



COTMOOR SOLAR FARM ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT: NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

PREPARED BY PEGASUS GROUP | DECEMBER 2021
P18-2917_28 | ON BEHALF OF JBM SOLAR PROJECTS 6 LTD

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INTRODUCTION

JBM Solar Projects 6 Ltd (the “Applicant”) is seeking planning permission for the **“Construction of a solar farm and battery stations with all the associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure.”**

The development would have the capacity of 49.9MW solar scheme and would be on the Site for a period of 40 years. After this the solar farm and batteries would be removed. The only item that would remain on the Site would be the improvements that are proposed for the 132kV substation. These will remain as the National Grid operator (DNO) will have “adopted” these facilities and will be using them to run their electricity grid system in the local area for the 132kV line.

The Application Site (“Site”) is on land north of the village of Halloughton, Southwell Nottinghamshire. The Site lies within the administrative area of Newark & Sherwood District Council (the “Council”).

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) accompanies as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that was completed at the request of the Secretary of State (SoS). This request was made when the Council refused planning permission for the solar farm scheme and the Applicant appealed this planning decision. To make this request the SoS issued a “Screening Directive” using Regulation 5(6) (a) of the EIA Regulations 2017. The EIA is presented in an Environmental Statement (ES). The ES presents the findings of the EIA which has been completed following the Screening Directive of the SoS.

The ES considers two layouts of the Proposed Development of the Solar Farm and Battery Stations. The first layout is the design that was considered and refused by the Council. This design is known as the “Refused Design” in this document. The second is an alternative design that has removed some areas of the solar panels. This second design is known as the “Alternative Design” in this document. The Alternative Design has been consulted on and presented to the Planning Inspector, but to date, he has not determined if he will consider the Alternative Design in the appeal process. In order to ensure this ES is complete both designs have been considered.

The full findings of these studies and the overall ES are presented in a comprehensive set of documents that can be viewed at the offices of the Council. Additional copies of the NTS (no charge) and the ES (£100) +postage are available from:

Pegasus Group
Pegasus House
Querns Business Centre
Whitworth Road
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 1RT
Tel: 01285 641717

The complete ES can also be obtained in CD format for £10 from the same address. Please quote ref P18-2917 when requesting a copy of these documents.

KEY

 Site Boundary

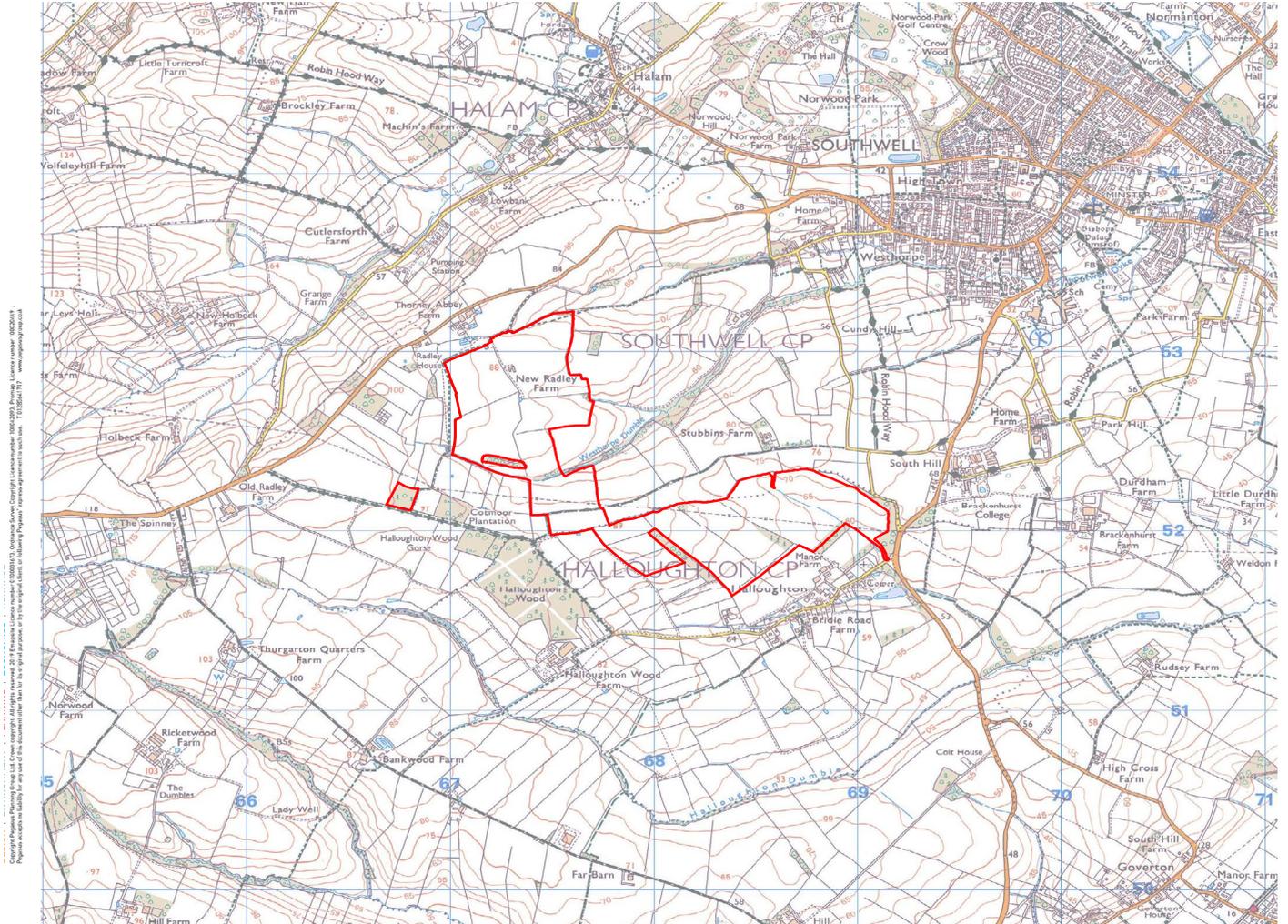


FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION PLAN

ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The purpose of EIA is to identify and assess the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the environment for both the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. The ES provides data to identify and assess any environmental effects resulting from the Proposed Development which are likely to be of significance and provides a description of the measures proposed in order to avoid, reduce or remedy, if possible significant adverse effects.

The EIA Regulations stipulate that an ES should, where possible, identify, describe and assess the likely significant effects of a development on the environment, Therefore, the ES identifies and assesses the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development in relation to both the construction, operational and, if needed, the decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development. Environmental effects have been evaluated with reference to definitive standards and legislation where available. Where it has not been possible to quantify effects, qualitative assessments have been carried out, based on available knowledge and professional judgement.

The topics that have been included within the ES are:

- Landscape and Visual Impacts
- Major Accidents and Disasters ;and
- Agricultural Resources

These topics were highlighted in the Screening Directive from the SoS which requested that an EIA accompany this planning appeal. with The Screening Directive was issued in November 2021.

CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

The EIA Regulations requires that an “outline of the main alternatives studies by the applicant and an indication of the main reasons for this choice, taking into account the environmental effects” are included within the ES.

The alternatives to the Proposed Development which the Applicant has considered include ‘No Development’ and ‘Alternative Designs’.

The ‘No Development’ alternative refers to the option of leaving the Site in its current state. If the Proposed Development were not to proceed, it is likely that the Application Site would continue to be used as agricultural land. It has been considered that the ‘no development’ alternative would result in the loss of an opportunity to provide a new renewable energy development and contribute to sustainable development in accordance with local and national policy.

For the ‘Alternative Designs’ the constraints and opportunities presented by the Application Site have been used to inform the design principles and design evolution, which in turn have helped to refine and structure the Proposed Development including the possible mitigation and enhancements. A number of mitigation measures have been implemented during the iterative design process and these relate to the reduction in the size of the scheme and increased in native planting at key boundaries of the Site.

When the application was first submitted to the Council July 2020 consideration had been made of the various design constraints that effect solar farm design. These items include, but are not limited to:

- Available grid connection and capacity;
- Topography;
- Potential for screening by existing vegetation;
- Location in relation to environmental designations;
- Located on lower grade agricultural land (Grade 3b);
- Located on land with a low probability of flooding;
- Site or adjacent features provide opportunities to improve the ecological value of the site; and

This design can be seen as **Figure 2**.



FIGURE 5: ALTERNATIVE DESIGN

CUMULATIVE ISSUES

In the process of preparing for the Planning Appeal, the Applicant has prepared a further scheme design which can be seen in **Figure 5** which is being known as the 'Alternative Design' within the ES.

The amendments to the design within the Alternative Design to the Refused Design are as follows:

- Removal of panels and associated infrastructure from a central field
- Belt of new trees are proposed within an existing hedgerow which encloses a section of the Site boundary to the southwest.
- Additional native hedgerow with semi-mature hedgerow trees is proposed between the northern extent of the Proposed Development and PRoW FP43.
- Removing panels and associated infrastructure from the north-eastern corner of the northern most field to facilitate the 're-wilding' of this area.

These changes were presented to further reduce the visual effects upon houses and residents at the western extent of Halloughton and users of the Public Right of Way (PRoW) Bridleway (Ref Halloughton BW3) and to pull the development back from the Halloughton Conservation Area. The new tree planting was included in the design to aid in the filtering and obscuring views of the Proposed Development from locations on PRoW footpath (Ref: Southwell FP42) to the southwest of the Site.

There are no cumulative sites that have been considered within the ES.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Site is made up of thirteen fields located to the north of the village of Halloughton. A separate area of woodland, which will be unaffected by the development, but improved for biodiversity, lies to the west of the Site.

The Site is within both the parish of Halloughton and the parish of Southwell. The southern portion of the Site is located to the north of Halloughton within the Parish of Halloughton. This section of the Site comprises of five large linear fields with boundaries at their edge, including copses at the western part of the southern boundary. Overhead electricity lines and pylons cross this parcel in a east-west direction. The built-up area of Halloughton lies close to the southern boundary of the parcel and the A612 Highcross Hill forms part of the eastern boundary. Agricultural land surrounds the parcel in other directions.

The northern section of Site is further away from Halloughton and largely lies within the parish of Southwell, comprising seven separate fields of various sizes. The parcel includes buildings associated with New Radley Farm, which has its own access track from the north. Bridleway (BW74) runs from the north-eastern edge of Halloughton Wood in a broadly east to west direction through a small portion of the Site. An overhead electricity line runs east to west through the southern section of the Site and Westhorpe Dumble crosses the Site in the same direction just to the north of this.

The whole of the Site is outside any of the defined settlement areas and is therefore defined as being within the open countryside for the purpose of planning.

Within the Development Plan for Newark and Sherwood, there is a Site of Interest in Nature Conservation running in a broad east to west direction through the northern part of the Site. Additional Sites of Interest in Nature Conservation are located in close proximity to the western boundary of the Site.

An area of Ancient Woodland 'Halloughton Wood' is located c150m to the west of the Site at its closet point.

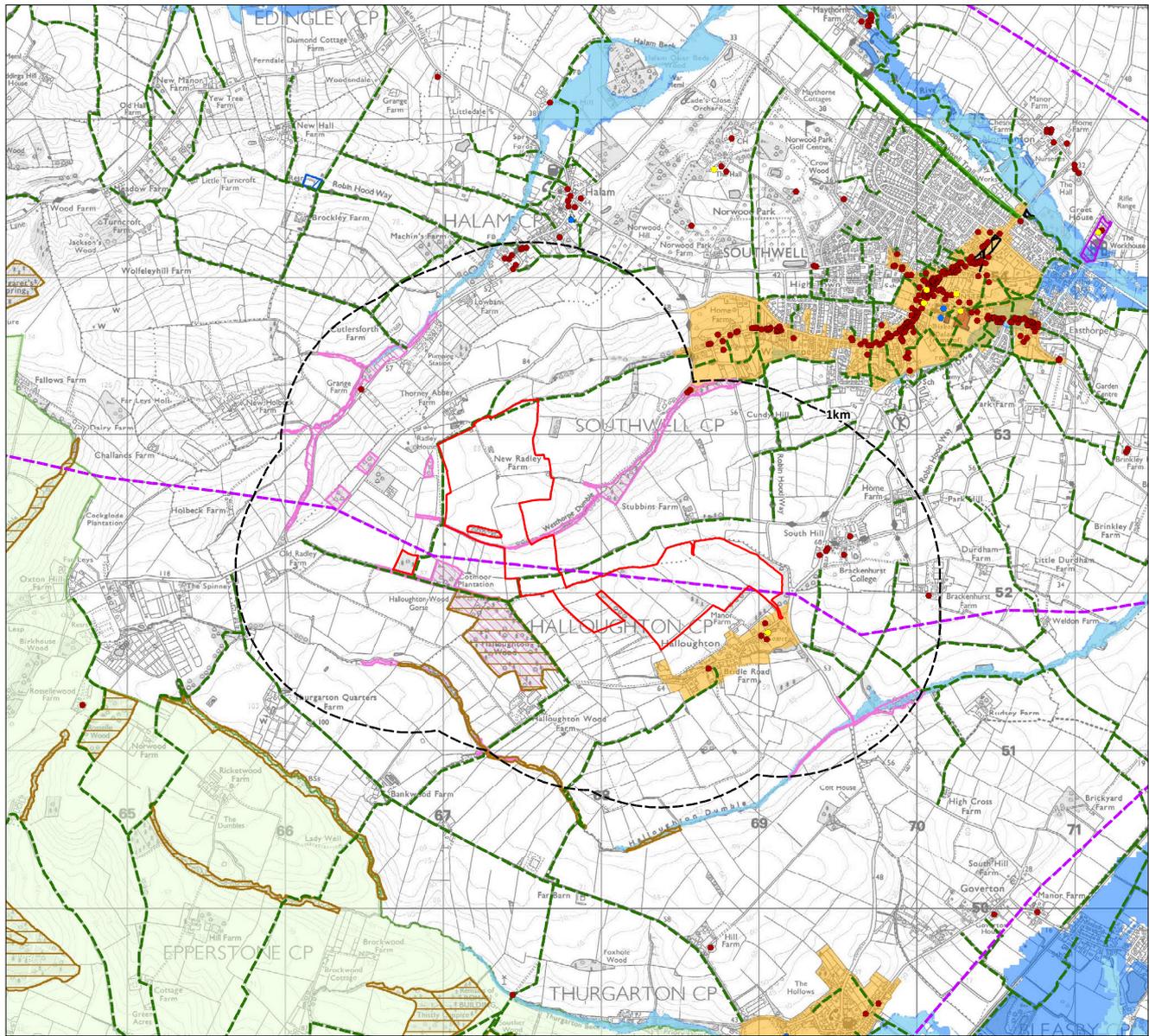
The built-up area of Halloughton lies close to the southern boundary and the eastern site boundary lies adjacent to Highcross Hill (A612) and Stubbins Lane. A number of isolated properties are located in close proximity to the application boundary including; New Radley Farm and Stubbins Farm.

With regard to nearby designations, much of Halloughton is defined as a Conservation Area, including four Grade II and one Grade II* Listed Buildings. Further Grade II Listed Buildings are located to the east. Southwell to the north-east of the proposed Site contains a large Conservation Area and numerous Listed Buildings.

All these designations and landscape assets can be seen on the **Environmental Designations Plan Figure 6**.

KEY

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Site Boundary |  Open Access Land / Registered Common Land |  Registered Park / Garden |  Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) |  EA Flood Zone 3 |
|  Overhead Line |  Grade I Listed Building |  Scheduled Monument |  Ancient Woodland |  EA Flood Zone 2 |
|  Public Right of Way |  Grade II* Listed Building |  Conservation Area |  Site of Interest in Nature Conservation (within 1km) | |
|  Green Belt |  Grade II Listed Building |  Local Nature Reserve (LNR) | | |



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FIGURE 6: ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATIONS PLAN



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This application seeks planning consent for the following scheme.

“Construction of a solar farm and battery stations with all associated works, equipment and necessary infrastructure.”

This development would have the capacity of a 49.9MW scheme for a temporary period of 40 years. The exception to this is the DNO substation that would remain on the Site permanently.

The proposed solar farm will involve the temporary change of use of the land due to the time restricted nature of the development, the agricultural use will be retained in the long term. The Site will also be capable to dual use farming during its operational period, with small livestock able to graze the land between and amongst the panels.

In addition, the minimal physical intrusion of the development itself will mean that the panels can be removed after their 40-year lifetime and the land will revert swiftly to full agricultural use. The inclusion of battery storage within the development will increase the effectiveness of the Proposed Development, balancing the release of electricity produced from a renewable source to the grid.

Access

The Site access is located off Bridle Road Farm in the south-eastern corner of the Site. The access connects into the wider highway network via Highcross Hill Road. The Site access will serve the whole of the Proposed Development and will be connected to the internal access track on the Site. Following completion of construction, a double width farm gate will be installed at the access point that adjoins the public highway in order to retain the traditional feel in Halloughton village. The solar farm security gate will be set back from the public highway and so any views of this gateway will be very limited.

There is Public Bridleway (BW74) which broadly runs through a small portion of the centre of the Site in an east-west direction. This bridleway commences at the north-eastern edge of Halloughton Wood and continues towards Southwell. Additionally, a public footpath runs along the northern site boundary and in close proximity to the western site boundary (Ref: Southwell FP43). It is proposed to retain both of the existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in their current locations.

Tracks and Fencing

A network of internal access tracks around the solar farm will be laid to allow vehicle access to the supporting equipment to allow for maintenance. The layout and the extent of the roads is limited to that which is necessary to provide access and maximise efficiency. The tracks will have a width of 3.5m and will be constructed with crushed aggregate.

The perimeter fencing and pole-mounted CCTV system serves an important purpose in protecting the valuable equipment on the Site. The fence height will be 2m in height with CCTV cameras located on poles (3m in height) at suitable locations along the perimeter fence.

Solar Arrays and Supporting Equipment

The solar panels will be placed in rows, allowing for boundary landscaping, perimeter fencing and access across the Site. The PV panels will be laid out in rows across the Site in an east-west orientation and face to the south at a maximum 25 degrees from the horizontal to maximise efficiency, with a maximum height of less than 3m. The arrays are spaced out to avoid any shadowing effect from one panel to another with topography dictating exact row spacing that can range between approximately 4m and 6.5m. The arrangement of the solar PV panels on the frames will either be 3 panels in portrait or 6 panels in landscape. The foundations to the solar panels will be a piled foundation, the depth of each of these piles will depend on the exact soil conditions.

Battery Stations

The battery stations will be located throughout the Site. Each station comprises of a containerised battery unit/inverter, DC-DC converter boxes and ancillary equipment.

DNO Substation

A 132kV substation will be required in order to connect the Proposed Development to the local electricity grid which will be operated by the DNO. This will remain on the Site after the lifetime of the solar farm. The location of the substation is shown on **Figures 4 and 5**. The 132kV substation will become part of the local electricity distribution network. There will be a need for one new overhead pylon for the connection to the DNO substation. The pylon will be of a similar size and scale to the pylon already present at the substation.

Landscaping

The layout of the development ensures that there will be minimal works to or loss of the existing trees and hedgerow within the Site. The layout of the Site has been designed to incorporate the existing trees and boundary vegetation into the scheme, as a result no trees, tree groups or hedgerows will require to be removed in their entirety. The removals that are required are located at the site access and for the access tracks within the Site where there were no existing gaps that could be utilised.

Where required gaps in hedgerows will be repaired with appropriate native hedgerow species supplemented with native tree planting to reflect the local landscape character.

Site Design

The ES has assessed two different site designs/layouts. These are as follows:

- Site Layout Cotmoor Solar Farm Refused Scheme (Figure 4)
- Site Layout Cotmoor Solar Farm Alternative Scheme (Figure 5)

Construction, Operation and Decommissioning

It is expected that the solar farm will be operating for 40 years. It is anticipated that the construction period will last for 26 weeks. The existing road network can accommodate the extra traffic from construction over this period of time. During construction there will be 24-hour security to ensure that the Site remains secure and all best practice guidelines for the construction industry will be followed on Site.

At the end of its operational lifetime the development would be decommissioned and all solar panels and supporting structures will be removed from the Site. At this point, the Site could be returned to agricultural use.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

This landscape assessment has considered the potential significant effects of the Proposed Development on the existing landscape character, landscape components and features, and visual amenity. The Proposed Development (Refused and Alternative Scheme) would be located on agricultural land and would introduce solar farm renewable energy infrastructure into the landscape.

Assessment of Likely Effects

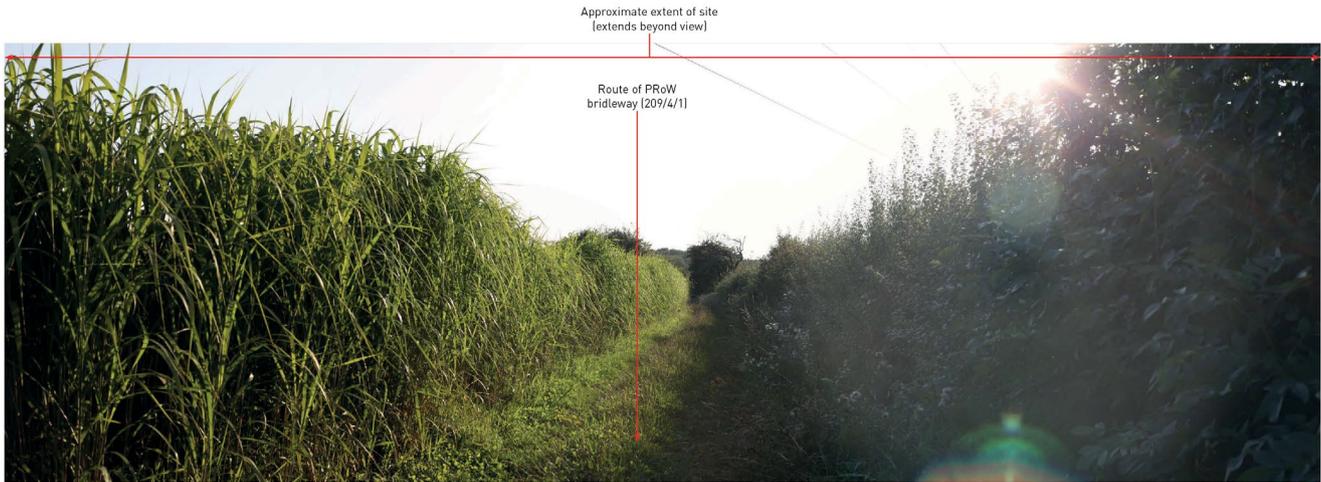
The Proposed Development (Refused and Alternative Schemes) would not materially affect the sense of tranquillity or other perceptual elements associated with the local countryside in terms of noise and activity, throughout the operation phase. There will be some limited affect upon tranquillity during the construction and decommissioning phases but it would be limited and localised. It is proposed that the construction process would take 26 weeks to complete.

The Proposed Development (Refused and Alternative Scheme) also presents opportunities to deliver enhanced landscape interest by converting land currently used for arable farming to pasture and managing it in such a way as to promote biodiversity in line with the guidelines for the Wooded Village Farmlands RLCT.

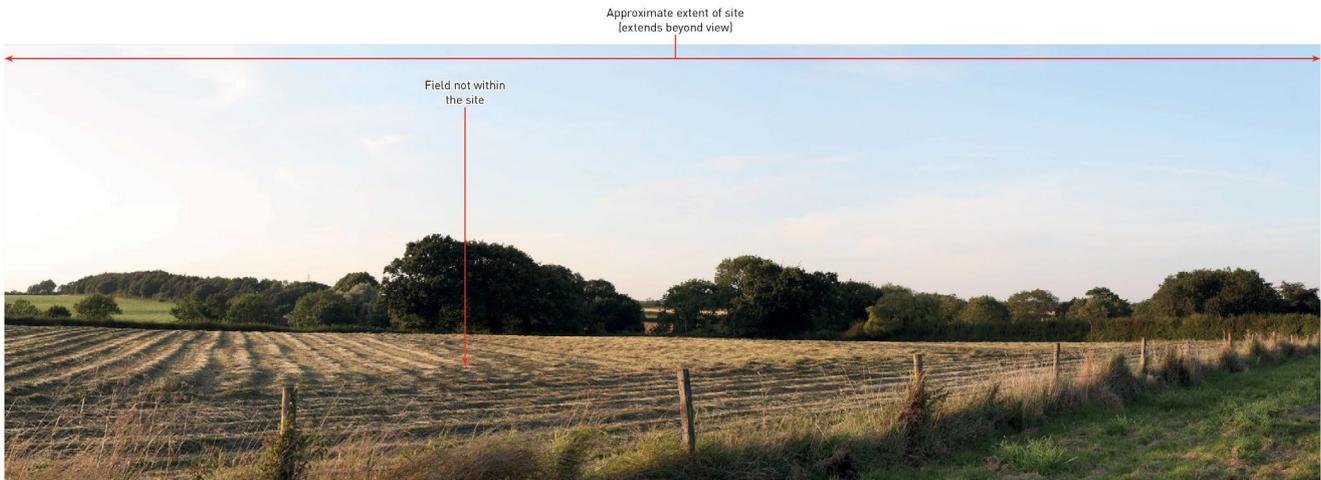
With regards to landscape character as a whole at a national, regional, and local level, the Proposed Development (Refused and Alternative Scheme) would have a relatively localised and time-limited effect upon the landscape. There would be a neutral effect upon the landscape character beyond the Site. Within the Site, the fieldscape character would continue to remain but would incorporate the solar farm.

In terms of visual amenity, there would be no one location where the whole of the solar farm can be seen. The Proposed Development can only be seen from a few viewpoints within the extensive Public Right of Way network. Where the solar farm can be seen only small elements of the proposal would be evident and would generally form a small element in any view. The geographical extent of any visibility would be very limited and localised.

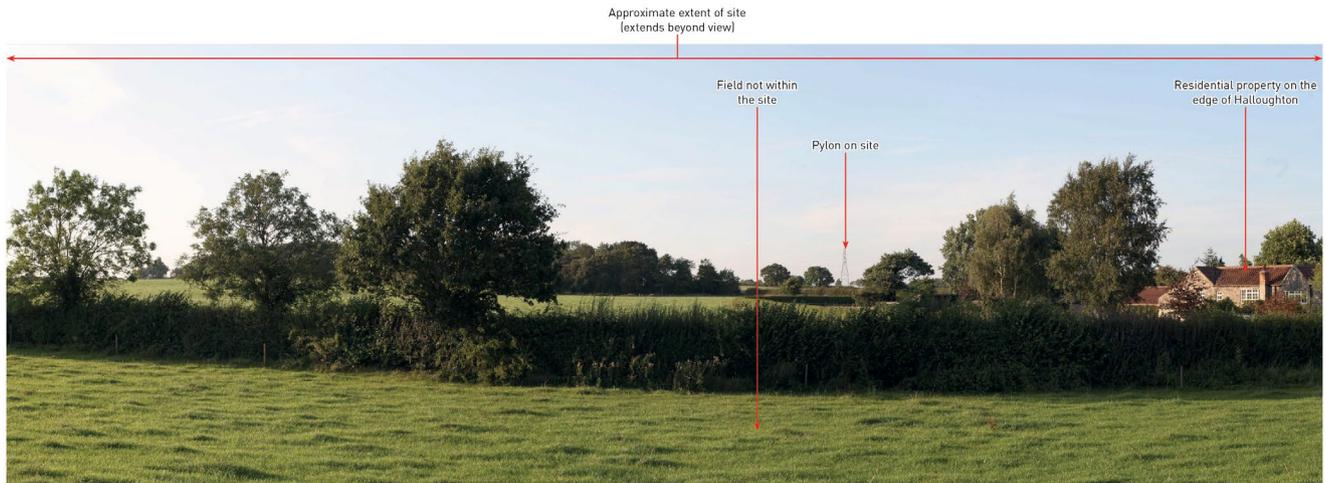
As a result of the amendments that have been made to the Proposed Development between the Refused and Alternative Scheme, there would be reduced visual effects upon receptors at several viewpoints including users of PRoW 209/74/1 at Viewpoint 3; users of PRoW 186/3/1 at Viewpoint 10; users of the local road to the west of Halloughton at Viewpoint 11; users of Cotmoor Lane Byway at Viewpoint 12 and; users of 209/43/1 at Viewpoints 15 and 16.



CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 3
View from PRow brideway 209/74/1, looking west



CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 10
View from PRow brideway 186/3/1, looking north



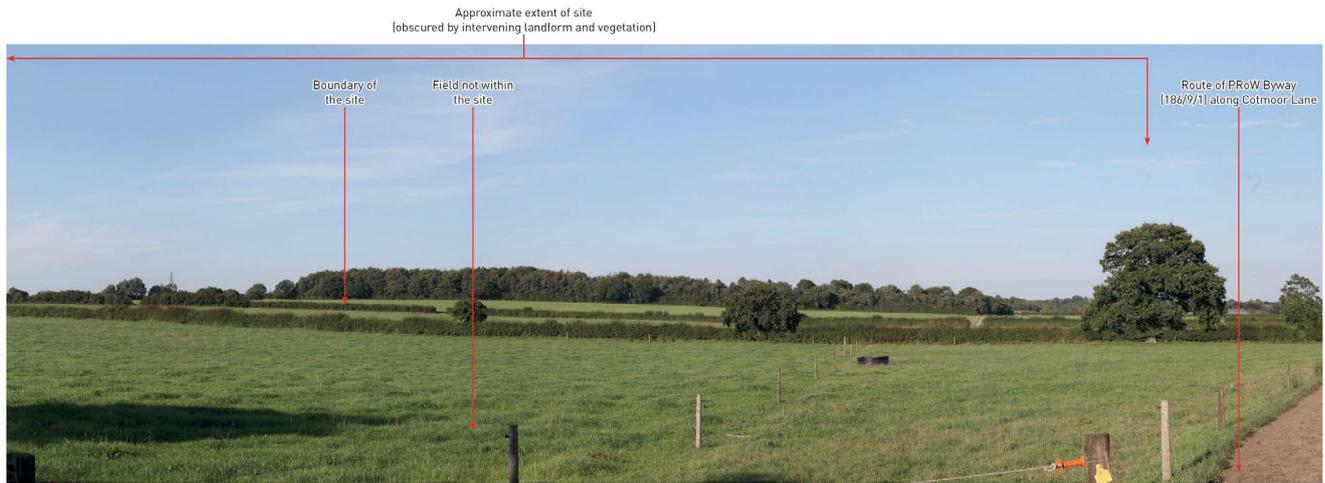
CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 11

View from the western edge of Halloughton, looking north



CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 12A

View from the southern extent of Cotmoor Lane Byway, looking northeast



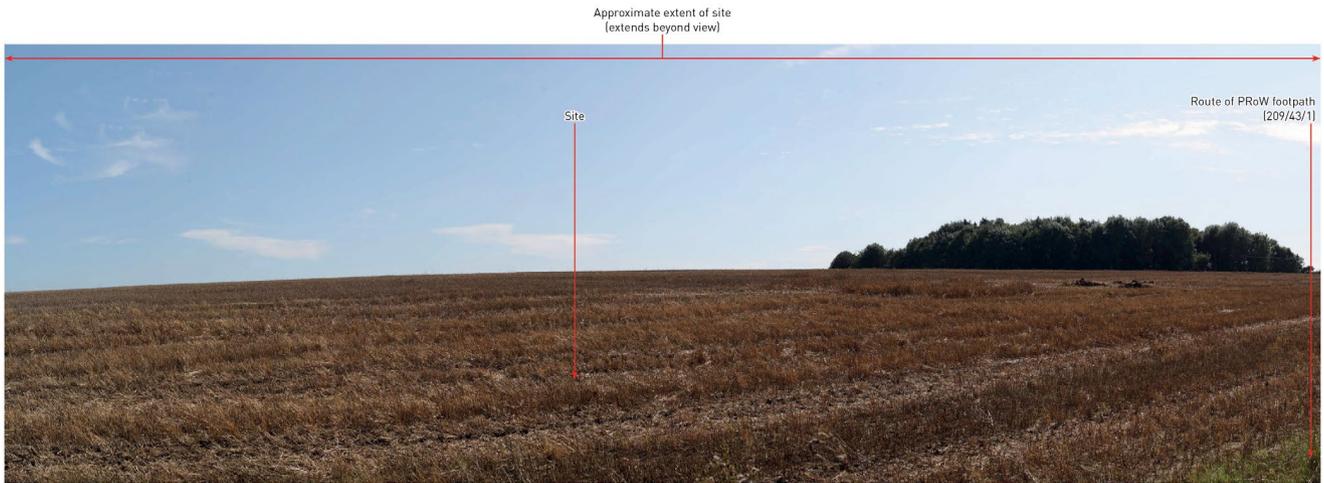
CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 12B

View from the southern extent of Cotmoor Lane Byway, looking northeast



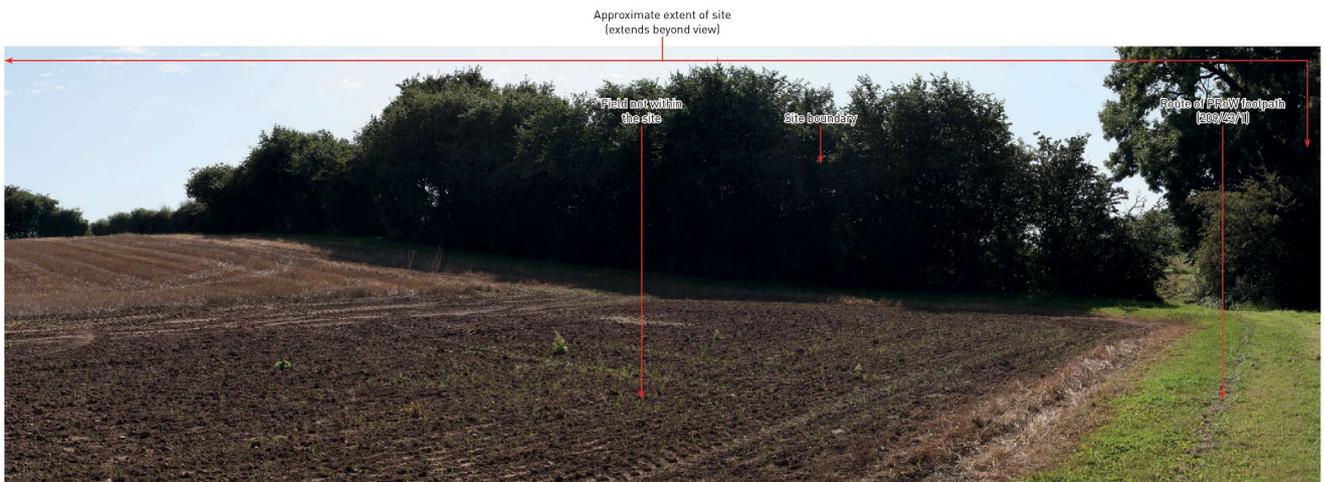
CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 15A

View from PRoW footpath 209/43/1, looking south



CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 15B

View from PRow footpath 209/43/1, looking south



CONTEXT BASELINE VIEWPOINT 16

View from PRow footpath 209/43/1, looking west

MAJOR ACCIDENTS AND DISASTERS

Mitigation and Enhancements

The Proposed Development (Refused and Alternative Scheme) has been sensitively sited and designed by locating the development in such a position where the number of potential visual receptors is limited where views of the full extent of the solar farm would not be possible from any single location. The height of the solar panels would be limited to 3m. The development would retain and enhance the existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees that screen the Site and maintain field patterns that contribute to local character. The grassland areas have been introduced as ecological enhancements for the scheme and were previously arable farm land, they will be managed as a wildflower meadow. Managing existing and proposed hedgerows, trees, grassland and meadow will make a positive contribution to the overall green infrastructure and ecological networks of this part of the Nottinghamshire landscape.

Conclusion

Whichever design is considered, both will be visible from some locations within the landscape. However, the designs of the Site have worked with the existing landscape features by retaining hedges and trees etc and adding to these to offer greater visual screening and in turn better quality habitats for nature.

Users of the footpaths and bridleways in the area will at some locations have views of sections of the solar farm. Again, these views will be limited and will only see sections of the solar farm, not the whole of it.

It has therefore been determined that both designs of the Site are suitable for the landscape and its presence in the landscape can be accommodated and is acceptable.

Accidents and disasters that could have the potential to occur on the Site in its construction and its 40-year operational lifetime.

The environmental risk for a major accident or disaster through this development has been designed out of the proposal through adhering the National Policy for Health and Safety for construction and operation. The likelihood of a H&S an incident or a fire on the Site, when management is in place, is extremely low, and therefore the risk of a major accident from H&S failures, fire or Unexploded ordnance is negligible.

The risk of a major accident from surface water flooding has also been mitigated through design and appropriate management of the Site during construction and operation. This has included the creation of two bunded attenuation features which would store water. The locations of these two areas can be seen in Figures 4 and 5 of this NTS.

Figure 8 shows a the details of the proposed surface water drainage area.

The potential for an increase in risk from flooding is the same for both of the designed schemes that were considered within this ES. The effect of the impact of surface water flooding for a major accident has been determined to be negligible.

The effect on climate change from Proposed Development has also been considered and determined that both schemes have the capacity to generate 49.9MW. This would result in enough electricity generated each year to power 12,000 homes, which in turn would offset 20,690 tonnes of CO₂ each year. The effect on climate change from this development would be a major beneficial effect.

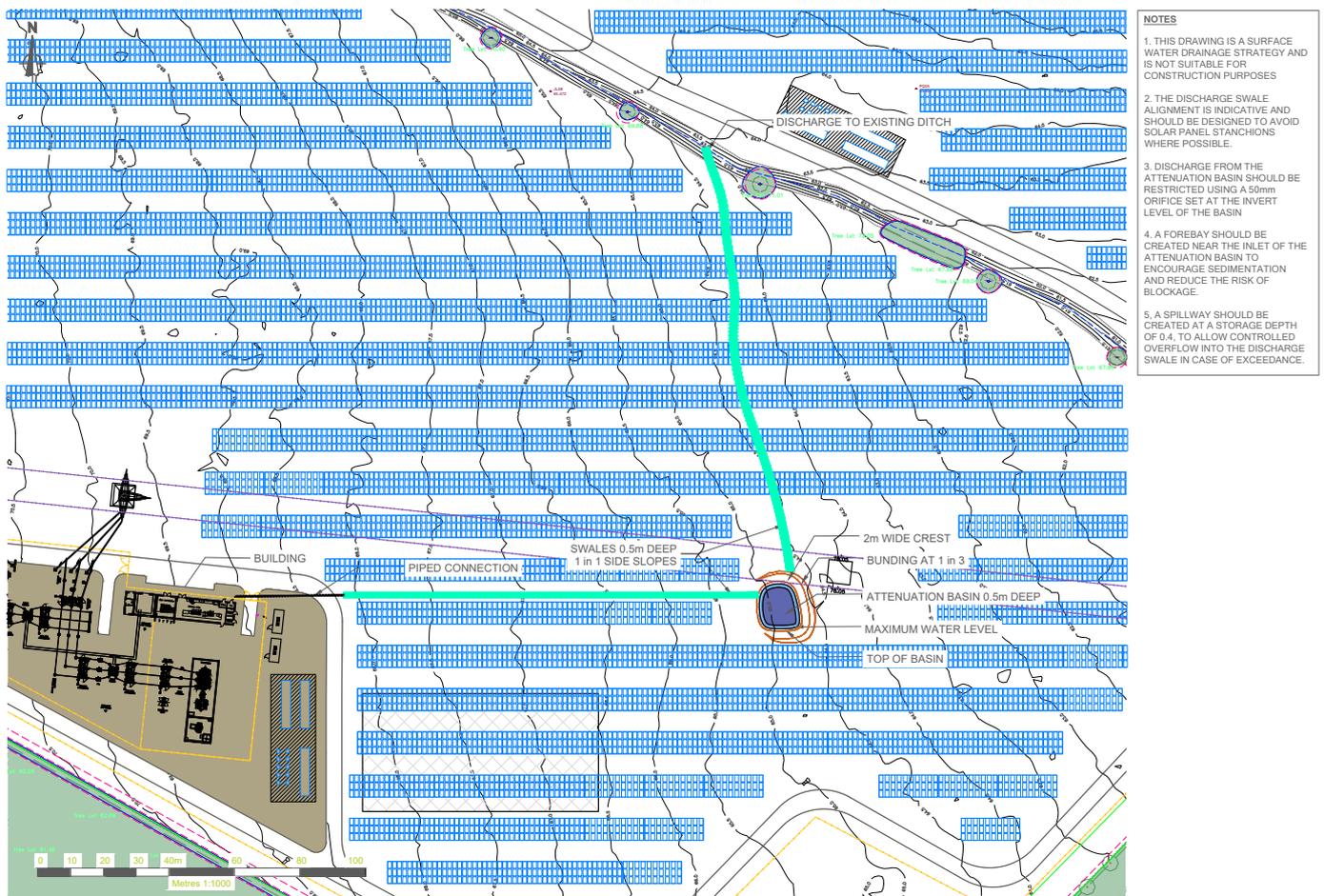


FIGURE 8: SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE PROPOSAL

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

This section of the ES considers and assesses the agricultural and soil resources that have the potential to be significantly affected during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, particularly the quality of agricultural land, the scale and nature of agricultural land use within the Application Site.

Agricultural land in England is graded between 1 and 5, depending on the extent to which physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use.

The principal physical factors influencing agricultural production are climate, site and soil and the interactions between them which together form the basis for classifying land into one of 5 grades; grade 1 being of excellent quality and grade 5 being very poor. Grade 3 land, which constitutes approximately half of all agricultural land in the UK is divided into 2 subgrades – 3a and 3b.

Land which is classified as Grade 1,2 and 3a in the ALC system is defined as Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Assessment of the Site has determined that 100% of the Site is Grade 3b.

Assessment of Likely Effects

The Proposed Development involves non-agricultural development on agricultural land. The Site is approximately 98 hectares and following decommissioning it will revert back to agricultural land.

Much of the development on the Site will be solar panels which are relatively unobtrusive and will allow continued use of most of the site for agricultural and ecological purposes. Only the panel mounting frames, fencing and inverter bases will prevent ongoing use of these areas in agriculture. Based on experience of other sites the applicant has estimated that approximately 3% of the Site will be utilised by these foundations and thus unavailable for use in agriculture or for ecological benefit. For the purposes of this assessment a land take figure of 5% of the

land within the outer edges of the solar panels has been assumed as a worst-case scenario for the temporary land loss from agriculture.

During the approximate 26 weeks needed for construction and for decommissioning of the Site none of the land would be able to be used for agriculture. Once operational the Refused Design would result in a temporary loss of 3.67ha to agricultural land. For the Alternative Design the temporary loss would be 3.45ha of agricultural land. The remaining areas of the Site would be used for agriculture over the 40 year operational life as low density sheep grazing can take place in the land whilst the solar farm is operational.



Mitigation and Enhancement

The area on which the solar panels are being placed can still be grazed by sheep. By replacing an element of the combinable crop enterprise with a sheep enterprise the financial impacts on the agricultural business are largely mitigated.

Conclusion

The whole of the Site is not BMV land as all of it is Grade 3b. Agricultural practices can continue to take place on the land once the solar panels are operational, which is a further diversification for the farm holding as they are proposing to graze sheep.

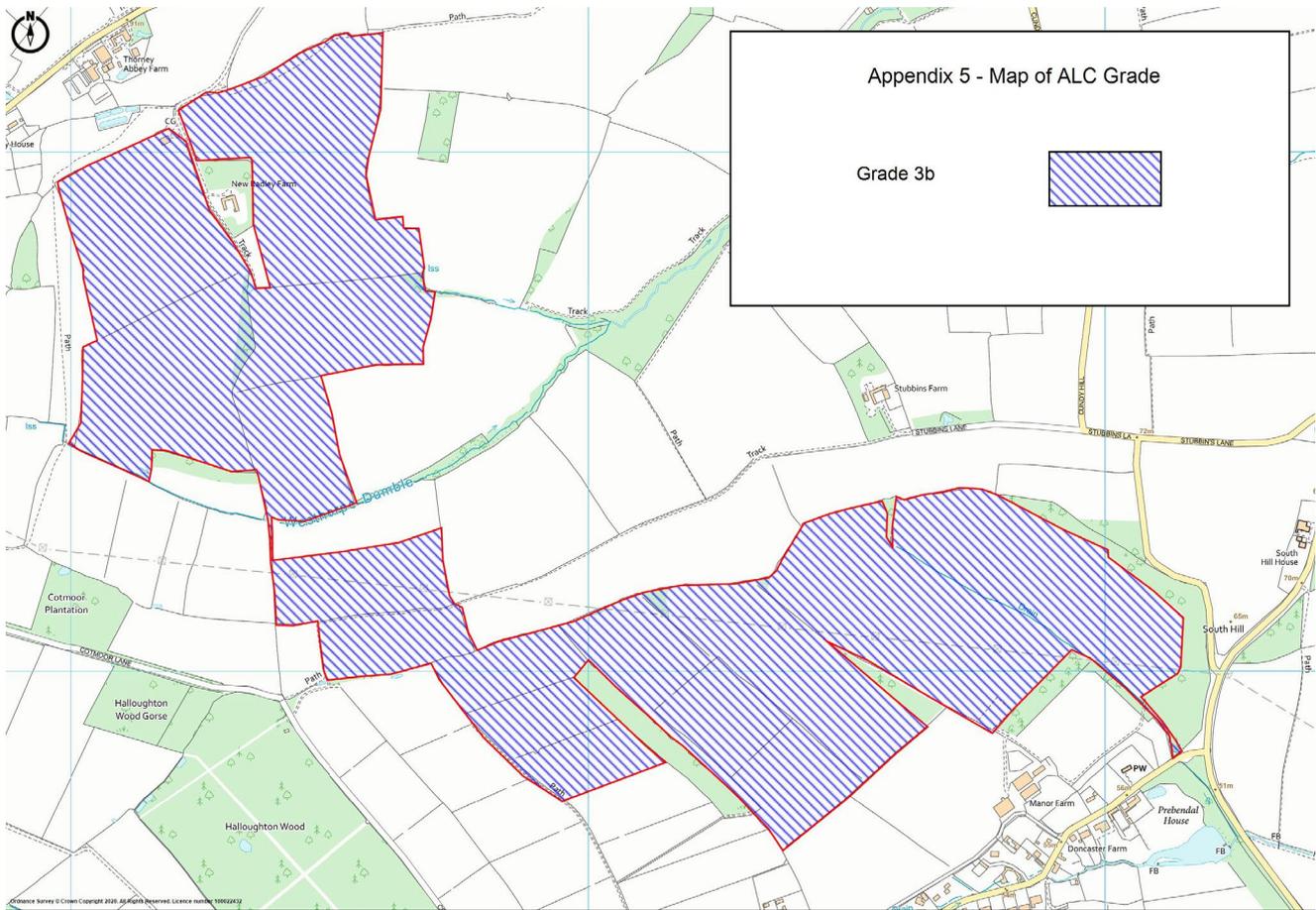


FIGURE 9: AGRICULTURAL LAND GRADING

SUMMARY

The aim of this ES has been to assess the 'likely significant effects' of the Proposed Development in accordance with the Town and Country Planning EIA Regulations 2017 (amended). Detailed assessments with respect to pertinent environmental topics have therefore been undertaken in accordance with definitive standards and legislation where available. The ES forms part of the planning application documentation submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and the Council and will inform their decision-making process.

The design process, including siting of the solar panels, has been informed by the detailed environmental assessments so to limit any adverse effects. As a result of this process, with mitigation in place, no significant there are still three locations where a significant negative environmental effect would occur if Proposed Development was built. These are:

Users of Cotmoor Lane Bridleway during the construction phase of the Refused Scheme, this would reduce to a Neutral effect and no longer be significant if the Alternative Scheme was progressed.

- Users of the PRoW 209/43/1 as it passes through or in close proximity to the Site during construction for both Scheme options.
- Users of PRoW 209/74/1 to the east of the Site would have partial views of construction activities taking place in the southern extent. These would also be present when either Scheme is operational, but the views would lessen over time as the planting becomes more established. As the planting creates screening the effect will no longer be significant.
- Users of PRoW 209/43/1 as it passes through the Site would have an opportunity to view both Schemes in the foreground of their views. The Refused Scheme would be significant in year 1-10. For the Alternative Scheme this effect would be significant in year 1 but would have reduced and no longer be significant by year 10.

- Users of PRoW 209/43/1 to the east of the Site would have partial views of either Site layout once the Site was operational. As the vegetation matures this effect will reduce to a no longer significant level.
- The landscape character of within the Site would be negatively affected for both Schemes. As planting on the Site established this effect would reduce after year 1 and no longer be a significant effect.
- The construction activities of both Schemes would affect the tranquillity of the Site as more vehicles will be traveling across the Site during construction. Once the Site is operational the level of vehicles will reduce to Neutral and would no longer be significant.

There are also two effects that would lead to a significant positive environmental effect if the Proposed Development was built. These are:

- The additional tree planting that has been proposed will remain in the Site after decommissioning.
- Both design schemes will lead to the annual generation of enough renewable electricity for the equivalent of 12,000 homes. Due to the battery storage this renewable energy can be fed into the National Grid system at the times when it required and therefore assist in balancing the Grid system and aid in the removal of fossil fuel electricity generators on the Grid. In turn this will lead to the offset of 20,690 tonnes of CO₂ each year.

The Proposed Development is also considered to provide beneficial effects, in particular the generation of enough renewable energy for 12,000 homes each year for distribution onto the National Grid. This aims to address the local and national renewable energy targets and ultimately reduce the reliance on fossil fuel-based sources as a form of energy production. This electricity generation and the use of battery storage to help to balance the Grid System will offset 20,690 tonnes of CO₂ each year.

In conclusion, the ES demonstrates that the design of the Proposed Development and its construction has taken into account the potential environmental effects and where possible mitigation measures form an integral part of the scheme so to ensure that the environment is suitably protected and any impacts from the Proposed Development are minimised.

