BEACON FEN ENERGY PARK

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010151

Written Summary of Oral Submissions from Issue Specific Hearing 2 and Responses to Action Points
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The Planning Act 2008

Quality information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
ED	CT	IM	Low Carbon

Glossary

Abbreviation	Description
AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic
AC	Alternating Current
AIL	Abnormal Indivisible Load
AIS	Air Insulated Switchgear
ALC	Agricultural landscape classification
Applicant	Beacon Fen Energy Park Ltd
BAR	Bespoke Access Road
BBC	Boston Borough Council
BESS	Battery energy storage system
BMV	Best and most versatile
CA Guidance	Government guidance 'Planning Act 2008: Guidance related to procedures for the compulsory acquisition of land'
CCTV	Closed circuit television
CNP	Critical national priority
CSTP	Construction Staff Travel Plan
CTMP	Construction Traffic Management Plan
DC	Direct Current
DCO	Development Consent Order
DMP	Delivery Management Plan
EA	Environment Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIA Regs	Regulation 14(2)(d) of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017
ES	Environmental Statement
ESDAL	Electronic Service Delivery for Abnormal Loads
GIS	Gas Insulated Switchgear
GW	Gigawatt
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
HLA	Host Local Authorities
HV	High Voltage
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment's
IDB	Internal Drainage Board
IPs	Interested Parties
LCC	Lincolnshire County Council
LCJMF	LCJ Mountain Farms Limited
Low Carbon	Low Carbon Ltd
LWS	Local Wildlife Sites
MW	Megawatts of alternating current
MW AC	Megawatt
MWh	Megawatt-hour
MWp	Megawatt peak
NESO	National Energy System Operator

Abbreviation	Description
NGR	National Grid Reference
NKDC	North Kesteven District Council
NPS	National Policy Statement
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
OBSMP	Outline Battery Safety Management Plan
Order	The Beacon Fen Energy Park Order
PCU	Power Conversion Unit
PINS	Planning Inspectorate
Proposed Development	The entire development to be constructed and operated within the Site, as set out in Schedule 1 of the draft DCO
PRoW	Public Right of Way
PS	Planning Statement
PV	Photovoltaic
Site	The entire draft Order Limits or red line boundary located approximately 6.5 km northeast of the village of Sleaford and 2.5 km north of Heckington
SoS	Secretary of State
SPV	Special purpose vehicle

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1. Introduction

1.1.1 This **Written Summary of Oral Submissions from Issue Specific Hearing 2 and Responses to Action Points (Document Ref. 9.15)** has been prepared on behalf of Beacon Fen Energy Park Ltd (the 'Applicant') in support of an application for a Development Consent Order ('DCO'), that has been submitted to the Secretary of State (the 'SoS') for the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, under Section 37 of 'The Planning Act 2008' (the '2008 Act').

1.1.2 This document summarises the oral submissions made by the Applicant at Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2) held on 12 November 2025 in relation to the application for development consent (the 'Application') for the Beacon Fen Energy Park (the Proposed Development).

1.1.3 The structure of this document follows the order of the items listed in the detailed agenda published by the ExA (EV4-001) (the Agenda).

1.1.4 This document is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides the summary of oral submissions made at ISH2;
- Section 3 provides the Applicant's responses to Action Points raised in the ISH2.

2. Written Summary of the Applicants Oral Submissions at ISH 2

2.1.1 The table below sets out the written summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions at ISH2 held on 12 November 2025.

Written summary of the Applicant's Oral Submissions at ISH2 – Table 2.1

AGENDA ITEM	WRITTEN SUMMARY OF APPLICANT'S ORAL SUBMISSION
1: Welcome, introductions, arrangements for the Hearing	Applicant Ian Mack – HSF (Solicitor) Leon Culot – HSF (Solicitor) Si Gillett – Humbeat (Technical Advisor) James Hartley-Bond – Low Carbon (Applicant) Colin Turnbull – DWD (Planning Consultant, Chartered Town Planner)
2: Purpose of ISH	The main purpose of the ISH2 is to undertake an oral examination of environmental matters as identified in annex C of the Rule 6 letter, namely matters linked to the BESS, landscape and visual effects, the historic environment and matters linked to biodiversity and ecology.
3: BESS	***The Examining Authority (ExA) will build on the applicant's response [REP2-040] to the ExA's R17 request [PD-010] in relation to the proposed BESS and will ask further questions of the applicant in relation to how the BESS is proposed to be used, its function, overall size and capacity and how this meets the needs of the proposed development. The ExA will ask for the applicant to provide information on any alternatives considered in relation to the BESS's overall capacity and why 600MW was deemed the appropriate capacity level of the BESS***.. In response, Si Gillett for the Applicant explained that in previous submissions (Action Point 7, **REP1-030)** the Applicant confirmed that the daily solar energy generated at the Proposed Development (PD) will regularly exceed the amount of energy the proposed BESS can store, and that it is very likely that the BESS as proposed will regularly be filled with energy from the solar array. The megawatt (MW) rating of the BESS impacts how the energy stored in the BESS may be dispatched to the grid, rather than the physical size of the BESS nor its capacity to store energy. A 'bath tub' analogy was introduced to explain the sizing of the BESS. In that the bathtub represents the physical size and shape of the BESS and the amount of energy that the BESS as proposed can store. The 600MW (megawatt) capacity of the BESS, as opposed to a lower, say 400MW capacity system, is effectively a rating of how quickly that bathtub can be filled, or how quickly it can be emptied. The MW rating of the BESS defines only how quickly the BESS can discharge its power – similar in some ways to the diameter of the taps and pipes in the bathtub analogy, and not the size of the bathtub itself.

	In that regard, the Applicant maintains that the physical dimensions of the battery as proposed is proportionate to the size of the solar scheme and its megawatt (power) capacity. Further, there are no significant physical effects which are different between a BESS which can export at only up to 400MW versus a BESS which can export at up to 600MW. In responding to the ExA's request for more information on the differences in physical effects between a 600MW unit and a smaller BESS unit, Si Gillett provided the following additional information. The size and shape of the BESS and defined by physical characteristics such as a number of containers, their individual sizes and dimensions, and the land area allocated for the BESS. The containers are principally where energy is stored. The BESS connection requires a number of physical infrastructures to connect it to the grid, including cables to the Point of Connection (PoC) and the PoC itself. The Applicant confirmed that these physical characteristics would not vary between a 400MW BESS and a 600MW BESS the significance of their correlative environmental effects [illegible] (the PD has been assessed as a 600MW scheme). However, to support a lower power (megawatt) capacity BESS, fewer inverters would be needed (approximately two-thirds for 400MW versus the layout which has been assessed). Inverters are a relatively small part of the BESS infrastructure and this reduction in the number of inverters would not cause any difference in the assessed significant effects. significant effects. ***The ExA asked what other alternatives besides 600Mwh did the applicant consider and where is that evidence submitted into the examination?*** The Applicant's response to Action Point 7 arising from ISH1 **[REP1-030]** describes the need for flexibility in the UK's future energy system as set out in the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, and the Applicant's response to ExQ1 NED.1.9 **[REP2-040]** reiterates the strong UK policy support in place for flexible assets including those which are co-located with solar schemes. Further, that the Applicant's response to ExQ1 NED.1.10 **[REP2-040]** explains that the Applicant has taken a Rochdale envelope approach to the characteristics that define the scheme in relation to any environmental effects arising from its development (NED 1.8). Therefore the Applicant has sought to bring forward a scheme which is able to deliver a significant benefit from the available land and grid connection and the Rochdale envelope approach allows for flexibility at the detailed design stage. Therefore the megawatt rating of the BESS is proposed to match the MW capacity of the grid connection available to the PD because (a) the MW

	rating of the BESS could not be larger, and (b) a 600MW capacity BESS may deliver greater flexibility to the grid than a smaller MW capacity BESS. This is important because as clarified previously, when compared to a lower MW rated BESS, the 600MW rating provides additional functional (beneficial) features of the proposed infrastructure to support the operation of the PD but creates no additional significant environmental 'impacts' in EIA terms. The PD as proposed, with a 600MW capacity BESS, makes full use of the available grid connection and allows the PD to deliver greater flexibility to the electricity system without additional adverse significant effects vs. a 400MW system, therefore any alternative smaller MW capacity BESS was not considered as an alternative to the proposals because such a MW restriction would restrict the scheme from being able to deliver that flexibility to the system with no significant differences in the physical characteristics of the PD. A BESS with a larger megawatt capacity than that of the grid could not be fully accommodated by the grid, and therefore it would not be sensible to propose a BESS with a larger megawatt capacity than that of the grid connection. Therefore, for these reasons, the Applicant did not consider any alternative megawatt capacities than the 600MW proposed. ***LCC requested clarification on how the BESS meets the definition of associated development, as they consider that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that a BESS at this scale is subordinate to the principal development.*** The Applicant explained that subsequently and in response to the discussion on this matter at ISH1, the Applicant made a number of submissions which seek to explain the rationale and justification for the BESS included as part of the Proposed Development – principally in response to Action Point 7 from ISH1 **(REP1-030)** and the response to the ExA's first written questions and related R17 request (both addressed in **REP2-040**). The Applicant then explored the challenge raised by LCC and NKDC (most recently as part of their D3 submission) - the megawatt rating of the BESS vs the Solar Array, and whether this precludes its inclusion as 'associated development' under the DCO. Taking a step back, the function of the BESS relative to the Solar Array is consistent with and typical of all such co-located development of this nature and there are a number of DCO precedents which support the inclusion of BESS as 'associated development'. Indeed policy is supportive of this approach (EN-3 paragraph 2.10.10 onwards), both as covered in the Applicant's response to Action Point 7. In that context, the Applicant does not understand there to be an issue with the principle of the inclusion of BESS as part of the Proposed Development, nor its proposed functioning . That helps to narrow the focus, because really then what is being discussed is whether the additional megawatt capacity proposed by the 600MW BESS as opposed to a counter-factual, for the sake of

	argument, 400MW BESS (which it is assumed would not arouse the same concern/challenge), causes an issue in planning/EIA terms. When looking at the core principles listed within the Government's guidance on Associated Development, which the SoS will consider in determining whether or not development should be treated as associated development for the purpose of a DCO (as referenced in the Applicant's response to Action Point 7), it is not envisaged that anyone takes issue with the *'direct relationship*' principle. Similarly, in terms of the *'cross-subsidisation*' principle, the guidance states 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*'. Quite rightly the Applicant hasn't understood there to be any suggestion from any party that this is why the BESS is proposed in instance of the PD and the guidance notes, in any case, that a level of cross-subsidy is permitted. That leaves *'subordinacy'* and *'proportionality'* as the remaining 'principles' and which have been those most frequently referred to in the IP submissions to date. Those principles note that: • '*Associated development should not be an aim in itself but should be subordinate to the principal development*.'; and that • '*Associated development should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the principal development*.' The Applicant explained that it is clear that the first principle is about subordinacy in aim and purpose. The second is about proportionality in nature and scale. The Applicant went on to address these in further detail: • In terms of scale/physical sizing – the BESS as proposed is considerably smaller in footprint than the Solar Array. The **Works Plans (AS-006)** clearly demonstrates that the scale of the BESS at its full extent proposed is proportionate in nature and scale to the solar array. The layout of a BESS of a lower megawatt rating would not be smaller than that of the BESS as proposed in terms of sizing/configuration. • The concern must logically then be focussed not on the sizing/physical infrastructure differences, but the simple principle of the name-plate capacity of the BESS being greater than the equivalent Solar Array approximate capacity. • The Applicant has explained in its submissions to date why it has proposed the capacity it has and it is not aware of an identified adverse impact having been asserted by any interested party that results from the proposed megawatt capacity of the BESS, nor still any impact that is suggested to occur due to relative difference in nameplate capacity from the BESS vs the solar array (which would logically need to be the focus for the reasons stated earlier in submissions). • There is nothing in guidance or policy which specifically states that the MW capacity of the BESS must be the same as or lower than the solar array and it is plainly not desirable to artificially constrain/limit the BESS to a lower megawatt capacity simply for the sake of not exceeding the megawatt capacity of the Solar Array. • The Applicant noted that to propose such a limitation would constrain the performance of the Proposed Development, reducing the valuable contribution it would make to the UK's decarbonisation targets and the resilience of the Grid. For not dissimilar reasons, it is not a feature of energy NSIPs to prescribe a ceiling on the generating capacity and they are instead

	principally controlled (as is the case for this Application) by the physical parameters, which inform the actual impacts that result. The Applicant consider that is an instructive comparison for this debate. ***NKDC echoed the comments by LCC and further questioned the capacity of the BESS and whether it meets the requirements to be considered AD.*** The Applicant understood the point raised by LCC to be related to 'subordinacy'. Mr Gillett, for the Applicant, provided two definitions of 'subordinate'. The first is "lower in rank or position." Solar energy would always be discharged in preference to the energy stored in the BESS (i.e. ahead of the BESS in priority terms) ***[Post-hearing note: see follow on point below providing further clarity on this point]***. In that regard, the Applicant presents that the solar is higher in "rank or position" than the BESS, because when the sun is shining, the solar will always discharge first. The second definition is "treat or regard as of lesser importance than something else." Mr Gillett for the Applicant explained that although storage is an essential part of government's plan to match supply with demand to create and sustain a zero carbon electricity system, the BESS is subordinate to the solar array in both function and contribution to a low carbon energy system. A low carbon system needs low carbon generation, such as the solar array, to generate low-carbon energy. The BESS supports the function of the low carbon generator by storing excess low carbon energy and releasing it when it is needed to balance supply with demand. However, BESS alone would not deliver a low carbon energy system. The BESS therefore helps the solar make a more effective contribution to a zero carbon electricity system but it does not do away with the need for solar and is therefore of lesser importance than (subordinate to) the solar array. ***The ExA requested clarification on the point regarding solar panels having prioritisation of dispatch (i.e. discharging first).*** Mr Gillett provided some additional context, being that in full sunlight, with the solar facility generating at 400 megawatts would take 90 minutes to fill a one hour, 600 megawatt system. So it would take three hours to fill a two hour, 600 megawatt system, because these capacity ratings are a maximum capacity rating. It is therefore possible to charge and discharge at a rate lower than that maximum rating. For example, thinking about an electric car, where the faster it goes, the quicker the battery discharges. BESS operations will not only be binary ON, OFF or fully charge, fully discharge. There are points in between. The Applicant reiterated that the key point is that the solar scheme, at 400 megawatts of solar generation, will regularly, over the course of a day, fill the energy capacity as proposed, of the BESS.

	[Post-hearing note: the BESS may not only charge from the solar when the solar generation is at its highest. The BESS will charge from the solar whenever the grid does not need the solar at the time of generation, and will charge at the rate at which the solar is being generated.] An example was provided to clarify the statement that "solar energy would be discharged in preference." If at some moment during operation the sun was shining and the BESS had charge and there was a market need for power, the energy generated at the solar panels would be sent to the grid. If at that time any energy was sent to the grid from the BESS, it would only 'top up' the solar, and not displace it. This is commercially sensible because if the solar was reduced by dispatches from the BESS (i.e. the BESS dispatches before the solar in priority terms), the solar energy would be wasted, whereas if the solar energy was dispatched, any energy stored in the BESS would be available for later dispatch, if needed. This natural prioritisation supports the solar array by reducing any wastage of the energy it generates and ensures that any energy stored in the BESS can be dispatched when it is most needed. Mr Gillett for the Applicant confirmed that the solar will discharge in preference to the BESS as long as the grid requires the energy. In response to the ExA asking whether the Applicant had considered how likely it would be or would not be that the network would require the energy produced by the solar when calculating the capacity of the BESS, Mr Gillett for the Applicant confirmed that the megawatt configuration of the BESS has been sized to maximise use of the available grid connection. ***[Post-hearing note: the Applicant would direct the ExA to its response to Action Point 7 REP1-030 in which the Applicant sets out some of the critical policy support for co-located flexible assets. One of the key benefits of co-located BESS is their ability to store energy which otherwise would be wasted, so that it can be sent to the grid at a later time, when it is needed. In that regard, the BESS is proposed to support the solar scheme in its operation including by storing energy which may otherwise be wasted, and the Applicant's response to Action Point 7 reiterates that the BESS as proposed may be regularly filled with the daily generation from the solar panels, meaning that it is of a scale which is capable of storing a significant amount of energy which, if it was not needed on the network, would otherwise go to waste.]*** ***LCJ Mountain Farms Ltd ("LCJMF") made submissions in relation to the siting of the BESS on LCJMF land, linked with LCJMF's proposals for its proposed alternative cable route shown by a dotted yellow line on ExD2.11 in REP2-051.*** By reference to the action the Applicant took from CAH 1 to consider further analysis regarding alternative cable routes, the Applicant queried whether LCJMF was solely proposing this alternative cable route or whether it was maintaining its proposal for the cable route shown as the solid yellow line on ExD2.11 and discussed in LCJMF's submissions prior to Deadline 2. LCJMF indicated that both routes should be considered.

	[Post-hearing note: LCJMF subsequently clarified in ISH 3 that it is solely proposing that the route shown by the dotted yellow line be considered.] In response to LCJMF's submissions on the siting of the BESS, the Applicant noted that it must be considered what a request to relocate the BESS at this stage of the project means in practice. It is clearly not feasible for the Applicant to fundamentally redesign the scheme or add another BESS midway through the examination. To the extent that LCJMF is saying that the scheme should be withdrawn and redesigned, that does not accord with its comments that it *"supports Beacon Fen"* (**REP3-015**) and is not attempting to block it (**REP1-043**), as well as running contrary to the urgent need for critical national priority infrastructure which the Government intends to be *"progressed as quickly as possible"* (EN-1 para. 3.3.63). Such an outcome would be an affront to policy and this urgent need for new energy infrastructure. To the extent that LCJMF's inference is that the Proposed Development should not be granted consent because there has been a deficient consideration of LCJMF's purported alternatives to the Applicant's BESS, this likewise runs contrary to LCJMF's purported support for the scheme and national policy. There is no basis in law or policy to conclude that the design of the scheme has been in any way deficient. The Applicant has explained how it has fully complied with law and policy on the consideration of alternatives in response to Action Point 6 in its **Written Summary of Oral Submissions from ISH1 and Responses to Action Points (REP1-030).** EN-1 is clear that, given the *"level and urgency of need for new energy infrastructure"*, the Secretary of State should be guided by the principles that consideration of alternatives *"should be carried out in a proportionate manner"* and *"only alternatives that can meet the objectives of the proposed development need to be considered"* (para. 4.3.22). Para. 4.3.23 continues that the Secretary of State *"should be guided in considering alternative proposals by whether there is a realistic prospect of the alternative delivering the same infrastructure capacity… in the same timescale as the proposed development".* At the time that LCJMF made his August 2023 offer, reworking the scheme would have added significant programme time and thus hindered the achievement of the project objectives. Paul Lock asserted that it is essentially a grid trade of price and is for the purpose of maximising profit. There are similarities between 'behind the meter' solar + BESS schemes, and grid-connected schemes, but there are also differences. Market price is an outcome of the balance of supply and demand. If supply outstrips demand, price is low. If demand outstrips supply, prices are higher. Therefore by storing excess energy and dispatching it when it is needed, the BESS seeks to ensure that supply and demand can be balanced at all times, and in a more efficient way (i.e. 'high' prices are reduced as a result of well-timed BESS dispatches).
4: Landscape and Visual	***ExA requested that the applicant provide an overview of ES Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual, particularly the assessment methodology, the assessment of effects, embedded mitigation proposed and any residual effects.***

	In response, Mr David Stokoe for the applicant explained that, with regard to methodology, the LVIA **(Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057))** has been produced in accordance with industry standard guidance, specifically the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3). He noted that the full methodology is provided in accordance with **Appendix 6.2 (APP-084)**. Mr Stokoe added that the viewpoint figures **(APP-210 to 229)** and photomontages **(APP-229 to 232)** have been prepared in accordance with the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals. With regard to the assessment of effects, Mr Stokoe explained that the assessment has considered effects in relation to the landscape of the Site area (being the Solar Array Area, Cable Route Corridor and Bespoke Access Road), wider landscape character effects at a National and Local level, and effects on visual amenity in relation to residents, recreational users including PRoW and transport receptors within a 5km LVIA study area as defined as an offset from the Order Limits. He added that cumulative effects arising in relation to other relevant schemes within the LVIA study area have also been considered and assessed. Mr Stokoe then explained that the embedded mitigation incorporated into the assessment includes measures relating to the siting and design of the Proposed Development, which are set out in **Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Evolution (APP-054)** paragraphs 3.6.2 to 3.6.4 and **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** paragraphs 6.3.15 to 6.3.17, and also within **Design and Access Approach Document (AS-019)**. He explained that specific landscape mitigation measures are described in paragraphs 6.3.19 to 6.3.20 of **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** and illustrated in the associated **Landscape Strategy Plan (REP2-021/022/023))**. Mr Stokoe then provided the following summary of the embedded mitigation measures, taking each of the 3 "parts" of the Proposed Development in turn: **Solar Array Area** • Mr Stokoe explained that the Proposed Development has been designed having regard to the retention of existing landscape elements, woodland, scrub and field boundaries and associated hedgerows and drainage ditches. He added that this means that the underlying landscape pattern will not be fundamentally changed which, together with landscape mitigation, will ultimately facilitate restoration of landscape character following decommissioning. In many cases the proposal is to strengthen existing landscape features rather than introduce entirely new features which may be perceived as being out of character; • The Battery Energy Storage System and On-site substation will be co-located to allow sharing of facilities and mitigations and have been located away from residential receptors and areas at risk of flooding to the extent possible.

	• Fences will be designed to provide adequate security while keeping landscape and visual impact to a minimum through measures such as keeping them behind hedgerows where possible. The proposed perimeter fence is deer fencing in style which is appropriate for the agricultural character of the landscape. • Existing tracks will be used to facilitate access within the Solar Array Area where possible to reduce the requirement for the introduction of infrastructure and disruption to the landscape pattern. • New access arrangements have been designed to utilise existing gaps in vegetation wherever possible. • Solar PV exclusion zones defined by belts of native shrubs with trees will be introduced to provide screening for residential receptors in close proximity to the Solar Array Area. • Field boundaries will be maintained and strengthened wherever possible, including perimeter hedgerows which will help to provide visual containment. • Introduction of new linear landscape features, hedges and native shrubs with trees to provide linkages with existing plantations and mature vegetation features. • Finally, Mr Stokoe explained that specific mitigation measures will include strengthening the boundary, perimeter planting of the Solar Array Area through infilling gaps and the introduction of native shrub belts with trees for specific receptors. These include residential properties adjacent to the Solar Array Area and to the west of the centrally located Onsite Substation and Battery Energy Storage System compound. **Cable Route Corridor** • Mr Stokoe then explained that the Cable Route Corridor and its construction accesses will make use of existing gaps in hedgerows and vegetation wherever possible. • Any Public Rights of Way crossed by the Cable Route Corridor will be retained and impacts kept to a minimum. An **Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan (REP2-039)** was submitted into the Examination at Deadline 2, which sets out set out how the Applicant will manage Public Rights of Way (PRoW) during construction and operation to ensure they have been suitably considered and able to operate effectively, in terms of both user safety and accessibility. • Requirement 18 of the **Draft DCO (Document Ref: 3.1)** secures the following: *'No part of the authorised development may commence until a public rights of way management plan for any sections of public rights of way shown to be temporarily closed on the streets, rights of way and access plans for that part has been submitted to and approved by the relevant planning authority [being Lincolnshire County Council].'* • Existing vegetation will be retained at sensitive sites through the use of trenchless methods to install the cable (including Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD)), including the South Forty Foot Drain, Heckington Eau and the Hodge Dike. • Finally, he explained that temporary access tracks and construction compounds which are to be used in relation to the construction of the Cable Route Corridor will be set away from sensitive receptors wherever possible. **Bespoke Access Road**

	• Mr Stokoe then explained that the indicative alignment of the Bespoke Access Road has been informed by the need to minimise landscape and visual impacts by, where possible, routing the road to the edge of field boundaries and away from residential properties from which no significant visual effects have been identified at any phase of the development. • Existing gaps in vegetation will be utilised where possible when the road is being constructed. • Landscaping will be designed, where possible, to protect the open nature of the area. This includes sensitive siting of soil storage mounds. • Any PRoW crossed by the Bespoke Access Road will be retained and impacts kept to a minimum. As noted above, the **Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan (**REP2-039**)** sets out how the Applicant will manage PRoW to ensure they have been suitably considered and able to operate effectively, in terms of both user safety and accessibility. • He also noted that construction compounds to be used in relation to the construction of the Bespoke Access Road will be set away from sensitive receptors wherever possible. Mr Stokoe then described how delivery of these measures is secured through the **Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (APP-089)**. This outlines the principles of the proposed landscape and ecological management. He explained that it will form the basis of a detailed Landscape and Ecology Management Plan(s) (LEMP) prepared pursuant to Requirement 7 in Schedule 2 to the **Draft DCO (Document Ref: 3.1)**. Mr Stokoe then explained that the LVIA has identified a number of residual effects which will remain at Year 15 of operation of the Proposed Development following establishment of mitigation planting and the implementation of management measures. These are as follows: In relation to residual landscape effects: • Solar Array Area (Site area), the characterising influence of energy infrastructure (identified as Moderate adverse). • Bespoke Access Road (Site area) – presence of linear infrastructure and partial fragmentation of landscape pattern. (identified as Moderate adverse). He also noted that no significant residual effects have been identified in relation to the Cable Corridor Route following cessation of construction activity and reinstatement of hedgerows. Mr Stokoe explained that there will be no significant residual effects on wider landscape character in terms of defined landscape character areas including the Fenland Sub Area following establishment of mitigation planting which will further assimilate the Solar Array Area into the landscape context. He added that there will also be no significant residual effects to the Holland Reclaimed Fen following cessation of construction activity and the reinstatement of hedgerows.

	In relation to visual effects, Mr Stokoe provided the following summary: • Residents at Gashes Barn (R4) (Moderate adverse). Views of solar panels will remain at year 15, although the effect will be partially mitigated by the establishment of planting belts to the eastern, western and southern boundaries and the introduction of a native hedgerow to the northern elevation and access track. He added that this mitigation planting will progressively screen views of the solar panels but will reduce perceptions of openness and alter the characteristics of the visual experience for residents. A further figure **R4 Photomontages (AS-031)** which provides baseline views and photomontages has been prepared and submitted into the Examination. • PRoWs near the River Slea (Moderate adverse). Close distance views of energy infrastructure within the Solar Array Area will occur from a limited section of this PRoW network. The effect will be partially mitigated by hedgerow management measures and planting up gaps in the perimeter hedgerow. • PRoW network to the west of Asgarby (Moderate adverse). Close distance views of the Bespoke Access Road will be available, and in some cases PRoW will cross the route of the Road. This has been assessed to result in residual significant effects for very short sections of paths within this network. Mr Stokoe then explained that, whilst significant adverse effects are identified in respect of the landscape and visual assessment, these need to be considered in the planning balance. He noted that, as outlined in Section 6.2 of the **Planning Statement (APP-277),** the residual impacts are acceptable in policy terms, and are outweighed by material considerations in the form of the benefits and need for the Proposed Development. ***The ExA requested that the applicant go into more detail regarding the residual landscape and visual significant environmental effects identified, what additional mitigation measures were considered and to explain how these have been taken forward by the applicant.*** Mr Stokoe responded as follows: At year 15, following establishment of mitigation planting significant residual landscape and visual effects will be experienced by the following receptors: In relation to landscape effects at the Site: • In the Solar Array Area, because of the characterising influence of energy infrastructure within a predominantly rural landscape (Moderate adverse).

	• Along the Bespoke Access Road, because of the introduction of linear infrastructure and the partial fragmentation of landscape pattern (Moderate adverse). • He noted that there would be no significant residual effects in relation to the Cable Corridor Route following cessation of construction activity and reinstatement of hedgerows. • In addition, there would be no significant residual effects on wider landscape character in terms of defined landscape character areas including in relation to the Fenland Sub Area following establishment of mitigation planting and the Holland Reclaimed Fen LCA following cessation of construction activity. In relation to visual effects: At year 15, following establishment of mitigation planting residual landscape and visual effects would be experienced by the following receptors: • Gashes Barn: there would be a fundamental change to the characteristics of the visual experience for residents, Although, effects will be partially mitigated by the establishment of planting belts to the eastern, western and southern boundaries and the introduction of a native hedgerow to the northern elevation and Black Drove access road. Residual effects would be Moderate adverse (significant). • PRoWs near the River Slea: close distance views of energy infrastructure will occur from a limited section of this PRoW network. These effects will be partially mitigated by hedgerow management measures and planting up gaps in the perimeter hedgerow. Residual effects would be Moderate adverse (significant). • PRoW network to the west of Asgarby Lane: close distance views of the Bespoke Access Road will be available, and in some cases PRoW will cross the Road. The visual assessment concludes that there will be significant effects for short sections of this path network. Residual effects would be Moderate adverse (significant). Mr Stokoe then explained that implementation of the measures illustrated in the **Landscape Strategy Plan (REP2-021/022/023)** is proposed as mitigation. He explained that, in summary, this includes the following: • Gapping up existing hedgerows, particularly those to the northern and western boundaries of the Solar Array Area. This will be particularly effective in terms of mitigating visual effects for receptors in proximity to this area including users of Halfpenny Toll Lane and users of the PRoW network near the River Slea. • Creation of 'Solar PV Exclusion Zones' to create a buffer between energy infrastructure and specific residential properties. This process also included extensive engagement with local residents as set out in the **Design and Access Approach**

	Document (AS-019) paragraphs 5.3.2 to 5.3.3. This is shown on the **Works Plans (AS-006)** which show the habitat buffers (Work No. 9, green fill) between these properties and the solar PV (Work No. 1, pale blue fill). Requirement 5 of the **Draft DCO (Document Ref: 3.1)** secures that the detailed design various aspects of the Proposed Development must be in accordance with (among other things) the **Works Plans (AS-006)**, which is the mechanism through which delivery of these buffers is secured legally. • Introduction of a 12m wide native shrub with trees belt to the west of the onsite substation and BESS. This will aid screening in views from the west/north west specifically residential properties to the western edge of Ewerby Thorpe and PRoW users of Ewer1103/1. • Routing of the Bespoke Access Road will, where possible, be towards the edge of field boundaries to avoid excessive fragmentation and where existing hedgerows/vegetation can provide visual assimilation. • Existing field access points will be utilised where possible to minimise vegetation loss. • Sub-base construction will be undertaken, with compacted gravel surface finish to the Bespoke Access Road. In addition, the applicant will implement management measures, including: • Management of hedgerows to a height of 3.5m within the Solar Array Area; • Allowing the growth of hedgerow trees at approximately 50m intervals; and • Woodland management to ensure long term viability of tree cover. Mr Stokoe explained that these measures are set out in the **Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (APP-089)** (oLEMP) which sets out the requirements for mitigation and the relevant documents including the Landscape Strategy Plan in which those measures are described and illustrated. This will form the basis of a detailed LEMP which must be prepared and approved by the local planning authority, pursuant to Requirement 7 in Schedule 2 to the **Draft DCO (Document Ref: 3.1)**. In addition (and as described in **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)**, the **Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (REP2-017)** and **Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (REP1-011)** outline further measures to mitigate identified adverse effects on the local landscape during construction and decommissioning respectively. He added that **Appendix 2.4 Outline Construction Environmental Management (REP2-017)** sets out specific measures including: • the retention and protection of existing vegetation protection of existing vegetation; and • use of temporary hoarding where visual screening is required for residential properties, the PRoW network and recreational areas.

	The ExA asked Mr Stokoe to clarify what is meant by "residual" effects. In response, Mr Stokoe explained that **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** provides an assessment of landscape and visual effects at construction, operation year 0 and year 15 and at decommissioning. Residual effects are those effects which are still present following establishment of mitigation planting at year 15. ***The ExA requested further detail on the visual and landscape effects identified as a result of the proposed Bespoke Access Road. The ExA noted that it appeared that the identified impacts are linked with how sensitive receptors interact with the Bespoke Access Corridor more widely.*** In response, Mr Stokoe provided the following summary of the landscape and visual effects associated with the Bespoke Access Road: In relation to landscape effects, **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** has considered effects at a Site and wider landscape character level. He explained that Chapter 6 does not distinguish between the individual parts of the Proposed Development (Solar Array Area, Cable Route Corridor and Bespoke Access Road) in terms of Site level effects, however, he then explained the Site level effects specifically relating to the Bespoke Access Road, as follows: In respect of landscape effects, Major adverse (Significant) but temporary effects will be experienced at construction phase because of the introduction of construction activity into the rural landscape. He also noted that Moderate adverse (Significant) effects at operation year 0 and year 15 will be experienced at a Site level because of the introduction of linear infrastructure, fragmentation of the landscape pattern and vegetation loss (hedgerows). Mr Stokoe explained that the mitigation proposed is as described previously, as well as the following specific measures: • The Bespoke Access Road will, where possible, be routed towards the edge of field boundaries to avoid excessive fragmentation, and where existing hedgerows/vegetation can provide visual assimilation. This will be secured through the Outline Design Principles at Appendix 1 of the Design and Access Approach Document (via Requirement 5 of the **Draft DCO (Document Ref: 3.1)**). An updated version of the **Design and Access Approach Document (APP-278)** to incorporate this matter will be submitted into examination. • In addition, existing field access points will be utilised where possible for access and routing to minimise vegetation loss and fragmentation. In relation to the materials used it is proposed that the Road will utilise a sub base construction with a

compacted gravel surface finish. This surfacing will have a visual association, in respect of the materials used, with other access tracks in the locality.

- With regard to mitigation planting more generally within this relatively open landscape it is considered that it would not be appropriate to introduce extensive linear belts of vegetation which would be uncharacteristic and may emphasis the linear nature of the route.

In respect of landscape character, Mr Stokoe explained that, beyond the immediate context of the Bespoke Access Road wider effects on the Central Clays and Gravels Sub Area would not be experienced because of the limited characterising influence of the Proposed Development at all development phases.

In respect of visual effects, Mr Stokoe noted the following:

At construction, the PRoW network to the west of Asgarby Lane and PRoW to the east of Asgarby Lane would experience Major adverse Significant effects. He added that, following cessation of construction activity the PRoW to the east of Asgarby Lane would reduce to non significant levels (minor adverse).

At operation (years 0 and 15), the PRoW network to the west of Asgarby would experience Moderate (adverse) Significant effects. He noted that these significant effects would be experienced by receptors where close distance views are available for very short sections of the routes.

He confirmed that there would be no significant visual effects for residential receptors or users of the local transport network and explained that longer distance views of the route will be screened by existing vegetation.

The ExA requested confirmation that the Bespoke Access Road would be wider than other typical roads and access tracks within the vicinity, and requested clarification on how this has been taken into account in the visual assessment.

In response, Mr Stokoe clarified that the visual characteristics of the road will be similar in terms of the materials used to construct the road. Mr Turnbull, on behalf of the Applicant, then provided clarification that the Bespoke Access Road will maintain the general characteristics of a farm road and will ensure the character of the road will look like a wide farm track or a rural driveway, although wider, rather than a public highway. He also noted that gates will be of a suitable specification to prohibit unauthorised access, and that safe crossing points will be designed for PRoW at each point they cross the Bespoke Access Road

The ExA questioned a difference in table 6.8 v 19.2,

	In response, Mr Stokoe clarified that the summary of landscape effects set out in the respective table 6.8 within **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** and table 19.2 within **Chapter 19 Summary of Significant Environmental Effects (APP-070)** is correct and consistently presented. Mr Stokoe further clarified that effects at a Site level in relation to the individual parts of the Proposed Development (Solar Array Area, cable Route Corridor and Bespoke Access Road) have been grouped together within the 'Landscape Effects' section of Chapter 6 under the heading; 'Landscape Character – Site level' rather than being assessed separately. ***Having regard to the effects identified as a result of the Bespoke Access Road, the ExA asked what options and alternatives the applicant had considered in terms of the usability of this road. He noted that is stated to be needed for construction, yet it will be kept in situ during operation for maintenance and for decommissioning.*** ***Action Point 1: The Applicant to consider if the same design layout and dimensions of the Bespoke Access Road are needed for the operational phase of the proposed development and, if needed, provide further justification for why the Bespoke Access Road is needed in the same form as the construction phase and what additional measures can be deployed in order to minimise its effects of the landscape.*** ***[Post hearing note: Please refer to the response to Action Point 1 in Table 3.1 below.]*** ***The ExA asserted that in his view, the view of the Proposed Development from the properties (at VP15) will have their view significantly change in character and residential amenity from those properties. He referred to the residential viewpoint at page 24 (Howell Fen Farmhouse) of Appendix 6.5 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment(APP-087)*** In response, Mr Stokoe agreed to provide a response to the ExA's assertion, as well as in relation to effects to Gashes Barn. ***Action Point 2: The Applicant to provide further justification for the conclusion on the residual significant effect in respect of residential receptor group R1, R2, R3(3a) and R20 and why the Applicant has determined these to be not significant, considering the substantial change in outlook for those properties.*** ***Action Point 3: The Applicant was also asked to provide justification as to the conclusions reached regarding the significance of the landscape and visual effects on Gashes Barn and why the applicant believes that the effects of the proposed development, including the proposed mitigation measures, will not be overbearing or undermine its use as a residential property.*** ***[Post hearing note: Please refer to the response to Action Point 2 and Action Point 3 in Table 3.1 below.]***

	The ExA requested detail on the effects identified in relation to residential visual amenity and the visual and landscape effects identified in relation to users of PRoWs, and asked the Applicant to explain the approach taken to the assessment of those receptors (residential receptors and users of PRoWs) and what mitigation has been considered or is proposed to address any identified effects.
	
	In response, Mr Stokoe explained that visual effects in relation to residential receptors have been considered in relation to residents within settlements and residents in individual properties and property groups.
	
	He went on to explain that the assessment of effects on views from publicly accessible areas within settlements and adjoining property groups has been set out in **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** (in paragraphs 6.6.92 to 6.6.126 and 6.6.181 to 6.6.191) informed by the more detailed findings in relation to specific viewpoints and receptors set out in **Appendix 6.4 Visual Assessment (APP-086)**.
	
	Mr Stokoe added that **Appendix 6.5 RVAA (APP-087)** has focused on the availability of views from individual properties and the external areas within the curtilage of these properties.
	
	He summarised that generally, it has been found that there will be no significant effects experienced by residents within defined settlement boundaries within the LVIA study area. However, he noted that 2 individual properties at the eastern edge of Ewerby Thorpe and 2 properties at the northern edge of Howell will experience significant effects at the construction phase and operation (year 0).
	
	Mr Stokoe then explained that the LVIA concludes that the following residential receptors would experience significant effects at construction, operation year 0 and operation year 15:
	• Property Group R1 Ewerby Thorpe Farm and Ewerby Thorpe Lodge. Effects would be;
	  ○ Construction – Major adverse.
	  ○ Operation (Year 0) – Major adverse.
	  ○ Operation (Year 15) – Minor adverse (not significant).
	• Property Group R2 Howell Fen Farmhouse, Asgarby Barns and Westmorelands Farm. Effects would be;
	  ○ Construction – Major adverse.
	  ○ Operation (Year 0) – Moderate adverse.
	  ○ Operation (Year 15) – Minor adverse (not significant).

	• Property R4 Gashes Barn. Effects would be;
	  ○ Construction – Major adverse.
	  ○ Operation (Year 0) – Major adverse.
	  ○ Operation (Year 15) – Moderate adverse.
	• R20 Crown Cottage and Keepers Cottage. Effects would be;
	  ○ Construction – Major adverse.
	  ○ Operation (Year 0) – Moderate adverse.
	  ○ Operation (Year 15) – Minor adverse (not significant).
	
	He added that, of these properties it is acknowledged that Gashes Barn would experience residual significant effects and would meet the RVAA threshold for a period of up to 10 years. He explained that, the establishment of mitigation planting substantially screens views of energy infrastructure after a period of approximately 10 years and following which the RVAA threshold would no longer be met.
	
	In respect of the Cable Route Corridor, Mr Stokoe explained that Property Groups R5, R6, R7 R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R14, R15 and R18 will experience short term visual effects associated with construction activity within the Cable Corridor Route. Following cessation of construction activity, residential receptors will not experience significant effects in this area.
	
	In respect of the Bespoke Access Road, Mr Stokoe explained that there would be no significant effects experienced by residential receptors because of the relative absence of residential properties in close proximity to the route and limited intervisibility.
	
	Mr Stokoe then explained that effects in relation to users of the PRoW network have been considered in terms of the sequential experience as people travel along routes in both directions rather than simply in relation to static viewpoints. He confirmed that the extent and duration of views have been factored into the assessment.
	
	He summarised that users of the following sections of the PRoW network will experience significant effects:
	
	<u>In the Solar Array Area:</u>

	The PRoW Network adjacent to the River Slea and Bridleway Ewer/1103/1 during construction and operation year 0. Following establishment of mitigation planting residual effects will be experienced by users of the PRoW adjacent to the River Slea from sections of the network where close distance views are available. <u>Along the Cable Route Corridor:</u> During construction, the following sections of the PRoW network will experience significant effects: • The PRoW network east of Great and Little Hale; • The PRoW network to north west of Heckington; and • PRoW Bick/2/1 will experience short term visual effects associated with activity within the Cable Route Corridor including at Bicker Fen Substation. He confirmed that there would be no significant effects relating to PRoW network users following the end of the construction phase. <u>Along the Bespoke Access Road:</u> The PRoW to the west of Asgarby Lane, PRoW to the east of Asgarby Lane during the construction phase and at operation year 0. He noted that, following establishment of mitigation planting at year 15 only users of PRoW to west of Asgarby Lane would experience significant effects. He stated that the proposed mitigation measures will include: • Gapping up existing hedgerows, particularly those to the northern and western boundaries of the Solar Array Area. This will be particularly effective in terms of mitigating visual effects for receptors in proximity to this area including users of Halfpenny Toll Lane and users of the PRoW network near the River Slea. • Solar PV Exclusion Zones to create a buffer between energy infrastructure and specific residential properties. • Introduction of a 12m wide native shrub with trees belt to the west of the onsite substation and BESS. This will aid screening in views from the west/north west specifically residential properties to the western edge of Ewerby Thorpe and PRoW users of Ewer1103/1. ***The ExA then asked the applicant to clarify how proposed additional planting as a mitigation measure will affect existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and how the sense of openness and space that users of the ProW network currently experience, will be affected, particularly for those PRoW that will be severed by the proposed Bespoke Access Road or are alongside or in close proximity to the Solar Array***. In response, the Applicant agreed to provide a response in writing.

Action Point 4: Clarify how proposed additional planting as a mitigation measure will affect existing Public Rights of Ways (PRoW) and how the sense of openness and space, that users of the PRoW network currently experience, will be affected, particularly for those PRoW that will be severed by the proposed Bespoke Access Road or are alongside or in close proximity to the Solar Array.

[Post hearing note: Please refer to the response to Action Point 4 in Table 3.1 below.]

The ExA requested comments from the Host Local Authorities (HLAs).

Oliver Brown from AHH on behalf of LCC and NKDC provided submissions relating to LCC and NKDC's review of the landscape assessment.

LCC/NKDC consultant will make the following points today and the remaining points will be deferred to a written submission:

- Relating to the baseline, AHH have been unable to identify a clear assessment of the landscape and visual sensitivity, by considering the value and susceptibility so it is unclear how the judgement has been reached in terms of landscape effects. In response David Stokoe, for the Applicant, stated that Paragraphs 6.6.8 to 6.6.29 of the **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** of the Environmental Statement (ES) provide an assessment of landscape sensitivity combining landscape value and susceptibility to determine sensitivity in accordance with the recommendations of the Landscape Institute's 2013 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3). Whilst it is acknowledged that **Appendix 6.3 Landscape Character Baseline and Sensitivity (APP-085)** does not provide an assessment of susceptibility, it is contained within the LVIA (**Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)**).

- AHH disagree with the reduction in the effect on the Fenland Landscape character areas looking at wider landscape character effects. AHH see this as a direct change to the agricultural character and as a direct land use change, which is a key characteristics in the area. Wish to understand how the applicants would come to the judgement of not significant following mitigation.

  In response David Stokoe, for the Applicant, explained that it is recognised that at a local level the agricultural character of the Site will be diminished, but it has been found that the long-term characterising influence of the Proposed Development will not be strongly perceived beyond the immediate context of the Solar Array Area. This finding is confirmed within the Landscape Effects section of **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** of the Environmental Statement (ES), where effects on the host Fenland Sub Area would reduce to minor adverse (Not Significant) at year 15, following establishment of mitigation planting.

- There is an assumption that planting between year 1 and year 15 will subsequently reduce visual effect, but AHH raise that that in itself could cause the problem for shortening views openness.

  The Applicant has set out further details in relation to this matter in Table 3.1, action points 2 and 3.

- Link the LVIA and question about reduction effects – disagree about the reduction on the three properties (R1, R2 and R20). Gashes Barn will meet the residential visual amenity threshold which is quite a high bar. AHH question whether there is any scope to further change the embedded mitigation to increase offsets to reduce effect. What opportunities is there around Gashes Barn to reduce effects?
  The ExA agreed to defer this matter to specific action points. In this regard the Applicant has set out further details in Table 3.1, action points 2 and 3.

- Future baseline: AHH don't consider that the pressures and future baseline of the area will undergo significant change have been appropriately considered. The scale of the change spans across multiple character areas, which currently have common characteristics that would be changed through the multiple energy development projects.

  David Stokoe, for the Applicant, responded that the cumulative schemes considered in **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** were those agreed at scoping stage with the HLPA's. Other schemes identified more widely across Lincolnshire beyond the LVIA study area have not been considered because they are beyond the scope of the LVIA with very limited potential to result in cumulative effects in association with the Proposed Development either in static views or as experienced sequentially as people travel through the landscape.

  [Post-Hearing Update: The Applicant has discussed the approach to resolve the above matters during an online meeting between the Applicant, NKDC, LCC and AAH Consultants to discuss outstanding landscape matters held on the 20th November. The outcome of this meeting and further correspondence between the respective parties will be used to inform the contents of the SOCG which will be submitted at deadline 5.]

Action Point 5: Incorporate and evaluate the effects of the additional schemes identified by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and update the Cumulative Environmental Assessment accordingly.

BBC clarified that Mr Brown does not represent BBC and that their views are included within **REP1-060** and **REP1-059**. BBCs concerns relate to the southern extent of the cable route and substation works.

	Mr Stokoe, for the Applicant, responded that a recent meeting had been held at which it was agreed that the Landscape Strategy Plan would be updated to included landscape enhancements at Bicker Fen Substation. This plan will form the basis of further discussions with BBC. The Applicant has set out further details in relation to this matter in Table 3.1, Action point 16. **Action Point 6: Clarify the applicant's overall approach to landscape and visual effects particularly how the applicant has taken into consideration the effects of the proposed mitigation on landscape and visual receptors, particularly how the applicant has considered changes brought by the proposed mitigation.** Carol Chapmam, on behalf of South Kyme Parish Council asked for clarity on whether the 600 MW connection capacity support additional panels, either now or in the future. The Parish Councils concerns are that other developers may use the 600 MW capacity as an argument to place additional future development of solar arrays in this vicinity, which they would see as resulting in an even greater negative impact. The Applicant clarified that it is not planning any further development in the area beyond what has been applied for under the terms of the DCO, and the parameters within which the Applicant is restricted, principally through the works areas/descriptions and the outline design principles provide certainty as to the scope of the Proposed Development subject to this Application. Beyond that, what other developers may or may not do in the area is not within the control of the Applicant or a matter appropriate for this examination.
Historic Environment	***The ExA requested that the applicant provide an overview of ES Chapter 8: Cultural Heritage (APP-059), particularly focusing on the assessment methodology, the assessment of effects, embedded mitigation proposed and any residual effects.*** In response Mr Anthony Hanna, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that **Chapter 8: Cultural Heritage (APP-059)** has been prepared following the accepted standards and guidance for assessing effects on cultural heritage assets, both non-designated and designated. The assessment methodology is in accordance with the Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties, International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) (2011), and the Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK; the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessments (IEMA), Institute for Historic Building Conservation (IHBC); and Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) (2021). He explained that the assessment is based on a review and scoping of assets likely to be affected and a review of likely significant effects arising from the Proposed Development. This is based on the legislative framework, planning policy, and guidance. Following early consultation and scoping, the assessment criteria were agreed, and the baseline was prepared for archaeology,

	historic landscape, and built heritage (see **Appendix 8.1 Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (APP-117)** and **Appendix 8.2 Heritage Statement (APP-118)**). Mr Hanna then described that the assessment methodology defined the extent of the Study Area and identified heritage assets to be brought forward for assessment, under agreement with the statutory consultees. He confirmed this was agreed during the scoping stage with LCC, where a methodology was agreed which included direct physical effects on archaeological assets during the operational, construction and decommissioning phases which were scoped in, as were impacts to the Historic Landscape. He noted that the archaeological mitigation is set out within the **Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (APP-153)**. He explained that it was agreed with LCC and NKDC for the methodology to include the results of consultation with the Heritage Trust for Lincolnshire and consultation with the local list of non-designated heritage assets for North Kesteven. He noted that this ensured any additional non-designated built heritage assets were included within the Heritage Statement. He confirmed that these issues were agreed with LCC and also agreed with NKDC. Mr Hanna then explained that, for built heritage, the study area for identifying designated heritage assets potentially sensitive to the Proposed Development was set at 5km from the Order Limits (**Figure 8.3 Field Reference (APP-246)** and **Figure 8.5 Geophysical survey interpretation of the DCO Order Limits (APP-248)**). This was agreed in consultation with LCC (Table 8.1 of **Chapter 8: Cultural Heritage (APP-059)**). He confirmed that this approach is robust and considers an asset's importance or value against the impacts of the proposed development. He noted that designated heritage assets beyond the 5km study area have also been considered; this was assessed by the technical team and agreed with the LCC Archaeological Advisor and the Local Planning Authority Conservation Officer. Where appropriate, these assets have been considered within the assessment. He explained that the Chapter assesses the potential for significant effects on buried archaeological remains within the Site, informed by **Appendix 8.1: Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (APP-117)**; **Appendix 8.2: Heritage Statement (APP-118)**; **Appendix 8.3: Aerial and LiDAR Assessment (Solar Array) (APP-119)**; **Appendix 8.5: Written Scheme of Investigation for Geophysical Survey on the Solar Array Area (APP-121)**; and **Appendix 8.10a: Trial Trenching Report (APP-150-151)**. Mr Hanna then explained that in terms of the assessment of effects, the methodology considered the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, and potential impacts on archaeology, historic landscape, and built heritage. The assessment concluded that effects on buried archaeological remains would be managed through a combination of site-specific investigation, monitoring, and recording, as outlined in the supporting appendices. He added that effects on historic landscape and built heritage have been assessed taking into account visibility, setting, and significance of the assets. Mr Hanna explained that embedded mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Proposed Development. These include preservation by design (avoidance) and preservation by record. Archaeological investigation, through strip, map, and record, will be

	undertaken where evaluation has identified archaeological potential and where the development is likely to result in harm in areas specified within the **Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (REP2-019)**. These areas have been identified through the evaluation stage and are located in areas defined within the Bespoke Access Corridor. He noted that areas of archaeological potential considered to be of low significance will be addressed through archaeological recording as part of a staged approach to evaluation and mitigation, in accordance with agreed Written Schemes of Investigation in consultation with LCC. He confirmed that all identified heritage assets will be recorded in line with current best practice. He then explained that appropriate designated heritage assets have been assessed and that effects on them will be mitigated through screening and the enhancement of existing hedgerow boundaries, to ensure that visibility from these assets to the Proposed Development is significantly reduced wherever possible. He added that this will be line the **Embedded Mitigation Technical Note (REP3-005)** supported by the **Landscape Strategy Plan (APP-233 to APP-235)**. Mr Hanna noted that following these mitigation measures, the residual effects are anticipated to be at the lower end of less than substantial harm for most heritage assets with the exception of St Andrews Church, which has been assessed as having a moderate effect during the construction phase moderate and slight effect during the operational phase due to its high value as a Grade I listed building and a medium impact having been assessed. He also noted that residual impacts are expected only in certain areas where physical disturbance cannot be avoided but confirmed that these will be recorded and managed in line with the mitigation measures described within the **Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (REP2-019)**. He confirmed that all mitigation measures are proposed to be secured through requirements in the **Draft DCO (Document Ref: 3.1)**, including adherence to Written Schemes of Investigation and monitoring programmes agreed with LCC and the Local Planning Authority Conservation Officer. In summary, Mr Hanna concluded that **Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage (APP-059)** provides a robust assessment methodology, carefully considers the likely significant effects, incorporates embedded mitigation, identifies residual effects, and sets out clear mechanisms to secure the mitigation measures for archaeology. This mechanism is secured through the Archaeological Mitigation Strategy, and the approach is agreed with Lincolnshire County Council. ***The ExA questioned whether any further consideration has been given to minimise the impact on the Church of St Andrew, Asgarby, (Grade I Listed Building).*** In response, Mr Hanna explained that the Church of St Andrew, Asgarby is of the highest designation (Grade I), and was considered as such in the assessment. He further explained that the impact to this asset is from the construction of the Bespoke Access Road approximately 400m to the west of the asset. The effect on the asset has been assessed as moderate adverse during the construction and decommissioning phases, and slight adverse during the operational phase of the Proposed

	Development. He confirmed that during the operational phase the road will be screened beyond an existing hedge and tree boundary. He explained that the road will be a low-lying feature and will be barely noticeable, because the use of the road will be for maintenance purposes only and therefore limited. Mr Hanna then explained that the non designated heritage assets represented by the earthwork remains to the west of the Church will be unaffected, as this field is not part of the Proposed Development and will be screened by the existing hedge boundary. He explained that archaeological potential identified during the archaeological evaluation will be preserved through design (avoidance) and record, outlined within the **Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (REP2-019)**. ***ExA requested that the Applicant provide clarification on the assessment of Kyme Tower.*** In response, Mr Hanna explained that the physical attributes of Kyme Tower will not be impacted by the Proposed Development. He also confirmed that the immediate setting of the asset will not experience change. He explained that the Proposed Development may have a slight adverse effect on the asset through change within the wider setting of the Tower. The original use and functionality of the asset is from its intended enclosure and its siting within the bend of a river and with protection from the inaccessible area to the west. He further explained that this area is enclosed providing seclusion to the asset that was once surrounded by a moat and comprised also of an attached Manor House. Mr Hanna noted that the Tower was originally built to provide protection to the fortified house and to guard the village and the River Slea to the south and east, which may have been an important transportation and trade artery. Any intended interaction with the wider landscape to the west was limited because this would have been inaccessible fenland outside of the functional 'catchment' of the asset. He confirmed that the key views from the asset are to the east, towards the manor house and the village, and then to the north toward the church, all contemporary features associated with the original function of the tower. He further confirmed that views west towards the Proposed Development are not as important in respect of understanding the historic and architectural interest of the asset. The change proposed would have an impact on the wider setting and is not considered to cause substantial harm to the asset, and any less than substantial harm has been minimised through embedded mitigation. He concluded that overall, the change within the wider setting is assessed as not significant, in line with the relevant National Policy Statements EN-1 and EN-3. Mr Hanna then explained the assessment of Kyme Tower, the Church of St Mary and All Saints, the Manor House (built in the early 19th century) and the Scheduled Monument, the remains of the medieval monastery and moated manor consist of an enclosed medieval settlement, set within slightly higher ground on the edge of the fenland. He explained that the tower house (Kyme Tower) was built for defensive and strategic reasons to guard the trade routes and protect the inhabitants of the enclosed manorial community. Kyme Tower comprises the relic remains of a medieval fortified manor house. He added that the house has been demolished, and the associated remains of the tower house have also been demolished. It has been suggested that Kyme Tower is

	all that remains of a Fortified Manor House with possibly a timber framed, two storey access to halls linking each of the towers forming a courtyard. More generally, it is considered to have been a lone tower attached to a, now lost, timber hall. In summary, Mr Hanna noted that it appears like a medieval fortified manor house but without curtain walls or multiple moats/ditches. Such defensive structures are usually built in areas that are largely inaccessible using natural defences of the surrounding landscape, in this case the river, the fens, to the south and west. He explained that the Tower itself was not a domestic dwelling, it was purely defensive, as there is no evidence of garderobes or fireplaces. Currently it is derelict and possibly structurally unsound, and no floors or roof exists. He confirmed that the assessment was carried out with this in mind. Mr Hanna explained that the Tower was assessed from the ground, as it is not publicly accessible. Therefore, public appreciation would be from the ground and not within the Tower or from the top floors of the Tower. He added that, to properly appreciate the Tower, it should be viewed within its immediate setting juxtaposed within the river, the church, the earthwork moated site and ponds, and the 19th century manor house, and from the track road to the west. He added that the wider setting is within the nearby and surrounding fields. To the south and west this once represented, at times, inaccessible fenland. He noted that the Proposed Development lies beyond and towards the edge of the wider setting to the west. The introduction of solar arrays 1.25km to the west does represent change within the wider landscape, which comprises glimpsed views beyond the existing screening of the Midfodder Dike and limited intervisibility. Therefore, the Proposed Development introduces a change to the setting of the assets at South Kyme that has a slight impact on their significance resulting in changes in our ability to understand and appreciate the significance of the assets. He confirmed that these changes will not be overtly noticeable; they will be slight. The Tower must be assessed within its historical and functional context to fully appreciate and understand its significance and not as a redundant folly glimpsed in and out of the surrounding landscape; to do so would deny appropriate appreciation and understanding of this former medieval tower and manor house. ***The ExA noted that he does not consider not significant harm to be the same as no harm and asked the Applicant to respond on this point.*** In response, Mr Hanna stated that he agreed with this and the assessment did not assert differently. He confirmed that any harm has sought to be mitigated through avoidance/design, recording and provision of appropriate screening. ***The ExA asked if there are any updates since the submission of Historic England's Response to ExQ1 [REP2-049].*** Mr Hanna provided an update explaining that a SoCG setting out the matters agreed with Historic England has been submitted into the examination. ***The ExA invited further comments from the HLAs.*** Mr Matt Bentley (conservation officer from NKDC) raised concerns regarding the various assessments on different historic assets.

	Action Point 7: Clarify the applicant's assessment of the effects of the proposed development on heritage assets, including any planting proposed as mitigation, and how the effects have been considered, particularly in relation to Church of St. Andrew, Asgarby and Church of St. Mary and All Saints. ***NKDC then raised concerns relating to the cumulative impacts on a number of heritage assets at Asgarby resulting from the Bespoke Access Road.*** ***Mr Mark Knighton on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council raised points relating to the scope of the ZTV to be included in the application and relating the inclusion for the group value of non-designated historic farmsteads.*** **Action Point 8: Undertake further desktop work to assess the effects of the proposed development on setting of Kyme Tower, considering the possibility that the proposed site will be visible from the top of the tower.** **Action Point 9: Re-assess Table 8.11 Cultural Heritage - Summary Assessment Matrix in light of the discussions at ISH2 and how the SoS should give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving all heritage assets from any harm or loss of significance, including its setting.** **Action Point 10: Undertake a group value assessment of farmsteads in response to NKDC's request.**

Biodiversity and Ecology	***ExA asked the applicant to provide an overview of Added to D5 tracker, particularly focusing on the assessment methodology, the assessment of effects, embedded mitigation proposed and any residual effects.***
	
	ES Chapter 7: Ecology (REP2-0153/0146) has been compiled as the culmination of an iterative project development process. This has included:
	• Initial desktop studies and site walkovers identifying constraints and opportunities associated with the development;
	• Project workshops considering environmental, engineering and landownership constraints;
	• Consultation with local planning authorities to identify biodiversity opportunities; a meeting was held in February 2024 to discuss how the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Biodiversity Opportunities maps could apply to the Proposed Development.
	• Meetings with Natural England in August 2024, May and November 2025 to identify mitigation and potential enhancement for protected species (great crested newt), and qualifying species of international sites (at the time of the meeting otter and gadwall).
	  ○ For great crested newt matters included timing of the population surveys and potential for conditioning of these in the Letter of no impediment, as well as creation of grassland and hedgerow terrestrial habitats;
	  ○ For otters and gadwall, the need for mitigation was discussed proportionate to the effect of the proposed works and numbers of individuals found on site.

	The ecology chapter has been based on impact assessment guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).
	
	The baseline surveys undertaken are outlined in Section 7.5 of the **ES Chapter 7 Ecology (REP2-015/16)** undertaken and were:
	• Preliminary Ecological Appraisal **(Solar Array Area: APP-092, Bespoke Access Road and Cable Route Corridor APP-112)**
	• Botanical **(SAA: APP-100 BAR and CRC: APP-104)**
	• Invertebrate scoping **(SAA only: APP-103**)
	• Reptiles **(SAA only: APP-099)**
	  • Great crested newt **(SAA: APP-093 & App-101 BAR and CRC: APP-113)**
	• Winter birds **(SAA: APP-094 BAR and CRC: APP-106)**
	• Breeding birds **(SAA: APP-095 BAR and CRC: APP-114)**
	  • Badgers **(SAA only: APP-097)**
	• Ground level tree assessment for bats **(SAA: APP-102 BAR and CRC: APP-105)**
	• Bats activity surveys (nighttime bat walkover) **(SAA: APP-096 BAR and CRC: APP-107)**
	• Otters **(SAA: APP-098 BAR and CRC: APP-108 to APP-111)**
	• Water voles **(SAA: APP-098 BAR and CRC: APP-108 to APP-111)**
	
	Alongside the Ecology Chapter we have produced (or input to) on behalf of the Applicant:
	• A habitats regulations assessment **(REP2-013/014)**;
	• A Biodiversity net gain strategy **(REP2-029/30)**; and
	• Input the biodiversity component of a hedgerows assessment considered within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment **(APP-088).**
	
	Impact assessment:
	
	The methodology for assessment of importance and significance of impacts are given in Section 7.4 of the **ES Chapter 7 Ecology (REP2-015/16).** In line with CIEEM guidance the ecological features identified within the baseline surveys are given a geographical value from international to site based on factors including relative numbers, type of population and legal protection.
	
	Any potential significant effects on the ecological features were considered in terms of their geographic extent, magnitude, duration (how long an impact would last), frequency (how many times would an impact occur), timing (when in the day/year an impact would occur) and reversibility. A significant negative impact would occur where the favourable conservation status of the ecological feature would be negatively affected.

	The embedded mitigation (Sections 7.6.1 to 7.6.29 of the **ES Chapter 7 Ecology** (**REP2-015/16**)) followed the mitigation hierarchy and consisted of: • Avoidance; designing the order limits to avoid ecological features (including the Cable Route Corridor Appraisal **APP-079** Sections 4.3.2-4.3.6, Bespoke Access Road Appraisal **APP-080** Section 4.4 in particular Table 1) and providing buffers around features with them (see Section 7.6.4 of the Ecology Chapter **REP2-015/016**); • Minimising impacts, through appropriate design and timing of works, (e.g. using gaps in hedgerows); and as a last resort • Compensation through replacement of ecological features (e.g. replanting hedgerows in alternative location on site) The Proposed Development includes enhancement of retained features developed from the biodiversity opportunities mapping (Central Lincolnshire Local Plan) and Natural England National Character Areas: • Managing the woodland to enhance the condition; improving diversity of age class and height (Section 7.8.1 of the Ecology Chapter **REP2-015/016**); • Creation of areas of approximately 485 ha grassland planting (Section 7.6.69 of the Ecology Chapter **REP2-015/016**) and 2.8 km hedgerow planting (Section 7.6.20 of the Ecology Chapter **REP2-015/016**), as well as approximately 3 ha shrub with trees (Section 2.3.7 of the **oLEMP (APP-089)**). Following on from the embedded mitigation the impacts on ecological features were identified (Section 7.7 of the Ecology Chapter **REP2-015/016**). Additional mitigation measures have been designed for these impacts and in conclusion no significant residual impacts are anticipated with the above mitigation. The mitigation outlined above is secured within the: • **oCEMP (REP2-017)** • **oLEMP (APP-089)** • **Outline Decommissioning Environmental Management Plan (oDEMP) (REP1-011/12); and** • **Biodiversity net gain strategy (REP2-029/30)** ***ExA requested clarification on Table 7.12, and that in Table 7.10 (summary of impact mitigation) there are some receptors identified with residual effects of significant.*** **Action Point 11: Review Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 7 Ecology to ensure effects are correctly listed and cross referenced, providing clarifications on any inconsistencies. The applicant should submit the revised chapter in both tracked and clean versions, including, but not limited to, Tables 7.9 and 7.10 and 7.11 of the ES.** **Action Point 12: Applicant to review and clarify assessment of significance or non-significance of effects on ecological receptors and review its assessment of beneficial and non-beneficial effects ensure that any beneficial effects which may**

	be included as a result of the decommissioning of the proposed development are also considered as potentially non-beneficial effect during the construction and or operational phases. ***The ExA noted that in recent decisions there has been encouragement to go beyond 10% minimum. The ExA requested clarification on whether the applicant is proposing to go beyond the proposed minimum.*** Mr Bradford on behalf of the Applicant noted the Applicant is committed to and is actively pursuing opportunities for Biodiversity Net Gain as set out in the **Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy** (**REP2-029/30**) which outlines the Applicant's ambitions for biodiversity net gain. The Applicant is committed to delivering biodiversity net gain and demonstrating this transparently using a recognised biodiversity metric, i.e. the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, published by DEFRA/NE. The Proposed Development will exceed 10% BNG, which is non mandatory for NSIPs at present, and is therefore a policy benefit of the Proposed Development. The **Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy (REP2-029)** demonstrates that the Proposed Development will achieve higher levels of biodiversity net gain (at least 30% net gain in habitat units, at least 10% net gain in hedgerow units and at least 10% net gain in watercourse units) which would be delivered and monitored on-site for 30 years as part of a wider package of landscaping and habitat proposals described in the **oLEMP (APP-089)**, well in exceedance of policy. This includes a mix of retention of key habitats and creation of grassland and hedgerows. Watercourse improvements are limited by consideration of the requirements of the internal drainage board and will be driven by improvements to water quality as chemical inputs are removed. The applicant welcomes the opportunity to develop enhancement of high diversity habitats including the Hodge Dike identified in the biodiversity opportunities in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. Ian Mack on behalf of the Applicant added that the BNG measures are secured through the **oLEMP (APP-089)** in requirement 7, and that the Applicant is currently considering including the BNG requirements into the **draft DCO (Document Ref: 3.1)** directly. **Darren Clarke for LCC confirmed that their first point regarding BNG has now been resolved.** **Mr Clarke for LCC questioned permanent predicted negative impact on ground nesting words, and requested further information on additional measures to avoid negative impact (particularly skylark and meadow pipit, grey partridge and lapwing).** Tim Bradford on behalf of the Applicant confirmed that a population of skylarks was found on the site; as this bird requires open sightlines nesting habitat will be lost. This will be balanced by improved foraging resources for bird nesting on adjacent land

	improving survival rates. Based on similar sites (e.g. Cottam Solar farm) it is anticipated a population of value at the site level will be lost with no significant in combination impacts. The Applicant does not consider the Proposed Development will have any likely significant adverse effects on skylark in isolation or in combination with other proposed projects. However, the Applicant is open to engagement with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (LWT) on the matter to seek to further understand the justification for the mitigation and/or enhancement proposals they discuss in their representation for skylark. ***The ExA requested clarification on why the impact is uncertain when the further survey work has been undertaken***. Tim Bradford on behalf of the applicant clarified that we have undertaken the surveys and are now looking at precedents and discussing with HLAs. The impacts of solar farms on skylarks are not fully understood as whilst there is a loss of nesting habitat this is offset by an increase in food availability supporting survival of skylark in adjacent fields. This will inform discussions with LCC and LWT on the matter. . ***The ExA questioned how residual effects are captured within the ES, in particular 7.6.93 and how there will be an overall positive impact on nesting for wintering birds.*** Tim Bradford on behalf of the applicant clarified that the points made in 7.6.93 relates to the impact at decommissioning. ExA requested clarification on how the applicant can consider the decommissioning as a positive but not consider the operational impacts as negative. The Applicant clarified that there is an error in the cross referencing in table and we will resolve. ***The ExA requested the applicant review across the whole document how the effects are referenced. The applicant should submit the revised chapter in both tracked and clean versions [see Action Point 11 above].*** **Action point 12: Applicant to review and clarify assessment of significance or non-significance of effects on ecological receptors and review its assessment of beneficial and non-beneficial effects ensure that any beneficial effects which may be included as a result of the decommissioning of the proposed development are also considered as potentially non-beneficial effect during the construction and or operational phases.** **LCC raised the ecological steering group, and requested an update from the Applicant.** The Applicant confirmed their willingness to explore this option but need to work out the details. **NKDC requested that BNG monitoring is secured (and raised that Springwell did this through both the OLEMP and a S106).** **Action Point 13: In light of the requests made by BBC [/NKDC: see response to Action Point 13 below] in their Local Impact Report and further information provided, to consider how BNG monitoring may be secured.**

	David Broughton from NKDC requested further explanation on how the Applicant has dealt with scarce arable flora in terms of the area and timing of surveys, and for riparian mammals they have concerns that there is no quantitative assessment on the worst case impact to water voles. **Action Point 14: Provide further explanation on how the Applicant has dealt with scarce arable flora and potential impacts on water vole within the assessment.** **BBC raised the point that BNG benefits are all proposed outside of the Borough. Noted that discussions have been undertaken with regards to this matter and will continue.** ***The ExA noted it did have some further questions or clarifications but will defer these to written questions.*** **Action Point 15: Provide update or confirm latest position on the Natural England Statement of Common Ground (SoCG).** **Action Point 16: Applicant to update the SoCG with BBC with regards to planting enhancements proposed within the Bicker Fen substation.**

3. Responses to action points

3.1.1 Table 3.1 below sets out the written summary of the Applicant's Responses to Action Points raised during the Issue Specific Hearing 2 and the further responses provided by the Applicant post-hearing.

Action Points arising during ISH2 – Table 3.1

#	ACTION POINT	APPLICANT'S UPDATE
1	Consider if the same design layout and dimensions of the Bespoke Access Road are needed for the operational phase of the proposed development and, if needed, provide further justification for why the Bespoke Access Road is needed in the same form as the construction phase and what additional measures can be deployed in order to minimise its effects of the landscape.	The Bespoke Access Road is primarily designed to accommodate construction traffic as this is the most intensive period of traffic generation by the Proposed Development. Whilst the Bespoke Access Road will accommodate many types of vehicles during the construction phase, the key determinants of design geometry are: 1. The requirement for two HGVs to pass each other safely as there will be material levels of HGV traffic throughout the construction period. HGVs passing each other will be a regular occurrence for a large proportion of the construction period; and 2. The requirement for Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) to access the site for the delivery of transformers, on a less frequent basis. Whilst several AILs will be required to deliver cable reels to the site, it is Girder Frame Vehicles required to deliver transformers that are the most onerous from a design perspective. In general, a minimum carriageway width for a new single-track road is 3.7m, determined by emergency vehicle access requirements in Building Regulations Approved Document B, Table 15.2[1] On straight sections of the Bespoke Access Road, the requirement for HGVs to pass each other determines carriageway width, with a provision of 6m required. AILs will not be required to pass other vehicles on the Bespoke Access Road as they will be under escort, and the road will be closed to other traffic when AILs proceed. Therefore, the most onerous design constraint on

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		straight sections of the road is the need for HGVs to pass each other, and not the passage of AILs. On curved sections of the Bespoke Access Road, the requirement for AILs determines the width of the carriageway. Additional width, over and above the 6m width required for conventional HGVs on straight sections of the carriageway, is required to accommodate the swept path of AILs. Swept path analysis (vehicle tracking) on the preliminary design alignment, shown on the **Bespoke Access Road Construction Method Statement (APP-075)** Key Plan, indicates a carriageway width of up to 8m will be required at bends in the carriageway for this purpose. The ultimate width on all bends in the Bespoke Access Road carriageway depends on the horizontal curvature of the road, and will be determined by swept path analysis at the detailed design stage. The requirement to retain the Bespoke Access Road during the life of the Proposed Development is due to several factors including: 1. Potential for equipment failure. While the exact frequency of such occurrences is variable, given the 40-year operational lifespan of the Proposed Development, it is likely that at least one HV transformer will require replacement. In the case of a transformer, this would require a girder frame vehicle to access the Site. Alternatives for (and to) the Bespoke Access Road are reported in the Environmental Statement in section 3.5 of **Chapter 3 – Alternatives and Design Evolution of the Environmental Statement Volume 1 (APP-054)**, which concludes that any alternative highway route would require significant mitigation which would need to remain for the life of the project, in order to guarantee that critical infrastructure can be serviced. 2. Potential for general equipment replacement. 3. The Solar Array Area will be decommissioned, with equipment and materials removed from the Site by the Bespoke Access Road. Whilst this project phase is anticipated to be less intensive from a traffic generation perspective than construction, it still has potential lead to intensive periods of traffic generation that may lead to significant effects on the local road

		network if the Bespoke Access Road were not to remain in place. During operation phase maintenance and decommissioning, the Bespoke Access Road would be required to maintain its full width, or as an absolute minimum to include frequent passing places on straight sections to allow vehicles to pass. There may be very limited scope to narrow carriageway on bends to circa 7.2m (a 0.8m reduction) as this in generally wide enough to accommodate passing HGVs for most horizontal curvatures. However, this minor reduction in carriageway width on bends is very unlikely to make a material difference to any correlative impact associated with retaining in its full form (and noting the works which would be involved to effect such reduction). If the Bespoke Access Road was reduced in width, this would be temporary because (as set out above) the full width will be required for the maintenance during operation and decommissioning. Therefore, any reductions in width would have to be reinstated back to the full width for certain operations, before being reduced again. Whenever these temporary changes would be made to the Bespoke Access Road, the related construction activity would result in potential adverse impacts including, but not necessarily limited to, generation of construction and decommissioning traffic, soil disturbance, temporary visual impact resulting from site fencing, welfare units and plant storage, temporary closure or diversion of public rights of way, construction dust and noise, production of waste material, and the requirement for production of additional construction material for reinstatement. These potential impacts should be balanced against any potential visual impact benefits from relatively marginal and temporary reductions in track width. Reducing the width of the carriageway to 3.7m would not notably reduce the level of residual effect in relation to any landscape or visual receptors affected by the introduction of the Bespoke Access Road. However, the temporary introduction of construction activity into the rural landscape, to facilitate removal of/or subsequent widening to the full carriageway width, would intermittently raise the level of visual effects to potentially significant levels for the duration of this activity.

		In respect of the mitigation measures to be deployed in relation to the Bespoke Access Road include: • The Bespoke Access Road will, where possible, be routed towards the edge of field boundaries to avoid excessive fragmentation, and where existing hedgerows/vegetation can provide visual assimilation. • Landscaping will be designed, where possible, to protect the open nature of the area. This includes sensitive siting of soil storage stockpiles which will also be located to help screen views and mitigate adverse visual effects. • In addition, existing field access points will be utilised where possible for access and routing to minimise. vegetation loss and fragmentation. • The Bespoke Access Road will utilise a sub base construction with a compacted gravel surface finish. This surfacing will have a visual association, in respect of the materials used, with other access tracks in the locality. With regard to mitigation planting more generally within this relatively open landscape, it is considered that it would not be appropriate to introduce extensive linear belts of vegetation which would be uncharacteristic and may emphasis the linear nature of the route. An update to the Outline Design Principles at Appendix 1 of the Design and Access Approach Document – and potentially other documents and plans - will be made and submitted into examination for Deadline 5 to ensure these proposed mitigations to address the potential landscape effects of the BAR are more expressly drawn out. Such design principles are secured via Requirement 5 of the **Draft DCO (Document Ref: 3.1)**. Potential impacts of the repeated construction activity required to reduce and reinstate the road would be greater than any reduction in landscape effects.
2	Provide further justification for the Applicant's conclusion on the residual significant effect in respect of residential receptor group R1, R2, R3(3a) and R20 and why the	Visual effects in relation to Howell Fen Farmhouse have been considered as part of effects on Residential Receptor Group R2 which also includes Asgarby Barns and Westmorelands Farm because of the geographical proximity of the respective properties. The view from Howell Fen Farmhouse shown in Figure 1a,b,c of **Appendix 6.5 – Residential Visual amenity Assessment (APP-087)**) was selected because it provides an illustration of the

	applicant has determined these to be not significant, considering the substantial change in outlook for those properties.	most open views towards the Solar Array Area from this receptor group. Therefore, it is not considered to be representative of views from this receptor group as a whole. The findings of **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)**, **Appendix 6.4 Visual Assessment (APP-086)** and **Appendix 6.5 – Residential Visual amenity Assessment (APP-087)** relate to the visual effects and amenity of this group as a whole rather than specifically in relation to Howell Fen Farmhouse. The baseline view illustrated in Figure 1a provides a partial view, framed by views of outbuildings, mature trees within the garden and an open timber fence to the property boundary which facilitates longer distance views of the largely agricultural landscape beyond. Immediately beyond the property boundary there is a relatively flat and open grassed field with layers of mature vegetation cover perceived in longer distance views. The skyline is largely defined by this vegetation cover and views to the southwest are screened by dense vegetation cover. A summary of the visual change to this baseline and the resulting effects which will arise through introduction of the Proposed Development is provided as context below. At the construction phase, Major Adverse (Significant) effects will be experienced because of the introduction of construction activity in relatively open views from the western elevation of Howell Fen Farmhouse. Other aspects of this property and the other 2 properties in the group (Asgarby Barns and Westmorelands Farm) will not be so notably affected because of dense vegetation cover to the west of Asgarby Barns and Westmorelands Farm. At the operational phase (year 0), Moderate Adverse (Significant) effects will be experienced because of the introduction of the solar arrays into the relatively open views from the western elevation of Howell Fen Farmhouse will be prominent in some views from the western aspects of the property and garden (illustrated in Figure 1a,b,c of **Appendix 6.5 – Residential Visual amenity Assessment (APP-087)**). Views from other aspects of this property and the other 2 properties in the group will not be so notably affected. At the operational phase (year 15), effects will reduce to Minor Adverse (Not Significant) on the basis of the establishment of native shrub belt with trees to the edge of the Solar PV Exclusion Zone and to the west and northeast of the property group will progressively screen views of energy infrastructure. It is acknowledged that some perceptions of openness will be partially

		diminished from some areas of the property group. However, views from the property group as a whole will not be characterised by views of energy infrastructure, rather they will be characterised by a mix of existing built development, existing and proposed vegetation cover. The Solar PV Exclusion Zone in itself will provide a considerable offset from the property boundary of approximately 60 to 100m at which point the mitigation planting will be introduced rather than directly at the property boundary. Strictly in relation to the view from Howell Fen Farmhouse illustrated in Figure 1a,b,c, it is acknowledged that the residual effects would remain Moderate (adverse) significant because the characteristics of the view would be affected by the presence of mitigation planting which would effectively screen views of infrastructure but partially diminish perceptions of openness. However, in relation to visual effects experienced at this property group as a whole the Applicant maintains the position that residual effects would not be significant on the basis that views from most areas will be screened or partially screened by intervening buildings and mature vegetation cover. Where open views are available a considerable offset will be provided between the property and the proposed mitigation planting to reduce the extent to which these views are contained by this planting.
3	Provide justification as to the conclusions reached regarding the significance of the landscape and visual effects on Gashes Barn and why the applicant believes that the effects of the proposed development, including the proposed mitigation measures, will not be overbearing or undermine its use as a residential property.	A summary of the visual change and the resulting effects which will arise for residents at Gashes Barn through introduction of the Proposed Development is provided as context below. During the construction phase, Major Adverse (Significant) effects will be experienced as a result of the introduction of construction activity into the open, agricultural landscape which will be available from all aspects of the property. At the operational phase (year 0), Major Adverse (Significant) effects will be experienced as a result of the introduction of the solar arrays which will be visible in close to medium distance views from all aspects of the property resulting in fundamental change to the visual experience of residents. At this stage, mitigation planting will be relatively small in stature and will not notably screen views or mitigate effects. At the operational phase (year 15), effects are predicted to reduce to Moderate Adverse (Significant) on the basis that views of the solar arrays will be largely screened by the

		establishment of planting belts to the eastern, western and southern boundaries and the introduction of a native hedgerow to the northern elevation and access track. At the decommissioning phase, Moderate Adverse (Significant) effects are anticipated. This is because established planting will largely screen views into the Site, however, decommissioning activity will still be apparent through gaps and above planting. The understanding of effects and proposed mitigation planting in relation to Gashes Barn is further illustrated by the submission of **Figure R4 Photomontages (AS-031)** which provides baseline views and photomontages at year 0 and year 15. The approach to mitigation at Gashes Barn has been to introduce belts of native shrubs with trees to the western, southern and eastern boundaries of the property which is situated within a substantial area of land providing considerable offsets from solar arrays. This planting will progressively and comprehensively screen views of the solar arrays from these aspects of the property. It should be further noted in relation to the eastern and western elevations of the property that there are a limited number of windows and opportunities for residents to experience views from these aspects of the property. Views to the east are further restricted by the presence of agricultural outbuildings/stables and to the south by a combination of minor landform variation and some vegetation cover. To the principal, northern elevation the requirement to maintain some perceptions of openness has been jointly informed by landscape and heritage considerations. This has resulted in the proposal as illustrated in **Figure R4 Photomontages (AS-031)** which includes a mixed species hedge immediately to the north of the Gashes Barn land holding which will be managed to a maximum height of 3.5m. The intention of this hedgerow is to screen views of solar panels whilst allowing longer distance views of the wider landscape partially maintaining a characteristic sense of openness. The Operation (Year 0) photomontage illustrates that at completion solar arrays will feature prominently in northerly views from Gashes Barn although these views will be partially backdropped by the presence of mature vegetation cover which defines the skyline in the view. However, the Operation (Year 15) photomontage illustrates that views of solar arrays will be largely screened by the established hedgerow in ground level views. In these views the hedgerow

		is sufficiently offset from the property (approximately 140m at the closest point) to not appear overly dominant or oppressive, although it is recognised that it will reduce perceptions of openness and partially affect longer distance views. The introduced planting will also have a visual association with the mature vegetation cover which defines the skyline. A 15m offset defined by a native hedgerow from Black Drove, which provides access to the property will also be introduced to provide continuous visual separation between the property and the point where the access road joins the public highway Overall, the intention is to introduce mitigation planting to the perimeter and boundaries of existing land parcels rather than more centrally in existing field units to avoid fragmentation and contribute to a rational landscape pattern.
4	Clarify how proposed additional planting as a mitigation measure will affect existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and how the sense of openness and space that users of the ProW network currently experience, will be affected, particularly for those PRoW that will be severed by the proposed Bespoke Access Road or are alongside or in close proximity to the Solar Array.	There is a single Public Rights of Way (PRoW) (Ewer/12/1) within the Solar Array Area. The footpath is approximately 300m long and runs west southwest to east northeast, south and west of the River Slea, approximately 2km west of South Kyme. This footpath is currently inaccessible due to a lack of a crossing of the dyke at the eastern end of the footpath, as described in the **Outline Public Rights of Way Management Plan (**REP2-039**)**. It is, therefore, not used. The proposal is to link this PRoW with the wider network through the introduction of a permissive path (illustrated in **Figure 1.4 Indicative Site Layout Plan (REP2-028).** This permissive path will be routed from Ewerby Lane in the west along the Hodge Dike and Car Dyke to connect with the PRoW network associated with the River Slea immediately to the north of the Solar Array Area. There are currently no agreed measures to enhance this route, although hedgerow planting is being considered to provide screening of the energy infrastructure. The exact form of this will be discussed and agreed during detailed design. Generally, planting proposals within the Solar Array Area will affect how receptors experience the landscape whilst using these paths. Landscape proposals to gap up and replant parts of the existing perimeter hedgerow will provide further visual enclosure for the proposed path network within the Solar Array Area. Further measures to the northeast of the Solar Array Area will include the introduction of a new pedestrian footbridge to facilitate the connection between the existing PRoW network and the new permissive path. This will require some small-scale vegetation removal and replanting that, overall, will introduce localised change for users of the PRoW network.

		Beyond the immediate context of the Solar Array Area, PRoW users will not be directly affected by vegetation removal or planting. However, measures to gap up the perimeter hedgerow and provide further landscape enhancement measures within the Solar Array Area including hedgerows and the introduction of new planting belts, such as that to the west of the Onsite Substation and BESS, will be perceived by some PRoW users, particularly users of Ewer/1103/1 to the west and the PRoW network near the River Slea to the northeast. No planting is proposed in relation to the PRoW network associated with the Bespoke Access Road. Planting will be restricted to the reinstatement of hedgerows lost during the construction of the road following decommissioning.
5	Incorporate and evaluate the effects of the additional schemes identified by LCC and update the Cumulative Environmental Assessment accordingly.	A response to this action will be provided at Deadline 5. The Applicant has noted the further NSIP schemes that have come forward and is currently reviewing these to determine if any further work is required.
6	Clarify the applicant's overall approach to landscape and visual effects particularly how the applicant has taken into consideration the effects of the proposed mitigation on landscape and visual receptors, particularly how the applicant has considered changes brought by the proposed mitigation.	The Applicant is currently updating **ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** in response to the ExA's comments in ISH2 and this Action Point, as well as in consideration of the matters raised by LCC, NKDC and BBC in their Local Impact Reports and subsequent submissions in relation to landscape and visual effects. The Applicant met with BBC on 31 October 2025, and LCC and NKDC on 20 November 2025 to discuss these matters, and will submit an updated **ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** at Deadline 5.
7	Clarify the applicant's assessment of the effects of the proposed development on heritage assets, including any planting proposed as mitigation, and how the effects have been considered, particularly in relation to Church of St. Andrew,	No specific planting measures have been identified in relation to the Church of St. Andrew, Asgarby. The Church is set within a broader parcel of land with a 'parkland' character containing individual mature trees of substantial stature and further separated from the Bespoke Access Corridor by a mature hedgerow which is located immediately to the east of the DCO Order Limits and not within the Applicant's control. However, the assumptions adopted in relation to the findings presented in **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual (APP-057)** are that this vegetation will be present in the medium to long-term. This hedgerow provides considerable visual separation from

	Asgarby and Church of St. Mary and All Saints.	the Church and associated setting and combined with the relatively flat nature of the landscape and road construction, which will largely be at grade, will reduce the potential for intervisibility. It is not considered appropriate to introduce linear belts of planting or further hedgerows to screen views because the measures would emphasise the linear nature of the Bespoke Access Road and add to landscape character change. Views from the east and Asgarby heritage assets are limited by the existing mature hedgerow. Views from the west of the Bespoke Access Road and toward the church of St. Andrew are open but it is intended that the Bespoke Access Road would be a construction of aggregate that would blend in within the grassed field and not be noticeable over time. The Bespoke Access Road would be without street furniture, road markings and other characteristics of a highway (as per the Outline Design Principles which are secured by requirement) and will therefore appear similar to a driveway or farm track in appearance and character . Because the Bespoke Access Road would be cut into the existing ground level and because of the construction materials it would weather and blend in and not appear intrusive but less visible over time. With regards to the Church of St Mary's and All Saints, this asset is set back from the enclosed and immediate setting of the Kyme medieval settlement, and it does not have the height benefited from a tower it sits low and cannot be viewed from the Proposed Development due to intervening distance and the mature hedgerow of the Midfodder Dike. Views from the church at Kyme towards the Proposed Development are limited and glimpsed due to the distance, 1.25km, and the Midfodder Dike which would provide mitigation including infilling of existing hedgerows abounding the Proposed Development presented in **Chapter 6, Landscape and Visual (APP-058)**.
8	Undertake further desktop work to assess the effects of the proposed development on setting of Kyme Tower, considering the possibility that the proposed site will be visible from the top of the tower.	A response to this action will be provided at Deadline 5. The Applicant is working to address this matter in relation to Kyme Tower (Grade I Listed Building (NHLE 1204786 / MLI60732)), however there was not sufficient time between the action request and Deadline 4 to prepare a comprehensive response.

9	Re-assess Table 8.11 Cultural Heritage - Summary Assessment Matrix in light of the discussions at ISH2 and how the SoS should give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving all heritage assets from any harm or loss of significance, including its setting.	A response to this action will be provided at Deadline 5. The Applicant is working to address this matter, however there was not sufficient time between the action request and Deadline 4 to prepare a comprehensive response.
10	Undertake a group value assessment of farmsteads in response to North Kesteven District Council's (NKDC) request.	A response to this action will be provided at Deadline 5. The Applicant is working to address this matter, however there was not sufficient time between the action request and Deadline 4 to prepare a comprehensive response.
11	Review Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 7 Ecology to ensure effects are correctly listed and cross referenced, providing clarifications on any inconsistencies. The applicant should submit the revised chapter in both tracked and clean versions, including, but not limited to, Tables 7.9 and 7.10 and 7.11 of the ES.	The Applicant has reviewed the ES **Chapter 7 (REP2-013)** and will provide an updated tracked changes and clean version at Deadline 5, which will further incorporate the additional clarifications anticipated to result from on-going engagement with LCC and NKDC to seek to resolve the residual queries they have on the topic.
12	Applicant to review and clarify assessment of significance or non-significance of effects on ecological receptors and review its assessment of beneficial and non-beneficial effects ensure that any beneficial effects which may be included as a result of the decommissioning of the proposed development are also	As above, a response to this action will be provided at Deadline 5 through the update to ES Chapter 7.

	considered as potentially non-beneficial effect during the construction and or operational phases.	
13	In light of the requests made by Boston Borough Council (BBC) in their Local Impact Report and further information provided, consider how BNG monitoring may be secured.	The Applicant notes that there may be an error in the ExA's record of actions as the securing of BNG monitoring was raised by NKDC in both their Local Impact Report and in ISH2, and not by BBC. The Applicant has, following ISH2, reached out to NKDC to discuss this matter and will continue to engage constructively with NKDC in relation to this matter.
14	Provide further explanation on how the Applicant has dealt with scarce arable flora and potential impacts on water vole within the assessment.	**Scarce arable flora** NKDC have queried whether the surveys would have been timed appropriately to identify the presence of arable flora. During the **Botanical Survey Report Solar Array Area (APP-100)** the surveyors noted that the fields themselves were subject to high levels of nutrient input, therefore they were unlikely to support the scarce arable flora, and no scarce arable flora was found during the surveys. The Applicant understands NKDC ecologist's concerns to be that the existing field margins have reverted to more standard grassland under the current farming regime rather than arable field margins which are actively managed, such that previous assessment/surveys may not be sufficient. The Applicant will discuss this with NKDC and provide an update at Deadline 5. **Water vole** The Site includes 12 water bodies with evidence of water voles, at least six of which bisect the Order Limits (no evidence of water voles was found on the Bespoke Access Corridor or within the Solar Array Area). NKDC have asked the Applicant to consider the worst case scenario for water voles so that appropriate mitigation can be demonstrated. Given the results of the surveys undertaken **(APP-098 and APP-108 to APP-111),** the likely worst-case scenario is that water voles, a mobile species with large populations increases and crashes over seasons and years, are present in the crossings at the time of the proposed works. Where burrows are identified during pre-commencement surveys, the location of the cable route will take into consideration the location of these burrows where practicable. If it is not possible to avoid the burrow the Applicant would undertake temporary displacement of water voles under a licence by: • Cutting back vegetation around the crossing between mid-February and mid-April;

		• Removing the minimum amount of vegetation to allow for safe working; • Allowing water voles time to move out of burrows (minimum five days); and • Carrying out checks of each burrow, followed by destruction of the burrow. The works will take place after destructive clearance and monitoring works will be required along the ditch to make sure the water vole population is not adversely affected.
15	Provide update or confirm latest position on the Natural England Statement of Common Ground (SoCG).	The Applicant has provided an updated draft SoCG with NE, that reflects the Applicant's understanding of the positions of each party, at this Deadline to reflect the output of the latest engagement between the parties
16	Update the SoCG with BBC with regards to planting enhancements proposed within the Bicker Fen substation.	The Applicant has submitted at Deadline 4 an updated draft SoCG with BBC which includes information on the mitigation of landscape and visual effects of the Bicker Fen Substation extension.