

Green Hill Solar Farm

EN010170

Written Summary of the Applicants Oral Submissions at Issue Specific Hearing 5

Prepared by: Pinsent Masons LLP

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The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Rules 8(1)(c)



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Issue Sheet

Report Prepared for: Green Hill Solar Farm

Examination Deadline 6

Written Summary of the Applicants Oral Submissions at Issue Specific
Hearing 5

Prepared by

Pinsent Masons LLP



1 Summary of Oral Submissions at Issue Specific Hearing 5

Agenda Item	Comment
1. Welcome, introductions, arrangements for the Hearing	The ExA introduced the hearing and made some preliminary remarks.
2. Purpose of Issue Specific Hearing 5	<p>Purpose of the hearing is to address matters raised by the ExA following its consideration of the Development Consent Order.</p> <p>The following parties introduced themselves during ISH5:</p> <p>The Applicant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claire Brodrick, Partner at Pinsent Masons LLP (solicitors for the Applicant) • Alison Dablin, Associate at Pinsent Masons LLP • Charlotte Astrella, Associate EIA Consultant at Lanpro • Lesley Giles, Project Development Manager at Island Green Power • Jane Crichton, Technical Director at Lanpro • Chris Jackson, Director of Landscape Architecture, Lanpro • Alexandra Clacy, Environmental Engineer, Arthian (virtual) • Malcolm Spaven, Aviation Consultant, Aviatica (virtual) • Chris Poole, Senior Ecologist, Clarkson and Woods • Mike Hockey, Principal Ecologist and Ornithology Lead, Clarkson and Woods • Ryan Gledhill, Director of Arboriculture, Lanpro • Stuart Morse, Director, KMC • Stephen Flynn, Senior Planner, Lanpro (virtual) • Alice James, Technical Director (Historic Environment) (virtual) <p>Milton Keynes City Council (“MKCC”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elizabeth Verdegem, Team Leader, Development Management <p>North Northamptonshire Council (“NNC”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gary Grant, Barrister at Kings Chambers • Ryan Mills, Chartered Landscape Architect (also representing West Northamptonshire Council) • Sven Rufus, Planning Ecologist <p>West Northamptonshire Council (“WNC”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicky Scaife, Major Projects Team Lead <p>Other Stat/Non-stat body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philip Anthony, Stop Green Hill Solar • Shena Howell, Stop Green Hill Solar • Dr Linda Twohey, Stop Green Hill Solar • Kay Brown, Stop Green Hill Solar



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carly Tinkler, Chartered Landscape Architect, Stop Green Hill Solar <p>Dr Marie Midgley, Stop Green Hill Solar</p>
<p>3.1 Matters for Discussion Introduction to agenda item 3</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>3.2 Effects for Landscape (including Design and Glint and Glare)</p> <p>Documents that may be referred to during the discussion of this item: [APP-045], [APP-052], [APP-078], [APP-079], [APP-082], [REP1-039] to [REP1-042] (inclusive), [REP3-042] to [REP3-054] (inclusive), [REP3-062], and [REP4-044].</p> <p>The ExA will ask the applicant to provide an update with regard to landscape, design and glint and glare matters since ISH2, including:</p> <p>a) Progress on the matters under discussion detailed in the draft Statements of Common Ground and any remaining areas of disagreement.</p> <p>The ExA will invite interested parties (IPs) to comment on the applicant's position in respect of landscape, design and glint and glare matters, including but not limited to the remaining disagreements over the LVIA methodology between Stop Green Hill Solar and the applicant.</p> <p>The ExA will then ask any questions it may have in respect to the oral and written cases made by the applicant and other IPs.</p>	<p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, provided a summary of the Applicant's second Change Request. Ms Brodrick explained the second Change Request was submitted on 17 February 2026. The Change Request was supported by the Change Application and Supporting Environmental Information Report [CR2-024].</p> <p>The Change Request comprises four changes and are refinements to the Scheme layout and design only. The Change Request does not involve any increase or extension of the Order limits and does not require any additional compulsory acquisition powers in respect of new or existing plots of land or interests.</p> <p>SECOND CHANGE REQUEST</p> <p>Ms Brodrick continued to explain the four changes set out in the second Change Request:</p> <p>Change 1: Optionality to allow for a 400 kV Substation at Green Hill G.</p> <p>Change One comprises the provision of optionality to allow for a 400 kV substation to be located at Green Hill G. A detailed post-submission review of the Scheme's electrical design undertaken by the Applicant has identified the need for flexibility to allow for either a 132 kV or a 400 kV substation in this location.</p> <p>Change 2: Provision of tree planting for Green Hill G.</p> <p>Following ongoing discussions with the Landscape Officer at Milton Keynes City Council, it has been agreed that woodland planting will be implemented to enhance screening between fields GF12 and GF13 where the Three Shires Way intersects Green Hill G off the A428. The additional woodland planting in this area will be implemented under both design options (A and B) for Green Hill G. Ms Brodrick reiterated that Option A is the 132 kV substation and Option B is the 400 kV substation, and that this area of planting would apply in either scenario.</p> <p>Additional woodland planting will also be provided to the south of field GF3. This woodland planting would be implemented under 'Option B' only. This planting will provide screening for the 400 kV substation, and will also assist in providing habitat connectivity to the ancient woodland, Barslay Spinney, located to the west of the Green Hill G.</p> <p>Change 3: Optionality to allow for up to 400 kV cabling between Green Hill BESS and Green Hill G; and optionality to allow for up to 132 kV cabling between Green Hill F and Green Hill G.</p> <p>This Change came as a consequence of Change 1 which was the option to have a 400 kV substation at Green Hill G, and the higher voltage connection at Green Hill G required. This change would be implemented under 'Option B' for Green Hill G only. The Environmental Statement assessed the maximum design scenario as set out in Table 4.1 of Chapter 4: Scheme Description [REP1-031]. The changes presented will sit within the maximum parameters already assessed within the ES.</p> <p>If Option B is progressed, the 132 kV substation on Green Hill F may be connected to the 400 kV substation on Green Hill G. To accommodate this, the cable connection between Green Hill F and Green Hill G will require elements of cabling to be up to 132 kV. The change is to include a single 132 kV circuit together with three 33 kV circuits within the trench, to enable connection of panels and the substation located within Green Hill F. This will accord with the maximum design parameters already set out in the Concept Design Parameters and Principles [CR2-016].</p> <p>Change 4: Removal of Panels (Work No.1) and reduction of Work No. 1(d) from field AF29 and replacement with biodiversity mitigation and enhancement (Work No 9).</p> <p>This is in relation to a request from the Examining Authority's schedule of changes to the draft Development Consent Order (DCO) [PD-015], asking the Applicant to consider whether panels in field AF29 could be removed. The Applicant has reviewed this recommendation and has accepted the majority of the suggestion as Change Four. As shown on Works Plans [CR2-004], Work No. 1 has been removed from field AF29 and the area of Work No. 1(d), which is the cabling that connects the panels together, has been reduced to the northern section of AF29. It is not possible to remove the cabling in its entirety from field AF29 as cabling is still required to connect panels on the</p>



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	<p>remainder of Green Hill A. The remainder of the land on field AF29 is now proposed for biodiversity mitigation and enhancement under Work Nos 6 and 9. AF29 has been changed to ground nesting bird mitigation, continued arable land.</p> <p>Section 5.5 of the Change Application and Supporting Environmental Information Report [CR2-024] sets out the considerations in more detail. Overall, the Applicant considers that the Proposed Changes to be minor and notes that the Change Request has been accepted.</p> <p>Progress on the matters under discussion detailed in the draft Statements of Common Ground and any remaining areas of disagreement.</p> <p>Chris Jackson, on behalf of the Applicant, provided an update on the matters under discussion regarding the Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) with Local Authorities.</p> <p>Mr Jackson explained that the Applicant continues to discuss the SoCGs at meetings with the Local Authorities. The most recent of these meetings took place in the week commencing 2 March 2026 with NNC and WNC. All Councils are currently reviewing the SoCG, following the Applicant's submissions at Deadline 5.</p> <p>The Applicant has been positively engaging with Landscape Representatives and officers of the host authorities throughout the course of pre-submission, post submission and Examination resulting in the methodology and its implementation being agreed within the Draft SoCGs. This has left only a few remaining matters under discussion WNC and NNC on landscape matters which relate to embedded mitigation, assessment outcomes and cumulative effects, the Applicant spoke with the landscape consultant appointed by NNC and WNC on the 5 March to discuss the matters still under discussion.</p> <p>Mr Jackson explained that a meeting was held with officers from MKCC on 28 January 2026 to progress the SoCG. However, this meeting was deferred as officers were unable to provide comments on the draft SoCG at that time. A subsequent meeting was arranged for 12 February 2026, but this was also deferred and, as at the date of the hearing, no further meeting date had been arranged. However, MKCC provided written comments on the draft SoCG at Deadline 5. By way of further update, Mr Jackson confirmed that the additional viewpoints requested by the Milton Keynes landscape officer have been submitted at Deadline 5 [REP5-094, REP5-095 and CR2-019], together with 'Option B' in relation to Change Request 2 [CR2-020].</p> <p>In relation to glint and glare matters, Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that, since Issue Specific Hearing 2 (ISH2), the Applicant has consulted with WNC and NNC regarding the potential impact of glint and glare on local roads. The Applicant has submitted two further technical reports to address the concerns raised by the Councils, namely the Glint and Glare Technical Note [REP2-054] in relation to West Northamptonshire roads, and the North Northamptonshire Local Highways Glint and Glare assessment [REP4-026]. The Councils have reviewed the respective reports and are content that no significant effects are predicted on local roads. Accordingly, there are no current matters under discussion or remaining areas of disagreement in relation to glint and glare within the SoCG across all Councils.</p> <p>Ryan Mills, on behalf of NNC and WNC, outlined the matters still under discussion with the Applicant, including issues 10.2, 13.2.2, 13.3.2 13.4.2, and 15 within the Statement of Common Ground.</p> <p>Chris Jackson, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the Applicant remains in ongoing dialogue with the relevant Local Authorities and is actively seeking to refine the matters still under discussion, with a view to narrowing those issues which are likely to remain for consideration during the remainder of the Examination.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: The Applicant received comments from Mr Mills on the 24 March 2026 and final versions of the NNC and WNC Statements of Common Ground will be submitted at Deadline 7.</p> <p>In response to a query from the Councils regarding the proposed operational period of the Scheme, Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, advised that the issue of operational length has been discussed at previous Issue Specific Hearings. Ms Brodrick reiterated that the Applicant has assessed the implications of a 60-year operational period and considers that the need for renewable energy over that timeframe is justified. Ms Brodrick explained that there is nothing specific to the location of this Scheme which would warrant a reduced operational period and noted that the Secretary of State has been minded to grant a 60-year period on other schemes, again, when there was no specific reason to impose a shorter timeframe .</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: The Applicant's submissions in relation to the 60-year operational period of the Scheme are set out in Written Summary of the Applicants Oral Submissions and Responses at Issue Specific Hearing 1 and Responses to Action Points [REP1-</p>



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	<p>162] under agenda item 3.2 and comment NNC 7.22 to 7.27 in The Applicant's Responses to Local Impact Reports [REP2-049]</p> <p>The ExA asked about future meetings and how much further engagement is likely to be undertaken. Chris Jackson, on behalf of the Applicant, explained his engagement with Ryan Mills (for both NNC and WNC), including a recent e-mail exchange where they had identified the remaining matters under discussion and they are seeking to refine these down to a more finite level. Mr Jackson and Mr Mills intend to have a follow up meeting within March, if not early April, or as soon as practicable.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: The Applicant received comments from Mr Mills on the 24 March 2026 and final versions of the NNC and WNC Statements of Common Ground will be submitted at Deadline 7.</p> <p>Carly Tinkler, on behalf on Stop Green Hill Solar, raised a number of concerns in relation to adverse effects on the landscape character of the site and concerns surrounding the glint and glare assessment methodology. These concerns will be submitted in writing at Deadline 6, alongside a report from another opposing group's glint and glare expert, if available.</p> <p>Linda Twohey, on behalf on Stop Green Hill Solar, raised a concern regarding glare affecting the upper floors of residential dwellings.</p> <p>In response to Ms Tinkler, Mr Jackson acknowledged the position taken by Ms Tinkler in recognising the position the Applicant has established through written representations and the examination.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, stated that the Applicant has been clear that there are residual impacts as a result of the Scheme, and National Policy Statement EN-3 (2023) is clear in noting that for large scale infrastructure projects of this nature that there will be landscape and visual effects and restated that the Scheme constitutes critical national priority infrastructure and, as seen in paragraph 4.2.15 of the National Policy Statement EN-1 (2023), it is stated that for Critical National Priority (CNP) infrastructure such as the Scheme, the need for the project is considered to outweigh residual visual impacts.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick explained that the policy tests that apply in respect to residual impacts generally, and specifically for LVIA impacts, are considered typical for projects of this nature. In respect to glint and glare, Ms Brodrick explained that the Glint and Glare Technical Note [REP2-054] (in respect of local roads in WNC) and North Northamptonshire Local Highways Glint and Glare [REP4-026] state that modelling is not recommended for local roads but, at the request of the Councils, the modelling was undertaken and the reports set out the results for this.</p> <p>In response to Dr Twohey in relation to the effects on upper floors of residential properties, Alexandra Clacy, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the glint and glare methodology uses downstairs modelling, in accordance with industry guidance, and in absence of UK legislation and standardised methodology. It is the Applicant's view that this is reasonable.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: Predicted total glare from the first floor of dwellings would not be significantly different compared ground floor dwellings. Furthermore, Section 15.3 in ES Chapter 15 Glint and Glare [APP-052] sets out the planning policy relevant to the Scheme and reference 15.17 is <i>Pager Power Solar Photovoltaic and Building Development – Glint and Glare Guidance (Sep 2022)</i> which sets out "Modelling is recommended for ground floor receptors because it is typically the most occupied during daylight hours". Ground floor rooms are typically the most occupied part of residential dwelling during daylight hours and have a greater amenity significance than upper floors. Glare modelling has therefore focused on the location of the main living space within the dwelling.</p> <p>ExA Questions</p> <p>The ExA asked the Applicant if they are aware of the Deadline 5 submission by Stop Green Hill Solar [REP5-120] which references Cleve Hill in Haversham and whether the Applicant had any comments on that example at this stage or any information you can give about how it may compare to Green Hill.</p> <p>Chris Jackson, on behalf of the Applicant, explained the infrastructure difference between the Cleve Hill and the Green Hill Scheme. The Cleve Hill DCO designed and consented a barn roof style solar development, with opposing 4.5m high panels on an east-west axis. this means they are north facing and south facing panels, forming an apex, with power infrastructure on both sides. However, this is not what is proposed for the Green Hill Scheme.</p> <p>Carly Tinkler, on behalf on Stop Green Hill Solar, expressed concerns over the effects of changes made post-consent at the Cleve Hill site.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the Applicant cannot comment on issues relating to another project. The</p>



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	<p>Applicant's position is that the mitigation measures that are set out in the Outline Management Plans are appropriate and suitably secured to minimise and prevent such effects from happening. The plans were developed in conjunction with stakeholders, and the Local Authorities have had opportunity to comment on these plans, and therefore the approach is sufficient to prevent the sorts of concerns raised by Ms Tinkler.</p> <p>In response to a question from Phillip Anthony, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, as to whether the construction plans for the Scheme have been finalised, Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the Scheme has been designed to retain flexibility to install either fixed or tracker panels. Ms Brodrick further clarified that the earlier point made by Mr Jackson in relation to comparisons with the Cleve Hill scheme was intended only to explain that the Green Hill Scheme would not permit the specific design deployed at Cleve Hill. The panel technology proposed for Green Hill is limited to fixed and single access tracker panels only.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, responded to a concern raised by Dr Marie Midgley, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, as to whether the size and format of the panels will obscure all the land underneath the panels. Ms Brodrick explained the Concept Design Parameters and Principles [EX6/GH7.17_C] sets out the type of panels and distances between them. Ms Brodrick clarified there will be gaps between the rows and reiterated that the configuration at Cleve Hill is not permitted under this Scheme.</p> <p>Chris Jackson, on behalf of the Applicant, clarified the types of panels are fixed or tracker panels, and that the Applicant is applying for the maximum height parameter of 4.5 metres, which is in relation to the Single access tracker panels. These would be installed in north-south rows, and track east to west. Between these tracker panels will be open space for maintenance to allow for either mechanical mowing or grazing to take place to maintain the grass between the panels. The Concept Design Parameters and Principles [CR2-016] set out that the separation distance between panel rows is minimum 2.5 metres and maximum 15 metres, to allow for the difference in the fixed or tracker panels. The fixed panels can have a much smaller gap, as the fixed panels would typically be 3.5 metres high. These would be fixed and orientated in east-west rows, which is typical for solar farms of a similar scale, within the local county. The assessment has considered a height of up to 4.5 metres of solar panel infrastructure. This allows for grazing but also space for panels to track and rotate, whereas fixed panels can sit closer together.</p> <p>ES Appendix 4.1 Engineering Drawings and Sections [APP-076] was shared, however, please also refer to ES Chapter 4: Scheme Description [EX6/GH6.2.9_B] which contains image examples. Mr Jackson explained that the tracker axis, which sits on a central point, will be approximately 2.4 metres in height. The panels rotate around this central axis, moving from a horizontal position to a maximum angle of 55 degrees. At this maximum angle, the overall height of the panels will be approximately 4.5 metres. The panels will commence the day at their highest position in order to capture the morning sun, before tracking and rotating towards a flatter position during the course of a typical sunny day. The panels will continue to track the movement of the sun and will revert to a horizontal position during the nighttime period. Mr Jackson further confirmed that the panels will also track automatically to account for storm events.</p> <p>In response to a query from Gary Grant, on behalf of NNC regarding the visual effects of the Scheme, Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, responded that the Applicant does not consider that this is a justification for not granting a 60-year operational period.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick noted the ExA's request, made in the Examining Authority's Written Questions 3 [PD-017] for an additional photomontage at viewpoint 51, and confirmed that this has been prepared and will be submitted for Deadline 6 [EX6/GH8.2.19].</p> <p>Sheena Howell, on behalf on Stop Green Hill Solar, asked for clarification on the effects of cabling in relation to the two substation design options.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, responded, referencing the Grid Connection Statement [CR2-014] (tracked version: [CR2-015]) and the updates to paragraph 3.2.12, which states the electricity generated at Green Hill F will be collected by the substation on site and be exported either to the Green Hill BESS or Green Hill G substation, and the length will vary slightly depending on which option is used.</p> <p>Sheena Howell queried whether the electricity generated could join the grid at the Wellingborough substation. Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed that the Applicant has been granted a grid connection offer for the Scheme to connect to the Grendon substation.</p>
<p>3.3 Effects for Ecology and Biodiversity</p> <p>Documents that may be referred to during the discussion of this item: [CR2-012], [REP1-033], [REP4-008] and [REP4-010].</p>	<p>The ExA invited the Applicant to address the effects of the Scheme on designated sites and protected species.</p> <p>Mike Hockey, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) [REP1-153] has been updated in response to the Report on the Implications for European Sites (RIES) [PD-014]. These changes scope in the assessment of disturbance to bird species outside the SPA. Mr Hockey explained that mitigation measures are proposed which include pre-construction inspections of newly accessed fields during the winter months. Where significant flocks of golden plover or lapwing are present, works will be postponed as necessary. These changes are formalised within the Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy (OEPMS) [EX6/GH7.5_D],</p>



Agenda Item	Comment
<p>The ExA will ask the applicant to provide an update with regard to ecology and biodiversity matters since ISH2, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Effects on internationally designated sites and protected species, including bats b) Effects on trees and hedgerow, including ancient woodland buffer zones. <p>The ExA will invite IPs to comment on the applicant's position in respect of ecology and biodiversity effects.</p> <p>The ExA will then ask any questions it may have in respect of the oral and written cases made by the applicant and other IPs.</p>	<p>through the introduction of a new Method Statement, Method Statement 13, which consolidates the mitigation measures in respect of SPA species. With these measures and acknowledging the propensity for these birds to move widely through the landscape during the winter period, and habituate to benign disturbance, no adverse effects on integrity are likely via this pathway. Mr Hockey confirmed that other minor updates to the HRA have also been actioned in response to the RIES.</p> <p>Natural England has also now confirmed their agreement with all matters detailed in the Natural England Statement of Common Ground (Revision B) (Clean) [REP5-106].</p> <p>With regards to bats, as per the Milton Keynes City Council Statement of Common Ground (Revision B) [REP5-102], a meeting was held between the Milton Keynes ecology officer and the Applicant's ecologists on 20 January 2026 where the need for further bat surveys was discussed. It was agreed that further surveys would not have materially affected the outcomes of the assessment or mitigation provided and were therefore not required. This matter is now confirmed as agreed in the Statement of Common Ground.</p> <p>Chris Poole, on behalf of the Applicant, provided a summary on ancient woodlands. Mr Poole stated there has been confusion over the application of protective buffer zones to ancient woodland habitats, principally from the information presented in the Appendix 9.12 Schedule of Protective Ecological Buffers (SPEB) [APP-095], OEPMS [EX6/GH7.5_D], and the Appendix 19.2 Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and Outline Arboricultural Method Statement (OAMS) [EX6/GH6.3.19.2_A].</p> <p>The figures in the SPEB were produced at an early stage of design, to highlight the standard buffers to be applied around different ecological features within the Scheme. However, they are indicative only, and do not account for specific works which will necessarily entail incursion into the buffer zones at discrete locations. Additionally, the SPEB does not provide indicative buffers for the Cable Route Corridor; only for the Green Hill Sites.</p> <p>It was confirmed that a minimum 15-metre protective buffer will be applied and implemented for all ancient woodland parcels within the Sites and Cable Route Corridor, as per the AIA and OAMS. No infrastructure works will take place within this 15-metre buffer (no installation of built infrastructure, including cabling), no site personnel or plant (machinery) shall enter the buffer zones, and no equipment will be stored therein. The only works which may take place within the 15-metre buffer zone are limited to unavoidable, non-intrusive works, such as upgrades to two existing tracks through the use of a 'no-dig' solution and provision of permissive paths. Manual works associated with landscaping and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures including planting (using hand tools) are also permitted. Such works will be undertaken under supervision of the project Arboricultural Clerk of Works (ACoW) and Ecological Clerk of Works (EcoCoW).</p> <p>The 15-metre buffer for ancient woodland is recommended by Natural England and the Forestry Commission to protect ancient woodland; therefore, the provision of up to 30-metres for this Scheme demonstrates that where practicable, the Scheme delivers protection beyond established good practice for ancient woodland. As outlined in Table 2.1 of the Signposting Document for Matters Raised at Issue Specific Hearings [REP4-024], works may be required between 15 and 30 metres from ancient woodland. Where environmental or engineering constraints necessitate works within the 30-metre buffer, such works must be agreed in advance with, and undertaken under the supervision of, the Ecological Clerk of Works (EcoCoW) and/or the Arboricultural Clerk of Works (ACoW).</p> <p>The OEPMS [EX6/GH7.5_D] and Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan [EX6/GH7.1_C] will be amended for Deadline 6 to secure and clarify where 15-metre buffers will be applied for the Scheme (including the Cable Route Corridor) and extended 30-metre buffers for the Green Hill Sites. The SPEB will also be updated with a covering note to highlight the indicative nature of the buffers therein.</p> <p>Sven Rufus, on behalf of NNC, raised concern regarding functionally linked land (FLL) being made available prior to construction. Mike Hockey, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that all FLL mitigation fields will be maintained as suitable habitat from the outset of construction, even where proposed habitat conversion works, such as the seeding of arable fields to grassland, cannot be undertaken prior to construction due to timing constraints. In those circumstances, such works will take place in the next available seeding window, unless an existing arable crop is present, in which case seeding will follow the last harvest. The maximum period between commencement of construction and conversion of those operational habitats will be 12 months. However, this delay is not consequential, as all fields will be usable by target species for the duration, such that no net loss in FLL extent will be realised.</p> <p>In response to a comment Mr Rufus, on behalf of NNC, regarding survey methodology for cable routes, Chris Poole explained that the Applicant conducted an initial visit of the cable route corridor over winter to characterise any habitats at a high level, and any grasslands which were recorded during the initial visit were revisited the following spring/summer, in the optimal survey window, as seen in the Environmental Statement Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity (Revision A) [EX6/GH6.2.9_B], submitted at Deadline 1. The Applicant now considers all cable route corridor surveys have been completed at a reasonable time of year to categorise the value of the habitats present.</p>



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	<p>Anything further can be clarified at the meeting next week between the Applicant and NNC.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: A meeting was held between the Applicant and the NNC Ecologist on the 18 March. It was agreed that the methodology, baseline conditions, mitigation and HRA matters are now agreed. There was further discussion on the FLL and the Applicant set out their approach and agreement was not reached on this point. The final positions of NCC and the Applicant will be set out in the Statement of Common Ground submitted at Deadline 7.</p> <p>Linda Twohey, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, raised queries regarding Natural England’s agreement on “adverse effects on integrity”, airborne pollution and impact on wildlife, surveys for water voles, and the buffer distance for ancient woodland.</p> <p>Mike Hockey, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed that all matters have been agreed with Natural England, as set out in the Natural England Statement of Common Ground [REP5106].</p> <p>Regarding bats, as per the MKCC Statement of Common Ground [REP5-012], a meeting was held between the MKC and the Applicant’s ecologists on 20 January 2026, where the need for further bat surveys was discussed. It was agreed that further surveys would not have materially affected the outcomes of the assessment or mitigation provided and were therefore not required. This matter is now taken as agreed in the SoCG.</p> <p>In response to comments made relating to BESS safety, Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant explained that the Applicant’s fire safety expert was not available for this hearing as this was not on the agenda. However, the Applicant has provided previous responses with the input from the fire safety expert. The Applicant will provide cross references to where this information can be found in the written summary of this hearing. Ms Brodrick stated that it is the Applicant’s position that fire safety concerns have been properly assessed. Further, hydrology matters have been properly assessed and agreement reached with Natural England and the EA. There are further matters ongoing with the EA, and these are close to agreement.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: The Applicant has previously provided responses on this in the Written Summary of the Applicant’s Oral Submissions and Responses at Issue Specific Hearing 2 and Responses to action Points [REP3-075] in particular the information in Appendix A.</p> <p>Chris Poole, on behalf of the Applicant, responded to concerns raised by Dr Twohey regarding water vole surveys. Mr Poole stated the presence of water vole within the Sites was not confirmed during the baseline surveys, although several potential field signs were noted, including burrows, feeding remains, and latrines, at Sites Green Hill C, D and BESS. A dead water vole was noted associated with a pond outside of the Site Boundary at Green Hill E, with connectivity to on-site watercourses via Swanspool Brook. For the purposes of the assessment, and in line with the precautionary principle, water vole presence has been assumed at those Sites where potential field signs were recorded during the surveys (Green Hill C, D, and BESS), as well as Green Hill E on account of the dead water vole, which was found off-site.</p> <p>Pre-commencement surveys will be undertaken to identify any evidence of water voles as well as otters, as per Method Statement 5 of the OEPMS [EX6/GH7.5_D], which relates to particular protected species and mitigation, of which section 6.6 pertains to water voles and otter. This states that all applicable habitat removal works will be preceded by an inspection of habitat at least 50 metres upstream and 50 metres downstream of the clearance extent to look for signs of these species and their sheltering sites, acknowledging that water voles can dispersed throughout the landscape between the last surveys and construction. This is also the case for badgers (see Method Statement 8). As the status of existing setts will change, it is proposed that pre-commencement work is carried out for that species as well, before construction.</p> <p>Ryan Gledhill, on behalf of the Applicant, responded to concerns raised regarding ancient woodland buffers, and explained that the 15 metres is in accordance with standard guidance recommended by Natural England and the Forestry Commission. Notwithstanding this, where appropriate, 30 metres is to be granted. The surveys did consider the possibility of ancient and veteran trees along the woodland edges, which would increase the buffers. From what was found in the baseline surveys this is more than sufficient to adequately protect ancient woodland, in accordance with the Natural England and Forestry Commission guidance.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, responded to a concern from Linda Twohey regarding the potential effects of smoke on wildlife. It was stated that Mr Gregory, the Applicant’s battery and fire expert, had addressed this point on behalf of the Applicant at previous hearings; specific references will be provided in the written summary.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: Please refer to Appendix A in the Written Summary of the Applicant’s Oral Submissions and Responses at Issue</p>



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	<p><i>Specific Hearing 2 [REP3-075].</i></p> <p>Shena Howell, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, sought clarification on paragraph 14.1.1 of the Outline Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy document [EX6/GH7.5_D] as to why the matter of mobile species is limited to only golden plover and lapwing, and on paragraph 7.6.1 of the same document regarding the ecological value of arable land.</p> <p>Mike Hockey, on behalf of the Applicant, responded to Ms Howell regarding mobile species outside the SPA, and explained that golden plover and lapwing are known to use the arable land outside the SPA for foraging, and therefore could be using functionally linked land outside the Site, which is critical for their survival. All other birds in the area are water birds and are associated more specifically with the gravel pits and with water habitats, and not the land within the Green Hill sites.</p> <p>Chris Poole, on behalf of the Applicant, responded to Ms Howell regarding ecological value of arable land. Mr Poole explained that the reference made by Ms Howell originated from Method Statement 6 regarding temporary habitat removal for cable installation – there are specific measures under Method Statement 6 regarding replanting of habitats such as hedgerows, which are removed and either translocated back in situ or replaced with additional planting to gap up the original habitat. Likewise, where there is grassland, seeding may be carried out post-cable installation to raise the habitat back to where it was prior to installation. In regards to arable land, arable fields are ploughed routinely. The statement in Method Statement 6 is not stating that there is no ecological value within arable fields (although it is of lower ecological value than hedgerow or grasslands habitat generally for certain species such as ground nesting birds, as covered in the impact assessments), but rather the method statement is setting out that there is no habitat that requires specific reinstatement post-installation, due to the fields being routinely ploughed.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, added that the suite of management documents are to be read together, as whilst the Ecological Protection and Mitigation Strategy [EX6/GH7.5_D] says little in terms of reinstatement of arable land, the Outline Soil Management Plan [APP-550] sets out all the measures required to preserve the soil where work is taking place and the specific measures when reinstating that soil, such that its usability for agricultural purposes is preserved.</p> <p>Kay Brown, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, asked if a definitive list of unavoidable exceptions to buffers is available.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant stated that the Applicant is making changes to the Outline Management Plans for Deadline 6, which will give greater clarity on where there are exceptions to buffers in terms of works, for example, the two existing access tracks that already exist within the buffer zones and the works being taken to upgrade the surface of those with specific construction methodology, including landscaping and ecological enhancement work, as someone would need to go into that area for seeding. More information will be provided at Deadline 6.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: Please refer to the outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan [EX6/GH7.4_E] where these updates have been captured.</p> <p>ExA Questions</p> <p>The ExA asked if the ancient woodland buffers would be included in Construction Compound 1, adjacent to Sywell wood.</p> <p>Chris Poole, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed that a minimum 15 metre protective buffer will be applied and implemented for all ancient woodland parcels within both the Sites and the Cable Route Corridor. This will be confirmed in the OEPMS [EX6/GH7.5_D] and the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) [EX6/GH7.1_C] submitted at Deadline 6.</p> <p>The ExA asked if any provisions have been made to monitor the ancient trees, as outlined by the Forestry Commission representation, in [ES Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity [EX6/GH6.2.9_B].</p> <p>Ryan Gledhill, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed that the details regarding the sequencing of works, including supervision and requirements of follow up for trees, will be provided in the detailed Arboricultural Method Statement and detailed design and is secured in the ES Appendix 19.2_Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Outline Arboricultural Method Statement [EX6/GH6.3.19.2_A].</p> <p>The ExA asked the Applicant to provide the source of the evidence supporting the following three assertions in chapter 9 (ecology and biodiversity) (revision A) be provided, including how comparable each item of evidence is to the circumstances at Green Hill.</p> <p>At paragraph 9.9.249; the statement that set-aside has been found to support significantly higher densities of skylarks.</p> <p>At paragraph 9.9.256; the statement that both yellow wagtail and skylark have been recorded foraging on active solar arrays.</p> <p>Also, at paragraph at 9.9.256; The statement that displacement affects on skylark and yellow wagtail would be counteracted to an extent by</p>



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	<p>the increased foraging potential of the operational array sites.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, stated this will be covered in the written summary of ISH5.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: With regards to the first point, the basis of the skylark assessment within the Environmental Statement Chapter 9 Ecology and Biodiversity (Revision B) [EX6/GH6.2.9_B] is a recent article from a Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) publication which sets out a framework for quantifying skylark mitigation provision (Fox, 2022). This article was written in the absence of other formal guidance on the subject and acknowledging an inconsistency in approach and conflation of mitigation advice across the industry. The article sets out, in Table 1, skylark territory densities according to habitat type and management. These values are derived from a literature review conducted by the author, Mr. Fox, principally adapted from Donald, P.F. (2004). <i>The Skylark</i>. Poyser, London. Organic set-aside habitat is given a territory density value of 0.56 territories/ha, compared to the winter cereals territory density of 0.23 territories/ha.</p> <p>With regards to the second point, Skylarks have been regularly observed foraging within solar arrays by the Applicant's Ecologists (Clarkson & Woods Ltd.), who have conducted ecological monitoring of well over 100 operational solar farms. These observations have been reported within annual reports produced by Solar Energy UK, in collaboration with Clarkson & Woods, Lancaster University and Wychwood Biodiversity, titled 'Solar Habitat'. Confirmation of skylark presence within multiple solar PV sites is presented within the Solar Habitat 2025 report: https://solarenergyuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/SEUK-Solar-Habitat-2025-3.pdf, which found that skylark was the most frequently observed Red Listed species, recorded during 59% of all bird surveys undertaken. Additionally, this is discussed in an article on the Solar Energy UK website: Solar farms and songbirds: could skylarks benefit from ground mounted solar?.</p> <p>Yellow wagtail is a much less abundant species and evidence is more sparse. However, evidence of yellow wagtails using active arrays in the UK is reported again in Solar Habitat 2025, and in another study from Germany (Diekmann et al, 2025)</p> <p>With regards to the third point, Skylark and yellow wagtail are both passerine species which rely heavily on invertebrates for food during the breeding season. Grassland can provide an important foraging habitat, as this supports the invertebrates on which skylark and yellow wagtail feed. Within an arable landscape, invertebrate prey can be a limiting factor in the number of territories which can be supported, since fields typically comprise monoculture crops which are subject to pesticide applications. This is the case for the majority of land within the Green Hill Sites at baseline.</p> <p>The permanent grassland habitats proposed within the operational array sites will support invertebrate prey, and this is likely to be at higher levels than the surrounding arable landscape, for the reasons discussed above. Sensitive management of the grassland habitats to promote floristic and, by extension, invertebrate diversity and abundance, is outlined in the Outline Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (Revision D) [REP5-069].</p> <p>This elevated foraging potential is considered to be exploitable by skylark and yellow wagtail which nest in proximate offsite fields, and would serve to increase the carrying capacity of the offsite land, where foraging resources may be a limiting factor to breeding success. This effect is accounted for in the quantitative skylark territory assessment, where a number of displaced territories are considered 'absorbed' into the wider landscape where suitable nesting habitat lies within foraging range of the solar PV sites (taken to be 200m). A precautionary functional foraging range of up to 200m from nesting locations is widely adopted, accounting for the core foraging area being within approximately 100m of the nest, and territory size and behavioural flexibility meaning that birds will utilise habitat beyond this core area (Kuiper et al, 2013; Miguet et al., 2013).</p> <p><u>References:</u></p> <p>Diekmann, L., Zitzmann, F., Schaarschmidt, F. & Reich, M. (2025). Habitat Use of Birds on a High-Mounted Agrivoltaic Trial Plot. <i>Ecology and Evolution</i> 15, no. 8: e71864.</p> <p>Fox, H. (2022) Blithe Spirit: Are Skylarks Being Overlooked in Impact Assessment? <i>CIEEM In Practice</i>, September 2022, Issue 117, pp.47-51</p> <p>Kuiper, M.W., Ottens, H.J., Cenin, L., Schaffers, A.P., van Ruijven, J., Koks, B.J., Berendse, F. & de Snoo, G.R. (2013). Field margins as foraging habitat for skylarks (<i>Alauda arvensis</i>) in the breeding season. <i>Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment</i>, 170, pp. 10–15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agee.2013.03.001</p> <p>Miguet, P., Gaucherel, C. & Bretagnolle, V. (2013).</p>



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	<p><i>Breeding habitat selection of skylarks varies with crop heterogeneity, time and spatial scale, and reveals spatial and temporal crop complementation. Ecological Modelling, 266, pp. 10–18. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolmodel.2013.06.029</i></p> <p>The ExA asked if the longer-term maintenance of ecological features, as set out in the OLEMP [EX6/GH7.4_E], should be explicitly for the lifetime of the Scheme.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, confirmed that the Applicant would provide a response in writing.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: <i>The measures identified in the OLEMP [EX6/GH7.4_E] are intended to be implemented for the full operational lifetime of the Scheme. This is outlined throughout the document, for example in paragraph 4.1.3, which reads as follows: 'This section should be read in conjunction with Appendix A – Outline Management Prescription Timetable, which sets out the timetable for management prescriptions, along with any seasonal restrictions on management measures, which would be adopted for the duration of the Scheme.' Nevertheless, for clarity, a revised version of the OLEMP has been submitted at Deadline 6 which specifically states in Section 1: Introduction that the measures in the OLEMP and detailed LEMP (when this is produced) will be adopted for the full operational lifetime of the Scheme.</i></p> <p>The ExA asked if the formatting on pages 171 and 206-223 of ES Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity [REP1-033] could be made to be searchable. Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, advised this would be looked into following the hearing.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: ES Chapter 9: Ecology and Biodiversity has been updated to ensure it is fully searchable and is provided at [EX6/GH6.2.9_B].</p>
<p>3.4 Effects for Traffic and Transport</p> <p>Documents that may be referred to during the discussion of this item: [CR2-012], [REP3-036], [REP3-066], [REP4-008] and [REP3-064].</p> <p>The ExA will ask the applicant to provide an update with regard to traffic and transport matters since ISH2, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Construction traffic arrangements b) Effects on public rights of way, including on promoted routes such as the Three Shires Way. <p>The ExA will invite IPs to comment on the applicant's position in respect of traffic and transport effects.</p> <p>The ExA will then ask any questions it may have in respect of the oral and written cases made by the applicant and other IPs.</p>	<p>The ExA requested an update on traffic and transport matters.</p> <p>Stuart Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, provide an update on traffic and transport matters. Mr Morse explained that discussions with the highway authorities have continued since ISH2. The discussions centred around providing further information on distinct elements such as expected worker travel, clarification of access points including the detailed design process of these access points and the expected use in terms of vehicle movements and duration.</p> <p>Queries were raised regarding the use of shuttle buses to move workers to and from the Sites. Comfort was requested that the use of shuttles would be effective in reducing travel by individual vehicles. A Transport Technical Note Shuttle Bus Service Supporting Document [REP3-080] was submitted. The document sets out further detail around the expected use of shuttle buses, identified why these are necessary, highlighting matters such as providing a means for workers who do not own vehicles and the need to minimise compound areas, and also signposted to other large scale solar projects who similarly include shuttle buses within the overall strategy</p> <p>Confirmation of aspects such as access design and their expected use have been confirmed and documented in Environmental Statement Appendix 13.2 Transport Assessment (Revision A) [REP3-036, REP3-038 and REP3-040], the Environmental Statement Chapter 13: Transport and Access (Revision A) [REP2-003] and the Transport and Access Technical Note [REP2-055] which provided further information around movements assorted with Cable Route Corridor access points.</p> <p>Further clarification was also sought regarding the mechanism for establishing suitable traffic management at the time of construction and ensuring the highway authority had opportunity to review and approve proposed detailed access arrangements. The detailed design of each access point will be produced and agreed with the highway authority prior to their implementation. The review will include the provision of Road Safety Audits to inform the design.</p> <p>Mr Morse explained that the technical approval of the detailed design of each access would be required by the relevant highway authority prior to construction and this could be secured either through the detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan or in an agreement entered into under Article 15 (Agreements with street authorities) of the draft Development Consent Order [EX6/GH3.1_E].</p> <p>Based on these reviews undertaken by the highway authorities, they are content with the assessment and consider that the resulting impact is not significant and that suitable access provision can be made. Accordingly, all transport matters are now agreed with all four highway authorities. This is reflected in the associated statements of common ground with the relevant authorities.</p> <p>Stephen Flynn provided a summary of public rights of way.</p>



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	<p>Mr Flynn stated that since ISH2, as requested by the Examining Authority, the updated Outline Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths Management Plan Revision B [EX6/GH7.10_C] includes provision for physical notice of PROW closures and diversions, with contact details for the Site Manager and Community Liaison Manager to be included. The updated management plan also includes provision for the management of private rights of way (if temporarily closed) in the same manner as public rights of way.</p> <p>As of Deadline 5, the status of discussions with the host authorities in the Statements of Common Ground over mitigation measures to PROWs and the assessment of impacts to PROWs and long-distance recreational routes is as follows:</p> <p>All of the Councils are in agreement with assessment methodology and outcomes as set out in ES Chapter 17: Socio-Economics, Tourism and Recreation [APP-054] and its supporting appendix 17.1: Tourism and Recreation Receptor Tables [REP1-079].</p> <p>Currently all mitigation measures are deemed acceptable by host authorities. There are a few outstanding points that are still under consideration and discussion, which will be picked up in the ongoing meetings.</p> <p>With WNC, there is an outstanding matter under discussion in relation to the alignment of footpath CW1 which crosses Green Hill B. The Applicant has corrected on the Public Rights of Way Plan Revision C [REP3-012]. Discussion will continue to ensure WNC are happy with this change.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: WNC confirmed in Comments on any further information and submissions received at Deadline 3 [REP4-035] that the inclusion of footpath CW1 had been corrected and this matter was resolved.</p> <p>With MKCC, there is still an outstanding matter under discussion in relation to the assessment of views from PROW, regarding landscape and visual impacts on the PROW itself.</p> <p>Kay Brown, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, raised a series of concerns regarding the adequacy and accuracy of the Applicant's transport and construction assumptions, including the scale and duration of HGV and worker traffic impacts on local communities, the robustness and transparency of HGV forecasts across construction, cable corridor works and replacement phases, the reliance on comparator projects such as Cottam, uncertainties around internal haul routes, compounds and parking provision, water usage and associated vehicle movements, potential damage to roads and verges, contamination risks to watercourses, and the need for these matters to be properly quantified and secured within the DCO if granted.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, stated the Applicant will respond to these points in writing. Stop Green Hill Solar confirmed they would provide this written submission to the Applicant ahead of Deadline 6.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: The Applicant's response is set out in the Applicant Response to Stop Green Hill Solar Written Transport Response [EX6/GH8.2.20].</p> <p>Regarding the use of shuttle buses, Stuart Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, clarified that the Applicant is not proposing 100% utilisation of shuttle buses, but rather an assumed 50% level of uptake, reflecting that not all workers own or use private vehicles and to avoid the need for an oversized construction compound; he confirmed that this approach is considered proportionate and necessary and will be progressed through the Applicant's future detailed Construction Traffic Management Plans and worker travel plans.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, answered a concern from Ms Brown regarding the level of detail currently available. Ms Brodrick stated the purpose of the transport assessment is to establish if the highway can cope with the maximum number of HGV vehicles. As the project is being designed within the Rochdale envelope, specific numbers cannot yet be provided as this will depend on the final design and the sequencing of construction, the assessment considers the worst-case scenario, and it has been agreed with the highway authorities that this assessment and the mitigation measures are appropriate.</p> <p>Ms Brodrick added that it was agreed at a previous hearing that the Applicant will include a Requirement to provide details of the phasing of the Scheme. Ms Brodrick explained that this information will be made publicly available and will give residents an indication of when particular works are anticipated to take place. Ms Brodrick advised that, once construction commences, this level of detail will be available; however, it is not available at this stage of the process.</p> <p>Stuart Morse responded to a query from Linda Twohey on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, regarding the route for HGVs on the A43 and the impact on traffic. Mr Morse explained that the assessments have accounted for the use of roundabouts. Access to and egress from Construction Compound 1 will be by left-hand turn only (using Access CR4), and the roundabout on the A43 is sizeable enough to</p>



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	<p>accommodate large construction vehicles turning around it.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, highlighted that the detail around left-hand only turns can be found in Tables 13.11 and 13.12 of ES Chapter 13: Transport and Access [REP2-003], and commitments to travelling outside of the peak hours (08:00–09:00 and 17:00–18:00) for both workers and HGVs are set out in the outline Construction Traffic Management Plan, submitted at Deadline 3 [REP3-064].</p> <p>Stuart Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, clarified the role of the shuttle buses. He explained that the purpose of the shuttle buses is so that the compounds do not need to accommodate large numbers of worker vehicles. The shuttle buses will collect the workers from key areas, such as hotels, or central hubs for those travelling by bus or train.</p> <p>Kay Brown, on behalf of Stop green Hill Solar, enquired about parking for the workers not travelling by shuttle bus. Stuart Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, explained the remainder of workers would be accommodated in the compound, keeping in mind there will be an element of vehicle sharing.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, added that there is a commitment in the outline Construction Traffic Management Plan [EX6/GH7.9_C] (section 6.5) that worker vehicles would park in the compound and not on local roads.</p> <p>Dr Marie Midgley, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, queried the effects of HGVs on traffic and potential road damage.</p> <p>Stuart Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that construction traffic will vary but the assessment is based on a peak of 11 HGV movements per day travelling to each cable route access which, when taking into account operating hours and avoiding the busiest periods, is approximately one vehicle movement every 30 mins. The potential damage to roads is assessed and set out in the outline Construction Traffic Management Plan [EX6/GH7.9_C], section 5.3, whereby any damage will be surveyed and rectified.</p> <p>Philip Anthony, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, enquired about the closure of the footpath from Grendon to Castle Ashby and requested the Applicant consider the creation of an alternative footpath.</p> <p>Stephen Flynn, on behalf of the Applicant, stated that the outline Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths Management Plan [EX6/GH7.10_C] sets out that footpath closures should be minimised as much as practicable. Closures are only intended for short periods of time and not for the entirety of construction length; it will be at distinct points of the construction, such as when cable is being laid and buried. Regarding the possibility of a diversion of the footpath, Mr Flynn advised he will assess the plans and respond in writing. Mr Flynn stated that if the diversion were along a road, that signage and prior notice would need to be given.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: <i>The Applicant refers to paragraphs 3.2.13-3.2.17 and Section 3.3 of the Outline Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths Management Plan [EX6/GH7.10_C] which sets out the reasons why PRow diversions or closures may be required, and what measures are available to mitigate impacts on PRow users. For the footpath referenced by Mr Anthony (NN TF 4), a temporary diversion within the Order Limits may be achievable but users would still be in proximity (<50 m) to ongoing works. The PRow route would then be reinstated after each diversion to allow work crews to move onto the next section of works. An alternative option is this footpath be closed for each duration when works are ongoing (such as for haul route laying, and then separately for cable trenching and installation), with the recommended diversion route being along public highways either via Station Road and the unnamed road past the Castle Ashby fishing lakes, or Yardley Road and Parkhill Road. The Applicant acknowledges that these routes would both be longer (by 0.6 km/8-10 minutes, or 1.1 km/13-18 minutes respectively), and would require walking on the highway or verges for the majority of these routes. Agreement of any diversion or closure would have to be agreed by the local highway authorities in consultation with community representatives, as part of the approval of the detailed Public Rights of Way and Permissive Paths Management Plan subject to Requirement 18 of Schedule 2 to the Draft DCO [EX6/GH3.1_E].</i></p> <p>Sheila English queried how many abnormal loads would travel through Olney. Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, stated there would be four abnormal load movements, as quoted in Table 7.1 of the Transport and Access Route Supporting Document [REP1-167].</p> <p>ExA Questions</p> <p>The ExA asked the Applicant if the closure of paths by hedgerows could exacerbate poor surface conditions, particularly in boggy areas.</p> <p>Stephen Flynn, on behalf of the Applicant, stated this will be responded to in writing in the Applicant’s Response to ExA Third Written Questions [EX6/GH8.1.38].</p> <p>The ExA asked, in reference to ES Figure 3.1 Field Numbering Plan [APP-191], if the removal of panels along GF2, together with moving hedgerow and fencing west alongside GF6, would be considered to address personal safety concerns and prevent exacerbation of boggy</p>



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	<p>areas restricting the use of the bridleway.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, noted that Mr Jackson, the Applicant's landscape consultant, was not available to provide a response in the hearing, and a response would therefore be provided in writing.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: <i>The Applicant refers to their responses in the Applicant's Response to ExA Third Written Questions [EX6/GH8.1.38]. The Applicant has sought to ensure that where public rights of way (including specifically the bridleways on Green Hill G) are planted with hedgerows on either side, either by new or reinforced hedgerows, that there is a suitably wide corridor for movement to be unhindered, or to be no narrower than existing conditions.</i></p> <p><i>On the ES Figures 4.10-4.20 Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Plans (as revised) [EX6/GH6.4.4.10_D, EX6/GH6.4.4.11_C, EX6/GH6.4.4.12_A, EX6/GH6.4.4.13.1_C, EX6/GH6.4.4.13.2_A, EX6/GH6.4.4.14_C, EX6/GH6.4.4.15_C, EX6/GH6.4.4.16.1_A, EX6/GH6.4.4.14.2_A, EX6/GH6.4.4.17_C, EX6/GH6.4.4.18_B, EX6/GH6.4.4.19_D, EX6/GH6.4.4.10_B] the indicative spacing between hedgerows along PROWs is approximately 10-15 metres. Whilst this will have some sense of enclosure to users, this width should allow for sufficient space for sun and wind to evaporate water from surfaces better than more narrowly enclosed PROWs. This is said in reference to the Three Shires Way / bridleway Lavendon\002 which presently has in some places less than 5 m of clearance between the trees of Threshires Wood and existing hedgerows (consider Viewpoint 51 [APP-384] as an example of this). Alongside the Threshires Wood, the offset between the existing woodland edge and the proposed new native hedgerow is 15-20m wide. Viewpoint 51 has been updated to provide a photomontage of the proposals, which confirms the proposed width between the existing woodland and proposed hedgerow creates a comfortable width for users of the PRoW to travel along, with the existing planting being perceived to a much greater extent than planting associated with the Scheme.</i></p> <p><i>Whilst the Applicant cannot state users would not need to navigate around boggy surfaces in wet conditions, it is considered that the proposed planting (c15 – 20m offset from the existing woodland) would not materially affect the existing condition of the PRoW. The Applicant has prepared three cross sections, one through the Permissive Path to the north of GF2, one through the bridleway to the east of GF2, and one through the existing Permissive Path at Site A, which can be found in Appendix A which demonstrates the width of the spacing in this area. The cross section shows a width of c18m from the existing woodland to the proposed hedgerow along the bridleway which is equivalent to more than twice the width of the existing permissive path running through Site A, and a gap of c15m for the proposed Permissive Path, again more than double the width of the existing Permissive Path at Site A, is shown on the Sectional drawings within Appendix A.</i></p> <p><i>The Applicant is not proposing to remove panels from GF2 as taking into account the above it is confident that there is no personal safety concern with use of this bridleway. If panels were removed wholly from GF2 it would reduce the energy generation of the Scheme by approximately 11 megawatts which would further reduce the benefits the Scheme delivers.</i></p> <p>There is an urgent need for an unprecedented capacity of new low carbon electricity capacity to come on line urgently in Great Britain to meet the Government's Clean Power target on the way to Net Zero 2050. The Applicant has brought forward a scheme which aims to maximise the use of available and suitable land and the available and suitable grid connection.</p> <p>The Applicant does not consider that there is any need to reduce the size of the scheme by removing panels along GF2 because it does not agree that any personal safety concerns on bridleway restrictions as suggested arise as a result of the Scheme.</p> <p>Removing panels would therefore artificially reduce the benefits of the Scheme without achieving a reduction to the residual harmful effects arising from the Scheme. Whilst NPS EN-1 sets out that applicants must apply the mitigation hierarchy and demonstrate that it has been applied (paragraph 4.2.11), it also confirms that where residual effects cannot be avoided, reduced or mitigated, the starting point is that the need for the CNP infrastructure outweighs the residual harm caused. As the removal of panels would not avoid, reduce or mitigate a residual harm, these having already been reduced as far as practicable, NPS EN-1 assumes that the residual harm is outweighed by the benefit of solar panels being installed in GF2. Removing panels from this field would result in a larger residual need for other schemes to make up for what is suggested not to be delivered at the Scheme, versus the case that the Scheme is consented as proposed. This is not aligned with the Government's policy position on the need for such schemes, and the critical national priority afforded to them, and as set out in NPS EN-1 (2023), Section 4.2.</p> <p>The ExA asked, in relation to PRoW, whether the offset of 15 metres from the centre line of PRoW takes the legal recorded width into account, and if no legal width has been recorded, how will this be ascertained?</p>



Agenda Item	Comment
	<p>Stephen Flynn, on behalf of the Applicant, stated the centre line would have been taken from the GIS data from the local Councils, and in respect of the legal width, this will be responded to in writing. The Applicant has committed to maintaining the clear width of the right of way either in accordance with the current condition of the paths (i.e as currently laid out on the ground and used)], or if greater, the minimum recommendations from the local Councils and other special interest groups, such as British Horse Society, as to how wide a public right of way is needed for its users.</p> <p>The ExA followed up with a query about whether checks have been done to ensure the Scheme will not encroach upon or restrict the recorded legal width of public rights of way, particularly in circumstances where the legally recorded width exceeds the width currently apparent on the ground.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, stated the Applicant will follow up in writing.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: <i>The Applicant is confident that the offset to PROW centrelines of 15 m is sufficient to include the full legal width of public rights of way that interact with the Scheme. The Applicant can confirm that no comments have been received by the host authorities in respect of legal width of public rights of way or any concerns of partial obstruction thereof.</i></p> <p>The ExA asked, where the 15-metre distance between the centre line of a PRoW includes fencing and hedgerow, if there would be sufficient space for vegetation maintenance on the PRoW if necessary.</p> <p>Stephen Flynn, on behalf of the Applicant, stated he understood this to be a yes, in as many places as possible, but this would have to be confirmed in writing. Please refer to response to Q3.9.2 within the Applicant Response to ExA Third Written Questions [EX6/GH8.1.38].</p> <p>The ExA asked the Applicant if there is possibility of use of tracker panels near a bridleway or pathway used by equestrians, and if so whether this could be revisited to align with British Horse Society guidance.</p> <p>Stephen Flynn, on behalf of the Applicant, stated that currently the Scheme reserved the flexibility to use fixed or tracked panels in any location, which may include alongside public bridleways. The Applicant can refer back to the noise assessments carried out and provide the assessment that shows the anticipated level of noise on public rights of way. In terms of the British Horse Society guidance, their position is precautionary at this point, so the Applicant is satisfied that this is not a reason to not go ahead with tracker panels in those areas.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, reiterated that the distance between the bridleway first tracker panel will include buffer either side of the bridleway and further buffers before the panels themselves, so they will not be immediately adjacent to the bridleways. There are also measures set out in the outline Operational Environmental Management Plan [EX6/GH7.2_D] in relation to noise. The management plan contains provisions for ongoing monitoring of noise levels during operational periods.</p> <p>Regarding the hopper bus service, the ExA asked for clarification of the term "actively being used", and whether any necessary traffic management for site F and the BESS would last throughout the entirety of the construction periods.</p> <p>Stuart Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that any traffic management would need to be determined in relation to the program at the time. The full 2-year period is allowed for at the moment, but the expectation is that it would not be continuous across that whole period. In addition, the traffic management won't necessarily bring restrictions to movement such as signals, but it can mean temporary reductions in speed limits. A detailed construction traffic management plan will come forward as part of the Scheme, but the precise measures would be very site specific.</p> <p>The ExA asked if the Applicant had considered maximising haul routes in Green Hill D and E to minimise use of highway roads by construction vehicles.</p> <p>Stuart Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that yes, the Applicant has included a number of options for access along Highfield Road. One option is the construction of a haul road through Site D so that vehicles can access site E from site D to minimise movements on Highfield Road.</p> <p>Sheena Howell, on behalf on Stop Green Hill Solar, raised a concern regarding the Sapphires youth football club, adjacent to Construction Compound 4.</p> <p>Stuart Morse , on behalf of the Applicant, stated that weekend working commitments will be restricted on Saturdays, with no work on Sundays. This will be Site specific again, and can be reviewed at that time. It is likely that the football club would be treated in the same way as nearby schools.</p>



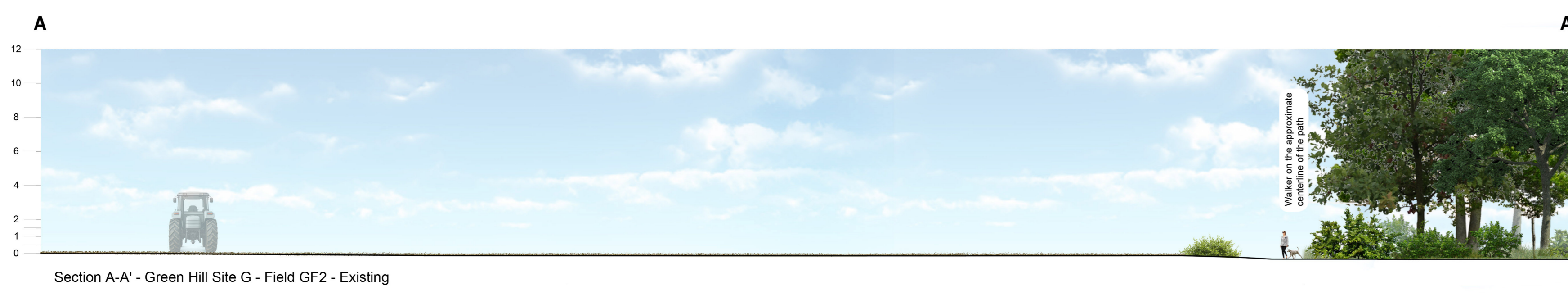
Agenda Item	Comment
	<p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, added that the Applicant will assess whether anything further can be added to the outline Construction Traffic Management Plan [EX6/GH7.9_C].</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: The Applicant has added additional text on working hours and added in reference to specific uses such as Grendon Football Club in the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan [EX6/GH7.9_C] submitted at Deadline 6.</p> <p>Kay Brown, on behalf on Stop Green Hill Solar, asked if the Applicant anticipates reducing one of the access points on Highfield Road.</p> <p>Stuart Morse, on behalf of the Applicant, stated that the number of access points on Highfield Road is to provide flexibility, so that best solutions can be brought forward when a contractor becomes involved to allow best access. All the access points may not be in use at one time.</p> <p>Linda Twohey, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, raised a concern regarding the permissive path around Green Hill A.2 and whether it would be usable by horse riders if tracker panels were used.</p> <p>In response, Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, stated the Applicant will respond in writing. It is the Applicant's position that the permissive paths for use by horse riders are suitable for that function, whether fixed or tracker panels are being used.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: The Applicant confirms that the permissive path for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians at Green Hill A.2 is located within the buffer zones between field boundary hedgerows, and the Solar PV Array areas. As identified on the ES Figure 4.11: Landscape and Ecology Mitigation Plan A.2 [EX6/GH6.4.4.11_C] which shows this buffer is predominantly 15 m, with the permissive path set approximately 5 m from the Scheme fenceline. Onsite infrastructure would then be set back a further 4 m to allow for onsite maintenance vehicle movements. Generally, a corridor of 10-12 m is kept open between the fenceline and hedgerows within which a minimum of 3 m would be set for the permissive bridleway (based on BHS recommendations). This open width only reduces in locations where the permissive route goes through hedgerow gaps between fields. In these locations a minimum clear gap of 3 m would be maintained. Where additional buffers create a larger open width (such as where offsets to residences have been applied) the permissive bridleway will be set at a further distance from the onsite infrastructure. Whilst users of the permissive bridleway in Green Hill A.2 may be closer to onsite infrastructure than on public rights of way, the Applicant is confident that there are sufficient offsets to ensure these routes are safe and easily usable for equestrian users without there being a significant risk of horses feeling enclosed or spooked by onsite noise.</p>
<p>3.5 The applicant's second change request</p> <p>Documents that may be referred to during the discussion of this item: [CR2-001] to [CR2-024]</p> <p>The ExA will ask the applicant to provide a brief summary of the reasons for the changes to the application set out in Change Request 2.</p> <p>The ExA may then have questions for the applicant in relation to Change Request 2 on topics that have not previously been covered in the agenda.</p>	<p>The ExA asked, in layman's terms, for an explanation of the need for the design flexibility set out in the second Change Request, including in relation to the substation design and the cabling between the BESS site and Sites E and G.</p> <p>Alison Dablin, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the need for design flexibility arises from the requirement to retain optionality within the electrical design. The National Grid will provide harmonic data and detailed substation information approximately 18 months prior to the connection date. Until that information is received, the final electrical design cannot be fully determined.</p> <p>Ms Dablin explained that retaining a range of design options enables the Applicant to more accurately model and finalise the most appropriate connection arrangement once the National Grid data has been provided. The proposed flexibility, including in relation to a 400kV connection at Green Hill G, can be accommodated without giving rise to any material new or different environmental effects. The ExA asked in reference to paragraph 1.3.2 of the Technical Addendum to Chapter 12 Cultural Heritage [CR2-022] why the statement of common ground with Historic England for mitigation for archaeological features had not been submitted at Deadline 5.</p> <p>Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that Historic England were unable to sign in time due to an administrative timing issue in time for submission at Deadline 5, and that the signed agreement is expected to be submitted at Deadline 6.</p> <p>Post Hearing Note: Please refer to agreed and signed Historic England Statement of Common Ground [EX6/GH8.3.4_A].</p> <p>The ExA asked whether the Councils could confirm that nothing arising from the proposed changes alters their position in regard to archaeological matters.</p> <p>NNC, WNC and MKC confirmed there were no immediate concerns.</p> <p>Phillip Anthony, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, asked whether the Applicant could clarify the criteria used to determine the substation arrangement proposed under Change Request 2.</p> <p>Alison Dablin, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that this decision will be informed by the information provided to the Applicant by National Grid, including the state, in electrical terms, of the National Grid substation at Grendon at the relevant time. Sheena Howell, on behalf of Stop Green Hill Solar, asked for clarification about whether the substation decision was due to the flood plain areas at Green Hill</p>



Agenda Item	Comment
	BESS. Claire Brodrick, on behalf of the Applicant, explained that the Applicant is seeking optionality to build either a 132kv or a 400kv substation on Green Hill G. There are potentially three 400kV substations required under the Scheme, consent is being sought for substations in both locations (Green Hill BESS and Green Hill G), if that is required.
4. Any Other Business	No other business was discussed.
5. Review of matters and actions arising	The Applicant has taken down the relevant action points and will respond in writing for Deadline 6.
6. Close of Hearing	Hearing closed at 14:47.



Appendix A – Indicative Sections for Permissive Paths and PRow



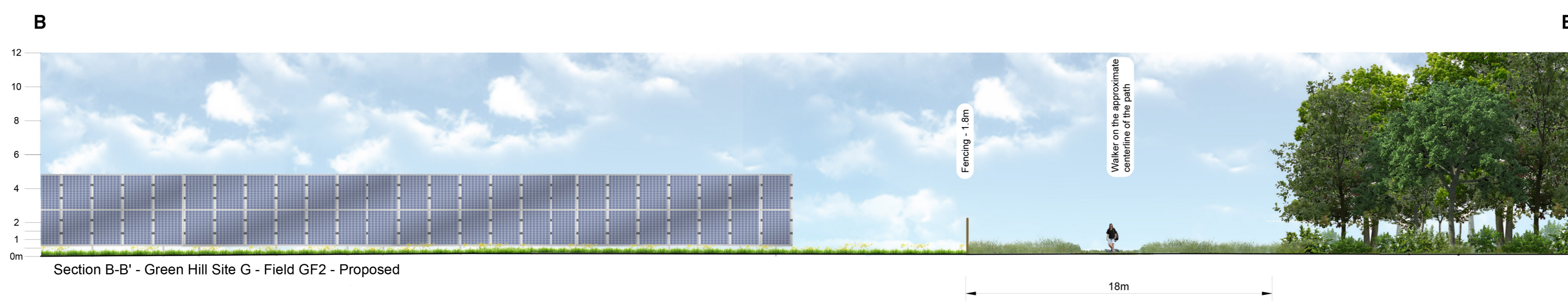
Section A-A' - Green Hill Site G - Field GF2 - Existing



Section A-A' - Green Hill Site G - Field GF2 - Proposed



Section B-B' - Green Hill Site G - Field GF2 - Existing



Section B-B' - Green Hill Site G - Field GF2 - Proposed



Section C - C' - Green Hill - Field AF26 - Existing

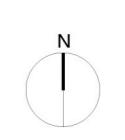


Section C - C' - Green Hill - Field AF26 - Proposed

Key Plan - 1:1000 - Green Hill - Site F



Key Plan - 1:1000 - Green Hill - Site A



1:200 @A0

GREEN HILL SOLAR FARM

Appendix A - Indicative Sections for Permissive Paths and PkOw
[EN010170/EX06/GH8.1.44]