. Any works outside of these hours would be limited to emergency works unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Council.
- 4.11.3 To ensure the potential construction impacts are minimised, the preparation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan ('CEMP') will be agreed with the Council prior to construction. It is proposed to secure this by way of a condition pursuant to the planning permission. The CEMP will outline the allocated responsibilities, procedures, and requirements for Site environmental management. It will include relevant Site-specific method statements, operating practices, and arrangements for monitoring and liaison with local authorities and stakeholders.
- 4.11.4 The main contractors undertaking the construction of the Proposed Development will need to adopt and comply with the CEMP, allocate environmental management responsibilities to a Site manager, and ensure that all sub-contractors' activities are effectively managed in accordance with the CEMP.

4.12 Operation

- 4.12.1 The Proposed Development would not be permanent but would be reversible with a temporary operational period of 40 years. Any planning permission would be for a non-permanent use with a condition requiring the land to be returned to its pre-development state at the end of this duration.
- 4.12.2 Once operational, the Site will not be manned full time and will be monitored remotely continuously. The use of remote monitoring reduces the number of visits required. However, regular checks will be undertaken to ensure the BESS units, solar arrays and associated infrastructure and fencing are all in good working order.
- 4.12.3 During normal operations, the Proposed Development will attract very limited vehicular movements and will only include maintenance vehicles. The movement within the Site will be either on foot or limited to a small vehicle. Personnel will visit the Site approximately once a week, in a light van or four-wheel drive vehicle, thus generating very few traffic

movements. Vehicles would park onsite and would not block any roads in the vicinity of the Site.

- 4.12.4 Operations for vegetation management would be comparable to common agricultural activities.

4.13 Decommissioning

- 4.13.1 At the end of the operational lifespan of the Proposed Development, the Site would be decommissioned in accordance with best practice at that time and decommissioning effects are considered similar in nature to those arising during construction.
- 4.13.2 The Site would be reinstated to full agricultural use following decommissioning of the Site. A decommissioning plan is proposed to be secured through a condition attached to the planning permission, which will be agreed upon with the Council before the end of the Site's useful life.

5 Consideration of Alternatives

- 5.1.1 Schedule 4, Paragraph 2 of the 2017 EIA Regulations requires a description and review of the reasonable alternatives (such as development design, technology, location, size and scale), and reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.
- 5.1.2 Table 5.1 provides an overview of reasonable alternatives considered and reasons for discounting.

Table 5.1: Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives

Option	Reasons for Discounting
No Development	A ‘no development’ scenario as an alternative to the Proposed Development has not been considered further in line with EN-1 paragraph 4.3.23. This is because ‘no development’ is not considered to be a reasonable alternative to the Proposed Development as it would have no prospect, realistic or otherwise, of delivering the additional renewable energy generation and energy storage proposed. Furthermore, a ‘smaller development’ in terms of energy generating capacity has not been considered further as an alternative to the Proposed Development, in the context of both NPS EN-1 paragraph 4.3.23 and 4.3.27. The Applicant has entered into a connection agreement with National Grid. The Proposed Development aims to take up the full capacity allocated in the grid connection agreement they have to reduce further need for additional projects to reach the grid connection capacity that is available. A smaller scheme would not deliver the same generation capacity, energy security and climate change benefits as the Proposed Development, and as such would not represent a reasonable alternative.
Alternative Sites	There is no standard methodology for the selection of sites for solar farms and BESS compounds and there is no policy requirement for this work to be undertaken. The selection of the Proposed Development’s location has followed a selection process, that has sought to identify sites that meet the legislative and policy requirements, whilst recognising the need for the Proposed Development to be commercially viable. Further detail on this can be found in the Planning, Design and Access Statement.
Other Alternative Designs	The Site layout can be found in Appendix 4.1 (Volume 2) with detail set out in Section 4 of the Planning, Design and Access Statement which sets out the iterative design process and how alterations to address environmental constraints and opportunities have been addressed.

Technology	As the Applicant is a solar PV and energy storage developer, alternative types of low-carbon forms of electricity generation have not been considered. However, notwithstanding this, it is not considered that the Site would be suitable for other forms of renewable generation at the same scale as the Proposed Development. Tidal power, offshore wind and hydroelectric storage are not considered viable options due to the location of the POC which is located approximately 87km from the coast and within an area of low topography with no local opportunities to source hydroelectric power from rivers. The cost of cabling over the required distance from the coast would be prohibitive. Nuclear power was not considered as an alternative because of the high cost of electricity and the lengthy planning and development timeframe; circa 20 years, that such a project would involve. The Proposed Development will be able to start generating electricity much more quickly with a grid connection anticipated in the near future. Onshore wind development is a potential alternative source of power generation. However, the Site is not considered to be well-suited to onshore wind generation for a number of reasons. The low-lying nature of the area would likely give rise to greater visual impacts due to the height of the turbines, including from distant views where turbines would be visible in views towards the horizon. In addition, proximity to residential dwellings may result in adverse effects associated with shadow flicker and wind turbine noise. The Proposed Development achieves added resilience through the inclusion of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). BESS provides improved stability and 'on demand' grid resilience functions that other technologies cannot offer. The inclusion of BESS in the Proposed Development is important for enhancing grid resilience and stability. BESS provides 'on demand' energy storage and release, ensuring a reliable supply of electricity even during peak demand or unexpected outages.
------------	---

6 Planning Policy Context

6.1 Introduction

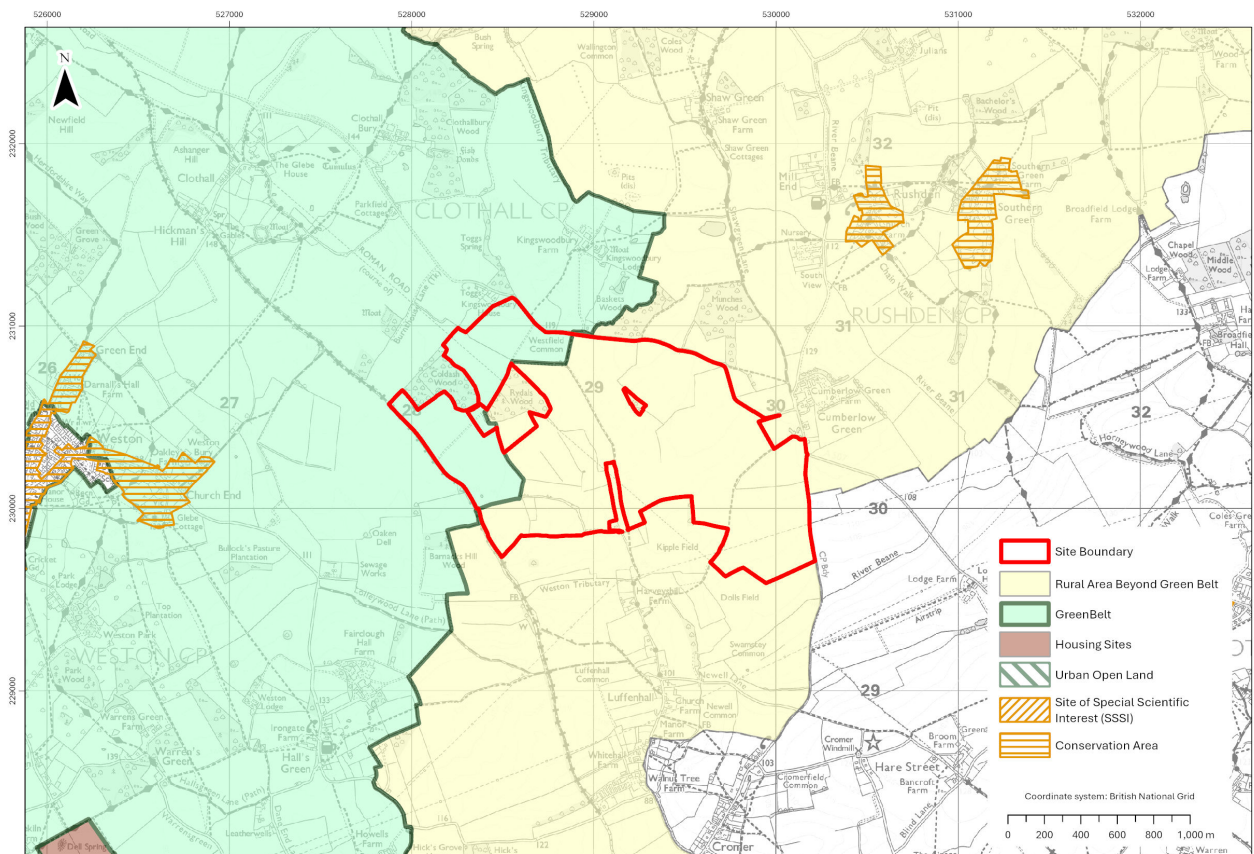
6.1.1 This Chapter provides an overview of the planning policy context. Relevant policies specific to landscape are contained in chapter 7 of this ES.

6.1.2 The planning policy context and how the Proposed Development is compliant is set out in full in the Planning, Design and Statement submitted alongside this application.

6.2 Planning Policy Designations

6.2.1 The majority of the Site is situated within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt (yellow shading) as defined in North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Policies Map. Part of the northwest of the Site is within the Green Belt (green shading). An extract of the Policies Map is provided in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Policies Map Extract



6.2.2 There are no designations on the Site within the Minerals and Waste Local Plan Policies Map (October 2024).

6.3 Development Plan

6.3.1 The current Development Plan for North Hertfordshire comprises:

- North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted 2022);
- North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031 Policies Map;
- Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2031;
- Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016 (Adopted March 2007);
- Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework – Waste Core Strategy & Development Management Policies – Development Plan Document 2011-2026 (Adopted November 2012);
- Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework – Waste Site Allocations – Development Plan Document 2011-2026 (Adopted July 2014); and
- Hertfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste Local Plan Interactive Adopted Policies Map (October 2024).

6.4 Other Material Considerations

6.4.1 Other material considerations include the following:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024);
- National Policy Statements including Energy (EN-1) and Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG);
- Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (September 2024);
- Other documents including:
 - Hertfordshire Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Technical Study (July 2010);
 - North Hertfordshire Green Belt Review (July 2016);
 - North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity) (2011);
 - Planning for Biodiversity and the Natural Environment in Hertfordshire: Guiding Principles (no date);
 - Council Plan 2020-2025;
 - North Herts Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027; and
 - Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A New Era of Clean Electricity.

7 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

7.1 Introduction

Purpose of Chapter

- 7.1.1 This Chapter has been prepared by Lanpro Services Ltd to assess the landscape and visual effects relevant to the Proposed Development as set out in Chapter 4 of the ES.
- 7.1.2 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken to assess the likely effects upon the landscape resource, specific views and visual amenity. The principal objective of the assessment has been to provide an assessment of the landscape and visual effects associated with the Proposed Development. The chapter considers the existing baseline conditions and seeks to identify the relevant landscape and visual issues applicable to the Site during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases.
- 7.1.3 This chapter is supported by the following appendices which can be found in Volume 2:
- Appendix 7.1 LVIA Figures;
 - Appendix 7.2 Photography;
 - Appendix 7.3 Methodology; and
 - Appendix 7.4 Environmental Masterplan.

7.2 Methodology

Overview

- 7.2.1 The assessment methodology utilised in preparing this LVIA follows the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ Third Edition (GLVIA3)¹. The methodology that underpins the LVIA principles and process is tailored to be proportionate to the assessment and nature and location of the Proposed Development. As recommended by GLVIA3 in Paragraph 1.15, Page 8:
- “GLVIA3 does not provide a detailed or formulaic ‘recipe’ that can be followed in every situation. It concentrates on principles. It is the responsibility of the professional carrying out the assessment to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the particular task in hand.”*
- 7.2.2 The methodology also considers the following guidance:

¹ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 3rd edition. The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. 2013

- Landscape Institute, Draft Technical Guidance Note 05/23 (July 2023) Notes and Clarifications on aspects of the 3rd Edition Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) – Consultation²;
- Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note 02/21 (26 May 2021) Assessing landscape value outside national designations³;
- Christine Tudor and Natural England, An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (October 2014)⁴; and
- Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 Notes and Clarifications on aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (August 2024).

7.2.3 GLVIA3 advises that LVIA must deal with and clearly distinguish between the assessment of landscape effects and the assessment of visual effects. This is set out in paragraphs 2.21:

“Assessment of landscape effects: assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;

Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on general visual amenity experienced by people.”

and 2.22:

“The distinction between these two aspects is very important but often misunderstood, even by professionals. LVIA must deal with both and should be clear about the differences between them. If a professional assessment does not properly define them or distinguish between them, then other professionals and members of the public are likely to be confused.”

7.2.4 The significance of landscape and visual effects is determined through consideration of the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change. Sensitivity is judged through consideration of the value of the landscape or view, and the susceptibility of the receptor to change.

7.2.5 The assessment involves a process of iterative design and re-assessment of any remaining, residual effects that would not otherwise be mitigated or ‘designed out’. The type of effect is also considered and may be direct or indirect; temporary or permanent (reversible); and positive, neutral, or negative. The LVIA unavoidably involves a combination of both quantitative and qualitative assessment and wherever possible a consensus of professional opinion is sought through consultation, internal peer review, and the adoption of a systematic, impartial, and professional approach.

² Landscape Institute Draft Technical Guidance Note 05/23 (July 2023) *Notes and Clarifications on aspects of the 3rd Edition Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) – Consultation.*

³ Landscape Institute (26 May 2021) Technical Guidance Note 02/21 *Assessing landscape value outside national designations.*

⁴ *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (October 2014) (Christine Tudor, Natural England) Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), (2002) *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland.*

- 7.2.6 This chapter considers the potential significant effects of the Proposed Development on the character of the landscape and on views towards and from the Proposed Development and associated potential significant visual effects. Effects can be both adverse and beneficial.
- 7.2.7 The Site based assessment involves the recording of both objective description and subjective impressions of the landscape, as well as details of the existing landscape condition. It includes an assessment of the extent and nature of views to and from the Site and the type of receptors that experience these views.
- 7.2.8 Site visits were undertaken in December 2024, and February and June 2025, by experienced Chartered Landscape Architects to appraise the character and condition of the Site and the landscape context, and to identify key visual receptors. The weather was fine on all occasions.
- 7.2.9 All photographs within **Appendix 7.2 (Volume 2)** were taken with a Nikon D610 Full Frame Sensor digital camera with a 50mm Focal Length prime lens in accordance with the guidance contained within LI Technical Guidance Note 06/19.
- 7.2.10 Chapter 7 LVIA is based on EIA guidance advised by **ES Chapter 2** and is consistent with the 2017 EIA Regulations which implement the EU) Council Directive 2014/52/EU. The LVIA and CLVIA (Chapter 8) both follow the GLVIA3⁵ and further guidance set out in para 7.2.2 above. The full detailed LVIA methodology is contained within **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)**.

Assessment Approach

- 7.2.11 The assessment of landscape character and visual amenity is both a subjective and objective process. Whilst subjectivity can never be removed, by following a systematic and robust step by step process, rational and transparent conclusions can be drawn.
- 7.2.12 The process of LVIA is therefore based on the following principles and processes:
- Baseline appraisal including desk based and field surveys to identify the nature of the existing landscape and visual resource;
 - Identification of the individual landscape and visual receptors likely to experience change from the Proposed Development and a description of the effects, in terms of whether they are adverse, neutral or beneficial;
 - An assessment of the significant effects identified; and
 - Identification of any additional mitigation or monitoring measures that may be required.
- 7.2.13 In accordance with GLVIA3 (paragraphs 2.20 and 2.21), the assessment of landscape and visual effects are separate but linked procedures; the landscape is assessed as an

⁵ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 3rd edition. The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. 2013

environmental resource in its own right, whereas visual effects are assessed on views and visual amenity experienced by people.

7.2.14 Landscape effects are concerned with the effects of the Proposed Development on the fabric and character of the landscape, combined with an understanding of the proposed change or development.

7.2.15 Key steps in the process defined by GLVIA3 (paragraph 5.34), are as follows.

- *“The first step is to identify the components of the landscape that are likely to be affected by the proposed development, often referred to as the landscape receptors, such as overall character and key characteristics, individual elements or features, and specific aesthetic or perceptual aspects.*
- *The second step is to identify interactions between these landscape receptors and the different components of the development at all different stages, including construction, operation and, where relevant, decommissioning and restoration/reinstatement.”*

7.2.16 Visual effects are concerned with changes in available views of the landscape and the effect of those changes on people, often referred to as visual receptors. A range of issues to assist in describing effects on views (not restricted to) are defined in GLVIA3 (paragraph 6.27), as follows:

- *“The nature of the view of the proposed development, for example a full or partial view or only a glimpse;*
- *The proportion of the proposed development or particular features that would be visible (such as full, most, small, part, none);*
- *The distance of the viewpoint from the development and whether the viewer would focus on the development due to its scale and proximity or whether the development would be only a small minor element in a panoramic view;*
- *Whether the view is stationary or transient or one of a sequence of views from the footpath or moving vehicle; and*
- *The nature of the change’s which must be judged individually for each project but may include, for example, changes in the existing skyline profile, creation of a new visual focus in the view, introduction of new man-made objects, changes in visual simplicity or complexity, alteration of visual scale and change to the degree of visual enclosure.”*

7.2.17 It is important to recognise that the LVIA process is an integral part of the design process. Following an initial assessment of the baseline conditions and consultation, the embedded mitigation and enhancement measures are fed back into the Proposed Development and its design as part of an iterative approach.

Study Area

- 7.2.18 GLIVA3 states that the Study Area must be reasonable and proportionate and must ensure that the focus, when defining the appropriate Study Area, is on where likely significant effects upon Landscape and Visual receptors may occur, together with likely significant cumulative effects.
- 7.2.19 The Study Area has been informed through a combination of desktop study, as well as professional judgement on similar scale projects. It has been established through consideration of the existing landform and vegetation, as well as the scale of the Proposed Development and heights of the proposed infrastructure and the potential for significant effects. Identification of the Study Area has considered the diminishing nature of visual perception as distance from visual receptors increases. As per GLVIA 3 Paragraph 6.11:
- “The effects of distance on views must also be considered – for example parts of the ZTV that are most distant from the proposal may be omitted from the final visual effects baseline if it is judged that visibility from this distance will be extremely limited. This will vary with the type of project and must be agreed with the competent authority.”*
- 7.2.20 The extent of the Study Area for assessment has been established through a combination of desktop study and on-Site assessment to assess landscape character and landscape and visual receptors. An initial 2km Study Area was found appropriate for the identification of significant adverse effects associated with the Proposed Development.
- 7.2.21 Landscape Effects have been assessed upon the following landscape receptors:
- Landscape Fabric of the Site: Landscape fabric being the individual tangible elements or features of the landscape, such as landform, woodland, hedges, tree cover, vegetation, for example which can usually be described and quantified.
 - Local Landscape Character: This being an assessment of effects upon the character of the landscape local to the Site and of the Site itself, (informed by all relevant landscape character assessments).
 - Wider Landscape Character: This being an assessment of effects upon the character of the wider landscape surrounding the Site within the Study Area, (informed by all relevant landscape character assessments).
- 7.2.22 An assessment of the visibility of the Site was carried out in accordance with GLVIA3 to determine the likely public and private views towards the Proposed Development. Visual Effects have been assessed upon individual visual receptors which have been identified through a combination of desktop and field study. Some visual receptors such as people, those within settlements, and road users within settlements, are considered collectively in order to understand visual effects to the grouping as a whole. Visual impact assessment involves identifying the visual receptors that are likely to be affected by the Proposed Development.
- 7.2.23 The methodology outlined in the following pages provides a summary of the detailed LVIA methodology set out in **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)**.

- 7.2.24 The time period for the assessment covers the construction of the Proposed Development and associated infrastructure, to completion of the works and the commencement of its operation and decommissioning, including identification of residual effects. How residual effects appear in the LVIA decision making process are set out in Figure 4.7 of GLVIA3.

Evaluation

Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

- 7.2.25 The judgement on landscape sensitivity is based on consideration of both the landscape receptor's value and its susceptibility to change arising from the Proposed Development.
- 7.2.26 For details on how landscape value and susceptibility is assessed please refer to Section 1.7 of **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)**.
- 7.2.27 Tables 7.3.2 and Table 7.3.3 of **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)** provide criteria for determining landscape value for both designated and undesignated landscapes. As listed, landscape value is based on factors such as natural and cultural heritage, its condition, associations, distinctiveness and recreational opportunities and how it is perceived.
- 7.2.28 GLVIA3 (paragraph 5.39) indicates that combining susceptibility and value can be achieved in a number of ways and needs to include professional judgement. However, it is generally accepted that a combination of high susceptibility and high value is likely to result in the highest sensitivity, whereas a low susceptibility and low value is likely to result in the lowest level of sensitivity.
- 7.2.29 Table 7.1 below illustrates how landscape value and susceptibility are combined to determine the level of landscape sensitivity.

Table 7.1: Matrix for Determining Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape Susceptibility	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value				
High	High	High to Medium	Medium	Medium to Low
Medium	High to Medium	Medium	Medium to Low	Low
Low	Medium	Medium to Low	Low	Low to Very Low
Very Low	Medium to Low	Low	Low to Very Low	Very Low

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 7.2.30 The judgement on visual sensitivity is based on consideration of both the visual receptor's value and its susceptibility to change arising from the Proposed Development.
- 7.2.31 For details on how a visual receptors value and susceptibility is assessed please refer to Section 1.8 of **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)**.

- 7.2.32 Table 7.2.9 of **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)** provides criteria for determining value attached to views which is dependent upon designation, cultural associations, popularity, and where views provide appreciation of the landscape. Professional judgements are made on the merit of the view based on the visual receptor. It should be noted that the levels are indicative and in practice there is not a clear distinction between criteria levels.
- 7.2.33 Table 7.2 below illustrates how the visual value and susceptibility are combined to determine the level of landscape sensitivity.

Table 7.2: Matrix for Determining Visual Sensitivity

Visual Susceptibility	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Value				
High	High	High to Medium	Medium	Medium to Low
Medium	High to Medium	Medium	Medium to Low	Low
Low	Medium	Medium to Low	Low	Low to Very Low
Very Low	Medium to Low	Low	Low to Very Low	Very Low

Magnitude of Landscape Change

- 7.2.34 The overall assessment of magnitude of landscape change, combines size and scale, geographical extent and duration and reversibility. Overall magnitude of change is assessed from high to very low depending on these factors. Not all aspects of a criterion need to be met for an evaluation to be given.
- 7.2.35 For definitions of landscape change please refer to Section 1.7 of **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)**.

Duration and Reversibility of Visual Effects

- 7.2.36 The following terminology is used to describe the duration of the change:
- Short-term: 0-5 years;
 - Medium-term: 5-10 years; and
 - Long-term: 10 to 40 years (or longer).
- 7.2.37 For the purposes of the LVIA process, the operational phase of the Proposed Development is assessed as a long-term duration and the construction and decommissioning phases is assessed as short-term duration.
- 7.2.38 Reversibility is the judgement about whether or not the Proposed Development can be removed and once removed whether the view can be fully restored.

Magnitude of Visual Change

- 7.2.39 The overall assessment of magnitude of visual change, combines size and scale, geographical extent and duration and reversibility. Overall magnitude of change is assessed from high to very low depending on these factors. Not all aspects of a criterion need to be met for an evaluation to be given.
- 7.2.40 For definitions of visual change please refer to Section 1.7 of **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)**.

Duration and Reversibility of Visual Effects

- 7.2.41 The following terminology is used to describe the duration of the change.
- Short-term: 0-5 years;
 - Medium-term: 5-10 years; and
 - Long-term: 10 to 40 years (or longer).
- 7.2.42 For the purposes of the LVIA process, the operational phase of the Proposed Development is assessed as a long-term duration and the construction and decommissioning phases is assessed as short-term duration.
- 7.2.43 Reversibility is the judgement about whether or not the Proposed Development can be removed and once removed whether the view can be fully restored.

Assessment of Significance

- 7.2.44 Table 7.3 below shows how the combined factors of sensitivity and magnitude are considered together to determine the significance of landscape and visual effects.
- 7.2.45 Landscape and visual effects assessed as **Major**, **Major to Moderate**, and **Moderate** are considered to be significant as highlighted in grey below.
- 7.2.46 Landscape and visual effects assessed as **Moderate to Minor**, **Minor**, **Minor to Negligible** and **Negligible** are not considered as significant.

Table 7.3: Matrix for Determining Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

Sensitivity	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Magnitude				
High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Minor
Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible
Very Low	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Minor/ Negligible	Negligible

7.2.47 Effects of the Proposed Development are considered adverse unless stated otherwise (neutral/beneficial) as defined in Section 1.9 of **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)**.

Cumulative Effects

7.2.48 Cumulative landscape effects, are likely to include effects on:

- The fabric of the landscape;
- The aesthetic aspects of the landscape; and
- The overall character of the landscape.

7.2.49 Cumulative effects are assessed separately from the standalone Proposed Development, as set out in **ES Chapter 8**.

7.3 Site Context

Site Description

7.3.1 The Site is located wholly within the North Hertfordshire District Council. It abuts the East Hertfordshire District Council boundary on its eastern edge.

7.3.2 The Site is situated southwest of the village of Cumberlow Green, approximately 3km northeast of Stevenage. Letchworth Garden City is located approximately 3.7km northwest.

7.3.3 The landscape surrounding the Site is largely rural with a number of villages including:

- Shaw Green approximately 1.2km to the north of the Site;
- Rushden approximately 1km to the northeast of the Site;
- Southern Green approximately 1.6km to the northeast of the Site;
- Cottered approximately 1.3km to the southeast of the Site;

- Hare Street approximately 1.25km to the southeast of the Site;
- Cromer approximately 1.2km to the south of the Site;
- Luffenhall approximately 0.4km to the south of the Site;
- Halls Green approximately 1.3km to the southwest of the Site;
- Weston approximately 1.4km to the west of the Site; and
- Clothall approximately 1.25km to the northwest of the Site.

7.3.4 The Site is bounded to the north by the A507 Clothall Road which runs in a broadly northwest to southeast alignment. Beyond the road lies Baskets Wood, Munches Wood and arable land. Further east the road then turns due south as it enters Cumberlow Green before returning to a northwest to southeast trajectory adjacent to the northeast corner of the Site.

7.3.5 The Site's eastern boundary is defined by dense vegetation and Cromer Heath Road. There is a distinct level change between the Site and Cromer Heath Road which lies approximately 3-4m below the Site. Beyond the road lies open arable land.

7.3.6 The southern Site boundary contains established vegetation and to the south of the Site lies predominantly arable land divided by woodland/hedgerow margins. The River Beane and the Weston Tributary are located approximately 0.25km south along shallow valleys running northeast to southwest and west to east respectively.

7.3.7 The Site's western boundary is defined by a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) and associated vegetation. Beyond this lies open arable land which forms part of the London Metropolitan Greenbelt which also extends into part of the Site. To the northwest of the Site adjacent to the Site boundary lies Kingswoodbury House, a residential property.

The Site

7.3.8 The Site covers approximately 187.3 ha and comprises of predominantly arable land of cereals and pasture and divided by woodland field margins/hedgerows and a number of watercourses. The Site is gently undulating and forms part of valley sides and higher ground to the north of the River Beane valley with land falling broadly from north to south with a smaller central valley associated with a small tributary stream which leads to the Weston Tributary.

7.3.9 An electricity pylon is located within the southeast corner of the Site forming part of the wider associated National Grid 400kV high-voltage overhead line (OHL) transcending the Site boundaries in a northeast-southwest direction.

7.3.10 Munches Farm, comprising a large agricultural farm building and associated areas of hardstanding, is situated adjacent to the Site with associated access falling within the Site. A further steel clad barn lies adjacent to the Sites southern boundary.

Planning Designations

Green Belt

- 7.3.11 The majority of the Site is situated within open countryside in a rural area beyond the Metropolitan Green Belt (the Green Belt) as defined in North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Policies Map. Approximately 41.19 ha of the northwest portion of the Site is within the Green Belt, as shown in Figure 5 Landscape Receptors of **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**.
- 7.3.12 There are no designations on the Site within the Minerals and Waste Local Plan Policies Map (October 2024).

Cumulative Development

- 7.3.13 A search of the North Hertfordshire District Council and East Hertfordshire District Council (as it is the adjacent authority) planning maps was undertaken on the 14th January 2025. With relevance to the Study Area, major applications of renewable energy development and of developments of 50+ dwellings have been accounted for along with other developments of relevance within 5km of the Site.
- 7.3.14 The search identified only one, pending development of a similar nature and scale to that of the Proposed Development that may result in cumulative impacts with the Proposed Development. The potential for cumulative effects, and where relevant, an assessment of their likely scale is presented within **ES Chapter 8**. All other existing, approved or pending planning applications have been scoped out of this assessment. The application description of the relevant development is set out below:
- Ref. 3/24/2245/FUL - Installation and operation of a solar farm including co-located energy storage facilities, onsite substation, ancillary infrastructure and landscaping at Land to the West of the A507 between Cottered and Cromer, Hertfordshire, SG9 9PU. Awaiting decision (validated: 20 December 2024).

This Proposed Development is directly southeast of the Site.

7.4 Baseline Appraisal

Overview

- 7.4.1 The Site is not subject to any statutory landscape designations or identified as an area of strategic landscape on the Council's Local Plan Policies Map. The Chiltern Hills National Landscape is located approximately 20km west of the Site. There are no National Parks within 50km of the Site.
- 7.4.2 The Proposed Development is entirely located within the National Character Area (NCA) Profile: 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (NE515). The NCA Profile: 40 (Natural England, 2015) states:

” It is an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau.”

Site Context

- 7.4.3 The Site is situated within the jurisdiction of North Hertfordshire District Council. It lies approximately 3km northeast of Stevenage. The village of Cumberlow Green is to the immediate northeastern boundary of the Site.
- 7.4.4 The Site is approximately 187.3ha. in area, with several cojoined parcels of arable field which form an overall east to west rectilinear orientation.
- 7.4.5 Topography on Site is largely gently rolling plateau to all boundaries, with a deep cut in the centre to the middle of the southern boundary. A water course runs through this depression in the landscape.
- 7.4.6 The Site lies in proximity to groups of designated Ancient Woodland, Coldash Wood and Rydal’s Wood. Large belts of unnamed woodland are present throughout the Site at several field parcel boundaries. Stretches of trees feature prominently at field boundaries amongst dense scrub.
- 7.4.7 Munches Farm lies adjacent to the Site towards the west adjoining the southern edge of Rydal’s Wood. Other notable structures and settlements include an area of land to the south of the Site used to store farm machinery and materials, a pylon in the southeast portion of the Site and a residential property adjoining the northwest boundary, Kingswoodbury House.
- 7.4.8 Two footpaths run through the centre and eastern side of the Site, Footpath HD|Clothall|019 and Footpath HD|Clothall|020.
- 7.4.9 The majority of the Site is situated within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt as defined in North Hertfordshire Council Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Policies Map. Part of the northwest of the Site is within the Green Belt, as shown in Figure 5 Landscape Receptors of **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**.

Published Landscape Character Assessments

- 7.4.10 A brief summary of the published landscape character assessments in the context of the Site is detailed below and illustrated on Figure 4 in **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**.

National Character Area

- 7.4.11 The Site lies in National Character Area profile 86. South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. The NCA profile gives the following as a general description for the area:

“It is an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a

complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams and rivers that flow eastwards. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernible over much of the area, despite field enlargements in the second half of the 20th century. The widespread moderately fertile, chalky clay soils give the vegetation a more or less calcareous character. Gravel and sand deposits under the clay are important geological features, often exposed during mineral extraction, which contribute to our understanding of ice-age environmental change.”⁶

7.4.12 The key characteristics of the NCA relevant to this LVIA include:

- *“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 narrower upper parts.*
- *Fragments of chalk give many of the soils a calcareous character, which also influences the character of the semi-natural vegetation cover.*
- *South-east-flowing streams and rivers drain the clay plateau. Watercourses wind slowly across flood plains, supporting wet, fen-type habitats; grazing marsh; and blocks of cricket-bat willows, poplars and old willow pollards.*
- *Lowland wood pasture and ancient woodlands support the dormouse and a rich diversity of flowering plants on the clay plateau. Large, often ancient hedgerows link woods and copses, forming wooded skylines.*
- *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. Field margins support corn bunting, cornflower and brown hare.*
- *Roman sites, medieval monasteries and castles and ancient woodlands contribute to a rich archaeology. Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates and Second World War airfields dot the landscape, forming historical resources.”⁷*

7.4.13 The following NCA 86 Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) are relevant to this assessment:

- *“Protect and enhance the area’s ancient woodland cover, parkland trees, river valley plantations and ancient hedgerows, through the management of existing woods and the planting of new woods, hedgerows and hedgerow trees to benefit landscape character, habitat connectivity and a range of ecosystem services, including timber provision, the regulation of soil erosion and the strengthening of the sense of place and history.”⁸*

⁶ National Character Area profile: 86. South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. Natural England, 2014. Page 3.

⁷ National Character Area profile: 86. South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. Natural England, 2014. Page 7.

⁸ National Character Area profile: 86. South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. Natural England, 2014. Page 5.

- 7.4.14 This is a national scale assessment and although it provides a useful broad scale overview of landscape character, the detail of more local scale landscape character assessment studies is more relevant to LVIA for developments of this nature.

District Landscape Character Assessment

- 7.4.15 The North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment places the main portion of the Site within the Upper Beane Valley Tributaries Landscape Character Type (LCA). Key characteristics of the LCA are:

- *“Bowl like landform comprising steeply sloping chalk valley sides incised by a network of water courses.*
- *Arable land use.*
- *Irregular pattern, of medium to large sized fields.*
- *Scattered hedgerows and waterside trees.*
- *Small blocks of relict ancient woodland on the upper slopes.*
- *Narrow winding lanes.”⁹*

- 7.4.16 Strategy and Guidelines for managing change (Strengthen and reinforce):

- *“Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora.*
- *Encourage the development of neutral species rich grasslands.*
- *Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas.*
- *Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas.*
- *Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges.*
- *Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees.*
- *Maintain and extend the rights of way network.”¹⁰*

- 7.4.17 The North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment places the Western section of the Site within the Weston – Green End Plateau Landscape Character Type (LCA). Key characteristics of the LCA capable of being affected by the Proposed Development are:

- *“Plateau landform.*

⁹ North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment. Babbie Group. Page 132.

¹⁰ North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment. Babbie Group. Page 136.

- *Predominantly arable land use.*
- *Extensive mature woodland cover and hedgerow trees.*
- *Organic pattern of field enclosures associated with irregular network of winding lanes.”¹¹*

7.4.18 Strategy and Guidelines for Managing Change (Strengthen and reinforce):

- *“Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora.*
- *Encourage diverse woodland management practice.*
- *Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas.*
- *Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas.*
- *Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges.*
- *Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees.*
- *Maintain and extend the rights of way network.*
- *Maintain the ecological diversity and use of green lanes and associated species-rich hedgerows.*
- *Maintain and encourage the development of marshy grassland on pockets of boulder clay.”¹²*

7.4.19 The documents outlined above, together with the Site appraisal, have been utilised to establish the baseline conditions for the Site and its surroundings in order to complete this assessment.

Statutory Designations

National Landscape Designations

7.4.20 Please refer to Figure 5 Landscape Receptors and Figure 6 Visual Receptors in **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)** of this report for the locations of statutory designations, heritage assets, PRoW, water bodies and other landscape features or resources as discussed below. There are no National Landscape Designations on Site.

¹¹ North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment. Babbie Group. Page 137.

¹² North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment. Babbie Group. Page 142.

Scheduled Monuments

- 7.4.21 There are no Scheduled Monuments on Site; however the Site of Cumberlow Manor House, (List entry number 1,003,551) lies to directly northeast of the Site, beyond the A507. A Scheduled Monument, Enclosure and Earthworks southeast of Clothallbury House (List entry number 1,003,540), is located 745m north of Site. Lammas Field Roman Villa, 680m northeast of Western Bury (List entry number 1,015,489), is located 610m to the northwest of the Site. Additionally, a moated site and associated remains, west of Hooks Green Farm (List entry number 1,010,912), is located 1km to the west of Site. Further details are available within Section 5 of the Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment (HDBA) report that accompanies this planning application.

Listed Buildings

- 7.4.22 There are no Listed Buildings within the Site, and no Grade I listed properties within the 1km Study Area. Within 1km of the Site, there are two Grade II* listed buildings and 25 Grade II listed buildings. The Grade II* listed Cromer Windmill (NHLE 1101453), located 1km to the south of the Site, is considered sensitive to the proposals and will be further assessed.
- 7.4.23 The Grade II listed Hooks Green Cottage (NHLE 1102700) lies 940m to the north-west of the Site. To the south, the closest asset is the Grade II listed Pryors (NHLE 1347347), located 610m away. Additionally, four more Grade II listed buildings are situated beyond 750m to the south of the Site:
- North Stable at Manor Farm (NHLE 1174331)
 - South Stable at Manor Farm (NHLE 1347929)
 - Barn at Church Farm (NHLE 1102703)
 - Church Farmhouse (NHLE 1308151)
- 7.4.24 The Grade II listed Birck Barn at Lodge Farm (NHLE 1101291) lies 850m to the south-east.
- 7.4.25 The Grade II* listed Church of St Mary (NHLE 1101295) is situated 1.6km south-east of the Site, outside the immediate search area.
- 7.4.26 Further details are available within Section 5 of the Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (HDBA) report that accompanies this planning application.

Registered Parks and Gardens

- 7.4.27 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within the Site. The nearest is Grade 2 Julians, (list entry number 1,000,914) which is located 1km to the northeast of Site.

Conservation Areas

- 7.4.28 The Site is not located within a Conservation Area (CA). CAs within the 2km Study Area include Rushden, 1km northeast of the Site; Southern Green, 1.4m east of Site; and Weston, 1.3km to the west of the Site.

Statutory Ecological Designations

- 7.4.29 There are no statutory Ecological Designations within the Site or 2km Study Area. Blagrove Common Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located 4km to the northeast of the Site. The nearest statutory designated site comprises Moor Hall Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) approximately 3.7km to the southeast.

Local Nature Reserve

- 7.4.30 Other designations in the surrounding area include Hill Local Nature Reserve (LNR) approx. 3.8km to the northwest.

Ancient Woodlands

- 7.4.31 There are two Ancient Woodlands immediately adjacent to the Site towards the northwestern end of the Site called Ryland's Wood and Coldash Wood. Two further Ancient Woodlands are located to the north of the Site at Baskets Wood and Munches Wood, beyond the A507.

Archaeology

- 7.4.32 There is potential for below-ground archaeological remains from the prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods to be present on the Site. The review of Archaeology is assessed in the Archaeological and Historical Background report that accompanies this ES, prepared by Lanpro.

Agricultural Land Classification

- 7.4.33 According to the Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC), the Site is predominantly Grade 3 ALC, with part of the southeast and a very small part of the northwest being Grade 2 ALC. The Applicant has undertaken ALC testing of the Site, which has confirmed that the Site is in its majority Grade 3b or lower (61.9%). There is approximately 38.1% of the Site located on BMV land (Grades 2 and 3a).

Flood Risk

- 7.4.34 The Site is predominantly within Flood Zone 1, with small areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 located through the central section of the Site and which branch off east and west from the central swathe (associated with an unnamed watercourse). There are also areas of high to low surface water flood risk. Areas of flood risk are illustrated on Figure 7 in **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and National Cycle Routes

- 7.4.35 A number of Footpaths and Bridleways traverse land within the 2km Study Area. Two Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Footpath HD|Clothall|019 and Footpath HD|Clothall|020 are located within the Site. Footpath HD|Clothall|019 is accessed from the A507 Clothall Road along the Sites northern boundary and runs in a broadly northwest to southeast orientation extending through and beyond the Site boundary. The footpath is approximately 1.47km in length, of which 1.15km is located within the Site. Footpath HD|Clothall|020 is approximately 1.46km in length, of which 0.93km is located within the Site. A Byway open to All Traffic (BOAT) HD|CLOTHALL|012 runs parallel and immediately adjacent to the western boundary of the Site.

Landscape Resource

Landscape Fabric of the Site (landscape Features)

- 7.4.36 The landscape fabric of the Site reflects the typical characteristics of the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland, typified by a wooded arable countryside with a notable sense of enclosure and containment. The Site itself occupies a gently undulating plateau, intermittently dissected by minor river valleys, in line with descriptions contained within National Character Area (NCA) Profile 86. While blocks of ancient woodland provide some structural coherence—occasionally projecting into adjacent field systems and reinforcing visual boundaries—the wider landscape displays signs of gradual morphological erosion. Built form is present within adjacent to the Site, most notably the utilitarian agricultural buildings associated with Munches Farm, which contribute little to landscape character or historic grain but utilise dull muted colours and therefore sit relatively quietly in the landscape adjacent to Ancient Woodland.
- 7.4.37 Ordnance Survey mapping marks the course of a former Roman Road traversing the Site from east to west, although this historic alignment is now entirely vestigial, with no discernible surface expression or corresponding influence on current land use or field structure. In contrast, high-voltage overhead lines (OHL) and accompanying pylons form a conspicuous and visually assertive element in the southeastern part of the Site. These infrastructure features introduce a strong urbanising influence, visually fragmenting the rural context and establishing a perceptual connection with more developed areas beyond the immediate visual envelope—thus diminishing the Site’s rural integrity and perceptual coherence.
- 7.4.38 Overall, the Site vegetation comprises features of varying scale, ranging from woodland to remnant hedgerow groups and linear shrub formations aligned with drainage ditches and historic field boundaries. The surrounding fields are predominantly arable in form and exhibit a largely coherent field pattern; however, hedgerow management appears to rely on mechanised flail-cutting rather than traditional layering techniques, resulting in degraded structure, intermittent gaps, and a high incidence of ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) disease. There is clear evidence of historic hedgerow removal and field

amalgamation, characteristic of widespread agro-industrial rationalisation across lowland England, which has led to the creation of larger, more homogenous field parcels. Although the land exhibits favourable topography and is in part classified as high-quality agricultural soil, several fields appear to be in low-intensity pastoral use for sheep and cattle grazing rather than full arable rotation. As such, while many field boundaries remain clearly legible, the landscape conveys a sense of utilitarian management, reduced ecological complexity, and marginal underutilisation—reflective of a functional yet visually diminished agro-industrial setting.

- 7.4.39 Tree cover across Site is significant due to groups of woodland and clusters of unnamed woods scattered across the Site. There are substantial blocks of ancient woodland out with the periphery of the Site to the west. Field boundaries in many areas are strengthened by dense groups of woodland and tightly packed rows of trees. Tree cover density thins out towards the north of the Site, particularly to the boundary running parallel to the A507, Clothall Road.
- 7.4.40 Hedgerow runs parallel to roads around the perimeter of the Site to the north and east, these are gappy in parts. Hedgerow within the Site tends to be less prevalent, rather unkept groups of shrubs within belts of trees growing wildly creating wide borders in areas between field parcels.
- 7.4.41 In light of the above, the value of the receiving landscape fabric of the Site is considered to be **Medium**. This is driven by the undesignated, but locally valued nature of the Site itself, and the surrounding countryside, which whilst demonstrating a number of distinguishing features worthy of conservation, there is evidence of some degradation and detracting features locally which detract from the local landscape character.
- 7.4.42 The ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies is referred to as Landscape Susceptibility.
- 7.4.43 As such the susceptibility of this landscape to accommodate the Proposed Development is considered to be **Medium**. This is where the landscape fabric of the Site has the ability to absorb the Proposed Development without loss of key physical components.
- 7.4.44 The judgement on landscape sensitivity is based on consideration of both the landscape receptor's value and its susceptibility to change arising from the Proposed Development. The **Medium** value and **Medium** susceptibility of the landscape fabric are combined to lead to a **Medium** sensitivity. There would be capacity or scope for landscape change.

Site Contribution to the Local Landscape Character

- 7.4.45 The Proposed Development is located to the south of and adjacent to the A507 on a partly wooded arable plateau to the southwest of Cumberlow Green. The Site is bisected by an unnamed watercourse flowing southwards. There is a PRow adjacent to the watercourse

which flows towards the Weston Tributary and River Beane, both situated approximately 200m to the south of the Site at their closest point.

- 7.4.46 The majority of the Site and its surrounding landscape is broadly undulating. There is also notable incised landform associated with the small-scale watercourses within and around the Site. The highest ground within the Site is 140m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to the westernmost Site boundary. The southern and eastern parts of the Site are lower lying compared to the northern and western parts, and this is due to the River Beane valley and its tributaries affecting the wider plateau landform. The lowest ground within the Site is along the valley floor to the southernmost Site boundary where the elevation is 100m AOD.
- 7.4.47 To the west of the unnamed watercourse there are notable blocks of deciduous woodland, with ancient woodland at Rydal's Wood (approx. 6.5 ha) and Coldash Wood (approx. 8.3ha) adjacent to the Site boundary. The fields adjacent to the woodland are small to medium size and irregular and generally bound by hedgerows with trees. To the east of the watercourse, the fields within the Site are also irregular albeit of a larger scale and less wooded compared to those on the opposite side of the minor valley to the west.
- 7.4.48 The western Site boundary is defined by a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) that is bordered by canopy trees and hedgerows for the majority of its length where it is contiguous with the Site boundary. Vegetation becomes less dense further north along the northwestern boundary of the Site thus enabling views into the site and across the wider landscape.
- 7.4.49 The northern Site boundary is defined by the A507. Kingswoodbury House and Toggs residential properties are situated on this road and are located adjacent to the northwestern Site boundary.
- 7.4.50 The eastern Site boundary is defined by a country lane (Cromer Heath Road) that connects Cumberlow Green with Cromer and crosses the Beane valley. The southern Site boundary is defined by field boundaries with hedgerows and trees.
- 7.4.51 High-voltage overhead power lines (OHL) and associated pylon towers are prominent visual detractors passing broadly east/west through the southeastern Site extents. Approximately 625m to the south of the Site, beyond the OHL, lies Luffenhall - a dispersed linear settlement located at the confluence of the Weston Tributary and the River Beane.
- 7.4.52 There is an agricultural building out with the Site to the immediate southwest periphery near Rydal's Wood. It is accessed from the A507 via a made track. Other than the OHL and the pylon, there is no built form within the Site.
- 7.4.53 The overall character of the Site and its immediate and local landscape context is reasonably consistent with the LCA summary above: an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside, with a distinct sense of enclosure; a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, with numerous small-scale river valleys. It is also consistent with the Upper Beane Valley Tributaries LCA in regard to the bowl-like landform, arable landuse, large scale field patterns scattered hedgerows and trees along watercourses, and narrow winding lanes.
- 7.4.54 In light of the above, the value of the receiving landscape is considered to be **Medium**. This is driven by the undesignated, but locally valued nature of the Site itself, and the

surrounding countryside, which whilst demonstrates a number of distinguishing features worthy of conservation, there is evidence of some degradation and detracting features locally which detract from the local landscape character.

- 7.4.55 The ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies is referred to as Landscape Susceptibility.
- 7.4.56 As such the susceptibility of this landscape to accommodate the Proposed Development is considered to be **Medium**. This is where the landscape of the Site and its surroundings has the ability to absorb the Proposed Development without loss of key characteristics or features or specific aesthetic or overall landscape character.
- 7.4.57 The judgement on landscape sensitivity is based on consideration of both the landscape receptor's value and its susceptibility to change arising from the Proposed Development. The **Medium** value and **Medium** susceptibility of the landscape are combined to lead to a **Medium** sensitivity. This is often described as ordinary countryside where, through consideration of the landscape resource and characteristics, there would capacity or scope for landscape change.

Site Contribution to the Wider Landscape Character

- 7.4.58 The Site's landscape consists of a gently undulating plateau, shaped in places by small river valleys that dissect the terrain—features characteristic of the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland and reflected in the NCA Area 86 assessment. Ancient woodland is a prominent feature, extending into the fields and contributing to the wooded arable character of the countryside. These wooded areas create strong boundaries and reinforce the distinct sense of enclosure identified in NCA 86.
- 7.4.59 Desk and field surveys have been undertaken to establish the baseline conditions of the Site itself, the 'fabric' of the landscape. Features, elements, combinations of elements and less tangible attributes such as the aesthetic qualities of the Site have been considered. These attributes have been assessed against criteria that indicate the value of the landscape as set out within LI Advice Note TGN 02/12 including: Natural Heritage; Cultural Heritage; Landscape Condition; Associations; Distinctiveness; Recreation; Perceptual (Scenic); Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity) and Functional. Other criteria include replaceable / substitutable, frequency and dominance of incongruous elements, importance placed on the Site by stakeholders, local accessibility to the Site and its role in the wider pattern of accessibility and its importance at a local, national or international level, e.g. National Landscapes or National Parks.
- 7.4.60 The Site characteristics the Site are of a plateau landform incised by a network of water courses, arable use with irregular field pattern and medium to large scale fields with extensive woodland cover and hedgerow trees, reflected in the NCA 86 and the Upper

Beane Valley Tributaries LCA. These features contribute to the shallow ‘dish’ that comprises the underlying landform of the Site, a key attribute that reduces its potential visibility from surrounding areas. Whilst it is recognised that the landscape surrounding the Site is not unattractive, it is undesignated ordinary agricultural farmland that is representative of that found within the wider area. It is not rare, nor does it contain any special features to elevate its value above that of the surrounding countryside.

- 7.4.61 In light of the above the value of the receiving wider landscape being considered is assessed as **Medium**. This is driven by the lack of designations within the wider location, although the surrounding countryside, which demonstrates a number of distinguishing features worthy of conservation. However, the Proposed Development would be located on a small fraction of the wider landscape, and it would be comfortably accommodated within it with no overall loss to the district’s landscape character.
- 7.4.62 The ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a NCA, or a sub-set of it, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies is referred to as Landscape Susceptibility.
- 7.4.63 As such the susceptibility of the wider landscape to accommodate the Proposed Development is considered to be **Low**. This is where the landscape of the Site and its surroundings has the ability to absorb the Proposed Development without loss of key characteristics or features or specific aesthetic or overall landscape character.
- 7.4.64 The judgement on landscape sensitivity is based on consideration of both the landscape receptor’s value and its susceptibility to change arising from the Proposed Development. The **Medium** value and **Low** susceptibility of the wider landscape are combined to lead to a **Low** sensitivity.

Cumulative Context

- 7.4.65 It is recognised that the land immediately to the south-east of the Site is subject to an application for a solar farm (Planning application ref. 3/24/2245/FUL). It is noted that this Site straddles the Beane Valley and extends southwards towards Cromer and Cottered.

Visual Resource

Overview

- 7.4.66 The visual baseline establishes the areas from where the new components of the Proposed Development can be seen, who can see them, the places where those who see them would be affected and the nature of views and visual amenity. This includes the identification of key receptors and viewpoints which represent such receptors.
- 7.4.67 The visual assessment aims to determine from which points the Proposed Development can be seen in the surrounding landscape; this is known as the visual envelope. Once

determined, a series of key representative viewpoints are chosen (i.e. areas within the visual envelope from where it may be possible to see the Proposed Development from publicly accessible viewpoints), such as residential areas, public open spaces, PRow / public footpaths and roads.

7.4.68 The direct effects of the Proposed Development on the content and character of views and on visual amenity, through intrusion, obstruction, or the loss or alteration of existing elements, are assessed in terms of the nature, extent, and duration of change:

- *“The assessment should consider both the content and character of views and the people experiencing them.”¹³*

7.4.69 The overall effect on visual amenity may represent a degradation, enhancement, or neutral change, depending on the nature of the change and its significance for the receptor:

- *“Visual effects can be positive (beneficial), negative (adverse), or neutral.”¹⁴*

7.4.70 The susceptibility of visual receptors to changes in the view and visual amenity is related to the activity they are engaged in and the extent to which their attention is focused on the views and visual amenity at that location. Receptors most sensitive to change are likely to include: residents at home; people, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views and visual amenity; visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views and visual amenity of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience; and communities where views and visual amenity contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area.

7.4.71 Travelers on ordinary road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of medium susceptibility to change. Where travel that involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views and visual amenity is likely to be a high susceptibility to change.

7.4.72 Visual receptors likely to be the least sensitive to change include: people engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views and visual amenity of the landscape; people at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings, and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life (although there may on occasion be cases where views and visual amenity are an important contributor to the setting and to the quality of working life).

7.4.73 Consideration of the Study Area, via desk research and field survey, has identified locations from which the Site and the Proposed Development would potentially be visible. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) study (Figure 9, **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**) was developed to guide and inform field work for the visual assessment, using digitally generated data to map

¹³ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 3rd edition. The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. 2013, para 6.17

¹⁴ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 3rd edition. The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. 2013, para 6.29

the potential extent of the Proposed Developments visual envelope, the area from where it would theoretically be visible in the surrounding landscape.

7.4.74 The ZTV (including Exclusions) mapping suggests or confirms potential visibility of at least some part of the Proposed Development would extend across approximately 50% of the land surface within 2km from the Site, including:

- Across the village of Cumberlow Green to the northeast.
- Luffenhall to the south.
- To the southeast this extends to Cottered.
- To the north to the edge of Rushden to the northeast.
- West to the outer fringes of Clothall and Weston.

7.4.75 Within the wider countryside:

- A zone of theoretical visibility that extends to the east towards Buntingford.
- A zone of theoretical visibility that extends south towards Stevenage.

7.4.76 The ZTV only provides an indication of potential visibility. It is generated using broad scale data sets and does not take account of vegetation such as hedges or other vegetation, instead focusing on large scale woodland, trees and topography. Accordingly, this draws an exaggerated impression of the extent of visibility.

7.4.77 Field study provided a refined understanding of the likely extent of visibility for the Proposed Development, confirming the area of assessment extends within a shallow dish-like geomorphological profile that effectively visually insulates the area to approximately 2km from the Site boundary, after considering the following factors:

- The Site is broadly representative of the Upper Beane Valley Tributaries Landscape Character Area (LCA), within which it is almost entirely situated. It comprises a gently rolling topography that descends from approximately 135m AOD in the western corner and 130m AOD in the eastern corner, sloping southwards gradually to 95m AOD towards the canalised upper headwaters of the River Beane, a tributary of the River Lea. While all areas of the Site are largely visible from within its boundaries. Intermediate views—extending up to 2km—are achievable from elevated ground, although the Site becomes increasingly visually contained beyond that distance due to local landform and intervening vegetation.
- Woodland blocks to the north and northeast of the Site are located on land ranging between 120m and 140m AOD within the relatively elevated but level Weston Green End Plateau LCA. These features combine with the local topography to restrict visibility primarily to a series of short to intermediate range views within the immediate landscape.
- To the southeast, the landform rises steadily beyond the Site boundary across the Ardeley / Cottered Settled Hills LCA, reaching elevations of approximately 135m AOD, before levelling out across the Cherry Green Arable Plateau LCA. Here, a

combination of built form around Clothall, along with woodland blocks, small copses, and mature field boundary hedgerows, serves to visually limit the extent of potential views to within approximately 2km of the Site.

- To the south, the landscape falls away into the broad Beane Valley LCA, aligned with the course of the River Beane. The combination of riparian vegetation, intervening copses, and hedgerow structure again acts to contain visual influence of the Site to within roughly 2km.
- To the west of the Site, the landform rises across the Weston Plateau Parklands LCA towards the settlement of Weston. Here, the gently undulating topography, together with established woodland blocks, hedgerows, and scattered built form, serves to screen and contain views of the Site within the wider visual envelope.

7.4.78 As well as identifying a suitable extent of the Study Area, the field work and Augmented ZTV depiction of the Site's visual envelope, together with assessment of potential clear visibility of the Site that can be seen from Google Earth and Streetview, specific, representative and illustrative views (shown on Figure 13-1, **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)** and listed in section 7.4.78) were selected for inclusion in the report (following consultation with the Council) to illustrate the visual effects of the Proposed Development.

Visual Baseline

Overview

- 7.4.79 Visibility of the Site from the surrounding landscape is limited due to intervening plateau landform to the north and west and the screening effects of vegetation in all directions. Vegetation within the Site is described above. The broad pattern of vegetation outside the Site includes woodland blocks on the plateau to the north and west of the Site and intermittent treed hedgerows within the river valleys to the south and east of the Site.
- 7.4.80 There is minimal intervisibility of the Site from receptors to the north and west other than those located within the immediate surroundings and set out above (A507, Kingswoodbury House and Toggs and BOAT (12 Clothall)). Kingswoodbury Farm, approximately 440m to the north of the Site, may also have southerly views across the Beane valley that take in the Site.
- 7.4.81 Visibility of the Site from receptors to the south and east are more widespread due to the potential for views across the Beane valley. Such views occur from a swathe of north and west-facing land that is bound by the B1037 to the south, Cromer to the west and Cottered to the east. This includes the local landmark Cromer Windmill. There are also approximately 10 no. residential receptors at Cumberlow Green to the immediate northeast of the Site.
- 7.4.82 There is a second OHL to the south of the Beane valley. Northerly and westerly views towards the Site is influenced by the detracting effects of numerous pylon towers and transmission lines.

Viewpoints

- 7.4.83 An initial set of 20 viewpoints was proposed by Lanpro in the LVIA Scoping Report to inform the visual baseline and provide a visual record of assessed potential visual effects taken from a range of receptors within the Study Area. In their response dated 12th May 2025, Place Services on behalf of the Council requested that additional representative viewpoints be included, following consultation with Place Services' Landscape Architect. Subsequent dialogue with Place Services' landscape architect resulted in agreement on a total of 25 viewpoints, incorporating their feedback.
- 7.4.84 Viewpoints were selected to provide representative visibility of the Proposed Development from a range of directions and receptor types, including views along key PRowS. This includes PRow Clothall 019, which traverses open farmland to the west of the Site and PRow Clothall 020, which runs to the southeast of the Site and offers partial views across the local landscape.
- 7.4.85 Following further consultation, additional refinements to viewpoint (VP) locations were made at the Council's request:
- VP5 was repositioned further south to better capture open views of the rolling landscape.
 - VP7, originally located north of the Site on the A507, was moved southeast to capture views from footpath HD|CLOTHALL|016 the entrance track to better reflect potential views into the Site.
 - VP14 was relocated further southeast along the A507, onto higher ground, to assess more open, elevated views toward the Site.
 - VP17 and VP20 were repositioned slightly eastwards to lie closer to the western extent of the Restricted Byway, improving representativeness of that receptor.
- 7.4.86 Given that several of the newly added viewpoints and/or amended location of the existing winter viewpoints were captured in summer conditions only, it was agreed with the Council that summer photography would form the basis for assessment in the LVIA. Affected viewpoints include VP5, VP7, VP14, VP20–VP25. The winter views are retained as an appendix for reference and comparative purposes.
- 7.4.87 The final viewpoint schedule is provided in Table 7.4 below and illustrated on the Viewpoint Location Plan, Figure 13.1, **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**.

Table 7.4: Viewpoint Schedule

Viewpoint ID	Location Name	Direction	Distance to site
1	A507 south of Cumberlow Green	Southwest	415m
2	Cromer Heath road near River Beane	Northwest	150m
3	Footpath Clothall 020	North northwest	175m
4	BOAT Weston 39/Clothall 012	East northeast	0m
5	BOAT near Coldash Wood	East	0m

6	A 507 Burnthouse Lane	Southeast	350m
7	A 507 near footpath Clothall 016	Southeast	15m
8	Footpath Clothall 016 near Kingswoodbury Farm	South	440m
9	Footpath Clothall 018	South	250m
10	A507 / Footpath Clothall 013	South southwest	12m
11	Footpath Clothall 020 near Cumberlow Green	South	0m
12	Footpath Rushden and Wallington 009	Southwest	1.1km
13	Restricted Byway Cottered 006 near River Beane	West	1.1km
14	A507 near Lodge Farm	West northwest	650m
15	Restricted Byway Cottered 006 near Cottered	West northwest	1.2km
16	B1037 / Footpath Ardeley 049	Northwest	1.2km
17	North of Cromer on Cromer Heath	Northwest	960m
18	Cromer Windmill	Northwest	1km
19	Brookfield Common	North	1.9km
20	Restricted Byway Clothall 021	North	540m
21	A507 /Cromer Heath Road Junction	South	10m
22	Footpath Clothall 020	North	0m
23	Footpath Clothall 020	South	0m
24	Footpath Clothall 019 (central site)	South	0m
25	Footpath Clothall 019 (Westfield Common)	Southeast	0m

- 7.4.88 The representative viewpoint photography was undertaken during the site visits in March (winter) and June (Summer) 2025, during which time the location of the viewpoint was adjusted to be reflective of available views at each location.

Sensitive Visual Receptors

Private Receptors

Kingswoodbury House

- 7.4.89 Represented by VP 7, the views from this residential receptor are deemed to be of low value. This assessment considers that private receptors have a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to their residential nature.
- 7.4.90 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Properties in Cumberlow Green

- 7.4.91 Represented by VPs 11 and 21(in part), the views from this residential receptor are deemed to be of low value. This assessment considers that private receptors have a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to their residential nature.

- 7.4.92 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Properties in Luffenhall, Cromer and Cottered

- 7.4.93 Represented by VPs 14 and 17 (in part), the views from this residential receptor are deemed to be of low value. This assessment considers that private receptors have a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to their residential nature.
- 7.4.94 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Public Receptors

Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 020

- 7.4.95 Represented by VPs 3, 11, 22 and 23, this assessment considers that this receptor has a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users walking through the countryside. The views from this receptor are deemed to be of low value.
- 7.4.96 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 019

- 7.4.97 Represented by VPs 24 and 25, this assessment considers that this receptor has a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users walking through the countryside. The views from this receptor are deemed to be of low value.
- 7.4.98 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Users of BOAT Weston 39/Clothall 012 adjacent to Site

- 7.4.99 Represented by VPs 4 and 5, this receptor has a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users walking through the countryside. The views from this receptor are deemed to be of low value.
- 7.4.100 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Users of PRow in wider landscape

- 7.4.101 These include users of the following PRowS and BOATs:

- Clothall 013 (represented by VP10).
- Clothall 016 (represented by VP7 and 8).
- Clothall 018 (represented by VP9).
- Clothall 020 (represented by VP11).
- Rushden and Wallington 009 (represented by VP12).
- Restricted Byway Cottered 006 (represented by VP13, VP15).
- Ardeley 049 (represented by VP16).
- Cottered 028 (represented by VP17).
- Restricted Byway Clothall 021 (represented by VP20).

7.4.102 This assessment considers that this receptor group has a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users walking through the countryside. The views from this receptor group are deemed to be of low value.

7.4.103 The sensitivity of the receptor group combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Transport Receptors

Users of A507 and Cromer Heath road (across River Beane)

7.4.104 Represented by VPs 1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 14, 17 and 21, this assessment considers that these receptors (road network in proximity to the Site) have a **Medium** susceptibility to the changes proposed due to their undulating topography. The views from these receptors are deemed to be of low value.

7.4.105 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**Medium**) with the value (**Low**) and this assessment considers it to be **Low**.

Users of B1037 and Cromerfield Common

7.4.106 Represented by VPs 16 and 18, this assessment considers that these receptors have a medium susceptibility to the changes proposed due to their elevated position on the plateaux looking across a large landscape and from a distance of over 1km. The views from these receptors are deemed to be of low value.

7.4.107 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**Medium**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium to Low**.

Summary

- 7.4.108 The surrounding raised plateau topography, together with the network of hedgerows and backcloth of woodland copses and woodland belts, frame the wider landscape surrounding the Site and lead to it generally having a contained character which limits opportunities for views of the Site from within the wider area. Due to the presence of existing vegetation, including woodland belts and hedgerows and existing undulations, there would be limited relationship and little intervisibility from the wider landscape. However, the A507, the B1037 and BOAT Weston 39/Clothall 012 pass along the boundaries of the Site and Footpaths Clothall 019 and Clothall 020 both traverse it centrally, allowing for views of the immediately surrounding fields and those within the Site.

7.5 Proposed Development

Overview

- 7.5.1 The Proposed Development would broadly comprise the fields within the Site which would accommodate ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) panels (the solar arrays), substation infrastructure to facilitate connection to the grid and energy storage. The identified Point of Connection (POC) is located adjacent to an existing 400kV transmission line. The transmission line crosses the Site in the southeastern corner in an east/west direction.
- 7.5.2 The operational life of the Proposed Development is anticipated to be 40 years. Once the Proposed Development ceases to operate, it would be decommissioned.
- 7.5.3 Detailed descriptions of the Proposed Development are provided in Chapter 4 of the Environmental Statement and are not repeated here.

Operation

- 7.5.4 The Proposed Development would not be permanent but would be reversible with a temporary operational period of 40 years. Any planning permission would be for a non-permanent use with a condition requiring the land to be returned to its pre-development state at the end of this duration.
- 7.5.5 Once operational, the Proposed Development would attract very limited vehicular movements and would only include maintenance vehicles. The movement within the Site would be either on foot or limited to a small vehicle. There would be no onsite staff required to operate the Proposed Development. Some permanent equipment for monitoring the Site would be held within one of the buildings on Site. Whilst this would typically be accessed remotely, it would be available for when physical access to the Site is required during routine visits.

Decommissioning

- 7.5.6 At the end of the operational period, the Proposed Development would be decommissioned in accordance with best practice at that time and decommissioning effects are considered similar in nature to those arising during construction. A decommissioning plan is proposed to be secured through a condition attached to the planning permission, which would be agreed upon with the Council.

Legacy Environmental Benefits

- 7.5.7 The legacy of the embedded mitigation strategy for the Proposed Development following decommissioning would generate enduring improvements to local landscape character and visual amenity. The Proposed Development would incorporate structural landscape interventions, including native hedgerow reinstatement, species-rich grassland creation, and perimeter planting, that align with the local Landscape Character Areas (LCA), in particular the Upper Beane Valley Tributaries and adjacent plateau landscapes.
- 7.5.8 Upon decommissioning of the Proposed Development, the Site would be returned to full agricultural use. The mitigation planting and biodiversity enhancements would be anticipated to remain in situ due to their demonstrable value in supporting sustainable land management and reinforcing landscape structure. These interventions would have matured to form visually absorbent boundaries which strengthen the traditional field pattern to be reflective of the local character typologies over and above existing baseline conditions.
- 7.5.9 In planning terms, the retention of this mitigation would contribute to the enhancement of rural landscape structure, improve visual integration from key sensitive local receptors (including PRoWs and nearby rural settlements), and deliver a measurable uplift in the landscape fabric. These legacy benefits are aligned with national and local planning policy objectives concerning landscape enhancement, biodiversity net gain (BNG), and sustainable rural land use.
- 7.5.10 Other benefits of the mitigation measures would include:
- **Biodiversity Net Gain:** On-site delivery through hedgerow creation, grassland seeding and long-term habitat management would contribute to BNG targets and broader ecological connectivity.
 - **Soil and Hydrological Health:** Reduced disturbance during the operational period, combined with vegetative cover and improved infiltration, would allow for soil structure recovery and natural regulation of surface water and sedimentation.
 - **Agricultural Enhancement:** Retention of mitigation planting post-decommissioning is expected to enhance farm productivity by moderating microclimatic conditions, supporting pollinators, and offering cover for game and livestock.
- 7.5.11 These conclusions are consistent with wider industry research, including a 2023 study by the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Lancaster University (Casciato, 2023). The study found that well-managed solar farm sites featuring species-rich grassland, hedgerows and

minimal disturbance can support significant increases in farmland and ground-nesting bird populations, demonstrating measurable ecological uplift.

- 7.5.12 In summary, the mitigation strategy would deliver not only a reduction in adverse effects but a positive and durable contribution to the receiving landscape, consistent with both the mitigation hierarchy and the principles of sustainable development.

Landscape Mitigation Design

- 7.5.13 The Site layout has been developed in direct response to an assessment of the Site's landscape sensitivity and character and its visibility from key receptors. Site work including photography has been undertaken including a review of likely cumulative effects.
- 7.5.14 The landscape mitigation associated with the Proposed Development aligns to the mitigation hierarchy prescribed as part of the EIA process.
- 7.5.15 In order to ensure this is undertaken, the mitigation associated with the Proposed Development would work with the fabric of, and reflect the inherent characteristics of the landscape, to ensure the Proposed Development can be successfully assimilated into the landscape.
- 7.5.16 An Environmental Parameters approach was undertaken to embed mitigation at the outset of the iterative design process and the landscape architecture team at Lanpro have led this process liaising directly with the Applicant and wider environmental and design disciplines at weekly design workshops and team meetings. This approach set out prescribed offsets from existing features and embedded environmental mitigation accordingly. The mechanism for controlling this information was through Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and AutoCAD to ensure all data sets such as Ancient Woodland PRoW are accurate and the data is live throughout the iterative design process.
- 7.5.17 Once the parameters had been defined, they enabled the Proposed Development to be located in the optimal position to minimise its effects.
- 7.5.18 In response to the assessment of potential visibility and wider landscape character and aligned to the above process, the design objectives are as follows:
- **Battery storage location:** locate the battery storage infrastructure in the south-eastern extent of the Site, (field parcel 9 as shown on the Environmental Masterplan Appendix 7.4 (Volume 2), where there is an established pattern of energy infrastructure and where mitigation planting is best placed to screen views across the Beane Valley.
 - **Development exclusion zones:** avoid development in the fields to the north-west of the Site, (field parcels 1, 2, 11 and 16 as shown on the Environmental Masterplan), and in the northern section of the most easterly field (closest to Cumberlow Green (field parcel 7 as shown on the Environmental Masterplan). This approach reflects early consultation feedback from nearby neighbours and reduces visual coalescence with adjacent development.

- **Use of woodland backdrop:** utilise the existing wooded backdrop and well-vegetated skyline to backcloth the Proposed Development and avoid skylining, particularly for visual receptors located to the south of the Site, including those along the B1037 between Cromer and Cottered.
- **Cross-valley screening:** provide layered screening to cross-valley views of the BESS, using both existing and enhanced structural vegetation on the southern slopes of the Beane Valley within the Site.
- **Western edge setbacks and screening:** where appropriate, introduce screening and/or set back development along the western edge of the Site and adjacent to the BOAT, to ensure landscape and visual effects remain contained and do not extend into the neighbouring plateau landscape.
- **Retention of existing vegetation:** where possible, retain all existing hedgerows, trees, and other vegetation within the Site to preserve the structural integrity of the landscape and to provide natural screening of proposed infrastructure.
- **Woodland enhancement:** protect and enhance existing woodland areas through new woodland planting on former sites or adjacent to existing woodlands, using local native species where this improves ecological connectivity and reinforces the traditional wooded character of the area.
- **Public Rights of Way (PRoW):** maintain existing PRoWs within the Site and enhance the experience of users through the creation of landscape corridors, incorporating appropriate vegetation such as riparian planting, native hedgerows, woodland blocks, and belts.
- **Reinforcement of local character:** deliver enhancements to local landscape character through the planting of native hedgerows, hedgerow trees, and woodland—gapping up and reinforcing as appropriate, in line with National Character Area (NCA) guidance.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain:** provide clear opportunities for measurable habitat improvements and biodiversity net gain, integrated with the landscape design approach.

7.5.19 In order to achieve the above, the following mitigation has been proposed to minimise landscape and visual effects and as illustrated in the Environmental Masterplan, **Appendix 7.4 (Volume 2) (drawing 5686_LAN-XX-XX-DR-L-1003-P09)**:

- 6.35km of existing native species hedgerow to be improved through gapping up, infill and a change in maintenance to a height of 4.5m tall and 3-4m wide.
- 6.27 ha. of proposed native species woodland (typically 7.5-10m in width).
- 3.6 ha. of proposed native species shrub planting (typically 5m in width).
- 1.14 km of proposed native species hedgerow.
- 0.4 ha. of proposed native species scrub planting.

- 102.2 ha. of proposed native species grassland/grazing mix.
- 21.25 ha. of proposed native species meadow seed mix.
- 26.5 ha. of proposed skylark mitigation.

7.5.20 As stated in the Site description, set out in Section 3, the Site comprises 187.3 ha. Within the Site there will be a total built electrical infrastructure area (i.e. panels, BESS and substation) of 112.2 ha. (60%), with the remaining 75.1 ha. (40%) being used for ecological, biodiversity and landscaping enhancements. However, part of the grassland matrix would coexist as underplanting to solar arrays themselves. The total proposed and improved ecological planting would be approximately 170 ha of the 187.3 ha Site: hence up to 88% of the Site would be devoted to habitat, biodiversity mitigation or ecological enhancement. The remaining 12% would include access roads, MVS, substation and BESS areas, and fencing.

7.6 Assessment of Landscape Effects

Overview

7.6.1 The assessment of landscape effects follows the methodology outlined in **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)**. It considers the significance of effects arising from the combination of landscape receptor Sensitivity and the predicted magnitude of change during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. Effects are assessed in relation to the landscape fabric, as well as the local and wider landscape character within which the Site is situated.

Landscape Fabric of the Site

Assessment context

7.6.2 Landscape fabric refers to the tangible elements within the landscape, such as, but not limited to, trees and hedges, and includes the physical land or landform within the Site itself. The assessment of effects on landscape fabric looks at how the Proposed Development directly impact on these elements themselves.

7.6.3 During the lifespan of the Proposed Development, there would be a loss of the ability to use the landform beneath the solar panels and the BESS / Substation for agricultural farmland. However, the installation of the Proposed Development would not require any substantial ground works, foundations, or construction for the main components of the solar array. Therefore, the Proposed Development in its entirety could be easily removed at the end of its life expectancy and the land could be restored to its existing uses without any special treatment being necessary.

7.6.4 Additionally, whilst the Site would not be used for arable farming for the temporary period (whilst the Proposed Development was in place), the Site could continue to be used in

pastoral farming through the grazing of sheep alongside the solar infrastructure. There are existing farms within the surrounding countryside that are grazing sheep on their land (and this is a current land use of the farm), and therefore this land use is considered to be complementary with existing uses locally.

- 7.6.5 The Proposed Development results in limited loss of existing features to accommodate it; there would be some minor loss of hedgerow (approximately 8m) to accommodate access, but all other vegetation would be largely retained as a result of the Proposed Development. The majority of trees within the Site are limited to existing field boundaries; and are intended to be retained and incorporated within boundary vegetation. However, a small number will be removed to facilitate access. Please refer to the **Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA)** prepared by Lanpro that accompanies this ES for details. The introduction of the new grass mix beneath the arrays, and the substantial tree, hedgerow and woodland planting, are all positive new land uses which would bring forward ecological enhancements leading to notable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) across the Site which are considered a benefit arising from the Proposed Development.

Construction

- 7.6.6 During the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development there would be temporary disruption to the Site. These changes would be restricted to within the Site boundary and would be temporary in nature. Retained vegetation would be protected during construction in accordance with the **AIA**.
- 7.6.7 There would be a temporary change in land use across the Site as it changes from an area of farmland to a solar farm above grassland and associated BESS and Substation infrastructure. The proposed mitigation measures would ensure that the important landscape features that contribute to the character of the Site and the wider landscape are retained and enhanced.
- 7.6.8 The Proposed Development includes substantial planting of new native woodland blocks, shelter belts as well as individual tree and hedgerow planting, which in the short term would have little effect, but over time as these grow, they would provide a mature landscape setting to the Proposed Development and provide multifunctional benefits including ecological connectivity and biodiversity enhancement.
- 7.6.9 As part of their partnership with Lightrock Power, the RSPB provided advice based on the information provided at the time on opportunities for conservation of priority species, such as the Turtle Dove, and for providing habitats of higher distinctiveness, including the creation of new habitat and enhancement of retained habitats.
- 7.6.10 The Proposed Development, over its approximate 40-year lifespan, would deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain. The Site would be reinstated to its existing agricultural use following decommissioning of the Development. However, it is anticipated that all landscape improvements would be retained; albeit the grassland would be subject to a return to arable use for cereals, subject to best practice farming at the time.

- 7.6.11 The judgement of landscape effects is based on combining the sensitivity of the affected resource / receptor (**Medium** sensitivity), and the magnitude of change caused by the Proposed Development.
- 7.6.12 The assessment of the overall magnitude of change at Construction is considered to be **Low** as it is short term and reversible.
- 7.6.13 The level of effect to landscape fabric at Construction Phase have been assessed to represent a **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effect on the landscape resource of the Site itself. This is derived from the limited, reversible and short-term loss of the existing landscape features within the Site required to facilitate the Proposed Development, and the new landscape proposals yet to have established.

Operational Phase Year 1

- 7.6.14 The Operational Phase is assessed at Year 1 when the Proposed Development including planting has been implemented, but before any planted mitigation can take effect.
- 7.6.15 During the lifespan of the Proposed Development, there would be a loss of the ability to use the landform beneath the solar panels for arable farmland. However, the installation of the Proposed Development would not require any substantial ground works, foundations, or construction for the main components of the array. During the lifetime of the array, the landform beneath it would benefit from being in meadow use, which brings biodiversity and green infrastructure benefits above that of arable farmland.
- 7.6.16 The Proposed Development in its entirety could be easily removed at the end of its life expectancy and if required the land could be restored to its existing uses without any special treatment being necessary. Until the Proposed Development is removed, and the landform below reverted to arable, there would continue be an adverse effect. However, there would be ecological and biodiversity benefits. There would be no loss of trees as a result of this Proposed Development. In the short term, the effect of new tree planting would be limited but over time as these trees grow, they would provide a mature landscape setting to the Proposed Development and provide multifunctional benefits including ecological connectivity. In the long term, there would be an overall increase in the level of tree cover resulting in beneficial effects.
- 7.6.17 Likewise, there would be a very limited loss of hedgerows as a result of this Proposed Development. However, the landscape scheme includes for strengthened and new native hedgerows. In the short term, the effect of this planting would be limited but over time as these hedgerows grow, they would provide a mature landscape setting to the development and provide multifunctional benefits including ecological connectivity and additional screening resulting in beneficial effects.
- 7.6.18 On balance and considering both beneficial and adverse effects during the construction phase of the Proposed Development, the magnitude of change would be **Medium** resulting in a **Moderate, Adverse** effect on landscape fabric at commencement of year 1 of operations.

Operational Phase Year 15

- 7.6.19 The Proposed Development includes new native woodland blocks, shelter belts as well as individual tree and hedgerow planting, which in the short term would have little effect, but over time as these grow, they would provide a mature landscape setting to the Proposed Development and provide multifunctional benefits including ecological connectivity and contribution towards the North Hertfordshire LCA objectives. In the long term, there would be a substantial overall increase in the level of tree and hedgerow cover on Site.
- 7.6.20 Once the Proposed Development has established (Year 15), the longer-term magnitude of change is considered to increase to **Low** and as a consequence, effects are considered to be **Minor Beneficial** to the fabric of the Site itself. This is driven by the retention of the existing landscape fabric of the Site, the long term substantial overall increase in the level of tree and hedgerow cover (including considerable BNG across the Site) resulting from the landscape proposals as well as the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) that could be secured by appropriate planning condition and would be put in place across the Site ensuring effective ongoing management and maintenance of the landscape proposals during the lifetime of the array.
- 7.6.21 By year 15 the mitigation planting would reinforce key landscape characteristics. The conservation and considerable enhancement of Site vegetation would achieve national and district landscape management objectives stated in the published character assessments.

Local Landscape Character

Assessment context

- 7.6.22 The Site makes a positive contribution to the local landscape by embodying many of the key characteristics associated with the 'Upper Beane Valley Tributaries' LCA. The heavily ploughed or grazed condition of the Site, combined with its comparatively slight undulating topography, results in a landscape that reads as attractive countryside. However, it does not exhibit attributes that would elevate it beyond the typical aesthetic or experiential quality of ordinary, functional agricultural land.
- 7.6.23 Whilst it is recognised that the landscape surrounding the Site is not unattractive, it is undesignated ordinarily attractive agricultural farmland that is representative of that found within the wider area. It is not rare, nor does it contain any special features to elevate the value of it above that of the surrounding countryside. The electricity pylons (large and small scale) which cross the site itself, and the surrounding countryside impart an urbanising influence on the character of the local landscape and decrease the sensitivity of this location.
- 7.6.24 The low-level nature of the array at 3m, combined with the layering of existing vegetation, would help to limit appreciation of the Proposed Development within the wider countryside. Surrounding woodland blocks would further this screening allowing the

Proposed Development to be somewhat absorbed into its immediate surroundings limiting wider adverse effects.

- 7.6.25 The taller principal elements of the substation extend to 6.4m (although busbars extend up to 12m), with the relay and control room reaching 5m. These elements have been positioned adjacent to the Site's eastern boundary, utilising existing topography and tree cover to provide initial screening. Woodland blocks within the surrounding countryside, including those immediately enclosing the Site, and within the surrounding landscape (such as, but not limited to, including Rydal's Wood and Coldash and parcels of ancient woodland in the surrounding area of the Site, including Munches Wood and Baskets Wood) further this screening and enclosure.
- 7.6.26 While all areas of the Site are largely visible from within its boundaries, it is relatively low-lying in relation to the surrounding landscape. Changes in topography help provide containment. For example, gently rolling topography that descends from approximately 135m AOD in the western corner and 130m AOD in the eastern corner, slope southwards gradually to 95m AOD towards the River Beane. Woodland blocks to the north and northeast of the Site are located on land ranging between 120m and 140m AOD within the relatively elevated but level Weston Green End Plateau LCA. These features combine with the local topography to restrict visibility primarily to a series of short- to intermediate-range views within the immediate landscape. To the southeast, the landform rises steadily beyond the Site boundary across the Ardeley / Cottered Settled Hills LCA, reaching elevations of approximately 135m AOD, before levelling out across the Cherry Green Arable Plateau LCA. Wooded belts and hedgerow boundaries quickly provide wider screening in this direction.
- 7.6.27 The low-level nature of the solar arrays (max 3m), combined with the layering of existing vegetation, would help to limit appreciation of the solar farm within the surrounding countryside. The isolated location of the proposed BESS and substation combined with the existing screening help to limit appreciation of the construction of these taller elements of the Proposed Development within the wider landscape. Woodland blocks along the western and northern edge of the Proposed Development would provide suitable screening allowing them to be somewhat absorbed into its immediate surroundings limiting wider adverse effects.
- 7.6.28 It is acknowledged that the Proposed Development would be apparent from the immediate setting where there would be a notable change to the immediate character of the area. However, this would be limited to the Site itself and its immediate setting. This screening and changes in topography, allows for the Proposed Development to be absorbed into its immediate surroundings limiting appreciation of them from within the wider landscape.
- 7.6.29 As set out in Para 7.4.58, the **Medium** value and **Medium** susceptibility of the landscape are combined to lead to a **Medium** sensitivity.

Construction and Operational Phase Year 1

- 7.6.30 The construction period would be expected to take 12 to 18 months and would not require any substantial machinery and would not have any material influence on the wider outlying landscape context. Whilst there would be some change locally as the Proposed Development is constructed, the low-level nature of the solar arrays (up to 3m max), combined with the layering of existing vegetation would help to limit appreciation of the construction of the Proposed Development within the wider landscape, limiting adverse effects on the character of the wider landscape. Surrounding woodland blocks (particularly to the north) would further this screening allowing the Proposed Development to be somewhat absorbed into its immediate surroundings, limiting wider adverse effects. The isolated location of the proposed BESS and substation combined with the existing screening and proximity to existing infrastructure (the transmission lines are to the west) would help to limit appreciation of the construction of these taller elements within the wider landscape, limiting adverse effects on the character of the wider landscape.
- 7.6.31 The proposed mitigation measures, as shown on the Environmental Masterplan in **Appendix 7.4 (Volume 2)**, include for the planting of new sections of native hedgerows and tree belts, the planting of new woodland blocks and a change to the overall hedgerow management across the Site to allow existing (and proposed) hedgerows to grow taller (up to 4.5m+). These measures would lead to further enclosure and screening of the Proposed Development, limiting opportunities for adverse effects on the landscape character. The proposed landscape mitigation strategy is in keeping with the character of the local landscape and would help provide additional structure and enclosure across the Site and the immediate area. The landscape proposals have been designed to provide screening and to enclose the Proposed Development, whilst providing multifunctional benefits including increased ecological connectivity and additional habitat and biodiversity benefit.
- 7.6.32 The effect of the Proposed Development on local landscape character during construction would be temporary and include both direct and indirect effects. The direct effects are dealt with under landscape fabric above. In terms of indirect effects, the Proposed Development would not fundamentally alter or remove any of the key characteristics of the local landscape. Disruption to the existing working farmland baseline would occur due to construction vehicle movements and other construction activities such as the erection of fencing and implementation of the mitigation planting. The installation activity and nature of the PV panels is not that dissimilar to certain intensive agricultural operations (such as harvesting or the use of polytunnels or plastic sheeting in force-growing), the magnitude of change on character due to these activities when considered in isolation would be **Low, Adverse**.
- 7.6.33 There would be a minor change to perceptions of tranquillity due to the presence of manmade features within the Site. There would also be a slight loss of openness (horizontally, but not vertically) due to the limited bulk of the Proposed Development. These adverse effects on character would directly affect approximately 20% of the Upper Beane Valley LCT with indirect effects extending to a very limited area and no more than 25% of the LCT. The retention and strengthening of the hedgerows and blocks of woodland that

characterise the local landscape would limit the ability to discern the Proposed Development from afar.

- 7.6.34 The assessment of the overall magnitude of change at Construction and at Year 1 is considered to be **Low** as it is short term and reversible.
- 7.6.35 The level of effect to landscape fabric during Construction and at Year 1 have been assessed to represent a **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effect on the landscape resource of the Site itself. This is derived from the limited reversible and short-term loss of the existing landscape features within the Site required to facilitate the Proposed Development, and the new landscape proposals yet to have established.
- 7.6.36 There would be a variable magnitude of change according to how keenly the perceptual effects of tranquillity and loss of openness would be felt, ranging from **Medium** in the most affected areas that are within the Site, to a **Low** magnitude of change in close proximity to the Site and no effect for 75% of the local landscape resource. For these reasons, the assessment of the overall magnitude of change is considered to be **Low** resulting in a **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effect on local character during construction.
- 7.6.37 With the Proposed Development in place, by Year 1 of Operations, the magnitude of change is considered to be **Medium** resulting in a **Moderate Adverse** effect on local character due to their visible and long term but reversible nature of the Proposed Development.

Operational Phase Year 15

- 7.6.38 Once built, the low-level nature of the array, combined with the layering of existing vegetation would help to limit appreciation of the Proposed Development within the wider countryside. Woodland blocks along the southern edge of the Proposed Development would provide suitable screening allowing it to be somewhat absorbed into its immediate surroundings limiting wider adverse effects. However, it would be apparent from the immediate setting.
- 7.6.39 By Year 15 the mitigation planting would reinforce key local landscape characteristics. The conservation and considerable enhancement of hedgerows and addition of woodland cover would contribute to the achievement of national and district landscape management objectives stated in the published character assessments.
- 7.6.40 This assessment considers that by Year 15 the adverse perceptual effects on local landscape character would diminish and no longer be discernible beyond the immediate vicinity of the Site.
- 7.6.41 The judgement of landscape effects is based on combining the sensitivity of the affected resource / receptor (**Medium** sensitivity), and the magnitude of change caused by the Proposed Development. It is acknowledged that there would be a notable change to the immediate character of the area as a result of the Proposed Development. However, this would be limited to the Site itself and its immediate setting.
- 7.6.42 By Year 15 as new vegetation matures it would provide greater screening and containment to the Proposed Development. New planting has been designed to help nestle the

Proposed Development into the landscape by building upon the existing character of the area. This is primarily achieved through the reinforcement of existing boundary hedgerows and through the planting of new tree belts and woodland blocks. These would represent positive contributions to this area of countryside in the context of this LCA and magnitude of change is assessed as **Low**. The level of effect to the character of the local landscape during Construction, Year 15 have been assessed to represent a **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effect.

Wider Landscape Character

- 7.6.43 In terms of the nature of effects on the wider landscape, these would be broadly comparable to those identified for the local landscape character, but of a reduced magnitude (**Very Low**) due to the considerably larger scale of the receiving landscape. While there would remain a graduated change in perceptual experience relative to proximity to the Site, the overall contribution of the Proposed Development to change within the wider landscape is limited.
- 7.6.44 Considering the perceptual characteristics of the Proposed Development within the baseline context described in section 7.4, it is considered that any adverse effects on the wider landscape would not exceed the threshold of significance. Given that the Proposed Development occupies a small proportion of the North Hertfordshire LCA, the assessment concludes that the Proposed Development would result in a **Minor to Negligible Neutral** effect at this broader scale.
- 7.6.45 Consequently, no further detailed assessment has been undertaken at this scale, in order to avoid disproportionate emphasis on potential effects that would be diluted within the broader landscape context.

7.7 Assessment of Visual Effects

Overview

- 7.7.1 Visual effects relate to changes in available views of the landscape and the effect of those changes on people, including:
- The direct effects of the Proposed Development on the content and character of views through the intrusion or obstruction and/or the change or loss of existing elements.
 - The overall effect on visual amenity, be it degradation or enhancement.
- 7.7.2 Visual effects are identified for different receptors (people) who would experience the view at their places of residence, during recreational activities, at work, or when travelling through the area. The visual effects may include the following:
- Visual effect: a change to an existing static view, sequential views, or wider visual amenity as a result of the Proposed Development, or

- the loss of particular landscape elements or features already present in the view.

7.7.3 In predicting the effects of the Proposed Development on the visual receptors from the viewpoints being assessed, GLVIA3 (para 6.27), states that it is helpful to consider (but not restricted to) the following factors:

- Nature of the view (full, partial or glimpsed).
- Proportion of the Proposed Development visible (full, most, part or none).
- Distance of the viewpoint from the Proposed Development and whether it would be the focus of the view or only a small element.
- Whether the view is stationary, transient, or sequential.
- The nature of the changes to the view.

7.7.4 Additionally, the seasonal effects of vegetation are considered, in particular the varying degree of screening and filtering of views.

7.7.5 People have different responses to views which are dependent upon context such as the:

- Location.
- Time of day.
- Season.
- Degree of exposure to views.

7.7.6 Responses to views are also dependent upon the purpose of people being in a particular place such as:

- Recreation.
- Residence.
- Employment.
- Passing through on roads, rail, or other forms of transport.

7.7.7 As people move through the landscape, certain activities or locations may be specifically associated with the experience and enjoyment of the landscape, such as:

- The use of paths such as core paths, footpaths, bridleways, byways open to all traffic (BOATs) and National Trails.
- National or local cycle routes.
- Tourist or scenic routes, and associated viewpoints on land or water.

7.7.8 The level of the visual effect has been assessed during Construction, at Completion (Year 1) of the Proposed Development and once established (i.e. 15 years plus). It is recognised that vegetation continues to grow beyond this period until full maturity is reached.

Assessing Visual Sensitivity

- 7.7.9 Determining visual sensitivity is the combination of susceptibility to change and value of a view. It is considered that a combination of high susceptibility to change and high value is likely to result in the highest sensitivity, whereas a low susceptibility and low value is likely to result in the lowest level.
- 7.7.10 The susceptibility of visual receptors to changes in the view and visual amenity is related to activity they are engaged in and the extent to which their attention is focused on the views and visual amenity at that location. As such, those receptors most sensitive to change are likely to include people engaged in outdoor activities where an appreciation of the landscape is the focus or residents in areas where the landscape setting contributes to the setting of the properties.
- 7.7.11 Conversely, those considered least sensitive to change include (but are not restricted to) people engaged in outdoor sports or recreation where there is no focus on the surrounding landscape/views and people at their place of work where the focus is on the work activity.

Assessment of Visual Effects

- 7.7.12 To determine visual effects both the sensitivity of the visual receptor and the magnitude of change are considered. Overall, the extent of views and visual influence of the Proposed Development are limited to the local area and mostly contained to locations alongside or within the Site. Other views are considered possible from a small number of locations within the surrounding countryside including a number of nearby residential properties.
- 7.7.13 Consideration of visual impacts of a Proposed Development is usually restricted to potential impacts on public visual amenity i.e. publicly accessible locations. However, it is not uncommon for significant adverse effects on views and visual amenity to be experienced by people at their place of residence as a result of introducing a new development into the landscape. It is a commonly understood position that private individuals do not have an automatic right to a view¹⁵ and where a new development significantly changes a view from a private property, this is not normally grounds for a refusal of planning permission, even in the case of significant impacts to residents' outlook.
- 7.7.14 The exception to this approach is when a visual impact on a private property is so severe that it may affect the residential amenity of a dwelling. This assessment considers the Visual Amenity of nearby residential properties. This is the overall quality, experience and nature of views and outlook available to occupants of residential properties, including views from gardens and domestic curtilage. It represents the visual component of Residential Amenity.
- 7.7.15 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) is the process by which the potential visual impact of a development on the residential amenity of a private property can be objectively assessed. The Landscape Institute TGN 02/2019 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment sets out the approach to assessing the potential impact of a development upon Residential

¹⁵ Established in 1610 by Aldred's Case [1558–1774] All ER Rep 622.

Visual Amenity and is based on the principles and process established in GLVIA3 and draws on principles established in Planning Appeals by planning inspectors. A key consideration was the Burnthouse Farm windfarm inquiry in which the Inspector stated:

“No individual has the right to a particular view but there comes a point when, by virtue of the proximity, size and scale of a given development, a residential property would be rendered so unattractive a place to live that planning permission should be refused. The test of what would be unacceptably unattractive should be an objective test.”¹⁶

7.7.16 At paragraph 120 of the Burnthouse Farm report the Inspector comments further on the threshold for determining unacceptable effects on visual amenity:

“There needs to be a degree of harm over and above an identified substantial adverse effect to take a case into the category of refusal in the public interest. Changing the outlook from a property is not sufficient.”¹⁷

7.7.17 Factors that contribute to this judgement include whether a development is:

- Overwhelming in views in all directions.
- Inescapably dominant.
- Unpleasantly encroaching.

7.7.18 By way of further clarification, the methodology for assessing the visual effects on views from residential properties allows for four stages of assessment, which is set out within current guidance on Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) contained within the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 02/19. Steps 1-3 of RVAA guidance align with the standard LVIA based approach as defined in GLVIA3. The guidance recommends that the effects on residential amenity should be assessed as follows:

- Step 1 – Definition of the Study Area and scope of the assessment
- Step 2 – Evaluation of Baseline Visual Amenity
- Step 3 – Assessment of likely change to visual amenity of properties
- Step 4 – Forming the RVAA judgement

7.7.19 Step 4 of the RVAA is defined as being required as follows:

“In this final step, and only for those properties where the largest magnitude of effect has been identified, a further judgement is required.”¹⁸

7.7.20 The assessment process considers the visual amenity from principal rooms (i.e., those most usually occupied during the day for living or receptions, from where views of the surrounding landscape would most readily be appreciated) under steps 1-3 above as defined by GLVIA3 and TGN 02/19. Steps 1-3 are undertaken as part of the LVIA for the Proposed Development. Where, following assessment of effects upon residential

¹⁶ Burnthouse Farm Windfarm, SoS Decision (APP/D0515/A/10/2123739) 6th July 2011

¹⁷ The Landscape Institute, Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA), Technical Guidance Note 02/19, 15 March 2019.

¹⁸ The Landscape Institute, Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA), Technical Guidance Note 02/19, 15 March 2019

properties at year 15, there remain effects at the highest level, (often defined as the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold), then a full RVAA would be undertaken separately from the LVIA.

- 7.7.21 Field work, with the assistance of the desktop study has helped to inform the visual envelope. Photographic viewpoint locations are shown on **Figure 13 Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**.
- 7.7.22 Photographic viewpoints are shown on Figure 15, **Appendix 7.2 (Volume 2)**. The field work and desktop study also assisted in identifying the following private, public and transport receptors that have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development. The following receptors within the visual envelope could experience effects.

Private Receptors

Kingswoodbury House - Represented by VP 7

- 7.7.23 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.
- 7.7.24 It is likely that there would be full views of parts of the Proposed Development on the west facing slopes of Field 3. These views would be obtained from upper storey windows and amenity area to the east. The nature of these views will change due to the introduction of the Proposed Developments and their associated features as the landscape transitions from an open agricultural landscape to that of a solar energy generating facility (with integrated agricultural land use).

Construction Phase

- 7.7.25 Whilst there would be some visual change to the nature of the Site itself as the Proposed Development is constructed, the low level nature of the infrastructure and the orientation, topography and screening proposed would ensure the majority of the solar farm would be screened in most views from the property, including those from the principal rooms. There would be no development in the fields next to Kingswoodbury House and the land in that location within the Site would be used for biodiversity and landscape / visual enhancement. The development is set back from the Site boundary, creating a robust buffer both perceptually and physically between the property and the Proposed Development. The landscaping proposed in the development would be newly implemented at this point and not providing any significant screening of the Proposed Development.
- 7.7.26 The judgement of visual effects is based on combining the sensitivity of the affected resource / receptor (**Medium** sensitivity), and the magnitude of change on the views caused by the Proposed Development.
- 7.7.27 The assessment of the overall magnitude of change at Construction is considered to be **Low** and **Adverse** on views as it is short term and reversible.

- 7.7.28 The level of effect during construction has been assessed to represent a **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effect on Kingswoodbury House. This is derived from the **limited reversible and short-term loss** of the existing landscape features within the Site required to facilitate the Proposed Development.

Operational Phase Year 1

- 7.7.29 Until the landscaping has established there would likely be south-westwardly views from the upper storey of the property. The judgement of visual effects is based on combining the sensitivity of the affected resource / receptor (**Medium** sensitivity), and the magnitude of change on the views caused by the Proposed Development, considered to be **Medium**, with operational effects at year 1 to be **Moderate Adverse**.

Operational Phase Year 15

- 7.7.30 Once established, the proposed mitigation measures would screen the majority of the Proposed Development from the property. The landscape mitigation measures are considered in keeping with the character of the area; however, they would still result in a marked change to the views from this property. As the landscaping matures, it would filter and soften views of the Proposed Development from the property and by Operational Year 15, the magnitude of change would reduce to **Low**, and the significance of effect would reduce to **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** and not significant. However, this additional enclosure may still be considered detrimental, and as such, the effect would be Adverse on Kingswoodbury House.

Properties in Cumberlow Green - Represented by VPs 11 and 21 (in part)

- 7.7.31 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.
- 7.7.32 These properties generally face west onto the A507 with the Proposed Development having the potential to appear in oblique views from the fronts of the properties. Existing views towards the Site are typically truncated by intervening vegetation. Views of the Site itself are unlikely, with development having been set back so as to screen the Proposed Development beyond topographical variations in the local landscape.

Construction Phase

- 7.7.33 Any views of the construction of the Proposed Development would be glimpses of very small parts and heavily filtered through layers of intervening existing vegetation. The judgement of visual effects is based on combining the sensitivity of the affected resource / receptor (**Medium** sensitivity), and the magnitude of change on the views caused by the Proposed Development.

- 7.7.34 There would be no change to the immediate countryside setting of these houses and this would result in a **Low** magnitude of change and **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effects. This is derived from the **limited reversible and short-term loss** of the existing landscape features within the Site required to facilitate the Proposed Development.

Operational Phase Year 1

- 7.7.35 The landscape mitigation planting would be immature, not providing additional screening to the Proposed Development during the operation period year 1, although the character of the surrounding landscape would be maintained, resulting in a **Medium** magnitude of change and **Moderate Adverse** effects, which are significant.

Operational Phase Year 15

- 7.7.36 The landscape mitigation planting would help to further screen the Proposed Development during the operation period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape resulting in a **Low** magnitude of change and **Moderate to Minor Adverse** effects. This would remain consistent through to year 15 and through to the eventual decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

Properties in Luffenhall, Cromer and Cottered - Represented by VPs 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19

- 7.7.37 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.
- 7.7.38 These properties are located to south of the Site and whilst the properties themselves are outside of the augmented ZTV, Figure 9, **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)** there would be potential for glimpsed, partial and heavily filtered views from the amenity areas and during access/egress. Existing views towards the Site are typically truncated by intervening landform and vegetation. Views of the Site itself are unlikely.

Construction Phase

- 7.7.39 Any views of the construction of the Proposed Development would be glimpses of very small parts and at distances of several hundred metres. There would be no change to the immediate countryside setting of these houses and this would result in a **Negligible** magnitude of change and **Negligible** effects.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 7.7.40 The landscape mitigation planting would help to further screen the Proposed Development during the operation period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape resulting in a **Low** magnitude of change and **Negligible Adverse** effects. This would remain consistent through to year 15 and through to the eventual decommissioning of the array.

Public Receptors

Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 020 – represented by VPs 3, 11, 22 and 23

- 7.7.41 This footpath is within the Site for the majority of its length.
- 7.7.42 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Construction Phase

- 7.7.43 Given that the footpath passes through the Site for the majority of its length the magnitude of change is **High**, and this would result in a **Major to Moderate Adverse** effect that is considered to be **Significant**.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 7.7.44 The landscape mitigation measures would help to integrate and screen parts of the Proposed Development during year 1 of the operation period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape. There would be close range views of the perimeter of the Proposed Development including the security fencing with mid-range views across large swathes of the array. The introduction of noticeable manmade features into the foreground of views would result in a **High** magnitude of change and **Major to Moderate Adverse** effects at Year 1 and **Significant**.
- 7.7.45 As the landscaping matures, it would screen parts of Proposed Development. The enhancement of landscape elements immediately adjacent to the path and the provision of their long-term management for biodiversity would result in some improvement to the visual amenity for users of the path when compared to the existing situation. In more elevated places, views of the Proposed Development would occur across hedgerows and the adverse effects described at year 1 above would continue to be experienced. The Proposed Development would remain perceptible and as such the magnitude of change is considered to be **Medium** resulting in a **Moderate Adverse** effect at year 15 that would not be significant.

Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 019 - represented by VPs 24 and 25

- 7.7.46 This assessment considers that this receptor has a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users walking through the countryside. The views from this receptor are deemed to be of low value.
- 7.7.47 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Construction Phase

- 7.7.48 Given that the footpath passes through the Site for the majority of its length the magnitude of change is **High**, and this would result in a **Major to Moderate, Adverse** effect that is considered to be **Significant**.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 7.7.49 Upon completion of the construction the path would be enclosed by existing hedgerows that have been encouraged to reach a height of 4.5m with retained hedgerow trees, enhanced where necessary by new planting, with the objective of creating or restoring green lanes. The landscape mitigation measures would help to integrate and screen parts of the Proposed Development during Year 1 of the operation period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape. There would be close range views of the perimeter of the Proposed Development including the security fencing with mid-range views across large swathes of the array. The introduction of noticeable manmade features into the foreground of views would result in a **High** magnitude of change and **Major to Moderate Adverse** effects at Year 1 and **Significant**.
- 7.7.50 As the landscaping matures, it would screen parts of the array. The enhancement of landscape elements immediately adjacent to the path and the provision of their long-term management for biodiversity would result in some improvement to the visual amenity for users of the path when compared to the existing situation. In more elevated places, views of the Proposed Development would occur across hedgerows and the adverse effects described at year 1 above would continue to be experienced. The Proposed Development would remain perceptible and as such the magnitude of change is considered to be **Medium** resulting in a **Moderate, Adverse** effect at year 15 that would be significant.

Users of BOAT Weston 39/Clothall 012 adjacent to Site - represented by VPs 4 and 5

- 7.7.51 This assessment considers that this receptor has a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users walking through the countryside. The views from this receptor are deemed to be of low value.
- 7.7.52 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Construction Phase

- 7.7.53 Given that the footpath passes adjacent to the Site for the majority of its length and there would be prominent visual effects during construction the magnitude of change is **High**, and this would result in a **Major to Moderate, Adverse** effect that is considered to be **Significant**.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 7.7.54 Upon completion of the construction phase the path would be enclosed by existing hedgerows that have been encouraged to reach a height of 3m with retained hedgerow trees, enhanced where necessary by new planting, with the objective of creating or restoring green lanes. The landscape mitigation measures would help to integrate and screen parts of the Proposed Development during Year 1 of the operational period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape. There would be close range views of the perimeter of the Proposed Development including the security fencing with mid-range views across the array. The Proposed Development would result in a **High** magnitude of change and **Major to Moderate Adverse** effects at Year 1 and **Significant**.
- 7.7.55 As the landscaping matures, it would screen parts of the array. The enhancement of landscape elements immediately adjacent to the path and the provision of their long-term management for biodiversity would result in some improvement to the visual amenity for users of the path when compared to the existing situation. In more elevated places, views of the Proposed Development would occur across hedgerows and the adverse effects described at Year 1 above would continue to be experienced. However, despite the introduction of noticeable manmade features into the foreground, there would be marked improvements in terms of reduction of visibility of the PV panels from the BOAT, and an enhanced green lane character. The Proposed Development would remain perceptible and as such the magnitude of change is considered to be **Low** resulting in a **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effect at year 15 that would not be significant.

Users of PRow in wider landscape

- 7.7.56 Those that may be subject to views of the Proposed Development include:
- Clothall 013 (represented by VP10)
 - Clothall 016 (represented by VP8)
 - Clothall 020 (represented by VP23)
 - Rushden and Wallington 009 (represented by VP12)
 - Restricted Byway Cottered 006 (represented by VP13, VP15)
 - Ardeley 049 (represented by VP16)
 - Cottered 028 (represented by VP17)
- 7.7.57 This assessment considers that this receptor group have a range of susceptibilities to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users walking through the countryside; a **Medium** Susceptibility is therefore likely. Likewise, views from this receptor group are deemed to be of mixed values; overall, a **Medium** value is likely.
- 7.7.58 The sensitivity of the receptor group combines the susceptibility (**Medium**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Construction Phase

- 7.7.59 These routes pass at a range of distances and have a variety of views over the Site, the majority beyond visibility or physical link to it. Magnitude of change is **Low**, owing the reversibility of the effects, and this would result in a **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effect that is not considered significant.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 7.7.60 As above, the landscape mitigation measures would help to integrate and screen parts of the Proposed Development during Year 1 of the operation period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape. There would be close range views of the perimeter of the Proposed Development including the security fencing with mid-range views across the array from some of the receptors in the group, the extent of which would be dependent chiefly on the effects of seasonal leaf fall and distance. The Proposed Development would not be prominent in views, resulting in a **Low** magnitude of change and **Minor, Adverse** effects at Year.
- 7.7.61 As the landscaping matures, it would screen parts of the array. Views of the Proposed Development would be screened or be accommodated within the wider landscape resource. The Proposed Development would cease to be perceptible and as such the magnitude of change is considered to be **Negligible** resulting in a **Negligible** effect at year 15.

Transport Receptors

Users of A507 and minor road across River Beane

- 7.7.62 As demonstrated by Viewpoints 1, 6, 7, 10, 14 and 21 views of the construction of the Proposed Development from this receptor would be close range.
- 7.7.63 This assessment considers that this receptor has a **Medium** susceptibility to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users drivers through the countryside. The views from this receptor are deemed to be of **Low** value.
- 7.7.64 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**Medium**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Low**.

Construction Phase

- 7.7.65 There would be noticeable changes to approximately 1km section of this route with the majority of the route being unaffected and this would result in a **Medium** magnitude of change and **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effects that are not considered significant.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 7.7.66 The landscape mitigation planting would help to further screen the Proposed Development during the operation period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape resulting in a **High** magnitude of change and **Major to Moderate, Adverse** effects at Year 1 completion. As the landscaping matures, it would screen views of the Proposed Development for the majority of the route. For these reasons the magnitude of change would reduce to **Medium**, and the **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effect would continue in year 15.

Users of B1037 and Brookfield Common

- 7.7.67 As demonstrated by Viewpoint 16 northerly views of the construction of the Proposed Development from the receptor would be cross valley glimpses at medium to long range of parts of the Proposed Development. Sensitivity of these locations would be **Medium**.

Construction Phase

- 7.7.68 There would be limited changes to very short sections of the routes with the majority of the route being unaffected and this would result in a **Low** magnitude of change and **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effects that are not considered significant.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 7.7.69 The landscape mitigation planting would help to further screen the Proposed Development during the operation period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape resulting in a **Low** magnitude of change and **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effects. As the landscaping matures, it would screen views of the solar farm from majority of the route. For these reasons the magnitude of change would remain **Low**, and the **Moderate to Minor, Adverse** effect would continue in year 15.

Conclusions

- 7.7.70 The LVIA has assessed the existing landscape character and visual resource of the Site—Westfield Energy Conservation Park—within its local and regional context. The Proposed Development comprises a solar farm and associated infrastructure, including Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), set within a rural landscape of arable fields and established field boundaries.

- 7.7.71 Although the Proposed Development occupies a relatively large proportion of the Site, , the infrastructure would be of relatively low vertical profile, and benefits from substantial existing screening provided by hedgerows and woodland. Combined with the proposed additional mitigation, this significantly limits potential visual intrusion.
- 7.7.72 The Site lies within the Upper Beane Valley Tributaries and the Weston – Green End Plateau LCAs identified in the North Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment. It is situated on gently sloping ground with established vegetation patterns. The area’s rural character, interspersed with utility infrastructure such as pylons and OHLs, sets a baseline that accommodates a degree of change without fundamental loss of character.
- 7.7.73 Mitigation measures have been integrated into the Site layout from the outset to minimise both landscape and visual effects. These include:
- Retention of existing hedgerows and mature trees, which provide immediate screening.
 - Setbacks from sensitive receptors, including public rights of way and nearby dwellings.
 - Low height and uniform arrangement of solar panels, reducing visual massing.
 - Orientation and layout that follows the field pattern, aiding integration.
- 7.7.74 To deliver these outcomes, the following landscape interventions are proposed:
- New native hedgerow planting along eastern and southern boundaries.
 - Enhancement of existing field boundaries to ensure continuity and density of screening.
 - Grassland creation and wildflower seeding, contributing to both visual quality and biodiversity.
 - Tree and woodland block planting at strategic locations to disrupt wider views and assimilate the development into the landscape framework.
- 7.7.75 The landscape effects of the Proposed Development upon completion are assessed to be **Minor, Adverse** and would diminish further as the proposed planting becomes established. The Proposed Development maintains the broad landscape structure and avoids key features of value, ensuring that the underlying rural character would not be fundamentally altered.

Table 7.4: Summary of Landscape Effects

Receptor	sensitivity	Construction Phase			Operation Phase Year 1			Operation Phase Year 15			
		Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Significant Residual Effects
Landscape Receptors											
Landscape Fabric of the Site	Medium	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Temporary construction work, vehicles and material storage compound, dust and noise occasionally.	Medium	Moderate Adverse	New hedging and tree saplings; variable views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure	Low	Minor Beneficial	Screening hedging & tree growth; glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure	None
Local Landscape Character	Medium	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Temporary construction work, vehicles and material storage compound, dust and noise occasionally.	Medium	Moderate, Adverse	New hedging and tree saplings; variable views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Enhanced screening hedging & tree growth; variable glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure	None
Wider Landscape Character	Low	Very Low	Minor to Negligible Neutral	Distant and glimpsed views of temporary construction work and vehicle movement	Very Low	Minor to Negligible Neutral	New hedging and tree saplings; glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure in wider landscape context	Very Low	Minor to Negligible Neutral	Enhanced screening hedging & tree growth; potentially glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure in wider landscape context	None

Table 7.5: Summary of Visual Effects

Receptor		Sensitivity	Construction Phase			Operation Phase Year 1			Operation Phase Year 15			
			Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Significant Residual Effects
Visual Receptors												
Location description	Viewpoint ID											
Kingswoodbury House	VP 7	Medium	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Temporary construction work, vehicles and material storage compound, dust and noise occasionally.	Medium	Moderate, adverse	New hedging and tree saplings; variable views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Enhanced screening hedging & tree growth; variable glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure	None
Properties in Cumberlow Green.	VPs 11 and 21(in part)	Medium	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Temporary construction work, of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure	Medium	Moderate, adverse	New hedging and tree saplings; glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Enhanced screening hedging & tree growth; variable glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure	None
Properties in Luffenhall, Cromer and Cottered	VPs 14 and 17 (in part)	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Glimpsed views of occasional construction work, vehicles and material storage compound, dust and noise occasionally.	Negligible	Negligible	New hedging and tree saplings; glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure in wider landscape context	Negligible	Negligible	Enhanced screening hedging & tree growth; potentially glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure in wider landscape context	None

Receptor		Sensitivity	Construction Phase			Operation Phase Year 1			Operation Phase Year 15			
			Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Significant Residual Effects
Visual Receptors												
Location description	Viewpoint ID											
Users of PRoW passing through the Site - Clothall 020	VPs 3, 11, 22 and 23	Medium	High	Major to Moderate, Adverse	Construction work, vehicles and material storage compound, dust and noise occasionally.	High	Major to Moderate, Adverse	New hedging and tree saplings; variable views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure	Medium	Moderate, Adverse	Enhanced screening hedging & tree growth; views of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure	Yes
Users of PRoW passing through the Site - Clothall 019	VPs 24 and 25	Medium	High	Major to Moderate, Adverse	Construction work, vehicles and material storage compound, dust and noise occasionally.	High	Major to Moderate, Adverse	New hedging and tree saplings; variable views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure	Medium	Moderate, Adverse	Enhanced screening hedging & tree growth; views of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure	Yes
Users of BOAT Weston 39/Clothall 012 adjacent to Site	VPs 4 and 5	Medium	High	Major to Moderate, Adverse	Construction work, vehicles and material storage compound, dust and noise occasionally.	High	Major to Moderate, Adverse	New hedging and tree saplings; variable views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Enhanced screening hedging & tree growth; views of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure	None

Receptor		Sensitivity	Construction Phase			Operation Phase Year 1			Operation Phase Year 15			
			Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Visual Effects	Elements of Proposed Development Visible	Significant Residual Effects
Visual Receptors												
Location description	Viewpoint ID											
Users of PRoW in wider landscape: Clothall 013 (represented by VP10) Clothall 016 (represented by VP8) Clothall 018 (represented by VP9) Clothall 020 (represented by VP11) Rushden and Wallington 009 (represented by VP12) Restricted Byway Cottered 006 (represented by VP13, VP15) Ardeley 049 (represented by VP16) Cottered 028 (represented by VP17) Restricted Byway Clothall 021 (represented by VP20)		Medium	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Temporary construction work, of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure	Low	Minor, Adverse	New hedging and tree saplings; glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure	Negligible	Negligible	Enhanced screening hedging & tree growth; site not visible for the most part	None
Users of A507 and minor road across River Beane	VPs 1, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14 and 21	Low	Medium	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Construction work, vehicles and material storage compound, dust and noise occasionally.	High	Major to Moderate Adverse	New hedging and tree saplings; variable views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure	Medium	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Enhanced hedging, tree growth; variable general to glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure	None
Users of B1037 and Brookfield Common	VP 17	Medium	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Glimpsed views of construction work, vehicles and material storage compound, dust and noise occasionally.	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	New hedging and tree saplings; glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access & infrastructure in wider landscape context	Low	Moderate to Minor, Adverse	Enhanced hedging, tree growth; variable general to glimpsed views of solar PV panels, access, and infrastructure	None

7.8 Conclusions and Summary of Residual Effects

Existing Receiving Environment

- 7.8.1 As noted in section 7.4 above, the surrounding raised plateau topography, together with the network of hedgerows and backcloth of woodland copses and woodland belts frame the wider landscape surrounding the Site and lead to it generally having a contained character which limits opportunities for views of the Site from within the wider area. Due to the presence of existing vegetation, including woodland belts and hedgerows and existing undulations, there would be limited relationship and little intervisibility from the wider landscape. However, the A507, the B1037 and BOAT Weston 39/Clothall 012 pass along the boundaries of the Site and Footpaths Clothall 019 and Clothall 020 both traverse it centrally, allowing for views of the immediately surrounding fields and those within the Site.

Embedded Mitigation

- 7.8.2 As indicated in section 7.5.21, the Proposed Development offers a substantial uplift the existing landscape and visual resource through BNG and mitigation planting. The total proposed and improved ecological planting would be approximately 170 ha of the 187.3 ha site. Up to 12 -15% of the Site would be existing or new hedgerows, shrub, scrub and new woodland and tree planting. Approximately a further 88% of the site area will be open grassland and meadow grass, some of which would underplant the solar panels. Around 90% of the site would therefore potentially be landscape and visual, biodiversity mitigation or ecological enhancement. The remaining c.12% would include access roads, MVS, substation areas, and fencing. Part of the grassland matrix would coexist as underplanting to solar arrays themselves.
- 7.8.3 The above equates to a significant uplift to the landscape character and visual amenity of the Site, particularly softening views from the A507, the B1037 and PRoWs that traverse or abut it, softening views of the immediately surrounding fields and those within the Site, as well the wider landscape as a whole.

Decommissioning and Legacy Environmental Benefits

- 7.8.4 Upon decommissioning, the Site would be returned to full agricultural use and mitigation planting, and biodiversity enhancements would remain in situ, supporting sustainable land management and reinforcing landscape structure. The planting would have matured to form visually absorbent boundaries and a strengthened the traditional field pattern to be reflective of the local character typologies than existing baseline conditions. Other benefits of the mitigation measures would include biodiversity net gain, soil and hydrological management and agricultural land enhancement. The mitigation strategy would deliver not only a reduction in adverse effects but a positive and durable contribution to the receiving

landscape, consistent with both the mitigation hierarchy and the principles of sustainable development.

Residual Landscape and Visual effects

7.8.5 The following residual effects have been identified:

Table 7.6 Summary of Residual Effects

Receptor	Residual Effects (after Year 15)	Significant
Landscape Receptors		
Landscape Fabric of the Site	Minor to Moderate Adverse	No
Local Landscape Character	Minor to Negligible Neutral	No
Wider Landscape Character	Negligible	No
Visual Receptors		
Kingswoodbury House	Minor to Moderate, Adverse	No
Properties in Cumberlow Green.	Minor to Moderate, Adverse	No
Properties in Luffenhall, Cromer and Cottered	Negligible	No
Users of PRow passing through the Site to Clothall 020	Moderate, Adverse	Yes
Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 019	Moderate Adverse	Yes
Users of BOAT Weston 39/Clothall 012 adjacent to Site	Minor to Moderate Adverse	No
Users of PRow in wider landscape	Negligible	No
Users of A507 and minor road across River Beane	Minor to Moderate Adverse	No
Users of B1037 and Brookfield Common	Minor to Moderate adverse	No

Conclusions

- 7.8.6 The assessment has identified that the Proposed Development would result in a range of landscape and visual effects across the Study Area, with the degree of impact varying in relation to proximity, topography, existing vegetation, and receptor sensitivity. Although the Proposed Development would be visible from the wider landscape, particularly in the early years and from nearby viewpoints such as local PRowS, the overall effect would be contained and softened by existing landform and vegetation as well as by proposed additional screening planting. The visual influence would be localised, and the design of the infrastructure avoids dominance or incongruity in the wider landscape. Over time, as mitigation matures, the Proposed Development would be absorbed into the field structure.
- 7.8.7 As outlined in Table 7.5, most receptors would experience **Negligible to Minor** effects, with **Moderate** effects arising only in a small number of localised cases during construction or early operational phases, typically where public rights of way pass close to the Site boundaries.
- 7.8.8 The Proposed Development has incorporated extensive embedded mitigation, including strategic siting of infrastructure, retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows, woodland and trees, and Proposed Development for substantial new planting. The combination of appropriate siting, low-profile infrastructure, and targeted mitigation measures ensures that effects on both landscape character and visual amenity are limited, localised, and not significant in planning terms. These measures significantly reduce the visibility of the Proposed Development over time. By Year 15, the combination of natural topographic screening and matured vegetation ensures that almost all visual effects are reduced to **Moderate to Minor, Minor** or **Negligible**, including at more sensitive locations such as nearby footpaths or isolated dwellings.
- 7.8.9 No landscape character areas, conservation areas, or key viewpoints are subject to Major (significant) effects at any stage of the project lifecycle, although during Construction and Operation Year 1 Phases, some (notably, PRowS Clothall 019, 020 and BOAT Weston 39/Clothall 012) that pass through, or are immediately adjacent to, the Site are acknowledged to be of potentially **Major to Moderate, Adverse** effect. These will be temporary and /or reversible, and are confined to being within the Site itself, where construction work and initial changes will be adjacent to the receptors. Such effects would be inevitable and normal for an infrastructural construction site, both during the work and immediately on completion.
- 7.8.10 Views from heritage assets such as the Cromer Windmill have been assessed with the same landscape and visual impact criteria used to evaluate all other views, which is principally of an ordinarily beautiful landscape with a **Medium** sensitivity. This is not to say the heritage assets themselves do not carry a high value, but they are assessed on a different basis. There are no significant residual effects predicted in the context of relevant guidance, including the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3). The Proposed Development aligns with North Hertfordshire District Council's landscape assessment criteria, including the preservation of valued features and enhancement of local green infrastructure, supporting its overall suitability for the Site.

- 7.8.11 In conclusion, while some temporary adverse effects are unavoidable during construction and early operation, these are localised and reduce substantially with time. The careful design approach and embedded mitigation strategy ensure that the Proposed Development would not result in significant landscape or visual harm and is therefore considered acceptable in planning terms from an LVIA perspective.

8 Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

8.1 Introduction

Purpose of Chapter

8.1.1 This Chapter has been prepared by Lanpro Services Ltd to review cumulative landscape and visual effects in respect of the Proposed Development as set out in Chapter 4 of the ES.

8.1.2 The Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 states:

“The cumulative LVIA should focus on the assessment of the project under consideration in the context of other submitted planning applications (potentially considering different combinations or scenarios where relevant) with scoping stage schemes only considered where they are likely to be submitted before or at a similar time to the project under consideration, and interact with the project in a potentially significant way, provided that the scoping project(s) is/are well defined and sufficient information is available for the effects to be reasonably understood,”¹⁹

8.1.3 There is a submitted application for a solar energy development on land adjacent to the southern corner of the Site, beyond the Cromer Heath road. With reference to **ES Chapter 7** para 7.3.19, this is the only solar PV Site within 5km that is currently under consideration for which cumulative landscape and visual impact assessment (CLVIA) will be required:

- Ref. 3/24/2245/FUL - Installation and operation of a solar farm including co-located energy storage facilities, onsite substation, ancillary infrastructure and landscaping at Land to the West of the A507 between Cottered and Cromer, Hertfordshire, SG9 9PU. Awaiting decision (validated: 20 December 2024).

8.1.4 This application is in part directly southeast of the Site but separated from it by the Cromer Heath road.

8.1.5 The likely scenario that applies to the Proposed Development and cumulative solar developments within the Study Area is stated within the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01:

“Additional cumulative effects are defined in GLVIA3, at paragraph 7.10, as the additional effects of the project in conjunction with other developments of the same type. This is typically assessed as the effect arising from the proposed development when considered against a baseline containing the other developments in the scenario being considered (i.e.

¹⁹ Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 Published August 2024 Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3)

what the effect of adding the project under consideration would be if Development X were already built)."²⁰

- 8.1.6 **ES Chapter 8** provides a Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CLVIA) of potential effects associated with the Proposed Development and the adjacent Beane Solar Farm application (East Herts, ref 3/24/2245/FUL). The CLVIA follows the same approach to assessment as in **ES Chapter 7 - LVIA**, extending consideration of the existing baseline conditions to include the projected cumulative presence of Beane Solar Farm within it. The CLVIA likewise seeks to identify the relevant potential landscape and visual effects applicable to the Site during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases arising upon the cumulative landscape resource, specific views and visual amenity.
- 8.1.7 As the landscape and visual baseline and predicted effects identified by the LVIA overlap with the CLVIA, cumulative effects are assessed on the same groups of landscape and visual receptors as outlined in Chapter 7. Reference has been made to **ES Chapter 7 - LVIA**, and this chapter should be read together with **ES Chapter 8** and **Appendix 7.3, Methodology (Volume 2)**.
- 8.1.8 Site visits were undertaken in December 2024, and January and June 2025, by experienced Chartered Landscape Architects to appraise the character and condition of the Site and the landscape context, and to identify key visual receptors. The weather was fine on all occasions.
- 8.1.9 Photographs within Figure 15, Illustrative Summer Viewpoint Photography, **Appendix 7.2 (Volume 2)** that show potential cumulative views, are used to assess aspects of the CLVIA, specifically: Viewpoints 1, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23 and 25 (referred to as “the Cumulative Viewpoints” hence forth).
- 8.1.10 The following nomenclature has been adopted throughout Chapter 8:
- Westfield Energy Conservation Park: “**the Proposed Development**” or “**the Site**”;
 - ES Chapter 7: “**the LVIA**”
 - ES Chapter 8: “**the CLVIA**”
 - Combined reference to the above: “**the Cumulative Sites**”.
 - The Proposed Development and Beane Solar Farm combined Study Area: “**the Cumulative Study Area**” as indicated in Figures 10, 11, 12 and 13.3 in **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**.
 - Throughout **ES Chapter 8**, reference has been made to Beane Solar Farm Document: NI 2747 Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (10 October 2024) by RPS.²¹ This document is referred to as “**the Beane Solar Farm LVIA**”.

²⁰ Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 Published August 2024 Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3)

²¹ Beane Valley Solar Farm, Planning Reference: 3/24/2245/FUL, East Hertfordshire District Council, Document: NI 2747 Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (10 October 2024) by RPS

8.2 Methodology

Overview

- 8.2.1 This assessment has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3), tailored proportionately to the nature, scale, and location of the Proposed Development and the adjacent site.
- 8.2.2 GLVIA3 does not prescribe a rigid formula but rather outlines principles to guide professional judgement in determining a context-specific approach. As stated in Paragraph 1.15 (p.8), it is the responsibility of the assessor to ensure the methodology is appropriate to the task.
- 8.2.3 The methodology also considers the following guidance:
- Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 (August 2024), Section 7 on cumulative effects including for Cumulative effects (section 7)²²;
 - Landscape Institute, Technical Guidance Note 02/21 (26 May 2021) Assessing landscape value outside national designations²³;
 - Christine Tudor and Natural England, An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (October 2014)²⁴;
- 8.2.4 GLVIA3 Section 7 outlines that cumulative landscape and visual effects arise where multiple developments affect the same receptors—either spatially (overlapping visibility) or temporally (successive views)—and that these effects must be assessed objectively whether they originate from a single scheme (intra-project) or multiple developments (inter-project).

Cumulative Study Area

- 8.2.5 The CLVIA has been informed through the same combination of desktop study, as well as professional judgement relating to similar scale projects, i.e., existing landform and vegetation, the scale of the Proposed Developments and heights of their proposed infrastructure and the potential for significant effects. Identification of the Study Area has considered the diminishing nature of visual perception as distance from visual receptors increases. As per GLVIA 3 Paragraph 6.11:

“The effects of distance on views must also be considered – for example parts of the ZTV that are most distant from the proposal may be omitted from the final visual effects baseline if it is judged that visibility from this distance will be extremely limited. This will vary with the type of project and must be agreed with the competent authority.”

²² Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 08/24 (July 2024) *Notes and Clarifications on aspects of the 3rd Edition Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3)*

²³ Landscape Institute (26 May 2021) Technical Guidance Note 02/21 *Assessing landscape value outside national designations*.

²⁴ *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment* (October 2014) (Christine Tudor, Natural England) Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), (2002) *Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland*.

- 8.2.6 The extent of the Study Area remains as a 2km radius extending from the Site boundaries of both the Proposed Development and the Beane Solar Farm.
- 8.2.7 As in the case of the LVIA Study Area, the extent of the Cumulative Study Area was established through fieldwork and analysis of the Cumulative Site's visual envelope, as set out in **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**, Figure 10: Cumulative Augmented ZTV. This figure was used in combination with desktop review tools, including Google Earth and Street View, to assess where clear visibility of both developments may occur. Based on this analysis, potential representative and illustrative viewpoints were identified for the cumulative assessment shown in Figure 13.3, **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**. The draft selection of viewpoints was then tested on Site, and the final set was confirmed (following consultation with the Council, ref. email 25 June 2025, re: Pre-Application Advice consultation response, Places Services and prior) for inclusion in the report to illustrate the likely visual effects of the cumulative development.

Assessment Approach

Overview

- 8.2.8 The assessment of landscape character and visual amenity in the CLVIA builds upon the same environmental baseline receptors identified in the LVIA. However, it evaluates additional cumulative effects resulting from the interaction of the Proposed Development with adjacent Development.
- 8.2.9 The process has considered both intra- and inter-project effects in accordance with GLVIA3, IEMA, and relevant Landscape Institute guidance. However, as only one cumulative development falls within the wider area of study, in this instance intra-project assessment is not required.

Cumulative Landscape Baseline

- 8.2.10 As noted previously, while no change to sensitivity of the landscape features or character are likely, cumulative landscape effects have been considered upon receptors consistent to those identified in the LVIA:
- **Landscape Fabric of the Site:** the individual tangible elements or features of the landscape, such as landform, woodland, hedges, tree cover, vegetation, for example which can usually be described and quantified.
 - **Local Landscape Character:** effects upon the character of the landscape local to the site and of the site itself, informed by all relevant landscape character assessments.
 - **Wider Landscape Character:** effects upon the character of the wider landscape surrounding the Site within the Study Area, informed by all relevant landscape character assessments.

Cumulative Visual Baseline

- 8.2.11 The cumulative visual impact assessment approach involves identifying the visual receptors identified within the LVIA that are likely to be affected by the adjacent development. An assessment of the cumulative visibility of the Site was carried out in accordance with GLVIA3 to confirm the likely additional effects to public and private views towards the Proposed Development resulting from the potential addition of the Beane Solar Farm. Cumulative Visual Effects upon individual visual receptors have been identified through a combination of desktop and field study. Some cumulative visual receptors such as settlements and roads within settlements, are considered collectively in order to understand visual effects to the grouping as a whole.

Cumulative Receptor Sensitivity

- 8.2.12 The CLVIA covers the potential cumulative effects on landscape receptors and views. For the CLVIA, Receptor Sensitivity will be as outlined within the LVIA. Receptor sensitivity is consistent with the findings of the LVIA. The methodology used to derive the landscape assessment results is set out in **Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)**.

Cumulative Magnitude of Change

- 8.2.13 Cumulative landscape effects may result from adding new types of change or from increasing or extending the effects of the main project when it is considered in isolation. For example, the landscape effects of the main project may be judged to be of relatively low significance when taken on their own, but when taken together with the effects of other development, the cumulative landscape effects may become more significant.
- 8.2.14 As with the assessment of effects of the Proposed Development itself, the significance of cumulative effects is determined through a combination of the sensitivity of the landscape receptor or view and the magnitude of change upon it. Although the cumulative landscape effects are considered, logically the sensitivity of landscape receptors and views ***is the same in the cumulative assessment as for the Proposed Development in isolation.***
- 8.2.15 Cumulative magnitude of change is an expression of the degree to which landscape receptors and views will be changed by the addition of the Proposed Development to other developments that are operational, consented or proposed within the Cumulative Study Area. This is dependent on a number of variables as follows:
- **The location of the Proposed Development:** if seen in a part of the view that is not affected by another development, there would generally be an *increase* the cumulative magnitude of change as its influence extends into an area that is currently unaffected. If, as in the case in hand, the scale and layout of the Proposed Development is similar to that of the other sites (i.e., there is a high level of integration and cohesion), the various development may appear as a single co-ordinated site;
 - **The extent of the developed skyline:** if the Proposed Development adds notably to the developed skyline in a view, the cumulative magnitude of change will tend to be

higher, as the nature of the skyline has a particular influence on both views and landscape receptors;

- **The number and scale of the developments seen in combination, successively, or sequentially:** the greater the number of visible developments, the higher the cumulative magnitude of change will be. A greater number of visible smaller developments generates a higher cumulative magnitude of change than a view of one or two large developments as this can lead to the impression of a less co-ordinated or strategic approach;
- **The size and scale comparison between all of the proposed developments:** similar scale developments, particularly those seen in closest proximity, may appear either larger or of similar scale when seen together, depending on how they align within the composition of a particular view. If a cumulative site is adjacent, it might appear to extend the Proposed Development; if it is behind, it may merge visually, not appearing any greater in extent, while still remaining visible. Likewise, if a cumulative site is in the foreground of a view, the Proposed Development might appear to merge with it, and thus the cumulative magnitude of change may be less evident than could otherwise be anticipated;
- **The distance of the proposed development from the viewpoint or receptor:** the greater the distance, the lower the cumulative magnitude of change will tend to be; and
- **The magnitude of change of the Proposed Development in isolation:** the lower this is assessed to be, the lower the cumulative magnitude of change would likely be. The focus of the CLVIA is on significant effects, however.

8.2.16 Definitions of cumulative magnitude of change are provided within Table 8.1 to ensure that the assessment process is transparent:

Table 8.1: Cumulative magnitude of change

Cumulative magnitude	Definition
High	The addition of the proposed development will make an immediately apparent contribution to the cumulative situation in a landscape receptor or view.
Medium	The addition of the proposed development makes a notable contribution to the cumulative situation, and its cumulative addition is readily apparent.
Low	The addition of the proposed development will make a minor contribution to the overall cumulative situation, and its cumulative addition is only slightly apparent.
Negligible	The addition of the proposed development will make a negligible

Significance of cumulative effects

- 8.2.17 The objective of the cumulative assessment is to determine whether any effects that the Proposed Development would have on views and landscape receptors when seen or perceived in conjunction with other existing and proposed sites will be significant.
- 8.2.18 A significant cumulative effect will occur where the addition of the Proposed Development to other existing and proposed relevant developments would result in a landscape or view that is defined by the presence of more than one major development and is characterised primarily by large scale development so that other patterns and components are no longer definitive.

8.3 The Cumulative Study Area Context

Description

- 8.3.1 The Cumulative Study Area includes the Proposed Development, situated southwest of the village of Cumberlow Green and Beane Solar Farm, situated 300m south of Cumberlow Green. The Cumulative Site Study Area is located to the south of the A507 between Clothall and Cumberlow, Hertfordshire. The Cumulative Study Area extends 2km from the combined site boundaries.
- 8.3.2 The Proposed Development is as described within **ES Chapter 7 - LVIA** and **ES Chapter 2**.
- 8.3.3 The Beane Solar Farm measures approximately 79.5ha. (compared to 187.3 ha. for the Proposed Development); it is located within East Hertfordshire, west of the A507 and is (like the Proposed Development) comprised of several mixed used arable, agricultural fields of varying scale. Two sets of overhead power lines run through the northern parcel of the site in a generally east - west orientation. The River Beane also bisects the site in a generally east – west orientation. Cottered Airfield falls within the Beane Solar Farm²⁵.
- 8.3.4 The northern boundary of the Beane Solar Farm is partially enclosure by mature trees; the eastern boundaries align with the adjacent A507. Western boundaries are adjacent to the junction of Newell Lane and Cromer Heath and sections of this boundary are open in nature with no hedgerows present. Hedgerows align with the southern boundary along the Ardeley PRow. Eastern boundaries are partially defined by hedgerow aligned with the B1037, which are generally open in nature though defined by small embankments. The western boundary aligns with Cromer Heath, which separate it from the Proposed Development; it is defined by field boundary hedges and deep road cuttings.
- 8.3.5 The rural villages surrounding or within the Cumulative Study Area are listed below:
- Shaw Green approximately 1.2km north.
 - Rushden approximately 1km northeast.

²⁵ Beane Valley Solar Farm, Planning Reference: 3/24/2245/FUL, East Hertfordshire District Council, Document: NI 2747 Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (10 October 2024) by RPS

- Southern Green approximately 1.6km northeast.
- Cottered approximately 1.3km (.4km from Beane Solar Farm) east.
- Hare Street approximately 1.25km (.57km from Beane Solar Farm) southeast.
- Cromer approximately 1.2km south.
- Luffenhall approximately 0.65km south.
- Halls Green approximately 1.3km southwest.
- Warren's Green approximately 2.15km southwest.
- Weston approximately 1.8km west.
- Clothall approximately 1.25km northwest.

8.3.6 There are 3 settlements that are additional to those previously identified by the LVIA that fall within the Cumulative Site Study Area, with distances from the Proposed Development followed by those to the Beane Solar Farm in parentheses:

- Walkern, 2.98km (2.2km from Beane Solar Farm) south.
- Moor Green, 3.5km (2.2km from Beane Solar Farm) southeast.
- Ardeley 2.5km (1.5km from Beane Solar Farm) south southeast.

8.3.7 These settlements are not identified by name as receptors within the Beane Solar Farm LVIA and while they fall within the Cumulative Study Area, they are unaffected by views of either sites and will not be considered further.

Planning Designations

8.3.8 The majority of the Site is situated within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt as defined in North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Policies Map. Refer to the **ES Chapter 7 - LVIA** and **ES Chapter 2 - Planning Policy**.

Environmental Baseline Conditions

8.3.9 Please refer to **ES Chapter 7 - LVIA** for details of the environmental baseline conditions.

8.4 Baseline Appraisal

Overview

8.4.1 Please refer to the LVIA for details of the Baseline Appraisal and Figures 5, 6, 10, 11, 12 and 13.3 in **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**.

Published Landscape Character Assessments – Cumulative Context

- 8.4.2 A brief summary of the published landscape character assessments in the context of Cumulative Sites is detailed below.

National Character Area

- 8.4.3 Both the Proposed Development and the adjacent Beane Solar Farm site are located in National Character Area profile 86. South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. The NCA profile gives the following as a general description for the area:

"It is an ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams and rivers that flow eastwards. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernible over much of the area, despite field enlargements in the second half of the 20th century. The widespread moderately fertile, chalky clay soils give the vegetation a more or less calcareous character. Gravel and sand deposits under the clay are important geological features, often exposed during mineral extraction, which contribute to our understanding of ice-age environmental change." ²⁶

- 8.4.4 The key characteristics of the NCA relevant to this CLVIA include:

- *"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 narrower upper parts.*
- *Fragments of chalk give many of the soils a calcareous character, which also influences the character of the semi-natural vegetation cover.*
- *South-east-flowing streams and rivers drain the clay plateau. Watercourses wind slowly across flood plains, supporting wet, fen-type habitats; grazing marsh; and blocks of cricket-bat willows, poplars and old willow pollards.*
- *Lowland wood pasture and ancient woodlands support the dormouse and a rich diversity of flowering plants on the clay plateau. Large, often ancient hedgerows link woods and copses, forming wooded skylines.*
- *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. Field margins support corn bunting, cornflower and brown hare.*
- *Roman sites, medieval monasteries and castles and ancient woodlands contribute to a rich archaeology. Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates and Second World War airfields dot the landscape, forming historical resources."* ²⁷

- 8.4.5 The following NCA 86 Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) are relevant to this assessment:

"Protect and enhance the area's ancient woodland cover, parkland trees, river valley plantations and ancient hedgerows, through the management of existing woods and the planting of new woods, hedgerows and hedgerow trees to benefit landscape character,

²⁶ National Character Area profile: 86. South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. Natural England, 2014. Page 3.

²⁷ National Character Area profile: 86. South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. Natural England, 2014. Page 7.

habitat connectivity and a range of ecosystem services, including timber provision, the regulation of soil erosion and the strengthening of the sense of place and history.”²⁸

- 8.4.6 This is a national scale assessment and though it provides a useful broad scale overview of landscape character, the detail of more local scale landscape character assessment studies is more relevant to CLVIA for development proposals of this nature.

District Landscape Character Assessment

- 8.4.7 Beane Solar Farm is located within the same LCAs as the Proposed Development, as shown in **ES Chapter 7** Figures 4, 11 and 12.
- 8.4.8 The North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment places the main portion of the Site within the Upper Beane Valley Tributaries Landscape Character Area (LCA) 221. Key characteristics of the LCA are:
- *“Bowl like landform comprising steeply sloping chalk valley sides incised by a network of water courses.*
 - *Arable land use.*
 - *Irregular pattern, of medium to large sized fields.*
 - *Scattered hedgerows and waterside trees.*
 - *Small blocks of relict ancient woodland on the upper slopes.*
 - *Narrow winding lanes.”²⁹*
- 8.4.9 Strategy and Guidelines for managing change (Strengthen and reinforce):
- *“Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora.*
 - *Encourage the development of neutral species rich grasslands.*
 - *Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas.*
 - *Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas.*
 - *Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges.*
 - *Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees.*
 - *Maintain and extend the rights of way network.”³⁰*

²⁸ National Character Area profile: 86. South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. Natural England, 2014. Page 5.

²⁹ North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment. Babbie Group. Page 132.

³⁰ North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment. Babbie Group. Page 136.

8.4.10 The North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment places the Western section of the Site within the Weston – Green End Plateau Landscape Character Area 222. Key characteristics of the LCA capable of being affected by the Proposed Development are:

- *“Plateau landform.*
- *Predominantly arable land use.*
- *Extensive mature woodland cover and hedgerow trees.*
- *Organic pattern of field enclosures associated with irregular network of winding lanes.”³¹*

Strategy and Guidelines for Managing Change (Strengthen and reinforce):

- *“Promote management of ancient woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora.*
- *Encourage diverse woodland management practice.*
- *Promote the creation of buffer zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas.*
- *Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas.*
- *Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges.*
- *Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees.*
- *Maintain and extend the rights of way network.*
- *Maintain the ecological diversity and use of green lanes and associated species-rich hedgerows.*
- *Maintain and encourage the development of marshy grassland on pockets of boulder clay.”³²*

8.4.11 The documents outlined above, together with the Cumulative Site appraisal, have been utilised to establish the baseline conditions for the Cumulative Sites and their surroundings in order to complete this assessment.

Cumulative Environmental Baseline Appraisal

8.4.12 The majority of the baseline conditions within the Cumulative Study Area are similar to or the same as Section 7.4 of **ES Chapter 7 - LVIA**.

³¹ North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment. Babtie Group. Page 137.

³² North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment. Babtie Group. Page 142.

- 8.4.13 There are no known ecological designations associated with Beane Solar Farm Study Area. The nearest statutory designated site comprises Moor Hall Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) approx. 3.7km southeast. Other designations in the surrounding area include Hill Local Nature Reserve (LNR) approx. 3.8km northwest, and Blagrove Common SSSI approx. 3.9km northeast.
- 8.4.14 The Cumulative Site Study Area is not within a National Park or National Landscape Area. It is classified as being within the South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland National Character Area of the East Anglian Plain.
- 8.4.15 Regarding Ancient Woodland, the only additional parcels within Beane Solar Farm Study Area are Sloggars Wood, 1.19km to the south; Drinkwater Wood, 1.61km to the east; and Great Wood, 1.98km to the east.
- 8.4.16 There are no designated heritage assets within the Cumulative Sites.
- 8.4.17 In addition to those assets identified by the LVIA, Beane Solar Farm Study Area includes the Garden House at Cottered, a Registered Park and Garden 300m to the east of Beane Solar Farm, but upon which the Proposed Development has no effects. Further to the above, there is one Grade II* and eight Grade II listed buildings within 1km of the Site. The Grade II* listed Cromer Windmill is located approx. 1km to the south of the Proposed Development, and approx. 150m to the east of Beane Solar Farm at the nearest.

Cumulative Landscape Resource

Landscape Fabric (landscape Features)

- 8.4.18 The Landscape Fabric of the Cumulative Study Area is as described in full by section 7.4 of the **ES Chapter 7 - LVIA**.
- 8.4.19 The Cumulative Sites are traversed by high-voltage overhead lines (OHL) and accompanying pylons forming conspicuous and visually assertive elements, to the south-eastern part of the Proposed Development and to the north and south of Beane Solar Farm. These infrastructure features introduce a strong urbanising influence, visually fragmenting the rural context and establishing a perceptual connection with more developed areas beyond the immediate visual envelope—thus collectively diminishing the rural integrity and perceptual coherence of the context of the Cumulative Sites.
- 8.4.20 Vegetation on both the Proposed Development and Beane Solar Farm comprises features of varying scale, ranging from substantial blocks of ancient woodland to the boundary of the Site, to remnant hedgerow groups and linear shrub formations aligned with drainage ditches and historic field boundaries.
- 8.4.21 In light of the above, the value of the receiving landscape fabric of Beane Solar Farm is considered to remain **Medium** and susceptibility of the landscape to accommodate the development type is also considered to remain **Medium**. This is where the landscape fabric of the Site has the ability to absorb the Proposed Development without loss of key physical components.

- 8.4.22 The judgement on landscape sensitivity is based on consideration of both the landscape receptor's value and its susceptibility to change arising from the cumulative development. The **Medium** value and **Medium** susceptibility of the landscape fabric are similar and combined are a **Medium** sensitivity. There would capacity or scope for landscape change.

Cumulative Sites Contribution to the Wider Landscape Character

- 8.4.23 The Cumulative Study Area is characteristic of both Landscape Character Assessments over which both the Proposed Development and Beane Solar Farm are located in that it lies over plateau landform incised by a network of water courses, arable use with irregular field pattern and medium to large scale fields with extensive woodland cover and hedgerow trees. These features contribute to the shallow 'dish' that comprises the underlying landform of the Cumulative Sites, a key attribute that reduces its potential visibility from surrounding areas. Whilst it is recognised that the landscape surrounding both the Proposed Development and Beane Solar Farm is not unattractive, it is undesignated ordinary agricultural farmland that is representative of that found within the wider area. It is not rare, nor does it contain any special features to elevate its value above that of the surrounding countryside.
- 8.4.24 As identified within **ES Chapter 7 - LVIA** previously there is a **Medium** value and **Low** susceptibility with a **Low** sensitivity. As it is ordinarily attractive countryside where, through consideration of the landscape resource and characteristics, there would capacity or scope for landscape change.

Cumulative Sites Contribution to the Local Landscape Character

- 8.4.25 The contribution to local landscape character of the Proposed Development has been outlined within the LVIA, and that of the Cumulative Sites would be similar, as both are located adjacent to the A507 on a partly wooded arable plateau to the west of Cumberlow Green. The majority of the Cumulative Sites and the landscape within the Cumulative Study Area is broadly undulating. There is also notable incised landform associated with the small-scale watercourses within and around the Site. Topographically both sites are low lying within the same geomorphological depression. The site levels within the Beane Solar Farm are of a similar but lower altitude; the minimum is c. 100m along the River Beane, and the maximum is c. 115m along the airstrip that is both of which are aligned west north to west – east southeast. The highest ground within the Proposed Development is 140m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) to the westernmost Site boundary. The southern and eastern parts of the Site are lower lying compared to the northern and western parts, and this is due to the River Beane valley and its tributaries affecting the wider plateau landform. The lowest ground within the Site is along the valley floor to the southernmost Site boundary where the elevation is 100m AOD. This is explored further in Section 8.5.17 in regard to the contribution of local landscape character to the cumulative context.
- 8.4.26 In light of the above, the **value** of the receiving landscape remains **Medium**, and the susceptibility remains **Medium**.

- 8.4.27 The **Medium** value and **Medium** susceptibility of the landscape are combined to lead to a **Medium** sensitivity. This is often described as ordinary countryside where, through consideration of the landscape resource and characteristics there would capacity or scope for landscape change.

Cumulative Visual Resource

Site Context

- 8.4.28 Study Area as well as identifying a suitable extent of the Cumulative Study Area, the field work and Augmented Cumulative ZTV depiction of the Site's visual envelope and by assessing potential clear visibility of the Site that can be seen from Google Earth and Streetview within this, specific, representative and illustrative views (shown on Figure 13.3, **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)** and listed in section 8.4.338.4.37 below) were selected for inclusion in the report (following consultation with the Council) to illustrate the visual effects of the Proposed Development.

Cumulative Visual Baseline

Overview

- 8.4.29 Visibility of the Proposed Development from the surrounding landscape is limited due to intervening plateau landform to the north and west and the screening effects of vegetation in all directions. Vegetation within the Site is described above. The broad pattern of vegetation outside the Proposed Development includes woodland blocks on the plateau to the north and west and intermittent treed hedgerows within the river valleys to the south and east. This contrasts with the visibility of the Beane Solar Farm, which is more open to views from the A507 from the north/northeast.

There is minimal intervisibility between the Beane Solar Farm and the Proposed Development from receptors to the north and west other than those located within the immediate surroundings and set out above (A507, Kingswoodbury House and Toggs and BOAT (12 Clothall)). Kingswood Bury Farm, approximately 440m to the north of the Site, may also have southerly views across the Beane valley that take in the Site. Intervisibility of the Beane Solar Farm and the Proposed Development from receptors to the south and east is more widespread due to the potential for views across the Beane valley. Such views occur from a swathe of north and west-facing land that is bound by the B1037 to the south, Cromer to the west and Cottered to the east. This includes the local landmark Cromer Windmill. There are also approximately 10 no. residential receptors at Cumberlow Green to the immediate northeast of the Proposed Development and north of the Beane Solar Farm.

- 8.4.30 There is a second OHL to the south of the Beane valley; while only one traverses the Proposed Development, both traverse the Bean Valley Solar site. Northerly and westerly

views towards the Bean Valley Solar site and Proposed Development would be influenced by the detracting effects of numerous pylon towers and transmission lines.

Viewpoints

- 8.4.31 Of the 25 viewpoints selected to provide representative visibility of the Proposed Development within ES **Appendix 7.2 (Volume 2)**, Figure 14 – Photosheets, 12 of these are considered to illustrate the cumulative context of the Proposed Development and Beane Solar Farm, either by showing the them together or in sequence and showing the view from within or adjacent to one development towards the other.
- 8.4.32 Given that several of the newly added viewpoints and/or amended location of the existing winter viewpoints were captured in summer conditions only, it was agreed with the Council that summer photography would form the basis for assessment in the LVIA. Affected viewpoints include VP5, VP7, VP14, VP20–VP25. The winter views are retained as an appendix for reference and comparative purposes.
- 8.4.33 The final viewpoint schedule is provided in Table 8.2 and illustrated on the Viewpoint Location Plan, Figure 13.3, **Appendix 7.1 (Volume 2)**. Photographs within Figure 15, Illustrative Summer Viewpoint Photography, **Appendix 7.2** that are subject to potential cumulative effects are: Viewpoints 1, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23 and 25.

Table 8.2: Cumulative Viewpoint Schedule

Viewpoint ID	Location Name	Direction	Distance to site
1	A507 south of Cumberlow Green	Southwest	415m
12	Footpath Rushden and Wallington 009	Southwest	1.1km
13	Restricted Byway Cottered 006 near River Beane	West	1.1km
14	A507 near Lodge Farm	West northwest	650m
15	Restricted Byway Cottered 006 near Cottered	West northwest	1.2km
16	B1037 / Footpath Ardeley 049	Northwest	1.2km
17	North of Cromer on Cromer Heath	Northwest	960m
18	Cromer Windmill	Northwest	1km
19	Brookfield Common	North	1.9km
21	A507 /Cromer Heath Road Junction	South	10m
23	Footpath Clothall 020	South	0m
25	Footpath Clothall 019 (Westfield Common)	Southeast	0m

- 8.4.34 The representative viewpoint photography was undertaken during the site visits in June (Summer) 2025 to be reflective of available views at each location.

Sensitive Visual Receptors

Cumulative Private Receptors

Properties in Cumberlow Green

- 8.4.35 Represented by Cumulative VP 21, the views from this residential receptor are deemed to be of low value. This assessment considers that private receptors have a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to their residential nature.
- 8.4.36 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Properties in Luffenhall, Cromer and Cottered

- 8.4.37 Represented by Cumulative VPs 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 the views from this residential receptor are deemed to be of low value. This assessment considers that private receptors have a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to their residential nature.
- 8.4.38 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Cumulative Public Receptors

Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 020

- 8.4.39 Represented by Cumulative VP 23, this assessment considers that this receptor has a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users walking through the countryside. The views from this receptor are deemed to be of low value.
- 8.4.40 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 019

- 8.4.41 Represented by Cumulative VP 25, this assessment considers that this receptor has a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users walking through the countryside. The views from this receptor are deemed to be of low value.
- 8.4.42 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

PRoW in wider landscape

8.4.43 These include users of the following PRoWs and BOATs:

- Clothall 013 (represented by Cumulative VP10)
- Clothall 016 (represented by Cumulative VP8)
- Clothall 018 (represented by Cumulative VP9)
- Rushden and Wallington 009 (represented by Cumulative VP12)
- Restricted Byway Cottered 006 (represented by Cumulative VPs 13 and 15)
- Cottered 028 (represented by Cumulative VP17)
- Restricted Byway Clothall 021 (represented by Cumulative VP20)

8.4.44 This assessment considers that this receptor group has a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to the view being experienced by local users walking through the countryside. The views from this receptor are deemed to be of low value.

8.4.45 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Cumulative Transport Receptors

Users of A507 and minor road across River Beane

8.4.46 Represented by Cumulative VPs 1, 10, 11, 14 and 21, this assessment considers that these receptors (road network in proximity to the Site) have a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to their undulating topography. The views from these receptors are deemed to be of **Low** value.

8.4.47 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and this assessment considers it to be **Medium**.

Users of B1037 and Brookfield Common

8.4.48 Represented by Cumulative VPs 2, 16, 17, 18 and 19 this assessment considers that these receptors have a high susceptibility to the changes proposed due to their position on plateaux. The views from these receptors are deemed to be of **Low** value.

8.4.49 The sensitivity of the receptor combines the susceptibility (**High**) with the value (**Low**) and is considered to be **Medium**.

Summary

8.4.50 Sensitive receptors subject to potential cumulative visual effects identified above are generally shielded from or have filtered views of the Cumulative Sites due to the

surrounding raised plateaux topography, together with the network of hedgerows and woodland belts, and a backcloth of woodland copses. These elements frame the wider landscape setting of the Cumulative Sites, the contained character of which limits opportunities for views of them together.

- 8.4.51 Due to the presence of existing vegetation, including woodland belts, hedgerows, and localised undulations, there would be a limited relationship and little cumulative intervisibility from the wider landscape. However, the A507 borders the northern boundaries of both sites, and the B1037 borders the east of the Site and the west of the adjacent Beane Solar Farm, allowing for cumulative views of the immediately surrounding fields and those within the Site. Beane Solar Farm is also more exposed individually to views, particularly from the A507 north of Lodge Farm and the B1037 near Cromer Windmill. These effects would not be extended to the Proposed Development, as it is more distant in views from the A507 near Lodge Farm and the B1037 at Cromer Windmill.

8.5 Proposed Development

- 8.5.1 The Proposed Development is described in **ES Chapter 8 - LVIA** and **ES Chapter 4**. Mitigation measures in regard to the Proposed Development have been set out in the LVIA. Proposed mitigation set out in the Beane Valley Solar Farm LVIA, section 1.11 Mitigation³³, has similar aims and objectives to that offered by the Proposed Development's. In conjunction with the Beane Solar Farm, in which a similar proportional level of BNG, landscape and visual mitigation has been proposed, and assuming both projects were to proceed, this represents a potential significant enhancement in the local landscape character in the long term. These should be taken into consideration in assessment of the overall effects.

Assessment of Cumulative Landscape Effects

Overview

- 8.5.2 The assessment of landscape effects follows the methodology outlined in **Section 8.2 Appendix 7.3 (Volume 2)**. It considers the significance of effects arising from the combination of landscape receptor sensitivity and the predicted cumulative magnitude of change during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. Effects are assessed in relation to the landscape fabric, as well as the local and wider landscape character within which the Site is situated.
- 8.5.3 The cumulative residual effects result from the difference between the identified cumulative effect and the LVIA effect from the same receptor. If there is a difference between the LVIA effect and the Cumulative effect, then it is residual effect. However, only if the total change is Moderate or greater would that be deemed to be significant. The likely

³³ Beane Valley Solar Farm, Planning Reference: 3/24/2245/FUL, East Hertfordshire District Council, Document: NI 2747 Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (10 October 2024) by RPS

residual cumulative effect is stated at the end of each receptor assessment. Table 8.4 in Section 8.7 provides a summary.

8.5.4 Landscape Fabric of the Site

Cumulative Assessment Context

8.5.5 Landscape fabric refers to the tangible elements within the landscape, such as, but not limited to, trees and hedges, and includes the physical land or landform within the Site itself. The assessment of effects on landscape fabric looks at how the Proposed Development would directly impact on these elements themselves. Cumulative developments could potentially affect the landscape fabric of the Proposed Development.

8.5.6 Cumulatively, the Beane Solar Farm would add to the limited loss of existing features that the Proposed Development would result in to accommodate them. With reference to the **Arboricultural Impact Assessment** prepared by Lanpro that accompanies this planning application, there would be some minor loss of hedgerow to accommodate access, and a small number of hedgerow trees to allow access, but all other vegetation would be retained. The majority of trees within the Proposed Development are limited to existing field boundaries and are intended to be retained and incorporated within boundary vegetation. As it is anticipated that this scenario would apply as a result of the Beane Solar Farm, the effects would be similarly limited. Again, the introduction of new grass mixes beneath arrays, the substantial tree, hedgerow and woodland planting are all positive new land uses which would bring forward ecological enhancements leading to notable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) across similar sites, which are considered a cumulative benefit arising from the Proposed Development, without resulting in an increase of effects on the landscape fabric due to the presence of the Beane Solar Farm.

Construction

8.5.7 As identified in the LVIA, there would be **Medium** sensitivity with and **Low** and **Neutral** magnitude of change at Construction resulting from the Proposed Development. The presence of Beane Solar Farm would not contribute to further changes to the landscape fabric. This would result in **Minor and Neutral Cumulative** level of effects to landscape fabric at Construction Phase on the landscape resource of the Site itself which is short term and reversible for all similar developments.

Operational Phase Year 1

8.5.8 At Year 1 as identified in the LVIA, the **Medium** sensitivity with and **Low** and **Neutral** magnitude of change at Construction would remain, and again, the presence of Beane Solar Farm would not contribute to further changes to the landscape fabric. This would also result in **Minor, Adverse Cumulative** level of effects to landscape fabric at year 1 of operations.

Operational Phase Year 15

- 8.5.9 The Proposed Development would mutually limit cumulative adverse effects the Beane Solar Farm on the character of the landscape fabric and provide multifunctional benefits including ecological connectivity and contributions to active biodiversity enhancement via Lightrock Power's RSPB partnership, and cumulatively with Beane Solar Farm. As identified and assessed in the LVIA, at year 15 the longer-term magnitude of change would be **Low, Beneficial** and effects are **Minor, Beneficial Cumulative** on landscape fabric. There would be no increase in the effects resulting from the Proposed Development cumulatively with the Beane Solar Farm on these receptors and the residual cumulative effect is therefore consistent with that of the LVIA.

Local Landscape Character

Cumulative Assessment Context

- 8.5.10 As identified in **ES Chapter 7 - LVIA**, the Proposed Development makes a positive contribution to the local landscape by embodying many of the key characteristics associated with the 'Upper Beane Valley Tributaries' LCA. The heavily ploughed or grazed condition of the Site, combined with its comparatively slight undulating topography, results in a landscape that reads as modestly attractive countryside. However, it does not exhibit attributes that would elevate it beyond the typical aesthetic or experiential quality of ordinary, functional agricultural land.
- 8.5.11 Whilst it is recognised that the landscape surrounding the Proposed Development is not unattractive, it is undesignated ordinarily attractive agricultural farmland that is representative of that found within the wider area. It is not rare, nor does it contain any special features to elevate the value of it above that of the surrounding countryside. The electricity pylons (large and small scale) which cross across the site itself, and the surrounding countryside impart an urbanising influence on the character of the local landscape and decrease the sensitivity of this location. Beane Solar Farm lies in the same LCA as the Proposed Development and therefore this applies cumulatively.
- 8.5.12 The low-level nature of the array at 3m, combined with the layering of existing vegetation would help to limit appreciation of the Proposed Development in context with Beane Solar Farm within the wider countryside. Surrounding woodland blocks would further this screening allowing the Proposed Development to be somewhat absorbed into its immediate surroundings limiting wider adverse effects. Beane Solar Farm has similar characteristics as the Proposed Development and therefore this applies cumulatively.
- 8.5.13 The taller elements of the substation located within the Proposed Development extend to 6.4m, (although busbars extend up to 12m) with the relay and control room reaching 5m. These elements have been positioned adjacent to the Site's eastern boundary, utilising existing topography and tree cover to provide initial screening. Woodland blocks within the surrounding countryside, including those immediately enclosing the Site, and within the surrounding landscape (such as, but not limited to, Rydal's Wood, and Coldash Wood, and

parcels of ancient woodland in the surrounding area of the Site, including Munches Wood and Baskets Wood) further this screening and enclosure. To a lesser extent, there are similar blocks of woodland enclosing the Beane Solar Farm site, and the woodland between the two sites would help to maintain a visual separation.

- 8.5.14 Topographically both sites are low lying within the same geomorphological depression. The site levels within the Beane Solar Farm are of a similar but lower altitude; the minimum is c. 100m along the River Beane, and the maximum is c. 115m along the airstrip that is both of which are aligned west north to west – east southeast.
- 8.5.15 The low-level nature of the arrays (max 3m), combined with the layering of existing vegetation would help to limit appreciation of the Proposed Development separately from the Beane Solar Farm within the surrounding countryside. The isolated location of the proposed substation combined with the existing screening help to limit appreciation of the construction of these taller elements of the Proposed Development within the wider landscape. Woodland blocks would provide suitable screening allowing the Proposed Development to be similarly absorbed into their immediate surroundings limiting wider adverse effects.
- 8.5.16 While the Proposed Development and Beane Solar Farm would cumulatively be apparent from their immediate settings, where there would be a notable change to the immediate character of the area as a result of both proposals, this would be limited to the sites themselves. This screening and changes in topography allows for the Proposed Developments to be absorbed into the immediate surroundings limiting appreciation of them from within the wider landscape, and to some extent, from each other.

Construction and Operational Phase Year 1

- 8.5.17 The construction phase of the Proposed Development would be expected to take 12 to 18 months and would not require any substantial machinery and would not have any material influence on the wider outlying landscape context. It is understood that of Beane Solar Farm would be a shorter period but may not be concurrent. The changes during construction will be for a limited period (phased over 12-18 months), and the use of much of the Site for agriculture and public access to PROWs will be maintained. The nature of views will fundamentally change as it transitions from open agricultural landscape to that of a solar energy generation facility with integrated agricultural land use. Whilst there would be some change locally during construction, the low level nature of the array (up to 3m max), combined with the layering of existing vegetation would help to limit appreciation of the construction of the Proposed Development as well as the Beane Solar Farm within the wider landscape, limiting cumulative adverse effects between the two developments mutually on the character of the wider landscape.
- 8.5.18 Surrounding woodland blocks (particularly to the north) would further this screening allowing the Proposed Development to be somewhat absorbed into its immediate surroundings, limiting wider adverse effects.

- 8.5.19 The isolated location of the Proposed Development's substation and BESS combined with the existing screening and proximity to existing infrastructure (the OHL are to the south-east corner of the Site) would help to limit appreciation of the construction of these taller elements of the Proposed Development cumulatively with the Beane Solar Farm within the wider landscape. Thus it would assist in limiting adverse effects on the character of the wider landscape. Similar mitigation measures have been recommended in the Beane Solar Farm LVIA, section 1.11, Mitigation.³⁴
- 8.5.20 The Proposed Development's mitigation measures (as shown on the Environmental Masterplan in **Appendix 7.4 (Volume 2)**) provides additional structure and enclosure across the Site and the immediate area. The landscape proposals have been designed to provide screening and to enclose the new array, whilst providing multifunctional benefits including increased ecological connectivity and additional habitat and biodiversity benefit and would not impact the Bean Valley Solar site. The Bean Valley Solar site mitigation measures respond to the landscape fabric within the cumulative Study Area similarly, and therefore there are no additional effects anticipated.
- 8.5.21 These effects are considered adverse although they are not that dissimilar in nature to certain agricultural operations such as harvesting and therefore the cumulative magnitude of change on character due to these activities when considered in isolation would be **Low, Adverse**.
- 8.5.22 There would be a minor change to perceptions of tranquillity due to the presence of manmade features within the Site. There would also be a slight loss of openness due to the limited bulk of the Proposed Development. These adverse effects on character would directly affect approximately 20% of the Upper Beane Valley LCA with indirect effects extending to a very limited area and no more than 25% of the LCA. The retention and strengthening of the hedgerows and blocks of woodland that characterise the local landscape would limit the ability to discern the Proposed Development in context with the Beane Solar Farm in its setting.
- 8.5.23 There would be a variable cumulative magnitude of change according to how keenly the perceptual effects of tranquillity and loss of openness would be felt, ranging from **Medium** in the most affected areas that are within the Site, to **Low** effect in close proximity to the Site and no effect for 75% of the local landscape resource. For these reasons, the assessment of the overall magnitude of change is considered to be **Low** resulting in a **Minor, Adverse Cumulative** effect on local character during construction.

Operational Phase Year 15

- 8.5.24 Once built, the low-level nature of Proposed Development, combined with the layering of existing vegetation would help to limit appreciation of it in context with the Beane Solar Farm within the wider countryside. Woodland blocks along the southern edge of the Proposed Development would provide suitable screening independently of the Beane Solar

³⁴ Beane Valley Solar Farm, Planning Reference: 3/24/2245/FUL, East Hertfordshire District Council, Document: NI 2747 Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment (10 October 2024) by RPS

Farm. However, similar mitigation proposed for the latter would also provide screening, allowing the Proposed Development to be somewhat absorbed into its immediate surroundings mutually limiting wider cumulative adverse effects

- 8.5.25 By Year 15 the Proposed Development's mitigation planting would reinforce key characteristics. The conservation and considerable enhancement of hedgerows and addition of woodland cover would contribute to the achievement of national and district landscape management objectives stated in the published character assessments The Proposed Development would not adversely affect the Beane Solar Farm, which could be expected to have also achieved the objectives.
- 8.5.26 This assessment considers that by year 15 the adverse cumulative perceptual effects on local landscape character would diminish and no longer be discernible beyond the immediate vicinity of the Site.
- 8.5.27 **Medium** sensitivity and **Medium** cumulative magnitude of change would result in a **Moderate, Adverse Cumulative** effect by Year 15.
- 8.5.28 There would be no increase in the effects resulting from the Proposed Development cumulatively with the Beane Solar Farm on these receptors and the residual cumulative effect is therefore consistent with that of the LVIA.

Wider Landscape Character

- 8.5.29 In terms of the nature of effects on the wider landscape, these would be broadly comparable to those identified for the local landscape character, but of reduced magnitude due to the considerably larger scale of the receiving landscape. Although a graduated change in perceptual experience would still occur with proximity to the Site, the overall contribution of the Proposed Development to change at the wider landscape scale would be limited, as would the Beane Solar Farm.
- 8.5.30 Considering the perceptual characteristics of the Proposed Development within the baseline context described in **ES Chapter 7** section 7.3 and summarised in section 8.3, it is considered that any adverse effects on the wider landscape would not exceed the threshold of significance. Given that the Proposed Development occupies a small proportion of the North Hertfordshire landscape character area, as does the Beane Solar Farm similarly, the assessment concludes that the Proposed Development would result in a **Minor to Negligible Neutral Cumulative** effect at this broader scale.
- 8.5.31 Consequently, no further detailed assessment has been undertaken at this scale, in order to avoid disproportionate emphasis on potential effects that would be diluted within the broader landscape context and ensuring that the landscape effects are assessed in proportion to their relative scale and influence within the wider context.

8.6 Assessment of Cumulative Visual Effects

Cumulative Sensitivity - Effects on Private Receptors

Properties in Cumberlow Green - Represented by VP21

- 8.6.1 The receptors have a **Medium** sensitivity.

Construction Phase

- 8.6.2 The Cumulative Development Augmented Zone of Theoretical Visibility (CZTV, Figure 10) indicates these properties are on the periphery of the visual envelope for the Proposed Development in context with Beane Solar Farm. The two sites generally face west onto the minor road with the Proposed Development having the potential to appear in oblique views from the fronts of the properties, and even less of a view of the Beane Solar Farm. Existing views towards the Proposed Development are typically truncated by intervening vegetation. Direct views of the Beane Solar Farm are also unlikely, with development having been set back so as to screen the development beyond topographical variations in the local landscape. The Beane Solar Farm would potentially be visible together with the Proposed Development, although existing and proposed vegetation will separate them by approximately 50m. There will be no effect on the skyline; the adjacent development will appear to be an extension of the Proposed Development, at a similar distance.
- 8.6.3 Any views of the construction of the Beane Solar Farm would be, like those of the Proposed Development, glimpses of very small parts and heavily filtered through layers of intervening vegetation. There would be no overall change to the immediate countryside setting of these houses and this would result in a **Low** cumulative magnitude of change and **Moderate to Minor, Adverse Cumulative** effects that are not considered significant.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 8.6.4 At operational phase year 1, the mitigation planting would be immature, but the existing vegetation would have already grown to around 3m height and would continue to screen and filter views from the receptors, resulting in a **Medium** cumulative magnitude of change and a **Moderate Adverse Cumulative** effect.
- 8.6.5 The landscape mitigation planting of the Proposed Development would combine with that of the Beane Solar Farm to provide further screening during the operation period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape, resulting in a **Low** cumulative magnitude of change and **Moderate to Minor, Adverse Cumulative** effects. This would

remain consistent through to year 15 and through to the eventual decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

- 8.6.6 There would be no increase in the effects resulting from the Proposed Development cumulatively with the Beane Solar Farm on these receptors. The residual cumulative effect is therefore consistent with that of the LVIA.

Properties in Luffenhall, Cromer and Cottered - Represented by VPs 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19

- 8.6.7 These receptors have a **Medium** sensitivity.

Construction Phase

- 8.6.8 These properties are located to south and southeast of the Proposed Development. As illustrated by the augmented CZTV (Figure 10), there would be potential for views of the Proposed Development across the Beane Solar Farm with partial and heavily filtered views from the amenity areas and during access/egress. Existing views towards the Beane Solar Farm are typically truncated by intervening landform and vegetation.
- 8.6.9 Views of the construction would be of the Beane Solar Farm prominently in the foreground, with small parts of the Proposed Development glimpsed at distances of several hundred metres through existing vegetation and shielded by landform. There would be no change to the immediate countryside setting of these houses and this would result in a **Low** cumulative magnitude of change and **Moderate to Minor, Adverse Cumulative** effects that are not considered significant.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 8.6.10 At operational phase year 1, the mitigation planting would be immature, but the existing vegetation would have already grown to around 3m height and would continue to screen and filter views from the receptors, resulting in a **Medium** cumulative magnitude of change and a **Moderate, Adverse Cumulative** effect.
- 8.6.11 During the operation period, although the landscape mitigation planting of the Proposed Development would provide effective screening alone, it would combine with that of the Beane Solar Farm to provide enhanced screening whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape, resulting in a **Low** cumulative magnitudes of change and **Moderate to Minor Adverse Cumulative** effects. This would remain consistent through to year 15 and through to the eventual decommissioning of Proposed Development.
- 8.6.12 There would be no increase in the effects resulting from the Proposed Development cumulatively with the Beane Solar Farm on these receptors and the residual cumulative effect is therefore consistent with that of the LVIA.

Cumulative Effect on Public Receptors

Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 020 – represented by VP 23

- 8.6.13 This receptor has a **Medium** sensitivity.
- 8.6.14 This path passes through the Proposed Development and views, from higher ground, including that of the Beane Solar Farm, are open for much of its length.

Construction Phase

- 8.6.15 The cumulative magnitude of change is **High**, and this would result in a **Major to Moderate, Adverse Cumulative** effect that is considered to be **Significant**. The nature of views will change due to the introduction of the sites and their associated features as it transitions from an open agricultural landscape to that of a solar farm (with integrated agricultural land use). However, the changes during the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development will be for a limited period (phased over 12-18 months), and the use of the path will be maintained; the programme for construction of the Beane Solar Farm would differ and may not overlap with the Proposed Development, reducing the likelihood that there would be a Cumulative effect. However, were there to be a concurrent construction programme, the phasing and visual separation of Bean Valley Solar Farm from the Proposed Development could be coordinated to minimise cumulative effects of construction works.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 8.6.16 The landscape mitigation measures would help to integrate and screen parts of the Proposed Development during year 1 of the operational period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape. Beyond the gently folding topography within the Site, the Beane Solar Farm would be visible from the brow of the shallow rises of ground over which the path traverses, and sequentially at the northern reaches of the path. The mitigation planting would be immature, but the existing vegetation would have already grown to around 3m height and would continue to screen and filter views from the receptors. While the landscape mitigation planting of the Proposed Development would provide some screening, the Beane Solar Farm would still be visible from higher ground. There would be close range views of the perimeter of the Proposed Development including the security fencing with mid-range views across large swathes of the array. The introduction of noticeable manmade features into the foreground of views would result in a **High** cumulative magnitude of change and **Major to Moderate, Adverse Cumulative** effects at Year 1 and **Significant**.
- 8.6.17 As the landscaping matures, it would screen parts of the array. During the operational period, although the landscape mitigation planting of the Proposed Development would provide effective screening alone, it would combine with that of the Beane Solar Farm to provide enhanced screening whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape. The enhancement of landscape elements immediately adjacent to the path and

the provision of their long-term management for biodiversity would result in some improvement to the visual amenity for users of the path when compared to the existing situation. In more elevated places, views of the Proposed Development would occur across hedgerows and the adverse effects described at year 1 above would continue to be experienced. The Proposed Development would remain perceptible as would the Beane Solar Farm in views from this receptor, and as such the cumulative magnitude of change is considered to be **Low** resulting in **Minor to Moderate Adverse Cumulative** effect at year 15 that would not be significant.

- 8.6.18 There would be no increase in the effects resulting from the Proposed Development cumulatively with the Beane Solar Farm on these receptors and residual cumulative effect is therefore consistent with that of the LVIA.

Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 019 - represented by VP25

- 8.6.19 The receptor has a **Medium** sensitivity.
- 8.6.20 This footpath is within the Proposed Development for the majority of its length.

Construction Phase

- 8.6.21 The footpath passes through the Site for the majority of its length. Beyond the folding topography the Beane Solar Farm would be visible particularly from the brow of the shallow hills over which the path traverses, and sequentially at the northern reaches of the path. The cumulative magnitude of change is **High**, and this would result in a **Major to Moderate, Adverse Cumulative** effect that is considered to be **Significant**.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 8.6.22 The landscape mitigation measures would help to integrate and screen parts of the Proposed Development during year 1 of the operation period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape. There would be close range views of the perimeter of the Proposed Development including the security fencing with mid-range views across large swathes of the array. Beyond the folding topography the Beane Solar Farm would be visible from the brow of the shallow rises of ground over which the path traverses, and sequentially at the northern reaches of the path. The introduction of noticeable manmade features into the foreground of views would result in a **Medium** cumulative magnitude of change and **Moderate, Adverse Cumulative** effects at Year 1 and **Significant**.
- 8.6.23 As the landscaping matures, it would screen parts of the array. The enhancement of landscape elements immediately adjacent to the path and the provision of their long-term management for biodiversity would result in some improvement to the visual amenity for users of the path when compared to the existing situation. In more elevated places, views of the Proposed Development would occur across hedgerows and the adverse effects described at year 1 above would continue to be experienced. The Proposed Development would remain perceptible and as such the cumulative magnitude of change is considered

to be **Low** resulting in a **Minor to Moderate, Adverse Cumulative** effect at year 15 that would not be significant.

- 8.6.24 There would be no increase in the effects resulting from the Proposed Development cumulatively with the Beane Solar Farm on these receptors and residual cumulative effect is therefore consistent with that of the LVIA.

Users of PRow in Wider Landscape

- 8.6.25 These receptors have a **Medium** sensitivity.

- 8.6.26 These include:

- Clothall 013 (represented by VP10)
- Clothall 016 (represented by VP8)
- Clothall 018 (represented by VP9)
- Rushden and Wallington 009 (represented by VP12)
- Restricted Byway Cottered 006 (represented by VP13, VP15)
- Cottered 028 (represented by VP17)
- Restricted Byway Clothall 021 (represented by VP20)

- 8.6.27 These footpaths are located at various distances and orientations to the both the Proposed Development and the adjacent site and their use and views, be they glimpsed or more open, would be largely unaffected by construction. The Cumulative magnitude of change is **Low**, and this would result in a **Minor to Moderate Adverse Cumulative** during Construction Phase.

- 8.6.28 There would be no increase in the effects resulting from the Proposed Development cumulatively with the Beane Solar Farm on these receptors and residual cumulative effect is therefore consistent with that of the LVIA.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 8.6.29 The landscape mitigation measures would be immature during the Operational Phase at Year 1, and there would be mid to distant range views of the perimeter of the Cumulative Sites. The introduction of the manmade features into the wider landscape within views would remain a **Low** cumulative magnitude of change and **Minor to Moderate, Adverse Cumulative** effects at Year 1.

- 8.6.30 As the landscaping matures, it would screen parts of the Proposed Development and improve the visual amenity for users of the paths when compared to the existing situation; the effect of the mitigation would reduce the visual connections to the Beane Solar Farm. It would be anticipated that the mitigation on that site would have a similar effect reciprocally. In more elevated places, views of the Cumulative Sites would occur across hedgerows and the adverse effects described at year 1 above would be greatly reduced, but perceptible. The Proposed Development would remain perceptible and as such the

cumulative magnitude of change is considered to be **Low to Negligible** resulting in a **Minor, Adverse Cumulative** effect at year 15 that would not be significant.

- 8.6.31 Residual cumulative effects would be a slightly greater effect than the LVIA assessment identifies (**Minor**), but it would not be significant.

Cumulative Effect on Transport Receptors

Users of A507 and Cromer Heath Road (across River Beane) - represented by VPs 1, 10, 14 and 21

- 8.6.32 These receptors have a **Medium** sensitivity.

Construction Phase

- 8.6.33 Views of the construction of the Cumulative Sites from this receptor would be close range.
- 8.6.34 There would be noticeable changes during construction perceived by receptors caused by the Cumulative Sites viewed in sequence along the A507 and minor road to approximately 1km section of these routes with the majority of it being unaffected resulting in a **Low** magnitude of change and **Moderate to Minor, Adverse Cumulative** effects that are not considered significant.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 8.6.35 Landscape mitigation planting would help to screen the Cumulative Sites equally during the operational period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape resulting in a **High** magnitude of change and **Major to Moderate Adverse Cumulative** effects. As the landscape measures mature, they would screen views of the Proposed Development from majority of the routes. This would apply to the adjacent Beane Solar Farm from all locations except the approach from Cottered captured by Viewpoint 14 at Lodge Farm, where views parallel to the road traverse the site and would remain unobstructed to some extent. For these reasons the cumulative magnitude of change would be **Medium**, and the **Moderate Adverse Cumulative** effect would continue in year 15.
- 8.6.36 There would be no increase in the effects resulting from the Proposed Development cumulatively with the Beane Solar Farm on these receptors and residual cumulative effect is therefore consistent with that of the LVIA.

Users of B1037 and Brookfield Common – represented by VPs 16, 17, 18 and 19

- 8.6.37 These receptors have a **Medium** sensitivity. While it is understood that the Cromer Windmill is a valued heritage or cultural asset, the views from it considered in the Chapter only in terms of visual amenity and not in regard to heritage value which is assessed as a

separate discipline. The view is of the same landscape typology that is assessed in all other receptors, which has been identified to have a **Medium** sensitivity.

Construction Phase

- 8.6.38 Views of the construction of the Proposed Development from the receptor would be cross valley filtered glimpses or fully screened by intervening landform and vegetation at medium to long range of parts of the Proposed Development. Views of the adjacent site would be closer to the receptors and less filtered by vegetation and landform would not screen the views to the same degree.
- 8.6.39 There would be changes to sections of the routes, particularly from Cromer Windmill on the B1037 and this would result in a **Medium** cumulative magnitude of change and **Moderate, Adverse Cumulative** effects that are considered significant.

Operational Phase Years 1 and 15

- 8.6.40 The views would remain open across the adjacent site during Year 1; those to the Proposed Development would not alter either. Landscape mitigation measures would mature and fully screen the Cumulative Sites during the operational period whilst maintaining the character of the surrounding landscape resulting in a **Low** magnitude of change and **Moderate to Minor** and **Adverse** effects. For these reasons the cumulative magnitude of change would remain **Low**, and the **Moderate to Minor, Adverse Cumulative** effect would continue in year 15.
- 8.6.41 There would be no increase in the effects resulting from the Proposed Development cumulatively with the Beane Solar Farm on these receptors and the residual cumulative effect is therefore consistent with that of the LVIA.

Summary

- 8.6.42 The CLVIA has assessed the existing landscape character and visual resource of the Site—Westfield Energy Conservation Park—within its cumulative context with the adjacent Beane Solar Farm, and their combined local and regional context within a 2km Study Area. The Cumulative Sites both comprise solar farms, including Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and associated infrastructure set within a rural landscape of arable fields and established field boundaries.
- 8.6.43 Although the Cumulative Sites occupy substantial land areas, their infrastructure would be for the large part of relatively low vertical profile, and benefit from substantial existing screening provided by landform, hedgerows and woodland. Combined with the proposed additional mitigation, this significantly limits potential visual intrusion.
- 8.6.44 The Cumulative Sites both lie within National Character Area (NCA) Profile: 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (NE515) and within the Upper Beane Valley Tributaries Landscape Character Area 221, identified in the North Hertfordshire and Stevenage

Landscape Character Assessment. It is situated on gently sloping ground with established vegetation patterns. The area's ordinarily attractive rural character of wide spaces and rolling topography, woodland and hedgerows, is interspersed with utility infrastructure including pylons. This establishes a baseline that accommodates a degree of change without fundamental loss of character.

8.6.45 Mitigation measures in common to both the Cumulative Sites would reduce landscape and visual effects from the commencement of operations. These include:

- Retention of existing hedgerows and mature trees, which provide immediate screening.
- Setbacks from sensitive receptors, including public rights of way and nearby dwellings.
- Low height and uniform arrangement of solar panels, reducing visual massing.
- Orientation and layout that follows the field pattern, aiding integration.
- New native hedgerow planting along eastern and southern boundaries.
- Enhancement of existing field boundaries to ensure continuity and density of screening.
- Grassland creation and wildflower seeding, contributing to both visual quality and biodiversity.
- Tree and woodland block planting at strategic locations to disrupt wider views and assimilate the developments into the landscape framework.

8.6.46 While there are undoubtedly locations within the Cumulative Study Area that would be subject to more permanent and unavoidable visual effects as a result of the perception and presence of the Cumulative Sites upon completion, the majority of these effects on sensitive receptors are assessed to be **Minor, Adverse** by Year 15 and would diminish further as the proposed planting becomes established. The broad landscape structure would be retained and key features of value respected, ensuring that the underlying rural character would not be fundamentally altered during their Operational Phases.

8.7 Summary of Residual Cumulative Effects

8.7.1 The cumulative residual effects result from the difference between the identified cumulative effect and the LVIA effect from the same receptor. If there is a difference between the LVIA effect and the Cumulative effect, then it is residual effect. However, only if the total change is Moderate or greater would that be deemed to be significant. The following residual effects have been identified:

Table 8.4 Summary of Residual Cumulative Effects

Receptor	Residual Cumulative Effects (after Year 15)	Significance

Landscape Receptors		
Landscape Fabric of the Site	Negligible (no change)	No
Local Landscape Character	Negligible (no change)	No
Wider Landscape Character	Negligible (no change)	No
Visual Receptors		
Kingswoodbury House	Negligible (no change)	No
Properties in Cumberlow Green.	Negligible (no change)	No
Properties in Luffenhall, Cromer and Cottered	Negligible (no change)	No
Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 020	Negligible (no change)	No
Users of PRow passing through the Site - Clothall 019	Negligible (no change)	No
Users of BOAT Weston 39/Clothall 012 adjacent to Site	Negligible (no change)	No
Users of PRow in wider landscape	Minor (no change)	No
Users of A507 and minor road across River Beane	Negligible (no change)	No
Users of B1037 and Brookfield Common	Negligible (no change)	No

8.8 Conclusions

- 8.8.1 The CLVA has considered the Proposed Development in combination with other relevant existing and proposed solar energy schemes in the Study Area. There is one such proposal identified – planning ref. 3/24/2245/FUL Beane Solar Farm - within the cumulative baseline. The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the principles of GLVIA3 and relevant guidance (including TGN 08/24), taking into account the nature of the receiving landscape, the degree of intervisibility between sites, and the sensitivity of visual receptors and landscape character areas.

- 8.8.2 The cumulative assessment confirms that while there is another energy-related development within the local landscape context, it is located contiguously to the Proposed Development. The intervening landform, network of hedgerows, woodland belts, and mature tree groups serve to fragment views and limit the extent to which developments are perceived collectively from most public vantage points. Where intervisibility does occur—primarily from elevated or open locations such as sections of the A507 or selected local rights of way—the character of views remains filtered and discontinuous due to the scale of the landscape and the layering of vegetation.
- 8.8.3 Within this cumulative context, the Proposed Development is not considered to contribute to a coalescence or concentration of energy infrastructure such that the receiving landscape becomes defined by a solar or industrialised character. Rather, the siting strategy avoids the most visually exposed field parcels, retains key field patterns and hedgerows, and co-locates infrastructure such as battery storage with areas of existing energy presence, helping to maintain the underlying agricultural character of the landscape and avoid visual saturation.
- 8.8.4 Residual cumulative effects on landscape character are considered to be **Minor** or **Negligible**, reflecting the limited geographical overlap of visible influence between the Proposed Development and Beane Solar Farm. The scale of the North Hertfordshire Plateau and Upper Beane Valley landscape character areas ensures that any localised effects are diluted at a broader scale. Moreover, mitigation planting proposed as part of the Proposed Development—particularly along valley slopes and at key interfaces with public routes—would further reduce intervisibility over time, minimising the extent to which the Proposed Development contributes to a cumulative perception of landscape change.
- 8.8.5 In terms of visual amenity, cumulative effects are similarly assessed as **Minor to Negligible** for the majority of receptor locations. Only a limited number of viewpoints, notably from sections of the A507 and from select public rights of way near Cromer and Lodge Farm, allow for partial and sequential views of the two Proposed Developments. Even in these locations, the combination of distance, vegetation screening, and the discrete layout of each development prevents the merging of visual form or character into a single, dominant feature. The Proposed Development is visually recessive in form, benefiting from low-profile infrastructure and contextualised siting within a well-defined landscape framework.
- 8.8.6 No cumulative views were identified from scenic viewpoints or nationally recognised recreational routes that would materially degrade their setting or experience. While there might potentially be a perceptible change in views from nearby heritage receptors (Cromer Windmill in particular), these were assessed in terms of landscape and visual effects on the same basis as all other receptors. During construction and early operational phases, these effects will be temporary and reversible and are not considered to result in significant cumulative harm to residential visual amenity or public enjoyment of the landscape.
- 8.8.7 Overall, the cumulative effects of the Proposed Development—both in terms of landscape character and visual receptors—are not considered significant in planning terms. The Proposed Development has been consciously designed to respond to the local landscape’s capacity for change, respects existing visual structure and hierarchy, and is set within a

wider cumulative context that remains rural and diverse in use and form. When considered in combination with the Beane Solar Farm, the Proposed Development demonstrates a clear avoidance of overdevelopment or landscape saturation. This supports its cumulative acceptability under local and national planning policy, including the aims of the North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment.

- 8.8.8 It is therefore concluded that the Proposed Development is capable of being successfully accommodated within the landscape without giving rise to significant cumulative effects. The integrated design, responsive mitigation, and containment of visual influence ensure that the contribution of the Proposed Development to cumulative change is both limited and proportionate. Over time, as mitigation measures mature and the Proposed Development is further assimilated into the local field pattern and vegetation structure, any cumulative effects would diminish further, reinforcing the Proposed Development's compatibility with the receiving landscape and its long-term resilience.

