Botley West Solar Farm

Environmental Statement

Volume 3

Appendix 8.6: Public Rights of Way and Recreational Routes Assessment

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1.1 Construction Impacts of the Proposed Substations and Solar Panels

1.1.1 The residual effects arising as a result of the construction of the proposed Substations and Solar Panels are assessed as being of the same magnitude and not higher on all visual receptors as those arising due to their operation and maintenance, however the residual effects arising as a result of the construction are assessed as being temporary, occurring during the length of the construction phase, and differing in nature from the operational effects mainly due to the influence of the various construction machinery, earthworks, construction compound(s), that will not be present or result in effects during the operational phase.

1.1.2 Therefore, the effects attributable to the construction stage of the proposed Substations and Solar Panels are not assessed further.

1.2 Construction Phase

Construction Impacts of the construction compounds

1.2.1 The construction phase for the Cables includes the installation of temporary fencing, areas of hardstanding within construction compounds (up to 4 compounds, which will be lit).

1.2.2 The proposed construction compounds, as shown in Figure EN010147/APP/7.3.6; one next to the A4260, second next to the A44, third next to the Lower Road and fourth next to Cumnor Road are located away from the sensitive residential receptors at least 200m and would therefore not be attributable to any notable visual effects.

Construction Impacts of the 275kV Cable Route

1.2.3 The works related to the Cable Corridor would have minimal impact on recreational routes. Overlap of the Cable Corridor with PRoW occurs only within short sections in relation to PRoW 413/5 (Sansoms Lane) and Bridleway 342/2 (to the east of Woodstock). Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) crossing would be used to cross River Thames and Thames Path to the east of Swinford.

1.2.4 In views from the paths, the construction activities would be disruptive to path users within short sections. Therefore, high sensitivity users of the recreational routes would experience a Low magnitude of change

1.2.5 The temporary nature and reversibility of the effects will minimise any perceived impact, which is considered to result in a Minor effect which are temporary, localised (reversible) and adverse.

1.3 Operational Phase

Long Distance Recreational Routes

Oxford Green Belt Way

1.3.1 The Oxford Green Belt Way is an 80 km long-distance path which circumvents the Oxford Green Belt surrounding the city of Oxford.

1.3.2 The path falls within the ZTV within a 2km section (including 184/30, 184/50, 184/22, 184/15) on the south eastern shore of Farmoor Reservoir, passing the southern section of the Project site and on the north facing slope of Smith Hill to the north of Cumnor.

1.3.3 The visibility and views from the route would vary and magnitude of change would fluctuate between negligible and high, in the proximity of the project Substation and solar panels, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoints 48 and 50. Otherwise, in elevated views as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 53, or more distant views as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 47, visibility of the Project is reduced due to the vast scale of the landscape and intervening vegetation and the distance factor.

1.3.4 Overall, the effects on users of the 2km section of the route would be of Medium-Low magnitude (Moderate and not Significant), in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed woodland planting, to Low and Neutral long-term effects.

Public Rights of Way

1.3.5 Reference to Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 mapping and web-based definitive interactive map for Oxfordshire[1] confirms the extent and status of public rights of way in the immediate vicinity of the Project Site. These are illustrated in Figures 8.4.

1.3.6 The following Public Rights of Way (PRoW) have the potential to be affected by the Project and have been mapped within 2km from the site.

Northern Site

Dornford Lane

1.3.7 Dornford Lane (bridleway 416/11, 413/6) runs due south from Barton Abbey to Woodstock. The hedgerows on either side of the path are 4 to 6m deep a mix of hawthorn and elder. An approximately 2.3km long section of this path extends through the northern section of the Project.

1.3.8 Representative Viewpoint 2, and 11 have been taken from the path. There are three intersections with another PRoW within the 2.3 km section, which runs through the northern section of the Project. However, views of the solar panels would be mainly available from the intersection locations, as presented by

[1] https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/countryside/countryside-access/public-rights-way/public-rights-way-online

Viewpoint 5a. The Project would not affect the main vegetated character of this route. The impact attributable to the change in occasional glimpsed views is considered limited along the few intersections.

1.3.9 The overall magnitude of impact is considered Low-negligible, resulting in Minor-negligible, not significant adverse effect. This would remain Minor-negligible in the long term, turning to neutral.

PRoW 416/22

1.3.10 Another south north direction route is PRoW 416/22, approximately 2km long path, which extends along the western boundary of the northern section of the Project, in between Upper Dornford Farm and Milford Bridge.

1.3.11 The route abuts with the Project Site boundary within a 340m section to the north east of Lower Dornford Farm, otherwise the route extends approximately at a distance of 180m from the Project Site. This section is partially lined by hedgerow, otherwise the route is lined by hedgerows and trees.

1.3.12 The visibility and views from the route would vary and magnitude of change would fluctuate between negligible and high, in the proximity of the solar panels, within a 340m section, resulting in High-medium magnitude of impact, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 4.

1.3.13 Overall, the effects on users of the route would be of Medium-Low magnitude, in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Low-negligible and Neutral long-term effects.

Footpath 416/5

1.3.14 Footpath 416/5 (including 416/6, 379/7, 379/8) is 3.1km long and runs between Wootton and Tackley, crossing agricultural fields. Due to the Project, a 1.3km long section of the route would be lined by solar panels which will cover the fields. Although the open views of fields would be lost, the proposed low-lying development would not affect the skyline. Therefore the magnitude of impact is considered High-medium within this section of the route, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoints 5 and 6.

1.3.15 Overall, the effects on users of the route would be of Medium magnitude **(Moderate and Significant)**, in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Low and Neutral long-term effects. Although the proposed planting on both sides of the route would channel the views within a 1.3km section of the route, the vegetation alongside the routes is considered a characteristic landscape element as the route intersects with the well vegetated Dornford Lane and Bridleway 416/21.

Footpath 416/24

1.3.16 Footpath 416/2 (416/24, 416/23, 413/5) extends from the southern end of Wootton, crosses River Glyme, and 1.5km further on it intersects with Dornford Lane. A 720m long section of the footpath crosses the agricultural field on the south-western corner of the northern section of the site. An approximately 110m long section of the footpath/ promoted cycle path would extend between solar panels. Otherwise, the solar panels would be discernible from the route

to the south east of Sansom's Farm, at a distance of not closer than 150m, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 8.

1.3.17 Overall, the effects on users of the route would be of Low magnitude, in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Low-negligible and Neutral long-term effects.

Bridleway 342/1

1.3.18 Bridleway 342/1 is 1.9 km long and extends between Sansoms Lane Bridleway and A4095. It crosses the south eastern part of the northern section of the Site, where it extends 640m along the hedgerow. The solar panels would align with the route on the agricultural field to the north.

1.3.19 The visibility and views from the route would vary, and the magnitude of change would fluctuate between negligible and high, in the proximity of the solar panels, within a 640m section, resulting in a High-medium magnitude of impact, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoints 13 and 14.

1.3.20 Overall, the effects on users of the route would be of Medium-Low magnitude (Moderate and not Significant), in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Low-negligible and Neutral long-term effects. Although the proposed planting on both sides of the route would channel the views within a 640m long section of the route, the vegetation alongside the routes is considered a characteristic landscape element as the route intersects with the well-vegetated Dornford Lane and Bridleway 416/21.

PRoW 342/6

1.3.21 PRoW 342/6 is a 1.7km long route, which extends from the eastern end of Woodstock, crosses an agricultural field and then turns east to Shipton Slade Farm, where it crosses the fields to the north, and intersects with Bridleway 342/1.

1.3.22 The route extends next to the Project site boundary within an 800 m-long section and crosses the Project Site within a 300m section. Views from the route are generally well screened by the vegetation, which aligns the route. Views along a 360m long section of the route with open views across the agricultural field would be changed due to the Project.

1.3.23 Due to the limited change in views the magnitude of impact is considered Low in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Low-negligible and Neutral long-term effects (Representative Viewpoint 15).

Central Site PRoWs

Footpath 238/5

1.3.24 Footpath 238/5 (including 206/10) is 3km long, and it runs from Dreydon House on the southern edge of Church Hamborough to Eynsham. Within a 370m section, the footpath would extend through the Project Site. As the field is defined by the hedgerow then the solar panels would appear on one side of the route, resulting in High-medium magnitude of impact, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 25 and 26.

1.3.25 Another 360m long section of the route is lined by a hedgerow and views of the solar panels would be screened. However, there are a few gaps in this hedgerow, which would allow views across the wider landscape due to the elevated location of this section of the route, resulting in Medium magnitude of impact, as illustrated by Viewpoint 24. Representative Viewpoint 27 illustrates more distant view towards Church Hamborough, resulting in Low magnitude of impact.

1.3.26 The visibility and views from the route would vary, and the magnitude of change would fluctuate between negligible and medium-high, in the proximity of the solar panels, within the 370m section. Overall, the effects on users of the route are considered of Medium-Low magnitude (Moderate and not Significant), in the medium term, which would be reduced due to the proposed planting to Low and Neutral long-term effects. The distinctive skyline, formed by landforms in both directions on the route, would be retained.

Bridleway 206/11

1.3.27 Bridleway 206/11 (including 206/3, 152/5) is 1.7km long and runs from Evenlode Farm to Eynsham Mill. When crossing Lower Road, the way is at its closest to the Project Substation and solar panels at a distance of 380m.

1.3.28 The Project Substation would be discernible across the open field at a distance of 390m within a 270m section. A limited section of the solar panels would not appear as a noticeable feature across a level field at this distance. Also the intervening, including the area of meadow grassland / Landscape enhancement would screen the low-lying development.

1.3.29 Overall, the effects on users of the route are considered of Low magnitude, in the medium term, which would be remain Low, as the proposed hedgerow would not screen the substation (Representative Viewpoint 30).

Footpath 238/1

1.3.30 Footpath 238/1 (including 238/2) is 2.4km long and it runs from the Main Road at the eastern edge of Long Hansborough to Church Hansborough. To the east of Pinsley Wood the path runs through, and alongside, the solar panels within a 900m section. An approximately 300m long section around a small field covered by solar panels would be affected, and no intervening mitigation planting is proposed. Another 600m long section would be lined by hedgerow planting, which would screen views of the Project. As the existing skyline above the solar panels would not be affected, the magnitude of change is considered Medium-High at Year 1, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 23.

1.3.31 The visibility and views from the route would vary, (as illustrated by Representative Viewpoints 20, 21, 22, 23) and the magnitude of change would fluctuate from negligible to medium-high, in the proximity of the solar panels. Overall, the effects on users of the route are considered of Medium-High magnitude (Major/moderate and Significant), in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Medium magnitude in the long term resulting in Moderate neutral and not significant effect. In terms of

landscape character, the introduced hedgerow planting is considered an enhancement measure with a consequent beneficial effect.

Footpath 152/6

1.3.32 Footpath 152/6 is 2.5km long path and extends from the northern edge of Cassington through agricultural fields up to the River Evenlode.

1.3.33 The vegetation flanks 700m of the path, the rest of it extends alongside the field boundary vegetation, with views across fields on one side. Approximately 1.2km of the path would have close proximity views of solar panels.

1.3.34 From Cassington the route is lined by existing vegetation on both sides within an 800m section. The other sections are lined by hedgerow on one side and would therefore have views of the solar panels in the proximity, resulting in a high magnitude of impact in the medium term. As the route extends across a small landform, the views differ towards the upper slope from those when moving down the slope. Due to the proposed mitigation planting next to the route, the overall open aspect would be lost; however, the main focus of the view, formed by the distant landform, would be retained, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoints 38 and 39.

1.3.35 Overall, the effects on users of the route are considered of Medium-High magnitude (Major/moderate and Significant), in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Medium magnitude of impact in the long-term, resulting in Moderate neutral and not significant effect. In terms of landscape character, the introduced hedgerow planting is considered an enhancement measure with a consequent beneficial effect (Representative Viewpoint 37a, 37b, 38, 39, 40).

Frogwelldown Lane/ Footpath 420/14

1.3.36 Footpath 420/14 (including 152/7, 420/14, 420/14) is 2km long. It runs from Cassington Road, where Burleigh Wood and Bladon Heath meet, southwards to Yarton. It overlaps with Shakespeare's Way to the south of Begbroke Wood.

1.3.37 The route extends through the Project site within a 900m long section to the south west of Bladon Heath. The route would extend in between the existing hedgerow and the solar panels, resulting in a high magnitude of impact in the medium term (as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 33). Otherwise, the route would pass the solar panels at a distance of 300m at its closest point, as shown by Representative Viewpoints 34 and 35.

1.3.38 Overall, the effects on users of the route are considered of Medium-High magnitude (Major/moderate and Significant), in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Medium magnitude of impact in the long-term, resulting in Moderate neutral and not significant effect. In terms of landscape character, the introduced hedgerow planting is considered an enhancement measure with a consequent beneficial effect.

Footpath 132/4

1.3.39 Footpath 132/4 (including 132/2, 132/2, 124/5) is 2.7 km long and extends from Baldon to Begbroke. The route crosses agricultural fields to the north east of

Baldon Heath, where it would run through the solar panels within its entire length, resulting in a high magnitude of impact in the medium term (Representative Viewpoints 18 and 32).

1.3.40 Overall, the effects on users of the route are considered of High magnitude (Major/moderate and Significant), in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Medium magnitude of impact, and in the long-term resulting in Moderate neutral and not significant effect. In terms of landscape character, the introduced hedgerow planting is considered an enhancement measure with a consequent beneficial effect.

Footpath 265/26

1.3.41 Footpath 265/26 (including 265/34, 265/24) is 1.9km long, extending around agricultural fields 1.8km to the east of Bladon/ Bladon Pits and to the west of the A44.

1.3.42 Part of the route runs alongside an existing hedgerow, whereas other sections cross the fields. The route would extend in between the existing hedgerow and the solar panels, resulting in a High-Medium magnitude of impact in the medium term (as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 17).

1.3.43 Overall, the effects on users of the route are considered of Medium-High magnitude (Major/moderate and Significant), in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Medium magnitude of impact, and in the long-term resulting in Moderate neutral and not significant effect. In terms of landscape character, the introduced hedgerow planting is considered an enhancement measure with a consequent beneficial effect.

Southern Site

Footpath 184/29

1.3.44 Footpath 184/29 (including 184/30) is 1.5km long and extends from Leys Road to the west of Cumnor via Upper Whitley Farm to link with a local road to the south east of the reservoir. The path runs within the site for 370m, passing the solar panels and Project Substation, and extends along the local road and the Project site boundary. This 420m section immediately next to the site is sparsely vegetated and allows views of the site.

1.3.45 Due to the route's proximity to the substation and as it circulates the section of the Project Site which would accommodate the substation, the overall magnitude on the route is considered Medium-high, resulting in Major adverse and Significant medium term effect. In the long term the proposed woodland planting along the site's perimeter would screen the Project Substation within a 600m section, reducing the overall magnitude on the route to Medium-Low, resulting in Moderate/Minor and Neutral long-term effects (Representative Viewpoint 50 and 51).

Footpath 184/15

1.3.46 Footpath 184/15 extends between Cumnor and Eynsham Road 2.7 km to the north. The route overlaps with Oxford Greenbelt Way on the northern slope of

Smith Hill within a 1.8 km section. The solar panels would be seen close to the route within a 560m section to the west of Denman's Copse.

1.3.47 The visibility and views from the route would vary and the magnitude of change would fluctuate between negligible and high, in the proximity of the solar panels, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 48. Otherwise, in elevated views as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 53, or more distant views as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 46, visibility of the Project is reduced due to the vast scale of the landscape and the intervening vegetation as well as the distance factor

1.3.48 Overall, the effects on users of the 2.7km section of the route would be Medium-Low magnitude, in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Low and Neutral long-term effects.

Footpath 184/16

1.3.49 Footpath 184/16 is approximately 2.2km long, and is another route between Cumnor and Eynsham Road. The route extends through the Project site within a 780 m section. Although the route extends next to the existing hedgerow, the solar panels would appear on the other side of the route.

1.3.50 The visibility and views from the route would vary and magnitude of change would fluctuate between negligible and Medium-High, in the proximity of the solar panels, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 49. Otherwise, in more elevated views as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 54, visibility of the Project is reduced due to the scale of the landscape and the prominent skyline feature which is provided by the distant ridgeline.

1.3.51 Overall, the effects on users of the 2.2km section of the route would be of Low magnitude, in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Low and Neutral long-term effects.

Footpath 184/22

1.3.52 Footpath 184/22 is a 2km route between the B4017/ Cumnor Road west and the A420 to the east. The route follows vegetated field boundaries in a west-east direction. Although it abuts with the Project Site boundary within a 420m section, the solar panels would be seen at a distance of 50 m at their closest to the route, resulting in a Medium magnitude of impact (Moderate and significant effect) as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 49. Otherwise, the solar panels would appear more distant on the slope of Smith Hill, as illustrated by Representative Viewpoint 47. The existing high voltage electricity transmission line runs close to the route and crosses it to the west of the A420. The pylons are visible and prominent features in views along the route.

1.3.53 Overall, the effects on users of the 2km section of the route would be of Low magnitude, in the medium term, which would be reduced, due to the proposed planting, to Low and Neutral long-term effects.