Botley West Solar Farm1

Applicant's Response to the ExA's Second Written Questions

August 2025

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Planning Act 2008; The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Approval for issue

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Contents

Introduction

- This report responds to the Examining Authority's (ExA) second written questions, issued on 30 July 2025 **[PD-012].** It responds to each of the questions posed to the Applicant.
- The Applicant has not responded to questions posed to specific Interested Parties, apart from clarifications provided on some questions. However, the Applicant will review further responses once available, and may comment on those at Deadline 5.
- Section 2 of this report is tabularised to include the ExA's questions and a response to each question under the topics set out in the ExA second written questions **[PD-012]** as per the Table of Contents above.

Applicant's Response to ExA's Second Written Questions (EXQ2)

Q2.1 General and Cross Topic Questions

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Planning Policy			
Q2.1.1	Applicant	**West Oxfordshire Design Guide** In response to Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 1 Action Point 8 you provided the West Oxfordshire Design Guide 5 – Settlement Types [REP1-040]. Whilst this document was not requested, it has led the Examining Authority (ExA) to consider other parts of the West Oxfordshire Design Guide that may be relevant to this application and how the project has sought to comply with these guides. Please provide a document that outlines how the project has responded to and will comply with the following parts of the West Oxfordshire Design Guide: 1) Part 2 – Geology and Landscape 2) Part 11 – New Development and Context 3) Part 13 – Biodiversity and Protected Species	The requested document is provided at **Annex 1: WODC Design Guide**.
Planning Permissions			
Q2.1.2	Applicant Blenheim Palace (Dominic Hare)	**Application 25/01510/OUT** The representation from Begbroke and Yarnton Green Belt Campaign [REP2-059] raises that the Blenheim Estate has submitted an application for 500 dwellings, affecting the Order land within the central section. Due to the application being submitted in 2025, it does not appear in the Environmental Statement (ES) Cumulative Effects	***The following is given as a joint response, on behalf of the Applicant and Blenheim Estate, and has been prepared in agreement with Blenheim Estate;*** Land south of Perdiswell Farm, Shipton Road, Woodstock, formed part of the shortlist of applications that is considered and assessed in the Cumulative Effects ES Chapter 20 [**APP-057**] – and features in Volume 3, Appendix 20.1 – p.6 [**APP-224**].

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Chapter 20 [APP-057] but appears to be important and relevant to the project at hand. 1) Explain what is known about this application and, through the use of maps and diagrams, explain the interaction between that proposed housing scheme and the solar farm project. 2) Provide a cumulative impact assessment. Set out what, if any, changes to the application are required to mitigate the effects on the housing scheme and vice versa.	The site, formerly known as PR10 in the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 Partial Review, was not allocated in the Partial Review as it was not considered by the Inspector at the Examination in Public to provide a suitable location for Oxford's unmet housing needs, mainly due to its distance from Oxford (whilst it is outside the Oxford Green Belt). Subsequently an application, for outline permission for up to 500 homes, was submitted in 2022 – but then withdrawn, in agreement with Cherwell District Council. The Council was of the view that the application could be regarded as premature and requested that it be withdrawn and resubmitted in parallel with the timing for the emerging Cherwell Local Plan 2042, through which the site has also been promoted. The 2022 application, 22/01716/OUT, is identified in the cumulative developments shortlist submitted with the application. The new application, 25/01510/OUT also for 500 dwellings and commercial floorspace, was submitted in June 2025. The Applicant has been made aware of it through on-going discussions with Blenheim Estate and the local planning authority. The illustrative Masterplan for the land south of Perdiswell Farm is appended to **Annex 2: Illustrative Masterplan for the land south of Perdiswell Farm**. In terms of the Botley West Project there are two main areas of built interaction with the land south of Perdiswell Farm site; 1) The cable route option; and 2) The potential for an HDD compound located within the southern part of the Perdiswell Farm site, in order to directionally drill under the Bladon roundabout. Neither of the above engineering elements creates a conflict with the housing proposals as shown in outline. The Applicant's proposed cable option runs outside the housing site, to the north along Shipton Road, and to the east along Upper Campsfield Road, within the public highway – as shown on the illustrative cable route option plan [**APP-121**]. The HDD compound, and that part of the housing site where the cable would enter the land, is shown as undeveloped land, retained as public open space – although there is new planting proposed alongside Upper Campsfield Road, which would need to be considered in terms of cable

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			location. This is an outline application, and the detailed landscape design is a point for reserved matters approval. The Applicant has been working closely with Blenheim Estate on the cable route for Botley West and the detailed landscape design will take this into account. Draft easements take into account the depth of the cable required for the proposed housing site infrastructure. In terms of temporal overlap, Blenheim Estate has confirmed that, if outline permission is granted, a reserved matters application for the first phase of development would be expected to be determined in Summer 2027, and once conditions are discharged the housing development would be commenced in Autumn 2027. This would mean the laying of the cable and the site preparation works would be able to complement each other, with the overall Botley West construction period concluding in June 2028, as set out in ES Chapter 6, Table 6.1 [**APP-043**]. It is worth noting that the cable options for this site were refined prior to submission to avoid the western side of the land, where there is both a Scheduled Monument (site of a Roman Villa) and Thames Water main. It is the Applicant's intention to provide an updated Cumulative Assessment – ES Chapter 20 [**APP-057**] – at Deadline 5, to run alongside the second Change Request, and which will also capture the position on the updated Red House Solar Farm project, (referred to in ExQ 2.9.2) and any other significant developments. From the material provided with the outline housing application on the land south of Perdiswell Farm, it is not considered by either party that there are any likely significant effects that have not already been cumulatively assessed as part of the submission.
Q2.1.3	Applicant	**Cumulative developments and battery storage** In response to ExQ1.3.5 [REP2-050], you have stated that Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) would be provided off-site elsewhere and point to an area to the west of the southern site in the cumulative assessment chapter [APP-057]. Having reviewed [APP-057], it appears that 'battery' appears 3 times in the course of ES Chapter 20 and, in each case, is associated with a proposed solar farm development. At a cursory	At the time of writing, there is 4GW BESS connected to the NETS, with 39GW with connection agreements under construction or awaiting construction. *Any* BESS connected to the Grid can store the electrical output from the proposed development. It is not necessary, or required in policy terms, to provide BESS with solar schemes. NPS EN3 states at para 3.10.2 that *"…. government is supportive of solar that is co-located with other functions (for example, agriculture, onshore wind generation, or storage) to maximise the efficiency of land use..."*. At 3.10.17 is also states that "*... Where sited on agricultural land, consideration may be given as to whether the proposal allows for continued agricultural use*

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		glance, it would appear that those solar farm developments are providing BESS to be self-sufficient and manage their own electricity output. 1) Is it therefore incorrect of the applicant to point to those other BESS facilities as potentially servicing the proposed development? 2) Has the applicant engaged those promoters with a view to connecting the Botley West Solar Farm to battery storage?	*and/or can be co-located with other functions (for example, onshore wind generation, or storage) to maximise the efficiency of land use...*". In the case of Botley West, the Applicant has co-located renewable energy with agriculture (and other activities – food growing and educational use). In response to the ExA two questions the Applicant responds below: 1) There is no requirement for any BESS facility to serve the Project. Whilst co-location is encouraged, it is not a requirement. The Applicant was drawing the attention of the ExA that other BESS were being developed locally. It is for National Energy Systems Operator (ESO) to ensure that supply and demand are balanced in real-time, not the developer, maintaining the stability and reliability of the electricity system as a whole. BESS projects assist them in doing that but there is no technical requirement to provide them with solar or any form of development 2) The Applicant has engaged with others to link its Project to their battery system. This is simply a commercial relationship that may suit both parties. The Applicant has/is exploring other commercial arrangements such as Power Purchase Agreements but none are directly relevant to the need or otherwise for BESS.
Legislative Framework			
Q2.1.4	Applicant	**The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape** The Cotswold National Landscape Board (CNL) [REP2-068] and the Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) [REP2-050, ExQ1.1.6] consider there is insufficient information to verify the applicant's conclusions in terms of impacts on the CNL, both in terms of viewpoints and detailed consideration of the individual special qualities. The ExA request that a specific topic paper / technical note is provided to evidence the conclusions made in this instance and to demonstrate that there would not be any impediment to the active function upon the	Please refer to the Applicant's response to REP2-025. This has formed the basis of an explanatory note, looking at the specific qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), potentially affected by the Project which is provided as **Annex 3** to this document. With a focus on Tranquillity, Dark Skies, and Recreation. Accompanying this note are Representative Viewpoints which were taken from locations in the CNL where the ZTV(s) indicates theoretical visibility from the CNL to the Project.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		local authorities under s85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (as amended). This should include representative viewpoints to verify the assertions made.	
Design			
Q2.1.5	Applicant	**Design principles** Despite requests for information, the response to ExQ1.1.10 [REP2-025] effectively states that there are no design details before the Examination, with all to be assessed under Requirement 5 of the Development Consent Order (DCO) post-consent. The lack of design details at this stage leads the ExA to the following questions: 1) The OHA have considered that an independent design review process would be beneficial [REP2-050, ExQ1.1.12]. Since no design information has been offered to the Examination under ExQ1.1.10 [REP2-025], the ExA also see the merit in having such a review process in place at detailed design stage to ensure the principles of good design are adhered to in whatever design choices are made. Provide a Requirement in the Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) to account for this design review process. 2) The representation of Mr Ford submitted at Deadline (DL) 3 [REP3-103] in response to ExQ1.1.14 references *"GOV.UK Guidance – Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Good Design. Updated 16th April 2025"* following on from which Mr Ford asks a series of questions about how the design ambition for the project has been attended to by the applicant. The ExA request detailed answers to be provided.	As a starting point, the Applicant directs the ExA to the design detail raised in the Applicant's Responses to ExA Q1.1.14. In summary, this addresses: - The process that has been gone through; - The factors that have influenced design and layout; - How those design measures can be secured; - The reason for continued flexibility and; - The means by which the OHA can still influence design and layout in detail via Requirement 5. Notwithstanding, the Applicant now also submits an updated Outline Layout and Design Principles [**EN01047/APP/7.7 Rev 4**] securing additional design parameters. The Applicant also submits an updated Project Mitigation and commitments Schedule which provides a summary of all of the various securing mechanisms, including Requirement 5 and the Outline Layout and Design Principles but also the other various management plans that are secured as DCO requirements and include design principles relevant to those topics. For example, the outline landscape and ecology management plan inherently commits the Applicant to key design features by securing buffer zones from key receptors. This is secured through Requirement 6 of the draft DCO. It is the full set of management plans and requirements that in-combination provide a design framework (as well as mitigation measures) within which the final scheme design must be brought within via the discharge of requirements. To supplement this, also attached is a consolidation of the Applicant Approach to Design which also deals with the latest Government design guidance issued in April 2025 – see **Annex 4.** In light of the above and following continuing consideration of this matter, the Applicant responds to the ExA's 3 points below: 1) The Applicant does not consider it necessary to apply another layer of checking/consideration to design and layout matters

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		3) NPS EN-3 paragraph 2.6.1 requests reasons to be provided as to why certain elements of design have not yet been finalised. Provide the reasons in relation to those aspects highlighted in ExQ1.1.10 [REP2-025].	beyond the provisions already outlined and the decision making that will be applied by the OHA when such detail is submitted for their approval via Requirement 5 and other management plans. The final design and delivery of the Project must accord with the principles and parameters in the Outline Layout & Design Principles, which provides certainty as to the potential scope of the development. Other requirements require final details to be substantially in accordance with the outline details that are already available. This gives certainty as to the various design measures that are currently secured, whilst retaining necessary flexibility for design to evolve within that wide consenting framework post-consent. This is standard practice on other solar DCOs where independent design reviews are not readily required. In discharging all of the Requirements, Schedule 16 paragraph 2(3) also requires a statement to confirm whether it is likely that the subject matter of the application will give rise to any materially new or materially different environmental effects compared to those in the environmental statement. This ensures coherence between the scope of the design and the assessed environmental effects. This must be balanced with the need for design flexibility post-consent, which is facilitated through Requirement 5, so long as that final design is within the framework discussed above. Ultimately, the relevant planning authority will then have a right of approval to ensure that the final design accords with the outline principles. This process, which is the standard and precedented approach across other solar DCOs and therefore routinely accepted by the Secretary of State, negates the need for an independent design review. 2) Mr Ford's representations ask the following questions: **What attention has been given to 'delight'? A conscious effort should be made to reveal or create beauty. The reference document refers to the need for "a succinct and ambitious vision" and "strong design leadership, driven by the vision."**

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			Applicant response: The Applicant would refer the IP to its updated Outline Layout and Design Principles [**EN010147/APP/7.7 Rev 4**] and the Applicants Approach to Design note (**Annex 4**). This describes the vision, the team that contributed to design and layout, and the process that was undertaken leading to the Applicants DCO submission. Reference to the word 'delight' is taken from Marcus Vitruvius' (c70-15BC) definition of good architecture. The Applicant has not applied this (yet) to any of the building architecture that form part of the Project (e.g. buildings within substation sites) as that detail will form part of the detail submitted for approval to the host authorities via Requirement 5. **What is the vision for the Development as it refers to 'delight'?** *Applicant Response:* The Applicant would refer the IP to its updated Outline Layout and Design Principles [**EN010147/APP/7.7 Rev 4**] and the annexed Applicant Approach to Design note as this describes the vision, the team that contributed to design and layout, and the process that was undertaken leading to the Applicants DCO submission. **The reference document refers to the need for a design champion. Who is this design champion?** *Applicant Response*: This reference is taken from that part of the PINS' Advice on Good Design (April 2025) (the "Guidance") that talks about process. It states: "*...design leadership supported by an engaged design champion to ensure design governance is secured and the design principles drive a structured design process and hierarchy of design control..."* This Guidance was published after the submission of the DCO application and therefore the Applicant had not allocated a specific 'design champion', although that function has been primarily driven by the planning and landscape experts within the Applicant team.

The reference document refers to the need for an independent design review. Has there been an independent design review?

Applicant response: There is no part of the guidance that *requires* there to be an independent design review. Reference to independent design review is referred to under the guidance subheading 'Good Design Outcomes'. One of the factors referred to under this heading states:
"*...well thought out mechanisms to enable design outcomes to be scrutinised, assessed and developed during the post-consent design process. For example, parameter plans, design codes, management plans, independent design review...*"

The Applicant would again refer the IP to its updated Outline Layout and Design Principles [**EN010147/APP/7.7 Rev 4**], and the Applicants Approach to Design note (**Annex 4**) as this explains the process the Applicant has gone through in respect of design and layout, and the mechanisms to secure good design outcomes. These include compliance with a series of management plans and allowing the host authorities to apply their expert judgement when approving design and layout detail via Requirement 5 of the DCO.

3) There are two main reasons for postponing detailed design and layout approval. The first is that if the DCO is granted, the nature of the procurement process that will follow will itself yield potentially different design solutions to that which is currently before the ExA; the Applicant cannot accurately predict what this is at this stage so has simply set design parameters within which specific design solutions will emerge. The retention of flexibility in this way also ensures that the Applicant can utilise any developments in technology between now and the detailed design stage.

The second reason is detailed design approval for all infrastructure will be subject to approval from the relevant host authority via the discharge of requirements (including but not limited to,

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			Requirement 5). Those details also need to accord with section 3 of the Outline Layout and Design Principles [**EN010147/APP/7.7 Rev 4**]. The various management plans secured through the other requirements in Schedule 2 also contain design and technical measures designed to ensure the development is carried out in way that avoids or minimises adverse environmental effects and achieves good design outcomes.
Q2.1.6	Applicant	**Security by design** Interested parties (IP) continue to raise the issue about security and the potential for theft or damage of solar infrastructure. NPS EN-5, paragraph 2.4.4, states: *"the functional performance of the infrastructure in respect of security of supply and public and occupational safety must not thereby be threatened."* Demonstrate to the ExA that positive and proactive measures are being secured by design in the dDCO to ensure the proposed development, and the energy it would produce, would be safe and secure.	The Applicant confirms that security has been embedded into the design of the Proposed Development from the outset, consistent with the principles of "security by design" and the requirements of NPS EN-5. Measures secured through the DCO include perimeter deer fencing to restrict unauthorised access, CCTV with motion detection limited to the access points, secure access points, and the provision of a security service. These features are controlled through Requirements in the DCO and further detailed in the Outline Layout and Design Principles document [**EN010147/APP/7.7 Rev 4**], and Outline Construction Code of Practice [**REP3-030**], and the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [**REP3-034**]. The final security layout will be subject to consultation with the relevant authorities and will ensure the infrastructure is safe, resilient, and compliant with national standards without compromising landscape or amenity considerations.
Q2.1.7	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Lighting** You have made a request at DL3 [REP3-072] that passive infrared sensor (PIR) motion sensor lighting should be omitted. Can you explain why and state where you consider this request is best secured?	
Q2.1.8	Applicant	**Horlock Rules** NPS EN-5, paragraphs 2.9.18 and 2.9.19, require applicants to take several factors into account when designing and locating substations. For the project main substation, and the 6no. secondary substations, set out how the Horlock Rules have influenced the project.	The siting and design of the main and secondary substations follow the Horlock Rules, as set out in NPS EN-5, paragraphs 2.9.18–2.9.19. Locations were chosen to balance visual impact, minimise cable lengths and losses, and ensure operational efficiency. Noise considerations were also factored in, with substation locations selected to reduce impact on sensitive receptors, in the Written Summary of Applicant's Oral Submissions at the Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) REP1-019 Chapter 3 Proposed Development Description PINS Action Point

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			No. 6. To the extent relevant, such matters will also be considered as part of Change Request 2.
Q2.1.9	Applicant	**Solar panel mounting support mechanism** The ExA acknowledges the applicant's response to EXQ1.1.19 at [REP2-025] and the plans supplied and have some follow-up questions. For both sheets of plans (labelled Q1.1.7 for sheet 1 and Q1.1.19 for sheet 2): 1) The plans show single and double leg supports that appear to be for the same side-on section. Explain in what conditions/instances a single leg support would be used instead of a double leg support. 2) For sheet 1 (Q1.1.7), explain how many supporting legs (and corresponding number of piles) there would be on a mounting table of 26 panels for both single and double leg options. 3) For sheet 2 (Q1.1.19), explain how many panels would be on a single-row mounting table, and how many supporting legs (and corresponding number of piles) there would be on a mounting table of panels for both single and double leg options. 4) ES Chapter 6 [APP-043], Table 6.3, Operational Development Parameters, shows the indicative total number of piles as 780,000 to 1,600,000. This is a huge range that is not fully explained either in this document, or in the response to EXQ1.1.19 or the plans provided. Provide a detailed explanation for this range.	Responses are provided to each point below; 1) Single-leg supports are suitable for stable ground and lower loads, offering simpler installation and reduced materials. Double-leg supports provide greater stability and are preferred where soils are weaker or wind loads are higher. Final selection will depend on detailed soil assessments and geotechnical investigations. 2) For the mounting table shown in Sheet 1 (Q1.1.7), which supports 26 panels, the single-leg configuration uses a maximum of 6 piles, while the double-leg configuration uses a maximum 14 piles. 3) For Sheet 2 (Q1.1.19), the mounting table supports a single row of 13 panels, using maximum 6 piles in the single-leg version and a maximum of 14 in the double-leg version. 4) The range of 780,000 to 1,600,000 piles reflects design flexibility within the Rochdale Envelope and accounts for variation in support configuration (single- vs double-leg), terrain, and soil conditions across the site. Use of more double-leg supports would lead to a higher pile count, while favourable ground conditions and optimal engineering design may allow for fewer piles through wider spacing or single-leg configurations. At the current stage of design the range is of 439,338 to 1,025,122 piles (which is a significant reduction in comparison to the reasonable worst case that has been assessed and so a sign of beneficial scheme design progression) based on a total of 1,903,788 panels.
Q2.1.10	Applicant	**Hours of working**	As detailed in the ES Chapter Document ref [EN010147/APP/7.6.1] the Outline CoCP 1.8 General Requirements, paragraph 1.8.2 Core working

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		In response to the Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP1-072], the applicant reports the working hours as being 7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday, which has fed into the construction programme [REP2-026, page 45]. The ExA are concerned that works, particularly at noise sensitive times, could be disruptive. It is therefore requested that the applicant considers a separate subset of hours within which the noisiest activities could take place (i.e. 7.30am to 6.00pm), but other non-intrusive works (start-up, shut down, deliveries etc) could take place within the 7am to 7pm period. Provide a response with reasons for the position taken and make any amendments to relevant management plans as necessary.	hours for the construction of the Project are secured in the DCO are 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Saturday. A separate subset of hours within which the noisiest activities will take place (7.30am to 6.00pm), but other non-intrusive works (start-up, shut down, deliveries etc) will take place within the 7am to 7pm period. A full noise impact assessment has been undertaken in accordance with all relevant technical and planning guidance, with noise mitigation measures suggested where they are required. The assessment can be found in Chapter 13 of the main ES reference [**PDB-011**], with additional information provided in ES Volume 2 (Figures) **[EN010147/APP/6.4**], and ES Volume 3 (Appendices) [**EN010147/APP/6.5**]. This assessment has identified that the development will not cause any significant adverse effects on noise sensitive receptors. This assessment includes consideration of noise from construction vehicles. During the construction and decommissioning phases, noise and vibration will be controlled and limited by the Outline Code of Construction Practice [**REP3-030**] (CoCP). This code of practice will ensure that no resident experiences a significant adverse effect. The CoCP includes construction phase noise limits, and construction times.
Q2.1.11	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Hours of working in the operational stage** The Outline Operational Management Plan (OOMP) [REP3-032] states that: *"Routine inspections and maintenance would be carried out as required during daylight hours, seven days a week. Emergency maintenance would be carried out as and when needed."* Given the wide scope of maintenance activities defined in the dDCO, allowing for the replacement of large parts of the project (but not the whole project at the same time), it would seem inappropriate to allow reconstruction works on a Sunday, particularly when the impact of working on a Sunday does not form part of the ES. The	During the operational phase of the project, any inspections and maintenance will be carried out between 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Saturday, except in the case of emergency. This has been committed to in the updated OOMP. The Applicant will continue to liaise with OHAs as requested. However, to confirm in response to the ExA's comment on the scope of maintenance activities, the Applicant has updated the OOMP [**EN010147/APP/7.6.2 Rev 3**] to secure the commitment that panel replacement will not exceed 30% in a single year. This is in response to comments made by the OHAs regarding concerns of panel replacement in excess of 30%. In its engagement with the OHAs, the Applicant will discuss what each party considers appropriate to be captured under 'emergency' works. If any further updates are required to the OOMP to capture any additional

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		applicant and the OHA are requested to liaise with each other on suitable wording in the OOMP so as to avoid such effects occurring. Included in this should be a consideration of what constitutes an 'emergency.'	provisions regarding emergencies, the Applicant will submit the updated document at a future deadline.
Q2.1.12	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Proposed construction hours** Following the question raised at ISH1 regarding construction hours being undertaken on a Saturday afternoon, the applicant responded at [REP1–019] by stating: *'This is required to minimise the overall Construction programme period'*. What concerns, if any, do the OHA have with regards to the applicant's proposed construction hours. In particular, what do you envisage would be the potential impact these additional construction hours proposed by the applicant would have on local residents, in comparison to the construction hours you expect and have stated in the post-hearing submission under agenda item 3i [REP1 -071].	
Q2.1.13	Applicant	**Promised documents** Throughout the DL2 submissions, but particularly in the responses to written questions [REP2-050], the applicant promises additional information and documentation:	Please see the Responses as provided below;
		NPPF compliance table with updated local policy context (revised Planning Statement) Deadline 6*	The Applicant will submit this at Deadline 6.
		Financial accounts up to December 2024 In due course	The Applicant will submit at Deadline 5.
		Archaeology trial trenching results Deadline 5	The Applicant is awaiting the completion and release of the reports showing the trial trenching results from the contractors. The Applicant is in discussions with the contractors to facilitate this and will submit the reports into the Examination once available.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Work No.6 in the dDCO to refer to education facility Deadline 6*	This relates to Change 10 from the Applicant's Change Request 2 Notification [**REP2-045**] and so any updates to the dDCO required for the education facility will be captured in the updated DCO to be submitted as part of the formal Change Application in September 2025 (in parallel Deadline 5).
		Bat survey data and technical note As soon as analysis complete	A draft bat trapping and radio tracking report has been shared with Natural England in draft form for their comment. It is anticipated that the complete report along with bat technical note setting out the rationale, location and nature of appropriate buffers will be submitted to the Examination at Deadline 5.
		Draft habitat licences (to Natural England, not to Examination) Deadline 3	Draft protected species licences for badger, great crested newt and dormice are in the process of being finalised and will be shared with Natural England's Wildlife Licensing Team (anticipated prior to Deadline 5).
		Bentonite breakout plan added to Outline Code of Construction Practice Deadline 3	An outline bentonite breakout plan has been added as Appendix F to the Outline Code of Construction Practice at this Deadline 4.
		Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (including watercourse units…offered at Deadline 3) To be submitted	During recent consultation, the EA expressed a preference for a single BNG Assessment revision to be produced. As such, the Applicant will endeavour to submit an updated Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (Rev 1) at Deadline 5 such that a single revision is provided that sets out both the watercourse assessment and updates the habitats/hedgerow assessment to account for Change Request 2.
		Revised Tree Protection Protocol To be submitted	This will be revised and submitted at Deadline 5.
		Consider improvements and upgrades to existing PRoW and ensure the dDCO allows for this To be submitted	The Applicant is in discussions with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) around the PROW offering to consider whether additional improvements or upgrades are to be secured. Any updates to the draft DCO will depend on the outcome of those discussions with OCC.
		Thermal turbulence modelling with regards to radar interference (offered at Deadline 3) Deadline 4	The Thermal Turbulence Modelling with regards to radar interference is currently underway and will be submitted at Deadline 6.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Revised Glint and Glare Assessment Deadline 3	An updated Glint and Glare Assessment was submitted by Pager Power to the Airport and their DCO advisors Lichfields on 21 July 2025. This assessed the latest layout and also considered the reorientation of panels to remove glare towards the ATC tower. The report confirmed no glare towards the ATC tower and all glare towards the approach paths is outside of the 50° horizontal field of view, in line with FAA guidance.
Q2.1.14	Applicant	**Concrete slabs** The ExA are concerned regarding the answer to ExQ1.1.15 [REP2-050]. It states that the applicant cannot commit to cable burial at 1.5m depth below ground level, albeit that is the aim. However, it goes on to say that if burial cannot be achieved to the depth (i.e. shallower) then concrete slabs would be laid to protect the cables. The laying of concrete slabs could have implications for drainage, soil quality (including Best and Most Versatile land (BMV)), agricultural activity (ploughing, mole-digging) in the vicinity of the cables and for ultimate decommissioning practices. The ExA request: 1) Limits of deviation for cable burial to be formally sought and specified in the dDCO to a minimum depth. 2) Information regarding any known or likely areas where the geology indicates difficulty in achieving the 1.5m burial depth. 3) A worst-case scenario assumption as to the percentage of the cable corridor that may require protection by covering. 4) An assessment of the consequential impacts (across all ES topics) during construction, operation and decommissioning of laying concrete slabs as cable protection. 5) Amendments to Work Nos. 4 and 6 to make reference to slabs being laid.	Responses are provided to each point below; 1) The Applicant confirms that while 1.5m is the target burial depth for cables, site-specific conditions may necessitate shallower burial. Where this occurs, protective measures such as concrete slabs may be employed. The cable laying methodology (Appendix 6.2), [**APP-130**] outlines that trenching will be between 1.0m–2.0m deep for open cut, and 1.5m–30m for HDD methods depending on constraints. 2) At this stage, no specific areas of constrained geology are identified, but some trenchless crossings are proposed for sensitive features (e.g., rivers, railways, veteran trees), reducing the likelihood of shallow burial in those zones. 3) & 4) The use of slabs is expected to be rare and localised. Their inclusion would not materially alter the conclusions of the Environmental Statement. Any such use will be managed through the final design and secured under the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), as referenced in the draft DCO Requirements. 5) Work Nos. 4 and 6 encompass all infrastructure needed for electrical connection, including associated protection measures. The Applicant considers the use of slabs within their scope.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Q2.1.15	Defence Infrastructure Organisation	**Position statement and mitigations required** Please set out clearly the position regarding the proposed development and the potential for interference with military assets. The statement should set out whether there is any impediment or infringement caused by the proposed development on national security or the ability for national defences to operate and function effectively. If there are concerns and issues about impacts, what mitigation measures are required from the proposed development?	
Q2.1.16	Applicant	**Defence Infrastructure Organisation** The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) made representations [AS-042] and [REP1-082] relating to glint and glare, changes in wildlife patterns, and interactions with Primary Surveillance Radar equipment. The response you gave in [REP2-027] only focuses on glint and glare, offering no other comments on the DIO's written representation. Provide bespoke responses on the topics raised by the DIO in respect of all the DIO's interests.	With respect to the issue raised regarding birdstrike hazards, the DIO has requested [**REP1-082**] '*that the grass beneath and surrounding the panels be managed as long grass and regularly maintained to prevent weeds from growing as weeds can provide a feeding opportunity to certain bird species.'* The subject of birdstrike risk associated with solar installations has been discussed with Oxford Aviation previously. As part of those discussions, the Applicant has agreed to update the oLEMP [**REP3-034**] to reassure IPs that the principles of landscape design within relevant areas of the Project (i.e. those nearest to the airport) comply with the CAA Guidelines on the Management of Wildlife Risk. This includes with respect to how the grassland beneath the panels is managed, as requested by the DIO. This update to the oLEMP will be submitted at Deadline 5.
Q2.1.17	Applicant	**Funding decommissioning** In your response to ExQ1.1.16 [REP2-025] you have stated: *"the infrastructure has asset value, which provides a financial incentive to decommission*." Provide evidence that at the end of the project life, the asset value will be greater than, if not at least equal to the cost of decommissioning.	Monocrystalline panels tend to have a longer lifespan of over 40 years, arriving at 83.1% after 38 years. At a remaining useful life of 6 years panels will still be producing 80%, i.e. 12.6% x 108 million GBP total panel CAPEX or 0.02 USD/per watt. That's half the price of 0.05 USD/per watt quoted online for used panels (https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/mortgages/used-solar-panels). The decommissioning of utility-scale solar power plants costs an estimated $30,000 to $56,300 per megawatt (MW). This translates to roughly $0.03 to $0.20 per watt. https://solarrecycling.com/crafting-an-effective-solar-decommissioning-plan-key-considerations/ Due to utility scale effects, Botley West will be able to reduce such $0.03 cost by half to

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			$0.015 and can thus recover the decommissioning costs with used panel sales proceeds.

Q2.2 Air Quality and Emissions

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Air Quality Management			
There are no questions under this topic at this time.			
Impacts on human health			
There are no questions under this topic at this time.			

Q2.3 Assessment of Alternatives

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Strategic Alternatives			
Q2.3.1	Applicant	**Evidence the assertion** Table 5.1 of Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 5 [APP-042] states that *"A site selection exercise was undertaken, including land outside the Oxfordshire Green Belt".* Whilst that comment may be relevant to the location of the National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) substation, there is no direct reasoning or rationale submitted as to why the majority of the solar farm has to be located in the Green Belt as well. Provide the evidence underpinning this assertion as paragraphs 5.6.7 to 5.6.9 basically state that a site without any impact on the Green Belt was not available.	Para 5.6.9 in Chapter 5 states that: *Whilst the Cowley substation is located within the Green Belt, all other substations examined with headroom capacity, were also located within the Green Belt, meaning that development of a project in the vicinity of any of the four substations with capacity, would also fall within the Green Belt. A site without any impact on Green Belt, therefore, was not available to the Applicant.* So the Applicant was trying to explain that given the importance of locating a substation with capacity to enable a project to be realised, the search undertaken at the time only revealed four suitable substations

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			with capacity and development in the vicinity of any of these would be likely to be in the Green Belt – at that point therefore, there was no clearly discerning factor that would distinguish between them in terms of avoiding impact in the Green Belt. During that substation search, the Applicant was also looking for suitable land to develop the solar farm. For example, the Applicant looked at land near to, and grid connection at, the former Didcot A power station, but that was controlled by RWE and neither the connection nor the land was available to the Applicant. Shortly after the Applicant's enquiry, both the land (part of) and connection was subsequently used by a recently consented, and now constructed, data centre. The Applicants decision making process then moved on and the Applicant settled on Cowley as a good substation location (see para. 5.6.8) and concentrated their efforts on securing suitable land nearby for a solar farm. The Applicant did look at land beyond the Green Belt in this area and indeed has included land in the DCO that is not in Green Belt as evidence of that. Whilst the NGET substation is no longer at the site of the Cowley substation, the substation that will now be built by National Grid, was still within an acceptable distance to allow land negotiations with nearby willing landowners to continue to be progressed and allow the solar farm design and layout to evolve into a viable project. As the ExA is aware, the Applicant explains in detail the process that it went through in Chapter 5, paras 5.6.4 to 5.6.18. It is the Applicants position that this approach to site selection is not in conflict with national policy. <u>The National Policy Position</u> Mr Lecointe explained on behalf of the Applicant at ISH-1 [**REP1-019**, page 15], the project site and its component parts were chosen using a combination of factors, as anticipated from paragraph 2.10.18 of NPS EN-3. Substation location was one of a number of factors, but no single factor was determinative of the site chosen.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			Notwithstanding the above, for the avoidance of doubt, it is the Applicants position that there is no policy requirement which requires it to search for a site for a substation or for any other form of development, outside of any Green Belt first. Policy does not require a sequential approach to be followed in that respect. Policy in this respect is expressed as a preference, not a requirement. There is no national policy requiring all or most of an NSIP site to only be located outside of the Green Belt. NPS EN-3 para. 2.10.29 and 2.10.31 does it make a reference to this matter. Para.2.10.29 states: "While land type should not be a predominating factor in determining the suitability of the site location applicants should, where possible, utilise suitable previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land and industrial land...". There is no reference to be located outside of Green Belt. At para 2.10.31 of NPS EN-3, it notes the 'preference' for development to be on suitable brownfield...land". In NPS policy terms therefore, the Applicant characterises policy as a preference in policy terms not a requirement, and even then only where possible and where suitable. To reinforce the point, in NPS EN-3, para 2.3.9, it states that as most renewable energy resources can only be developed where the resource exists and where economically feasible, and because there are no limits on the need established in Part 3 of EN-1, the Secretary of State should not use a consecutive approach in the consideration of renewable energy projects (for example, by giving priority to the reuse of previously developed land). Beyond the NPS policy above, the NPPF (para 148) talks about a sequential test but only when considering a change in Green Belt boundaries or the release of Green Belt. The applicant is not seeking a change to nor a release from the Green Belt, and in the Applicants view therefore, para 148 does not apply. The Applicant has carefully assessed potential impacts on the Green Belt as part of the ES, and sought to avoid, minimise and mitigate those

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			effects in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy and setting out a VSDC case.
Q2.3.2	Applicant	**NPS EN-5, paragraph 2.2.10** NPS EN-5 refers to the duty placed on applicants under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989. Evidence how this Act and the principles within it have been addressed in the project. Demonstrate how paragraph 2.2.10 has been met.	Schedule 9 to the Electricity Act 1989 places a duty on all transmission and distribution licence holders, in formulating proposals for new electricity networks infrastructure, to "have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest and of protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest; and …do what [they] reasonably can to mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects. The Applicant has discharged this duty through: a) the production of an Environmental Statement for the Project which applies the mitigation hierarchy in seeking to avoid, minimise and/or mitigate harmful effects; and, b) the production and application of the Layout and Design Principles document (REP3-036), and associated Management Plans. Paragraph 2.2.10 of NPS EN-5 has therefore been met.
Q2.3.3	Applicant National Grid Electricity Transmission	**Substation availability** From evidence submitted to the Examination thus far, it appears that most existing National Grid substations are at capacity or oversubscribed in terms of customers, giving rise to a need for new substations (such as the one to service the proposed development and other projects in the area). A number of Interested Parties (IP) have commented that there are significant energy projects approved that are in a queue waiting for grid improvements before they can be connected; this, they say, reduces the urgent need for the proposed development because there is more energy than there is demand for the foreseeable future. The urgent need	The Applicant does not believe it is prudent nor accurate analysis to claim 'oversupply' of schemes by reference to a register or registers of schemes the significant majority of which have not submitted planning applications, have not demonstrated that they have secured land, have not taken FID and have not made significant (irreversible) progress in construction. This is particularly relevant in relation to NESO has shown historically that "only 30-40% of projects in the [connections] queue make it to fruition" [https://www.neso.energy/news/eso-leads-way-major-initiative-accelerate-connections-electricity-transmission-grid] and is engaged in an ongoing 'Connections Reform' activity which seeks to remove projects which are "speculative or do not have the necessary funding or planning permission to progress" from connection queues [Page 65 of the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan].

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		is actually for grid infrastructure. What do you say in response to this?	The Applicant also note the energy needs analysis presented by Cherwell District. It is important to recognise that the Scheme is not designed solely to meet the local needs of Cherwell but is a nationally significant scheme which is designed to contribute to meeting national decarbonisation and energy security needs as established in the National Policy Statements. Therefore, while the Applicant is not commenting on the numerical conclusions of the Cherwell analysis, it notes that EN-1 confirms that this is a not a relevant point for the Examiner to consider because of Paras 3.2.6 – 3.2.8 of EN-1.
Project Alternatives			
Q2.3.4	Applicant	**Cable corridor** In response to ExQ1.3.10 [REP2-025], it is stated that any formal request to remove residual optionality (for the cable routing options) from the Order limits is unlikely until the outstanding surveys and agreements are concluded, which is expected in the post-consent phase. Explain: 1) Who would be notified of the cable routeing decision outcomes and when. 2) How would the discarded options be managed post-consent (i.e. for example is it just a case of not exercising Compulsory Acquisition powers)? 3) Have any surveys or investigations to date indicated a potential preference in cable corridor routeing? Should the optionality, or at least the decisions in relation to the optionality, be subject of a Requirement that would secure a choice of cable routeing that subsequently prevents other options from also being pursued?	1) The Applicant has updated the outline Code of Construction Practice to include an obligation on the undertaker to provide notice to the relevant planning authority and landowners of the areas of land forming part of the cable corridor where there is optionality (as shown on Figures 5.2 to 5.5 of the environmental statement (Illustrative Masterplan Cable Corridor Plan Overviews), to inform them of the selected route prior to the commencement of Work No. 4 (cable works) on that land. 2) There is no need for a requirement to discard any compulsory acquisition powers over the discarded options as the DCO powers are inherently limited to prevent the exercise of any compulsory acquisition powers over more land than is required for the Project. Article 22 (Compulsory acquisition of rights) – which gives the undertaker the power to acquire the rights for the cable route – restricts the Applicant to acquiring the rights only for the purpose for which they are sought (i.e. as is required for the authorised development or to facilitate, or as is incidental, to it). Therefore, there would be no justification and in fact no power, to take more than is needed for those purposes irrespective of the scope of CA powers granted. This approach is analogous to the standard and precedented approach taken for cable routes on other energy DCO projects, where compulsory acquisition powers are sought (and routinely granted) over a wide area of potential cable route, with the ultimate exercise of those compulsory acquisition powers only exercisable over the land required for the development. This retains the necessary flexibility post-consent to allow the working width and ultimate cable placement to be over a narrower

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			and most suitable area, whilst ensuring the ability to exercise those powers is limited. 3) The Applicant has submitted a Cable Optionality Report at Deadline 4 which summarises the land, environmental and technical position(s) in relation to each area of the Cable Corridor where optionality continues to be sought.
Q2.3.5	Applicant	**Evidence the assertion** Table 5.1 of [APP-042] states: *"The layout has been designed to avoid minimise direct or indirect effects on valuable flora and fauna."* However, Natural England (NE) raised significant concern about the lack of bat surveys and detail regarding bats in the ES, suggesting there may be areas of design refinement to allow bat commuting and foraging. This leaves the Examining Authority (ExA) wondering whether the layout was fully informed by impacts to flora and fauna. Explain how bats and bat activity (breeding, commuting, foraging etc) influenced the layout of the proposal.	There are two components in relation to bat presence within the Project site – (1) roosting; and (2) commuting/foraging. In order to protect both elements, very early in the Project design a decision was made to retain all woodland, watercourses and waterbodies and for all hedgerows to be protected except in isolated locations where small increases in existing gaps were necessary or to create small new gaps for access purposes. These design principles are captured in Commitment 9.1 and 9.2, Table 9.8.1 of ES Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity [**REP2-012**]. These commitments are secured in the Outline Code of Construction Practice [**REP3-030]** (paragraphs 1.10.09 and 1.10.10). They protect any potential roost within trees, hedgerows and woodlands and ensure that the key foraging/commuting routes are retained. As such, the potential presence of bats had a key influence on the layout of the Project from a very early stage. In addition, the publication in late 2023 of various research that suggested there were other potential interactions between bats and solar panels (Tinsley *et al*. 2023; Szabadi *et al*. 2023) led to the additional embedded mitigation of appropriate buffers to be incorporated into the Project layout during detailed design (ES Chapter 9, Para 9.9.774 [**REP2-012**]): *The impact of solar farm sites on bats has been the subject of recent research (Tinsley et al. 2023; Szabadi et al. 2023). This research suggests that there is a potential effect of solar panels on the ability of bats to forage through solar farms, with potential interactions between echolocation and solar panels. Such an effect could lead to bats avoiding fields with panels with associated severance impacts, preventing bats from commuting between roosts and foraging habitat. In order to ensure that such an effect does not occur,* ***the Project will incorporate appropriate buffers along all important commuting habitat used by bats. The incorporation of such buffers will limit any severance***

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			impact, ensuring that bat species are still able to forage and commute across the Project site, post development. *After the application of this mitigation, the magnitude of impact is therefore, considered to be negligible. The significance of effect is therefore, considered to be negligible.* The commitment to appropriate buffers as set out above is secured in the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [**REP3-034]** (paragraph 8.5.1). The Applicant has shared further bat survey data with NE post submission. Discussions are ongoing with NE and it is hoped to have satisfactorily addressed this issue in the next iteration of the SoCG.
Q2.3.6	Applicant	**Minimum buffers** In terms of project choices, why did the applicant choose to provide minimum buffers (to rivers, watercourses, ancient woodland etc) as opposed to providing greater margins given the sensitivity of these features?	The Applicant has adopted minimum or appropriate buffers areas based upon relevant guidance/best practise. There is, therefore, no need to exceed these buffer distances: **Ancient woodland** - As per guidance: Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions, Gov.uk, 14 January 2022. Note trees, woodland hedgerows are also protected by [**REP1-044** to **REP1-047**] inclusive. **Rivers/watercourse** - As per best practise: based upon the Flood Risk Assessment Permits (FRAP) and Land Drainage Consents – this is usually around 8m for a FRAP, however a local byelaw uses 10m therefore for a consistent approach across the development area of 10m has been adopted. In addition, relevant ecological and landscape features are also protected by the Outline Operational Management Plan [**REP3-032**] and Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [**REP3-034**], and the Outline Code of Construction Practice [**REP3-030**].
Q2.3.7	Applicant	**Co-location vs remote battery energy storage** Referring to [REP2-122], in which the IP has queried the applicant's rationale for selecting remote battery storage, can the applicant provide details on the comparison of the two	Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) is not part of the Botley West Solar Farm, and no BESS infrastructure is included in the draft DCO or Environmental Statement, either on site or off-site. Any reference to such is a mistake.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		options: 'co-location verses remote battery energy storage'. The comparison is to focus on the following: 1) maximum potential electricity generated by panels 2) electrical energy inputted to the grid/ used 3) minimising the potential discarding of unused electricity Should there be a difference in efficiency (electrical energy generated vs energy used) between the two options, the applicant is required to equate this to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.	See also Applicant response to Q2.1.3.
Q2.3.8	Applicant	**Cable corridor** In response to ExQ1.3.10 [REP2-025], it is stated that any formal request to remove residual optionality (for the cable routing options) from the Order limits is unlikely until the outstanding surveys and agreements are concluded, which is expected in the post-consent phase. Explain: 1) Who would be notified of the cable routeing decision outcomes and when. 2) How would the discarded options be managed post-consent (i.e. for example is it just a case of not exercising Compulsory Acquisition powers)? 3) Have any surveys or investigations to date indicated a potential preference in cable corridor routeing? Should the optionality, or at least the decisions in relation to the optionality, be subject of a Requirement that would secure a choice of cable routeing that subsequently prevents other options from also being pursued?	Please see answer to Q2.3.4 above.
Q2.3.9	Applicant	**Evidence the assertion** Table 5.1 of [APP-042] states: *"The layout has been designed to avoid minimise direct or indirect effects on valuable flora and fauna."* However, Natural England (NE) raised significant concern about the lack of bat surveys and detail regarding bats in the ES, suggesting there may be areas of design refinement to	Please see answer to Q2.3.5 above.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		allow bat commuting and foraging. This leaves the Examining Authority (ExA) wondering whether the layout was fully informed by impacts to flora and fauna. Explain how bats and bat activity (breeding, commuting, foraging etc) influenced the layout of the proposal.	
Q2.3.10	Applicant	**Minimum buffers** In terms of project choices, why did the applicant choose to provide minimum buffers (to rivers, watercourses, ancient woodland etc) as opposed to providing greater margins given the sensitivity of these features?	Please see answer to Q2.3.6 above.
Q2.3.11	Applicant	**Co-location vs remote battery energy storage** Referring to [REP2-122], in which the IP has queried the applicant's rationale for selecting remote battery storage, can the applicant provide details on the comparison of the two options: 'co-location verses remote battery energy storage'. The comparison is to focus on the following: 1) maximum potential electricity generated by panels 2) electrical energy inputted to the grid/ used 3) minimising the potential discarding of unused electricity Should there be a difference in efficiency (electrical energy generated vs energy used) between the two options, the applicant is required to equate this to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.	Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) is not part of the Botley West Solar Farm, and no BESS infrastructure is included in the draft DCO or Environmental Statement, either on site or off-site. Any reference to such is a mistake. See also Applicant response to Q2.1.3
General Considerations for Alternatives			
There are no questions under this topic at this time.			

Q2.4 Climate Change

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Assessments and Calculations			
Q2.4.1	Applicant	**Commentary of case law** Could the applicant provide comment in light of the recent cases of R (on the application of Finch on behalf of the Weald Action Group) v Surrey County Council [2024] UKSC 20 and Friends of the Earth Ltd and South Lakeland Action on Climate Change v SSLUHC [2024] EWHC 2349 (Admin), and whether these cases have any implications for the assessments of greenhouse gas emissions?	In relation to Finch on behalf of the Weald Action Group) v Surrey County Council [2024] UKSC 20, it was deemed unlawful as it failed to assess the downstream GHG emissions (i.e. indirect effects in line with the EIA Regs.) of an oil production project, with the environmental statement issued by the developer only assessing the Project's direct GHG emissions. In relation to Friends of the Earth Ltd and South Lakeland Action on Climate Change v SSLUHC [2024] EWHC 2349, it was deemed that the decision was unlawful on the grounds relevant to climate change concerning; lack of appropriate consideration of the substitution of US Coal from the Project coal and lack of consideration of the burning of Project coal and associated downstream emissions. As set out within Volume 1, Chapter 14: Climate Change **[REP3-016]**, the Applicants' approach assesses both the direct and indirect GHG emissions associated with the project. The 2017 EIA Regs stipulate that an EIA must identify, describe, and assess the development's potential "direct and indirect significant effects" on the environment, including its impact on climate change. Both beneficial and adverse effects can be deemed 'significant' in EIA terms and as such should be assessed. Additionally, the Applicants' assessment has been conducted in line with IEMA's (2022) EIA guide on Assessing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Evaluating their Significance. The Applicant has presented its assessment of likely significant direct and indirect effects associated with the Project following a whole life project approach (paragraph 14.5.17 of ES Chapter 14 - Climate Change **[REP3-016]**). As is detailed in paragraph 14.9.2 of ES Chapter 14 - Climate Change **[REP3-016]** impacts of the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases of the Project has been conducted. The assessment has taken a cradle-to-grave (accounting for in use and decommissioning). As such, all associated direct effects (on site activity) and indirect effects such as manufacturing and transportation of panels, and associated reduction in grid carbon intensity through Project renewable energy have been considered and assessed.
Q2.4.2	Applicant	**Baseline data** In Table 4 of the applicants Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 1 summary [REP1-019] (Baseline Climate	Data refenced in Table 4 4 of the applicants Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 1 summary **[REP1-019]** (Baseline Climate Data (1991-2020) for Oxford Climate Station) only contains information relevant to monthly mean wind speed at 10 m.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Data (1991-2020) for Oxford Climate Station), it states the monthly mean wind speed in miles per hour (mph). Can the applicant provide the maximum wind speed recorded during this period in mph.	As such, the maximum wind speed is not recorded in the Met Office's historic weather data. In the Written Summary of Applicant's Oral Submissions at the Issue Specific Hearing 1 **[REP1-019]**, particularly Appendix 2, paragraph 2.1.4 the Applicant has identified that the maximum gusts in Oxfordshire during Storm Eunice were in the region of 55 knots (kn) (62 mph).
Q2.4.3	Applicant	**Climate change resilience** Referring to Table 14.6 in ES Chapter 14 [APP-051] provide further detail and justification for scoping out risks to the proposed development from climate change. If the scoping out relies on the fact that either the likelihood of extreme weather events is extremely low (or defined as minor exposure, as in Table 3 of ISH1 summary [REP1-019]), or the impacts from events such as high winds are insignificant, provide evidence on how such conclusions were reached.	The Applicant has provided further detail and justification for the scoping out of risks to the Project from climate change within the ISH1 Summary Appendix 2 (Climate Change Risk Assessment Screening Approach) **[REP1-019]**. Section 4 of Appendix 2 **[REP1-019]** sets out the methodology of the screening of potential climate related hazards conducted at the scoping stage. As is set out in Table 1 **[Appendix 2, REP1-019]**, the assessment has screened climate related risks against both the exposure of the Project to certain climate risks, as well as the Projects vulnerability to the said risk, aligning with IEMA (2020) guidance on assessing climate change resilience and adaptation. Specifically in relation the impacts of high winds, as mentioned, responses to Q2.4.2 and Q2.4.5 in this document help to provide further evidence as to how conclusions have been reached.
Q2.4.4	Applicant	**Carbon sequestration** Can the applicant provide a response to the following statement made by Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) in their written summary of oral submissions for ISH1 [REP1-071]: *"Further consideration is required of the Outline GHG Reduction Strategy [APP-216] which makes no mention of the potential for increased carbon sequestration on the site*.".	As has been previously discussed APP-216 is an Outline Plan with detailed design considerations to likely occur later. Carbon sequestration through biogenic growth (the process by which plants remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it in their tissues during growth) captured during the operational period of the Project was scoped out of the climate change assessment (ES Chapter 14 - Climate Change **[REP3-016]**) as it would likely be insignificant. Carbon sequestration would be a considered through design workshops as the Project evolves through detailed design. It is unlikely that the site through it operational would have opportunities for significant carbon sequestration, such as afforestation, peatland etc.
Q2.4.5	Applicant	**Maximum design parameters**	In the Applicants Written Summary of Applicant's Oral Submissions at the Issue Specific Hearing 1 **[REP1-019]**, particularly Appendix 2, paragraph 2.1.4 the

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		In Table 3 of the applicants ISH1 summary [REP1-019], the embedded mitigation measure for the hazard of increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather states: *"Panels and mounting systems are designed in accordance with BS 62584-1 specification which ensures a safe design for winds up to 90 mph"*. Given wind speeds greater than 90 mph have been recorded across the UK in the past, what assurance can the applicant provide that the proposed panels and mounting systems will either not be subjected to wind speeds greater than 90 mph or will be designed to withstand higher wind speeds.	maximum gusts in Oxfordshire during Storm Eunice were in the region of 55 kn (62 mph). The Applicant response concerning lessons learned concerning wind gusts are as follows: • Storm damage to panels and racking: Botley West design response: Compliance with EN 1991-1-4 (Eurocode 1, Part 1-4) of the English/British standard BS EN 1991-1-4:2005 + UK National Annex (NA to BS EN 1991-1-4:2005) taking into account country-specific wind zones, reference velocities, terrain categories, roughness lengths etc. for the United Kingdom The design and module height of 2.2 m at a low angle reduces the risk, taking into account the standards As such, the risk of potential wind speeds in the local area to be in excess of 90 mph is considered to be low.
Q2.4.6	Oxfordshire Host Authorities National Grid Electricity Transmissions Environment Agency	**Justification for SF6** The applicant has amended the Outline Layout and Design Principles document to give reasons for not fully adopting an SF6-free development. Do you accept those reasons?	
Impacts of Climate Change			
Q2.4.7	Applicant	**Lessons learned** Can the applicant signpost the Examining Authority (ExA) to where they have provided a response to action point 24 at ISH1 [EV5-010] with regards to lessons learned and how the design standards of their proposed development may differ to those solar farms mentioned in action point 24, resulting in a lower risk of such extreme weather incidents.	In the Applicants Written Summary of Oral Submissions at the Issue Specific Hearing 1 [**REP1-019**], agenda item 3h details the lessons learned from these instances. These have been repeated below here for clarity: • Storm damage to panels and racking: Botley West design response: Compliance with EN 1991-1-4 (Eurocode 1, Part 1-4) of the English/British standard BS EN 1991-1-4:2005 + UK National Annex (NA to BS EN 1991-1-4:2005) taking into account country-specific wind zones, reference velocities, terrain categories, roughness lengths etc. for the United Kingdom The design and module height of 2.2 m at a low angle reduces the risk, taking into account the standards • Electrical faults leading to fires: Botley West design response: Electrical faults leading to fires are mitigated by installing high-voltage cables underground to minimize the risk of ignition, ensuring safe and secure operation. In addition, substations are equipped with CCTV for fire identification, and preventive fire

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			protection measures and regular safety checks are carried out to enhance safety. • Component overheating: Botley West design response: Component overheating in substations is monitored using infrared thermography and temperature sensors for early detection of hotspots, partial discharge monitoring to identify insulation faults, gas-in-oil analysis for thermal issues in oil transformers, and SCADA systems for real-time data integration and alerts. AI based analysis helps detect abnormal temperature trends early. • Flood and water ingress causing failure: Botley West design response: Sensitive cable routing (e.g., HDD under rivers), creation of flood alleviation pond north of Cassington as a resilience measure, providing betterment.
Q2.4.8	Applicant	**Mounting structure integrity** The applicant's response to ExQ1.1.18 [REP2-025] states: *'mounting structures (frames) for the Botley West Solar Farm are designed for a service life of minimum 40 years.'* What specific engineering process and procedures will the applicant have in place to ensure the integrity of the mounting structures is maintained throughout the life of the proposed development and has not been reduced due to extreme weather events.	The mounting structures for the Botley West Solar Farm are designed for a minimum service life of 40 years, using galvanised steel fixed-tilt supports and Steel or aluminium purlins, which are intended to ensure long-term corrosion resistance and surface durability. These structures will be founded on driven or screw piles to depths of approximately 1.0 m to 3.0 m below ground level, with the foundations and framework engineered to withstand site-specific wind loads and topographical conditions. Structural integrity over the operational lifespan will be supported through the use of stainless steel bolts or zinc-coated fasteners to mitigate galvanic corrosion and enhance durability. All elements are designed in accordance with relevant European and UK structural standards. Ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the infrastructure will be governed by a structured regime secured through the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and the Outline Decommissioning and Restoration Plan. This will include regular visual inspections for corrosion, structural distress, misalignment, or loose bolts. Remedial works, including re-coating of any scratched or damaged protective surfaces, will be carried out where necessary to restore corrosion protection and maintain the alignment and fastening integrity of the structures, thereby ensuring the continued stability and serviceability of the system over its full operational life.

Q2.5 Compulsory Acquisition

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Overarching Case			
Q2.5.1	Applicant	**Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker** The submission and content of the Blenheim Estate Ownership Commentary document at Deadline 3 (DL3) [REP3-068] is noted by the Examining Authority (ExA). The Land and Rights Negotiations Tracker submitted at DL3 [REP3-008] lists the following Trustees: 1) Blenheim Trustees Company No. 1 Limited 2) Blenheim Trustees Company No. 2 Limited 3) Vanbrugh Trustees Limited 4) Vanbrugh Trustees No 2 Limited Whilst the interests held and plot references are given within the tracker, please provide a detailed explanation of the differences between each Trustee. Furthermore, having regard to [REP1-098], the ExA request a flowchart of the companies that make up the Blenheim Estate and which arm is responsible for what and who benefits from the project financial arisings. This includes explanation of: 5) The Blenheim Estate 6) Vanbrugh Unit Trust 7) Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation 8) Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund What is the legal method by which funds, and how much, will transfer directly to Blenheim	The Applicant has liaised with Blenheim to answer this question. This is attached as **Annex 5**.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Palace for the purposes of maintenance of the World Heritage Site (WHS), who will administer these funds and how is it secured? Explain how the Blenheim Maintenance Fund, a recipient of the lease monies, is related to these companies.	
Q2.5.2	Applicant	**Funding availability** The ExA notes the response to ExQ1.5.26 and ExQ1.5.27 [REP1-025], including the statement that EY London Energy & Infrastructure Corporate Finance team consider that the scheme should be able to achieve a sufficiently high internal rate of return to attract third party debt and equity investors. However, the ExA, and ultimately the Secretary of State (SoS), need to be satisfied that Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP) will have adequate funds available for proposed development. Currently the ExA has concerns as to whether the availability of funding would be an impediment to the implementation of the proposed development, should development consent be granted. Please provide additional detail to confirm adequate funding would be available in order to commence development and for any compulsory acquisition to take place within the timescales set by the Order.	It needs to be distinguished between proposed development cost, which have mostly been borne by PVDP already and construction cost, which will be borne by third party investors.
Q2.5.3	Applicant	**Botley to Eynsham and Eynsham to Hanborough cycle schemes** The response by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to ExQ1.5.20 in respect of Third-Party Land is noted by the ExA [REP2-050], as are the comments made by the applicant at DL3 in respect of this issue [REP3-065]. However, please confirm whether any rights granted over	On the assumption that the third-party land is subject to CA powers under the DCO, but OCC wish to progress the cycle route on the B4044 over that third party land, then we do not expect those CA powers to impact OCC's ability to dedicate the land as highway unless the proposals were inconsistent with the works being proposed under the DCO, such as design or delivery of the project. On the basis that any third-party land would be proposed to be acquired for the cable route, we would envisage that co-existence is possible as the cables would be below ground of any new highway or potential cycle route in the area.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		highway land or third-party land adjacent the highway would jeopardise the dedication of land as highway or the delivery of the B4044 path in its entirety.	
Q2.5.4	Applicant	**Change Request 2 and land retention** A response to this question may be provided at Deadline 4 (DL4) or can be included in the environmental information to accompany the second change request application. The change request includes two large reductions in land at Bladon. The first relates to complete removal of the land from the Order limits and re-drawing of the boundary as a consequence. The second relates to retention of 17.6ha of land within the Order limits, but the land to be used for biodiversity net gain as opposed to the installation of solar arrays. 1) The Government's 'Guidance related to procedures for the compulsory acquisition of land' advises that the SoS needs '*to be satisfied that the land to be acquired is no more than is reasonably required for the purposes of the development*' (paragraph 11). Given the project was already stated to provide up to 80% net gain, why is this 17.6ha of land needed to be acquired to deliver biodiversity net gain (BNG)? 2) If it is not needed or essential to deliver BNG, is there a compelling case for compulsory acquisition? 3) What is the actual tangible benefit to the applicant of retaining this land in the Order limits as opposed to re-drawing the boundary to exclude such land entirely?	In addition to the provision of BNG, the 17.6ha of land south of Bladon will be retained within the Order Limits to provide additional mitigation habitat for breeding and wintering birds, skylark, in particular. It is intended that it will be managed as meadow grass in a similar manner to the grassland to be created over areas set aside to protect buried archaeology but acknowledging the presence of Oxford Airport nearby and the need to ensure compliance with the CAA Guidance on Management of Wildlife Risk. As such, this land will perform a mitigation function in addition to the BNG. Therefore, the Project would provide circa 53ha of new grassland managed specifically for birds (i.e. 36ha as set out in ES Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity [**REP2-012**] plus the additional 17.6ha of the land south of Bladon). The view of the Applicant is that this area is necessary for the Project to improve the provision of new bird habitat post construction, in addition to providing BNG. The inclusion of this additional land would reduce in absolute terms the overall magnitude of adverse impacts to bird receptors from habitat loss that are described in ES Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity [**REP2-012**] although not sufficiently to change the magnitude in EIA terms. Therefore, on the basis of the above: 1) The land is also to be used for bird mitigation, not just BNG. 2) Yes, the case for compulsory acquisition relates to the delivery of additional bird mitigation. 3) The tangible benefit relates to the delivery of additional bird mitigation that would reduce the magnitude of adverse impacts to bird receptors from habitat loss. 4) The Applicant's view is that the land is necessary to reduce adverse impacts to birds from habitat loss and, as such, it would not be better served in its current agricultural use.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		4) Would the land not be better served being kept in its current agricultural use?	
Q2.5.5	Applicant West Oxfordshire District Council	**Land retention at Church Hanborough** As noted above, the SoS needs to be satisfied that the land to be acquired is not more than is reasonably required of the purposes of development. Applicant - The ExA notes that land to the southeast of Church Hanborough, Field 2.116 and the northern section of Field 2.115 is contained within the Order limits and is, according to the landscape, ecology and amenity plan [AS-022], available for community food growing. 1) What consultation has been undertaken to ensure that this area is the most appropriate for community food growing? 2) If it is not needed or essential to provide space for community food growing, is there a compelling case for compulsory acquisition? 3) What is the actual tangible benefit to the applicant of retaining this land in the Order limits as opposed to re-drawing the boundary to exclude such land entirely? 4) Would the land not be better served being kept in its current agricultural use? West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) – This area is within the Church Hanborough Conservation area, do you feel that community	The land referred to is Field 2.116 and Field 2.117. Panels were removed from these two fields after the Phase One consultation in November 2022 as a result of feedback from residents of Church Hanborough. The proposed permissive path was relocated from the northern to southern boundary of the fields. At the Phase 2 consultation the two fields were described on the masterplan as meadow grassland/opportunity for enhancement. They were not consulted on as specifically for community food growing, though the idea of having areas for food growing was part of the consultation. A group of potential food growers from the OxFarmToFork scheme was shown round the food growing sites and this field was of interest to a grower of organic onions selling via the Farm to Fork scheme. The fields are part of the BNG design and are, therefore, needed within the order limits. This is shown on Works Plan No 8 **[APP-006].** These fields will be used for organic crop production using agroecological methods. These methods nurture soil health, promote biodiversity, reduce emissions and food waste. The Farm to Fork scheme encourages small growers, provides them with funding and reduces dependence on imports from climate-vulnerable regions, enhancing food security. The land is covered by the option agreement with Blenheim Estate, so will be drawn down should the DCO be granted. There should be no need for compulsory acquisition. Given the organic methods that a potential food grower will use, involving no chemicals and fewer tractor movements, putting the fields to this use is a better use of the land than intensive commercial agriculture as is the current use.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		food growing would be an appropriate use of this land having regard to heritage objectives.	
Q2.5.6	Applicant	**Decommissioning** At paragraph 2.1.1 of the Outline Decommissioning Plan (ODP) [APP-236] it is stated that *"The land within the Project Site Boundary will be returned to the respective landowners and to its original use after decommissioning*". The ExA acknowledge that the content of commercial agreements is usually confidential in nature. However, the ExA consider it would be useful to have sight of an extract of the Heads of Terms being sought with landowners which confirms the wording of such a return clause.	An extract from the Heads of Terms with Landowners: The Landlord and the Tenant will agree a schedule of condition to be appended to the Lease. Unless the Landlord confirms otherwise, the Tenant shall reinstate the Leased Area prior to termination, returning it to the previous condition, and removing all objects relating to the solar park both above and below ground including the removal of all access roads, electric cables, hard standings and equipment, and the reinstatement of any damage to any drains, drainage systems and access ways which previously existed Provided That the Tenant shall not be required to reinstate any new conduits or other installations situated more than 1 metre below the surface nor shall the Tenant be required to reinstate any (existing) access roads.
Q2.5.7	Applicant	**Permanent acquisition** The applicant is seeking the permanent acquisition for the freehold of land and permanent acquisition of new rights. Given that the proposed development is considered temporary by the applicant, please provide a detailed explanation as to why the acquisition of permanent rights and land is justified for a temporary development.	Under paragraph 2.10.66 of the NPS EN-3, time limited consents are temporary. On the basis that Requirement 14 of the draft DCO requires decommissioning to commence no later than 37.5 years following the date of final commissioning, the Project is time limited and therefore is inherently temporary as set out in national policy. At the end of the operational period the above-ground infrastructure will be removed and land reinstated to its previous use (as secured in the outline Decommissioning Plan [**APP-236**]. However, the National Grid substation is intended to remain in situ as well as certain buried assets such as cables under the public highway and those installed by horizontal directional drill (HDD). As outlined in the Statement of Reasons **[AS-015]**, the DCO includes powers of Permanent Freehold Acquisition for areas for the solar arrays, substations and essential infrastructure. Acquisition of the freehold is sought where other powers, such as new rights or temporary possession, are not sufficient to enable construction, operation or maintenance of the Project. Whilst the voluntary agreements with the main site landowners enable the Applicant to acquire leasehold interests (i.e. temporary and limited to the duration of the lease), it is not possible to compulsorily acquire a leasehold interest. Therefore, the minimum power that is available to be acquired that will enable the delivery of the Project is

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			for the freehold acquisition. In any event, any acquisition of freehold interests would only be utilised where the options / lease agreements for the main site are not secured or fail through death or insolvency or similar. The Permanent New Rights are sought where enduring access or control is required to facilitate and maintain the development for example where cables are laid under the public highway and installed by HDD and will be left in situ. It is also not possible to compulsorily acquire a 'temporary' easement. Therefore, in a similar vein to the powers being sought over freehold interests, the acquisition of the permanent rights is the minimum power available that will ensure delivery of the Project. The inclusion of both permanent and temporary powers aligns with statutory guidance on compulsory land acquisition—namely, powers must be necessary, proportionate, and justified. The dual approach allows the Order to be proportionate: with freehold interest and permanent rights only where truly required. The Statement of Reasons [**AS 015**] and Explanatory Memorandum [**REP3-006**] explain how the need for permanent acquisition is considered necessary and proportionate under the section 122 of the Planning Act 2008.
Q2.5.8	Applicant	**Proportionate land take** At DL3, in response to a submission by Deborah Mackin [REP2-098], the applicant [REP3-064] states that "*The current red line boundary is intentionally broad to allow for flexibility during this process, but all final alignments will be confirmed in consultation with affected parties and designed to minimise disruption"*. The ExA wishes to draw the applicant's attention to Paragraph 10 of 'Planning Act 2008 – Guidance related to procedures for the compulsory acquisition of land' which states *"The Secretary of State must ultimately be persuaded that the purposes for which an order authorises the compulsory acquisition of land are legitimate and are sufficient to justify interfering with the human rights of those with an interest in the land affected.*"	The representations referred to by the ExA relate to land proposed to be used for the cable route, where the flexibility being sought is required whilst the Applicant continues its landowner engagement and consideration of environmental, engineering and other technical matters. Article 22 (Compulsory acquisition of rights) which gives the power to acquire these rights, restricts the Applicant to acquiring the rights only for the purpose for which they are sought (including so much of the Order land as required for the authorised development or to facilitate, or as is incidental, to it). Therefore, there would be no justification and in fact no power, to take more than is needed for those purposes irrespective of the scope of CA powers granted. On a practical level, there's also an incentive for the Applicant to take as little as they need, given they will need to appropriately compensate the landowner for the acquisition of the rights. A final decision on the preferred cable route within the wider cable corridor area is expected to be made post-consent, once survey data is available and feasibility has been undertaken (taking into account the balance of any environmental, human and financial constraints). Until that decision is taken, a reduction in the

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		If an intentionally flexible and broad approach has been adopted by the applicant in respect of land take, please confirm how compliance with paragraph 10 of the above guidance is to be adhered to.	scope of powers currently sought would not give certainty that the remaining land is sufficient to deliver the cable route (and ultimately the NSIP). The Applicant has submitted a cable corridor optionality report **[EN010147/APP/14.4]** alongside this Deadline 4 submission to explain where optionality is being sought and to provide clarity on the various environmental, land and technical factors that must be better understood and progressed in relation to each area of optionality before a preferred cable route can be selected. This report supports that the flexibility being sought is legitimate by explaining why each option is required to be sought. In the meantime, and to provide additional clarity and comfort to the ExA and landowners of the land along the cable corridor (in absence of that decision being made pre-consent), the Applicant has updated the outline Code of Construction Practice to include an obligation on the undertaker to provide notice to the relevant planning authority and landowners of land forming part of the cable corridor where there is optionality, to inform them of the preferred route once that decision is made. This notice will be required to be given to the relevant planning authority and landowners of both the preferred cable route and the alternative options not included in the preferred cable route. This approach ensures compliance with paragraph 10 of the Guidance ('*Planning Act 2008 – Guidance related to procedures for the compulsory acquisition of land*') by limiting the ability of the Applicant to exercise its CA powers for specific purposes only. The DCO cannot grant the power for the undertaker to acquire compulsorily more than is required for the authorised development or to facilitate, or as is incidental, to it. For completeness, and as explained in the Statement of Reasons [**AS-015**], the Applicant is seeking temporary use powers over all land within the Order limits, in order to allow it to take temporary possession ahead of acquiring land or rights permanently. Therefore, the Applicant will be able to enter on to land for particular purposes (including site preparation works) in advance of any vesting of the relevant land/rights. This enables the Applicant to only compulsorily acquire the minimum amount of land and rights over land required to construct, operate and maintain the Project, because, for example, the Applicant could exercise the temporary possession powers to undertake site investigation works to inform and minimise the land within the preferred cable route over which permanent rights are needed. This demonstrates again that the initial breadth of powers being sought is necessary and legitimate in order to retain the flexibility required pre-consent, whilst the ultimate exercise of CA powers post-consent will be over a narrower

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			area once the Applicant is in a position to have certainty that the narrower area is sufficient to deliver the cable route / Project.
Q2.5.9	Applicant	**Funding** The ExA notes the responses made by the applicant to both Layla Morgan MP and Begbroke and Yarnton Green Belt Campaign in respect of both funding and the selling of other solar projects [REP3-064] and [REP3-065]. With particular regard to the comment made by the applicant that it is "*funding the project up to Decision stage from its own resources*…", if the proposed development receives consent, please confirm whether it is the intention to sell the Project post-consent?	By the time the proposed development receives consent, it is the intention to have third party investors to participate in the project post-consent. It is the intention of the current project owners to retain an adequate equity ratio in commensuration with the value of Botley West project by the time it will be ready to build.
Statutory Undertakers			
There are no questions at this time.			
Individual Affected Persons			
Q2.5.10	Applicant	**Engagement and communication** The ExA notes at DL2 several submissions have commented on a lack of engagement and communication in respect of potential land issues and the applicant has responded at DL3 [REP3-064] to the majority of these submissions. The ExA acknowledges the scale of the proposed development but is keen to ensure effective engagement for all parties. Please advise if there are any specific barriers facing the applicant in respect of continuing to undertake meaningful engagement and communication.	The Applicant acknowledges the importance of effective engagement and does not see a barrier to this engagement continuing. For example, the Applicant also notes that the changes proposed in the Applicant's Change Request 2 have in part been informed by continued engagement with affected landowners and key stakeholders, following the submission and acceptance of the DCO Application. The Applicant has continued to refresh their land registry data, and has continued to notify any new parties of the Proposed Development and their opportunity to take part. Through Land Interest Questionnaires, the Applicant has also sought to confirm any details obtained from Land Registry are correct, in support of continued future engagement.
Crown Land and Special Category Land			
There are no questions at this time.			

Q2.6 Cultural Heritage

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
General			
Q2.6.1	Diane Berry	**Clarification required** In section 7 of your Relevant Representation (RR) [RR-248] you state *"the remains of the barn where my Great Uncle lived will be cleared away and lost forever, local history destroyed"*. In their response to RR [REP1-020] the applicant has stated that no historic farm buildings would be demolished. Please identify the location of this barn (grid reference, field and plot number, or what 3 words reference, along with a photograph) and whether it has any know designation, either as a curtilage building to a heritage asset, or a non-designated heritage asset.	
Q2.6.2	ICOMOS-UK	**Variation in suggested omissions maps between Deadline 1 and Deadline 2** The following is a list of field numbers (as seen in [APP-131]) that you had suggested for omission at Deadline1 (DL1) [REP1-103], either in part or whole, but are not suggested for omission in your DL2 submission [REP2-071 – REP2-074]. • Field 1.14 (northern part) • Field 2.28, south of Burleigh Farmhouse • Field 2.40 Please explain these discrepancies.	
Q2.6.3	Applicant	**Suggested omissions by ICOMOS-UK** The Examining Authority (ExA) posed question EXQ1.6.11 [PD-008] to ICMOS-UK which asked why they had suggested additional removal of panels and how this impacted on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage Site (WHS). In their response [REP2-069], ICMOS-UK stated that that omitting areas that were considered to be oppressive to local	The Applicant understands the principal issue raised by ICOMOS-UK in their response [**REP2-069**] to EXQ1.6.11 [**PD-008**] to be the nature and extent of the contribution of the wider rural setting of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS) to the identified Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the WHS. This issue is discussed in some detail in ES Appendix 7.4: Heritage Impact Assessment – Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site [**APP-**

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		villages would sustain the general quality of the rural landscape that provides context to Blenheim Palace. They further explained that in the 18th century, the parkland and rural landscape were perceived holistically around grand houses and that the quality of the landscape outside the park remains relevant to the contemporary understanding of the WHS. In your response to EXQ1.6.12, [REP2-025] which asked you to comment of the additional omissions suggested by ICOMOS-UK you reiterated your position regarding the OUV of the WHS and intervisibility, but did not comment on the proposed omissions. Your submission [REP3-065] again ignores the response from ICOMOS-UK. Provide a detailed response to ICOMOS-UK's position and suggestions for the wider removal of panels that would sustain the context of the Blenheim Estate.	**141**]. The identified 'attributes' that convey or express the OUV are set out in the 2017 WHS Management Plan Review. Attribute 7 establishes that '*The park retains a complete, 18th century enclosing stone wall which protects its integrity, but views into and out of the site still provide key linkages between Blenheim and the traditional English countryside and villages surrounding it*' (emphasis added). The '*traditional English countryside and villages*' referenced in Attribute 7 extend for a considerable distance in all directions from the WHS. The understanding of the contribution of the wider rural setting of the WHS to the identified Outstanding Universal Value OUV therefore requires consideration of the physical extent of the '*traditional English countryside and villages*' within the setting of the WHS, i.e. at what point does the rural landscape cease to become a relevant or material part of the setting of the WHS? The Applicant's position on this is set out in ES Appendix 7.4: Heritage Impact Assessment – Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site [**APP-141**]. Whilst it is not possible to simply draw a line on a map which defines the setting of the WHS, the Applicant has provided a detailed explanation in that document of how setting and sensitivity can be linked not just to intervisibility but to other factors such as land ownership (past and present) and land use. The Applicant has worked closely with Historic England on the design of the proposed development to minimise any potential harm to the OUV of the WHS, most recently in the form of the changes set out in our Change Request 2 Notification [**REP2-045**]. The Applicant considers that the further removal of panels as requested by ICOMOS-UK and indicated on the drawings provided in their Written Representation [**REP1-103**] are unnecessary in that these changes would not lead to any reduction in the perceived level of harm to the OUV of the WHS. The Applicant accepts that much (if not all) of the land identified by ICOMOS-UK as a concern could be considered to fall within the setting of the WHS; the issue is more that how the level or nature of the contribution of that part of the setting to the OUV of the WHS. The Applicant does not agree that any of the land identified by ICOMOS-UK as a concern within the Southern Site Area could

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			reasonably be considered to form part of the setting of the WHS that could contribute towards its OUV. Much of the land identified by ICOMOS-UK as a concern within the Northern Site Area has already seen the removal of panels as a result of the consideration of various constraints such as landscape and buried archaeology. Some of the land identified by ICOMOS-UK as a concern within in the Central Site Area would see the removal of panels if the changes set out in our Change Request 2 Notification [**REP2-045**] are accepted. The Applicant agrees that the remaining land identified by ICOMOS-UK as a concern within in the Central Site Area could reasonably be considered to form part of the setting of the WHS, but that this land makes little or no contribution to the OUV of the WHS. One way to examine this is to look at how other proposed developments in the area have been assessed against the potential to cause harm to the OUV of the WHS. ICOMOS-UK have requested the removal of panels from fields located to the east and north of the allocated large residential-led development known as Salt Cross Garden Village. The Expression of Interest seeking financial support from the UK Government for what was then known as the West Oxfordshire Garden Village was produced by West Oxfordshire District Council https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/vrcivylm/west-oxon-garden-village-expression-of-interest.pdf. There is no reference anywhere within the Expression of Interest to the Blenheim Palace WHS or its setting. An Outline Planning Application for the development was submitted in July 2020. The Historic Environment section of the Environmental Statement (ES) makes no mention of the Blenheim Palace WHS or its setting. In fact, there is no mention of, or consideration of, the potential for harm to the OUV of the WHS in any of the application documents or in the responses from consultees. This observation is not meant as a criticism of WODC or the applicant (for the Salt Cross Garden Village development) or the consultees; rather it demonstrates how land that could reasonably be considered to form part of the setting of the WHS does not

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			always make a measurable contribution to the OUV of the WHS and therefore this issue is not material within the planning process. The Applicant can confirm that they are not proposing any additional changes to the proposed development that were requested by ICOMOS-UK.
Q2.6.4	Historic England ICOMOS-UK	**Settings of historic towns** In Green Belt policy, one of the purposes of the Green Belt is to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. Taking into account the applicant's potential proposed change request [REP2-045], do you consider there to be any continuing conflict with this purpose of the Green Belt?	
Q2.6.5	ICOMOS-UK	**ICOMOS-UK position** ICOMOS provided a technical review (Appendix 1 of [RR-0398]) which concluded: *"(ICOMOS) considers that the proposal will likely have an adverse impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage property and advises that the proponent consider alternative locations for this development to avoid these negative impacts on the Blenheim Palace World Heritage property."* The ICOMOS-UK position, as outlined in [RR-0413] (superseded by [REP2-070]) and [REP1-103]), fundamentally differs from this technical review in that you do not consider that there would be a direct impact on the OUV, but expands on the potential impact on the wider landscape, including areas suggested for omission that would protect the wider setting. How should the ExA reconcile the different positions of ICOMOS and ICOMOS-UK.	
Q2.6.6	Stop Botley West	**Community Impact Report** Figures 6.1a and 6.1b of [REP2-081] show an archaeological excavation site and a fragment of pottery. Please identify these figures in relation to the project site, or indicate if they are not related to this site.	
Q2.6.7	Historic England	**Cumulative impacts**	

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		At Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 1 [EV5-004] the ExA asked whether you felt that, if taken together, the impact on multiple heritage assets could increase the overall level of harm of the project from less than substantial to substantial. Your response was that you only considered heritage assets individually. Whilst it is appreciated that each case is determined on its merits, the ExA has experienced a different approach taken by Historic England (HE) to cumulative impacts on multiple heritage assets on other projects and would like you to expand on the reasons for not considering this in relation to this particular project.	
Q2.6.8	Applicant	**Aerial views** Taking into account the responses to EXQ1 on this subject, the ExA is minded to consider that on balance, aerial views such as those experienced by air travellers for business or pleasure are a factor in the consideration of the wider setting of the WHS and other numerous heritage assets as they provide the context in which the historic landscape can be viewed and appreciated. It is noted in your response to ExQ1.6.9 [REP3-065] that you will be addressing aerial views in the next revision of ES Appendix 7.5, Settings Assessment and the ExA welcomes careful consideration of this issue.	The Applicant can confirm that the issue of aerial views will be addressed in the next revision of ES Appendix 7.4: Heritage Impact Assessment – Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site [**APP-141**] rather than ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment. This is because the issue has been raised specifically with regard to the setting of the WHS. The next revision will be prepared following the consultation on the changes set out in our Change Request 2 Notification [**REP2-045**].
Q2.6.9	Applicant	**Church of St Peter and St Paul, Church Hanborough (Grade I)** The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. However, in consideration of this particular heritage asset, the ExA is minded to agree with HE's assessment [REP1-086], which they confirm in [REP3-081], that whilst the project would not disrupt views of the church spire or impact its landmark qualities, it would erode the character of the church within its traditional open agricultural setting. In addition, HE note that the proposed development would be in place for nearly two generations and would establish the principle of built form of an industrial character in land from which the church is experienced. As such,	The assessment of impacts and effects on the significance of a heritage asset as a result of change within its setting is largely subjective. As a consequence, it is not unusual for specialist to have different conclusions regarding the magnitude of impact and the level of effect as expressed in the terminology used in Environmental Impact Assessments. The Applicant's position is set out in paragraphs 1.9.36 - 1.9.44 of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment (Rev 1) [**REP2-014**]. This states that '*The setting makes a reasonable contribution to the heritage significance of the church, with the greatest contribution coming from the enclosing churchyard*' (paragraph 1.9.37). The wider landscape which provides the longer views in which the

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		they conclude that the magnitude of harm is low adverse, resulting in minor or moderate harm to the significance of the church. In order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please comment on HE's assessment and provide more detailed reasonings for your position.	church spire is visible is still considered to be part of the setting, but of reduced significance in comparison with the churchyard. Historic England place greater weight on the wider views towards the church and consider that the heritage significance of the church would be 'slightly harmed' as a result of the change in these longer views [**REP1-086**, paragraph 5.75]. The assessment presented by Historic England in their Written Representation [**REP1-086**] expands on the one set out in their Relevant Representation (RR) [**RR-0398**]. The assessment in the RR presents the level of harm (to the significance of the church) in NPS/NPPF terms as 'less than substantial'. The Applicant agrees that any harm to the heritage significance of the Church of St Peter and St Paul (Church Hanborough) would be less than substantial. As such the correct policy test is the one set out in paragraph 5.9.32 of NPS EN-1 '*Where the proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate securing its optimum viable use*'. In a section regarding factors influencing site selection and design, NPS EN-3 advises '*In considering the impact on the historic environment as set out in Section 5.9 of EN-1 and whether it is satisfied that the substantial public benefits would outweigh any loss or harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Secretary of State should take into account the positive role that large-scale renewable projects play in the mitigation of climate change, the delivery of energy security and the urgency of meeting the net zero target*' (paragraph 3.3.8).
Q2.6.10	Applicant	**Church of St Peter, Cassington (Grade I)** The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. However, in consideration of this particular heritage asset, the ExA is minded to agree with HE's assessment [REP1-086], which they confirm in [REP3-081], that the church spire is seen against a backdrop of agricultural fields which provide a strong visual relationship between the landscape and the church that	The assessment of impacts and effects on the significance of a heritage asset as a result of change within its setting is largely subjective. As a consequence, it is not unusual for specialist to have different conclusions regarding the magnitude of impact and the level of effect as expressed in the terminology used in Environmental Impact Assessments. The Applicant's position is set out in paragraphs 1.9.45 - 1.9.49 of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment (Rev 1) [**REP2-014**]. This

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		contributes to the appreciation and understanding of the origins of this rural parish church and its close connection with the landscape. HE note that the proposed development would change the character of those fields behind the church spire from agricultural to semi-industrial, which would erode the church's traditional agricultural context due to the ordered rows of solar panels making it slightly more difficult to appreciate the silhouette of the spire when compared to the existing backdrop of patchwork fields, thus disrupting its landmark qualities. In addition, HE note that the proposed development would be in place for nearly two generations and would establish the principle of built form of an industrial character in land from which the church is experienced. As such, they conclude that the magnitude of harm is low adverse, resulting in moderate to major harm to the significance of the church. In order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please comment on HE's assessment and provide more detailed reasonings for your position and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.	states that '*The setting makes a reasonable contribution to the heritage significance of the church, with the greatest contribution coming from the enclosing churchyard*' (paragraph 1.9.46). The wider landscape which provides the longer views in which the church spire is visible is still considered to be part of the setting, but of reduced significance in comparison with the churchyard. Historic England place greater weight on the wider views towards the church and consider that the heritage significance of the church would be 'slightly harmed' as a result of the change in these longer views [**REP1-086**, paragraph 5.82]. The assessment presented by Historic England in their Written Representation [**REP1-086**] expands on the one set out in their Relevant Representation (RR) [**RR-0398**]. The assessment in the RR presents the level of harm (to the significance of the church) in NPS/NPPF terms as 'less than substantial'. The Applicant agrees that any harm to the heritage significance of the Church of St Peter (Cassington) would be less than substantial. As such the correct policy test is the one set out in paragraph 5.9.32 of NPS EN-1 'W*here the proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate securing its optimum viable use*'. In a section regarding factors influencing site selection and design, NPS EN-3 advises '*In considering the impact on the historic environment as set out in Section 5.9 of EN-1 and whether it is satisfied that the substantial public benefits would outweigh any loss or harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Secretary of State should take into account the positive role that large-scale renewable projects play in the mitigation of climate change, the delivery of energy security and the urgency of meeting the net zero target*' (paragraph 3.3.8). The Applicant can confirm that they are not proposing any additional changes to the proposed development in the vicinity of Cassington.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Q2.6.11	Applicant	**Church of St Michael, Begbroke (Grade II*)** The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. However, in consideration of this particular heritage asset, the ExA is minded to agree with HE's assessment [REP1-086], which they confirm in [REP3-081], that while views towards the church tower from the north are, in part, screened by trees, from these fields the church can be seen within its countryside setting which contributes to its significance as a rural place of worship. HE also stated that from within the fields the church can be seen alongside the former St Philip's Priory and Church (both grade II listed), and together these have group value in being a focal point in the landscape and gives the viewer the sense that they are approaching an important ecclesiastical complex. HE state that the proposed development would signal a hardening of the setting of the church, and the experience would change from a rural character to one that is semi-industrial, and whilst views of the church tower would not be physically impacted by the development, the ability to experience the church within its traditional agricultural context on this approach would be eroded. In addition, HE note that the proposed development would be in place for nearly two generations and would establish the principle of built form of an industrial character in land from which the church is experienced. As such, they conclude that the magnitude of harm is low adverse, resulting in minor or moderate harm to the significance of the church. In order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please comment on HE's assessment and provide more detailed reasonings for your position and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.	The assessment of impacts and effects on the significance of a heritage asset as a result of change within its setting is largely subjective. As a consequence, it is not unusual for specialist to have different conclusions regarding the magnitude of impact and the level of effect as expressed in the terminology used in Environmental Impact Assessments. The Applicant's position is set out in paragraphs 1.9.56 - 1.9.62 of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment (Rev 1) [**REP2-014**]. This states that '*The setting makes a reasonable contribution to the heritage significance of the church, with the greatest contribution coming from the enclosing churchyard*' (paragraph 1.9.57). The wider landscape which provides the longer views in which the church tower is visible along with other historic buildings including the Grade II listed St Philip's Priory is still considered to be part of the setting, but of reduced significance in comparison with the churchyard. Historic England place greater weight on the wider views towards the church and consider that the heritage significance of the church would be 'slightly harmed' as a result of the change in these longer views [**REP1-086**, paragraph 5.90]. The assessment presented by Historic England in their Written Representation [**REP1-086**] expands on the one set out in their Relevant Representation (RR) [**RR-0398**]. The assessment in the RR presents the level of harm (to the significance of the church) in NPS/NPPF terms as 'less than substantial'. The Applicant agrees that any harm to the heritage significance of the Church of St Michael (Begbroke) would be less than substantial. As such the correct policy test is the one set out in paragraph 5.9.32 of NPS EN-1 '*Where the proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate securing its optimum viable use*'. In a section regarding factors influencing site selection and design, NPS EN-3 advises '*In considering the impact on the historic environment as set out in Section 5.9 of EN-1 and whether it is*

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			satisfied that the substantial public benefits would outweigh any loss or harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Secretary of State should take into account the positive role that large-scale renewable projects play in the mitigation of climate change, the delivery of energy security and the urgency of meeting the net zero target' (paragraph 3.3.8). The Applicant notes that the changes set out in our Change Request 2 Notification [**REP2-045**] include the removal of panels from the fields closest to the Church of St Michael (Begbroke). A revised assessment will be presented in the next version of ES Appendix 7.5 [**REP2-014**]: Settings Assessment; this will be prepared following the consultation on the change request.
Q2.6.12	Applicant	**Hordley House, Wootton (Grade II*)** The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. From the Unaccompanied Site Inspections (USI) undertaken and the evidence provided to the Examination to date, the ExA considers that there is an historic relationship between the land to the southwest of Hordley House to the junction at Samsom's Farm that contributes to the significance of Hordley House as part of a wider, planned, historic landscape. The applicant is asked to explore this further, providing any evidential assessment as necessary to demonstrate otherwise than the ExA's initial review, and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.	The Applicant will review the available evidence for a wider planned landscape associated with Hordley House. A revised assessment will be presented in the next version of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment [**REP2-014]**; this will be prepared following the consultation on the change request. Consideration will be given for potential reductions or omissions of solar panels in this area.
Q2.6.13	Applicant	**Shipton Slade (Grade II)** The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. However, from the USI's undertaken and the evidence provided to the to the Examination to date, the ExA considers that the farmland to the north and west provides the historic context and setting of Shipton Slade Farm and whilst the buildings have been converted to residential use, this context and historic association remains important to the significance of the group. The applicant	The Applicant's position is set out in paragraphs 1.9.75 - 1.9.80 of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment (Rev 1) [**REP2-014**]. This states that '*The setting makes a reasonable contribution to the heritage significance of the listed buildings*' (paragraph 1.9.77). The Applicant acknowledges that this setting includes the farmland to the north and west. The Grade II listed former farmhouse has its principal facade to the south, providing views towards the complex of former farm buildings. Any longer views beyond these former farm buildings are restricted by mature vegetation around the boundary of the farm

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		is asked to explore this further, providing any evidential assessment as necessary to demonstrate otherwise than the ExA's initial review, and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.	complex and on each side of the former railway. Views north and west towards the farmland are restricted by further former farm buildings and by mature vegetation around the boundary of the farm complex. The Grade II listed former barn has its principal carriage access on the north side, opening into the complex of former farm buildings, although the conversion to residential use has resulted in the principal facade being on the south side of the building. Views north and west towards the farmland are restricted by further former farm buildings and by mature vegetation around the boundary of the farm complex. The significance of the association between the farm buildings and the adjacent farmland is reduced due to the cessation of the working relationship and the transition to a largely residential use. The Applicant considers that any harm to the heritage significance of the two Grade II listed buildings at Shipton Slade Farm would be less than substantial. As such the correct policy test is the one set out in paragraph 5.9.32 of NPS EN-1 '*Where the proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate securing its optimum viable use*'. In a section regarding factors influencing site selection and design, NPS EN-3 advises '*In considering the impact on the historic environment as set out in Section 5.9 of EN-1 and whether it is satisfied that the substantial public benefits would outweigh any loss or harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Secretary of State should take into account the positive role that large-scale renewable projects play in the mitigation of climate change, the delivery of energy security and the urgency of meeting the net zero target*' (paragraph 3.3.8). The Applicant can confirm that they are not proposing any additional changes to the proposed development in the vicinity of Shipton Slade Farm.
Q2.6.14	Applicant	**Upper Whitley Farm**	The Applicant is aware of the comment from VWHDC in [**REP3-072**] and also of the images provided on page 6 of Cumnor Parish Council's comments on responses to ExQ1 [**REP3-078**] which

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		In the Oxford Host Authorities (OHA) response to ExQ1.6.29 [REP3-072] Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) have stated that they consider your statement that "*No element of the Project, including the project substation, would be visible in views to or from the listed building"* to be incorrect. Your assessment of viewpoint 51 in the Environmental Statement (ES) chapter 8 [APP-045], which represents the closest point to Upper Whitley Farm, indicates that there would be views of the substations. The ExA are minded to agree with VWHDC's position. In light of the proposed changes to the project design set out in Change Notification 2, the ExA request that the applicant to explore the relationship between the project and Upper Whitley Farm further, providing any evidential assessment as necessary to demonstrate otherwise than the ExA's initial review, including photomontages.	appear to indicate that parts of the Grade II listed Upper Whitley Farmhouse are visible in views across the proposed development site from locations along Bushy Leaze Lane. A revised assessment will be presented in the next version of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment; this will be prepared following the consultation on the change request.
Q2.6.15	Applicant	**Burleigh Farmhouse (Grade II)** The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. From the USI's undertaken and the evidence provided to the to the Examination to date, the ExA agrees with the assessment that the most affected area of the setting would be the fields to the east, which still provides historic context to the working farm. The applicant is asked to explore this further and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.	The Applicant's position is set out in paragraphs 1.9.100 - 1.9.103 of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment (Rev 1) [**REP2-014**]. This states that '*Overall, the setting makes some contribution to its significance*' (paragraph 1.9.101), also '*The greater impact would be from solar PV panels and PCSs to the east, on the other side of Burleigh Road, as these would be clearly visible from the listed building and particularly from the upper floors. This land is still farmed from Burleigh Farmhouse and therefore the associative relationship has been retained*' (paragraph 1.9.102). The Applicant considers that any harm to the heritage significance of the Grade II listed Burleigh Farmhouse would be less than substantial. As such the correct policy test is the one set out in paragraph 5.9.32 of NPS EN-1 '*Where the proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate securing its optimum viable use*'. In a section regarding factors influencing site selection and design, NPS EN-3 advises '*In considering the impact on the historic environment as set out in Section 5.9 of EN-1 and whether it is satisfied that the substantial public benefits would outweigh any loss or harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the*

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			Secretary of State should take into account the positive role that large-scale renewable projects play in the mitigation of climate change, the delivery of energy security and the urgency of meeting the net zero target' (paragraph 3.3.8). The Applicant can confirm that they are not proposing any additional changes to the proposed development in the vicinity of Burleigh Farmhouse.
Q2.6.16	Applicant	**Hall Farmhouse, Begbroke (Grade II)** It was noted at para 7.2.59 in the OHA Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP1-072] that the setting and potential impact of the project on Hall Farmhouse and The Old Rectory had not been assessed and in your response [REP2-026] you stated that further information would be available within Rev 1 of the settings assessment [REP2-014]. This document does not provide any additional assessment of either of these buildings. From the USI, the ExA considers that the project would lie within the setting of Hall Farmhouse and its associated dwellings and requests that an assessment of the potential impacts are provided.	Assessments of the likely impacts and effects of the proposed development on these two Grade II listed buildings will be presented in the next version of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment; this will be prepared following the consultation on the change request.
Q2.6.17	Applicant	**Begbroke Conservation Area** The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. However, in consideration of this particular heritage asset, the ExA is minded to agree with the assessments of ICOMOS-UK [REP2-069] and [REP2-070] and the OHA LIR [REP1-072] that indicate that the development has the potential to result in harm to the setting of the conservation area. Furthermore, in relation to the ICOMOS-UK representations, they have suggested a 200m buffer to the north of the village. The applicant is asked to explore this further, providing any evidential assessment as necessary to demonstrate otherwise than the ExA's initial review, and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.	The Applicant acknowledges the potential for harm to the heritage significance of the Begbroke Conservation Area as a result of the change within its setting; this is set out in paragraphs 1.9.152 - 1.9.158 of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment (Rev 1) [**REP2-014**]. A revised assessment will be presented in the next version of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment; this will be prepared following the consultation on the change request which includes the removal of panels from the land closest to this Conservation Area.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Q2.6.18	Applicant	**Cassington Conservation Area** The ExA acknowledges that the applicant has provided further assessment in the updated Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. The OHA's responses to EXQ1.6.1 [REP2-050] note the Cassington Design Code and the emphasis it places on the character of the landscape that surrounds the village and how this defines its setting. The ExA notes that this document has not been referred to in the ES Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014]. In addition, ICOMOS-UK suggest in their representations [REP2-069] and [REP2-070] that panels should be removed from the north of Cassington in order to provide "breathing space" to the village; a view that is shared by several interested parties (IP). The applicant is asked to explore this further and give consideration to potential reductions or omissions of solar panels from this setting.	The Applicant acknowledges the potential for harm to the heritage significance of the Cassington Conservation Area as a result of the change within its setting; this is set out in paragraphs 1.9.164 - 1.9.171 of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment (Rev 1) [**REP2-014**]. Paragraph 1.9.171 concludes that '*The magnitude of impact on the heritage significance of the Conservation Area as a result of the change within its setting is considered to be low adverse, resulting in a long-term, reversible minor adverse effect*'. As set out in section 2 of the Cassington Design Code, the Design Code appraises the main village settlement outside of the Cassington Conservation Area. The special character and appearance of the Conservation Area are described in the Conservation Area Appraisal and also the Proposals for Preservation and Enhancement (of the Conservation Area). The main purpose of the Design Code is to '*raise the standards of design for the purpose of managing future infill development and/or rural exception sites*'. The proposed solar farm does not fall into either of these two categories of development. It is quite correct, therefore, that the Applicant's assessment of likely impacts and effects on the heritage significance of the Cassington Conservation Area utilises the information provided in the Conservation Area Appraisal and the Proposals for Preservation and Enhancement documents. The Applicant considers that any harm to the heritage significance of the Cassington Conservation Area would be less than substantial. As such the correct policy test is the one set out in paragraph 5.9.32 of NPS EN-1 '*Where the proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate securing its optimum viable use*'. In a section regarding factors influencing site selection and design, NPS EN-3 advises '*In considering the impact on the historic environment as set out in Section 5.9 of EN-1 and whether it is satisfied that the substantial public benefits would outweigh any loss or harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Secretary of State should take into account the positive role that*

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			large-scale renewable projects play in the mitigation of climate change, the delivery of energy security and the urgency of meeting the net zero target' (paragraph 3.3.8). The Applicant can confirm that they are not proposing any additional changes to the proposed development in the vicinity of Cassington.
Archaeology			
Q2.6.19	Applicant	**Trial trenching results, Sansoms Platt** It is noted that in their submission [REP2-056], HE is still concerned about the level of impact assessed and the potential for the area of nationally important archaeological remains to be greater than the area currently scheduled. It is also noted in your response to EXQ1.6.45 [REP2-025] that the results of trial trenching will be available at DL5. However, in [CR1-003] you state that the trial trenching was commenced in August 2024. In their responses to EXQ1.6.35, both Oxford County Archaeology Service (OCAS) [REP2-050] and HE [REP2-056] have indicated that they are awaiting this important information in order to be able to more fully assess the potential impact on archaeological site. In addition, OHA second response to EXQ1.6.45 [REP3-072] notes concerns regarding the timing of this submission in relation to the Examination period. 1) Please explain the delay in getting these results published and, if possible, commit to submission at DL4 instead of DL5. 2) In the updated settings assessment [REP2-014] paragraph 1.9.7 alludes to some of the results being available. If it is not possible to bring the full submission forward, please provide a more detailed initial summary of results at DL4 and whether you consider they are likely to result in any changes to the proposed buffer zones. The ExA appreciate that the conclusions in the ES Appendix 7.5 [REP2-014] have been made without the benefit of the trial trenching results and expect that this document will be updated	1) The Applicant is awaiting the completion and release of the reports showing the trial trenching results from the contractors. The Applicant is in discussions with the contractors to facilitate this and will submit the reports into the Examination once available. 2) The reference to the results of the trial trenching in the vicinity of the Sansom's Platt Scheduled Monument in paragraph 1.9.7 of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment (Rev 2) [**REP2-014**] is based on the observations made by the Applicant's historic environment consultant during the programme of weekly site monitoring visits undertaken jointly by OCAS and the consultant. This programme of monitoring has enabled both the Applicant and OCAS to have a reasonable understanding of the nature and extent of the archaeological remains uncovered by the trial trenching. However, this understanding is not sufficient to provide a detailed initial summary of the results. Through the programme of embedded mitigation set out in Table 7.14 in ES Chapter 7: Historic Environment (Rev 1) [**CR1-003**] and repeated in ES Appendix 6.1: Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule [A**PP-129**] , the Applicant has committed to avoiding impacts on all areas of significant archaeological remains through the design of the Project, i.e. through the establishment of the Areas of Archaeological Interest as indicated on ES Figures 2.1a-2.4c - Illustrative Masterplan [**AS-020**]. These are also shown on Figures 1a – 1c in the Outline Written Scheme of Investigation (Rev 2) [**REP2-021**] where they are referred to as Archaeological Protection Zones. The Areas of Archaeological Interest represent buffer zones around the significant archaeological sites and were identified on the basis

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		following publication of the results to ensure that the effects are accurately reflected.	of the results of the geophysical survey. The programme of trial trenching included examination of all of these significant archaeological sites with the aim of 'ground-truthing' the extent of the sites and providing information on their date and nature, as well as the examination of areas which were geophysically 'blank'. The trial trenching established that the geophysical survey was very accurate in identifying the location and extent of the significant archaeological sites. On this basis the Applicant considers that the examination of the reports setting out the results of the trial trenching will not lead to any major changes to the protected Areas of Archaeological Interest. Any changes would be very limited, amounting the extension of a protected Area of Archaeological Interest by no more than a few metres. Any adjustments to the protected Areas of Archaeological Interest will be set out in the layout presented in the detailed design which has to be approved by the relevant planning authorities in accordance with Requirement 5 of the draft Development Consent Order (Rev 4) [**REP3-004**]. This process ensures that OCAS can review the extent of the protected Areas of Archaeological Interest in the light of all available information including the results of the trial trenching. Specifically with regard to the protected Area of Archaeological Interest proposed around the Sansom's Platt Scheduled Monument, this is indicated on Figures 2.1b and 2.1c in ES Figures 2.1a-2.4c - Illustrative Masterplan [**AS-020**]. It was established not just on the basis of the results of the geophysical survey of Fields 1.11, 1.12, 1.13 and 1.14 as indicated in ES Appendix 7.3: Geophysical Survey Report (Part 2) [**APP-134**], but also on the basis of the consideration of the current setting of the Scheduled Monument. As set out above, any adjustment to the extent of this protected Area of Archaeological Interest can be incorporated within the layout presented in the detailed design which has to be approved by the relevant planning authorities in accordance with Requirement 5 of the draft Development Consent Order (Rev 4) [**REP3-004**].
Q2.6.20	OCAS	**Sansom's Platt protection**	

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
	Historic England	In HE's RR [RR-0398] it is indicated that the scheduled area is accepted to be the site of a Roman Settlement associated with Akeman Street and may extend beyond the existing scheduling boundary. In light of the trial trenching results possibly not being available until DL5 and given your existing knowledge of this and other similar sites, please provide a plan suggesting what you might consider to be a suitable buffer zone to protect the potential remains in this area.	

Q2.7 Draft Development Consent Order

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Interpretation and Articles			
Q2.7.1	Applicant National Grid Electricity Transmission	**Associated Development** By virtue of Work No.2, following on from Work No.1, the National Grid (NGET) substation is classed as being associated development in the Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO). The Examining Authority (ExA) refers to the published guidance note which, in summary, states there needs to be a direct relationship between associated development and the principal development; that the associated development should not be an aim in itself but should be subordinate to the principal development; that development should not be treated as associated development if it is only necessary as a source of additional revenue for the applicant, in order to cross-subsidise the cost of the principal development; and, that the associated development should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the principal development.	The Applicant understands that the guidance being referred to by the ExA is the DCLG 'Guidance on Associated Development applications for major infrastructure projects' (April 2013) (the "**Guidance**"). This response therefore builds on paragraph 2.1.7 of the Explanatory Memorandum [**REP3-006**] which refers to that Guidance, to set out in more detail how the Guidance has been considered specifically in relation to Work No. 2 (i.e. the new NGET substation). The Applicant refers the ExA to paragraph 6 of the Guidance which states: "*It is expected that associated development will, in most cases, be typical of development brought forward alongside the relevant type of principal development or of a kind that is usually necessary to support a particular type of project, for example (where consistent with the core principles above), a grid connection for a commercial power station*". Firstly, the Guidance expressly envisages that works to facilitate a grid connection are capable of being associated development. This would include Work No. 2, as the delivery of the new NGET substation is essential to ensure that the principal development (i.e. the generating station under Work No. 1) is able to connect into the UK National Grid. Without the substation, there will be no point of connection for the solar farm. This supports the following core principles: - the new substation is not an aim in itself (it is a key aspect of allowing the Project to deliver renewable energy to the National Grid, because without both

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		The ExA questions whether, given that NGET is looking to reinforce the network in this area and provide a new substation to act as a connection space for a variety of customers (not just the project), the NGET substation is actually an aim of itself and whether it could truly be considered as associated development. Explain your position with reasons.	the Project and other projects to connect into it, the substation has no purpose as its very purpose is to aid in the transmission of energy generated by generation stations); - there is a direct relationship between the principal development (i.e. the solar farm) and the associated development (i.e. the new substation) (the substation can only operate effectively if it receives inputs from generation projects; and the Project will only deliver renewable benefit to the National Grid if the substation is consented and delivered); and - the new substation is not only necessary as an additional source of revenue (the need for the substation is a practical and not a commercial one, to deliver the renewable energy generated to the National Grid. Whilst the substation is required for the Applicant to generate income by facilitating the connection from the generation station, the substation on its own does not give the Applicant any revenue at all - it's only through the ability of the NSIP to connect into it, that there is any revenue. In contrast, battery energy storage systems (BESS) – which are also frequently consented as associated development – are able to generate income unconnected to the NSIP). In short, the new NGET substation is a vital element for the delivery of the electricity generated by the solar project to the National Grid. Equally, the NGET substation as a piece of infrastructure cannot standalone. It is required to respond to projects such as Botley West (for example, to facilitate connection of the Project into the grid) but also more generally in terms of responding to the wider increased renewables on the grid. This supports the core principle that the new substation is not an aim in itself, because it is reliant on various principal developments (including the Project) in order to serve its own function. Secondly, the Guidance recognises that precedent is important because it considers what is 'usually necessary' for similar projects. The Secretary of State has granted in other made energy DCOs that works for a new NGET substation or works to extend an existing NGET substation are capable of being associated development. For example: • The East Anglia ONE North Offshore Wind Farm Order 2022 (see Work No. 41 for a new NGET substation); • The East Anglia TWO Offshore Wind Farm Order 2022 (see Work No. 41 for a new NGET substation); and

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response

- Longfield Solar Farm Order 2023 (see Work No. 5 for an extension to the existing Bulls Lodge Substation).

The offshore wind farm examples are helpful as they are directly comparable to Botley West Solar Farm, in that both of those made DCOs grant consent for the generating station(s) as the principal development, with the works for a new NGET substation as associated development.

On Longfield, the works related to an extension to an NGET substation (which again served a purpose beyond Longfield). However, the Secretary of State included the extension works as associated development as those works are nonetheless associated to the new solar development. This supports the position that a wider purpose for the new substation does not preclude the works for that new substation as being associated development.

It is worth adding that in relation to the core principle that associated development should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the principal development, the Guidance sets out that "*this core principle should not be read as excluding associated infrastructure development (such as a network connection) that is on a larger scale than is necessary to serve the principal development if that associated infrastructure provides capacity that is likely to be required for another proposed major infrastructure project*". In other words, the Guidance makes it clear that a new substation for one project can be associated development to that project even though that new substation is also to provide capacity to other projects. It would be unnecessarily binary and contrary to the Guidance if a new substation was not considered associated development on the basis that it offers a connection space beyond the principal development to which the associated development relates.

In addition, Paragraph 12 of the Guidance explains that Annexes A and B of the Guidance provide examples of the type of development that may qualify as associated development. Annex A includes "Connections to national, regional or local networks" including 'electricity networks'; whilst Annex B refers to "substations", "control buildings", "Overhead/underground lines" (amongst other things). The new NGET substation under Work No. 2 therefore falls under the works envisaged by the Guidance to be capable of constituting associated development. For the avoidance of doubt, paragraph 12 states that the annexes are illustrative. Therefore, whilst the principle of a new substation is covered by the Guidance, it is not necessary for each and every element of the infrastructure proposed for the 'New National Grid Substation' under Work No. 2 (as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 1) to be expressly mentioned in the Guidance / Annexes.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Q2.7.2	Applicant	**Disapplication** The Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) disagree with the disapplication of s23 Land Drainage Act 1991. Can the applicant explain clearly what the benefit to the project would be by modifying s23 in the manner proposed by the dDCO and what the impediments to the project would be if the existing legislative provisions were retained intact.	**Context for ordinary watercourse consents** Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 prohibits the erection, raising or alteration of mills, dams, weirs or other obstructions to the flow of any ordinary watercourse, and the erection of culverts or alteration of a culvert in a manner likely to affect the flow of an ordinary watercourse, without written consent from the drainage board concerned. The relevant drainage board is OCC as the Lead Local Flood Agency. The provisions of section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 apply only to ordinary watercourses, with works to 'main rivers' being subject to the environmental permitting regime and the regulation and oversight of the Environment Agency. Under the Planning Act 2008 (PA08), a DCO may include provisions that have the effect of removing the requirement to obtain a consent. This process is known as disapplication, as the DCO provides that the requirement does not apply to the development authorised by the DCO. However, section 150 of the PA08 provides that, for any 'prescribed consent', it may only be disapplied if the relevant consenting body agrees to this. The prescribed consents are set out in Schedule 2 to the Infrastructure Planning (Interested Parties and Miscellaneous Prescribed Provisions) Regulations 2015 (as amended). The consent of the drainage board required under section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 (Ordinary Watercourse Consent) is a prescribed consent, and accordingly the requirement for consent can only be disapplied with the specific agreement of OCC as the relevant drainage board concerned. **Applicant's position** Ordinary Watercourse Consent is commonly disapplied by DCOs, frequently with a mechanism for a broadly equivalent consent to be obtained provided for in Protective Provisions within the DCO. For example, paragraph 3 of the protective provisions requires the approval (which may be subject to reasonable requirements) of the drainage authority before commencing the specified works, which aligns with s23(1) and s23(1A) of the Land Drainage Act 1991. This has a number of benefits. • First, the DCO would provide a 'one-stop shop for consenting' as is intended by the NSIP regime under the Planning Act 2008 and would avoid the need for a separate consent to be unnecessarily sought under other legislation outside of the DCO process. By disapplying the need for a separate statutory

consent to be obtained in relation to relevant activities, certainty is provided that the proposed development can proceed and be implemented. For instance:

(a) Paragraph 3(3)(b) of the protective provisions includes a shorter period (28 days) before deemed approval applies under s23(3)(b) (two months). This is important for the Project being of Critical National Priority (CNP) under NPS EN-1. Linked to this, paragraph 3(3)(b) of the protective provisions also provides that the approval "*must not be unreasonably withheld or delayed*" whereas the corresponding provisions in s23(3)(a) only state that "*the consent is not to be unreasonably withheld".* This means that under the existing legislation there is scope for the OHA to delay the giving of consent. Then, as set out above, the Applicant could only proceed with the specified works after waiting two months (once deemed approval would kick in) even if it was unreasonable of OHA to have delayed its approval. This has programme and delivery risk that contrasts with national policy as it poses a potential impediment to the delivery of CNP infrastructure that would be avoided through the application of the protective provisions (first, prohibiting unreasonable delay; then deemed approval after a shorter period to allow works to progress). This 28-day period is the precedented position in the other made solar DCOs; and

(b) Paragraph 9 of the protective provisions would ensure that the arbitration process under article 42 (arbitration) of the dDCO would apply in the event of any dispute. This would ensure that a consistent enforcement process would apply to these provisions as would apply to the other provisions of the DCO.

- Secondly, for projects that include land in the areas of multiple drainage boards, a simplified consenting structure can be provided for, such as a single board having responsibility irrespective of the area of the works.

- Thirdly, protective provisions offer greater detail. For example:

  (a) Paragraph 4 of the protective provisions supplements paragraph 3 to set out detail on what conditions may be included by OHA as part of its approval.

  (b) Paragraph 5 of the protective provisions ensures that the works must be constructed "*without unreasonable delay in accordance with the*

plans approved or deemed to have been approved or settled" and "*to the reasonable satisfaction of the drainage authority*". This offers additional protection over and above what is covered in section 23.

(c) Paragraph 6 sets out what would happen in the event of impairment or damage as a result of the specified works, including that "*the impairment or damage must be made good by the undertaker as soon as reasonably practicable to the reasonable satisfaction of the drainage authority*". This offers additional protection to OHA that is not captured in the existing legislation.

(d) Whilst section 23(2) provides that "*The drainage board concerned may require the payment of an application fee by a person who applies to them for their consent under this section; and the amount of that fee shall be £50 or such other sum as may be prescribed*", paragraph 7 of the protective provisions has broader provisions requiring that the "*undertaker must make reasonable compensation for costs, charges and expenses*". Paragraph 8 supplements this with provisions requiring the undertaker to make "*reasonable compensation for liabilities, costs and losses which may be reasonably incurred or suffered*…". This is broader in scope than section 23 and is therefore more protective for OHA.

The inclusion of protective provisions for drainage boards within a DCO (which are included at Part 3 of Schedule 15 of the dDCO) ensures that, although a DCO applicant is not required to obtain the Ordinary Watercourse Consent, OCC can ensure that works to ordinary watercourses do not cause damage or harm. In this way, the DCO ensures that the need for certainty that nationally significant projects can be implemented, does not compete with the protections that the requirement for Ordinary Watercourse Consent provides to both drainage boards and the environment.

Notably, in some cases DCOs do not even include protective provisions for drainage boards. This will exist where the relevant drainage board will have been satisfied that appropriate levels of protection are achieved through other provisions in the DCO, including the detailed management plans secured by DCO Requirements. An example of this approach can be seen in relation to the Mallard Pass Solar Farm Order 2024, where the relevant drainage body was content that the provisions in the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan provided sufficient comfort.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			There is a clear precedent for this approach in all of the recent made solar DCOs, including: The Oaklands Farm Solar Park Order 2025; The East Yorkshire Solar Farm Order 2025; The Heckington Fen Solar Park Order 2025; The West Burton Solar Project Order 2025; and The Cottam Solar Project Order 2024. Whilst drainage bodies may initially query the approach of disapplying the requirement for Ordinary Watercourse Consent, particularly if they are less familiar with the DCO process, it is well established across the DCO regime. The proposed protective provisions at Part 3 of the draft DCO align with the standard protective provisions secured across each of those made Orders referred to above. In other words, the protections removed are the same as those other similar projects, with the protections added in replacement being the same as those other similar projects. The Applicant is unaware of any distinction between those projects and this Project that suggests that the provisions are not sufficiently protective of OHA and the Applicant would welcome more detail from OHA here on what specific concerns they have. The Applicant would welcome the specific views of OHA as to which provisions of section 23 Land Drainage Act 1991 are considered essential that are not already captured in the protective provisions. The Applicant can then consider whether those provisions could be built into the protective provisions, to get OHA comfortable disapplying section 23 Land Drainage Act 1991.
Q2.7.3	Applicant All local authorities (including parish councils)	**Council organisation and administration** The ExA is aware of a wider Government push for local government reorganisation that may involve the merge or split of local authorities and the transfer of powers/ responsibilities/ functions between any newly created offices. To that extent the ExA would ask the local authorities to provide an update on the current thinking regarding such reorganisation and indicate the direction of travel that is likely, and also ask the applicant to 'future proof' the DCO so that any successors to the current local government structure are accounted for (for example, if Oxfordshire County Council is named in the Order as a discharging authority, if the Council ceases to be called as such or its roles	Article 2(7) of the DCO confirms that "*In this Order, references to any statutory body include that body's successor bodies.*" Therefore, the Applicant considers that the dDCO is sufficiently future proofed.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		split, that the newly formed entities would remain a discharging authority).	
Q2.7.4	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Amendments to the DCO** Table 20 of the Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP1-072] lists the amendments, clarifications and modifications requested by the OHA to the dDCO, including new requirements. The applicant provided a rebuttal [REP2-026, page 53*ff*] agreeing to some corrections and disagreeing on others. In respect of those matters of dispute that remain between the parties, please set out why the Secretary of State (SoS) should consider the changes you have suggested and what material difference those amendments would make to the smooth running, understanding or practical application of the DCO.	
Q2.7.5	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities National Highways Environment Agency	**Consultation** The applicant has commented at [REP3-065] that National Highways would be consulted on the final Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) because of an amendment to a paragraph within the outline Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) [ExQ1.7.20]. In a similar vein, the applicant says the Environment Agency would be consulted on the whole CoCP because of a paragraph written into the flood risk assessment [ExQ1.7.27]. This appears to be an unusual and non-standard approach to securing consultation and the ExA strongly suggest the consultees are named on the face of the dDCO. The applicant should update the dDCO accordingly or the consultees (named in this question) should provide written confirmation that the applicant's current approach is acceptable.	The Applicant has inserted a new sub-paragraph (5) of Requirement 11 (Code of Construction Practice) in Schedule 2 of the draft DCO to make it clear on the face of the DCO who is intended to be a consultee and in respect of which part(s) of the Code of Construction Practice (for example, National Highways in respect of the CTMP and the Environment Agency in respect of flood risk).
Q2.7.6	Applicant	**New Article proposed**	The wording proposed by OCC is copied here for ease of reference:

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Oxfordshire County Council proposed a new Article 16A be added into the Order at [REP3-072]. What is your position?	"*The undertaker will not commence any works under this Part 3 prior to entering into an agreement under section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 in respect of them*". The Applicant rejects the inclusion of the proposed wording in its current form because as currently drafted this would prevent *any* works under Part 3 of the dDCO from being carried out unless a s278 agreement is entered. This is not appropriate, as explained below. Firstly, a s278 agreement is not an appropriate mechanism to facilitate all works under Part 3. For example, Article 8 relates to the carrying out of Street Works and the drafting confirms that the Applicant has a statutory right to carry out those street works (noting that a statutory right already exists for the Applicant due to its status as a statutory undertaker pursuant to its electricity generation licence). On that basis, there are no other agreements required to facilitate the delivery of those street works. The Applicant must simply exercise its statutory powers in accordance with NRSWA (and the permit scheme). In fact, s100 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA) confirms that "*An agreement which purports to make provision regulating the execution of street works is of no effect to the extent that it is inconsistent with the provisions of this Part*". Secondly, the Applicant's position is that Article 9 is sufficient to deliver the sorts of highways works that may otherwise be delivered under a s278 agreement. For example, the formation of accesses, widening of the highway boundary or the removal/reinstatement of street furniture. Therefore, a blanket commitment to enter into a s278 agreement for *any* works is unreasonably burdensome because this would require a s278 agreement to be entered even for minor works, even though those works can reasonably be delivered under the DCO, in absence of a separate s278 agreement. This is also means that the requirement is not necessary because the DCO is able to provide the sufficient consent and controls for such works without any further agreement. Further, the need for a s278 agreement for *any* works would risk an unnecessary delay to the Project in the event that an agreement could not reasonably be reached. Having said that, the Applicant accepts that a highways side agreement may be a reasonable request in relation to more substantial highways works. To be clear, the intention is not to enter into a s278 agreement because such agreements in part authorise the ability to carry out the works covered under it, which the DCO already achieves. Therefore, it will be a highways side agreement pursuant to Article 15 (agreements with street authorities) to facilitate the delivery of those works (i.e. approval of design, inspection, any bond payable, maintenance etc).

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			This will be akin to other aspects usually found in a s278 agreement. The Applicant is awaiting OCC's standard highways agreement to be shared by OCC to begin discussions on the form of that agreement. The Applicant also appreciates the intention for the dDCO to secure a commitment for the Applicant to enter into that agreement, noting that the detail required for that agreement will follow post-consent. To achieve this, the Applicant has updated the outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) to include a commitment to enter into a highways side agreement with OCC pursuant to Article 15 of the dDCO, prior to the carrying out of certain specified and identifiable works. The works included in the updated CTMP represent those that the Applicant considers appropriate to be subject to a highways side agreement pursuant to Article 15 of the DCO. This will balance the interests of both parties – this will give certainty to OCC that a highways side agreement is required in relation to certain named works before those works can be carried out; whilst ensuring sufficiently flexibility for the Applicant to proceed with more minor works that are not justified to be subject to a separate side agreement.
Requirements			
Q2.7.7	Applicant	**Grampian requirement** The applicant previously stated [REP2-025, ExQ1.3.3] that the requirement was not needed and not necessary, particularly since there were 'paid securities' that the connection agreement in October 2028 would be honoured. NGET's response [REP2-076, ExQ1.3.6] states the substation would not be built and ready until late 2029 (assuming a smooth process through the planning system). The ExA request re-consideration of this matter and draft wording, on a without prejudice basis, of such a requirement.	The reference to a 2028 connection date in the Applicant's response [**REP2-025**] is a typo and the current agreed connection date is October 2027 (see the Grid Connection Statement [**APP-019**]). However, oral discussions between the Applicant and NGET had previously suggested that this would likely be varied to October 2028. In light of NGET's submission [**REP2-076**], the Applicant has queried the position with NGET who confirmed: 1) the 2029 connection date is a very cautious estimate; 2) NGET's design is finished, surveys are ongoing and terms have been agreed with the landowner; 3) consultation on the proposed New National Grid Substation design is planned for Q4 2025; 4) a planning application for the New National Grid Substation will be submitted to the LPA in Q2/3 2026. The Applicant is awaiting a draft Agreement to Vary from NGET so that the new connection date can be agreed. Meantime, NGET has confirmed to the Applicant that NGET has given the Project's connection protected status (i.e. Gate 2).

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			The Applicant has re-considered the request from the ExA in the above context and maintains that a Grampian requirement is not appropriate for inclusion in the DCO. This is supported by the 'Opinion of King's Counsel' [REP6-050] submitted into the Examination for the Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm. In summary: • The Applicant has signed a connection agreement with National Grid and the delivery of that connection is a matter for National Grid (either through the separate planning permission or via some alternative approach as National Grid sees fit). Note, the Applicant has assisted National Grid here by seeking DCO powers for the new substation, which NGET has recognised are an appropriate fallback (see the Statement of Common Ground [**REP3-053**]). This is an important distinction to the Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm, in that the connection of the Botley West Solar Farm is not contingent on NGET obtaining planning permission for the alternative site because the Applicant has made provision for connection via associated development included in the Application. There is no need to link the authorised development to the proposed off-site substation when a means for on-site connection is provided within the authorised development. • Commencement of the authorised development cannot occur until detailed design has been approved by the relevant planning authority pursuant to Requirement 5. An application to discharge Requirement 5 (detailed design approval) will, necessarily, confirm to the relevant planning authority whether the New National Grid Substation is to be implemented pursuant to Work No. 2 and Works Plan 13A, or solar panels are to be erected on the same land pursuant to Work No.1 and Works Plan 13B (the detailed design of Work No.4 (grid connection infrastructure) would also confirm this). If the latter applies, then it will be clear that the New National Grid Substation will be implemented by NGET pursuant to planning permission granted by the relevant planning authority for an alternative site. Having granted that planning permission, the relevant planning authority will be well aware of the programme for implementation of the New National Grid Substation. Accordingly, there is no need for a requirement preventing development of the authorised development. Any such requirement would, in effect, be duplicating the information submitted with an application to discharge Requirement 5. • The imposition of a Grampian requirement would fail the relevant policy tests, including for the following reasons:

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			(a) The requirement is not necessary because the Applicant would not invest very substantial sums in constructing the solar farm unless it was confident that the scheme would be able to connect to the transmission network pursuant to the connection agreement with National Grid. (b) The requirement is not necessary because the Applicant sees no reason as to why the planning permission being sought by NGET would be refused. In any case, as has been advocated by the Applicant above, the draft DCO includes the necessary works powers for the new substation as a fallback. Therefore, there is consenting certainty that the necessary planning permission will be available to NGET to deliver the New National Grid Substation pursuant to the existing grid connection agreement. (c) It would also be unreasonable to make the implementation of one DCO contingent on another development, in particular having regard to the sequence of commercial decisions the Applicant must make as part of the process leading from the grant of the DCO to implementation. An inability by the Applicant to progress to implementation on the basis of its own DCO would thus represent an unreasonable impediment to delivery. Also, if it is necessary for the Applicant to wait until the proposed requirement can be discharged this would create a significant delay to the Project and risk the Applicant being unable to meet the agreed connection date. (d) It would also be unreasonable in that the imposition of such a requirement would put the Project at a competitive disadvantage as against other comparable proposed solar farms when seeking a Contract for Difference ("CfD") and investment. (e) No other DCO authorising a solar farm has been made subject to a requirement of this type, reflecting the long-established precedent that the existence of a connection agreement is considered sufficient to demonstrate that account has been taken of the need for a grid connection. In the absence of any unique distinguishing features here to mark this case out from electricity generation NSIPs generally, it would set a distinctly unhelpful precedent that would need to be considered when making decisions on other similar renewable energy generation projects. In fact, there are precedents for generating stations being consented at a point when the

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			associated grid connection project was further back in the consenting (for example, Hinkley Point C). No equivalent requirement was imposed on the Hinkley Point C DCO. In summary, the suggested Grampian requirement would not satisfy the policy tests for the imposition of requirements because it is both unnecessary and unreasonable. Any decision to impose such a requirement would be directly contrary to both NPS policy and guidance. The Applicant recognises the distinction between the situation on Five Estuaries (where the new National Grid substation is being sought by NGET via a DCO application under the Planning Act 2008) and Botley West (where the New National Grid Substation is being sought by NGET as a planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA)). Nonetheless, the policy context under the TCPA regime (including the National Planning Policy Framework) supports energy development, e.g. the NPPF confirms that "*when determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should: a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future*…". Therefore, it would be reasonable for the ExA and Secretary of State to expect planning permission to be granted for the substation and for NGET to use reasonable endeavours to achieve that and the necessary acquisition of land.
Q2.7.8	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Replacement panel requirement** The OHA requested a clause within the dDCO stating that if 30% or more of the solar arrays were to be replaced at one time, a new CTMP should be produced [REP2-050]. The applicant has responded at [REP3-065] that panel replacement would be phased over 5 years. It is unknown whether that means 20% per year. Could both parties give consideration as to how this level of replacement could be written into the dDCO, whether as a definition (under maintain) or as an additional to a Requirement etc. Explain with reasons.	The extent of annual panel removal across the five-year period may vary depending on the extent of panel replacement required, although the Applicant will not replace more than 30% of panels in a single year. This Applicant has updated the outline Operational Management Plan to secure this commitment. On that basis, the requirement proposed by the OHAs would be otiose.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Q2.7.9	Applicant	**Requirement 9** At [REP3-072] the OHA noted that the applicant indicated that they would work in collaboration with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) to develop a detailed Surface Water Management Strategy and that such a collaboration would be secured via the DCO. Please confirm and amend, if necessary, as to where Requirement 9 secures approval by the relevant LLFA.	The Applicant has updated the Conceptual Drainage Strategy [**REP3-022**] to add in an express commitment for the Applicant to prepare its surface water management strategy in collaboration with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). This secures the LLFA's involvement pre-discharge because Requirement 9 requires the written details of the surface water drainage works and (if any) foul water drainage systems to be submitted to the relevant planning authority "*substantially in accordance with the conceptual drainage strategy*". No amendment to Requirement 9 is required to secure the approval by the relevant LLFA. The existing drafting already ensures that the written details of the surface water drainage works and (if any) foul water drainage system must be substantially in accordance with the conceptual drainage strategy. Table 2-2 of the Conceptual Drainage Strategy states that: *"SuDS will require the approval of Oxfordshire County Council as LLFA and SuDS Approval Body, and proposals must include an agreement on the future management, maintenance and replacement of the SuDS features."* Therefore, LLFA approval is already secured.
Schedules			
Q2.7.10	Applicant All local authorities	**Schedule 12** The applicant has amended schedule 12 of the dDCO, removing the words "within the Order limits" [REP2-027]. The applicant justifies this as being the means by which hedgerows that straddle the Order limits could be removed in full if necessary. Local authorities 1) What are your views on this amendment? 2) Are you content that the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) would provide suitable and satisfactory mitigation/ replacement planting for any hedgerow lost that falls outside the Order limits? 3) Are the hedgerows affected suitably surveyed or protected (by the need for surveys and environmental mitigation/	4) The changes made to Schedule 12 as part of the Deadline 2 DCO updates [**REP2-027**] relate to H2.02, H2.04, H3.01 and H3.07 only, as shown on the Hedgerow Removal Plans [**AS-007**]. It is not necessary for the Applicant to obtain any additional property rights to facilitate the removal of these hedgerows as the land outside of the Order limits within which these hedgerows are located is highway land. Therefore, no provisions are needed for private access and the amendments do not conflict at all with the compulsory acquisition guidance. As a general point of principle, developments consent orders are able to grant powers that extend beyond the Order Limits. For example, Article 16 (Traffic Regulation Measures) provides that "*the undertaker may make temporary provision for the purposes of the authorised development*", whilst Article 18 (Authority to survey and investigate the land) allows the undertaker to "*enter on any land shown within the Order limits **or** enter on any land which may be affected by the authorised development **or** enter on any land upon which entry is required in order to carry out monitoring or surveys in respect of the authorised development"* (our emphasis). Similarly, there is a general power in Article 38(1) which allows the undertaker to "*fell or lop any tree or shrub near any part of the authorised*

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		protection measures) in the ES and the DCO? Applicant 4) The result of the change to Schedule 12 appears to re-draw the Order limits around these hedgerows without seeking the additional land or rights to do this. It would seem unfair for the landowners (whose land the hedgerows fall upon) to be affected in this way without any compensation for the rights lost or the loss of features on their land. Provide a legal note as to why this change is acceptable with regards to the relevant compulsory acquisition guidance and legislation or revert back to the previous wording accordingly.	*development or cut back its roots, if it reasonably believes it to be necessary…*". This is analogous to the scope of the statutory powers in Schedule 4 paragraph 9 of the Electricity Act 1989. These provisions are well precedented in made solar DCOs. The purpose of the hedgerow powers is to effectively avoid the need for a further consent as the DCO is intended to secure a 'one-stop-shop' approach to consenting. Whilst as a matter of principle the DCO enables the powers to extend beyond the Order Limits, the hedgerows which are intended to be removed are shown on the Hedgerow Removal Plans [**AS-007**], therefore the powers are sufficiently identifiable and limited. The Applicant accepts that as the hedgerows outside of the Order Limits are within the highway, whilst no access rights need to be acquired, the works will need to be controlled with the involvement of the highway authority. Article 38(6) provides that the undertaker may not fell or lop a tree or remove hedgerows under that Article within the extent of the publicly maintainable highway without the prior consent of the highway authority.
Q2.7.11	Applicant All local authorities	**Paragraph (6) of Schedule 16** At [REP1-005], the applicant updated Schedule 16 of the dDCO with text regarding 'anticipatory steps' to discharging requirements before the Order is made. The applicant cites some examples where such text has appeared before, saying there is precedent. **a)** The ExA notes all the examples given are highway projects. Can the applicant confirm whether any energy-based projects, including the most recent for solar schemes, contain such provisions? **b)** Can the applicant explain what the benefits are of having this clause within the Order and whether there really is an impediment to the project that needs overcoming in this way?	**a)** <u>Examples of any energy-based projects, including the most recent for solar schemes, containing such provisions</u> The Applicant is not aware of the recent solar schemes including comparable wording. However, in addition to the precedent cited in the Explanatory Memorandum [**REP3-006**] Schedule of Changes to the dDCO [**REP1-016**], the Applicant notes that the following made DCOs which do include comparable wording: • M5 Junction 10 Development Consent Order 2025); • Viking CCS Carbon Dioxide Pipeline Order 2025; • London Luton Airport Expansion Development Consent Order 2025; • A122 (Lower Thames Crossing) Development Consent Order 2025; and • North Lincolnshire Green Energy Park Order 2025. There is therefore strong precedent across other recently made DCOs for this wording. As the drafting relates to the procedure for the discharge of requirements, which applies equally to solar DCOs as it does to other DCOs (i.e. the procedure

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Do the local authorities have any practical or operational concerns regarding the inclusion of this provision?	for discharging requirements is not specific to a particular sector but is relevant for the application of a development consent Order), the Applicant's position is that this precedent is reliable for the Project to support the inclusion of the newly added wording. See further below for an explanation of the benefits. **b)** Explanation of the benefits of having this clause within the Order and whether there is an impediment to the project that needs overcoming The purpose of the drafting is to allow steps to be taken prior to the Order coming into force in relation to requirements and for those steps to 'count' as a formal step towards satisfaction of the relevant requirement. Whilst this departs from the Model Provisions, the Applicant's intention is to be able to consult the local authorities on draft control documents prior to the DCO being made and during the period between the Order being made and the Order coming into force. Whilst there is no impediment to the Project without this wording as such, the inclusion of the wording is to encourage an efficient discharge process and to give clarity that if the Applicant takes any proactive steps for the purposes of Schedule 2 (Requirements), those steps may be taken into account for determining compliance with that provision as if they had been taken after the Order came into force.
Q2.7.12	Applicant	**Schedule 16 additional sub-paragraph** The ExA consider it may be useful for members of the public, should development consent be granted, for there to be a clear audit trail of the processes and procedures that take place on the path to commissioning the proposed development. In this vein, particularly with the applicant having added paragraph (6) to Schedule 16, the ExA recommend the following text is added into the dDCO (noting precedent in the A12/A120 Order 2024). The applicant's views are requested in response to this suggestion. ***Register of requirements*** 24.— (1) The undertaker must, as soon as practicable following the making of this Order,	The Applicant has updated the draft DCO at Deadline 4 to incorporate the proposed wording from the ExA as a new paragraph 7 of Schedule 16 subject to the following amendments: ***Register of requirements*** *24.— (1) The undertaker must, prior to first submitting an application for discharge under this Schedule ~~as soon as practicable following the making of this Order~~, establish and maintain in an electronic form suitable for inspection by members of the public a register of those requirements contained in Part 1 of this Schedule that provide for further approvals to be given by the approving authority.* *(2) The register must set out in relation to each such requirement the status of the requirement, in terms of whether any approval to be given by the approving authority has been applied for or given, providing an electronic link to any document containing any approved details.*

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		establish and maintain in an electronic form suitable for inspection by members of the public a register of those requirements contained in Part 1 of this Schedule that provide for further approvals to be given by the approving authority. (2) The register must set out in relation to each such requirement the status of the requirement, in terms of whether any approval to be given by the approving authority has been applied for or given, providing an electronic link to any document containing any approved details. (3) The register must be maintained by the undertaker for a period of 3 years following completion of the authorised development.	*(3) The register must be maintained by the undertaker for a period of 3 years following the date of final commissioning ~~completion of the authorised development~~.* The first amendment is considered appropriate because it is not necessary for the undertaker to establish the register straight away post-consent. The new drafting still ensures that there will be transparency of the discharge process as and when the process is about to be engaged, by requiring the register to be in place prior to an application for discharge being made. Otherwise, the wording is unreasonably burdensome because it would require a register to be in place even where an application for discharge may not be about to be made. The second amendment is considered appropriate because the intention here is to show a clear audit trail on the path to commissioning. It's therefore unreasonable and unnecessary to require the register to be available throughout the entire Project's lifespan and then even post-decommissioning. The new wording ensures that it will remain available for a limited period after the Project enters operation, as the date of final commissioning is defined as "*the date on which the authorised development commences operation by generating electricity on a commercial basis but excluding the generation of electricity during commissioning and testing*". However, the new wording is more balanced by limiting the obligation on the undertaker by not requiring the register to be maintained unnecessarily throughout the rest of the operational and decommissioning periods.
Q2.7.13	Applicant	**Schedules 1 and 5 - road widening** Schedule 1 of the dDCO mentions road widening at Works. No 9 and then Schedule 5 of the dDCO lists alteration layouts required before these works can go ahead, referring to the B4017 Cumnor Road only [REP3-004]. However, paragraph 12.7.18 of ES Chapter 14 [APP-049] states two other roads where road widening will be undertaken. Does the dDCO cover widening of these two additional roads also, if so, where and how, if not should it do so?	To confirm, paragraph 12.7.18 of ES Chapter 12: Traffic and Transport **[APP-049]** refers to the following 'widening works': • Widening works will be undertaken on the B4017 Cumnor Road through Filchampstead to accommodate AILs and also provide betterment for HVs • Widening works will be undertaken on the south-eastern side of the B4027 / Banbury Road junction to accommodate AILs • Temporary widening works to be undertaken at the Burleigh Road / Yarnton Road junction to accommodate large vehicles. As the ExA identifies, the 'authorised development' in Schedule 1 includes works power to facilitate those widening works. These are included at Work No. 9 (works to facilitate access to Work No. 1 to Work No. 8 including) of the dDCO, including Work No. 9(d) (works to improve and widen accesses across bridge) and Works No. 9(f) (works to widen and surface the public highway and private means of access).

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			Then, Article 9 of the DCO (Power to alter layout, etc., of streets) sets out that the undertaker may permanently alter the layout of the streets in Part 1 (permanent alteration of layout) of Schedule 5 (alteration of streets), and may temporarily alter the layout of the streets in Part 2 (temporary alteration of layout) of Schedule 5 (alteration of streets). Each of B4017 Cumnor Road; B4027 / Banbury Road Junction; and Burleigh road, are referred to in both Parts 1 and Part 2 of Schedule 5, as permanent and temporary alterations of layout are required to each of those roads. Column 3 of those tables sets out the description of the proposed alteration works. Schedule 5 therefore covers each and all of the widening works mentioned in the bullet points above from Chapter 12 as well as another other alteration works required.
Q2.7.14	Applicant Siemens Healthcare Ltd	**Protective Provisions** The ExA notes an outstanding disagreement between the applicant and Siemens Healthcare Limited. Both parties are requested to consider whether the differences could be solved via bespoke protective provisions and, if so, work urgently on drafting these. In response to this question, inform the ExA what is being done, when and why.	The Applicant does not consider that a bespoke set of protective provisions is necessary or justified with Siemens Healthcare Limited. The Applicant has proposed sufficient mitigation to Siemens that can be captured through the various management plans already secured under the DCO Requirements, to ensure that any potential impact on Siemens will be suitably protected. The Applicant also reiterates that as part of its Change Request 2, the Applicant is proposing to remove the area of wharf road that is owned by Siemens and runs closer to its operations. The remaining road that is proposed to be used is adopted highway. Therefore, it would be unreasonable and unjust to impose protective provisions on the Applicant for that area of road when no such limitations otherwise apply to existing users of the adopted highway. Siemens Healthcare Limited is a landowner of a verge alongside the adopted highway, as set out in the Book of Reference [**REP3-010**]. The Applicant has therefore continued its discussions with Siemens to seek to acquire the necessary land rights required from Siemens by voluntary property agreement. As set out above and in the Applicant's Change Request 2 Notification [**REP2-045**], as a result of this continued engagement, the Applicant is proposing to reduce the Order Limits to reduce the area required along Wharf Road on the basis that Siemens did not want the Applicant to use that route. The Applicant continues to negotiate with Siemens to acquire the remaining land by voluntary agreement and updates on the progress of those negotiations is captured in the Land & Rights Negotiations Tracker. The Applicant has submitted a report at this Deadline 4 showing the outstanding cable corridor optionality – including the Siemens' land – to support why the remaining Siemens land is required for the Project. Meantime, the Applicant has

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			provided Siemens with information of the mitigation methods proposed which are aimed at minimising any potential impact on Siemens.
Controlling Documents for the dDCO			
Q2.7.15	Applicant	**Integrity of the Project Mitigations and Commitments Schedule** The ExA has undertaken a random spot check of measures listed in the schedule [APP-129]. The following has been spotted. a) Measure 7.11 states all temporary satellite compounds would be managed as grassland if not required for solar installations. The word 'compound' appears once in the OLEMP, the word 'satellite' does not appear and, whilst grassland is prevalent throughout the document, this specific commitment listed in [APP-129] does not appear in the OLEMP [APP-235]. b) Measure 9.28 refers to badger setts being retained with an appropriate buffer of undisturbed habitat. The OLEMP only refers to a license being obtained for disturbance impacts. The measure does not appear secured. c) Mitigation measure 13.8 states a bespoke Horizontal Direction Drilling (HDD) method statement would be committed to in respect of HDDL3 and HDD6 in the CoCP [APP-232]. There is no such commitment listed or readily identifiable. d) Measure 13.5 states that the requirement for operational phase noise limits will be identified in Outline Operational Management Plan (OOMP) [APP-234]. This cannot be readily discerned when reviewing the OOMP. e) Measure 14.1 commits to tables of panels being between 1.5m and 3m apart from	a) Noted, the Applicant has submitted an updated oLEMP to reflect this, last bullet point of paragraph 8.2.2 now states 'A range of grasslands within the solar arrays to be managed for conservation value (including temporary satellite compounds, if not required for solar installations)'. Additionally, paragraph 8.2.7 now states - 'All land used for temporary satellite compounds during construction will be managed as grassland if not required for solar installations'. b) Noted, the Applicant has submitted an updated oLEMP to reflect this, paragraph 8.4.1 in updated oLEMP states - 'All badger setts will be retained, where possible, with a 30 m buffer of undisturbed habitat. Retained badger setts must not be isolated from other areas of suitable habitat by fencing and construction activity, as advised by a suitably qualified ecologist'. c) Noted, the Applicant has submitted an updated oCOCP to clearly reflect commitment with updated wording as follows in table 1.1, Construction Method Statements row - 'To include detailed design on watercourse crossings including bentonite breakout plan, and bespoke HDD method statements at locations to be agreed. To be informed through site investigation.' d) The Noise section of table 3.1 **[REP3-032]** states, 'Operational noise from the development will need to be limited so as to avoid the significant adverse effect'. As such, in line with what is stated in 13.5 of the commitments schedule **[APP-129]**, the requirement for Operational phase noise limits has been identified in the Outline Operational Management Plan (oOMP). The oOMP then goes on to state that this will be further defined in the detailed Operational Management Plan, as is stated in 13.5 of the commitments schedule. e) The Outline Layout and Design Principles **[REP3-036]** already secures, amongst other things "*Indicative North/South separation distance (m) between tables - 1.5m to 3.0m*" (as referred to at Measure 14.1) and "*Indicative Table Width (inc. Ridge Break), East to West – 3m to 22m*".

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		one another. Table 9.1 in the Outline Layout and Design Principles document does not reflect this, seemingly saying between 3m and 22m. It is requested that the Project Mitigations and Commitments Schedule [APP-129] is rigorously updated and, where a commitment is said to be in a document, a cross reference should be given to the paragraph or section where such a commitment exists.	The Project Mitigations and Commitments Schedule **[APP-129]** has been reviewed and updated for D4 to include cross referencing to sections / paragraphs in securing documents, where relevant, as requested.
Q2.7.16	Applicant	**Buffer distances to ancient woodland** The CoCP states that there would be a 15m buffer between works and ancient woodland. The location for the entry and exit pits for HDDL3 [APP-130], albeit shown indicatively, appear very tight to the edges of these buffers. 1) Provide dimensions and distances between the HDDL3 compounds and the edges of the woodland areas. **f)** Provide details of the likely depth of all occasions where HDD tunnelling would take place underneath ancient woodland and set out why such a depth would be acceptable having regard to the root protection areas and soil stability within woodland areas.	The indicative location of the HDDL3 compound shows a distance of approximately 12 metres from the edge of the ancient woodland. While this is slightly less than the 15m buffer referred to in the CoCP, it reflects a worst-case, over dimensioned compound footprint to ensure sufficient space is allowed for construction flexibility. For HDD beneath ancient woodland, typical installation would aim for a depth of around 9 m, which is well below the rooting zone and generally sufficient to avoid disturbance. Depending on ground conditions and survey results, depths may reach up to 30 m to ensure adequate clearance and soil stability. Final depths will be confirmed following further assessment.
Q2.7.17	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Legal agreements** The Joint LIR [REP1-072] made reference to off-site works (biodiversity, improvements to public rights of way etc) that would need to be secured via a legal agreement pursuant to section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended. The LIR also made reference to the availability and suitability of using a section 278 agreement under the Highways Act 1980 to facilitate works to public	

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		highways as opposed to powers sought in the dDCO. On the understanding that Development Consent Orders are used as 'one stop shops' for the consenting regime to speed up infrastructure delivery, provide express legal reasons why such different legislative routes should be pursued, and the pros and cons (implications) should development consent be granted for the project in the absence of such legal agreements.	

Q2.8 Ecology and Biodiversity

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Ecology			
Q2.8.1	Applicant	**Otters, voles and fish** The Environment Agency (EA) submission at Deadline 1 (DL1) [REP1-083] is unequivocal as to the need for surveys for these species. The Examining Authority (ExA) notes the EA are supported by the Beds, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust [REP2-065, ExQ1.8.14]. The ExA finds no direct rebuttal of the EA's comments at DL2. If not going to be carried out during the Examination, the ExA expects such surveys to be part of the pre-construction surveys the applicant would undertake, with the survey results shared with the relevant consultees to inform detailed design and the mitigation (if any) required. Either provide such surveys to the Examination or update the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) and register of commitments [APP-129] accordingly to ensure the requested surveys are	The Applicant maintains that surveys of the aquatic environment with respect to otter, water vole and fish are not necessary since impacts to them are avoided through the use of appropriate buffers to watercourses and HDD/OTT methodologies for all crossings. This position is supported by Natural England in their response to ExQ1.8.14 [**REP2-057**]. Notwithstanding this, during on-going discussions with Interested Parties (including the EA and OHA) with respect to the need or otherwise for these surveys, the Applicant has agreed to strengthen the commitments for pre-commencement surveys set out in the oCoCP (submitted at Deadline 4) to specifically require those relating to otter and water vole, as necessary. With respect to fish, the Applicant and the EA have agreed that drilling under watercourses will avoid the fish spawning season (October to June) unless full details of geology and associated noise/vibration propagation associated with such works is submitted to the appropriate authority, in consultation with relevant stakeholders to demonstrate that no impact on fish would occur. The appropriate changes to the oCoCP have been made at Deadline 4.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		undertaken and protective measures (if any are necessary) are secured.	
Q2.8.2	Applicant	**Confidence in assumptions** In the response to the Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP2-026, p31], you have stated that *"further surveys for water vole or otter are not necessary since all impacts are avoided."* 1) When you have not surveyed for the presence of these species, and therefore have no understanding of their potential habitats in the area, how can you be so certain that no impacts would occur? 2) In the action of horizontal directional drilling (HDD), there is the potential for bentonite to breakout. Beds, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust [REP2-065] have advocated micro-siting should occur so as to avoid drilling underneath otter and vole habitats, so that any bentonite breakout would be managed without harming habitats. Why has the applicant ruled this out as a potential effect/ impact and what does the applicant propose to do to prevent the impact occurring as feared by the Wildlife Trust? 3) In response to ExQ1.10.4 [REP2-025], a commitment appears to be made that HDD would be at least 2m below the riverbed. At this depth, what is the potential for noise and vibration affecting the wildlife in the riverbanks and riverbed? 4) In the absence of surveys, how can the applicant be sure that its proposed flood meadow programme on the River Evenlode would not harmfully change or	Responses are provided to each point below; 1. It is not correct to state that there is no understanding of the potential habitats of these species within the Project. Impacts to them can be avoided precisely because there is an understanding of where these species might occur. Water vole live in burrows on watercourse/waterbody banks where they feed on riparian vegetation; although they can live fossorial lifestyles and the presence of such populations is common on continental Europe, it has not been recorded within the UK with the exception of a well-studied population in urban Glasgow. Therefore, because their range (at least in Oxfordshire) is restricted to along watercourses/waterbody banks, it is possible to avoid impacts to this species through the use of appropriate buffers. Indeed, this is the recommended approach to avoiding impacts to water vole within the Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (Dean *et al.* 2016). The Project includes buffer zones of at least 10m from all watercourses, well above the minimum 5m recommended in the Water Vole Mitigation Handbook. As such, given that all watercourse crossings will be via HDD or OTT, even if surveys for this species were undertaken, it would not change the approach to avoidance/mitigation measures already proposed. Otter are more complex since their home ranges can be very large and can include holts away from watercourse banks. However, their territories are always centred on watercourses and holts will always have connectivity with water. They are carnivorous and feed primarily on fish. As such, they will not use the arable fields within the Project site for feeding (there is no prey present they could easily catch) and would be very unlikely to otherwise make use of them. This species will make use of hedgerows and other linear features for the purposes of crossing a landscape but are, ultimately, a riparian species with key life stages, breeding in particular, requiring connectivity with water to allow breeding females a ready source of food. Natal dens are always in undisturbed locations and can be located within woodland if there is connectivity with water. There are few locations where this requirement for undisturbed connectivity with water occur across the Project site. The Project retains all

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		alter the living conditions for otters, voles and fish?	water courses and hedgerows with appropriate buffers and does not result in the loss of any woodland while and maintaining connectivity between woodlands and water course features is ensured within the masterplan through the provision of the buffers around such features. As set out in ES Chapter 9, otter are known to occur along the Evenlode with various observations of their presence made along the watercourse (near to Burleigh Wood in the north and the A40 in the south of the Central Project Area). Although not surveyed for specifically, their presence has not been noted elsewhere within the Project site, despite four years of other ecological survey work and otter field sign being relatively easy to spot (they will usually leave spraint in obvious locations such as on rocks and leave feeding remains near to watercourses). This has included various habitat and the recent River MoRPh surveys that have been completed along the watercourses within the Project. As such, the assumption was made that they might make use of other features on the Project site such as woodland and hedgerows and smaller watercourses, but that their main habitat was the Evenlode. Since this is to be enhanced as a result of the Project and all other features protected with appropriate buffers, there can be confidence that impacts are avoided. The Applicant's position on this issue is supported by Natural England in their response to ExQ1.8.14 [**REP2-057**]. Notwithstanding this, see the response to Q2.8.1 in respect of pre-commencement surveys. 2. If not properly managed, a bentonite breakout could occur in any location near to an HDD route, depending on local geology. It is therefore not possible, from an engineering perspective to micro-site the crossing within the Order Limits such that the risk of a breakout can be removed completely. To help limit such risk, the Applicant has committed that, prior to construction, Construction Method Statements will be prepared for watercourse crossings that will include a bentonite breakout plan. The method statements will be informed by site investigations to characterise the site-specific geological conditions including consideration of bentonite breakout. An outline bentonite breakout plan has been appended to an updated CoCP at this Deadline 4. 3. The depth committed to is a minimum depth that HDD would be at below the riverbed. However, the actual depth will either be calculated based on ground conditions, once these are known, such that there is no

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			vibration/noise impact to wildlife or such crossings will be timed to avoid potential impacts during sensitive periods (such as fish spawning seasons). 4. Currently, the River Evenlode is located within a valley of intensive agricultural operations with associated chemical/animal fertiliser input. The proposed changes to this area will diversify the habitats present, remove the chemical /reduce the animal fertiliser inputs and enhance the ecological setting of the river, all of which will improve the living conditions of otter, water vole and fish. This position (that the Evenlode corridor is beneficial for wildlife) is supported by all ecology interested parties.
Q2.8.3	Environment Agency	**Fish and the riverbed** The applicant, at [REP3-065], has said that HDD underneath rivers would only see vibration for a period of 2 weeks and therefore vibration impacts would be minimal. Do you accept this, or do you feel fish surveys are necessary?	
Q2.8.4	Applicant Natural England	**Ammonia deposition** The ExA understand that ammonia deposition is under review between the parties. Provide an update and what steps are being undertaken to avoid, reduce or mitigate the effects.	The Applicant has provided Natural England with a proposed methodology to undertake a precautionary assessment of changes in air quality at the Oxford Meadows SAC during the construction period of the Project. Once this is agreed, the assessment will then be undertaken and will determine what, if any, measures might be necessary to avoid, reduce or mitigate effects. It is anticipated that the results of the assessment will be provided as a technical note and updated HRAR to the Examination by Deadline 6.
Q2.8.5	Applicant	**Bird displacement** The applicant accepts that the impact to the wintering bird assemblage is moderate adverse and long term. The applicant states the reference to 'temporary' in relation to the impact refers to the future provision of further habitat. 1) When would the new habitat be created and ready for use by wintering birds? 2) Where would this new habitat be positioned and why has the location been chosen?	1) The new habitat would be created over the construction phase of the Project in accordance with the principles set out in the oLEMP [**REP3-034**]. In practice, it is likely that some will be created throughout the construction period as construction works are finished. However, at the latest, habitat would be available once construction was complete. 2) As set out in section 9.9.100 of ES Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity [**REP2-012**] and section 10.2 of the oLEMP [**REP3-034**] circa 36ha of land around the Project site would be managed as meadow grassland with the aim of providing guaranteed winter foraging resource for birds through the inclusion of appropriate seed mixes. These parcels of land are located in areas to protect buried archaeology. Since these are scattered throughout

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			the Project, spatially, they were considered to provide mitigation foraging habitat for wintering birds throughout the Project site. The Applicant is also seeking to facilitate additional new habitat with respect to birds [on land south-east of Bladon and north of Heath Lane] as part of its Change Request 2. The benefits of this proposal will be set out in detail as part of the formal Change Request 2 application
Q2.8.6	Applicant	**Monitoring Evenlode** Natural England (NE) [REP2-057] requested that water quality in the River Evenlode should be monitored. It is not readily apparent to the ExA that this point has been addressed in the DL3 submissions. Please either signpost where the request has been accommodated or provide reasons as to why this has not occurred.	With respect to construction, the oCoCP [**REP3-031**] already includes a commitment that the detailed Environmental Management System of the Principal Contractor would have to include *measures to monitoring the effectiveness of the measures included within the detailed CoCP(s), as approved by the relevant local planning authorities in consultation with the relevant stakeholders* (section 1.7.1). If required, this could include monitoring with respect to water quality. As set out in section 9.9.620 of ES Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity [**REP2-012**], since the Project will remove agricultural runoff into the River Evenlode (and all other watercourses within the Project site catchment), with no additional chemical runoff or similar generated by the Project, impacts are considered beneficial. As such, monitoring of water quality during the operation of the Project is not considered necessary as there are no mitigation/avoidance measures preventing adverse effects, the efficacy of which might require monitoring.
Q2.8.7	Applicant Forestry Commission	**Effects on woodland** Forestry Commission - In the submission [REP2-054], you state *"more needs to be demonstrated to ensure that relevant Government policy, legislation and guidance is being met."* The ExA note that paragraph 5.4.32 of NPS EN-1 requires applicants to mitigate fully the direct and indirect effects of development on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees or other irreplaceable habitats during both construction and operational phases. The ExA would like to enquire as to which elements of legislation and which elements of the National Policy Statements are considered not currently being met and which direct/ indirect effects you feel are not reasonably covered/ mitigated for by the project. Please specify the exact Acts, clauses and paragraphs, along with reasoning to explain the	As set out in ES Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity [**REP2-012**], direct impacts to ancient woodland have been avoided through the provision of appropriate buffers around all ancient woodland, in line with Natural England guidance. Indirect impacts through pollution etc. would be avoided via the measures set out in the oCoCP and associated annexes [**REP3-030**]. It should be noted that, currently, the ancient woodland within the Zone of Influence of the Project is surrounded by intensive agriculture and often ploughed to the edge of the tree line with no buffer of any sort present. As such, the Project represents an enhancement to the setting of the ancient woodland, where it occurs adjacent to the Project boundary. Therefore, the Project is considered to be fully in accordance with paragraph 5.4.32 of EN-1.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		perceived breaches, deficits or conflicts in each case. Applicant - The ExA requests your early views on the alleged potential non-compliance with NPS EN-1.	
Q2.8.8	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Farmland bird strategy** Please outline what is envisaged in such a strategy, why you consider it necessary to secure, why it is needed in respect of national policy and what the implications would be if the project was granted development consent without such a strategy in place.	
Q2.8.9	Applicant Natural England	**Skylarks** The Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) and Cassington Parish Council (amongst others) note that the skylark plots to be provided are only intended to provide foraging areas. There is an alleged loss of nesting/ breeding skylark habitat by the proposed development that the interested parties (IP) consider to be adverse. The OHA suggest some 60ha of off-site land needs to be secured and maintained to support some 228 skylark territories. Provide comment on the request and the need for such mitigation.	The Applicant has provided a Technical Note on skylark mitigation as **Annex 6: Technical Note on Skylark** to this document. This sets out that the new habitat to be provided across the Project site for skylark combined with the influence of enhanced foraging for this species on surrounding fields around the Project site can support some 119 skylark territories. The background surveys to support the Project set out in ES Appendix 9.9 Breeding Bird Surveys [**APP-158**] found the site supported 72 territories in 2023 and 228 in 2024. This demonstrates the inter-annual variability of skylark populations in arable settings where the success or otherwise of breeding is determined by the crop plantation (better in spring sown cereal, very poor in winter-sown crops). This variability would not occur post development where the habitat to be created would be available for skylark every year, thus creating a more stable and, consequently, resilient population. In addition, the provision of enhanced foraging resources for skylark has been shown to result in a greater number of chicks per nest – i.e. a higher rate of breeding success compared to control plots. As such, although there would be a reduction in the peak territory potential for the Project site, this would be offset by a higher baseline provision of potential territories (119 compared to 72) which would be available every year without breeding success being reliant on crop rotation. In addition, those nests supported by the habitat provision across the Project are likely to be more successful in raising chicks.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			On this basis, therefore, the Applicant does not consider that there is a requirement for any offsite mitigation. Note that the OHA calculations in their submission at Deadline 3 [**REP3-072**] have multiplied the number of territories by the territory density they used (0.27) instead of dividing it. Using the OHA methodology, 228 territories at 0.27/ha would equate to 228/0.27 = 844ha. 60ha at 0.27 territories/ha would equate to 60*0.27 = 16 territories.
Q2.8.10	Applicant	**Monitoring commitments** Table 9.10.1 in the revised Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 9 [REP2-012] sets out the monitoring commitments in respect of ecology. For some of the entries, it reports cleanly "Requirement in DCO". The ExA note no such specific requirements for monitoring exists on the face of the dDCO. 1) If the monitoring measures are to be secured on the face of the DCO, as firmly stated by Table 9.10.1, make the necessary amendments and provisions to make the requirement into force. 2) If the monitoring commitments are meant to be part of the OLEMP, specify this clearly in ES Chapter 9 and within the Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule [APP-129], clearly demonstrating where such measures are secured. 3) In Appendix C of the OLEMP [REP2-019], it states hedges should be managed to a minimum height of 3m and would be monitored to ensure this height. Can you explain how the density of planting would be monitored and managed to ensure that visual screening is achieved? (for example, a 3m tall hedgerow which is very sparse might provide very little screening).	1, 2) The Requirement in DCO reference in Table 9.10.1 is referring to the fact that the monitoring is set out within section 14 of the oLEMP [**REP3-034**] which is, itself, secured via Requirement 6 of the dDCO [**REP3-004**]. This has been updated in a revised ES Chapter 9 submitted at Deadline 4. 3) As described in Appendix B of the oLEMP **[REP3-034]**, hedgerows are to planted at a density of seven plants per linear metre, in three staggered rows. This will ensure a dense hedge forms, thereby providing any necessary visual screening. Once established, the principles of on-going management and monitoring, as set out in sections 11 and 12 of the oLEMP, will ensure that such screening is maintained at the correct level. Maintenance responsibility will be secured through Requirement 6 of the draft DCO.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Q2.8.11	Applicant Natural England Environment Agency	**Monitoring mitigation** Applicant – What would happen if ecological monitoring found that a greater adverse effect was being had on a species (i.e. bats, breeding bird assemblage) than the ES envisages? What would the mitigation options be and where are they secured? Would panels be removed to lessen the impact? Natural England / Environment Agency – Please provide your comments on this matter and what monitoring would achieve without effective mitigation options being tabled or understood at this point in the DCO process.	The monitoring procedure with respect to habitats and species is set out in section 12 of the oLEMP [**REP3-034**]. If the monitoring identified that mitigation was not as effective as envisaged then appropriate measures would be taken to ensure that the desired outcome were achieved. The measures to be taken in such a scenario would be completely dependent upon the nature of the identified failure and would be considered in consultation with relevant stakeholders.
Q2.8.12	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Biodiversity metric** In the applicant's rebuttal of the local impact report [REP2-026, page 37] the applicant provides reasoning for not applying a temporal multiplier to the biodiversity metric. Do you disagree and, if you do, what are the implications for the ExA's and the SoS' assessments?	The Applicant's position remains as per **[REP2-026]**.
Q2.8.13	Applicant	**Effects on woodland** Forestry Commission [REP2-054] query the interface of HDD and ancient woodland. This was not commented on in the applicant's DL3 submissions. Please elaborate on the relationship and specify whether a minimum depth underneath ancient woodland could be secured.	Woodland soils can vary in depth, however it is widely recognised that the principal zone for tree roots is within the uppermost 600mm of the soil horizon. Alongside the physical tree roots themselves the rich seed bank which lies within woodlands soils is also held within the uppermost soil horizons, as their presence is formed by natural seed dispersal, such as wind-blown or fallen seed mast (such as acorns or fruit). These roots and seed resources will only lie within the woodland and the immediate woodland edge zone, any areas which have been intensively managed through agriculture (i.e. ploughing and arable crop rotation) will not possess significant roots or valuable natural seed banks within the soils. As woodland micro flora & fauna require aerobic conditions to live, these also will likely exist within the uppermost organic soils, not the sub-soils which lie beneath. Therefore, any HDD at depths greater than 600mm are highly unlikely to cause direct tree root harm or affect significant woodland seed resources or micro flora & fauna.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Q2.8.14	Forestry Commission Natural England	**Woodland fragmentation** The applicant has stated [REP2-026] that: *"maintaining connectivity between woodlands and water course features is ensured within the masterplan through the provision of the buffers around water courses, hedgerows etc. Indeed, the masterplan would improve connectivity between these features compared to the baseline as the majority of the fields present across the Project site have little or no field margin. Once built, the Project would provide a minimum of 5m of margin either side of all hedgerows."* Given this statement, do you consider there the potential for fragmentation between woodland (and ancient woodland) areas to occur, or would the proposal provide betterment compared to the current situation?	
Q2.8.15	Applicant	**Biodiversity Net Gain** The OLEMP anticipates the delivery of 70% net gain of habitats units across the project as well as 50% net gain in hedgerow units [REP2-019, paragraph 9.1.4]. The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment forecasts 80% and 57% respectively [APP-162]. 1) Explain the differences between the % figure. 2) Which of the above figures is relied upon in the assessment of beneficial effects in ES Chapter 9 [REP2-012]	1) The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment [APP-162] sets out the assessment of the BNG Illustrative Masterplan as submitted [APP-062]. This shows that the Project would deliver the 80% and 57%, Habitats/Hedgerows BNG, respectively, if the final landscape design of the Project followed that set out in the Illustrative Masterplan exactly. However, since this Masterplan is only illustrative at this stage with the final design to be confirmed by way of discharge of the relevant Requirements, it is necessary to provide a degree of precaution in what is committed to with respect to BNG both to ensure the Applicant has the necessary engineering flexibility within the final masterplan and to ensure that the Secretary of State (SoS), in making their decision, can have confidence in ascribing any necessary weight to the provision of BNG by the Project, even though the landscape design is only illustrative at this stage. 2) As such, the Project has committed to the delivery of at least 70% habitats BNG and 50% hedgerow BNG and it is these figures that are relied upon within ES Chapter 9. It was considered that these values are sufficiently ambitious that they match the scale of the Project while also being precautionary enough that IPs, the ExA and the SoS can have confidence

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			they can be achieved. Given that the final masterplan design is required to be substantially in accordance with that set out in the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (oLEMP) [REP3-034] and it is this document that drives the delivery of the BNG, it is likely that the Project will deliver more than the 70%/50%, as set out in the BNG Assessment. However, for the purposes of decision making, only the 70%/50% is relied upon.
Q2.8.16	Natural England	**Biodiversity Net Gain vs loss of habitat** Many IP have queried whether BNG would actually be an effective replacement for the habitat (breeding and foraging opportunities) that would be lost to bats and breeding birds through the loss of arable land by way of the project. Do you have any views on this, particularly with regards to connectivity between existing established habitats and the distance to proposed BNG land?	

Q2.9 Environmental Impact Assessment

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Areas for further evidence			
Q2.9.1	Applicant	**Overplanting** NPS EN-3 para 2.10.17 anticipates solar generation as being between 2 to 4 acres for each MW of output. Overplanting, as noted in 2024 NPS EN-3 footnote 92, is "*the situation in which the installed generating capacity or nameplate capacity of the facility is larger than the generator's grid connection*". The Examining Authority (ExA) has not found reference to overplanting within	The export limit is defined by the 840 MW AC agreement with National Grid. The project includes 1.8 to 2.2 million modules with a DC installed capacity of up to 1300 MWp, an inverter capacity of 936 MVA and the system is designed to export up to 840 MW AC, accounting for transmission, conversion losses and auxiliary power.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Environmental Statement (ES) Chapters 5 or 6. Reference was made at Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 1 regarding the generating capacity being limited by the grid connection offer of 840MW. The ExA requests greater detail on these two aspects of the proposed development in respect of these NPS citations.	
Q2.9.2	Applicant	**Cumulative developments** Cumnor Parish Council [REP2-048, ExQ1.1.5] raised concern regarding the cumulative effects associated with the Red House Solar Farm and a floating solar farm at Farmoor Reservoir. Whilst Red House Solar Farm is cited in a couple of tables in ES Chapter 20 [APP-057] there is little literature discussing the cumulative impacts of the project with Red House Solar Farm or ratifying the conclusions drawn, even though that proposal is adjacent/ adjoining the project. In addition, whilst the ES does make reference to the Farmoor Reservoir scheme [APP-057], there is little literature on the potential for cumulative effects. Provide more information in respect of these other proposals and evidence any conclusions drawn as to the cumulative effects arising across all the varying ES Chapter topics.	Red House Solar Farm and the floating solar farm at Farmoor Reservoir were both included in the Cumulative Effects Assessment Shortlist, ES Chapter 20 [**APP-057**] – and feature in Volume 3, Appendix 20.1 – p.16 [**APP-224**], which identifies both of the sites as adjacent to the Botley West Project. Red House Solar Farm had been the subject of a screening request and two scoping requests (Tier 2) and an application made in 2023 (P23/V2624/FUL) had been withdrawn prior to submission. At the point of submission for Botley West, there was no validated application for Red House Solar Farm, but subsequently application P24/V2489/FUL was validated and remains undetermined at the point of preparing this response. The Farmoor Reservoir 7.3MW floating solar project had, and still has, only been subject to a screening request (Tier 2) and negative screening decision. The Applicant is aware that Thames Water is promoting the proposal on its website, and that they are in discussion with Vale of White Horse District Council about the project, but at the point of preparing this response no application has been made. An update to the Cumulative Effects Assessment Longlist was provided by the OHAs on 31 July 2025. This updated list will be used to inform an update to the cumulative assessment, proposed to be submitted at Deadline 5 where further information and assessment of cumulative effects will be provided for both these developments.
Q2.9.3	Applicant	**Cumulative effects** The ExA note that, among all the other projects in the shortlist [APP-224], there are four particular proposals that appear to be getting attention from Interested parties (IP) during the course of the Examination. These are: 1) The 2MWe floating solar farm at Farmoor Reservoir	Red House Solar Farm, the floating solar farm at Farmoor Reservoir, The Salt Cross development and land south of Perdiswell Farm (see also Q2.1.2) were all included in the Cumulative Effects Assessment Shortlist, ES Chapter 20 [**APP-057**] – and feature in Volume 3, Appendix 20.1 [**APP-224]**. An update to the Cumulative Effects Assessment Longlist was provided by the OHAs on 31 July 2025, including the new applications at Perdiswell Farm, and Red House Solar Farm. Cherwell District has also highlighted a new application on

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		2) The 65ha solar farm on adjacent/ adjoining land at Red House Farm 3) The Salt Cross housing allocation 4) The proposed housing development by Blenheim Palace sought under reference 25/01510 Other questions in ExQ2 request details relating to these proposals. For the purposes of this question, the ExA state that these proposals appear more important and relevant to the Examination than others due to the interest from IP. The ExA request assessment of these schemes and evidence that the applicant has given thought both to the cumulative effects and to the potential implications for mitigation when advancing the project.	land north of The Moors, Kidlington, as worthy of consideration in terms of cumulative effects. This updated list from the OHAs will be used to inform an update to the cumulative assessment from the Applicant to be submitted at Deadline 5, where further information will be provided for all four developments.
Q2.9.4	Oxfordshire Host Authorities Other Interested Parties	**Consequences of assessments** The ExA note your concerns about the applicant's methodology (particularly on landscaping) underplaying the effects arising from the proposed project, and the ExA also note the applicant's rebuttals defending the decisions made. The question following on from this is whether, as a result, you consider the mitigation to be adopted by the applicant is equally underplayed. 1) Do you consider that, if the effects arising had been deemed 'significant', that additional mitigation above and beyond what is proposed would be required, or: 2) Do you consider that the mitigation proposals would likely have remained equivalent to what is currently proposed, regardless of whether the applicant reported moderate adverse effects as significant or not significant?	

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		If the answer to question 2 is no (i.e. more mitigation would have been proposed had the effects been deemed significant), which areas do you think the mitigation proposals have been underplayed and what do you consider needs to be done for more effective mitigation?	
Matters of Clarification			
Q2.9.5	Applicant	**Residual effects** Paragraph 4.1.7 references the role of residual adverse effects after the implementation of mitigation measures in the overall planning balance, and states that the Secretary of State (SoS) should weigh these effects against the public benefits. The applicant has faced criticism of the approach taken in the ES, particularly on cultural heritage and landscape topics in terms of methodology and the perceived downplaying of effects, as well as in respect of ecology in terms of surveys. If an effect has been considered to be of a lesser consequence than it actually is (i.e. not significant), the ExA perceive there could be real potential for the subsequent mitigation plans to be less than what is required (i.e. the belief it is not broke, don't fix it). If that were to be the case, then the true residual effects of the development could be unknown and unquantified. In light of this, the ExA is curious to understand from the applicant how the SoS should take into account the potential for such unknown or understated residual adverse effects in the planning balance. How can it be confidently said that the 'critical national priority' would outweigh	**Approach to Assessment** The approach to the assessment of residual effects within the Environmental Statement is consistent with the approach set out in Section 4 of the Scoping Report **[APP-125]** and as confirmed by the Scoping Opinion **[APP-126]**. The approach is reiterated in Chapter 4 of the ES 'Approach to Environmental Assessment' **[APP-041]**. The technical sections of the ES each follow the systematic approach of having assessed likely significant effects with the incorporation of embedded mitigation and, where necessary, the assessment of likely residual effects following any additional mitigation. Where, in the course of consultation with Interested Parties, residual effects are perceived by others to be of a greater magnitude, then these are generally subjective opinion and do not materially affect the assessment of significant effects. The areas of focus in this regard during Examination are heritage and landscape assessments. Further commentary is provided below. • The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) **[PDB-006]** has considered the residual effects of the Project as those effects at summer Year 15. As detailed at paragraph 8.9.100 to 8.9.256 and summarised in Table 8.24. All residual effects identified at summer Year 15 are acknowledged as being adverse to some degree, except where there is no effect. However, there are no significant adverse residual effects considered likely as a result of the Project. It should be noted that in light of this and other Representations through the examination process, the Applicant has reviewed the submitted LVIA **[PDB-006]** and amended the assessment of effects where appropriate, giving more explanation as for the reasoning for the levels of significance reached [**REP2-029**] and [**REP3-066**]. It is not the Applicant's intention to make wholesale changes to the LVIA methodology, as this has been produced based on best

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		the residual effects when the residual effects may not be accurately covered or represented?	practice guidance, contained within GLVIA3 and clarified in LI TGN 2024 01, as agreed with the OHA. • With regard to cultural heritage the Applicant's position is that all residual effects are not significant in accordance with the EIA methodology. However, the policy tests are those set out in Section 5.9 of NPS EN-1. The Applicant considers that that any harm to the significance of heritage assets would be 'less than substantial', and it not aware of any views expressed by statutory or non-statutory consultees that 'substantial harm' would be caused to any heritage asset. As such the correct policy test is the one set out in paragraph 5.9.32 of NPS EN-1 '*Where the proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate securing its optimum viable use*'. In a section regarding factors influencing site selection and design, NPS EN-3 advises '*In considering the impact on the historic environment as set out in Section 5.9 of EN-1 and whether it is satisfied that the substantial public benefits would outweigh any loss or harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the Secretary of State should take into account the positive role that large-scale renewable projects play in the mitigation of climate change, the delivery of energy security and the urgency of meeting the net zero target*' (paragraph 3.3.8). **National Policy** The Applicant does not therefore accept that the assessed residual effects are understated. However, even if the ExA and SoS disagree, the Applicant has clearly demonstrated an appropriate application of the mitigation hierarchy in compliance with EN-1 and EN-3, which acknowledges that are likely to be likely significant effects (for example, paragraph 5.10.5 of NPS EN-1 states that "*Virtually all nationally significant energy infrastructure projects will have adverse effects on the landscape*"). The ExA should be assured that the method and reporting of residual effects across the ES, together with cumulative effects assessment adheres to PINS Advice and IEMA practice guidance and is consistent with national policy. Also, paragraph 4.1.7 of NPS EN-1 continues to state that: "*For projects which qualify as CNP Infrastructure, it is likely that the need case will outweigh the residual effects in all but the most exceptional cases*". Therefore, if the ExA or SoS considered there to be any potential unknown or understated residual adverse

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			effects, even then the national policy position would strongly support the Project as a piece of critical national priority infrastructure. This is confirmed by paragraph 4.2.16 of NPS EN-1 which says, the SoS will take as a starting point for decision making that such infrastructure is to be treated as if it has met *any* tests which are set out within the NPSs or any other planning policy, which requires a clear outweighing of harm, exceptionality or very special circumstances. Paragraph 4.2.17 goes on to list some of those situations where the starting point should be that the CNP infrastructure has met required tests. By starting point, it means that the decision maker starts from the position that the tests are met unless there is clear evidence to support coming to a contrary view. The list comprises areas or receptors with the highest level of protection. Paragraph 4.2.17 provides that even for these areas, which have national importance and the highest status of protection, and where exceptional circumstances are required to be demonstrated, the "*Secretary of State will take as a starting point that CNP Infrastructure will meet*" that test of amounting to exceptional circumstances. The nature of the impacts from the Project (including for example, landscape and cultural heritage effects), are very clearly not of a scale or in any way comparable with the residual effects contemplated within paragraph 4.2.17 of EN-1. In short, the CNP presumption applies "*in all but the most exceptional circumstances*", and the Applicant's position is that any residual harm associated with the Project is far from the types of effects that may be in the realm of exceptional circumstances, let alone "the most" exceptional circumstances. **DCO controls** Even if the ExA or Secretary of State formed the view that the ES and proposed mitigation measures were understated, the DCO provides a number of mechanisms for ensuring that effects of the Project are no worse than what has been assessed as the worst-case scenario under the ES. The process for discharge of requirements under Schedule 16 ff the Draft Development Consent Order [**REP3-004**] requires the Applicant to provide a statement to the relevant planning authority that the application will not give rise to any materially new or different environmental effects to those in the ES. Should the relevant planning authority not be satisfied that this is the case, the Applicant would be required to demonstrate what further mitigation or design changes would

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			be required to ensure that was the position before the requirement can be discharged. Similarly, in order to "maintain" the Project as defined in Article 2 of the draft Development Consent Order, the Applicant must ensure that such works do not give rise to any materially new or materially different environmental effects to those identified in the ES. As such, the burden/risk of addressing any shortcomings in the assessed conclusions of significance falls entirely on the Applicant, in being able to properly implement the DCO. This ensures that any residual effects are appropriately addressed to the point that they are outweighed by public benefits of the Project.

Q2.10 Flood Risk, Hydrology and Water Resources

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Areas for further evidence			
Q2.10.1	Applicant	**Flood risk assessment** The response to EXQ1.10.10 is noted [REP2-025]. In respect of those solar panels which have a 200mm freeboard, please provide the following: 1) Location of the proposed solar panels on a plan Estimate of number of solar panels with a 200mm freeboard	The updated Appendix 10.1: Flood Risk Assessment **[REP3-020]** submitted at Deadline 3, has been reflective of the 300mm freeboard required for the limited solar panels located in an area at up to 600mm depths of flooding. As such, we anticipate that this has since been resolved.
Q2.10.2	Applicant Environment Agency Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Flood modelling** In relation to the modelling that has been undertaken, the applicant states [REP2-027, page 4]: *"While the current model is uncalibrated and excludes some features (e.g., eastern flow route, culverts, urban pipework), it has identified key flood flow patterns and areas of potential*	The Cassington surface water model [**APP-172**] has been produced to support enhancement mitigation for existing flood risk in Cassington but is not required under national and local planning policy, including the NPS. The modelling has been undertaken to be used as a helpful tool to identify flow patterns and areas where mitigation could be most effective, which it has achieved. The modelling will be used to inform initial mitigation concepts and ensure these concepts are grounded in the best available understanding of flood behaviour at

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		mitigation…the modelling outputs have informed initial mitigation concepts." How reliable and robust are the flood mitigation proposals when they have been informed by uncalibrated and incomplete data?	this stage and ensures the space available in the plans to provide this mitigation. Mitigation measures will be refined post-consent at detailed design stage and will be submitted to and approved by the relevant local planning authority or authorities prior to construction. The approach at this stage is deemed reasonable, taking into account the proposed solar panel design, we do not foresee an increase in flow rate, and therefore an adverse effect on flood risk to Cassington. In either case, the planned mitigation is anticipated to provide a betterment to the existing conditions. The Applicant has added the Environment Agency as a consultee for the purposes of Requirement 11 of the draft DCO in respect of flood risk. The Conceptual Drainage Strategy has also been updated to ensure that "*The Applicant will prepare its detailed surface water management strategy in collaboration with the LLFA".* These updates ensure that appropriate controls are in place.
Q2.10.3	Applicant	**Infiltration testing** The applicant states [REP2-027, page 5] it *"recognizes the importance of infiltration testing to inform pond sizing, locations, and overall drainage design. A programme of site-specific infiltration testing will be undertaken as part of detailed design."* Can the applicant arrange for some preliminary infiltration testing to take place during the Examination so as to: 1) Seek to resolve or narrow the amount of dispute with Cassington Parish Council 2) Demonstrate to the Secretary of State (SoS) that the assumptions made in respect of flood risk and surface water drainage are robust. In addition, given the concerns from Oxford Airport and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation **(**DIO) regarding bird strike, further information on the location, size and form of any attenuation ponds is required, including whether	Appendix 10.2 Conceptual Drainage Strategy [**REP03-022**] assesses the maximum design scenario for new impermeable areas, and includes initial information regarding the detailed design of attenuation features, their suitability for ecological habitat and management and maintenance of SuDS features. The following will be prepared post-DCO in accordance with the Conceptual Drainage Strategy and will be submitted to and approved by the relevant local planning authority or authorities prior to construction: • Ground investigation reports, including infiltration testing, • Detailed drainage layout, including refined calculations, and • Further details regarding water quality, management and maintenance of SuDS features The Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [**APP-235**] sets out how grassland management will be managed throughout the development. A detailed Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) will be prepared in accordance with the OLEMP and will be submitted to and approved by the relevant local planning authority or authorities prior to construction. This will include provisions in respect of on-going maintenance and management of the landscape and ecology including in relation to bird species. Detail on attenuation is set out in Sections and 7 of the Conceptual Drainage Strategy.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		such ponds would accommodate or support large bird species.	
Q2.10.4	Applicant	**Monitoring of Northern Watercourses** The Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) requests modelling of watercourses in the northern area [REP1-072, paragraph 7.5.17]. The response to the LIR [REP2-026] does not address this point. Provide a response.	An assessment of flood risk to and from the watercourses within the northern area is included within Section 2 of Appendix 10.1 Flood Risk Assessment [**REP3-020**]. Data sources used within the assessment of flood risk include Strategic Flood Risk Assessment information, the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning and the Environment Agency Long Term Flood Risk mapping which includes risk of flooding from surface water. The Flood Risk Assessment concludes that the northern site is located within Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3 and that development has been restricted to Flood Zone 1 and outside of the 1 in 1,000-year surface water flood extent associated with flood risk from ordinary watercourses and as such the modelling of watercourses within the northern site was not deemed to be necessary. Additionally, it is noted the Environment Agency have not requested additional modelling of these watercourses.
Q2.10.5	Applicant	**Cassington vulnerability** The response by the applicant in respect of specific concerns raised in several Relevant Representations (RR) regarding the impact of the proposed development on Cassington flooding vulnerability is noted [REP1-020]. Please expand on why proposed mitigation measures are to be tested at the detailed design stage and not earlier in the process. How can the Examining Authority (ExA), and ultimately the SoS, be confident that the proposed measures would provide adequate mitigation if testing has not occurred.	The Cassington surface water model **[APP-172]** has been produced to support enhancement mitigation for existing flood risk in Cassington but is not required as part of national and local planning policy, including the NPS. The modelling has been undertaken to be used as a key tool to identify flow patterns and areas where mitigation could be most effective. The modelling will be used to inform initial mitigation concepts which include shallow ponds, bunds and ditch widening is proposed at an area upstream of Cassington, as detailed within the Outline OMP **[APP-234]**. The modelling will ensure these concepts are grounded in the best available understanding of flood behaviour at this stage and ensures the space available in the plans to provide this mitigation. Mitigation measures will be refined post-consent at detailed design stage and presented within the detailed OMP which will be submitted to and approved by the relevant local planning authority or authorities prior to construction. The relevant planning authority will have a right of approval at that stage to determine whether the proposed mitigation, as supported by additional information informed by any test results carried out post-consent, is considered sufficient.
Q2.10.6	Applicant	**Soil compaction** The response by the applicant in respect of specific concerns raised in several RR's regarding	Chapter 6: Project Description of the ES **[APP-043]** provides details of the Project Description including the design of piles, their depth and possible numbers (paragraph 6.4.10 and Table 6.2). The variation in the number of piles is as a result of the potential for the module mounting structure to either have one or two

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		the lack of mention of soil compaction in the Conceptual Drainage Strategy with respect to pile driving and construction is noted [REP1-020]. Please provide additional detail as to the content of the proposed soil/grass management plan in order for the ExA to understand what measures would be in place to ensure that the ground does not become bare due to the lack of maintenance and peak runoff discharge does not increase over time	legs at each end, as stated at paragraph 6.4.10, but for 'worst case scenario' purposes two legs at each end has been assessed. CoCP Annex C, Outline Soil Management Plan **[REP3-030 & 233]**, provides details of the Soil Management Measures for elements of the Project within paragraph 9.6.9-12, including the mitigation of the installation of the piles upon the ground conditions. The outline Code of Construction Practice **[REP3-030 & APP-233]** section 1.10 also contains details of environmental management measures, including noise and vibration from pile installation, and air quality management during construction Appendix 10.2 Conceptual Drainage Strategy **[REP3-022]** assesses the maximum design scenario for new impermeable areas, and includes an assessment of an increase in peak rainfall intensities over time as a result of climate change. Initial management and maintenance of SuDS features are also noted. The following will be prepared post-DCO in accordance with the Conceptual Drainage Strategy and will be submitted to and approved by the relevant local planning authority or authorities prior to construction: • Ground investigation reports, including infiltration testing, • Detailed drainage layout, including refined calculations, and • Further details regarding water quality, management and maintenance of SuDS features The Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan **[APP-235]** sets out how grassland management (that also serves as a SuDS feature) will be managed throughout the development. A detailed Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) will be prepared in accordance with the OLEMP and will be submitted to and approved by the relevant local planning authority or authorities prior to construction. This will include provisions in respect of on-going maintenance and management of the landscape and ecology.
Q2.10.7	Lead Local Flood Authority	**Outline Operation Management Plan** Noting the response made to ExQ1.7.27 [REP2-050], the applicant has updated the Outline Operational Management Plan (OOMP) at Deadline 3 (DL3) [REP3-032] to include proposed measures to manage recent pollution and manage surface water runoff during the	

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		construction of the solar farm. Such measures would include soil/vegetation management in the context of flood risk, and this is to be set out in the Construction Surface Water Management Plan. Please confirm whether these additional measures are considered satisfactory.	
Q2.10.8	Applicant	**Haul roads** Please confirm whether any of the temporary haul roads are to be kept in place during the operational phase. If so, please provide an explanation as to why this is required and identify on a plan which haul roads are to be retained.	Haul roads would not be retained during the operational phase. If during operation a maintenance need presented requiring the temporary reinstatement of any haul road this would be via mats. Mats would be removed on completion of operational activity.
Q2.10.9	Applicant	**Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule** The additional mitigation measures contained within Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 10: Hydrology and Flood Risk submitted at [REP3-012] are noted. However, please advise whether the Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule [APP-129] should be updated to reflect these additional commitments. If so, please amend and submit into the Examination at D4.	The Project Mitigations and Commitments Schedule **[APP-129]** has been reviewed and updated to include the additional mitigation contained in ES Chapter 10: Hydrology and Flood Risk **[REP3-012]** and will be submitted at D4.
Hydrology and Groundwater			
Q2.10.10	Applicant	**Code of Construction Practice: Part 1** Noting the comments made by the Environment Agency (EA) [REP2-053], please confirm whether the following plans will be available prior to the close of the Examination. Alternatively, if the plans aren't going to be available, please provide further detail on the content of the proposed plans: 1) Pollution Prevention Plan 2) Spillage and Emergency Response Plan	Mitigation measures regarding hydrology and flood risk to be implemented during the construction stage of the project are presented within the outline CoCP [**REP3-030] [APP-233].** Measures include Flood Management Plans, Hydrogeological Risk Assessments, and best construction practice measures including pollution prevention and emergency pollution control measures, buffer distances from Environment Agency Main Rivers and ordinary watercourses, watercourse crossing methodologies. A detailed Pollution Prevention Plan, Spillage and Emergency Response Plan and Contaminated Land and Groundwater Discovery Strategy will be prepared post-DCO in accordance with the outline CoCP and will

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		3) Contaminated Land and Groundwater Discovery Strategy	be submitted to and approved by the relevant local planning authority or authorities prior to construction. As detailed within the outline CoCP, all surface water management practices will comply with relevant environmental legislation and guidance, including The Water Supply (Water Quality) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 and the Environment Agency's guidance on pollution prevention, including Pollution Prevention Guidance notes 01, 05, 08 and 21.
Q2.10.11	Environment Agency	**Water Supply Strategy** It is noted in the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) submitted at DL3 [REP3-047] that the applicant is proposing to prepare a Water Supply Strategy post consent. Please confirm whether the timing of this strategy is acceptable to the EA.	
Rivers and Watercourses			
There are no questions under this topic at this time.			
Control of Pollution and contaminants			
There are no questions under this topic at this time.			

Q2.11 Geology and Land Use

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Farming Operations			
Q2.11.1	Applicant	**Grazing strategy** The response to ExQ1.10,11 is noted by the Examining Authority (ExA) [REP2-025]. However, please confirm the following: 1) Which other livestock, apart from sheep, is to be used for grazing? Is this reference to low-intensity cattle grazing in the River Evenlode corridor?	As described in Table 11.1 of the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) **[REP3-034]**, either sheep or cattle would be used for conservation grazing depending on the location within the Project site. For example, low intensity cattle grazing would primarily be limited to the River Evenlode Corridor and areas of meadow grassland (Table 11.1 [REP3-034]), whilst the remainder of the Project site, particularly the areas allocated for solar panels, would be subject to conservation grazing using sheep. Notwithstanding, the final grazing strategy, including the type and location of grazing will be developed as part of the detailed

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Provide additional detail in respect of the statement that there will be a pause in the grazing over much of the site to allow grasses and wildflowers to set seed. How long is the pause anticipated to be for?	LEMP, which will be prepared and submitted for approval by the relevant Local Authorities prior to the commencement of construction. The Applicant assumes the ExA is referring to Paragraph 7.2.7 of the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) **[REP3-034]**, which states "*A pause in the grazing over much of the site will allow grasses and wildflower to set seed*". The duration of this 'pause' (also referred to as 'shutting up') is a traditional management tool for hay production but also in conservation management to enable plants to flower and set seed. The exact timing will vary from year to year, depending on weather conditions, and be dependent on the type of grasses and wildflowers chosen, which would be determined as part of the detailed LEMP, to be prepared and submitted for approval by the relevant Local Authorities prior to the commencement of construction. Generally, shut up is between mid-late April and July (i.e. circa three months).
Q2.11.2	Applicant	**Grazing strategy** The response to ExQ1.11.2 in respect of sheep grazing is noted by the ExA [REP2-025]. Given the importance of the grazing, please confirm how the expansion of Blenheim's current livestock business is to be secured? Similarly, if Blenheim's livestock business is not expanded, how would the required number of sheep be secured with the three local farmers mentioned in the response to ExQ1.11.2?	In addition to the sheep flock within Blenheim Estate as stated previously, they also run a herd of British White cattle specifically for conservation grazing in parts of the Estate. The commitment by the Applicant to the implementation of conservation grazing mainly by sheep, but also be cattle, where appropriate, is secured through Requirement 6 of the Draft Development Consent Order **[REP3-004]** which describes the development of the detailed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan largely in accordance with the outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (REP3-034). The Applicant can confirm that it is discussing a Memorandum of Understanding with Blenheim Estate to secure the expansion of their livestock business. Should this not be possible, grazing will be offered on attractive terms to local graziers with the backstop being mechanical cutting of the grassland, all in accordance with the stated outputs of the Project.
Q2.11.3	Applicant	**Land holding details** The ExA notes the response made to ExQ1.11.6 in respect of land holding details [REP2-025]. However, please revisit the response and, as per ExQ1.11.6, amend the original response to include the following details:	A table has been provided in **Annex 7: Land Holding Details**

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		1) All relevant plot numbers 2) Holding Use 3) Breakdown of land classification – by hectare and percentage of holding 4) Loss of land – defined by temporary and/ or permanent by both hectare and percentage of holding Please provide the revised response in an Annex to your responses in a tabular format for use by the ExA.	
Q2.11.4	Applicant	**Best and Most Versatile Land** The ExA notes the response made to ExQ1.11.8 in respect of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land [REP2-025]. However, please revisit the response, and as requested, provide, or signpost to existing, justification for each use of land by grade. Please provide the revised response in an Annex to your responses in a tabular format for use by the ExA.	A detailed breakdown of the area (ha) of each ALC grade for each land use within the Project site has been provided in a tabular format in **Annex 8: Justification of Land Use by ALC Grade** of the Applicants Response to ExAs Second Written Questions **[EN010147/APP/14.2]**. In addition, a separate column has been provided setting out the justification for each land use within the Project site.
Q2.11.5	Campaign for the Protection of Rural England	**Best and Most Versatile Land** The ExA notes the comments made by Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) during Open Floor Hearing (OFH) 1 and the written summary submitted into the Examination [REP1-100]. With regard to the concerns raised regarding the use of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land, please confirm what additional information CPRE would expect to see from the applicant which illustrates how harm/avoidance of BMV land has been included in the project design.	
Q2.11.6	Blenheim Farm	**Fallow land** Noting your response to ExQ1.11.11 [REP2-067] and also in response to James Price's submission at Deadline 3 (DL3) [REP3-100], please provide	Leaving land fallow is a practice which has formed part of agricultural rotations for centuries as it enhances soil quality through natural restoration processes. Without intensive cultivation, organic matter accumulates, boosting fertility and supporting microbial activity essential for nutrient cycling. Native plants and cover crops contribute residues that enrich soil carbon and microbial diversity. Fallow periods also promote biodiversity, beneficial insects, grasses, and microorganisms improve

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		additional detail on how land quality would increase just by leaving it fallow.	soil structure, suppress pests, and enhance water retention. Root systems stabilise soil, reducing erosion and nutrient loss. Along with centuries of fallow rotations, there are bodies of research on Agricultural Ecosystems which show the act of fallowing increases soil organic carbon and moisture retention; key indicators of resilience and productivity. In context of Botley West, fallowing and allowing vegetation to grow beneath panels supports soil regeneration, fertility and in turn long-term land productivity.
Q2.11.7	Applicant	**Best and Most Versatile Land** The ExA notes the applicant's response to ExQ1.11.7 [REP2-025], however part 2 of the question has not been answered. Please revisit the response, and as requested, consider whether there would be a significant effect on the ability for those affected farms to grow crops for an extended period of time.	With regard to Part 2 of ExQ1.11.7 **[REP2-025]**, the temporary and permanent loss of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land during operation and maintenance of the Project was scoped out of the assessment reported in ES Chapter 17 - Agricultural Land Use and Public Rights of Way **[APP-054]** on the basis that there would be no additional effects beyond those already scoped into the assessment during the construction and decommissioning phase (see Table 17.6 [APP-054]), which includes the temporary and permanent loss of BMV land and disruption to farm holdings. As such, the temporary and permanent effect of the Project on the ability of affected farms to grow crops has already been considered in ES Chapter 17 - Agricultural Land Use and Public Rights of Way **[APP-054]**. In addition, as stated in - ES Chapter 6 - Project Description **[APP-043]** and the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan **[APP-235]**, agricultural land use within the Project site would be retained during the operation and maintenance phase in the form of conversation grazing.
Q2.11.8	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Outline Decommissioning Plan** Applicant - The detail regarding the return of land to agricultural use/farmland in the Outline Decommissioning Plan (ODP) [APP-236] is noted. However, the ExA requests that further commitments are included within the ODP to ensure that the land to be returned to agricultural use/farmland would be to the same Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) grade. Additional detail should include, but is not limited to, specific methods and timescales to be involved. Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) – Noting the current wording of Requirement 14 within the Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) [REP3-004],	The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) grade is dependent upon physical characteristics, including climate, soil, topography and drainage and reflects the inherent potential of land for agricultural use (not its current usage). As such, construction of the Project would not change the underlying ALC but does reduce the availability of certain ALC grade land for future agricultural use. This is reflected in Table 17.6 of ES Chapter 17 - Agricultural Land Use and Public Rights of Way **[APP-054]**, which considered the potential effects of temporary and permanent loss of BMV agricultural land. Taking this into account, the Applicant does not consider that further commitments are required in the Outline Decommissioning Plan to maintain the same ALC grade of land following decommissioning of the Project. Notwithstanding, as explained in Paragraph 2.1.5 of the Outline Decommissioning Plan [APP-236], land would be restored to its preconstruction condition, as far as practicable, in accordance with measures like those set out in the Outline Soil Management Plan (see Annex C **[APP-233]**). The specific methods and

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		please comment on whether it is considered necessary for the relevant planning authority to also determine the acceptability of the end state of the land to be returned to agricultural use/farmland in terms of the ALC grade after the decommissioning stage.	timescales for the return of land to agricultural use/farmland following decommissioning of the Project would be determined as part of the detail Decommissioning Plan, which will be prepared and submitted for approval by the relevant Local Authorities prior to the decommissioning of the Project. However, it is likely that land would be reinstated as soon as reasonably practicable following decommissioning of the Project. The Outline Soil Management Plan (see Annex C [**APP-233**]) will be updated at Deadline 5 to explain that similar measures will be implemented during decommissioning phase of the Project to maintain the quality of soils and reinstate land to its preconstruction condition. As stated in [**APP-233**] the implementation of the detailed Soil Management Plan and the reinstatement of the land would be the responsibility of the Site Supervisor and the Agricultural Liaison Officer who would work with the landowners and farmers to ensure that the reinstatement and aftercare is appropriately implemented. The acceptability of the end state of the land to be returned would not need to be determined by the local planning authority.
Q2.11.9	Applicant	**Underground cables and land drainage** The ExA notes that the majority of the underground cables are to be left in-situ following decommissioning. Please confirm whether this would have any effect on the reinstatement of land drains? Would the presence of underground cabling prevent the land from being returned to agricultural use as it would no longer be efficiently drained? How does the applicant intend to maintain the existing land drain network across the site and how is this to be secured?	Existing land drains present within the Project site would be reinstated during the construction phase, where required, as to maintain drainage function. During decommissioning cables would be removed where required in line with best practice. All excavations are to be backfilled using soil sourced on the land within the Project Site Boundary, or with imported soil where required, using appropriate soil management techniques. This is to ensure that the land is appropriately returned to pre-existing agricultural use. As such, the presence of underground cables, following decommissioning of the Project, would have no effect on the reinstatement of land drains or the return of land to agricultural usage. As described in Table 3.1 of Outline Operational Management Plan (OMP) **[REP3-032]**, the Applicant would maintain the existing land drain network within the Project site, including regular monitoring and inspections of drainage features. The specific requirements for monitoring and inspections of drainage features will be set out in the detailed OMP, to be prepared and submitted for approval by the relevant Local Authorities prior to the commencement of operation of the Project.
Q2.11.10	Natural England	**Agricultural land yield** At ExQ1.11.11 [PD-008] the ExA requested that Blenheim Estate provide further detail regarding	

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		which parcels of agricultural land to be included within the proposed development were degraded of nutritional and organic content. A response was received from Blenheim Estate at [REP2-067]. However various interested parties (IP's), including Professor David Sherratt at DL3 [REP3-112], have raised concern in respect of the information given in terms of accuracy. In order to assist the ExA, please review the initial question posed at ExQ1.11.1 by the ExA [PD-008] and the responses received and provide commentary.	
Other land use matters			
Q2.11.11	Applicant	**Land stewardship** The response made by the applicant in respect of land management options is noted by the ExA [REP1-020]. Please confirm whether there is any update in respect of proposed management options. Is a decision in respect of this matter to be made before the close of the Examination?	**Land stewardship.** No formal decision has currently been taken regarding land stewardship and a final decision on this matter will be made post-consent. However, the Applicant can confirm that it is discussing a Memorandum of Understanding with Blenheim Estate for the management of the Solar Farm as has been suggested by interested parties.
Q2.11.12	Applicant	**Green Belt – openness definition** In response to ExQ1.11.12, the OHA state that the definition of openness as provided in the Planning Statement is not accepted [REP2-050]. Several reasons are given for such non-acceptance but include the fact that the account of a development's three-dimensional volume has not been included, and that the visual element of openness should not be determined simply by whether the scheme can be seen, but also by the change in the openness of the view. Please provide comment on the full answer provided at ExQ1.11.12 by the OHA.	The applicant has acknowledged the visual and spatial aspect of the development within the Green Belt – see **REP1-012**, at paras 8.3.9 to 8.4.48 inclusive. Change in the openness of the view is a concept the Applicant accepts, and whilst screening arising from the management of existing hedgerows (allowing them to grow to up to 3m) and planting new, will help screen the development, there will still be openness of view, for example, over field gates and other accesses, the change in the filtered views through screening vegetation in winter months compared to the summer months. **REP3-035**, the Outline Landscape, Ecology and Management plan explains at length how the Applicant intends to balance screening with local landscape character. For example, at para 2.2.1 it states: ".. The management of the site shall seek to balance the Site's operational objectives / needs within the existing vegetation and context of the locality..."

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			At para 2.1.2 it states "... The overall design objectives of the landscape proposals are as follows; • Landscape Integration and Local Character: – To respond to the setting, scale and character of the site and to provide screening to the Site from within the local area and from elevated areas to the west. – Provide an appropriate setting for the proposals, responding to adjacent pastoral/arable land uses where appropriate, ensuring that the landscape proposals include native species planting appropriate to the local area. – Enhancing and protecting the existing landscape fabric. • Landscape Amenity: – Maintain and enhance, where possible, the local residents and visitors experience within this landscape, including the retention and enhancement of public access along waymarked footpaths and the introduction of interpretation boards...."
Q2.11.13	Applicant	**Green Belt – Very Special Circumstances** The response to ExQ1.11.16 [REP2-025] is noted. With regard to VSC 5 – Economic, Education and Sustainability Benefits please provide additional clarity and detail in respect of each of the three aspects as to how the suggested benefits would justify the proposed development within the Green Belt.	In the opinion of the Applicant the following explanations provide greater clarity as to why these are considered to be benefits capable of being VSC, to justify development in the Green Belt: **Economic**: The impact of employment generation on unemployment rates in the Study Area is assessed to be moderately beneficial at construction and decommissioning phases and minor beneficial at the operational and maintenance phase. The impact of providing education and skills benefits as part of a targeted employment and skills plan is assessed to have minor beneficial impacts at construction and operation phases. In addition, the direct investment is assessed to have a minor beneficial impact across all phases of the Project. (**REP3-018**, paras 15.13.4). In addition the Outline Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan (OSSEP) (**REP3-028**, Appendix 15.2) provides detail on the various employment and skills opportunities to be committed to as part of the Project. They involve the upskilling of disadvantaged local adults and young people not in employment, education or training. This will contribute towards the UK's requirement for a skilled solar workforce to achieve its Net Zero Ambitions. The *Outline, Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan* also has objectives of educational visits to the site & or educational establishments in the local area by the Applicant to educate them

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			about the proposed development, careers in solar development and the wider sustainability industry. For the employment and income determinant of health there would be a moderate beneficial (significant) effect for population health during the construction, operations and maintenance and decommissioning phases (**APP-053** para 16.9.149). These effects are driven by the measures that target employment opportunities to vulnerable groups (**APP-053** para 16.9.147). GVA: During the construction phase there will be a net employment GVA benefit of £16.4m as detailed in **REP3-018**, Chapter 15: Socio-Economics (Table 15.17). The effect on economic output as a result of the operational and maintenance phase of the Project would equate to a real term economic output of circa £64.7m. This figure does not allow for any economic output associated with the sale of the electricity that will be generated and thus the economic output in real terms may be significantly higher, although this will in itself be offset by some loss of agricultural production. (**REP3-018**, paras 15.9.56 to 15.9.60). In the Applicant's judgement, significant weight should be given to this VSC factor. **Education**: The inclusion of an outdoor educational area and growing spaces offers further public health benefits. These areas provide opportunities for community engagement, environmental education, and access to fresh produce, further enhancing overall well-being and fostering a healthier lifestyle for the local population over time. (**APP-053**, Paras 16.14.4) For the education and training determinant of health there would be a moderate beneficial (significant) effect for population health during the construction, operations and maintenance and decommissioning phases (**APP-053** para 16.9.135). These effects are driven by the measures that target educational and training opportunities to vulnerable groups (**APP-053** para 16.9.133). In the Applicant's judgement, moderate weight should be given to this VSC factor. **Sustainability**: As a renewable energy generation Project, the development contributes to climate change mitigation efforts via the production of low carbon electricity in operation. As stated in paragraph 14.15.8 **(REP3-016)**,'The Project is in line with the NPS EN-3's principle of supporting new renewable and low carbon energy developments, in addition to their associated infrastructure, in order to contribute to

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			reductions in GHG emissions'. Section 2 of NPS EN-1 also clearly sets out the need for new low carbon energy infrastructure to contribute to climate change mitigation, helping the UK to continue to work towards meeting a legally binding target to meet net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as enshrined in the Climate Change Act 2008. As is set out in paragraph 14.10.5 of the Volume 3, Chapter 14: Climate Change **(REP3-016)**, the impact of whole-life GHG emissions from the Project is considered to meet the definition of a Significant Beneficial effect in EIA Terms. In their 2024 report 'Progress in reducing emission 2024 report to Parliament', the Climate Change Committee, a UK Government advisory body, emphasize the crucial role of solar power in decarbonising the UK's energy system, stating that the UK needs to significantly expand large-scale solar capacity, alongside other renewable energy sources. In the Applicant's judgement, significant weight should be given to this VSC factor. It is relevant to note in judging the weight to attributed to these VSC factors that all of the above benefits referred to would either not otherwise be available, or available at the scale proposed, without the Project.
Q2.11.14	Applicant	**Soil analysis information** Further to the submissions made by CPRE Oxfordshire [REP3-090] and Tom Lewis [REP3-122] at DL3, please provide a copy of the soil sampling plan and the following information: 1) pH levels 2) Phosphorus, potassium, and magnesium levels, expressed in parts per million, rather than an index 3) Organic matter content Also, noting the additional comment in respect of lack of data for the northern site, please confirm whether the applicant intends to purchase the missing data? If not, please provide an explanation.	The requests in the CPRE Oxfordshire [**REP3-090**] and Tom Lewis [**REP3-122**] submissions relate to the soil sampling plan as referenced in Blenheim's response to the Examining Authority's first written questions [**REP2-067**]. The Applicant suggests that it is therefore appropriate for Blenheim (and not the Applicant) to provide a copy of the soil sampling plan and the information requested because it is based on the input Blenheim has provided. In terms of the assessment of agricultural land quality this is presented in Chapter 17 of the ES [**APP-054**], the application of the Agricultural Land Classification system does not include the consideration of the nutrient status as provided by Blenheim Estate, as this data would be considered to be subject to changing managing practices being applied over time and not an indicator of the extent to which physical limitations impose long term limitations on agricultural use. The outline Soil Management Plan, secured as Requirement 11 of the Draft DCO [**REP3-004**] as part of the outline CoCP [**APP-233**] at Section 9.7 refers to the requirement at the commencement of aftercare that in establishing the areas of grassland for conservation grazing, prior to seeding operations the following management measures would be determined:

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			• Cultivations to be undertaken, which would depend on the soil type and site conditions, but could include the use of a plough, harrow and roller; • Seed mixture to be used for initial grass establishment; and • Soil samples would be taken from the area or any bunded soils to be used in the restoration of the area to determine nutrient levels and inform proposals for any lime and fertiliser applications. At the end of the first year following cultivations and seeding operations, there would be an onsite review (with interested parties), which would comprise the following: • A review of the physical soil characteristics of the restored land; • Identification of requirements for further cultivation activities; • Identification of requirements for further remedial measures; and • Collection of samples to check soil nutrient levels and inform lime and fertiliser requirements. The onsite review would enable the management requirements to be identified for the following year.
Q2.11.15	Applicant	**Agricultural Land Classification and soil survey** Noting the response to ExQ1.11.4 [REP2-025], please provide an update in respect of the outstanding survey work for the remaining 5% of the total survey area. The ExA requests that the results of this survey are submitted into the Examination as soon as possible.	The Applicant is continuing to try to arrange access to be able to complete the survey of the remaining cable route option areas. If the survey access cannot be agreed for the intrusive ALC survey work within areas to be affected by the temporary cabling works, these surveys will be undertaken prior to construction in the development of the detailed Soil Management Plan, secured by Requirement 11 of the draft DCO. The outline SMP **[APP-233]** at section 9.3.4 states that the results of the survey work within these areas would be incorporated into the development of the detailed Soil Management Plan prior to construction. The soil types shown within the published soils information [**APP-113**] to occur within the unsurveyed cable route areas have been encountered and characterised within the areas of the survey work already undertaken. Therefore, the measures proposed within the outline Soil Management Plan are appropriate for the areas of land that remain unsurveyed at this stage.

Q2.12 Habitats Regulations Assessment

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Effect of the Proposed Development on its own and In-combination with Other Plans and Projects			
There are no questions under this topic at this time.			

Q2.13 Landscape and Visual Amenity

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Arboriculture			
Q2.13.1	Applicant	**Updated arboricultural report** [REP1-045] provides the updated tree survey plan, however the cable route (shown in light blue on the key) is not shown on the plans. [REP1-046] shows what appears to be a cable route, but not in the colour indicated on the key; the lighter blue (which is shown as the proposed cable route on the key) appears to indicate waterways and drains. Update these documents to show the cable route.	The updated arboricultural drawings do identify the cable route; however, the colour of the cable route has been updated to make it easier for the viewer to identify these areas in accordance with the legend. Updated plans are appended – See **Annex 9: Updated Arboricultural Drawings.**
Q2.13.2	Applicant Oxford Host Authorities	**Tree protection scenarios** [REP1-047] shows various scenarios in relation to works adjacent to/within root protection zones. However, no indication is provided on the plans of where such incursions may occur. Provide plans that show where each scenario may occur. Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) – do you have sufficient information to provide clear advice on the likelihood of impact to the tree roots and if not, what additional information do you require?	At this stage, prior to detailed design, the application of where each working scenario is implemented in not yet known. The current arboricultural document provides the working framework based on worst case scenarios, which will be implement later, once detailed design and tree survey information has been refined. At this stage, the designs are illustrative, but the expectation is that the cable route can be moved sufficiently within the cable route corridor to avoid the RPAs of most trees entirely and that the working framework is robust enough, so that it can be readily applied, in the limited number of places where it cannot be moved outside of a trees RPA. The impact assessment is, therefore, as detailed and robust as it can be pending detail design.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Landscape Effects			
Q2.13.3	Applicant	**Landscape effects – construction** In their responses to EXQ1.14.11 [REP3-072] OHA consider that your response further highlights their general concerns on the Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA). They state that there will be compounds, temporary compounds, fencing, vehicle movements, piling with associated plant and drilling machinery, which are all elements that would have an impact on the landscape character of an area thus conflict with the statement *"the inherent landscape characteristics and physical framework of the landscape would be retained".* The Examining Authority (ExA) are minded to agree with the OHA assessment and so in order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please provide a more robust and detailed response to the question of how the assessment of minor adverse effect is justified, particularly in relation to the how the scale of construction across the proposed development site may be considered as only a "slight variance" with the existing character.	The Projects' construction will take place over a period of approximately 24 months and in a phased manner, i.e. not over the entire Project Site at the same time. As a result, different parts of the landscape would be affected at different times, while other part of the Project Site would have no construction activities present. As the Project progresses and parts of the Project are completed, resulting in landscape and visual effects equivalent to that of operation, other parts of the landscape would experience a landscape and visual effect as a result of the construction works. Taken the landscape of the Project Site and host character areas as a whole, it is considered that effects identified in the LVIA **[PDB-006]** are not significant and the Applicant's maintains its' position as detailed in the response to Q1.14.11. It should be noted that the LVIA **[PDB-006]** has been reviewed, in light of comments received through the examination, with the assessment of effects of both landscape resource being further assessed in relation to individual LCAs. This is also being completed as a result of the Applicant's Change Request 2.
Q2.13.4	Applicant	**Landscape effects – operation** In their responses to EXQ1.14.11 [REP3-072] OHA consider that the impacts on landscape character are inadequately assessed and underestimated, and they state that your response does not address those concerns. In addition, Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) disagrees with your assessment and state that landscape character changes throughout the proposed development site, and for the south area with large scale fields, open nature and elevation of the landscape, means that the change in landscape would be out of odds with the character of the area. They also note that the National Grid Energy	The Applicant has noted the concerns of the OHA and other interested parties and it should be noted that the LVIA **[PDB-006]** has been reviewed, in light of comments received through the examination, with the assessment of effects of both landscape and visual resources being further tested and adjusted as appropriate. This is also being completed as a result of the Applicant's Change Request 2 Notification **[REP2-045]**.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Transmission (NGET) substation would not be low-lying in nature. The ExA are minded to agree with the OHA and VWHDC assessments and so in order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please provide a more robust and detailed response to the question of how the assessment of moderate/minor adverse effect is justified, particularly in relation to the change in character of the landscape from rural to industrial.	
Q2.13.5	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Photomontages** In [REP2-026] the applicant has responded to question raised by your consultants LUC regarding the photomontages not showing the worst-case scenario of winter in year 15. The applicant has stated *"At winter Year 15, the views experienced by visual receptors would be similar to those experienced in summer Year 15, given the height and width of the proposed landscape mitigation and the height of the solar panels."* Do you agree with this statement?	For OHA to respond.
Q2.13.6	Applicant	**Photomontages** Chapter 3 of Annex 1 to the OHA Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP1-072] indicates several irregularities with the photomontages provided. In order to assure that these can be relied upon, please respond to every point raised and, where necessary, amend the relevant photomontage and re-submit.	Addressing the points raised in turn, as detailed within Chapter 3 of Appendix 1 to the OHA Local Impact Report (LIR) **[REP-071]**: Paragraph 3.1 – The visualisations have produced based on the supplied layout and as detailed in ES Chapter 6: Project Description **[APP-043]**. Paragraph 3.2 – The worst-case scenario is shown at winter Year 1 on all visualisations. This is in contrast to the 'best case' scenario illustrated at summer Year 15. This approach is standard practice. Paragraph 3.3 – For ease of reference, we have used compass directions, rather than degrees. LI TGN 06/19 (Visual Representation of Development Proposals) states that information to be provided for the direction of each view should be 'bearing from North (0°) or Compass Direction ('90° from N' or 'Looking East') (Page 50). Information related to time of day and camera height has been added to the visualisations.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			Paragraph 3.4 – The location of Representative Viewpoints and Visualisations (Photomontages) is shown on the ES Figure 8.9 to 8.11: Representative Viewpoint and Photomontage Locations **[APP-085]**. Paragraph 3.5 – All photographs were taken at a height of approximately 1.5m. Reference to 1.7m within the LVIA (paragraph 8.6.43) has referred to 1.7m in error. This has been corrected. Paragraph 3.6 – The most impactful 90-degree view has been shown where the scheme covers a greater angle of view. Paragraph 3.7 – It is the Applicant's assertion that the more meaningful parts of any given view are being shown as a single frame view. Whether this is of mitigation planting at Year 15, or views of the solar arrays at Year 1. The wider 90° panorama of each visualisation gives further context. Paragraph 3.8 – Hedgerows have been modelled at 3.5m at summer Year 15. In light of other comments / questions (Q2.13.7 for example) this has been altered to illustrate hedgerows at the suggested maximum height of 3m. Paragraph 3.9/10 – The solar panels have been modelled based on the layout provided, which is an illustration of panels filling the developable area. Final build is not expected to be exactly as modelled, but we are showing a worst-case illustrative view. Paragraph 3.11 – This is an error and has been corrected. Paragraph 3.12 to 3.14 – These errors / discrepancies have been addressed and altered on the visualisations. Paragraph 3.15 – Representative Viewpoint 32 has been altered as a result of the Applicant's Change Request 2 Notification **[REP2-045]**. Paragraph 3.16 – This particular Representative Viewpoint being referred to was taken during winter, in the best conditions available. New imagery would not be possible during the examination.
Q2.13.7	Applicant	**Hedges adjacent to new and existing Public Rights of Way** There have been several representations regarding the "tunnelling effect" of planting tall hedges on both sides of many of the Public Rights of Way (PRoW).	A range of typical plans and sections across new paths is shown on figures 7.6.3.2 A to 7.6.3.2 M, of the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (oLEMP) **[REP3-034]**. These plans and section have produced to illustrate proposed planting a Year 1, 5 and 15 (maturity) A typical planting schedule is included at Appendix B of the oLEMP **[APP-235]**, giving details of the proposed species mix.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		1) Using a worst-case scenario, provide scaled plans that show a typical section across these paths, showing the minimum suggested width of path and suggested height of hedges on both sides at maturity during operation. 2) Include details of the proposed species mix as outlined in the outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (OLEMP) [REP3-034]. 3) In Appendix C of the OLEMP, it is noted that hedgerows should be managed to a minimum height of 3m but no maximum is provided. On the plan and within the OLEMP include details of the proposed maximum height for these hedges during the operational phase of the proposed development to ensure they do not get overgrown. Include details of who holds responsibility for this maintenance.	The wording in Appendix C of the oLEMP has been revised and submitted as an updated document to clarify that 3m be the maximum height of hedgerows. Maintenance of new and retained hedgerows is caught under section 11.3 of the oLEMP which is secured through Requirement 6 of the draft DCO and will be developed in more detail as part of detailed design and the discharge of requirements.
Q2.13.8	Applicant All Interested Parties	**Landscape mitigation and decommissioning** In the applicant's response to the Rule 17 letter [REP2-029], the applicant states *"the proposed landscape mitigation would be retained after the removal of the infrastructure elements and will continue to provide a positive long-term contribution to and reinforcement of the character of the landscape, in line with the management guidelines for the area. Should the proposed landscape mitigation be considered detrimental to landscape character at decommissioning, then it could be removed. However, as it follows the current management guidelines this is unlikely to be recommended."* To the applicant	Taking each point in turn: 1) The purpose of the designed in mitigation is to minimise the, in particular, visual effects of the Project. It is acknowledged that proposed hedgerows on either side of public rights of way would obscure some available views of the wider landscape at lower levels. However, public rights of way flanked by hedgerows and / or trees are characteristic elements within parts of the existing landscape. With some, such as 416/11/20 (Claude Duvall Way), passing through a narrow green lane. The Project mitigation would allow for a more generous corridor within which the public rights of way would pass, in the majority of cases. Creating a wide green corridor is also characteristic of the existing landscape, such as much of Dornford Lane (PRoW 416/11/30) which passes through the middle of the northern section of the Project. This mitigation would reinforce the landscape character. From higher vantage points, as stated within Q2.13.8, due to the undulating nature of the local topography, appropriately managed hedgerows would not prevent the long sweeping views characteristic of the local area. With views to local landmarks, including the Church of St Peter & St Paul, Church Hanborough would be

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		1) When a number of interested parties (IP) have expressed that the landscape character, at present, is defined by long sweeping views across undulating countryside from higher vantage points, how do you justify your position that the landscape mitigation (including lining footpaths with 3m high hedgerows, thus removing or blocking a proportion of these views) would reinforce landscape character? 2) Is the landscape mitigation (i.e. such as additional hedgerows along footpaths) being relied upon for biodiversity net gain calculations or are these deemed as separate biodiversity enhancements? 3) There is no mention of future hedgerow management in the outline Decommissioning Plan (ODP) and no mention of whose responsibility this would be. Add this maintenance responsibility information to the ODP along with a proposed appropriate height for future maintenance to ensure the wider landscape views would not be affected. To all IP 4) The ExA recognises that the proposal would have visual impacts on the landscape, and several IP's have expressed concerns as to how adverse they would be. The ExA nonetheless is considering all stages of the development and is considering the future condition of the landscape post-decommissioning. What would your reaction be if, at this stage, areas of landscape mitigation (for example, planting hedgerows along public	maintained, as illustrated in the photomontage for Representative Viewpoint 38 **[APP-072]**. 2) Yes, as an integral part of the landscape design that the Project would deliver, features associated with landscape mitigation are included within the BNG calculations for the Project, as described in ES Appendix 9.13 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment **[APP-162]**. They are also considered to be enhancements within respect to ecology, where they are not also necessary for ecology mitigation. 3) Reference to the future management of and potential removal of proposed hedgerows after the removal of the Project infrastructure, and information regarding responsibility and heights for maintenance, will be added to the detailed Decommissioning Plan as appropriate, and at the relevant time.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		footpaths) were excluded from the applicant's plans and not implemented?** This would of course result in un-mitigated visual effects being endured during operation but, at decommissioning stage, the original landscape character could be restored closer to that presented, enjoyed and described in the book by Forever Fields [REP1-101]. ** Please note the ExA is not necessarily advocating this or pursuing this as a possibility but simply seeking to consider detail of operational and decommissioning phases of the development, taking into account paragraph 2.10.151 of NPS EN-3.	
Q2.13.9	Applicant	**Environmental Statement and landscape effects** In their response [REP2-029], to the Rule 17 letter [PD-009], the applicant acknowledges that mitigation would result in a change in view but states that the mitigation planting would 'balance' the effects attributable to the solar infrastructure and that the mitigation would be beneficial. The Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 8 [PDB-006], paragraph 8.9.107 also states that operational effects are fully reversible suggesting the site would return to baseline conditions following decommissioning. However, the ExA notes that ES Chapter 8 table 8.11 determines the magnitude of impact is related to the change in view from baseline condition. The OHA identify a number of viewpoints [REP1-072], [REP2-050], [REP3-072] where they consider that despite mitigation, the view remains altered and therefore the magnitude of impact is not	As set out in GLVIA3, paragraph 2.21, landscape and visual effects are assessed separately, although the procedure for assessing each is closely linked. A clear distinction has been drawn between landscape and visual effects as described below: 1) Landscape effects relate to the effects of the Proposed Development on the physical and perceptual characteristics of the landscape and its resulting character and quality. 2) Visual effects relate to the effects on views experienced by visual receptors (e.g. local residents, visitors, footpath users, road users etc) and on the change in views experienced by people. In terms of landscape effects, the proposed mitigation serves its purpose and works as a positive enhancement measure. It should be noted that there would be no loss of existing landscape elements attributable to the proposed development. In terms of visual effects, the screening by the proposed mitigation planting would change views from several footpaths/ PRoWs, however the overall quality of the available views would not be affected.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		reduced or reduced to the extent the applicant reports. The ExA notes that in the applicant's response to the Rule 17 request it states the mitigation will assist in integrating the proposed development into the landscape, provide biodiversity benefits and follow local management guidelines. However, it is unclear how ES Chapter 8 section 8.9 takes into account the change in the nature of the impact with reference to the supporting photomontages and instead considers all mitigation to have a beneficial effect. Can the applicant demonstrate how the change in nature of the impact has been taken into account in line with the methodology with appropriate consideration of, and reference to, the correlating photomontages. Where there is any change in the conclusions or justification for the conclusions of the assessment of likely significant effects, the ES should be updated accordingly.	
Q2.13.10	Applicant	**Definition of temporary** In your response to the Rule 17 letter [REP2-029], you have stated that 'temporary' relates to the completion of the construction period and therefore the magnitude of effects at construction is the same as the initial year of operation. However, this is not always the case in ES Chapter 8 [PDB-006] section 8.9; examples include but are not limited to viewpoints 22 and 36. Explain the discrepancies or otherwise seek to amend any errors in the ES.	It is generally accepted that construction effects are short-term in nature as most of the impacts are temporary, stemming from the construction phase itself, rather than being permanent. Although the end of the construction phase is marked by the completion of the built development these effects are regarded as permanent and are assessed as part of effects at Year 1. As construction effects are short term effects, even if they last 5 years, the factor of their short duration reduces the magnitude of effects. And the reduced magnitude was broadly reflected in the assessment. Any discrepancies will be picked up in the revised LVIA Chapter.
Q2.13.11	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Response to ExQ1.14.9 [PD-008]** The ExA acknowledge the Change Request (CR) 2 notification [REP2-045]. However, the CR has not taken into account all of the changes proposed by others, particularly in relation to the ICOMOS-	The Applicants would refer to their response to ExQ2.6.3 above with regard to changes to the scheme design proposed by ICOMOS-UK.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		UK submission and OHA's. Please refer back to this question and respond with a plan with overlays, as requested, indicating the omissions proposed in excess of those captured by CR2. It is acknowledged that this may change at DL4 when OHA submits the findings from their visits, as outlined in [REP3-072].	
Visual Effects			
Q2.13.12	Applicant	**LVIA methodology and assessment of effects.** At Issue Specific Hearing 1(ISH1) and EXQ1.14.10 [PD-008] the ExA asked the applicant to explain why effects with a significance level of Moderate or less were considered not to be significant. Whilst the applicant provided a response at [REP2-025] and [REP2-029], the ExA is minded to agree with other representations on this matter, including the LIR [REP1-072], OHA [REP3-072] and Stop Botley West [REP3-120] and still consider this matter unresolved. In light of these representations (and the alternative approach taken in other ES chapters) and in order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please comment on the representations made at DL3 and provide a more detailed and robust reasoning for your position.	Please refer to the Applicant's response to ExAQ1.14.10 for the Applicant's position, review and alterations to the levels of significance for a number of Representative Viewpoint. For Deadline 4, a wider review of the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) **[PDB-006]** has been completed. This incorporates changes suggested at ExAQ1.14.10, along with a more comprehensive review of the landscape and visual effects of the Project as a whole.
Q2.13.13	Applicant	**Visual effects – operation** In response to ExQ1.14.14 [REP2-025] you referred to your response to ExQ1.14.10 [REP2-025] regarding the significance of effects. Your statement that *"In middle or long distance views, with the Project following the existing contours and much of it at 2.30 m in height, it was judged that views would largely be retained"* does	Designed-in mitigation, as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan **[APP-062]** and the Landscape, Ecology and Amenities Plan **[APP-228]**, includes supplementing existing vegetation as well as and new planting including new hedgerows, trees and woodland. This over time, along with substantial areas of existing new woodland planting, would break up the overall scale of the Project within views, over time. Low-lying solar panels following the existing contours, along with gaps between rows and available views under the panels, would further reduce the absolute visual effects of the Project. In summary, viewpoints form PRoWs present the following:

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		not account for the change in view from rural to industrial. 1) The ExA would like you to expand on this and explain why, given the change in view from rural to industrial, you consider the views would be largely retained. You also note that in relation to close views, it has been acknowledged in the LVIA that the project would result in a number of significant effects, although you consider that these would diminish over time with no residual significant visual effects predicted at summer of year 15 (paragraph 8.14.4 of the LVIA). Because this negation of effect is due to the growth of the screening hedges, the ExA would like you to expand on your reasons for not considering that the change in views from expansive fields to close-range 3m hedges would be significant.	1) All close-proximity views illustrate a good setback of the low-lying development from the PRoWs; 2) Solar panels will appear mainly in transient, oblique views along a short section of the routes; 3) Solar panels will not form a skyline feature. The existing landscape features take prominence; 4) The closest parts of the development would occupy a limited angle of the view; and 5) Solar panels do not appear as prominent features.
Q2.13.14	Applicant	**Viewpoints** There have been representations from OHA [REP1-072], [REP2-050], [REP3-072] as well as IP's, including but not limited to [REP1-148], [REP1-154], [REP2-081], [REP3-108] regarding the lack of consultation on viewpoints, suggestions for additional viewpoints, noting the poor positioning of existing viewpoints and, given the scale of the project, the lack of photomontages. From the Unaccompanied Site Inspections (USI) undertaken, the ExA is minded to agree with these various representations and the applicant is therefore asked to explore this further, providing evidence to demonstrate the robustness of their approach in order for the ExA to reconcile this matter.	A record of email correspondences, with host authorities, and schedule of suggested amendments / additions to Representative Viewpoints has been kept. This included reasoning for inclusion or discounting any suggestions from the host authorities and is summarised in Table 8.5 of the LVIA **[PDB-006]**, including a number of additional viewpoints (46 and 47) included as a direct response to comments from the VWHDC.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Q2.13.15	Applicant	**Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)** The Scoping Opinion [APP-126] states *"In line with guidance, the requirement for a RVAA is generally dependent on the outcome of a landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). Therefore, in the absence of LVIA conclusions, the Inspectorate does not agree to scope out a RVAA at this time. The need for an RVAA should be justified based on the conclusions of the LVIA presented in the ES and agreed with the relevant consultation bodies."* (ID 3.2.3). In the LVIA [APP-126] you have responded with "*The need for an RVAA will be determined through the outcome of the ES and through further consultation with relevant parties as required following the ES process*" and at paragraph 8.6.80 "*Due to the low level of the Project, particularly the solar arrays, and proposed mitigation, there is no potential for any private views to be adversely affected to an extent that would result in a level of harm of Substantial, which trigger the threshold for an RVAA being required. As such, private views are not considered further in this Chapter".* In Appendix 1 of the Joint LIR [REP1-073], OHA consultants have questioned the methodology that led to the assumption that the RVAA was not required, and this does not appear to have been fully addressed in your response at [REP2-026]. The ExA are unclear on the properties that were initially considered, what mitigation has already been undertaken since public consultation, which properties may have residual effects and what the proposals are for any further mitigation. In order for the ExA to reconcile this issue, please comment on the representations made by OHA and their consultants on this matter and provide	Individual and groups of properties, closest to the Project, were looked at on a case by case basis during the iterative design process as part of an analysis of buffer zones. Account was taken as to the nature of existing vegetation on the boundaries of each property. Where limited or no existing vegetation was present, mitigation was put in place in order to minimise potential visual effects. Individual properties included within this process were: 1) Upper Dornford; 2) Samsom's Cottage and Farm; 3) Bladon (Middle); 4) Amhurst Cottage; 5) Bladon (North); 6) Begbroke; 7) Campsfield; 8) Village End; 9) Bladon South; 10) Burleigh House; 11) College Fam; 12) Goose Eye Farm; 13) Owls Leat; 14) New Barn Cottage; 15) Purwell Farm; 16) Barrow Court; 17) Willow Park; 18) Burleigh Farm; and Denman's Farm. A minimum buffer of 25 m and additional mitigation (where required) was included. As shown on the Illustrative Masterplan **[AS-020]**. It should be noted that, as a result of Change Request 2, buffers from a number of residential receptors will be further increased. Including, but not limited to, a large area around the village of Bladon (Change 1) and Begbroke (Change 2) **[REP2-045]**.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		any such further information that would assist the ExA.	

Q2.14 Noise and Vibration

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Noise Effects			
Q2.14.1	Applicant	**Cumulative noise in Public Rights of Way** In response to paragraph 7.9.10 of the Joint LR [REP2-026] there is a statement that: *"It is possible that noise from the PCS units will be slightly audible in some areas of some PROW which cross the Site. However, it is not uncommon for industrial noise to be audible on PROWs, as is experienced alongside the Siemens factory in Whitney. Furthermore, receptors on PROW are transient, and so any potential impact experienced by noise from the development, whilst on a PROW, would be for a very short period of time, thereby reducing the magnitude of any impact."* This leads to the following questions: 1) The Examining Authority (ExA) note that the Power Converter Stations (PCS) units are rated at 92dB [APP-043, Table 6.3]. At what distance away from a PCS unit would that level of noise be deemed 'slightly audible'? 2) What minimum buffer/ distance is planned in the layout of the proposed development between any single individual PCS unit	1. The ExA correctly state that the PCS units have a sound power of 92dB(A). However, it is important to note that this is a sound emission power emission level, and so is not directly comparable to a sound pressure level, which is measured at a known distance. For example, a simple noise source, when placed on a hard and flat ground, with a sound power level of 100dB(A) would be measured as 92dB(A) at 1m, 86dB(A) at 2m etc. In addition, the PCS units do not emit sound equally in all directions. In response to the query, additional noise modelling and assessments have been undertaken to determine the distance from the PCS unit where the noise emissions will be 'slightly audible'; • The measured daytime background sound level in rural locations have been assessed with 42dB L_{A90} being determined as the average background sound level for PROWs in the area of the proposed development. • It is considered reasonable that where the sound level from the PCS units is 5dB above the background sound level, then it could be considered to be 'slightly audible'. • The sound pressure level falls to 47dB(A) at between 75m and 100m from the PCS unit. This is based upon the maximum operational capacity which will only occur during warmer weather and when the electrical load is high. Therefore, most of the time, the sound emissions from the PCS units will be less than has been assessed.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		and the nearest Public Rights of Way (PRoW), and can that buffer appear as a design commitment in the Outline Layout and Design Principles (OLDP) document? 3) The ExA observed from its Unaccompanied Site Inspections (USI) that, apart from road traffic noise, industrial noise was not frequently experienced across the PRoW network. From the statement above, it appears assumed that the noise from a PCS unit would only be experienced for a short period of time. However, this does not account for someone walking the full length of a path and being susceptible to multiple PCS units (and/ or substations). Does this affect the magnitude of the impact in a cumulative sense?	2. We have determined that at a distance of up to 100m, noise from the PCS units is considered to be 'slightly audible' on a PROW. However, there are some locations where there are PCS units which are located within 100m of a PROW. These occur as follows; • Northern Area – 11 PCS Units • Central Area – 15 PCS Units • Southern Area – 3 PCS Units • **TOTAL – 29 PCS Units** 3. There are some areas where a walker along path could experience noise from one or more PCS units in a single walk. These have been identified to occur in the following number of locations; • Northen Area – Once • Central Area – Three times • Southern Area – Once Although users may experience some noise from PCS units along the PROWs crossing the site, given the linear nature of PROWs and their transient use, significant adverse noise effects on the users of the PROW are considered unlikely.
Q2.14.2	West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)	**Background noise data** In paragraph 7.9.19 of the Joint LIR [REP1–072], West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) state they wish to review the derivation of the representative background noise levels. Can you confirm if you have received the information you need from the applicant to complete this review. In the absence of this data being made available to you, how confident are you with the background noise data currently provided by the applicant in their Environmental Statement (ES) assessment.	
Q2.14.3	Applicant	**Operational noise monitoring** In response to action point 27 arising from Issue Specific Hearing (ISH)1 [EV5 -010], you have stated in [REP1-019], your willingness to undertake noise measurements from a sample of	It is acknowledged that the applicant is open to undertake some post completion noise measurements of the PCS units, so as to ensure that they comply with the manufacturers noise emission levels, which have been used in the assessment.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		PCS units and other electrical infrastructure (e.g. sub-stations) during the commissioning stage. How long will noise monitoring during this commissioning stage last and taking into account cumulative effects also, justify how this would be representative of the noise impact on residents during the operational phase. How will this proposed noise monitoring be secured in the Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) and what would happen if the noise levels during commissioning were found to be harmful?	We are of the opinion that both short term detailed noise measurements, and longer term noise measurements would be required to capture the sound emissions from the PCS units. **Short Term Detailed Noise Measurements** A short term survey would be undertaken during the middle part of the day, ideally during the summer months (June, July, August), during a day with low cloud cover, and when temperatures are above the annual average. These parameters would ensure a high electrical load, and cooling requirement. Noise measurements would be undertaken 1m from the PCS unit and on a number of axis. These measurements could be directly compared with the noise model input data. We would look to undertake this short term detailed noise survey on 5 randomly selected PCS units. **Long Term Noise Measurements** In addition to the above, we would look to install a sound level meter for a period of several days to capture the changeable noise emissions from a PCS unit as the electrical load varies over the course of a 24 hr period and over several days. The sound level meter would be installed close by the PCS unit so that measured levels are not affected by external noise sources (e.g. road traffic etc.) This survey would ideally be undertaken during the summer months (June, July, August), during a day with low cloud cover, and when temperatures are above the annual average. These parameters would ensure a high electrical load, and cooling requirement.
Q2.14.4	Applicant	**Statutory nuisance caused by UK solar farms** Applicant to investigate and provide details of any statutory nuisance issues caused by noise or vibration generated from solar farms in the UK. Where such issues have been resolved, the ExA would appreciate details of actions taken by the owner of the solar farm and/ or the relevant local authority.	The Applicant has investigated this matter and is aware of only one instance of a statutory nuisance issue for a solar project in respect of noise. The details of this matter are not yet in the public domain, but in summary the Applicant understands that the alleged nuisance is from noise caused by the inverters. The Applicant understands that the issue is being dealt with by seeking to address the noise issues in a practical manner by introducing noise reduction measures around the inverters. To give comfort in relation to the Project and to build on Table 3.1 of the outline Operational Management Plan which makes a general reference to noise control measures, the Applicant has updated the oOMP at Deadline 4 to include additional detail on how the operational noise limits for the Project will be defined.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Q2.14.5	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Planning condition** At Deadline (DL) 3 in response to the Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) answer to Q1.15.1 [REP3-065], the Applicant accepts that a planning condition requiring a detailed noise impact assessment to be submitted could be imposed. What is meant by planning condition? Is this a requirement, amendment to a requirement or an amendment to a management plan?	Please accept our apologies for the confusion here. If a detailed noise impact assessment were required, then it would be secured in 7.6.2 - Outline Operational Management Plan [**APP-234**] through Requirement 12 of the draft DCO.
Vibration Effects			
There are no questions on this topic at this time			

Q2.15 Socio-Economic Effects

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Socio-Economic Effects			
Q2.15.1	Applicant	**Community benefit** Please confirm whether the proposed community benefit fund is £440,000 or £441,000 as there are variations in the figures within various documentation submitted into the Examination.	The Applicant has agreed to an annual community benefit fund payment of £525 per MW, or £441,000.
Q2.15.2	Applicant Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Community benefit funding** Applicant - The Examining Authority (ExA) is aware that the proposed community benefit funding sits outside of the Examination. However, please confirm how the proposed funding is to be secured to ensure it can be effectively delivered? Similar scaled projects have previously drafted section 106 agreements to secure such funding.	The applicant has discussed this with the OHA and agreed that the fund will be secured by means of a Section 111 agreement. The applicant is drafting the agreement and will share with the OHA in due course.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) – Please confirm how you wish to see the community benefit funding to be secured and who would be the administrator of the fund.	
Q2.15.3	Applicant	**Blenheim Palace** The ExA notes the Applicant's response to ExQ1.16.7 [REP2-025] and the signposting to the Heritage Impact Assessment. However, the Heritage Impact Assessment does not provide detail in respect of agricultural productivity or impacts on tourism as was requested. Please provide this information.	Analysis on agricultural productivity is included in detail in section 'Reduced Agricultural Output' of Chapter 15: Socio Economics [**REP3-018**] (pg. 52) which concludes a Minor Adverse or Negligible significance of effect impact during all phases. Tourism analysis is included in 'Change in Visitor Economy' of Chapter 15: Socio Economics [**REP3-018**] (pg. 57) which concludes a Minor Adverse significance of effect impact during all phases.
Q2.15.4	Applicant	**Education facility** At Deadline 3 (DL3) various submissions including those from Frances Stevenson [REP3-094] and [REP3-095], Ian Hudspeth [REP3-099], Bladon Parish Council [REP3-073], Professor and Mrs A. Banning [REP3-123] and the OHA [REP3-072] comment that, alongside of a lack of community consultation regarding the proposed location of the education facility, the proposed access along School Lane is narrow and would not offer suitable vehicular access to the land identified for the education facility building. Please confirm whether the proposed location would benefit from adequate access, particularly during the construction phase of the facility.	The proposed education facility forms part of Change Request 2 for which the Applicant will submit further assessment, including its access arrangements, at Deadline 5.
Q2.15.5	Applicant	**Education facility** Noting the submission at DL3 from the OHA [REP3-072], please confirm what consultation took place with the relevant local authorities and interested parties (IP) regarding the siting of the proposed	As part of on-going engagement during 2024, prior to the submission of the application, the request for the education facility was made by OCC after the statutory consultation had been completed. The education facility is one of the items in the targeted consultation now being conducted – item 10 in the Explanatory Note, forming part of the proposed Change Request 2.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		education facility. If no consultation took place, please provide an explanation.	
Q2.15.6	Applicant	**Solar Road Map and skills** The recently published 'Solar Road Map[1]' states that "*The solar sector requires skills and professional competencies from a range of occupations. However, there is wide recognition that the sector needs to improve the visibility and clarity of its training provision to the existing and future workforce".* Please confirm how the proposed development would meet Government's aspiration of improving its training provision for both the existing and future workforce?	The Applicant has been working with sector skills bodies for the last eighteen months on the skills and employment programme for the proposed development. At a recent meeting it was agreed that the key bodies would form an implementation group, which would begin work should DCO consent be granted. The Solar Road Map (SRM) states that there are few clear paths to competency within the solar sector, so it will be important to offer targeted training in specific skills to the existing workforce and to future members. Our work with Abingdon and Witney College will be very important: they are able to offer short, intensive skills courses tailored to the project's skills needs. Their renewables skills centre in Bicester will be key to delivering this training. Finding trainees will be a challenge, given the novelty of the industry. The SRM identifies the DfE and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) as key bodies. The Applicant will work with JCP in Banbury and Witney to advertise the project's skills requirements, holding job fairs and staging displays at the JCP (this is secured within mitigation 15.1 and 15.2 outlined in the Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule [**EN010147/APP/6.5**]). The SRM correctly identifies that the majority of the workforce for 2030 projects will already be in work, so the Applicant will work with existing trade bodies to attract people to their skills training and job fairs. The future workforce will be targeted by Abingdon and Witney College and by direct engagement by the Applicant with local schools (this is secured within mitigation 15.1 and 15.2 outlined in the Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule [**EN010147/APP/6.5**]. Promotion of STEM and explaining the benefits of working in the solar industry will be done by school visits, career fairs and by encouraging schools to visit the solar farm (this is secured within the Outline Skills, Supply Chain & Employment Plan [EN010147/APP/6.5] at 'Opportunity 3: STEM Education and Careers'). Enterprise Oxford (formerly OxLEP) has played an important role to date in guiding and advising the Applicant on how to access potential recruits, and will be an important component of the implementation group. The Applicant is a member of SEUK, a collaborator in the production of the SRM. SEUK has

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/solar-roadmap

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			committed to promote guidance to businesses and colleges, highlighting routes for potential employees to move into the solar sector. The Applicant will work closely with SEUK to implement this communications strategy, and will use its membership of the NSIP Forum to share information with and gain insights from other NSIP solar projects, particularly those in construction. Programmes that the project will promote and use include the DWP Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) and the DfE's Skills Bootcamps (this is secured within mitigation 15.1 and 15.2 outlined in the Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule [**EN010147/APP/6.5**]).
Q2.15.7	Applicant	**Outline Skills Supply Chain and Employment Plan** The updates to the Outline Skills Supply Chain and Employment Plan (OSSCEP) made by the Applicant at DL3 [REP3-028] is noted by the ExA. Reference is made to 'The Planning Inspectorate' in paragraph 8.2.2 of the OSSCEP. Please review and consider whether this reference should be the relevant Secretary of State or whether the reference should be removed? Additionally, the ExA consider that the figures quoted within Table 8.1 of the OSSCEP for both targeted and stretch outputs are low. Given the location of the proposed development in proximity to the both the Oxford – Cambridge Growth Corridor and well-established education facilities, the ExA considers the targets represent limited ambition for the local area. Please provide an explanation as to how the proposed targets were arrived at. Please also review the targets and if no change is considered necessary, provide a detailed explanation.	The Applicant recognises the inclusion of the term 'The Planning Inspectorate' within paragraph 8.2.2 and agrees to its removal, this does not negate the Applicant's commitment to continued communication with relevant stakeholders in the context of iterative target monitoring, feedback and evaluation. The Applicant held three stakeholder engagement meetings across July to August 2025 with Enterprise Oxfordshire; Abingdon and Witney College; ACE Training, SOFEA & No Limits Programme, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, Cherwell District Council and Aspire Oxford. The contents of these engagements are summarised in the OSSCEP Section 7.5. Across all meetings no objections were raised pertaining to both the targets and stretch targets. One of the key evaluation criteria when deciding the targets was they should be "Realistic", the Applicant feels that all of the targets were realistic, and the stretch targets provided an adequate level of ambition. The Proposed Development's location to key growth corridors or education establishments was not considered to be an influential determinant of the targets. The process for arriving at the proposed targets was to understand the potential supply and demand of opportunities (the Host Authorities have a lower unemployment rate than the nation which effects potential demand for employment targets), the potential delivery mechanisms and partners of such opportunities, as well as the duration of these opportunities and the potential resources needed to manage them e.g. time and cost from the Applicant. The introduction of 'Stretch Targets' to the OSSCEP was inspired by engagement with Enterprise Oxfordshire's 'Community Employment Plan', which recognises the balance between more 'realistic' and 'ambitious' targets. An overall professional judgement was made based on these aforementioned criteria that ensured targets were not overstated and underdelivered. Overall, all stakeholders were in agreement with the Applicant's targets.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			Nonetheless, the Applicant is happy to increase their "Opportunity 2: Other Training" target as it focuses on skills training, which is a key policy area outlined in the Solar Roadmap (DESNZ, June 2025) in readying the provision of a solar construction workforce skills. Therefore, "Opportunity 2: Other Training" will increase from a target of 5 to 15 and a stretch target of 15 to 45, this is a 300% increase and based on recent conversations with stakeholders the Applicant feels this is both possible, ambitious and will bring great benefit to the Study Area as well as the wider UK Construction and Solar Industries.
Effects on social infrastructure			
There are no questions on this topic at this time.			
Health and Wellbeing			
Q2.15.8	Applicant	**Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule - trails and education boards** Row 15.5 of the Project Mitigation Measures and Commitments Schedule [APP-129] states that children's fun trails and education boards will be provided, and this is a commitment within the project design as set out in the Outline Layout and Design Principles (OLDP) document [REP1-014]. Please signpost to where this is contained within the OLDP.	The Outline Layout and Design Principles (Rev 3) **[REP3-036]** refers to the Outline Operational Management Plan and the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plans. Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (Rev 2) **[REP3-034]** section 6 'Public Health Elements' has the key commitment to greenways including trails, signage and information boards (wayfinding). Including that detail would be developed in the detailed Landscape and Ecology Management Plan. To clarify, the updated mitigation and commitments schedule (Rev1) has corrected signposting in regard to mitigation 15.56 to section 6 of the OLEMP (Rev3) **[EN010147/APP/7.6.3]**.
Q2.15.9	Applicant	**New hedgerows** The proposed provision of new hedgerows to compensate for removal elsewhere or to provide screening is noted by the ExA [APP-129]. However, whilst not only having the potential to change the nature of existing views, concern has also been raised by Stop Botley West regarding users of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) who may potentially experience feelings of enclosure and/or experience a tunnelling effect, which in turn may have a negative effect on mental wellbeing [REP2-081].	Applicant's Responses to Relevant Representations **[REP1-020]** responds to the issue of concerns with regards to feelings of an enclosed or tunnelling effect. This includes the health and wellbeing related response to RR-870-003 on pdf page 86 of 545 titled 'Loss of countryside views affecting mental and physical health benefits of walking'; and the response to RR-1086-23 on pdf page 91 of 545 titled 'PRoW impacts, mitigation measures and changes in landscape character'. The response to RR-1050-004 on pdf page 174 of 545 also addresses the point on tunnel effects more generally in relation to the project design. The issue of tunnelling was also covered in Written Summary of Applicant's Oral Submissions at the Issue Specific Hearing 1 (ISH1) **[REP1-019]**, including Appendix 1 on the feel of the routes in relation to vulnerable groups.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		What consideration has been given to such effects and could hedgerows be lowered at key vantage points to reduce the potential for such effects?	Hedgerows are to be maintained to a maximum heigh of 3 m. Public rights of way flanked by hedgerows and / or trees is characteristic elements in of the existing landscape. With some, such as 416/11/20 (Claude Duvall Way) passing through a narrow and, in places, green corridor. The Project mitigation, detailed above, would allow for a more generous corridor, 5 m minimum, within which the public rights of way would pass, in the majority of cases. Creating a wider green corridor not uncharacteristic of the current situation and existing landscape. The effect of the landscape mitigation, as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan, Rev 1 [AS-020] and the Landscape, Ecology and Amenities Plan, Rev 1 **[AS-022]**, proposed as part of the Project, enclosing some available views is acknowledged in paragraph 1.1.26 of the Applicant's Response to Rule 17 Letter (17th June 2025) on ES LVIA Chapter 8 **[REP2-029]**. The height of the proposed hedgerows is shown at 3 m in the amended visualisations. This need not be the case, as the height of the panels is 2.3 m. Where appropriate the hedgerows could be managed to a lower height, e.g. 2.5 m, which would retain long views, if required, in consultation with the OHA. Alternative methods of hedgerow establishment can be adopted. These are a matter for detailed design. In the meantime, provisions in relation to hedgerow planting can be found in the outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (oLEMP) **[REP2-019]**. Requirement 6 of the Draft DCO refers to the need for a final version of the LEMP to be submitted for approval 'substantially in accordance with the outline LEMP'.
Q2.15.10	Applicant	**Statements of Common Ground and Statement of Commonality** The topic of 'Health' is not included in the Statement of Commonality submitted at DL3 [REP3-041], please explain why and amend if necessary. The ExA notes that the topic of 'Health' has been included in the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) submitted at DL3 [REP3-056]. Please explain why 'health' is not included within the other local authorities SoCG?	At DL3 the health SOCG with OCC Public Health had not been sufficiently advanced to be included in the Statement of Commonality submitted at DL3 [**REP3-041**]. This reflected that a meeting with OCC Public Health had been scheduled but had not yet taken place. That meeting has now taken place and health will be reported on in the next iteration of the Statement of Commonality. The local Public Health team (including the Director of Public Health) are at the County Council level rather than within each individual District. The OCC Public Health team are therefore the relevant local authority with which to have a SOCG with regards to the health topic, which covers the public health implications of the project, as set out in ES Chapter 16 – Human Health [**APP-053**].

Q2.16 Traffic and Transport

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Local Road Network			
Q2.16.1	Applicant Siemens Healthcare	**Mitigation of effects** Applicant – Although the construction programme cannot be finalised at this stage, could you provide predictions of how long construction works would be active in the vicinity of the Siemens Healthcare facility? Could this period of works be timed and forewarned to Siemens Healthcare so as to limit impacts upon their operations? Siemens Healthcare – Can you explain how the business operates on a day-to-day basis in terms of its demands on the highway network and when certain activities (deliveries) occur that require the network to be as clear as possible?	The Applicant estimates that the construction works along Wharf Road in the vicinity of the Siemens Healthcare facility would last three weeks (15 working days). This consists of site set-up, installation of traffic management, excavation, cable laying, backfilling and reinstatement of carriageway, cleaning up and removal of traffic management. The Applicant confirms that these works can be timed and forewarned to Siemens Healthcare so as to limit impacts upon their operations. The Applicant is in ongoing discussions with Siemens Healthcare in this regard and once those discussions reach a conclusion the Applicant will include relevant agreements within relevant documents (for example how forewarning of the works would be relayed to Siemens Healthcare).
Q2.16.2	Applicant Oxford County Council	**Highway works interface** Can the applicant co-ordinate with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to facilitate the submission of 1:1250 and 1:500 plans showing the overlay of potential works areas both for the project and for the junction improvements on the A40 that OCC are undertaking, to show the level of interaction between the Order limits and the scope of works intended. In addition to the provision of this plan, both OCC and the applicant are requested to answer the following questions: Both 1) Could this matter be resolved via protective provisions or via a separate memorandum of	The Applicant confirms that they are co-ordinating with OCC regarding the interaction of the Project and the junction improvements on the A40. The Applicant is working with OCC to plan for either installing the Project cables in advance of the A40 improvement works being undertaken by OCC or have suitable ducts installed for the Project as part of the A40 improvement works being undertaken by OCC. Discussions are ongoing with OCC in this regard and this includes the preparation of plans. (1) The Applicant does not consider protective provisions to be necessary and OCC has confirmed that it may be possible to achieve a solution outside of the DCO process. This may be a separate memorandum of understanding although this will depend on the agreed position between the parties. (2) As above, the Applicant is working with OCC to ensure the co-ordination of the works and to avoid cumulative effects with OCC works programme.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		understanding to be submitted to the Examination? Applicant 2) The applicant states [REP2-026, page 59] *"it cannot control the nature and timing of the works proposed to the A40."* What prevents the applicants from being flexible in relation to the works in proximity to the A40 and why can works in this location not be undertaken as a bespoke piece of infrastructure delivery, timed to avoid cumulative effects with OCC works programme? 3) Describe the sequencing or phasing of the project as a whole and whether it would be sequential construction of north, central and south areas or concurrent construction. Oxfordshire County Council 4) Please provide an anticipated timetable for the construction and delivery of the improvement works to the A40.	(3) The Project will be constructed concurrently across the Northern, Central and Southern areas (including the cable route) and not sequentially from one area to the next. The four main compounds within the Northern, Central and Southern areas would all be set up at the start of the construction period and then all removed at the end of the construction period. The construction of the Northern, Central and Southern areas (including the cable route) would all be concurrent during the construction period although the precise phasing of each of these would be devised by the contractors who would be appointed (and therefore such phasing details would be devised) post consent.
Q2.16.3	Applicant	**Road widening works** ***Management*** In response to ExQ1.17.5, you have confirmed that all road widening works would be retained for the lifetime of the Project [REP2-025]. Can you confirm the following: 1) If the additional land required is all within the boundary of the Order limits. 2) If construction associated with these works is included in the outline Code of Construction Practice.	The Applicant confirms that all land required for the road widening works is all within the boundary of the Order limits. The Applicant confirms that the construction associated with these works is included within the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (OCTMP) which forms Annex A of the Outline Code of Construction Practice Part 1 [**REP3-030**]. Section 1.8 of the OCTMP [**REP3-030**] covers mitigation and bullet point five of paragraph 1.8.4 confirms this includes the off-site highway works. Some example layouts of traffic management measures are shown on Figure 1.1 to Figure 1.6 of the OCTMP [**REP3-030**], some of which would be appropriate for the off-site highway works, whilst paragraph 1.1.8 confirms that detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan(s) will be prepared strictly in accordance with the OCTMP [**REP3-030**] and in consultation with Oxfordshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority and National Highways as the highway authority for the strategic road network. The

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Assessment 3) How was the assessment and subsequent decision to widen certain roads and not others carried out. Can you also confirm if this assessment included the following: a. proposed HGV route along the A4095 b. access to and from new buildings such as the proposed education facility 4) Taking environmental factors into account, what are the benefits verses harms if the width of these roads were to be reduced back to their original size post construction.	detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan(s) will confirm the traffic management measures for each of the off-site highway works, in accordance with the OCTMP [**REP3-030**]. The assessment and identification of off-site road widening was undertaken as part of the access strategy set out at Section 12.7 of ES Chapter 12 [**APP-049**] which itself draws upon the baseline analysis set out at Section 12.6 of ES Chapter 12 [**APP-049**], Appendix 12.1 Description of Network Links and Sensitivity [**APP-196**], Appendix 12.8 Accesses and Highway Drawings [APP-206-209], site visits and observations, the undertaking of swept path analyses using computer software and professional judgement which combined to characterise the layout and geometries of the highway, identify suitable access routes for HGVs and identify the existing movement of HGVs along those access routes. This identified locations along those access routes where any improvements (widening) may be needed to allow HGVs to travel safely and within the extent of the carriageway. The locations of widening for Abnormal Indivisible Loads transporting transformers were identified by a heavy haulage contractor as listed in Section 12.7 of ES Chapter 12 [**APP-049**]. The assessment included all parts of the traffic and transport study area which is shown on Figure 1.1 of Appendix 12.1 Description of Network Links and Sensitivity [**APP-196**] and included the A4095 and all access locations and buildings. The Applicant notes that construction HGVs delivering day-to-day materials will not travel along the A4095 through Bladon as shown at Appendix A1 of the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (OCTMP) which forms Annex A of the Outline Code of Construction Practice Part 1 [**REP3-030**]. This shows that HGVs delivering Power Converter Stations (PCS) to areas accessed via Cassington Road and Burleigh Road in the Central Area would travel along the A4095 through Bladon for which there are a total of 54 HGV movements predicted over the entire 24 month construction period. Putting this into context, Table 12.21 of ES Chapter 12 [**APP-049**] sets out that there is a baseline of 392 HGV movements each day along the A4095 through Bladon, which equates to 286,160 HGV movements predicted over the entire 24 month construction period. Thus, the movement of 54 HGV movements delivering PCS units along the A4095 through Bladon over the 24 month construction period represents an increase in HGVs of 0.019% and was deemed to be not significant.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			Access to the proposed education facility forms part of Change Request 2 for which the Applicant will submit further assessment at Deadline 5. If the width of these roads were to be reduced back to their original size post construction, then replacement components, should they ever need replaced, would not be possible safely within the extents of the carriageway. The widening works also enable Abnormal Indivisible Loads transporting transformers and HGVs delivering PCS units as set out in Section 12.7 of ES Chapter 12 [**APP-049**]. Although replacement of these components is not envisaged, in the event of a failure and a replacement is required, said deliveries would not be possible safely within the extent of carriageway if the roads had been reduced back to their original size post construction. Whether the roads should be reduced back to their original size post construction is not therefore an environmental consideration but it is a consideration to enable the Project to continue generating by enabling components to be delivered in the event they need replaced,
Public Rights of Way			
Q2.16.4	Applicant	**Public Rights of Way diversions and cycle path connections** Your response to the issues/ concerns on the strategic walking and cycling connections raised in the Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) is noted [REP2-026], including your point about continuing to engage with OCC regarding the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network. However, can the applicant confirm if the issues/ concerns raised by Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) in their response to the Examining Authority's (ExA's) first written questions [REP2-051], including the changes proposed have now been addressed.	With regard to issues/concerns raised by Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) in their response to the Examining Authority's (ExA's) first written questions [**REP2-051**], some of these will be addressed as part of Change Request 2, as described in Applicant's Change Request 2 Notification [**REP2-045**], which is intended to be submitted 30 September 2025. If accepted by the ExA, Change Request 2 would avoid siting permanent infrastructure (solar panels) on public footpaths 132/4/10, 152/8/10 and 416/24/10, thus removing the need for permanent stopping up and diversions of PRoW, which would be reported as part of an amended version of the Annex B Outline PRoW Management Plan [**REP3-030 and APP-233**]. With regard to the other changes proposed as part of the OHAs response to the ExA's first written questions [**REP2-051**], in addition to the issues/ concerns on the strategic walking and cycling connections raised in the Joint (LIR) [**REP2-026**], the Applicant engaged with Oxfordshire County Council via a meeting on 21 August 2025 to discuss PRoW mitigation proposals as part of the Project, including requirements for on-site and offsite improvements to the rights of way network.
Q2.16.5	Local Authorities	**Mitigation measures proposed**	

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		Paragraph 7.8.51 of the LIR [REP1-072], states a number of mitigation measures which the OHA are seeking from the applicant, can the local authorities provide an update on how agreement and implementation of these is progressing.	
Q2.16.6	Applicant Local Authorities	**Responsibility for new and diverted Public Rights of Way** Please clarify who would be responsible for maintaining diverted and new PRoW including any proposed hedgerow planting alongside them during the operational and decommissioning phases of the proposed development.	To confirm, there are no new definitive PRoW proposed within the Project site. However, as set out in the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [**REP2-019**], several new permissive paths and cycleways are proposed as part of the DCO application, within the Project site. The Applicant would be responsible for maintaining the new permissive paths and cycleways, including associated landscaping and hedgerow planting within the Project site throughout the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases.
Air Traffic and Aviation Safety			
Q2.16.7	Oxford Aviation Services Ltd	**Thermal plumes** In light of the forthcoming change request and the applicant's omission of land in proximity to Oxford Airport, are the concerns regarding thermal plumes resolved? If not, why not and which areas cause the concern to remain?	
Q2.16.8	Applicant	**Bird strike** Paragraph NPS EN-1 paragraph 5.5.41 requires the applicant to take account of bird strike. It also advocates that environmental mitigation is designed in such a way as not to increase bird strike risk. 1) Given that there is considered to be long-term displacement of wintering birds [REP2-025, ExQ1.8.7], (deemed temporary until new habitat is established), how does the displacement and the associated new habitat creation seek to avoid an increase in bird strike risk?	1) The Project has sought to avoid any increase in bird strike risk through the placement of bird mitigation areas within the Project design. The Project includes mitigation in the form of areas of various new grasslands to be managed specifically for birds that currently use the Project site both the areas set aside to protect buried archaeology and the Evenlode Corridor. Although the areas of grassland to protect buried archaeology are scattered across the Project site, the Evenlode Corridor runs through the centre of the Central Project Area and is over 2.5km from Oxford Airport. This means that birds using it that might be a risk to aviation if they were using fields near to the airport would be a greater distance from the airport. The Combined Aerodrome Safeguarding Team (CAST)'s Advice Note 3 (dated April 2024 - https://www.caa.co.uk/media/0vjkbyeh/cast-advice-note-3-wildlife-hazards-around-aerodromes-april-2024.pdf) deals with managing

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		The second change request (that is not yet formally submitted) proposes an additional 17.6ha of biodiversity net gain (BNG), which would be in proximity to the airport. How would bird-strike potential from this land be limited?	wildlife hazards around aerodromes, in particular during development. With respect to solar development, Advice Note 3 sets out that '*[w]hilst solar farms (PV arrays) have the potential to provide some attractants (perches, shelter, and recesses for breeding), peer-reviewed research (DeVault et al. 2014) suggests that "PV arrays would not increase hazards associated with bird-aircraft collisions"*'. It goes on to say that '*[i]n addition, there is the possibility that PV arrays may provide fewer attractants than existing habitat (either open land or open flat roof habitat), so each application should be assessed individually as some may have the potential to reduce the presence of current hazardous bird populations*'. The Project site currently comprises a mainly arable landscape that is subject regular ploughing and other soil-management techniques. These attract significant flocks of gull-sized birds to the area that are of a size that would be a risk to aircraft. Although there may be displacement of birds to surrounding fields on a temporary basis (although not the airfield, given it is specifically managed to prevent this), post development, there will be no such soil management in the fields that form the Project, including near to Oxford Airport, and, as such, there would be an overall reduction in the risk to aviation from gull-sized birds flocking around such activities. The subject of birdstrike risk associated with solar installations has been discussed with Oxford Aviation previously. As part of those discussions, the Applicant has agreed to update the oLEMP [REP3-034] to reassure IPs that the principles of landscape design within relevant areas of the Project (i.e. those nearest to the airport) comply with the CAA Guidelines on the Management of Wildlife Risk. This update to the oLEMP will be submitted at Deadline 5. 2) The area 17.6ha of land south of Bladon included within the CR2 will specifically be managed for the benefit of birds, primarily skylark. How this management interacts with birdstrike risk will be included within the updated oLEMP to be submitted at Deadline 5.
Q2.16.9	Applicant Oxford Aviation Services Ltd Defence	**Impacts on radar** The applicant reports at Deadline (DL) 3 [REP3-065] that thermal plume modelling is going to be conducted to determine if impacts are possible. However, in the	Thermal plume modelling will be conducted with respect to aviation activity. This is mutually exclusive of the assessment that has been undertaken to determine the impacts towards radar. The significant potential for impacts upon radar derives from infringement to the line of sight which requires a physical obstruction. Therefore, it is not possible for thermal plumes to infringe

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
	Infrastructure Organisation	same sentence the applicant states that the impact on radar would be minimal. Applicant - when thermal plumes have not been fully assessed to any great detail, what evidence do you have to substantiate the claim of a minimal effect? Oxford Aviation/ Defence Infrastructure Organisation - Are you aware of any instances where radar has been adversely impacted by thermal plumes and, if so, how has such an issue been overcome in the past?	the line of sight and has therefore not been considered as a factor within the radar assessment.

Q2.17 Waste and Minerals

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Waste			
Q2.17.1	Applicant	**Battery Energy Storage System containers** On page 18 of the applicant's response to the Joint Local Impact Report (LIR) [REP2-026], in respect of mineral safeguarding, the following is stated: *"When the operational phase ends, the solar farm will require decommissioning. All PV modules, BESS containers, mounting poles, inverters transformers and switchgear would be removed and recycled or disposed of in accordance with good practice and market conditions at the time."* Battery Energy Storage System **(**BESS) containers are not listed in the Draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) in any of the works or equipment to be provided, and the applicant has stated repeatedly that BESS is not part of the project. The reference to BESS containers is therefore unusual. What is this, why is it listed, and would that invoke any different waste regulations to those already relied upon for the disposal of waste arisings?	The reference to BESS containers was included in error. The statement should say 'PCS containers' (Power Converter Stations). There is no Battery Energy Storage System associated with the Project.

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
Q2.17.2	Applicant	**Bill of quantities** The Examining Authority (ExA) note that the applicant has declined to provide a bill of quantities in response to ExQ1.18.4 [REP2-025]. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations state that the description of the development should include an estimate, by type and quantity, of types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases (Schedule 4 Paragraph 1(d)). In line with the EIA regulations and the requirements of NPS EN-1 confirm the anticipated volumes of waste from the proposed development and provide a bill of quantities.	The Applicant has provided an estimate of the types and quantities of waste that would be generated during the construction and operation of the Project in Table 18.25 and Table 18.26 of ES Chapter 18: Waste and Resources [[**APP-055**]. The Applicant notes that this information is commensurate with the stage of the design process presented in the DCO application and has been used to inform other assessments within the ES, e.g. traffic and transport. The Applicant considers this approach is in accordance with the Infrastructure Planning (EIA) Regulations (1997) and NPS EN-1. The Applicant will prepare a bill of quantities during the detailed design process and will take into account the discussions with the contractors.
Q2.17.3	Applicant	**Future waste management** In their response at Deadline (DL) 3 [REP3-072] the Oxfordshire Host Authorities (OHA) state - *"The Minerals and Waste Policy and Strategy Team therefore remain of the view that there is currently insufficient information within the application to ascertain its impact, particularly on existing waste infrastructure and to plan for the management of the waste arisings from this development over future plan periods."* 1. Whilst acknowledging the applicant intends to provide details on the waste arisings during decommissioning in the future decommissioning management plan and that specific waste management facilities and tonnages may be subject to commercial confidentiality, how does the applicant intend to alleviate the concerns raised by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) regarding the lack of detail on type and amount of waste likely to be generated? 2. Applicant to produce a waste processing plan for the life of the project. The plan to include details of:	1. The Applicant notes it has provided estimates of the waste types and quantities that would be generated during decommissioning (see Table 18.27 of ES Chapter 18: Waste and Resources). The Applicant has committed to managing end-of-life panels in accordance with Best Available Treatment, Recovery and Recycling Techniques' (see the Outline Decommissioning Plan [**APP-236**]). The Applicant notes there are existing facilities within the UK to recycle end-of-life solar panels. Work is also underway to expand the number and capacity of recycling facilities to support the Government's plans to expand solar energy. This includes an action within the Government's Solar Roadmap (June 2025) to support new innovative recycling processes. Private companies are also progressing future recycling solutions to manage panels from large scale projects. The Applicant will provide a list of the authorised processors for recycling the end-of life panels in the Decommissioning Plan. The Decommissioning Plan will be prepared in accordance with the Outline Decommissioning Plan [**APP-236**] and will be approved by the relevant planning authority prior to the decommissioning phase as secured through a requirement of the draft DCO. 2. The Applicant notes that waste generated during the operations and maintenance phase will be managed in accordance with measures set out in the Operational Waste Management Plan, which forms part of the Operational Management Plan and is secured through a requirement in the draft DCO. The Applicant has updated the Outline

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		• when individual parts would need replacing (based on estimated failure rates) • A list of the components, materials and quantities each of these parts would be broken down into • outlet for each specific material generated, taking into consideration potential recyclables produced by other solar farms and industries in the future (U.K. recycling capacity) and the ease with which the material can be processed. N.B. If outlets for specific waste materials are not likely to be available in the near future, this should influence design choices.	Operational Management Plan at Deadline 4 to confirm that the Operational Waste Management Plan will identify the waste types and volumes of waste that will be generated during the operations and maintenance phase and the measures for managing these wastes. The Operational Waste Management Plan will also include a programme for when wastes are likely to be generated from maintenance activities or replacement of panels. This will be informed by the maintenance schedule that will be provided in the Operational Management Plan. As required by the WEEE Regulations 2013, the panels will be recycled in accordance with 'Best Available Treatment, Recovery and Recycling Techniques'. The Applicant notes the Government's Solar Roadmap (June 2025) commitment to maximising the use of resources and reducing waste and recognises solar's potential in the circular economy. The management of the wastes generated during the Project's operations and maintenance phase and decommissioning phase will be cognisant of the Government's commitments and future incentives to maximise the circularity of the solar panel lifecycle. The detailed types and volumes of waste will be informed by the selected specification of the panels and the maintenance schedule. This will be confirmed during detailed design and will be recorded in the Operational Waste Management Plan. The Applicants consider that the Operational Waste Management Plan is the appropriate document to record this information.
Q2.17.4	Environment Agency	**Landfill cabling** With regards to potentially installing underground cabling in close proximity/ through a landfill, has the applicant sought advice from you about how best to approach this and, if so, are there sufficient safeguards in place to give you reassurance that contamination, leachate or release of landfill gases would not occur?	
Q2.17.5	Applicant	**Waste facilities** Having read the DL3 response from the OHA [REP3-072], the ExA require clarity on the following:	1) The Applicant has identified an extensive network of existing waste management facilities (as described in ES Chapter 18: Waste and Resources [**APP-055**]) within the district and the Applicant may use a combination of these facilities. The Applicant notes that the selection of the specific waste management facilities that will be used to manage

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		1) Is the applicant reliant on existing waste management facilities to handle construction waste? 2) Is the applicant reliant on existing waste management facilities to handle operational waste? 3) If the answer to 1 and/or 2 is yes, whilst the contract may be described as 'commercially confidential', the ExA want to know the amount of waste being sent to those facilities and the distance the waste would travel (i.e. would waste be handled within 5 miles of the Order limits?) 4) The OHA state that if the amount of waste is broadly known, this could influence future policymaking and the planning for future management facilities in the locality. It almost implies there is a 'chicken and egg' scenario to the handling of waste. Provide comment and a means for resolution.	construction waste from the Project will not be confirmed until detailed design. It is not usual to include this information within an application as the design information is not detailed to confirm specific quantities. 2) The Applicant notes its response to point 1). 3) The Applicant has confirmed that it will apply the proximity principle where possible with regards to managing waste from the Project. However, the Project requires flexibility regarding the distance within which waste will be managed depending on the type of waste being managed and the facilities available e.g. hazardous waste is often managed on a regional or national basis whereas, non-hazardous waste can be managed locally. The Applicant notes that solar panels are likely to be recycled within the region or nationally due to the specialised nature of the waste. The Applicant reiterates its position that the specific waste facilities will be selected during the detailed design and will be documented in the Operational Waste Management Plan, which will be approved by the relevant planning authority. 4) The Applicant notes that the key waste types and estimates of waste quantities have been provided in ES Chapter 18: Waste and Resources and provide broad information for initial planning discussions. The Applicant will engage with Oxfordshire County Council during the detailed design process and the establishment of the list of authorised reprocessors. In any event, the relevant planning authority will have a right of approval in discharging the site resources and waste management plan pursuant to Requirement 11(2)(d).
Minerals			
Q2.17.6	Applicant	**Repeat of question ExQ1.3.11** Point 1 in question ExQ1.3.11 [PD-008] asked about the amount of the mineral safeguarding area that was covered by the solar farm, which was responded to by the applicant saying 119ha. Point 2 of the question asked why the mineral safeguarding area, or more crucial parts of it, wasn't avoided when selecting the site, designing the solar farm and arranging the cable corridor. The response given relates to contaminated	A Mineral Resource Assessment (MRA) was undertaken by the Applicant [**APP-195**]. The assessment concluded that, given the proposed development is temporary in nature, this will not result in permanent sterilisation of mineral resources, and the national importance of the Project outweighs the importance of the safeguarded resources beneath the affected Land Parcels of the Site, and is therefore consistent with Policy M8, without the need for prior extraction. Appropriate decommissioning measures applied to the grant of any planning permission will ensure that the land is returned to its current use upon cessation of the permission granting the use of the land for a temporary solar farm and/or ancillary uses. The potential development of a solar farm on mineral safeguarding areas was therefore not ruled out when considering

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
		land, which does not answer the question being asked in point 2. Please answer appropriately.	'alternatives', and the findings of the MRA report reaffirms that this is an acceptable approach. The area stated is considered conservative as it does not account for buffer zones that could be applied to any potential mineral extraction in proximity to existing infrastructure on or bordering the proposed development such as roads, properties, utilities or archaeological or environmentally sensitive land uses. The safeguarded resource is present at a greater depth than the regarded sensitive archaeology deposits, and across much of the proposed development, the safeguarded resource is afforded protection by overlying Alluvium deposits. Any construction works intercepting the safeguarded resources would be limited to contact with the upper layers of the safeguarded resource. Therefore whilst any development would present permanent loss and/or damage to archaeological deposits (therefore such areas have been omitted or protected from development), any areas of the proposed development that lie within the mineral safeguarded area are not considered to significantly impact on the available volume and economic viability of the deposit for future extraction, if allocated, following the temporary period of operation of the proposed development.
Q2.17.7	Oxfordshire Host Authorities	**Clarification on mitigation** In the applicant's response to ExQ1.18.8 [REP2-025], it is stated that the principle of incidental extraction (i.e. use it or sell it) is a type of mitigation for developing over a mineral safeguarding area. Is that mitigation or opportunism?	
Q2.17.8	Applicant	**Decommissioning of cables** Can the applicant commit, in the Outline Decommissioning Plan, to remove all above and below ground infrastructure in the presence of the mineral safeguarding area? If not, why not.	At decommissioning, the Applicant is committed to the full removal of all above-ground infrastructure (see paragraph 2.1.1 [**APP-236**]), including within the Mineral Safeguarding Area. This will include solar PV modules, mounting structures, piles, cabling, inverters, transformers, substations, fencing, CCTV, lighting, and internal access tracks unless specifically requested to be retained by landowners. Below-ground infrastructure such as piles and foundations will also be removed where feasible and appropriate; where full removal is not practicable, these will be cut to at least 1 metre below ground level to allow for future agricultural use, taking into account environmental considerations such as soil condition, drainage, and archaeological sensitivity. All underground cabling will be removed except for 33kV and 275kV cables laid in the public

ExQ2	Question to	Question	Applicant's Response
			highway or installed using horizontal directional drilling (HDD), which will remain in place to avoid unnecessary disruption. The National Grid (NGET) substation, if constructed, will also be retained. A detailed decommissioning strategy will be developed and agreed with the relevant planning authority at the time of decommissioning to ensure alignment with safeguarding policies and current best practice. All decommissioned materials will be managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy, prioritising reuse and recycling. Where present within the mineral safeguarding area, all above ground infrastructure will be removed. The only below ground infrastructure that would remain beneath the mineral safeguarding area would be horizontally directional drilled (HDD) cabling. This is primarily associated with the River Thames crossing (HDD 6, River Evenlode Crossing (HDD 5) and a hedgerow (HDD 12) within the MSA, as set out in APP-130. HDD-laid cables will be bored into the ground along a shallow arc path rather than laid in ducts and therefore will not be removed during decommissioning to avoid unnecessary ground disturbance. The presence of these cables is not considered to significantly impact any future extraction of the wider area, and are to be located for the purposes of protecting existing sensitive surface features and watercourses. Buffers associated with those sensitive features will already preclude mineral extraction in these buffer areas.

Annex 1: Response to ExQ2.1.1 – WODC Design Guide

Botley West Solar Farm

The Applicants Response to Examining Authority Question 2.1.1 and requests for information

August 2025

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Approval for issue

Jonathan Alsop	22 August 2025

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Contents

Tables

No table of figures entries found.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Document

1.1.1 Photovolt Development Partners (PVDP), on behalf of SolarFive Ltd (the Applicant), submitted its application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Botley West Solar Project (the "Project") was submitted on 15 November 2024 (the "DCO Application") and accepted for Examination on 13 December 2024.

1.1.2 In response to Action Point 8 of the Issue Specific Hearing 1 Action Points (EV5-010), Part 5 of the West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) Design Guide (the "Design Guide") was submitted to the Examining Authority (ExA) [**REP1-040**]. The Applicant's response to ExA Q 1.1.8 [**REP2-025**] also provided a list of all adopted Design Guidance for the three local planning authorities, including the WODC Design Guide.

1.1.3 Following this, the ExA produced its' second written questions and requests for information (ExQ2) **[PD-012]** which includes the following question at Q2.1.1:

"West Oxfordshire Design Guide

In response to Issue Specific Hearing (ISH) 1 Action Point 8 you provided the West Oxfordshire Design Guide 5 – Settlement Types [REP1-040]. Whilst this document was not requested, it has led the Examining Authority (ExA) to consider other parts of the West Oxfordshire Design Guide that may be relevant to this application and how the project has sought to comply with these guides. Please provide a document that outlines how the project has responded to and will comply with the following parts of the West Oxfordshire Design Guide:

1) *Part 2 – Geology and Landscape*
2) *Part 11 – New Development and Context*
3) *Part 13 – Biodiversity and Protected Species"*

1.1.4 The Applicant has assumed that the ExA in Q2.1.1 above refers to Part 3 – Geology and Landscape of the Design Guide, rather than Part 2 – Planning Policy. This document has been drafted on this assumption. Each section of the Design Guide highlighted above has been considered in section 2 below.

1.1.5 As detailed in the Planning Statement **[REP1-012],** due to the project being a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), the relevant National Policy Statements (NPSs) form the primary planning policy. However, as per Section 104(d) of the Planning Act 2008, regard should be had to other matters which the Secretary of State thinks are important and relevant to their decision. This document provides a response to Q2.1.1 and clarification on how the Project has taken these design considerations into account throughout its development.

1.1.6 All references to local planning policy within this document refer to the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 (adopted in September 2018), unless otherwise stated.

2 West Oxfordshire District Council Design Guide

2.1 Context and purpose of WODC Design Guide

2.1.1 The Design Guide was adopted in April 2016 following public consultation, and is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and therefore forms part of the development framework for WODC. It does not, however, form part of the adopted Development Plan.

2.1.2 In terms of planning policy, the Design Guide was based upon the NPPF 2012 and an emerging version of the WODC Local Plan 2031 (despite the Local Plan not having been subject to examination or adoption at the time). The NPPF has been subject to a number of updates since the adoption of the Design Guide, and the WODC Local Plan 2031 was subsequently adopted in 2018. WODC is in the process of formulating a new Local Plan.

2.1.3 The Design Guide provides a detailed analysis of both natural and man-made qualities and characteristics of West Oxfordshire in Parts 1-10 and goes on to provide design advice which aims to protect and enrich the character of the District, in Parts 11-20. Whilst it's primary focus is on residential development, the Design Guide is also intended to be used by a wide range of users involved in any form of development. The central theme of the Design Guide is *"the belief that good design can only result from a comprehensive understanding of, and meaningful response to, local context in all its forms; that each context is unique, and merits an individually tailored design response."*

2.2 Part 3 – Geology and landscape

2.2.1 Part 3 of the Design Guide provides an overarching picture of the geology and landscape found within WODC. It highlights how West Oxfordshire is a predominantly rural district which encompasses a variety and pattern of landscapes and is home to two principal swathes of terrain: The Cotswold Hills and The Upper Thames Vale.

2.2.2 In relation to geology, within West Oxfordshire, this ranges from the thick belt of oolitic limestone located in the north and centre of the district to the successive belts of cornbrash limestone and Oxford clay, river gravels and alluvium found within the south. Volume 1, Chapter 11: Ground Conditions [**REP3-014**] provides an overview of the geology found across the Order Limits.

2.2.3 The majority of the northern and central sites of the Project are located within West Oxfordshire, with the northern site broadly located to the east of the Dorn Valley, and the Central Site within the Evenlode Valley. The majority of the Project is located within the Clay Vale (as described in Part 3 of the Design Guide) with a small section of the Order Limits located within River Meadowlands. No solar panels are proposed within any of the functional floodplain, as a conscious design decision to avoid any areas of installation within Flood Zones 2 and 3. The Guide states that this underlying geology has, and continues, to influence the landscape, how it is used and how it is occupied, including how development responds to it.

2.2.4 The Design Guide emphasises the interaction between geology and landscape and how a thorough understanding of these two elements is fundamental when considering the design of new development and how this can be integrated successfully into the existing landscape.

Project Response

2.2.5 Understanding the geology and landscape across the Order Limits, and beyond, has been central to the development of the Project and continues to influence decisions. As demonstrated within Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

[**PDB-006**] and the accompanying appendices and figures, these landscape area characteristics have been considered at length within the initial stages of the Project, including consultation at non-statutory, scoping and statutory stages. This essential understanding has provided a rationale of how best to anchor the Project into the existing landscape, whilst acknowledging that, as a solar farm, it comprises equipment and components that differentiates it from housing or commercial building development.

2.2.6 Section 3.10 of the Design Guide, Vegetation Character Areas states:

"The management of flora and fauna should reinforce or restore those landscape characteristics which contribute to local distinctiveness and biodiversity. In general, intervention should aim to restore diversity and structure to the landscape; for example through the planting of trees and hedgerows, and the creation of habitats, in order to reinforce the distinctive characteristics of a particular landscape type."

2.2.7 The Application is supported by an Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (oLEMP)[**REP3-034**], the obligations of which are secured through a requirement in the draft DCO [**REP3-004**] in that prior to commencement of any part of the authorised development, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) must be submitted to and approved by the relevant Local Authority, and the LEMPs must be substantially in accordance with the oLEMP. The oLEMP includes the approach to and delivery of landscaping, including a locally appropriate palette of planting, across the Order Limits. This includes measures such as reinforcing existing hedgerows (c.22km), planting new areas of hedgerows (c.26.5km), new trees and woodland planting and delivering a Biodiversity Net Gain of at least 70% for habitat units and at least 50% in hedgerow units (calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric) which will support or enhance local distinctiveness and biodiversity. No planting measures are designed to undermine the characteristics of any landscape type, building instead on existing landscape character. Further discussion regarding biodiversity is provided in section 2.4 below.

2.2.8 Part 3 of the Design Guide does not provide any specific planning policies. Relevant local and national planning policies have been considered within the Planning Supporting Statement including Green Belt Case [**REP1-012**], which provides an overview of planning policy along with an assessment of compliance.

2.2.9 Compliance, or substantial compliance with landscape related national and local planning policies has been demonstrated, which includes WODC Policy EH2 – Landscape Character, which seeks for West Oxfordshire's natural environment to be conserved and enhanced. On balance, the Project is considered to be substantially in compliance with this policy. The Project will result in a change in landscape character during operation. However, the adverse effect will be limited and temporary and will be offset by the significant new landscaping, which will complement the existing landscape structure which the Applicant considers will lead to an enhancement of the landscape character, for the majority of the operational life of the Project. At decommissioning, the character will be conserved and significantly enhanced, benefiting the area. Volume 1, Chapter 8; Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment **[PDB-006]** provides further details.

2.2.10 In addition, WODC Policy EH13 – Historic Landscape Character, which requires development to conserve or enhance special historic character of its surroundings has also been considered, with no significant effects predicted. Volume 1, Chapter 7; Historic Environment **[CR1-003]** provides further details.

2.2.11 Compliance with WODC Policy EH3 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity, which seeks to, *inter alia,* minimise impacts on geodiversity, has also been demonstrated; no geological sites are located within the Order Limits (the biodiversity element of this policy is considered in section 2.4 below). Volume 1, Chapter 11: Ground Conditions [**REP3-014**] provides further details.

2.2.12 Furthermore, the 'Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Energy Assessment and Strategy for West Oxfordshire' (LDA Design, October 2016), is of relevance. This provides an overview of the potential for renewable and low carbon energy development in West Oxfordshire alongside a renewable and low carbon strategy and suggested revised planning policy, which informed the WODC Local Plan 2031. Whilst it is acknowledged that national planning policy has moved on since the publication of this report, it provides an overview of where renewable developments may be able to be successfully incorporated within the District. The document considers the suitability and susceptibility of different parts of West Oxfordshire, in terms of large scale infrastructure, and forms part of the evidence base for the adopted Local Plan 2031. The document was also listed in the Joint Local Impact Report of the three host local authorities **[REP1-072]** as being a document of relevance. In a broad sense, the strategy recommends to *"focus the energy strategy on maximising the deployment of renewable generation facilities … whilst avoiding significant adverse impact to the intrinsic character of the District, maintaining an attractive and biodiversity rich environment and protecting the distinctive quality of the district's towns and villages."*

2.2.13 In respect of solar farms, the study highlights how there are very few hard constraints for solar farms. Coupled with their low lying profile, it considers that screening can be effective with existing hedges and trees potentially enabling mitigation of most or all of the visual impact. Whilst consideration would need to be given to landscape character, heritage assets and agricultural land classification, the study conducted its own landscape character assessment and concluded that most of the lowlands areas of the district is 'more suitable' for solar farms, but that, in particular, the 'Eynsham Vale' (within which most of the Project within West Oxfordshire is situated) is rated as 'more suitable'. The LDA Design document also highlights the approach towards demonstrating Very Special Circumstances for inappropriate development in Green Belt, which may include improvements to public access, biodiversity and community benefits.

2.2.14 The Applicant had regard to this evidence base document in developing the proposals, and the Project has reflected these recommendations, with no residual significant adverse effects identified after mitigation planting has established, as demonstrated throughout the Environmental Statement. As detailed in section 2.3, the context of the Project has informed its development from the outset, which has given way to opportunities such as providing new areas of vegetation, and enhancing existing areas, which in turn has led to a significant gain in regards to ecological and biodiversity enhancements (see section 2.4 below).

2.3 Part 11 – New Development and Context

2.3.1 Part 11 of the Design Guide details the processes (via the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) and design considerations of new development, including how development can be successfully integrated with existing settlements and settlement patterns. Part 11 of the Design Guide is heavily focused on residential developments with many elements of this section not relevant to the Project, or to large scale solar in general which is to be consented under the Planning Act 2008.

2.3.2 In the wider sense, the Design Guide stresses the importance of undertaking a comprehensive analysis of a proposed site, and its surrounding context to inform any proposed development. Such analysis, it states, helps to understand the areas particular characteristics, be that physical, economic or social. For larger development proposal, the Design Guide stresses the ambition for *"high quality, distinctive and meaningful place making; for the creation of highly desirable places to live, with all levels of design …"*

2.3.3 The Design Guide provides a set of 35 questions which represents a breakdown of the major aspects of context which are important to consider at the initial stage of a development proposal and will inform the design process, with individually tailored design

responses required. These contextual questions range from an understanding of the local and national policies, through to consideration of how waste may be addressed.

2.3.4 Whilst significantly residentially focused, the Design Guide in Part 11 highlights the importance of understanding, and responding to, character, landscape and open space and biodiversity and green infrastructure. It seeks for developments to have these elements integral to the design of any scheme.

Project Response

2.3.5 Volume 1, Chapter 2 of the Environmental Statement sets out the Existing Baseline [**APP-039**] and every chapter of the Environmental Statement submitted with the DCO application has considered the site and surrounding context against the baseline condition. This includes identifying key features of the area, in terms of the land which is occupied by the Project and its wider surroundings including land use and planning designations, heritage assets and public rights of way, and relationship with settlements and emerging development proposals. This then forms the baseline of the environmental assessment.

2.3.6 Due to the nature of the Project, as a ground mounted solar farm, the Applicant has limited control in regard to the individual design of the various technical and built form components required to create it. The Project has been designed to maintain flexibility, with the submitted Outline Layout and Design Principles document [**REP1-014**] providing the maximum parameters of key infrastructure that the final design must accord with (as secured via Requirement 5 in the DCO [**REP3-004**]). However, the appreciation of landscape and development context, means that greater influence can be exerted on the layout and landscape design of the Project, which has been informed at the outset by a fundamental understanding of a contextual analysis approach, which culminated in the key design principles and themes produced at the earliest stages of the Project.

2.3.7 Volume 1, Chapter 5: Alternatives Considered [**APP-042**] provides commentary at sections 5.6 (paras 5.6.15 to 5.6.18) and 5.7 (paras 5.7.1 to 5.7.5) on the key considerations that were taken into account in relation to site location, scale, site layout and design. In accordance with NPS EN-1 (para 4.7.5), design principles were established from the outset, prior to Scoping and informal consultation, to help guide the Project from conception to operation. These included:

- An understanding and appreciation of the landscape character of the area, and the desire to compliment that in the way the infrastructure is sited (through avoiding the felling of trees and removal of hedgerows) and allowing opportunities for new hedgerow and woodland planting;
- Desire to avoid uninterrupted views of the solar farm from any public vantage point, via the introduction of new planning of hedgerows and woodland and their effective management;
- Desire to maintain and introduce new footpaths and cycleways throughout the Project;
- A recognition of the need to accommodate appropriate buffers away from sensitive receptors, such as, residential properties, schools, footpaths, woodlands, hedgerows, bat foraging corridors, rivers and other watercourses;
- Avoiding built development in Flood Zones 2 or 3;
- Minimising the permanent loss of Best and Most Versatile Land; and
- The need to avoid any unacceptable direct or indirect effect upon the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site.

2.3.8 This exercise led to a number of evolutions in the design, which responded to the existing site context. These design principles were included in consultation materials at non-statutory consultation in November-December 2022 and repeated again at statutory consultation in November 2023-February 2024, which included:

- Seek to avoid adverse impacts on designated heritage assets;

- Not propose built development within any of the Order Limits land contained within a Conservation Area;
- Retain existing field patterns, protect existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands and we will also enhance existing landscape and ecological features, by reinforcement and new planting;
- Provide the opportunity for continued agricultural use. This could include sheep grazing, bee keeping, new allotments as well as the provision of community gardens;
- Assume that the height of the panels being used will be between 1.8 metres and 2.5 metres, keeping the height of the panels as low as possible whilst allowing opportunities for sheep grazing;
- Apply 5-10 metre buffers away from existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands, and a 15 metre buffer from ancient woodland areas;
- Designing the scheme so that panels are set back to avoid areas close to roads, nearby residential properties and other sensitive receptors.

2.3.9 These design considerations, which have been applied from the outset and have continued to be refined through consultation and the emerging Change Request 2, have led to a scheme which is suitably anchored within its existing landscape and responds to its context. The comprehensive contextual analysis and landscape-led approach has also allowed for opportunities from the Project to be developed, such as:

- Areas for habitat enhancement, including planting of native species and opportunities to enhance existing habitats;
- Ability to enhance the existing landscape structure and character and provide screening for the Project from public vantage points;
- Retention of agricultural use beneath the solar arrays, and for areas of land made available for community-based food growing initiatives;
- Enhance the existing network of public rights of way, where appropriate, with new landscaping; and
- The provision of new footpaths and cycleways to improve pedestrian access in the area.

2.3.10 These principles are also reflected in the oLEMP **[REP3-034]** which details the overall design objectives of the landscape proposals into three broad areas of landscape integration and location character, landscape amenity and biodiversity, but also provides landscape and ecology zone objectives (where the Project has been divided into five broad geographic 'zones') which identify specific objectives for each zone in relation to their context.

2.3.11 This developing understanding of the site and its context is further demonstrated in the Change Requests [**CR1-007** and **REP2-046]** which are a result of ongoing consultations and dialogue and further consideration of how the Project is anchored within its landscape and context, for example in relation to the setting of the Blenheim World Heritage Site and the function of Oxford Airport.

2.4 Part 13 – Biodiversity and Protected Species

2.4.1 Part 13 of the Design Guide provides a code of practice setting out how biodiversity, protected species and habitats should be considered within development. As detailed within the Design Guide, *"The protection and enhancement of biodiversity is a key component of sustainable development, and thus has significant implications for design."*

2.4.2 The Design Guide considers that all schemes will:

- Aim to maintain and enhance, restore, or ideally add to the net biodiversity and geological conservation interests of the District;
- Avoid direct loss or damage to priority habitats or species;
- Mitigate/compensate for any unavoidable loss or damage to habitats or species;

- Incorporate beneficial biodiversity and geological features within the design of the development; and
- Encourage habitat creation

Project Response

2.4.3 Volume 1, Chapter 9; Ecology and Nature Conservation **[REP2-012]** and its associated appendices, provides a comprehensive ecological baseline (including a full suite of ecology surveys) and subsequent assessment of the Project and gives full consideration to biodiversity, protected species and habitats. The Planning Supporting Statement including Green Belt Case **[REP1-012]** has also considered the relevant national and local planning policies in relation to ecology and biodiversity. This includes demonstrating compliance against WODC Policy EH3 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity as the Project provides the most significant opportunity within WODC to secure BNG around a significant area of land with significant BNG gains (discussed below) demonstrated with the oLEMP **[REP3-034]** acting as the mechanism to record and monitor ecological data on created, or evolving, habitats during the operation of the Project.

2.4.4 As detailed in Chapter 9, the mitigation hierarchy has been applied throughout and the chapter concludes that whilst there will be moderate adverse likely significant effects on the temporary and permanent habitat loss on Wintering Birds during construction, there are also a significant number of beneficial effects on the following receptors as a result of habitat creation:

- Nationally Designated Sites;
- Locally Designated Sites;
- Ancient Woodland;
- Floodplain Meadow HPI;
- Waterbodies HPI;
- Hedgerows HPI:
- Important Hedgerows;
- Breeding Birds;
- GCN;
- Bat Species Assemblage;
- Dormice; and
- Reptiles.

2.4.5 Furthermore, as detailed within Appendix 9.13 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment **[APP-162],** there is a net gain of at least 70% for habitat units and at least 50% in hedgerow units. This derives from the provision of an enhanced habitat network compared to the agricultural baseline and 26.5km of new species rich hedgerow that will be planted alongside an addition 22km of existing hedgerow which will be reinforced. This significant net gain has also been achieved via the dual use proposed, in that the solar farm will also function alongside enhanced grasslands beneath the panels, managed through conservation grazing.

2.4.6 As detailed within Section 7 of the oLEMP **[REP3-034]**, the overall ecology strategy for the Project *"aims to facilitate the creation of a coherent and resilient ecological network that seeks to increase the biodiversity of the Project site in a controlled manner such that it integrates with and supports the existing wider ecology of the surrounding landscape."* In tandem, the broader aims of the landscape proposals are supported by the ecology strategy, in respect of integration and amenity, building upon the comprehensive ecological baseline, numerous surveys and understanding of the Project's context, strategic aims include improving wider connectivity, linking woodlands which are present adjacent and near to the Site with local water courses and further afield. In addition, the enhancement of the overall biodiversity status of the land the Project sits within is sought. These aims have been informed from outset by the Oxfordshire Nature Recovery

Network (ONRN), the precursor to the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Oxfordshire. As such, the Project has been designed to ensure that it aligns with, and furthers the goals of, the strategic ecological enhancement envisaged for the District.

2.4.7 The Evenlode Corridor is central to the delivery of a coherent landscape-scale enhancement due to it being identified in the ONRN as one of the main opportunities in the area (running broadly north-south through the Central Project Area). Being a landscape-scale feature, it provides continuous habitat to facilitate the movement of species, providing ecological linkages though the Project and with the surrounding habitat, aiding in wildlife dispersion. The River Evenlode Corridor is to be restored to a mosaic of Floodplain Meadow, comprising of a matrix of grasslands and wetland features, providing enhanced habitats for a range of species. Further information can be found in section 7.2 of the oLEMP **[REP3-034].**

2.4.8 Additionally, connectivity between the Project and surrounding landscape will be enhanced via the provision of 26.5km of new hedgerow, buffers to new and existing hedgerows, woodland and watercourses and a sensitive management regime of grassland within the panel arrays will help ensure the Project delivers a coherent ecology enhancement at a landscape scale which responds to its context. A number of biodiversity objectives and targets for the Project have been identified with specific objectives provided for each biodiversity area (as set out in the oLEMP **[REP3-034]**, such as the Evenlode Corridor, Wildflower Meadow Grasslands, Solar Array Grasslands, Native Shrub and Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows.

2.4.9 The Project has been specifically designed to avoid impacts to key ecological features such as ancient woodland, flood meadow, woodland and water bodies/courses. Impacts to hedgerows have specifically been limited to widening a number of accesses with the vast majority of hedgerow retained (total loss is circa 600m out of a total resource of circa 60km).

3 Conclusion

3.1.1 In conclusion, this document has demonstrated how the Project has responded to and complied with Parts 3, 11 and 13 of the West Oxfordshire Design Guide, as an SPD, but also to the evidence base of the adopted WODC Local Plan 2031. Primarily, the Project has undertaken a wide-ranging contextual analysis of the entire Project area, including that located within West Oxfordshire, understanding the geology, landscape and settlement patterns of the District which has in turn informed how the Project has developed.

3.1.2 Whilst the detailed engineering design and layout cannot be finalised at this stage, this contextual analysis has formed the basis of how the Project has developed, and which continues to evolve as the Project moves through the examination process. Biodiversity and ecology are integral to the Project, as demonstrated via the comprehensive analysis of protected species and habitats that has taken place, which has provided a number of significant enhancements for the Project.

3.1.3 The Project does not consider the parts of the West Oxfordshire Design Guide in isolation, but at its heart has been developed holistically taking into account the local context and considerations to create a development which responds to this, is appropriately designed based on core principles, is suitably anchored within its setting and provides a number of beneficial opportunities.

3.1.4 Whilst regard and compliance with the Design Guide has been demonstrated, the primary policy for the determination of the Project remains the relevant NPSs.

Annex 2: Response to ExQ2.1.2 – Illustrative Masterplan for the land south of Perdiswell Farm

Site boundary 48.8ha (120.59 acres)

Proposed park and ride

Notes/Revisions

A	10/05/2022	Layout update
B	13/12/2022	Layout update
C	06/01/2023	Minor layout update, updated roundabout access

Land East of Park View, Woodstock

Blenheim Estate Homes

N

Illustrative Masterplan

Status:	Drawn by:	Checked by:
FINAL	MP	MP

Project Number:	Scale @ A3:	Date:
226403	1:4000	13/12/2022

Drawing Number:	Revision:
TOR-SK010	C

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Annex 3: Response to ExQ2.1.4 – Explanatory Note looking at the specific qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL)

The Applicant's Response to the Examining Authority's (ExA) Second Written Question (Q2.1.4) – regarding The Special Qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL)

Executive Summary

The LVIA **[PDB-006]** has assessed the effects upon the Cotswolds National Landscape as a whole rather than assessing each individual special quality, as listed in the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-25 (Page 18). For clarity, the 14 special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape are as follows, with a summary of how the Project would affect them in the following section:

- The unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material
- The Cotswold escarpment, including views from and to the National Landscape
- The high wolds – a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, 'big' skies and long-distance views
- River valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, with high-quality water
- Distinctive dry stone walls
- Flower-rich grasslands particularly limestone grasslands (Not affected by the Project);
- Ancient broadleaved woodland particularly along the crest of the escarpment
- Variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the National Landscape to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness (Not affected by the Project)
- The tranquillity of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution (the Project does not affect the tranquillity within the CNL. However, there is the potential for a negligible)
- Extensive dark sky areas
- Distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity
- An accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswold Way National Trail
- Significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks
- A vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olimpicks, cheese rolling and woolsack races.

Summary of Effects upon the 14 Special Qualities of the CNL

The LVIA **[PDB-006]** has assessed the indirect effects upon the Cotswolds National Landscape at construction, operation and decommissioning. Refer to sections 8.9, paragraphs 8.9.10 to 8.9.14 (construction); 8.9.113 to 8.9.117 (operation). Predicted effects upon the landscape and visual resource of the Project Site and surrounding area during the decommissioning would be equivalent to those experienced during construction for the duration of the decommissioning phase. Indirect effects upon the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape are judged to be no greater than Minor adverse. As such, there would be no significant effects upon the Cotswolds National Landscape as a result of the Project.

Any adverse effects, upon the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape, that have been identified are likely to be reduced further as a result of changes to the Project, detailed within the

changes request submitted at deadline 2. (EN 010147 Notification of Intention to Submit a Request to Change the Application, Change Request 2).

In order to provide further clarification, each of the 14 Special Qualities listed above have been reviewed in respect of their relative location, to the Project Site and / or 5 km study area used within the LVIA **[PDB-006]**, and possible visibility as shown on the ZTV(s) for the Project (e.g. Figure 2 of this response). Table 1 below provides a summary of any potential direct or indirect effects as a result of the Project. This note is supported by a number of figures:

- Figures 1 and 2 show the extent and location of the Cotswold National Landscape in relation to the project with the ZTV overlayed on 1:50,000 OS mapping
- Figure 3 shows the different Landscape Character Types within the entirety of the Cotswold National Landscape
- Figure 4 shows those character areas within the 5 km study area and in close proximity to the study area
- Figure 5 shows the Cotswold National Landscape Character Types within and immediately adjacent to the study area, with the ZTV.

Site visits were undertaken in winter 2022/2023 and summer 2023 to assess whether there was the potential for significant effects. At that time it was judged that there was no potential for significant effects as the Botley West solar farm was unlikely to be visible from the CNL. However, in the light of the Ex.A's Q1.1.6 (REP2-025) and the further question Ex.A Q2.1.4 and to support the assessment made in Chapter 8 (PDB-006) an additional site visit was undertaken on the 14th August 2025. Photographs were taken from a number of publicly accessible locations within the CNL that were highlighted by the ZTV. The viewpoint location plan is Figure 6 and the photographs from the locations are Figures 7 to 14 of this note. Most views are foreshortened by vegetation. It is evident that in summer, there will be no views of the Botley West Solar Farm from these viewpoints, even in the more open locations. Due to the layers of vegetation between these viewpoints and the Botley West solar farm, it is our professional opinion that the Botley West solar farm would be scarcely visible, if at all, during the winter months.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

A ZTV (e.g. Figures 2 and 5 of this response) is used as a tool to inform the professional judgements made in Chapter 8 **[PDB-006]** as well as this response to ExA Q2.1.4.

The ZTV for Botley West solar farm is modelled on the maximum development parameters available; the proposed solar panels were modelled at 2.3 m high, the integral power control systems at 3.5 m, the Botley West substation at 11 m, the secondary substation at 6 m with the NGET substation modelled at 15 m high.

The analysis was carried out using a topographic model which includes existing woodland blocks at 12m in height and buildings at 9 m in height, as shown on the OS 1:25,000 mapping. This mapping does not take account of individual trees, hedgerows or narrower tree belts, nor does it take account of small banks and other minor variations in terrain and so provides a somewhat unrealistic worst case. In reality, as verified from the fieldwork, the high hedgerows within the CNL and within the landscape in and around the proposed solar farm screen most views towards the Botley West solar farm and the fields in which the solar farm would be located.

The ZTV exercise is only meaningful if the limitations of the ZTV production are considered. In visual assessment the main factor affecting magnitude of impact is scale, which is determined by distance and the field of view occupied by the Proposed Development, these factors cannot be modelled in the ZTV and as a result, the extent of actual visibility experienced on the ground is considerably less than is suggested by the ZTV coverage.

While the ZTV provides some indication from where visibility of the Proposed Development might be experienced, it should be noted that just a fraction of a modelled structure used in the ZTV generation may give rise to the wide burst of colour band indicating visibility. Therefore, the ZTV could at the same time indicate visibility of the whole development or only a fraction of it.

Thus, the ZTV represents a theoretical model of the potential visibility of the Proposed Development. The extent of actual visibility experienced on the ground will be less than suggested by the ZTV study.

Table 1.1: Effects upon the 14 Special Qualities of the CNL

Cotswolds National Landscape Special Quality	Summary of Likely Effects	Significance of Indirect Effect
1. The unifying character of the limestone geology	The Project would have no direct effects upon the distinctive limestone geology within the CNL.	No Effect
2. The Cotswold escarpment	The Cotswolds Escarpment Landscape Character Type (LCT) and Escarpment Outliers LCT are approximately 31 km to the northwest of the Project Site boundary at the closest point (Figure 5 of this response). There would be no direct or indirect landscape characterising effects upon them as a result of the Project. The ZTV (e.g. Figure 2 of this response) indicates that the visual envelope for the Project does not extend beyond the 5 km study area and therefore would not extend to the Cotswolds Escarpment / Escarpment Outliers LCTs. Additionally, the predominant orientation of views from these character types is west, away from the Project. The Project would not be visible fom these areas and there would be no indirect perceptual effects upon views from the Cotswolds Escarpment or Escarpment Outliers LCTs.	No Effect
3. The High Wolds	The areas of the High Wolds LCT lie to the west of the Project Site. The closest part of this wide-ranging LCT to the Project Site is approximately 12 km to the west of the Project (see Figure 5 of this response). There would be no direct or indirect landscape characterising effects upon this LCT as a result of the Project. The ZTV (e.g. Figure 2 of this response) indicates that the visual envelope for the Project does not extend beyond the 5 km study area and therefore would not extend to the High Wolds LCT. As such, the Project would not be visible from these areas and there would be no effects upon view from any part of the wide ranging High Wolds LCT.	No Effect
4. River valleys	The Project would have no direct or indirect effects upon the River Valleys within the CNL.	No Effect
5. Distinctive dry stone walls	The Project would have no direct or indirect effects upon the distinctive drystone walls of the CNL.	No Effect
6. Flower-rich grasslands	The Project would have no direct or indirect effects upon the flower rich grasslands within the CNL.	No Effect
7. Ancient broadleaved woodland	The Project would have no direct or indirect effects upon the ancient broadleaved woodland within the CNL.	No Effect

Cotswolds National Landscape Special Quality	Summary of Likely Effects	Significance of Indirect Effect
8. Variations in the colour of the stone	The Project would have no direct or indirect effects upon the variations in the colour of the stone within the CNL.	No Effect
9. The tranquillity of the area	Tranquillity is a combination of multiple factors, including noise, movement and views. The perception of tranquillity is an important aspect of the landscape of the CNL. Those parts of the CNL nearest the Project, which fall within the ZTV (e.g. Figure 2 of this response) are located within an area of the landscape which lies predominantly in the middle band between High and Low tranquillity (CPRE Tranquillity Map). Areas to the west, near Combe, and those areas closest to the A4095 / railway are of lesser tranquillity. As such, this small part of the CNL is not considered to be highly tranquil. Chapter 13: Noise and Vibration of the ES **[APP-050]**, has assessed the effects of the Project in respect of noise. Figure 13.3 **[APP-105]**, of ES Chapter 13, illustrates the study area used for the assessment. This extends to 100m beyond the Project Site boundary in all directions. Only a very small part of the CNL falls within this study area. The operational noise assessment results, for the central Project Site which is nearest the CNL, show results of no greater than Negligible. As such, there is no scope for the CNL to be significantly affected by noise or vibration from the Project. The ZTV (e.g. Figure 2 of this response) indicates small areas of potential visibility of the Botley West solar farm from within the easternmost parts of the CNL, around Combe. CNL viewpoints 1 to 7 (Figures 7 to 14 of this response) have been taken from publicly accessible areas within the CNL, covered by the ZTV, to establish actual visibility, rather than theoretical visibility. These CNL viewpoints show that there are no potential views of the Project Site from either of the PRoWs or along the small section of Park Road in summer and it is judged that it is highly unlikely to be any during winter months, due to the height and layers of vegetation between these areas and the Project site. As such, there is no potential for the tranquillity of the CNL to be significantly affected.	No change/ negligible adverse (not significant)
10. Extensive dark sky areas	The Project would not affect the extensive dark skies within the CNL. A night-time photograph was taken from CNL viewpoint 3, as it provided the most open view from the highest point within the CNL covered by the ZTV. The night-time photograph from this viewpoint (Figure 10 of this response) demonstrates that the views looking east from this part of the CNL have the sky glow of the City of Oxford as a backdrop and are not extensively dark. The Project will have no permanent lighting and views towards it from the CNL have this noticeable lit backdrop. From some	No Effect

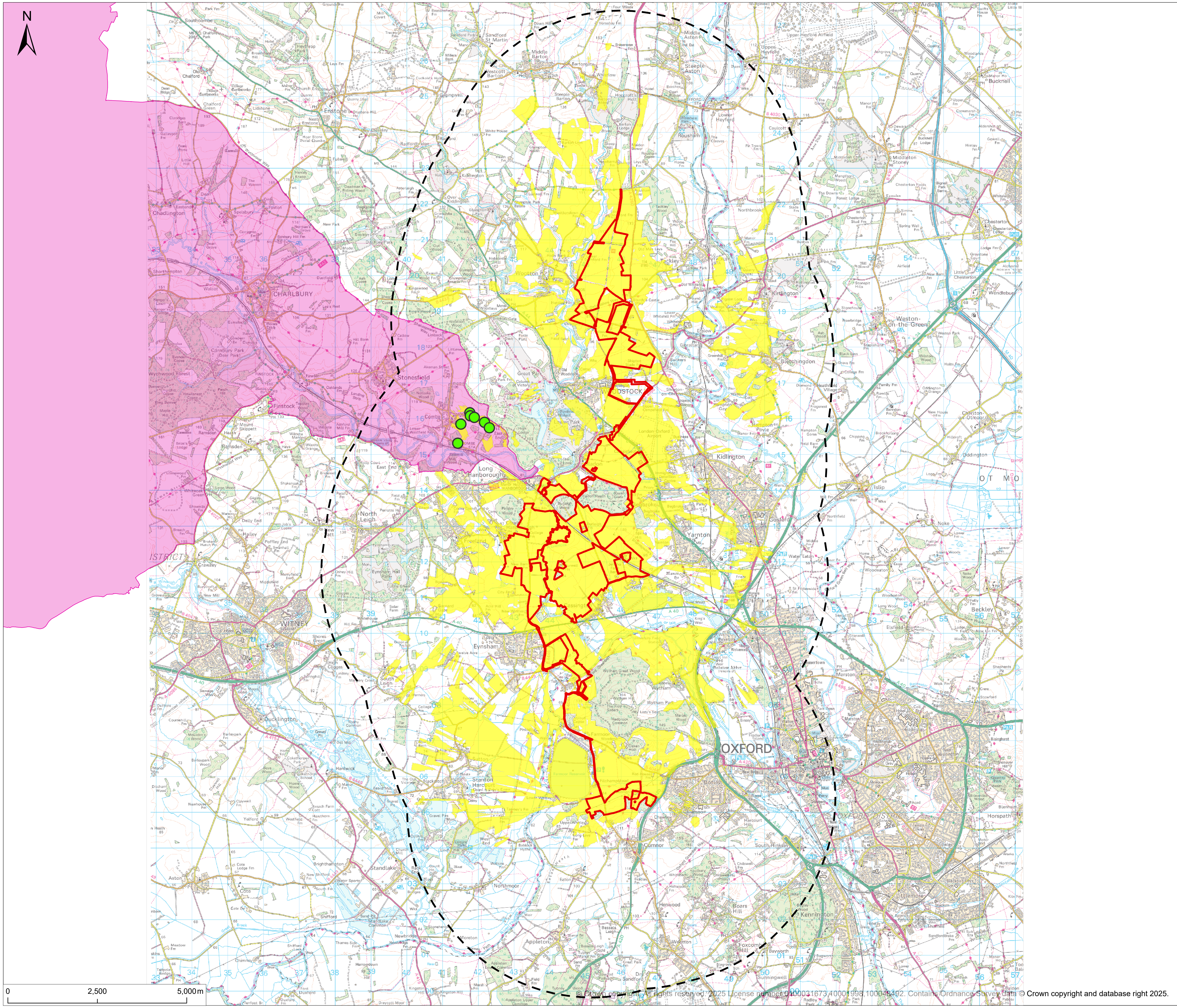
Cotswolds National Landscape Special Quality	Summary of Likely Effects	Significance of Indirect Effect
	locations other urban settlements and infrastructure, might be visible, such as Bladon and the A4095.	
11. Distinctive settlements	The Project would have no direct or indirect effects upon the distinctive settlements within the CNL.	No Effect
12. An accessible landscape for quiet recreation	The ZTV (e.g. Figure 2 of this response) indicates small areas of potential visibility from within the easternmost parts of the CNL, around Combe. Within this area covered by the ZTV, there are a number of public rights of way, including footpaths 173/1/10 (Wychwood Way/Palladian Way) and 173/9/10. A small section of Park Road to the east of Combe also lies within the ZTV. Photography at a number of publicly accessible viewpoints (CNL viewpoints 1 to 7, Figures 7 to 14 of this response) were taken from these areas to determine the levels of actual visibility (see Figure 6, Viewpoint Location Plan, of this response). The photography illustrates that there is no potential visibility of the Botley West solar farm during summer months from either of the PRoWs, or along the small section of Park Road east of Combe. Although the photography at these CNL viewpoints have been taken in summer it is judged that due to the extent of intervening vegetation, including woodland to the southeast, together with low-lying nature of this part of the CNL there would be little or no potential visibility in winter either, as reported in Chapter 8 (APP-045). The Project would have no significant direct or indirect effects upon the quiet recreation of the CNL. The Cotswolds Way National Trail lies approximately 45 km to the west of the Project Site, at its closest point. There is no potential for any part of it to be affected by the Project.	No Effect
13. Significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations	The Project would have no direct or indirect effects upon the significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations of the CNL.	No Effect
14. A vibrant heritage of cultural associations	The Project would have no direct or indirect effects upon the vibrant heritage of cultural associations of the CNL.	No Effect

The legal and policy tests in relation to Section 85 of the CROW Act are outlined in the Applicant's response to ExA Q1.1.6 (REP2-025).

Summary and Conclusion

The 14 Special Qualities of the CNL would not be significantly affected by the Project, with only a potential negligible adverse effect in terms of tranquillity within a very limited geographical area during winter months, adjacent to the A4095 to the east of Combe, if at all. There would be no direct physical change to the balance of its features or activities. It is the relationship and quality of the landscape and visual amenity and activities within the CNL that largely define its inherent character and integrity, and these would not be affected by the Project.

Considering these factors, the effects predicted during construction, operation and maintenance and at decommissioning of the Project on the CNL would not occur to such a degree that it would affect the integrity of the CNL or its inherent natural beauty.



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Legend

- Order Limits
- Buffer distance
- 5km
- Viewpoints for Cotswolds National Landscape
- Cotswolds National Landscape
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Data source	OS Terrain 5
Date sourced	2021
Coverage	Within 5km of the site.
Original cell size	5m
Ground cover is modelled using indicative heights of 9m for buildings, and 12m for woodland blocks. Ground cover is located using OS Open Maps.	ZTV calculated using panel heights of 2.3m, NGET Substation 15m, Main Substation 11m, Secondary Substation 6m, PCS 3.5m
ZTV is not calculated beyond 5km from the site areas	Viewer height is 2m
ZTV calculation does not use mathematically approximate methods	The effects of earth curvature and light refraction are considered

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

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Client PVDP

Project Botley West Solar Farm

Title Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Cotswolds National Landscape

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
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Figure Number 1

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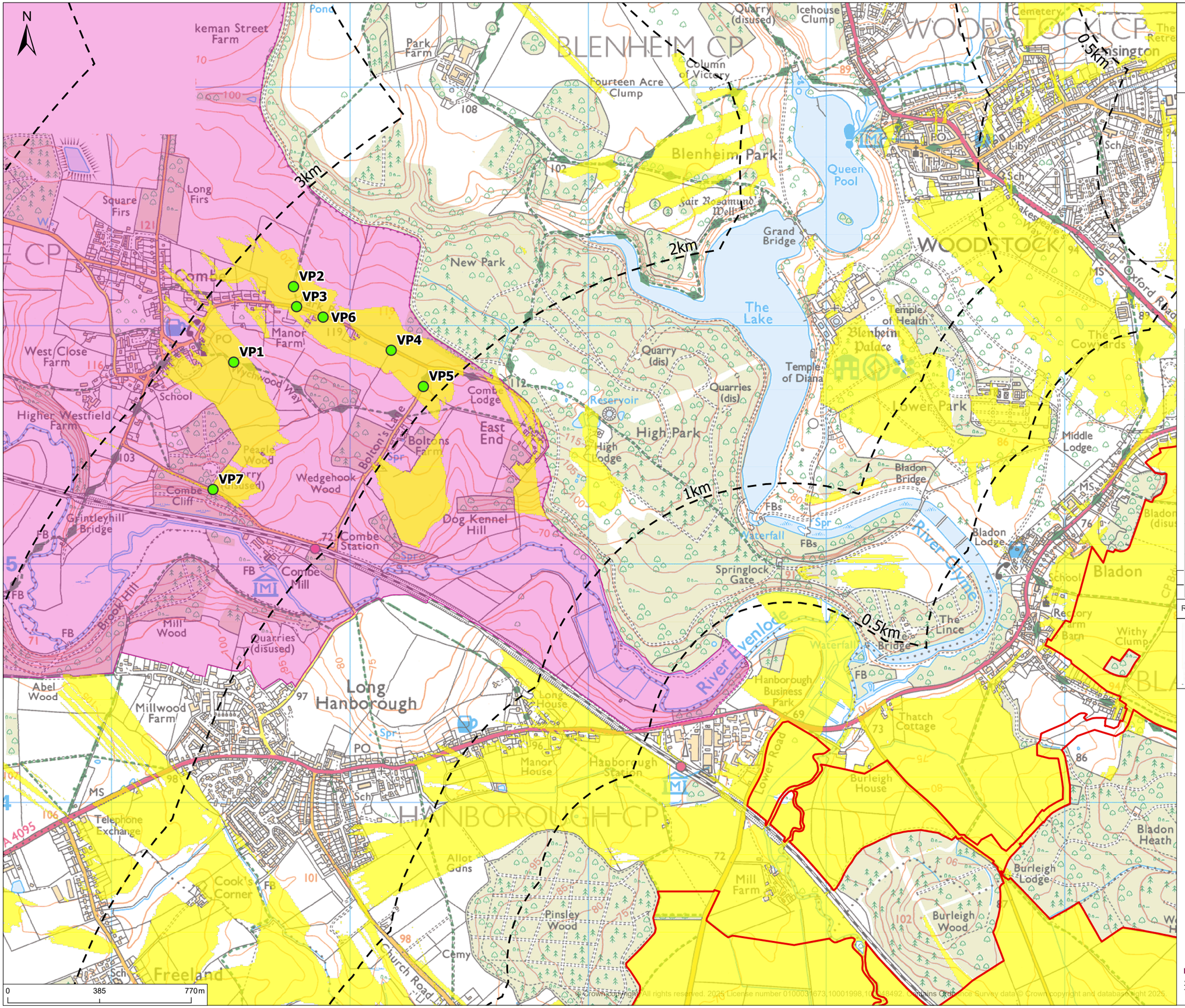

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Legend

- Order Limits
- Buffer distance
  - 500m
  - 1km
  - 2km
  - 3km
  - 4km
  - 5km
- Viewpoints for Cotswolds National Landscape
- Cotswolds National Landscape
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Data source	OS Terrain 5
Date sourced	2021
Coverage	Within 5km of the site.
Original cell size	5m
Ground cover is modelled using indicative heights of 9m for buildings, and 12m for woodland blocks. Ground cover is located using OS Open Maps.	ZTV calculated using panel heights of 2.3m, NGET Substation 15m, Main Substation 11m, Secondary Substation 6m, PCS 3.5m
ZTV is not calculated beyond 5km from the site areas	Viewer height is 2m
ZTV calculation does not use mathematically approximate methods	The effects of earth curvature and light refraction are considered

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

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Client PVDP

Project Botley West Solar Farm

Title Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Cotswolds National Landscape

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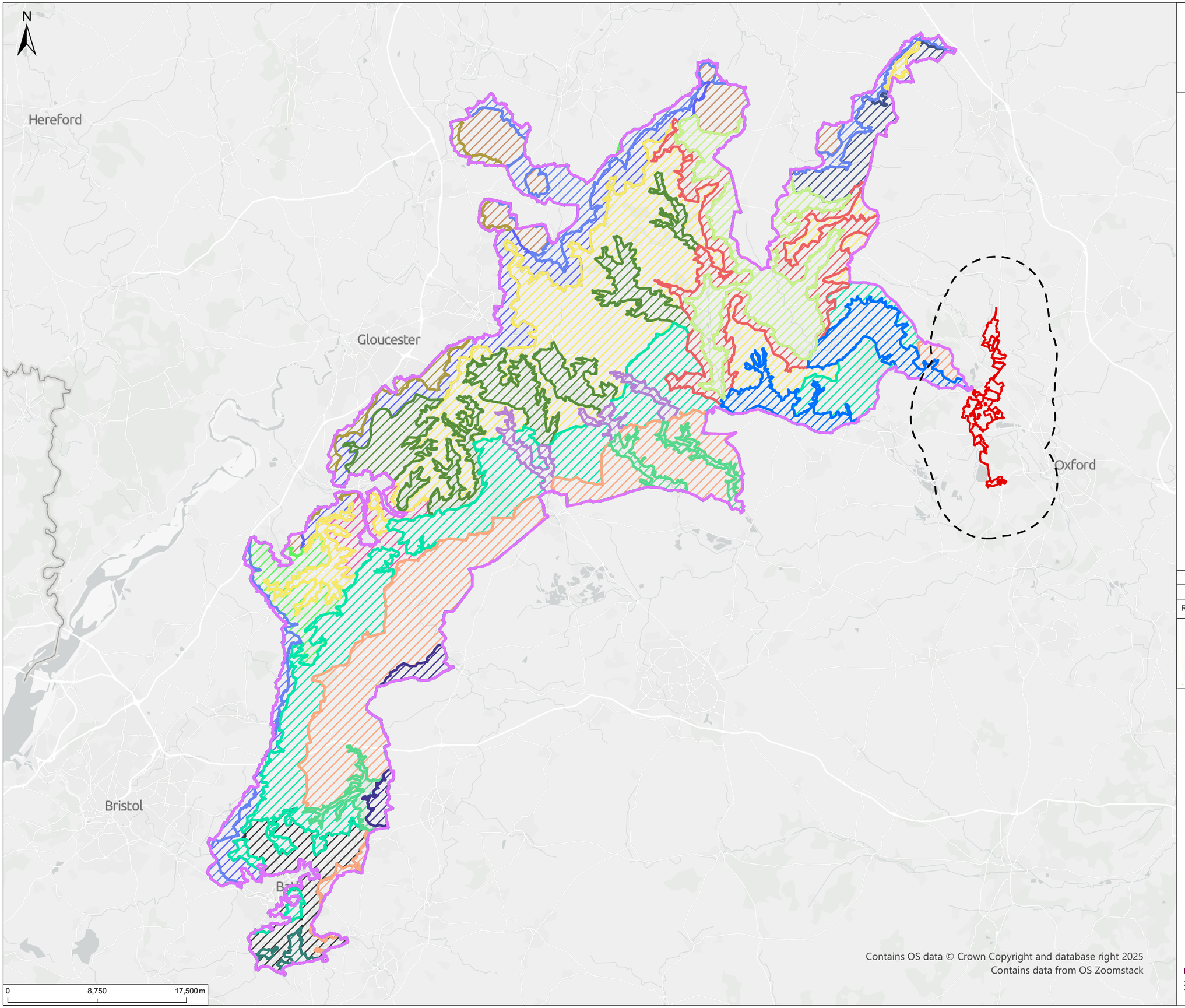

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Legend

- Order Limits
- Cotswolds National Landscape

Buffer distance

- 5km

Cotswolds National Landscape Character Types

- 01. Escarpment Outliers
- 02. Escarpment
- 03. Rolling Hills and Valleys
- 04. Enclosed Limestone Valley
- 05. Settled Valley
- 06. Ironstone Hills and Valleys
- 07. High Wold
- 08. High Wold Valley
- 09. High Wold Dip-Slope
- 10. High Wold Dip-Slope Valley
- 11. Dip-Slope Lowland
- 12. Dip-Slope Lowland Valley
- 13. Low Limestone Plateau
- 14. Cornbrash Lowlands
- 15. Farmed Slopes
- 16. Broad Floodplain Valley
- 17. Pastoral Lowland Vale
- 18. Settled Unwooded Vale
- 19. Unwooded Vale

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

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Client	PVDP
Project	Botley West Solar Farm
Title	Cotswolds National Landscape Character Types

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
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Drawing Number	**Scale @ A3**	**Date Created**
EN010147	1:350,000	NOV 2024
Figure Number		**Rev**
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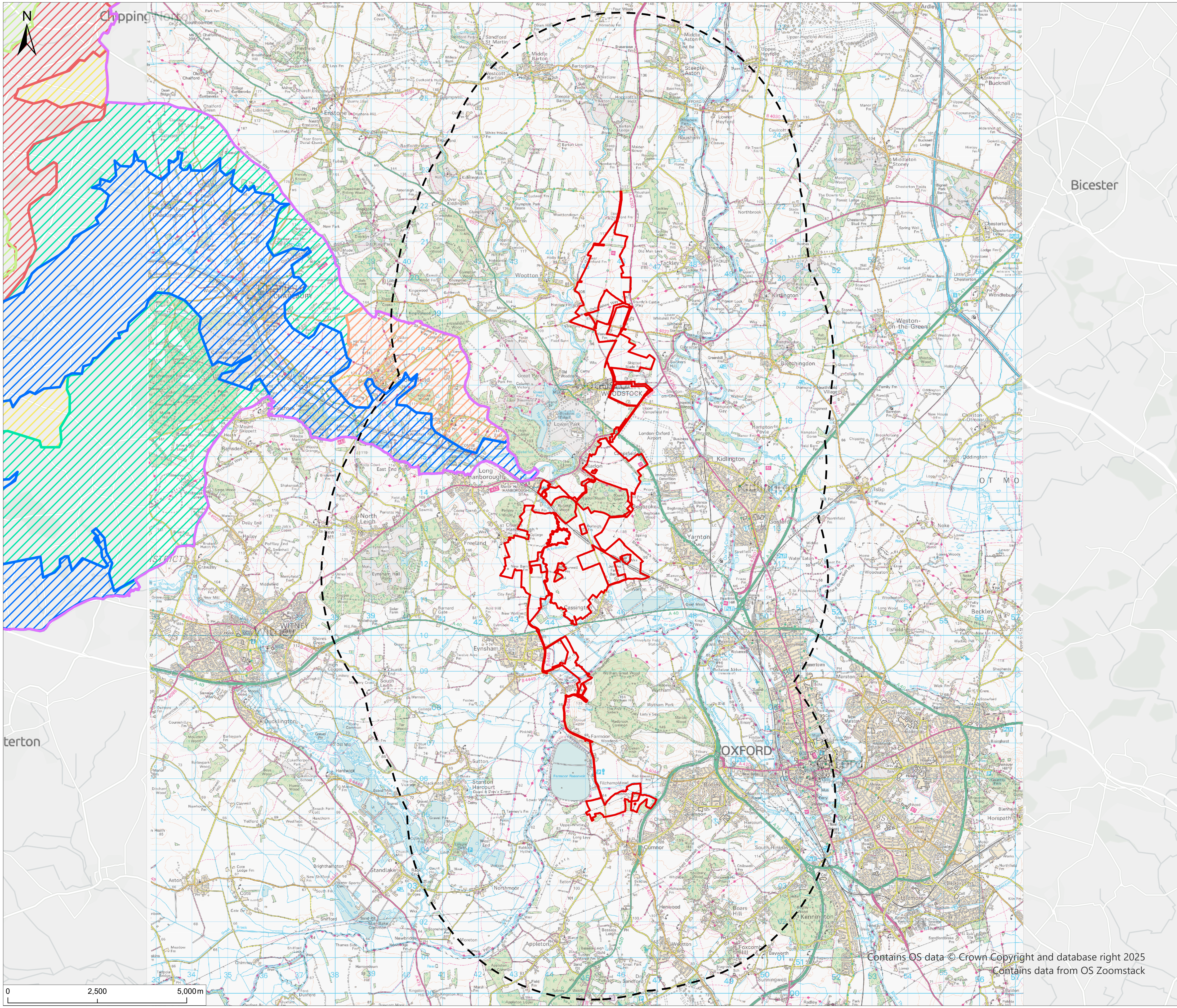

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Legend

- Order Limits
- Cotswolds National Landscape

Buffer distance

- 5km

Cotswolds National Landscape Character Types

- 07. High Wold
- 09. High Wold Dip-Slope
- 11. Dip-Slope Lowland
- 15. Farmed Slopes
- 16. Broad Floodplain Valley
- 17. Pastoral Lowland Vale

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

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Client PVDP

Project Botley West Solar Farm

Title Cotswolds National Landscape Character Types

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
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Figure Number **5**

Rev **3**

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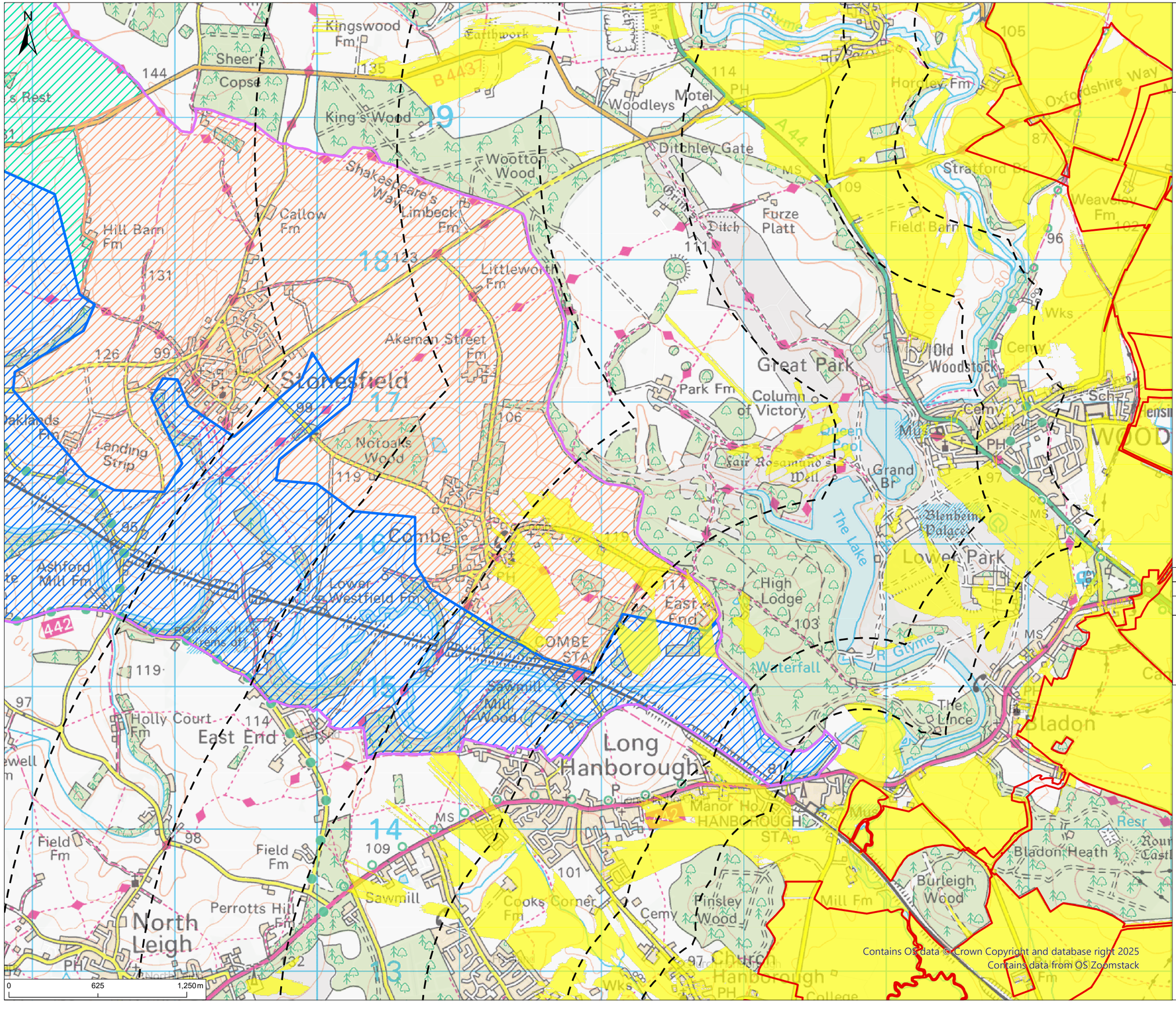

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Legend

- Order Limits
- Cotswolds National Landscape
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Buffer distance

- 500m
- 1km
- 2km
- 3km
- 4km
- 5km

Cotswolds National Landscape Character Types

- 09. High Wold Dip-Slope
- 11. Dip-Slope Lowland
- 16. Broad Floodplain Valley

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

PHOTOVOLT DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

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Client	PVDP
Project	Botley West Solar Farm
Title	Cotswolds National Landscape Character Types

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
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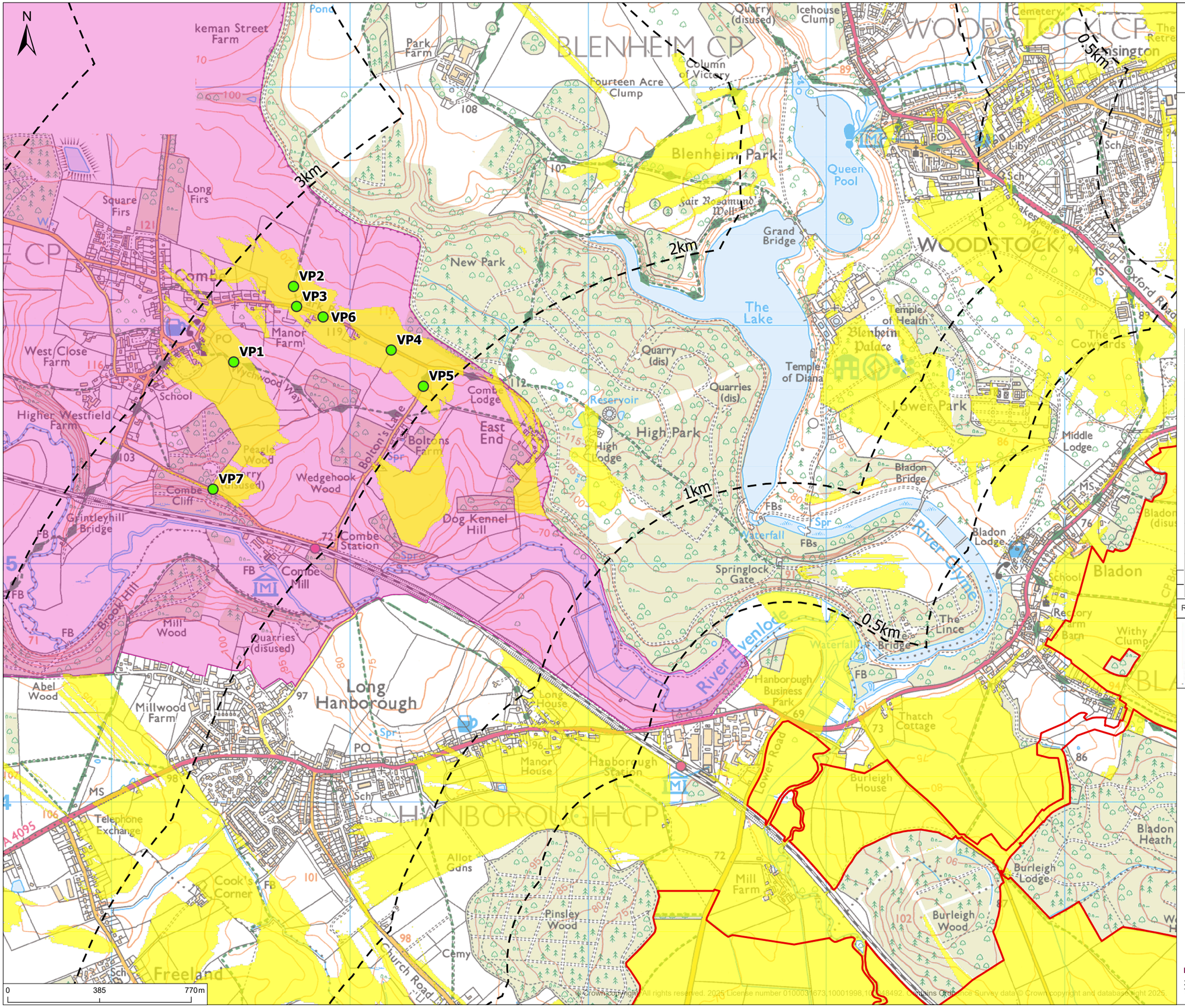

Notes
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Legend

- Order Limits
- Buffer distance
  - 500m
  - 1km
  - 2km
  - 3km
  - 4km
  - 5km
- Viewpoints for Cotswolds National Landscape
- Cotswolds National Landscape
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Data source	OS Terrain 5
Date sourced	2021
Coverage	Within 5km of the site.
Original cell size	5m
Ground cover is modelled using indicative heights of 9m for buildings, and 12m for woodland blocks. Ground cover is located using OS Open Maps.	ZTV calculated using panel heights of 2.3m, NGET Substation 15m, Main Substation 11m, Secondary Substation 6m, PCS 3.5m
ZTV is not calculated beyond 5km from the site areas	Viewer height is 2m
ZTV calculation does not use mathematically approximate methods	The effects of earth curvature and light refraction are considered

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

PHOTOVOLT DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

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Client PVDP

Project Botley West Solar Farm

Title Viewpoint Location Plan

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
FINAL	SHB	GL
Drawing Number	**Scale @ A3**	**Date Created**
EN010147	1:15,000	AUG 2025
Figure Number		**Rev**
6		3

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Visualisation Type	Type 3	Photography Date and Time	14/08/2025 13:51	Client	PVDP	Title	Cotswold National Landscape Viewpoint 1: View from footpath 173/1/10 on the southeastern edge of Combe looking southeast
Projection	Cylindrical	Viewpoint Location	441512, 215848	Project	Botley West Solar Farm		Existing Summer View
Camera and Lens Type	Full Frame Sensor / 50mm	Viewpoint Height	108 m AOD	Project Number	NP12426	Figure Number	7
Height of Camera Lens above ground	1.5 m	Direction of View	Southeast				
Horizontal Field of View	90°	Distance to Development Site	3.0 km				

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12426-0249-03

Visualisation Type	Type 3
Projection	Cylindrical
Camera and Lens Type	Full Frame Sensor / 50mm
Height of Camera Lens above ground	1.5 m
Horizontal Field of View	90°

Photography Date and Time	14/08/2025 14:12
Viewpoint Location	441763, 216165
Viewpoint Height	119 m AOD
Direction of View	South-southeast
Distance to Development Site	3.0 km

Client	PVDP
Project	Botley West Solar Farm
Project Number	NP12426

Title	Cotswold National Landscape Viewpoint 2: View from footpath 173/9/10 on the eastern edge of Combe looking south-southeast Existing Summer View
Figure Number	8

12426-0249-03

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Visualisation Type	Type 3
Projection	Cylindrical
Camera and Lens Type	Full Frame Sensor / 50mm
Height of Camera Lens above ground	1.5 m
Horizontal Field of View	90°

Photography Date and Time	14/08/2025 14:20
Viewpoint Location	441776, 216081
Viewpoint Height	118 m AOD
Direction of View	South-southeast
Distance to Development Site	2.9 km

Client	PVDP
Project	Botley West Solar Farm
Project Number	NP12426

Title	Cotswold National Landscape Viewpoint 3: View from junction of footpath 173/9/10 and Park Road on the eastern edge of Combe looking south-southeast Existing Summer View
Figure Number	9

12426-0249-03

Visualisation Type	Type 3
Projection	Cylindrical
Camera and Lens Type	Full Frame Sensor / 50mm
Height of Camera Lens above ground	1.5 m
Horizontal Field of View	90°

Photography Date and Time	14/08/2025 21:52
Viewpoint Location	441776, 216081
Viewpoint Height	118 m AOD
Direction of View	South-southeast
Distance to Development Site	2.9 km

Client	PVDP
Project	Botley West Solar Farm
Project Number	NP12426

Title	Cotswold National Landscape Viewpoint 3: View from junction of footpath 173/9/10 and Park Road on the eastern edge of Combe looking south-southeast Existing Night-time Summer View
Figure Number	10

12426-0249-03

Visualisation Type	Type 3
Projection	Cylindrical
Camera and Lens Type	Full Frame Sensor / 50mm
Height of Camera Lens above ground	1.5 m
Horizontal Field of View	90°

Photography Date and Time	14/08/2025 14:37
Viewpoint Location	442173, 215898
Viewpoint Height	118 m AOD
Direction of View	South-southeast
Distance to Development Site	2.5 km

Client	PVDP
Project	Botley West Solar Farm
Project Number	NP12426

Title	Cotswold National Landscape Viewpoint 4: View from Park Road on the eastern edge of Combe looking south-southeast Existing Summer View
Figure Number	11

12426-0249-03

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Visualisation Type	Type 3
Projection	Cylindrical
Camera and Lens Type	Full Frame Sensor / 50mm
Height of Camera Lens above ground	1.5 m
Horizontal Field of View	90°

Photography Date and Time	14/08/2025 14:48
Viewpoint Location	442308, 215746
Viewpoint Height	110 m AOD
Direction of View	South-southeast
Distance to Development Site	2.3 km

Client	PVDP
Project	Botley West Solar Farm
Project Number	NP12426

Title	Cotswold National Landscape Viewpoint 5: View from Bolton's Lane/Wychwood Way on the eastern edge of Combe looking south-southeast Existing Summer View
Figure Number	12

12426-0249-03

Visualisation Type	Type 3	Photography Date and Time	14/08/2025 15:07	Client	PVDP	Title	Cotswold National Landscape Viewpoint 6: View from Park Road on the eastern edge of Combe looking south-southeast
Projection	Cylindrical	Viewpoint Location	441887, 216037	Project	Botley West Solar Farm		Existing Summer View
Camera and Lens Type	Full Frame Sensor / 50mm	Viewpoint Height	118 m AOD	Project Number	NP12426	Figure Number	13
Height of Camera Lens above ground	1.5 m	Direction of View	South-southeast				
Horizontal Field of View	90°	Distance to Development Site	2.8 km				

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12426-0249-03

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Visualisation Type	Type 3
Projection	Cylindrical
Camera and Lens Type	Full Frame Sensor / 50mm
Height of Camera Lens above ground	1.5 m
Horizontal Field of View	90°

Photography Date and Time	14/08/2025 15:29
Viewpoint Location	441425, 215314
Viewpoint Height	98 m AOD
Direction of View	Southeast
Distance to Development Site	2.7 km

Client	PVDP
Project	Botley West Solar Farm
Project Number	NP12426

Title	Cotswold National Landscape Viewpoint 7: View from Horn Lane on the southern edge of Combe looking southeast Existing Summer View
Figure Number	14

12426-0249-03

Annex 4: Response to ExQ2.1.5 – Applicant's Approach to Design Note

Applicant's Approach to Design Note

Layout and Design Principles

This note brings together the Applicants previous responses on matters relating to Design and Layout of the Project. It also sets out the process and principles it has used and also addresses recent policy guidance on design produced by Government.

Policy Context

In April 2025, the Government produced an update to 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects: Advice on Good Design'. It states that the Secretary of State is under a duty in preparing NPSs to contribute to sustainable development, mitigating and adapting to climate change and achieving good design.

Good design is crucial for achieving excellent functionality, sustainability, positive place-making and resilience in NSIPs.

The Advice on Good Design guidance explains that design is a way of dealing with the complexities and challenges associated with NSIPs. These can include lengthy timescales, changing technologies and micro-siting which can influence design outcomes and changing market conditions.

The guidance also makes clear that details of the NSIP considered during examination are often not the final as built infrastructure because further design input is required for the reasons set out above. The Examining Authority (ExA) therefore needs to be satisfied that there is evidence that applicants have engaged in and are committed to a process that can deliver good design outcomes, which are specific and proportionate to the type of infrastructure proposed. These need to be secured by the Development Consent Order (DCO) through requirements, conditions, management plans or other certified documents.

The guidance states that EIA should inform the design process. It also sets out the process through which the Applicant is recommended to go through to help achieve good design. In summary these elements are:

1) Assemble

   Setting a brief and a multi-disciplinary teak with design skills and gathering baseline information which can inform consideration of alternatives and site selection. Develop a vision as to how the site could be developed and managed.

2) Research

This stage needs to be iterative. It should analyse the constraints and opportunities of technology and location with a narrative of how the design evolved from the brief. It will need to mitigate adverse effects assessed as part of the EIA process and show how the proposed development will deliver positive outcomes. Consultation should take place at this stage.

3) Co-ordinate

Further iteration must be undertaken to refine choices for details and parameters. This should incorporate consultation responses, independent design input and ensure that design principles are being met. There may be choices to be made. Decisions need to be taken using strong design leadership, driven by the vision. This stage must set out the process by which future post-consent decision-making will be made.

4) Secure

The essential output of this stage must be to set out how the project's good design is secured and will be delivered, including ongoing design advice and community engagement. It is important that applicants are clear about the influence procurement decisions could have and that any differences with future consenting authorities are aired. ExAs will expect designs to be progressed to a detailed level where the outcomes of the applicant's analysis, program and vision are defined. Clarity over how design elements that have less certainty at application stage will be decided and secured post-consent must be provided.

The NPSs set out criteria for achieving good design in projects, aligning functionality with sustainability principles and balancing environmental, economic, and social factors. NPS EN-1 at paragraph 4.7.2 states that:

"Applying good design to energy projects should produce sustainable infrastructure sensitive to place, including impacts on heritage, efficient in the use of natural resources, including land-use, and energy used in their construction and operation, matched by an appearance that demonstrates good aesthetic as far as possible. It is acknowledged, however that the nature of energy infrastructure development will often limit the extent to which it can contribute to the enhancement of the quality of the area "

Paragraph 4.7.5 onwards goes on to state that:

"….Design principles should be established from the outset of the project to guide the development from conception to operation. Applicants should consider how their design principles can be applied post-consent…."

"…Whilst the applicant may not have any or very limited choice in the physical appearance of some energy infrastructure, there may be opportunities for the applicant to demonstrate good design in terms of

siting relative to existing landscape character, land form and vegetation. Furthermore, the design and sensitive use of materials in any associated development such as electricity substations will assist in ensuring that such development contributes to the quality of the area.

Applicants should also, so far as is possible, seek to embed opportunities for nature inclusive design within the design process.

Applicants must demonstrate in their application documents how the design process was conducted and how the proposed design evolved. Where a number of different designs were considered, applicants should set out the reasons why the favoured choice has been selected…"

In relation to solar development, such guidance can be found at NPS EN-3, from paragraph 3.10.9. This sets out how various factors could influence site selection and design. These include: irradiance; proximity to dwellings; agriculture land classification and type; accessibility; public rights of way; security and lighting and network connection.

The NPSs and guidance also point to the importance of explaining decisions taken in the design process and the reasons for them. This includes how environmental impact assessment (EIA) and views from stakeholder engagement and consultation have informed the design process.

At a local level, to the extent policies on design and layout are relevant, these have been set out and assessed in the Appendix 4 to 6 inclusive, within the Applicants Planning Supporting Statement (REP1-012), and are not repeated here. Nothing in those policies introduce new or locally specific criteria that national policy above does not already address.

Applicant's Approach

Recognising the potential for adverse effects, something recognised if not anticipated in Government policy (NPS EN1, para 3.1.2: *it will not be possible to develop the necessary amounts of such infrastructure without some significant residual adverse impacts*.), and the desire to continue to develop successful solar farms, the Applicant sought to create an exemplar development, that meets the challenge set by Government to provide renewable energy at scale and pace, but do this in a way that demonstrates that with such a challenge can come positive outcomes.

The Applicant has therefore sought to create a development that:

1) Is capable of balancing the need to provide renewable energy at scale and pace whilst at the same time being able to be absorbed into the landscape in which it is situated, without significant harm arising;

2) Makes a significant and long-lasting positive contribution to the wider landscape character of the area, and, after the development has been decommissioned, a lasting landscape legacy with new and improved access for the public;

3) Contributes significantly to the biodiversity of the area both during the lifetime of the Project, as well as post decommissioning;

The Applicant's approach to securing good design was founded upon:

a) Bringing together a team of experts familiar with solar development, to apply their combined experience in producing a development that maximised the benefits and avoided or minimised harm. This includes locally based planning and environmental consultants, with extensive experience in solar development, experts in NSIP communication and consultation, leading planning layers in the solar, and leading land referencing consultants.

b) Engaging in informal then formal consultation/engagement exercises to enable the Applicant to identify then respond to concerns raised;

c) Entering into a Planning Performance Agreement with the host authorities, to ensure there was a means by which information relating to the project could be shared and discussed and Statements of Common Ground resolved.

d) Actively using the EIA process to drive continuous improvement to design and layout, including sustainability and responding to climate change.

The Applicant commenced work on the Project in 2019 with the effort applied by the team since that time leading to a considered proposal for a solar farm submitted in November 2024.

The plans submitted with the application incorporate embedded mitigation measures that the Applicant has imposed from the outset of the project but then refined up until the point of submission.

In the context of good design, however, it is important to note that the Applicant does not seek detailed design approval at this stage for any of the infrastructure the subject of its draft DCO submission. The plans submitted are deliberately labelled illustrative or indicative.

There are two main reasons for postponing detailed design and layout approval until post-consent. The first is that if the DCO is granted, the nature of the procurement process that will follow will itself yield potentially different design solutions to that which is currently before the ExA; the Applicant cannot accurately predict what this is at this stage so has simply set design parameters within which specific design solutions will emerge.

The second reason is detailed design approval for all infrastructure will be subject to approval from the relevant host authority via the discharge of requirements (DCO Schedule 2, Requirement 5). Those details must accord with section 3 of this report, which itself cross refer to Management Plans within which there are design and technical measures designed to ensure the development is carried out in way that avoids or minimises adverse environmental effects).

Solar Farm Layout & Design

The Applicant recognises and supports good design. However, it worth being clear what is meant by ‘design’ and ‘layout’ when it comes to solar development.

Design Matters

Solar projects are a relatively simple and essentially utilitarian forms of development made up of specific elements required to generate and transmit energy. A very large part the design of electrical infrastructure required to develop a solar farm is driven by engineering and safety factors, not necessarily aesthetic considerations. They often do not comprise ‘buildings’ where there is normally great scope to influence the design of these in terms of the types and colours of materials that may be used, and even their size and shape. In the case of solar farm development, however, there are very limited opportunities to apply what would be ‘normal’ design criteria to the components of a solar farm. In particular, the following equipment/structures have very limited scope to be accommodate design preferences. Such equipment includes:

- Electric cabling;
- Power Converter Stations;
- Anemometers.
- Secondary Substations;
- Main Substations;
- National Grid Substation;
- Other ancillary electrical equipment including transformers.

Only in exceptional circumstances will some of these pieces of equipment be clad e.g. for noise attenuation measures. Otherwise there is very limited scope to change the appearance, size and shape of this equipment.

There is, however, some scope to exert influence over the external appearance and size of the following structures:

- Buildings associated with any substation;
- Solar array frames, tables and colour of modules

In the case of buildings within or as part of a substation, the applicant will seek to agree the detail of the types of material, colours and overall sizes (subject to engineering and safety requirements) of these structures. However, these cases will be very limited and in geographical terms, confined to a few relatively small locations.

Currently the Applicant has developed the design of the solar arrays and have selected the module type and proposed a mounting structure for these. The height of the arrays has also been limited as has the height

above ground of the leading edge of the arrays. However, subject to engineering requirement, visual impact and requirement to manage land beneath the arrays, the Applicant is willing to agree such detail with the OHA's.

Given the limited nature and scope to exert influence over these components of the development, the Applicant has not developed *design* principles for this operational development, although their placement and size can be governed by *layout* principles (see below). The Applicant considers it appropriate for the detail of any buildings and the solar array structures to be resolved between the Applicant and the OHA's via the discharge of Requirement no.5. It is the Applicants' view, that in this aspect, there is little if any benefit of involving an Independent Design Panel, when such a matter is well within the normal bounds of expertise held within the OHA's.

Layout Matters

In terms of a the 'layout' of a solar farm, and its interaction with the landscape, habitat, cultural heritage, drainage regime and other environmental factors, then there is much more scope to decide where and how the structures required can/should be sited.

It is in this aspect, that the Applicant has had the most engagement.

From the very outset of the consultation events, all plans produced had shown a version of an illustrative layout on which any interested party could comment.

Table 6.2 of Chapter 6, Project Description [**APP-042**[, explained the changes made at that time to the Project, many of which were changes directly related to the solar farm layout.

However, even before the consultation exercises began in 2022, the Applicant had imposed certain core Design Principles to help guide the outcome of the layout in particular.

The overarching vision for the development seeks to ensure that the Project contributes to renewable energy policy targets and objectives, which includes responding positively to the existing site context, baseline analysis and assessment of potential impacts. The Project seeks to do so through delivery of a design that positively responds to its locational context, delivers on the potential substantial benefits to energy production, climate change, and biodiversity enhancement, whilst keeping negative impacts on the local and wider environment to a minimum.

Design Principles were set by the Applicant and the project team to meet these criteria. These are set out below.

Core Principles:

The Applicant had four self-imposed overarching Core Principles within which every decision on layout had to be tested. These were:

- To develop a 'landscape led' layout for the installation areas – seeking to protect and/or enhance existing landscape character and habitat features by an analysis of the character and morphology of the landscape, and extensive surveys to understand the existing ecology of the area;
- To develop a layout and landscape strategy which would avoid or minimise extensive, uninterrupted views, of large areas of solar arrays and other electrical infrastructure, and so avoid or minimise harmful visual impacts, and help with the visual aspects of openness with the Green Belt. This was the design brief for the landscape architect, who then constantly reviewed draft layouts to ensure this principle was observed;
- Apply appropriate buffers or stand-off distances between the development and sensitive receptors including residential and other sensitive land uses (e.g. educational areas); heritage assets and their setting; landscape features (hedgerows, woodland and individual trees); watercourses; sensitive ecology; and generally, where possible use such buffers to maintain a sense of openness to minimise harm to the Green Belt;
- To deliver as much benefit as possible within the Order Limits, including maintaining the ability to produce renewable energy to the level to meet the Connection Offer; to maximise Biodiversity Net Gain – through landscape, new habitats, soil and ecology management plans – of at least 70%, consistent with achieving other objectives; increased and/improved public access throughout the site; a continuation of agricultural use; and by providing community benefits in terms of an area for educational use and food growing.

Within these Core Principles, the Applicant developed a number for more detailed design and layout principles, including:

Detailed Principles:

Trees, Woodland & Hedgerows

1. Maximise the opportunity for additional planting of woodland and hedgerows, and their ongoing maintenance.
2. Ensure appropriate 'gapping up' of hedgerows to improve visual amenity, reduce impact of the solar arrays and improve biodiversity.
3. Avoid or minimise the removal of existing hedgerows by carefully selecting cable routs and installation layouts and by using HDD where feasible.

Buffers

1. Ancient Woodland – consistent buffer treatment of 15 m
2. Veteran Trees – surveyed and protected
3. Watercourses – buffer of a minimum of 10m

4. Residential properties – buffer of a minimum of 25m between curtilage of property and edge of solar array.

Visual Impact and Amenity

1. Reduce the height, where practicable, of solar arrays and substations and associated equipment. This led to the height of the arrays being reduced to between 1.8 metres and 2.5 metres, keeping the height of the panels as low as possible whilst allowing opportunities for sheep grazing;
2. Ensuring that the treatment of edges of the arrays against field boundaries, were set back to avoid creating an oppressive environment for those living, walking or driving nearby, and to help screen the security fencing and installation areas.
3. Identification of existing rights of way for protection and enhancement, and the provision of new footpaths and cycleways;
4. Developing a lighting scheme that was fit for purpose but avoided where practicable night time glow and a material change in the character of the countryside.

Noise

1. To avoid or mitigate any adverse effects arising from noise generated by the noise outputs of PCS and substations, by careful siting and/or imposing noise threshold to protect nearby sensitive receptors;
2. To mitigate and manage construction and operational noise impacts.

Heritage

1. To avoid any development within designated Conservation Areas;
2. To minimise or avoid the impact of development on the setting of heritage assets;
3. To assess and manage the relationship with the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Blenheim World Heritage Site, through the production of a Heritage Impact Assessment and management plans, and in liaison with Historic England.

Vehicular Access

1. To utilise the primary highway network as the main focus for delivery / construction vehicles;
2. To limit the use of the secondary highway network;
3. To avoid tracking construction vehicles along Public Rights of Way (PRoWs).

Flood Zones

1. To safeguard existing hydrological systems and ensure reliance to flooding, taking account of the impacts of climate change;
2. To avoid development in Flood Zone 3;
3. To prevent increased surface water run-off;
4. To offer betterment to the existing management of surface water, in particular in regard to flood risk in Cassington.

Improved public access to countryside and Oxford Green Belt

1. Seeking to retain and protect existing PRoW – with no permanent closures or diversions;
2. Limiting interruption to existing routes – especially national routes – during construction, with managed approach to installation and access;
3. Where possible to enhance the existing PRoW network through increased opportunities for public access to the countryside, including the Oxford Green Belt, and to promote Active Travel.

Continued use of land for agriculture and community food growing

1. The Applicant will retain an agricultural land use beneath the proposed solar arrays and between the power converter stations and substations, and on areas of the Site that will remain undeveloped, such as the water meadows adjoining the River Evenlode. This continued agricultural use will be in the form of conservation grazing, primarily by sheep.
2. The Applicant also proposes to introduce some small scale horticultural production areas, for use by community food growing groups.

This grazing and horticultural use will be managed in a way that will support the Biodiversity Net Gains expected for the Site. An area of up to 30 hectares is being provided for within the areas shown as providing ‘opportunities for enhancement’ on the illustrative masterplan.

Cable routes

1. Laid underground rather than overhead;
2. Proposing main cables connecting parts of the project to be located primarily beneath public highway;
3. Where located on private land – using Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) where necessary to;

- Cross main infrastructure (road, rail, utilities, main rivers)

- Protect river meadows and avoid impacts on main rivers and watercourses
- Avoid disruption to woodland, hedges & trees, and areas of archaeological sensitivity

Aircraft Safeguarding

1. Avoiding increased risk to aircraft utilising Oxford Airport

In accordance with NPS EN-1 section 4.7 and paragraph 4.7.5, design principles were established from the outset of the project to guide the layout of the development. This document also explains how the Project is also substantially in accordance with the Government: NSIP Design Principles, updated April 2025.

These design and layout considerations have continued to be refined through consultation and have led to a scheme which responds carefully to the environment in which it is situated.

The design and layout of the Project will have to accord with the Updated Outline and Design Principles report, which itself contains design and layout parameters. The oLDP also refers to the Management Plans that the design and layout will have to accord with. These plans contain measures designed to protect the environment. They include buffer zones, landscaping measures and maintenance and other measures designed to avoid or mitigate harm to the environment and sensitive receptors.

Annex 5: Response to ExQ2.5.1 – Land and Negotiation Tracker

Land and Negotiation Tracker

Blenheim Trustee Company No 1 Limited and Blenheim Trustee Company No 1 Limited are the trustee companies (there needed to be two acting together) for a number of Blenheim trusts including, for this application, the Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund Settlement.

Vanbrugh Trustees Limited and Vanbrugh Trustees No 2 Limited are the trustee companies for the Vanbrugh Unit Trust only.

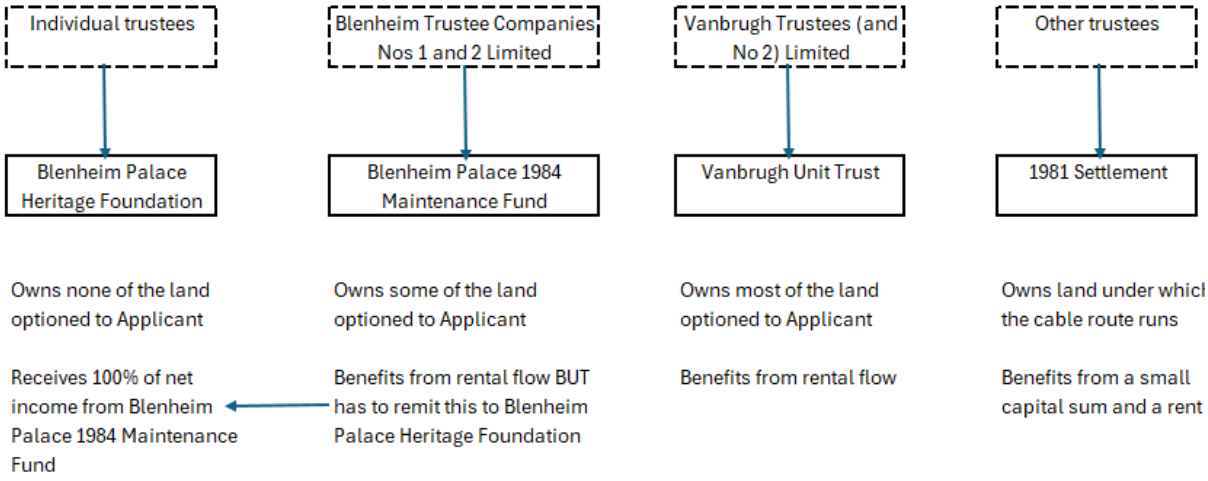
For completeness, Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation has individual trustees (ie not the trustee companies listed above).

Relevant entities are described below in **Table 1.2**:

Table 1.2: Relevant Entities

Entity	Description	Benefit from Botley West
The Blenheim Estate	This is an overarching collective description of all the entities related to Blenheim and the Spencer-Churchill family. There is no specific legal entity. It is the term most likely to be used by local people in describing the whole of Blenheim.	N/A
Vanbrugh Unit Trust	This entity owns or leases the vast majority of the Blenheim land outside of the Park Walls.	Most of the land optioned to the Applicant is owned by Vanbrugh Unit Trust which will therefore benefit from a flow of rents from the Applicant.
Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund	This trust is an HMRC approved Maintenance Fund which owns some of the land outside the Park. In some instances, it owns the freehold of land let on a long lease to Vanbrugh Unit Trust.	Some of the land optioned to the Applicant is owned by Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund which will therefore benefit from a flow of rents from the Applicant. The Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund is required under the terms of its heritage designation to remit its net income to fund the World Heritage Site, which it does by remitting the funds to the Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation.
Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation	This entity is a charity with a long licence to run the heritage business at Blenheim Palace and Park; its main charitable objects are to conserve and restore Blenheim Palace (the World Heritage Site)	Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation will benefit each year from a flow of income each year from the Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund .

The key entities involved are set out as follows. The only main entity omitted below is the Blenheim Parliamentary 1994 Settlement which owns the freehold of Blenheim Park, which it licenses to Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation. It does not benefit from this Application.



The legal method for the transfer of funds for the World Heritage Site has been described in detail within previous representations and is summarised here:

- Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund is an HMRC approved heritage maintenance fund. This is a structure through which owners of significant heritage of perceived national importance could shelter some assets from Inheritance Tax for a generation in return for a legally binding commitment that, for the life of the Fund, all net income arising from those assets will be applied for the preservation of the heritage property. In this case the Heritage Property refers to the World Heritage Site.
- This distribution each year is reported on to HMRC ie the trustees set out the income arising in that year and explain what projects were funded to preserve the World Heritage Site (this is achieved by transferring the money to Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation which delivers all conservation at Blenheim Palace and Park)
- The land which was passed to the Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund includes some of the land included in the Application. The rent arising from a successful order on that land will flow into the Blenheim Palace 1984 Maintenance Fund which will then be distributed to Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation

In summary, the obligation to transfer the money is secured by the legal requirement form approved heritage maintenance funds to spend their net income on that heritage property and monitored by HMRC. When the money is transferred to Blenheim Palace Heritage Foundation, they must spend that money in accordance of the terms of that distribution.

Annex 6: Response to ExQ2.8.9 – Technical Note on Skylark

Skylark technical note

Background

This technical note has been produced in response to questions raised by Interested Parties (in particular the Oxfordshire Host Authorities, OHA) with respect to the delivery of bird-related mitigation measures within the proposed Botley West Solar Farm (the Project), with particular reference to skylark *Alauda arvensis*.

Extensive bird surveys were undertaken to support the Project across two seasons (as reported in ES Appendix 9.9 Breeding Bird Survey Report [APP-158] and ES Appendix 9.10 Wintering Bird Survey Report [APP-159]. These demonstrated that the total breeding population of skylark within the Project site was 72 pairs in 2023 and 228 pairs in 2024 (ES Appendix 9.9, table 35). Skylark was considered to be of no more than local geographic value, possibly reflecting the intensive arable nature of much of the Project site. The density (0.06 to 0.18 territories/ha on a site of 1,300ha) is consistent with that of intensive cereals (0.17) and improved grassland (0.05) (from CIEEM In practice 117 Sep 2022). Within an arable landscape, the success or otherwise of skylark breeding is predicated on the timing of crop sowing; by the spring breeding period, winter-sown arable crops become too tall for skylark to successfully nest in, restricting breeding success to years and fields where spring-sown crops are established.

The assessment of effects on breeding birds (section 9 of ES Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity [REP2-012]) identified minor adverse effects from habitat loss, primarily as a result of changes to habitat for ground nesting birds. Mitigation for the loss of such habitat would comprise the provision of circa 36ha of meadow grasslands managed specifically for both wintering and breeding birds within habitat retained for the protection of buried archaeology. In addition, the flood meadow and other grassland habitats within the River Evenlode corridor will provide further nesting habitat

Further, skylark plots would be provided within the solar arrays that would provide enhanced foraging opportunities for ground-foraging birds, such as skylark. These would be provided at a density of 2/ha and managed to provide areas of bare ground/low vegetation to increase foraging opportunities for skylark (and other birds) that were recorded nesting elsewhere (either within the Project site or in surrounding fields). Skylark require areas of bare ground/sparse vegetation to gather the invertebrate prey that their chicks are fed on during the first weeks after hatching. The plots are therefore not provided as nesting habitat but to ensure that skylark nesting in the surrounding landscape and areas of open grassland on site (the archaeology areas) have sufficient foraging habitat available to improve the breeding success rate. Skylark plots function in an arable setting by providing an open area of habitat for birds to forage in as crops become too dense for them to reach the ground. As such, although it is acknowledged that skylark are unlikely to breed within the panel areas, the plots provide areas of open habitat within which they can feed.

Analysis of Project ability to support skylark

In order to help demonstrate to IPs that the Project site can continue to support the skylark population present pre construction, a detailed analysis of the measures proposed within the Project has been undertaken. The analysis has used the illustrative layout [AS-019], as modified by Change Request 2 which is to be fully submitted at Deadline 5, in order to demonstrate that the Project is capable of supporting the skylark population. The masterplan for the Project is still illustrative at this stage, with the final layout/landscape etc. to be determined post consent,

Skylark territory density varies considerably with habitat ranging from 0.76 territories per hectare in coastal marshes to 0.02 per hectare in intensive grazed pasture (from Fox 2022). Preconstruction, the population density of skylark on the Project site varied from 0.06 to 0.18 territories per hectare,

demonstrating the inter-annual variability of skylark populations, related to annual differences in farm management practices, in an intensive largely arable landscape.

In order to analyse the number of territories the Project site could support post construction, the following parameters were considered when determining where might support skylark:

- Greater than 50m from hedgerow, tree, woodland and solar infrastructure (including fence lines) (i.e. area is away from any location where avian predators may perch);
- Grassland habitat; and
- >16m^2 in area.

These parameters are taken from the location requirements for skylark plots (i.e. the government's now archived AB4 guidance (https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20250604003130/https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/skylark-plots-ab4).

Using GIS, Figure 1 of this Technical Note shows the location of the areas that this analysis suggests could be used by nesting skylark. The majority of these areas are within the River Evenlode corridor and within areas to protect buried archaeology.

The total area of such habitat across the Project site will be 72.15ha. Although primarily used to facilitate botanic diversity, shut up of grazing of meadows (both the archaeology areas and the flood meadow within the Evenlode Corridor) will be timed to ensure skylark breeding success (i.e. the shut up will end as late as possible in the summer). This will ensure that the habitat can support skylark territories at least at a similar density to spring-sown cereal (0.46/ha, Fox, 2022). **Table 1.3** below shows the results of this analysis by land parcel (from Figure 1).

The total number of skylark territories that the Project site might therefore support directly (i.e. that would breed on site) based on the above criteria, would be 33.19.

In addition to this, and as described above, the Project includes skylark plots across the panel installation areas to support foraging activities of skylark (and other wildlife). There are also hedgerow buffers and other features where skylark may forage. Research has shown that the presence foraging resources can support nesting skylark within circa 100m (Kuiper *et al*., 2013) and that the presence of skylark plots within a field can increase the population of skylark breeding in winter cereal crops in each field with plots by a factor of three (Donald & Morris, 2005). On this basis, therefore, it is likely that the provision of additional foraging resource (i.e. the skylark plots, hedgerow buffers and other habitat features) within the Project will play a role in enhancing skylark that are breeding in the surrounding landscape.

In order to quantify this, additional analysis was undertaken to map the areas of fields outwith the Project site but within 100m of the installation areas (Figure 1) – i.e. the area outside the Project site from which skylark might be expected to forage within the Project site.

This provides an area of 253.66ha.

Within these areas, using a territory density of 0.17 (i.e. that of intensive cereals which is the most common land use in the area) gives an offsite baseline skylark territory number of 253.66 x 0.17 = 43.1 territories.

Given the supportive effect on territory numbers that the presence of skylark plots (and other enhanced foraging resources) has within an area, the theoretical carrying capacity within the fields surrounding the Project site may increase by threefold up to 129.37 territories, an increase of 86.24 territories.

On the basis of the above analysis, therefore, the Project site would support 33.19 + 86.24 = 119.43 skylark territories post development.

Although this is a net decrease compared to the number of territories recorded on site in 2024 (228), it is a substantial increase over the number recorded in 2023 (72).

However, since the habitat available for skylark within the Project site will be present every year and managed specifically to support breeding, the overall population of skylark will be more stable and, as such, more resilient compared to the substantial inter-annual variability of the existing situation where breeding success is determined by crop rotations.

In addition, although no quantified for the purposes of this analysis, the presence of enhanced foraging resources for skylark, such as the skylark plots has been shown to improve breeding success in addition to increasing skylark territory density. For example, fields with skylark plots had 1.75 chicks/nest compared to 0.9 in control plots (Donald & Morris, 2005) while a further study found nests with skylark plots in had 0.5 more chicks per breeding attempt than control plots (Morris *et al*., 2004). A review of literature available at the time found that, on average, fields with skylark plots supported 49% more young compared to fields without such features (Smith & Jones, 2007). This research relates to fields with skylark plots present. Although the fields surrounding the Project site do not have such features within them directly, they are within the Project site within the distance from nests that skylark are known to forage. As such, it is highly likely that similar benefits in terms of an increase in the number of young per brood would accrue, offsetting the loss of potential peak territory numbers and helping to support an overall more stable skylark population.

Table 1.3 – Analysis of skylark territories across Project site

Label on Figure 1	Habitat	Field Number	Area (ha)	Skylark density/ha	Territories
1	Archaeological areas - Grassland - Other neutral grassland	1.13	1.54	0.46	0.70819
2	Archaeological areas - Grassland - Other neutral grassland	1.11	2.38	0.46	1.09626
3	Archaeological areas - Grassland - Other neutral grassland	1.14	0.08	0.46	0.03533
4	Archaeological areas - Grassland - Other neutral grassland	1.17	0.14	0.46	0.06268
5	Archaeological areas - Grassland - Other neutral grassland	1.12	0.06	0.46	0.02778
6	Archaeological areas - Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.9	0.07	0.46	0.03403
7	Archaeological areas - Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.2	0.12	0.46	0.05383
8	Grassland - Modified grassland	2.17	2.80	0.46	1.28738
9	Grassland - Modified grassland	2.1a	0.48	0.46	0.21981
10	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.5a	2.10	0.46	0.96719
11	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.2	2.38	0.46	1.09469

Label on Figure 1	Habitat	Field Number	Area (ha)	Skylark density/ha	Territories
12	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.2	0.70	0.46	0.32106
13	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.31	0.01	0.46	0.00443
14	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.33	0.72	0.46	0.33209
15	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.32	0.35	0.46	0.16278
16	Grassland - Modified grassland	2.26	0.00	0.46	0.00152
17	Archaeological areas - Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.1	0.05	0.46	0.0229
18	Archaeological areas - Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.11	0.12	0.46	0.05371
19	Archaeological areas - Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.111	0.30	0.46	0.13727
20	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.83	6.73	0.46	3.09728
21	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.81	0.01	0.46	0.00371
22	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.72	2.45	0.46	1.12675
23	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.93	1.59	0.46	0.73207

Label on Figure 1	Habitat	Field Number	Area (ha)	Skylark density/ha	Territories
24	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.109	2.87	0.46	1.32016
25	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.66a	0.45	0.46	0.20869
26	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.73	15.21	0.46	6.99613
27	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.67	0.01	0.46	0.00614
28	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.68	5.77	0.46	2.65518
29	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.115	0.07	0.46	0.03186
30	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.1	0.02	0.46	0.00943
31	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.111	5.73	0.46	2.63646
32	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.86	0.40	0.46	0.18447
33	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.92	2.89	0.46	1.32741
34	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.9	1.50	0.46	0.69223
35	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.91	0.45	0.46	0.20777

Label on Figure 1	Habitat	Field Number	Area (ha)	Skylark density/ha	Territories
36	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.92.1	0.18	0.46	0.0812
37	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	2.92.2	3.16	0.46	1.45573
38	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.71	6.06	0.46	2.78787
39	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.71	1.02	0.46	0.46712
40	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.71	0.08	0.46	0.03689
41	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.107	0.36	0.46	0.16541
42	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.107	0.09	0.46	0.04363
43	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.85	0.16	0.46	0.07317
44	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.85	0.15	0.46	0.06952
45	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.74	0.00	0.46	0.00183
46	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.74	0.25	0.46	0.11581
47	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.69	0.03	0.46	0.01221

Label on Figure 1	Habitat	Field Number	Area (ha)	Skylark density/ha	Territories
48	Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM	2.69	0.01	0.46	0.00353
49	Grassland - Other neutral grassland	3.3	0.04	0.46	0.01661
TOTAL			**72.15**		**33.1892**

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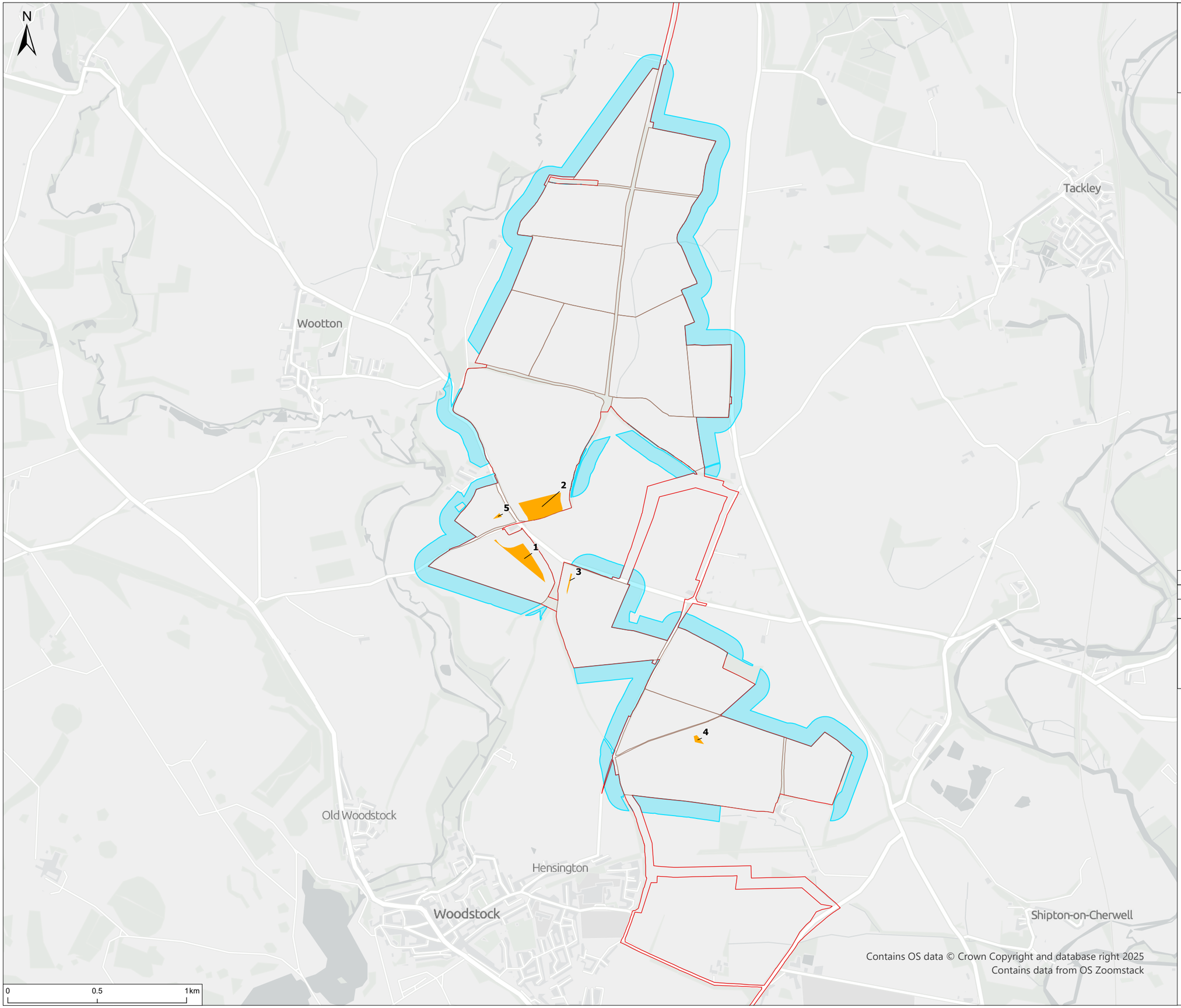

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Legend

- Order Limits
- New Field Boundaries
- Archaeological Interest Areas (grassland)
- Grassland / Arable area within 100m of solar installation area

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

PHOTOVOLT DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

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Client PVDP

Project Botley West Solar Farm

Title Potential Skylark Territories - Change Request 2 Scenario

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
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Drawing Number	**Scale @ A3**	**Date Created**
12426-0248-01	1:20,000	AUG 2025
Figure Number		**Rev**
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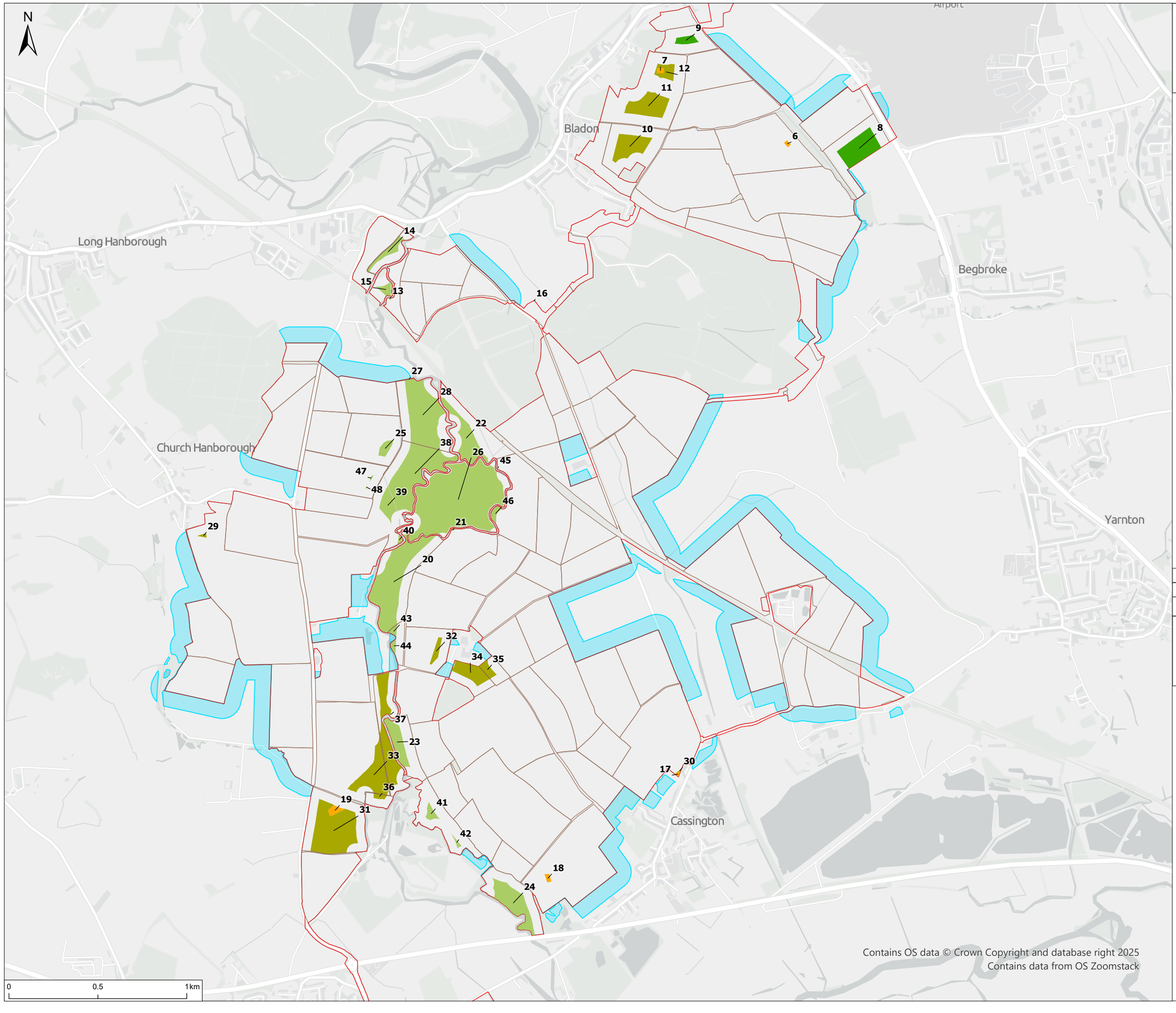

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Legend

- Order Limits
- New Field Boundaries
- Archaeological Interest Areas (grassland)
- Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM
- Grassland - Modified grassland
- Grassland - Other neutral grassland
- Grassland / Arable area within 100m of solar installation area

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

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Client	PVDP
Project	Botley West Solar Farm
Title	Potential Skylark Territories - Change Request 2 Scenario

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
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Legend

- Order Limits
- New Field Boundaries
- Grassland - Other neutral grassland
- Grassland / Arable area within 100m of solar installation area

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

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Client PVDP

Project Botley West Solar Farm

Title Potential Skylark Territories - Change Request 2 Scenario

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
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Annex 7: Response to ExQ2.11.3 – Land Holding Details

Landowner Tables

Table 1.4: Land holdings by ALC grade

Holding No	Holding	Plot Numbers	Acquisition Type	Holding Use	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3a	Grade 3b	Not Surveyed
1	Blenheim Trustee Company No. 1 Limited, Blenheim Trustee Company No. 2 Limited, Vanbrugh Trustees Limited and Vanbrugh Trustees No 2 Limited. The Estate Office Blenheim Palace Woodstock OX20 1PP	1-03	New Rights	Agricultural	2.16 - Permanent	92.36 - Permanent	370.35 - Permanent 0.02 - New Rights 0.001 - Temporary	672.27 - Permanent 0.22 - New Right 0.001 - Temporary	5.39
		1-04	New Rights						
		1-05	Permanent						
		1-06	New Rights						
		1-07	Permanent						
		1-08	Temporary Use						
		1-09	Temporary Use						
		1-10	Permanent						
		1-11	New Rights						
		1-12	New Rights						
		1-13	Permanent						
		2-01	Permanent						
		2-02	New Rights						
		2-03	Permanent						
		2-04	Permanent						
		2-05	Permanent						
		2-06	New Rights						
		2-07	Permanent						
		2-08	New Rights						
		2-09	New Rights						

Holding No	Holding	Plot Numbers	Acquisition Type	Holding Use	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3a	Grade 3b	Not Surveyed
		2-10	Permanent						
		2-11	Permanent						
		2-12	Permanent						
		2-13	Permanent						
		2-16	Permanent						
		3-01	Permanent						
		3-03	Permanent						
		3-04	New Rights						
		3-06	New Rights						
		3-07	Permanent						
		3-08	New Rights						
		3-12	Permanent						
		3-21	New Rights						
		3-22	Permanent						
		3-23	Permanent						
		3-25	Permanent						
		3-26	New Rights						
		3-27	Permanent						
		3-31	New Rights						
		3-32	New Rights						
		3-34	New Rights						
		4-23	Permanent						

Holding No	Holding	Plot Numbers	Acquisition Type	Holding Use	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3a	Grade 3b	Not Surveyed
		4-24	Permanent						
		4-25	New Rights						
		5-01	Permanent						
		5-02	New Rights						
		5-03	Permanent						
		5-04	Permanent						
		5-05	Permanent						
		5-06	New Rights						
		5-07	New Rights						
		5-08	New Rights						
		5-09	New Rights						
		5-10	New Rights						
		5-11	Temporary Use						
		5-12	Permanent						
		5-19	New Rights						
		5-22	Permanent						
		5-24	Permanent						
		6-01	Permanent						
		6-02	Permanent						
		6-03	Permanent						
		6-04	Permanent						
		6-05	Permanent						

Holding No	Holding	Plot Numbers	Acquisition Type	Holding Use	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3a	Grade 3b	Not Surveyed
		6-06	Permanent						
		6-07	Permanent						
		6-09	Permanent						
		6-12	Permanent						
		6-13	Permanent						
		6-14	New Rights						
		6-15	New Rights						
		6-16	New Rights						
		6-18	Permanent						
		6-19	Permanent						
		6-21	New Rights						
		6-22	New Rights						
		6-23	New Rights						
		6-24	Permanent						
		7-01	Permanent						
		7-03	Permanent						
		7-04	New Rights						
		7-06	Permanent						
		7-07	Permanent						
		7-09	Permanent						
		7-10	New Rights						
		7-31	Permanent						

Holding No	Holding	Plot Numbers	Acquisition Type	Holding Use	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3a	Grade 3b	Not Surveyed
		7-32	Permanent						
		8-01	Permanent						
		8-02	New Rights						
		8-03	New Rights						
		8-04	Permanent						
		8-06	Permanent						
		8-07	Permanent						
		8-09	New Rights						
		8-12	Permanent						
		8-13	New Rights						
		8-14	Permanent						
		8-15	Permanent						
		8-16	Permanent						
		8-18	Permanent						
		8-19	Permanent						
		8-20	Permanent						
		8-21	Permanent						
		8-23	Permanent						
		8-24	New Rights						
		8-25	New Rights						
		8-26	Permanent						
		8-27	Permanent						

Holding No	Holding	Plot Numbers	Acquisition Type	Holding Use	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3a	Grade 3b	Not Surveyed
		8-28	Permanent						
		8-30	Permanent						
		8-31	New Rights						
		8-32	Permanent						
		8-33	New Rights						
		8-36	Permanent						
		8-38	Permanent						
		9-01	Permanent						
		9-02	Permanent						
		9-03	Permanent						
		9-04	Permanent						
		9-18	Permanent						
		10-01	Permanent						
		10-02	Permanent						
		10-05	Permanent						
		10-07	New Rights						
		10-08	New Rights						
		10-09	Permanent						
		10-10	New Rights						
		10-11	Permanent						
		10-12	Permanent						
		10-14	New Rights						

Holding No	Holding	Plot Numbers	Acquisition Type	Holding Use	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3a	Grade 3b	Not Surveyed
		10-15	Permanent						
		10-16	Permanent						
2	Worton Rectory Farms Ltd, Cassington, Oxon OX29 4SU			Agricultural			1.76 - Permanent	53.04 - Permanent	
3	John P. Gee & Sons Limited Denmans Farm, Farmoor Oxford OX2 9NJ			Agricultural		4.02 - Permanent	15.76 - Permanent	60.37 - Permanent	
4	Unregistered/Unknown The Chancellor Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford University of Oxford University Offices Wellington Square Oxford OX1 2JD			Agricultural					6.58
5	Smith and Sons (Bletchington) Ltd Enslow, Kidlington Oxford OX5 3AY			Agricultural					31.83
6	Punch partnerships, Elsley Court 20-22 Great Titchfield Street London W1W 8BE			Area used for hospitality events					0.07
7	Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance Church House Oxford Langford Locks Kidlington OX5 1GF			Agricultural					3.43
8	The Wardens and Scholars of the House or College of Scholars of Merton University of Oxford, Oxford OX1 4 JD			Agricultural					3.55

Holding No	Holding	Plot Numbers	Acquisition Type	Holding Use	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3a	Grade 3b	Not Surveyed
9	The Sunderland Foundation (as Trustee of the Duke of Marlborough's 1981 settlement) PO Box 175 Guernsey Gy1 4HQ			Agricultural					10.00
10	Malcolm Stuart Hoskins Price, Perdiswell Farm Woodstock, OX20 1QJ			Agricultural					5.29

Table 1.5: Land use breakdown within the Project by land holding

Land Holding No	Land Holding	Land Use Breakdown within Project	
1	Vanbrugh Trustees Ltd The Estate Office Blenheim Palace Woodstock OX20 1PP		
		Archaeological exclusion areas	34.74
		Buffer strip	3.48
		Bund	0.20
		Cable 33 kv Crossings	0.82
		Educational area	0.00
		Existing hedges	13.33
		Existing woodland	6.93
		Food Growing	32.56
		Food Growing / Education	1.17
		Installation Area	745.09
		Maintenance Roads	36.56
		Meadow Grassland and Enhancement	257.51
		PCS	0.42
		Proposed bridge	0.01
		Proposed pond	1.45
		Proposed woodland	4.18
		Secondary substation	0.58
		Skylark Plot	3.17
2	Worton Rectory Farms Ltd, Cassington, Oxon OX29 4SU	Archaeological exclusion areas	0.29
		Cable 33 kv Crossings	0.09
		Existing hedges	0.38
		Existing woodland	0.31
		Installation Area	43.81
		Maintenance Roads	2.00
		Meadow Grassland and Enhancement	8.11
		PCS	0.02
		Skylark Plot	0.22

Land Holding No	Land Holding	Land Use Breakdown within Project	
3	John P. Gee & Sons Limited Denmans Farm, Farmoor Oxford OX2 9NJ	Archaeological exclusion areas	0.54
		Cable 33 kv Crossings	0.00
		Educational area	0.00
		Existing hedges	1.15
		Existing woodland	0.75
		Installation Area	45.94
		Main substation	0.76
		Maintenance Roads	3.20
		Meadow Grassland and Enhancement	24.23
		NG substation	2.88
		PCS	0.03
		Proposed woodland	0.20
		Secondary substation	0.21
		Skylark Plot	0.23
4	Unregistered/Unknown The Chancellor Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford University of Oxford University Offices Wellington Square Oxford OX1 2JD	Cable Route Corridor – 8.37ha	
5	Smith and Sons (Bletchington) Ltd Enslow, Kidlington Oxford OX5 3AY	Cable Corridor – 33.20ha	
6	Punch partnerships, Elsley Court 20-22 Great Titchfield Street London W1W 8BE	Cable Corridor – 0.07ha	

Land Holding No	Land Holding	Land Use Breakdown within Project
7	Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance Church House Oxford Langford Locks Kidlington OX5 1GF	Cable Corridor – 3.43ha
8	The Wardens and Scholars of the House or College of Scholars of Merton University of Oxford, Oxford OX1 4 JD	Cable Corridor – 3.55ha
9	The Sunderland Foundation (as Trustee of the Duke of Marlborough's 1981 settlement) PO Box 175 Guernsey Gy1 4HQ	Cable Corridor – 3.74ha
10	Malcolm Stuart Hoskins Price, Perdiswell Farm Woodstock, OX20 1QJ	Cable Corridor – 5.29ha

Annex 8: Response to ExQ2.11.4 – Justification of Land Use by ALC Grade

Justification of land use by ALC grade

The purpose of this annex is to respond to Q1.11.8 of the Examining Authorities First Written Questions [PD-008] and 2.11.4 of the Examining Authorities Second Written Questions [PD-012] which requested the following respectively:

***1.11.8**: "Please provide in a tabular format, the areas of land in each land classification across the Proposed Development. Please provide specific justification for the use of land by grade".*

***2.11.4**: "The ExA notes the response made to ExQ1.11.8 in respect of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land [REP2-025]. However, please revisit the response, and as requested, provide, or signpost to existing, justification for each use of land by grade. Please provide the revised response in an Annex to your responses in a tabular format for use by the ExA".*

Therefore, the Applicant has prepared **Table 1.6** below in support of the response provided in at Q2.11.4 of Applicant's Response to the ExA's Second Written Questions [**EN010147/APP/14.2**], which provides a justification of land use by Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) grade within the Order Limits.

Table 1.6: Justification of land use by ALC grade

Project Element	ALC Grade (m^2)				Non-agri (m^2)	Not surveyed (m^2)	Total (m^2)	Total (ha)	Land Use Justification
	1	2	3a	3b					
Archaeological areas	0.00	30243.33	127014.39	199649.45	1.11	0.00	**356908.28**	**35.69**	Land protected from solar panel use due to archaeological sensitivity.
Buffer strip	0.00	3911.22	21079.50	9861.89	0.00	0.00	**34852.61**	**3.49**	Buffer areas proposed to specific access routes within the Project for landscape protection.
Bund	0.00	1979.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	**1979.36**	**0.20**	Surface water drainage enhancement close to Cassington, providing betterment to pre-existing surface water flood risk – not as mitigation for the Project.
Educational area	0.00	0.00	20.00	11748.63	0.00	0.00	**11768.63**	**1.18**	Community benefit – developed in liaison with Oxfordshire County Council Public Health and Education teams – and subject to consultation as part of Change Request 2.
Food Growing	0.00	68597.67	116043.88	143104.94	58.81	0.00	**327805.30**	**32.78**	Community benefit from provision of land for local food growing – developed in liaison with local community food groups; Cherwell Collective and The Cutteslowe Larder.
Installation Area	10000.53	678072.45	2839724.26	4815400.14	21.61	4871.16	**8348090.15**	**834.81**	Area within installation fence line, including solar panels and grassland areas surrounding panel installation.
Main Project substation	0.00	0.00	4316.46	3331.21	0.00	0.00	**7647.67**	**0.76**	Electrical design – required to collect and export AC electrical output to the NGET substation.
Maintenance Access routes (grassed)	1352.91	28174.50	131405.61	258661.00	1349.02	926.63	**421869.67**	**42.19**	Access routes to enable maintenance to take place during the operational period.
Meadow Grassland and Enhancement	9551.41	111773.73	567793.09	2275435.45	25241.24	2691.88	**2992486.80**	**299.25**	Biodiversity strategy and enhancement as part of the Project.

Project Element	ALC Grade (m^2)				Non-agri (m^2)	Not surveyed (m^2)	Total (m^2)	Total (ha)	Land Use Justification
	1	2	3a	3b					
NG substation	0.00	18415.00	10350.76	33.75	0.00	0.00	**28799.51**	**2.88**	Electrical design for the Project required to transform and export AC electrical output to the grid.
PCS	0.00	484.54	1735.14	2417.44	0.00	0.00	**4637.12**	**0.46**	Electrical design for the Project required to convert DC generated electricity to AC electrical output.
Proposed pond	0.00	13474.56	1062.99	0.00	0.00	0.00	**14537.55**	**1.45**	Surface water drainage enhancement close to Cassington, providing betterment to pre-existing surface water flood risk – not as mitigation for the Project.
Secondary substations	0.00	0.00	1170.00	6800.82	0.00	0.00	**7970.82**	**0.80**	Electrical design required to accept, transform and export AC energy from different sections of the solar farm.
Skylark Plots	100.00	2806.59	11840.98	21485.69	0.00	75.14	**36308.40**	**3.63**	Small areas throughout the project in between panels for species specific enhancement.
Cable corridor	0.00	21575.55	50334.67	262467.39	243893.37	600629.31	**1178900.28**	**117.89**	Area within which the cable route will be located as part of the electrical design for the Project required to transfer AC energy across the Project area.

Annex 9: Response to ExQ2.13.1 – Updated Arboricultural Drawings