

# The Drovers Solar Farm

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## **Appendix 6.6: Extracts from Relevant Landscape Character Assessments**

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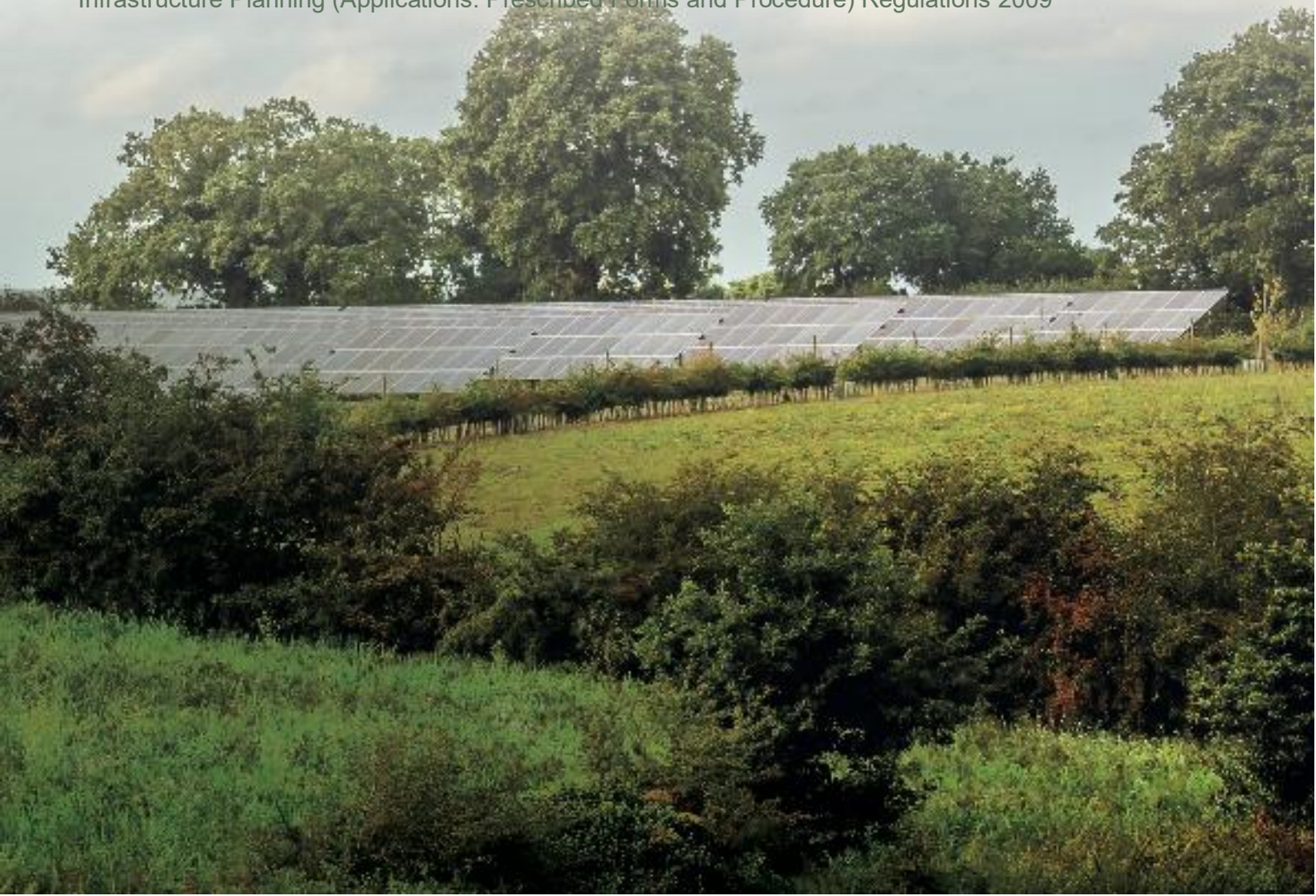
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## 6.0 Appendix 6.6 Extracts from Relevant Landscape Character Assessments

### 6.1. The Breckland Landscape Character Assessment (2007)

6.1.1. The Breckland Landscape Character Assessment (2007) is the primary landscape character assessment used to inform the LVIA. The following landscape character areas are scoped into the assessment and are predominantly/wholly outside the Order limits. Additional detail for each LCA is included below.

#### B7: River Nar Tributary Farmland LCA (LCT Settled Tributary Farmland)

6.1.2. Relevant extracts from the overall description of B7: River Nar Tributary Farmland LCA are as follows:

- *“Lowestoft till glacial deposits give rise to a subtly undulating landform interrupted by occasional shallow dry valleys and tributaries.*
- *Alluvial deposits are a feature of the tributaries and dry valleys. Clayey Argillic brown earths dominate the character area and support a range of arable crops.*
- *The topography is gently undulating and sloping in places, particularly where associated with the course of the Nar, and ranges from 45-75m AOD.*
- *Due to landform and the varied range of landcover elements, views are essentially framed and intermittent, with wooded skylines often evident.*
- *A diverse range of landcover elements includes historic parkland (Lexham Hall, a large part of which lies in the adjoining River Nar character area), mixed plantation and grazing pasture, together with arable agriculture in the eastern part of the character area.*
- *Enclosure hedges with hedgerow trees define the medium-large scale arable field network, with some post and rail fenced boundaries associated with the Lexham Hall Estate.*
- *A number of Sites within the character area are designated as County Wildlife Sites in view of their local biodiversity interest. These include the wooded common at Bilney Common and woodland at Fox Covert.*

- *Settlement pattern is often nucleated and centred on an historic village core, as at Litcham and Tittleshall, and more occasionally linear, as at Stanfield. In addition there is a scattered distribution of small farmsteads associated with the narrow rural road network.*
- *The range of landcover elements creates a distinctly textured, varied landscape, which is of a broadly unified and tamed, estate and agricultural character.*
- *Opportunities for recreation and access are provided by open access land at Litcham Common (Nature Reserve), in addition to a network of rights of way”*

6.1.3. With regard to its perceptual and visual qualities, the LCA states that “This is a varied landscape which is essentially unified by the undulating landform and the managed estate and farmland character. The well managed, designed landscape of Lexham Hall is an important and distinctive element of the local landscape, and its influence is extended through blocks of mixed estate plantation woodland”. It then goes on to state that “views are contained by landform and by woodland vegetation, either as plantation woodland or wooded field boundary strips and field boundary hedgerows. A wooded skyline is evident at points, with scots pine belts limiting instances of intervisibility with adjacent landscapes”.

6.1.4. The LCA identifies key landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to its character:

- *“Pine belts which are historic boundary features;*
- *Intact field boundary hedgerows which indicate the Enclosure field pattern;*
- *Small scale contained settlements of vernacular style and materials”*

- 6.1.5. Key visual sensitivities of the LCA include “the prominent wooded skylines and the views across to Lexham Hall parkland and the course of the Nar within the adjacent character area.”
- 6.1.6. The section of this LCA within the study area, adjacent to the east of the Site, displays some of its key characteristics and sensitivities such as the wooded skylines and enclosure hedgerows associated with nearby agricultural fields.
- 6.1.7. The LCA provides some relevant landscape management guidelines:
- *“Conserve remaining areas of heathland and common through appropriate management, investigating the viability of traditional management techniques such as grazing;*
  - *Conserve and enhance the tributary systems and associated vegetation;*
  - *Enhance and reinforce existing field boundaries with an appropriate species rich native hedgerow mix, gapping up with native species where appropriate to promote habitat connectivity;*
  - *Explore opportunities for woodland and heathland creation, both to connect to existing and to satisfy the objectives of Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.”*
- 6.1.8. Relevant development considerations associated with the LCA include:
- *“Ensure that wooded skylines are conserved when planning for change;*
  - *Any new development should respond to local vernacular in terms of materials and scale, and should seek to maintain the existing tightly nucleated settlement pattern.”*

#### F1 River Nar Valley LCA (LCT Chalk Rivers)

- 6.1.9. Relevant extracts from the overall description of F1: River Nar Valley LCA are as follows:
- *“The River Nar arises from chalk springs follows a meandering course through the underlying chalk bedrock and later glacial drift, with alluvial deposits along the floodplain.*
  - *A narrow floodplain with valley sides rising to approximately 50m, with this contour approximately defining the crests of the valley sides.*

- *Visual containment is provided by the valley landform and landcover such as hedgerows and woodland associated with parkland.*
- *Grazing pasture line the valley floor interspersed with areas of parkland, wet meadow and wet woodland.*
- *Small remnant blocks of heathland e.g. Newton Heath occupy areas of sandy soils on the valley sides.*
- *Woodland associated with Lexham Hall, West Lexham Hall and Narborough Hall create a wooded character, views to the wooded skyline being distinctive.*
- *The course of the River Nar and sections of the floodplain are designated as SSSI due to its value as a chalk river habitat.*
- *The Nar Valley Way is an important recreational feature providing access to the river and connectivity, via the rights of way network with surrounding landscapes.*
- *Settlement density is low being characterised by isolated Halls and farm houses, with small villages generally set above flood level at the valley crest as at East Lexham, West Lexham, South Acre and Castle Acre (the latter in King's Lynn and West Norfolk)...*
- *Opportunities for recreation and access are facilitated by the Nar Valley Way which intersects the centre of the character area, in addition to a network of rights of way."*

6.1.10. Regarding its perceptual and visual qualities, the LCA states that "This is a varied landscape which is essentially unified by the valley landform and consistent land use of pasture and woodland. The well managed and designed parkland landscapes of Lexham Hall and Narford Hall are an important and distinctive element of the valley; their influence is extended through blocks of mixed estate plantation woodland. The valley has a strong, rural character". It goes on to state that "Views are generally contained by landform and by woodland vegetation, either as plantation woodland or field boundary hedgerows. The skyline is characteristically wooded, although views to landmark features such as Litcham church tower are also a feature."

6.1.11. The LCA outlines key landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to its character, which include:

- *"The grazed pastures and meadow on the valley floor;*

- *The chalk river and associated biodiversity interest*
- *Riffles, pools and meanders associated with the natural river course;*
- *Wet woodland and carrs on the banks of the river;*
- *The remnant areas of heathland at Litcham Common and Newton Heath;*
- *The designed, historic settings of Lexham Hall and Narford Hall;*
- *Views to a generally wooded skyline punctuated by views of Litcham and West Lexham church towers.*
- *The Nar Valley Way which has a high recreational value;*
- *The low settlement density and tranquil character.”*

6.1.12. Regarding the key visual sensitivities of the LCA, it states “The containment provided by the landform and land covers allow for only occasional longer views. The glimpsed views and setting of landmark features” (...) “are sensitive as are the views to an undeveloped wooded skyline. Views of the designed, historic landscapes of Lexham and Narford Hall are a further important feature.”

6.1.13. The LCA identifies a strategy to conserve the rural character of the valley. The landscape management guidelines are as follows:

- *“Conserve existing wet woodland adjacent to the River Nar;*
- *Conserve and manage areas of pasture and meadow along the valley floor;*
- *Conserve and enhance remnant areas of heathland and commons and seek opportunities to expand this habitat;*
- *Conserve and enhance the parkland landscapes associated with the Halls;*
- *Safeguard water flows and water quality in the chalk river to conserve the habitats value of the river and maintain the pastoral character of the valley floor and floodplain habitats.”*

6.1.14. Relevant development considerations associated with the LCA are to:

- *“Conserve the sparsely settled character of small villages and hamlets. Maintain the small scale villages and seek to avoid further expansion onto the valley floor;*

- *Conserve the undeveloped valley crests*

## 6.2. King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2007)

- 6.2.1. The King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2007) includes surrounding landscape areas which have been characterised within the wider 3km study area. A number of LCTs and LCAs detailed within this assessment about the Order limits. Whilst the LCTs and LCAs within this assessment are not situated within the Site itself, they are situated within the study area.

G3 Gayton and East Winch LCA (LCT Farmland with Woodland and Wetland)

- 6.2.2. This LCA lies adjacent to a section of the north of the Site, and contains the village of West Acre. The LCA is described as encompassing *“a fairly inconsistent gently undulating landscape of farmland, (plantation) woodland and wetland”*.
- 6.2.3. It goes on to state that “This area encompasses a small-scale landscape exhibiting a variety of different habitats, mainly agricultural fields (combination of arable and pasture) in a colourful mosaic of generally medium sized fields, delineated by a variety of field boundaries, including hedgerows and post and wire fencing. Farmland is interspersed with fairly large (plantation) woodland (deciduous, coniferous and mixed) copses, which are concentrated mainly to the eastern and southern edges of the area. Areas of open water are also an important feature, associated with the valley of the River Nar to the south e.g. (Pentney Lakes Leisure Park to the south). Settlement is relatively scarce and consists of a number of small villages and hamlets, including East Winch, Gayton and Pentney, with village Halls often prominent features within the villages. Village churches form landmarks within views throughout the area. The character of the views across the area varies greatly, from enclosed and channelled by paths in the woodland to open (although frequently limited by blocks) across farmland. Built character in the villages is a mixture of flint, mainly red brickwork, carstone, slate and pantiles. Several farmsteads are dotted along the mainly rural roads”.
- 6.2.4. The relevant ‘inherent landscape sensitivities’ of the LCA are as follows:
- *“Strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout the character area.*



- *Diversity of character with patchwork of (wet) (plantation) woodland, farmland and wetland.*
- *Contrast between open panoramic views across farmland and beyond to adjacent character areas and more enclosed within woodland.”*
- *Relevant landscape planning guidelines associated with the LCA are listed below:*
- *“Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity*
- *Seek to conserve panoramic and open views the area and beyond to adjacent landscape areas, especially toward the open inland marshes”*

#### 19 Little Massingham and Castle Acre LCA (LCT Rolling Open Farmland)

- 6.2.5. This LCA is located close to the north eastern and northern part of the Site, and comprises elevated land to the north of the Nar Valley.
- 6.2.6. The LCA states that “this area of open farmland is characterised by strongly rolling topography. The landscape consists of predominantly arable farmland with a large regular field pattern broken up by belts and copses of mixed and coniferous woodland and plantations. Generally mature intact hedgerows with oak hedgerow trees demarcate field boundaries. Narrow country lanes cross the rural landscape providing access to the villages and isolated dwellings. The roads are often lined with mature trees that form canopies across the roads creating a sense of enclosure. Amongst the patchwork of fields lie scattered farmsteads and cottages. Settlement is concentrated in the southeastern corner of the area in Castle Acre with other villages in the area including the edge of Little Massington in the northeast and Gayton Thorpe in the southwest”.
- 6.2.7. The LCA goes on to state that “just to the south of the character area, the valley of the River Nar meanders across the landscape. Water meadows associated with the river corridors also contribute to distinctive character. The area has a very strong sense of tranquillity and sense of isolation.”
- 6.2.8. The relevant ‘inherent landscape sensitivities’ of the LCA are as follows:
- *“Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.*
  - *Landscape setting of the villages.*
  - *Strong sense of tranquillity and isolation throughout the area.*



- *Strong sense of openness, with open views over the farmland.*
- *Strong recognisable sense of place.*
- *Mature corridor of the River Nar (to the south of the character area) and associated habitats.”*

6.2.9. Relevant landscape planning guidelines associated with the LCA are listed below:

- *“Seek to conserve and enhance the existing belts and copses of plantation woodland and other tall vegetation within the area and conserve the landscape setting of Massingham and West Acre*
- *Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.”*