



Meridian Solar Farm

EN010169

Volume 7

Other Documents

7.1 Planning Statement -
Appendix F: Mineral
Safeguarding Assessment

APFP Regulation 5(2)(q)

Infrastructure Planning (Applications:
Prescribed Forms and Procedure)
Regulations 2009

March 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. This Mineral Safeguarding Assessment forms part of an application by Meridian Solar Farm Limited to the Secretary of State under the Planning Act 2008 (the 'PA 2008') for a Development Consent Order (the DCO Application) for the Scheme.
- 1.1.2. The Scheme would comprise the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of a solar PV electricity generating station with associated infrastructure, including co-located Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), Inter-Array Connections to link the land parcels that form the Solar Development Areas, and an up to 13 km overhead line Grid Connection (with one short undergrounded section) which would run north towards a point of connection (PoC) at the proposed Weston Marsh B National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) substation, to the north of Weston.
- 1.1.3. The Solar PV generating station, associated BESS, on-site substations and other associated infrastructure would be located within four land parcels (A, B, C and D) referred to collectively as the Solar Development Area, as shown in **ES Figure 1-1** (Doc Ref. 6.2).
- 1.1.4. The Inter-Arrays would be the areas within which 132 kV connection cables (the 'Inter-Array Connections') would link the land parcels of the Solar Development Area. The configuration of the Inter-Array Connections (132 kV) would comprise underground cabling between Land Parcels A and B ('the Underground Inter-Array') and an overhead line between Land Parcels C and D ('the Overground Inter-Array').
- 1.1.5. The Grid Connection Route would be the area between the Solar Development Area and the National Grid Weston Marsh B Substation in which a 400 kV overhead line (the 'Grid Connection') would be located. There is one section where the Grid Connection would route underground to avoid conflicts with an existing 132 kV overhead line. Cable Sealing End Compounds (CSECs) would join the proposed underground cable at that section with the proposed overhead line.
- 1.1.6. The Scheme comprises a generating station of more than 100 MW and the installation of above ground electric lines greater than two kilometres in length

and a nominal voltage of 132 kV or greater. The Scheme therefore qualifies as an NSIP under sections 14(1)(a), 14(1)(b), 15(2) and 16 of the PA 2008.

- 1.1.7. The purpose of this Mineral Safeguarding Assessment is to assess the potential for the Scheme to affect safeguarded mineral resources. It has been prepared in accordance with national and local planning policy, including paragraphs 222 to 225 of the NPPF and the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Core Strategy and Development Management Policies) 2016.
- 1.1.8. This document should be read alongside information that is contained within the other application documents and plans.

2. Policy Context and Guidance

2.1. Overview

- 2.1.1. Mineral resources are finite, and sterilisation of mineral resources can occur as a result of surface development overlying or close to a resource. Therefore, there is a need to safeguard and conserve mineral resources. The following subsections set out the policy context relevant to minerals for the Scheme.

2.2. National Policy Statements

- 2.2.1. Paragraph 5.11.19 of the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)¹ requires applicants to “safeguard any mineral resources on the proposed site as far as possible, taking into account the long-term potential of the land use after any future decommissioning has taken place”.

- 2.2.2. Further paragraphs 5.11.28 and 5.11.29 of EN-1 state:

“Where a proposed development has an impact upon a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA), the Secretary of State should ensure that appropriate mitigation measures have been put in place to safeguard mineral resources.

Where a project has a sterilising effect on land use (for example in some cases under transmission lines) there may be scope for this to be mitigated through, for example, using or incorporating the land for nature conservation or wildlife corridors or for parking and storage in employment areas.”

- 2.2.3. There are no mineral-related policies within the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) or the National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks (EN-5).

2.3. National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.3.1. Section 17 of the NPPF² sets out policies to ensure there is a sufficient supply of minerals. Paragraph 223(c) requires mineral planning authorities to safeguard minerals by defining Mineral Safeguarding Areas and Mineral Consultation

¹ Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (December 2025). Accessed at: [Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy \(EN-1\) – December 2025](#) [Accessed January 2026]

² National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024). Accessed at: [National Planning Policy Framework](#) [Accessed January 2026]

Areas along with appropriate policies to ensure known locations of specific mineral resources of local and national importance are not sterilised by non-mineral development where this should be avoided.

- 2.3.2. Paragraph 225 directs that local planning authorities “*should not normally permit other development proposals in Mineral Safeguarding Areas if it might constrain future potential use for mineral working*”.

2.4. Local Policy

- 2.4.1. As the Scheme is wholly situated within Lincolnshire, the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan³ is the relevant minerals planning document for the Scheme. It comprises two parts:

- Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (June 2016) which outlines the principles for the future winning and working of minerals and the form of waste management. Further, it sets out criteria for the consideration of minerals and waste development applications.
- Site Locations (adopted December 2017) which includes specific proposals and policies for the provision of land for minerals and waste.

- 2.4.2. A small area of the Order Limits (approximately 18 hectares within Land Parcel A of the Solar Development Area) extends partially across an area allocated by Lincolnshire County Council as a Mineral Safeguarding Area for sand and gravel (see **Figure 3-1** in Section 3 below). The Order Limits are not within any site locations identified within the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

- 2.4.3. Policy M11 allows for development to be granted within a Mineral Safeguarding Area provided that it would not sterilise mineral resources within the Mineral Safeguarding Areas or prevent future minerals extraction on neighbouring land. It states:

Sand and gravel, blown sand and limestone resources that are considered to be of current or future economic importance within the Minerals Safeguarding Areas shown on Figure 1, together with potential sources of dimension stone for use in building and restoration projects connected to Lincoln Cathedrai/Lincoln Castle

³ Lincolnshire County Council (2016). Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Core Strategy and Development Management Policies). Accessed at: [Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan](#) [Accessed January 2026]

within the areas shown on Figure 2, and chalk resources included on Figure 3, will be protected from permanent sterilisation by other development.

Applications for non-minerals development in a minerals safeguarding area must be accompanied by a Minerals Assessment. Planning permission will be granted for development within a Minerals Safeguarding Area provided that it would not sterilise mineral resources within the Mineral Safeguarding Areas or prevent future minerals extraction on neighbouring land. Where this is not the case, planning permission will be granted when:

- the applicant can demonstrate to the Mineral Planning Authority that prior extraction of the mineral would be impracticable, and that the development could not reasonably be sited elsewhere; or*
- the incompatible development is of a temporary nature and can be completed and the site restored to a condition that does not inhibit extraction within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be needed; or*
- there is an overriding need for the development to meet local economic needs, and the development could not reasonably be sited elsewhere; or*
- the development is of a minor nature which would have a negligible impact with respect to sterilising the mineral resource; or*
- the development is, or forms part of, an allocation in the Development Plan.*

2.4.4. Figure 1 referred to within Policy M11 is reproduced below at **Figure 2-1**. This map identifies the safeguarded areas within Lincolnshire.

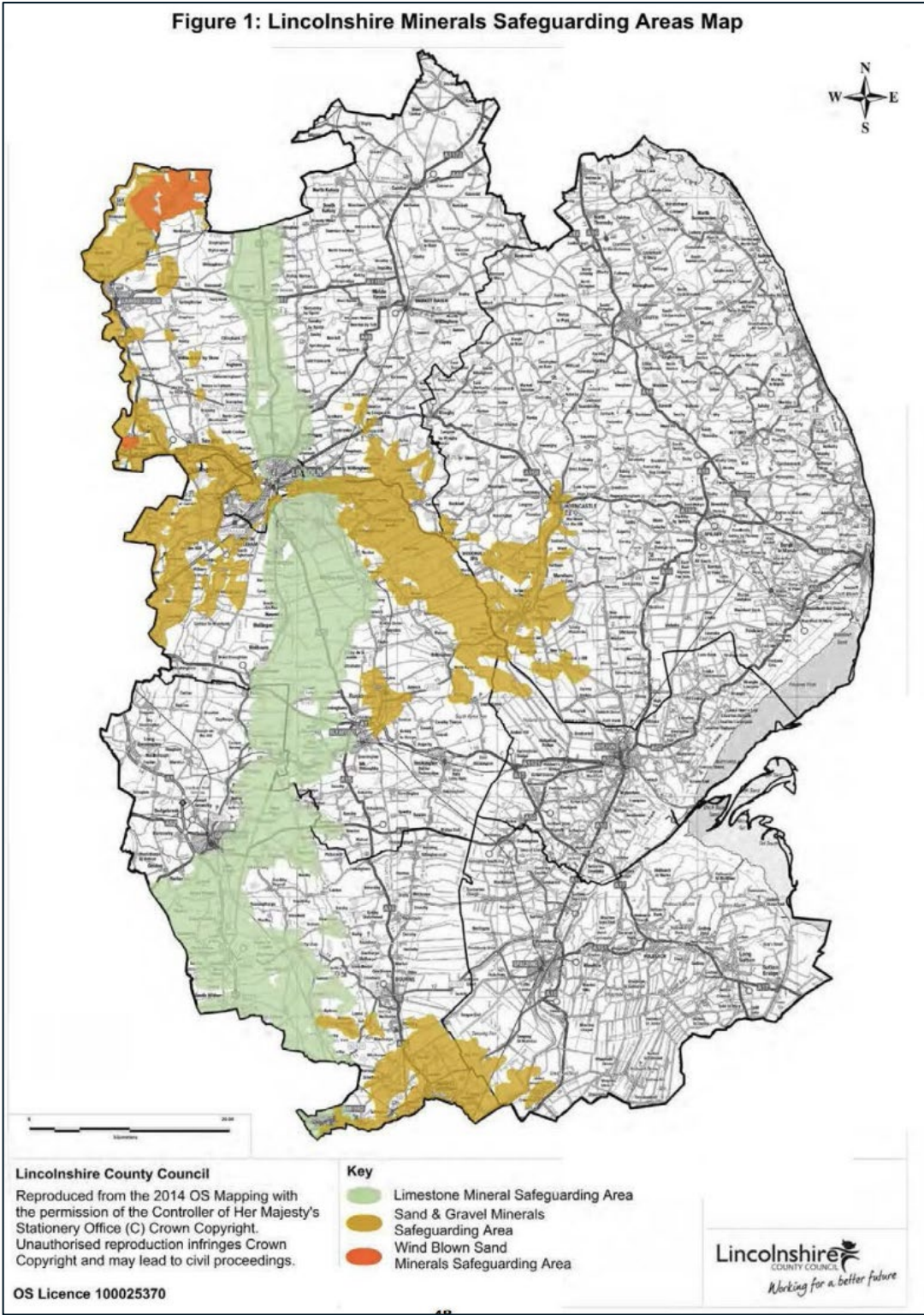


Figure 2-1 Mineral Safeguarding Areas identified within the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan

- 2.4.5. Paragraph 5.94 of the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan requires applications for non-mineral development to be accompanied by a minerals assessment in accordance with guidance from the British Geological Survey (currently set out in Mineral Safeguarding in England: Good Practice Advice OR/11/046).
- 2.4.6. Lincolnshire County Council is updating its Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which will replace the adopted plan and cover a period up to 2041. It held a consultation between July and September 2024. No preferred minerals sites were identified within the Order Limits. At the time of writing, Lincolnshire County Council is still reviewing and considering the responses to the consultation.

2.5. Guidance

Mineral Safeguarding in England: Good Practice Advice OR/11/046, British Geological Survey (2011)

- 2.5.1. As aforementioned the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan requires applications for non-mineral development to be accompanied by a minerals assessment in accordance with Mineral Safeguarding in England: Good Practice Advice OR/11/046. This Mineral Safeguarding Assessment follows this guidance.
- 2.5.2. Paragraph 1.1.4 of the Good Practice Advice states *“The presence of a MSA neither precludes other forms of development being permitted nor conveys any presumption that the mineral will be worked. MSAs simply provide a policy tool which will be an alert to the fact that minerals may be sterilised by the proposed nonmineral development and that this should be taken into account by the planning process, both when making site allocations in development plans and during development management”*.

3. Assessment of Impact of the Scheme on Mineral Resources

3.1. Overview

- 3.1.1. This section considers the potential for the Scheme to impact on the supply of mineral reserves following a review of local information available on landbanks. It then considers the potential impact of the Scheme on safeguarded minerals in line with policy requirements for Mineral Safeguarding Areas.
- 3.1.2. The Order Limits associated with Land Parcel A extend across a small area of a Mineral Safeguarding Area for sand and gravels (approximately 18 hectares), the extent of which is shown on **Figure 3-1**.

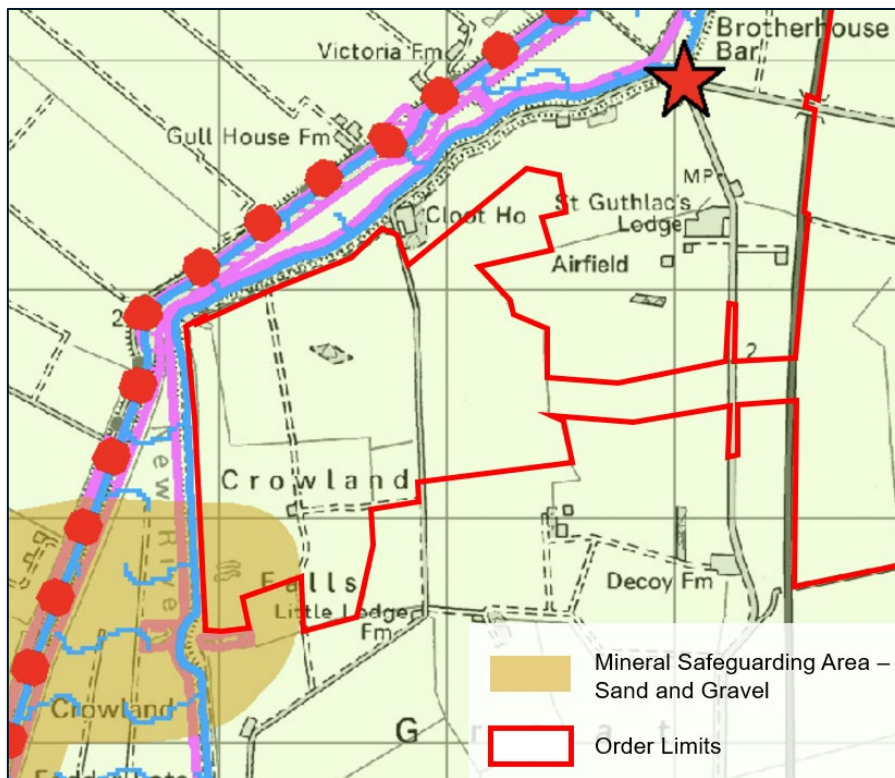


Figure 3-1 Extract of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan showing the extent of the Mineral Safeguarding Area for sand and gravel within the Order Limits.

- 3.1.3. This area forms part of the South Lincolnshire Production Area which extends across parts of South Holland and South Kevesten.

- 3.1.4. Within this area, the Scheme proposes to site solar panels and solar stations (Work No. 1) and areas of landscaping (Work No. 5). The extent of these works is identified on the **Works Plans** (Doc Ref. 2.3).

3.2. Impact on Supply of Minerals

- 3.2.1. Consideration has been given to the availability of sand and gravel within Lincolnshire in order to assess whether the Scheme could prevent sufficient supply of minerals coming forward.
- 3.2.2. A 'landbank' is a stock of planning permissions for mineral extraction. They are used as a monitoring tool to provide an early indication of possible disruption to the provision of an adequate and steady supply of minerals within the country and when new permissions are likely to be required. Government requires mineral planning authorities to seek to maintain a landbank of at least 7-years for land-won sand and gravel. Mineral Safeguarding Areas identify potential future areas for extraction sites once the current landbanks are exhausted.
- 3.2.3. Paragraph 226 of the NPPF requires mineral planning authorities to plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates through the preparation of Local Aggregate Assessments. The most recent Local Aggregate Assessment produced by Lincolnshire County Council remains in draft (published January 2025) and reports 2023 data⁴.
- 3.2.4. There are eight allocated sites for the winning and working of sand and gravel within Lincolnshire, and these sites cover areas where future applications are expected during the current plan period up to 2031. The Local Aggregate Assessment concludes at paragraph 8.1 that Lincolnshire has sufficient permitted reserves of sand and gravel to meet its 7-year minimum landbank as of the end of 2023. At the time the draft Local Aggregate Assessment was produced, there were six planning applications pending determination that would collectively provide an additional 6.28mt of sand and gravel reserves (the existing landbank stood at 20.556mt at the end of 2023). Lincolnshire County Council's planning register shows the following application were granted since the end of 2023:

⁴ Lincolnshire County Council (2025). Draft Local Aggregate Assessment 2023. Accessed at: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/9598/draft-local-aggregate-assessment-2023> [Accessed January 2026]

- An extension to Kettleby Quarry (PL/0104/23) (2.4mt of sand and gravel); and
- An extension to the Baston No.2 Quarry (PL/0087/22 & PL/0088/22) (1mt of sand and gravel).

3.2.5. The most recent Local Aggregate Assessment prepared in full (i.e. not in draft) was published in 2023⁵ and reported 2022 data. It also concluded that there would be sufficient sand and gravel resources to last beyond the plan period.

3.2.6. The Applicant notes that the duration of the Scheme will be for up to 40 years which extends beyond the 7-year minimum landbank, and the Council is obliged to safeguard land for future extraction. The Minerals and Waste Local Plan identifies future areas for potential extraction, as illustrated earlier in **Figure 2-1**. The release of land for extraction would be subject to planning permission being granted. The plan does not publish a figure indicating the total area of land within Lincolnshire subject to a Mineral Safeguarding designation, however the 18 hectares of safeguarded land that lies within the Scheme's Order Limits is a very small area of the total designation for sand and gravel resource (see **Figure 3-2**).

⁵ Lincolnshire County Council (2023). Local Aggregate Assessment 2022. Accessed at: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/8051/local-aggregate-assessment-2022> [Accessed January 2026]

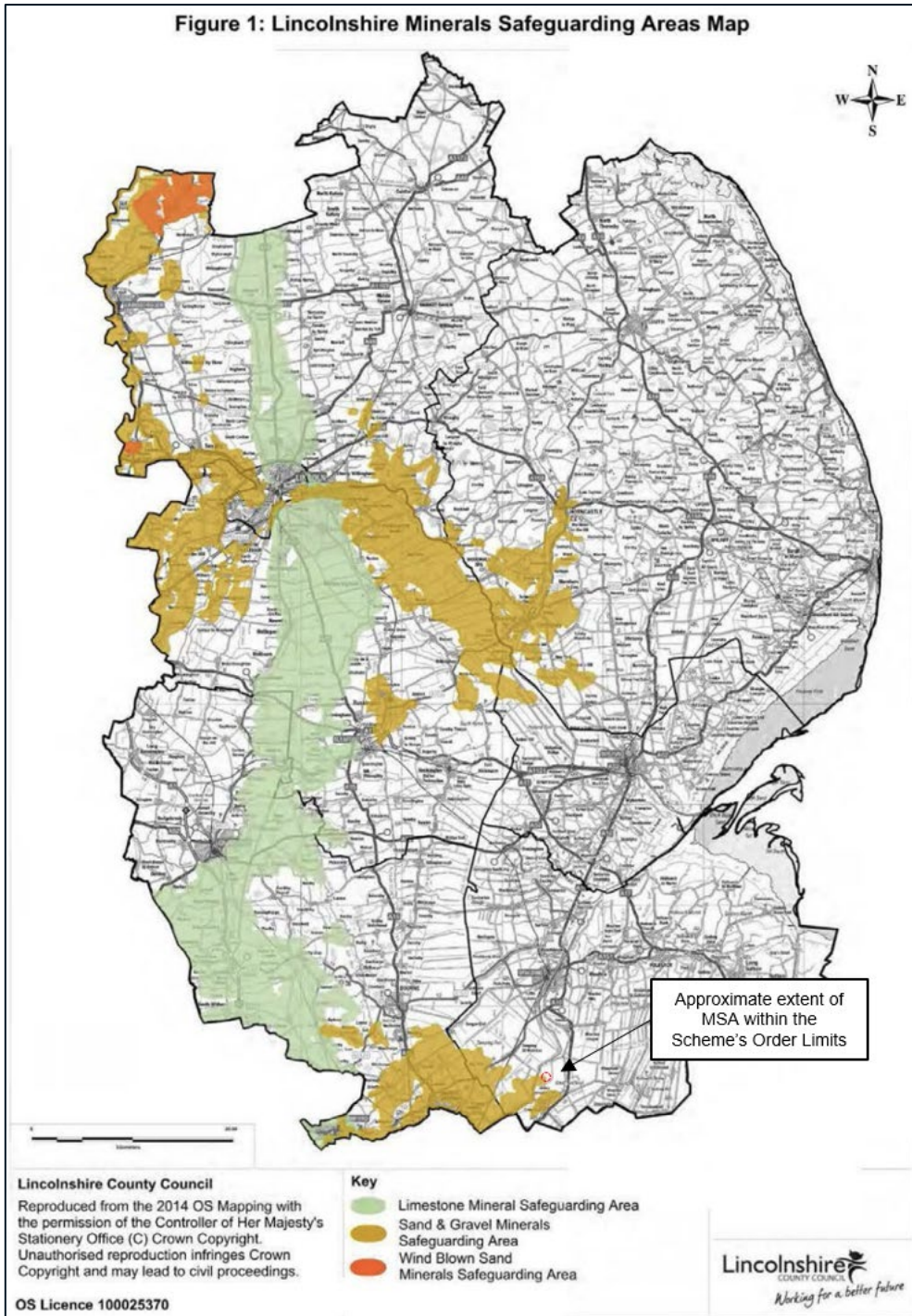


Figure 3-2 Approximate extent of safeguarded land within the Scheme's Order Limits

3.2.7. In summary, Lincolnshire has sufficient permitted reserves of sand and gravel to meet its 7-year minimum landbank and the small area within the Order Limits (18 hectares) would not prevent a sufficient supply of sand and gravel to come forward as it is a very small proportion of the country's total safeguarded

resource. Although a Local Aggregates Assessment has not been produced for 2024 or 2025, several planning permissions for sand and gravel extraction have been granted since the end of 2023.

3.3. Impact on the Mineral Safeguarding Area

3.3.1. As illustrated on **Figure 3-1** and **Figure 3-2**, the Order Limits are partly located across a small area of a Mineral Safeguarding Area for sand and gravel. Policy M11 of the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan requires that non-mineral development does not sterilise mineral resources within the safeguarded area. It also sets out further criteria where development impacting a Mineral Safeguarding Area may be acceptable. This includes:

- *the applicant can demonstrate to the Mineral Planning Authority that prior extraction of the mineral would be impracticable, and that the development could not reasonably be sited elsewhere; or*
- *the incompatible development is of a temporary nature and can be completed and the site restored to a condition that does not inhibit extraction within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be needed; or*
- *there is an overriding need for the development to meet local economic needs, and the development could not reasonably be sited elsewhere; or*
- *the development is of a minor nature which would have a negligible impact with respect to sterilising the mineral resource; or*
- *the development is, or forms part of, an allocation in the Development Plan.*

3.3.2. The following responds to each of these criteria within Policy M11 in turn.

the applicant can demonstrate to the Mineral Planning Authority that prior extraction of the mineral would be impracticable, and that the development could not reasonably be sited elsewhere

3.3.3. Prior extraction of the mineral would not be practical due to the shallow and temporary nature of the Scheme. Given the area within the Order Limits identified as safeguarded represents a very small area of land, it would not be economically viable to extract the mineral in advance of the Scheme.

the incompatible development is of a temporary nature and can be completed and the site restored to a condition that does not inhibit extraction within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be needed

3.3.4. The nature of the Scheme is one that would not permanently sterilise resource or hinder future extraction as the solar PV panels and infrastructure will all be

removed and the land restored to a condition suitable for future mineral extraction following its operational life.

- 3.3.5. The Applicant is seeking a time limited consent (40 years) and has committed to the decommissioning of the Scheme when it ceases to be operational. Should this safeguarded area need to be released for mineral extraction within this timescale, the solar PV panels and infrastructure could be temporarily removed to allow for mineral extraction.

there is an overriding need for the development to meet local economic needs, and the development could not reasonably be sited elsewhere

- 3.3.6. The **Planning Statement** (Doc Ref. 7.1) sets out why the Scheme is urgently required. The Scheme is classed as a critical national priority project within EN-1 recognising the urgency to bring forward low carbon energy schemes that contribute to the Government's net zero commitment and efforts to fight climate change, as well as the need to maintain a secure and reliable energy system.

- 3.3.7. **Appendix D: Site Selection Report** (Doc Ref. 7.1) provides an overview of the site selection process undertaken by the Applicant to identify the Site and sets out why the Scheme and its Order Limits are located in this particular location. The Site Selection Report takes into account the technical and environmental requirements of utility-scale solar developments. Alternative sites have been considered however, there are external factors that also influence the siting of the Scheme, such as the availability of land (and willingness of landowners), proximity to a grid connection with sufficient capacity, topography and irradiance. There is policy support within NPS EN-3 that these factors should appropriately direct site selection for solar NSIPs.

the development is of a minor nature which would have a negligible impact with respect to sterilising the mineral resource

- 3.3.8. **ES Chapter 14: Socio-Economics and Land Use** (Doc Ref. 6.1) provides an assessment of the Scheme on land take affecting the quality and ability to access known mineral resources. It concludes that the Scheme would result in a negligible effect (not significant) on the Mineral Safeguarding Area because the infrastructure proposed within this area is minimally invasive, and the proposals are not considered to affect the underlying geology. The frames supporting the solar panels would be driven at most 3.5m into the ground. The frames would be fully removed (pulled out) on decommissioning. The nature of the Scheme would not permanently sterilise the resource.

the development is, or forms part of, an allocation in the Development Plan

- 3.3.9. The Scheme does not form part of an allocation within the relevant local plan.
- 3.3.10. The above demonstrates the Scheme's compliance with the criteria within Policy M11 which governs whether development impacting a Mineral Safeguarding Area may be acceptable.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1.1. Approximately 18 hectares of the Order Limits are located within the Mineral Safeguarding Area for sand and gravel. This represents a very small area of the total land safeguard for sand and gravel resources within Lincolnshire and the UK, as illustrated on **Figure 3-1** and **Figure 3-2**. The most recent Local Aggregates Assessment demonstrates that Lincolnshire has sufficient permitted reserves of sand and gravel to provide in excess of the 7-year landbank, with additional planning permissions granted since the end of 2023.
- 4.1.2. This assessment concludes that the Scheme would be long-term but temporary in nature. All infrastructure proposed is fully reversible and should there be a need for mineral resource to be extracted from this designated area within the Order Limits, the solar PV panels could be temporarily removed to facilitate extraction and then reinstated. Following its 40-year lifespan, the Scheme will be decommissioned and any impacts of the Scheme that prevent the use of the land for minerals would be reversed with the site returned to a state suitable for future mineral extraction. As such, the minerals within the Order Limits will not be permanently sterilised and post decommissioning the land could be worked for minerals.
- 4.1.3. The Scheme is required to meet the overriding national need for renewable energy generation as clearly set out within EN-1.
- 4.1.4. This assessment demonstrates that the Scheme accords with the specific policy requirements listed within Policy M11 of the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, as stepped through in Section 3.3.
- 4.1.5. In light of the above, it is considered that the Scheme is in accordance with the EN-1, NPPF and the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Plan.

