Meridian Solar Farm

EN010169

Volume 6

Environmental Statement

6.3 ES Appendix 9-7: Otter and Water Vole Report

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)

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

March 2026

This report is based on surveys undertaken between September 2024 – September 2025 and uses the Scheme terminology and extents defined at that stage. Since the preparation of this report, there have been minor updates to the Scheme, however, these do not impact on the conclusions of this report.

Contents

1 Executive Summary

Meridian Solar Farm Ltd undertook an otter and water vole habitat suitability assessment and presence/likely absence survey on multiple ditches within land generally between Spalding and Sutton St James, in the South Holland district of Lincolnshire. The surveys were carried out to provide ecological information as part of a Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the Meridian Solar Farm Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

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 13km 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.

Surveys were initially carried out in June and September 2024. Further surveys were implemented in September 2025 to re-assess the Land Parcels surveyed the previous year, and also to include an assessment of new Inter-Array and Grid Connection areas.

- The general Site character is mostly agricultural fields broken up by a vast network of ditches and drains. The NSIP requires that crossing points be constructed or upgraded over many of these features to support transport and other logistical operations. Assessment of the impact to otter and water vole in the specific ditches and drains likely to be affected is the focus of this report.
- A total of 38 crossing points, covering four Land Parcels associated with the PV Area, were surveyed in June and September 2024.
- Most of the ditches surveyed were dry and were either heavily encroached with vegetation or had recently undergone drainage board management, which in some cases included stripping all vegetation down to bare earth. These ditches had poor suitability for water vole and no suitability for otter.

- Some ditches held permanent water, and all of these had good suitability for water vole, while only the larger drains had suitability for otter.
- In September 2025, 103 crossing points were surveyed across the four previously investigated Land Parcels within the PV Area, as well as the previously un-surveyed Inter-Array and Grid Connection Route. Some of the crossing points in the PV Area occupy the same ditches as those surveyed in 2024, while others required new ditches to be surveyed.
- Habitat assessments in 2025 largely confirmed the findings from the previous year, with the majority of ditches being dry and with poor suitability for the target species, except where permanent water was present.
- Field signs for otter and water vole were recorded during all survey periods, and this report also includes details of evidence of otter and water vole recorded during bird surveys[1] conducted by Temple within the Site area between 2023 and 2025.
- Water vole evidence was varied and widespread among features with permanent water, and includes burrows (Land Parcels B, D and Inter-Array), latrines (Inter-Array), feeding stations (Land Parcel D and Inter-Array) and species sightings (Land Parcels A, D and Grid Connection).
- Otter evidence was confirmed at two points only, both along the South Holland Main Drain, although at opposite ends of the Scheme (Grid Connection and Land Parcel D).
- Desk study results indicate that water voles are using the surrounding areas and network of ditches, and the Site is within a regionally key area and alert area for water voles[2] ().
- Due the risk of disturbance and direct harm to water vole, in the absence of mitigation, which would constitute a legal breach under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as

[1] Temple (2023) *Breeding Bird Survey Report.* Temple.

[2] McGuiridee, C and Morse, A (2020) National Water Vole Database and Mapping Project, PART 1: Project Report for period 2009-2018. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Curdridge.

amended), works will need to be carried out under a UK Protected Species licence (CL31). This licence will require the applicant to demonstrate a conservation benefit for water voles, by improving either the amount of habitat available or the quality of the habitat present for water vole.

- Crossing points must be designed to maintain connectivity and planting of suitable riparian vegetation must be implemented 10m either side of all crossing points to provide a significant habitat improvement for water vole.
- A 10m stand-off from the toe of the banks must be put in place. Where this is not possible, further, targeted surveys may be required to inform suitable mitigation and licensing requirements.
- It is recommended that update otter and water vole surveys are carried out on all ditches to be affected if works are delayed beyond 12 months[3] to confirm if there has been any change in the suitability of ditches and the status of either species within the Scheme boundary. Ditches which could not be accessed should be re-surveyed prior to the commencement of development. The updated survey would be necessary to inform status (at that time) and therefore inform the UK protected species licence, where required.

[3] CIEEM (2019) Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports & Surveys. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

2 Introduction

BACKGROUND

2.1 Meridian Solar Farm Limited undertook an otter and water vole habitat suitability assessment and presence/likely absence survey on multiple ditches within land generally between Spalding and Sutton St James, in the South Holland district of Lincolnshire. The surveys were carried out to provide ecological information as part of a Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the Meridian Solar Farm Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP)..

2.2 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 13km 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.

2.3 In both 2024 and 2025, the surveys covered land and boundary features within four discrete land parcels of the PV Area, as outlined in Appendix 1, Figure 1.1. The parcels are identified by their landownership and, for the purposes of this report, hereafter referred to as Land Parcels A, B, C and D. In 2025, the surveys also covered land in the Inter-Array and Grid Connection areas (Appendix 1, Figure 1.5). These survey areas collectively are hereafter referred to as “the Site”.

SCOPE OF REPORT

2.4 This report presents the findings of the otter and water vole surveys carried out during the dates indicated in Table 2.1, focusing on the section of the ditches that run within the Site (where access was available) which may be affected by the development access routes, henceforth referred to as Crossing Points.

Table 2.1: Survey dates and locations

Survey Period	Dates Surveyed	Survey Area
June 2024	5, 6, 12, 13	PV Area
September 2024	24, 25, 26, 30	PV Area
September 2025	1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 17	PV Area and Inter-Array
	22, 23, 24, 25	Grid Connection

2.5 The report identifies any likely impacts resulting from the proposed works and outlines any further survey or mitigation measures likely to be required, as well as habitat improvement measures to enhance the Site for otter and water vole post-development. Recommendations with respect to relevant legislation and best practice guidelines for otter and water vole are provided. Otter and water vole survey maps are included in Appendix 1 and photographs in Appendix 2. Survey data is detailed in Appendix 3 and legislation is detailed in Appendix 4.

2.6 The surveys have been undertaken with reference to best practice guidance published by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management [4] and as detailed in British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of Practice for Biodiversity and Development[5] (.

SITE CONTEXT AND STATUS

2.7 The Site constitutes the total land area within the Order Limits of the Scheme, including the Solar Development Area, Inter-Array Connections and Grid Connection Route. A summary of the areas for each part of the Scheme is provided below:

- Solar Development Area - Land Parcel A: 197ha

[4] CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

[5] British Standards Institution (2013) *BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development*. BSI Standards Limited.

- Solar Development Area - Land Parcel B: 335ha
- Solar Development Area - Land Parcel C: 205ha
- Solar Development Area - Land Parcel D: 330ha
- Underground Inter-Array between Land Parcel A & B: 15ha
- Overhead Inter-Array between Land Parcel C & D: 46ha
- Grid Connection Route: 510ha
- Site (total): 1616ha*

*Note the sum of parts for the areas of the Scheme exceeds the total area of the Order Limits due to an overlap of the Grid Connection Route with Solar Development Area Land Parcel B.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

2.8 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 13km 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.

2.9 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).

2.10 The Inter-Arrays would be the areas within which 132kV connection cables (the 'Inter-Array Connections') would link the land parcels of the Solar Development Area. The configuration of the Inter-Array Connections (132kV) 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').

2.11 The Grid Connection Route would be the area between the Solar Development Area and the National Grid Weston Marsh B Substation in which a 400kV 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 132kV overhead line. Cable Sealing End Compounds (CSECs) would join the proposed underground cable at that section with the proposed overhead line.

3 Methodology

DESK STUDY

3.1 The following data sources were reviewed as part of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)[6]) to provide information on the location of internationally designated sites[7,] nationally statutory designated sites, non-statutory designated sites[8], legally protected species[9], Species and Habitats of Principal Importance[10] and other notable species[11] and habitats[12] that have been recorded within a 2km radius of the Site (15km for internationally statutory designated sites):

- Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership, the local Biological Records Centre, principally for species records and information on non-statutory sites;
- MAGIC (http://www.magic.gov.uk/) - the Government's on-line mapping service;
- Ordnance Survey mapping and publicly available aerial photography; and
- National Water Vole Monitoring and Mapping Project database.

3.2 Data from this desk study which concerns otter and water vole only have been discussed in Section 4 of this report.

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[6] Temple (2024a) Meridian Solar Farm PEA Report. Temple.

[7] Statutory designations include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar sites (referred to collectively as National Site Network sites in England), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR).

[8] Non-statutory sites are designated by local authorities (e.g. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation or Local Wildlife Sites).

[9] Legally protected species include those listed in Schedules 1, 5 or 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

[10] Species/Habitats of Principal Importance are those defined by Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006.

[11] Notable species include Species of Principal Importance under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species; Birds of Conservation Concern (Stanbury *et al.* 2021); and/or Red Data Book/nationally notable species (JNCC, undated).

[12] Notable habitats include Habitats of Principal Importance under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006; those included in an LBAP; Ancient Woodland Inventory sites; and Important Hedgerows as defined by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

3.3 A summary of key records provided by the desk study is presented in Section 3 of this report. All records have been used to inform the assessment of the potential for protected or otherwise notable species to be present at the Site to provide a preliminary view of the Site's ecological importance, but these are not presented in full in the report.

3.4 Maps from the National Water Vole Database and Mapping Project were consulted to identify whether the Site lies within a key or alert area for water voles[2]. This project aims to assess the national status and trends of water vole distribution, and uses GIS to enable strategic water vole conservation at the local, regional and national level.

HABITAT SUITABLITY ASSESSMENT

3.5 Habitat Suitability Assessments on multiple agricultural ditches/watercourses for otters and water vole were undertaken on each of the ditches surveyed in June 2024, September 2024 and September 2025.

3.6 The ditches/watercourses were split into parcels across the Site. In 2024, these comprised Land Parcels A, B, C East, C West, D North and D South. In 2025, these comprised PV Areas A, B, C and D, Inter-Array and Grid Connection areas. The habitats up to 100m either side of potential crossing points over the ditch were assessed for their suitability to support otters & water vole.

3.7 Assessment of the suitability of the ditches for water vole (as shown in Figure 1.5, Appendix 1) was based on Dean[13] with consideration of the following factors:

- bank profile, channel profile and characteristics, and water levels;
- availability of food sources;
- vegetation structure (in particular, the extent of suitable marginal vegetation);

[13] Dean, M. (2021) Water Vole Field Signs and Habitat Assessment: A practical guide to water vole surveys. Pelagic Publishing, Exeter.

- level of shading;
- disturbance levels;
- bordering land use, and
- connectivity with other areas of suitable or sub-optimal habitat.

3.8 The following terminology was used to describe the vegetation:

- High (waist height);
- Medium (knee height);
- Low (ankle height); and
- Dense (tightly packed plants/vegetation).

3.9 Where suitable habitat was found, the ditches were subject to a targeted search for evidence of otter and water vole presence as set out below.

OTTER SURVEY

3.10 The survey methods followed guidance from the JNCC Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Mammals[14] . Both sides of the bank (where access was available) were surveyed for signs of otter presence and the ditches, where possible. This extended up to 100m upstream and downstream of crossing points and 10m inland of both banks where possible. Signs searched for included the following.

- Presence of latrines (spraints);
- Presence of footprints;
- Presence of feeding remains;
- Presence of lying up areas;
- Presence of runs; and
- Presence of holts (permanent places of rest and shelter).

WATER VOLE SURVEY

3.11 Where suitable habitat was present, the banks of the watercourse (up to a distance of 100m either side of crossing points from the edge of the water) were inspected for signs of use by water vole. Field signs searched for included the following:

- presence of latrines;
- presence of burrows ;
- presence of runs;
- presence of footprints;
- presence of feeding remains/stations;
- individual droppings, and

[14] JNCC (2004) Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Terrestrial Mammals, Version August 2004, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

- sightings and/or sounds (characteristic sound entering the water) of individuals.

3.12 Best practice survey guidance states that water vole presence can only be confirmed if several water vole field signs are recorded in association with one another. During field surveys, burrows, feeding remains and other field signs were only regarded as evidence of water vole if found in association with water vole droppings.

EVALUATION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.13 Where sufficient baseline data are available, the Site's ecological importance has been evaluated broadly following guidance issued by CIEEM[15]which ranks the nature conservation importance of a site according to a geographic scale of reference: international, national, regional (eastern England), metropolitan, county (Lincolnshire), vice-county or other local authority-wide area; and of importance at the zone of influence of the Site only. In evaluating the nature conservation importance of the Site, the following factors were considered: nature conservation designations; species/habitat rarity; naturalness; fragility and connectivity to other habitats. Where no importance has been assigned this is due to insufficient information.

3.14 An assessment of likely ecological impacts has been undertaken in accordance with CIEEM guidelines15 only where clear evidence is available to substantiate and justify the findings. In the absence of such evidence, the ecological feature is merely identified as a potential constraint to development.

3.15 Where ecological constraints to development are identified, further survey requirements and/or mitigation measures that are proportionate to the predicted

[15] CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine, version 1.3. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development are described. In addition, in accordance with the Environment Act 2023, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), relevant National Policy Statements (NPSs) and local/regional planning policies, opportunities to enhance or create benefits for wildlife are provided where this is possible based on the information available to date. These measures may be appropriate for the attainment of net gains in biodiversity, details of which will follow in a formal Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment for the Site.

LIMITATIONS

3.16 Every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the Site; however, the following limitations apply to this assessment.

3.17 Many of the ditches were difficult to survey due to the presence of dense vegetation along the banks and the ditches themselves. The angle of most ditches was between 30° and 60°, with some as much as 90°, and the depth varied from approximately 1.5m to 5m making it difficult to get into many of the ditches in order to survey them fully. Where there were clear areas, and water in the ditches was visible, binoculars were used.

3.18 Where vegetation had been cut back due to ditch management, this potentially reduced the suitability of the habitat for otter and water vole. However – except in cases where vegetation was fully stripped back to bare earth, and therefore no field signs remained – in many cases this was beneficial to the survey effort, as on the main drains, due to the steepness of banks, depth of water and density of vegetation, they would have been almost impossible to survey thoroughly had the vegetation not been trimmed, so detection of field signs was aided, rather than impeded, by their recent management.

3.19 The presence of active bird nests (protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) within ditch vegetation also presented limitations in some cases. Areas with birds displaying obvious nesting behaviours were avoided.

3.20 Ditches with limited access and therefore surveyed from the bank tops are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Ditches with limited access 2024 & 2025

Land Parcel/PV Area	Limited Access June 2024	Limited Access September 2024	Limited Access September 2025
A	A.1.1; A.3.3; A.4.4; A.6.6	A.1.1; A.3.3; A.4.4; A.6.6	PV-A-02; PV-A-03
B	B.1.1; B.2.2; B.3.3; B.4.4; B.6.6	B.6.6	
C	C_W.2.2; C_W.4.4; C_W.5.5; C_W.6.6; C_E.1.1; C_E.3.3; C_E.4.4; C_E.6.6; C_E.7.7	C_W.2.2; C_W.4.4; C_W.5.5; C_W.6.6; C_E.1.1; C_E.3.3; C_E.4.4; C_E.6.6	PV-C-02
D	D_N.1.1; D_N.2.2; D_N.3.3; D_N.4.4; D_N.5.5; D_N.6.6; D_S.1.1; D_S.2.2; D_S.3.3; D_S.6.6	D_N.1.1; D_N.3.3;	PV-D-05; PV-D-10; PV-D-11

3.21 It is possible that otter and water vole signs may have been under-recorded in areas that could not be accessed directly, and thus a precautionary approach to mitigation and further survey has been taken. Likewise, due to regular annual management of the ditches and fluctuations in water levels it is possible that their suitability for water voles, in particular, varies over time; the surveys undertaken are a snapshot in time only.

3.22 During the 2025 surveys, seventeen crossing points within the Grid Connection area were not surveyed as access could not be agreed with the respective landowners before the end of the optimal survey season for water vole, i.e. between mid-April and September16. A further crossing point within the Inter-Array A to B area was not

[16] Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016) The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series). Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. The Mammal Society, London.

surveyed due to hazards, as the coordinates provided were in the carriageway of the A16.

3.23 Details of the crossing points not surveyed are provided in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Crossing points not surveyed in 2025

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID
Inter-Array	PV-B-01
Grid Connection	GC-03; GC-05; GC09; GC-10; GC-15; GC-16; GC-17; GC-24; GC-27; GC28; GC-29; GC32, GC33; GC34; GC-35; GC-39; GC-40; GC-41; GC-42; GC-43; GC46; GC47; GC-50; GC-51; GC55; GC58; GC68; GC69; GC70; GC77; GC80; GC82; GC88; GC92; GC93; GC94; GC95; GC96; GC100; GC103; GC104; GC105; GC106; GC107; GC108; GC109; GC110; GC111; GC112; GC113; GC114; GC115; GC116; GC117

3.24 It is important to note that, even where data is available, a lack of records for a defined geographical area does not necessarily mean that there is a lack of ecological interest: the area may be simply under recorded.

3.25 Where only four figure grid references are provided for protected species by third parties, the precise location of species records can be difficult to determine, and they could potentially be present anywhere within the given 1km x 1km square. Equally six figure grid references are to the nearest 100m only.

3.26 Ecological survey data are typically valid for 18 months to two years, dependent on a review undertaken by a professional ecologist[3] . Twelve months validity is considered appropriate for this water vole data given the management regime, difficulty accessing ditches and their mobile nature.

4 Results

DESK STUDY

4.1 The data search returned 18 records of otter sightings with the most recent being from 2020. These are located on the River Welland (adjacent to Parcel A) and South Holland Main Drain, of which a small section runs adjacent to Parcel D North.

4.2 The data search revealed water vole have been recorded 420 times within the assumed 2km search area around the PV Area. Forty-four of these were from 2022 and comprise records from the nearby watercourses including South Holland Main Drain, which runs adjacent to Parcel D-North.

4.3 Desk study records for otter and water vole can be found in Appendix 1, Figure 1.15

4.4 As a result of the Order Limits extension at the northern end of the Grid Connection Route, the survey area is not the same as the Order Limits as land access could not obtained for this reports submission deadline. However national grid survey report was reviewed and their findings informed this report and post submission the areas in the new redline boundary be surveyed to confirm the conditions are the same.

4.5 The Site is shown as being within a Regional Key Area and Alert Area for water voles on the National Water Vole Database data Mapping Project 2.

4.6 An Alert Area for water voles is a 2km buffer of water courses where water vole have been recorded within the last ten years; a Regional Key Area is an area where the Alert Area covers more than 35km^2 and are likely to play a strategic role in the recovery of the water vole.

HABITAT SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

4.7 Each of the crossing points was subject to a habitat suitability assessment for otter and water vole during the 2024 and 2025 surveys. The weather conditions during the surveys were warm and dry with light winds in June 2024. In both September surveys – 2024 and 2025 – it was cooler and mainly dry with light to moderate winds. Instances of heavy rain were avoided throughout all survey periods, as this can potentially wash away field signs.

4.8 The Site is largely open and flat, comprising mainly arable land with very little tree coverage. Most of the ditches within the Site were dry, rendering them unsuitable for otter. Being dry reduces their suitability for water vole, although potential for their use cannot be entirely ruled out, particularly where management practices are favourable. Some ditches may contain ephemeral water at times, such as following high rainfall, and so their suitability may change periodically. Three fishing lakes which lie approximately 450m south-east of Parcel D may attract otters to the area via the Fleet Drain that runs adjacent to the east boundaries of Parcel D-South.

2024 Assessments

4.9 All ditches surveyed within the Site area were agricultural drainage ditches of various lengths, depth, and profiles. A length of up to 100m either side of all crossing points was surveyed. In most cases, the ditches were dry and heavily encroached with dense mixed vegetation dominated by common reed Phragmites australis, and as a result, the habitat suitability for otters and water voles was poor at these crossing points.

4.10 Three ditches across the Site were considered to have good suitability for water vole, one on Parcel A and two on Parcel D, as shown in Table 4.1, below.

Table 4.1: 2024 Crossing points with good habitat suitability

Land Parcel	Crossing Point ID	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value
Parcel A	A.3.3	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good
Parcel D (North)	D_N.2.2	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	Vegetation trimmed prior to September survey	Good
Parcel D (North)	D_N.5.5	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	Vegetation trimmed prior to	Good

Land Parcel	Crossing Point ID	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value
						September survey	

4.11 Due to its shallow depth and lack of food sources, the ditch on Parcel A is considered unsuitable for otter. The two crossing points on Parcel D are on different stretches of the same ditch. This is a main drain known as Sly's Cut, and connects Lambert Drain on the western boundary of the Parcel to Fleet Drain on its eastern boundary, which in turn connects directly to the South Holland Main Drain. Sly's Cut contains permanent standing water, and while its frequent management makes it unsuitable for otter holts, it may be used by otters commuting between other watercourses.

2025 Assessments

4.12 Habitats throughout the PV Area remain the same in general character as they were when surveyed in 2024. Some of the crossing points surveyed in 2025 occupied the same ditches surveyed the previous year, and others were in new, previously unsurveyed ditches. All ditches surveyed within PV Areas B and C, as well as throughout the Grid Connection area, were without permanent water and mostly densely vegetated. These are considered unsuitable for otter and of poor suitability for water vole.

4.13 Ditches with good suitability for water vole are summarised in Table 4.2 and are discussed below.

Table 4.2: 2025 Crossing points with good habitat suitability

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value
PV Area A	PV-A-02	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good
PV Area A	PV-A-03	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good
Inter-Array	IA-03	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good
PV Area D	PV-D-05	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	Vegetation trimmed prior to survey	Good
PV Area D	PV-D-10	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good
PV Area D	PV-D-13	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good

4.14 In PV Area A, the ditch associated with the crossing point PV-A-03 is the same ditch surveyed at the previous year's crossing point A.3.3, and its assessment remains unchanged. The ditch at crossing point PV-A-02 is a main drain which, in the north-west of the Parcel, passes approximately 95m from the River Welland, and may be used by otters commuting between watercourses in the wider landscape, as well as having good suitability for water vole.

4.15 In PV Area D, crossing point PV-D-05 is on Sly's Cut, the drain that contained two crossing points with good suitability in 2024, and its assessment remains unchanged following the 2025 survey. Two additional crossing points were assessed in 2025 as having good suitability for both otter and water vole – PV-D-10 and PV-D-13. These are both on the South Holland Main Drain, which connects directly to the River Nene approximately 11.55km east of the Scheme boundary. Management of South Holland

Main Drain varied throughout its course, but its use by otters is confirmed by both the Desk Study data and the Field Signs survey, detailed below.

4.16 A single crossing point in the Inter-Array area between Parcels C and D, IA-03, contained permanent water, mostly covered by duckweed, with grassy banks and common reed cover in the central channel, with good food availability for water vole.

FIELD SIGNS

4.17 As well as habitat assessments, each of the crossing points surveyed in both June and September 2024 and September 2025 underwent a targeted survey for otter and water vole field signs.

4.18 A summary of all field signs found for otter and water vole during both the 2024 and 2025 survey periods, as well as incidental sightings from other survey types, is provided in Table 4.3 (also see Figure 1.14 in Appendix 1).

Table 4.3: Collated evidence of otter and water vole from all surveys

Scheme Element	Nearest Crossing Point	Evidence Recorded	W3W Location	Date Recorded	Survey Type
PV Area A	PV-A-03	Water vole heard	heartache.income.castle	01/09/2025	Otter/water vole
PV Area B	PV-B-06	Water vole burrows	fattest.essays.pity	01/09/2025	Otter/water vole
PV Area B	PV-B-08	Water vole burrows	denser.countries.printer	01/09/2025	Otter/water vole
Grid Connection	GC-03	Water vole sighting	effort.portfolio.similar	22/07/2025	Bird survey
Grid Connection	GC-03	Otter spraint	airstrip.chase.drain	15/05/2023	Bird survey
Inter-Array	IA-03	Water vole burrows, droppings and feeding remains	overlaps.eclipses.brownish	16/09/2025	Otter/water vole
PV Area D	PV-D-05	Water vole burrows	credited.mourner.chose	02/09/2025	Otter/water vole

Scheme Element	Nearest Crossing Point	Evidence Recorded	W3W Location	Date Recorded	Survey Type
PV Area D	PV-D-13	Otter spraint	jumbo.outwards.safest	17/09/2025	Otter/water vole
PV Area D	D_N.2.2	Water vole burrows	armrest.junior.adventure	13/06/2024	Otter/water vole
PV Area D	D_N3.3	Water vole sighting	drags.everyone.refusals	16/10/2024	Bird survey

2024 Survey

4.19 No otter field signs were found during the two targeted survey visits of the ditches which could be accessed and checked. A single water vole burrow was found in Sly's Cut Drain in Parcel D (ditch D_N.2.2) in the north bank of the ditch. (Appendix 2, Photograph 9). No other field signs were found within the area of this burrow.

2025 Survey

4.20 In Parcel A of the PV Area, as the surveyors approached the ditch at crossing point PV-A-03, the distinctive 'plop' sound of a water vole entering the water was heard. Upon arrival at the area, ripples were seen on the water, but due to dense reed cover, the animal was not seen.

4.21 Two ditches were surveyed in the northern peninsula of Parcel B in 2025, at crossing points PV-B-06 and PV-B-08. Both of these ditches were dry and offered poor suitability, however, water vole burrows were seen in the adjacent Wheat Mere Drain (Appendix 2, Photographs 7 & 8), which has permanent standing water, in the vicinity of both crossing points.

4.22 In the Inter-Array C to D area, water vole burrows were found, along with droppings, feeding remains and runs in the bankside vegetation, in a ditch at crossing point IA-03 (Appendix 2, Photographs 13 & 14).

4.23 In Parcel D of the PV Area, two water vole burrows were seen in the northern bank of the drain known as Sly's Cut (Appendix 2, Photograph 10), east of crossing point PV-D-05. This is at the eastern end of the same ditch where a water vole burrow was

found during the June 2024 survey. The watercourse is also directly connected to Lambert Drain in the west, where an incidental water vole sighting was recorded in October 2024 (detailed below), indicating a permanent presence in this area.

4.24 Otter spraint was recorded at PV-D-13, a crossing point approximately 200m north-east of the boundary of PV Area Parcel D, which is at a bridge over South Holland Main Drain. The spraint was found under the bridge (Appendix 2, Photographs 15-17).

National grid report 2025 review

4.25 No field signs were found for water voles or otters within extended Order Limits at the northern end of the Grid Connection Route. However outside of the Order Limits and immediately adjacent to the Site there were multiple field signs of watervoles, as shown in Table 1. This should not impact the Scheme as no works are planned outside of the Order Limits and this area will be appropriately buffered.

Table 1 Field signs on Lord's Lane

Field Signs	Count
Feeding Remains	**4**
Feeding stations	**12**
Burrows	**3**
Latrines	**10**
Droppings	**5**
Run	**1**

Incidental Sightings

4.26 During a previously conducted breeding bird survey on 15 May 2023, an otter spraint was recorded on a bridge over the South Holland Main Drain. The location coincides with crossing point GC-03, at the southern end of the Grid Connection corridor and on the northern boundary of PV Area Parcel B. This field sign is also approximately 9.7km west of the otter spraint found at PV-D-13 in September 2025, on the same watercourse. This indicates a permanent presence along South Holland Main Drain, which is supported by desk study records.

4.27 On 27 February 2024 during the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) [6] a potential otter holt (a burrow in a spoil pile within a ditch adjacent to the western boundary of Parcel A) was noted just off-site. An old spraint was also observed just on-site near to the spoil pile and was included in the Temple PEA report. During the otter & water vole surveys in June and September 2024[17]this area was checked again but no further evidence was found.

4.28 An incidental sighting of a water vole was made during a wintering bird survey in October 2024, in Lambert Drain on the western boundary of Parcel D, approximately 130m south-west of crossing point D_N.3.3, and directly connected to Sly's Cut drain (D_N.2.2). This area was subsequently searched during the wintering bird survey and a burrow, feeding area and latrine were also found (Appendix 2, Photographs 11 & 12). There is no crossing point associated with Lambert Drain, so this area was not re-surveyed in 2025, as only ditches with crossing points were surveyed during this period.

4.29 On 22 July 2025, during a bird survey carried out by Temple, a water vole was seen crossing the channel on South Holland Main Drain at crossing point GC-03. This is approximately 360m north and directly connected to the burrows seen in Wheat Mere

[17] Temple (2024b) Meridian Otter and Water Vole Survey Report. Temple.

Drain at PV-B-08. This crossing point was surveyed again as part of the Grid Connection surveys in September 2025, however, no further sightings or field signs were recorded during this visit.

Potential Impacts

4.30 The creation of the crossing points has the potential to reduce the availability of suitable habitat for otters and water voles in the area. In the absence of mitigation, construction of the crossing points or upgrading of the existing, has the potential to kill or injure water vole or destroy a place of shelter and protection.

4.31 The drainage ditches are maintained by South Holland Internal Drainage Board (SHIDB), North Level District Internal Drainage Board (NLDIDB) or individual landowners. Management by SHIDB comprises either annual or twice annual weed cutting and flailing. They also undertake bank reprofiling when necessary. The NLDIDB also undertakes annual management of their ditches, however, the specifics of their managements are unknown. Landowner ditch management is also unknown with information being sought. The known high level of annual/twice annual maintenance across the ditch network is, however, extensive (Appendix 2, Photographs 5 & 6) with some banks scraped to bare ground and as such, will reduce the year-round suitability of the applicable ditches for use by water vole/otter due to the level of clearance completed.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Water vole activity has been recorded in isolated ditches within the PV and Inter-Array areas of the Scheme. Evidence, fully detailed in the Results section, includes burrows in Wheat Mere Drain (Parcel B) and Sly's Cut (Parcel D), latrines and feeding stations (Inter-Array C to D) and confirmed sightings in Lambert Drain (Parcel D), South Holland Main Drain (Parcel B) and at crossing point PV-A-03 (Parcel A). The evidence identified within the Inter-Array area was located within 100m of a proposed new crossing point, whereas field sign evidence throughout the PV Area was found within 100m of existing crossing points which will require upgrading. The presence of latrines is a good indicator of a breeding population of water vole; therefore, it is anticipated that water vole will be dispersing seasonally depending on annual breeding success, ditch management regime, population changes, and climatic variations e.g., drying out or otherwise of the ditch network.

5.2 Given the presence of the UK protected water vole within ditches requiring either creation of new crossing points or upgrade of existing ones, works will need to be undertaken under a UK Protected Species licence due the risk of disturbance and direct harm to water vole, which would constitute a legal breach under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The licence will require the applicant to demonstrate a conservation benefit for water voles. The conservation benefit will be achieved by delivering a net gain (separate to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)) in the amount of habitat available to the water vole population on the Site, or by improving the quality of the habitat present. 15m enhancement buffer up downstream of all crossing points (regardless of water vole presence) will have riparian habitat planted and established thereby delivering a gain for water vole. Legal Agreements will however be required with both South Holland and North levels internal drainage boards on the habitat enhancement to ensure the suitability and retention of created habitat within their management regime. Retention will be a requirement of the licensing.

5.3 The specific licence required is a CL31 Water Vole Displacement licence, which is appropriate for activities resulting in impacts to <50m sections of a ditch where water voles are present and that meet all other qualifying criteria. All works would take place under the supervision of an appropriately experienced ecologist who is pre-registered to use the CL31 Displacement licence. Under this licence, works can proceed and allow legal displacement of water vole in the affected areas ensuring crossing point works can be completed with minimal risk of disturbance or harm to water vole. All crossing point design and licence activities will also need to consider presence of other protected species, such as nesting birds and European eel. This will form part of the method statement supporting the licence application.

5.4 Following discussion with Natural England (January 2025), it was confirmed that a draft approach (licence) not need to be submitted to Natural England, and that a a Letter of No Impediment (LONI) for the displacement of water voles was not necessary. This was because Natural England agreed with the water vole strategy discussed during the meeting and as set out within this report. Natural England also confirmed that this will be made clear within their response to PINS at examination, so they don't expect to receive a LONI. A formal licence application will therefore be submitted post determination of the DCO application and once updated water vole surveys have been undertaken to inform the current baseline/presence (at that time) and therefore, any alterations to the licencing approach.

5.5 As no otter holts have been identified, no licensing is currently required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further Survey

If crossing point locations change then updated survey will be required to inform any water vole/otter presence in the new location(s) and therefore, any ecological mitigation and/or licensing requirements.

5.6 As otter and water voles are highly mobile species, and given the number of records within the wider area, it is recommended that all ditches on Site are resurveyed if more than 12 months elapses since the date of the last survey[3] to account for the

possibility that suitability changes over time in response to management and fluctuating water levels. Updated survey will be required to inform the necessary UK protected species licence required in advance of crossing point works.

Working adjacent to the watercourse

5.7 Wherever possible, a minimum 10m protection zone from all watercourses (river & ditches) must be established prior to the construction phase and maintained throughout to maintain suitable habitat corridors. A physical barrier, such as hoarding or Heras fencing, should be installed before the commencements of works between the works boundary and the watercourses (river & ditches) to prevent accidental encroachment and reduce disturbance, allowing continued use of the watercourse network.

5.8 Any fuels or chemicals must be stored appropriately to minimise the risk of accidental spillage. Refuelling of plant will only be undertaken in controlled locations away from any waterbody and in accordance with a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). Sources of best practice for construction and environmental management include CIRIA guidance[18]). This guidance relates to various pieces of legislation including the Environmental Damage (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations 2009 and the Environment Act 2021.

5.9 Crossing points must be designed to maintain connectivity through culverting or installation of flumes and should remain unlit at night. Mammal ledges to be considered within the detailed design to aid continued connectivity for wildlife.

Management of watercourses

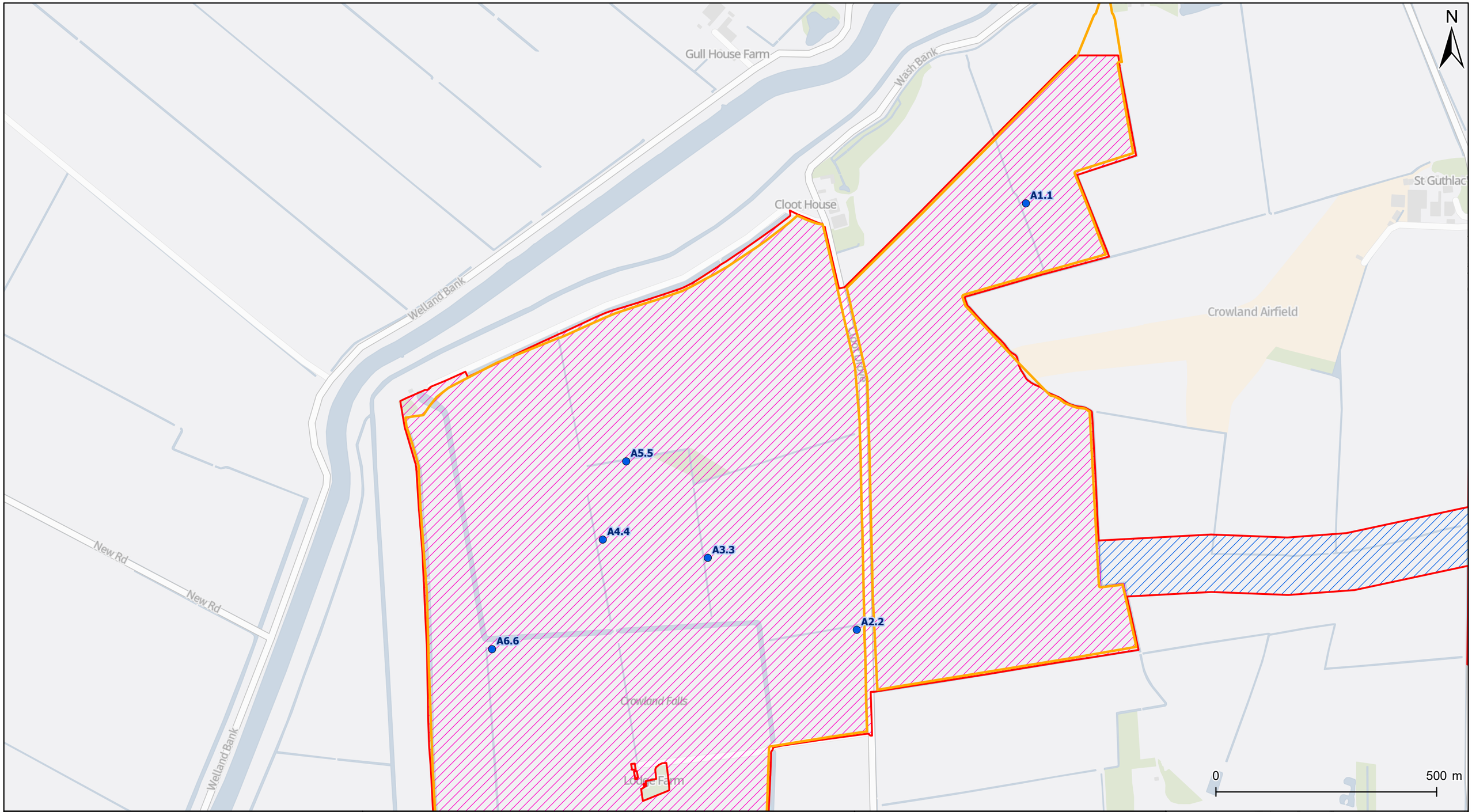
5.10 Planting of emergent and aquatic vegetation in poorly vegetated sections of the watercourse would also provide food and shelter for water voles as well as increasing

[18] Dickinson, K. and MacLeod, C (2023) Environmental good practice on site guide (fifth edition). CIRIA, London.

the watercourses general wildlife value. Only native plants should be planted along the watercourse and these could include purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, water crowfoot *Ranunculus aquatilis*, ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, hemp agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*, yellow loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*, marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, flag iris *Iris pseudacorus*, and lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformus*. Some of these species have been noted to be favoured by water voles[19] . This will need discussion and agreement with applicable landowners given watercourse management regimes.

[19] Strachan, R., Moorhouse, T. & Gelling, M. (2011) Water Vole Conservation Handbook. WildCRU, Oxford.

Appendix 1: Maps



Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.1: Land Parcel A PEIR extent
Watercourse Crossing Points 2024

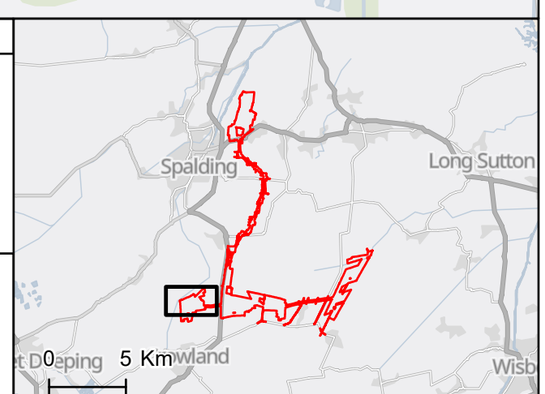
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:8,000	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Solar Development Areas
- Inter-Array Connections
- Land parcel A
- Watercourse crossing points

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



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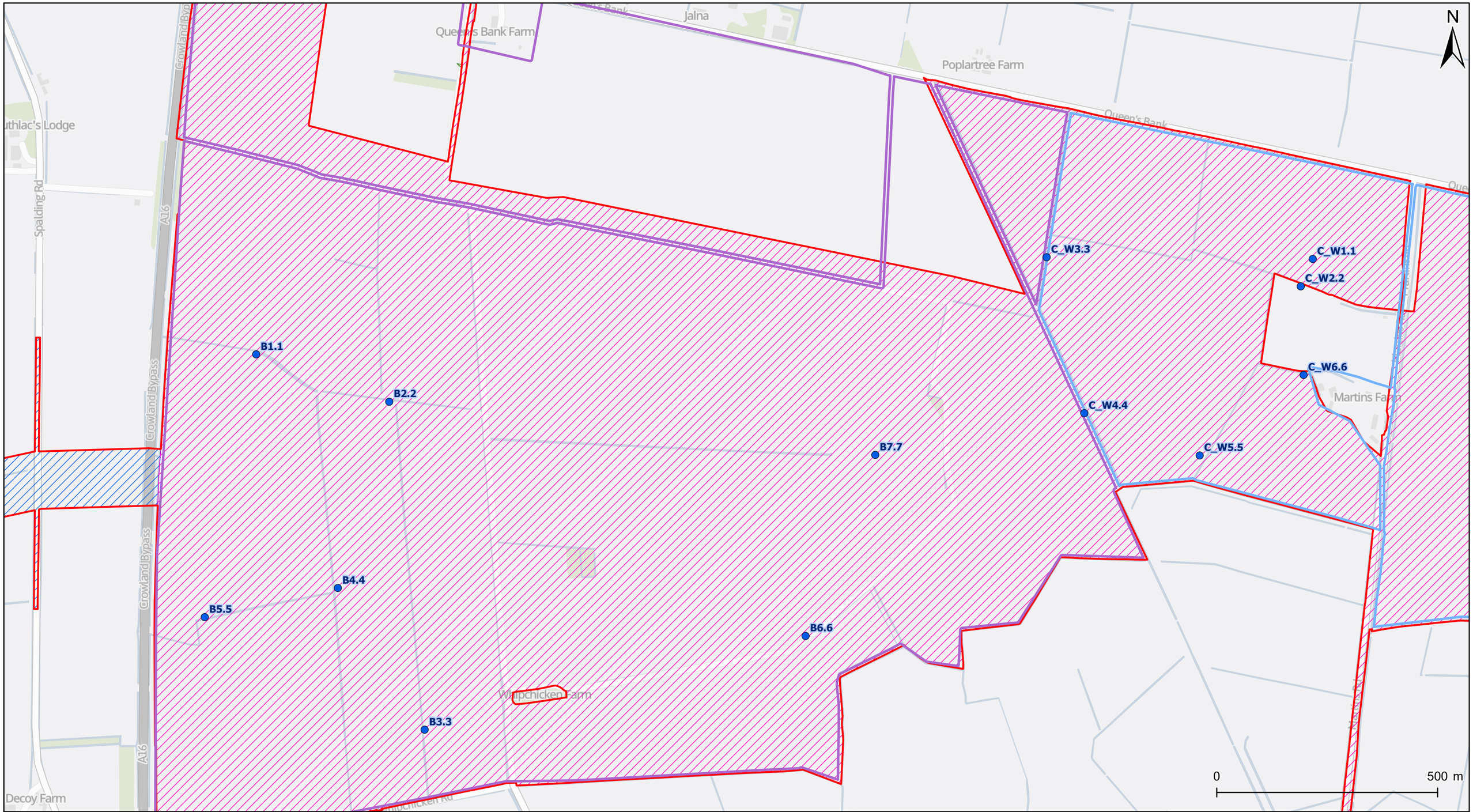


Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.2: Land Parcel B PEIR extent
Watercourse Crossing Points 2024

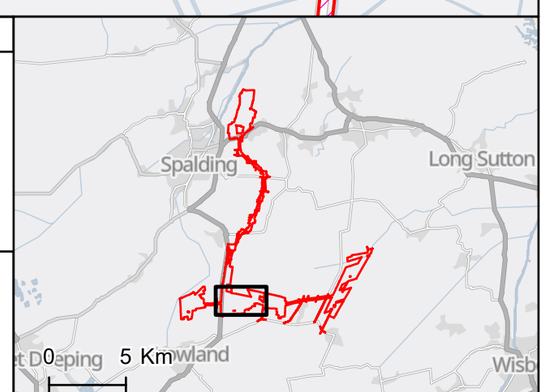
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:8,000	0	JM	JET

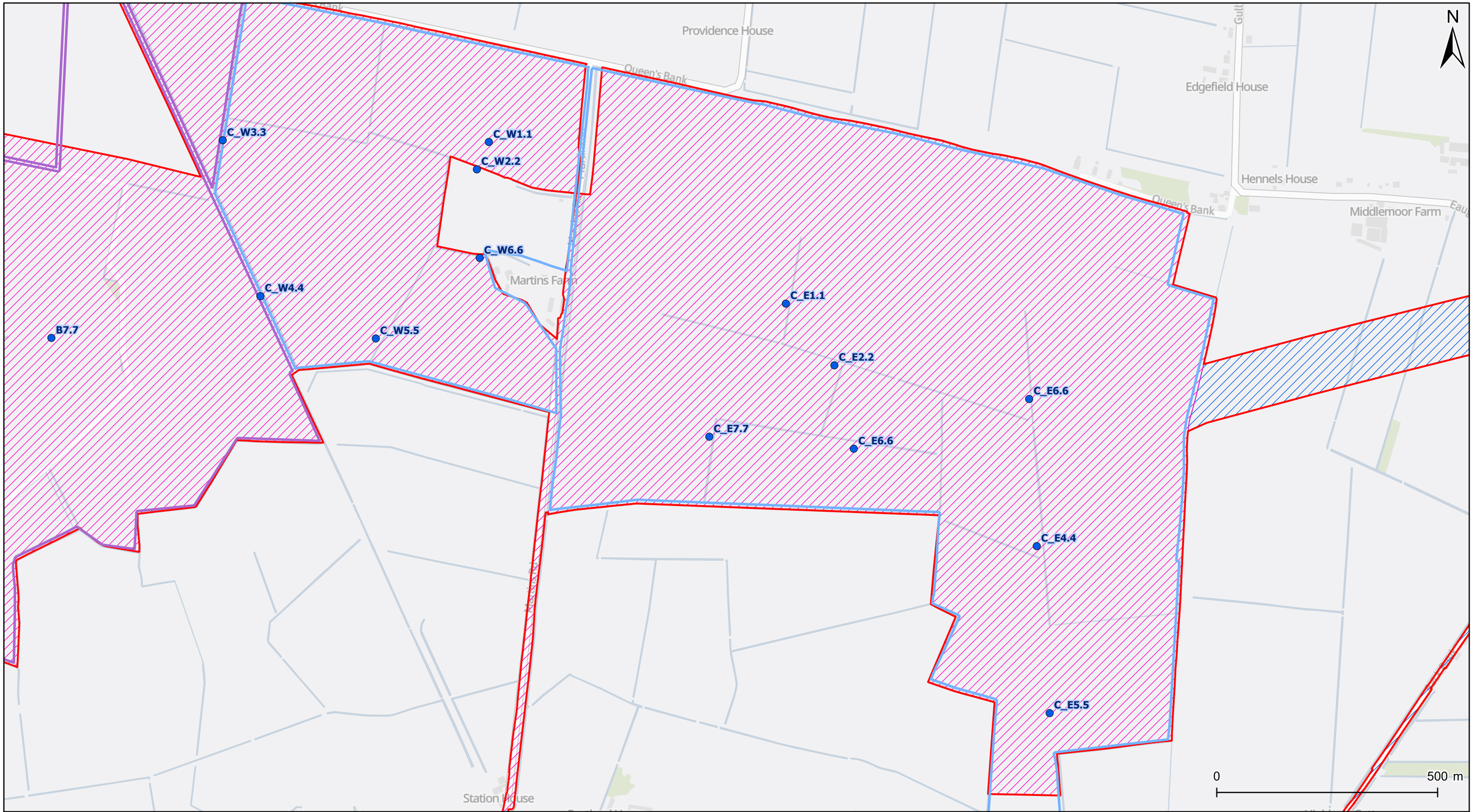
Legend

- Order Limits
- Solar Development Areas
- Inter-Array Connections
- Grid Connection Route
- Land parcel B
- Land parcel C
- Watercourse crossing points

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar





Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.3: Land Parcel C PEIR extent
Watercourse Crossing Points 2024

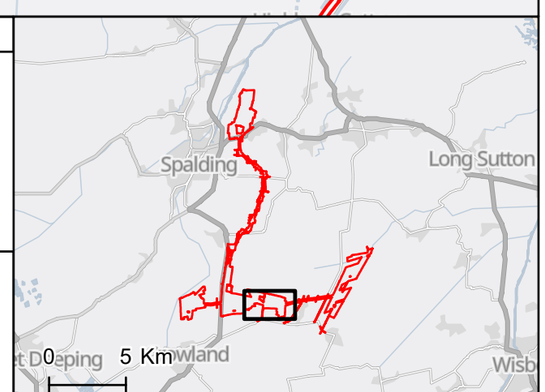
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:8,000	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Solar Development Areas
- Inter-Array Connections
- Land parcel B
- Land parcel C
- Watercourse crossing points

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



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N

D_N6.6
D_N1.1
D_N5.5
D_N2.2
D_N3.3
D_N4.4
D_S1.1
D_S6:6
D_S2.2
D_S3.3
D_S4.4
D_S5.5

The Sittio
Glasshouse Farm
Dowse Farm
Gedney Drain
Hallgate Farm
New Fen Dike
Smiths Fa
Little Eau
Tudor Lodge
The Hermitage
Holbeach Drove Gate
Ash Farm
Langary Gate Farm
North Rd
Lutton Gate Rd
Broadgate Rd
Guano
Chapel Hill Farm
Chapel Gate
Dog Drove
B1168
Tinsley's Drain
Poplar Cottage
Whinfell House
The Poplars
Falcon House
Fir Tree Cottag
Guanockgate Dr
Mole Drove
Mole Drove Farm
Gothic Farm
Parson's La
Barr's La
Whaplode Drove
Partridge Fen
Broadgate
Northwood House Farm
Rose Cottage
Sutton St Edmund
Chapel Rd
Fleet Drain
Gedney Drain
Highstock Drain
Ash Tree Farm
Guanock Fm
Division Drain
Lambert Drain
North Rd

0 500 m

Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.4: Land Parcel D PEIR extent
Watercourse Crossing Points 2024

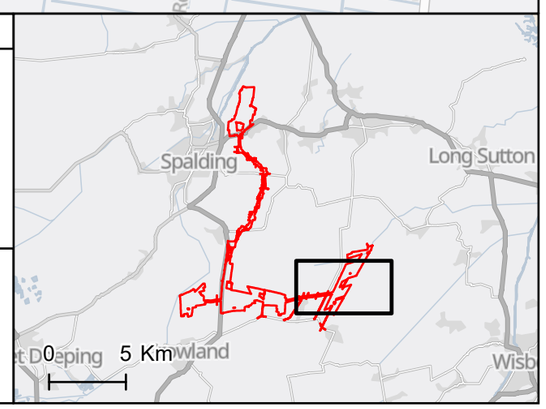
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:15,000	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Solar Development Areas
- Inter-Array Connections
- Land parcel D
- Watercourse crossing points

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



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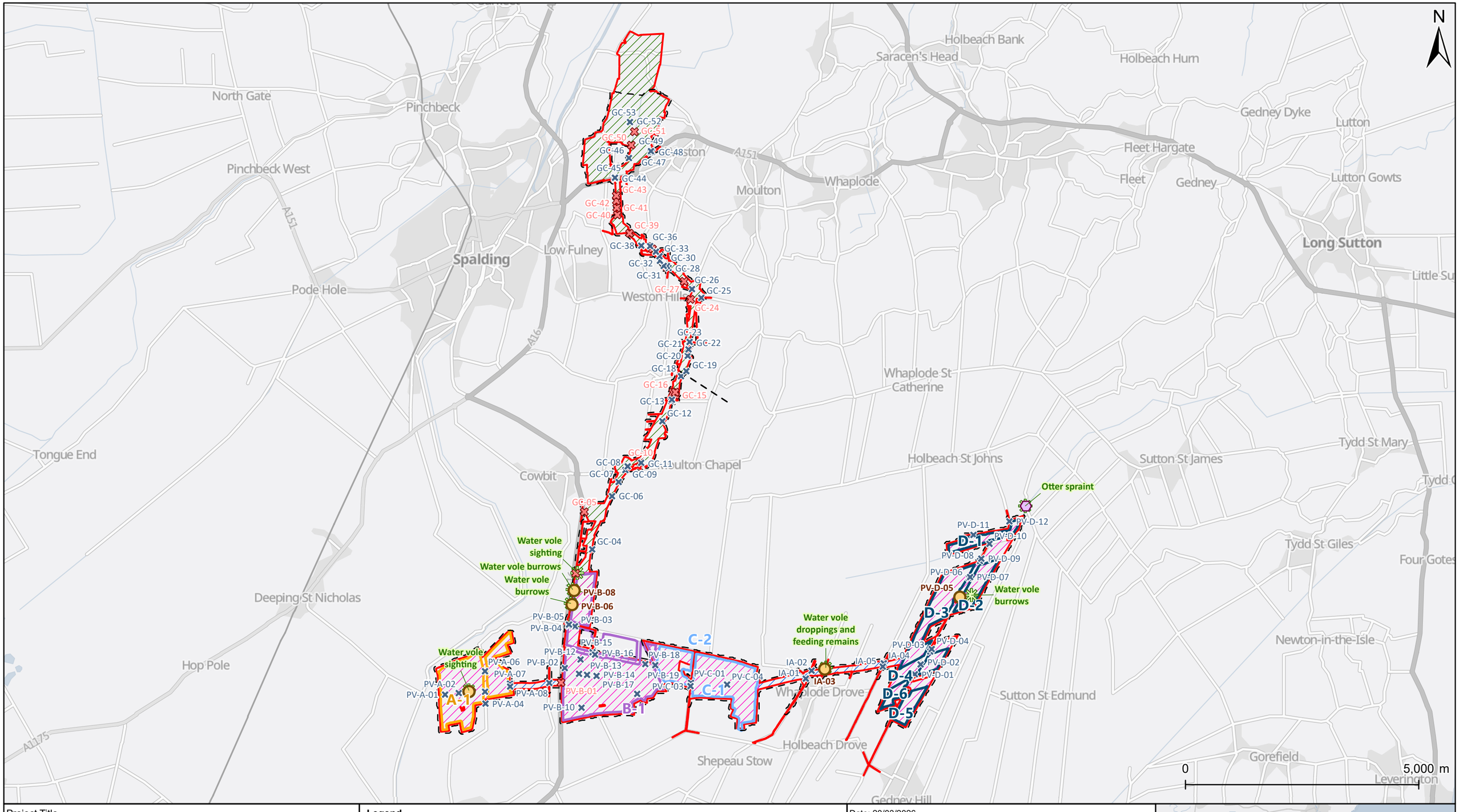

Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.5: Site Plan - 2025 Scheme Extent

Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:75,000	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Solar Development Areas
- Inter-Array Connections
- Grid Connection Route
- Survey Area
- Evidence of otter
- Evidence of water vole
- Field signs
- No evidence found
- No survey access
- Land parcel A
- Land parcel B
- Land parcel C
- Land parcel D

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar

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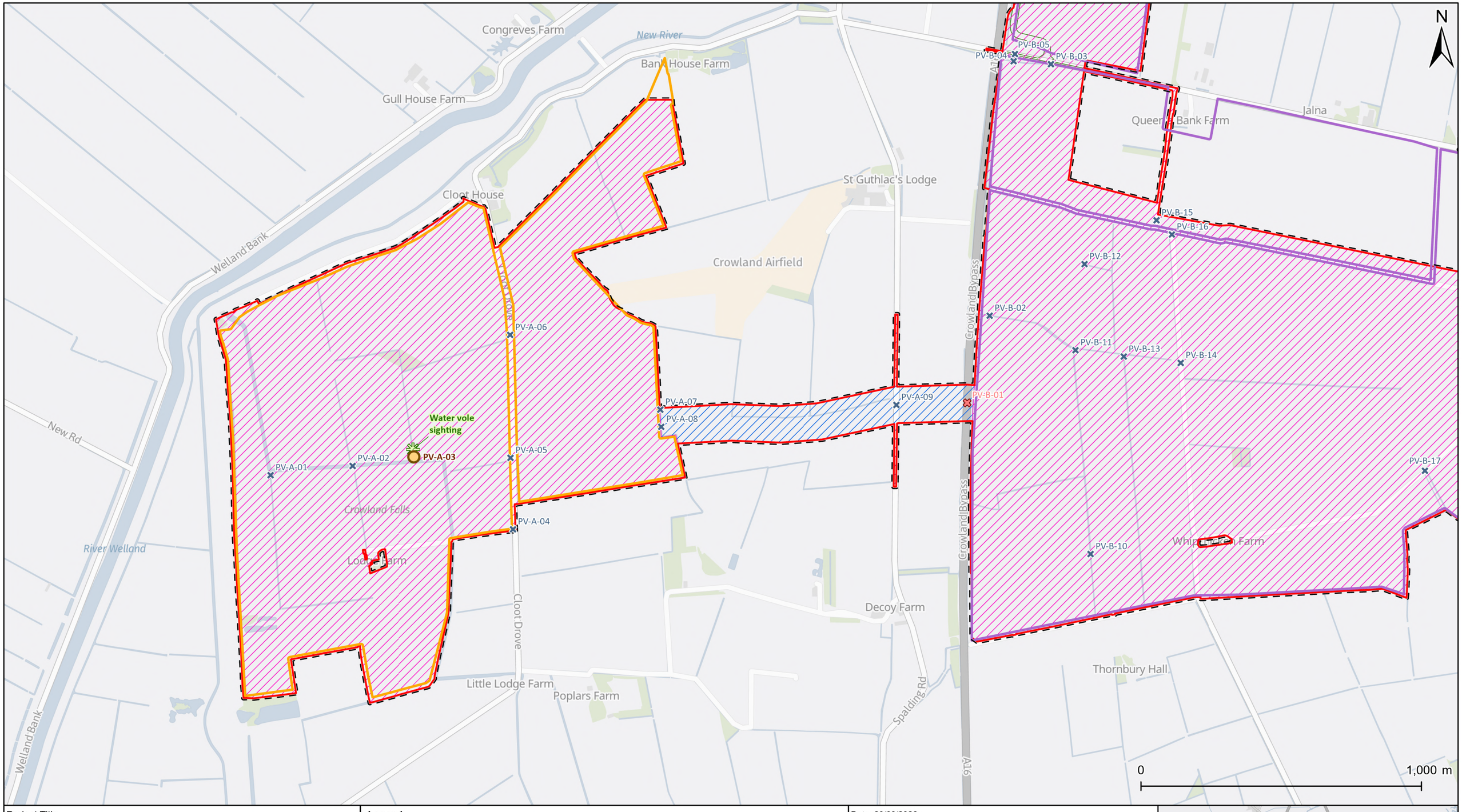


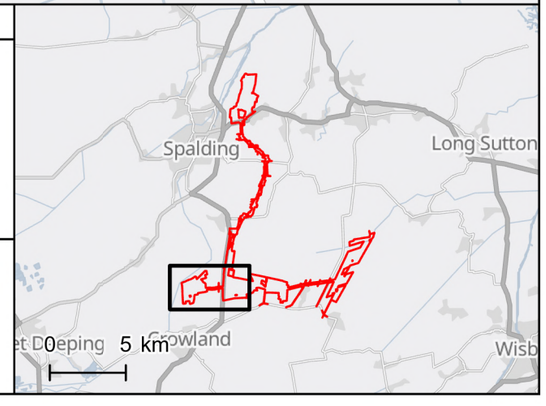
Project Title: Meridian Solar Farm			
Map Title: Environmental Statement Figure 1.6 Land Parcel A and B Watercourse Crossing Points			
Scale @ A3 1:12,500	Version 0	Drawn JM	Reviewed JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Land parcel A
- Land parcel B
- Survey Area
- Solar Development Areas
- Inter-Array Connections
- Grid Connection Route
- Evidence of water vole
- Field signs
- No evidence found
- No survey access

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



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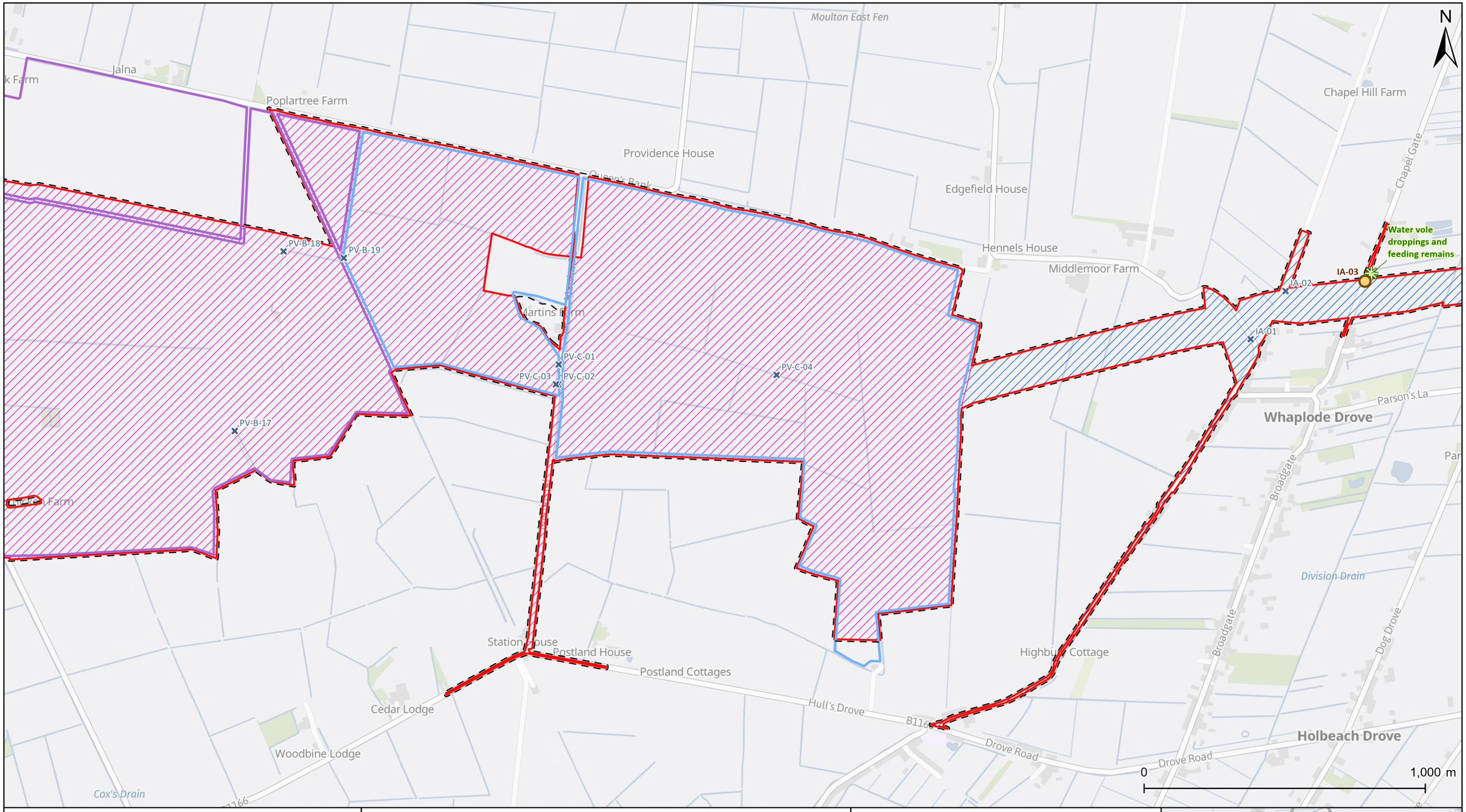


Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.7
Land Parcel B and C
Watercourse Crossing Points

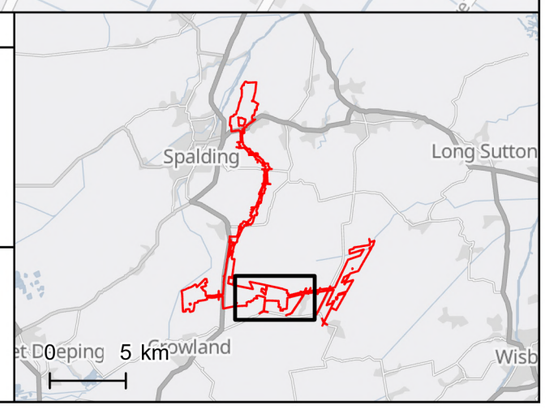
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:12,500	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Land parcel B
- Land parcel C
- Survey Area
- Solar Development Areas
- Inter-Array Connections
- Evidence of water vole
- Field signs
- No evidence found

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



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River View
Tudor Lodge
The Hermitage
Ash Farm
Holbeach Drove Gate
Gedney Drain
Water vole burrows
PV-D-05
Langley Gate Farm
North Rd
Lutton Gate Rd
Chapel Hill Farm
Chapel Gate
Tinsley's Drain
Poplar Cottage
B1168
Whinfell House
Dog Drove
The Poplars
Falcon House
PV-D-04
PV-D-03
IA-04
IA-05
PV-D-02
Water vole droppings and feeding remains
IA-03
IA-02
IA-01
PV-D-01
Mole Drove
Mole Drove Farm
Gothic Farm
Parson's La
Barr's La
Whaplode Drove
Partridge Fen
Broadgate
Northwood House Farm
Chevet House
Fleet Drain
Gedney Drain
Chapel Rd
Waltons Farm
Highstock Drain
N
0
1,000 m

Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.8
Land Parcel D
Watercourse Crossing Points

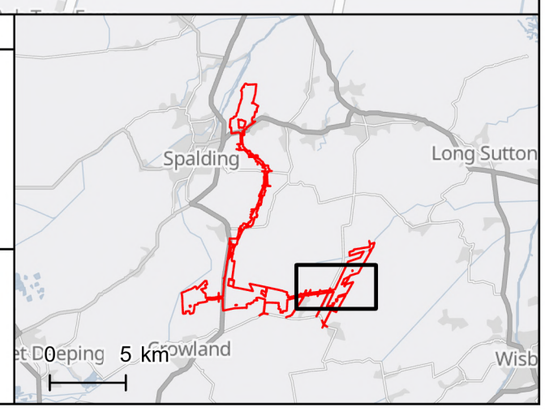
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:12,500	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Land parcel D
- Survey Area
- Solar Development Areas
- Inter-Array Connections
- Evidence of water vole
- Field signs
- No evidence found

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



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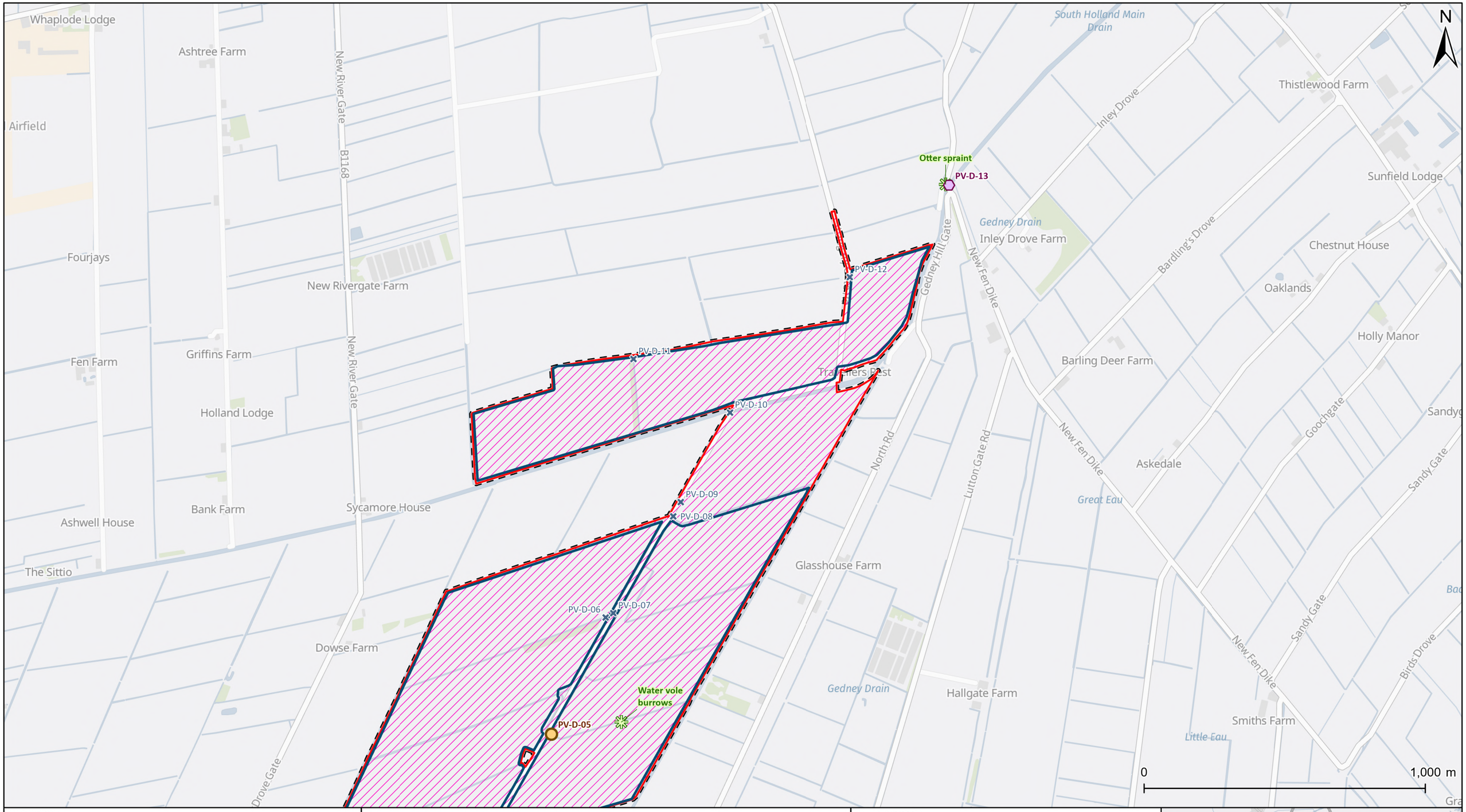


Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.9
Land Parcel D
Watercourse Crossing Points

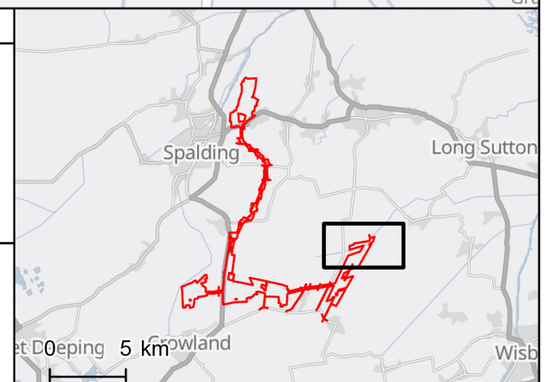
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:12,500	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Land parcel D
- Survey Area
- Solar Development Areas
- Evidence of otter
- Evidence of water vole
- Field signs
- No evidence found

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



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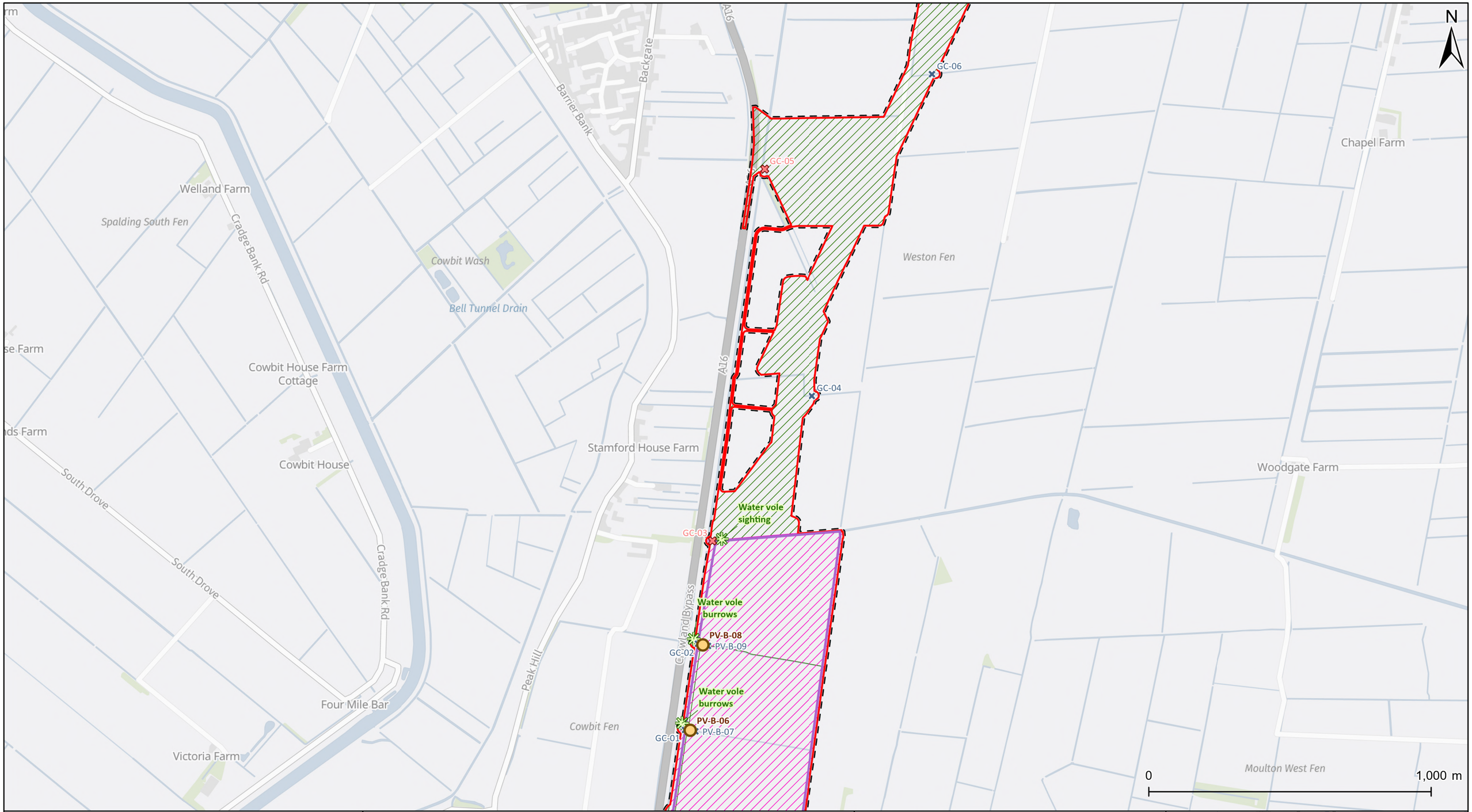


Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.10
Grid Connection Route Part 1
Watercourse Crossing Points

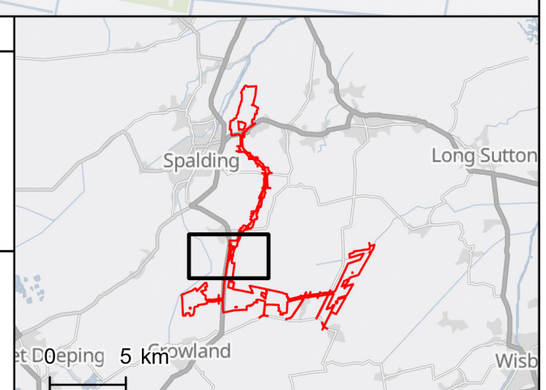
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:12,500	0	JM	JET

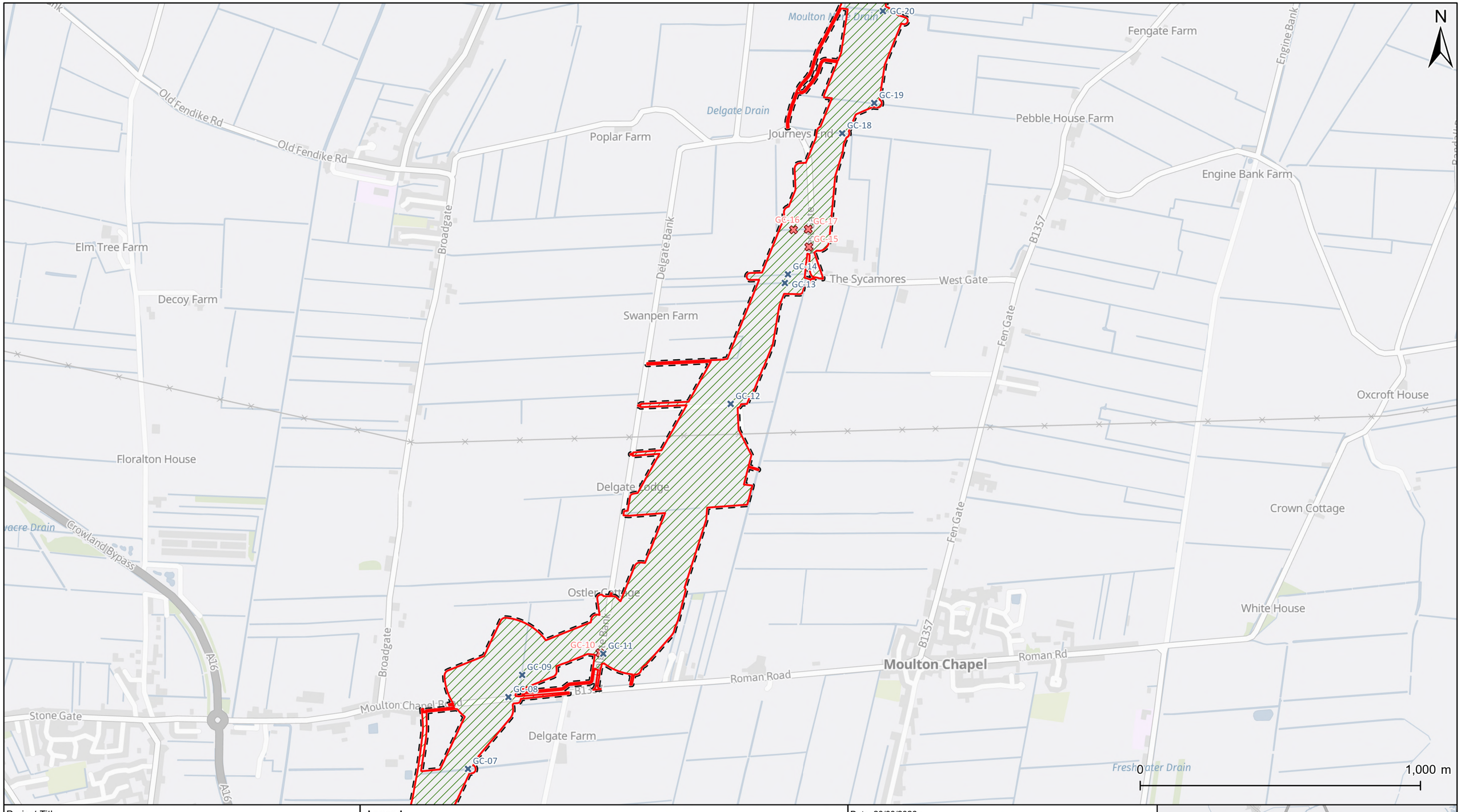
Legend

- Order Limits
- Land parcel B
- Survey Area
- Solar Development Areas
- Grid Connection Route
- Evidence of water vole
- Field signs
- No evidence found
- No survey access

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar





Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.11
Grid Connection Route Part 2
Watercourse Crossing Points

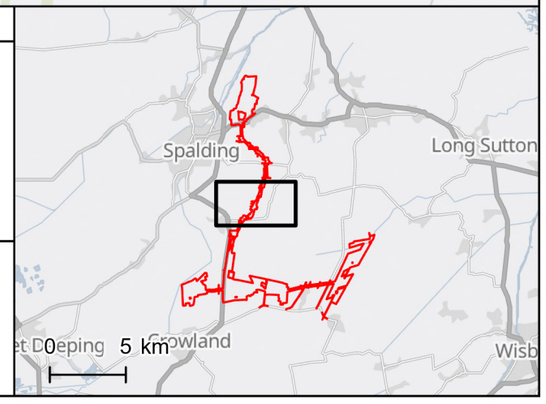
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:12,500	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Survey Area
- Grid Connection Route
- No evidence found
- No survey access

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



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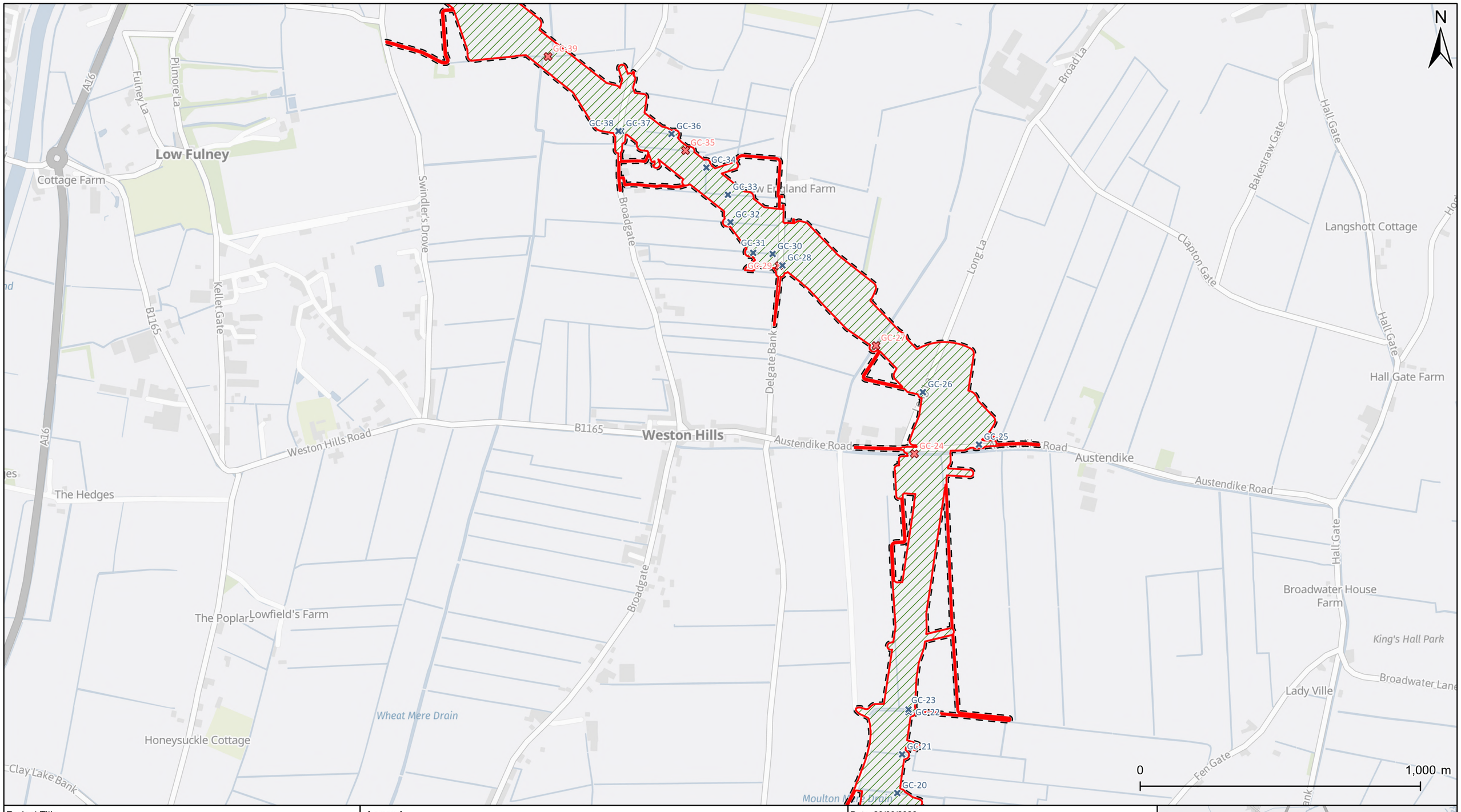


Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.12
Grid Connection Route Part 3
Watercourse Crossing Points

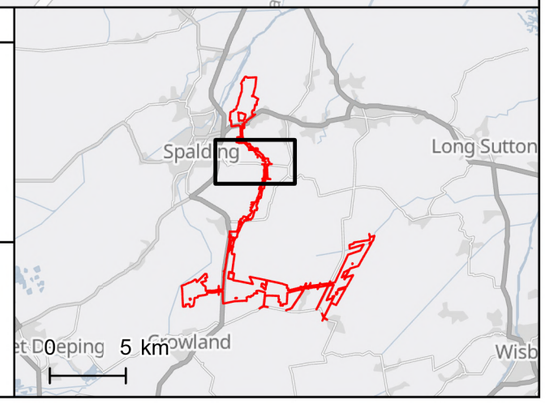
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:12,500	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Survey Area
- Grid Connection Route
- No evidence found
- No survey access

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



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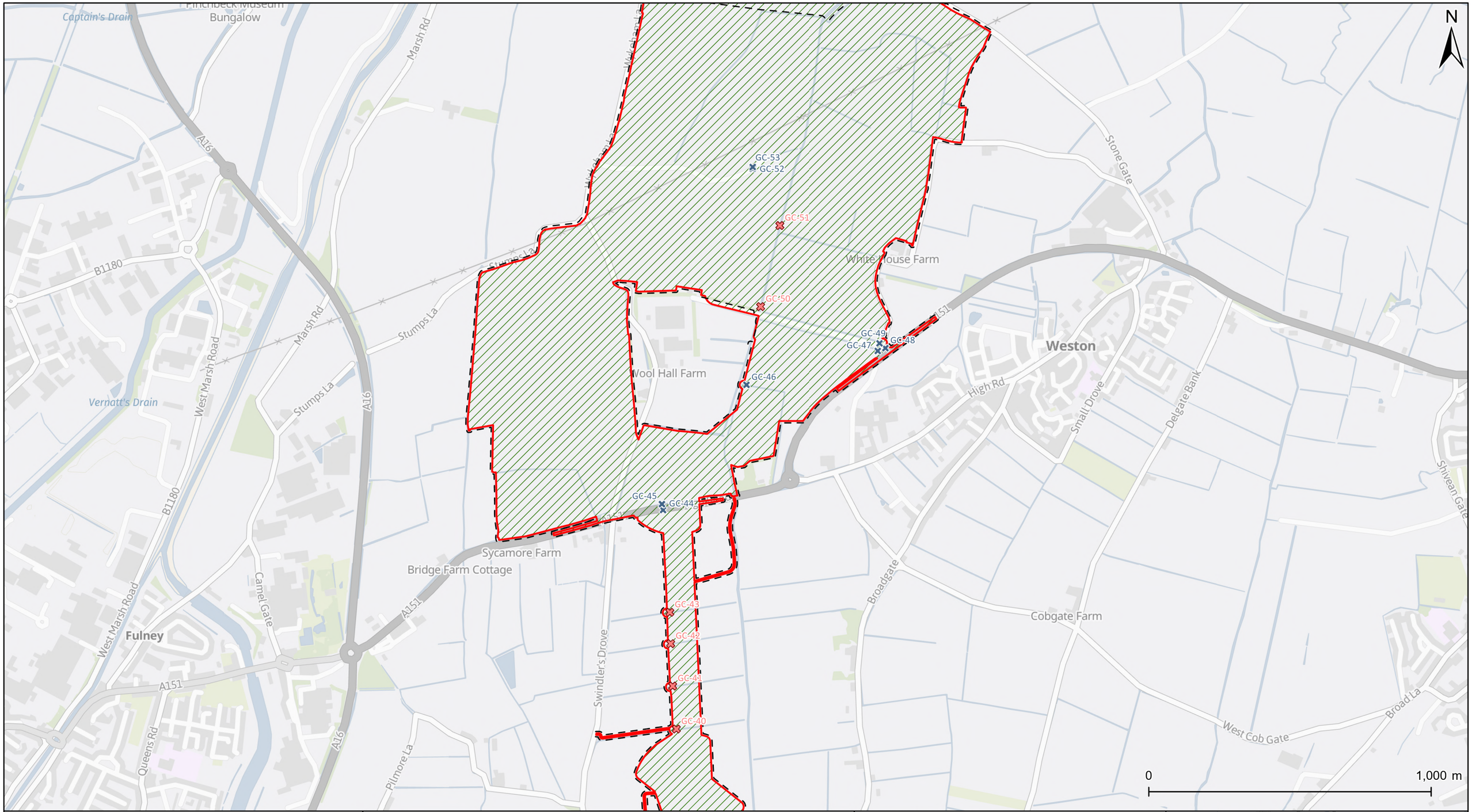


Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.13
Grid Connection Route Part 4
Watercourse Crossing Points

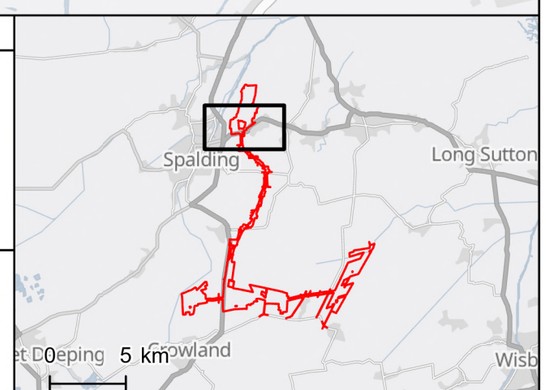
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:12,500	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Survey Area
- Grid Connection Route
- No evidence found
- No survey access

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



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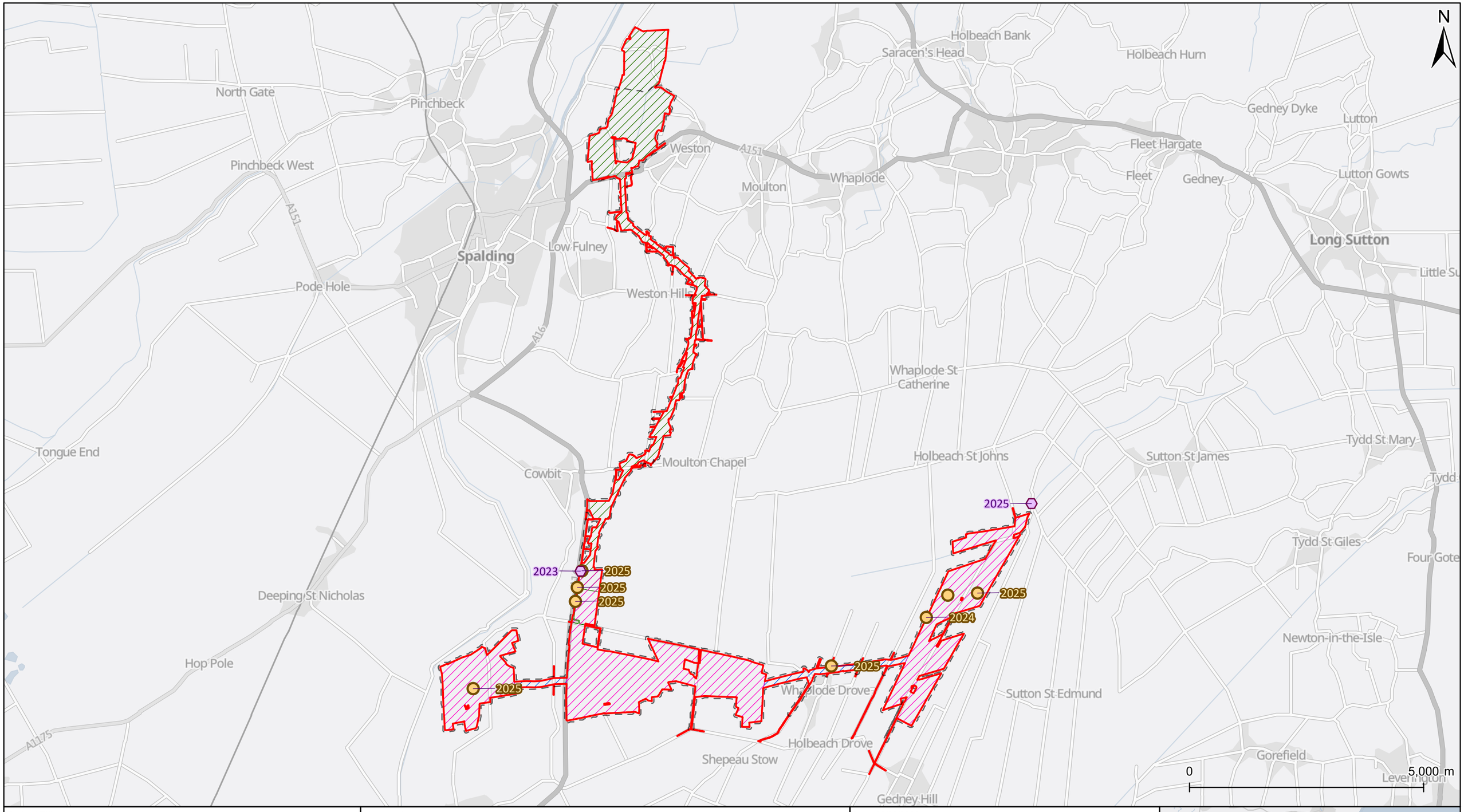

Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.14: Collated Field Signs from All Surveys and Incidental Sightings

Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:75,000	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Solar Development Areas
- Inter-Array Connections
- Grid Connection Route
- Survey Area

Evidence of:

- Otter
- Water vole

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar

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Project Title

Meridian Solar Farm

Map Title

Environmental Statement
Figure 1.15: Desk Study Results

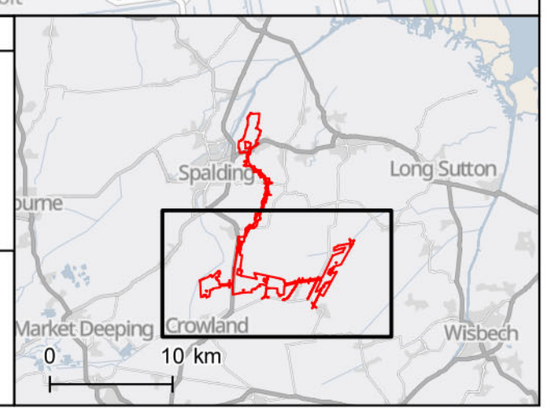
Scale @ A3	Version	Drawn	Reviewed
1:45,000	0	JM	JET

Legend

- Order Limits
- Solar Development Areas
- Inter-Array Connections
- Grid Connection Route
- Solar Development Areas - 2km buffer
- Survey Area
- Watercourse crossing points
- Eurasian Otter
- European Water Vole

Date: 20/03/2026

Meridian Solar



Appendix 2: Photographs

Photographs 1 and 2:

General character of dry ditches throughout Site.

Photographs 3 and 4:

General character of larger drains throughout site.

Photographs 5 and 6:

Examples of variation in management – vegetation trimmed and scraped back to bare earth.

Photograph 7:

Water vole burrows in Wheat Mere Drain, at crossing point PV-B-06 (01/09/2025).

Photograph 8:

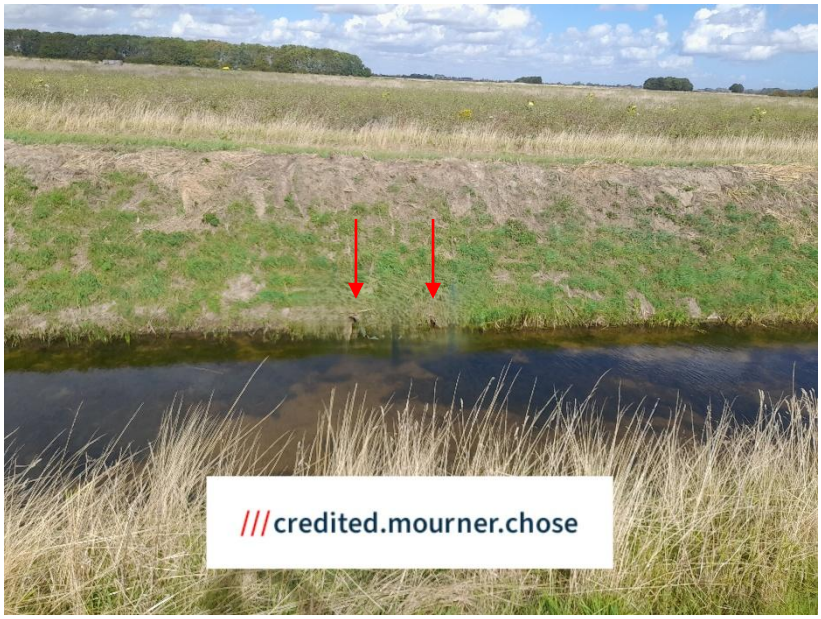
Water vole burrow in Wheat Mere Drain, at crossing point PV-B-08 (01/09/2025).

Photograph 9:

Water vole burrow in Sly's Cut at crossing point D_N.2.2 (13/06/2024).

Photograph 10:

Water vole burrows in Sly's Cut at crossing point PV-D-05 (02/09/2025).



Photographs 11 and 12:

Water vole burrow and feeding remains in Lambert Drain, recorded during bird survey (16/10/2024).

Photographs 13 and 14:

Water vole burrow and latrines at crossing point IR-03 (16/09/2025).

Photographs 15, 16 and 17:

Otter spraint and feeding remains (fish bones and scales) under bridge over South Holland Main Drain, at crossing point PV-D-13 (17/09/2025).

Appendix 3: Survey Data

Table 6.1: All Survey Data – 2024 Surveys

Land Parcel	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors (Jun)	Date (Jun)	Surveyors (Sep)	Date (Sep)
Parcel A	A.1.1	525240	314312	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	AB/HF	05/06/2024	SW/SG	24/09/2024
Parcel A	A.2.2	524863	313357	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to September survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	AB/HF	05/06/2024	SW/SG	24/09/2024
Parcel A	A.3.3	524525	313502	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good	No evidence found	AB/HF	05/06/2024	SW/SG	24/09/2024
Parcel A	A.4.4	524281	313546	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	AB/HF	05/06/2024	SW/SG	24/09/2024
Parcel A	A.5.5	524306	313724	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	AB/HF	05/06/2024	SW/SG	24/09/2024
Parcel A	A.6.6	524032	313297	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to September survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	AB/HF	05/06/2024	SW/SG	24/09/2024
Parcel B	B.1.1	526752	313854	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	AB/HF	06/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel B	B.2.2	527063	313741	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	AB/HF	06/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024

Land Parcel	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors (Jun)	Date (Jun)	Surveyors (Sep)	Date (Sep)
Parcel B	B.3.3	527133	312993	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to September survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	AB/HF	06/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel B	B.4.4	526923	313333	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to September survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	AB/HF	06/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel B	B.5.5	526630	313245	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	Negligible	No ditch present	AB/HF	06/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel B	B.6.6	528000	313202	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	AB/HF	06/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel B	B.7.7	528163	313617	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	Negligible	No ditch present	AB/HF	06/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel C (West)	C_W.1.1	529134	314072	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	Negligible	No ditch present	SH/SW	12/06/2024	SG/SH	25/09/2024
Parcel C (West)	C_W.2.2	529111	314014	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	SG/SH	25/09/2024

Land Parcel	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors (Jun)	Date (Jun)	Surveyors (Sep)	Date (Sep)
Parcel C (West)	C_W.3.3	528549	314098	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	SG/SH	25/09/2024
Parcel C (West)	C_W.4.4	528644	313720	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	SG/SH	25/09/2024
Parcel C (West)	C_W.5.5	528906	313616	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	SG/SH	25/09/2024
Parcel C (West)	C_W.6.6	529126	313805	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	SG/SH	25/09/2024
Parcel C (East)	C_E.1.1	529827	313691	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	LV/SW	25/09/2024
Parcel C (East)	C_E.2.2	529911	313582	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to September survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	LV/SW	25/09/2024
Parcel C (East)	C_E.3.3	530376	313502	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	LV/SW	25/09/2024

Land Parcel	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors (Jun)	Date (Jun)	Surveyors (Sep)	Date (Sep)
Parcel C (East)	C_E.4.4	530403	313167	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	LV/SW	25/09/2024
Parcel C (East)	C_E.5.5	530426	312750	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	Negligible	No ditch present	SH/SW	12/06/2024	LV/SW	25/09/2024
Parcel C (East)	C_E.6.6	529982	313386	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	LV/SW	25/09/2024
Parcel C (East)	C_E.7.7	529657	313408	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation removed prior to September survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	12/06/2024	LV/SW	25/09/2024
Parcel D (North)	D_N.1.1	534611	315591	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	13/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel D (North)	D_N.2.2	534444	315319	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	Vegetation trimmed prior to September survey	Good	Water vole evidence (burrow) at ///armrest.junior.adventure	SH/SW	13/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel D (North)	D_N.3.3	534314	315010	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found / incidental WV sighting at	SH/SW	13/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024

Land Parcel	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors (Jun)	Date (Jun)	Surveyors (Sep)	Date (Sep)
										///drags.everyone.refusals on 16/10/2024				
Parcel D (North)	D_N.4.4	534260	314687	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation removed prior to September survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	13/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel D (North)	D_N.5.5	535119	315389	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	Vegetation trimmed prior to September survey	Good	No evidence found	SH/SW	13/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel D (North)	D_N.6.6	535321	315797	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation removed (scraped to bare earth) prior to June survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	13/06/2024	SW/SG	30/09/2024
Parcel D (South)	D_S.1.1	534273	314418	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	13/06/2024	LV/SH	26/09/2024
Parcel D (South)	D_S.2.2	534047	314025	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	13/06/2024	LV/SH	26/09/2024
Parcel D (South)	D_S.3.3	534028	313961	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	13/06/2024	LV/SH	26/09/2024

Land Parcel	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors (Jun)	Date (Jun)	Surveyors (Sep)	Date (Sep)
Parcel D (South)	D_S.4.4	533833	313629	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	13/06/2024	LV/SH	26/09/2024
Parcel D (South)	D_S.5.5	533736	312999	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation removed (scraped to bare earth) prior to June survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	13/06/2024	LV/SH	26/09/2024
Parcel D (South)	D_S.6.6	534653	314290	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to September survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/SW	13/06/2024	LV/SH	26/09/2024

Table 6.2: All Survey Data – 2025 Surveys

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors	Date
PV Area A	PV-A-01	524031.2534	313307.9384	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Good	No evidence found	SW/SH	01/09/2025
PV Area A	PV-A-02	524323.2983	313340.8213	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good	No evidence found	SW/SH	01/09/2025
PV Area A	PV-A-03	524543.0291	313373.3608	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good	Water vole evidence (heard) at ///heartache.income.castle	SW/SH	01/09/2025
PV Area A	PV-A-04	524896	313115	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	15/09/2025
PV Area A	PV-A-05	524887.0001	313369.7797	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SH	01/09/2025
PV Area A	PV-A-06	524885.9666	313808.1362	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SH	01/09/2025
PV Area A	PV-A-07	525420.5735	313541.5879	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG	02/09/2025
PV Area A	PV-A-08	525423.7869	313480.442	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG	02/09/2025
Inter-Array	PV-A-09	526262.6565	313558.5286	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG	02/09/2025
Inter-Array	PV-B-01	526514.7188	313565.8532	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed	N/A	N/A
PV Area B	PV-B-02	526594.9546	313876.5113	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG/RT	03/09/2025

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors	Date
PV Area B	PV-B-03	526813	314773	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	15/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-04	526680.0157	314783.5304	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG/RT	03/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-05	526684.9479	314809.026	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG/RT	03/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-06	526750.6088	315236.7489	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation partially trimmed prior to survey	Suitable but poor	Water vole evidence (burrows) at ///fattest.essays.pity	SW/SG	01/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-07	526768.7094	315233.1084	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation partially trimmed prior to survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG	01/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-08	526795.253	315538.8351	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation partially trimmed prior to survey	Suitable but poor	Water vole evidence (burrows) at ///denser.countries.printer	SW/SG	01/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-09	526813.2297	315535.1955	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation partially trimmed prior to survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG	01/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-10	526954.1494	313027.1047	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG	02/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-11	526900.3557	313753.4569	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG/RT	03/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-12	526932.6144	314060.4597	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	Negligible	No ditch present	SW/SG/RT	03/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-13	527072.2397	313730.8614	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG/RT	03/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-14	527275.1048	313708.2133	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG/RT	03/09/2025

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors	Date
PV Area B	PV-B-15	527189.0284	314216.656	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG/RT	03/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-16	527243.4609	314165.9256	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG/RT	03/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-17	528145.9598	313323.6889	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG	02/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-18	528319.4913	313961.8885	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG	02/09/2025
PV Area B	PV-B-19	528533.1479	313938.6068	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SW/SG	02/09/2025
PV Area C	PV-C-01	529298	313560	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	15/09/2025
PV Area C	PV-C-02	529296.8271	313489.5127	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/RT	02/09/2025
PV Area C	PV-C-03	529288.2381	313489.6997	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/RT	02/09/2025
PV Area C	PV-C-04	530071.4713	313522.8449	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/RT	02/09/2025
Inter-Array	IA-01	531758	313650	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	16/09/2025
Inter-Array	IA-02	531882	313821	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	16/09/2025

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors	Date
Inter-Array	IA-03	532164	313856	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good	Water vole evidence (droppings and feeding remains) at ///imagined.guideline.lawyer	MH/SG	16/09/2025
Inter-Array	IA-04	533429	313978	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	16/09/2025
Inter-Array	IA-05	533407	313908	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	16/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-01	534094	313744	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	17/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-02	534218	313954	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	17/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-03	534423	314230	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	17/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-04	534454.7679	314283.9047	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/RT	02/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-05	535058.6668	315395.6901	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	Vegetation trimmed prior to survey	Good	Water vole evidence (burrows) at ///credited.mourner.chose	SH/RT	02/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-06	535250.8683	315810.4444	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/RT	02/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-07	535278	315826	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	17/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-08	535491	316170	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/SG	17/09/2025

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors	Date
PV Area D	PV-D-09	535517.7254	316220.6202	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/RT	02/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-10	535692.536	316538.686	Steep	Yes	Yes	Yes	No evidence	Good	No evidence found	SH/RT	02/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-11	535349.781	316729.2752	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/RT	02/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-12	536119.5008	317020.1717	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	SH/RT	02/09/2025
PV Area D	PV-D-13	536472	317347	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Good	Otter evidence (spraint) at ///jumbo.outwards.safest	MH/SG	17/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-01	526732	315238	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	22/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-02	526778	315543	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	22/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-03	526829	315907	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access / incidental WV sighting at ///effort.portfolio.similar on 22/07/2025	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-04	527182	316420	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	22/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-05	527014	317223	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-06	527607	317559	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	22/09/2025

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors	Date
Grid Connection	GC-07	527749	317863	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	22/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-08	527893	318119	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	22/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-09	527942	318198	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	22/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-10	528219	318277	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-11	528231	318274	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	22/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-12	528685	319165	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	22/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-13	528878	319596	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	No ditch	Negligible	No ditch present	MH/TH	22/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-14	528889	319627	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	22/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-15	528965	319725	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-16	528909	319786	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-17	528963	319788	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-18	529084	320130	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors	Date
Grid Connection	GC-19	529198	320238	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-20	529229	320566	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-21	529246	320704	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-22	529269	320855	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-23	529269	320864	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-24	529290	321776	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-25	529520	321809	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-26	529320	321996	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-27	529153	322162	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-28	528818	322448	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-29	528806	322447	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-30	528783	322489	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors	Date
Grid Connection	GC-31	528714	322493	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	23/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-32	528633	322602	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	24/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-33	528624	322700	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	24/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-34	528547	322797	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	24/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-35	528473	322858	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-36	528423	322917	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	24/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-37	528243	322927	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	24/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-38	528234	322927	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	24/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-39	527983	323193	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-40	527721	323586	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-41	527708	323738	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-42	527701	323888	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A

Scheme Element	Crossing Point ID	X	Y	Bank Profile	Bank substrate suitable for burrowing	Continuous bankside or in-channel vegetation	Permanent water	Evidence of recent/current management	Habitat Value	Evidence of otter/water vole (field signs)	Surveyors	Date
Grid Connection	GC-43	527698	323999	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-44	527674	324361	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	24/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-45	527670	324382	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	Vegetation trimmed prior to survey	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	24/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-46	527969	324804	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	25/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-47	528435	324924	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	25/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-48	528462	324934	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	25/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-49	528441	324951	Steep	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	25/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-50	528019	325081	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-51	528087	325368	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	Not surveyed	N/A	Not surveyed - no access	N/A	N/A
Grid Connection	GC-52	527991	325569	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	25/09/2025
Grid Connection	GC-53	527991	325575	Shallow	Yes	Yes	No	No evidence	Suitable but poor	No evidence found	MH/TH	25/09/2025

Appendix 4: Legislation

OTTER

Otters are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 2. Regulation 41 prohibits:

- Deliberate killing, injuring or capturing of otters;
- Deliberate disturbance of any Schedule 2 species (e.g. otter) as:
    - a) to impair their ability:
        - (i) to survive, breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture young;
        - (ii) to hibernate or migrate
    - b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place; and
- Keeping, transporting, selling, exchanging or offering for sale whether live or dead or of any part thereof. Intentionally kill, injure or take an otter.

Otters are also currently protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through their inclusion on Schedule 5. Under this Act, they are additionally protected from:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance (at any level)
- Intentional or reckless obstruction of access to any place of shelter or protection
- Selling, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transporting for purpose of sale.

How is the legislation pertaining to otter liable to affect development works?

A European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence issued by the relevant countryside agency (e.g. Natural England) will be required for any works liable to affect otter breeding or resting places (often referred to as holts, couches or dens) or for operations likely to result in a level of disturbance which might impair their ability to undertake those activities mentioned above (e.g. survive, breed, and rear young). The licence is to allow derogation from the relevant legislation but also to enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place and their efficacy to be monitored.

WATER VOLE

The water vole is fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take (capture) a water vole;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a water vole while it is occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection; and
- Sell, offer or expose for sale, or have in his possession or transport for the purpose of sale, any live or dead water vole or part thereof.

How is the legislation pertaining to water voles liable to affect development works?

Wherever development works are liable to affect habitats known to support water vole, the relevant countryside agency must be consulted. It must be shown, that means by which the proposal can be re-designed, to avoid contravening the legislation have been fully explored e.g. the use of alternative sites, appropriate timing of works to avoid times of the year in which water voles are most vulnerable, and measures to ensure minimal habitat loss. Conservation licences for the capture and translocation of water voles may be issued by the relevant countryside agency (e.g. Natural England) for the purpose of development activities if it can be shown that the activity has been properly planned and

executed and thereby contributes to the conservation of the population. The licence will then only be granted to a suitably experienced person if it can be shown that adequate surveys have been undertaken to inform appropriate mitigation measures. Identification and preparation of a suitable receptor site will be necessary prior to the commencement of works.

- London: Temple Chambers, 3-7 Temple Avenue, London, EC4Y 0DT. T: +44 (0)20 7394 3700
- Haywards Heath: Unit 6 Basepoint; John De Mierre House, 20 Bridge Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 1UA. T: +44 (0)20 7394 3700
- Lewes: 3 Upper Stalls, Iford, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 3EJ. T: +44 (0) 1273 813739
- Lichfield: 1-2 Trent Park, Eastern Avenue, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 6RN. T: +44 (0)1543 229049
- Manchester: Express Building, 9 Great Ancoats Street, Manchester, M4 5AD. T: +44 (0)161 509 4900
- Norwich: 60 Thorpe Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 1RY. T: +44 (0)1603 628408
- Wakefield: St James Suite, Nostell Business Park Doncaster Road WF4 1AB. T: +44 (0)1924 921900