



# Botley West Solar Farm

Applicant's Response to ExQ2.16.2

September 2025

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## Approval for issue

Jonathan Alsop

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**Prepared by:**

**RPS**  
**101 Park Drive, Milton Park, Abingdon,**  
**Oxfordshire, OX14 4RY**  
**United Kingdom**

**Prepared for:**

**Photovolt Development Partners GmbH,**  
**on behalf of SolarFive Ltd.**

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# 1 Introduction

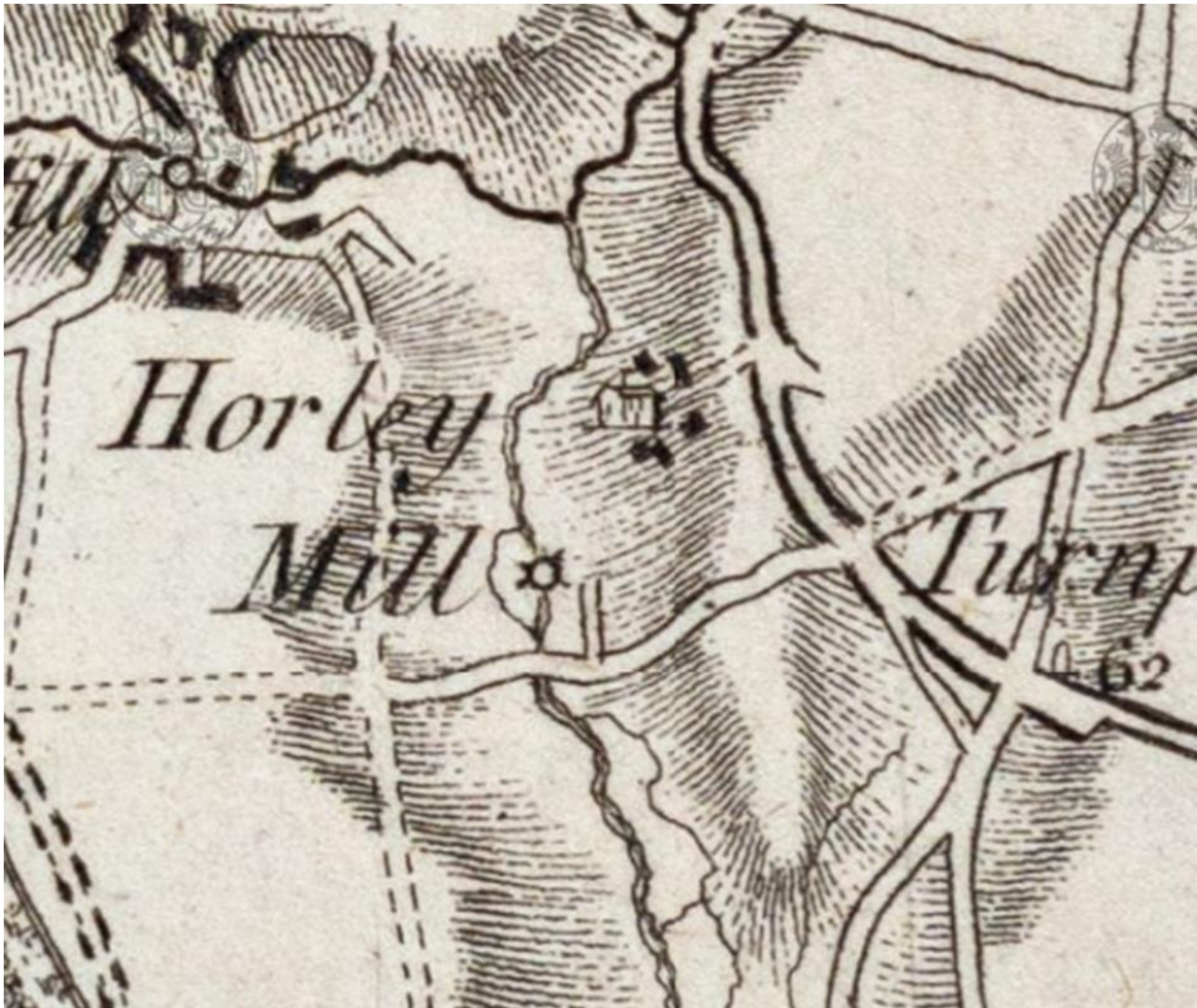
## 1.1 Purpose of this Document

- 1.1.1 This documents presents the Applicants' response to ExQ2.6.12, as set out in the Examining Authority's second written questions and requests for information (ExQ2) [PD-012] issued on 30 July 2025.
- 1.1.2 ExQ2.6.12 states '***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***'.
- 1.1.3 In the Applicant's response to the ExA's Second Written Questions [REP4-037], the Applicant advised with regard to ExQ2.6.12 that '*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*'.
- 1.1.4 Following further consideration of this question, the Applicant has decided to present the results of their review of available evidence for a wider planned landscape associated with Hordley House as a separate document rather than include this information within the next version of ES Appendix 7.5: Settings Assessment [REP2-104].

## 1.2 Applicant's review and conclusions

- 1.2.1 A small settlement is known to have been present at Hordley from at least the 13th century AD, when it was referenced as a hamlet dependent on the manor of Woodstock. Hordley comprised 151.5 acres of land divided into smallholdings of around 12 acres each. Ecclesiastically, Hordley was a dependency of the parish of Wootton and included a 'King's Chapel' of which no evidence survives. Although Wootton was recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as having a population of 39 households (putting it within the largest 20% of settlements recorded in the Survey), there was no mention of Hordley in the Survey.
- 1.2.2 During the Medieval period, Hordley was likely to have been a cluster of small cottages and agricultural buildings including at least one mill on the River Glyme. The Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record notes the presence of slight earthworks and patches of limestone rubble suggesting a deserted or shrunken Medieval village on the level floodplain of the river. The loss of, or reduction in size of, villages and hamlets in the Medieval period is often linked to the massive decline in population associated with the pandemic known as the Black Death which spread rapidly across the UK in the years 1348 – 1350.
- 1.2.3 The earliest parts of the large farmhouse now known as Hordley House date to the middle of the 16th century, although it was substantially remodelled and extended in the later part of that century. The farmhouse may be located on the site of a Medieval building, but no trace of anything earlier than the mid-16th century survives. Hordley House is a Grade II\* listed building - an external gazebo built around 1750 is separately listed at Grade II.

- 1.2.4 Hordley House was built for the Gregory family who were yeoman farmers, owning land here as well as in Wootton and Hanborough. The later 16th century expansion may have been linked to an increase in wealth resulting from steadily rising prices for products from the farming operations in the area. At this time the farming landscape was one of large open fields; the land between the River Glyme and the Banbury road (now the A4260) was one of three or four open fields of Hensington and was known as Hordley Hill.
- 1.2.5 Thomas Jefferys' map of the County of Oxford was published in 1766-67. It shows a house in the location of Hordley House, although it is not named on the map. The depiction of the house should not be taken as an accurate image of the building, but the fact that it is represented on the map in this form is an indication of its status above that of a small farmstead.



**Image 1: Thomas Jefferys' map of the County of Oxford - 1766-67**

- 1.2.6 Other, smaller buildings are also shown adjacent to the house on the Jefferys' map and probably represent associated farm buildings such as barns and stables. The houses and adjacent buildings are accessed along a track leading north-east to the turnpike road (now the B4027 road), with buildings on either side of the track. The location of Horley (Hordley) Mill on the River Glyme is also shown, south-west of the house and just to the north of a road or track which crosses the river and which is actually the Roman road known as Akeman Street. The land to the south-east of Hordley House is shown as being the northern part of a low ridge aligned north/south – there is no indication of land-use.

- 1.2.7 Land within the parish of Wootton was enclosed through an Act of 1796, and this may well have resulted in the reorganisation of the landscape into the pattern which generally remains visible today. Through the process of enclosure, the large Medieval open fields were replaced by smaller fields with straight boundaries whilst roads and tracks were also straightened.
- 1.2.8 The Richard Davis map of Oxfordshire (published 1793-94) generally shows a similar situation to that depicted on the Jefferys' map of 1766-67. The house and adjacent buildings are reduced to two rectangular structures, but this is very much a stylised depiction rather than an accurate rendition of the number and location of the buildings. A similarly stylised planting scheme is shown around the buildings, and the whole set-up is named as Hordley.



**Image 2: Richard Davis' new map of Oxfordshire - 1793-94**

- 1.2.9 The mill on the River Glyme is not named on the Davis map but is still noted by a symbol very similar to that used on the Jefferys' map. The land to the south-east of the farm is still shown as elevated ground with no indication of land-use, although the smaller fields with straight boundaries appear to recognise the changes to the landscape as a result of enclosure (albeit that this too may be stylised rather than accurately surveyed). Buildings are shown on each side

of the turnpike road (now the B4027 road) at the junction with Akeman Street, these probably represent Sansom's Farm (now the Oxford School of Drama) on the west side of the turnpike road and Sansom's Cottage on the east side.

- 1.2.10 In around 1809 the farmhouse and surrounding land at Hordley was acquired by the 4th Duke of Marlborough.
- 1.2.11 The Ordnance Survey Drawing (OSD) was produced in 1815. It shows a number of buildings at Horley (Hordley). The ones to the south of the access track must include Hordley House, with a cluster of structures to the north of the track probably representing additional farm buildings. To the south this map also shows an unnamed building likely to represent Sansom's Farm (now the Oxford School of Drama). No indication is given as to the use of the land to the south-east of the house. Field patterns shown on the early 19th century Ordnance Survey Drawings are usually heavily stylised rather than being accurately surveyed.



**Image 3: Ordnance Survey Drawing – 1815**

- 1.2.12 Hordley Farm is shown and named on Andrew Bryant's map of the County of Oxford which was published in 1823. This map confirms the presence of buildings to both the south and north of the access track, but with no real details as to which one is the farmhouse. Sansom's Farm (now the Oxford School of Drama) is clearly present along with Sansom's Cottage on the east side of the turnpike road (now the B4027 road).

- 1.2.13 The first map to show Hordley House and the surrounding area in any level of detail is the Tithe Map of Wootton Whitechurch which was produced in 1847. The accompanying Tithe Apportionment provides useful information regarding land-use and field names as well as the names of the landowners and tenants.
- 1.2.14 The Tithe Map shows the farmhouse in its correct quadrangular form, with other buildings to the north, south and east. The Apportionment names the land parcel containing the house (No. 77) as 'Hordley Farmhouse and Premises'; the owner is the Duke of Marlborough and the tenant is Thomas Bulford. The same arrangement of owner and tenant occurs for all of the land and buildings at Hordley Farm.



**Image 4: Tithe Map of the Parish of Wootton Whitechurch – 1847**

- 1.2.15 The land parcel to the north of the farmhouse (No. 73) is described as 'The Green' with a separate parcel (No. 74) described as 'Barn Yards and Sheds'. To the north-west of the farmhouse and adjacent to the River Glyme are land parcel nos. 75 and 76, described respectively as 'Cow Shed Yard and Pond' and 'Wood and Pond'. To the south of the farmhouse is land parcel 78 which is described as 'The Paddock', whilst to the south-east is a small enclosure (No. 72) described as 'Farm Yards and Buildings etc'.
- 1.2.16 The field to the east of the farm (No. 71) is bisected by a footpath which is now a Public Right of Way and which may represent an early access route to the farm that was retained within the post-enclosure landscape. This field is named on the Tithe Apportionment as 'Shepherds Close' with the land-use given as pasture. The field to the north of the main access track leading to the farm (No. 70) is named as 'Chapel Lays Upper' and is identified as pasture. The field name may be linked to the 'King's Chapel' recorded in Wootton in documents of 13th century date, although other adjacent fields have the same or similar names so the location of the former chapel cannot really be pinpointed through this placename evidence. The field to the south and south-west of the farm (No. 79) is named as 'Behind Town' with the land-use given as arable.
- 1.2.17 There is no trace of Hordley Mill but the Tithe Map clearly shows a leat at this location and the land parcel here (No. 82) is named on the Apportionment as 'Old Mill Close'. The buildings at Sansom's Farm and Sansom's Cottage are not shown on the Tithe Map as they are located within the adjacent parish of Hensington.

**Table 1.1: 1847 Tithe Apportionments – Wootton Whitechurch**

Land Parcel No.	Landowner	Occupant	Description	Land Use
59			Hordley Farm, Garden	-
60			Hordley Farm, Six Lands	Arable
61			Hordley Farm, Banbury Lane Ground	Arable
63			Hordley Farm, Nelsons Hill	Arable
67			Hordley Farm, Chapel Lays Upper	Arable
68			Hordley Farm, The Hooks & The Moors	Pasture
69			Hordley Farm, Pasture In Chapel Lays	Pasture
70			Hordley Farm, Chapel Lays Upper	Arable
71			Hordley Farm, Shepherds Close	Pasture
72			Hordley Farm, Farm Yards & Buildings &c	-
73			Hordley Farm, The Green	Pasture
74			Hordley Farm, Barn Yards & Sheds	-

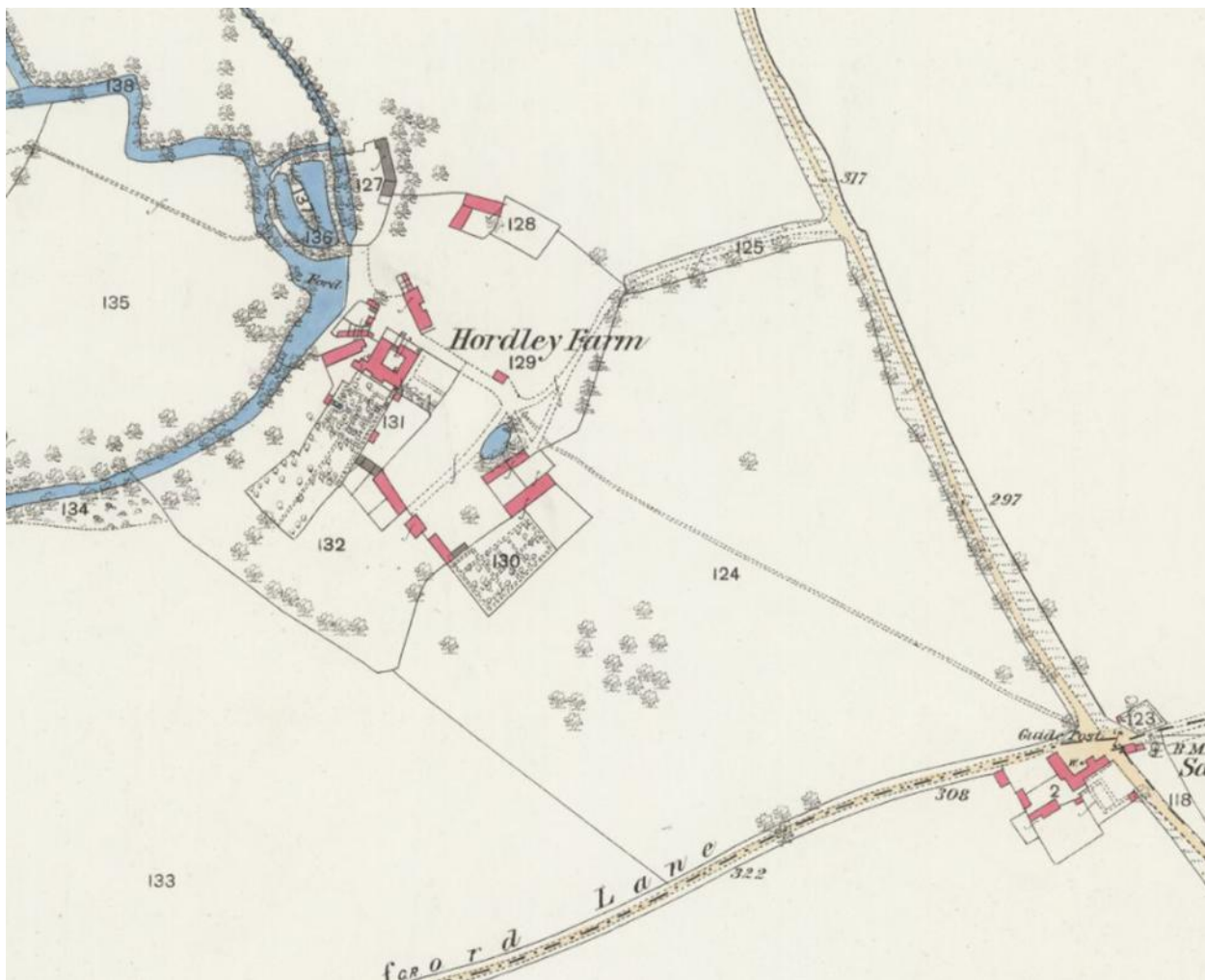
Land Parcel No.	Landowner	Occupant	Description	Land Use
75			Hordley Farm, Cow Shed Yard & Pond	-
76			Hordley Farm, Wood & Pond	-
77			Hordley Farm, Hordley Farm House & Premises	-
78			Hordley Farm, The Paddock	Pasture
79			Hordley Farm, Behind Town	Arable
80			Hordley Farm, The Great Meadow (Part of)	Pasture
81			Hordley Farm, The Great Meadow (Part of)	Pasture
82			Hordley Farm, Old Mill Close	Pasture
83			Hordley Farm, Meadow By The Bridge	Pasture
84			Hordley Farm, The River	-
85			Turnpike Road & Other Roads	-

- 1.2.18 Overall, the Tithe Map and Apportionment show the presence of an extended farm complex centred on the quadrangular farmhouse. The farm includes a mixture of arable land and pasture. There is no evidence to suggest the presence of a designed landscape associated with the farm.
- 1.2.19 The 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey (OS) 25 inch (to the mile) map was published in 1881 (following survey in 1876-1880). The arrangement of buildings at Hordley Farm remains unchanged from that shown on the 1847 Tithe Map. The enclosed area of land immediately to the south-west of the farmhouse appears to have been laid out with a number of regular compartments separated by straight paths; this may represent a garden with a more formal section towards the house and a less formal section (lawn and trees?) beyond. The small enclosure to the south-east (beyond the farm buildings) also appears to have been laid out with an arrangement of straight paths; this may represent a kitchen garden as such features were often located at a distance from the principal house.
- 1.2.20 This map also shows the presence of mature trees in several areas, including along each side of the River Glyme. Mostly these are shown as deciduous trees, although some conifers are depicted along the eastern side of the track leading towards the farm from the road to the east. Some mature trees are shown in the field to the east of the farm, mostly to the south of the footpath which bisects the field although there are a couple in the northern part of the field.
- 1.2.21 It is difficult to ascertain from the historic maps whether or not any of the mature trees represent elements of a designed landscape. No trees are indicated on any part of the 1847 Tithe Map of Wootton, but it is highly unlikely that this means no trees were present and indeed the Apportionment refers to woodland in some land parcels. The OS survey was undertaken around 30 years after the production date of the Tithe Map and it is doubtful if these trees could all have

developed into maturity in that short period. The more likely scenario is that trees were always present within this landscape but are first depicted in detail on this 1st edition 25 inch map.

1.2.22

The conifers along the eastern side of the track leading towards the farm from the road to the east are more likely to have been deliberately planted as part of the design of a more formal access to the farm. Some of the deciduous trees south of the farmhouse may also have been deliberately planted to provide a perimeter around what was perceived as 'the grounds' of the house. The arrangement of the trees in the field to the east of the farm does not suggest deliberate design as there are no lines or avenues of trees, or any distinct clusters of trees or perimeter tree belts. It is possible that they were planted as part of an attempt to create a naturalistic pastoral or parkland landscape, but equally they may represent self-seeded trees that have survived here as this land was more suitable for pasture than arable farming and would have provided shade and shelter for the livestock. This would accord with the Tithe Apportionment which identifies that this field was used for pasture.

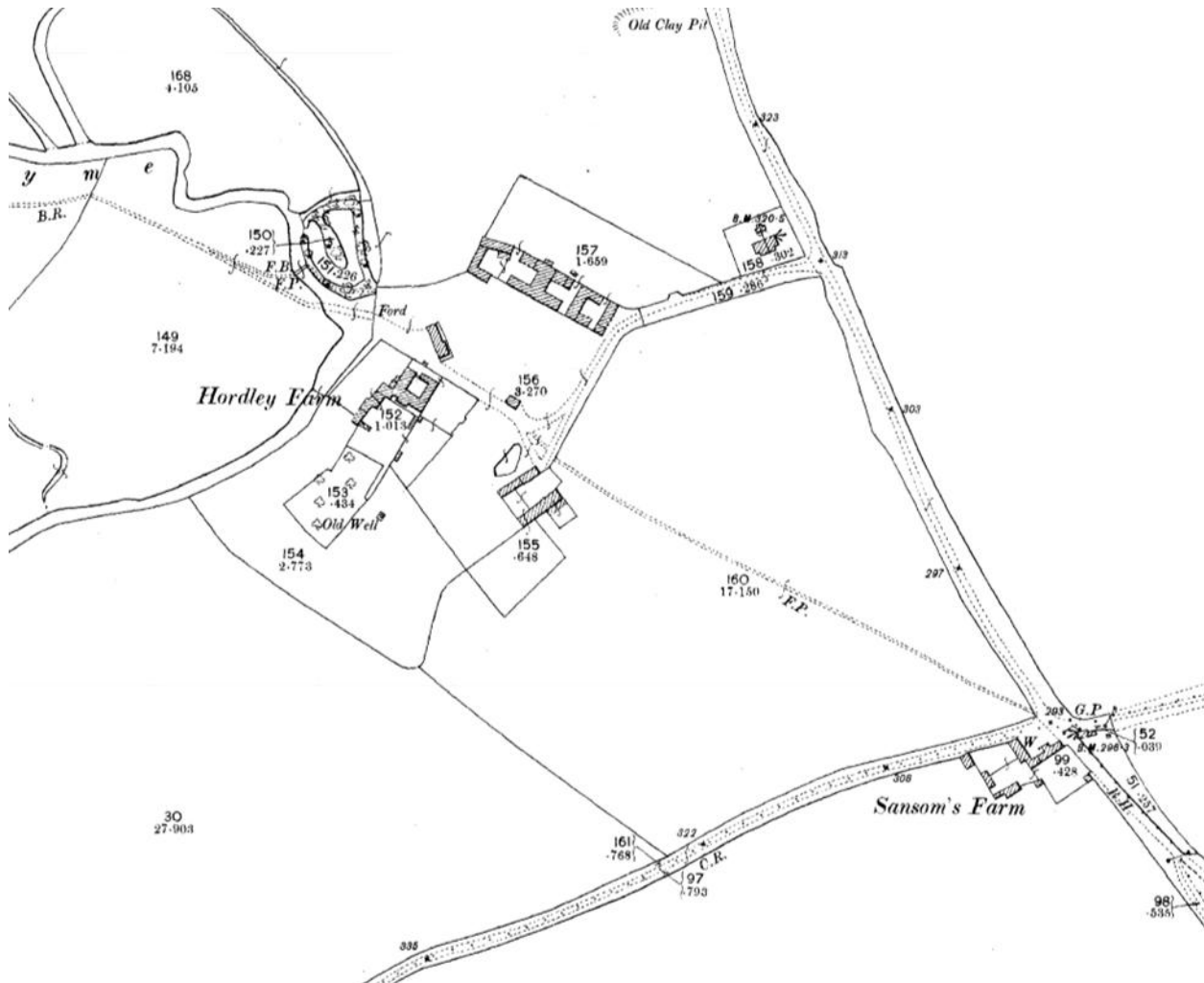


**Image 5: 1st edition OS 25 inch map – 1881**

1.2.23

The 2nd edition of the OS 25 inch map was published in 1899. This shows very few trees at all, all within the garden to the south-west of the farmhouse, but again this does not mean that all of the trees shown on the 1st edition had been felled. The key changes to the farm as shown on this 2nd edition are the additional buildings to the north. These include a pair of farm cottages at the junction of the access track and the road to the east, but more significant are the new farm buildings to the north-east of the farmhouse. The previous edition confirms the presence of two attached buildings here, but by the time of the 2nd edition this group had been extended to the south-east with the new buildings being in the form of a 'model farm' typical of the Victorian

period. This may have been an attempt to relocate the core of the working farm away from the farmhouse and associated historic farm buildings. The new 'model farm' buildings included brick corbelling and quoining, in contrast to the earlier buildings immediately to the west which were entirely in stone.



**Image 6: 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS 25 inch map – 1881**

1.2.24

A post-war OS 1:2500 map confirms that the farming operations have moved to the north, with larger barns and sheds established close to the Victorian 'model farm' buildings and this area marked as Hordley Farm. This map shows some trees within the former probable kitchen garden and also within the grounds of Hordley (House). Most of the older farm buildings around the former farmhouse have been removed.



**Image 7: Post-war OS 1:2500 inch map – c. 1955**

- 1.2.25 In more recent years the Victorian 'model farm' buildings (and the older farm buildings immediately to the west) have been converted to residential use with the development now known as Hordley Farm Barns.
- 1.2.26 Of the mature trees within the field to the east of Hordley House which are shown on the 1st edition OS 25 inch map (Image 5 above), only one survives. An aerial photograph of 1945 shows that one or two more of these mature trees may have been present at that time, but these had certainly gone by the end of the 20th century.

## 2 Conclusions

- 2.1.1 A review of available documentary and cartographic material has been undertaken, with the aim of identifying evidence for the presence of a planned historic landscape in the vicinity of Hordley House.
- 2.1.2 The review has not found any conclusive evidence for any planned or designed landscape at this location. A map of 1881 shows formal planting in two locations, possibly a garden adjacent to the former farmhouse and also a kitchen garden to the south-east and deliberately separate from the grounds of the house. Some trees are shown on this map to be present within the field to the south-east which forms part of the site of the proposed solar farm (Field 1.12). However, the arrangement of these trees does not indicate a planned landscape unless it was designed to be wholly naturalistic. Only one of these trees has survived and this would remain undisturbed within the layout of the proposed solar farm – this is indicated on Figure 2.1c in ES Figures 2.1a-2.4c – Illustrative Masterplan (Rev 1) **[AS-020]**.
- 2.1.3 On the basis that this study has not identified any conclusive evidence for any planned or designed landscape associated with Hordley House, the Applicant does not intend to make any reductions to the areas of solar PV panels proposed in this area.