



Planning Design and Access Statement

Installation of underground grid
connection cable between Hill Farm
Solar Farm & Clump Farm Solar Farm to
the point of connection at Enderby
Substation.

Clump Farm Solar Limited

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Clump Farm Solar Limited in support of a planning application for the installation of an underground grid connection cable within the highway verge and 300m of agricultural land located between the consented Hill Farm Solar Farm (Blaby District Council LPA ref. 21/1386/FUL) and Clump Farm Solar Farm (Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council LPA ref. 21/01242/FUL) to the point of connection at Enderby Substation, Desford Road, Enderby, LE19 4AD. The development is essential infrastructure required to facilitate the connection of these two consented renewable energy developments.
- 1.1.2 Grid connections can either be installed by the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) or by an Independent Connection Provider (ICP). In the case of a DNO connection, as the DNO is a statutory undertaker, all works are carried out under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015¹ (i.e. the DNO does not require planning permission to undertake the works). However, where an ICP installs the grid connection, planning permission is required as an ICP is not a statutory undertaker.
- 1.1.3 In this instance, as part of the Applicant's grid offer, the cable route must be a private wire. This is not something that the DNO would implement as it is not their contracted responsibility. As such, the Applicant has proceeded with an ICP for the installation of the grid connection and therefore requires planning permission for the works², hence the submission of the planning application.

¹ Schedule 2, Part 15, Class B 'Electricity Undertakings'

² Under Section 57 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990



2.0 The Site and Designations

2.1 Site Location

2.1.1 Most of the site comprises the main A47 (Hinckley Road and Leicester Road) and B582 (Desford Road) highways and associated verges. The site also comprises approximately 300m of agricultural land to the south of Leicester Road.

2.1.2 In the wider sense, the site is located approximately 1.5 km to the south west of the city of Leicester (at its closest point). Other surrounding settlements include Earl Shilton, Desford, Thurlaston and Enderby.

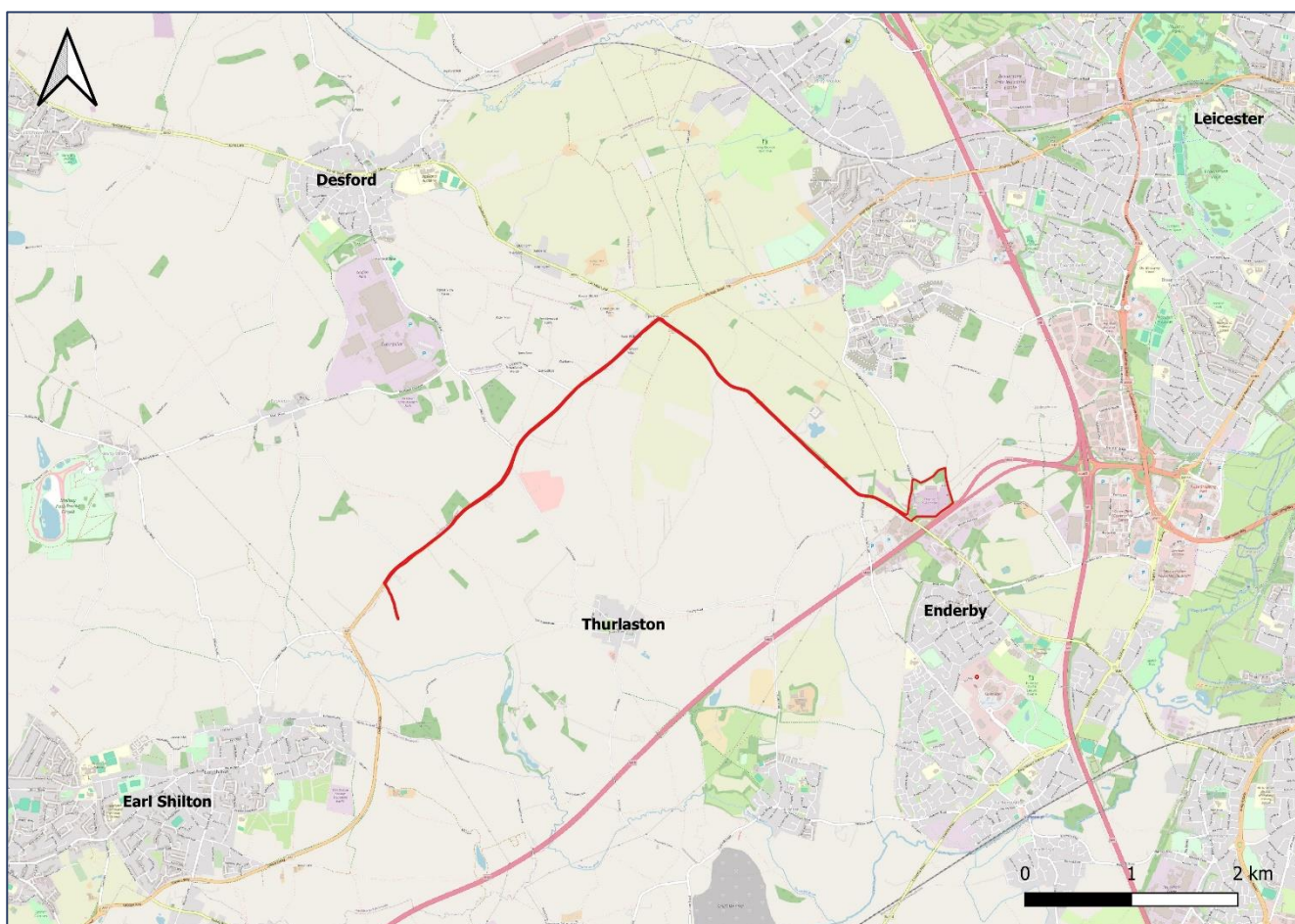


Figure 1 Plan illustrating approximate site location within surrounding area.

2.2 Site Description

2.2.1 Most of the site forms the main A47 (Hinckley Road and Leicester Road) and B582 (Desford Road)



highways and associated verges with approximately 300m of the route comprising agricultural land to the south of Leicester Road. Originating at the point of connection at Enderby Substation to the north east of Desford Road, the cable will travel north towards the A47 (Hinckley Road) along Desford Road and then west along the A47 (Hinckley Road and Leicester Road) towards the two consented solar projects located to the north and south of the highway. It will then branch off to meet Clump Farm Solar Farm to the north of Leicester Road and travel through approximately 300m of agricultural land to the south to meet Hill Farm Solar Farm.

2.2.2 The plan below illustrates the proposed cable route in relation to the consented solar farms:

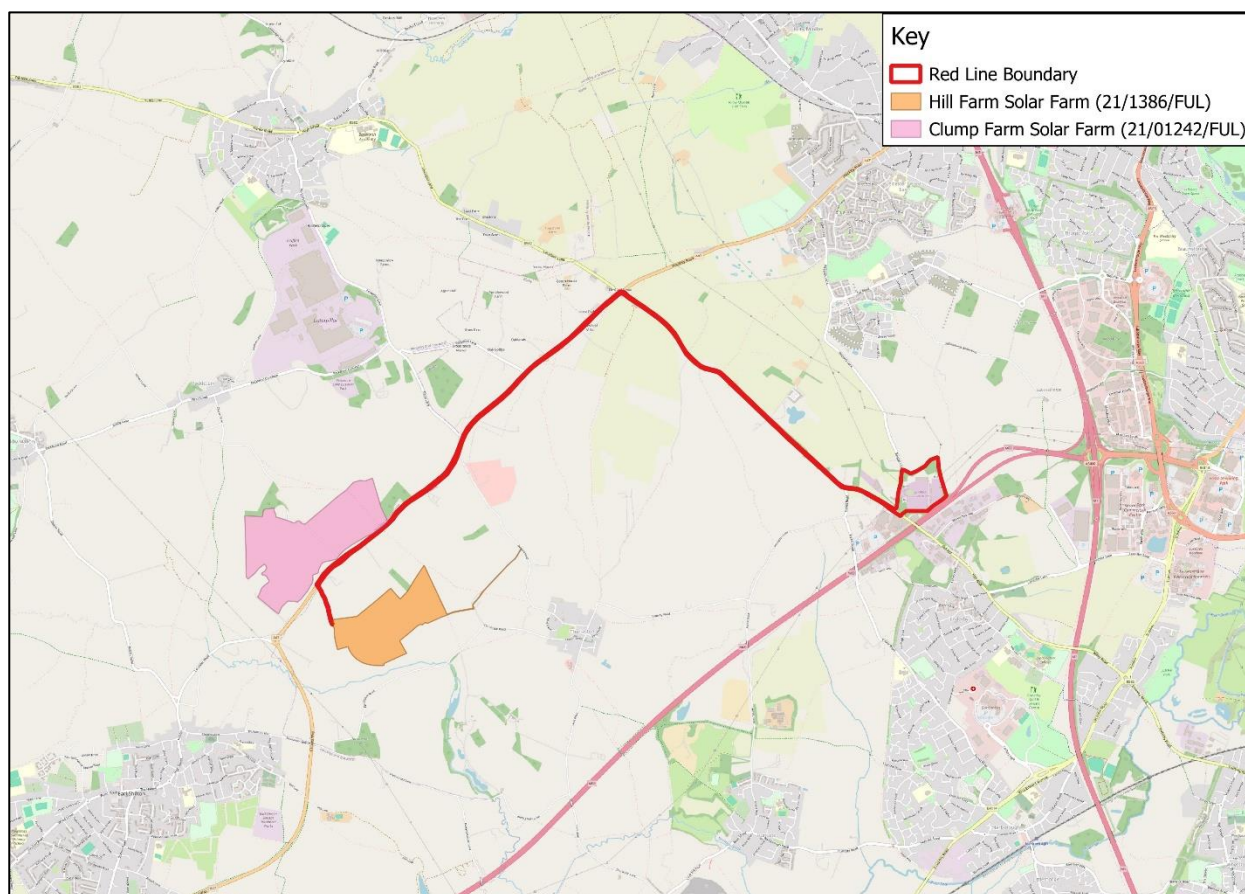


Figure 2 Plan illustrating the proposed cable route in relation to the consented solar farms

2.3 Planning Policy Designations

2.3.1 Most of the site is located within Blaby District Council. However, where the cable is routed through the A47 (Hinckley Road and Leicester Road), the site crosses into Hinckley and Bosworth Council's boundary at a few locations. The plans below provide illustration to locations where the proposed cable



route extends into both Council boundaries.

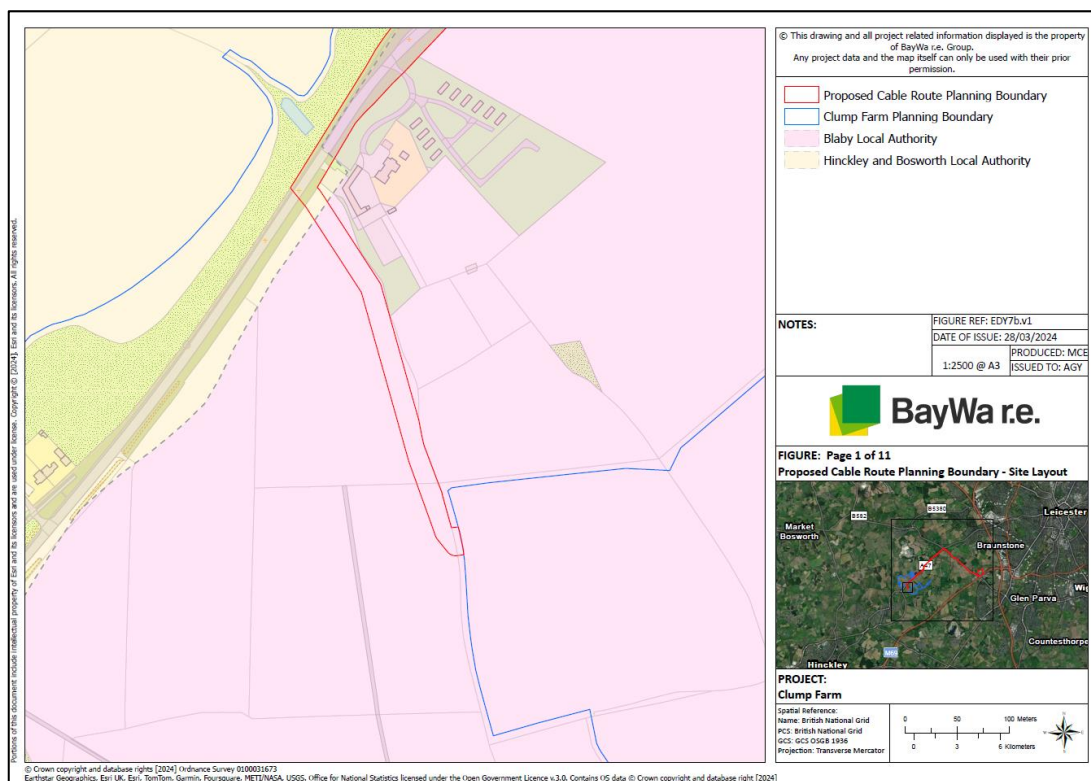
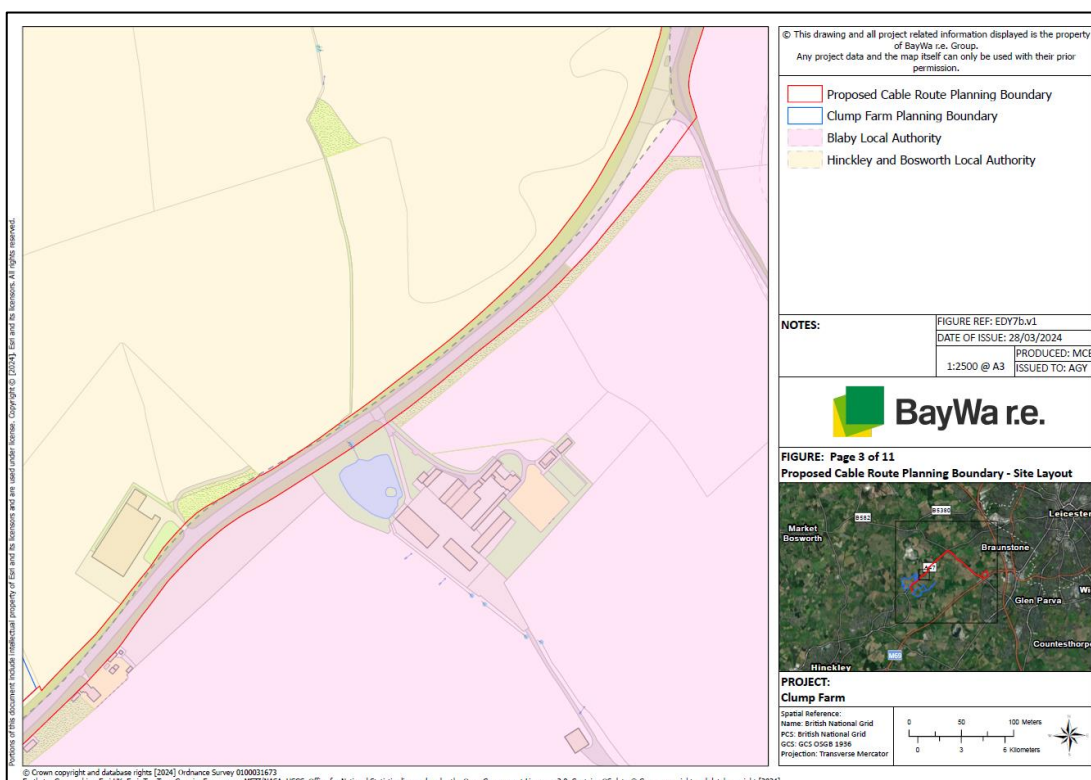


Figure 3 Plan illustrating proposed cable route planning boundary.



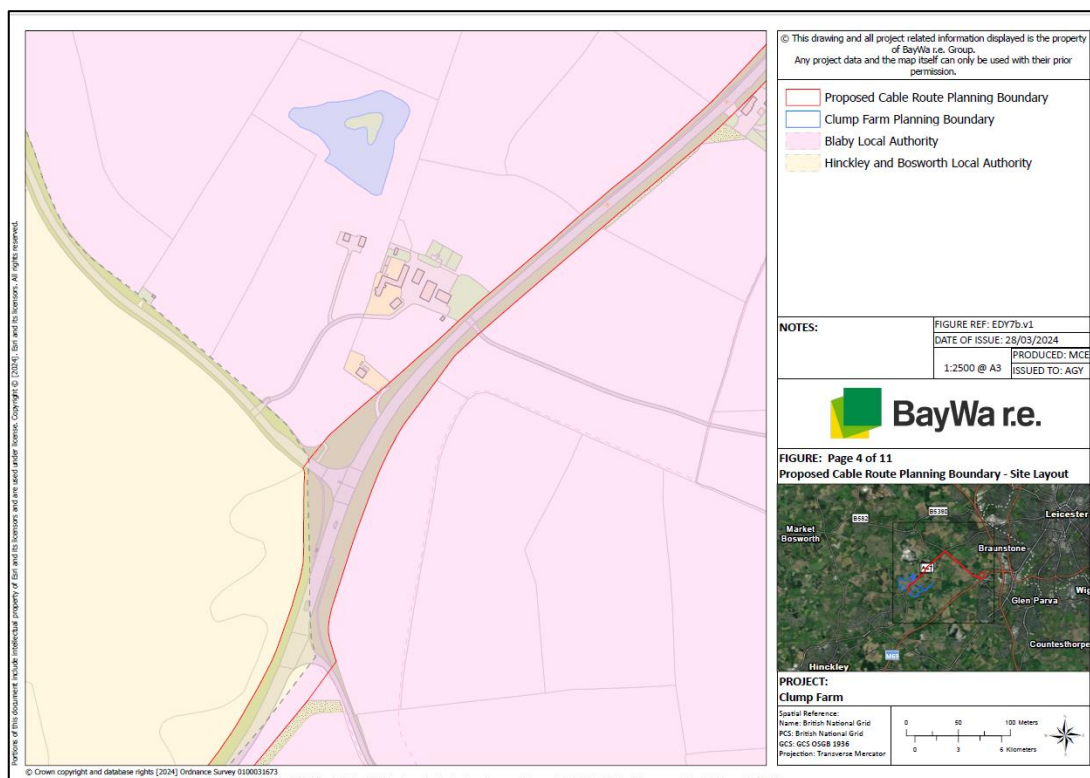


Figure 6 Plan illustrating proposed cable route planning boundary.

- 2.3.2 As can be seen above, the proposed cable route overlaps between both Council boundaries and as such, two identical planning applications are submitted (i.e., one to each Local Planning Authority).
- 2.3.3 The site is not located in any significant planning designations which include Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), National Park, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Green Belt.
- 2.3.4 The site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1 (lowest risk of flooding).
- 2.3.5 There are no designated or non-designated heritage assets within the site. However, there are some designated heritage assets within the surrounding area.
- 2.3.6 With regard to listed buildings, there is a Grade II listed building to the south west of the B582 (Desford Road) (Easting 451707, Northing 300872) known as Huncote Grange (List Entry Number. 1074719). It is located approximately 85m away from the highway and subsequently the site boundary.
- 2.3.7 There is another Grade II listed building located on Leicester Road, to the south west of the proposed cable route (Easting 447887, Northing 299332). This is a road milestone (Milestone at NGR SP 4790



9935) (List Entry Number. 1074239). It is located approximately 200m away from the site boundary.

2.3.8 There is also a Grade II listed building to the north of the consented Clump Farm Solar Farm (Easting 447962, Northing 300059) known as 'Garden wall and gazebo approximately 200m east of Tooley Park Cottages' (List Entry Number. 1188001). It is located approximately 418m away from the site boundary.

2.3.9 There are two scheduled monuments located to the north of Thurlaston (Easting 450595, Northing 300448). These are the 'Moated site at New Hall' (List Entry Number. 1010914) and an 'Iron age enclosure' (List Entry Number. 1005047). They are located over 1km away from the nearest boundary of the site.

2.3.10 There is also a cluster of listed buildings located to the south east of Enderby Substation located within Enderby Conservation Area. The Conservation Area is located approximately 325m south east of the boundary of the site but is separated by the existing Warrens Business Park industrial estate.



Figure 7 Plan illustrating planning policy designations within the surrounding area with site location overlaid



2.3.11 There are several Public Rights of Way (PROWs) within the surrounding area with three crossing the main highway and therefore, the site. These include Footpath T73, Footpath V72 and Footpath V80A. Although short-term closures might be required during construction, the PROWs will remain open once the cable route is installed.

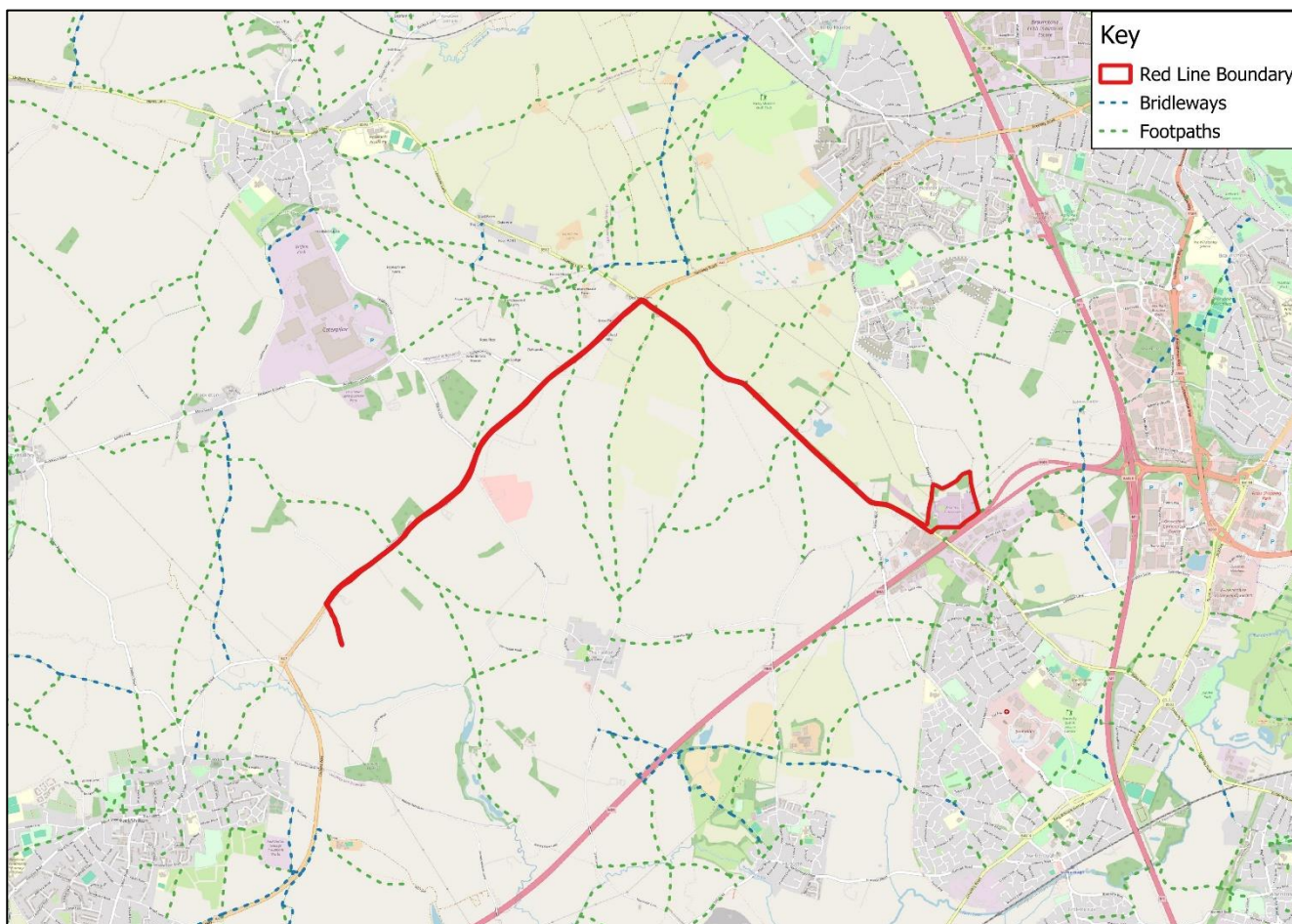


Figure 8 Plan illustrating Leicestershire PROWs with site location overlaid



3.0 The Proposed Development

3.1 Summary of the Proposed Development

- 3.1.1 This application proposes the installation of an underground grid connection cable within the public highway / verge and 300m of agricultural land located between the consented Hill Farm Solar Farm (Blaby District Council LPA ref. 21/1386/FUL) and Clump Farm Solar Farm (Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council LPA ref. 21/01242/FUL) to the point of connection at Enderby Substation, Desford Road, Enderby, LE19 4AD.

3.2 Cable Design

- 3.2.1 The cable would be installed in accordance with the approved installation procedure for all underground cables set out in National Grid's Company Directive relating to the Installation of Underground Cables³; or as adopted at the time of installation.
- 3.2.2 The cable will consist of copper conductors suitable for the design power rating, ducts, earthing wires, pilot/fibre optic media, marker tape, protective elements, joints etc. as specified by National Grid.
- 3.2.3 The proposed cable would be designed to accommodate 2 x 33kV circuits, enclosed within uPVC ducts and covered with sand for protection. The cable trench will be approximately 920mm wide and the depth will vary depending on its location (approximately 900mm in the carriageway and 1100mm in agricultural land). The plan below provides an indicative cross section of the cable route:

³ National Grid (2021) *Company Directive – Standard Technique: CA6A/7 Relating to the Installation of Underground Cables*. Available at: <https://www.nationalgrid.co.uk/downloads-view-reciteme/604882#:~:text=This%20technique%20forms%20the%20approved,33kV%2C%2066kV%20and%20132kV%20cables.>

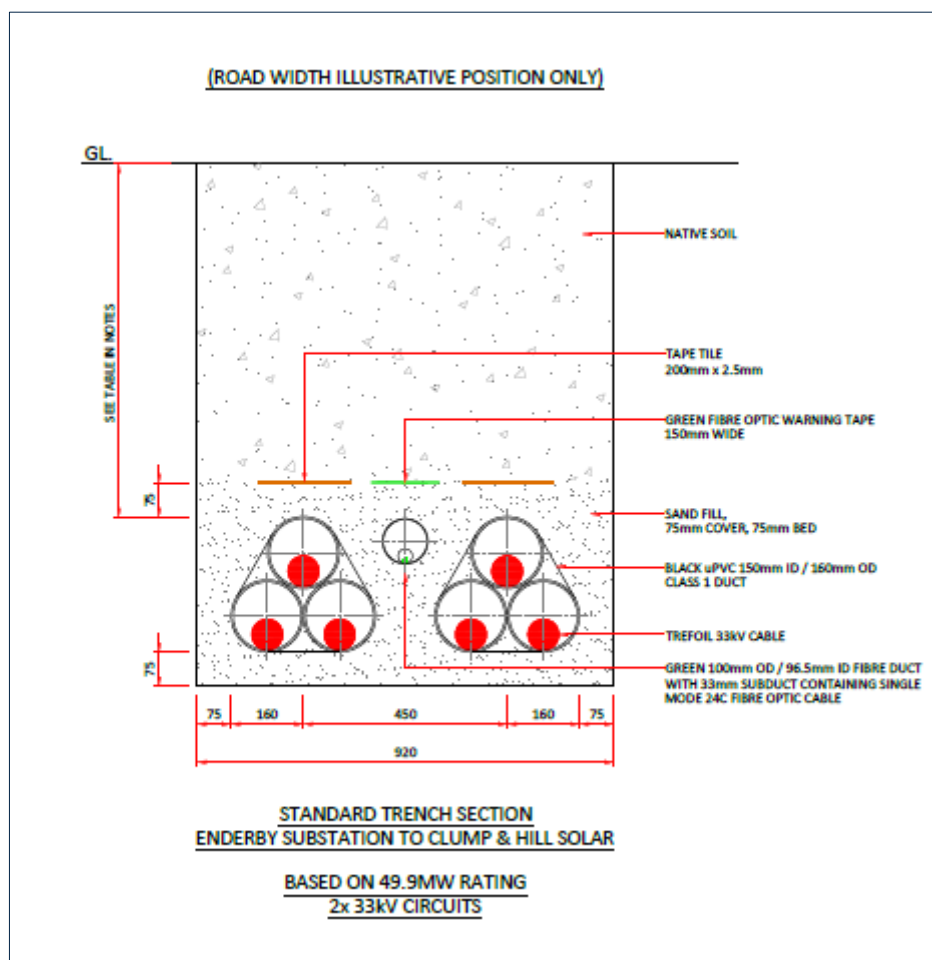


Figure 8 Plan illustrating cross-section of cable route trench (indicative)

3.3 Construction Phase and Traffic Management

- 3.3.1 The proposed cabling would take place in individual sections along the route with a trench being dug within the highway, verge or agricultural land before the duct/cable is installed into the trench.
- 3.3.2 A temporary access track will be required to facilitate the installation of the cable within the ~300 m of agricultural land. This will likely comprise of geotextile matting with stone laid on top. This will be removed following installation of the cable route.
- 3.3.3 The exact location of the cable route will be confirmed following detailed design. There are a small number of hedgerows within the Site (primarily within the agricultural land and where it joins the A47). Should the cable route require to cross a hedgerow, this will be likely be installed via Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD). The drilling rig and exit point will be positioned at least 10 m from the



hedgerow to minimise vehicles within proximity to hedgerows. The HDD will bypass the hedgerows at a depth of approximately 5 m – 10 m and will have no effect on the roots of the hedgerows. The hedgerows will therefore be unaffected by the development. Utilising this construction method will ensure hedgerow habitats are not removed to facilitate the development. If required, further details on HDD will be provided through the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to be secured by planning condition.

- 3.3.4 The works would be completed in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual⁴ and in agreement with the LPA.
- 3.3.5 It is envisaged that approximately three teams would work simultaneously across the route in order to complete the project as soon as possible, whilst also minimising disruption. The proposed construction works are anticipated to last between 25-45 weeks in total.
- 3.3.6 The precise arrangement would be dependent upon subsequent agreements with the LPA in respect of final traffic management arrangements. However, it is proposed that the works would only involve the closure of a single lane of traffic, allowing the road(s) to remain open during construction and minimising the potential impact upon the movement of vehicles, horse riders, pedestrians and cyclists. An example of the proposed construction arrangement is shown below.

⁴ Department of Transport (2006) *Guidance: Traffic Signs Manual. Chapter 8*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual>

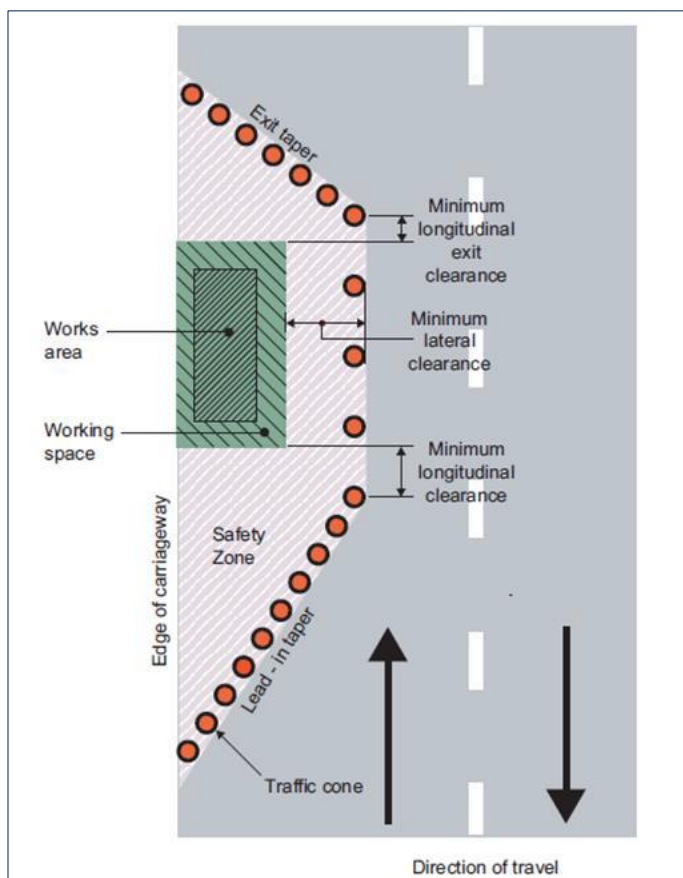


Figure 9 Example layout illustrating construction arrangements.

- 3.3.7 Clearance distances from the work areas will be determined in relation to the speed limit on the section of road where the works are being carried out.
- 3.3.8 It is the intention of the Applicant to work with the LPA and the local community to programme the works to reduce the disruption and total duration of the works as much as possible. This will be done by identifying in the early stages, constraints in relation to community events or locations whereby specific works can be planned in order to mitigate any adverse impacts.
- 3.3.9 The initial disruption experienced during the construction phase would end upon completion of the development, leaving no visible development above ground.
- 3.3.10 In addition to planning permission, all necessary permissions would be secured to complete the works through obtaining a Section 50 licence to authorise the works within the public highway.
- 3.3.11 In instances where the cable would cross existing Public Rights of Way (PROWs), the construction



works would be coordinated to minimise any disruption, prioritising temporary diversions rather than closures wherever possible. Upon completion, the PROWs will be immediately re-opened.

3.3.12 The ICP, with the permission of the DNO, will make the final connection into the primary substation (Enderby). These works fall outside the scope of this planning application.

3.3.13 It should be noted that once construction has been completed, there will be no residual visual impact resulting from the development.



4.0 Relevant Planning History

4.1 The Site

- 4.1.1 A review of the planning history shows that the site had not been subject to any planning applications. However, an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening (EIA) Opinion was issued as detailed below.

Planning Reference	Location	Application Description	Decision
18/02/EIASCR (Blaby LPA)	Land North of Hinckley Road, Kirby Muxloe, Leicestershire	Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion relating to proposed residential development for circa 750 dwellings	EIA Required

4.2 The Surrounding Area

- 4.2.1 A review of the planning history of the surrounding area showed that the only relevant planning applications are those already identified previously as the consented solar farms. Further details are as follows:

Planning Reference	Location	Application Description	Decision
21/1386/FUL (Blaby LPA)	Land at Hill Farm, Earl Shilton Road, Thurlaston, Leicestershire, LE9 7TG	Construction of a 36.1-hectare solar park to include the installation of solar photovoltaic panels to generate electricity (up to 22MW) with associated substations, transformers, inverters, perimeter fencing, access tracks, CCTV and landscaping.	Permitted



21/01242/FUL (Hinckley and Bosworth LPA)	Land at Clump Farm, Peckleton, Hinckley Road/Leicester Road, Leicestershire, LE9 7TJ	Solar Farm for the generation of up to 40MW of AC electrical energy, including access tracks, solar panels, transformer cabins and a substation, enclosed within a 2m perimeter 'deer' fence and associated landscaping.	Permitted
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5.0 The Need for the Scheme

5.1 Transition to Net Zero

5.1.1 The Climate Change Act⁵ legally commits the UK government to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050.

5.1.2 The environmental impact of climate change is also linked to significant damage to the UK economy. Combined, the net-zero transition (estimated to cost a maximum of 2% of UK Gross Domestic Profit (GDP) is expected to have a net benefit of around 4% of GDP (LSE 2022⁶), meaning addressing climate change will protect and benefit the UK economy.

5.1.3 HM Government's Net Zero Strategy: Build back greener⁷ confirms:

"By 2035 the UK will be powered entirely by clean electricity, subject to security of supply."

"A low-cost, net zero consistent electricity system is most likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar generation".

"The net zero economy will be underpinned by cheap clean electricity, made in Britain. A clean, reliable power system is the foundation of a productive net zero economy as we electrify other sectors – so we will fully decarbonise our power system by 2035".

5.2 Increase in Electricity Demand

5.2.1 The UK's electricity demand is predicted to double by 2050 due to widespread use of heat pumps and electric cars. Solar farms play a crucial role in meeting the National Grid's renewable energy needs, providing green electricity and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Solar technology is a safe, locally produced, and sustainable source, without the need for tax subsidies.

⁵ Climate Change Act 2008; Chapter 27; Part 1; Section 1 (1). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents>

⁶ Rising, J. et al. (2022) *Policy Brief – What Will Climate Change Cost the UK?* Available at: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Climate-costs-UK-policy-brief.pdf> (Accessed: 09 May 2024)

⁷ HM Government (2021) *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener*. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6194dfa4d3bf7f0555071b1b/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf>



Figure 10 Electric car charger and heat pump driving electricity demand which is set to double by 2050.

5.3 Decline of centralised fossil fuel power stations and decarbonise the grid.

- 5.3.1 Seven nuclear power stations have been decommissioned in recent years, and all 14 UK coal-fired power stations are set to close by 2025. The urgent need for clean renewable generators to support biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions is a pressing issue.
- 5.3.2 Two examples of mass decommissioning of fossil fuel power stations are Eggborough and West Burton A. Eggborough, a 2-gigawatt coal-fired generating plant in North Yorkshire, stopped generating in March 2018. West Burton A in Nottinghamshire closed in March 2023.
- 5.3.3 The final remaining coal-fired power station is Ratcliff on Soar, which is set to close in September 2024. The urgent need is not only to replace these generators but also to double electricity generation due to demand.

5.4 Energy Security Strategy

- 5.4.1 HM Government's Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan (March 2023)⁸ sets out the steps the Government is taking to ensure the UK is more energy independent, secure and resilient. It states that *"Energy security necessarily entails the smooth transition to abundant, low-carbon energy. If we do not decarbonise, we will be less energy secure."* The Plan builds upon the ambitions set out in the British Energy Security Strategy and the Net Zero Strategy.
- 5.4.2 Having regard to Solar, the Plan states *"The UK has huge deployment potential for solar power, and*

⁸ HM Government (2023) *Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan*. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/642708eafbe620000f17daa2/powering-up-britain-energy-security-plan.pdf>



we are aiming for 70 gigawatts of ground and rooftop capacity together by 2035.” This amounts to a fivefold increase on current installed capacity. The Plan proceeds to state, “We need to maximise deployment of both types of solar to achieve our overall target”. The plan recognises that ground-mounted solar is “one of the cheapest forms of electricity generation and is readily deployable at scale”.

5.5 Declaration of Climate Emergency

- 5.5.1 Blaby District Council have made a commitment to address the global climate and ecological emergency and tackle climate change. Their ambition is for the Council to be Net Zero by 2030, and to support the District in becoming Net Zero by 2050.
- 5.5.2 Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council have announced their Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy 2024-2028. The strategy sets out actions and opportunities Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council will undertake to address the climate emergency declared in July 2019 and the biodiversity emergency declared in July 2023.

5.6 National Policy

- 5.6.1 Paragraph 163 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁹ confirms that when determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should: “a) *not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions.*” As such, national planning policy clearly states the need for renewable energy is ‘a given’.

5.7 Conclusions on Need

- 5.7.1 The Climate Change Act¹⁰ commits the UK government to reaching net zero by 2050. The HM Government’s Net Zero Strategy¹¹ confirms that by 2035, the UK will be powered entirely by clean electricity, composed predominantly of wind and solar generation.
- 5.7.2 Electricity demand is set to double by 2050 and the biggest benefit to solar farms is their role in meeting

⁹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (2023) *National Planning Policy Framework*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a11af7e8f5ec000f1f8c46/NPPF_December_2023.pdf

¹⁰ Climate Change Act 2008; Chapter 27; Part 1; Section 1 (1). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents>

¹¹ HM Government (2021) *Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener*. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6194dfa4d3bf7f0555071b1b/net-zero-strategy-beis.pdf>



the National Grid's renewable energy needs, providing green electricity and reducing the reliance on fossil fuels.

- 5.7.3 As a result of the decommissioning of nuclear power and coal fired power stations by 2025, there is an urgent need not just to replace these generators but to double electricity generation.
- 5.7.4 The HM Government's Energy Security Plan¹² aims to make the UK more energy independent, secure and resilient. The Plan builds on the British Energy Security Strategy and Net Zero Strategy, focusing on transitioning to abundant, low-carbon energy. The Plan aims for 70 gigawatts of ground and rooftop solar capacity together by 2035, a fivefold increase on current installed capacity.
- 5.7.5 Blaby District Council have committed to the District being Net Zero by 2050, while Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy 2024-2028 outlines actions to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies declared in July 2019 and 2023 respectively.
- 5.7.6 Considering all of the above, it is clear that there is a demonstrable need for solar development and the proposed development will contribute to this need. Significant weight ought to be given to the benefits of generating renewable energy in the context of this unprecedented need.

¹² HM Government (2023) *Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan*. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/642708eafbe62000f17daa2/powering-up-britain-energy-security-plan.pdf>



6.0 Benefits of the Proposed Development

6.1 Environmental Benefits

- 6.1.1 The proposals would allow for the implementation of two consented solar farms, which combined would generate up to 57 MW of electricity. This equates to enough electricity to serve the total power needs of around 17,100 average UK households per annum. In accordance with guidance outlined by the Solar Trade Association (now Solar Energy UK) this would offset around 24,510 tonnes of CO₂ per annum, and 1,000,000 tonnes over the life of the scheme.

6.2 Economic Benefits

- 6.2.1 Through implementing the two solar farms there will be significant economic benefits. Wider economic spin-off benefits could also be realised via the following means:

- Plant and equipment hire;
- Benefits to the hospitality sector through hotel and restaurant bookings;
- The use of locally sourced construction materials for ancillary components of the development; and
- The use of local haulage companies.

- 6.2.2 In addition to these construction phase benefits, there will also be contracts issued in relation to the ongoing operation and maintenance of the solar farms, covering a wide range of activities including:

- Remote performance monitoring of the scheme;
- Landscaping contracts relating to the maintenance of hedgerows and wildflower areas;
- Periodic cleaning and maintenance of all panels and componentry; and
- Site security contracts.

- 6.2.3 The proposal also addresses the growing demand for decentralised electricity, allowing the transition to electric vehicles and heating without causing economic fluctuations.

6.3 Social Benefits

- 6.3.1 The proposal aims to facilitate the implementation of two consented solar farms which will contribute to



decreasing the UK's reliance on imported fossil fuels thereby enhancing energy security and control over future prices. It will contribute to stable, cost-efficient, local energy production, benefiting all households in the UK in the short and long term.



7.0 Summary of Consultation

7.1 Engagement with the Local Planning Authority (LPA)

- 7.1.1 Blaby District Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council LPA's were consulted in March 2024 regarding the proposed development. A letter providing details of the draft proposals was provided at that time. The proposed method for submission was outlined, explaining the reason for submitting two identical planning applications to each LPA and clarification regarding Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was requested. Despite several follow up emails, neither LPA responded to the letter. As such, this submission is based on publicly available information and the Applicant's understanding of the requirements for submission.



8.0 Planning Policy Context

8.1 Legislative Context

8.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004¹³ states that all planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

8.2 The Development Plan

8.2.1 The site crosses the boundaries of both Blaby District Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. Most of the cable route is located within the Blaby District Council area.

8.2.2 In Blaby District, the Development Plan relevant to the proposal includes:

- Blaby District Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2013¹⁴; and
- Blaby District Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan Document (DPD) 2019¹⁵.

8.2.3 The current Local Plan for Hinckley and Bosworth is 'The Local Plan 2006 to 2026'. This is made up of a series of documents, with supporting maps where relevant. DPDs outline the Council's policies for development within the borough. The DPDs carry the most weight for making decisions on planning applications. The following DPDs, relevant to the planning application, are included in the Local Plan 2006 to 2026 documents:

- Core Strategy DPD¹⁶; and
- Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD¹⁷.

¹³ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; Section 38 (6). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/section/38>

¹⁴ Blaby District Council (2013) *Local Plan (Core Strategy) Development Plan Document*. Available at: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/4107/adopted-core-strategy.pdf>

¹⁵ Blaby District Council (2019) *Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan Document*. Available at: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/media/15ebnxns/blaby-district-adoped-local-plan.pdf>

¹⁶ Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (2009) *Local Development Framework: Core Strategy*. Available at: https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/487/core_strategy_adopted_document

¹⁷ Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (2016) *Local Plan 2006-2026: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies*. Available at: https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/info/856/local_development_framework/426/site_allocations_and_generic_development_control_policies-development_plan_document



8.2.4 Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council also have several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), of relevance is the 'Renewable Energy Capacity Study'¹⁸.

8.2.5 Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council's Local Development Scheme (February 2024) establishes the programme for producing DPDs. It states the Council's priority between 2020-2025 is to prepare and submit for examination a single Local Plan. The Local Plan will use the existing suite of adopted DPDs as the starting point for developing the strategy and vision for Hinckley and Bosworth to 2041.

8.2.6 In 2021, the Council asked for views on the draft Local Plan. The draft Local Plan set out a preferred strategy for housing and economic growth and included a number of planning policies covering a range of issues such as conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment, sustainable transport, good design and responding to the challenges of climate change. Policies included within the draft Local Plan 2020-2039 (June 2021)¹⁹ relevant to the proposal were:

- SS01 Sustainable Development
- CC01 Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC04 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

8.2.7 Of particular relevance to the proposal, Policy CC04 (*Renewable and Low Carbon Energy*) states:

"The Borough Council is committed to reducing its environmental impact through carbon reduction measures and through the support of appropriately designed and sited renewable energy and low carbon developments.

Planning applications for the development of renewable energy and low carbon development installations at the domestic, community and commercial scales will be supported where:

a) All reasonable steps have been taken to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts including but not

¹⁸ LUC (2014) *Hinckley and Bosworth Renewable Energy Capacity Study*. Available at: https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/4482/renewable_energy_capacity_study_-_december_2014

¹⁹ Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (2021) *Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan 2020-2039 Consultation Draft Plan Regulation 18 June 2021*. Available at: https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/7356/draft_local_plan_2020_-_2039



limited to landscape, noise, visual and cumulative impacts; and

- b) *The proposed development accords with other policies of this plan with specific regard to HE01 and HE02*

The impact of ancillary structures included as part of the proposed scheme will also be assessed.

Community-led renewable energy schemes for low carbon developments which can demonstrate direct community benefit will be encouraged.”

8.2.8 The new Local Plan is programmed for adoption in January/February 2026.

8.3 Relevant Development Plan Policies

8.3.1 The following table(s) summarise the pertinent planning policies of relevance to the proposed development. These are set out in more detail below and Section 9 of this report explains how the proposed development is compliant with these policies.

Blaby District Council:

Planning Consideration	Relevant Planning Policy			
	Blaby District Core Strategy DPD (CS)		Blaby District Delivery DPD	
Principle of Development	CS18	Countryside	DM2	Development in the Countryside
	CS21	Climate Change		
	CS24	Presumption in favour of sustainable development		
Biodiversity	CS19	Biodiversity and Geodiversity		
Cultural Heritage	CS20	Historic Environment and Culture	DM12	Designated and Non-designated Heritage Assets



Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council:

Planning Consideration	Relevant Planning Policy	
	Hinckley and Bosworth Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD (SADMP)	
Principle of Development	DM1	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	DM2	Delivering Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Development
	DM4	Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation
Biodiversity	DM6	Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geological Interest
Cultural Heritage	DM11	Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment
	DM12	Heritage Assets
	DM13	Preserving the Borough's Archaeology
Highways and Transportation	DM17	Highways and Transportation

Renewable Energy

- 8.3.3 Blaby District Council do not have a specific renewable energy policy within their Local Plan. However, Hinckley and Bosworth SADMP Policy DM2 (*Delivering Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Development*) deals specifically with renewable energy.
- 8.3.4 Policy DM2 states: *"the Borough Council is committed to reducing its environmental impact through carbon reduction measures and through the support of appropriately designed and sited renewable energy and low carbon developments."*

Planning applications for the development of renewable energy and low carbon development installations at the domestic, community and commercial scales will be supported where:



- a) *All reasonable steps have been taken to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts including, but not limited to, landscape, noise, visual and cumulative impacts; and*
- b) *The proposed development accords with other policies of this plan, with specific regard to DM11 and DM12*

The impact of ancillary structures included as part of the proposed scheme will also be assessed.

Community-led renewable energy schemes for low carbon developments which can demonstrate direct community benefit will be encouraged.”

Principle of Development

Blaby District Council

- 8.3.5 The CS sets out 12 strategic objectives. Having regard to this proposal, ‘strategic objective’ viii is of relevance. It states: *“to minimise energy use and use of valuable resources and to encourage renewable energy production in sustainable locations.”*
- 8.3.6 As the site is located outside the limits of built development and outside designated Green Wedges and Areas of Separation, it comprises the ‘Countryside’. Policy CS18 (Countryside) of the CS states *“within areas designated as Countryside, planning permission will not be granted for built development, or other development which would have a significantly adverse effect on the appearance or character of the landscape.”* This is further developed in the District Delivery DPD at Policy DM2 (Development in the Countryside). It states *“development proposals consistent with Core Strategy Policy CS18 will be supported”* where it meets a set criteria.
- 8.3.7 Policy CS21 (Climate Change) of the CS states *“Development which mitigates and adapts to Climate Change will be supported”* it also outlined how the Council will contribute to achieving national targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Of relevance to this proposal is Criterion c) which states:

“Encouraging the use of renewable, low carbon and decentralised energy at commercial, community and domestic scale. Renewable and low carbon energy generation will be supported within the District where the proposal:



- (i) *Ensures the siting and scale of development avoids harm to the significance of designated heritage assets and nationally important archaeological remains and their setting.*
- (ii) *Ensures that the impact of the development on local landscape character and historic landscape character is minimised.*
- (iii) *Ensures that the proposal does not result in significant detriment to residential amenity for new or existing residents.*
- (iv) *Includes measures to mitigate any adverse impacts on the built and natural environment resulting from the construction, operation and decommissioning of any development.*
- (v) *Does not create an overbearing cumulative noise or visual impact, when considered in conjunction with similar developments and permitted proposals in the area.”*

8.3.8 Policy CS24 (*Presumption in favour of sustainable development*) of the CS outlines that Blaby District Council when considering development proposals will take a “*positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework*”. Furthermore, Policy CS24 states:

“Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan Core Strategy (and, where relevant, with policies in Neighbourhood Plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or*
- *Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council



8.3.9 Like Policy CS24 above, Policy DM1 (*Presumption in favour of sustainable development*) of the SADMP states:

“Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Borough Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether:

- a) Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or*
- b) Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.”*

8.3.10 Policy DM4 (*Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation*) aims to protect and safeguard the countryside from unsustainable development. However, Policy DM4 outlines certain exemptions whereby development in the countryside will be considered sustainable, this includes:

“d) ...provision of stand-alone renewable energy developments in line with Policy DM2: Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Development;”

Biodiversity

Blaby District Council

8.3.11 Policy CS19 (*Biodiversity and Geodiversity*) of the CS seeks to safeguard and enhance sites of ecological and geological importance of national, regional and local level significance. It also outlines the Council will seek to maintain/extend networks of natural habitats. In terms of species protection, it states the Council will protect those species which do not receive statutory protection under a range of legislative provisions, but have identified as requiring conservation action as a species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity nationally. Policy CS19 states *“any development proposals should ensure that these species and their habitats are protected from the adverse effects*



of development through the use of appropriate mitigation measures.”

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

- 8.3.12 Policy DM6 (*Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geological Interest*) seeks development proposals to “conserve and enhance features of nature conservation and geological value.”

Cultural Heritage

Blaby District Council

- 8.3.13 Policy CS20 (*Historic Environment and Culture*) of the CS outlines that the Council takes a positive approach to the conservation of heritage assets and wider heritage and Policy DM12 (*Designated and Non-designated Heritage Assets*) seeks to ensure that heritage assets are suitably considered and where necessary, protected when affected by a development proposal.

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

- 8.3.14 Policy DM11 (*Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) of the SADMP outlines that the Borough Council will protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment throughout the Borough through careful management of development that might adversely impact both designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 8.3.15 Policy DM12 (*Heritage Assets*) outlines that all development proposals affecting heritage assets and their setting will be expected to secure their continued protection or enhancement, contribute to the distinctiveness of the areas in which they are located and contribute to the wider vibrancy of the Borough.
- 8.3.16 Policy DM13 (*Preserving the Borough’s Archaeology*) as its title suggests, aims to preserve archaeology within the Borough.

Highways and Transportation

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

- 8.3.17 Policy DM17 (*Highway and Transportation*) of the SADMP outlines when development proposals will



be supported. Of relevance to this scheme, it states that development proposals will be supported where they:

- c) *Demonstrate that there is not a significant adverse impact upon highway safety...; and*
- e) *Where it can be demonstrated that the residual cumulative impacts of development on the transport network are not severe.*

8.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 8.4.1 The NPPF is clear that planning has a key role in supporting renewable energy and associated infrastructure. Paragraph 157 proposes that the planning system should “*support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate*” and “*support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure*”.
- 8.4.2 In order to increase the supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, Paragraph 158 states that plans should provide a positive strategy for renewable and low carbon energy development. The NPPF is also clear that LPAs should not require applicants “*to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions*” (Paragraph 163(a)).
- 8.4.3 Applications for renewable and low carbon development should be approved if the impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

8.5 Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) and National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3)

- 8.5.1 The National Policy Statements (NPSs) for energy²⁰ outline national policies for energy infrastructure and provide planning guidance for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). Whilst they relate specifically to NSIPs, in England they are a material consideration in decision making on applications that fall under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Whether the Policies in the NPS are material and to what extent, will be judged on a case-by-case basis and will depend upon the extent

²⁰ Gov UK. *National Policy Statements for Energy Infrastructure*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-policy-statements-for-energy-infrastructure>



to which the matters are already covered by applicable planning policy.

- 8.5.2 The revised NPS EN-1²¹ and EN-3²² came into force on 17th January 2024. The NPSs highlight the urgent need for new electricity generating capacity in the UK to ensure a secure, reliable and affordable energy supply while meeting decarbonisation targets.
- 8.5.3 Paragraph 1.1.1 of EN-3 states there is “*an urgent need for new electricity generating capacity to meet our energy objectives*”. It proceeds to state “*Electricity generation from renewable sources is an essential element of the transition to net zero and meeting our statutory targets for the sixth carbon budget (CB6)*”. Government analysis suggests that demand for electricity could more than double by 2050 suggesting a requirement for a fourfold increase in low carbon electricity generation, with most from renewables.
- 8.5.4 Section 2.10 relates solely to Solar Photovoltaic Generation. Paragraph 2.10.9 states “*The government has committed to sustained growth in solar capacity to ensure that we are on a pathway that allows us to meet net zero emissions. As such solar is a key part of the government's strategy for low-cost decarbonisation of the energy sector*”.
- 8.5.5 Paragraph 2.10.10 states “*the British Energy Security Strategy states that government expects a five-fold increase in solar deployment by 2035 (up to 70GW)*”.
- 8.5.6 Due to the size of area needed for solar development, it is accepted that there will be impacts on rural areas. The NPS states at Paragraph 2.10.17 “*Along with associated infrastructure, a solar farm requires between 2 to 4 acres of each MW of output. A typical 50MW solar farm will consist of around 100,000 to 150,000 panels and cover between 125 to 200 acres...this scale of development will inevitably have impacts, particularly if sited in rural areas.*”
- 8.5.7 EN-3 recognises the various factors that influence site selection and design. It acknowledges at Paragraph 2.10.24 that the distance from the solar farm to the point of connection can have a

²¹ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2024) *Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overarching-national-policy-statement-for-energy-en-1>

²² Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2024) *National Policy Statement for renewable energy infrastructure (EN-3)*



“significant effect on the commercial feasibility” of a proposal.

- 8.5.8 It also states at Paragraph 2.10.29 *“while land type should not be a predominating factor in determining the suitability of the site location, applicants should, where possible, utilise previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land and industrial land. Where the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land (avoiding the use of “Best and Most Versatile” agricultural land where possible.”* However, it proceeds to explain at Paragraph 2.10.30 that ground mounted solar arrays *“is not prohibited”* on BMV land or sites designated for their natural beauty or recognised for ecological or archaeological importance.
- 8.5.9 EN-3 has also clarified at Paragraph 2.10.53 that *“From the date of designation of this NPS, for the purposes of Section 15 of the Planning Act 2008, the maximum combined capacity of the installed inverters (measured in alternating current (AC)) should be used for the purposes of determining solar site capacity.”* As such, the capacity threshold for Town and Country Planning Act applications is 50MW in England.
- 8.5.10 The emphasis on the need for renewable energy, particularly solar, is evidenced by the revised National Policy Statements. These statements highlight the urgent need for new electricity generating capacity in the UK to meet decarbonisation targets.

8.6 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 8.6.1 PPG²³ confirms that, where solar PV farms are proposed on greenfield land, projects should be such that:
- (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and*
- (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.*

²³ Planning Practice Guidance; Renewable and Low Carbon Energy; Paragraph 013, Reference ID 5-013-20150327. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy>



9.0 Planning Case

9.1 Assessment of the Principle of Development

- 9.1.1 It is considered that the principle of development is established by virtue of granting permission for both solar farm developments. This development is essential infrastructure to allow the consented projects to connect to the National Grid. Notwithstanding, this section provides an assessment of the proposal against planning policy.
- 9.1.2 Paragraph 163 of the NPPF makes it clear that LPA's must not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. They must also approve such an application if its impacts are (or can be made acceptable). Notwithstanding, within this and the following section it will be demonstrated that the proposed development is compliant with national and local policies.
- 9.1.3 Policy CS24 (*Presumption in favour of sustainable development*) of the Blaby District CS and Policy DM1 (*Presumption in favour of sustainable development*) of the Hinckley and Bosworth SADMP sets out both Council's overall strategy for sustainable development. This proposal is essential infrastructure which will facilitate the operation of two consented solar farms. Solar energy generation is environmentally friendly and contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, thus meeting the criteria for sustainable development.
- 9.1.4 In addition to the above, the principle of development is supported by Policy CS21 (*Climate Change*) of the CS. Policy CS21 states that development which mitigates and adapts to Climate Change will be supported. Furthermore, it states the Blaby District Council will contribute to achieving national targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging the use of renewable, low carbon and decentralised energy. It states that renewable and low carbon energy generation will be supported within the District where the proposal:
- (i) *Ensures that the siting and scale of development avoids harm to the significance of designated heritage assets and nationally important archaeological remains, or their setting.*

Further details with regards to Historic Environment impacts is provided below at Section 9.4.



- (ii) *Ensures that the impact of the development on local landscape character and historic landscape character is minimised.*

Further details with regard to landscape character is provided below at Section 9.2.

- (iii) *Ensures that the proposal does not result in significant detriment to residential amenity for new or existing residents.*
- (iv) *Includes measures to mitigate any adverse impacts on the built and natural environment resulting from construction, operation and decommissioning of any development.*

The proposal will not result in significant detriment to residential amenity for new or existing residents. The cable will be laid underground, primarily within the highway or verge to avoid any impacts on residents. Impacts associated with the development will be temporary during construction. The construction process will be appropriately managed by a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) which will be submitted to discharge the relevant planning condition.

- (v) *Does not create an overbearing cumulative noise or visual impact, when considered in conjunction with similar developments.*

The proposal will not generate any noise emissions or visual impact as it will be laid underground. Disruption during construction will be managed via the CEMP.

9.1.5 Policy DM2 (*Delivering Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Development*) of the SADMP explicitly supports renewable energy and low carbon development installations. The Policy states that planning applications for the development of renewable energy and low carbon development installations will be supported where:

- a) *All reasonable steps have been taken to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts including but not limited to, landscape, noise, visual and cumulative impacts; and*
- b) *The proposed development accords with other policies of this plan, with specific regard to DM11 and DM12.*



- 9.1.6 It is considered that all reasonable steps have been taken to avoid and mitigate adverse impacts associated with the Development. Except for 300 m within agricultural land, the cable will be laid within the highway, or verge, to mitigate any long-term impacts. It will be underground and therefore, will not result in any landscape, noise, visual or cumulative impacts. An assessment against policies DM11 (*Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment*) and DM12 (*Heritage Assets*) is provided below at Section 9.4.
- 9.1.7 Whilst the proposal is not for the generation of renewable energy itself, it is essential infrastructure, required for the implementation of two consented solar farms. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policies CS21 of the CS and DM2 of the SADMP.
- 9.1.8 Policies CS18 (*Countryside*) of the CS, DM2 (*Development in the Countryside*) of the Blaby District Delivery DPD and DM4 (*Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation*) of the SADMP aims to protect the countryside. As the site is located outside the limits of built development and outside designated Green Wedges and Areas of Separation it comprises the 'Countryside'. Policy CS18 states "*within areas designated as Countryside, planning permission will not be granted for built development, or other development which would have a significantly adverse effect on the appearance or character of the landscape.*" This is further developed in the Delivery DPD at Policy DM2, which states "*development proposals consistent with Core Strategy Policy CS18 will be supported*". The proposed development will not adversely affect the appearance and character of the landscape as it will be underground.
- 9.1.9 Regarding Policy DM4 of the SADMP, there are certain exemptions whereby development in the countryside will be considered sustainable including the "*provision of stand-alone renewable energy developments in line with Policy DM2: Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Development*". As this proposal will facilitate the implementation of a stand-alone renewable energy development, it is considered that it complies with SADMP Policy DM4.
- 9.1.10 With all things above considered, the principle of development is supported by local and national policy.

9.2 Landscape and Visual

- 9.2.1 Landscape and Visual impacts have been assessed during the decision making process for the two consented solar farms. They were assessed as being acceptable, evidenced by the consent being



granted. The proposal will not have any additional landscape and visual impacts as it will be laid underground and therefore, it is considered that the proposal is compliant with local and national policy in this regard.

9.3 Biodiversity

- 9.3.1 This application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the cable route which was informed by a site walkover survey.
- 9.3.2 Following the survey, a badger sett (outlier) has been found within 30m of the site boundary. Whilst the PEA recommends a precautionary buffer of 30m from the badger sett, given the narrow nature of the planning application boundary, maintaining the recommended 30 m buffer of the entrance to the badger sett might not be possible depending on the final location of the cable trench within the planning application boundary.
- 9.3.3 If the recommended buffer cannot be maintained, it is anticipated that, following further pre-construction surveys, a disturbance license will be obtained post-planning (planning permission needs to be in place prior to obtaining a license).
- 9.3.4 Alternatively, as the badger sett was identified to be an outlier sett, camera trapping could be undertaken to establish whether the sett is occupied a few weeks prior to the commencement of the works. If no badgers are present and as the works would not damage or destroy the sett (as the sett is out with the Site), then no licence would be needed. If the sett is shown to be occupied, then a license would be obtained. The exact method of protecting the badger sett will be determined based on updated survey and relevant guidance / consultation prior to construction.
- 9.3.5 In England, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory from 12th February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990²⁴ (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021²⁵). Developers must therefore deliver a BNG of 10% unless their development is exempt from BNG requirements.

²⁴ Town and Country Planning Act 1990; Schedule 7A. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/schedule/7A>

²⁵ Environment Act 2021; Schedule 14. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/schedule/14/enacted>



9.3.6 Guidance provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs²⁶ sets out the types of development that will be exempt from the mandatory BNG requirements²⁷. This application does not fall into any of those identified types of development.

9.3.7 However, the Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide²⁸ sets out how to account for temporary losses. It states:

“Accounting for temporary losses:

you do not need to record a habitat as lost when there a temporary impacts to a habitat and the area can be restored to both:

- *Baseline habitat type within two years of the initial impact; and*
- *Baseline condition within two years of the initial impact.”*

9.3.8 A BNG metric has been prepared and submitted as part of this planning application. The BNG metric only presents the baseline habitat and hedgerow units and therefore shows a 0% change. This is because the biodiversity metric allows for temporary impacts that can be restored within two years to be excluded from the calculations.

9.3.9 Where the cable crosses agricultural land, the soil and the covering grassland habitat would be fully restored immediately following the construction works. This will be restored to pre-development conditions within two years. Tree and hedgerow removal will be avoided through careful design of the cable trench and using appropriate construction techniques (i.e., HDD for the small areas of hedgerow that intersect the planning application boundary). Therefore, the identified habitats within the planning application boundary would be fully protected and comprise temporary impacts and are subsequently exempt from BNG calculations.

9.3.10 Notwithstanding the above, guidance is provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural

²⁶ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2024) *Guidance: Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>

²⁷ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2024) *Guidance: Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>

²⁸ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2024) *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide*. Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c60e0514b83c000ca715f3/The_Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_-_User_Guide_.pdf



Affairs²⁹ which sets out three ways a developer can achieve BNG. It states:

1. *They create biodiversity on-site (within the red line boundary of a development site).*
2. *If developers cannot achieve all of their BNG on-site they can deliver through a mixture of on-site and off-site. Developers can either make off-site biodiversity gains on their own land outside the development site, or buy off-site biodiversity units on the market.*
3. *If developers cannot achieve on-site or off-site BNG, they must buy statutory biodiversity credits from the government. This should be a last resort. The government will use the revenue to invest in habitat creation in England.*

9.3.11 In this instance off-site biodiversity gains could be made on land under the control of the applicant outside of the development site, as per point 2 above. This application will allow for the implementation of two consented solar farms. The consented solar farms will achieve a net gain of 113.43% for habitat units and a net gain of 107.18% for hedgerow units (Blaby LPA ref. 21/1386/FUL); and 37.38% for habitat units and net gain of 67.94% for hedgerow units (Hinckley and Bosworth LPA ref. 21/01242/FUL). This is a substantial amount of BNG achieved across both sites which will be realised through the granting of this consent.

9.3.12 It is considered that this gain can be secured via a suitably worded condition attached to any consent granted. This condition could ensure that the consent for the cable is tied to the consented solar farms ensuring the retention of the LPAs control that BNG will be achieved.

9.3.13 The proposal will not have any detrimental impacts on biodiversity and therefore, it is considered it complies with Policies CS19 (*Biodiversity and Geodiversity*) of the CS and DM6 (*Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geological Interest*) of the SADMP.

9.4 Cultural Heritage

9.4.1 The consented solar farms were supported by Historical Environment Desk Based Assessments (DBA) and Geophysical surveys. These documents set out assessments of the potential effects of the solar farms on designated and non-designated heritage assets, including impacts on archaeology. The

²⁹ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2024) *Guidance: Understanding biodiversity net gain*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-biodiversity-net-gain>



impacts were assessed as being acceptable.

9.4.2 There are no designated or non-designated heritage assets within the site. There are some designated heritage assets within the surrounding area however, given the cable route will be underground, indirect impacts on heritage assets are not anticipated as a result of the development.

9.4.3 It is not considered that this proposal will have any further impacts on designated and non-designated heritage assets, as well as archaeology. As such, it is considered that it complies with Policies CS20 (*Historic Environment and Culture*) of the CS and DM12 (*Designated and Non-designated Heritage Assets*) of the Blaby District Delivery DPD. It is also considered to comply with Policies DM11 (*Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment*), DM12 (*Heritage Assets*) and DM13 (*Preserving the Borough's Archaeology*) of the Hinckley and Bosworth SADMP.

9.5 Arboricultural Impacts

9.5.1 This proposal is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment. The cable route is planned to avoid Root Protection Areas (RPAs). Where there is potential for impacts on the RPAs a HDD could be used.

9.5.2 Accordingly, the assessment concludes that the proposal is feasible from an arboricultural perspective and if carefully implemented according to an approved arboricultural method statement, there would be no to low potential of negative impact on the retained trees.

9.6 Highways and Transportation

9.6.1 As the majority of the proposal will be located within the public highway, or verge, Policy DM17 (*Highways and Transport*) of the SADMP is of relevance.

9.6.2 Policy DM17 outlines circumstances when development proposals will be supported. It is not considered that the proposal will have an adverse impact upon highway safety, and it can be demonstrated that the residual cumulative impacts of development on the transport network are not severe. There will be short term, temporary impacts due to road closures etc during construction of the proposal. These impacts will be mitigated by the submission of a CEMP to be secured by planning condition.



9.7 Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- 9.7.1 As identified in Section 2.3 of this statement, there are several PROWs within the surrounding area with three crossing the main highway which forms part of the site. This includes Footpath T73, Footpath V72 and Footpath V80A. Although short-term closures might be required during construction, the PROWs will remain open once the cable route is installed.
- 9.7.2 As any impacts will be temporary in nature, it is not considered that the proposal will significantly impact the PROWs.



10.0 Conclusion

10.1 Summary of Planning Policy Requirements

- 10.1.1 National policy promotes increasing energy efficiency, minimising energy consumption and developing renewable energy sources. Local Policy supports development that promotes these objectives wherever any adverse impacts can be addressed satisfactorily.

10.2 Need for the Proposals

- 10.2.1 The Climate Change Act³¹ commits the UK government to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels by 2050, with a net benefit of around 4% of GDP. The UK will be powered entirely by clean electricity, subject to security of supply and electricity demand is set to double by 2050 due to the electrification of the UK. With the decommissioning of all of the UK's coal fired power stations by 2025 there will be an urgent need to replace these generators and double electricity generation. Solar farms are a proven source of safe, locally produced and sustainable power and accordingly the Government is calling a fivefold increase in solar development to be delivered³².
- 10.2.2 There is an acute and growing need for the solar farms that will be facilitated as a result of this proposal. The consented solar farms will help tackle climate change, help replace closing fossil fuel power stations, meet a two-fold increase in electricity demand and transition to home-grown energy to improve energy security and stabilise fuel prices.

10.3 Benefits of the Proposals

- 10.3.1 The proposals would allow for the implementation of two consented solar farms, which combined would generate approximately 57MW of electricity. This equates to enough electricity to serve the total power needs of around 17,100 average UK households per annum, which would offset around 24,510 tonnes of CO₂ per annum and 1,000,000 tonnes over the lifetime of the scheme. The economic benefits of the consented solar farms include economic output of over £1,000,000 GVA and £198,000 business rates

³¹ Climate Change Act 2008; Chapter 27; Part 1; Section 1 (1). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents>

³² HM Government (2023) *Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan*. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/642708eafbe620000f17daa2/powering-up-britain-energy-security-plan.pdf>



generated per annum.

10.4 Summary of Impacts

- 10.4.1 The potential impacts that could arise from the proposed development have been identified in Section 9 of this statement, including considerations of Landscape and visual, Biodiversity, Cultural Heritage, Arboricultural and Highways and Transportation. These considerations have been assessed in detail and where relevant, reference evidence-based assessments undertaken by qualified professionals. No significant impacts have been identified as a result of the Development.

10.5 Compliance with Planning Policy and Planning Balance

- 10.5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Act, the determination must be in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 10.5.2 The previous section of this statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is compliant with the Development Plan and all relevant National and Local Planning Policy.
- 10.5.3 If it were to be concluded that there is some degree of conflict with the Development Plan when taken as a whole, there are material considerations that indicate that planning permission should still be granted, which include the very significant benefits of the proposed development when applied in the planning balance (i.e., essential infrastructure required to facilitate the connection of two consented renewable energy developments), which further support the case for granting planning permission.

10.6 Final Conclusions

- 10.6.1 Based on the contents of this statement, it has been demonstrated that the proposed development is compliant with the Development Plans and all local and national policy guidance.
- 10.6.2 The public benefits that would be realised through the implementation of the two solar farms should weigh substantially in favour of granting planning permission for this proposal (i.e., the development is essential infrastructure required to facilitate the connection of two consented renewable energy developments). The economic and biodiversity benefits which this development would facilitate through the implementation of the two approved solar farms, should also attract moderate weight in favour of



granting planning permission. In conclusion, the planning balance tilts overwhelmingly in favour of granting planning permission.



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