Light Valley Solar

Outline Soil Resource Management Plan

Document Reference EN0110012/APP/LVS/07.14

November 2026
Version 3

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN0110012
APFP Regulation: 5(2)(a)

Light Valley Solar

Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

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

Light Valley Solar

DCO Submission

Outline Soil Resource Management Plan

Regulation Reference	APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)
Planning Inspectorate Case Reference	EN0110012
Application Document Reference	EN0110012/APP/LVS/07.14
Author	Light Valley Solar Limited

Version	Date	Status of Version
1.0	February 2026	DCO Submission
2.0	September 2026	DCO Deadline 2 Submission
3.0	November 2026	DCO Deadline 4 Submission

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview and purpose of the document

1.1.1 This document provides an Outline Soil Resource Management Plan (oSRMP) for the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of Light Valley Solar (the Proposed Development). It includes the overall approach to managing soil resources affected by the Proposed Development.

1.1.2 This oSRMP sets out the measures that will be developed in more detail in the detailed Soil Resource Management Plan (SRMP), the production of which is secured through the Development Consent Order (DCO) Application, as well as setting out the monitoring and recording activities to ensure that these measures are carried out.

1.1.3 The detailed SRMP will be produced for the Proposed Development following the appointment of the contractor prior to the commencement of construction. This OSRMP provides the structure of the detailed SRMP and the types of controls that are anticipated to be included to deliver the Proposed Development.

1.1.4 Any detailed SRMP(s) which follows a first SRMP to be approved will set out how soil resources will be managed across the different works covered by the respective SRMPs[1].

1.2 The Order Limits and Proposed Development

Order Limits

1.2.1 The Order Limits outline the maximum extent of the land that may be required to facilitate the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of the Proposed Development and are shown on Figure 1.1: Site Location Plan and Order Limits (ES Volume 2) [**EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.02.01.01**]. The Order Limits are described in Chapter 2: The Proposed Development (ES Volume 1) [**EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.01.02**].

1.2.2 The Order Limits cover an area of approximately 1,270 hectares (ha) located within the administrative area of North Yorkshire Council, near Selby. The Proposed Development comprises seven distinct Solar Development Sites totalling approximately 900 ha of land, together with the Cable Route Corridor extending to 328.5 ha, Highways Improvement Area totalling 17.1 ha, and 24.1 ha of Site 8 Access Area.

[1] As mentioned in Chapter 5: Agricultural Land and Soils (ES Volume 1) **[EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.01.05.00]**, references to 'a' or 'the' detailed SRMP in this Outline plan can read as referring to 'any' detailed MWMP, as more than one SRMP could be brought forward for different parts of the Proposed Development, depending on the detailed construction strategy undertaken.

The Proposed Development

1.2.3 The Proposed Development will comprise the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating station with a capacity over 100 MW. The 'associated development' comprises a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), grid connection infrastructure and other infrastructure integral to the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning phases.

1.2.4 It is defined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under sections 14(1)(a) and 15(2) of the Planning Act 2008 (Ref 1) and therefore must be consented by way of a DCO Application.

1.2.5 The main element of the Proposed Development comprises seven Solar Development Sites (Solar Development Sites 1-4 and 6-8) that will accommodate the Solar PV Panels. A BESS Compound will be located within Solar Development Site 2.

1.2.6 The Cable Route Corridor is the area within which the export connection cables (hereafter referred to as the 'Grid Connection Cables') would be located to connect the Solar PV Sites to the National Grid at the existing Monk Fryston Substation (hereafter referred to as the 'Existing National Grid Monk Fryston Substation') and the area within which cables connecting the Solar Development Sites would be located (hereafter referred to as 'Interconnecting Cables') (refer to Figure 2.1: Illustrative Site Layout Plan (ES Volume 2) [**EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.02.02.01**].

1.2.7 Further details of the Proposed Development are presented in Chapter 2: The Proposed Development (ES Volume 1) [**EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.01.02**] and the design envelope for the Proposed Development is set out in the Design Parameters and Commitments Document [**EN0110012/APP/LVS/05.06**] and the limits of deviation shown on the Works Plans [**EN0110012/APP/LVS/02.03**].

2 Relevant policy and guidance

2.1 Policy

2.1.1 Relevant policies for soil protection include:

1) Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (Ref 2);
2) National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3) (Ref 3);
3) National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5) (Ref 4);
4) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 187 (Ref 5); and
5) Defra Soil Strategy for England (Ref 6).

2.2 Guidance

2.2.1 The relevant guidance listed generally sets out the principles of good soil management. Relevant guidance notes for soil protection include:

1) Defra Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites (Ref 7);
2) Institute of Quarrying, Good Practice for Handling Soils in Mineral Workings (Ref 8) which is an update of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) Good Practice Guidance for Handling Soils (Ref 9);
3) Natural England, Guide to assessing development proposal on agricultural land (Ref 10);
4) British Society of Soil Science, Working with Soil Guidance Note Document 3: Benefitting from Soil Management in Development and Construction (Ref 11);
5) Institute of Environmental Assessment and Management, A New Perspective on Land and Soil in Environmental Assessment (Ref 12); and
6) Soils in Planning and Construction Task Force, Building on soil sustainability: Principles for soils in planning and construction (Ref 13).

3 Scope

3.1.1 The detailed SRMP will apply to the management of all soils during the construction phase and throughout the lifetime of the Proposed Development. Although most soil resources that will be affected are in agricultural use, the detailed SRMP will apply to all soil resources in all land uses.

3.1.2 Although primarily designed for the construction phase, the soil protection measures contained within the detailed SRMP will also be applied to any monitoring, maintenance, repair or replacement works that need to occur during the operation of the Proposed Development and that affect soil resources. The measures will also be relevant to works during the decommissioning phase, subject to relevant good practice measures in place at that time.

3.1.3 Soil management methodologies to be included within the detailed SRMP include:

1) Soil handling methods (stripping, stockpiling and reinstatement) for any soils that will be disturbed temporarily or permanently by the construction of the Proposed Development;
2) Monitoring procedures required for all soils (disturbed or those left in situ) during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, including details of roles and responsibilities;
3) Restoration methods for land that is disturbed, both temporarily during construction and subsequently returned to agricultural use for the operation of the Proposed Development, and permanently until decommissioning;
4) Any measures required to ameliorate soils to ensure the original land quality is achieved upon reinstatement; and
5) Monitoring required during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

4 Sources of information

4.1 Soil Survey

4.1.1 All of the agricultural land within the Solar Development Sites has been subject to soil and Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey, with representative samples also taken within the Cable Route Corridor. In total, 647 soil profiles have been observed and characterised (although 165 are no longer within the Order Limits). The soils have been described in line with the Soil Survey Field Handbook (Ref 14) which is the recognised source for describing soil profiles and characteristics according to the ALC guidelines (Ref 15).

4.1.2 The following characteristics were assessed for each surveyed location:

1) Depth of horizon;
2) Soil texture;
3) Stone content;
4) Colour (including localised mottling);
5) Consistency;
6) Structural condition; and
7) Free carbonate.

4.1.3 Ten representative topsoil samples were submitted for laboratory determination of particle size distribution (to confirm hand texturing in the field), pH, organic matter content and nutrient contents (Phosphorus (P), Potassium (K) and Magnesium (Mg)). An additional four samples were submitted for particle size distribution only.

4.1.4 The soil characteristics recorded were then analysed according to the ALC guidelines and used to develop the ALC mapping.

5 Description of soils

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 The soil surveys have identified four main soil types within the Order Limits. In summary, these are broadly defined as:

1) Clay loam or clay topsoils over slowly permeable clay subsoils (Soil Type 1);
2) Sandy loam or sandy clay loam topsoils over sandy or coarse loamy subsoils (Soil Type 2);
3) An amalgamation of the clay and sandy soil types (Soil Type 3); and
4) Clay loam or silty clay loam textures throughout, with permeable subsoils (Soil Type 4).

Soil Type 1

5.1.2 The topsoil is dark greyish clay loam or clay, often mottled which is indicative of prolonged soil wetness. The upper subsoil is brown or greyish, mottled clay or occasionally heavy clay loam, and passes to similar or more greyish, dense, clay lower subsoil. The profiles are slowly permeable throughout the subsoils and are imperfectly drained in Wetness Class (WC) III.

Soil Type 2

5.1.3 The topsoil is (very) dark greyish brown sandy loam or sandy clay loam with occasional mottling. The subsoils are mostly brown, coarse loamy textures, with some sandy clay loam and sandy clays also present. The profiles are permeable throughout (WC I, well drained) but, where affected by fluctuating groundwater or where located within a Flood Zone, the WC is II (moderately well drained) or WC III (imperfectly drained).

Soil Type 3

5.1.4 This soil type includes the characteristics of Soil Types 1 and 2 in variable combinations and can be split into three subgroups:

1) clay loam or clay topsoils and upper subsoils passing to sandy lower subsoils;
2) sandy topsoils and upper subsoils passing to clay lower subsoils; and
3) profiles with differing or alternating clayey and sandy lenses.

5.1.5 The soil profiles are moderately well drained in WC II or imperfectly drained in WC III.

Soil Type 4

5.1.6 This soil type is localised to Solar Development Site 2 and includes clay loam or silty clay loam textures throughout the profile. The subsoils are mottled and greyish or brownish. Depending upon the depth to mottling, the soils are well drained in WC I or moderately well drained in WC II.

5.2 Characterisation of soil types

5.2.1 The sensitivity of soils to handling, stockpiling and reuse is determined by their texture, WC and local agro-climatic conditions, particularly the number of days when soils are at field capacity and can accept no further rainfall.

5.2.2 Soils, when in a wet condition, generally have a lower strength and less resistance to compression and smearing than when dry. Lower strength when soils are wet also affects the bearing capacity of soils and their ability to support the safe and efficient operation of machines than when in a dry state.

5.2.3 In terms of resilience and susceptibility to soil wetness, the clay content of the soil largely determines the change from a solid to a plastic state (the water content at which this occurs is the plastic limit). This is the point at which increasing soil wetness reduces the cohesion and strength of the soil and its resistance to compression and smearing.

5.2.4 Whilst coarse textured sandy soils are not inherently plastic when wet, they are still prone to compaction when in a wet condition. Hence, handling all soils when wet will have adverse effects on plant root growth and soil profile permeability.

5.2.5 Significant wind erosion is restricted to a relatively narrow range of susceptible soil types but can result in the loss of topsoil, seeds, seedlings and fertiliser, and cause damage by abrasion to remaining plants. The risk is greatest in spring or early summer on flat or gently sloping land where light textured, bare or sparsely vegetated soil is exposed to strong wind and the surface is dry. The soils most at risk are sands and loamy sands with a high fine sand content, organic sand, sandy and loamy peats and peats. The presence of stones reduces erosion risk to some extent.

5.2.6 The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), (now known as the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (ISEP)) (Ref 12) has characterised the sensitivity of topsoil and subsoil resources based on its resilience to structural damage, as shown in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1 Sensitivity of soil types (from ISEP)

Sensitivity of topsoil and subsoil	Soil texture, Field Capacity Days and Wetness Class
High sensitivity (low resilience to structural damage)	Soils with high clay and silt fractions (clays, silty clays, sandy clays, heavy silty clay loams and heavy clay loams) and organo-mineral and peaty soils where the Field Capacity Days (FCD) are 150 or greater.

Sensitivity of topsoil and subsoil	Soil texture, Field Capacity Days and Wetness Class
	Medium-textured soils (silt loams, medium silty clay loams, medium clay loams and sandy clay loams) where the FCDs are 225 or greater. All soils in WC V or VI.
Medium sensitivity (medium resilience to structural damage)	Clays, silty clays, sandy clays, heavy silty clay loams, heavy clay loams, silty loams and organo-mineral and peaty soils where the FCDs are fewer than 150. Medium-textured soils (silt loams, medium silty clay loams, medium clay loams and sandy clay loams) where FCDs are fewer than 225. Sands, loamy sands, sandy loams and sandy silt loams where the FCDs are 225 or greater or are in WC III and IV.
Low sensitivity (high resilience to structural damage)	Soils with a high sand fraction (sands, loamy sands, sandy loams and sandy silt loams) where the FCDs are fewer than 225 and are in WC I and II.

5.2.7 The number of FCDs within the Order Limits ranges from 122 to 135, which is lower than the average for lowland England (150).

5.2.8 The heavy textured soils of Soil Types 1 and 3, and the medium textures of Soil Type 4, are therefore categorised as medium sensitivity and medium resilience to structural damage, and the sandy textures of Soil Type 2 are low sensitivity and high resilience to structural damage.

5.2.9 There are no soils in WC V or VI within the Order Limits, so no soils are categorised as high sensitivity solely on their wetness class.

6 Soil handling

6.1 Soil handling methods and suitability criteria

6.1.1 Soil stripping, handling, storage and reinstatement procedures should conform with the relevant guidance set out in Section 2 (or any replacement guidance), particularly the Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites (Ref 7) and the Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils in Mineral Workings (Ref 8). Although the Good Practice Guide is designed specifically for mineral workings, it is the replacement of the earlier Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Good Practice Guidance for Handling Soils (Ref 9), and has wider applicability to developments other than mineral workings.

6.1.2 The main impacts on soils during construction occur as a result of trafficking by vehicles and plant, and excavating and handling soils in inappropriate conditions, largely when the ground conditions and soils are too wet. These can both cause damage to soil structure from compaction and smearing, which can be difficult to ameliorate.

6.1.3 The following general good practice measures should be adopted and employed by the contractor to avoid damage to soil structure, and should be included in the detailed SRMP:

1) Suitably qualified soil scientists should be appointed by the contractor to oversee and define all soil management good practice measures set out in this oSRMP;
2) Soil resources should be clearly identified (usually by texture and/or colour) to avoid mixing of topsoils with subsoils;
3) No trafficking of vehicles/plant or materials storage should occur on reinstated soil wherever practicable;
4) Disturbance to soils should be minimised at all stages; for example, avoiding unnecessary repeat movements over the same ground;
5) The movement of vehicles and plant should be restricted to designated access and haul routes, where practicable;
6) Multiple handling of soils should be avoided;
7) Soil handling, including tracking over the soil with machinery, should only take place in suitable soil moisture and weather conditions;
8) Soils should only be stored in designated stockpiles;
9) Long-term (over 6 months) stockpiles should be seeded to prevent wind and water erosion; and
10) Records of soil handling operations and stockpiles should be kept.

6.1.4 Nothing in this oSRMP would prevent the modification or omission of the measures set out in Section 6. This will be confirmed (including confirming the absence or change to such measures would not lead to any materially new or

materially different effects than those reported in the ES) at the time of submission of the detailed SRMP.

Soil moisture conditions for handling

6.1.5 Handling soils in appropriate moisture conditions will avoid damage to soil structure, particularly from compaction and smearing. The soil resource in the Order Limits is identified as medium to low sensitivity, with medium to high resilience to structural damage respectively.

6.1.6 The Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils (Ref 8) provides indicative regional summaries of the optimal times for soil handling based on soil moisture deficits, field capacity days and soil textures. Within this model, the Proposed Development is mostly within climatic zone 3. The indicative months when soils might be in a sufficiently dry condition to move are shown in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1 Indicative months when soils are sufficiently dry for handling (from Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils)

Soil clay content	Handling window
Topsoil (0-30cm)	
<10% clay	Late March to early December
10-27% clay	Early April to early December
>27% clay	Not given
Upper subsoil (30-60cm)	
<10% clay	Early April to early December
10-27% clay	Early April to early December
>27% clay	Late May to early December
Lower subsoil (>60cm)	
<10% clay	Early April to early December
10-18% clay	Early April to early December
18-27% clay	Late May to early December
>27% clay	Late June to mid-October

6.1.7 This guide is intended to assist with planning soil handling and movement operations at an early stage and broad scale for projects. It will also assist in communicating the likely requirements for access with landowners. It should not be relied on in practice when deciding operationally whether to proceed with soil handling on the ground, given the actual variation in weather events and soil moisture conditions from year to year and within years.

6.1.8 Nevertheless, in planning soil handling operations for the Proposed Development, there is generally likely to be a smaller window when the heavier textured subsoils are suitable for handling. For most of the panel areas, the subsoils will not be disturbed and the soils will only be trafficked in suitable soil moisture and weather conditions. For the cable installation, it is important that subsoils are reinstated in a suitably dry condition as otherwise the reinstatement could lead to compaction and poor drainage at depth which would be difficult to

remedy. If soils are wet when due for reinstatement, they should be moved into smaller windrows prior to reinstatement to enable them to dry to a suitable moisture condition.

6.1.9 It is important to note that soil handling operations should be completed in time to enable a new vegetation cover to become established on reinstated land (or on the surface of a stockpile) prior to the onset of winter in order to keep the soils in as dry a condition as possible and prevent erosion over winter.

6.1.10 The above gives a broad indication of when soils are likely to be suitable to be moved but the contractor must set out the procedures for assessing on site whether soils are in a suitably dry condition for handling in the detailed SRMP.

6.1.11 The initial testing should be carried out by professional soil surveyors but suitably trained site operatives can carry out and record the testing during operations, with periodic reviews undertaken by the professional soil surveyors.

6.1.12 The tests should be undertaken in the field, with samples taken from at least five locations in the soil handling area and at each soil horizon to the full depth of the horizon to be stripped. The tests comprise visual examination of the soil and physical assessment of the soil consistency. The criteria are taken from the Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils (Ref 8) and set out below in Table 6-2 and Table 6-3.

Table 6-2 Visual examination test for suitably dry soils (from Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils)

Visual examination	Action
If the soil is wet, films of water are visible on the surface of soil particles or aggregates (e.g. clods or peds)	No soil handling to take place
If a clod or ped is squeezed in the hand and readily deforms into a cohesive 'ball'	No soil handling to take place
If the sample is moist (i.e. there is a slight dampness when squeezed in the hand) but it does not significantly change colour (darken) on further wetting, and clods break up/crumble readily when squeezed in the hand rather than forming into a ball	Soil handling can take place
If the sample is dry, it looks dry and changes colour (darkens) if water is added, and it is brittle	Soil handling can take place

Table 6-3 Consistency test for suitably dry soils (from Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils)

Consistency tests (not applicable to sands and coarse loams)	Action
First test: Attempt to mould soil sample into a ball by hand	
Impossible because soil is too dry and hard	Soil handling can take place
Impossible because soil is too loose and dry	Soil handling can take place
Impossible because the soil is too loose and wet	No soil handling to take place

Consistency tests (not applicable to sands and coarse loams)	Action
Possible - Go to second test	
Second test: Attempt to roll ball into a 3mm diameter thread by hand:	
Impossible because soil crumbles or collapses	Soil handling can take place
Possible	No soil handling to take place

6.1.13 The contractor must also include a rainfall protocol in the detailed SRMP for stopping and restarting soil handling operations. The following guidelines are commonly used and are taken from the Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils (Ref 8), assuming that the soils are in a suitably dry condition (following the above tests in Table 6-2 and Table 6-3) before the rainfall event:

1) In light drizzle, soil handling may continue for up to four hours unless the soils are already at/near to their moisture limit;
2) In light rain, soil handling must cease after 15 minutes; and
3) In heavy rain and intense showers, soil handling shall cease immediately.

6.1.14 Once the rainfall event has passed, the visual examination and consistency tests should be applied to determine if soil handling operations can restart, provided that the ground is free from ponding and ground conditions are safe to do so.

6.1.15 These are general guidelines, and decisions to proceed or stop should be made at the local site level and based on the actual wetness state of the soils being handled.

6.1.16 The tests described above should also be used to inform choices of machinery selection in order to comply with best practice and minimise soil compaction. For example, tracked machinery is more suitable for use on soils that are moist, compared with wheeled vehicles that are not suitable. Vehicle size should also be considered in relation to the number of movements required over particular ground conditions. These principles will be expanded upon in the detailed SRMP.

Preparatory works

6.1.17 Before commencing any work on site that involves vehicles running over ground, the contractor should ensure that the following areas are marked and signposted:

1) Construction exclusion zones around trees;
2) Areas from which soils will be stripped;
3) Locations of topsoil and subsoil stockpiles; and
4) Access routes.

Topsoil stripping methods

6.1.18 Any areas required temporarily for compounds, machinery storage etc., and all areas of soil sealing such as the location of the BESS, substations and access tracks that will remain in place throughout the operation of the Proposed

Development, will normally be stripped of topsoil. Topsoils should be stripped in accordance with good practice as set out in the Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils (Ref 8) or any subsequent revision, and which will be described further in the detailed SRMP.

6.1.19 Likely plant required will include excavators, tracked dozers and dump trucks in accordance with good practice as set out in the Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils (Ref 8) or any subsequent revision.

6.1.20 The locations and depths of topsoils to be stripped will be confirmed in the detailed SRMP as the information becomes available.

Subsoil stripping methods

6.1.21 Subsoils should be stripped in accordance with good practice as set out in the Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils (Ref 8) or any subsequent revision, and which will be described further in the detailed SRMP.

6.1.22 Likely plant required will include excavators, tracked dozers and dump trucks in accordance with good practice as set out in the Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils (Ref 8) or any subsequent revision.

6.1.23 The locations and depths of subsoils to be stripped will be confirmed in the detailed SRMP as the information becomes available.

6.2 Stockpiling

6.2.1 The locations of topsoil and subsoil stockpiles will be determined in the detailed SRMP as the information becomes available. In line with Defra's Construction Code of Practice (Ref 7), stockpiles will not be located next to water courses, within the root- or crown-spread of trees, or where they are at risk of being disturbed by subsequent construction works~~...~~. The siting of stockpiles will be subject to the following additional controls:

a) A minimum offset of 10m from the bank top for all watercourses, or 50m for Canal and River Trust watercourses, and their associated riparian zones;
b) Not within ecological buffer zones as set out in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Iteration [REP2-029]**, Table 3-3, for example not within 30m of a badger sett;
c) Only within fields where ecological pre-commencement or pre-clearance checks have been undertaken and where an absence of ecologically sensitive features such as ground-nesting bird nests and badger setts has been confirmed by the Ecological Clerk of Works. Should such features be identified, appropriate buffers should be adhered to in line with the parameters as set out in ES Volume 1, Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Iteration [REP2-029], Table 3-3 in determining stockpile locations.;
d) Not within the Landscape and Visual buffer zones as set out in **ES Volume 1, Chapter 3: Alternatives and Design Iteration [REP2-029]**,

Table 3-3, for example not within 30m of residential properties or 15m of a Public Right of Way; and

e) Not within areas identified for archaeological mitigation in the form of preservation in-situ. Stockpiles may be located in areas identified for archaeological mitigation by record once the area has been signed off by the Archaeological Clerk of Works

6.2.2 In addition, stockpiles will not be located in Flood Zones 2 and 3, although some temporary short term storage of soil set aside for backfilling may occur during construction for example, in association with cable trenching works, and taking account of other control measures set out in the detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan.

~~6.2.2~~6.2.3 Stockpiles should be built according to the good practice methodologies as set out in the Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils (Ref 8) or any subsequent revision, and which will be described further in the detailed SRMP. Best practice principles include ensuring that topsoil and subsoil material is stockpiled separately, that stockpiles do not exceed 4m in height, that side slopes do not exceed 1 in 2, and that if stockpiles are to be in place for more than 6 months, they are seeded with an appropriate seed mix.

~~6.2.3~~6.2.4 Stockpiled soils may need to be sampled and the nutrient status ascertained in order to inform potential suitability for re-use.

~~6.2.4~~6.2.5 For each stockpile a plan must be kept and maintained, detailing:

1) Material type (topsoil or subsoil);
2) Date(s) when soil was stockpiled and weather conditions;
3) Volume of material;
4) Stockpile location;
5) Source location of material; and
6) Management of stockpile, particularly in respect of weed control and other biosecurity considerations.

6.3 Reinstatement

6.3.1 Reinstatement of soils that were stripped during construction activities, including those from the BESS location, substations, temporary compound areas and access tracks, that have been stockpiled, should involve excavating and replacing the soil according to good practice guidance set out in the Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils (Ref 8) or any subsequent revision, and which will be described further in the detailed SRMP.

6.3.2 All stripped soils shall be reinstated, either during construction or at decommissioning. There will be no surplus of soil material in the Solar Development Sites remaining at decommissioning. Land within the Solar Development Sites will be reinstated such that it is able to achieve its original use, noting that the landowner will decide on the actual end use.

6.3.3 Reinstatement of the soils along the cable route should occur as soon as reasonably practicable after installation of the cable, and as agreed with the landowner, such that the soil handling conditions are likely to be similar at the point of excavation and reinstatement. Soils disturbed for the installation of the cables will be reinstated to the ALC baseline.

6.3.4 Liaison will take place between the designated Agricultural Liaison Officer (ALO), contractor and landowners to agree the timing and management of the reinstatement of soil over the cable.

6.3.5 For soil replacement, the use of dozers should be confined to reinstating the topsoil only since any compaction in the topsoil can be readily addressed by normal cultivation with standard agricultural equipment such as harrows; subsoils should be loose tipped in accordance with Sheet D of the Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils (Ref 8) in order to optimise the infiltration of water, air and roots through the replaced subsoil.

6.3.6 The soils must be reinstated in order, i.e. subsoil first then topsoil. Normally, any surplus material from the cable void that would need to be removed from site would be subsoil, retaining the full topsoil resource on site, although there may be occasions where the landowner is seeking to restore land to a particular habitat that requires less topsoil resource. These matters and the process for agreement with landowners would be set out in the detailed SRMP.

6.3.7

6.4 Monitoring procedures during construction

6.4.1 This section of the detailed SRMP will set out the monitoring procedures to be included as a minimum during construction.

6.4.2 Monitoring procedures during construction will apply to all soils that are to be reinstated, for example those disturbed for compounds, access ways and the cables.

6.4.3 Guidelines for monitoring the soil resource during construction will be included in the detailed SRMP. Continuous, live monitoring by the contractor of soil handling/weather conditions, as well as visual monitoring of ground conditions, will be required.

6.4.4 Compaction will be monitored during construction by inspecting the soil following installation of piles but prior to fixing the panels. If compaction is identified, remedial action must be taken while the ground remains accessible to the machinery required to relieve compaction and before the panels are fixed. Amelioration of compaction will ordinarily be undertaken using standard farming or horticultural equipment, such as a small tractor with a subsoiler attached.

6.4.5 Monitoring the soil resource during construction will primarily involve the contractor who is responsible for ensuring the detailed SRMP is adhered to. Periodic monitoring by a suitably qualified soil practitioner may also be required.

6.4.6 All soils reinstated over cables will be assessed by or on behalf of the contractor and signed off by the contractor to record that the soils and land are in a suitable condition to hand back to the landowner. Site meetings will take place with the landowner following completion of the works to confirm that the landowner is reasonably satisfied with the reinstatement of land. Any defects identified and agreed between the landowner, contractor and ALO will be ameliorated by the contractor prior to handing back the land.

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