



Lime Down

Solar Park

Environmental Statement

**Volume 3, Appendix 8.6: Assessment of
Effects on the Cotswolds National
Landscape and its Special Qualities
(Change Application) (Clean)**

June 2026

Revision 1

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010168

Document Reference: APP/6.3

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)



Schedule of Changes

Revision	Section Reference	Description of Changes	Reason for Revision
Change Application	2.3.7	Update to the removal of panel locations within the CNL.	Updated to reflect the changes in Change 4 as part of the Change Application.
	2.3.20	Update in relation to the specific enhancement measures.	Updated to reflect the changes in Change 4 as part of the Change Application.
	2.3.24 and 2.3.28	Updates in relation to the LEMP.	Updated to reflect the changes in Change 4 as part of the Change Application.
	2.4.18	Updates in relation to visual effects on private receptors.	Updated to reflect the changes in Change 4 as part of the Change Application.
	Table 12 and 3.6.18	Updates in relation to visual effects on transport receptors.	Updated to reflect the changes in Change 4 as part of the Change Application.
	Table 17	Updates in relation to the mitigation quantities within the setting of the CNL	Updated to reflect the changes in Change 4 as part of the Change Application.
	3.6.24	Updates in relation to the visual effects of the Scheme on the CNL	Updated to reflect the changes in Change 4 as part of the Change Application.
	Table 19	Updates in relation to mitigation quantities within setting of the CNL	Updated to reflect the changes in Change 4 as part of the Change Application.

List of Contents

1	Assessment of Effects on the CNL and its Special Qualities	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Consultation	2
1.3	Legislation and Planning Policy	9
1.4	Assessment Assumptions and Limitations	23
1.5	Study Area	23
1.6	Temporal Scope: Assessment Years	24
1.7	Assessment Methodology	24
2	Landscape and Visual Assessment on the CNL	27
2.1	Baseline	27
2.2	LVIA Assessment Material	49
2.3	Embedded Mitigation	55
2.4	Assessment of Effects on the CNL	65
3	Effects on the Special Qualities of the CNL National Landscape	82
3.1	Introduction	82
3.2	CNL Special Qualities	82
3.3	Embedded Mitigation	89
3.4	Assessment of Effects on the SQ	89
3.5	Positive contributions to further the purpose of the AONB designation	111
3.6	Summary and Conclusions	114
4	References	124

List of Tables

Table 1:	Planning Inspectorate Scoping Opinion Responses	2
Table 2:	Summary of Engagement Undertaken	7
Table 3:	Summary of Landscape Character Assessments in CNL and North Wiltshire	28
Table 4:	Summary of Landscape Character Assessments	42
Table 5:	Relevant Viewpoint Locations to and from the CNL	51
Table 6:	Viewpoint Locations	54
Table 7:	Embedded Mitigation: General Offsets / Buffers	57
Table 8:	Embedded Mitigation: Landscape Design Parameters	58
Table 9:	Summary of Scheme Effects:	65
Table 10:	Visual Effects - Private Receptors	69
Table 11:	Visual Effects - Public Receptors	71
Table 12:	Visual Effects - Transport Receptors	74

Table 13: Summary of Abnormal Indivisible Loads	81
Table 14: Cross Cutting Themes.....	84
Table 15: Conserving and Enhancing	85
Table 16: Increasing understanding and enjoyment.....	88
Table 17: Mitigation Quantities within the Setting of the CNL.....	112
Table 18: Summary of Effects on the CNL's Special Qualities	118
Table 19: Mitigation Quantities within setting of the CNL	119

1 Assessment of Effects on the CNL and its Special Qualities

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Appendix forms a standalone assessment of the effects of the Lime Down Solar Park on the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and its Special Qualities.

1.1.2 It is set out in four Sections as follows:

- **Section 1** Sets out the context for the assessment which includes Consultation undertaken, the Legislation and Planning Policy context relevant to the CNL and the Methodology for the assessment.
- **Section 2** presents the findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in Chapter 8 of the Environmental Statement as relevant to the CNL.
- **Section 3** undertakes an assessment of the Scheme on the CNL's Special Qualities.
- **Section 3** concludes with a summary of the effects on the CNL and its Special Qualities and describes how the Scheme provides positive enhancement within the setting of the CNL which further the purposes of '*conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty*'.

1.1.3 The following aspects are considered within this assessment:

- The existing landscape and visual baseline scenario within the CNL and its Special Qualities.
- Embedded mitigation proposals established as part of the landscape-led approach to the Scheme and in response consultation with the CNL Board.
- The effects of the Scheme upon landscape and visual receptors within the CNL arising as a result of the Scheme and the significance associated with identified effects based on the sensitivity of these receptors to change and the magnitude of any change that would likely occur. It also defines whether an effect is beneficial, adverse, or neutral.
- The effects of the Scheme upon the Special Qualities of CNL and the significance associated with identified effects as above.

Development Parameters Assessed

- 1.1.4 **ES Volume 1, Chapter 3: The Scheme [EN010168/APP/6.1]** sets out the development parameters for the Scheme against which the effects covered in this Appendix have been assessed. The assessment has been based on likely worst-case parameters, in accordance with the Rochdale Envelope approach. The actual impacts of the Scheme may therefore be less than anticipated if the Scheme is built to a differing design within the worst-case parameters.
- 1.1.5 **ES Volume 1, Chapter 6: Environmental Impact Assessment Methodology [EN010168/APP/6.1]** sets out the worst-case parameters. The peak construction year for the purpose of the EIA is anticipated to be 2028, assuming commencement of construction in 2027 and the Scheme is built out over a 24 month period.

1.2 Consultation

- 1.2.1 A request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion was sought from the Secretary of State through the Planning Inspectorate in July 2024. The issues raised in the Scoping Opinion in relation to the CNL are summarised and responded to within **ES Volume 3, Appendix 1-2 Scoping Opinion Response Table [EN010168/APP/6.3]**, which demonstrates how the matters raised in the Scoping Opinion are addressed in the ES. Matters where the scope of the assessment has been raised by the Planning Inspectorate and specific to the CNL are set out in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Planning Inspectorate Scoping Opinion Responses

ID	Summary of Matter	Response
The Planning Inspectorate 22 nd August 2024 Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted Cotswolds Conservation Board	Any Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA') prepared as part of an Environmental Statement should include a detailed consideration of the landscape and visual impact of the proposed solar park upon the National Landscape and its setting, including the potential impacts upon local landscape character (including land within the setting of the CNL which may complement the character of the CNL landscape) and impacts upon views from within the National Landscape or towards the National Landscape.	A detailed consideration of the landscape and visual impact of the proposed solar park upon the National Landscape and its setting is included in this Appendix.
The Planning Inspectorate 22 nd August 2024 Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted	For avoidance of doubt, we agree with the Applicant's assessment that: The northern boundary of three field parcels (Fields A1, A11 and A12) within Lime Down A adjoin the boundary of the CNL south and southeast of Sherston;	Noted.

ID	Summary of Matter	Response
Cotswolds Conservation Board	<p>The CNL boundary follows Foxley Road to the north of Lime Down B, however a combination of topography and strong hedgerow limits intervisibility;</p> <p>The CNL boundary adjoins the western edge of Lime Down C at Fields C1, C6, C8 and C10 along an unnamed road to the east of Alderton;</p> <p>Lime Down D has no landscape and visual relationship with the Cotswolds National Landscape;</p> <p>Lime Down E has no landscape and visual relationship with the Cotswolds National Landscape;</p> <p>Land at Melksham Substation has no landscape and visual relationship with the Cotswolds National Landscape;</p> <p>The Cable Route Search Corridor is located either close to or adjacent to the Cotswolds National Landscape boundary near Sherston, Alderton, Grittleton, Yatton Keynell and Biddlestone.</p>	
<p>The Planning Inspectorate 22nd August 2024 Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted Cotswolds Conservation Board</p>	<p><u>Lime Down A</u>- We agree with the location and orientation of Viewpoints 2, 3, 4 and 5.</p> <p>We recommend that Viewpoint 6 is relocated c.150m eastwards to the junction of the unnamed lane with bridleway SHER16 (shown on the photograph below) where a clearer view of the site is available and is a location more likely to be used by walkers and riders.</p> <p>We recommend an additional viewpoint is provided located on footpath SHER15 at the southern boundary of field A11, looking northwards across the field towards the CNL boundary to enable an assessment of the impact of the proposal on views back towards the CNL.</p> <p><u>Lime Down B</u>- We agree that Viewpoint 18 provides a representative view of the site from the CNL boundary.</p> <p><u>Lime Down C</u> - We agree with the location and orientation of Viewpoints 25, 26, 27b, 31, 32 and 33.</p> <p>Viewpoint 30 should be extended westwards or an additional viewpoint provided to incorporate the clear view across the site to the CNL including the spire of St Giles' church at Alderton as shown in the photograph below:</p>	<p>The requested changes and additional Viewpoints have been included within the ES.</p>
<p>The Planning Inspectorate 22nd August 2024</p>	<p>Having reviewed the Landscape and Visual chapter of the EIA Scoping Report and its associated Appendices, including the proposed LVIA methodology outlined at Section 7.3 and Appendix 7.2 of the EIA</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

ID	Summary of Matter	Response
<p>Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted</p> <p>Cotswolds Conservation Board</p>	<p>Scoping Report, much of its scope and content is appropriate.</p>	
<p>The Planning Inspectorate</p> <p>22nd August 2024</p> <p>Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted</p> <p>Cotswolds Conservation Board</p>	<p>Based on the preliminary site visit by the Board's Planning Officer, we recommend that photomontages of the proposal are provided from the following viewpoints to enable an accurate assessment of the potential impacts of the proposal on the CNL:</p> <p>Viewpoint 3 and Viewpoint 4</p> <p>Additional viewpoint located on footpath SHER15 at the southern boundary of field A11, looking northwards across the field towards the CNL boundary</p> <p>Viewpoint 6 (amended location referred to above)</p> <p>Viewpoint 25, Viewpoint 26, Viewpoint 27b</p> <p>Viewpoint 30 (amended orientation referred to above)</p> <p>Viewpoint 31</p> <p>We also request that view cones are added to the viewpoint locations shown at Figures 7.7 and 7.10 to help readers to interpret the orientation and direction of the viewpoints.</p>	<p>It is agreed that AVR level 1 Photomontages are prepared for these viewpoints</p> <p>These are presented in the Figure 8.14 series: Figure 8-14 Baseline Photography and Photomontages (including figure series 8-14-1 to 8-14-56) [EN010168/APP/6.2]</p> <p>These have been added to Table 8.6.</p> <p>AVR Level 3 have been prepared for agreed Viewpoints for inclusion in the ES: Figure 8-14 Baseline Photography and Photomontages (including figure series 8-14-1 to 8-14-56) [EN010168/APP/6.2]</p> <p>Full winter and summer photomontages have informed the final assessment included in the ES: Figure 8-14 Baseline Photography and Photomontages (including figure series 8-14-1 to 8-14-56) [EN010168/APP/6.2]</p> <p>View cones are included in the photosheets in Figure 8.14 series: Figure 8-14 Baseline Photography and Photomontages (including figure series 8-14-1 to 8-14-56) [EN010168/APP/6.2]</p>
<p>The Planning Inspectorate</p> <p>22nd August 2024</p> <p>Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted</p>	<p>We note and agree that cumulative impacts are to be scoped into the ES and that an assessment of the in-combination landscape and visual effects of Lime Down A to E will be undertaken to determine the effects of the Scheme as a whole. A cumulative assessment will be undertaken, assessing both the cumulative landscape and visual effects of the Scheme</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>An assessment of Cumulative Sites and Cumulative Developments has been included in ES Chapter 8 LVIA [EN010168/APP/6.1].</p>

ID	Summary of Matter	Response
Cotswolds Conservation Board	('Cumulative Sites') and of the Scheme in conjunction with other local developments ('Cumulative Developments') within the Cumulative Effects chapter of the ES.	
<p>The Planning Inspectorate 22nd August 2024 Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted Cotswolds Conservation Board</p>	<p>Any Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA') prepared as part of an Environmental Statement should include a detailed consideration of the landscape and visual impact of the proposed solar park upon the National Landscape and its setting, including the potential impacts upon local landscape character (including land within the setting of the CNL which may complement the character of the CNL landscape) and impacts upon views from within the National Landscape or towards the National Landscape.</p>	<p>A detailed consideration of the landscape and visual impact of the proposed solar park upon the National Landscape and its setting has been included in the ES and this standalone assessment: Appendix 8-6 LVIA Assessment of the Special Qualities of the Cotswold National Landscape [EN010168/APP/6.3].</p>
<p>The Planning Inspectorate 22nd August 2024 Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted Cotswolds Conservation Board</p>	<p>For avoidance of doubt, we agree with the Applicant's assessment that:</p> <p>The northern boundary of three field parcels (Fields A1, A11 and A12) within Lime Down A adjoin the boundary of the CNL south and southeast of Sherston;</p> <p>The CNL boundary follows Foxley Road to the north of Lime Down B, however a combination of topography and strong hedgerow limits intervisibility;</p> <p>The CNL boundary adjoins the western edge of Lime Down C at Fields C1, C6, C8 and C10 along an unnamed road to the east of Alderton.</p> <p>Lime Down D has no landscape and visual relationship with the Cotswolds National Landscape;</p> <p>Lime Down E has no landscape and visual relationship with the Cotswolds National Landscape;</p> <p>Land at Melksham Substation has no landscape and visual relationship with the Cotswolds National Landscape;</p> <p>The Cable Route Search Corridor is located either close to or adjacent to the Cotswolds National Landscape boundary near Sherston, Alderton, Grittleton, Yatton Keynell and Biddlestone.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>The Planning Inspectorate 22nd August 2024</p>	<p><u>Lime Down A</u>- We agree with the location and orientation of Viewpoints 2, 3, 4 and 5;</p> <p>We recommend that Viewpoint 6 is relocated c.150m eastwards to the junction of the unnamed lane with bridleway SHER16 (shown on the photograph below) where a clearer view of the site is available and is a location more likely to be used by walkers and riders.</p>	<p>The requested changes and additional Viewpoints have been included within the ES: Figure 8-14 Baseline Photography and Photomontages (including figure series 8-14-1 to 8-</p>

ID	Summary of Matter	Response
<p>Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted</p> <p>Cotswolds Conservation Board</p>	<p>We recommend an additional viewpoint is provided located on footpath SHER15 at the southern boundary of field A11, looking northwards across the field towards the CNL boundary to enable an assessment of the impact of the proposal on views back towards the CNL.</p> <p><u>Lime Down B</u>- We agree that Viewpoint 18 provides a representative view of the site from the CNL boundary.</p> <p><u>Lime Down C</u> - We agree with the location and orientation of Viewpoints 25, 26, 27b, 31, 32 and 33.</p> <p>Viewpoint 30 should be extended westwards or an additional viewpoint provided to incorporate the clear view across the site to the CNL including the spire of St Giles' church at Alderton as shown in the photograph below:</p>	<p>14-56) [EN010168/APP/6.2]</p>
<p>The Planning Inspectorate</p> <p>22nd August 2024</p> <p>Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted</p> <p>Cotswolds Conservation Board</p>	<p>Having reviewed the Landscape and Visual chapter of the EIA Scoping Report and its associated Appendices, including the proposed LVIA methodology outlined at Section 7.3 and Appendix 7.2 of the EIA Scoping Report, much of its scope and content is appropriate.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>The Planning Inspectorate</p> <p>22nd August 2024</p> <p>Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted</p> <p>Cotswolds Conservation Board</p>	<p>Based on the preliminary site visit by the Board's Planning Officer, we recommend that photomontages of the proposal are provided from the following viewpoints to enable an accurate assessment of the potential impacts of the proposal on the CNL:</p> <p>Viewpoint 3 and Viewpoint 4</p> <p>Additional viewpoint located on footpath SHER15 at the southern boundary of field A11, looking northwards across the field towards the CNL boundary</p> <p>Viewpoint 6 (amended location referred to above)</p> <p>Viewpoint 25, Viewpoint 26, Viewpoint 27b</p> <p>Viewpoint 30 (amended orientation referred to above)</p> <p>Viewpoint 31</p> <p>We also request that view cones are added to the viewpoint locations shown at Figures 7.7 and 7.10 to help readers to interpret the orientation and direction of the viewpoints.</p>	<p>It is agreed that AVR level 1 Photomontages are prepared for these viewpoints</p> <p>These are presented in the Figure 8.14 series: Figure 8-14 Baseline Photography and Photomontages (including figure series 8-14-1 to 8-14-56) [EN010168/APP/6.2]</p> <p>These have been added to Table 8.6.</p> <p>AVR Level 3 have been prepared for agreed Viewpoints for inclusion in the ES: Figure 8-14 Baseline Photography and Photomontages (including figure series 8-14-1 to 8-14-56) [EN010168/APP/6.2]</p> <p>Full winter and summer photomontages have been inform the final assessment included in the ES: Figure</p>

ID	Summary of Matter	Response
		8-14 Baseline Photography and Photomontages (including figure series 8-14-1 to 8-14-56) [EN010168/APP/6.2] View cones are included in the photosheets in Figure 8.14 series: Figure 8-14 Baseline Photography and Photomontages (including figure series 8-14-1 to 8-14-56) [EN010168/APP/6.2]
The Planning Inspectorate 22 nd August 2024 Appendix 1: Consultation bodies formally consulted Cotswolds Conservation Board	We note and agree that cumulative impacts are to be scoped into the ES and that an assessment of the in-combination landscape and visual effects of Lime Down A to E will be undertaken to determine the effects of the Scheme as a whole. A cumulative assessment will be undertaken, assessing both the cumulative landscape and visual effects of the Scheme ('Cumulative Sites') and of the Scheme in conjunction with other local developments ('Cumulative Developments') within the Cumulative Effects chapter of the ES.	Noted. An assessment of Cumulative Sites and Cumulative Developments has been included in ES Chapter 8 LVIA [EN010168/APP/6.1].

1.2.2 Engagement has been undertaken with the Cotswolds National Landscape Board (CNLB). The matters raised are summarised in **Table 2** below.

Table 2: Summary of Engagement Undertaken

Consultee and Date	Issue/Topic	Response
Remote meeting with Senior Landscape Officer Wiltshire Council and Planning Officer Cotswolds National Landscape Board 17 th September 2024	Discussion regarding scoping response and viewpoint agreement	Viewpoint agreement undertaken. Additional Viewpoints h included in the ES as noted above.
Response from Landscape Officer, Wiltshire Council 07 th November 2024	Viewpoint Agreement Request for additional viewpoints: WC1 Church Road, Sherston, just south of New Barn. WC2 Bridleway HULL18 WC3 Bridleway MALW54 and footpath MALW53	These additional Viewpoints are included in Tables 5 and 6 of this report. Proposed Viewpoint Locations. Both winter and summer photography is included in the final Environmental Statement (refer to Figure 8-14 Baseline Photography

Consultee and Date	Issue/Topic	Response
		and Photomontages [EN010168/APP/6.2].
Response from Planning Officer Cotswolds National Landscape Board (CNLB). 16 th October 2024	Request for additional viewpoints: CNLB A-Footpath WT LUCK 46 to Site C CNLB B- Footpath WT SHER 19 to Site A, C CNLB C- Footpath WT SHER 15 looking northwest to Sherston Church from A11 CNLB D- Bridleway WT NORT 2 to Site B CNLB E- Footpath WT SHER 10 to Site A, B CNLB F- Footpath WT SHER 13 to Site B	These additional Viewpoints are included in Section 2.2 and Table 5. Proposed Viewpoint Locations. Both winter and summer photography is included in the final Environmental Statement (refer to Figure 8-14 Baseline Photography and Photomontages [EN010168/APP/6.2] ..
CNLB and CC 26/03/2025	Email proposal to prepare iterative section drawings to inform the developing layout of the Scheme as part of the iterative design process regarding: •Proposed panels in C6, C7, & C9 and the southern part of A1 which are within the setting of the CNL, and •Proposed panels in E2, E3 and E4.	Viewpoints on the edge of the CNL where agreed. Sections prepared for Viewpoints 25, 30, 31, 32, 33, CNL A and additional VP CNL G from Alderton Road at field entrance across C7 and C8.
CNLB and CC 24th April 2025	Meeting to discuss options for the red line boundary following removal of parcels A11, A12, C2, C3 and C4 in response to Statutory Consultation and to discuss positive enhancement measures in parcels on the edge of the Cotswolds National Landscape (to further the purposes of the CNL) within parcels on the edge of the CNL - parcels C1, C6, C8, C9 and C10.	Parcels on the edge of the CNL boundary (C1, C6, C8, parts of C9 and C10.) have remained within the Scheme and provide opportunities for positive enhancement measures. Parcels C2, C3 and C4 which are not on the edge of the CNL have been removed from the Order Limits. Information received from CNL on positive enhancement measures from CNLs Nature Recovery Lead including grassland and woodland mosaic creation.
Response from CNL on sections 8 th July 2025	Testing of parcels through iterative visualisation work being undertaken regarding S42	Section commentary received from CNL and WC officers about parcels C6, C7, & C9 which are within the setting of the CNL, and proposed panels in E2, E3 and E4.

- 1.2.3 Statutory consultation was held between 29 January 2025 and 19 March 2025. A full list of consultation responses in relation to Landscape and Visual are presented in the **Consultation Report [EN010168/APP/5.1]** submitted as part of the Application.

1.3 Legislation and Planning Policy

- 1.3.1 A summary of applicable legislation, planning policy and other guidance documents relating to CNL Special Qualities pertinent to the Scheme is provided below.

Legislation

European Legislation

European Landscape Convention (Ref 1)

- 1.3.2 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the first international treaty dedicated to the protection, management, and planning of all landscapes in Europe. Signed by the UK government in 2006 and introduced in March 2007, the ELC provides a people-centred and forward-looking way to reconcile management of the environment with the social and economic challenges of the future and aims to help people reconnect with place. The ELC is not a directive of the European Union, rather it is a Convention of the Council of Europe.
- 1.3.3 The ELC does not advocate the same measures and policies for all landscapes. Instead, it encourages approaches that are adaptable to particular landscape types and which respond to their unique characteristics.
- 1.3.4 The ELC contains 18 articles which, collectively, promote landscape protection, management and planning and organising European cooperation on landscape issues. Articles 5 and 6 commit signatory states to a number of actions which are designed to help ensure compliance with the overarching aims of the ELC. These include the need to recognise landscapes in law, to establish policies aimed at landscape planning, protection and management and the integration of landscape into other policy areas.

UK Legislation

Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA 2023) - Section 245 (Protected Landscapes) (Ref 7)

- 1.3.5 This Act amends the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CRoW Act) and places a duty on relevant authorities, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, the

Broads or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (National Landscapes) in England, 'to seek to further the statutory purposes of the area'. The duty applies to local planning authorities and other decision makers in making planning decisions on development and infrastructure proposals, as well as to other public bodies and statutory undertakers.

- 1.3.6 This legislation, in effect, increases the duty on relevant authorities to be more pro-active in its consideration of new development proposals to conserve and enhance the statutory purpose and function of nationally protected landscapes.

The Environment Act 2021 (Ref 2)

- 1.3.7 The Environment Act 2021 provides a framework for environmental protection in the UK and requires government and public bodies to set targets for air quality, water, biodiversity, and waste reduction.
- 1.3.8 Key commitments of the Act include halting species decline by 2030 and the introduction of mandatory BNG requirements for all Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) developments.
- 1.3.9 Commitments that would be secured through the DCO which are relevant to the LVIA include:
- Part 6 Nature and Biodiversity
 - Section 99: Biodiversity gain in nationally significant infrastructure projects outlines that Schedule 15 makes provision about biodiversity gain in relation to development consent for nationally significant infrastructure projects specifically. This is expected to become a legal requirement for nationally significant infrastructure projects from November 2025.

National Planning Policy

- 1.3.10 The National Policy Statements (NPSs) that are relevant to the Scheme are:
- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (November 2023) (Ref 3);
 - National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (November 2023) (Ref 4); and
 - National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (November 2023) (Ref 5).
- 1.3.11 The NPSs listed above came into effect on 17 January 2024. These NPSs set out the Government's energy policy for the delivery of nationally

significant energy infrastructure, the need for new energy infrastructure, and guidance for the determination of an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO).

- 1.3.12 The relevant NPS requirements, together with an indication of where in the ES the information is provided to address these requirements, are provided in **Volume 3, Appendix 5-1 [EN010168/APP/6.3]**.
- 1.3.13 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023) (Ref 6)

- 1.3.14 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a general presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11) and guides the Local Planning Authorities in the production of Local Plans and in decision making.
- 1.3.15 In Section 14, the NPPF sets out its support for renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure, with subsequent paragraphs setting out how this can be achieved.
- 1.3.16 The NPPF states in Paragraph 189 (Authors emphasis in bold):
- “Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and **National Landscapes**, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues...The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while **development within their setting** should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.”*
- 1.3.17 The NPPF goes on to state in Paragraph 190:
- “When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest”.*
- 1.3.18 The NPPF policy guidelines are incorporated within the CNLMP, Policy CE13 (Development & Infrastructure), which requires major development to avoid significant harm to the Special Qualities.
- National Landscape Policy**
- 1.3.19 Other guidance documents relevant to the assessment of the impacts of the Scheme on the CNL Special Qualities include:

- National Landscapes (formerly AONBs) are designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, with the primary statutory purpose to **conserve and enhance natural beauty** (Section 82) and a duty on all authorities to “seek to further” this purpose (Section 85).

Other Guidance

Guidance for LPAs on Applying the CRoW Act

- 1.3.20 Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes (Ref 8) sets out how the Protected Landscapes duty is intended to operate and provides broad principles to guide relevant authorities in complying with it.
- 1.3.21 ‘Protected Landscapes’ refers to National Parks, the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads and National Landscapes (formerly areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs)) in England.
- 1.3.22 Section 245 (Protected Landscapes) of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) amends the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Parks, National Landscapes, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads (collectively referred to as Protected Landscapes) in England.
- 1.3.23 Relevant authorities must now ‘seek to further’ the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes. This replaces the previous duty on relevant authorities to ‘have regard to’ their statutory purposes.
- 1.3.24 In the section on ‘What a relevant authority should do’ the guidance notes for development plan making and development management decisions affecting a Protected Landscape, a relevant authority should “*seek to further the purposes of the Protected Landscape - in so doing, the relevant authority should consider whether such measures can be embedded in the design of plans and proposals, where reasonably practical and operationally feasible*”
- 1.3.25 The guidance sets out what the relevant authority should consider. This includes:
- What are the statutory purposes that you should seek to further when exercising a function in the Protected Landscape it affects?
 - Do measures which would further the purposes align with and help to deliver the targets and objectives in the Protected Landscape’s Management Plan?
 - Are such measures appropriate and proportionate to the type and scale of the function and its implications for the area?

- Could the measures contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the Protected Landscape's wildlife, ecological value and quality, geological and physiographical features, water environment, cultural heritage, dark skies, tranquillity, opportunities for access to nature, and landscape character for which the area was designated.

The Biodiversity Duty

1.3.26 Public authorities must also comply with the strengthened Biodiversity Duty that the Environment Act 2021 introduced. You should consider:

- How your actions taken to comply with the Biodiversity Duty are complementary; and
- If you have met both duties in full through your decisions.

Statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes

1.3.27 The statutory purposes of National Landscapes (areas of outstanding natural beauty) are:

- Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.

1.3.28 The statutory purposes of National Landscapes (areas of outstanding natural beauty) with Conservation Boards are:

- Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty; and
- Increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty.

The setting of Protected Landscapes

1.3.29 The duty also applies to functions undertaken outside of the designation boundary which affects land within the Protected Landscape.

1.3.30 Natural beauty, special qualities, and key characteristics can be highly dependent on the contribution provided by the setting of a Protected Landscape. Aspects such as tranquillity, dark skies, a sense of remoteness, wildness, cultural heritage or long views from and into the Protected Landscape may draw upon the landscape character and quality of the setting.

1.3.31 Functional connectivity is also important where there are flows or close interconnection between the Protected Landscape and its setting, for example:

- A shared water catchment and management of water resources;

- Ecological connectivity where species are able to move across and between the designated and non-designated area; and
- Rights of Way, Open Access Land and other recreational links joining the designated area to the wider countryside.

1.3.32 Development and the management of land, water and estates located in the setting have the potential to adversely affect the natural beauty, special qualities, and key characteristics of a Protected Landscape.

CNL Specific Planning Policy

1.3.33 Local planning policies that are relevant to the Scheme and the CNL Special Qualities are outlined below:

Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan (Ref 9)

1.3.34 The management plan was adopted on 21 February 2023 and sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the Cotswolds National Landscape for the period 2023-2025. The management plan sets out fourteen outcomes and relevant policies to outline how the outcomes can be achieved.

1.3.35 The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan (CNLMP) 2025, is the key resource provided to help developers assess the sensitivity of landscape character to development. The CNLMP has been produced by Cotswolds National Landscape Board ('the Board'), whose statutory purpose is to:

“conserve and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape; and

increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Landscape.”

1.3.36 The core of the plan is made up of four components:

- Vision;
- Key Issues;
- Special qualities (SQs);
- Outcomes and policies.

1.3.37 The CNLMP contains guidance, descriptions and maps of the characteristics and sensitivity of each of the SQs within the CNL Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). It provides:

- An overview of the forces for change influencing the Cotswolds National Landscape;
- Landscape and land management strategies to guide change in a positive and sustainable way; and
- Guidance for developers, local planning authorities, land managers, and other decision-makers to make informed decisions about the suitability of proposed development or other changes that may affect the 14 SQs.

The Special Qualities

- 1.3.38 The 14 SQs are key elements that have been identified within the area that have prompted it to be designated as worthy of National Landscape designation. As set out in the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan within Chapter 4, the Special Qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape¹, are presented as:

“those aspects of the area’s natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. They are the key attributes on which the priorities for its conservation, enhancement and management are based. They bring out the essence of the National Landscape as an evocative description of the area rather than as a statistical account.”²

- 1.3.39 Chapter 4 of the CNLMP includes a Special Quality statement of significance. While not listed in any order of priority or importance, together they provide underlying focus of the principles that guide the development of planning policies designed to protect the CNL.
- 1.3.40 The Special Quality statement is quoted as follows (Authors emphasis in **bold**):

*“The Cotswolds is **a rich mosaic** of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological and ecological features. The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape are:*

1. **The unifying character of the limestone geology** – its visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material;
2. **The Cotswold escarpment**, including views from and to the National Landscape;
3. **The High Wolds** – a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, ‘big’ skies and long-distance views;
4. **River valleys**, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames,

¹ <https://www.cotswolds-aonb.org.uk/planning/cotswolds-aonb-management-plan/> Cotswolds National Landscape Board

² <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-work/cotswolds-national-landscape-management-plan/>

with high-quality water;

5. **Distinctive dry-stone walls;**
6. **Flower-rich grasslands** particularly limestone grasslands;
7. **Ancient broadleaved woodland** particularly along the crest of the escarpment;
8. **Variations in the colour of the stone** from one part of the National Landscape to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness;
9. **The tranquillity of the area**, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution;
10. **Extensive dark sky areas;**
11. **Distinctive settlements**, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity;
12. **An accessible landscape** for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswold Way National Trail; Policy UE1: Health and wellbeing
13. **Significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations** dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks;
14. A vibrant heritage of **cultural associations**, including the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olimpics, cheese rolling and woolsack races. (REF9)

1.3.41 The Special Qualities collectively are the distinctive aspects of the area's natural beauty that make it valuable and unique, informing the CNLMP's 'vision', the summation of what needs to be conserved, enhanced, and celebrated in the CNL.

Outcomes

1.3.42 Stated Outcomes of the CNLMP have been devised to support the maintenance of the Special Qualities. This effectively rationalises the Special Quality into principles, translating them into actionable, goal-oriented statements that guide how these qualities can be conserved, enhanced, and enjoyed. The Outcomes are:

- **Outcome 1 – Climate action:** By 2050 (or sooner), the Cotswolds National Landscape would have reached net zero (or better) through the collective efforts of stakeholders following a clearly defined pathway, while also building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

- **Outcome 2 – Working together:** Through collaborative partnerships and a shared understanding, the purposes of the Cotswolds National Landscape and its Board are applied consistently across the whole area.
- **Outcome 3 – Landscape:** The evolving landscape and much-loved character of the Cotswolds is better understood, and at the heart of all we do and the decisions we make.
- **Outcome 4 – Local distinctiveness:** In a world of constant and rapid change, the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape is valued, conserved and enhanced.
- **Outcome 5 – Tranquillity:** Noise pollution and visual disturbance are minimised to maintain tranquillity across the National Landscape.
- **Outcome 6 – Dark skies:** Fewer areas of the Cotswolds National Landscape are affected by artificial light at night.
- **Outcome 7 – Historic environment and cultural heritage:** The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape is better understood, conserved and enhanced.
- **Outcome 8 – Biodiversity and nature recovery:** There is concerted unified action for a widespread recovery of nature – conserving, restoring and enhancing a connected mosaic of characteristically Cotswolds habitats and species.
- **Outcome 9 – The water environment:** Watercourses and bodies of water within the Cotswolds National Landscape have good ecological and chemical status supported by sufficient quantities of water.
- **Outcome 10 – Farming and land management:** Conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape in ways which balance the needs of recovering nature, climate action, food production, supporting livelihoods and public access.
- **Outcome 11 – Development and infrastructure:** Development and infrastructure schemes positively contribute to the purpose of national landscape designation and also play a key role in facilitating the economic and social wellbeing of local communities.
- **Outcome 12 – Health and wellbeing:** The Cotswolds National Landscape plays a full part in improving the nation's health, benefitting the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of the wide range of people who experience it.
- **Outcome 13 – Access and recreation:** The Cotswolds is

recognised as a welcoming place, where barriers to access are being removed and everyone feels connected to the landscape.

- **Outcome 14 – Sustainable tourism:** Businesses and visitors have a shared commitment to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

1.3.43 The stated Outcomes also assist with assessing potential impacts of the Scheme on the somewhat amorphous original Special Qualities in a broader but more cohesive and objective manner. The Outcomes express the desired state of the Cotswolds National Landscape and serve as the link between the long-term Vision and immediate action, achievement of which is set out by the CNLMP policies.

Policies

1.3.44 The CNLMP includes three categories of policies each of which covers relevant and related aspects to the Special Qualities, namely:

- **Section 5 - Cross cutting themes:** - sets out 13 policies (Policies CC 1 – CC 13) that are relevant to coordination with national policies, guidance and protection of the CNL as a whole, including: Policy CC1: Climate change – mitigation; Policy CC3: Natural and cultural capital – principles; Policy CC5: Water; and Policy CC6: Developing a consistent, coordinated and landscape-led approach.
- **Section 6 – Conserving and Enhancing** sets out 13 policies (Policies CE 1 – CE 13) specific to the protection and management of the physical fabric of the CNL, including: Policy CE1: Landscape; Policy CE2: Geology; Policy CE3: Local distinctiveness; Policy CE4: Tranquillity; Policy CE5: Dark skies; Policy CE6: Historic environment and cultural heritage; and Policy CE7: Biodiversity and nature recovery.
- **Section 7 - Increasing understanding and enjoyment** sets out 3 policies (Policies UE 1 – UE 3) related to promotion and management of sustainability, social inclusivity, education and health within the CNL, including: Policy UE2: Access and recreation.

Cotswolds National Landscape, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, June 2016 (Ref 10)

1.3.45 The CNL Landscape Strategy and Guidelines are technical strategies and guidance to help guide change in a positive and sustainable way. The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment offers a comprehensive characterisation of the AONB's landscape that can assist

in understanding and promoting the concept of local distinctiveness. The study also recognises the fundamental role that farming, forestry and other forms of development have played in fashioning the landscape and acknowledges that the landscape of the AONB owes its character as much to these influences as to those of geology, climate, flora and fauna.

Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan (Ref 11)

- 1.3.46 The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan was adopted as guidance by the Board of the Cotswolds National Landscape in October 2021. As such it forms part of a suite of documentation that is supported by the statutory Management Plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape. While this Nature Recovery Plan focusses on nature recovery the Management Plan takes a more holistic look at the social, economic and environmental factors operating within the Cotswolds landscape.
- 1.3.47 The Nature Recovery Plan takes a habitat led approach to nature restoration and includes measures for priority species. The plan describes the current situation, what is changing and the potential for nature recovery, before outlining policy in the form of priorities and outcomes. It goes on to outline how nature recovery can be delivered across the Cotswolds based on four broad habitats which are considered individually and practical measures recommended. These include woodland and trees, grassland and scrub, rivers and wetlands and cropland.
- 1.3.48 Although the plan treats woodland/trees, grassland/scrub, arable and rivers/wetlands separately within their own sections, it notes in Section 6 that to a large extent this is a false distinction as *“Much of the value of these habitats lies in their close proximity and overlapping features. Grassland flora can be found within the rides and glades of woodlands and trees and scrub can be an important feature on grasslands”*.
- 1.3.49 The plan also notes in Section 6 that *“the creation of new, dynamic extensively grazed habitat mosaics can maximise the potential of edge habitats further blurring the distinction between woodland and grassland”* and that this theme would reoccur throughout the individual habitat sections.
- 1.3.50 The Nature Recovery Plan defines three main areas of landscape character types (as identified in the Cotswolds landscape character assessment) that have distinctive ecological characteristics. These include:
- The Scarp and Outliers defined by landscape character types; 1. Escarpment outliers, 2. Escarpment, 3. Rolling hills and valleys, 18. Settled unwooded vale and 19. Unwooded vale.

- High Wold and Dip Slope defined by landscape character types; 4. Enclosed limestone valley, 5. Settled valleys, 6. Ironstone hills and valleys, 8. High wold valley, 10. High wold dip slope valley, 11. Dip slope lowland, 12. Dip slope lowland valley, 14. Cornbrash pastoral lowlands, 15. Farmed slopes, 16. Broad floodplain valley, 17. Pastoral lowland vale.
- River Valleys defined by landscape character types; 4. Enclosed limestone valley, 5. Settled valleys, 6. Ironstone hills and valleys, 8. High wold valley, 10. High wold dip slope valley, 11. Dip slope lowland, 12. Dip slope lowland valley, 14. Cornbrash pastoral lowlands, 15. Farmed slopes, 16. Broad floodplain valley, 17. Pastoral lowland vale.

Position Statements

1.3.51 As part of the CNL's commitment to the 'conserving and enhancing' purpose of AONB designation, the Cotswolds Conservation Board publishes position statements on key issues affecting the area. Developing these position statements is an action within the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan. The following Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statements are of particular relevance:

- Landscape-Led Development (April 2021); (Ref 12)
- Development in the setting of the Cotswolds AONB (Revised June 2016); (Ref 13)
- Tranquillity Position Statement (June 2019); (Ref 14)
- Cotswolds Dark Skies & Artificial Light Position Statement (Adopted March 2019) (Ref 15).

Development in the setting of the Cotswolds AONB - Position Statement

1.3.52 The Board considers the setting of the Cotswolds AONB to be "*the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting materials or design can be considered to have an impact, positive or negative, on the landscape, scenic beauty and special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB*".

1.3.53 The Statement clarifies references to setting from the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan: "*The surroundings of the Cotswolds AONB are also important to its landscape character and quality. There are views out of the AONB and across back into land within the AONB and views towards or into it from surrounding areas, all of which can be very significant. Development proposals that affect views into and out of the AONB need to be carefully assessed to ensure that they conserve and enhance the natural beauty and landscape character of the AONB*".

- 1.3.54 The position statement sets out that the level of harm from any proposal does however have to be considered and expressed in terms of:
- (i) harm directly to land **in** the designated AONB itself which is the significant issue and
 - (ii) as a separate material consideration, harm to land **outside** the designated AONB that is viewed in the context or backdrop of the AONB.
- 1.3.55 The statement notes that *“in all cases where setting issues may arise specific consideration should be given to guidance within the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment, the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan”*.
- 1.3.56 The priority to the Board, when responding to development within its setting, would be to express impact, positive or negative, on the special qualities and character in the designated AONB and with reference to the then Paragraph 115 of the NPPF, (equivalent to paragraph 189 in the NPPF December 2024).

Examples of Adverse Impacts on the Setting of the Cotswolds AONB

- 1.3.57 At section 4, this Position Statement provides examples of adverse impacts on the setting of the Cotswolds AONB. These could include:
- *“development which would have a significant visual impact on views out of the AONB or between parts of the AONB (and subject to separate guidance and policies views into the AONB) including consideration of cumulative impact of several similar forms of development;*
 - *loss of tranquillity through the introduction or increase of lighting and or noise (including consideration of cumulative impact of several similar forms of development);*
 - *other environmental impact and forms of pollution like dust;*
 - *introduction of abrupt change of landscape character (including the addition of tall structures, masts, wind turbines etc);*
 - *loss or harm to heritage assets and natural landscape, particularly if these are contiguous with the AONB;*
 - *impact on special associations and interrelationships of settings (for example between the Bath World Heritage Site and the AONB);*
 - *change of use of land where of a significant enough scale to cause harm to landscape character; and*

- *development individually or cumulatively giving rise to significantly increased traffic flows to and from the AONB (resulting in loss of tranquillity and erosion of the character of rural roads and lanes);*
- *inappropriate use of external materials, external colours, reflective surfaces, and inappropriate landscaping.”*

Conserving & Enhancing the Cotswolds AONB

1.3.58 At section 4 the Statement provides advise on Conserving & Enhancing the Cotswolds AONB. It states:

“The Environmental Impact Assessment process for example, is based on avoiding harm in the first place before then considering minimising harm and then offsetting adverse impacts. In relation to development affecting its setting, the Cotswolds Conservation Board, considers avoidance in the first place to be the best option. However, there may be circumstances where options exist to minimise harm. The Board supports the following:

- *measures to consider impact on the setting of development of the AONB (including where required through Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments);*
- *accordingly avoiding development that fails to conserve and enhance the setting of the Cotswolds AONB and cannot be made acceptable;*
- *if development can be made acceptable then ensuring care over orientation, site layout, height and scale of structures and buildings;*
- *consideration not just of the site but also the landscape, land uses, topography and heritage assets around and beyond it;*
- *careful use of external colours, materials and non-reflective surfaces;*
- *careful use of existing native landscaping and provision of new additional native landscaping (where suitable) to help screen views of development;*
- *where new landscaping is proposed ensuring it is of sufficient quantity, quality, species and has a suitable agreed management plan to ensure long term effectiveness;*
- *consideration of the potential impacts of light, noise and other forms of pollution spreading from outside the Cotswolds AONB into the AONB (either from individual sites or through cumulative effects of several sites); and*
- *generally avoiding external lighting or street lighting; or ensuring if external lighting is required it is of a “dark night skies” compliant design, with full cut off or shielding to prevent light pollution and “night*

glow". Use of lighting time switches to ensure lighting is only used when actually needed."

1.3.59 The Statement concludes:

"the Board therefore recognises that in certain circumstances where setting issues cannot be resolved, the Board may choose to oppose specific forms of development within its setting if brought forward for development."

Landscape Led Development, April 2021-- Position Statement

1.3.60 The primary purpose of the position statement is to expand upon relevant policies in the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan, as well as to help local authorities, developers and other stakeholders to positively contribute to, fulfil the requirements of and emulate best practice in the Cotswolds National Landscape (an AONB). Position statements are supplementary and subsidiary to the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan.

1.3.61 The position statement states that *"a landscape-led approach to development is one in which development within the Cotswolds National Landscape and its setting is compatible with and, ideally, makes a positive contribution to the statutory purpose of AONB designation, which is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. A landscape-led approach, at this level, is promoted in Policy CC1 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023."*

1.3.62 The position statement goes on to state that relevant authorities must have regard to the purpose (now superseded by the duty to further the purposes) of the CNL (Cotswolds AONB) designation in their decision-making. Consideration of landscape and visual impacts is a key consideration when taking a landscape-led approach, however, this approach should also consider all of the factors that contribute to the natural beauty of the CNL.

1.4 Assessment Assumptions and Limitations

1.4.1 The Assessment Assumptions and Limitations made in this assessment on the CNL are as set out in the Section 8.4 of the LVIA in Chapter 8 [EN010168/APP/6.1] of the ES.

1.5 Study Area

1.5.1 The Study Areas for the assessment on the CNL are as set out in Section 8.5 of the LVIA in Chapter 8 of the ES [EN010168/APP/6.1].

1.6 Temporal Scope: Assessment Years

1.6.1 The assessment scenarios for the purposes of the assessment on the CNL are as set out in Section 8.6 of the LVIA in Chapter 8 [EN010168/APP/6.1] of the ES and include:

- Construction Phase;
- Operational Phase at Year 1 and Year 15; and
- Decommissioning Phase.

1.7 Assessment Methodology

1.7.1 The methodology for the assessment of Landscape and Visual effects on the CNL is as set out in ES Volume 1: Chapter 8 – Landscape and Visual [EN010168/APP/6.1] and in ES Volume 3: Appendix 8-1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology [EN010168/APP/6.3].

Assessing effects on Special Qualities

1.7.2 There is no standard approach available on how to assess the impacts of infrastructure development on CNL Special Qualities (SQs).

1.7.3 The CNLMP however sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the Cotswolds National Landscape. The outcomes express the desired state of the CNL and are arranged under three overarching headings which reflect the National Landscape's purpose of designation as follows:

- Purpose 1: To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape;
- Purpose 2: To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape - Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone;
- Cross cutting themes (Purposes 1 and 2) - Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnership.

1.7.4 The Outcomes and corresponding set of Policies together provide a policy framework for assessing planning applications and guiding development. The Outcomes and Policies support the Special Qualities and have been used to help develop the baseline and inform the Special Qualities assessment. In line with GLVIA3 best practice, the Assessment comprises:

- Definition of the Special Qualities;
- Scoping of potential impacts that may arise due to the Scheme (i.e.,

to determine those that are relevant and those that do not need be considered further);

- A description of the baseline information including the policy context and landscape context of each special quality;
- Assessment of the potential impacts of the elements of the Scheme relevant to the Special Qualities, as well as an outline of the embedded design, mitigation and enhancement measures which have been undertaken for the Scheme;
- An assessment of the predicted direct or physical effects and indirect visual effects of the proposals on each Special Quality, including positive effects.

- 1.7.5 The Assessment references the findings of other ES chapters where relevant.
- 1.7.6 No guidance is available for any of the potential impacts on how to relate the potential impacts to the special quality as a whole. Therefore, overall conclusions of the effects on the special quality have been based on the results of the assessment of individual impacts.
- 1.7.7 It is agreed with the Cotswolds National Landscape Board that parts of Sites A, B, and C are within the setting of the CNL. On this basis, Landscape Character Types (LCTs) 11 and 14, and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) 11A and 14B, have been identified for consideration. These areas were previously assessed in ES Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) **[EN010168/APP/6.1]**. To avoid duplication, this assessment cross-refers to the relevant sections of ES Chapter 8 and provides supplementary commentary on the extent to which these areas may be affected by the Scheme.
- 1.7.8 This assessment draws on, and is consistent with, the conclusions of the LVIA in ES Chapter 8 **[EN010168/APP/6.1]**, in relation to the likely significant effects of the Scheme on the Study Areas. Although there would be no direct physical change to the fabric of the CNL, as the Scheme is not within the CNL, there would be perceptual changes to the character of the CNL in close proximity to the Scheme within the 1km Local Study. As such, the primary focus of this assessment is the extent to which the Scheme may result in effects on the special qualities of the CNL, defined here as the quality and enjoyment of views experienced by people and the perceptual changes to the character of the landscape within the CNL.
- 1.7.9 In contrast to the LVIA **[EN010168/APP/6.1]**, which considers likely significant effects on landscape character and visual receptors at a broad scale, this assessment examines how each Special Quality of the CNL

may be affected. The analysis is undertaken with reference to the definition of each Special Quality, the objectives established to support its conservation, and the relevant policies set out in the Cotswolds Management Plan (CNLMP). As there cannot be any direct physical effects on the CNL, as the Scheme is not within the CNL itself, the assessment presents the predicted visual effects on each Special Quality whilst having regard to the character of the landscape and how it is perceived.

- 1.7.10 Subjective judgements beyond the scope of the ES have been avoided to ensure an objective, evidence-based approach.
- 1.7.11 The CNL Special Qualities, are framed as specific attributes to be protected, rather than as high-level principles. The CNLMP assimilates these attributes into a schedule of measurable outcomes and supporting policies.
- 1.7.12 Each SQ has been reviewed individually and enhancements are proposed where applicable. For example, it is not possible to enhance a dark sky in the same way that it is to enhance other identified SQs. The assessment has considered this context in how the 'seek to further' duty has been fulfilled. Where applicable enhancement measures have been applied which seek to further the purposes of the CNL.
- 1.7.13 The assessment evaluates the extent to which, if at all, each outcome is likely to be affected by the Scheme, and the following section sets out the baseline policies and guidance against which the Scheme is tested. The conclusions then summarise the predicted long-term effects on the CNL Special Qualities as listed in the CNLMP, having regard to both physical and visual aspects.
- 1.7.14 The LVIA **[EN010168/APP/6.1]** has considered the effects of the Solar PV Sites A-E and the associated Cable Route Corridor within the 1km Local Study Area during the operational phases Year 1 and Year 15, unless there are any effects that would directly impact the Special Quality during construction or decommissioning, for example Abnormal Indivisible Loads associated with the construction of the Substation and the Cable Route Corridor to Melksham Substation.
- 1.7.15 This approach to determining the significance of effects is considered to be intrinsically linked to the purpose of this report (which is to provide an assessment of the effects of the Scheme on the Special Qualities of the CNL). An adverse effect is taken to be one which is inconsistent with the relevant Special Quality and the significance of effect category (as defined within Appendix 8.1, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology) is an indication of the severity of the effect.

2 Landscape and Visual Assessment on the CNL

2.1 Baseline

Landscape Baseline

- 2.1.1 This section describes the baseline environmental characteristics for the Scheme and surrounding areas with specific reference to the landscape and visual setting of the CNL.
- 2.1.2 The existing baseline conditions are derived from completed desk based and field-based studies, the methodologies of which are given separately in Section 1.7 of this report.
- 2.1.3 The character of the landscape evolves over time as a result of the interaction of human activity and the natural environment (people and place). Attributes used to assess landscape character include:
- Physical – geology, landform, climate, soils, landcover;
 - Cultural and Social – land use, settlement, enclosure and history; and
 - Aesthetics – colour, texture, pattern, form and perception.
- 2.1.4 Known for its dramatic Jurassic limestone geology, vernacular stone buildings, dry stone walls and hedges, permanent pastures and archaeological sites, the Cotswolds National Landscape stretches across six counties. The Cotswold Hills are the area's central feature, and the Cotswold escarpment, which runs the length of the western edge of the Cotswolds is a distinctive feature of the landscape.
- 2.1.5 From the escarpment, the landscape forms an expansive, large scale, landscape of the High Wold plateau which drains eastwards across the dip slope. The dip slope forms a transitional landscape from the higher, more exposed High Wold, gradually descending towards the lower Dip Slope Lowland. The landscape features a network of valleys, with the main rivers flowing southeast, and numerous dry valleys, creating a well-defined "grain" to the landscape. This progression from high wold to dip-slope and dip-slope lowland is therefore a continuum, rather than a distinct division with clearly evident boundaries.
- 2.1.6 All published National Character Areas (NCAs), Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) within the 5km Study Area from National to District level are included and assessed in ES Chapter 8 **[EN010168/APP/6.1]**.
- 2.1.7 The Cotswolds National Landscape, Landscape Character Assessment covers the extents of the landscape within the CNL boundary. It identifies 19 landscape character types across the Cotswolds. These are areas of

landscape that are relatively uniform in character, sharing similar characteristics of geology, landform, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern. Within these landscape character types are 68 separate landscape character areas. These smaller areas are unique and geographically discrete.

2.1.8 Of these 68 separate landscape character areas five are within the 5km Study Area of the Scheme. These include:

- LCT 9: High Wold Dip Slope - LCA 9D: Cotswolds High Wold Dip Slope;
- LCT 11: Dip Slope Lowland - LCA 11A: South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands;
- LCT 12: Dip Slope Lowland Valley - LCA 12A: Upper By Brook Valley;
- LCT14: Cornbrash Lowlands - LCA 14A: Biddestone Lowland; and Farmland
- LCT14: Cornbrash Lowlands - LCA 14B: West Malmesbury Lowland Farmland.

2.1.9 It is worth noting that as the landscape is continuum, the North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment overlaps with the CNL up to the County boundary. Although named differently the boundaries of the Landscape Types and Character Areas are generally contiguous as shown in **Table 3** below (those in bold have been Scoped into the Assessment and were formally agreed with CNL Board and Wiltshire Council).

Table 3: Summary of Landscape Character Assessments in CNL and North Wiltshire

Cotswolds National Landscape Character Assessment	The North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment
Refer to Volume 2, Figure 8-5-2: Cotswolds National Landscape Local Character Areas	Refer to Volume 2, Figure 8-5-3: North and West Wiltshire Local Landscape Character Areas
LCT 9: High Wold Dip Slope LCA 9D: Cotswolds High Wold Dip Slope	No overlap between assessments.
LCT 11: Dip Slope Lowland LCA 11A: South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands	Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland LCT LCA 7 - Sherston Dip Slope
LCT 12: Dip Slope Lowland Valley LCA 12A: Upper By Brook Valley	No overlap between assessments.

<p>LCT14: Cornbrash Lowlands LCA 14A: Biddestone Lowland Farmland</p>	<p>Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland LCT LCA 8 - Hullavington Rolling Lowland</p>
<p>LCT14: Cornbrash Lowlands LCA 14B: West Malmesbury Lowland Farmland</p>	<p>Settled Farmland Valley LCT LCA 6 - Upper Avon Valley</p>

- 2.1.10 A very small part of the 500m Cable Route Corridor Study Area is within the boundary of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). The majority of the Cable Route Study Area that falls within the CNL is within LCT 11: Dip Slope Lowland and LCA 11A: South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands with a very small area to the south within LCT14: Cornbrash Lowlands and LCA 14A Biddestone Lowland Farmland. The Cable Route Corridor itself is not located within the CNL.

Landscape Character of the Cotswolds National Landscape

- 2.1.11 The Landscape Character Assessment of the Cotswolds AONB (REF10) is shown on **Volume 2, Figure 8-5-2: Local Landscape Character Areas**. Lime Down A, B and C adjoin the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- 2.1.12 Fields C1, C2, C8, C9 and C10 and parcel A1 (refer to **Volume 2, Figure 2-2: Field Boundaries and Numbering**) adjoin the Dip Slope Lowland LCT 11 and the South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands LCA 11A.
- 2.1.13 Fields A11 and A12 adjoin Cornbrash Lowlands LCT14 and West Malmesbury Lowland Farmland LCA 14B. Fields B6 and B12 are approximately 200m away from the boundary of this LCT and LCA.
- 2.1.14 The Cable Route Corridor also adjoins the boundary of the Cotswolds National Landscape and adjoins the Dip Slope Lowland LCT 11 and the South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands LCA 11A; and the Cornbrash Lowlands LCT14 and Biddestone Lowland Farmland LCA 14A.
- 2.1.15 As formally agreed with the Cotswolds National Landscape Board, LCTs 11 and 14 and LCAs 11A and 14B are scoped into the assessment. These Landscape Types and Character Areas, as well as separate Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for the Landscape Type are described below:

LCT 11 Dip Slope Lowland

- 2.1.16 The Dip-Slope Lowland “forms a broad area of gently sloping, undulating lowland with a predominantly south-easterly fall, and provides the final transition between the high Cotswolds country and the Thames Valley. The lowland form is gently, although infrequently, dissected by small watercourses, with the overall impression of a well managed, productive

landscape of mixed arable and improved pasture. Medium to large scale regular fields enclosed by hedgerows predominate, although fences and stone walls are not entirely absent. Intermittent small villages and isolated farmsteads define the pattern of settlement, although there are some larger settlements present. There is also a distinctive pattern of large estates and their associated parks and woodland, some of which are of national importance. Otherwise, woodland is limited to isolated copses and shelter belts”

2.1.17 The Dip-Slope Lowland comprises a broad tract of land that forms the transition between the High Wold Dip-Slope to the north-west, and the lower lying and flatter Thames Basin to the south-east. The principal section of this landscape type extends north of Bath near Marshfield and North Wraxall and then sweeps first northwards, and then north-eastwards along the south-eastern perimeter of the AONB as far as Burford. In contrast to this large and almost continuous tract of land, broken only by the valleys of the Churn and Coln, there are a number of much smaller and fragmented sections of this landscape type. These principally occur in the extreme south of the AONB, forming small sections of a larger area of Dip-Slope Lowland that extends to the east of the Limpley Stoke section of the Avon Valley, and beyond the designated area, encompassing land extending up to the settlements of Bradford-on-Avon, Melksham and Corsham.

2.1.18 Key features of the Landscape Type include:

- Broad area of gently sloping, undulating lowland with a predominantly south-easterly fall, changing to a north-easterly fall in the southern perimeter of the area;
- Lowland landform gently dissected by infrequent small watercourses flowing into the main rivers that cross the area, reinforcing the general grain of the topography;
- Strong and structured farmland character, more intimate and smaller in scale than the High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope;
- Well-managed, productive agricultural landscape of mixed arable and improved pasture, together with more limited areas of permanent pasture, mainly within the valley bottoms;
- Seasonal variations in colour and texture associated with mixed arable farming;
- Medium to large scale, regular fields predominate mainly enclosed by hedgerows, with hedgerow trees, together with some stone walls or post and wire fencing;

- Woodland cover limited to intermittent copses and shelterbelts within agricultural land, but balanced by extensive broadleaved, mixed and coniferous plantations within the large estates and associated farmland areas;
- Limited areas of ancient woodland and species rich grassland;
- Settlement pattern of intermittent small, nucleated villages, hamlets, and isolated farmsteads, together with occasional larger settlements;
- Distinctive pattern of large estates and associated planned parkland landscape and woodland occurring throughout the Dip Slope Lowland; and,
- Evidence of long period of occupation of the area.

2.1.19 There are two Landscape Character Areas within the Dip Slope Lowland. The Scheme adjoins the South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands Landscape Character Area 11A which is described below:

LCA 11A South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands

2.1.20 *The South Cotswolds Lowlands “forms an almost continuous area of Dip-Slope Lowland along the eastern and south-eastern side of the Cotswolds, broken only by the valley of the River Churn at Cirencester. Despite the linear extent of the area, there is a strong continuity in its character principally relating to the landform. Generally below the 160 m AOD levels, the area has a gently sloping mainly south-easterly grain with more subtle undulations and shallower slope profiles than in the adjacent Dip-Slope Character Type. In the eastern part of the South Cotswolds Lowlands, however, small, often tree lined tributary watercourses and dry valleys systems have dissected the otherwise gentle terrain. There is a consistent pattern of well-managed, productive mixed arable and pastoral landscape across this lower tract of land enclosed by both stone walls and hedgerows with hedgerow trees being a common feature.*

2.1.21 *This main section of the Dip-Slope Lowland is remarkable for the concentration of Historic Parks, Registered Gardens and private estates throughout the area. A particularly strong cluster occurs in the south-west including Badminton, Westonbirt, Highgrove and Estcourt House, and part of the smaller Pinkney Park adjacent to the River Avon.*

2.1.22 *Woodlands within this Character Area vary between the extensive woodlands and plantations within the large estates and a pattern of intermittent smaller woodlands associated with the farmed landscape. Many of the farm copses have been planted within the last two centuries following enclosure and are generally geometric in form, functioning as shelterbelts and game coverts.”*

Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (2016) for the LCT 11 Dip slope Lowland

- 2.1.23 The Cotswolds National Landscape also provides Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for LCT 11 Dip Slope Lowland.
- 2.1.24 On Potential Landscape Implications; for Solar Farms in this Landscape Type the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines states:
- *“Industrialisation of the rural landscape*
 - *Change of character due to colour and texture and heliographic glint*
 - *Loss of seasonal change in the landscape*
 - *Loss of characteristic agricultural landscape*
 - *Damage to and loss of landscape features such as Ridge and Furrow, Strip Lynchets, trees and dry stone walls*
 - *Impact of supporting infrastructure such as buildings, cables, roadways,*
 - *Security fencing, CCTV masts and lighting*
 - *Concealment of geomorphological or archaeological features*
 - *Decline in quality of landscape.”*
- 2.1.25 Landscape Strategies and Guidelines for Solar Farms in this Landscape Type are to:
- Prevent proposals for solar farms that would impact negatively on landscape character and/or intrude into views;
 - Ensure a comprehensive LVIA is undertaken (including potential cumulative effects);
 - Avoid proposals that would result in the loss or harm to landscape features such as Strip Lynchets, hedgerows and walls;
 - Ensure a glint/glare assessment is undertaken to determine the heliographic impact on receptors;
 - Reduce landscape impact with appropriate screening;
 - Bury cables underground and seek opportunities to bury existing overhead cables;
 - Keep supporting infrastructure to a minimum and ensure it is in keeping with landscape character;
 - Ensure removal and restoration on temporary construction access;

- Avoid the inclusion of any security lighting proposals;
- Seek appropriate landscape enhancement to field boundaries and margins within solar farm development proposals; and
- Promote the use of roof space for photovoltaic panels particularly on modern farm buildings.

LCT 14 Cornbrash Lowlands

2.1.26 *“The Cornbrash Lowlands provide the transition from the Dip-Slope Lowland of the south Cotswolds to the flatter, more open landscapes to the south-east, though only two small areas of this character type occur within the AONB. It is a very gently undulating, rural landscape that offers wide views over productive farmland with vertical elements such as pylons having a strong presence. A network of tributary streams in shallow valleys run south-east to the River Avon. Rich, fertile soils derived from the underlying cornbrash geology support a predominance of arable farming, with some pastoral land bordering water courses. Fields are medium to large in size, bounded by intermittent hedgerows and the occasional stone wall. Woodland is infrequent and mainly confined to geometric plantations. Nucleated villages, hamlets and farms make up the dispersed pattern of settlement.*

2.1.27 The Cornbrash Lowlands landscape type extends beyond the eastern perimeter of the Cotswolds Dip-Slope Lowland. Within the boundary of the AONB, the areas of land classified as Cornbrash Lowland is very limited and confined to two separate sections in the vicinity of Biddestone and immediately to the west of Malmesbury. An examination of the wider context of the landscape that adjoins the Cotswolds AONB provides a better understanding of the setting of the designated area and the potential effects arising from landscape change and development within these adjacent landscapes. Therefore, the descriptions below apply to areas of Cornbrash Lowland Landscape Character Type within the AONB, but consider their wider landscape setting.

2.1.28 The Cornbrash Lowlands form a transition from the South Cotswolds Lowlands area of Dip-Slope Lowland to the flatter and more open landscapes to the south-east, beyond the AONB. The area forms part of the catchment of the upper River Avon and its tributaries, which have dissected the area to form a subdued, gently undulating topography with occasional very low hillocks rising above the general landform. The rich and fertile soils derived from the underlying Cornbrash Formation that extends across the area, support a land use focused on arable cultivation, together with more limited pastoral areas, principally utilising wetter areas of land bordering water courses. The area has a predominantly rural character derived from the expanse of cultivated arable fields, and a

dispersed pattern of small villages, hamlets and farms. Intermittent woodlands, mainly geometric in form, and comprising both broadleaved, and mixed coniferous and broadleaf trees, extend across the area. These provide local enclosure and landmarks within an otherwise undistinguished agricultural landscape.

2.1.29 Key features of the Landscape Type include:

- Flat or very gently undulating landform with occasional low hills;
- Occasional wide views over productive farmland limited only by small farm copses and woodlands;
- Vertical elements such as hedgerow trees and pylons gain visual prominence;
- Network of tributary streams draining eastwards occupy shallow valleys with course of narrow
- Streams marked by alder and other wetland tree species; fertile soils derived from the Cornbrash Formation bedrock;
- Predominance of arable farming together with some pastoral land mainly bordering water courses;
- Medium to large scale rectilinear fields with intermittent hedgerows and occasional stone walls; dispersed settlement pattern of mainly nucleated villages, hamlets and farms;
- Infrequent woodland cover of mainly geometric broadleaf and coniferous plantations;
- Network of principal roads surround or cross the area but have limited effect on the quiet settled rural character; and
- Quiet rural lanes bordered by tall hedgerows, narrow grass verges and drainage ditches that weave through the landscape.

2.1.30 There are two Landscape Character Areas within the Cornbrash Lowlands. The Scheme adjoins the West Malmesbury Lowland Farmland Landscape Character Area 14B which is described below:

LCA 14B West Malmesbury Lowland Farmland

2.1.31 This character area to the west of Malmesbury comprises part of the valley of the upper reaches of the River Avon, into which flow a number of small tributaries. Slope orientation and the general grain of the gently undulating or shallow falls of the landform have been largely determined by this drainage pattern. Thus, to the north and south of the river, there is a general fall to the south-east and north-east, respectively. This is a quiet

rural area dominated by arable farming although improved permanent pastures are prevalent in low lying areas bordering river channels. Fields are generally medium to large scale enclosed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. These provide strong vertical elements within an otherwise flat landscape. A number of woodlands extend across the southern side of the River Avon and comprise a mix of small geometric coniferous farm plantations, and broadleaved woodland in the vicinity of the River Avon. A number of these are ancient in origin. Parkland trees and shelter belts contribute significantly to woodland cover in the character area, with three parks located in close proximity to each other bordering the Sherston section of the Avon valley.

- 2.1.32 In view of the limited extent of the character area, settlement is sparse and confined to the hamlets of Foxley Green and Easton Grey and the village of Brokenborough which is located at the northern perimeter of the character area. All are sited at crossing points over the river. At Easton Grey, for example, a cluster of whitewashed rubble stone houses are located adjacent to the stone bridge that crosses the river. Beyond these small villages, settlement consists of isolated farms. To the east the ancient town of Malmesbury borders the character area.

Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (2016) for the LCT14 Cornbrash Pastoral Lowlands

- 2.1.33 The Cotswolds National Landscape also provides Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for LCT 14 Cornbrash Pastoral Lowlands LCT 11 Dip slope Lowland.
- 2.1.34 On Potential Landscape Implications; for Solar Farms in this Landscape Type the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines states:
- Industrialisation of the rural landscape;
 - Change of character due to colour and texture and heliographic glint
 - Loss of seasonal change in the landscape;
 - Loss of characteristic agricultural landscape;
 - Damage to and loss of landscape features such as Ridge and Furrow, Strip Lynchets, trees and dry stone walls;
 - Impact of supporting infrastructure such as buildings, cables, roadways, security fencing, CCTV masts and lighting;
 - Concealment of geomorphological or archaeological features; and
 - Decline in quality of landscape.

2.1.35 Landscape Strategies and Guidelines for Solar Farms in this Landscape Type are to:

- Prevent proposals for solar farms that will impact negatively on landscape character and/or intrude into views;
- Ensure a comprehensive LVIA is undertaken (including potential cumulative effects);
- Avoid proposals that would result in the loss or harm to landscape features such as Strip Lynchets, hedgerows and walls;
- Ensure a glint/glare assessment is undertaken to determine the heliographic impact on receptors;
- Reduce landscape impact with appropriate screening;
- Bury cables underground and seek opportunities to bury existing overhead cables;
- Keep supporting infrastructure to a minimum and ensure it is in keeping with landscape character;
- Ensure removal and restoration on temporary construction access;
- Avoid the inclusion of any security lighting proposals;
- Seek appropriate landscape enhancement to field boundaries and margins within solar farm development proposals;
- Promote the use of roof space for photovoltaic panels particularly on modern farm buildings.

Site Character

2.1.36 Lime Down A to C and the Cable Route Corridor are separated by varying distances and therefore from a landscape and visual perspective Lime Down A-C is considered to have varying interconnecting effects on the local landscape. The Lime Down A-C within the Study Areas are shown on the **ES Volume 2, Figure 8-1: Study Area [EN010168/APP/6.2]** series and the associated landscape baseline for the individual Solar PV Sites are shown in the **Volume 2, Figure 8-6: Landscape Receptors [EN010168/APP/6.2]** series are described below.

Lime Down A

2.1.37 Lime Down A is located approximately 240 m to the southeast of the small village of Sherston which is situated on the eastern edge of, but inside of the Cotswolds National Landscape. The village is situated approximately 8 km west of main town of Malmesbury. The area of Lime Down A is 94 ha

and the area is entirely in agricultural use. The area consists of parcels of farmland either side of the road running between Sherston and the Fosse Way (Roman Road) to the east and Commonwood Lane, a no through road to the west. Refer to **Volume 2, Figure 8-1-1: Study Area [EN010168/APP/6.2]**.

- 2.1.38 The land broadly slopes up from east to west from 105 m to 115 m elevation. The nearest properties are located at Lordswood Farm, Ladyswood Farm and Southfields. The land is characterised by agricultural fields separated by hedgerows and scattered trees. To the south blocks of woodland surrounding Lordswood House provide separation between Lime Down A and C.
- 2.1.39 The topography to the north of the area falls steeply towards the River Avon (Sherston Branch) before rising towards the village of Sherston which has a designated Conservation Area.
- 2.1.40 There are four Public Rights of Way (PRoW) located on the boundary or within Lime Down A. Landscape designations in and around Lime Down A are shown on in **Volume 2, Figure 8-6-1: Landscape Receptors [EN010168/APP/6.2]** and are described below:

Scheduled Monuments

- 2.1.41 There are no Scheduled Monuments within Lime Down A. Within the 1 Km Study Area there is one Scheduled Monument:
- Earthwork, (180 m) west of Sherson parish church. List entry number 1004703.

Conservation Area

- 2.1.42 Sherston Conservation Area covers the historic core of the village to the north of Lime Down A.

Listed Buildings

- 2.1.43 There are no listed buildings within Lime Down A. Those in closest proximity include:
- Widley's Farmhouse Grade II to the west List entry number: 1,199,103;
 - New Barn at Widley's Farmhouse, to the west, List entry number: 1,356,005; and
 - 15 Thompson's Hill, List entry number 1,199,883.
- 2.1.44 There is a concentration of listed buildings within Sherston Conservation Area (nearest distance-580 m to the north west) and in the village of Norton (nearest distance 1800 m to the east).

- 2.1.45 In Sherston the Grade 1 Listed Church of the Holy Cross, List entry number 1,023,223 is a locally prominent feature of the landscape. In Norton the Grade II* Norton Manor: List entry number 1,023,215 is noted. All listed buildings in Norton are visually separated from Lime Down A by woodland.

Ancient Woodlands

- 2.1.46 There are no Ancient Woodlands within Lime Down A. Lord's Wood to the south of Lime Down A is Ancient Replanted Woodland.

Ecological Designations

- 2.1.47 There are no Ecological Designations associated with Lime Down A.

Landscape Character

- 2.1.48 Lime Down A is situated within the Cotswolds National Character Area; the Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands (LCA 16A) at the county level; the Hullavington Rolling Lowland (LCA 8) at the local level; and it adjoins the South and Mid Cotswolds Lowland (LCA 11A) and the West Malmesbury Lowland Farmland (LCA 14B) as defined in the Cotswolds National Landscape Character Assessment. **Refer to Volume 2, Figure 8-5 series [EN010168/APP/6.2].**

Lime Down B

- 2.1.49 Lime Down B consists of parcels of farmland located to the east of Fosse Way; located approximately 300 m to the north and west of the village of Norton, and approximately 180 m to the south of Foxley to the north, where there are some isolated residential properties. The western part of the Solar PV Site is relatively flat at a height of approximately 100 m, with the eastern part sloping away to the east to a height of approximately 85 m. Refer to **Volume 2, Figure 8-1-2: Study Area [EN010168/APP/6.2].**
- 2.1.50 Malmesbury is the nearest major settlement and is located approximately 3.4 km to the north-east of Lime Down B. Sherston lies to the west and the hamlet of Easton Grey. is sited approximately 1.3 km to the north.
- 2.1.51 Foxley Road runs east to west approximately 180 m north of Lime Down B at its nearest point. Honey Lane bounds part of the south-east of Lime Down B. The south-west site boundary is bounded by an unnamed road between Norton to the south and Easton Grey to the north. The Fosse Way forms a distinctively straight boundary to the west of the area. Including the Fosse way (SHER 37) there are seven PRoW located on Lime Down B.

2.1.52 The area of Lime Down B is 114 ha and the area is entirely in agricultural use. The land is characterised by agricultural fields separated by hedgerows, with small irregular blocks of woodland in the wider area.

2.1.53 Landscape designations in and around Lime Down B are shown on **Volume 2, Figure 8-6-2: Landscape Receptors [EN010168/APP/6.2]** and are described below:

Scheduled Monuments

2.1.54 There are no Scheduled Monuments within Lime Down B. Within the 1 km Study Area there is one Scheduled Monument:

- Early medieval settlement, palace, church and Bronze Age ring ditches 340 m east of Cowage Farm, List entry number 1,018,389 situated 995 m to the east of Lime Down B.

Listed Buildings

2.1.55 There are no listed buildings within Lime Down B. Those in closest proximity include two clusters in Foxley Green to the north of the area and in the village of Norton to the south as follows:

- Grade I Parish Church List entry number 1023219;
- Two Grade II unidentified monuments in the churchyard, 2 to 3 metres south of the tower, Parish Church List entry number 1199088;
- Grade II Foxley House List entry number 1199062;
- Grade II Foxley Manor List entry number 1023221; and
- In Norton the Grade II* Norton Manor: List entry number 1,023,215 is noted. All the listed buildings in Norton are visually separated from Lime Down B by woodland.

Conservation Area

2.1.56 Sherston Conservation is located approximately 2350 m to the north west of Lime Down B.

Ancient Woodlands

2.1.57 There are two ancient woodlands within the 1 km Study area of Lime Down B. These include:

- Cowage Grove, 647 m to the east of Lime Down B, designated as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland; and
- Bradfield Wood, 960 m to the southeast of Lime Down B, designated as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland.

Ecological Designations

- 2.1.58 There are no Ecological Designations associated with Lime Down B.

Landscape Character

- 2.1.59 The western part of Lime Down B is situated within the Cotswolds NCA and the eastern part is situated within the Avon Vales NCA. The whole of Lime Down B is situated within the Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands (LCA 16A) at the county level and the Hullavington Rolling Lowland (LCA 8) at the local level. To the north it is in close proximity to the West Malmesbury Lowland Farmland (LCA 14B) as defined in the Cotswolds National Landscape Character Assessment. Refer to **ES Volume 2, Figure 8-5: Landscape Character Areas [EN010168/APP/6.2]** series.

Lime Down C

- 2.1.60 Lime Down C consists of parcels of land both to the east and west of Fosse Way, which lies to the east of the village of Alderton. Its church spire within the Conservation area is visible in some views within Lime Down C. The boundary of the Cotswolds National Landscape follows the southwestern parcels of land. To the south the Great Western railway line runs through the area. Refer to **ES Volume 2, Figure 8-1-3: Study Area [EN010168/APP/6.2]**.
- 2.1.61 The land is relatively flat at a height of approximately 120 m AOD though it predominantly slopes down to the east. Gauze Brook, a tributary of the River Avon runs east-west through the area giving rise to gently sloping land in its vicinity.
- 2.1.62 The area of Lime Down C is 318 ha and the area is entirely in agricultural use. There are hedgerows and some woodland blocks scattered outside Lime Down C.
- 2.1.63 Landscape designations in and around Lime Down C are shown on **ES Volume 2, Figure 8-6-3: Landscape Receptors [EN010168/APP/6.2]** and are described below:

Scheduled Monuments

- 2.1.64 There are no Scheduled Monuments within Lime Down C or within the 1 km Study Area of Lime Down C.

Listed Buildings

- 2.1.65 There are no listed buildings within Lime Down C. Those in closest proximity include a cluster in the village of Alderton to the east of the area as follows:

- Grade II* Church of St Giles List entry number 1,022,362 and four Grade II monuments with the churchyard;
- Grade II The Old Vicarage List entry number 1,363,841;
- Grade II Hughes Farmhouse List entry number 1,022,367;
- Grade II Fosse Lodge at the southern corner of Lime Down C (parcel C10), List entry number 1,198,366;
- Grade II Farleaze Farmhouse to the south of parcel C25 and to the north of C14, List entry number 1,251,985; and
- Grade II Surrendell Farmhouse List entry number 1,198,980; Barn List entry number 1,023,212 and Shelter Barn List entry number 1,283,578 to the south of Lime Down C (parcel C15).

Conservation Area

- 2.1.66 Alderton Conservation Area is located 185 m to the west of Lime Down C (Field C6). The spire of St Giles Church in Alderton is a visible feature of the landscape.

Ancient Woodlands

- 2.1.67 There are two Ancient woodlands within the 1 km Study Area of Lime Down C. These include:
- Surrendel Wood- Ancient and Semi-Natural to the southern boundary; and
 - Lord's Wood-Ancient Replanted Woodland to the northern boundary.

Ecological Designations

- 2.1.68 There are no Ecological Designations associated with Lime Down C.

Landscape Character

- 2.1.69 Lime Down C is situated within the Cotswolds NCA; within the Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands (LCA 16A) at the county level and the Hullavington Rolling Lowland (LCA 8) at the local level. To the west adjoins the South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands (LCA 11A) as defined in the Cotswolds National Landscape Character Assessment. Refer to **ES Volume 2, Figure 8-5: Landscape Character Area [EN010168/APP/6.2]** series.

Cable Route Corridor

Scheduled Monuments

2.1.70 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the Cable Route Corridor Study Area.

Conservation Area

2.1.71 There are no Conservations Areas within the Cable Route Corridor However, the following Conservation Areas are within the Cable Route Study Area:

- Grittleton;
- Sevington;
- Yatton Keynall;
- Corsham; and
- Easton.

Listed Buildings

2.1.72 There are a number of listed buildings within the Cable Route Corridor Study Area. The majority of these are clustered within Conservation Areas or are isolated farmhouses.

Ancient Woodlands

2.1.73 There are no ancient woodlands within the Cable Route Corridor.

Ecological Designations

2.1.74 There are no Ecological Designations within the Cable Route Corridor.

Landscape Character

2.1.75 With reference to the Published Landscape Character Assessments described in Section 8 of this report, the 500m CRC Study Area is situated within the following Landscape Character Areas as summarised in **Table 4** below:

Table 4: Summary of Landscape Character Assessments

National Level	Natural England - National Character Area Profiles
	Refer to Volume 2, Figure 8-5-1: National and Regional Landscape Character Areas
	NCA Profile: 107 - Cotswolds
	NCA Profile: 117 - Avon Vales

Regional (county) Level	Wiltshire County Landscape Character Assessment Refer to Volume 2, Figure 8-5-1: National and Regional Landscape Character Areas
	LCT 16: Limestone Lowland LCA16A: Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands
Local Level	Cotswolds National Landscape Character Assessment Refer to Volume 2, Figure 8-5-2: Cotswolds National Landscape Local Character Areas
	LCT 11: Dip Slope Lowland LCA 11A: South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands
	LCT14: Cornbrash Lowlands LCA 14A: Biddestone Lowland Farmland
	The North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment Refer to Volume 2, Figure 8-5-3: North and West Wiltshire Local Landscape Character Areas
	Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland LCT LCA 7 - Sherston Dip Slope
	Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland LCT LCA 8 - Hullavington Rolling Lowland
	LCT 10: Limestone Valley LCA 10A: By Brook Limestone Valley
	Lowland River Farmland LCT LCA 11 - Avon Valley Lowland
	The West Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment
	LCT A: Limestone Lowland LCA A3 - Broughton Gifford Limestone Lowland
	LCT C: Open Clay Vale LCA C2 - Semington Open Clay Vale

2.1.76 For this assessment the National Character Areas are deemed to be at too great a scale to be a useful means of assessing the landscape effects on the CRC.

2.1.77 At the county level, the CRC Study Area is situated wholly within the LCA16A: Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands.

- 2.1.78 At the local level (as defined by the North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment), the CRC Study Area is situated predominantly within LCA 8 - Hullavington Rolling Lowland, with the western fringes at the northern end of the corridor extending into LCA 7 - Sherston Dip Slope, the southern end of the corridor extending into LCA 10A: By Brook Limestone Valley and the eastern fringes to the south of the corridor extending into the LCA 11 - Avon Valley Lowland.
- 2.1.79 To the very south the CRC Study Area is within LCA A3 - Broughton Gifford Limestone Lowland with a very small fringe to the east within LCA C2 - Semington Open Clay Vale as defined by the West Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment.
- 2.1.80 A very small part of the CRC Study Area is within the boundary of the CNL. The majority of the Study Area that falls within the CNL is within LCT 11: Dip Slope Lowland with a very small area to the south within LCT14: Cornbrash Lowlands. The CRC is not located within the CNL.
- 2.1.81 Detailed descriptions of the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) are provided in Volume 1: Chapter 8 **[EN010168/APP/6.1]** and the published assessments are provided in Appendix 8.4 Landscape Character Area Descriptions **[EN010168/APP/6.3]**.
- 2.1.82 The land within the CRC Study Area is predominantly agricultural in use as it intentionally avoids settlements and woodlands. The landscape is characterised by medium to large agricultural fields, criss-crossed by minor roads, B4039, the A420, the A4 Bath Road, the B3353 and the M1 and the Great Western Main Line Railway

Visual Baseline

Visual Amenity

- 2.1.83 General visual amenity is experienced by people and notably the views that people have and their visual amenity, can be defined as the overall pleasantness or attractiveness of a place and the views they enjoy of their surroundings. Amenity is something considered to benefit a location, contribute to its enjoyment, and thereby increase its value.
- 2.1.84 The visual amenity experienced by people (visual receptors) in the locality of the Solar PV Site differs according to many factors. The visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include: residents at home (private Viewpoints), people engaged in outdoor recreation (including use of PRoW), visitors to heritage assets and other attractions, travellers on recognised scenic routes (public Viewpoints) and people at their workplace where views are an important contributor to the

setting and quality of their working life. The visual receptors least susceptible to change include views experienced from places of work where workers and visitors are concentrating on their day-to-day activities, views experienced by users of rail and main roads travelling at high speed or local roads where the focus is upon the road ahead owing to traffic conditions. For full details of visual susceptibility please refer to the LVIA Methodology as set out within **ES Volume 3, Appendix 8-1: LVIA Methodology [EN010168/APP/6.3]**.

- 2.1.85 Site visits were undertaken over a number of days, between 31 January and 14 February 2024. The weather was variable with some clear days with good visibility and some cloudy and misty days with poor visibility. Trees were predominantly not in leaf representing a worst-case scenario in terms of the screening afforded by vegetation. A second series of site visits were undertaken in July 2024 and Summer 2025.
- 2.1.86 The following section outlines visual amenity for the Lime Down Solar PV Sites and identifies Viewpoints included within the **ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [EN010168/APP/6.1]**.

Visual Character

- 2.1.87 The Scheme is visible from the network of minor roads, byways, bridleways and footpaths within the Study Area which includes the CNL to the west of the Site. Most of the Study Area is relatively flat although there are gently sloping areas predominantly associated with water courses and there is a general fall from the west across the Cotswolds dip slope higher ground within the High Wold to the Avon valley lowlands to the east.
- 2.1.88 The landscape consists of an irregular pattern of fields of varying scales which are enclosed by predominantly low chipped hedgerows with occasional mature trees. Blocks of woodland provide further enclosure in some places. Views from roads, byways and bridleways are generally short distance from the boundaries of the individual field parcels where hedgerows form strong boundaries along these routes. Footpaths tend to follow internal field margins or cross individual fields where views are more open. Field boundary hedgerows tend to limit views from these footpaths where the land is flat, whilst longer distance views are afforded where fields are sloping.
- 2.1.89 The visual character for Lime Down A, B and C which are within the setting of the CNL are described below.

Lime Down A

Visual Amenity

- 2.1.90 Lime Down A is located to the south of Sherston which sits on high ground to the north of the River Avon Sherston Branch. The river here is in a steep sided valley which then rises to approximately 124 m AOD to the west of Field A1 (Volume 2, Figure 8-3-1: Landform Lime Down A). The Holy Cross church tower in Sherston is visible from the higher ground at the northwest corner of Field A1 where Footpath WT|SHER|15 crosses the field. The topography then falls southwards towards a small stream near the boundary of Lime Down C.
- 2.1.91 The majority of Lime Down A is situated between Commonwood Lane to the west and Sherston Road to the East and is dissected north south by Bridleway (BW) SHER 16 between Sherston and Lordswood Farm. Footpath (FP SHER 17) is situated to the south of the area. Fields A11 and A12. Visual Receptors Lime Down A are situated to the east of Sherston Road and are bounded by Foxley Road to the north and FP SHER 14 to the west. These two field parcels slope to the north and northeast.
- 2.1.92 Visual Receptors of Lime Down A are shown on **ES Volume 2, Figure 8-7-1 Visual Receptors [EN010168/APP/6.2]** Lime Down A.

Visual relationship to Cotswolds National Landscape

- 2.1.93 Fields A1, A11 and A12 adjoin the boundary of the Cotswolds National Landscape to the south of Sherston. The River Avon forms a distinct west-east valley with steep sided slopes between the village and the Solar PV Site. The lanes of Bustlers Hill and Thompsons Hill climb up the valley side from the village to meet Foxley Road beyond its crest. The topography of the transitional dip slope limits views towards the Solar PV Site from Sherston and the wider National Landscape However, where the valley sides are less steep to the east there are cross valley views to Pinkney Wood and Old Wood and Lime Down A beyond, in views from the urban edge of Sherston.

Lime Down B

Visual Amenity

- 2.1.94 Lime Down B is located between Foxley to the north and Norton to the south and extends to the east to meet the Fosse Way, To the east it adjoins Kennelfield Cottage Lane and to the south by Honey Lane. The topography is relatively flat but is dissected by a series of streams/ditches. Which generally flow from the southwest to the northeast towards the River Avon. A small stream/ditch runs north to the south and east of

Baker's Gorse to the west of Foxley Manor. Another stream runs west to east through Norton to the south of Honey Lane. This gives rise to some gently sloping topography within the area.

2.1.95 There are views of Lime Down B from the minor roads within the Area, The Fosse Way (BOAT 37) and from FP NORT 1 between Norton and Foxley. Views from a number of footpaths to the west of the Fosse Way are limited as the topography slopes north westwards away from the Solar PV Site. The Fosse Way is a long-distance path which is often lined with vegetation. Due to the topography, there are some longer distance views across the landscape of Lime Down B.

2.1.96 Visual Receptors of Lime Down B are shown on **ES Volume 2: Figure 8-7-2: Visual Receptors Lime Down B [EN010168/APP/6.2]**.

Visual relationship to Cotswolds National Landscape

2.1.97 The boundary of the National Landscape follows Foxley Road to the north of Lime Down B. A combination of gently undulating topography associated with intervening watercourses and the River Avon and strong hedgerows limits intervisibility between Lime Down B and the wider Cotswolds National Landscape. There are fleeting views towards Lime Down B from Foxley Road where Lime Down B is either screened by intervening vegetation (B6) or at some distance away (B12). From slightly higher ground to the north, near Foxley Grove there are longer distance views beyond intervening vegetation towards Lime Down B.

Lime Down C

Visual Amenity

2.1.98 Visual amenity within Lime Down C is varied. The eastern part of the Solar PV Site is relatively enclosed by irregular blocks of woodland on either side of the Fosse Way which diagonally crosses the area and connects to a number of footpaths which heads west to join Commonwood Lane and its extending byway. To the east of Common Wood Lane and byway the landscape is more open. The topography here consists of gently rising slopes to either side of an indistinct valley. Fields C1 to C3 (refer to **ES Volume 2, Figure 2-2: Elements of the Site [EN010168/APP/6.2]**) are situated on a north facing slope and are visible from the north. The spire of St Giles Church in Alderton is also a visible feature of the landscape from here.

2.1.99 Fields C6 to C10 are located on flatter higher ground with the railway line cutting through the area. It is tunnelled under the unnamed road to Alderton and has limited visibility in this location. There are no PRoW in this part of Lime Down C and views are limited to the adjoining unnamed road which is also the AONB boundary. Strong hedgerows predominantly

screen views although there are occasional views through hedgerow gaps and field entrances.

- 2.1.100 Visual Receptors of Lime Down C are shown on **ES Volume 2: Figure 8-7-3. Visual Receptors Lime Down C [EN010168/APP/6.2]**.

Visual relationship to Cotswolds National Landscape

- 2.1.101 The Cotswolds National Landscape boundary adjoins the western edge of Lime Down C at Fields C1, C6, C8 and C10 along an unnamed road to the east of Alderton. Field C6 is located on relatively flat land on a low ridge sloping down to the north and west. Fields C1, C2 and C3 slope north are clearly visible from FP LUCL 35 which runs parallel to these parcels to the north (refer to **ES Volume 2, Figure 2-2: Elements of the Site [EN010168/APP/6.2]**). The topography also slopes down towards LUCK 41 to the west which follows a stream/ditch to Alderton. The rising landform of the transitional dip slope and strong hedgerows to the intervening field boundaries limit views from these nearby footpaths within the National Landscape.

Cable Route Corridor

- 2.1.102 Visual Receptors within the Cable Route Corridor are shown on **ES Volume 2, Figure 8-7-6: Visual Receptors [EN010168/APP/6.2] series** and are summarised below. The methodology set out within **ES Volume 3, Appendix 8-1: LVIA Methodology [EN010168/APP/6.3]** has been followed to identify detailed baseline information, which is presented below.

Visual relationship to Cotswolds National Landscape

- 2.1.103 Part of the eastern extent of the Cotswolds National Landscape is within the 500m CRC Study Area as it passes between the villages of Grittleton and Yatton Keynell. The 50m CRC is not within the CNL.

Public Rights of Way

- 2.1.104 Numerous PRoW are located within and directly cross the Cable Route Corridor and its 500m Study Area. These typically run east to west across the arable landscape connecting the small rural settlements. The Cable Route Corridor avoids any Recreational Routes or National Trails.

Highways

- 2.1.105 There are a number of small lanes which surround and pass through the Cable Route Corridor. These are typically local unnamed roads and minor roads.
- 2.1.106 The Cable Route Search Corridor also passes across the following A roads and Motorways:

- The M4;
- A420; and
- A4, Bath Road

Cycleways

- 2.1.107 The Wiltshire Cycleway (between Malmesbury and Yatton Keynell) follows the western extent of the Cable Route Corridor. Study Area, north of Yatton Keynell The route also follows the boundary of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Settlements

- 2.1.108 The Cable Route Corridor passes alongside a number of small rural settlements including the villages of Grittleton, Easton Piercy, Yatton Keynell, Biddlestone, Gastard, and Whitley. It also passes the larger settlements of Chippenham, Corsham and Melksham.

Residential Properties

- 2.1.109 All Residential Properties within the Cable Route Study Area have been scoped into the LVIA. A scoping exercise identified those receptors which would have the potential for change in views and these have been assessed in full.

2.2 LVIA Assessment Material

- 2.2.1 The LVIA assessment material is described in full in Section 8 of the **ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [EN010168/APP/6.1]**.
- 2.2.2 Zone of Theoretic Visibility mapping and Viewpoints and Visualisations are included in the ES. For this standalone Appendix only viewpoints to and from the CNL are included and have been informed through consultation with the CNL who requested 6 additional viewpoints following Statutory Consultation These are referred to as viewpoints CNL A-F. Another additional viewpoint from a gateway on Alderton Road was requested following a Site visit in Feb 2025 attended by the Applicant's Landscape and Visual consultants and the CNLB. This viewpoint is referred to as CNL G.
- 2.2.3 Verified Photography was undertaken in Winter 2024 and in summer 2025 which are included within **ES Volume 2 Figure 8-14: Baseline Photography and Photomontages [EN010168/APP/6.2]** series.
- 2.2.4 Viewpoint selection has followed good practice guidance and in particular paragraphs 6.18 to 6.20 of GLVIA3. The Viewpoints proposed are used to aid the description of effects on both Landscape and Visual resources and have been utilised for visual assessment purposes.

- 2.2.5 The selection of Viewpoints was made on the basis of the following types of publicly accessible Viewpoints, as follows:
- Representative Viewpoints (representative of views from a particular PRoW);
 - Specific Viewpoints (such as key views from a specific visitor attraction);
 - Illustrative Viewpoints (chosen to demonstrate a particular effect/specific issue);
 - Any important sequential views, for example, along key recreational or transport routes; and
 - Any additional viewpoints that have been requested by statutory consultees during Statutory Consultation.
- 2.2.6 All viewpoints have been taken from publicly accessible land during both summer and winter months to ensure a worst-case scenario is assessed and illustrated.
- 2.2.7 Consultation with the relevant consultees and planning authorities has played an important part in selecting the viewpoints to support the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) process. This consultation process has played a role in gathering specific information about the Sites, the Cable Route Corridor and the associated views. Public Consultation also played a role in canvassing feedback from the public on the visibility of the Scheme. This process has been a valuable tool in seeking an understanding and agreement about views and to highlight the local interests and values that may otherwise have been overlooked. This commitment and engagement has been undertaken in a genuinely open and responsive process through a series of workshops and public consultation events as set out in Section 8.2 (Consultation) of the **ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [EN010168/APP/6.1]**. One of the objectives of the consultation has been to clearly identify those matters of visibility which are important to stakeholders to inform the LVIA process.

Viewpoints

- 2.2.8 There are a total of 67 viewpoints covering the Study Areas for the Sites and the Cable Route Corridor. These viewpoints comprise 57 initial viewpoints selected for the purpose of the assessment and likely to be affected by the Scheme and then additional viewpoints provided as part of Consultation. The locations of the viewpoints have been subject to consultation with the relevant consultees and planning authorities through Statutory Consultation, where a total of 10 additional viewpoints have

been included and photography undertaken, these are identified as Viewpoint Number CNL A-G and WC1-3. The viewpoint locations are shown on **ES Volume 2, Figures 8-10-1 to 8-10-5: Viewpoints** and **Figure 8-14: Baseline Photography and Photomontages [EN010168/APP/6.2]**.

2.2.9 Table 6 lists the relevant Viewpoint locations where there is visibility to and from the CNL. The table should be read in conjunction with **ES Volume 2, Figures 8-10-1 to 8-10-5: Viewpoints [EN010168/APP/6.2]**.

Table 5: Relevant Viewpoint Locations to and from the CNL

Viewpoint Reference Number	Receptor Represented by the Viewpoint	Type of Receptor	To or From CNL
VP2	Junction of Unnamed Road (TR055) and FP SHER 17 (TP027)	Walkers, Motorists	To CNL from Site A
VP3	Junction of Foxley Road (TR044) and FP SHER 14 (TR029)	Walkers, Motorists,	From CNL to Site A
VP4	FP SHER 12 (TP026)	Walkers, Residents	From CNL to Site A
VP5	PF SHER 26 (TP022)	Residents, Walkers	From CNL to Site A
VP6	Unnamed Lane (TR044)	Walkers; Motorists	From CNL to Site A
VP7	BW SHER 16 (TP097)	Walkers, Horse riders	To CNL from Site A
VP10	Honey Lane (TR202)	Walkers, Motorists; Residents	To CNL from Site B
VP18	Foxley Road (TR206) and WT NORT 1 (TP037)	Walkers, Motorists, Residents	From CML to Site B
VP25	Fosse Way (TR145) and Alderton Road (TR038)	Walkers, Motorists	From CNL to Site C
VP26	Junction of Church Road (TR114) Unnamed lanes (TR040) and (TR039)	Walkers; Motorists	From CNL to Site C
VP27	BOAT LUCK 57 and FP SHER 18	Walkers; Horse Riders	To CNL from Site C
VP30	Footpath WT LUCK 35 (TP077)	Walkers and residents	To CNL from near Site C
VP31	Footpath WT LUCK 35 (TP077)	Walkers	From CNL to Site C
VP32	Footpath WT LUCK 41 (TP071)	Walkers	From CNL to Site C
VP33	Footpath WT LUCK 45 (TP080)	Walkers	From CNL to Site C

Viewpoint Reference Number	Receptor Represented by the Viewpoint	Type of Receptor	To or From CNL
VP CNL A	Footpath WT LUCK 46 (TP079)	Walkers	From CNL to Site C
VP CNL B	Footpath WT SHER 19 (TP083)	Walkers	From CNL to Site A and C
VP CNL C	Footpath SHER 15 (TP027)	Walkers	To CNL from A11
VP CNL D	Bridleway WT NORT 2 (TP038)	Walkers and Horse riders	From CNL to Site A
VP CNL E	Footpath WT SHER 10 (TP030)	Walkers	From CNL to Site A
VP CNL F	Footpath WT SHER 13	Walkers	From Site B to CNL
VP CNL G	Alderton Road (TR038)	Walkers, Motorists,	From CNL to Site C
VP WC1	Church Road, Sherston, just south of Widley's Farm (TR040)	Walkers, Motorists,	From CNL to Site A

LVIA Assessment Material

Viewpoints and Visualisations

2.2.10 A suite of Viewpoints has been identified through desk studies which were verified through fieldwork. Verified Photography was undertaken in Winter 2024 and in summer 2025 which are included within **ES Volume 2, Figure 8-14: Baseline Photography and Photomontages [EN010168/APP/6.2]**. Consultation has been undertaken with Officers at Wiltshire Council and the Cotswolds National Landscape Authority agreeing to the locations of these Viewpoints. Wiltshire Officers requested an additional 3 Viewpoints and Cotswolds National Landscape Authority requested an additional 7 Viewpoints which are included. Additional Verified Photography was undertaken to include all Viewpoints, including those requested by consultees.

2.2.11 The selection of Viewpoints was made on the basis of the following types of publicly accessible Viewpoints, as follows:

- Representative Viewpoints (representative of views from a particular PRow);
- Specific Viewpoints (such as key views from a specific visitor attraction);

- Illustrative Viewpoints (chosen to demonstrate a particular effect/specific issue);
- Any important sequential views, for example, along key recreational or transport routes; and
- Any additional viewpoints that have been requested by statutory consultees at through consultation.

2.2.12 For the purposes of this ES submission, all viewpoints have been taken from publicly accessible land during both summer and winter months to ensure a worst-case scenario is assessed and illustrated.

2.2.13 For the purposes of the LVIA, all viewpoints have been taken from publicly accessible land during both summer and winter months to ensure a worst-case scenario is assessed and illustrated.

Viewpoints

2.2.14 There are a total of 20 viewpoints included in the LVIA which relate to the CNL. These viewpoints comprise initial viewpoints selected for the purpose of the assessment and likely to be affected by the Scheme and then additional viewpoints provided as part of the Statutory Consultation. The locations of the viewpoints have been subject to consultation with the relevant consultees and planning authorities, where a total of 8 additional viewpoints have been included and photography undertaken, these are identified as Viewpoint Number CNL A-G and WC 1. The viewpoint locations are shown on **ES Volume 2, Figures 8-10-1 to 8-10-5: Viewpoints** and **Figure 8-14: Baseline Photography and Photomontages [EN010168/APP/6.2]**.

2.2.15 During consultation the importance of considering views to and from the CNL was set out.

2.2.16 The following representative views to and from the CNL have been used in the assessment on the CNL. The table shows which Viewpoints have been agreed for AVR 3 visualisations. An AVR Level 3 photomontage is fully rendered, photo-realistic image with texture, shading and reflections as appropriate, showing the location of a proposed development as accurately as possible.

Table 6: Viewpoint Locations

Viewpoint Reference Number	Receptor Represented by the Viewpoint	Type of Receptor	LD Site	AVR 3
VP2	Junction of Unnamed Road and FP SHER 17	Walkers, Motorists	A	YES
VP3	Junction of Foxley Road and FP SHER 14	Walkers, Motorists,	A	YES
VP4	FP SHER 12	Walkers, Residents	A	YES
VP5	PF SHER 26	Residents, Walkers	A	NO
VP6	Unnamed Lane	Walkers; Motorists	A	YES
VP18	Foxley Road	Walkers, Motorists, Residents	B	YES
VP25	Fosse Way and Unnamed Lane near Fosse Lodge	Walkers, Motorists	C	YES
VP26	Unnamed lane	Walkers; Motorists	C	YES
VP30	FP WT LUCK 35	Walkers and residents	C	YES
VP31	FP WT LUCK 35	Walkers	C	YES
VP32	FP WT LUCK 41	Walkers	C	NO
VP33	FP WT LUCK 45	Walkers	C	NO
VP CNL A	Footpath WT LUCK 46	Walkers	C	YES
VP CNL B	Footpath WT SHER 19	Walkers	A & C	YES

Viewpoint Reference Number	Receptor Represented by the Viewpoint	Type of Receptor	LD Site	AVR 3
VP CNL C	Footpath SHER 15	Walkers	A	YES
VP CNL D	Bridleway WT NORT 2	Walkers and Horse riders	B	YES
VP CNL E	Footpath WT SHER 10	Walkers	A & B	YES
VP CNL F	Footpath WT SHER 13	Walkers	A & B	YES
VP CNL G	Alderton Road	Walkers, Motorists,	C	YES
VP WC1	Church Road, Sherston, just south of New Barn.	Walkers, Motorists,	A & C	YES

2.3 Embedded Mitigation

- 2.3.1 The Scheme has been designed, as far as practicable, to avoid and reduce impacts and effects on the Cotswolds National Landscape through the process of embedding measures into the Scheme design. In addition, how the Scheme is constructed, operated and maintained, and decommissioned would be appropriately controlled in order to manage and minimise potential environmental effects (required as a result of legislative requirements and/or standard sectoral practices).
- 2.3.2 Embedded Mitigation is taken into account during the construction, operation (Year 1 and Year 15) and decommissioning stages of the Scheme. Measures are embedded within the design of the Scheme at the outset and depend on the preliminary findings of the LVIA process. The measures are iterative and essentially look to modify the scale and layout of the Scheme and also strive to achieve to raise the bar of acceptability in terms of planning policy compliance. These measures aim to ensure a reasonable balance of viability and to meet with policy expectations.
- 2.3.3 The LVIA assessment process has identified the need for mitigation to avoid and reduce to a minimum any significant adverse landscape and visual impacts, particularly within the CNL.
- 2.3.4 In accordance with the EIA Regulations, the mitigation hierarchy is to prevent/ avoid, mitigate and restore and finally offset or, failing that,

compensate in order to reduce development impacts and control any negative effects on the environment. The LVIA takes this approach to mitigation in the assessment of both the landscape and visual effects.

Avoidance Measures

- 2.3.5 Avoidance measures are incorporated into the design of the scheme in order to reduce development impacts and control any negative effects on the landscape, especially on sensitive receptors such as the Cotswolds National Landscape. These measures include:
- Avoiding development adjacent to the National Landscape where it would affect its setting; and
 - Avoiding development where it would be visually intrusive and affect the character and visual experience of the landscape.
- 2.3.6 Throughout the iterative design process appropriate multipurpose avoidance and mitigation measures have been incorporated into the development of the layout. These mitigation measures have been embedded into the Scheme design and have looked to modify the scale and layout of the Scheme or introduce appropriate interventions in order to reduce significant adverse effects and to ensure compliance with planning policy for the CNL.
- 2.3.7 These measures include the removal of panels within the setting of the CNL in Sites A, B and C where there is a strong visual relationship between the CNL and the Scheme. This includes:
- **Site A:** The northern part of A1, A11 and A12.
 - **Site B:** B12.
 - **Site C:** C1, C6, C8, C9 and the majority of C10.
- 2.3.8 Panels in C2, C3 and C4, where significant visual effects on receptors within the CNL were recorded at PEIR were subsequently removed from the Scheme following Statutory Consultation.

Embedded Mitigation - General Offsets / Buffers

- 2.3.9 The following buffers outlined in **Table 7** below have been embedded into the design of the Scheme to protect the landscape fabric of the Sites. Infrastructure associated with the Scheme is located outside of the buffers listed below with the exception of internal access tracks where exclusion from the buffers is unavoidable.
- 2.3.10 Buffers listed below have been used to create a set of design parameters in which above-ground infrastructure has been located. The distances

listed below are a minimum set distance which have been agreed across disciplines and have been tested throughout the design process.

- 2.3.11 There may be occasions where buffer distances are greater due to site specific requirements for example if a PRow is located on elevated ground with a high level of visibility.

Table 7: Embedded Mitigation: General Offsets / Buffers

Criteria where Buffer Applied	Buffer Size
Ecological Buffers	
All hedgerows and woodland	15m
A ditch or watercourse of any kind	8m
At least one of: Signs of Otter or abundant evidence of Water Vole in the ditch or Watercourse Outlier badger setts	10m
Individual Trees and groups of trees	10m (unless Arboriculture surveys indicate greater Root Protection Area (RPA) is required)
Ancient Woodland	15m
Some minor watercourses (depending on Ecological Value)	15m
Ponds (with no Great Crested Newts)	10m
At least one of: Major watercourses Main badger setts	30m
Ponds containing Great Crested Newts	50m
Bat roosts	To be specified following survey information and detailed within the ES where required.
Schedule 1 bird nests (e.g. Barn Owl, hobby)	To be specified following survey information and detailed within the ES where required.
Other Buffers	
Curtilage of Residential Properties	50m
PRoW (Public Footpath, Bridleway)	15m
Services	6m minimum
Scheme Boundary	5m
Internal offset from fence to panel	4m minimum

Embedded Mitigation- Landscape Design Parameters

- 2.3.12 Embedded mitigation, developed through the iterative design process and integrated or embedded into the project design; standard construction and operational management practices; and additional mitigation, is specifically intended to address significant adverse effects but not built into the Scheme.
- 2.3.13 These ‘embedded mitigation’ measures are secured via the DCO (for example, by specifying that each Work number can only be located on the area shown on the **Works Plans [EN010168/APP/2.3]** or as part **ES Volume 1, Chapter 3: The Scheme [EN010168/APP/6.1]**.
- 2.3.14 Details of the strategic approach that has been adopted for the design of the Scheme have been informed by the strategies and guidelines for the relevant Landscape Character Areas as described in **Section 2.1** of this report, including:
- Statements of Environmental Opportunities for NCA Profile: 107- Cotswolds and NCA Profile: 117- Avon Vales as defined by Natural England;
 - Broad Management Objectives for LCT 16: Limestone Lowland LCA (16A: Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands) as defined by the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment; and
 - Management guidelines and strategy actions for LCA 8: Hullavington Rolling Lowland as defined in the North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment; and
 - Landscape Strategy and Guidelines for LCT 14 Cornbrash Lowlands (LCT 11 Dip Slope Lowland) and LCA 14B West Malmesbury Lowland Farmland (LCA 11A South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands) as defined in the Cotswolds Landscape Character Assessment.
- 2.3.15 The approach to mitigation has also been informed by Wiltshire’s Nature Recovery Strategy and the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan in conjunction with liaison with the project Ecologist and consultation with officers at Wiltshire Council (WC) and the CNLB.
- 2.3.16 The embedded mitigation measures are set out in **Table 8** below.

Table 8: Embedded Mitigation: Landscape Design Parameters

Consideration	Embedded Mitigation	Outcome
Planting Strategy	The approach to mitigation has been to reinforce the existing hedgerows to provide greater	The new planting would provide a more varied landscape in terms of management and vegetation. Overall enhancement and

Consideration	Embedded Mitigation	Outcome
	<p>enclosure to the site and provide screening of the infrastructure.</p> <p>Embedded landscape mitigation provides reinforcement to host landscape fabric, strengthening and reinforcing existing landscape elements of the site in accordance with LCA aims and guidelines.</p>	<p>strengthening of the Local Character Area with new planting and grassland reversion, where appropriate.</p>
Existing Vegetation	<p>Retention of existing woodland/scrub and hedgerow cover (other than where required for access). This vegetation provides a strong visual framework and potentially screens or substantially filters views at ground level towards the Scheme. Existing hedgerows are to be allowed to grow out and will be managed to a height of 4.5m. Hedgerow trees will be encouraged to grow out to add further thickening and growth to field boundaries.</p>	<p>Reinforcement of existing woodland/scrub and hedgerow cover with new planting. The addition of new hedgerow trees or secondary hedgerows as appropriate planted along the length of existing hedges. This new planting provides long term screening, structural benefits to the landscape and wider Green Infrastructure and habitat connectivity benefits.</p>
Riparian Corridors	<p>Existing water corridors have been identified, and new riparian planting has been proposed to enhance these features as they pass through the Sites.</p>	<p>The careful use of scattered tree and hedge planting adjacent to watercourses would reinforce the riparian character in these areas of the landscape.</p>
Lighting	<p>Lighting is not required within the Solar Arrays for the operational phase. Motion sensing security lighting will be provided within substations and within the BESS to be used only for maintenance and security purposes.</p> <p>Temporary site lighting during construction will be required to enable safe working during construction and decommissioning during hours of darkness and will be designed as far as reasonably practicable to minimise potential for light spillage outside the Sites and Cable Route Corridor, particularly towards houses, traffic and ecological habitats.</p>	<p>New planting along the boundary of substations and energy storage areas to filter their presence in the landscape and provide softening and screening to any potential light spill.</p>

Consideration	Embedded Mitigation	Outcome
	<p>Standard good practice measures would be employed to minimise light spill, including glare during construction, operation and decommissioning.</p> <p>There will be no lighting on perimeter fencing.</p>	
Location	The location of the solar panels set back from the site boundary.	The careful use of scattered tree and hedge planting to avoid undue impacts on the open character of the area.
New Planting and Green Infrastructure	Use of Green Infrastructure publications, policy and recognised guidance at the baseline stage to establish a full understanding of the vegetation characteristics of the receiving landscape This has included the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy Consultation Draft, March 2025 and Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan (October 2021. Proximity to local ecological designations and sensitive ecological receptors has been considered and appropriate buffers incorporated into the Scheme where required.	Measures to enhance the landscape framework in keeping with landscape character are explored to soften and to continue to provide the ‘filtering’ effect of vegetation that is characteristic of the local landscape.
New Planting and Inherent Visual Amenity	Scheme allows for 15m to fence line from existing hedgerows allowing space for new woodland, shelterbelts or grassland margins to be established and to allow for the thickening and growth of existing vegetation.	New planting within the Sites to provide screening and habitat connectivity, particularly where transport routes and footpaths and bridleways cross the site.
New Planting and Landscape Character	Use of landscape character publications, policy and recognised guidance at the baseline stage to establish a full understanding of the important landscape characteristics of the receiving landscape.	<p>The approach to mitigation has been to reinforce the existing hedgerows to provide greater enclosure to the Site and provide screening of the infrastructure.</p> <p>Proposed woodland planting would not be effective in all locations, but some areas have been proposed to ensure the long-term presence of woodland where it is in accordance with landscape character.</p>

Consideration	Embedded Mitigation	Outcome
New Planting and Recreational Users	Retention of existing woodland/scrub and hedgerow cover along recreational routes. Public Rights of Way (PRoW) would be buffered with 15m to proposed fence lines to allow for establishment of existing hedgerows or woodland cover to each side. Proximity to major watercourses would allow 30m set off distance to the outer edge of the solar panels.	New planting would screen certain views for users of the PRoWs, the bridleway network, and local roads. New native hedgerow planting to field boundaries with hedgerow trees added to further screen views. Where PRoW cross the Sites, space has been given (15m each side) to retain openness and allow for creation of landscaped corridors.
New Planting and Time Depth	The retention of existing woodland/scrub and hedgerow cover that helps provide local distinctiveness and cement the intrinsic landscape character. Panels would have a minimum off set of 15m from all existing hedgerows. Proximity to existing woodland has been considered with a 20m set off distance to the outer edge of infrastructure incorporated into the design of the Scheme.	New planting to reflect landscape character and policy expectations using a palette of native tree and shrub species that are appropriate to the location. Faster growing species would be used to provide quicker screening/filtering effects. Grassland reversion around settlements to respect historic integrity of former environs and introduce a less intensively managed context. Potential for grazing around settlement edges and across the Scheme.
New Planting and Wider Visual Amenity	Identification of key visual receptors and key views at the baseline stage. Proximity of residential properties with 50m (min) from boundary curtilage to outer edge of solar panels to allow marginal areas of vegetation to establish fully as screening.	The establishment of new planting along the margins of the Scheme to increase the robustness, elevation and efficacy of the planting as screening becomes more effective in the integration with the surrounding landscape.

Enhancement Measures

- 2.3.17 In order to ‘further the purpose’ of the Cotswolds National Landscape to conserve and enhance its natural beauty, as required by the LURA Act detailed in Section 1.3, the Scheme also includes positive enhancement measures which have been informed by the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan, the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan and the ‘special qualities’ of the National Landscape - those aspects of the area’s natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. These measures are

incorporated in **ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4: Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan [EN010168/APP/6.2]**.

- 2.3.18 Consultation with the Cotswolds National Landscape Board to further the purpose of the national landscape was undertaken. The detailed proposals have been considered further as the design evolved and have been incorporated into **ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan [EN010168/APP/6.2]** for the DCO Application.
- 2.3.19 These embedded mitigation measures include: retention and enhancement of the existing landscape framework to gap up existing hedgerows and provide new tree lines to increase age and species diversity. The embedded mitigation also includes new planting to both mitigate the visual effects of the Scheme and provide landscape benefits, This includes the re-establishment of historic hedgerows within the setting of the CNL, new areas of native woodland, trees, scrub and grassland, new planting within riparian corridors to enhance rivers and wetland, as well the restoration of dry-stone walls and creation of new ponds.

Specific Enhancement Measures

- 2.3.20 In response to Consultation, specific embedded mitigation measures have been included within the **Outline LEMP [EN010168/APP/7.18]** to both maintain and enhance landscape character on the edge of the CNL. This includes:
- The creation of wildflower meadows and Low Density Scrub on the edge of the CNL within the northern part of A1, C1, C6, C8, C9 and B12;
 - The inclusion of wildflower meadow verges on the edge of set aside land in A11, A12 and C10 to provide attractive buffers in views from public roads; and
 - Maintaining hedgerows at their current height of c1.5m (or as existing if greater) bordering the CNL within Site C (including the northern boundary of C1 to maintain open views of the landscape within the setting of the CNL.
- 2.3.21 For all hedgerows bordering the CNL within Site C (including hedgerow number SH3 as indicated on **TPO and Hedgerow Plan [EN010168/APP/2.7]**) a height of c1.5m (or as existing if greater) has been utilised within the visualisations to conform with the management requirements as set out within the **Outline LEMP [EN010168/APP/7.18]**.

Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Plan (LEMP)

- 2.3.22 Mitigation measures have been informed by the specific Management Guidelines for the Hullavington Rolling Lowlands as well as Wiltshire's Nature Recovery Strategy for the Cotswolds Limestone Lowlands - Area 4; the Broad Management Objectives for the Malmesbury-Corsham Limestone Lowlands; and the Statements of Environmental Opportunities for the Cotswolds and Avon Vale National Character Areas.
- 2.3.23 The iterative design process that has been undertaken for the Scheme has allowed for landscape features to be retained and incorporated into the layout. However, a development of this scale is expected to have some potential landscape effects. Where possible, the final design of the scheme has included measures to design out potential adverse landscape and visual effects, reduce potential effects and/or mitigate potential adverse effects.
- 2.3.24 Using the mitigation hierarchy, the design for the Scheme has been to avoid harm to the Cotswolds National Landscape, Conservation Areas and the Fosse Way. A buffer of at least one field has been provided in Sites A, B and C where the Scheme adjoins the Cotswolds National Landscape. In Site A, the northern part of parcel A1 is to be retained as farmland and parcels A11 and A12 are to be utilised for skylark mitigation as arable set aside. The design for Site B has been to avoid harm to the Cotswolds National Landscape, the Conservation Area of Foxley and the Fosse Way. Parcel B12 closest to the Cotswolds National Landscape and Foxley Conservation Area is to be sown with Diverse Wildflower Meadow species. In Site C, parcels C2, C3, C4 have been removed from the Order Limits. Parcel C1, C6, and the majority of C10 which are on the boundary of the Cotswolds National Landscape are to be sown with Diverse Wildflower Meadow species to maintain the relationship of the Church within Alderton Conservation Area and the surrounding landscape. Along the edge of the South Wales Main Line, Fields C8 and C9 are to be brought forward as Low Density Scrub.
- 2.3.25 The design utilises and builds upon the existing landscape framework provided by the existing field boundaries. The design has for the most part avoided infrastructure on both sides of the Fosse Way. However, for the short section where panels are proposed within opposing fields C11 and C14, increased buffers to infrastructure are provided. The approach to mitigation has been to reinforce the existing hedgerows and the use of new native tree planting to provide greater enclosure to the Scheme and provide screening of the infrastructure.
- 2.3.26 In addition to the reinforcement of all hedgerows, new native hedgerows with trees are proposed across the Scheme which reinstates lost

hedgerows. The Gauze Brook provides opportunities for watercourse enhancements. Setbacks to the brook, new riparian planting and hedgerows are proposed, especially along footpaths, to provide long term riparian corridors along the brook as they pass through the Scheme. These proposals would strengthen landscape character in line with the guidelines for the Hullavington Rolling Lowland LCA and support the aims of Wiltshire's Nature Recovery Strategy for the Cotswolds Limestone Lowlands - Area 4 and the CNL's Nature Recovery Plan.

2.3.27 Mitigation measures across the Scheme have been informed by the Management Guidelines and Strategy Actions for the Hullavington Rolling Lowland which extends west into the CNL to the County boundary and is contiguous with the LCT 11 Dip Slope Lowland and LCA 11A South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands as defined by the CNL. These include:

- To conserve and enhance its pastoral character;
- To maintain the continuity of hedgerows through appropriate land management;
- To enhance river valleys by encouraging habitat creation and planting of riverside trees;
- To conserve hedgerows and mature trees, including planting new trees in existing hedges and planting specimen trees in field corners; and
- To enhance the wetland character in riverside locations by planting willows along water courses in informal groups and broken lines, and by encouraging the creation of more diverse waterside habitats.

2.3.28 The proposals would result in land within the Scheme transitioning away from open agricultural fields to large areas of meadow creation, whether beneath the arrays, or alongside in the form of Tussock Grassland Margins or as Diverse Wildflower Meadows and Low Density Scrub. These interventions would lead to meaningful increases in natural habitat and biodiversity benefits across the Scheme within the Hullavington Rolling Lowland.

2.4 Assessment of Effects on the CNL

Landscape Effects

- 2.4.1 There is no physical overlap between the Scheme and the CNL, and consequently the Proposed development causes no direct impacts on the CNL. Hence, this assessment focuses principally on the how the character is perceived with relevant to Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCA) that would potentially be indirectly impacted upon by the proposed development. Accordingly, these are principally affected due to intervisibility with the Scheme and the visual effects on sensitive receptors.
- 2.4.2 Parts of Sites A, B and C are within the setting of the CNL and the intervisibility between the CNL and the Scheme has been assessed on Site with a CNL officer. It has also been formally agreed with the Cotswolds National Landscape Board, that LCTs 11 and 14 and LCAs 11A and 14B are scoped into the assessment, as set out in the baseline in Section 2.1 of this assessment. These have been assessed with commentary in regard to how they may be affected by the Scheme.
- 2.4.3 **ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [EN010168/APP/6.1]** recorded Moderate Significant Beneficial effects on the Landscape Fabric of the Site and Moderate adverse effects within the 1 km Local Study Area of the Scheme as set out in **ES Volume 3, Appendix 8.3.2.2.1 Landscape Assessment [EN010168/APP/6.3]** and summarised in **Table 9** below.

Table 9: Summary of Scheme Effects:

Lime Down Solar Park: Summary of (Cumulative) Scheme Effects				
Receptor	Significance of Effect			
	Construction	Operation – Year 1	Operation – Year 15	De commissioning
Landscape Fabric	Moderate / Minor Neutral	Moderate / Minor Neutral	Moderate Beneficial (Significant)	Moderate Beneficial (Significant)
Local Study Area	Moderate (Significant)	Moderate (Significant)	Moderate / Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse

- 2.4.4 The beneficial effects to the Landscape Fabric of the Lime Down Sites is derived from the extensive mitigation measures embedded in the Scheme

which includes protection of the existing features of the Site and new planting, including trees, hedgerows and woodland, as well as improvements to watercourses and the extensive change in land use to grassland under solar panels and the conversion to grassland meadows on the edge of the CNL as shown on **ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan [EN010168/APP/6.2]** and described in Section 2.3 of this report.

- 2.4.5 The avoidance measures set out in Section 2.3 to prevent harm to the CNL provide opportunities for positive enhancement within the setting of the CNL. These measures contribute to the substantial increase in vegetation across the scheme.
- 2.4.6 The significant effects within the 1 km local study area as shown above are primarily related to the change in land use from agriculture to the solar farm. This change does not directly affect the CNL as the buffer to the development provided by the avoidance measures contains the development away from the edge of the CNL. As such, the development would be barely discernible from within the CNL. Harm to the CNL itself would be minimal with beneficial effects in the long term which further the purposes of the designation.

Visual Effects

Private Receptors

- 2.4.7 The effects on identified Private Receptors scoped into the assessment of effects on the CNL, i.e.: those residential properties which have a visual relationship with the CNL are summarised in **Table 10** below. These have been extracted from **ES Volume 3, Appendices 8-3-2-1-2: Visual Assessment Sheets of Private Receptors (Non-Significant) and 8-3-2-2-2: Visual Assessment Sheets of Private Receptors (Significant) [EN010168/APP/6.3]** where full details of the Assessment can be found.
- 2.4.8 **Table 9** shows that Significant effects were identified for two individual Residential Receptors within the CNL during Construction and Year 1. These include Widley's Farm, Sherston (RI014) and Fosse Lodge (RI024), Grittleton which are both Grade II Listed buildings with a high sensitivity to visual change.
- 2.4.9 Widley's Farm is located on higher ground on the edge of the CNL and would have views over Site A to the southeast during construction and operation.
- 2.4.10 Fosse Lodge is located at the junction of the Fosse Way and Alderton Road within the CNL and has a visual relationship with Site C where

construction and Year 1 operations would be partially visible in the distance

- 2.4.11 Although the magnitude of change in both cases is assessed as Low, this gives rise to Moderate Adverse effects when combined with their High Sensitivity. In both cases the infrastructure would be seen at distance across intervening landscape features. Once embedded mitigation matures, the magnitude of change would reduce to Very Low and the effects at Year 15 would reduce to Moderate / Minor Adverse and non-significant.

Public Receptors

- 2.4.12 The effects on identified Public Receptors scoped into the assessment of effects on the CNL, i.e.: PRowS which have a visual relationship with the CNL (including views to and from the CNL) are summarised in **Table 11** below. Refer to **ES Volume 3, Appendices 8-3-2-1-2 Visual Assessment Sheets of Public Receptors (Non-Significant) and 8-3-2-2-3 Visual Assessment Sheets for Public Receptors (Significant) [EN010168/APP/6.3]** for full details of the Assessment.
- 2.4.13 Table 10 shows that Significant effects were identified for one Footpath WT|NORT|1 (TP037) associated with the CNL during Construction and Year 1.
- 2.4.14 This footpath connects from Foxley Road on the edge of the CNL to Honey Lane to the southwest. Although not in the CNL itself there is a visual relationship between the footpath and the CNL at its northern end.
- 2.4.15 Although the assessment identifies Moderate Adverse effects on the footpath during Construction, these effects are as a result of the development on the southwestern end of the Footpath, close to Honey Lane. There is no infrastructure proposed in B12 and there would be no change in views to and from the CNL from the footpath at its northern end.
- 2.4.16 As such there are no significant effects on Public Receptors associated with the Scheme and the CNL. This is predominantly as a result of the measures incorporated into the Scheme to avoid harm to the CNL.

Transport Receptors

- 2.4.17 The effects on identified Private Receptors scoped into the assessment of effects on the CNL, i.e.: Roads which have a visual relationship with the CNL (including views to and from the CNL) are summarised in Table 12 below. Refer to **ES Volume 3, Appendices 8-3-2-1-3 Visual Assessment Sheets of Transport Receptors (Non-Significant) and 8-3-2-2-4 Visual Assessment Sheets for Transport Receptors (Significant) [EN010168/APP/6.3]** for full details of the Assessment.

- 2.4.18 Table 11 shows that Significant effects were identified for four Transport Receptors associated with the CNL during Construction and Year 1. These include:
- Ford Road and Widleys Road Junction East C93 to Bottom of Bustlers Hill, Sherston (TR043) which follows the CNL boundary to Site A;
 - Commonwood Lane (TR143) which is not within the CNL;
 - Fosse Way (TR145) within the CNL to the south of the of Site C and adjacent to Site C not within the CNL; and
 - Road Junction at Southfields Southeast to Y Junction, Sherston (TR154) which provides an approach road to Sherston joining the CNL at its northern end.
- 2.4.19 The assessment identifies Moderate Adverse effects on all the above Transport Receptors during the Construction and Operation Phase 1. Construction effects would be temporary in nature and at the start of the Operation phase infrastructure would be visible to varying degrees as mitigation planting would have a limited effect initially. However, once mitigation planting matures the magnitude of change would reduce to Very Low and the effects at Year 15 would reduce to Minor and Neutral in nature, with no effects identified during decommissioning. As such, there would be no significant long-term effects on the CNL.

Table 10: Visual Effects - Private Receptors

					Magnitude of Change				Significance of Effect			
Receptor Code	Receptor Name	Viewpoint (where relevant)	Nearest Site	Sensitivity	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	De commissioning	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	De commissioning
Residential Settlements												
RS001	Luckington		C	High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
RS002	Alderton	32 and 33	C	High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
RS004	Sherston	5	A	High	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
RS007	Foxley	18	B	High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
Residential Group												
RG010	New Barn, Easton Grey	CNL E	B	High	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
Residential Individual												
RI013	Widley's Farm Cottages, Sherston	WC1	A	High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect

					Magnitude of Change				Significance of Effect			
Receptor Code	Receptor Name	Viewpoint (where relevant)	Nearest Site	Sensitivity	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	De commissioning	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	De commissioning
RI014	Widley's Farm, Sherston	WC1	A	High	Low	Low	Very Low	None	Moderate Adverse Significant	Moderate Adverse Significant	Moderate/ Minor Neutral	No Effect
RI018	Racecourse Barn, Luckington	30	C	Medium	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
RI024	Fosse Lodge, Grittleton	25	C	High	Low	Low	Very Low	None	Moderate Adverse Significant	Moderate Adverse Significant	Moderate/ Minor Adverse	No Effect
RI025	Dunley House, Grittleton		C	Medium	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
RI043	Southfields, Sherston		A	Medium	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
RI045	Keeper's Cottage, Pikney Wood, Pikney	4	A	High	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect

Table 11: Visual Effects - Public Receptors

					Magnitude of Change				Significance of Effect			
Receptor Code	Receptor Name	Viewpoint (where relevant)	Nearest Site	Sensitivity	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	Decommissioning	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	Decommissioning
TP022	WT SHER 26	VP 5	A	High	None	No Effect	Very Low	None	No Effect	No Effect	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP026	WT SHER 12	VP 4	A	High	None	No Effect	Very Low	None	No Effect	No Effect	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP027	WT SHER 15	CNL C	A	High to Medium	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP029	Bridleway WT SHER 14	VP 3	B	High to Medium	None	None	Low	None	No Effect	No Effect	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP030	BOAT WT SHER 10	CNL E	A	High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP031	WT SHER 11	N/A	B	High to Medium	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP032	WT SHER 13	CNL F	A	High to Medium	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Neutral	Moderate/Minor Neutral
TP033	BOAT WT SHER 37 Fosse Way	N/A	B	High	Very Low	Very Low	None	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	No Effect	No Effect
TP037	Footpath WT NORT 1	VP 18	B	High to Medium	High	High	Very Low	None	Major / Moderate Adverse Significant	Major / Moderate Adverse Significant	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP038	Bridleway WT NORT 2	CNL D	B	High	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect

					Magnitude of Change				Significance of Effect			
Receptor Code	Receptor Name	Viewpoint (where relevant)	Nearest Site	Sensitivity	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	Decommissioning	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	Decommissioning
TP056	Footpath WT LUCK 62	N/A	C	High	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP058	Footpath WT LUCK 37	N/A	C	High	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP059	Footpath WT LUCK 40	N/A	C	High	None	None	Very Low	None	No Effect	No Effect	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP060	Footpath WT LUCK 39 (Macmillan Way)	N/A	C	High	None	None	Very Low	None	No Effect	No Effect	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP061	Footpath WT LUCK 38	N/A	B	High	None	None	Very Low	None	No Effect	No Effect	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP062	Footpath WT LUCK 27	N/A	B	High	None	None	Very Low	None	No Effect	No Effect	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP067	Footpath WT LUCK 55	N/A	C	High	None	None	Very Low	None	No Effect	No Effect	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP071	Footpath WT LUCK 41	VP 32	C	High	None	None	Very Low	None	No Effect	Minor Neutral	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP072	Footpath WT LUCK 44	Refer to VP 33	C	High	None	None	Very Low	None	No Effect	Minor Neutral	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP073	Footpath WT LUCK 42	Refer to VP 32	C	High	None	None	Very Low	None	No Effect	Minor Neutral	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect

					Magnitude of Change				Significance of Effect			
Receptor Code	Receptor Name	Viewpoint (where relevant)	Nearest Site	Sensitivity	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	Decommissioning	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	Decommissioning
TP074	Footpath WT LUCK 43	N/A	C	High	None	None	Very Low	None	No Effect	Minor Neutral	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP075	Bridleway WT LUCK 53	N/A	C	High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP077	Footpath WT LUCK 35	VP 30, and VP 31	C	High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP079	Footpath WT LUCK 46	CNL A	C	High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP080	Footpath WT LUCK 45	VP 33	C	High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TP083	Footpath WT SHER 19	CNL B	A	High	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Neutral	No Effect

Table 12: Visual Effects - Transport Receptors

					Magnitude of Change				Significance of Effect			
Recept or Code	Receptor Name	Viewpoint (where relevant)	Nearest Site	Sensitivity	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	De commissioning	Construction	Operational (Year 1)	Operational (Year 15)	De commissioning
TR035	Back Lane, Alderton		C	High to Medium	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR037	The Street, Alderton		C	High to Medium	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR039	The Avenue Alderton North C94 to Junction of Rat Hole and Widleys Road, Alderton	26	C	High to Medium	Low	Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR040	Road to Alderton North Past Widleys Farm to Cross Roads South of Sherston, Sherston	WC1	C	High to Medium	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect

TR043	Ford Road and Widleys Road Junction East C93 to Bottom of Bustlers Hill, Sherston	6	A	High to Medium	Medium	Medium	Very Low	None	Moderate Adverse Significant	Moderate Adverse Significant	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR044	Bustlers Hill East to Crossroads North of Norton, Easton Grey	3	A	High to Medium	Very Low	Very Low	None	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR045	Foxley Road	18	B	High to Medium	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR047	Bustlers Hill	6	A	High to Medium	Very Low	Very Low	None	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR054	Easton Town Road, Sherston		A	High to Medium	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
TR055	Crossroads South of Forlorn South East to Road to Norton, Ladyswood	1	A	Medium	Low	Very Low	None	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR114	Church Road		C	High to Medium	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
TR121	Racecourse Barn Access, Luckington		E	Medium to Low	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Moderate/Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect

TR122	Manor Farm access road, Alderton		C	Medium	None	None	Very Low	None	No Effect	Minor Neutral	Moderate/ Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR143	Commonwood Lane		A	High to Medium	Medium	Medium	Very Low	None	Moderate Adverse Significant	Moderate Adverse Significant	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR145	Fosse Way		C	High to Medium	Medium	Medium	Very Low	None	Moderate Adverse Significant	Moderate Adverse Significant	Minor Adverse	No Effect
TR148	East Dunley Cottage Road, Grittleton		C	Medium	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR154	Road Junction at Southfields South East to Y Junction, Sherston		A	Medium	Medium	Medium	Very Low	None	Moderate Adverse Significant	Moderate Adverse Significant	Minor Neutral	No Effect
TR156	Easton Town Junction with Forlorn South East Past Pinkney Wood to C68 Foxley Road, Pinkney		A	High to Medium	None	None	None	None	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect
TR204	Foxley Green South to Honey Lane, Foxley		B	Medium	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect

TR206	Foxley Manor Farm Access Road, Foxley		B	Medium	Very Low	Very Low	Very Low	None	Minor Adverse	Minor Adverse	Minor Neutral	No Effect
-------	---	--	---	--------	----------	----------	----------	------	------------------	------------------	------------------	-----------

Effects of the Cable Route Corridor

- 2.4.20 The Cable Route Corridor connects the Solar PV Sites to the Existing National Grid Melksham Substation. It includes both the Interconnecting Cables between the Solar PV Sites and Grid Connection Cables connecting the Solar PV Sites to the Existing National Grid Melksham Substation.
- 2.4.21 The exact location of the Grid Connection Cables and Interconnecting Cables within the Cable Route Corridor will be determined at the detailed design stage. The CRC runs for approximately 22 km from Lime Down D to the Existing National Grid Melksham Substation and also connects the Solar PV Sites. It is 50 m wide along the majority of its length with an increase in width up to 665m at a number of locations including utility, road and rail crossings.
- 2.4.22 The land within the Cable Route Corridor is predominantly agricultural in use as it intentionally avoids settlements. The landscape is characterised by medium to large agricultural fields, criss-crossed by minor roads, B4039, the A420, the A4 Bath Road, the B3353 and the M1 and the Great Western Main Line Railway.
- 2.4.23 The Study Area for the Cable Route Corridor (CRC) is 500m as shown on **ES Volume 2, Figure 8-1: Study Area (sheets 6,7,8) [EN010168/APP/6.2]**. This Study Area has been used to identify both Landscape and Visual receptors with the CRC.
- 2.4.24 The 0.5km radius is considered appropriate for the CRC, as the proposed cable would be underground with the only above ground features visible during the operational period being limited to ground level inspection chambers. Construction activity and lay down areas would be visible during the construction phase only.
- 2.4.25 Landscape effects resulting from the installation of the Cable would be localised and loss of landscape features such as trees and hedgerows would be mitigated through micro siting of the proposed cabling and directional drilling.
- 2.4.26 Beyond 0.5 km, even with good visibility, it is deemed that this element of the Scheme would be barely perceptible with construction activities localised.
- 2.4.27 All Landscape receptors within this Study Area are assessed during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases.

Landscape effects of the CRC

- 2.4.28 A very small part of the 500m Cable Route Corridor Study Area is within the boundary of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). The majority of the Cable Route Study Area that falls within the CNL is within LCT 11: Dip Slope Lowland and LCA 11A: South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands with a very small area to the south within LCT14: Cornbrash Lowlands and LCA 14A Biddestone Lowland Farmland. The 50m Cable Route Corridor itself is not located within the CNL.
- 2.4.29 As the 50m Cable Route Corridor is not located within the CNL, there would be no direct effects on landscape character within the CNL at any phase of the Development.

Visual Effects of the CRC

- 2.4.30 The visual effects of the proposals within the CRC Study Area on the CNL have been considered with reference to the LVIA as set out in Chapter 8 of the ES and include effects on Private, Public and Transport Receptors
- 2.4.31 Although a total of nine Private and Public receptors were found to experience Significant effects during the Construction Phase none of these receptors are within the CNL. Two Private receptors and 6 Public receptors were found to experience Moderate Significant effects and one Public receptor (TP096- WT|GRIT|20) was found to experience Major / Moderate Significant effects. This is a result of footpath being temporarily diverted around a temporary Construction Compound.
- 2.4.32 Due to the short term and temporary nature of the works associated with the Cable Route Corridor which would be akin to the typical process involved in the laying of utility cables, there would be no significant visual effects on the CNL.

Effects of Glint and Glare

- 2.4.33 With reference to ES Volume 1: Chapter 20- Glint and Glare Assessment which assessed the solar reflections from a number of Viewpoints within the Cotswolds National Landscape (refer to Table 5: Relevant Viewpoint Locations to and from the CNL in Section 2 .2 above), the following findings were made:
- *“Solar reflections are geometrically possible towards 14 of the 15 assessed viewpoint receptors.*
 - *For nine of these receptors, screening in the form of intervening terrain and/or existing vegetation is predicted to obstruct views of reflecting panels. No impact is predicted, and no mitigation is proposed.*

- *For the remaining five receptors, partial screening has been identified in the form of intervening terrain and/or existing vegetation, however views of the site cannot be ruled out. A low impact is predicted, and no mitigation is proposed.”*

2.4.34 In concluding the assessment states: “No significant impacts are predicted towards residential amenity, road safety and railway operations, considering the embedded mitigation. No additional mitigation is recommended”.

Assessment of Effects of Abnormal Loads

2.4.35 The construction traffic associated with the Scheme will be subject to measures and procedures defined within a **Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) [EN010168/APP/7.22]** which information such as the routes that construction traffic must take and the measures that will be implemented to reduce the effect of the construction phase on the local highway network.

2.4.36 Construction traffic and Site access is discussed further in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 13: Transport and Access [EN010168/APP/6.1]**.

2.4.37 The HGV routes to the Solar PV Sites that are identified in the **Outline CTMP [EN010168/APP/7.22]** represent the most suitable direct route to the relevant access from the strategic road network (M4). Two of the four routes are within the CNL. These include:

- Lime Down A: M4 Junction 18 → A46 → B4040 → B4039 → Unnamed Road west of Grittleton → Alderton Road → Fosse Way → Unnamed Road between Fosse Way and Sherston; and
- Lime Down B and C: M4 Junction 18 → A46 → B040 → B4039 → Alderton Road → Fosse Way.

2.4.38 The construction traffic associated with the Scheme will be subject to measures and procedures defined within a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP).

2.4.39 There are a number of works required including widening and passing bays to accommodate the AILs which have been assessed for any landscape and visual effects in **ES Volume 3, Appendix 8.3.5: Assessment Sheets of Abnormal Indivisible Loads (Non Significant) [EN010168/APP/6.3]**. There are three small sections on the route where works to trees is required. This includes cutting back or trimming of hedgerow rather than removing/loss and the effect on Landscape and Visual Receptors would be temporary and would be Negligible (Not Significant) as shown in **Table 13** below:

Table 13: Summary of Abnormal Indivisible Loads

Assessment Summary of Abnormal Indivisible Loads		
Location	Description	Landscape Effects
A46 Bath Road / B4040 junction, Old Sodbury	Temporary minor road widening at the junction, temporary removal of give-way and no-entry signage, and trimming of existing hedge/tree branches.	Vegetation removal includes cutting back or trimming hedgerow rather than removing/loss and the effect on Landscape and Visual Receptors would be temporary and would be Negligible (Not Significant)
B4093 At the Salutation Inn, Castle Coomb	Temporary minor road widening at the junction, and trimming of existing hedge/tree branches. These works are required to allow the abnormal load vehicle to turn at the junction safely.	Vegetation removal includes cutting back or trimming hedgerow rather than removing/loss and the effect on Landscape and Visual Receptors would be temporary and would be Negligible (Not Significant)
Fosse Way/Alderton Road, North of Grittleton	Temporary minor road widening at the bend, temporary removal of chevron signage, and trimming of existing hedge and other vegetation.	Vegetation removal includes cutting back or trimming hedgerow rather than removing/loss and the effect on Landscape and Visual Receptors would be temporary and would be Negligible (Not Significant)

3 Effects on the Special Qualities of the CNL National Landscape

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This section of the Appendix provides an assessment of the likely effects on the Special Qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Sources of Information

3.1.2 In the preparation of this chapter, the following sources of published information have been used:

- The Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2023) Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025;
- The Cotswolds National Landscape Board (n.d.) Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy & Guidelines; and
- The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan, adopted as guidance by the Cotswolds National Landscape October 2021.

3.2 CNL Special Qualities

3.2.1 The Special qualities of the CNL are set out in the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan, in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 4: Alternatives and Design Evolution [EN010168/APP/6.1]**.

“those aspects of the area’s natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. They are the key attributes on which the priorities for its conservation, enhancement and management are based. They bring out the essence of the National Landscape as an evocative description of the area rather than as a statistical account.”

3.2.2 Chapter 4 of the CNLMP includes a Special Quality statement of significance. While not listed in any order of priority or importance, together they provide underlying focus of the principles that guide the development of planning policies designed to protect the CNL.

3.2.3 The Special Quality statement is quoted as follows (Authors emphasis in **bold**):

*“The Cotswolds is **a rich mosaic** of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological and ecological features. The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape are:*

- **The unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible**

presence in the landscape and use as a building material; Policy CE2: Geology

- **The Cotswold escarpment**, including views from and to the National Landscape; Policy CE1: Landscape
- **The High Wolds** – a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, ‘big’ skies and long-distance views; Policy CE1: Landscape
- **River valleys**, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, with high-quality water; Policy CC5: Water24
- **Distinctive dry stone walls**; Policy CE3: Local distinctiveness
- **Flower-rich grasslands** particularly limestone grasslands; Policy CE7: Biodiversity and nature recovery
- **Ancient broadleaved woodland** particularly along the crest of the escarpment; Policy CE7: Biodiversity and nature recovery
- **Variations in the colour of the stone** from one part of the National Landscape to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness; Policy CE3: Local distinctiveness
- **The tranquillity of the area**, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution; Policy CE4: Tranquillity
- **Extensive dark sky areas**; Policy CE5: Dark skies
- **Distinctive settlements**, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity; Policy CE3: Local distinctiveness
- **An accessible landscape** for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswold Way National Trail; Policy UE1: Health and wellbeing Policy UE2: Access and recreation
- **Significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations** dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks; Policy CE6: Historic environment and cultural heritage
- A vibrant heritage of **cultural associations**, including the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olimpicks, cheese rolling and woolsack races.”

- 3.2.4 The Special Qualities collectively are the distinctive aspects of the area's natural beauty that make it valuable and unique, informing the CNLMP's 'vision', the summation of what needs to be conserved, enhanced, and celebrated in the CNL.
- 3.2.5 Special Qualities are rarely experienced in isolation; more often, several are perceived together in a single location or view. For assessment purposes, related SQs have been grouped under the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan's three policy categories: Cross-cutting themes, Conserving and enhancing, and Increasing understanding and enjoyment. Within these categories, only those policies directly relevant to the potential effects of the Scheme have been taken forward for detailed consideration. This ensures that the assessment is proportionate and focused on likely significant effects, if any.

Potential Effects on CNL Special Qualities

- 3.2.6 The SQs are set out in the following table according to how they relate to the CNLMP policies and outcomes, illustrating their relevance in terms of how they might be impacted by the Scheme. The SQs that may be affected by the Scheme are therefore highlighted in bold or scoped out of the assessment.

Table 14: Cross Cutting Themes

Cross cutting themes- Climate Emergency/ Natural and cultural capital / Working together		
Discussion	Relevant Policy	Outcome
<i>"The need for climate action is urgent, but it needs to be well thought out and carefully implemented to conserve and enhance the Cotswolds for future generations."</i>	Policy CC1: Climate change – mitigation Policy CC2: Climate change – adaptation	Outcome 1 – Climate action
<i>"Natural capital stock includes renewable and non-renewable natural resources e.g. geology, minerals, soils, water, air, plants, animals, habitats and ecosystems. The CNL's cultural heritage assets are equally rich, including the cultural-historical landscape, individual heritage assets, historic settlements and vibrant cultural activity" as defined by the CNL's Special qualities.</i>	Policy CC3: Natural and cultural capital – principles	Outcome 2 – Natural and cultural capital:

Soils and Water “are addressed under Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services, rather than meriting their own section, because they are not key features of the special qualities of the National Landscape”.	Policy CC4: Soils Policy CC5: Water	Outcome 2 – Natural and cultural capital:
CNL position statement on Landscape-led development notes:” a landscape-led approach to development is one in which development within the CNL and its setting is compatible with and, ideally, makes a positive contribution to the statutory purpose of AONB designation, which is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area . A landscape-led approach, at this level, is promoted in Policy CC1 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023.26”	Policy CC6: Developing a consistent, coordinated and landscape-led approach	Outcome 3 - Working Together
The ‘duty of regard’ has been superseded by the ‘seek to further’ duty which requires relevant authorities to ‘seek to further’ the purpose of an AONB (National Landscape).	Policy CC7: Compliance with section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act	Outcome 3 - Working Together
“Stakeholders should work in partnership to support the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL “	Policy CC8: Working in partnership	Outcome 3 - Working Together

Table 15: Conserving and Enhancing

Conserving and enhancing		
Landscape/ Local distinctiveness/ Tranquillity/ Dark Skies/ Historic environment and cultural heritage/ Biodiversity and nature recovery/ Rural land management/ Development and transport		
Special Quality (Included/ Excluded)	Relevant Policy	Outcome
SQ 1: Unifying character of limestone geology This SQ is relevant to all areas of the CNL and is included in the Assessment	Policy CE2: Geology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visible presence in the landscape • use as a building material 	Outcome 4 – Landscape
SQ 2: The Cotswold escarpment.	Policy CE1: Landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • views from and to the 	Outcome 4 – Landscape

The Scheme is remote from the Escarment and this SQ is excluded.	National Landscape	
SQ 3: The High Wolds The High Wolds includes the High Wold Dip slope LCAs 11A and 14B and this SQ is included in the Assessment	Policy CE1: Landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons 'big' skies and long-distance views 	Outcome 4 – Landscape
SQ4: River valleys River valleys are a key feature of the High Wolds and High Wold Dip slope. This SQ is included in the Assessment.	Policy CC5: Water <ul style="list-style-type: none"> majority forming the headwaters of the Thames high-quality water 	Outcome 2 – Natural and cultural capital
SQ5: Distinctive dry-stone walls. This SQ is relevant to all areas of the CNL and is included in the Assessment	Policy CE3: Local distinctiveness	Outcome 5 – Local distinctiveness
SQ 6: Flower-rich grasslands There are no flower rich grasslands within the setting of the CNL which would be impacted. However, this SQ is of relevance in terms of positive enhancement measures within the setting of the CNL.	Policy CE7: Biodiversity and nature recovery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> limestone grasslands 	Outcome 9 – Biodiversity and nature recovery
SQ 7: Ancient broadleaved woodland There are no ancient woodlands within the setting of the CNL which would be impacted and this SQ is excluded.	Policy CE7: Biodiversity and nature recovery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> particularly along the crest of the escarpment 	Outcome 9 – Biodiversity and nature recovery
SQ 8: Variations in the colour of the stone The scheme does not include new built form or impact on built form and this SQ is excluded.	Policy CE3: Local distinctiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> from one part of the National Landscape to another a vital element of local distinctiveness 	Outcome 5 – Local distinctiveness

<p>SQ 9: The tranquillity of the area The scheme has the potential to affect tranquillity and this SQ is included.</p>	<p>Policy CE4: Tranquillity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution 	<p>Outcome 6 – Tranquillity</p>
<p>SQ 10: Extensive dark sky areas The scheme has the potential to affect dark skies and this SQ is included.</p>	<p>Policy CE5: Dark skies</p>	<p>Outcome 7 – Dark skies</p>
<p>SQ 11: Distinctive settlements The scheme has the potential to affect distinctive settlements and this SQ is included.</p>	<p>Policy CE3: Local distinctiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Cotswold vernacular high architectural quality and integrity 	<p>Outcome 5 - Local distinctiveness</p>
<p>SQ13: Archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations The scheme has the potential to affect Archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations and this SQ is included.</p>	<p>Policy CE6: Historic environment and cultural heritage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> dating back 6,000 years Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks 	<p>Outcome 8 – Historic environment and cultural heritage:</p>
<p>SQ14: A vibrant heritage of cultural associations The scheme has the potential to affect the vibrant heritage of cultural associations of the CNL and this SQ is included.</p>	<p>Policy CE6: Historic environment and cultural heritage And Policy CC3: Natural and cultural capital – principles the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olimpicks, cheese rolling and woolsack races.</p>	<p>Outcome 8 - Historic environment and cultural heritage And Outcome 2 - Natural and cultural capital:</p>

Table 16: Increasing understanding and enjoyment

Increasing understanding and enjoyment		
Health and wellbeing / Access and recreation / Sustainable tourism		
Special Quality	Relevant Policy	Outcome
<p>SQ 12: An accessible landscape- Quiet recreation and routes The Scheme would not have any direct effects on this SQ. However, the visual amenity of the landscape within the setting of the CNL is recognized. This is fully assessed in section 2 of this Appendix.</p>	<p>Policy UE.1: Health and wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • walking, cycling and riding routes • access and interaction with nature <p>Policy UE2: Access and Recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessible, clearly waymarked and well-connected Public Rights of Way <p>National Trails, including the Cotswold Way and Thames Path</p>	<p>Outcome 12 - Health and wellbeing</p> <p>Outcome 13 - Access & Recreation</p>

3.2.7 As described above, the following Special Qualities are carried forward to Assessment:

- SQ 1: Unifying character of limestone geology;
- SQ 3: The High Wolds;
- SQ 4: River valleys;
- SQ 5: Distinctive dry-stone walls;
- SQ 6: Flower-rich grasslands;
- SQ 9: The tranquillity of the area;
- SQ 10: Extensive dark sky areas;
- SQ 11: Distinctive settlements;
- SQ 12: An accessible landscape;
- SQ 13: Archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations; and
- SQ 14: A vibrant heritage of cultural associations.

3.3 Embedded Mitigation

3.3.1 Section 2.3 of this Appendix describes the embedded mitigation measures within the Sites A-C which are within the setting of the CNL.

3.3.2 All elements of the mitigation including avoidance measures, the use of buffers to protect the existing fabric of the landscape, measures to mitigate the visual effects of the Scheme and positive enhancement measures, particularly in avoidance areas within the setting of the CNL are applicable to the assessment of effects on the Special Qualities of the CNL.

3.4 Assessment of Effects on the SQ

3.4.1 The geographic scope of the assessment is limited to SQs present within Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) that could be indirectly affected by the Scheme. As the scheme does not physically overlap with the CNL boundary, any potential effects would arise primarily from intervisibility and associated visual change experienced by a small number of sensitive receptors. The magnitude of these potential effects is expected to be localised and, in most cases, capable of being mitigated to a moderate–minor level or lower.

3.4.2 Each relevant SQ has been considered individually and sets out:

- A brief description of the SQ in relation to the specific policy(s) and CNL Outcome;
- A brief description of SQ's contribution to landscape character and its relationship with the Scheme;
- An evaluation of the SQs Sensitivity based on Value and Susceptibility to the Scheme;
- An assessment of the magnitude of change on the SQ of the CNL and whether effects are direct/ indirect, Adverse, Neutral or Beneficial;
- An assessment of whether any long term effects would pose a risk to the defining qualities of the SQ; and
- Finally, the assessment notes any positive outcomes as a result of the Scheme related to the specific SQ.

3.4.3 As evidenced by the Assessment of Effects on the CNL in Section 2 of this Appendix, the embedded mitigation is expected to reduce potential effects to levels that would not materially harm the overall integrity of the SQs.

- 3.4.4 Where the assessment concludes that no likely effect would occur, this is clearly stated along with the supporting rationale.
- 3.4.5 As has been explained previously, as there is no physical overlap of the Scheme and the CNL, the only means of perceiving a change is by assessing the visual amenity as is undertaken below.

Effects on Special Quality 1 - The distinctive limestone geology and the use of local stone in buildings

Outcome 3 – Landscape; CE2.1

- 3.4.6 The distinctive limestone geology and the use of local stone in buildings is a fundamental to the character of Cotswolds and is a key driver behind the designation of the CNL. Outcome 3 seeks to extend this understanding. Policy CE2.1 requires the proposal to be “*compatible with and seek to further the conservation and enhancement of these features*”.³
- 3.4.7 The distinctive limestone geology is noted across all landscape types within the CNL and this underlying geology extends east from the boundary of the CNL across the dip slope and overlaps with the Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland LCT as defined in the North Wilshire Landscape Character Assessment where the Scheme is located.
- 3.4.8 This Special Quality is integral to the CNL’s identity and visual character. Its limestone geology underpins the Cotswold landform and provides the material palette for vernacular buildings. As a receptor, it has low capacity to accommodate change in relation to its material expression.
- 3.4.9 The Scheme is located outside the CNL boundary and has no direct physical relationship with the CNL’s exposed limestone geology or the quarries and sources of building stone. It would not affect the resource itself or the way it is perceived in the landscape. No new built form is introduced into the CNL that might jar with its stone vernacular or compete with its geological expression. As there is no direct or indirect pathway for adverse effect, this Special Quality is considered to be wholly unaffected.
- 3.4.10 The Scheme is located outside the CNL boundary, with no physical or visual interaction with geological exposures, quarries, or stone-built settlements that contribute to this Special Quality. It is recognised that this vernacular character extends beyond the CNL boundary within the dip slope, However, there is no loss, alteration, or obscuring of geological

³ CNLMP Policy CE2: Geology and Geomorphology.p35

features and no effect on the legibility or appreciation of Cotswold stone in the built environment within the CNL or its immediate setting.

At the outset of operation, there is no intervisibility between the Scheme and key geological exposures or stone-built settlements within the CNL. Construction and operational activity would not involve any extraction, masking, or alteration of the limestone resource or its architectural application. The magnitude of change is imperceptible, and there is no measurable effect on the appreciation of this Special Quality from within LCAs 11A or 14B.

By Year 15, there is no change in the relationship between the Scheme and the CNL's geological resource or its built stone heritage. Vegetation maturity around the site has no bearing on this Special Quality, as no effect exists to be screened or mitigated.

There is no mechanism for the development to alter the physical characteristics or perceptual appreciation of this Special Quality.

- 3.4.11 Professional judgement indicates that, despite the high sensitivity of the receptor and the very low magnitude of change results in a negligible significance of effect in both LVIA and policy terms.
- 3.4.12 In conclusion, the Special Quality remains wholly unaffected in both the short and long term. The integrity and perception of the CNL's geological and building-stone distinctiveness are fully preserved.
- 3.4.13 **Related Positive Outcomes:** In accordance with the duty to 'seek to further' the purpose of an CNL and Policy CE2.1, The Lime Down Scheme proposes enhancement measures within the setting of the CNL including the restoration of dry-stone walls and calcareous grassland meadows appropriate to the underlying geology (reference to **ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan [EN010168/APP/6.2]**).

Effects on Special Quality 3 - The High Wolds

Outcome 4 – Landscape; CE1.2

- 3.4.14 The High Wolds landscape is a large open, elevated predominately arable landscape with commons, 'big' skies and long-distance views. These characteristics are supported by Outcome 4 which seeks to extend this understanding and for character to be at the heart of all decisions. Policy CE1.2 requires proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape, should have regard to the scenic quality of the location and its setting and ensure that views – including those into and out of the National landscape – and visual

amenity are conserved and enhanced. to conserve and enhance landscape character as a key environmental objective.⁴

- 3.4.15 The Scheme is not located within the CNL. However, landscape is a continuum, and the High Wold Dip Slope continues eastwards beyond the boundary of the CNL and overlaps with the Lowland Limestone (Forest Marble) Farmland LCT and the Sherston Dip Slope (LCA 7) as defined in the North Wilshire Landscape Character Assessment. There is a visual relationship between the Scheme LCAs and 11A or 14B within the CNL.
- 3.4.16 The High Wold (LCT 11) and High Wold Dip-Slope (LCT 14) form some of the most expansive and visually open landscapes in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). Within the scoped receiving landscape, LCAs 11A and 14B express these characteristics strongly: large-scale arable plateaux, long views, and the perceptual “big sky” quality. These areas have a low capacity to accommodate large-scale built form without perceptual change to openness and scale.
- 3.4.17 The High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope landscapes are characterised by a combination of expansive horizons, rolling landform, and large arable fields bounded by hedgerows and occasional woodland. The Scheme sits outside the CNL but within the wider viewshed of these landscapes. From certain locations, particularly on local ridges within LCAs 11A and 14B, the solar arrays may be perceived as geometric insertions into the rural mosaic. These insertions would remain low-profile and confined to existing field enclosures, so the overarching openness and horizon dominance remain intact. Materials and finishes are chosen to avoid reflective glare, and edge treatments are designed to soften visual thresholds. The magnitude of perceptual change is greatest in the early years but never dominates or erodes the legibility of the “big sky” quality that defines these landscapes.

From selected mid-distance viewpoints within LCAs 11A and 14B, parts of the Scheme would be discernible as low-lying, rectilinear forms contained within existing field patterns. The proportion of the panorama affected is small, skylines remain unbroken, and horizontal emphasis remains dominant.

Prior to mitigation maturity, the solar arrays would be discernible in certain mid-distance views, especially during winter conditions, as ordered, horizontal textures within the agricultural matrix. While perceptible, these occupy only a fraction of the panorama and remain subordinate to landform and skyline. There is no skyline breach or vertical intrusion. The

⁴ CNLMP Policy CE1.2: Landscape. p34

magnitude at Year 1 is assessed as Low, owing to the limited spatial extent and retention of defining landscape attributes.

By Year 15, strengthened hedgerows, field-edge planting, and small woodland blocks have matured, reducing visibility of the arrays from most viewpoints. In summer, the site is largely absorbed into the field structure; in winter, any views are reduced to filtered glimpses. The horizon and expansive sky continue to dominate perception. Magnitude reduces to Very Low.

- 3.4.18 The high sensitivity of the High Wold as a receptor is tempered by the Very Low magnitude of change and limited geographical spread of visibility, resulting in a Minor adverse indirect effect overall.
- 3.4.19 In conclusion, the High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope would retain their defining openness, large-scale landform, and perceptual “big sky” quality.
- 3.4.20 **Related Positive Outcomes:** In accordance with the duty to ‘seek to further’ the purpose of an CNL and Policy CE2.1, The Lime Down Scheme includes avoidance areas on the edge of the CNL which provide opportunities for positive enhancement. With reference to **ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan [EN010168/APP/6.2]**, the proposals include calcareous grassland meadows appropriate to the underlying geology, maintenance of existing hedgerow heights for hedgerows on the boundary of Site C and the CNL, or for new hedgerows to be maintained at no greater than 1.5m with additional tree planting to increase species diversity and age depth whilst maintaining openness and views across the landscape to and from the CNL, in accordance with the CNL Nature Recovery Plan. Specific details can be confirmed at detailed design with input from Wiltshire Council and the CNL Board.

Effects on Special Quality 4 - River valleys and headwaters

Outcome 2 – The Water Environment; Policy CC.5

- 3.4.21 River Valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames, provide high quality water and are fundamental to natural and cultural capital embedded in Policy CC5 and Outcome 2 which seeks to understand, conserve and enhance the natural and cultural capital assets of the National Landscape and the services which they provide. Policy CC5 ensures that water resources are carefully managed and conserved to improve water quality; ensure adequate aquifer recharge; ensure adequate river flows; and contribute to natural flood management systems.

- 3.4.22 River valleys are a key feature of the High Wolds and High Wold Dip slope. The rivers in the CNL rise on the upper sections of the High Wold within close proximity of the scarp edge. The river valleys cut into the High Wold deepening and broadening as they develop through the dip slope and beyond. The rivers give rise to the undulating topography of the Dip Slope Lowland landscapes which comprise broad tracts of land on the edge of the Cotswolds next to the flatter Thames basin to the east.
- 3.4.23 The river valleys and headwaters of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) are valued for their hydrological, ecological, and scenic qualities. They form distinctive topographic features and biodiversity corridors, supporting species-rich riparian habitats. These areas have an extremely low capacity to accommodate any physical or visual changes that could affect water quality, flow regimes, or their perceptual integrity.
- 3.4.24 The river valleys and headwaters in the CNL are defined by their topographical enclosure, naturalistic vegetation, and role as sources of clean water feeding into the Thames and Severn catchments. The Scheme sits within LCAs 11A and 14B, which form part of the high wold plateau and dip-slope and are physically separated from CNL valleys by intervening landform. Drainage from the site is fully managed via a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) that retains and filters water on-site before controlled release, eliminating the possibility of downstream hydrological impact. There are no riparian habitats within the CNL with visual or functional connectivity to the Scheme. As such, there is no physical, ecological, or perceptual pathway for change to this Special Quality.
- 3.4.25 The Scheme lies outside the CNL and has no direct hydrological connection with its river valleys or headwaters. However, the River Avon passes close to the north and east of the Lime Down Scheme and watershed within the scheme flows eastwards via number of small brooks to the river Avon, away from the CNL. The topography associated with the River Avon valley gives rise to a cross-valley views towards the Scheme from within the CNL. Refer to Viewpoint 5. However, no panels are proposed in A11 and A12 and as such there is no visual association between the CNL River valleys and the Scheme.
- 3.4.26 From the outset, the SuDS and embedded pollution prevention measures operate to prevent any change to water flows or quality entering CNL catchments. No views to the Scheme are possible from river valleys or headwaters within the CNL, and no change to their landscape or experiential qualities occurs. Magnitude of change is assessed as Very low.

- 3.4.27 By Year 15 there would be no change from Year 1 — the hydrological and visual isolation of the site from the CNL’s water landscapes remains complete. Magnitude remains Very Low.
- 3.4.28 The combination of high sensitivity with very low magnitude results in a Negligible indirect effect.
- 3.4.29 In conclusion, the Special Quality of the CNL’s river valleys and headwaters would be wholly preserved. Although positive enhancement of these features are proposed within the Scheme, these benefits are downstream of the CNL and would not benefit the CNL itself.
- 3.4.30 **Related Positive Outcomes:** In accordance with the duty to ‘seek to further’ the purpose of an CNL and Policy CE2.1, the Lime Down Scheme includes positive management of watercourses and riparian areas as identified within the **Waterbodies in a River Basin Management Plan [EN010168/APP/2.8]**, and the **Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [EN010168/APP/7.18]**.

Effects on Special Quality 5 - Dry-stone walls and field patterns

Outcome 3 - Landscape and 5 - Local distinctiveness. Policy CE3 and CE1.4

- 3.4.31 Dry stone walls are features of the landscape which contribute to the CNL’s local distinctiveness and are to be valued, conserved and enhanced.
- 3.4.32 Within the Dip slope Lowlands (**LCA 11A**) to the east of the CNL it is noted that much of the land is farmed as mixed arable and pasture and that this landscape is characterised by a well-managed mosaic of medium and large, regular fields contained not by stone walls but by hedgerows. Although fences and stone walls are not entirely absent, hedgerows predominantly form the boundaries of fields. The change from stone walls to hedgerows is visually noticeable in the landscape and there is a marked change at the eastern boundary of the CNL in the vicinity of the Lime Down Scheme.
- 3.4.33 The intricate network of dry-stone walls and historic field patterns is a defining cultural and visual characteristic of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). Within LCT 11 (High Wold) and LCT 14 (High Wold Dip-Slope), and specifically LCAs 11A and 14B, these boundaries contribute strongly to landscape legibility and historic continuity. They have low capacity to absorb change that would interrupt their structure, legibility, or visual coherence.

- 3.4.34 The CNL's dry-stone walls and historic field structures define the grain of the High Wold and Dip-Slope landscapes. The Scheme sits entirely outside the CNL and has been sited to avoid physical alteration or removal of any walls or boundary features. From CNL viewpoints, the characteristic geometry of field enclosures in LCAs 11A and 14B remains clear and uninterrupted, with the development contained neatly within the existing structure of the land. The proposals incorporate strengthened boundary planting that complements the historic enclosure pattern rather than detracting from it. As a result, both the physical and visual integrity of this Special Quality are maintained.
- 3.4.35 The Scheme avoids any direct interaction with dry-stone walls or traditional enclosure boundaries within the CNL. The pattern and legibility of these features remain unaffected in all relevant views.
- 3.4.36 At the start of operation, all existing dry-stone walls and field boundaries within and around the CNL remain intact. The Scheme sits behind retained hedgerows and in-field vegetation that frame the historic pattern in distant views. No visual fragmentation of field boundaries occurs, and the perception of enclosure continuity is preserved. Magnitude is assessed as Very Low.
- 3.4.37 By Year 15, planting enhancements along existing boundaries have matured, reinforcing the visibility and continuity of the field pattern in views from the CNL. Any limited glimpses of the development are softened and contextualised by the established vegetation framework. Magnitude remains **Very Low**.
- 3.4.38 The High sensitivity combined with very low magnitude results in a Negligible indirect effects
- 3.4.39 In conclusion, the defining enclosure patterns and dry-stone walling of the CNL are unaffected.
- 3.4.40 **Related Positive Outcomes** In accordance with the duty to 'seek to further' the purpose of an CNL and Policy CE2.1, The Lime Down Scheme proposes enhancement measures within the setting of the CNL including the restoration of dry-stone walls, enhancement of existing hedgerows and re-establishment of historic hedgerows within the setting of the CNL.

Effects on Special Quality 6: Flower-rich grasslands

Outcome 9 – Biodiversity and nature recovery. Policy CE7: Biodiversity and nature recovery

- 3.4.41 Flower-rich grasslands are infrequently represented within Lime Down A, B and C. As described in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 9: Ecology and**

Biodiversity [EN010168/APP/6.1], the majority of the land within these sites is given over to arable farmland, with grassland present typically comprising agriculturally improved fields within swards dominated by a restricted number of competitive grasses. Grassland is also present at margins at the edges of arable fields, although these are also typically species-poor as a likely result of lack of management and application of pesticides/ fertilisers associated with routine arable farming. However, one field within Lime Down C (C29) comprises neutral grassland managed for hay, which covers an area of approximately 4.72 hectares and supports a relatively high diversity of botanical species.

- 3.4.42 On completion of construction, the Scheme is expected to deliver a considerable uplift in the extent and quality of neutral grasslands across the Solar PV Sites, as quantified within **Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report [EN010168/APP/7.8]**. This includes areas of grassland within undeveloped margins outside of security fencing as well as entire fields, including fields B12, C1, & C6 all of which border the CNL as shown in **ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan [EN010168/APP/6.2]**. Flower-rich grassland within these areas would be established through seeding or hay spreading with appropriate seed mix, with long-term management of these grasslands to take the form of infrequent cutting regimes to allow flowering species to grow, flower, set-seed and proliferate, with input of fertiliser or herbicide treatment prohibited. Suitable conditions for flower-rich grasslands can also be achieved through low-intensity grazing regimes if these are employed during the operation and maintenance phase. The establishment, management and monitoring of the development of grassland areas is prescribed within **Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [EN010168/APP/7.18]**.
- 3.4.43 Within sites A, B and C only, it is anticipated that the Scheme would deliver approximately 119.7 hectares of other neutral grassland post-development compared with 4.72 hectares at baseline and is in accordance with delivery of new habitat in line with Policy CE8: Nature recovery and Biodiversity of the CNL Management Plan. The figure of 119.7ha is based the BNG calculations and includes areas of flower rich neutral grassland, undeveloped margins of Tussock grassland and some of the areas of existing vegetation to be retained and enhanced which are currently species-rich neutral grassland (refer to **Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report [EN010168/APP/7.8]**).
- 3.4.44 In conclusion, the delivery of approximately 119.7 hectares of flower-rich neutral grassland, long term maintenance of existing hedgerow and woodland, additional tree and hedgerow planting in accordance with the CNL Nature Recovery Plan represents a beneficial effect on Special

Quality 6. Specific details can be confirmed at detailed design with input from Wiltshire Council and the CNL Board.

Effects on Special Quality 9 - Tranquillity

Outcome 6 – Tranquillity; CE4.1

- 3.4.45 With reference to the Boards Tranquillity Statement (Ref 14) and Policy CE5., the Cotswolds AONB has relatively high levels of tranquillity, especially when compared with the surrounding urban areas. Tranquillity is one of the features of the Cotswolds and noise pollution and visual disturbance should be minimised to maintain tranquillity and sense of seclusion across the National Landscape. The Position Statement on Tranquillity provides additional background information and guidance on how the issue of tranquillity should be addressed in the Cotswolds AONB and its setting.
- 3.4.46 Outcome 6 recognises that tranquillity relates to issues of visual impact and light pollution as well as noise and other disturbance. It notes that Policy CE1 addresses visual impacts and Policy CE5 addresses light pollution. Policy CE4 has an emphasis on noise which incorporates issues such as significant increases in traffic in the towns, villages and smaller settlements of the National Landscape, including increased traffic arising from developments outside of the National Landscape.
- 3.4.47 Proposals that affect, or have the potential to impact on, the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB need to assess potential impacts on tranquillity, particularly with regards to noise, vehicle movements, landscape and visual impacts and, where appropriate, visitor numbers. Tranquillity is defined as a “*state of calm and quietude associated with peace, experienced in places with mainly natural features and / or historic character, free from man-made noise and other aural and visual disturbance*”. A distinction should be made between ‘absolute’ tranquillity and ‘relative’ tranquillity (i.e. the tranquillity of one place compared to another). When we refer to tranquillity in the UK, it is almost always relative tranquillity that we are referring to as very few places have absolute tranquillity.
- 3.4.48 As well as being a ‘special quality’ in its own right, tranquillity is also an important factor in people’s understanding and enjoyment of the AONB’s other special qualities, including its distinctive landscapes and settlements, its historic and cultural associations and its flower rich grasslands and ancient broadleaved woodlands. CPRE’s tranquillity mapping shows that the Cotswolds AONB has a relatively high level of tranquillity, especially when compared to the surrounding urban areas.

The AONB therefore fulfils an important function for the populations of these areas as a 'breathing space' where they can 'get away from it all'.

- 3.4.49 The landscape character Assessment for LCA 11 notes that apart from the network of principal and local roads that cross the area, the southern sector is crossed by the M4 and the Swindon / Bristol main railway line. These major transport routes follow the general grain of the Dip-Slope, and many sections are in cutting so their impact is limited. Nevertheless, they generate noise and movement, which affects the peace of the surrounding rural landscape. High voltage power lines have a greater impact, and the sequence of pylons to the northeast of Tetbury, and also to the north of the Leach Valley in the vicinity of Aldsworth, are intrusive elements in the landscape.
- 3.4.50 Tranquillity is a defining perceptual quality of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), valued for its low levels of human-made noise, visual clutter, and artificial lighting. Within LCT 11 (High Wold) and LCT 14 (High Wold Dip-Slope) - specifically LCAs 11A and 14B - open farmland, low settlement density, and limited traffic contribute to a strong sense of remoteness and calm. Tranquillity has a low capacity to accommodate perceptual intrusion without noticeable change in quality.
- 3.4.51 Tranquillity in the CNL is reinforced by the absence of large-scale modern structures in views and by an uninterrupted natural soundscape. The Scheme is designed to operate silently and is located outside the CNL boundary. However, in the early operational years, winter views from certain public rights of way, high points, or settlement edges within the CNL may include glimpses of solar arrays in the middle distance. These views are highly localised, partially filtered, and occur within an agricultural context. The presence of the arrays may marginally diminish the perception of visual naturalness for a small number of receptors but would not affect the broader experience of tranquillity across the CNL. The absence of new lighting, traffic, or mechanical noise ensures that sensory qualities other than sight remain unaffected.
- 3.4.52 From a small number of locations within the CNL, especially in leaf-off conditions, partial and filtered views of the Scheme may be perceptible across LCAs 11A/14B. These may slightly reduce the perception of remoteness and visual simplicity in the early years. No audible change is expected at CNL distances, and no permanent lighting would be present to affect night-time tranquillity.
- 3.4.53 In winter, or before planting has matured, the arrays may be faintly visible from certain tranquil vantage points, introducing a minor visual element associated with human activity into otherwise undeveloped views. The

effect is spatially limited and recessive in tone and form. Magnitude at Year 1 is assessed as Low.

- 3.4.54 By Year 15, perimeter planting and hedgerow reinforcement within LCAs 11A and 14B have matured, filtering or screening most views from tranquil locations. The visual presence of the development is greatly reduced, and the perception of remoteness and visual simplicity is fully re-established in most affected locations. Magnitude reduces to Very Low.
- 3.4.55 The High sensitivity combined with a localised and low magnitude of visual change gives rise to an indirect Minor adverse effect for certain receptors, with no change to tranquillity for the majority of the CNL.
- 3.4.56 In conclusion, tranquillity remains intact for the CNL, with only negligible–minor localised change persisting at a few viewpoints within the setting of the CNL. Long term effect: Negligible–Minor adverse (localised).
- 3.4.57 **Related Positive Outcomes:** In accordance with the duty to ‘seek to further’ the purpose of an CNL and Policy CE2.1, The Lime Down Scheme maintains tranquillity within the CNL.

Effects on Special Quality 10 - Dark skies

Outcome 6 – Dark Skies; CE6.1

- 3.4.58 ‘Light pollution’ of the night sky is an intrusion into the countryside at night, which can have harmful effects on the health of people and wildlife. With reference to the Cotswolds Conservation Board Position Statement on Dark Skies & Artificial Light, the Cotswolds and the AONB in particular continue to represent a large area which at its core is largely free from excessive light pollution as compared with the surrounding regions outside the AONB, especially in relation to the adjacent urban areas.
- 3.4.59 Proposals that are likely to impact on the dark skies of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to these dark skies, by seeking to (i) avoid and (ii) minimise light pollution.
- 3.4.60 Dark skies and landscapes are a characteristic of most of the Cotswolds AONB and therefore covered by the primary purpose of ‘conservation and enhancement’ of the AONB. The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (LS&G) included measures to conserve dark skies and landscapes. The Dark skies policy contributes to the enjoyment and understanding of the landscape, wildlife, heritage, human health and well-being, as well as economic benefit.
- 3.4.61 The CNL benefits from extensive areas with very low levels of artificial light, allowing for clear visibility of the night sky and natural nocturnal conditions. Dark skies are a valued perceptual quality closely linked to

tranquillity, ecological health, and rural character. They have very low capacity to accommodate additional lighting without perceptual degradation.

- 3.4.62 The CNL's dark skies contribute to a high-quality night-time environment for both residents and wildlife, supporting astronomical visibility and nocturnal ecological patterns. The Scheme's lighting design is specifically tailored to avoid any perceptual or ecological intrusion. All security lighting would be:
- Fully shielded and directional;
 - Activated only by motion sensors;
 - Set on short-duration timers; and
 - Turned off entirely outside occasional maintenance or being triggered by security events.
- 3.4.63 This approach removes the possibility of continuous illumination, upward light spill, or widening of existing light domes visible from the CNL. The lack of operational lighting also ensures that wildlife corridors, particularly bat foraging areas, are unaffected by light pollution.
- 3.4.64 The Scheme incorporates a no permanent external lighting policy, with only occasional use of motion-activated, dark-sky-compliant fittings for security purposes. All lighting would be full cut-off, directional, and shielded to prevent upward or outward light spill. As a result, no measurable change to skyglow or light trespass would occur within the CNL.
- 3.4.65 Temporary site lighting would be used during construction to enable safe working during construction in hours of darkness or where natural lighting is unable to reach (such as sheltered/confined areas). Mobile lighting towers with a power output of 8 kilo volt-amperes (kVA) would be used for construction work, along with lighting at the construction compounds while construction is underway. All construction lighting would be deployed in accordance with the following recommendations to prevent or reduce the impact on human and ecological receptors: As set out in **the Outline CEMP [EN010168/APP/7.12]** the use of lighting would be minimised to that required for safe site operations;
- Lighting would utilise directional fittings to minimise outward light spill and glare (e.g. via the use of light hoods/cowls which direct light below the horizontal plane, preferably at an angle greater than 20° from horizontal); and

- Lighting would be directed towards the middle of the Order limits rather than towards the boundaries.
- 3.4.66 There would be no direct effects on the CNL itself. Any effects would be temporary in nature and confined to the construction phase and would have a Very Low magnitude of change.
- 3.4.67 From the outset, the dark-sky-compliant lighting strategy would be fully implemented. Lighting is not required within the Solar PV Sites during the operation and maintenance phase of the Scheme. All routine maintenance activities would be scheduled for daylight hours as far as is practicable. Focussed task specific lighting would only be required in the event of emergency works or equipment failure requiring night-time working.
- 3.4.68 Motion sensing security lighting would be provided within substations and within the BESS Area to maintain safe working conditions in winter months, for security purposes, and for maintenance activities. The lighting commitments for the operation and maintenance phase are set out in the **Outline OEMP [EN010168/APP/7.13]**, including details on lighting design to minimise light spill.
- 3.4.69 These brief activations would be imperceptible from the CNL due to distance and directional shielding. Magnitude at Year 1 is assessed as Very Low.
- 3.4.70 By Year 15, the lighting policy remains unchanged and is embedded into operational management protocols. Perimeter vegetation maturity adds further screening, although lighting levels are already negligible. Magnitude remains Very Low.
- 3.4.71 The high sensitivity of the receptor is offset by the complete avoidance of lighting impacts, resulting in Negligible significance.
- 3.4.72 It is recognised that it is not possible for the Scheme to further this purpose. However, the Scheme has been designed to ensure that the CNL's dark skies remain entirely intact.

Effects on Special Quality 11 - Distinctive settlements

Outcome 4 – Local Distinctiveness; CE4.1

- 3.4.73 Distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity which have a visual relationship with the Scheme include Foxley, Sherston, Alderton and Luckington. The value of these historic settlements, built in the local vernacular, are recognised by their designation as Conservation Areas. The CNL's rich cultural heritage

includes the cultural-historical landscape, individual heritage assets, historic settlements and its vibrant cultural activity.

- 3.4.74 Intermittent small villages and isolated farmsteads define the pattern of settlement within the Dip slope Lowland, although there are some larger settlements present. Settlement pattern of intermittent small, nucleated villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads, together with occasional larger settlements, contribute to the strong rural character of the Dip slope Lowland.
- 3.4.75 The settlements of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) are valued for their compact, nucleated forms, vernacular architecture, and intimate relationship with the surrounding countryside. The interplay between settlement edge and rural setting is a key component of local distinctiveness. Within LCT 11 (High Wold) and LCT 14 (High Wold Dip-Slope), and specifically LCAs 11A and 14B, settlement edges are often visually prominent due to the openness of surrounding farmland. These receptors have low capacity to accommodate visible large-scale development without perceptual change to setting.
- 3.4.76 The distinctive character of CNL settlements is rooted in their visual and physical integration with the surrounding agricultural landscape. The Scheme is located outside the CNL, avoiding direct intrusion into settlement fabric or immediate setting. However, in certain outward views from settlements near the CNL boundary, especially where gaps in vegetation coincide with the direction of the site, parts of the solar array may be perceived at distance. These views would remain subordinate to the primary visual relationship between settlements and their immediate landscape setting. The low panel height, matte finishes, and retention of hedgerows within LCAs 11A and 14B ensure that any perceptible change remains recessive. Strengthened planting would further integrate the development into the agricultural matrix over time.
- 3.4.77 A small number of settlement-edge viewpoints within the CNL may perceive distant, partial views of the Scheme across LCAs 11A and 14B. Views would be limited, filtered by intervening vegetation, and perceived in the context of an existing agricultural mosaic.
- 3.4.78 In winter or from open vantage points, faint, partial views of the arrays may be possible from certain settlement edges. The development would be seen low in the view, with field boundaries and small woodland blocks interrupting sightlines. The magnitude at Year 1 is assessed as Very Low.
- 3.4.79 As proposed layers of vegetation matures, the proposed mitigation would screen the arrays and by Year 15, the magnitude of change would reduce to Very Low and neutral in nature

- 3.4.80 The High sensitivity combined with low-magnitude, spatially restricted visibility results in a Negligible effect for a small number of settlement-edge receptors.
- 3.4.81 The Scheme has been designed to avoid infrastructure within the rural setting of villages within the CNL, including Sherston, Foxley and Alderton. The Scheme has been designed to maintain openness within the setting of the CNL and to maintain views from within the Site to the settlement edges and notable features such as village churches helping maintaining their distinctive rural setting.
- 3.4.82 In conclusion, there would be some Negligible neutral indirect effects on a small number of settlement-edge receptors and there would be no direct effects on the distinctive settlements within the CNL.

Effects on Special Quality 12 - An accessible landscape - Quiet recreation and routes (e.g. Cotswold Way, PROW)

Outcome 12 – Health and wellbeing Outcome 13 – Access & Recreation and Policies UE1.1 and UE2.1

- 3.4.83 The National Landscape plays a full part in improving the nation's health, benefitting the mental and physical wellbeing of those who experience it. The CNL provides safe, pleasant, accessible, clearly waymarked and well-connected Public Rights of Way network which should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the Cotswolds National Landscape. The network of Byways, Bridleways and Footpaths both within the CNL and within the setting of the CNL provide views to and from the CNL.
- 3.4.84 The Dip slope Lowland contains numerous footpaths which cross the landscape. Long distance trails within this LCT include and the Macmillan Way, Thames Path, Wysis Way and Monarch's Way. Only the Macmillan Way is in the vicinity of the Scheme.
- 3.4.85 Users of National Trails, public rights of way (PROW), and other recreational routes within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) are considered highly sensitive visual receptors. The CNL's quiet routes are valued for their combination of physical access, scenic quality, tranquillity, and opportunities for appreciation of the landscape. Within LCT 11 (High Wold) and LCT 14 (High Wold Dip-Slope), and specifically LCAs 11A and 14B, many routes offer open or elevated views across farmland, making them susceptible to visible change in the landscape setting.
- 3.4.86 The appeal of the CNL's quiet recreation routes lies in their immersive rural character and, for many, the opportunity to experience expansive and uncluttered views. The Scheme is located outside the CNL and avoids direct intersection with any designated trails or PROW. There is no

intervisibility between the Macmillan Way and the Scheme due to topography. Views from Footpath WT|LUCK|35 which crosses the boundary of the CNL near Site C have been protected by the removal of panels in C1-C4 to maintain open views of Alderton Church. In Site A, fields A11 and A12 would remain as set aside to maintain views to and from Footpath WT|SHER|15 to and Sherston Church.

- 3.4.87 However, in certain directions from routes within the CNL, the site may be visible as low-profile, ordered elements within the agricultural mosaic. The design has minimised effects firstly by avoiding infrastructure on the boundary of the CNL and through retention of hedgerows. Mitigation planting along field boundaries and site perimeters is designed to reinforce this containment. Any change is both spatially and temporally limited, with the majority of route sections unaffected.
- 3.4.88 The visual amenity of the landscape within the setting of the CNL has been fully assessed in section 2.4 of this Appendix. A small number of recreational routes within the CNL, particularly those along elevated ground or open field edges, may afford intermittent, filtered views of the Scheme across LCAs 11A and 14B. The affected segments of routes are limited in length, and views are often transitory as users move through the landscape.
- 3.4.89 Before mitigation planting has matured, some winter views from specific route sections may include glimpses of the solar arrays in the middle distance. These are typically framed or interrupted by intervening hedgerows, woodland, or subtle landform changes. Magnitude at Year 1 is assessed as Very Low, reflecting the restricted spatial and temporal extent.
- 3.4.90 By Year 15, planting along site boundaries and intervening field edges has matured to reduce or remove most route-based visibility. In summer, the development is largely screened; in winter, remaining glimpses are fragmented and recessive. Magnitude of change would reduce to Negligible.
- 3.4.91 The High sensitivity combined with Very Low magnitude of change gives rise to a Minor adverse indirect effect at Year 1 affecting short stretches of certain routes but not the overall recreational experience. By Year 15 the effect would reduce to Negligible.
- 3.4.92 In conclusion the qualities of quiet recreation routes within the CNL remain intact, with no influence on users' enjoyment and experience. Long term effect: Negligible (localised).
- 3.4.93 **Related Positive Outcomes:** Fields on the edge of the CNL where infrastructure has been avoided to protect the setting of the CNL and

maintain views to and from it, provide opportunities for positive enhancement. In Site A, fields A11 and A12 would remain in agricultural land but would be managed as set aside for Skylark mitigation. Wildflower margins along verges to public areas would provide an attractive area for recreation.

- 3.4.94 In addition to the above, the Scheme provides for a set of new non-vehicular permissive paths on each of the Solar PV Sites. These permissive paths are shown on the **Works Plan [EN010168/APP/2.3]** as demarcated by Work No.10. These routes would provide pedestrians and riders improved accessibility to the countryside and improved connectivity to the wider PRoW network. These permissive paths are to remain open up to 364 days per year throughout the proposed 60-year operational lifetime of the Scheme. These permissive paths would provide a beneficial impact on PRoW use for local users and visitors through mitigating adverse impacts on other PRoW and providing alternative access routes to the use of the local highway network. These measures, when implemented, would enhance connectivity in the local area and may help to improve recreation in the immediate vicinity, secondarily benefitting local population health and wellbeing in the long-term. The provision of these permissive paths is secured through landowner agreements alongside the DCO, and in the **Outline LEMP [EN010168/APP/7.18]**, secured by way of requirement in the **draft DCO [EN010168/APP/3.1]**.
- 3.4.95 With reference to **ES Volume 1: Chapter 16. Socio Economic, Tourism, Recreation [EN010168/APP/6.1]** section 11 notes *“The Scheme also features provision for enhancement to existing PRoW within the Scheme Order Limits, through repairing, upgrading and replacing existing PRoW furniture, such as signs, gates, and re-establishing hedgerows gaps. Furthermore, ecological mitigation and landscape planting along PRoW corridors on in fields not proposed for Solar PV infrastructure will aid the enhancement of the experience for PRoW users on the network.”* The Scheme proposes 12.8km of new permissive paths which aid this Special Quality.
- 3.4.96 The new non-vehicular permissive paths would provide pedestrians and riders improved accessibility to the countryside and improved connectivity to the wider PRoW network. The benefits to individual receptors (PRoWs, long-distance recreation routes, equestrian facilities) are set out in **ES Volume 3, Appendix 16-2: Tourism and Recreation Receptor Tables [EN010168/APP/6.3]**.

Effects on Special Quality 13: Archaeology and historic associations

Outcome 7 – Historic Environment & Cultural Heritage; CE6.1

- 3.4.97 Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to heritage assets and their setting and seek opportunities to conserve and enhance them. This should include respecting the historical elements of landscape character including features such as buildings, sites, layout and context, including the relationship between the existing feature or settlement and the landscape. With reference to **ES Volume 1 Chapter 12 Cultural Heritage [EN010168/APP/6.1]**, the assessed heritage assets within the CNL and its setting highlight these archaeological and historical associations. Their sensitivity arises from the potential for change to affect their physical integrity, setting, and the way their historic context is understood and appreciated. The Heritage Assessment findings therefore provide a proportionate basis for understanding how the development may interact with this aspect of the CNL's Special Qualities.
- 3.4.98 The main section of the South Cotswolds Dip slope Lowlands is remarkable for the concentration of Historic Parks, Registered Gardens and private estates throughout the area. A particularly strong cluster occurs in the south-west including Badminton, Westonbirt, Highgrove and Estcourt House, and part of the smaller Pinkney Park adjacent to the River Avon. There are numerous listed buildings clustered within villages designated as Conservation Areas, as well as isolated farmhouses and barns. Remnants of Roman occupation are also notable, within the dip slope and include the Roman roads of Akeman Street, Fosse Way and Ermin Way. The Fosse Way runs through the Scheme, outside of the CNL.
- 3.4.99 The archaeological resource and historic associations of the CNL contribute to its national and, in some cases, international significance. These assets are sensitive to changes that could alter their physical integrity, setting, or the way their historic context is understood and appreciated. Within LCT 11 (High Wold) and LCT 14 (High Wold Dip-Slope) - specifically LCAs 11A and 14B there is a strong survival of historic landscape patterns, ancient routeways, and visual relationships with heritage features. Capacity to absorb change without altering setting or perceptual qualities is **Low**.
- 3.4.100 The CNL's archaeological and historic environment includes prehistoric earthworks, Roman roads, medieval settlements, and historic agricultural landscapes. Many of these are valued for their undisturbed settings and

visual connections to surrounding landscape features. The Scheme sits outside the CNL boundary and avoids any physical disturbance of the CNLs heritage fabric.

- 3.4.101 With reference to the Heritage Assessment (**ES Volume 1, Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage [EN010168/APP/6.1]**), while the CNL is not a designated heritage asset in itself, the Special Qualities of the CNL are partly defined through its historic environment and cultural associations. The contribution of heritage to these Special Qualities has therefore been addressed indirectly through the assessment of designated and non-designated heritage assets that lie within the CNL, or within its wider setting. In line with the adopted approach, built heritage receptors within the study area were assessed through Statements of Significance contained within **ES Volume 3, Appendix 12-1: Heritage Statement [EN010168/APP/6.3]**. See in particular Tables 4–6, 12, 24–26. These statements consider the historic, architectural and artistic interest of each asset, as well as the contribution made by setting. Discussion of heritage assets outside these groupings are assessed from Page 107 onwards. Archaeological impacts are addressed separately. Effects on the setting of built heritage assets were also tested and illustrated through the Heritage Viewpoints provided in Annex 3 of the Heritage Statement. No harm was identified to the heritage assets considered with regard to the CNL. Less than substantial harm (at the lower end of the scale) was identified for Fosse Lodge on the edge of the CNL (Table 12) and the Outfarm, East of Lords Wood Cottage- a non-designated asset (Table 26) within Site A.
- 3.4.102 As noted for SQ 12 above, views from Footpath WT|LUCK|35 which crosses the boundary of the CNL near Site C have been protected by the removal of panels in C1-C4 to maintain open views of Alderton Church. In Site A fields A11 and A12 would remain as set as aside to protect views from Footpath WT|SHER|15 to Sherston Church. The avoidance of infrastructure in these areas maintains the visual relationship between the landscape and heritage assets associated with the villages of Sherston and Alderton maintaining the important viewsheds identified as sensitive in the CNL Management Plan.
- 3.4.103 There is no direct physical impact on designated or non-designated heritage assets within the CNL. From a small number of locations, distant and filtered intervisibility with the Scheme may occur, but without intrusion into key views, skyline positions, or interpretive relationships essential to understanding significance.
- 3.4.104 In early operational years, and before mitigation planting is fully mature, some heritage viewpoints may include faint evidence of the development in the mid-distance. These instances are rare and occur in the context of a

working rural landscape. Magnitude is Low where these glimpses occur and Very Low elsewhere.

- 3.4.105 By Year 15, boundary and intervening planting has matured to screen or break up almost all visibility from heritage viewpoints. The site is no longer a perceptible feature in the setting of sensitive assets, and the associative qualities of place remain intact. Magnitude reduces to Very Low universally.
- 3.4.106 The High sensitivity is offset by very limited spatial extent, minimal perceptual change, and strong mitigation, producing negligible to minor indirect effects in the few locations where change occurs.
- 3.4.107 In conclusion, overall, whilst the Scheme has sought to enhance the SQs of the CNL, some qualities are not capable of being enhanced. However, effects on these qualities can be avoided/minimised, such as with SQ13. The archaeological and historic associations of the CNL remain preserved in their physical form and experiential setting. Long term effect would be Minor Adverse / Negligible (localised), with the lower end of the range applying once mitigation is mature.

Effects on Special Quality 14 - Cultural associations and traditions

Outcome 2- Natural & Cultural Capital Outcome 8 - Historic Environment & Cultural Heritage; and Policy CC3.4 and CE6.1

- 3.4.108 Cultural heritage includes tangible culture (such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, archive materials, books, works of art, and artifacts), intangible culture (such as folklore, traditions, language, and knowledge), and natural heritage (including culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity).
- 3.4.109 The Cotswolds has a vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olimpicks, cheese rolling and woolsack races. Proposals affecting the Cotswolds National Landscape should have regard to and seek to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural capital of the National Landscape and the services they provide.
- 3.4.110 Although specific reference is not made to any cultural associations and traditions within the character descriptions for the LCAs 11A and 14B, the landscape is fundamental to the Cotswold's rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological and ecological features and shaped by traditional land practices.

- 3.4.111 The cultural associations and traditions of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) encompass intangible heritage, including links to literature, art, craft traditions, and seasonal rural customs. These associations are deeply embedded in the character and identity of the CNL and are sensitive to changes in setting or landscape experience that could weaken their authenticity or recognition.
- 3.4.112 The cultural life of the CNL is shaped by centuries of artistic and literary representation, traditional agricultural fairs, stone masonry skills, and other practices that depend on the visual and functional integrity of the rural landscape. The Scheme does not intersect with the locations where these activities occur or with the visual frames through which they are traditionally experienced. The development's siting within LCAs 11A and 14B does not coincide with any celebrated cultural viewpoints, event spaces, or traditional routes identified in the CNL Management Plan as integral to cultural identity. Given the low-profile nature of the scheme, the containment of views within an agricultural context, and the absence of noise or lighting effects, there is no potential for disruption of the experiential qualities that underpin cultural associations.
- 3.4.113 With reference to the Heritage Assessment (Volume 1. Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage [EN010168/APP/6.1]), the cultural value of the CNL, including artistic, literary and associative dimensions, is reflected within the Statements of Significance, which consider the intangible as well as tangible heritage values of relevant assets. These assessments enable an interpretation of potential effects on this aspect of the CNL's Special Qualities. The relationship between built heritage and the CNL has also been considered in the HIA, with reference to Landscape Character Types 11 (High Wold) and 14 (High Wold Dip-Slope), specifically LCAs 11A and 14B, to ensure consistency with the landscape assessment.
- 3.4.114 The Scheme is located outside the CNL and has no physical or visual interaction with key sites, landscapes, or settings strongly associated with CNL cultural traditions. There is no pathway for perceptual change that could influence the continuation or appreciation of these associations.
- 3.4.115 At the start of operation, there is no perceptible change to the landscapes or settings that form the backdrop for CNL cultural traditions. Activities, events, and the symbolic representation of the landscape remain unaffected. Magnitude is assessed as Very Low.
- 3.4.116 By Year 15, the absence of any functional or visual connection between the Scheme and culturally significant locations remains unchanged. Mitigation planting has matured, but given there was no initial pathway for effect, its role is incidental. Magnitude remains Very Low.

- 3.4.117 While this receptor is highly sensitive in principle, the absence of physical, visual, or experiential links between the development and the core locations or practices associated with this Special Quality results in a Negligible indirect effect in LVIA terms.
- 3.4.118 In conclusion, the cultural associations and traditions of the CNL remain wholly intact and unaffected.

3.5 Positive contributions to further the purpose of the AONB designation

- 3.5.1 The primary statutory purpose of the CNL is to:
- Conserve and enhance its natural beauty and improve its condition for future generations (Section 82 CRoW Act); and
 - A duty on all authorities to “seek to further” this purpose (Section 85 CRoW Act).
- 3.5.2 In accordance with the duty to ‘seek to further’ the purpose of the CNL, which supersedes Policy CC7 of the cross-cutting themes of the Cotswold Management Plan, the Scheme includes a number of positive enhancement measures on the edge of the CNL. These enhancement measures are embedded within the Scheme, such as those described above.

CNL Nature Recovery Strategy

- 3.5.3 The Nature Recovery Plan notes that nature recovery should be undertaken in accordance with the Cotswolds Management Plan and associated guidance including the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines which has been described above.
- 3.5.4 The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan is a strategy to create a robust and interconnected wildlife network across the landscape. This includes:
- **Creation and restoration of habitats:** The plan prioritizes species-rich grasslands, wetlands in river valleys, and broadleaved woodlands. This includes restoring traditional features like drystone walls and orchards and managing habitats to allow natural processes to occur.
 - **Improving habitat connectivity:** Measures are designed to link fragmented habitats, which is crucial for helping wildlife adapt to climate change.
 - **Supporting land managers:** The strategy advocates for a farmer-led approach to delivery, ensuring land managers are supported and incentivised to implement nature-friendly practices on their land.

- **Embracing new techniques:** The plan explores modern approaches like "stage zero" river restoration, reintroducing beavers, and using virtual fencing to improve grazing management.

3.5.5 In order to deliver the above, the landscape led Scheme has included liaison with ecology to improve habitats, especially for priority species.

3.5.6 The Nature Recovery Plan defines four Broad Habitats selected from the natural capital evaluation. These include:

- Woodland and trees;
- Grassland and scrub, including dry stone walls;
- Rivers and wetland; and
- Cropland.

3.5.7 These broad habitat categories have been utilized to provide the following measurements for the areas within Site A, B and C which are within the setting of the CNL as set out in **Table 17** below. They do not include existing hedgerow understories, existing woodland understories, existing tracks or roads within the Site and the proposed Scheme infrastructure (substations, invertors etc).

Table 17: Mitigation Quantities within the Setting of the CNL

Mitigation Quantities within setting of the CNL (Lime Down Sites A-C)						
CNL Broad Habitats	LEMP Typologies	A	B	C	CNL total	units
Grassland and Scrub	Existing Vegetation to be Retained and Enhanced	0.37	10.41	3.94	14.71	Ha
	Proposed Grassland Creation (Beneath Panels)	45.34	37.33	126.93	209.6	Ha
	Proposed Tussock Grassland Margins	6.36	9.42	19.4	35.18	Ha
	Proposed Damp Grassland	0	0	2.41	2.41	Ha
	Proposed Diverse	13.65	17.60	29.08	60.33	Ha

	Wildflower Meadow					
	Proposed Low Density Scrub	0.08	0.25	14.19	14.52	Ha
		65.80	75.00	195.95	336.76	Ha
Cropland	Proposed Ground Nesting Bird Mitigation - Set Aside	23.29	3.03	36.97	63.29	Ha
		23.29	3.03	36.97	63.29	Ha
Woodland and Trees	Proposed Native Woodland Belt	0.82	0.32	1.26	2.39	Ha
	Proposed Native Woodland Block	0	0	1.09	1.09	Ha
	Proposed Scrub and Tree Planting (On Bund)	0	0	0.00	0.00	Ha
		0.82	0.32	2.34	3.48	Ha
Rivers and Wetland	Proposed Riparian Corridor	0	0	2.33	2.33	Ha
		0	0	2.33	2.33	Ha
Hedgerow Reinforcement	Existing Hedge to be Reinforced / Gapped Up with Native Tree Planting	8592.08	3709.06	11431.87	23733.01	M
	Proposed Linear Tree Planting	1589.70	226.99	4043.65	5860.34	M
	Proposed Native Hedgerow with Trees	1790.72	1701.70	3786.99	7279.40	M
		11972.49	5637.75	19262.51	7279.40	M

3.6 Summary and Conclusions

- 3.6.1 This Appendix provides a standalone assessment of the Lime Down Scheme on the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and its Special Qualities. The CNL is a nationally designated Landscape, protected by national, local policy. The Special Qualities are defined as *“those aspects of the area’s natural beauty which make the area distinctive, and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. They are the key attributes on which the priorities for its conservation, enhancement and management are based. They bring out the essence of the National Landscape as an evocative description of the area rather than as a statistical account.”* These special qualities support the reason for designation.
- 3.6.2 The NPPF at paragraph 189 states: *“the scale and extent of development within National Landscapes should be limited, while development within the setting of National Landscapes should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.”*
- 3.6.3 It has been agreed with Statutory Consultees that Sites A, B and C of the Lime Down Scheme are within the setting of the CNL. The CNL Board (in its position statement - Development in the setting of the Cotswolds AONB, considers the setting of the Cotswolds AONB/ National Landscape to be *“the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting materials or design can be considered to have an impact, positive or negative, on the landscape, scenic beauty and special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB”*.
- 3.6.4 The position Statement clarifies this further stating: *“The surroundings of the Cotswolds AONB are also important to its landscape character and quality. There are views out of the AONB and across back into land within the AONB and views towards or into it from surrounding areas, all of which can be very significant. Development proposals that affect views into and out of the AONB need to be carefully assessed to ensure that they conserve and enhance the natural beauty and landscape character of the AONB”*.
- 3.6.5 As such, the assessment of effects on the CNL focuses on Sites A-C of the Lime Down Scheme. It considers the effects of the surrounding landscape character and quality of the landscape within the CNL and in visual terms it considers the effects of the development on views to and from the CNL. The assessment of landscape and visual effects on the CNL has been extracted from **ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [EN010168/APP/6.1]** and is presented in Section 2 of this appendix.

- 3.6.6 Section 3 of this appendix provides an assessment of effects on the 14 Special Qualities (SQs) of the CNL. As there is no standard approach available on how to assess the impacts of infrastructure development on the Special Qualities in National Landscapes, the approach taken has been to link the SQs to the vision and specific 'outcomes' and policies of the Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan (CNLMP). The Assessment references the findings of other ES chapters where relevant and evaluates the extent to which, if at all, each SQ is likely to be affected by the Scheme. As there cannot be any direct physical effects on the CNL, as the Scheme is not within the CNL itself, the assessment presents the predicted visual effects on each Special Quality whilst having regard to the character of the landscape.
- 3.6.7 This section concludes on how the Scheme contributes to furthering the purpose of the AONB designation as set out in Section 245 of the LURA Act which strengthens section 85 of the CRoW Act's 'duty of regard' and seeks positive outcomes for the natural beauty, in its holistic sense. For this, reference is made to the mitigation measures embedded in the Scheme.
- 3.6.8 Section 1 of this appendix provides the context for the two assessments including: consultation undertaken with the CNL; the policy context specific to the CNL; and the Methodology for the Assessments.

Landscape Assessment

- 3.6.9 The Landscape Assessment sets out the landscape baseline for the CNL and Sites A-C within its setting, with reference to both the published Cotswolds National Landscape Character Assessment and the North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment. This notes that landscape is a continuum, and the North Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment overlaps with the CNL up to the County boundary within the CNL. Although named differently the boundaries of the Landscape Types and Character Areas within both assessments are generally contiguous with the majority of the Scheme within the transitional landscape of the Dip slope between the High Wold to the west and the lowlands to the east.
- 3.6.10 There is no physical overlap between the Scheme and the CNL, and consequently the Proposed development causes no direct impacts on the CNL. **ES Volume 1, Chapter 8: Landscape and Visual [EN010168/APP/6.1]** recorded Moderate Significant Beneficial effects on the Landscape Fabric of the Site and Moderate adverse effects within the 1 km Local Study Area of the Scheme. These beneficial effects to the Landscape Fabric of the Lime Down Sites is derived from the extensive mitigation measures embedded in the Scheme which includes protection of the existing features of the Site and new planting, including trees,

hedgerows and woodland, as well as improvements to watercourses and the extensive change in land use to grassland under solar panels and the conversion to grassland meadows on the edge of the CNL as shown on **ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan [EN010168/APP/6.2]** and described in Section 2.3 of this report.

- 3.6.11 The avoidance measures set out in Section 2.3 to prevent harm to the CNL provide opportunities for positive enhancement within the setting of the CNL. These measures contribute to the substantial increase in vegetation across the scheme.
- 3.6.12 The Moderate Adverse significant landscape effects within the 1 km local study area are primarily related to the change in land use from agriculture to the solar farm. This change does not directly affect the CNL as the buffer to the development provided by the avoidance measures and layers of proposed mitigation planting contains the development away from the edge of the CNL. As such, the development would be barely discernible from within the CNL. Harm to the CNL itself would be minimal with beneficial landscape effects within the setting of the CNL in the long term which would further the purposes of the designation.

The Visual Assessment

Private Receptors

- 3.6.13 The assessment effects on identified Private Receptors scoped into the assessment of effects on the CNL, i.e.: those residential properties which have a visual relationship with the CNL include Widley's Farm, Sherston (RI014) and Fosse Lodge (RI024), Grittleton which are both Grade II Listed buildings with a high sensitivity to visual change.
- 3.6.14 Widley's Farm is located on higher ground on the edge of the CNL and would have views over Site A to the southeast during construction and operation. Fosse Lodge is located at the junction of the Fosse Way and Alderton Road within the CNL and has a visual relationship with Site C where construction and Year 1 operations would be partially visible in the distance
- 3.6.15 Although the magnitude of change in both cases is assessed as Low, this gives rise to Moderate Adverse effects when combined with their High Sensitivity. In both cases the infrastructure would be seen at distance across intervening landscape features. Once embedded mitigation matures, the magnitude of change would reduce to Very Low and the effects at Year 15 would reduce to Moderate / Minor Adverse and non-significant.

Public Receptors

- 3.6.16 The assessment effects on identified Public Receptors scoped into the assessment of effects on the CNL, i.e.: PRowS which have a visual relationship with the CNL (including views to and from the CNL) identified one Footpath WT|NORT|1 (TP037) associated with the CNL as having Major / Moderate Adverse effects during Construction and Year 1. This footpath connects from Foxley Road on the edge of the CNL to Honey Lane to the southwest. Although not in the CNL itself there is a visual relationship between the footpath and the CNL at its northern end.
- 3.6.17 Although the assessment identifies Major / Moderate Adverse effects on the footpath during Construction, these effects are as a result of the development on the southwestern end of the Footpath, close to Honey Lane. There is no infrastructure proposed in B12 and there would be no change in views to and from the CNL from the footpath at its northern end. As such there are no significant effects on Public Receptors associated with the Scheme and the CNL. This is predominantly as a result of the measures incorporated into the Scheme to avoid harm to the CNL.

Transport Receptors

- 3.6.18 The assessment of effects on identified Private Receptors scoped into the assessment of effects on the CNL, i.e.: Roads which have a visual relationship with the CNL (including views to and from the CNL) identified Significant effects on four Transport Receptors associated with the CNL during Construction and Year 1. These include:
- Ford Road and Widleys Road Junction East C93 to Bottom of Bustlers Hill, Sherston (TR043) which follows the CNL boundary to Site A;
 - Commonwood Lane (TR143) which is not within the CNL;
 - Fosse Way (TR145) within the CNL to the south of the of Site C and adjacent to Site C not within the CNL; and
 - Road Junction at Southfields Southeast to Y Junction, Sherston (TR154) which provides an approach road to Sherston joining the CNL at its northern end.
- 3.6.19 The assessment identifies Moderate Adverse effects on all the above Transport Receptors during the Construction and Operation Phase 1. Construction effects would be temporary in nature and at the start of the Operation phase infrastructure would be visible to varying degrees as mitigation planting would have a limited effect initially. However, once mitigation planting matures the magnitude of change would reduce to Very Low and the effects at Year 15 would reduce to Minor and Neutral in

nature, with no effects identified during decommissioning. As such, there would be no significant long-term visual effects on the CNL.

Assessment on the Special Qualities of the CNL

3.6.20 The Assessment on the Special Qualities of the CNL found there would be no direct significant effects on the Special Qualities of the CNL. A summary of the effects on the Special Qualities of the CNL scoped into the assessment is shown in **Table 18** below:

Table 18: Summary of Effects on the CNL's Special Qualities

Special Quality	Conclusion of Assessment
1 - The distinctive limestone geology and the use of local stone in buildings	The Special Quality remains wholly unaffected in both the short and long term. The integrity and perception of the CNL's geological and building-stone distinctiveness are fully preserved.
3 - The High Wolds	The High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope would retain their defining openness, large-scale landform, and perceptual "big sky" quality.
4 - River valleys and headwaters	The Special Quality of the CNL's river valleys and headwaters would be wholly preserved. Although positive enhancement of these features are proposed within the Scheme, these benefits are downstream of the CNL and would not benefit the CNL itself.
5 - Dry-stone walls and field patterns	The defining enclosure patterns and dry-stone walling of the CNL are unaffected.
6 – Biodiversity and nature recovery	The delivery of approximately 119.7 hectares of flower-rich neutral grassland (as defined in the BNG assessment) represents a beneficial effect on Special Quality 6.
9 - Tranquillity	Tranquillity remains intact for the CNL, with only negligible–minor localised change persisting at a few viewpoints within the setting of the CNL. Long term effect: Negligible–Minor adverse (localised).
10 - Dark skies	It is recognised that it is not possible for the Scheme to further this purpose. However, the Scheme has been designed to ensure that the CNL's dark skies remain entirely intact.
11 - Distinctive settlements	There would be some Negligible neutral indirect effects on a small number of settlement-edge receptors and there would be no direct effects on the distinctive settlements within the CNL.
12 - An accessible landscape	The qualities of quiet recreation routes within the CNL remain intact, with no influence on users' enjoyment and experience. The Scheme proposes 12.8km of new permissive paths which aid this Special Quality.
13 - Archaeology and historic associations	Whilst the Scheme has sought to enhance the SQs of the CNL, some qualities are not capable of being enhanced.

	However, effects on these qualities can be avoided/minimised. The archaeological and historic associations of the CNL remain preserved in their physical form and experiential setting. Long term effect would be Minor Adverse / Negligible (localised), with the lower end of the range applying once mitigation is mature.
14 - Cultural associations and traditions	The cultural associations and traditions of the CNL remain wholly intact and unaffected.

3.6.21 The assessment of effects on the Special Qualities of the CNL scoped out 3 SQs as there is no association with the Site. The assessment has found that there are no direct effects on the SQs and there are some Minor/Negligible short-term effects on a small number of visual receptors within the setting of the CNL on SQ7 -Tranquillity and SQ13 Archaeology and historic associations. The assessment also found that there would be beneficial effects on SQ 6 – Biodiversity and nature recovery as a result of the delivery of approximately 119.7 hectares of flower-rich neutral grassland (as defined in the **Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report [EN010168/APP/7.8]**) and SQ 12 - An accessible landscape as a result of the delivery of approximately 12.8km of new permissive paths within the setting of the CNL. The remaining SQs would remain entirely intact.

Positive contributions to further the purpose of the AONB designation

- 3.6.22 With each Special Quality assessment positive outcomes of the scheme were identified where relevant. This was based on the embedded mitigation measures described in section 2.3 of this report including avoidance measures on the edge of the CNL; general offsets to protect landscape features; extensive new tree, hedgerow and meadow planting informed by the CNL’s Nature Recovery Plan and specific measures to improve the character of the landscape and maintain views to and from the CNL. These measures are incorporated into **ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan [EN010168/APP/6.2]** and would be secured through the **Outline LEMP [EN010168/APP/7.18]**.
- 3.6.23 In accordance with the duty to ‘seek to further’ the purpose of the CNL, the positive benefits of the Scheme within Lime Down Sites A-C, within the setting of the CNL, are set out in **Table 19** below:

Table 19: Mitigation Quantities within setting of the CNL

Mitigation Quantities within setting of the CNL (Lime Down Sites A-C)

CNL Broad Habitats	LEMP Typologies	A	B	C	CNL total	units
Grassland and Scrub	Existing Vegetation to be Retained and Enhanced	0.37	10.41	3.94	14.71	Ha
	Proposed Grassland Creation (Beneath Panels)	45.34	37.33	126.93	209.6	Ha
	Proposed Tussock Grassland Margins	6.36	9.42	19.4	35.18	Ha
	Proposed Damp Grassland	0	0	2.41	2.41	Ha
	Proposed Diverse Wildflower Meadow	13.65	17.60	29.08	60.33	Ha
	Proposed Low Density Scrub	0.08	0.25	14.19	14.52	Ha
		65.80	75.00	195.95	336.76	Ha
Cropland	Proposed Ground Nesting Bird Mitigation - Set Aside	23.29	3.03	36.97	63.29	Ha
		23.29	3.03	36.97	63.29	Ha
Woodland and Trees	Proposed Native Woodland Belt	0.82	0.32	1.26	2.39	Ha
	Proposed Native Woodland Block	0	0	1.09	1.09	Ha
	Proposed Scrub and Tree Planting (On Bund)	0	0	0.00	0.00	Ha
		0.82	0.32	2.34	3.48	Ha
Rivers and Wetland	Proposed Riparian Corridor	0	0	2.33	2.33	Ha

		0	0	2.33	2.33	Ha
Hedgerow Reinforcement	Existing Hedge to be Reinforced / Gapped Up with Native Tree Planting	8592.08	3709.06	11431.87	23733.01	M
	Proposed Linear Tree Planting	1589.70	226.99	4043.65	5860.34	M
	Proposed Native Hedgerow with Trees	1790.72	1701.70	3786.99	7279.40	M
		11972.49	5637.75	19262.51	7279.40	M

Conclusion

3.6.24 The landscape and visual effects of the Scheme on the CNL and its Special Qualities have been mitigated throughout the landscape led, iterative design process and has been informed by the Cotswold Nature Recovery Plan in conjunction with liaison with the project Ecologist and consultation with officers at the CNL and WC. Embedded mitigation includes:

- Avoidance - Avoidance measures to avoid harm to the CNL through the use of significant buffers to the CNL boundary where Sites A, B and C are within its setting and to maintain views to and from the CNL such as Alderton and Sherston Church;
- Protection – Buffers and offsets have been embedded into the design of the Scheme to protect the existing landscape fabric of the Sites within the setting of the CNL (and throughout the wider Scheme);
- Retention and Enhancement - Retention and enhancement of the existing landscape framework to gap up existing hedgerows and provide new tree lines to increase age and species diversity. The embedded mitigation also includes new planting to both mitigate the visual effects of the Scheme and provide landscape benefits, This includes the re-establishment of historic hedgerows within the setting of the CNL, new areas of native woodland, trees, scrub and grassland, new planting within riparian corridors to enhance rivers and wetland, as well the restoration of dry-stone walls and creation of new ponds; and

- Positive Enhancements – Positive enhancements to further the purpose of the CNL are incorporated into the Scheme, particularly within avoidance areas. This includes:
 - The creation of wildflower meadows and Low Density Scrub on the edge of the CNL within the northern part of A1, C1, C6, C8, C9 and B12.
 - The creation of wildflower meadow verges on the edge of set aside land in A11, A12 and C10 to provide attractive buffers in views from public roads on the edge of the CNL; and
 - Maintaining hedgerows at their current height of c1.5m (or as existing if greater) bordering the CNL within Site C (including the northern boundary of C1 to maintain open views of the landscape within the setting of the CNL.

- 3.6.25 As a result of the above mitigation embedded within the Scheme and shown on **ES Volume 2, Figure 3-4 Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan [EN010168/APP/6.2]**, Moderate Significant Beneficial effects on the Landscape Fabric of the Site have been recorded within the setting of the CNL.
- 3.6.26 Although significant landscape effects have been recorded within the 1 km Local Study Area of the Lime Down Sites, these effects are primarily related to the change in land use from agriculture to the solar infrastructure. This change does not directly affect the CNL as the buffers to the development provided by the avoidance measures and layers of proposed mitigation planting would contain the development away from the edge of the CNL. As such, the development would be barely discernible from within the CNL.
- 3.6.27 The Visual assessment of effects recorded some short term Moderate Adverse effects during Construction and Operation Year 1 on some receptors which have a visual relationship with the CNL (including views to and from the CNL). However, once mitigation planting matures the magnitude of change would reduce to Very Low and the effects at Year 15 would reduce to Minor and Neutral in nature, with no effects identified during decommissioning. As such, there would be no significant long-term visual effects on the CNL.
- 3.6.28 The assessment of effects on the Special Qualities of the CNL scoped out 3 SQs as there is no association with the Site. The assessment has found that there are no direct effects on the remaining SQs. There are some Minor/ Negligible short-term effects on a small number of visual receptors within the setting of the CNL which effect SQ7 -Tranquillity and SQ13 Archaeology and historic associations. However, these effects are

mitigated by Year 15 when proposed vegetation has matured. The assessment also found that there would be beneficial effects on SQ 6 – Biodiversity and nature recovery as a result of the delivery of approximately 119.7 hectares of flower-rich neutral grassland (as defined in the BNG assessment) and SQ 12 - An accessible landscape as a result of the delivery of approximately 12.8km of new permissive paths within the setting of the CNL. The remaining SQs would remain entirely intact.

- 3.6.29 As set out above the Scheme has avoided harm to the CNL, maintained views to and from the CNL, protected the features of the landscape within the setting of the CNL, retained and enhanced the character of the landscape through the proposed embedded mitigation and provided positive enhancements to further the purpose of the CNL.
- 3.6.30 In conclusion, this standalone assessment of effects on the CNL and its Special Qualities has found that there are no significant direct effects on the CNL or its Special Qualities. Harm to the CNL itself would be minimal with beneficial landscape effects within the setting of the CNL in the long term which would further the purposes of the designation.

4 References

- 1) European Landscape Convention. Available at:
[REDACTED]
- 2) The Environment Act 2021. Available at:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents>
- 3) Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) (2023) Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1). Available at:
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65bbfbd709fe1000f637052/overarching-nps-for-energy-en1.pdf>
- 4) DECC (2023) National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3). Available at:
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a7889996a5ec000d731aba/nps-renewable-energy-infrastructure-en3.pdf>
- 5) DECC (2023) National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5). Available at:
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a78a5496a5ec000d731abb/nps-electricity-networks-infrastructure-en5.pdf>
- 6) Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- 7) Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA), Section 245, DEFRA, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-protected-landscapes-duty/guidance-for-relevant-authorities-on-seeking-to-further-the-purposes-of-protected-landscapes#the-protected-landscapes-duty>
- 8) National Landscapes Association (2024) Applying the CRoW Act section 85 duty to 'seek to further the purpose' in National Landscapes (AONBs). Available at:
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 9) The Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2023) Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025. Available at:
<https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/planning/cotswolds-aonb-managementplan/>
- 10) The Cotswolds National Landscape Board (n.d.) Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy & Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-landscape/landscapecharacter-assessment/>

- 11) The Cotswolds National Landscape Board (n.d.). The Cotswold Nature Recovery Plan, adopted as guidance by the Cotswolds National Landscape October 2021
- 12) Cotswolds Conservation Board (n.d.). Position Statement - Landscape-Led Development ([April 2021](#)).
- 13) Cotswolds Conservation Board (n.d.). Position Statement – Development in the setting of the Cotswolds AONB ([Revised June 2016](#))
- 14) Cotswolds Conservation Board (n.d.). Position Statement – Tranquillity Position Statement (June 2019);
- 15) Cotswolds Conservation Board (n.d.). Position Statement - Cotswolds Dark Skies & Artificial Light Position Statement (Adopted March 2019).