



Meridian Solar Farm

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Volume 6

Environmental Statement

6.3 ES Appendix 12-3:
Landscape Baseline

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)

Infrastructure Planning (Applications:
Prescribed Forms and Procedure)
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1. Landscape Baseline

1.1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. This appendix sets out the relevant extracts and information from published landscape character assessments and associated studies across the study area of the Scheme. These have been used to inform the value of the landscape baseline, which is required to determine landscape sensitivity, in order to assess landscape effects. This information should be read in combination with **ES Figures 12-1 to 12-18** (Doc Ref. 6.3).
- 1.1.2. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3, paragraphs 5.12-5.18)¹ indicate that broad-scale character assessments, such as those produced at the national and regional level, can be used to set the scene and indicate the key characteristics that may be apparent in the study area. It suggests that local authority assessments provide more detail and that these can be mapped to show how the Scheme relates to them. GLVIA3 acknowledges that it is likely that it will be necessary to carry out specific and more detailed surveys of the site and its immediate setting or surroundings, whilst keeping it proportionate to the assessment of the Scheme.

1.2. Study Area

- 1.2.1. The study area for the Scheme, as described within **ES Appendix 12-2: LVIA Methodology** (Doc Ref. 6.3) comprises the area within 5km radius of the Solar Development Areas (including the On-Site 400kV Substation and BESS Compound and On-Site 132kV Substation Compounds) and Inter-Array Connections, and within 10km radius of the Grid Connection Route.
- 1.2.2. The Scheme is located within south-east Lincolnshire, north / north-east of Crowland and east of Spalding. Other settlements consist of small clusters of residential and business properties within various villages and hamlets, as well as a number of individual properties which are scattered throughout the study area. The Scheme lies within a predominantly arable landscape, with flat, typically fenland, topography. The A16 passes in between Solar Development Area - Land Parcel A and Solar Development Area - Land Parcel B, connecting Peterborough and Boston, which are both located outside of the 5km radius study area around

¹ Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. (2013). Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition. Available as hardcopy only.

the Solar Development Areas and Inter-Array Connections as well as the 10km radius study area around the Grid Connection Route.

1.3. Landscape Baseline

Introduction

- 1.3.1. This section details the baseline landscape characteristics of the Site and study area. Baseline information on topography and hydrology, vegetation, settlement and land use, connectivity and accessibility, tranquillity, and landscape designations are detailed below. Detailed baseline information concentrates on the 5km and 10km study areas as outlined in Section 1.2 above.
- 1.3.2. Due to the nature of the assessment, the baseline covers the Scheme as a whole, which includes the following components:
- Solar Development Area - Land Parcel A;
 - Solar Development Area - Land Parcel B;
 - Solar Development Area - Land Parcel C;
 - Solar Development Area - Land Parcel D;
 - Underground Inter-Array Connection between Land Parcel A & B;
 - Overhead Inter-Array Connection between Land Parcel C & D; and
 - Grid Connection Route.
- 1.3.3. Where relevant, the individual elements of the Scheme have been referenced to provide clarity in changes in the baseline scenario across the study area.

Landscape Designations

National Level Published Landscape Character Assessments

- 1.3.4. Natural England publish mapping and written descriptions of the National Character Areas (NCAs) of England. The aim is to assist those who make decisions regarding local plans to consider how best to enhance and respect local distinctiveness. The entire study area lies within a single NCA: NCA 46 – The Fens². This area is a distinctive, historic and human-influenced wetland

² Natural England (2013). NCA Profile: 46. The Fens (NE424). Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6229624> [Accessed 21/11/2025]

landscape, notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons.

1.3.5. NCA's are broad-scale and provide context to more detailed studies of regional / county or local landscape characters. Effects on the NCA will not, therefore, be assessed in the LVIA.

1.3.6. The NCA covered by the study area is shown in **ES Figure 12-4** (Doc Ref. 6.2).

National Character Area Profile 46 (NCA 46) – The Fens

1.3.7. Key characteristics of NCA 46 relevant to the Site and study area are:

- *“Expansive, flat, open, Low-lying wetland landscape influenced by the Wash estuary, and offering extensive vistas to level horizons and huge skies throughout, provides a sense of rural remoteness and tranquillity;*
- *Overall, woodland cover is sparse, notably a few small woodland blocks, occasional avenues alongside roads, isolated field trees and shelterbelts of poplar, willow and occasionally leylandii hedges around farmsteads, and numerous orchards around Wisbech;*
- *The predominant land use is arable – wheat, root crops, bulbs, vegetables and market gardening made possible by actively draining reclaimed land areas;*
- *Open fields, bounded by a network of drains and the distinctive hierarchy of rivers (some embanked), have a strong influence on the geometric/rectilinear landscape pattern. The structures create local enclosure and a slightly raised landform, which is mirrored in the road network that largely follows the edges of the system of large fields;*
- *The area is very rich in geodiversity and archaeology, with sediments containing evidence for past environmental and climate changes and with high potential for well-preserved waterlogged site remains at the fen edge, within some of the infilled palaeo-rivers and beneath the peat; and*
- *Villages tend to be dispersed ribbon settlements along the main arterial routes through the settled fens, and scattered farms remain as relics of earlier agricultural settlements”.*

Regional and County

Lincolnshire County Historic Landscape Character Areas (HLCA) and Historic Landscape Character Zones (HLCZ)

- 1.3.8. While the NCA profiles provide a broad perspective on the region's natural and cultural identity, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) published a focussed assessment on the historic character of the county in September 2011. The Historic Landscape Characterisation Project for Lincolnshire³ provides a detailed analysis of the unique regional character, and how the landscape has evolved over time.
- 1.3.9. The region is divided into ten Historic Landscape Character Areas (HLCAs), which are also referred to as Regional Character Areas. These are then complemented by subsidiary smaller Historic Landscape Character Zones (HLCZs), which are also referred to as Character Zones, based on distinctive features.
- 1.3.10. The study area of the Scheme falls within the following two of the HLCAs:
- 9: The Fens (FEN); and
 - 10: The Wash (WSH).
- 1.3.11. The study area of the Scheme falls within the following six HLCZs:
- FEN1: The Witham Fens;
 - FEN2: The Eastern Fens;
 - WSH1: Reclaimed Coastal Fringe;
 - WSH4: Reclaimed Wash Farmlands;
 - WSH5: Bicker Haven; and
 - WSH6: Townlands.
- 1.3.12. The HLCAs and HLCZs covered by the study area and included in the LVIA are shown in **ES Figure 12-5** (Doc Ref. 6.2).
- 1.3.13. A summary of the relevant historic landscape character areas and the historic landscape character zones can be found below.

³ LCC (2011) The Historic Character of the County of Lincolnshire 2011. Available at: https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/HEV002%20LincsHLC_Report-1.pdf [Accessed 21/11/2025]

The Fens (HLCA 9)

1.3.14. The Fens Historic Landscape Character Area encompasses the south and west of the 10km study area, and a large proportion of the southern half of Lincolnshire. Key characteristics include the following:

- *“The landscape is the most rural in the county and is mostly made up of arable fields. These fields are typically rectilinear, with boundaries formed from drains rather than hedges;*
- *The few trees to be found in the area are also found near and around the farmsteads and there are no hedges in evidence as field boundaries;*
- *The flat landscape is relieved by occasional small blocks of woodland, raised roads and tracks, and the occasional isolated farmstead;*
- *The only vertical elements in this otherwise flat landscape are the scattered farmsteads and their barns, which are frequently located some distance from the main residential farm buildings;*
- *The overall effect of the flatness of the landscape, and the lack of tall objects therein, is to emphasise the impact of the sky;*
- *Since the Second World War the increasingly mechanised nature of agriculture has necessitated the removal of field boundaries to create larger fields that can more easily be worked by machinery; and*
- *Historic wetland heritage of the Fens has largely been lost due to intensive arable farming; however, drainage to keep the land dry is still identifiable across the area”.*

Landscape Value:

1.3.15. The value of HLCA 9 is considered Medium due to the historic drainage network, which results in a distinctive and formal field pattern offering ecological and cultural value. The flat landscape with long distance views across a mainly rural landscape, and big skies offer a scenic value with limited detracting features such as main roads, wind turbines, overhead line infrastructure and settlements.

The Wash (HLCA 10)

1.3.16. The northernmost section of the Grid Connection Route crosses into ‘The Wash’, a large estuarine complex on the east coast of Lincolnshire and present across the north-east of the 10km study area. Key characteristics of this HLCA relevant to the Site and study area are:

- *“The rural landscape offers wide, open vistas, occasionally interrupted by vertical structures like St Botolph’s Church tower in Boston, wind power installations, or old sea banks;*
- *Roads are usually raised by up to a metre, allowing long-distance views, particularly across the drained marshlands;*
- *The area is predominantly agricultural, with the highest proportion of modern fields by area in the county, which is indicative of the high rate of field boundary loss;*
- *There is a high proportion of surviving ancient enclosure;*
- *Settlements are typically found on high ground, often nucleated in character. Although an increasing proportion of new housing threatens to merge some smaller settlements with their neighbours; and*
- *Despite changes, much of the historic character remains, including remaining marshland which is a National Nature Reserve”.*

Landscape Value:

1.3.17. The value of HLCA 10 is considered Medium due to the expansive historic drainage network and former marshland offering ecological and cultural value. The field patterns are formal and of medium to large scale. The flat landscape offers open and long distance views with large skies across a mainly rural landscape once the string of settlements from Spalding, Weston, Moulton, Whaplode and Holbeach along the southern section are left behind. There is a distinct scenic value but with a number of prominent detracting features such as 400 kV overhead lines, main road infrastructure and settlements.

The Witham Fens (HLCZ FEN1)

1.3.18. The south-eastern section of the HLCZ ‘The Witham Fens’ is located within the 5km and 10km study areas west of the Scheme. The majority of this HLCZ is located outside the study areas. Key characteristics include the following:

- *“Few nucleated settlements;*
- *Dispersed pattern of settlements including isolated farmsteads and irregular linear settlements along routes, with little intervisibility between them;*
- *Generally flat landscape with very slight rises of around half a metre upon which settlement is located; and*

- *Extensive network of drainage ditches, including the 20m wide South Forty Foot Drain, part of which forms the boundary of this character zone”.*

Landscape Value:

1.3.19. The section covered by the study area contains an expansive flat landscape with long distance views, which are only interrupted by scattered clusters of trees, farmsteads or small settlements. Views are across a rural landscape which is defined by drainage systems resulting in formalised field patterns which is distinctive for fenland landscapes. Field pattern is generally medium to large scale. The landscape is of medium tranquillity due to the presence of detracting features such as a number of wind turbines northwest of Deeping St Nicholas and overhead line infrastructure. The PRoW network is sparse within the section covered by the study area. The value of the HLCZ FEN1 is assessed as Medium.

The Eastern Fens (HLCZ FEN2)

1.3.20. The Solar Development Area Land Parcels A-D and the southern section of the Grid Connection Route is located within the Historic Landscape Character Zone ‘The Eastern Fens’. Key characteristics include the following:

- *“The area has a strong feeling of openness, with few hedges demarcating fields; and*
- *Although dispersed, there is a relatively high settlement density, including linear settlements, in this area, compared to other fen or marsh areas in the county”.*

Landscape Value:

1.3.21. The section covered by the study area contains an expansive flat landscape with a field pattern defined by drainage systems. Field pattern is generally medium to large scale. Views across the character zone are still open and distinctive but less long distance due to a higher density of intervening settlements and associated vegetation as well as cluster of trees and woodland. Agriculture is still a defining land use. The PRoW network is becoming more expansive and concentrates along the River Welland between Crowland and Spalding, the South Holland Main Drain as well as scattered sections of PRoW across the character zone, which are not necessarily connected to each other. The landscape is of medium tranquillity with a strong sense of place but with the presence of detracting features such as overhead line infrastructure, the A16 and a number of wind turbines located close to the boundary of this character zone (French Park, south-east of Crowland), and an existing solar farm (Decoy Farm, north-east of Crowland). The value of the HLCZ FEN2 is assessed as Medium.

Reclaimed Coastal Fringe (HLCZ WSH1)

- 1.3.22. WSH1 covers a small area within the northern section of the 10km study area and extends outside of the study area to the north and south along the coast. This zone is characterised by a network of relict sea banks, with agricultural rectilinear fields bound by shallow dykes. The canalised River Welland dissects the zone within the study area. Settlement is sparse, limited to isolated farmsteads.

Landscape Value:

- 1.3.23. The section covered by the study area contains an expansive flat landscape with open and long distance views, which are only interrupted by scattered clusters of trees, farmsteads or small settlements. Views are across a rural landscape as well as marshland. Field patterns are generally medium scale and are defined by drainage systems distinctive for fenland landscapes. Large skies and an increasing sense of remoteness, particularly when moving closer to the sea, contribute to a medium landscape tranquillity. Detracting features include mainly overhead line infrastructure. There is a strong sense of place with a considerable scenic quality. The PRoW network concentrates along the River Welland and adjoining areas. The value of HLCZ WSH1 is assessed as Medium.

Reclaimed Wash Farmlands (HLCZ WSH4)

- 1.3.24. WSH4 is characterised by being primarily agricultural with large scale farmsteads and a semi regular field pattern. A small number of orchards are present to the west of this area. Field boundaries are generally narrow and shallow dykes.

Landscape Value:

- 1.3.25. Similar to HLCZ WSH1, the section covered by the study area contains an expansive flat landscape with open and long distance views, which are only interrupted by scattered clusters of trees, farmsteads or small settlements. Views are across a rural landscape. Field patterns are generally medium scale and are defined by drainage systems distinctive for fenland landscapes. Large skies and an increasing sense of remoteness contribute to a medium landscape tranquillity. Detracting features include mainly overhead line infrastructure. There is a strong sense of place with a considerable scenic quality. The PRoW network is sparse. The value of HLCZ WSH4 is assessed as Medium.

Bicker Haven (WSH5)

- 1.3.26. WSH5 is a small HLCZ located between 'The Townlands' and 'Reclaimed Wash Farmlands' character zones. This zone primarily arable with a number of farmsteads, with all settlement dispersed. The boundaries of the zone are

characterised by the 'Roman Bank', a historic remnant sea bank. The A16 now crosses this zone.

Landscape Value:

- 1.3.27. The section covered by the study area contains a flat landscape with open and longer distance views, interrupted by scattered clusters of trees or bands of trees and shrubs along main road infrastructure such as the A16, a denser network of farmsteads or scattered dwellings. Views are across a rural landscape. Field patterns are generally small to medium scale and are defined by drainage systems, which are less linear and much more irregular. Large skies are still a feature of this landscape leading to a medium landscape tranquillity. Detracting features include mainly overhead line infrastructure and the A16. The PRow network is sparse and concentrates along the northern shore of the River Welland. The value of HLCZ WSH4 is assessed as Medium.

The Townlands (HLCZ WSH6)

- 1.3.28. The Townlands HLCZ encompasses most of the nucleated settlements in the wider Wash region. The northern section of the Grid Connection Route is located within this character zone. Key characteristics include the following:

- *"The pattern of settlement in the zone is distinct, with a string of nucleated medieval market towns, such as Boston and Spalding, and villages running roughly parallel to the coastline;*
- *The zone is largely agricultural in character, with the greater part of this area made up of arable fields; and*
- *Tree cover in the zone is sparse, comprising deciduous and non-deciduous, small-scale plantations located in field edges and corners, around settlements and as shelter belts around farmsteads".*

Landscape Value:

- 1.3.29. The section covered by the study area contains a string of settlements consisting of Spalding, Weston, Moulton, Whaplode and Holbeach as well as Spalding Power Station and associated visually prominent 400kV overhead lines. Away from settlements, the landscape character becomes quickly rural with open and expansive and distinctive views. The field patterns are defined by drainage systems and are of medium to large scale. Settlements become smaller and more sparse further north. The PRow network concentrates along the River Welland and the River Glen with a number of others along drainage channels. The landscape is of low to medium tranquillity with a sense of place but with the

presence of detracting features such as overhead line infrastructure, settlements and main road infrastructure. The value of the HLCZ WSH6 is assessed as Low.

- 1.3.30. Three other HLCZ are located adjacent to WSH6. Although the Scheme is not located within any of these zones, they lie within the north, north-east of the 10km radius study area. Their key characteristics are summarised below.

Landscape East: Agreed Landscape Character for the East of England showing 31 Landscape Character Types (LCTs)

- 1.3.31. Landscape East, which was formally known as the East of England Landscape Forum, published an Agreed Landscape Character for the East of England region in January 2009⁴. It states that “*Landscape East brings together landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, historic environment and spatial planning interests together under a single banner to steer the development of the East of England Landscape Framework and to identify and disseminate good practice in all aspects of landscape protection, management and planning*”. It is understood that the information published is in addition to information published at county, district and borough level by the relevant planning authorities.
- 1.3.32. Character assessments published more recently by relevant planning authorities will take precedence, hence the Landscape East LCTs will not, therefore, be assessed in the LVIA. Information on the Landscape East landscape character types have been included into this landscape baseline for completeness. Mapping of the relevant landscape character areas located within the study area can be obtained online⁵.
- 1.3.33. Cambridgeshire, which the southern extremity of all three study areas straddle, is covered by the Landscape East landscape character assessment. The study areas cover sections of three of the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) in the north part of Cambridgeshire. These include Planned Silt Fen, Planned Peat Fen and Settled Marsh.

⁴ Landscape East: Agreed Landscape Character for the East of England. Available at: <http://landscape-east.org.uk/> [Accessed 21/11/2025]

⁵ Landscape East: Agreed Landscape Character for the East of England. Available at: <http://landscape-east.org.uk/map.html> [Accessed 21/11/2025]

Planned Silt Fen

- 1.3.34. Located in the south and south-western parts of the study areas is a landscape type characterised as Planned Silt Fen. It occurs in the central seaward part of the Fens, in northern Cambridgeshire, west Norfolk and south Lincolnshire.
- 1.3.35. Typical of the fens it is an engineered, large-scale open landscape which is distinctively flat and uncomplicated in its patterns. Arable land use occurs in large, regular fields and vertical structures appear prominent.

Planned Peat Fen

- 1.3.36. The Planned Peat Fen area is located on the south-western side of the study areas.
- 1.3.37. The LCT can be defined as a flat, Low lying and sparsely populated landscape characterised by dark peaty soils, a grid like pattern of large arable fields bounded by drainage ditches and wide views to distant, often dramatic skies.

Settled Marsh

- 1.3.38. The Settled Marsh area is situated in the eastern part of the study areas. This LCT occurs in central seaward part of the Fens, in northern Cambridgeshire, west Norfolk and south Lincolnshire.
- 1.3.39. It is a distinctively flat and intensively farmed open arable landscape, with a densely settled character of towns and villages expressing periods of past wealth in stone buildings and churches. Tree cover is restricted to small shelterbelts and orchards.

District

South Holland District Council Landscape Character Types (LCT)

- 1.3.40. The SHDC Strategic Landscape Capacity Study⁶, produced in 2003, also provides a characterisation of the landscape within the study area based on distinctions within NCA 46 – The Fens. The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) published by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) in 2011 will take precedence, hence the South Holland LCTs will not, therefore, be assessed in the LVIA. The HLC is a more recent method for examining the development of the modern landscape. The Lincolnshire HLC was a joint endeavour between Historic

⁶ SHDC (2003) Strategic Landscape Capacity Study for South Holland District Council. Available at: https://southeastlincslocalplan.org/media/24158/Strategic-Landscape-Capacity-Study-for-South-Holland-District-Council/pdf/Strategic_Landscape_Capacity_Study_for_South_Holland_District_Council.pdf?m=1703961388580 [Accessed 21/11/2025]

England, relevant District and Borough Councils including Boston Borough Council, South Kesteven District Council, South Holland District Council and other stakeholders. While the HLC does not supersede character assessments at district or borough levels, it provides a more up to date and detailed landscape character assessment.

- 1.3.41. Two Landscape Character Types (LCTs) are present within the 5km and 10km study areas. They are described further below.
- 1.3.42. The LCTs covered by the study area are shown in **ES Figure 12-6** (Doc Ref. 6.2) for information.

The Settled Fens LCT

- 1.3.43. The majority of the Grid Connection Route is located within the Settled Fens LCT, which encompasses the majority of the district, and the central and north areas of the 10km study area, extending east toward the coast. Key characteristics include the following:
 - *“Predominantly flat topography, dissected by main roads, rivers and drainage channels;*
 - *Nucleated settlement with associated mature trees;*
 - *Locally strong hedgerow elements;*
 - *Church spires and towers often rise above the mature vegetation; and*
 - *Visual detractors include overhead lines, substations and urban fringe visual clutter”.*

The Peaty Fens LCT

- 1.3.44. The Peaty Fens encompass the Solar Development Areas, Underground and Overhead Inter-Array Connections, and the southern section of the Grid Connection Route. This LCT extends into the north-west of the study area around the outskirts of Spalding and towards the A52. Key characteristics include the following:
 - *“Flat topography dissected by long straight roads, rivers, drainage channels and drainage ditches;*
 - *Large scale, extensive views and largely uninterrupted skyline, providing a sense of openness/exposure; and*
 - *Strong linear pattern, defined by geometric arable fields bounded by drainage channels”.*

South Kesteven District Council Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.3.45. The south-western extremities of the 10km radius Grid Connection Route study area cover the south-eastern edge of the District of South Kesteven. The South Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment⁷, produced in 2007, splits the district into seven separate landscape character areas (LCA), of which the study area falls within 'The Fens' character area.
- 1.3.46. The HLC assessment published by Lincolnshire County Council in 2011 will take precedence as stated above, hence the South Kesteven District Council LCAs will not, therefore, be assessed in the LVIA.
- 1.3.47. The LCAs covered by the study area are shown in **ES Figure 12-6** (Doc Ref. 6.2) for information.

The Fens LCA

- 1.3.48. Key characteristics of The Fens LCA include:
- *“Low flat terrain, level horizons and large skies;*
 - *Large-scale open rectangular fields, divided by drainage ditches and embanked rivers;*
 - *Sparse trees and woodland cover; and*
 - *Little settlement apart from individual farmsteads”.*

Boston Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.3.49. Prepared on behalf of Boston Borough Council by ECUS, the Landscape Character Assessment of Boston Borough was published in July 2009⁸. Character assessments published by Lincolnshire County Council in 2011 will take precedence as stated above, hence the Boston Borough Council landscape character areas will not, therefore, be assessed in the LVIA.

7 South Kesteven District Council (2007) South Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/Landscape%20Character%20Assessment%202007.pdf> [Accessed 21/11/2025]

8 ECUS (2009) Landscape Character Assessment of Boston Borough. Available at: https://southeastlincslocalplan.org/media/24154/Landscape-Character-Assessment-of-Boston-Borough/pdf/Landscape_Character_Assessment_of_Boston_Borough.pdf?m=1703961387673#:~:text=The%20key%20landscape%20characteristics%20found,with%20shelter%20belts%20around%20farmsteads. [Accessed 21/11/2025]

- 1.3.50. The LCAs covered by the study area are shown in **ES Figure 12-6** (Doc Ref. 6.2) for information.
- 1.3.51. The northernmost part of the 10km Grid Connection Route study area intersects with the southern part of the Boston District and four of its landscape character areas (LCAs). A summary of key characteristics for each LCA is included below.

Bicker to Wyberton Settled Fen (B1)

1.3.52. Key characteristics:

- *“A largely flat landform slightly elevated above the adjacent drained fenland;*
- *Open views with big skies;*
- *Views towards landmark water towers, and church towers and spires set amongst mature trees in historic villages;*
- *An intact working rural landscape;*
- *Settlement pattern of widely spread villages, often medieval in origin, with farmsteads and dwellings scattered in between; and*
- *Scattered agricultural buildings, horticultural glasshouses, packing sheds, poultry sheds, food processing plants and distribution centres which are a mix of styles and ages”.*

Frampton to Fosdyke Settled Fen (B2)

1.3.53. Key characteristics:

- *“A largely flat farmed landscape with a patchwork of predominantly arable fields with some pasture;*
- *Open views with big skies;*
- *Views to landmark church towers and spires set amongst mature trees in historic villages;*
- *Tree cover is generally sparse with occasional hedgerows and trees and infrequent blocks of mixed woodland;*
- *Some areas under Environmental Stewardship Schemes have more rangy hedgerows with hedgerow trees; and*
- *A small-scale landscape pattern of winding narrow roads enclosing small irregularly shaped fields bounded by dykes and ditches”.*

Welland to Haven Reclaimed Saltmarsh (C1)

1.3.54. Key characteristics:

- *“A fairly remote man-made, flat landscape of reclaimed saltmarsh which is surrounded and enclosed by sea banks of varying ages;*
- *Views to big skies within the area are contained at ground level by grassed and hedged sea banks;*
- *Longer views from the tops of the sea banks extend towards The Wash and the Norfolk coast;*
- *A predominantly geometric pattern of Medium to large-scale fields bordered by open ditches and dykes;*
- *Tree and hedgerow cover is mostly confined to the inland relict sea bank and also shelter belts around farmsteads and dwellings; and*
- *Limited access via a very small number of minor roads and farm tracks”.*

Welland to Haven Wash Saltmarsh (D1)

1.3.55. Key characteristics:

- *“An extensive area of open saltmarsh and intertidal winding mud and sand flats, and mud creeks;*
- *Tidal areas which regularly change from landscape to seascape with the tides. Occasional flooding by the sea in other areas;*
- *A largely inaccessible, remote and wild landscape;*
- *Views with big skies and wide horizons across The Wash to Norfolk are influenced by the changing tides, light and weather conditions; and*
- *Built structures are virtually absent and there are no roads, and only one track”.*

Peterborough Landscape Character Assessment (2024)

1.3.56. The southern sections of the 5km and the 10km radius study areas include the jurisdiction of the City of Peterborough in Cambridgeshire.

- 1.3.57. The 2024 Peterborough Landscape Character Assessment⁹ identifies Landscape Character Types (LCTs), which are subdivided into Landscape Character Areas (LCAs).
- 1.3.58. The LCTs and LCAs covered by the study area and included in the LVIA are shown in **ES Figure 12-6** (Doc Ref. 6.2).
- 1.3.59. The following two LCTs and LCAs are located within the southern sections of the 5km radius study area of the Solar Development Areas, Underground and Overhead Inter-Array Connections, and the 10km radius study area of the Grid Connection Route:
- Peterborough Fens (LCT) – 3a Bedford North Level (LCA); and
 - Fen Fringe (LCT) – 4b Eye Fen Fringe (LCA).

Peterborough Fens (LCT) - 3a: Bedford North Level (LCA)

1.3.60. LCT Key characteristics:

- *“Flat, extensive and open landscape with panoramic views and large skies.*
- *Rectilinear field pattern reflecting the artificial drainage pattern.*
- *Predominantly arable farmland.*
- *Isolated farmsteads of Victorian to modern origin.*
- *Sparse tree cover, generally limited to shelter belts/copses around farmsteads and avenues along drove roads.*
- *Road pattern typically straight and raised above the surrounding peat fen.*
- *Scattered active and former mineral extraction sites.*
- *Settlements on the drained fen mainly of recent origin”.*

1.3.61. LCA Key characteristics:

- *“Flat landscape, at or just above sea level;*
- *Intensively farmed arable land with fields arranged in a rectilinear pattern, subdivided by straight drainage ditches;*

⁹ Peterborough City Council (2024). Peterborough Landscape Character Assessment: Final Report September 2024.

- *Limited settlement and isolated farmsteads often surrounded by trees and shelterbelts;*
- *Shelterbelts and copses often form the skyline in long-distance views across the fen;*
- *Straight roads and droves bordered by drainage ditches elevated above the surrounding landscape with sharp right angle turns; and*
- *A vast, open landscape with panoramic views and large skies”.*

1.3.62. LCA Key sensitivities:

- *“Strong sense of rurality, remoteness, and tranquillity.*
- *Open and exposed character with large skies.*
- *Hierarchy of watercourse and drainage channels.*
- *Dominance of arable land use with sparse tree cover.*
- *Narrow, rural lanes linking settlements and scattered farmsteads.*
- *Working agricultural character”.*

Landscape Value:

1.3.63. The section covered by all study areas contains lands north and north-east of Peterborough City within the fenlands. It contains an expansive, flat, rural landscape with open and long-distance views. It contains clusters of trees, bands or individual stands of trees, which are mainly located along main roads, drainage channels or between field boundaries. Dwellings and farmsteads are sparse and scattered. Thorney Golf Centre provides a change in landscape character due to tree belts and clusters throughout the golf course. Views are across a rural fenland landscape. Field patterns are generally small to medium scale and are defined by distinctive drainage systems. Large skies contribute to a medium landscape tranquillity and remoteness. There are few detracting features which include mainly overhead line infrastructure and wind turbines in the distance. There is a strong sense of place with a considerable scenic quality. The PRoW network is sparse and concentrates along the River Welland. The value of Peterborough Fens (LCT) - 3a: Bedford North Level (LCA) is assessed as Medium.

Fen Fringe (LCT) - 4b: Eye Fen Edge (LCA)

1.3.64. LCT Key characteristics:

- *“Gently undulating landform, slightly higher than the adjacent fen at up to approximately 10m AOD.*

- *Evidence of former clay extraction, with former clay pits now used for landfill or reinstated to provide nature conservation value.*
- *Car Dyke and other drainage ditches.*
- *Isolated farmsteads and residential properties”.*

1.3.65. LCA Key characteristics:

- *“Gently undulating but Low-lying landform.*
- *Arable farmland area transitioning into surrounding fenland.*
- *Limited woodland cover.*
- *Ecological habitats including LNR, SSSI and County Wildlife Sites.*
- *Large Local Geological Site”.*

1.3.66. LCA Key sensitivities:

- *“Recreational value of the local PRow and permissive path network in the nature reserve.*
- *Ecologically important habitats.*
- *Cultural associations including Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Eye Conservation Area.*
- *Some long, uninterrupted views across the wider landscape.*
- *Working agricultural character.*
- *Narrow, rural lanes linking settlements and scattered farmsteads”.*

Landscape Value:

1.3.67. The section covered by the study area is small and narrow. It contains an expansive, flat, rural landscape with open and long-distance views. Significant vertical vegetation and dwellings are sparse and focus in form of a tree belt along the Cat's Water, a minor stream meandering along the eastern boundary of this LCA. Views are across a rural fenland landscape. Field patterns are generally small to medium scale and are defined by distinctive drainage systems. Large skies contribute to a medium landscape tranquillity and remoteness. There are few detracting features which include mainly overhead line infrastructure and wind turbines in the distance. There is a strong sense of place with a considerable scenic quality. The PRow network is sparse. The value of Fen Fringe (LCT) - 4b: Eye Fen Edge (LCA) is assessed as Medium.

Emerging Fenland Local Plan

- 1.3.68. The Fenland Local Plan 2021-2040, Draft Local Plan Consultation (August 2022)¹⁰ is a proposed new Local Plan for the Fenland District in Cambridgeshire, and includes information on landscape character areas. While still a draft it will replace the Fenland Local Plan (May 2014)¹¹, which does not include specific information on landscape character areas.
- 1.3.69. The Draft Local Plan 2021-2040 identifies five Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The southern tip of the 10km radius study area of the Grid Connection Route and the southeastern section of the 5km radius study area of the Solar Development Area – Land Parcel D covers a small area of the following landscape character area as indicated in Appendix 4 of the Fenland Local Plan 2021-2040, Draft Local Plan Consultation (August 2022).
- 1.3.70. The LCAs covered by the study area and included in the LVIA are shown in **ES Figure 12-6** (Doc Ref. 6.2).

The Fens

- 1.3.71. Key characteristics include:
- *“This area is located in the central area forms the majority of the district.*
 - *Largely unsettled, arable landscape with isolated villages and scattered individual properties*
 - *Characterised by large scale, flat and open landscape with extensive views and large skies.*
 - *With very few hedgerows in the landscape and long straight roads elevated above the surrounding fields.*
 - *Very few hedgerows in the landscape and long straight roads elevated above the surrounding fields”.*

Landscape Value:

- 1.3.72. The section covered by the study areas are small and contain lands west of Tydd St Giles and in the vicinity of Parson Drove within the fenlands. It contains a flat, rural landscape with open views. It contains clusters of trees, bands or individual

¹⁰ Fenland Local Plan 2021-2040: Draft Local Plan Consultation August 2022. Available at: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/draftlocalplan> [Accessed 21/11/2025]

¹¹ Fenland Local Plan (May 2014). Available at: https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/12064/Fenland-Local-Plan-Adopted-2014/pdf/Fenland_Local_Plan-Adopted_2014.pdf?m=1591111057500 [Accessed 21/11/2025]

stands of trees. Intervening vegetation curtails often long-distance views. Dwellings and farmsteads are sparse and scattered. Field patterns are generally medium scale and are defined by distinctive drainage systems. Large skies contribute to a medium landscape tranquillity and remoteness. Detracting features which include mainly overhead line infrastructure, settlements, and wind turbines in the distance. There is a good sense of place. There is a scattered PRow network throughout the area. The value of The Fens is assessed as Low-Medium.

Designations relevant to Landscape Value

- 1.3.73. Designations which relate or contribute to landscape value in the study area are shown on **ES Figures 12-3 to 12-6** (Doc Ref. 6.2). Reference should also be made to **ES Chapter 8: Cultural Heritage** (Doc Ref. 6.1) and **ES Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity** (Doc Ref. 6.1) for further details of the heritage and biodiversity designations.

International and National Designations

- 1.3.74. Neither the study area nor the Order Limits are covered by any statutory landscape designations (e.g. National Parks or National Landscapes, formerly Areas Outstanding Natural Beauty); or any international designations that may inform landscape value, such as World Heritage Sites.
- 1.3.75. The western boundary (Mouth of River Great Ouse) of the Norfolk Coast National Landscape lies around 24 km to the north-east of the eastern extent of the Order Limits (Solar Development Area – Land Parcel D) at the closest point. No visibility of the Scheme is expected from the National Landscape due to distance and intervening landform.
- 1.3.76. The southern boundary (area close to East Keal) of the Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape lies around 39 km to the north, north-west from the northern tip of the Order Limits at the closest point. No visibility of the Scheme is expected from the National Landscape due to distance and intervening landform.

Other Designations influencing Landscape Value: Heritage

- 1.3.77. There are a number of Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas located within the study area. Whilst not specific landscape designations, they may reflect landscape and architectural quality and can be relevant to development proposals that may impact upon them. The presence of such features can inform landscape and visual value and hence sensitivity. Further details are provided in **ES Chapter 8: Cultural Heritage** (Doc Ref. 6.1).

1.3.78. A number of Conservation Areas are located close to the Scheme including the following:

- Moulton Conservation Area, located approximately 1.9km to the east of the northern section of the Grid Connection Route;
- Crowland Conservation Area, located approximately 1.8km to the south of Solar Development Parcel A;
- Spalding Conservation Area, located approximately 2.1km to the west of the centre section of the Grid Connection Route; and
- Pinchbeck Conservation Area, located approximately 2.5km to the west of the northern section of the Grid Connection Route.

1.3.79. Summaries of the baseline conditions and supporting assessments are provided in Sections 8.6 and 8.9 of **ES Chapter 8: Cultural Heritage** (Doc Ref. 6.1).

Other Designations influencing Landscape Value: Nature and Biodiversity

1.3.80. National and local designations provide protection to areas of biodiversity value, which may inform landscape condition, quality and value. Further details are provided in **ES Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity** (Doc Ref. 6.1).

1.3.81. In summary, the Wash Ramsar/ Special Protection Area (SPA)/ Special Area of Conservation (SAC)/ Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the closest designated site of international importance, located 8.4km north-east of the Grid Connection Route. In addition, there are also the Baston Fen SAC / SSSI 10km west of Land Parcel A and Nene Washes Ramsar / SPA/ SAC/ SSSI is located 11km south of Land Parcel D. The Cowbit Wash SSSI is located approximately 4km west and the Surfleet Lows SSSI approximately 3.5km north-west of the Grid Connection Route. There are also a number of non-statutory designated sites (local wildlife sites) within 2km of the Order Limits.

1.3.82. The Solar Development Area contains four non-statutory nature conservation designations: Slys Connection Local Wildlife Site (LWS) which runs through the Site across Sub-parcels D-2 and D-3; South Holland Main Drain, West LWS located within Sub-parcel B-5; Lambert Drain to Highstock Drain Connection LWS crosses the Order Limits at Langary Gate Road to the south of Parcel D; and Wheatmere Drain LWS crosses the Order Limits within the Grid Connection Route . The nearest outwith the Site is Crowland Falls Pit LWS approximately 40m south of Land Parcel A.

Features of the Study Area

Geology and Soils

- 1.3.83. The study area (with radii of 5km and 10km) is dominated by flat, low-lying land formed primarily from post-glacial marine and estuarine deposits, notably marine alluvium, silts, clays, and extensive peat layers. The underlying geology consists mainly of Upper Jurassic clays (such as Oxford, Ampthill, and Kimmeridge clays) beneath these superficial sediments, reflecting a long history of marine transgression and sedimentation. The landscape is largely shaped by these thick sequences of soft sediments deposited during repeated cycles of sea-level change over the last 10,000 years.
- 1.3.84. Soils in this region include decay and peat-rich organic soils, especially in areas where the fen peat remains at surface level, and calcareous, clayey silts derived from marine alluvium deposits. The peat soils are typically black and rich in organic matter, supporting fenland vegetation, but they can be seasonally waterlogged and vulnerable to shrinkage if drained. The silty soils closer to the coast and characteristic of the soils within the Order Limits are lighter in colour and have formed from silt deposited by marine and tidal influences. The combination of peat, clays, and silts results in soils that are often poorly drained and require extensive artificial drainage to maintain agricultural use. Extensive rectilinear drainage channels and pumps manage the high water table in this reclaimed agricultural landscape.

Topography and Hydrography

- 1.3.85. The topography within the study area is predominantly flat and low lying, which is a key characteristic of The Fens, ranging from 0m to 10m AOD across the full extent of the 5km and 10km study areas. The embankment associated with the River Welland, on the eastern side of the 5km study area, provides an elevated view of the landscape surrounding the Site from the PRow Crow 7/1 and National Cycle Network (NCN) Sustrans 12. This elevated river embankment continues north beyond the 5km study areas. Across the Solar Development Areas and Inter-Array Connections, there is little fluctuation in topography, adding to the long, open views within the 5km radius study areas.
- 1.3.86. Low-lying topography is also typical within the 10km study area for the Grid Connection Route, with similar elevated views found along river embankments, including the River Welland embankment at Fosdyke, the River Glen embankment north of Baston to the south-west and the embankment of the South Holland Main Drain at Tydd St Mary, to the east. The highest areas are

located just outside of the 10km study area in the south-west along the northern edge of Peterborough, between the A15, A16 and A47, to the west of Eye.

- 1.3.87. A network of large linear drainage ditches and dykes along field boundaries and close to rural roads and PRow are a distinct feature within the study area. The main hydrological feature within the study area is the River Welland, which is present from the south-west to the north-east of the 10km study area, travelling in a straightened corridor.
- 1.3.88. Additional information on the hydrology network can be found in **ES Chapter 11: Hydrology and Flood Risk** (Doc Ref. 6.1).

Land Use and Settlements

- 1.3.89. The land use within the study area is predominantly arable farmland, enclosed by dykes and drains. It is a landscape populated with intensely farmed medium and large-scale arable fields.
- 1.3.90. The largest settlement within the 10km study area is Spalding. Peterborough, the largest nearby city, is located outside the 10km study area to the south / south-west.
- 1.3.91. There are several small villages, hamlets and farmstead scattered throughout the 5km and 10km study areas. The villages of Shepeau Stow, Whaplode Drove, Holbeach Drove and Gedney Hill, all located to the south-east within the 5km study area, contain several Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments such as windmills and churches. The settlements are linear developments either on or leading away from the B1166.
- 1.3.92. The settlement of Sutton St. Edmund, Sutton St James are located in the eastern / north-eastern section of the 5km study area. Cowbit, Moulton Chapel and Weston Hills are to the north-west within the 5km study area. These settlements also contain Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments such as mills, churches and farmhouses. Crowland is located to the south-west within the 5km radius study area. The belfry of Crowland Abbey is a recognisable focus point in the surrounding area. The village of Deeping St. Nicholas is located in west of the 5km study area.
- 1.3.93. Spalding and Moulton, located in the north within the 10km study area, contain Conservation Areas and listed buildings. Within the 10km study area of the Grid Connection Route, residential settlements such as Cowbit, Moulton Chapel, Weston Hills, Low Fulney, Moulton and Weston are located on the east or west of the proposed route. A number of settlements are located further to the north-east, north and north-west within the 10km study area including Whaplode, the

town of Holbeach, Holbeach Bank, Fosdyke, Sutterton, Gosberton, Quadring, Surfleet, and Pinchbeck.

- 1.3.94. Dispersed industrial units, infrastructure and man-made elements become more frequent in the northern section of the 10km study area, including overhead line pylons, telecommunication masts, and additional main roads including the A17.

Vegetation Cover

- 1.3.95. Vegetation within the study area is sparse, large rectilinear fields with limited boundary vegetation allowing open views across an arable landscape and adding emphasis to the long, open views of The Fens. However, occasional woodland blocks and linear scattered tree and shrub planting interrupt some of these open views. Sporadic remnant hedgerows are present in a few locations indicating former field boundary features, near Whaplode Drove. The limited extant vegetation is largely associated with the A16 road corridor, residential settlements and surrounding isolated properties, as well as along the dismantled railway corridor between Queen's Bank and French Drove.
- 1.3.96. South of Langary Gate Road, to the south-east of the Site, small woodland blocks and mature boundary planting are also present, with woodland belts associated with Gedney Hill Golf Course.
- 1.3.97. Most of the vegetation present is deciduous, with some lines of poplars which are a notable feature within the open views, as evident around the settlement of Whaplode Drove.

Movement and Connectivity

- 1.3.98. The A16 is the main road present within the study area, extending from the south-west to the north-east of the 10km study area. The A151 extends from the A16, heading east towards Holbeach and the A17. The B1166 is located to the south of the study area and extends from the A16 east towards Gedney Hill before it changes direction.
- 1.3.99. A large network of local rural roads connects small villages and hamlets throughout the study area. A number of these are single track lanes, generally located in more isolated areas where properties are limited.
- 1.3.100. Other infrastructure includes the railway line linking Spalding to the East Coast Main Line, which passes Deeping St Nicholas on the western fringe of the 5km study area, with a station located in the centre of Spalding.

Tranquillity

- 1.3.101. The majority of the study area is classed as Countryside (South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036)¹². The limited settlements, quiet minor roads and limited pedestrian presence create a sense of tranquillity across the Site and 5km study area. This is most evident within the eastern half of the 5km and 10km study areas, between Gedney Hill, Whaplode Drove and Whaplode St. Catherine. Further west, toward the A16, road noise, vehicle presence and larger settlements diminish the sense of tranquillity.
- 1.3.102. Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) tranquillity mapping depicts the range of tranquillity across England. The Solar Development Areas fall within the area mapped as most tranquil, with areas around the settlements, main transport routes and existing infrastructure mapped as least tranquil.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

- 1.3.103. There are numerous PRoW within the 5km and 10km study areas. There are limited PRoW to the centre of the Site, surrounding the Solar Development Areas, Underground and Overhead Inter-Array Areas. Where they are present, they generally follow field boundaries or the route of a main drain. The majority of PRoW are located around the River Welland in the western section of the 5km and 10km study areas, between the river and the A16, as well as within and surrounding Spalding.
- 1.3.104. PRoW and recreational routes are mapped on **ES Figure 12-3** (Doc Ref. 6.2).

¹² South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036. Available at: <https://southeastlincslocalplan.org/media/21941/South-East-Lincolnshire-Local-Plan-2011-2036/pdf/Local-Plan-text-March-2019.pdf?m=1720710748483> [Accessed 21/11/2025]

