



One Earth Solar Farm

Volume 6.0 Environmental Statement [EN010159]

Volume 3: Technical Appendices Supporting ES Volume 2

Appendix 11.1: Summary of Relevant Legislation, Policy and Technical Guidance

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Contents

A.11 Landscape and Visual Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance **2**

A.11.1 Review of Policy, Legislation and Relevant Guidance _____ **2**

A.11 Landscape and Visual Legislation, Planning Policy and Guidance

A.11.1 Review of Policy, Legislation and Relevant Guidance

- A.11.1.1. Legislation, planning policy and guidance relating to landscape and visual, and pertinent to our Project comprises:

Legislation

Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (2024)

- A.11.1.2. This policy acts as key guidance for a range of stakeholders to understand government policy on NSIPs, how planning applications relating to energy will be assessed, and the way in which any impacts and mitigation measures will be considered. Section 5.10 of this policy statement focusses on Landscape and Visual.
- A.11.1.3. Paragraph 4.7.1 states that *“The visual appearance of a building, structure, or piece of infrastructure, and how it relates to the landscape it sits within, is sometimes considered to be the most important factor in good design. But high quality and inclusive design goes far beyond aesthetic considerations. The functionality of an object – be it a building or other type of infrastructure – including fitness for purpose and sustainability, is equally important.”*
- A.11.1.4. Paragraph 5.10.1 states that *“The landscape and visual effects of energy projects will vary on a case-by-case basis according to the type of development, its location and the landscape setting of the proposed development. In this context, references to landscape should be taken as covering seascape and townscape where appropriate.”*
- A.11.1.5. Paragraph 5.10.6 states that *“Projects need to be designed carefully, taking account of the potential impact on the landscape. Having regard to siting, operational and other relevant constraints the aim should be to minimise harm to the landscape, providing reasonable mitigation where possible and appropriate.”*

National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (2024)

- A.11.1.6. This policy acts as key guidance for a range of stakeholders to understand government policy on NSIPs, how planning applications relating to energy infrastructure will be assessed, and the way in which any impacts and mitigation measures will be considered. Specific extracts relating to this Proposed Development are as follows:
- A.11.1.7. Paragraphs 2.10.96 to 2.10.98 state that *“Landscape and visual impacts should be considered carefully pre-application. Potential impacts on the*

statutory purposes of nationally designated landscapes should form a part of the pre- application process.

Applicants should carry out a landscape and visual assessment and report it in the ES. Visualisations may be required to demonstrate the effects of a proposed solar farm on the setting of heritage assets and any nearby residential areas or viewpoints.

Applicants should follow the criteria for good design set out in Section 4.7 of EN-1 when developing projects and will be expected to direct considerable effort towards minimising the landscape and visual impact of solar PV arrays especially within nationally designated landscapes.

Whilst there is an acknowledged need to ensure solar PV installations are adequately secured, required security measures such as fencing should consider the need to minimise the impact on the landscape and visual impact.”

National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN- 5) (2023)

- A.11.1.8. This policy acts as key guidance for a range of stakeholders to understand government policy on NSIPs, how planning applications relating to electricity networks infrastructure will be assessed, and the way in which any impacts and mitigation measures will be considered.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- A.11.1.9. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. Paragraph 5 of the NPPF explains that the Framework does not contain specific policies for nationally significant infrastructure projects. It states that:

“The Framework does not contain specific policies for nationally significant infrastructure projects. These are determined in accordance with the decision-making framework in the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and relevant national policy statements for major infrastructure, as well as any other matters that are relevant (which may include the National Planning Policy Framework). National policy statements form part of the overall framework of national planning policy, and may be a material consideration in preparing plans and making decisions on planning applications.”

- A.11.1.10. NPPF paragraph 8(c) states the environmental objective of sustainable development is:

“to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

- A.11.1.11. NPPF paragraph 104 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.”

A.11.1.12. NPPF paragraph 117 states that developments should:

“give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas...”

A.11.1.13. NPPF paragraph 125 states planning policies should:

“a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside...”

A.11.1.14. NPPF paragraph 135 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)...”*

A.11.1.15. NPPF paragraph 137 states:

“Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.”

A.11.1.16. NPPF paragraph 139 states:

“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

- a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*

- b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”*

A.11.1.17. NPPF paragraph 187 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- c) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*

A.11.1.18. Paragraph 188 states:

“Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.”

A.11.1.19. Paragraph 198 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and*
- c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.”*

Local Planning Policy

Newark and Sherwood District Council (2023), Local Development Framework, Allocations and Development Management, Development Plan Document (AADMDPD)

A.11.1.20. This amended local Development Plan Document (DPD) has been compiled to ensure that the wider development framework within Newark and Sherwood District Council sufficiently allocates land for development to meet the needs

of the area, up until 2033. The document includes *“new and amended Housing and Affordable Housing Policies which replace those included in the Amended Core Strategy and new Gypsy Roma Traveller policies and allocations. The document also sets out amendments to urban boundaries and village envelopes, retail boundaries as well as sites requiring continued protection from development (open space and green infrastructure designations). It also includes a suite of Development Management policies to provide greater direction, help deliver specific allocations and assist in the day-to-day assessment of planning applications.”*

- A.11.1.21. This DPD is currently under examination via the Secretary of State with an independent planning inspector.
- A.11.1.22. Specific policies within the AADMDPD relevant to the Proposed Development include Policy DM8 *“Development in the Open Countryside”* which states that *“In accordance with the requirements of Spatial Policy 3 of the Amended Core Strategy, development away from villages or settlements, in the open countryside, will be strictly controlled and limited to the following types of development;*
- 1. Agricultural and forestry development requiring planning permission;*
 - 2. New and replacement rural workers dwellings, the extension of existing rural workers dwellings, and the removal of occupancy conditions attached to existing dwellings;*
 - 3. New and replacement dwellings;*
 - 4. Replacement of non-residential buildings;*
 - 5. Conversion of existing buildings;*
 - 6. Rural diversification;*
 - 7. Equestrian uses;*
 - 8. Employment uses;*
 - 9. Community and leisure facilities;*
 - 10. Roadside services; and*
 - 11. Visitor based tourism development and tourist accommodation.”*

Newark and Sherwood District Council (2019), Amended Core Strategy Development Plan – specifically Core Policy 12 and 13.

- A.11.1.23. The Amended Core Strategy for Newark and Sherwood District is part of the Local Development Framework for the area. This strategy outlines the overarching issues and objectives to address over a 20-year period, contextualising this into wider vision, series of objectives and core policies toward delivery.
- A.11.1.24. Core Policy 12 *“Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure”* is relevant to this Proposed Development and states that *“The District Council will seek to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and geological diversity of the District by working with partners to implement the aims and proposals of the Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan, the Green Infrastructure*

Strategy and the Nature Conservation Strategy. The District Council will therefore:

- > Expect proposals to take into account the need for continued protection of the District's ecological, biological and geological assets. With particular regard to sites of international, national and local significance, Ancient Woodlands and species and habitats of principal importance identified in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and in the Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan;
- > Seek to secure development that maximises the opportunities to conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and geological diversity and to increase provision of, and access to, green infrastructure within the District;
- > Promote the appropriate management of features of major importance for wild flora and fauna;
- > Provide for Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space to reduce visitor pressure on the District's ecological, biological and geological assets, particularly in the Newark area and for 5kms around the Birklands and Bilhaugh Special Area of Conservation;
- > Support the development of a Green Infrastructure Network, as illustrated in the Green Infrastructure Diagram, linking together Key Strategic Routes throughout the District and providing for, in appropriate locations, visitor infrastructure that improves accessibility. The District Council will, in particular, promote improved green infrastructure linkages between:
 - > Newark and Southwell; and
 - > Southwell and the north-west of the district
- > Development proposals crossing or adjacent to the network should make provision for its implementation and/or enhancement;
- > Positively view proposals that seek to enhance the District's Green Infrastructure resource in support of tourism development. Proposals in the Bilsthorpe, Edwinstowe and Ollerton & Boughton areas, in connection with the Sherwood Forest Regional Park, will be supported. In Newark, new Green Infrastructure schemes that maximise the potential of the Trent Riverside area will be supported;
- > Support the implementation of area-based Strategic Green Infrastructure interventions; and
- > Work with partners to develop a strategic approach to managing Air Quality in the Sherwood Area, including through the development of a Supplementary Planning Document."

A.11.1.25. Core Policy 13 "*Landscape Character*" is relevant to the Proposed Development and states that "*Based on the comprehensive assessment of the District's landscape character, provided by the Landscape Character*

Assessment Supplementary Planning Document, the District Council will work with partners and developers to secure:

- > New development which positively addresses the implications of relevant landscape Policy Zone(s) that is consistent with the landscape conservation and enhancement aims for the area(s) ensuring that landscapes, including valued landscapes, have been protected and enhanced.”
- > Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (2023)

A.11.1.26. The Local Plan for the central Lincolnshire area sets out the approach to planning policy and overarching development allocations to drive growth in the area over a 20-year period. The Local Plan is contextualised into a wider vision, series of objectives and core policies toward delivery.

A.11.1.27. Specific policies detailed in the Local Plan and are relevant to the Proposed Development, as below.

A.11.1.28. Policy S66 “*Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows*” states that:

Development proposals should be prepared based on the overriding principle that:

- *the existing tree and woodland cover is maintained, improved, and expanded; and*
- *opportunities for expanding woodland are actively considered and implemented where practical and appropriate to do so.*

Existing Trees and Woodland

Planning permission will only be granted if the proposal provides evidence that it has been subject to adequate consideration of the impact of the development on any existing trees and woodland found on-site (and off-site, if there are any trees near the site, with ‘near’ defined as the distance comprising 12 times the stem diameter of the off-site tree). If any trees exist on or near the development site, ‘adequate consideration’ is likely to mean the completion of a British Standard 5837 Tree Survey and, if applicable, an Arboricultural Method Statement.

Where the proposal will result in the loss or deterioration of:

- a) *ancient woodland; and/or*
- b) *the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland*

permission will be refused, unless and on an exceptional basis, the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

Where the proposal will result in the loss or deterioration of a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order or a tree within a Conservation Area, then permission will be refused unless:

- c) *there is no net loss of amenity value which arises as a result of the development; or*

- d) *the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.*

Where the proposal will result in the loss of any other tree or woodland not covered by the above, then the Council will expect the proposal to retain those trees that make a significant contribution to the landscape or biodiversity value of the area, provided this can be done without compromising the achievement of good design for the site.

Mitigating for loss of Trees and Woodland

Where it is appropriate for higher value tree(s) (category A or B trees (BS5837)) and/or woodland to be lost as part of a development proposal, then appropriate mitigation, via compensatory tree planting, will be required. Such tree planting should be on-site wherever possible and should:

- e) *take all opportunities to meet the six Tree Planting Principles (see supporting text); and*
- f) *unless demonstrably impractical or inappropriate, provide the following specific quantity of compensatory trees:*

Trunk diameter(mm) at 1.5m above ground of tree lost to development	Number of replacement trees required, per tree lost*
75-200	1
210-400	4
410-600	6
610-800	9
810-1000	10
1000+	11

**replacement based on selected standards 10/12cm girth at 1m.*

New Trees and Woodland

Where appropriate and practical, opportunities for new tree planting should be explored as part of all development proposals (in addition to, if applicable, any necessary compensatory tree provision). Where new trees are proposed, they should be done so on the basis of the five Tree Planting Principles. Proposals which fail to provide practical opportunities for new tree planting will be refused.

Planting schemes should include provision to replace any plant failures within five years after the date of planting. Planting of trees must be considered in the context of wider plans for nature recovery which seek to increase biodiversity and green infrastructure generally, not simply planting of trees, and protecting/enhancing soils, particularly peat soils. Tree planting should only be carried out in appropriate locations that will not impact on existing ecology or opportunities to create alternative habitats that could deliver better enhancements for people and wildlife, including carbon storage. Where woodland habitat creation is appropriate, consideration should be given to the economic and ecological benefits that can be achieved through natural regeneration. Any tree planting should use native and local provenance tree species suitable for the location.

Management and Maintenance

In instances where new trees and/or woodlands are proposed, it may be necessary for the council to require appropriate developer contributions to be provided, to ensure provision is made for appropriate management and maintenance of the new trees and/or woodland.

Hedgerows

Proposals for new development will be expected to retain existing hedgerows where appropriate and integrate them fully into the design having regard to their management requirements.

Proposals for new development will not be supported that would result in the loss of hedges of high landscape, heritage, amenity or biodiversity value unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh the loss and this loss can be clearly demonstrated to be unavoidable.

Development requiring the loss of a hedgerow protected under The Hedgerow Regulations will only be supported where it would allow for a substantially improved overall approach to the design and landscaping of the development that would outweigh the loss of the hedgerow. Where any hedges are lost, suitable replacement planting or restoration of existing hedges will be required within the site or the locality, including appropriate provision for maintenance and management.”

Bassetlaw District Council (2010) Local Development Framework, Publication Core Strategy and Development Management Policies

- A.11.1.29. The Core Strategy for the Bassetlaw District sets out the overarching vision for the area up until 2026, including the policy approach to deliver this.
- A.11.1.30. Policy DM4 “Design and Character” is relevant to the Proposed Development and states that:

“A. Major Development Principles

All major development proposals, notably for sites allocated through the Site Allocations DPD, will need to demonstrate that they:

- *make clear functional and physical links with the existing settlement and surrounding area and have not been designed as 'standalone' additions. Where physical links cannot be made (e.g., for reasons of third-party land ownership), provision must be made such that they can be provided in future should the opportunity arise;*
- *complement and enhance the character of the built, historic, and natural environment;*
- *are of a scale appropriate to the existing settlement and surrounding area;*
- *provide a qualitative improvement to the existing range of houses, services, facilities, open space, and economic development opportunities.*

Where neighbouring or functionally linked sites will come forward together within the timeframe of this DPD, the Council will expect applicants to work together with the Council to ensure any proposals are, or can be, properly integrated and will provide complementary development.

Proposals for major residential or mixed-use development will be expected to demonstrate that they score well (allowing for site constraints where applicable) against the design principles established in the Building for Life guidance and any subsequent or complementary best practice guidance on design and placemaking by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) or comparable organization.

B. General Design Principles

Individual development proposals, including single buildings, changes of use, or extensions to existing buildings, will only be accepted where they are of a high-quality design that addresses the relevant areas below:

Local character and distinctiveness: New development, particularly backland and infill development, should respect its wider surroundings, in relation to historic development patterns or building/plot sizes and forms; density; and landscape character.

Architectural quality: New development should respect its context, without resorting to pastiche architecture, in terms of density, height, scale, mass, materials, and detailing. Extensions will be expected to be subservient to the original structure in relation to height, scale, and mass. Developments in prominent positions at 'gateways' to settlements or town centers will be of particularly high-quality design that will serve to reinforce a positive perception about the quality of place.

Public realm: New development should support stimulating and safe streets and public spaces, with active frontages at ground level to public spaces; have appropriate landscaping and boundary treatments (retaining historic walls and hedgerows); integrate crime prevention measures where this will not compromise the other principles of good design; and provide usable and functional open space.

Accessibility: New development should ensure that all people, including those with disabilities, can easily and comfortably move through and into it; prioritize safe, easy and direct pedestrian movement and the creation of an network of attractive, well-connected public spaces; establish both visual and functional relationships between the different parts of a development and between the development and its wider setting.

Amenity: New development should ensure that it does not have a detrimental effect on the residential amenity of nearby residents; provide a decent standard of private amenity space; allow adequate space for waste and recycling storage and collection; and is not to the detriment of highway safety.

Carbon reduction: New development will need to demonstrate that careful consideration has been given to minimizing CO2 emissions and measures that will allow all new buildings in Bassetlaw to adapt to climate change. Such measures include, but are not limited to: use of suitable construction materials; site layout and building orientation that makes best use of passive heating and cooling, natural light, and natural ventilation; minimizing water consumption and maximizing water recycling; achieving the highest feasible level of energy efficiency; and maximizing opportunities to integrate renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure.

Account will also be taken of any relevant Village Design Statement, Conservation Area Appraisal or character appraisal approved or adopted by the District Council and Bassetlaw's Landscape Character Assessment. Where there is obvious tension between the requirements listed above, due to the sensitivity of the location of certain sites, the Council will work with applicants and local residents to achieve a balanced solution. Some factors are likely to outweigh others in reaching a decision in such cases. Further detail will be set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document on Design."

Draft Bassetlaw Local Plan (2023) 2020-2038: Main Modifications Version, August 2023

A.11.1.31. This Local Plan sets out Bassetlaw District's planning and policy framework, development strategy and site allocations to inform effective delivery of the overall vision up until 2038.

A.11.1.32. Policies set out in the Local Plan are relevant to the Proposed Development.

A.11.1.33. Policy ST37 "Landscape Character" states that:

"Proposals that contribute to the nature and quality of Bassetlaw's landscapes will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

a) it protects and where possible enhances the distinctive qualities of the relevant landscape character policy zone, as identified in the Bassetlaw Landscape Character Assessment 2009 by conserving, restoring, reinforcing or creating relevant landscape forms and features; and

b) in the case of the Local Plan site allocations, also promotes the development opportunities identified within the Site Allocations: Landscape Study 2019 and the Landscape Assessment Addendums 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Proposals in an edge of settlement location will be expected to create a positive interface between the urban and rural environments. This should be demonstrated through compliance with Part 1 of this Policy, and by giving appropriate consideration to layout, density, scale, massing and form of development in accordance with Policy ST35."

A.11.1.34. Policy 41 "Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows" states that:

“The Council will protect existing trees, woodland and hedgerows and secure additional planting that increases canopy cover in the interests of biodiversity, amenity and climate change adaptation by:

- a) retaining, protecting and improving woodland and trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), trees within conservation areas, and ‘important’ hedgerows as defined by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997;*
- b) making Tree Preservation Orders;*
- c) giving consideration to trees and hedgerows both on individual merit as well as their contribution to amenity and interaction as part of a group within the broader landscape setting;*
- d) resisting the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists;*
- e) seeking from major development, provision for new trees or an equivalent financial contribution to help mitigate the impacts of climate change in accordance with Policy ST50.”*

A.11.1.35. Policy 48 “Protecting Amenity” states that:

“Proposals for development should be designed and constructed to avoid and minimise impacts on the amenity of existing and future users, individually and cumulatively, within the development and close to it. As such, proposals will be expected to:

- a) not have a significant adverse effect on the living conditions of existing and new residents and future occupiers of the proposed development through loss of privacy, excessive overshadowing or overbearing impact; and*
- b) not generate a level of activity, noise, light, air quality, odour, vibration or other pollution which cannot be mitigated to an appropriate standard.*

Proposals for development adjacent to, or in the locality of, existing ‘bad neighbour’ uses such as waste sites, incinerators, chemical production, heavy industry and businesses with out of normal hour (9-5) operations, will need to demonstrate that:

- a) the ongoing use of the neighbouring site is not compromised; and*
- b) the amenity of future occupiers of the new development can be achieved in accordance with Part 1 of this policy with the ongoing normal use of the neighbouring site;*

Where the development of a new bad neighbour business or change of use could have a significant adverse effect on residential amenity, appropriate mitigation will be required before the development can be occupied.”

National Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance (2019), Natural Environment

- A.11.1.36. The government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on the Natural Environment provides information on Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Landscape¹. In respect of Green Infrastructure, the PPG states: *"Green infrastructure opportunities and requirements need to be considered at the earliest stages of development proposals, as an integral part of development and infrastructure provision, and taking into account existing natural assets and the most suitable locations and types of new provision."* The PPG supports the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding the character. It also recognises that this can be used to understand local distinctiveness of the landscape and identifying the features that give it a sense of place, as a means to informing, planning and managing change. It also makes reference to Natural England guidance on landscape character assessment.
- A.11.1.37. Guidance on light pollution² refers to the risk of artificial lighting undermining enjoyment of the countryside or the night sky in paragraph 1, and in paragraph 2, considers potential effects on protected areas of dark skies or intrinsically dark landscapes. It also provides guidance in relation to minimising light pollution.
- A.11.1.38. The Renewable and Low Carbon Energy PPG³ sets out consideration for the assessment and design of large scale energy schemes relevant to landscape and visual matters. Planning considerations include: *"cumulative impacts require particular attention, especially the increasing impact that wind turbines and large scale solar farms can have on landscape and local amenity as the number of turbines and solar arrays in an area increases"*, and *"local topography is an important factor in assessing whether wind turbines and large scale solar farms could have a damaging effect on landscape and recognise that the impact can be as great in predominately flat landscapes as in hilly or mountainous areas."*
- A.11.1.39. In respect of buffer zones: *"Local planning authorities should not rule out otherwise acceptable renewable energy developments through inflexible rules on buffer zones or separation distances. Other than when dealing with set back distances for safety, distance of itself does not necessarily determine whether the impact of a proposal is unacceptable. Distance plays a part, but so does the local context including factors such as topography, the local environment and nearby land uses. This is why it is important to think about in*

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/light-pollution>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy>

what circumstances proposals are likely to be acceptable and plan on this basis.”

A.11.1.40. Particular considerations for ground mounted solar are: *“The deployment of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes. However, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively”.*

A.11.1.41. Factors a local planning authority will need to consider include:

- > *“that solar farms are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use;*
- > *the proposal’s visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare (see guidance on landscape assessment) and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;*
- > *the extent to which there may be additional impacts if solar arrays follow the daily movement of the sun;*
- > *the need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing;*
- > *great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large scale solar farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset;*
- > *the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges;*
- > *the energy generating potential, which can vary for a number of reasons including, latitude and aspect.”*

“The approach to assessing cumulative landscape and visual impact of large scale solar farms is likely to be the same as assessing the impact of wind turbines. However, in the case of ground-mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography the area of a zone of visual influence could be zero.”

Planning Practice Guidance (2023), Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

A.11.1.42. This guidance identifies several different considerations for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, including visual impact, mitigation through screening, and glint and glare. This guidance further sets out the ways in

which a strategy can be developed for low carbon energy projects, specific planning considerations for solar and battery storage systems.



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