EAST PARK ENERGY

East Park Energy

EN010141

Environmental Statement
Volume 1 – Main Report

Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual

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EAST PARK ENERGY

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Environmental Statement
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Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual

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5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This chapter of the Environmental Statement (ES) presents the findings of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) undertaken for the Scheme. A description of the Scheme is provided within **ES Volume 1 Chapter 2: The Scheme [EN010141/DR/6.1]**.

5.1.2 The landscape assessment has considered the potential effects of the Scheme on the landscape as an environmental resource and the visual assessment has considered the potential effects on people's views, such as residents, users of publicly accessible routes, visitors to community facilities, road users and people working in the area.

5.1.3 Landscape and visual effects have been considered for the construction, operational, post-mitigation (i.e. residual effects once mitigation has reached maturity) and decommissioning phases of the Scheme. However, operational effects of the grid connection route have been scoped out and therefore only the construction and decommissioning phases have been considered.

5.1.4 The landscape and visual assessments have been undertaken in parallel, and have been informed by a combination of desk and site-based appraisal techniques and professional judgement.

5.1.5 This chapter is supported by the following appendices in **ES Volume 2 [EN010141/DR/6.2]**:

- **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-1: Assessment Methodology [EN010141/DR/6.2]**;
- **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-2: ZTV and Visualisation Methodology [EN010141/DR/6.2]**;
- **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-3: Effects on Landscape Character [EN010141/DR/6.2]**;
- **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-4: Effects at Viewpoints [EN010141/DR/6.2]**;

- **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-5: Effects on Visual Receptors [EN010141/DR/6.2]**;
- **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-6: Glint and Glare Assessment [EN010141/DR/6.2]**; and
- **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-7: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment [EN010141/DR/6.2]**.

5.1.6 This chapter is supported by the following figures in **ES Vol 3 [EN010141/DR/6.3]**:

- **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-1: Topography [EN010141/DR/6.3]**;
- **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-2a: National Character Areas [EN010141/DR/6.3]**;
- **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-2b: Local Landscape Character Areas [EN010141/DR/6.3]**;
- **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-3a: 5km ZTV (Solar Array and Transformers) [EN010141/DR/6.3]**;
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- **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-3c: ZTV (percentage of solar array and transformers visible) [EN010141/DR/6.3]**;
- **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-3d: ZTV (BESS & Substation) [EN010141/DR/6.3]**;
- **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-4a: Visual Receptors - Representative Viewpoints & Rights of Way [EN010141/DR/6.3]**;
- **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-4b: Visual Receptors - Residential, Community, Roads and Commercial Receptors [EN010141/DR/6.3]**;
- **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-5 to Figure 5-87 [EN010141/DR/6.3]** comprise the viewpoint plates and photomontage visualisations.

5.1.7 The following sections of this chapter include:

- A summary of relevant planning policy.
- A summary description of the methodology for the assessment, including details of the study area and the approach to the assessment of effects.
- A summary of consultation with stakeholders.

- A review of baseline (existing) conditions.
- Details of the measures proposed as part of the Scheme to avoid or reduce environmental effects, including mitigation and design measures that form part of the Scheme.
- An assessment of the likely effects for the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Scheme, taking into account the mitigation measures proposed.
- Identification of any further mitigation measures or monitoring required in relation to likely significant effects.
- Assessment of any cumulative effects with other proposed developments.

Statement of Competence

5.1.8 Drawing on published standards and guidance, landscape and visual assessment relies on an element of reasoned professional judgement. This assessment has been undertaken by Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) with experience of assessing the landscape and visual effects of large-scale infrastructure developments.

5.1.9 The landscape competent expert holds a master's degree in landscape architecture and CMLI status. The competent expert has over 21 years' experience working in the field of LVIA and landscape design and has worked on numerous large-scale infrastructure projects across the UK, including electrical grid connections and solar arrays. The competent expert has experience representing landscape and visual issues at topic hearings as part of the nationally significant infrastructure project application process.

5.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

Introduction

5.2.1 National and local policy relevant to the LVIA is summarised within the subsequent sections.

Legislation

5.2.2 There is no current legislation specific to the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

Policy

National Policy

5.2.3 The following National Policy Statements set out national planning policies in relation to nationally significant solar photovoltaic generation developments:

- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (NPS EN-1)[1];
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (NPS EN-3)[2]; and
- National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (NPS EN-5)[3].

5.2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[4], and the accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)[5] are also important and relevant considerations, however the Scheme will be determined in accordance with the NPSs.

5.2.5 Relevant policies from the relevant national policy documents are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 – Summary of National Planning Policy

Document	Policy / Paragraph Reference	Summary of Policy / Paragraph	Where addressed in the ES?
NPS EN-1	4.2.10-4.2.12	Requirement for applicants to apply the mitigation hierarchy and demonstrate that is has been applied as part of their application. Applicants should also demonstrate how any residual effects would be compensated for as far as possible.	See Section 5.7 for details of landscape and visual mitigation. Section 5.9 discusses the need for additional mitigation in relation to residual effects See **ES Vol 1 Chapter 4: EIA Methodology [EN010141/DR/6.1]** for more general discussion of the mitigation hierarchy and Section 7 of the **Planning Statement [EN010141/DR/5.6]** where the application of the mitigation hierarchy in relation to landscape effects is discussed.
	Section 4.6.1 – 4.6.2	In addition to avoiding, mitigating and compensating harm, the project should also consider opportunities for enhancement. Net gains for biodiversity and the wider environment should be provided where possible.	See Section 5.7 for details of landscape and visual enhancement measures.
	Section 4.7	Discusses the criteria for good design for energy infrastructure.	See the **Design Approach Document (DAD) [EN010141/DR/5.6]** for details of the approach taken to achieving good design, which incorporates the landscape mitigation and enhancement measures set out in Sections 5.7 and 5.9.
	5.10.12	Notes that local development document policies based on landscape or waterscape character assessment should be paid particular attention. However, locally valued landscapes should not be used in themselves to refuse consent, as this may unduly restrict acceptable development.	See Table 5.2 for a summary of local planning policies. The Site and study area are not covered by any statutory or local landscape designations.

Document	Policy / Paragraph Reference	Summary of Policy / Paragraph	Where addressed in the ES?
	5.10.16-5.10.25	LVIA should include: • Reference to landscape character assessment/seascape character assessment and associated studies. • Consider landscape and visual matters from an early stage, feeding into the design process and opportunities for mitigation/enhancement. • Assess landscape and visual effects during construction/operation, including the effects of any proposed lighting. • Consider how landscapes can be enhanced using landscape management plans.	Landscape character assessment and associated studies are discussed in Section 5.6. The **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** discusses how landscape and visual matters have influenced the design evolution of the Scheme. Section 5.8 includes an assessment of landscape and visual effects during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. Sections 5.7 and 5.9 describe the provisions made for landscape management.
	5.10.27	Notes that adverse landscape and visual effects can be minimised through appropriate siting of infrastructure within the development site and the wider setting	See the DAD **[EN010141/DR/5.6]** for details of the approach taken to achieving good design, which incorporates the mitigation and enhancement measures set out in Sections 5.7 and 5.9.
NPS EN-3	2.10.42-44	Encourages applicants to design solar schemes in such a way as to ensure that recreational use of public rights of way continues, where possible during construction, and in particular during operation of the Proposed Development. Applicants are also encouraged where possible to minimise the visual effects of development upon public rights of way users, and to consider and maximise opportunities to facilitate enhancements to public rights of way, and the adoption of new rights of way	Refer to Section 5.7 of this chapter, to **ES Vol 1 Chapter 2: The Scheme [EN010141/DR/6.1]**, to the **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** and to the **outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (oLEMP) [EN010141/DR/7.7]** for details regarding design and mitigation, including in relation to public rights of way, and to new permissive routes.

Document	Policy / Paragraph Reference	Summary of Policy / Paragraph	Where addressed in the ES?
		through site layout and design of access	
	2.10.46-2.10.48	Require that applicants should assess and seek to minimise the landscape and visual impacts of security measures, including intrusion from fencing, CCTV and light pollution in the vicinity of the Site	The assessment set out in Section 5.8 of this chapter and in **ES Vol 2 Appendices 5-3, 5-4, and 5-5 [EN010141/DR/6.2]** assesses the effects of security measures. Refer to Section 5.7 of this chapter, to **ES Vol 1 Chapter 2: The Scheme [EN010141/DR/6.1]**, and to the **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** for details regarding design and mitigation.
	2.10.100-2.10.101	Highlights the need to take account of the growth of retained and proposed vegetation along site boundaries as part of design and management proposals. The effects of a development upon existing trees and hedges should be informed by an arboricultural assessment	The measures set out in Section 5.7 and in the **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** reflect the potential for future growth of retained and proposed vegetation. Sections 5.7 and 5.9 describe the provisions made for landscape management. Further details of landscape management are set out in the **oLEMP [EN010141/DR/7.7]**. **ES Vol 2 Appendix 2-2: Arboricultural Assessment [EN010141/DR/6.2]** has been provided as part of the application for development consent.
	2.10.103	Advises that the effects of glint and glare from proposed solar PV modules should be assessed	**ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-6 [EN010141/DR/6.2]** includes a glint and glare assessment, the conclusions of which are summarised in Section 5.8
	2.10.131-2.10.135	Recommended mitigation measures include: • Screening with native trees, hedges and woodland;	See Section 5.7 for details of landscape and visual mitigation.

Document	Policy / Paragraph Reference	Summary of Policy / Paragraph	Where addressed in the ES?
		• Minimising the height of security fencing and using existing features to assist in site security (or to screen security fencing); • Minimising the use of security lighting, with infra-red lighting preferred; • Consider the use of anti-glare/anti-reflective coatings on solar PV modules • Consider use of screening between solar PV modules and receptors with potential to be affected by glint and glare. • Consider using screening between potentially affected receptors and the reflecting panels to mitigate the effects	
NPS EN-5	2.9.18-2.9.19	Summarises the Horlock Rules in relation to the design of substation infrastructure.	The landscape and visual effects of the proposed East Park substation are assessed in Section 5.8, with mitigation measures set out in Section 5.7. Refer to the **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** for a consideration of how the Scheme performs against the Horlock Rules.
	Section 2.10.5-2.10.8	Identifies further potential landscape and visual mitigation measures	

Local Planning Policy

5.2.6 The Scheme lies within the administrative boundaries of Bedford Borough Council (BBC) and Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), with HDC being a two-tier authority with Cambridgeshire County Council. Planning policy of relevance to the LVIA that will be considered includes:

- Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030[6];
- Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036[7]; and
- Great Staughton Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2036[8].

5.2.7 Relevant local planning policies from the above documents are summarised in Table 5.2:

Table 5.2 – Summary of Local Planning Policy

Document	Policy / Paragraph Reference	Summary of Policy / Paragraph	Where addressed in the ES?
Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036	Policy LP2	Sets the strategy for development in Huntingdonshire, including that development should protect the character of existing settlements, and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of surrounding countryside, whilst providing complementary green infrastructure enhancement for recreational, biodiversity and climate change benefits.	The baseline characteristics of the existing landscape are identified in Section 5.6. The **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** provides a description of the Scheme's design response and how opportunities for enhancement are embedded within the proposals.
	Policy LP10	Requires development in the countryside to seek to use land of lower agricultural value where possible, recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and not give rise to impacts that would adversely affect the use of the countryside.	The baseline characteristics of the existing landscape are identified in Section 5.6. An assessment of landscape and visual impacts is provided in Section 5.8.
	Policy LP11, LP12 & LP13	Require the design of development proposals to be informed by their context, and large-scale developments to undergo a masterplanning process that includes demonstrating how	The **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** provides a description of the Scheme's design evolution, and how this has been informed by environmental assessment and

		good design has been achieved.	consultation to deliver good design.
	Policy LP14	Requires development to protect the amenity of nearby users.	A residential visual amenity assessment has been provided in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-7 [EN010141/DR/6.2]**, with the effects summarised in Section 5.8 of this chapter.
	Policy LP31	Requires development proposals to protect trees and hedgerows.	**ES Vol 2 Appendix 2-2: Arboricultural Assessment [EN010141/DR/6.2]** provides a tree and hedgerow survey, and assessment of impact.
	Policy LP35	Provides support for renewable energy projects provided the impacts can be made acceptable. Reference is made to the Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD.	Relevant local landscape character assessments including the Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD have been used to inform this assessment, as set out in Section 5.6.
Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030	Policy 3S	Requires development to safeguard the intrinsic character of the countryside.	The baseline characteristics of the existing landscape are identified in Section 5.6.
	Policy 28S	Expects development to contribute to good place making by promoting local distinctiveness, having a positive relationship with the surrounding area, enhancing the landscape, and including appropriate landscaping.	The baseline characteristics of the existing landscape are identified in Section 5.6. The **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** provides a description of the Scheme's design evolution, and how this has been informed by environmental assessment and consultation to deliver good design.
	Policy 29 & 30	Requires development proposals to be of a high design quality informed by design codes, that respects the character and quality of the area in which it is located.	The **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** provides a description of the Scheme's design evolution, and how this has been informed by environmental assessment and consultation to deliver good design.
	Policy 37	Requires development proposals to protect and	Relevant local landscape character assessments

		enhance the key landscape elements and visual sensitivities of the area, as informed by the Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment.	including the Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment have been used to inform this assessment, as set out in Section 5.6. The **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** provides a description of the Scheme's design evolution, and how this has been informed by environmental assessment and consultation to deliver good design.
	Policy 38	Requires new development to provide landscaping that supports multiple benefits.	The **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** provides a description of the Scheme's design response and how opportunities for enhancement are embedded within the proposals.
	Policy 39 & 40	Requires development proposals to protect trees and hedgerows.	**ES Vol 2 Appendix 2-2: Arboricultural Assessment [EN010141/DR/6.2]** provides a tree and hedgerow survey, and assessment of impact.
	Policy 57	Provides support for renewable energy projects provided the impacts have been addressed, including the landscape and visual impact.	This chapter of the ES provides an assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the Scheme, which are set out in Section 5.8.
	Policy 91	Requires development to safeguard public rights of way	Public rights of way have been integrated into the masterplan for the Scheme, as shown on **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]**. An **outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan [EN010141/DR/7.8]** sets out how users of public rights of way will be protected during the construction and operational phases.
Great Staughton Neighbourhood	Policy GSNP 7	Requires development to respond positively to existing landscape characteristics, and	The baseline characteristics of the existing landscape are identified in Section 5.6.

Plan 2021 to 2036		incorporate measures that mitigate and manage landscape and visual impacts.	The **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** provides a description of the Scheme's design evolution, and how this has been informed by environmental assessment and consultation to deliver good design. Mitigation measures are set out in Section 5.7.

Guidance

5.2.8 The methodology and criteria used for this assessment of landscape and visual effects has been developed based on the non-prescriptive Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, 2013 (GLVIA3). The GLVIA3 sets out the principles that underpin landscape and visual assessment but does not provide a formulaic recipe for reaching judgements about significance. Such judgements instead rely on reasoned and experienced professional judgement.

5.2.9 The following additional guidance has also informed detailed aspects of the approach taken to the assessment of the Scheme:

- Natural England (2014) *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*[9];
- The Landscape Institute (2016) *Technical Guidance Note 08/15: Landscape Character Assessment*[10];
- The Landscape Institute (2017) *Technical Information Note 01/2017: Tranquillity – An Overview*[11];
- The Landscape Institute (2019) *Technical Guidance Note 02/19: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)* [12];
- The Landscape Institute (2019) *Technical Guidance Note 06/19: Visual Representation of Development Proposals*[13];
- The Landscape Institute (2020) *Technical Guidance Note 04/2020: Infrastructure*[14]; and

- The Landscape Institute (2021) *Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations*[15].
- The Landscape Institute (2024) *Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01: Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3)*.

5.3 Consultation and Engagement

Scoping

5.3.1 Scoping of this landscape and visual assessment was undertaken as part of a wider Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping exercise, the findings of which were recorded in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 4-1: EIA Scoping Report [EN010141/DR/6.2]** that was submitted in October 2023.

5.3.2 A Scoping Opinion was received in December 2023 as presented in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 4-2: EIA Scoping Opinion [EN010141/DR/6.2]**. The feedback received from PINS and stakeholders within the Scoping Opinion has been reviewed and the points relating to this chapter are summarised in Table 5.3 below.

5.3.3 Table 5.3 sets out a record of relevant scoping responses:

Table 5.3 – Scoping responses with respect to landscape and visual impact

Consultee	Summary of Comments	Response
PINS	Regional Landscape Character Types. The Inspectorate is content that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment.	No further response required.
PINS	Effects on designated landscapes. The Inspectorate is content that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment.	No further response required.
PINS	Standalone glint and glare assessment. The applicant proposed that this assessment would be carried out and form a technical appendix to the LVIA chapter with significant effects and any mitigation measures proposed reported within the ES. The Inspectorate is content with this approach subject to cross	No further response required.

Consultee	Summary of Comments	Response
	references being made where appropriate.	
PINS	Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA). The Scoping Report notes that a RVAA is proposed to be scoped into the ES at this stage on the basis that the layout of the Proposed Development and proposed mitigation is not yet fixed. The RVAA may be subsequently scoped out following consultation with stakeholders, and an evidence-based appraisal will be provided to justify this. The Inspectorate welcomes this approach.	The Scheme has been designed to provide suitable offsets and/or visual screening from the properties located in close proximity to the Site. There are no residential receptors where the threshold of acceptability for residential visual amenity as outlined in the Landscape Institute's TGN 02/2019 would be exceeded. **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-7 [EN010141/DR/6.2]** comprises a residential visual amenity assessment.
PINS	Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA). PINS note that the Scoping Report refers to the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note TGN 2/19: 'Residential Visual Amenity Assessment'. The Inspectorate understands that in this guidance the requirement for an RVAA is generally dependent on the outcome of a LVIA. In the absence of an LVIA for the construction and decommissioning phases, the Inspectorate does not have sufficient evidence to agree to scope this matter out of further assessment. Construction and decommissioning effects should therefore be assessed within any subsequent RVAA, or justification should be provided why significant effects would not occur, supported by evidence of agreement with the relevant consultation bodies.	The Applicant notes the comment with regards construction and decommissioning effects and has considered these stages of the Scheme within the RVAA at **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-7 [EN010141/DR/6.2]**.
PINS	Night-time effects – operation. The Inspectorate is content that this matter can be scoped out of further assessment for the operational phase. Nevertheless, the ES should clarify the likely frequency of maintenance activities occurring outside of daylight hours and provide details	The Applicants notes the comment with regards scoping out further assessment of night-time effects during the operational phase. Further information regarding lighting design for the operational stage is included within **ES Vol 1 Chapter 2: The Scheme [EN010141/DR/6.1]** and covered

Consultee	Summary of Comments	Response
	of the proposed operational lighting strategy, such as measures to prevent impacts from lighting during emergency or maintenance events.	within the **outline Operational Environmental Management Plan [EN010141/DR/7.5]**.
PINS	Night-time effects – construction and decommissioning. Given that lighting would be required, the Inspectorate does not agree that this matter can be scoped out at this stage. Accordingly, the ES should provide an assessment of these matters, or the information demonstrating agreement with the relevant consultation bodies and the absence of LSE.	Further information regarding lighting design for the construction and decommission phases is included within **ES Vol 1 Chapter 2: The Scheme [EN010141/DR/6.1]** and covered within the **outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [EN010141/DR/7.3]** and **outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan [EN010141/DR/7.6]**. A summary of the night-time baseline situation is provided in Section 5.6 of this Chapter and reference to the potential for night-time effects of construction lighting is provided in Section 5.8 of this Chapter.
PINS	Study area. The Inspectorate is broadly content with the 3km study area proposed. However, the ZTV included in the Scoping Report are based on the 3m maximum height of PV panels. The Proposed Development involves additional infrastructure exceeding 3m in height, such as elements of the substation up to 12m in height, switchgear up to 8m in height, and battery storage facility up to 4.5m in height. Although it is noted that fieldwork was undertaken in June 2022 to establish the maximum extent of visibility of the site, the detail of this fieldwork is not provided, and it is unclear whether this is based on the maximum height of components or the 3m high PV panels. The ES should clearly justify the study area(s) used and should ensure that a worst-case scenario	The Applicant notes that the Inspectorate is broadly content with the 3km study area. With respect to comments on ZTVs, additional ZTVs have been produced illustrating the solar array (**ES Vol 3 Figures 5-3a and 5-3b [EN010141/DR/6.3]**) and substation and BESS site (**ES Vol 3 Figure 5-3d [EN010141/DR/6.3]**). These ZTVs are based on the maximum height parameters of the Scheme.

Consultee	Summary of Comments	Response
	is assessed. Where there are elements of the Proposed Development which exceed 3m, the Applicant should consider using multiple ZTVs to assess the potential visibility for all components of the Proposed Development. The Applicant should make effort to agree the study area for LVIA with relevant consultees and provide evidence of this within the ES.	
PINS	Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) The Scoping Report states that LLCAs will be defined for the site and its immediate context but not for the full extent of the LVIA study area. It is not clear on what basis this has been established. The Inspectorate is of the opinion that the study area should reflect the extent of likely significant landscape effects. The study area represents the extent to which effects could occur and therefore all the LLCAs within the study area should be defined.	The Applicant notes the comments made by the Inspectorate and has since amended the approach taken to the landscape character assessment to ensure that landscape character within the entire study area is addressed. The applicant has taken the local landscape character assessments published by the host authorities as the focus of the landscape character assessment. LVIA site surveys have established that the scale and detail of the assessments, which were relatively recently produced, is appropriate as the basis of the character assessment. The landscape character assessment has been carried out for the entire 3km study area.
PINS	Viewpoints. There is discrepancy within the Scoping Report about the number of viewpoints selected. Paragraph 7.4.64 states that a provisional list of 79 viewpoints has been selected, however, Table 7.3 and Figure 7-7 identify 82 viewpoints. Although the Inspectorate recognises that these are still subject to finalisation in consultation with relevant consultees, the ES should be consistent with the number of viewpoints selected. Evidence of the consultation with relevant bodies regarding the viewpoints	The Applicant notes the discrepancy and can confirm that 82 viewpoints were provisionally identified within the Scoping Report.

Consultee	Summary of Comments	Response
	selected should be provided within the ES.	
PINS	Mitigation. The Scoping Report states that changes to the layout of the proposed solar panels and ancillary structures would occur in order to mitigate landscape and visual effects. Where flexibility is sought, the ES should clearly set out the maximum design parameters that have been assessed and how these have been used to inform an adequate assessment in the ES.	Refer to **ES Vol 1 Chapter 2: The Scheme [EN010141/DR/6.1]** for the Scheme description and the parameters which have been assessed in this chapter, as part of the overall EIA process. Additional parameters which are specific to landscape and visual assessment such as, for example, the assumed heights of mitigation planting within the Year 10 assessment of landscape and visual effects, are set out in Section 5.4 of this chapter.
PINS	Assessment scenarios. The Scoping Report states that landscape and visual effects will be assessed during summer of Year 10 of operation. It is unclear how a scenario within the summer would represent a worst-case scenario in terms of landscape and visual effects given the potential screening effect from deciduous vegetation in leaf. It is also stated in that summer and winter photography will be used "*as far as practicable*." The reasoning behind this statement is unclear considering paragraph 7.7.2 states that all photography will be from publicly accessible locations. The Applicant should provide photographs during winter as well as in summer to allow an assessment of the maximum visibility scenario and illustrate the seasonal differences in screening provided by mitigation planting in line with the GLVIA3.	The Applicant notes these comments and, as has is set out in Section 5.4 of this chapter, has taken an approach regarding the assessment of seasonal effects which focuses on the worst-case scenario at each stage of the visual assessment, including construction, operation (Year 0 and Year 10) and decommissioning. This does not apply to the landscape assessment which is not typically considered seasonally. With regards winter photography, the applicant can clarify that "*as far as practicable*" was intended to refer to the Scheme timeframe and the time available during that programme to take winter photographs. However, since the Scoping Opinion was issued the applicant has carried out winter photography, in January and February 2024, at viewpoints 1 to 82. In addition, summer photography (i.e. when deciduous trees were in leaf) was undertaken in September and early October 2024.
Natural England	Statutory Landscape Designations.	No further response required.

Consultee	Summary of Comments	Response
	The letter states: "*We discussed Statutory Landscape Designations and were in agreement that the proposed project does not trigger any Statutory Landscapes and that this can be screened out of the EIA.*" *"Further consultation was taken with Natural England's Senior Landscape advisor. It was confirmed post meeting that taking the distance and intervening infrastructure into consideration we are confident that any impact on protected landscapes will be negligible."* *"In terms of Local Landscape Designations, it was agreed that these discussions would be held between the applicant and the Local Planning Authority."*	

Statutory Consultation

5.3.4 Statutory consultation on the project took place between September 2024 and October 2024. This included consultation on the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) which contained a preliminary assessment of landscape and visual effects. The feedback received from statutory consultees is summarised within Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 – PEIR consultation responses with respect to landscape and visual impact

Consultee	Summary of Comments	Response
Bedford Borough Council	The local authority reserved the right to comment further on the LVIA, but had no comments during the statutory consultation.	The Applicant notes this comment.
Huntingdonshire District Council / Cambridgeshire County Council	By virtue of the scale of the proposals, there will be substantial residual landscape	The Applicant notes this comment. An assessment of the landscape and visual effects is provided in Section 5.8 of this chapter, which

Consultee	Summary of Comments	Response
	character and visual impacts that cannot be mitigated. There are concerns about the visual impact on PROWs. This includes the different users of the network including equestrians. The local authority reserved the right to comment further on the LVIA.	includes the impact on views for users of the public right of way network.

5.3.5 The three host authorities (Bedford Borough Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council) noted from the outset of the Applicant's pre-application consultation that they did not have in-house expertise on landscape and visual assessment, and that consequently they would be able to provide limited comment on the scope and approach of the LVIA.

5.3.6 The Applicant has been engaging with the host authorities on a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) since August 2023 such that they could collectively instruct external resource to review, comment and advise on the LVIA on their behalf. Despite the best efforts of the Applicant and the host authorities, the final PPA was not signed until July 2025, and the external resource to be brought in by the host authorities has not to the Applicant's knowledge been instructed. The Applicant has therefore not undertaken any pre-application consultation with the host authorities on the LVIA outside of the statutory consultation.

5.4 Assessment Methodology

5.4.1 The methodology used for this assessment is based on the guidance referred to previously in Section 5.2, with primary reference to GLVIA3. This approach has been applied to the assessment of landscape and visual effects on other Development Consent Order (DCO) projects carried out by the lead assessor and it focuses on proportionality in the assessment and the identification of likely significant landscape and visual effects. The adopted assessment methodology has specifically focused on providing appropriate environmental information regarding the following potential landscape and visual impacts of the Scheme:

- The construction of sections of underground cabling;
- The landscape and visual implications of a limited extent of hedgerow removal to enable access and construction of the cable route;
- The construction of the solar array and associated infrastructure including the East Park BESS and substation; and
- The landscape and visual effects of installing solar array infrastructure within an area of predominantly rural countryside.

Structure of the LVIA

5.4.2 This LVIA comprises:

- Identification of landscape and visual receptors and a description of current baseline conditions.
- An assessment of receptor susceptibility and receptor value, which are combined to report the sensitivity of the receptors.
- An assessment of the potential impacts associated with the Scheme, i.e. a description of how the introduction of the Scheme will alter the baseline landscape and visual conditions.
- An assessment of the magnitude of change to the receptors , comprising specific assessments of the: scale; extent; duration; and potential reversibility of the change.

- An assessment of the level and significance of the effect on the receptor, based on the six principal considerations of: susceptibility; value; scale of effect; extent; duration; and reversibility.
- Identification of measures to mitigate adverse landscape and visual effects.
- Report on the residual landscape effects once mitigation has been taken into account.
- An assessment of the cumulative landscape and visual effects that could arise as a result of the Scheme in combination with other emerging developments.

Approach to Assessment

Baseline studies

5.4.3 Baseline landscape and visual assessments are undertaken in parallel, and are informed by a combination of desk and field-based techniques.

Baseline desktop assessment

5.4.4 Preliminary identification, description and evaluation of the existing landscape and visual context of the study area involved a desk-based review and interrogation of the following information sources:

- Responses obtained through the scoping and consultation processes;
- Ordnance Survey mapping and aerial photography relating to existing landform, vegetation, settlement patterns, public rights of way and vantage points;
- Plans containing information relating to landscape designations and landscape related policies at the local, regional and national level;
- Engineering data and schematic plans relating to the construction and operation of the Scheme;
- The Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside website; managed by Natural England (available at http://www.magic.gov.uk);

- National landscape character areas (NCAs) as defined by Natural England; and
- Local Landscape Character Assessments, as defined in 'Local Character Areas' in subsequent Section 5.6.

Baseline field assessment

5.4.5 Field surveys have been undertaken during periods of clement weather from public highways, public rights of way and publicly accessible areas. Site work involved:

- A corroboration of the findings of the desktop review;
- Gathering of additional information on landscape elements, character, views and localised screening; and
- Taking photographs from proposed representative viewpoints.

5.4.6 The Site was visited on multiple occasions by landscape consultants responsible for undertaking this LVIA and the co-ordination of the design of the Scheme. However, key survey dates comprise:

- An initial site visit was undertaken in June 2022, prior to further site visits throughout 2022 and 2023 as the Scheme design evolved;
- Winter photography was undertaken between 1 February 2024 and 7 March 2024;
- Summer photography, i.e. when deciduous trees and hedgerow were in leaf, was undertaken between 24 September and 4 October 2024; and
- Final LVIA assessment visits, following the Scheme design freeze, were undertaken in July 2025. This included the final RVAA site visit.

Receptors

5.4.7 The approach to assessment comprises desktop studies and walkover surveys. The purpose is to establish the nature and extent of potential receptors, to identify the likely sensitivity of receptors, and to record the potential landscape and visual effects of the Scheme on the receptors.

5.4.8 The landscape receptors with potential to experience change as a result of the Scheme comprise landscape elements (i.e. woodland, individual trees, hedgerow, landform, field pattern, etc) and landscape character. The description of the change to landscape elements caused by the Scheme informs the overall assessment of the significance of the effects on landscape character.

5.4.9 The visual receptors with potential to experience change as a result of the Scheme include people in specific locations such as residential areas, using public rights of way or attending places of work. An assessment of effects on representative viewpoints is presented in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-4: Effects at Viewpoints [EN010141/DR/6.2]** and provides an illustration of typical views of the Scheme which informs the assessment of visual effects on the visual receptors within the study area which is presented in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-5: Effects on Visual Receptors [EN010141/DR/6.2]**.

Assessment Stages, Seasons and Planting Heights

5.4.10 The assessment of landscape and visual effects includes consideration of the following:

- Seasonal differences with or without the Scheme including summer with foliage and winter without foliage.
- The change to, or loss of, existing landscape elements (e.g. loss of existing trees and hedgerow).
- Temporary construction activity (e.g. presence of plant, temporary buildings, materials storage, and construction traffic parking and movements).
- The introduction of the solar and battery infrastructure, grid connection, and other associated development needed to operate and maintain the Scheme.

5.4.11 The assessment considers the effects of the Scheme at the following points in time:

- Construction: the assessment of the construction phase of the Scheme assumes that construction is taking place across the whole Site during winter when visibility is greatest.
- Year 0 of operation: the assessment of the operational phase considers the opening year of the Scheme prior to the maturing of any mitigation planting. The visual assessment considers both winter and summer effects and the description of each effect includes reference to key differences in seasonal effects where applicable. However, the judgement with regards the level and significance of effect on each visual receptor refers to winter. Visual effects experienced during winter months are considered to be the 'worst-case' in assessment terms as trees are without leaf and visibility tends to be more open.
- Year 10 of operation: the assessment of the operational phase also considers the effects of the Scheme once planting has established and increased in maturity. Similar to the Year 0 assessment, reference has been made to visual effects during both summer and winter and the focus of this Year 10 assessment is the extent to which proposed mitigation planting would have established and the subsequent change in effects during both seasons, albeit with the level and significance of effect on each visual receptor assessed as a worst-case during winter.
- Decommissioning: the assessment of the Decommissioning Phase assumes that operations to remove the Scheme from the Site would take place across the whole Site during winter when visibility is greatest.

5.4.12 **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]** has been developed to mitigate effects during both summer and winter, albeit it is acknowledged that this tends to be more effective during summer when trees are in leaf.

5.4.13 The landscape assessment does not take into account seasonality; however reference may be made to the seasons where seasonal changes over a calendar year form a distinct part of the landscape character.

5.4.14 The assessment considers the following timescales:

- Start of construction works – early 2028;
- Estimated duration of construction – 30 months;
- Opening year (Year 0) – 2030; and
- Decommissioning year – 2070.

5.4.15 All proposed landscape and visual mitigation measures would be implemented by the year of opening (Year 0 in 2030), with a mitigation design year of 2040 (Year 10), which is the date by which proposed planting would have established to a point of relative maturity in contributing to mitigation objectives. For the purpose of assessment, mitigation planting growth and height assumptions have been defined in Table 5.5 subsequently. The figures set out in Table 5.5 are based on experience of the competent expert and colleagues, including previous DCO and public inquiry experience. They are reasonable estimates of growth rates which are subject to the variables of ground conditions, general climatic influences and individual species growth rates).

Table 5.5 – Mitigation planting growth and height assumptions

Planting type	Year 0	Year 10
Individual trees (12-14 cm heavy standard)	3.5m	6.5 m (3 m growth over ten years)
Woodland (2 m centres)	0.6m	5.5 m (5 m growth over ten years)
Hedgerow (maintained) (5 plants per linear metre in double staggered row)	0.6m	2.5-3.5 m
Hedgerow (unmaintained)	0.6m	3-5 m

Decommissioning

5.4.16 **ES Vol 1 Chapter 2: The Scheme [EN010141/DR/6.1]** contains a description of the decommissioning phase of the Scheme. However key assumptions regarding the decommissioning stage which are relevant to the assessment of landscape and visual effects are:

- After 40 years, the Scheme would no longer be operational, and all solar PV modules, mounting structures, cabling, inverters, transformers, BESS equipment, the East Park Substation, and fencing would be removed from the Site. The Site will be returned to a condition suitable for return to its original use after decommissioning.
- Decommissioning is expected to take between 12 and 24 months and would be undertaken in phases.
- The proposed planting would remain with hedgerows remaining at a height of approximately 3m in height, dependent on management approaches by landowners, and new trees would have reached substantial levels of maturity and therefore height over 40 years.
- The meadows and grassland would be removed, and the fields returned to agricultural use.
- The East Park BESS and substation will be removed.
- The LVIA is undertaken for the winter season with the duration of the decommissioning phase being between 12 and 24 months.

5.4.17 There is a high degree of uncertainty regarding decommissioning as engineering approaches and technologies evolve over the operational life of the Scheme. However, the landscape and visual effects of decommissioning would likely be similar to the construction effects and therefore a comparatively brief assessment has been carried out of decommissioning effects within this chapter.

Study Area

5.4.18 The study area for the Scheme has been established with reference to guidance in GLVIA3. A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) has been established using computer modelling to help identify the potential extent from which the Scheme may be visible (refer to **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-3a [EN010141/DR/6.3]** for the extent of the ZTV and **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-2 [EN010141/DR/6.3]** for the approach to ZTV modelling).

5.4.19 An initial ZTV was carried out to a radius of 5km from the Order Limits (**ES Volume 3 Figure 5-3a [EN010141/DR/6.3]**) to ensure a large extent of coverage prior to the selection of a study area. The ZTV was also produced using both DTM (digital terrain model) and DSM (digital surface model) data. The DTM based ZTV presents a worst-case scenario in terms of theoretical visibility, while the DSM based ZTV presents a more realistic theoretical visual envelope as surface screening features are taken into account. Refer to **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-2 [EN010141/DR/6.2]** for further description of the approach taken to ZTV production.

5.4.20 The main ZTVs produced comprise the solar array panels, which would be a maximum of 3m above ground level (AGL) and the transformer units which would be a maximum of 3.15m AGL (**ES Vol 3 Figures 5-3a** and **5-3b [EN010141/DR/6.3]**). An additional ZTV has been produced which illustrates the theoretical visibility of the taller elements of the Scheme, namely the East Park substation and BESS which are a maximum of 13.6m AGL for the substation and 4.0m AGL for the BESS (**ES Vol 3 Figure 5-3d [EN010141/DR/6.3]**). These components of the Scheme would each be located in one location and therefore have less influenced the overall study area than the solar array.

5.4.21 The extent of potential visibility has then been reviewed and verified in the field to determine how visible the Site and in turn the Scheme would actually be.

5.4.22 Taking account of the above, the study area for the LVIA extends to 3km from the Order Limits. This distance is sufficient for the LVIA given the limited vertical height of the elements of the Scheme and the screening provided by the gently rolling and reasonably well-wooded surrounding landscape. The ZTV illustrated on **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-3a [EN010141/DR/6.3]** demonstrates that the theoretical visibility of the Scheme is suitably contained within a 3km radius.

5.4.23 The area within the Order Limits is hereafter referred to as 'the Site.' The study area is 3km in both the landscape and visual assessments, however this has not been taken as a fixed boundary which cannot be exceeded, and reference has been made to receptors beyond 3km where applicable.

Assessment Criteria

5.4.24 Refer to **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-1: LVIA Methodology [EN010141/DR/6.2]** for a detailed methodology which sets out the approach taken to the assessment of landscape and visual effects and how conclusions have been reached regarding the level and significance of effects. In summary, the assessment follows GLVIA3 and LI Technical Guidance, whereby:

- The sensitivity of each landscape or visual receptor is judged, combining its susceptibility to change and the value attached to it.
- The magnitude of effect is judged, primarily by the scale of change, with extent, duration and reversibility considered as modifiers.
- Sensitivity and magnitude are then combined through professional judgement to determine the level of effect and whether it is considered significant in EIA terms.

5.4.25 For the purposes of this Environmental Statement, references to whether an effect is significant or not significant are made within the meaning of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Judgements are supported by clear evidence and reasoning, including how thresholds of significance have been determined. Greater than 'moderate' effects are more likely to be significant, though context may mean some 'moderate' or lower effects are significant, or some greater than 'moderate' effects are not.

5.4.26 The assessment of the level and significance of residual effects takes into consideration embedded mitigation measures implemented as part of the Scheme.

5.5 Assumptions and Limitations

5.5.1 It has not been possible to exactly define the nature of views from private property in the study area. Access was requested in relation to one property subject to the Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA), however, no response was received. The Site surveys were carried out from publicly accessible locations near to private properties, such as roads and rights of way, and the assessment of visual effects therefore reflects the best estimate of those effects.

5.5.2 With regards the assessment of long-term landscape and visual effects at Year 10, several assumptions have been stated in Section 5.4, specifically within the sub-sections: ‘Assessment Stages, Seasons and Planting Heights’ and ‘Decommissioning’.

5.6 Baseline Conditions

Introduction

5.6.1 The summary description of the baseline landscape and visual conditions set out in this chapter is supported by fuller descriptions provided in:

- **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-3: Effects on Landscape Character [EN010141/DR/6.2]***;*
- **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-4: Effects at Viewpoints [EN010141/DR/6.2]***;* and
- **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-5: Effects on Visual Receptors [EN010141/DR/6.2]**.

5.6.2 In describing the existing environment, the Site and study area has been referred to in a west-east direction i.e. broadly from the vicinity of Swineshead across to Eaton Socon.

General Context

5.6.3 The Site is located on the south side of a broad shallow clay vale landform formed by a number of west-east tributaries to the River Great Ouse, which flows north-south to the east of the study area through the town of St Neots. The River Kym flows eastwards through the study area, and references are made to the Kym's tributary valley as a landscape feature in local character assessment (refer to **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-3: Effects on Landscape Character [EN010141/DR/6.2]**).

5.6.4 **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-1: Topography [EN010141/DR/6.3]** demonstrates that the landscape within the study area is generally more undulating than within the Site which is located predominantly in a low-lying area with relatively limited topographic variation. The landform rises across the northern extent of the study area towards Grafham Water, in the western extent of the study area towards a ridgeline beyond Swineshead and in the southern extent of the study area towards a high point around the Bedford Aerodrome.

5.6.5 The landscape pattern across the study area is broadly consistent, comprising medium to large scale arable farmland interspersed with blocks of woodland, particularly in the more elevated parts of the landscape in the northern extent of the study area. The woodland in the north of the study area towards Kimbolton and Grafham Water is generally ancient woodland, as is the woodland located around Bushmead Priory in the southern extent of the study area. The Site comprises occasional small blocks of woodland and there is no ancient woodland within the Order Limits. The eastern extent of the study area comprises larger scale arable fields and is less wooded than the western extent.

5.6.6 Hedgerow cover across the study area is varied although the higher ground in the southern, western and northern extents of the study area have a more robust network of hedgerows on field boundaries and alongside roads with intermittent hedgerow trees evident. The eastern extent of the study area is more open with less hedgerows on field boundaries and beside roads.

5.6.7 The settlement pattern in the study area is dispersed and typically rural in character comprising occasional distinct village settlements. From west to east the principal settlements within the study area are Riseley, Swineshead, Pertenhall, Keysoe, Keysoe Row, Little Staughton, Stonely, Great Staughton, Staughton Highway, Hail Weston, and Duloe. The town of St Neots lies east of the A1 in the east of the study area and is the largest settlement local to the Site. Outside of the settlements there are occasional individual properties and farmsteads.

5.6.8 There are several existing solar farms within the study area, which are located:

- To the south of Pertenhall (adjacent to East Park Site A).
- At Little Staughton Airfield (1.2km south-west of East Park Site C).
- At High Wood to the west of Hail Weston (0.1km south of East Park Site D).

5.6.9 Other notable non-residential or arable land uses include: Thurleigh Airfield (Bedford Aerodrome) in the south-western extent of the study area; the Sunny Farm poultry facility west of Pertenhall; and HM Littlehey Prison in the northern extent of the study area.

5.6.10 The study area is crossed by a network of public rights of way including footpaths, bridleways and byways open to all traffic. There are three long distance recreational trails in the study area, albeit none of which cross into the Site: the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail which passes through Riseley and Keysoe Row in the south-west of the study area; the Three Shires Way north of Great Staughton in the north of the study area that provides a circular route around Grafham Water; and the Ouse Valley Way which follows the River Great Ouse through St Neots in the east of the study area. There are occasional small areas of public space located around villages, and the largest area of accessible natural green space is Swineshead Wood open access land which is located to the north of Swineshead in the north-western extent of the study area.

5.6.11 Existing lighting in the study area has been considered with reference to the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) Light Pollution and Dark Skies mapping[16] available online.

5.6.12 This mapping shows that most of the study area includes darker skies primarily in colour band 2 (0.25 to 0.5 NanoWatts /cm2 /sr) with small areas in the darkest colour band 1 (less than 0.25 NanoWatts /cm2 /sr), and some areas in colour band 3 (0.5 to 1 NanoWatts /cm2 /sr). This indicates a low level of artificial lighting in these areas. Sources of light in these locations include streetlamps and vehicles travelling on the rural lane and road network.

5.6.13 Brighter skies are identified over Great Staughton and the most eastern extent of the study area including Hail Weston and the larger settlements of Eaton Socon and St Neots, where the level of artificial lighting increases up to colour band 8 (16 to 32 NanoWatts /cm2 /sr), which indicates a high level of artificial lighting. Sources of light in these built-up areas include streetlamps, car park

lighting, infrastructure related with commercial uses and vehicles travelling on the road network.

Landscape Designations

5.6.14 There are no landscape designations within the study area.

Landscape Elements

5.6.15 Consideration has been given to the direct, physical loss of existing landscape elements as a result of the Scheme. Landscape elements within the Site contribute to the landscape character of the wider area. The following provides a summary of the principal existing landscape elements within the Site.

Landform

5.6.16 The following is a summary description of landform within the Site which comprises a baseline landscape element:

- The landform within the Site is broadly flat with minimal undulation, which is typical of a landscape which is largely used for arable farmland.
- Referring to **ES Volume 3 Figure 5-1: Topography [EN010141/DR/6.3]** there are some minor undulations within the Site, notably:
    a. A low ridge at the south-western extent of Site A which broadly runs from Riseley through to Pertenhall.
    b. An area of slightly higher ground at the southern extents of Sites B, C and D which subtly raise it above the northern extents of those parts of the Site.

Ditches and Watercourses

5.6.17 The Site is located within the wider catchment of the River Great Ouse, which is located outside the study area, and several tributaries drain the Site, including the Pertenhall Brook, Duloe Brook, South Brook and the River Kym.

5.6.18 For a full description of the hydrological baseline conditions refer to **ES Vol 1 Chapter 8: Hydrology and Flood Risk [EN010141/DR/6.1]**.

Land cover

5.6.19 Land within the study area consists primarily of medium to large scale, rectilinear, fields which is planted with arable crop. The landcover therefore has a varying appearance over the year, with crop evident in summer, while in winter the fields are generally without vegetation cover and are bare, ploughed soil.

5.6.20 The condition and quality of the agricultural landscape is good and typical of the area. Its value associates with its contribution to the consistency in appearance of the character of the area. An agricultural soils assessment has been provided within **ES Vol 1 Chapter 13: Land and Soils [EN010141/DR/6.1]** which provides detailed description of soils within the Site.

Trees and Hedgerows

5.6.21 The Site largely comprises open, large-scale arable farmland and so there is a relatively low level of tree and hedgerow cover, with the Order Limits excluding most woodland cover which is in the vicinity of the Scheme. However, there is hedgerow cover throughout the Site, located on most field boundaries, and intermittent hedgerow tree cover. With regards woodland cover, there are small blocks or belts of tree cover within or directly adjacent to the Site and the following are some notable tree groups:

- A small block of woodland at the south-western extent of Site A, 'Willow Spinney';
- Tree cover around the village of Pertenhall, directly to the north of Sites A and B;
- Tree cover around the village of Brook End, directly to the west of Site B;
- Tree cover around the village of Little Staughton, directly to the south-east of Site B;

- Tree cover along the River Kym and around the village of Great Staughton, directly to the north of Site C;
- Two woodland blocks, located directly to the south and south-east of Site B, respectively;
- 'New Wood' which sits centrally within Site C; and
- Little Paxton Wood located approximately 1km north-east of Site D, screens views in that direction.

5.6.22 An arboricultural survey in accordance with BS:5837 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction is provided at **ES Vol 2 Appendix 2-2: Arboricultural Assessment [EN010141/DR/6.2]**.

Landscape Character

National Character Areas

5.6.23 The majority of the study area lies within National Character Area (NCA) 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, as shown on **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-2a: National Character Areas [EN010141/DR/6.3]**. This is a broad-scale landscape character study and as such provides a high-level understanding of the landscape character of the study area, with the local (District and Borough) character assessments providing greater detail. The key characteristics of NCA 88 are:

> *"Gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach The Fens NCA in the east.*
>
> *The River Great Ouse and its tributaries meander slowly across the landscape, and the River Nene and the Grand Union Canal are also features. Three aquifers underlie the NCA and a large manmade reservoir, Grafham Water, supplies water within and outside the NCA.*
>
> *Brickfields of the Marston Vale and Peterborough area form distinctive post-industrial landscapes with man-made waterbodies*

and landfill sites. Restoration of sand and gravel workings has left a series of flooded and restored waterbodies within the river valleys.

Variable, scattered woodland cover comprising smaller plantations, secondary woodland, pollarded willows and poplar along river valleys, and clusters of ancient woodland, particularly on higher ground to the north west representing remnant ancient deer parks and Royal Hunting Forests.

Predominantly open, arable landscape of planned and regular fields bounded by open ditches and trimmed, often species-poor hedgerows which contrast with those fields that are irregular and piecemeal.

Wide variety of semi-natural habitats supporting a range of species – some notably rare and scarce – including sites designated for species associated with ancient woodland, wetland sites important for birds, great crested newt and species of stonewort, and traditional orchards and unimproved grassland supporting a rich diversity of wild flowers.

Rich geological and archaeological history evident in fossils, medieval earthworks, deserted villages and Roman roads. A number of historic parklands, designed landscapes and country houses – including Stowe House and Park, Kimbolton Park, Croxton Park, Wimpole Hall and Wrest Park – combine with Bletchley Park, Second World War airfields, the Cardington Airship Hangars and brickfields to provide a strong sense of history and place.

Settlements cluster around major road and rail corridors, with smaller towns, villages and linear settlements widely dispersed throughout, giving a more rural feel. Small villages are usually nucleated around a church or village green, while fen-edge villages are often in a linear form along roads.

Major transport routes cross the area, including the M1, M11, A1, A6, A5 and A14 roads, the East Coast and Midlands mainline railways, and the Grand Union Canal.

Recreational assets include Grafham Water, the Grand Union Canal, Forest of Marston Vale Community Forest, Chilterns AONB, woodland and wetland sites, an extensive rights-of-way network and two National Cycle Routes. The cities of Cambridge and Peterborough and several of the historic market towns in the NCA are popular tourist destinations."

5.6.24 A small proportion of the very western extent of the study area is located within NCA 91 Yardley-Whittlewood Ridge. Referring to **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-2a [EN010141/DR/6.3]** and the ZTV shown on **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-3a [EN010141/DR/6.3]**, given the negligible extent of theoretical visibility from that area, NCA 91 has therefore not been considered further in this chapter.

Local Character Areas

5.6.25 The Scheme and study area are located within two local authority boundaries and each authority has produced a landscape character assessment, which are:

- Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2020[17].
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document 2022[18].

5.6.26 Refer to **ES Volume 3 Figure 5-2b: Local Landscape Character Areas [EN010141/DR/6.3]** for the extent of the LCAs.

5.6.27 The following five LCAs have been used as the basis for assessment of the Scheme landscape effects (taken from west to east within the Study Area) and are therefore the 'assessment LCAs':

- Bedford character areas:
    - LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland (Clay Farmland Landscape Type)

    - LCA 1D Thurleigh Clay Farmland (Clay Farmland Landscape Type); and
    - LCA 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley (Clay Valley Landscape Type).
- Huntingdonshire character areas:
    - Southern Wolds LCA; and
    - Northern Wolds LCA.

5.6.28 East Park Site A and Site B are located within Bedford LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland. East Park Site C and D are located within Huntingdonshire Southern Wolds LCA. The 400 kV Grid Connection crosses Huntingdonshire Southern Wolds LCA and Bedford LCA 1D Thurleigh Clay Farmland, with the point of connection at the Eaton Socon Substation in Bedford LCA 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley.

5.6.29 Three LCAs which are located within the Study Area have been scoped out of the assessment:

- Huntingdonshire character areas:
    - Great Ouse Valley LCA.
    - South East Claylands LCA.
- Beford character areas:
    - LCA 5F Biggin Wood Clay Vale (Clay Vale Landscape Type).

5.6.30 The Site does not directly fall within these LCAs and both the ZTV and Site studies have identified that there would be no intervisibility between these LCAs and the Scheme.

5.6.31 Baseline descriptions of each of the five LCAs scoped into the assessment are presented in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-3: Effects on Landscape Character [EN010141/DR/6.2]**. Each of the baseline landscape descriptions includes a summary of the key characteristics of landscape within the extents of the study area that have a bearing on the sensitivity of the LCA to the Scheme (i.e. the key characteristics and attributes that are likely to be indicators of the sensitivity of each LCA to the addition of a solar array and associated infrastructure). Each description includes the identification of a sensitivity

rating of the landscape area relative to the Scheme. Subsequent Table 5.6 summarises the key characteristics and sensitivities of each assessment LCA.

Table 5.6 – Assessment LCAs baseline summary

LCA Reference	LCA Summary Description
LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland	A low-lying landscape with subtly varied topography. The area is dominated by arable farmland but scattered woodlands give variety, often crowning the horizon in long views across the level fields. The large and medium fields are bounded by hedges and ditches, the former in mixed condition. Smaller fields and occasional horse pastures are clustered around settlements. Hedgerow trees, usually ash or oak are present, many mature and sometimes within fields marking lost hedgerows. This is a rural area with a dispersed but regular pattern of scattered farmsteads and small villages with frequent medieval earthworks and tall stone churches.
Northern Wolds LCA	A broad north-south strip on the western edge of Huntingdonshire, extending from the Nene Valley in the north to the Southern Wolds to the south east with the Central Claylands to the east. The area contains the highest land in Huntingdonshire with a distinctive ridged topography formed by streams flowing down from this higher land towards the Fens and Central Claylands. The streams have eroded pronounced valleys which are very different in character from the intervening higher land. Medieval influence is still strongly visible in the landscape of the Northern Wolds.
Southern Wolds LCA	The Southern Wolds forms a transition area between the Northern Wolds which lie to the north west and the Great Ouse Valley which is to the east. The Central Claylands is also situated to the north of part of this area. The topography of the Southern Wolds is similar to that of the Northern Wolds in comprising ridges and valleys but given the greater scale of the rivers here it consists of just two broad valleys with very gently undulating ground divided by the steep ridge that contains Grafham Water. Settlements are more scattered in this area and parishes larger suggesting a more dispersed pattern of historic development. However, there are several ancient monuments including medieval moats and sites of Roman buildings.
LCA 1D Thurleigh Clay Farmland	A low-lying landscape with largely level topography with subtly undulating tributary valleys to the east. It is dominated by arable farmland with a few scattered woodlands giving some variety, and crowning the horizon in long views across the level fields. The large fields are bounded by hedges and ditches, the former sometimes in poor condition or lost altogether causing the visual merging of individual fields into large open areas. Hedgerow trees, usually ash or oak are present, many mature and sometimes within fields marking lost hedgerows. A network of quiet rural lanes connects the settlements and provide an important resource for informal recreation. On the higher ground to the west, the presence of Thurleigh Airfield creates a less rural landscape with industrial fencing and large-scale airfield buildings

LCA Reference	LCA Summary Description
	visible on the skyline plus extensive loss of field boundaries making a more open landscape.
LCA 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley	A level and broad valley, low lying at 15m AOD rising to 30m AOD, and following the course of the River Great Ouse as it flows out of Bedford to leave the county to the north east above Little Barford. The open, gently rising slopes of the Great Ouse Clay Valley have strong visual links with the surrounding higher ground of Clay Farmland and Clay Vales character areas particularly the large-scale arable fields for instance to the north west of Wyboston. The course of the river is also marked by narrow woodland belts and willow trees. In some sections the river retains a highly rural character but in other areas the leisure use of the land (for instance for the golf course at Wyboston) gives a more manicured, urbanised appearance. There are smaller pastoral fields along the valley floor with historic parklands sited on the valley side slopes at Little Barford with scattered parkland trees and small woods. Hedgerows are often gappy or lost but hedgerow trees are present in some sections along with poplar shelter belts. Nurseries are common particularly around Wyboston with many of them now disused. This mixture of land uses plus the presence of the major roads outside the character area/ borough (the A1 and A421) and the eastern edge of Bedford creates a fragmented urban fringe landscape.

Visual Baseline

Site Visibility

5.6.32 As shown on **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-1: Topography [EN010141/DR/6.3]**, the Site is located on the south side of a broad shallow clay vale landform formed by a number of west-east tributaries to the River Great Ouse, which flows north-south to the east of the study area through the town of St Neots. The landform rises across the northern extent of the study area towards Grafham Water; in the western extent of the study area towards a ridgeline beyond Swineshead; and in the southern extent of the study area towards a high point around the Bedford Aerodrome.

5.6.33 **ES Vol 3 Figure 5-1: Topography [EN010141/DR/6.3]** demonstrates that the landscape context beyond the Site within the wider study area is generally more undulating, as opposed to the Site located at a relatively low-lying and less undulating area than the wider study area and landscape beyond the study area.

5.6.34 The extent of each ZTV of the Scheme is primarily influenced by subtle topographical variations and tree cover. Given the relatively low amount of built form within the study area, this has less of an influence on the ZTV, however there is some localised screening afforded by built form and associated garden tree and hedge cover within the villages throughout the study area. Refer to **ES Vol 3 Figures 5-3a to 5-3d [EN010141/DR/6.3]** for the extent of ZTV of the solar array, transformers, substation and BESS components of the Scheme.

5.6.35 Notable landform and vegetation elements which influence the extent of intervisibility across the landscape are:

- A small block of woodland at the south-western extent of Site A, 'Willow Spinney';
- Tree cover around the village of Pertenhall, directly to the north of Sites A and B;
- Tree cover around the village of Brook End, directly to the west of Site B;
- Tree cover around the village of Little Staughton, directly to the south-east of Site B;
- Tree cover along the River Kym and around the village of Great Staughton, directly to the north of Site C;
- Two woodland blocks, located directly to the south and south-east of Site B, respectively;
- 'New Wood' which sits centrally within Site C;
- Tree cover on the south-western extent of Hail Weston.
- Tree cover beside the A1 road, at the eastern extent of the study area, which screens views further east, including from Eaton Socon and St Neots.
- Little Paxton Wood located approximately 1km north-east of Site D, screens views in that direction.

Representative viewpoints

5.6.36 83 representative viewpoint locations have been selected to assist in understanding the appearance and visual effects of the Scheme. The locations of representative viewpoints are shown on **ES Vol 3 Figures 5-4a to 5-4b [EN010141/DR/6.3]**.

5.6.37 Viewpoints are 'representative' and as such, whilst taken from a fixed point, are intended to reflect the range of visual aspects experienced by the receptors they represent. The interpretation of the significance of visual effects on individual representative viewpoints should therefore be recognised as more widely informing the assessment of effects on the visual receptors identified in this assessment.

5.6.38 The following Table 5.7 lists the representative viewpoints, identifying the key receptors that each represents.

Table 5.7 – Representative viewpoints baseline summary

Viewpoint reference	Location	Reason for selection
1	Bridleway M8 (Parish of Melchbourne and Yielden)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
2	Bridleway 6 (Parish of Swineshead)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
3	BOAT 7 (Parish of Swineshead) near Swineshead Wood	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
4	Church of St Nicholas in Swineshead	Specific view from church, and representative of views available from within Swineshead
5	Junction between Swineshead Road and Melchbourne Road	Representative of views for local road users
6	Footpath A4 (Parish of Swineshead)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
7	Footpath A3 (Parish of Swineshead)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
8	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside

Viewpoint reference	Location	Reason for selection
9	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
10	Bridleway 44 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
11	Footpath 12 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
12	Footpath 34 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
13	Bridleway 40 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
14	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
15	Footpath 29 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
16	Footpath 11 (Parish of Pertenhall) at the Chadwell Spring	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
17	Footpath 12 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside, and local road users
18	Bridleway A1 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
19	Footpath 138/32 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
20	Junction between Kimbolton Road and Wood End Lane in Pertenhall	Representative of views available to residents in Pertenhall, and local road users
21	Footpath 5 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
22	Church of St Peter in Pertenhall	Specific view from church
23	Footpath 20 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside

Viewpoint reference	Location	Reason for selection
24	Great Staughton Road	Representative of views for residents and local road users
25	Footpath 26 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
26	Footpath 35 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
27	Footpath 112 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to residents, people walking in the countryside, and local road users
28	Footpath 6 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to residents and people walking in the countryside
29	Church of St Mary the Virgin in Keysoe	Specific view from church
30	Footpath 64 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
31	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
32	Footpath 47 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
33	Footpath 13 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
34	Footpath 4 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
35	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
36	Footpath 10 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
37	Footpath 3 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
38	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
39	West End Road to the west of Little Staughton	Representative of views available to road users
40	Bridleway 23 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside

Viewpoint reference	Location	Reason for selection
41	Bridleway 13 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside and users of the green space at Little Staughton
42	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
43	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to residents and people walking in the countryside
44	Green End at the Crown Inn in Little Staughton	Representative of views available to residents
45	Spring Hill in Little Staughton	Representative of views available to residents
46	The Kangaroo at the junction between Little Staughton Road and Great Staughton Road	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
47	Footpath 138/5 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
48	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
49	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
50	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
51	Footpath 5 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
52	Church of All Saints at Little Staughton	Specific view from church
53	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
54	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
55	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
56	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside

Viewpoint reference	Location	Reason for selection
57	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
58	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
59	Footpath 213/23 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
60	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
61	Church of St Andrew in Great Staughton	Specific view from church
62	View across Birds Meadow from The Causeway towards River Kym	Representative of views available to road users and people walking in the countryside
63	Footpath 219/9 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
64	Footpath 213/3 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
65	Footpath 213/28 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
66	Moor Road near Mill View	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
67	Moor Road near Roman Field Cottage	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
68	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
69	Footpath 213/12 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
70	Bridleway 27 (Parish of Staploe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
71	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
72	Unnamed road, part of the Three Shires Way	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
73	Bridleway 213/4 (Parish of Great Staughton), part of the Three Shires Way	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside

Viewpoint reference	Location	Reason for selection
74	Bridleway 207/12 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
75	Bridleway 207/13 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
76	B645 near Wood View	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
77	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
78	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
79	Junction between B645 and High Street at Hail Weston	Representative of views available to residents and local road users
80	Duloe Road	Representative of views available to local road users
81	Footpath 23 (Parish of Staploe)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
82	Footpath 8A (Parish of Staploe) at the Eaton Socon Substation	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside
83	Footpath 213/28 beside the River Kym (Parish of Great Staughton)	Representative of views available to people walking in the countryside

5.6.39 A description of the existing view at each viewpoint location is provided in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-4: Effects at Viewpoints [EN010141/DR/6.2]**.

5.6.40 The view from each representative viewpoint is presented in **ES Vol 3 Figures 5-5 to 5-87 [EN010141/DR/6.3]**, comprising baseline photographs for each viewpoint and photomontage visualisations for selected viewpoints.

5.6.41 The baseline winter view is provided for viewpoints 1 to 82. The baseline summer view is provided for viewpoint 83 and for the following viewpoints, in addition to the baseline winter view:

- Viewpoint 3;
- Viewpoint 6;
- Viewpoint 7;
- Viewpoint 8;
- Viewpoint 9;
- Viewpoints 12 to 21;
- Viewpoints 23 to 27;
- Viewpoints 32 to 34;
- Viewpoints 36 to 38;
- Viewpoints 42 to 43;
- Viewpoint 46;
- Viewpoint 48;
- Viewpoint 49;
- Viewpoints 51 to 52;
- Viewpoint 54;
- Viewpoints 56 to 60;
- Viewpoint 62;
- Viewpoints 64 to 68;
- Viewpoint 71;
- Viewpoint 74; and
- Viewpoints 76 to 78.

5.6.42 Photomontage visualisations of the opening year of the Scheme (Year 0) and of the Scheme at Year 10, in the winter view, are presented from the following viewpoints:

- Viewpoint 3;
- Viewpoint 7;
- Viewpoint 12;
- Viewpoint 16;
- Viewpoint 21;
- Viewpoint 23;

- Viewpoint 28;
- Viewpoint 32;
- Viewpoint 36;
- Viewpoint 38;
- Viewpoint 42;
- Viewpoint 51;
- Viewpoint 54;
- Viewpoint 57;
- Viewpoint 60;
- Viewpoint 62;
- Viewpoint 68; and
- Viewpoint 76.

5.6.43 Photomontage visualisations of the Scheme (at Year 0 and at Year 10) also are provided for the summer view from Viewpoints 7, 12, 16, 32, 33, 36, 42, 57, 60, 68 and 76.

Visual Receptors

5.6.44 The locations of visual receptors are identified on **ES Vol 3 Figures 5-4a and 5-4b [EN010141/DR/6.3]**. Visual receptors typically associate with the following outlooks:

- Views experienced by people in residential areas/communities;
- Views from people on public rights of way;
- Views from people using community facilities such as churches;
- Views from employment sites, i.e. people at their places of work; and
- Views from people in vehicles when travelling along roads.

5.6.45 A thorough selection of 83 viewpoints forms the basis of the visual assessment, as is set out in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-4: Effects at Viewpoints [EN010141/DR/6.2]** which includes a description of the existing view. To ensure there is a documented list of individual receptors throughout the study area, **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-5: Effects on Visual Receptors**

[EN010141/DR/6.2] provides a schedule of visual receptors with a cross reference to the relevant representative viewpoint.

5.6.46 A summary of the type and location of the main visual receptor groups is provided below. For each group of receptors, a standardised judgement on sensitivity to change has not been applied. For example, residential receptors are typically considered to be of higher sensitivity to the type of change proposed, however this is not always the case, and some residential receptors may be judged to be of medium sensitivity to the type of change proposed dependent on the characteristics of the view they currently experience. Refer to **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-4: Effects at Viewpoints [EN010141/DR/6.2]** which defines the levels of susceptibility, value and overall sensitivity for each representative viewpoint.

People in Residential Properties

5.6.47 The study area is predominantly rural and residential receptors generally comprise isolated farmsteads or small clusters of properties throughout the areas. There are eight villages in proximity to the Scheme: Swineshead, Riseley, Pertenhall, Keysoe, Little Staughton, Great Staughton, Hail Weston and Duloe.

5.6.48 Views out from the villages are generally screened by surrounding tree cover, subtle landform undulations and tree cover on their perimeter. Occasional, glimpsed views are likely from some upper storey windows; however ground level views are generally screened.

5.6.49 People's views from residential properties associate with their sense of identity and place and people tend to spend longer durations of time within their homes than in other locations, such as recreational locations or their workplace. The susceptibility of such views to change is therefore typically considered to be higher, subject to the influence of what is present in the existing view. It therefore follows that the visibility of existing infrastructure, such as a solar array or electricity pylons, may reduce susceptibility where similar features are proposed.

Users of Public Rights of Way

5.6.50 Various public rights of way (e.g. footpaths and bridleways) coincide with the extent of the study area, which are shown on **ES Vol 3 Figures 5-4a to 5-4b [EN010141/DR/6.3]**. Some public rights of way are enclosed by landform undulations and tree cover. **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-5: Effects on Visual Receptors [EN010141/DR/6.2]** identifies visual receptors, however the following is a high-level summary of groups of routes which are most relevant to the assessment of effects of the Scheme:

- Footpaths and bridleways which pass across the site, generally along field boundaries, connecting farms and small settlements;
- Footpaths, bridleways and byways located within the wider study area which are on more elevated ground, and which afford views across the Kym Valley, within which the Site is located;
- The North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail, which is a designated trail within the south-west of the study area; and
- Three Shires Way, which is a designated trail within the north of the study area around Grafham Water.

5.6.51 The susceptibility of views from recreational receptors varies depending on the nature of the recreational activity and therefore how much attention is given to the view. Where the activity is focussed, such as an organised sport, or has some active engagement such as allotments, or is within an area attributed to function, such as around large-scale agricultural buildings, then the surrounding view is less important than where the purpose of the recreation is specific to the enjoyment of the setting.

5.6.52 The susceptibility of views to change is therefore variable and is further influenced by what is present in the existing view such that the visibility of existing infrastructure, including roads, solar farms, pylons or large-scale agricultural buildings, may reduce susceptibility where similar features are proposed.

Users of Community Facilities

5.6.53 Churches have been identified as the main type of community facility within the study area. Seven churches have been identified within the study area: All Saints Church in Riseley; Church of St Nicholas in Swineshead; Church of St Peter in Pertenhall; Church of St Mary the Virgin in Keysoe; Church of All Saints at Little Staughton; Little Staughton Baptist Church; and Church of St Andrew in Great Staughton. There are various churches and other community facilities within St Neots at the eastern extent of the study area. However, they are set away from the main part of the Site and have therefore been excluded as receptors that have the potential to experience visual effects of the Scheme.

5.6.54 The susceptibility of views from community receptors, in this case specifically church attendees, would typically be limited where the focus of the individual would be on the immediate location rather than the wider outlook, in this case the church service. However, church attendees would experience views when entering and exiting church, albeit for a relatively short duration.

5.6.55 Detailed information regarding the setting of churches in relation to the Scheme is included within **ES Volume 1 Chapter 6: Cultural Heritage and Archaeology [EN010141/DR/6.1]**.

People Using Roads

5.6.56 Views of the Scheme would be experienced by road users of various minor roads within the study area. These tend to be rural roads which connect small settlements and isolated properties. The A1 is located at the eastern extent of the study area, however this is scoped out of the assessment as there would be no views of the Scheme.

5.6.57 The susceptibility of views from road receptors would typically be limited where the focus of the view would not be fixed on a particular outlook or visual relationship. As the receptor outlook is inherently that of the road along which they are travelling, the susceptibility of views is typically low.

People at Employment Sites

5.6.58 Views of the Scheme would be experienced by people working at occasional employment sites throughout the study area. These tend to be agricultural related businesses such as a chicken farm at the north-western extent of the study area (Sunny Farm Poultry Farm).

5.6.59 The susceptibility of views from employees would typically be limited as the focus of the view would be internal to the employment site and as people would be focused on their job, as opposed to the wider views. The susceptibility of views to change is therefore low.

Future Baseline

5.6.60 In the absence of the Scheme, it has been assumed that the Order Limits would remain in its present usage, i.e. predominantly arable farmland, with all existing public rights of way and other access routes remaining in-situ. It has been assumed that routine maintenance would be carried out to retain the existing broad pattern of vegetation.

5.7 Embedded Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

Design Principles

5.7.1 The **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** explains how the design of the Scheme has evolved from project inception through to submission of this application for development consent. The DAD sets out the project vision and design principles, the way the design has evolved, and how good design will be secured post-consent.

5.7.2 The design process has been led by competent design experts in consultation with the local community, local project stakeholders and statutory consultees to deliver on a design vision. Design decisions have been made in line with a series of project design principles that were prepared based on guidance set out by the Planning Inspectorate and the National Infrastructure Commission.

5.7.3 These design principles have evolved since the inception of the Scheme as an understanding of the project has also evolved, and in response to the EIA process. The design principles are as follows:

- **Design Principle 1**: The Scheme will seek opportunities to deliver solar development as efficiently as practicable to support national electricity network decarbonisation targets;
- **Design Principle 2**: The Scheme will be sensitive to landscape and views, and how people perceive the landscape;
- **Design Principle 3**: The Scheme will be sensitive to heritage assets, looking to protect the most valuable assets that contribute to a sense of place;
- **Design Principle 4**: The Scheme will be sensitive to biodiversity, and look to provide enhancement where possible;
- **Design Principle 5**: The Scheme will be sensitive to the water environment, looking to avoid harm to watercourses and improve water quality where practicable;

- **Design Principle 6**: The Scheme will be sensitive to local amenity and human health; and
- **Design Principle 7**: The Scheme will seek opportunities to leave a positive legacy through the delivery of multiple social and environmental benefits.

5.7.4 Of most relevance to the mitigation of landscape and visual effects is Design Principle 2, which has the following sub-principles:

- **Principle 2.1:** Protect views towards tall church spires, which are visually prominent landmarks in the landscape and contribute towards creating a sense of place.
- **Principle 2.2:** Protect the sense of openness, wide views and skylines with long views from elevated positions across the Kym valley.
- **Principle 2.3:** Protect the pattern of dispersed farmsteads and rural villages with their distinctive structure of 'ends' and associated small irregular fields.
- **Principle 2.4:** Protect hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- **Principle 2.5:** Protect the nature conservation value of the rivers, and protect and restore riverside meadows.
- **Principle 2.6:** Protect recreational access via rights of way network and the network of quiet lanes.

5.7.5 Section 5.6 of the **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** sets out how the design of the Scheme has responded to each of the above principles. These design principles and the illustrative masterplan for the Scheme are embedded design measures. The design principles are secured by the **Design Parameters and Principles Statement [EN010141/DR/7.1]** which will be certified as part of the DCO, and detailed design submissions will be required to accord with it.

Published Landscape Management and Development Guidelines

5.7.6 The published landscape character assessments referenced in Section 5.6 of this chapter include specific landscape management guidelines and development guidelines for the LCAs in which the Site is located. These guidelines are set out in full within Section 4.2 of the **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** and informed the development of the design principles described above, which are secured through the Design Parameters and Principles Statement **[EN010141/DR/7.1]**. While the DAD itself is not a document certified by the DCO, it provides further information on how these guidelines have informed the Scheme.

5.7.7 Section 5.8 of the **DAD [EN010141/DR/5.6]** sets out the Scheme's design response to the published guidelines. This demonstrates that the Scheme has had regard to these guidelines through the design process, and that the submission layout, secured via the Design Parameters and Principles Statement, will support the future landscape objectives and management for the relevant LCAs.

Illustrative Environmental Masterplan

5.7.8 **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]** shows the proposed landscape and visual mitigation for the Scheme. The same plan is included as the Illustrative Landscape Proposals at **Appendix A** of the **outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (oLEMP) [EN010141/DR/7.7]**. The oLEMP is a control document that will be certified as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO).

5.7.9 A Requirement in Schedule 2 of the **draft DCO [EN010141/DR/3.1]** requires that a final Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP), in substantial accordance with the oLEMP, is prepared and approved by the relevant local planning authorities (LPAs) prior to commencement of

construction. The final LEMP will implement the landscape proposals, which must therefore be in substantial accordance with the Illustrative Landscape Proposals at **Appendix A** of the **oLEMP [EN010141/DR/7.7]**.

5.7.10 **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]** is annotated to set out the purpose of the landscape proposals to meet the design principles and mitigate for the impacts of the Scheme, these include:

- Retention of existing woodland, hedgerows, individual trees, ditches and watercourses across the Site as far as practicable;
- Retention of all existing public rights of way across the Site along their current alignment;
- Creation of 'Green Lanes' through the Site where public rights of way are set within wide corridors bounded by hedgerows and woodland blocks for visual screening, landscape integration and habitat connectivity purposes;
- Sensitive design of landscape treatment alongside public rights of way on more elevated ground such as west of Little Staughton to ensure footpaths are not enclosed by vegetation and intermittent views out across the Kym Valley to the north are available;
- Enhancement of waterside meadows along the Pertenhall Brook and a brook through Site B by creating riparian woodland blocks, meadows, hedgerows and intermittent riparian tree groups for ecosystem benefits, habitat connectivity, and to reduce visual impact on public rights of way alongside watercourses;
- Provision of permissive paths west of Little Staughton to increase access to the local public right of way network and create the opportunity for new circular routes;
- Setting back of fence lines from field boundaries and public rights of way in areas of high ground such as west of Little Staughton and at the southern end of Site C to avoid the solar array breaking skylines, and to allow views out looking 'over' the solar array to retain panoramic vistas where available;

- Proposed hedgerows with trees for landscape integration, visual screening and habitat connectivity. In parts of the Site these have been provided to restore historic field boundaries;
- Creation of species-diverse grassland meadows and corridors as buffers to existing landscape elements (such as hedgerows and woodland), as buffers to residential properties, and for ecological mitigation and benefits.

5.7.11 **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]** has also included mitigation proposed by the Glint and Glare Assessment, which is identified in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-6: Glint and Glare Assessment [EN010141/DR/6.2]**. This includes native hedgerows to be planted and maintained to a height of at least 3.5m along the following parts of the Site (the following site references to Arrays 1 to 13 are specific to the Glint and Glare Assessment and are shown in **Appendix A, Figure 4** of **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-6 [EN010141/DR/6.2]**:

- The norther/southern/south-western boundary of Array 1;
- The eastern/northern/north-western boundary of Array 2;
- The eastern/south-eastern boundary of Array 5;
- North-eastern/western/north-western/eastern/south-eastern boundary of Array 6 and beside the roads that cross the Order Limits in their vicinity;
- Western/south-western/north-eastern/eastern boundary of Array 7;
- Western boundary of Array 9;
- Southern boundary of Array 10;
- North-eastern/southern/south-eastern boundary of Array 11;
- South-western boundary of Array 12; and
- The northern/north-western/eastern boundary of Array 13.

Construction Phase

General

5.7.12 Embedded mitigation measures for the construction phase are secured through the adoption of the **oLEMP [EN010141/DR/7.7]** and an **outline**

Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) [EN010141/DR/7.3].

5.7.13 The oCEMP is a control document that will be certified as part of the DCO. Schedule 2 of the **draft DCO [EN010141/DR/3.1]** sets out a Requirement that a final Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), in substantial accordance with the oCEMP, is prepared and approved by the relevant local planning authorities (LPAs) prior to commencement of construction. The oCEMP sets out the following specific measures that would mitigate for landscape and visual effects:

- Sensitive colouring of welfare facilities and temporary office units within site compounds.
- Keeping a tidy and organised site.
- Materials delivered on an 'as needed' basis to prevent unnecessary stockpiles.
- Protection of retained vegetation in accordance with British Standard (BS) 5837:2012. Hedgerow and trees located in proximity to the working areas will be protected from disruption and if necessary, protection fences will be erected to ensure that roots remain undisturbed.

Construction of the Cable Route

5.7.14 The design of the cable route has avoided notable landscape elements, such as groups of trees and hedgerows, where possible. Where loss of a landscape element is unavoidable, the loss has been kept to a practical minimum and the Scheme has been designed such that it is currently anticipated there will be no tree loss and minimal hedgerow loss along the cable route.

5.7.15 The working width during the construction phase is expected to be confined to a corridor of no greater than 20m to minimise the construction footprint on the landscape.

5.7.16 A pre-construction walkover survey of the working area will be undertaken by an appropriately experienced arboricultural consultant and the guidance set

out in BS 5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Construction will be adhered to where applicable. The survey will define specific mitigation measures required for all trees situated in or adjacent to the working width, including measures such as the erection of protective fencing in order to minimise the impacts on trees and their roots.

5.7.17 In addition, hedgerow in proximity to the working width will be protected from disruption and if necessary, protection fences will be erected to ensure that roots remain undisturbed.

5.7.18 Trenchless techniques (Horizontal Drilling or Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD)) will be adopted at the location of certain sensitive landscape elements. Drilling under such elements avoids the loss or damage to these elements.

5.7.19 Following completion of construction operations all agricultural land will be restored to its previous condition. Topsoil will be prepared and seeded using an appropriate seed mix or returned to arable cultivation.

5.7.20 Land drains within agricultural land on the cable route, which may be temporarily affected by construction operations will also be restored following completion of construction. This is important to ensure that the growth of trees and hedgerows is not affected by changes to the surface water drainage system.

5.7.21 Hedgerows which will have been removed during the construction period will be replanted, including on the cable route. Trees will not be planted on or within 6 m of the edge of the cable trench to avoid the risk of damage to the cable by tree roots.

5.7.22 Considering the connection to the existing Eaton Socon Substation, the cable route location and extent has been proposed to avoid loss of existing tree planting which is located on the periphery of the existing Substation compound. The entry of the cable route into the western extent of the existing

Substation compound will utilise HDD underneath the existing (albeit relatively recently planted) tree planting to avoid losses.

5.7.23 Restoration will seek to replace vegetation lost with the same species which are removed, as far as is practicable, in accordance with the **oLEMP [EN010141/DR/7.7]**.

Operational Phase

5.7.24 The Applicant has prepared an **outline Operational Environmental Management Plan (oOEMP) [EN010141/DR/7.5]** as part of the application for development consent. The oOEMP is a control document that will be certified as part of the DCO. Schedule 2 of the **draft DCO [EN010141/DR/3.1]** sets out a Requirement that the final Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP), in substantial accordance with this oOEMP, is prepared and approved by the relevant local planning authorities (LPAs) prior to commencing the operational phase.

5.7.25 The management and maintenance of the Scheme's proposed landscaping and green infrastructure is secured by the requirements of the **oLEMP [EN010141/DR/7.7]**. This ensures the proposed landscaping is successful in establishing and can be relied on as embedded mitigation for the Landscape and Visual impact Assessment.

5.7.26 With reference to the Illustrative Landscape Proposals at **Appendix A** of the **oLEMP [EN010141/DR/7.7]**, the following habitat types are expected to be created as part of the Scheme:

Table 5.8 – Landcover Types Created in the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan

Landcover Type	Total Amount Created (Area/Number/Length)
Native Species Woodland or Woodland Belt	Approx. 19 hectares
Native Species Hedgerow	Approx. 17 kilometres
Native Species Individual Tree	Approx. 375 number
Grazing Pasture or Neutral Grassland	Approx. 448 hectares

Landcover Type	Total Amount Created (Area/Number/Length)
Species-Diverse Grassland	Approx. 205 hectares

Decommissioning Phase

5.7.27 At decommissioning the proposed planting (woodland, hedgerow and individual trees) implemented as part of the Scheme would be retained.

5.7.28 The Applicant has prepared an **outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (oDEMP) [EN010141/DR/7.5]** as part of the application for development consent. The oDEMP is a control document that will be certified as part of the DCO. Schedule 2 of the **draft DCO [EN010141/DR/3.1]** sets out a Requirement that the final Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (DEMP), in substantial accordance with this oDEMP, be prepared and approved by the relevant local planning authorities (LPAs) prior to commencing the decommissioning phase.

Enhancement

5.7.29 **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]** provides for a Scheme intended to not only avoid, reduce and mitigate for landscape and visual effects, but with the additional aspiration (following decommissioning) of leaving the landscape in a better condition than it is now.

The proposed woodland belts, woodland, hedgerows and trees would be retained post-decommissioning. The design of these features as shown on **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]** is intended to reinforce the existing landscape characteristics, restore historic field boundaries, and provide enhanced recreational opportunities through features such as the 'green lanes'. Whilst these proposals will mitigate for the Scheme during its Operational phase, they will also provide enhancement beyond the operational life of the Scheme.

5.8 Assessment of Likely Impacts and Effects

Introduction

5.8.1 This section assesses the level and significance of the landscape and visual effects of the Scheme during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases. The assessments follow the iterative design development process and incorporation of the embedded mitigation and enhancement measures set out in Section 5.7.

5.8.2 The assessment of operational effects is separated out into Year 0, or the 'opening year' of the Scheme and Year 10, when proposed mitigation planting would have reached a reasonable level of maturity, as was set out in Section 5.4.

Construction Phase Effects

5.8.3 Construction would result in temporary disruption within the Site and study area. This would include a limited amount of vegetation clearance and localised earthworks, particularly in relation to the underground cable route, and the presence of site compounds and construction plant, vehicles and machinery. Temporary lighting would be required primarily in the winter months and at the beginning and end of the working day when natural light levels are low. Such lighting would be limited in duration and managed to avoid continuous overnight use..

Landscape Assessment

Effects on Landscape Elements

5.8.4 The presence of construction plant, materials, machinery, and construction compounds would have an adverse effect on the composition of local landscape elements. Construction operations would be temporary and the residual effect on landscape character due to minor vegetation loss, is factored into the assessment of operational phase effects.

5.8.5 No tree removal is expected to be required as part of the construction operations and only a small extent of hedgerow loss, approximately 54m in length, which is limited in the context of the extent of the overall Site. With reference to Section 2.5 of **ES Volume 1 Chapter 2: The Scheme [EN010141/DR/6.1]**, only 17m of this hedgerow would be permanently removed across the full operational phase of the Scheme, with the remainder replanted, alongside the wider landscape proposals which implement additional hedgerow planting, at the end of the construction phase.

5.8.6 There would be no fundamental change to the underlying landform during construction, with only very minor intervention required to establish foundations at the East Park BESS, East Park Substation and solar transformers, and in the provision of drainage retention basins and access tracks. However, in the most part there would be no change required to the underlying landform given that the solar array can be secured to the ground using soft-piling techniques or concrete shoes, which would follow the existing contours.

Effects on Landscape Character

5.8.7 The detailed assessment of construction stage effects on landscape character is set out in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-3: Effects on Landscape Character [EN010141/DR/6.2]**. The conclusions of the landscape character assessment are summarised in Table 5.9 below.

Table 5.9 – Construction effects on landscape character areas

Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Level of Effect and Significance
LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland	Moderate - Major Adverse (Significant)
Northern Wolds LCA	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
Southern Wolds LCA	Moderate - Major Adverse (Significant)

Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Level of Effect and Significance
LCA 1D Thurleigh Clay Farmland	Negligible (Not Significant)
LCA 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley	Negligible (Not Significant)

5.8.8 The landscape character of the Site and its immediate setting would be affected to the greatest degree within the two central character areas within the study area: LCA 1B and Southern Wolds LCA and the primary impacts which would cause these adverse effects would be:

- The construction of the substation and BESS.
- The delivery and installation of the solar panels.
- The construction operations associated with the cable corridor.

5.8.9 These aspects of the Scheme would vary perceptions of tranquillity locally within the study area due to the movement and noise created by construction activity. However, perceived variations in tranquillity would be short-term due to the temporary nature of construction works.

5.8.10 Overall, the presence of construction plant, materials, machinery, construction compounds and construction lighting, in addition to the small extent of removal of existing vegetation would have a **Moderate to Major Adverse** (Significant) effect on the host LCAs during construction.

Visual Assessment

Visual Effects at Viewpoints

5.8.11 The detailed assessment of construction phase effects on representative viewpoints is set out in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-4: Effects at Viewpoints [EN010141/DR/6.2]**. The conclusions of the visual assessment are summarised in Table 5.10 below and those receptors which have been

identified as being subject to a significant visual effect during construction are shaded grey.

Table 5.10 –Effects on representative viewpoints during construction

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
1	Bridleway M8 (Parish of Melchbourne and Yielden)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
2	Bridleway 6 (Parish of Swineshead)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
3	BOAT 7 (Parish of Swineshead) near Swineshead Wood	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
4	Church of St Nicholas in Swineshead	No change
5	Junction between Swineshead Road and Melchbourne Road	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
6	Footpath A4 (Parish of Swineshead)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
7	Footpath A3 (Parish of Swineshead)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
8	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Major Adverse (Significant)
9	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
10	Bridleway 44 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
11	Footpath 12 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
12	Footpath 34 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Major Adverse (Significant)
13	Bridleway 40 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Major Adverse (Significant)
14	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Moderate to Major Adverse

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
		(Significant)
15	Footpath 29 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Major Adverse (Significant)
16	Footpath 11 (Parish of Pertenhall) at the Chadwell Spring	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
17	Footpath 12 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
18	Bridleway A1 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
19	Footpath 138/32 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
20	Junction between Kimbolton Road and Wood End Lane in Pertenhall	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
21	Footpath 5 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
22	Church of St Peter in Pertenhall	No change
23	Footpath 20 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
24	Great Staughton Road	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
25	Footpath 26 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Major Adverse (Significant)
26	Footpath 35 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
27	Footpath 112 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Major Adverse (Significant)
28	Footpath 6 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Negligible (Not Significant)
29	Church of St Mary the Virgin in Keysoe	No change

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
30	Footpath 64 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Negligible (Not Significant)
31	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Negligible (Not Significant)
32	Footpath 47 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Major Adverse (Significant)
33	Footpath 13 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Major Adverse (Significant)
34	Footpath 4 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
35	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Major Adverse (Significant)
36	Footpath 10 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Major Adverse (Significant)
37	Footpath 3 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Major Adverse (Significant)
38	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
39	West End Road to the west of Little Staughton	No change
40	Bridleway 23 (Parish of Little Staughton)	No change
41	Bridleway 13 (Parish of Little Staughton)	No change
42	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Major Adverse (Significant)
43	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
44	Green End at the Crown Inn in Little Staughton	Negligible (Not Significant)
45	Spring Hill in Little Staughton	Negligible

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
		(Not Significant)
46	The Kangaroo at the junction between Little Staughton Road and Great Staughton Road	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
47	Footpath 138/5 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Negligible (Not Significant)
48	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
49	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Major Adverse (Significant)
50	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Major Adverse (Significant)
51	Footpath 5 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Major Adverse (Significant)
52	Church of All Saints at Little Staughton	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
53	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Negligible (Not Significant)
54	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
55	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
56	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
57	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
58	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
59	Footpath 213/23 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
60	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
61	Church of St Andrew in Great Staughton	Negligible (Not Significant)
62	View across Birds Meadow from The Causeway towards River Kym	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
63	Footpath 219/9 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Negligible (Not Significant)
64	Footpath 213/3 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
65	Footpath 213/28 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
66	Moor Road near Mill View	Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
67	Moor Road near Roman Field Cottage	Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
68	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
69	Footpath 213/12 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
70	Bridleway 27 (Parish of Staploe)	Negligible (Not Significant)
71	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
72	Unnamed road, part of the Three Shires Way	Negligible (Not Significant)
73	Bridleway 213/4 (Parish of Great Staughton), part of the Three Shires Way	Negligible (Not Significant)
74	Bridleway 207/12 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
75	Bridleway 207/13 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Negligible (Not Significant)
76	B645 near Wood View	Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
77	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
78	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
79	Junction between B645 and High Street at Hail Weston	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
80	Duloe Road	Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
81	Footpath 23 (Parish of Staploe)	No change
82	Footpath 8A (Parish of Staploe) at the Eaton Socon Substation	Negligible (Not Significant)
83	Footpath 213/28 beside the River Kym (Parish of Great Staughton)	Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)

5.8.12 Of the 83 viewpoints, 36 have been assessed as likely experiencing significant visual effects during construction. The largest construction effects on representative viewpoints would associate with those locations in closest proximity to the Scheme, particularly users of footpaths, with the following significant visual effects noted:

- Viewpoints 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and bridleways which are located directly adjacent to Site A. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site A.
- Viewpoints 21 and 23 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths within 0.8km north of Sites A and B. These viewpoints are on

slightly elevated, large-scale fields to the east of Pertenhall and users would experience views in a south-westerly direction, down onto the construction operations within Sites A and B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Sites A and B and the extent of view from slightly elevated ground.

- Viewpoints 24 and 25 are representative of views experienced by residential properties on Great Staughton Road and users of footpaths respectively, and are located in close proximity to the north of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoint 27 is representative of views experienced by users of a footpath located in close proximity to the west of Site B. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect given its proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoints 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 and 38 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths which are located directly adjacent to the southern extent of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoints 42 and 43 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths directly to the west of Little Staughton and in close proximity to the eastern extent of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoints 46 is representative of views experienced by residential properties at the junction between Little Staughton Road and Great Staughton Road, and is located in close proximity to the north of Site B. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given its proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoints 48, 49 and 50 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths which are located directly adjacent to the eastern extent

of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site B.

- Viewpoints 51 and 54 are representative of views experienced by users of a footpath within 0.9km south-east of Site B. This viewpoint is within slightly elevated fields to the east of Little Staughton and users would experience views in a north-westerly direction, down onto the construction operations within Site B. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect given its proximity to the construction operations within Site B and extent of view from slightly elevated ground.
- Viewpoints 56, 68 and 83 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and a small number of residential properties within close proximity to the boundary of Site C. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site C.
- Viewpoint 60 is representative of views experienced by users of a footpath located in close proximity to the north of Site C. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect given its proximity to the construction operations within Site B.
- Viewpoints 71, 77 and 78 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and a bridleway which are located directly adjacent to the southern and central extents of Site D. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects given their proximity to the construction operations within Site D.

Visual Effects on different Receptor Groups

5.8.13 The effects on visual receptors within the study area are reported in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-4: Effects at Viewpoints [EN010141/DR/6.2]** and **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-5: Effects on Receptors [EN010141/DR/6.2]**, however they are based on the detailed assessment of visual effects on the 83 representative viewpoints, as summarised in the previous section. The following provides a

general overview of the effects on each receptor type based on the detailed appendices:

People in Residential Properties

5.8.14 Given the low density of settlement within the study area and the visual containment provided by subtle landform undulations, a relatively small number of residential receptors have been identified as experiencing significant visual effects during construction. All residential receptors identified as experiencing significant visual effects are either individual properties or small groups of properties which are located in close proximity to the Order Limits. No significant visual effects have been identified on the villages located within the study area.

5.8.15 The residential receptors that would be subject to a significant visual effect during construction are as follows:

- R9 - Properties on Great Staughton Road, east of Green End, a small group of properties.
- R10 – Hoo Farm, a small group of properties.
- R12 – Row of properties off the B660, a small group of properties.
- R17 – Northern Extent of Green End (road), a small group of properties.
- R19 - Lodge Farm, an individual property.
- R20 - Rectory Farm, an individual property.
- R21 – Home Close and Little Hollow Cottage, a small group of properties.
- R22 - The Kangaroo, an individual property.
- R23 – New Farm, an individual property.
- R25 - Garden Farm and Garden Cottage, a small group of properties.
- R31 - Pastures Farm, a small group of properties.

Users of Public Rights of Way

5.8.16 The rights of way receptors that would be subject to a significant visual effect during construction are as follows:

- Footpaths A3, 2, 32, 11 and 12, which are located directly within the northern extent of Site A.
- Bridleway 37 and 40 and Footpaths 34 and 35, which are located directly within the southern extent of Site A.
- Footpaths 4, 8, 13, 26, 47, which are located directly within Site B.
- Footpaths 5 and 20 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Pertenhall, at least 1km north of Sites A and B;
- Footpaths 1, 5, 19, which pass directly within the eastern extent of Site B.
- Footpaths 213/3 and 213/28, which are located on the perimeter of Site C.
- Footpaths 5 and 213/1 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Little Staughton, within 1km south of Site B;
- Footpaths 112/5 and 112/6 and Bridleways 112/7 and 112/8, which are located within Site D.

5.8.17 There are few designated trails which have a formal recreational purpose within the study area, i.e. designated trails. Two designated trails are located within the study area, the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail and the Three Shires Way and it is concluded that:

- With regards users of The North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail, based on an assessment of Viewpoints 10, 11 and 40 and the assessment of visual receptors, that there would be a worst-case Minor Adverse (Not Significant) level of effect on users of North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail during construction in a relatively small number of locations along the route.
- With regards users of The Three Shires Way, based on an assessment of Viewpoints 72, 73, 74 and 75 and the assessment of visual receptors, there would be a worst-case Minor Adverse (Not Significant) level of effect on users of The Three Shires Way during construction in a relatively small number of locations along the route.

5.8.18 Similar to the assessment of effects on residential receptors, all right of way receptors identified as likely experiencing significant visual effects due to the

construction of the Scheme are located within or in close proximity to the Scheme. There are a relatively high number of rights of way identified as being subject to significant visual effects during construction as there is a relatively dense network of rights of way within the study area which provide connections between farms and small settlements.

5.8.19 Some routes are located outside the Order Limits on slightly elevated ground and users would experience occasional views down onto the Scheme. In these views, the Scheme construction would largely be set below the visible horizon, whether views are from the northern or southern extents of the study area. However, such significant effects are less frequently identified than from footpaths directly within or adjacent to the Site and these elevated areas are largely contained to the ground to the north, west and south of Sites A and Sites B. The area within which Sites C and D are located is broader and flatter, with less topographic variation.

Users of Community Facilities

5.8.20 No community receptors have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the temporary construction works.

People Using Roads

5.8.21 No road receptors have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the temporary construction works.

People at Employment Sites

5.8.22 No receptors at their place of work have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the temporary construction works.

Operational Phase Effects

5.8.23 The following section considers the landscape and visual effects of the Scheme during operation. As is defined in the methodology, the operation assessment is in two stages: in the year of opening (Year 0); and ten years following opening (Year 10). As was also stated in the methodology, the

assessment of visual effects has adopted a worst-case approach with regards seasonal change throughout the year, with a worst-case of winter effects assumed throughout.

Landscape Effects

Effects on Landscape Elements

5.8.24 As stated in the baseline section, this is largely a gently undulating arable landscape which has a low level of tree and hedgerow cover. The Scheme would not require any fundamental change to the underlying landscape elements, including landform and tree cover, with minimal hedgerow loss to facilitate the creation of some access tracks and the cable route. While the fields under which the solar arrays will be located will not comprise arable crop during operation of the Scheme, they will be seeded with a mix suitable for use as grazing pasture or to create neutral grassland.

5.8.25 Overall, at Year 0 of operation the following would be evident with respect of landscape elements:

- There would be no change to the underlying landform.
- There would be a limited absence of hedgerow following the construction of the Scheme.
- The underlying landcover of fields would be altered to remove crop planting and to introduce grassland to enhance biodiversity.
- There would be new woodland, tree and hedgerow planting throughout the Site.

5.8.26 With reference to Section 5.7 and also **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]**, at year 10 of operation the establishment of Scheme woodland, individual trees and hedgerows would notably contribute to the reinforcement and enhancement of landscape elements and contribute to integration of the Scheme into its setting. There would be an overall long-term enhancement in the landscape elements within the Site due to the Scheme.

Effects on Landscape Character

5.8.27 The detailed assessment of operation effects on landscape character is set out in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-3: Effects on Landscape Character [EN010141/DR/6.2]**, including judgements regarding sensitivity and magnitude of effect. The conclusions of the landscape character assessment are summarised subsequently in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11 – Operation effects on landscape character areas

Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Level of Effect and Significance
LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
Northern Wolds LCA	Years 0 and 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
Southern Wolds LCA	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
LCA 1D Thurleigh Clay Farmland	Years 0 and 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
LCA 4A Great Ouse Clay Valley	Years 0 and 10: No Change (Not Significant)

5.8.28 The majority of the Scheme would be located within Bedford LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland and Huntingdonshire Southern Wolds LCA. While there are evident differences between the two host character areas, as described in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-3: Effects on Landscape Character [EN010141/DR/6.2]**, and their baseline sensitivity, they are both landscapes which are dominated by large-scale arable fields, with subtly varied topography within shallow valleys.

5.8.29 With regards LCA 1B, overall there are some distinct indicators of higher susceptibility to change, such as views across the landscape to church spires and the general lack of built form, however the LCA is large in scale, with a dominance of arable fields, and it is affected by some declining condition which detracts from the rural character, in particular the hedgerows and hedgerow and field trees. The susceptibility of LCA 1B is therefore considered to be Medium-High. LCA 1B doesn't associate with any landscape designations and is of Low landscape value. The overall sensitivity of LCA 1B has therefore been assessed as Medium.

5.8.30 Southern Wolds LCA has been assessed as being of slightly lower susceptibility than LCA 1B. While there are some distinct landscape characteristics indicating higher susceptibility to change, the LCA is large in scale, with a dominance of arable fields and it is affected by the presence of modern built influences such as power lines and airfields which detracts from the rural character. There is also less woodland cover in the southern extent of the LCA, where the Site is located. The susceptibility of the LCA is therefore considered to be Low-Medium. Southern Wolds LCA doesn't associate with any landscape designations and is of Low landscape value. The overall sensitivity of Southern Wolds LCA has therefore been assessed as Low-Medium.

5.8.31 Changes in landscape character during operation would principally associate with:

- The introduction of solar arrays within Sites A, B, C and D. Site A is located 0.7km to the west of Swineshead with Pertenhall located directly to the east. Site B is located between Keysoe to the west and Little Staughton the east. Site C is located 0.2km to the south of Great Staughton and Site D is more separated from settlement and is located 1.1km west of Hail Weston. Solar panels will have a maximum height of 3m above ground level.
- Transformer units would be located throughout the solar arrays, at a maximum height of 3.15m above ground level.

- The introduction into Site D of the East Park substation and BESS which would be a maximum of 13.6m AGL for the substation and 4.4m AGL for the BESS.
- Lighting at the substation and BESS in Site D, which would be motion activated or used in emergencies, i.e. not expected to be on overnight.
- Associated access tracks, CCTV units and fencing.
- Proposed woodland, tree and hedgerow planting.

5.8.32 For both LCA 1B and Southern Wolds LCA, the Scheme would largely comprise the introduction of solar arrays into large-arable fields, outside the settlement boundary of small rural villages. The array would be relatively low-level, at a maximum of 3m above existing ground-level, and would have a generally uniform appearance, albeit given the orientation of the panels to face south, there would be some variation in how it is perceived throughout the landscape.

5.8.33 The solar array would mostly be located on the lower ground within both LCAs, albeit Southern Wolds LCA is broadly flatter than the western extent of the study area and LCA 1B. The Scheme would follow the contours and would not alter the underlying topography. The southern extent of the array would be slightly more elevated than the northern extent which would orientate the Scheme to face slightly more towards the north. However, this comprises a subtle change in levels.

5.8.34 The Scheme would not alter the pattern of fields with the Site. The solar array would be contained within existing fields and not cross existing field boundaries or require removal of hedgerow which define those boundaries.

5.8.35 Sites C and D would have a slightly less extensive area of visibility than Sites A and B as is illustrated by **ES Vol 3 Figures 5-3a and 5-3b [EN010141/DR/6.3]**, given their smaller scale and the screening effect of occasional woodland blocks. This is particularly evident within the south-eastern extent of the study area.

5.8.36 Associated infrastructure within Sites A and B would be relatively subtle in comparison to the broader footprint of the solar array. Transformers and CCTV columns would be located throughout the Site and, while protruding slightly above the solar array, they would be broadly contained by the broader solar array as an influence on the underlying landscape character. Access tracks would be surfaced similar to existing farm tracks, and would therefore not be uncharacteristic of the existing landscape.

5.8.37 The substation and BESS components of the Scheme would be directly located within the Southern Wolds LCA in Site D and, given their taller vertical scale than the solar array (13.6m for the substation and 4.4m for the BESS) and utilitarian appearance, would contribute to a slight increase in landscape change within the vicinity of Site D. However, these components would be set within the wider solar array, which would partially reduce their influence on the area.

5.8.38 The Scheme would alter some of the key characteristics within both LCA 1B and Southern Wolds LCA, however in the most part it would retain their overall characteristics and not fundamentally alter the nature of landscape character within the study area. These are large-scale, very gently undulating and open LCAs which can accept a development of this scale and low-level height. The Scheme would not alter the underlying pattern of the landscape, and the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (**ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1 [EN010141/DR/6.3]**) has been designed to enhance and strengthen field boundaries through the additional planting of hedgerow and hedgerow trees, with reference to the landscape strategy guidelines for each LCA. The Scheme would not require the removal of trees and there would be minimal loss of hedgerow to facilitate the underground cable connections. All hedgerows would be replanted following the completion of construction of the cable route.

5.8.39 The Scheme would be suitably low-level such that the characteristic of open views across the landscape would be retained and there would be no loss of

the scattered trees and woodland blocks that fragment the large-scale arable landscape.

5.8.40 While there would be retention of the structure of fields, there would be a partial tonal change in the appearance of fields within the broader context of the landscape character of the study area and it would be evident that there has been a change in land use from arable crop to solar panels. This change would alter a relatively large extent of each LCA, however due to the gently undulating nature of the landscape and the presence of hedgerow and intermittent blocks of woodland on field boundaries, the Scheme would not be seen in its entirety, which would reduce its perceived scale.

5.8.41 The Southern Wolds landscape contains some existing built influences, most notably the prominent lines of pylons which are a strong vertical and eye-catching element within views. Other features, such as airfields and the solar farm at the former RAF Little Staughton Airfield, are present but are more recessive in their influence on the character area, with the solar development in particular forming a limited influence on overall character when seen within the wider arable landscape. Despite these influences, the area retains an overall rural character, with large arable fields and an open, gently undulating landform continuing to define its prevailing qualities.

5.8.42 In summary of the level of effect during operation on the two host landscape character areas:

- On LCA 1B, the level of effect during Year 0 of operation of the Scheme would be Moderate to Major Adverse which is Significant. At Year 10, mitigation planting would have established to an extent that the Scheme would assimilate further within the LCA. Linear belts of planting beside the Scheme, specifically on field boundaries, would reduce its visibility within the wider landscape and enhance an existing characteristic of LCA 1B. At Year 10 there would be a Moderate Adverse level of effect which is Not Significant.

- On Southern Wolds LCA, the level of effect during operation of the Scheme would be Moderate Adverse which is Not Significant. At Year 10, mitigation planting would have established to an extent that the Scheme would assimilate further within the LCA. Linear belts of planting beside the Scheme, specifically on field boundaries, would limit its visibility within the wider landscape and enhance an existing characteristic of Southern Wolds LCA. However, at Year 10 there would remain a Minor to Moderate Adverse which is Not Significant.

5.8.43 No significant effects have been identified on other LCAs within the study area, with at most a partial visual influence on areas which are located outside the Site.

Visual Assessment

Visual Effects on Representative Viewpoints

5.8.44 The detailed assessment of operational phase effects on representative viewpoints is set out in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-4: Effects at Viewpoints [EN010141/DR/6.2]**, including judgements regarding sensitivity and magnitude of effect. The conclusions of the visual assessment are summarised in Table 5.12 below and those receptors which have been identified as being subject to a significant visual effect during both Year 0 and Year 10 of operation are shaded grey (with a lighter shade of grey when effects are significant at Year 0 but not at Year 10).

Table 5.12 – Effects on representative viewpoints during operation

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
1	Bridleway M8 (Parish of Melchbourne and Yielden)	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
2	Bridleway 6 (Parish of Swineshead)	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
		Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
3	BOAT 7 (Parish of Swineshead) near Swineshead Wood	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
4	Church of St Nicholas in Swineshead	No change
5	Junction between Swineshead Road and Melchbourne Road	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
6	Footpath A4 (Parish of Swineshead)	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
7	Footpath A3 (Parish of Swineshead)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
8	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
9	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
10	Bridleway 44 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
11	Footpath 12 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe), part of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
12	Footpath 34 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
13	Bridleway 40 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
14	Bridleway 37 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
15	Footpath 29 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
16	Footpath 11 (Parish of Pertenhall) at the Chadwell Spring	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
17	Footpath 12 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
18	Bridleway A1 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
19	Footpath 138/32 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
20	Junction between Kimbolton Road and Wood End Lane in Pertenhall	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
21	Footpath 5 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
22	Church of St Peter in Pertenhall	No change
23	Footpath 20 (Parish of Pertenhall)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
24	Great Staughton Road	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
25	Footpath 26 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
26	Footpath 35 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
27	Footpath 112 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Moderate - Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
28	Footpath 6 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
29	Church of St Mary the Virgin in Keysoe	No change
30	Footpath 64 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
31	Bridleway 1 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
32	Footpath 47 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
33	Footpath 13 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
34	Footpath 4 (Parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe)	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
35	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
36	Footpath 10 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate to Major Adverse

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
		(Significant)
37	Footpath 3 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
38	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
39	West End Road to the west of Little Staughton	No change
40	Bridleway 23 (Parish of Little Staughton)	No change
41	Bridleway 13 (Parish of Little Staughton)	No change
42	Footpath 4 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
43	Footpath 11 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
44	Green End at the Crown Inn in Little Staughton	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
45	Spring Hill in Little Staughton	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
46	The Kangaroo at the junction between Little Staughton Road and Great Staughton Road	Year 0: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
		Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
47	Footpath 138/5 (Parish of Kimbolton)	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
48	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
49	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
50	Footpath 1 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
51	Footpath 5 (Parish of Little Staughton)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
52	Church of All Saints at Little Staughton	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
53	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
54	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate to Major Adverse

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
		(Significant)
55	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
56	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant)
57	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Year 0: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
58	Footpath 213/1 (Parish of Great Staughton), adjacent to Scheduled Monument	Year 0: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
59	Footpath 213/23 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
60	Footpath 213/2 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
61	Church of St Andrew in Great Staughton	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
62	View across Birds Meadow from The Causeway towards River Kym	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
63	Footpath 219/9 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
64	Footpath 213/3 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
65	Footpath 213/28 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
66	Moor Road near Mill View	Year 0: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
67	Moor Road near Roman Field Cottage	Year 0: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
68	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
69	Footpath 213/12 (Parish of Great Staughton)	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Significant)
70	Bridleway 27 (Parish of Staploe)	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
71	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
72	Unnamed road, part of the Three Shires Way	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
73	Bridleway 213/4 (Parish of Great Staughton), part of the Three Shires Way	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
74	Bridleway 207/12 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Year 0: Minor Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor Adverse (Not Significant)
75	Bridleway 207/13 (Parish of Southoe and Midloe), part of the Three Shires Way	Year 0: Negligible (Not Significant) Year 10: Negligible (Not Significant)
76	B645 near Wood View	Year 0: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
77	Bridleway 112/7 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)
78	Footpath 112/5 (Parish of Hail Weston)	Year 0: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant) Year 10: Minor to Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)

Viewpoint reference	Location	Level of Effect and Significance
79	Junction between B645 and High Street at Hail Weston	No change
80	Duloe Road	No change
81	Footpath 23 (Parish of Staploe)	No change
82	Footpath 8A (Parish of Staploe) at the Eaton Socon Substation	No change
83	Footpath 213/28 beside the River Kym (Parish of Great Staughton)	Year 0: Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) Year 10: Moderate Adverse (Not Significant)

5.8.45 Of the 83 viewpoints, 26 have been assessed as experiencing significant visual effects at Year 0 and this reduces to 9 viewpoints at Year 10. The largest effects on representative viewpoints would associate with those locations in closest proximity to the Scheme, particularly users of footpaths, with the following significant visual effects noted:

- Viewpoints 7, 8, 9, and 12 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and bridleways which are located directly adjacent to Site A. Of these viewpoints 8 is assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site A. However, the effects on Viewpoints 7, 9, and 12 are assessed as being Not Significant at Year 10 due to the establishment of the mitigation planting at that stage.
- Viewpoints 21 and 23 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths within 0.8km north of Sites A and B. These viewpoints are on slightly elevated, large-scale fields to the east of Pertenhall and users would experience views in a south-westerly direction, down onto the section of the Scheme which is within Sites A and B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located

within Sites A and B and the relatively wide extent of the view of the Scheme from slightly elevated ground.

- Viewpoints 24 and 25 are representative of views experienced by residential properties on Great Staughton Road and users of footpaths respectively, and are located in close proximity to the north of Site B. Viewpoint 25 is assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given the proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoint 24 to Not Significant.
- Viewpoint 27 is representative of views experienced by users of a footpath located in close proximity to the west of Site B. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect at Year 0 given its proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoint 27 to Not Significant.
- Viewpoints 32, 33, 35, 36 and 37 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths which are located directly adjacent to the southern extent of Site B. The majority of these viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. However, the effects on Viewpoints 32, 35 and 37 are assessed as being Not Significant at Year 10 due to the establishment of the mitigation planting at that stage.
- Viewpoint 42 is representative of views experienced by users of footpaths directly to the west of Little Staughton and in close proximity to the eastern extent of Site B. However, the effect on Viewpoint 42 is assessed as being Not Significant at Year 10 due to the establishment of the mitigation planting at that stage.
- Viewpoints 48, 49 and 50 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths which are located directly adjacent to the eastern extent of Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 given their proximity to the proposed solar array

which would be located within Site B. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoints 48, 49 and 50 to Not Significant effects.

- Viewpoints 51 and 54 are representative of views experienced by users of a footpath within 0.9km south-east of Site B. These viewpoints are within slightly elevated fields to the east of Little Staughton and users would experience views in a north-westerly direction, down onto the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to a significant visual effects at Year 0 and Year 10 given its proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B and extent of view from slightly elevated ground.
- Viewpoints 56 and 68 are representative of views experienced by users of footpaths and a small number of residential properties within close proximity to the boundary of Site C. These viewpoints are assessed as being subject to significant visual effects at Year 0 given their proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site C. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoint 68 to Not Significant, while Viewpoint 56 would be subject to a significant effect at Year 10.
- Viewpoint 60 is representative of views experienced by users of a footpath located in close proximity to the north of Site C. This viewpoint is assessed as being subject to a significant visual effect at Year 0 given its proximity to the proposed solar array which would be located within Site B. At Year 10, proposed mitigation would reduce the level of effect on Viewpoint 60 to Not Significant.

5.8.46 Residually significant effects at Year 10 therefore remain on the following viewpoints:

- Viewpoint 8, which represents a specific view from Bridleway 1.
- Viewpoint 21, which represents a specific view from Footpath 5.
- Viewpoint 23, which represents a specific view from Footpath 20.
- Viewpoint 25, which represents a specific view from Footpath 26.

- Viewpoint 32, which represents a specific view from Footpath 47.
- Viewpoint 36, which represents a specific view from Footpath 10.
- Viewpoint 51, which represents a specific view from Footpath 5.
- Viewpoint 54, which represents a specific view from Footpath 213/1.
- Viewpoint 56, which represents a specific view from Footpath 213/2.

5.8.47 These viewpoints represent specific views and not necessarily the entire right of way upon which they are located. Overall, they represent residual significant effects from public rights of way which either cross into the Site or are located in very close proximity. However, the following are two slight exceptions to this pattern:

- Viewpoints 21 and 23 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, at least 1km north of Sites A and B and the residually significant effect on each of these viewpoints is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Sites A and B; and
- Viewpoints 51 and 54 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, within 1km south of Site B and the residually significant effect on each of these viewpoints is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Site B.

Visual Effects on Different Receptor Types

5.8.48 The effects on visual receptors within the study area are reported in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-4 [EN010141/DR/6.2]** and **ES Vol 2 Appendix 5-5 [EN010141/DR/6.2]**, however they are based on the detailed assessment of visual effects on the 83 representative viewpoints, as summarised in the previous section.

5.8.49 In relation to the assessment of operational visual effects at Year 0, it is of note that that the Scheme would not require notable change to the underlying landform, nor the removal of trees. The relatively small extent of hedgerows impacted by the cable route would be replanted following the completion of

construction. It is therefore the case that the majority of visual effects at Year 0 would arise due to the introduction of new elements, i.e. a solar array, substation, BESS and other associated infrastructure, and not the removal of existing features.

5.8.50 The following provides a general overview of the effects on each receptor type based on the detailed appendices.

People in Residential Properties

5.8.51 Given the low density of settlement within the study area and the visual containment provided by subtle landform undulations, a relatively small number of residential receptors have been identified as experiencing significant visual effects during operation of the Scheme.

5.8.52 All residential receptors identified as experiencing significant visual effects during the operational phase are either individual properties, or small groups of properties, located in close proximity to the Order Limits.

5.8.53 No significant visual effects have been identified on residential receptors located directly within the villages located within the study area.

5.8.54 The residential receptors that would be subject to a significant visual effect at Year 0 during operation are as follows:

- R9 - Properties on Great Staughton Road, east of Green End, a small group of properties.
- R10 – Hoo Farm, a small group of properties.
- R12 – Row of properties off the B660, a small group of properties.
- R23 – New Farm, an individual property.
- R25 - Garden Farm and Garden Cottage, a small group of properties.

5.8.55 These residential receptors comprise individual properties, or small groups of properties, which are located in relatively close proximity to the Order Limits either outside the villages and small settlements, or within open farmland. No significant visual effects have been identified on properties directly within the

villages located throughout the Scheme, with sufficient separation included in the Scheme design to avoid significant effects on those locations.

5.8.56 It has also been identified within the visual assessment that, while all parts of the Scheme, i.e. Sites A to D, would contribute to some significant visual effects at Year 0, prior to the establishment of mitigation planting, there are no instances where more than two would contribute to a notable change in the view. Typically either one or, at most, two of the solar arrays forming Sites A to D, would be evident within the view.

5.8.57 At Year 10, the mitigation proposed, shown on **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]**, would have established to a reasonable level of maturity such that the Scheme would be more suitably integrated into the view experienced by most visual receptors, including residential properties. The mitigation has been designed to enhance and strengthen field boundaries through the additional planting of hedgerow and hedgerow trees, which would assist in screening the solar array and associated components such as the substation and BESS.

5.8.58 The establishment of mitigation would give rise to a reduction in the level of effect from residential receptors, with all residential receptors experiencing a reduction in the change such that the residual effect at Year 10 is Not Significant. The proposed mitigation, in particular hedgerow planting on field boundaries, would be effective in screening a relatively low-level solar array at a maximum of 3m above ground level and would integrate it into the view overall.

5.8.59 This LVIA also includes a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) for the Scheme, included at **ES Volume 2 Appendix 5-7 [EN010141/DR/6.2]** and which is summarised in the latter part of this sub-section. The RVAA assesses whether the effect of the Scheme on residential visual amenity is of such a nature and/or magnitude that it potentially affects ‘living conditions’ or ‘residential amenity’.

Users of Public Rights of Way

5.8.60 The following rights of way receptors would be subject to a significant visual effect during Year 0 of operation:

- Footpaths A3, 2, 32, 11 and 12, which are located directly within the northern extent of Site A;
- Bridleway 37 and 40 and Footpaths 34 and 35, which are located directly within the southern extent of Site A;
- Footpaths 4, 8, 13, 26, 47, which are located directly within Site B.
- Footpath 5 and 20 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Pertenhall, at least 1km north of Sites A and B and the residually significant effect on each of these of these rights of way is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Sites A and B;
- Footpaths 1, 5, 19, which pass directly within the eastern extent of Site B.
- Footpaths 5 and 213/1 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Little Staughton, within 1km south of Site B and the residually significant effect on each of these rights of way is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Site B; and
- Footpaths 112/5 and 112/6 and Bridleways 112/7 and 112/8, which are located within Site D.

5.8.61 Similar to the analysis of the significant visual effects on residential receptors, these receptors are located within open farmland in relatively close proximity to the Order Limits. Also, similar to the findings of the assessment of effects on residential receptors, typically either one or, at most, two of the solar arrays forming Sites A to D, would be evident within the view.

5.8.62 There is a relatively high number of rights of way identified as being subject to significant visual effects during Year 0 of operation as there is a relatively dense network of rights of way within the study area which provide connections between farms and small settlements. Significant visual effects

at Year 0 of operation therefore typically relate to relatively short distance footpaths which form part of a network of rights of way in and around fields and small settlements within the Site.

5.8.63 Some rights of way assessed are located further away from the Order Limits on slightly elevated ground and users would experience occasional views down onto the Site. In these views, the Scheme would largely be set below the visible horizon, whether views are from the northern or southern extents of the study area. However, significant effects are less frequently identified on rights of way located towards the periphery of the study area than from rights of way directly within or adjacent to the Site. Rights of way located on elevated ground are largely contained to the ground to the north, west and south of Sites A and Sites B. The area within which Sites C and D are located, is broader and flatter, with less topographic variation.

5.8.64 There are few designated trails which have a formal recreational purpose within the study area, i.e. designated trails. Two designated trails are located within the study area, the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail and the Three Shires Way and it is concluded that:

- With regards users of the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail, based on an assessment of Viewpoints 10, 11 and 40 and the assessment of visual receptors, that there would be a worst-case Minor Adverse (Not Significant) level of effect on users of North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail during Year 0 of operation in a relatively small number of locations along the route. At Year 10, following the establishment of tree and hedgerow planting on the southern boundary of Sites A and B in particular, the Scheme would be further integrated into the view, particularly during summer months. While the mitigation planting would benefit the Scheme and reduce the change to this view, the worst-case level of effect at Year 10 would remain as Minor Adverse which is Not Significant.
- With regards users of the Three Shires Way, based on an assessment of Viewpoints 72, 73, 74 and 75 and the assessment of visual receptors, there would be a worst-case Minor Adverse (Not Significant) level of effect

on users of the Three Shires Way during Year 0 of operation in a relatively small number of locations along the route. At Year 10, following the establishment of tree and hedgerow planting on field boundaries within Sites C and D in particular, the Scheme would be further integrated into the view, particularly during summer months. While the mitigation planting would benefit the Scheme and reduce the change to this view, the worst-case level of effect at Year 10 would remain as Minor Adverse which is Not Significant.

5.8.65 At Year 10, the mitigation proposed, shown on **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]**, would have established to a reasonable level of maturity such that the Scheme would be more suitably integrated into the view from the majority of visual receptors, including rights of way users. With regards the design of the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan, careful consideration has been given to potential views of the Scheme from rights of way located in close proximity to the Order Limits.

5.8.66 Some significant visual effects on users of rights of way within the study area would mostly remain at Year 10, following the establishment of mitigation. In some cases, particularly from rights of way directly adjacent to the Site, while the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan illustrates the proposed enhancements in the level of planting on the site and the creation of better defined field boundaries with tree and hedgerow planting, there would be a residual change to the level of openness in views and as such the significant visual effects would remain. However, in many cases the level of effect reduces to being Not Significant at Year 10 as the mitigation planting would have established and would integrate the Scheme into the view, or screen it entirely.

5.8.67 The following are rights of way receptors which have been identified as experiencing a residually significant visual effect at Year 10:

- Bridleway 37 and 40 and Footpaths 34 and 35, which are located directly within the southern extent of Site A;
- Footpaths 4, 8, 13, 26, 47, which are located directly within Site B.
- Footpath 5 and 20 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Pertenhall, at least 1km north of Sites A and B and the residually significant effect on each of these rights of way is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Sites A and B;
- Footpaths 5 and 213/1 are located on rights of way situated on slightly elevated ground, close to Little Staughton, within 1km south of Site B and the residually significant effect on each of these rights of way is due to the extent of the solar array which would be evident in a single view due to Site B.

5.8.68 With regards: Bridleway 37 and 40 and Footpaths 34 and 35, which are located directly within the southern extent of Site A; and Footpaths 4, 8, 13, 26, 47, a residual Significant effect remains at Year 10 due to the extent of enclosure of the footpath network through the Scheme, however views would typically be of hedgerow lined 'green lanes' and not of infrastructure.

Users of Community Facilities

5.8.69 No community receptors have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the operation of the Scheme.

People Using Roads

5.8.70 No road receptors have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the operation of the Scheme.

People at Employment Sites

No receptors at their place of work have been identified as experiencing a significant visual effect during the operation of the Scheme.

Night-time Effects

5.8.71 Temporary lighting required during the construction period would be designed and managed in accordance with the CEMP to minimise light pollution in the landscape and views Lighting would only be used for health and safety or task-specific purposes during darker periods of the day (for example, during site set-up in the morning or demobilisation in the evening), ensuring that effects on the night sky remain limited and short-term..

5.8.72 As was stated in Table 5.3, operational night time effects were scoped out from further assessment as the only permanent lighting would comprise sensitively designed lighting associated within the proposed substation and BESS in Site D, which would not alter the character of the night sky in this part of the study area.

Operational Glint and Glare Effects

5.8.73 A separate glint and glare assessment is included as **ES Volume 2 Appendix 5-6: Glint and Glare Assessment [EN010141/DR/6.2]**. This considers effects on ground-based receptors (residential, rail, road, and bridleway) within 1km, whilst a 30km study area is considered for aviation receptors.

5.8.74 Geometric analysis was conducted at 177 individual residential receptors, including 20 residential areas, 171 road receptors, and 88 bridleway receptors. Also, geometric analysis was conducted at four runway approach paths at Old Warden Airport and Sackville Farm Aerodrome.

5.8.75 The glint and glare assessment concludes that:

- Once mitigation has been taken into consideration the overall impacts on residential, road and bridleway receptors identified in **ES Volume 2 Appendix 5-6 [EN010141/DR/6.2]** would be acceptable.
- No impact on train drivers or railway infrastructure is predicted.
- Four runway approach paths were assessed in detail at Old Warden Airport and Sackville Farm Aerodrome. **ES Volume 2 Appendix 5-6**

[EN010141/DR/6.2] identifies that overall impacts on these aviation assets would be acceptable.

5.8.76 The glint and glare assessment reports that due to the existing screening and / or proposed screening in the landscape, glint and glare impacts would be acceptable. There is therefore no additional mitigation proposed to reduce glint and glare effects over and above the embedded landscape proposals.

Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

5.8.77 A Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) for the Scheme has been produced and is included at **ES Volume 2 Appendix 5-7 [EN010141/DR/6.2].**

5.8.78 The RVAA has been prepared in accordance with Landscape Institute's 'Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 2/19: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment' (2019) and it considers the construction, operational and decommissioning stages of the Scheme.

5.8.79 The purpose of the RVAA is to identify if the effect of the Scheme on residential visual amenity is of such a nature and/or magnitude that it potentially affects 'living conditions' or 'residential amenity'.

5.8.80 Six residential properties were identified within the 100 m study area considered appropriate for this RVAA. The initial assessment concluded that, for all six properties, predicted changes to views would not approach the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold when judged in the round.

5.8.81 In line with the RVAA methodology, a Step 4 detailed assessment was therefore not required for any property, as the RVA Threshold would not be reached. This conclusion reflected:

- The orientation of principal rooms and the primarily ground-floor screening provided by existing boundary vegetation;
- The limited proportion of the view that the Scheme would occupy, due to the low profile of the solar arrays and intervening features;
- The short-term nature of construction and decommissioning effects; and

- The progressive reduction in visibility as proposed mitigation planting establishes, typically by Year 10.

5.8.82 The RVAA concludes that the Scheme would not result in an overbearing effect on residential visual amenity. Effects would remain below the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold during construction, operation, and decommissioning, and no dwelling would experience a reduction in outlook or visual amenity sufficient to make it an unattractive place to live when judged objectively in the public interest.

Decommissioning Effects

5.8.83 As was stated in Section 5.4.16, the activities involved in decommissioning of the Scheme would be similar to those involved in the construction stage with respect to the temporary disruption to the Site and study area. However, the key difference between construction and decommissioning stages is that proposed vegetation implemented at the end of construction of the Scheme would have reached a high level of maturity, leaving the Site and study area enhanced through the improvement to field structure due to increased hedgerow and tree planting.

5.8.84 Decommissioning would largely involve the presence of site compounds and construction plant, vehicles and machinery and would be for a duration of up to two years, which is considered to be short-term in assessment terms. As with construction, some limited use of temporary lighting may be required at the start and end of the working day, particularly during winter months, but this would be short-term and carefully managed to minimise night-time effects.

5.8.85 With regards the impact on landscape elements, any infrastructure that is more than 1m below ground level, such as cable conduit and casing, would typically be left in situ at decommissioning. The majority of the Scheme comprises the solar array which would be removed without any alteration to the underlying landform or landcover, albeit there is an assumption that the fields would be returned to arable crop by the landowner. As stated previously,

there would be a net benefit on landscape features at the decommissioning stage as all hedgerow and tree planting located on field boundaries would be retained by the Scheme.

5.8.86 In relation to landscape character, there would be temporary adverse effects during the removal of the Scheme which would be similar to those reported during construction, i.e. that there would be Moderate to Major Adverse levels of effect on the two main host LCAs, LCA 1B and Southern Wolds LCA. However, at the end of decommissioning there would likely be a residual Minor Beneficial effect on landscape character as there would be enhanced field structure within the Site due to the mature hedgerow and tree cover left by the Scheme.

5.8.87 With regards visual effects, there would be temporary adverse effects during the removal of the Scheme which would be similar to those reported during construction. This essentially comprises some temporary significant visual effects on residents of properties and users of public rights of way which are either within or directly adjacent to the Site. However, at the end of decommissioning, there would likely be a residual Negligible effect overall on visual receptors as the Scheme would be removed from views. The Scheme would leave enhanced field structure within the Site due to the mature hedgerow and tree cover left by the Scheme, which would primarily comprise a benefit to landscape character, while, aside from users of footpaths in close proximity to the Site, in the most part this would not alter the view experienced by receptors.

5.9 Additional Mitigation, Enhancement and Monitoring

5.9.1 The Scheme design has undergone a series of design iterations to embed mitigation measures into the design, as detailed in Section 5.7 and, given that mitigation is embedded in the Scheme design, no additional mitigation measures are proposed.

5.9.2 With regards monitoring of mitigation measures, an **oCEMP [EN010141/DR/7.3]** and **oLEMP [EN010141/DR/7.7]** have been prepared which include outline measures to protect retained vegetation. The monitoring requirements include an arboricultural survey to be conducted in line with BS5837:2012 pre-construction to consider trees that may be affected by construction.

5.9.3 The oLEMP would be developed into a final LEMP prior to implementation in accordance with requirements of the DCO. The oLEMP includes a five-year establishment aftercare period during which landscape and ecological mitigation would be managed and monitored to ensure the successful establishment of the proposed planting. Additionally, a post-construction monitoring programme would require walkover surveys of the Order Limits at set intervals post construction.

5.9.4 No further monitoring is required.

5.10 Residual Effects

5.10.1 This section summarises the residual significant effects of the Scheme on landscape and visual receptors following the implementation of mitigation, i.e. long-term effects from Year 10 of operation of the Scheme. Significant residual effects are defined as those which are deemed to be Significant in EIA terms.

Residual Landscape Effects

5.10.2 As there are no mitigation measures proposed in addition to those which are embedded within the Scheme design, including **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]**, the residual landscape effects remain as reported in Section 5.8. The residual construction effects are as reported, and the residual operational effects comprise the Year 10 assessment.

Residual Visual Effects

5.10.3 As there are no mitigation measures proposed in addition to those which are embedded within the Scheme design, including **ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1: Illustrative Environmental Masterplan [EN010141/DR/6.3]**, the residual visual effects remain as reported in Section 5.8. The residual construction effects are as reported, and the residual operational effects comprise the Year 10 assessment.

5.11 Cumulative Effects

5.11.1 The cumulative assessment has considered the potential for cumulative environmental effects as a result of the Scheme in combination with the cumulative schemes set out in **ES Vol 2 Appendix 4-5: Short List of Other Development [EN010141/DR/6.2]**.

5.11.2 The cumulative landscape and visual assessment is concerned with the effects of the Scheme introduced into a cumulative baseline scenario where the other developments are present (in addition to existing development and any development under construction which form part of the LVIA baseline), rather than the effects of those developments.

Construction Phase

5.11.3 The proposed construction period for the Scheme overlaps with the anticipated construction period for the proposed High Wood Solar Farm and the proposed Cobholden Solar Farm. However, the separation between the main construction activity of the Scheme, i.e. within Sites A, B, C and D, to Cobholden Solar Farm is sufficient that there would be no additional notable cumulative landscape and visual effects in relation to that cumulative development. Whilst Cobholden Solar Farm would be located in close proximity to the installation of the underground cable connection running into Eaton Socon Substation, very limited landscape and visual effects during construction in that part of the Site have been identified and so there would be very limited potential for additional cumulative effects. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that Cobholden Farm BESS would be constructed prior to the construction phase of the Scheme and so there would be no overlap in construction effects. The potential for notable additional cumulative effects therefore relate to High Wood Solar Farm only.

5.11.4 In relation to landscape character, the additional construction activity due to the Scheme and High Wood Solar Farm would extend the influence of construction activity within the Southern Wolds, this is a large-scale landscape, which would minimise the change and the presence of the

operational solar farm within High Wood Solar and some large blocks of woodland between the two developments would minimise additional change. There would therefore remain a Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) effect due to construction of the Scheme and High Wood Solar Farm. In a broader sense, there would be no notable effects on other LCAs within the study area.

5.11.5 In relation to visual effects, the potential for additional cumulative effects due to the construction of the Scheme and High Wood Solar Farm would be on receptors in proximity to Site D, and typically users of public rights of way in and around Site D. No notable cumulative effects on residential receptors have been identified. Viewpoint 69, which is located on Footpath 213/12, and Viewpoint 78, which is located on Footpath 112/5, represent a small number of footpaths located between the construction activity within the Scheme and High Wood Solar Farm and would be subject to additional cumulative visual effects on users of these footpaths. Effects on footpaths represent beside Site D represent sequential visual effects and, given the openness in this location, there would be reasonably large extents of each of Footpaths 213/12 and 112/5 for example, which would be subject to cumulative visual change during construction.

5.11.6 In the most part, this is a large-scale landscape and, whilst there would be some additional cumulative landscape and visual effects due to the construction of the Scheme and High Wood Solar Farm, this would be relatively localised. Effects during the construction phase of the Scheme and High Wood Solar Farm would be temporary, experienced for the short-term, and would be reversible on completion of proposed construction activity.

Operational Phase

5.11.7 The proposed High Wood Solar Farm has the most potential for cumulative landscape and visual effects with the Scheme, given its immediate proximity to Site D. However, the operational assessment also takes account of other relevant solar development within the cumulative baseline, including the

existing solar farm immediately south of Site D and Staughton Airfield Solar Farm located approximately 1.4 km to the south-west. Reference is also made to Cobholden Solar Farm to ensure that the wider context of operational and proposed solar development is considered. Cumulative effects in relation to Cobholden Farm BESS are anticipated to be limited, given its location close to the urban edge of Eaton Socon and within the footprint of Cobholden Solar Farm, and it is therefore not considered further within this operational assessment.

Landscape Effects

5.11.8 The Scheme would be introduced into the same LCA as the majority of the High Wood Solar Farm and would result in cumulative change in landscape character in this part of the Southern Wolds LCA, which is already influenced by a solar farm south of the Scheme, (and which largely would be surrounded by the proposed High Wood Solar Farm) and Staughton Airfield Solar Farm, which is located 1.4km south-west of the Scheme at its closest point.

5.11.9 The Scheme would result in an increased concentration of solar development in this part of the Southern Wolds LCA. A significant effect on the Southern Wolds LCA has not been identified due to the operation of the Scheme, and there would be no significant additional cumulative visual effects over and above those identified for the Scheme in isolation. Whilst the presence of the two schemes would extend the influence of solar development within the LCA, when considered with the operational developments at Staughton Airfield and directly to the south of Site D, this is a large-scale landscape, which would minimise the change and the presence of two large blocks of woodland and a low ridge between the two developments would minimise additional landscape change. At Year 0, the cumulative level of effect would be Moderate Adverse, which is judged to be Not Significant.

5.11.10 At Year 10, mitigation planting as part of the Scheme and as part of the High Wood Solar Farm would have established to an extent that these developments would assimilate further within Southern Wolds LCA. Linear

belts of planting beside the Scheme, specifically on field boundaries, would limit its visibility within the wider landscape and enhance an existing characteristic of the Southern Wolds LCA. There would however continue to be an adverse cumulative effect on the Southern Wolds LCA judged to be Moderate to Minor Adverse, which is considered to be Not Significant.

Visual Effects

5.11.11 In relation to visual effects, the greatest potential for additional cumulative change during operation would arise where views include both the Scheme and the proposed High Wood Solar Farm, particularly in the vicinity of Site D. These effects would predominantly be experienced by users of public rights of way to the south of Site D, notably Footpaths 213/12 and 112/5, where the openness of the landscape affords relatively long durations of view towards both developments. In these locations, the developments would be experienced either in combination within the same view or sequentially when moving along the route.

5.11.12 For most other visual receptors, including residential properties, intervening landform, field boundary vegetation, and woodland blocks would limit intervisibility such that the cumulative contribution of the High Wood Solar Farm and other operational solar farms (including the existing scheme immediately south of Site D and Staughton Airfield Solar Farm) would not materially increase the level of effect beyond that identified for the Scheme in isolation.

5.11.13 At Year 0, cumulative operational visual effects at the most affected viewpoints (notably Viewpoint 71) would reach Moderate to Major Adverse (Significant) due to the surrounding of the receptor by solar development. At other viewpoints, including Viewpoints 69 and 78, effects would be Moderate Adverse or lower (Not Significant) as the arrangement of development and intervening screening prevents full enclosure of the view. By Year 10, the establishment of mitigation planting at both the Scheme and High Wood Solar Farm would soften the visual influence of the developments and assist their

integration into the surrounding landscape. However, some adverse cumulative effects would remain where views towards the developments are open and direct.

5.11.14 No notable cumulative operational visual effects are anticipated in relation to Cobholden Solar Farm or Cobholden Farm BESS, given their separation from the main East Park array areas and the limited intervisibility with the same visual receptors.

Decommissioning Phase

5.11.15 If decommissioning of cumulative schemes, i.e. High Wood Solar Farm or Cobholden Solar Farm, were to coincide with that of the Scheme, there is potential for temporary cumulative effects on landscape character and visual amenity of a similar nature and magnitude to those reported for the construction phase. These effects would arise from site compounds, plant, and vehicle movements, and would be most notable where decommissioning activity is in close proximity and visible together.

Summary

5.11.16 The cumulative assessment is reported in **ES Vol 1 Chapter 17: Cumulative and In-Combination Effects [EN010141/DR/6.1]** and concludes that there would be no significant landscape and visual cumulative effects as a result of the Scheme in combination with any cumulative scheme.

5.11.17 An assessment of the in-combination effects arising from the interaction and combination of different residual environmental effects of the Scheme affecting a single receptor is reported in Section 17.5 of **ES Vol 1 Chapter 17: Cumulative and In-Combination Effects [EN010141/DR/6.1]**.

5.12 Conclusions

5.12.1 The LVIA comprises a description of the existing environment and identification of the potential effects of the Scheme on landscape and visual receptors within the study area. The landscape receptors with potential to experience change as a result of the Scheme comprise landscape character areas. The visual receptors with potential to experience change as a result of the Scheme comprise people in residential areas/communities, using rights of way, using roads, visiting community facilities and in attending places or work. The visual receptors within the study area are represented by a comprehensive set of 83 viewpoints.

5.12.2 The assessment of landscape and visual effects includes consideration of the effect of change to existing landscape elements, the effect of temporary construction works and the effect of the introduction of a solar array and associated infrastructure.

5.12.3 As was described in Section 5.7 and separately in the **Design Approach Document [EN010141/DR/5.6]**, the Scheme has been through an iterative design process from an early stage such that the final design of the solar array, associated infrastructure and the illustrative environmental masterplan (**ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1 [EN010141/DR/6.3]**) includes embedded landscape and visual mitigation which reduces landscape and visual effects. This includes setting back the Scheme from settlements such as Little Staughton to avoid the solar array breaking skylines by creating views out looking 'over' the solar where possible. These design considerations are therefore taken into account in the assessment of both Year 0 and Year 10 landscape and visual effects. At Year 10 of operation, the proposed planting embedded within the Scheme design would have reached a reasonable level of maturity such that it would further reduce the long-term effects of the Scheme on landscape and visual receptors through integration of the Scheme into the existing landscape and effective screening.

5.12.4 The Scheme would involve minimal change to landscape elements within the Site with very little vegetation removal and no change to the underlying landform upon which the Site is located. The landscape character of the Site and its immediate setting would be affected to the greatest degree within the two central character areas within the study area: LCA 1B and Southern Wolds LCA and significant landscape effects have been identified on these host character areas during construction.

5.12.5 Significant visual effects have been identified on some residential and rights of way receptors located in close proximity to the Site. However, these effects would be for the short-term duration of construction (up to 30 months).

5.12.6 With regards operational effects on landscape character, the majority of the Scheme would be located within Bedford LCA 1B Riseley Clay Farmland and Huntingdonshire Southern Wolds LCA. While there are evident differences between the two host character areas, they are both landscapes which largely comprise arable fields, albeit of varying scale across the study area and with subtly varied topography. The Scheme would comprise the introduction of a solar array into medium to large scale arable fields, outside the settlement boundaries of small rural villages. The solar array would be relatively low-level and would have a generally consistent appearance, excepting that whilst the arrays of panels uniformly face south, there would variation in how they are seen from the wider landscape from differing directions (differing combinations of front, back and sides of panels). The Scheme would follow the contours and would not alter the underlying topography, nor would it alter the pattern of fields with the Site.

5.12.7 The substation and BESS components of the Scheme would contribute to a slight increase in landscape change within the vicinity of Site D given their taller vertical scale than the solar array. However, these components would be set within the wider solar array, which would partially reduce their influence on the Southern Wolds LCA.

5.12.8 In summary of the level of effect during operation on the two host landscape character areas:

- On LCA 1B, the level of effect during Year 0 of operation of the Scheme would be Moderate to Major Adverse which is Significant. At Year 10, mitigation planting would have established such that there would be a Moderate Adverse level of effect which is Not Significant.
- On Southern Wolds LCA, the level of effect during operation of the Scheme would be at Year 0 would be Moderate Adverse which is Not Significant in EIA terms. At Year 10, mitigation planting would have established such that there would be a Minor to Moderate Adverse level of effect which remains Not Significant.

5.12.9 No significant effects have been identified on other LCAs within the study area, with at most a partial influence on character areas which are located outside the Site.

5.12.10 The Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (**ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1 [EN010141/DR/6.3]**) has been designed to enhance and strengthen field boundaries through the additional planting of hedgerow and hedgerow trees. No significant landscape effects would remain at Year 10 due to the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation planting and the integration of the scheme into the field pattern.

5.12.11 At Year 0 there would be significant visual effects on some residents of residential properties and users of rights of way located in proximity to the Scheme, prior to the establishment of mitigation planting. Given the low density of settlement within the study area and the visual containment provided by subtle landform undulations and intermittent tree and hedgerow cover, a relatively small number of residential receptors have been identified as experiencing significant visual effects during operation of the Scheme. All residential receptors identified as experiencing significant visual effects are either individual properties, or small groups of properties, which would be subject to close-distance views of the Scheme. No significant visual effects

have been identified on visual receptors located directly within the villages located within the Study Area as views out are generally contained by buildings within the villages and tree cover outside them.

5.12.12 The establishment of mitigation would give rise to a reduction in the level of effect from residential receptors, with all residential receptors experiencing a reduction in the change such that the residual effect at Year 10 is Not Significant. The proposed mitigation, in particular hedgerow planting on field boundaries, would be effective in screening a relatively low-level solar array at a maximum of 3m above ground level and would integrate it into the view overall.

5.12.13 Similar to the assessment of effects on residential receptors, all right of way receptors identified as likely experiencing significant visual effects due to the operation of the Scheme are located in close proximity to the Scheme. There is a relatively high number of rights of way identified as being subject to significant visual effects during Year 0 of operation as there is a relatively dense network of rights of way within the Study Area which provide connections between farms and small settlements.

5.12.14 The number of significant visual effects on users of footpaths within the Study Area would notably reduce at Year 10, following the establishment of mitigation. While the Illustrative Environmental Masterplan (**ES Vol 3 Figure 2-1 [EN010141/DR/6.3]**) illustrates the proposed enhancements in the level of planting on the site and the creation of better defined field boundaries with tree and hedgerow planting, there would remain a residual change from the baseline situation in the openness of views from locations in proximity to the Site and as such some significant long-term visual effects would remain. However, as already stated, these effects are mostly on a small number of rights of way which cross into the Site or are directly adjacent to it. The establishment of mitigation would give rise to a reduction in the level of effect from residential receptors, with all residential receptors experiencing a reduction in the change such that the residual effect at Year 10 is Not Significant. The proposed mitigation, in particular hedgerow planting on field

boundaries, would be effective in screening a relatively low-level solar array at a maximum of 3m above ground level and would integrate it into the view overall.

5.12.15 Overall, this assessment concludes that, despite the extent of the Scheme, significant landscape and visual effects would be relatively limited in number and largely confined to receptors located in close proximity. Proposed mitigation would integrate the Scheme into the existing landscape and visual setting by year 10 of operation, with no residual significant effects on landscape character identified by Year 10. Residually significant visual effects that have been identified at Year 10 predominantly associate with those locations in closest proximity to the Scheme, particularly users of the high number of footpaths located in or adjacent to the Order Limits and also a small number located on slightly elevated ground within 1km of the Scheme, from which it would be evident within a wide extent of the view.

5.12.16 At decommissioning stage, at Year 40 of the Scheme, there would be no residually significant landscape or visual effects and overall the planting implemented as part of the Scheme would leave a Site which would appear similar to the baseline situation, albeit with enhanced field structure planting which would comprise a residually beneficial change to landscape character.

5.13 References

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