

# Planning Statement



## **Higher Stockbridge Solar Farm** Longberton, Sherborne, DT9 6EP

P17-2603 | December 2019



## **HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE SOLAR FARM**

# **PLANNING STATEMENT**

**HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE FARM, LONGBURTON,  
SHERBORNE, DT9 6EP**

**ON BEHALF OF VOLTALIA UK LIMITED**

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)  
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004**

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**PLANNING** | **DESIGN** | **ENVIRONMENT** | **ECONOMICS**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies a full planning application submitted by Pegasus Group on behalf of Voltalia UK Limited ("the applicant"). Planning permission is sought for a renewable energy proposal encompassing ground mounted photovoltaics and associated infrastructure on land at Higher Stockbridge Farm, Longburton, Sherborne, DT9 6EP.

1.2 A site location plan is provided at Appendix 1.

### APPENDIX 1: SITE LOCATION PLAN

1.3 The main element of the proposal is the installation of a ground mounted solar park with a maximum export capacity of 35MW laid out across various field enclosures at Higher Stockbridge Farm. This would allow the solar park to generate clean renewable energy for the equivalent of approximately 10,605 homes a year. The anticipated CO<sub>2</sub> displacement is circa 11,610 tonnes per annum.

1.4 The proposal would provide a clean, renewable and sustainable form of electricity and will also make a valuable contribution to the generation of electricity at a local level. The scheme would add to the Council's progress in meeting its renewable energy target and would also assist in meeting national targets for both energy supply and low carbon energy development.

1.5 The issues relevant to the assessment of the application proposal are set out in this Statement. The subsequent sections of this Statement are divided into: -

- **Section 2:** *Background*

1.6 The section summarises the key legislative background and support for standalone renewable energy schemes in the UK. The revised NPPF confirms that planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements and the documents are considered relevant to the determination of this application.

- **Section 3:** *Site and Surrounds*

1.7 This section contains a description of the application site and its environs

- **Section 4:** *The Proposal*

1.8 This section contains a description of the application proposal.

- **Section 5: Planning Policy Context**

1.9 The planning policy context for the site includes both national policy guidance and the statutory development plan which comprise the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2011 – 2031 . Brief explanations of the key policies pertaining to the development proposal is contained within this section.

- **Section 6: Planning Assessment**

1.10 The sixth section outlines the planning matters that are considered to be important to the determination of the application. Considerations are addressed in turn and explained in the context of the relevant planning policy outlined in the previous section and the legislative background set out in Section 2.

- **Section 7: Conclusions**

1.11 This provides the concluding comments in relation to the application proposal.

### **Supporting Documentation**

1.12 The application proposal is supported by the following documentation:

- **Completed 1APP [Application Form] and Certificates**
- **Planning Application Drawings**
- **Covering Letter**, prepared by Pegasus Group.
- **Design and Access Statement**, prepared by Pegasus Group
- **Planning Statement**, [this statement] prepared by Pegasus Group
- **Community Engagement Report**, prepared by Pegasus Group.
- **Landscape and Ecological Management Plan**, jointly prepared by Pegasus Group and Clarkson and Woods Ecological Consultants.
- **Construction Traffic Management Plan**, prepared by Pegasus Group.
- **Agricultural Land Classification Survey**, undertaken by Askew Land and Soil Ltd.

- **Arboricultural Survey, Impact Assessment and Protection Plan**, prepared by Barton Hyett Associates.
- **Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy**, prepared by Clive Onions Ltd.
- **Phase 1 Ecological Survey Report**, prepared by Clarkson and Woods.
- **Wintering Birds Survey**, prepared by Clarkson and Woods.
- **Breeding Birds Survey**, prepared by Clarkson and Woods.
- **Bat Survey**, prepared by Clarkson and Woods.
- **Environmental Statement**, coordinated by Pegasus Group and structured into: -
  - i. **Volume 1: Main Statement** - Comprises the main volume of the Environmental Statement, including 'general chapters' that describe the EIA context, provide a description of the Application Site and Proposed Development, and set out the scope of the Environmental Statement, followed by the 'technical chapters' for each environmental theme with the associated figures concluding with a summary. coordinated by Pegasus Group.
  - ii. **Volume 2: Technical Appendices** - Comprise the technical appendices supporting the main report.
  - iii. **Volume 3: Non-Technical Summary** - this provides a concise summary of the Environmental Statement identifying the likely significant environmental effects and the measures proposed to mitigate or to avoid adverse effects of the Proposed Development.

1.13 Documents are either appended to the Environmental Statement or provided as standalone reports accompanying the planning application submission.

### **Statutory Requirements**

1.14 EIA Regulations contain two development schedules (Schedule 1 development and Schedule 2 development). Schedule 1 contains a list of development where EIA is

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mandatory and Schedule 2 contains a list of development, coupled with development thresholds, where EIA may be considered.

- 1.15 Given the land take of the application proposal, a Screening Opinion was previously requested from the former West Dorset District Council. The Council adopted its Screening Opinion on 17 November 2017 which deemed the renewable energy proposal to be EIA development. The Council advised that the development could have the potential to generate significant impacts with regards to ecology, landscape and heritage and these topics are considered in the accompanying Environmental Statement. The Screening Opinion is attached at Appendix 2.

## **APPENDIX 2 – SCREENING OPINION**

### **Pre-Application Advice**

- 1.16 The application submission has been prepared in line with the Local Planning Authority's advice provided at the pre-application stage. A copy of the Council's pre-application advice dated 5 July 2018 is provided at Appendix 3. To summarise, the Council consider how the layout of the site, the surrounding landform and topography makes it a potentially favourable location for solar development. As part of the pre-application advice the Council consulted with the Council Specialist Services in relation to landscape and heritage matters.

## **APPENDIX 3 – LPA'S PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE**

## 2. BACKGROUND AND RENEWABLE ENERGY IN THE UK

2.1 The explicit need to introduce a step change in how the country deals with the climate change has been recognised by the Government who, on 1 May 2019, **declared an Environmental and Climate Change Emergency** following the finding of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change that to avoid more than 1.5°C rise in global warming, global emissions would need to fall by around 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching net zero by around 2050. Through the declaration, the Government recognises a need to move swiftly to capture economic opportunities and green jobs in the low carbon economy while managing risks for workers and communities currently reliant on carbon intensive sectors.

2.2 **At a local level, Dorset Council made its own Climate Change Emergency Declaration during its inaugural meeting of the newly formed administrative Dorset Council on 16 May 2019.**

2.3 BREXIT is also a material consideration for energy and climate change. Government has explored the relationship between BREXIT, energy and climate change through its Briefing Paper published on 9 November 2018<sup>1</sup>. The salient points are: -

- There is currently uncertainty about the Brexit impact on a number of issues including: the UK's departure from Euratom, the future of the EU internal energy market (IEM) and the status of the single electricity market (SEM) on the island of Ireland.
- The impact of Brexit on UK energy and climate change policy is subject to the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. The possible consequences vary based on whether the outcome is a full Brexit deal, a sector-specific deal, or in the case of no Brexit deal.
- Brexit has the potential to impact the UK's civil nuclear industry, including nuclear supply of electricity
- The UK is currently a full member of the EU internal energy market (IEM). The IEM allows harmonised, tariff-free trading of gas and electricity across Europe (through interconnectors), leading to lower prices and greater security of supply. Britain has four electricity interconnectors with Europe

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<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Briefing Paper: Brexit Energy and Climate Change

and the island of Ireland providing 4GW of electricity interconnector capacity: 2GW to France (IFA); 1GW to the Netherlands (BritNed); 500MW to Northern Ireland (Moyle); and 500MW to the Republic of Ireland (East West).

- The IEM facilitates harmonised, tariff-free trade across these interconnectors. The flow of electricity between interconnected markets is driven by cost differentials. When the price of electricity is lower in one market, energy will flow from that market to the higher priced market. The effect of this is to make the prices in each converge - they increase in the exporting market and decrease in the importing market.
- As wholesale gas and electricity prices in the UK are generally higher than elsewhere in Europe, interconnection has caused a reduction in wholesale prices, and hence consumer prices in the UK.

2.4 Leaving the IEM has the potential to impact the trade of energy through interconnectors. The Briefing Paper identifies how one potential impact of leaving the IEM is an increase in the cost of energy imports and this in turn would be passed on to UK's householders and businesses. In terms of energy security, it notes how the interest of the UK should be to increase the flexibility and resilience of grid, especially with increasing intermittent renewables. The development proposal would contribute towards the objectives set out in the briefing note.

2.5 This section continues to highlight the legislative background and support for standalone renewable energy schemes as part of both local climate change mitigation and wider national targets on the use of renewables in the UK. These documents form key components of central and local Government's policy and commitments to renewable and low carbon energy and should be considered material to the determination of this scheme.

2.6 The background to the drive to increase the use of renewable sources of energy has its roots in the recognition that the burning of fossil fuels has an adverse effect on the climate of the world as a whole and that global measures are required to deal with it. The extensive use of fossil fuels that accompanied the industrialisation of the world's economy has released large volumes of CO<sub>2</sub> back into the atmosphere. The accumulation of greenhouse gases in the upper atmosphere

reduces the planet's ability to reflect solar radiation back into space, resulting in a gradual increase in mean global air temperature.

### UK Legislative Context

2.7 The objectives of the UK renewable energy policies are in accordance with the overall European policy objectives. These are focused on a number of key climate change challenges, these include: -

- The reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to tackle climate change;
- The promotion of competitive energy markets in the UK; and
- Security of decentralised energy supplies.

2.8 This subsection goes on to summarise the following relevant provisions: -

- UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009);
- Energy Security Strategy (2012);
- Energy Bill (2013);
- Renewable Energy Roadmap (Update 2013);
- Clean Growth Strategy (2017); and
- Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics 2018.

### Energy Act (November 2012)

2.9 By way of background, the Energy Bill was introduced by the Coalition Government in November 2012 and aimed to ***“power low-carbon economic growth for the UK”***. The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change confirmed the introduction of the Energy Bill to the House of Commons alongside the Annual Energy Statement. The Bill sought to establish a legislative framework for delivering secure, affordable and low carbon energy throughout Great Britain. At its core is the need to ensure that, as old power plants are taken off line, the UK remains able to generate enough energy to meet its needs even if demand increases. Doing this while also decarbonising requires significant investment in new infrastructure to be brought forward. The Bill was duly progressed through Parliament and received the Royal Assent on 18 December 2013.

- 2.10 With regard to setting a decarbonization target, the Act allows the Secretary of State to set or amend a decarbonisation target range, being a target range for the level of carbon intensity of the electricity generation sector. The earliest that a decarbonisation target range could be set for is 2030, and the decision of whether to exercise that power would be taken in 2016, after the Committee on Climate Change has provided advice on the Fifth Carbon Budget.
- 2.11 In the meantime, the objectives of the Electricity Market Reform (EMR) to which the Secretary of State will have regard when carrying out the key EMR functions are:
- the carbon reduction targets as set out in the climate change act 2008, which include a 34% reduction by 2020 and 80% reduction by 2050;
  - to ensure a security of energy supply (including through diversification of energy mix);
  - the cost to consumers; and
  - the legally binding EU targets for 15% of UK energy to be supplied from renewable sources by 2020.

### **UK Renewable Energy Strategy**

- 2.12 The 'UK Renewable Energy Strategy' was published in July 2009 by DECC, identifying how to radically increase renewable energy use in the UK as part of an overall strategy for tackling climate change. This strategy would also meet the UK's European obligations and legally binding targets to ensure that 20% of our energy comes from renewable sources by 2020.

### **Energy Security Strategy**

- 2.13 This document was published in November 2012 and provides a detailed and open assessment of the UK's current energy security, outlines work already underway to safeguard our energy security, and sets out the policy which the Government is putting in place to ensure that our energy supplies remain secure.
- 2.14 Whilst the document identified that total UK energy demand 'is predicted to fall by 7 per cent between 2011 and 2020'; it also recognises that demand for '*electricity is likely to increase by at least 30 per cent and potentially by 100 per cent as much of our heating and transportation becomes electrified*'

2.15 One of the key goals of the Energy Security Strategy is to decarbonise electricity supply which will help reduce UK reliance on international fossil fuel. The UK Government recognises that increasing the amount of energy UK gets from low-carbon technologies will help make sure the UK has a secure supply of energy.

**Renewable Energy Roadmap November 2013 Edition)**

2.16 The Government first published the Renewable Energy Roadmap in July 2011 which sets out the path to achieve the UK's headline renewable energy target.

2.17 The Roadmap has been updated on two occasions since July 2011, once in 2012 and most recently in November 2013. In these updates solar PV deployment has been included as one of the key technologies to help create a balanced UK energy mix.

2.18 This reflects the significant changes to the solar PV industry in the United Kingdom including the increased viability of implementing this technology at larger scales predominantly as a result of the significant decrease in costs associated with its deployment.

2.19 At Paragraph 15 of the 2013 update, it is confirmed that the target outlined in the Statutory Instrument (2011 No 243 referred to above) was not met, with only 3.94% of electricity used being generated from renewable sources, compared with the first interim target of 4.04%.

2.20 Furthermore, Paragraph 191 confirms that there was 2.4GW of installed solar PV capacity as of the end of June 2013 and Paragraph 192 states there is significant potential for further deployment with 20GW being the estimate of the current technical maximum level of solar PV deployment by 2020. That would represent nearly a ten-fold increase in deployment over a 7 year period.

**Clean Growth Strategy**

2.21 The Clean Growth Strategy, published in October 2017, provides the Government's latest position on solar parks and sets out a comprehensive set of policies and proposals that aim to accelerate the pace of "*clean growth*", i.e. deliver increased economic growth and decreased emissions.

2.22 To achieve the clean growth, the Government identifies how the UK will need to nurture low carbon technologies, processes and systems that are as cheap as

possible, this includes subsidy free ground mounted solar parks as achieved by this development proposal. The Government places significant emphasis on securing increased investment across the energy systems whilst minimising, as much as possible, the public costs for securing such investments and makes multiple references to how they are seeking the delivery of solar without subsidy. Moreover, page 99 specifically states how the '**Government want to see more people investing in solar without government support**'

### **Climate Change Act 2008**

2.23 The Climate Change Act 2008 gives Ministers the power to issue guidance to reporting authorities on:

- assessing the current and projected impacts of climate change;
- preparing proposals and policies for adapting to climate change;
- co-operating with other organisations for that purpose

2.24 The Act sets the legally binding target of an 80% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and sets a carbon budgeting system that caps emissions over five year periods.

2.25 The two key aims of the Act are to:

- improve carbon management, helping the transition towards a low-carbon economy in the UK
- demonstrate UK leadership internationally, signalling commitment to taking our share of responsibility for reducing global emissions in the context of developing international negotiations.

2.26 The UK Committee on Climate Change advises the government on progress on tackling climate change.

### **Statutory Instrument (2011 No. 243) – The Promotion of the Use of Energy from Renewable Sources Regulations 2011 (February 2011)**

2.27 Statutory Instrument No. 243 (The Promotion of the Use of Energy from Renewable Sources Regulations) came in to force on the 14th March 2011. This Regulation places a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure that the renewables share in 2020

is at least 15%. Regulation 4(1) places a duty on the Secretary of State to introduce measures effectively designed to ensure the indicative targets for the share of energy from renewable sources set out in the Schedule (below), are met. Regulations 4(2) and 4(3) modify that duty in the event that an indicative target is missed.

2.28	Indicative Target period	2.29	Percentage
2.30	1st January 2011 to 31st December 2012	2.31	4%
2.32	1st January 2013 to 31st December 2014	2.33	4.5%
2.34	1st January 2015 to 31st December 2016	2.35	7.5%
2.36	1st January 2017 to 31st December 2018	2.37	10.2%

### UK Renewable Energy Strategy

2.38 The 'UK Renewable Energy Strategy' was published in July 2009 by DECC, identifying how to radically increase renewable energy use in the UK as part of an overall strategy for tackling climate change. This strategy would also meet the UK's European obligations and legally binding targets to ensure that 15% of our energy comes from renewable sources by 2020.

### Energy Security Strategy

2.39 This document was published in November 2012 and provides a detailed and open assessment of the UK's current energy security, outlines work already underway to safeguard our energy security, and sets out the policy which the Government is putting in place to ensure that our energy supplies remain secure.

2.40 Whilst the document identified that total UK energy demand 'is predicted to fall by 7 per cent between 2011 and 2020'; it also recognises that demand for **'electricity is likely to increase by at least 30 per cent and potentially by 100 per cent as much of our heating and transportation becomes electrified'**

2.41 One of the key goals of the Energy Security Strategy is to decarbonise electricity supply which will help reduce UK reliance on international fossil fuel.

2.42 The UK Government recognises that increasing the amount of energy UK gets from low-carbon technologies will help make sure the UK has a secure supply of energy.

#### **UK Renewable Energy Roadmap Update (November 2013 Edition)**

2.43 The Government first published the Renewable Energy Roadmap in July 2011 which sets out the path to achieve the UK's headline renewable energy target.

2.44 The Roadmap has been updated on two occasions since July 2011, once in 2012 and most recently in November 2013. In these updates sustainable biomass electricity has been included as one of the key technologies to help create a balanced UK energy mix.

2.45 Paragraph 103 of the roadmap recognises how DECC continues to support innovation in bioenergy technologies.

#### **Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics (July 2019 Edition)**

2.46 This Digest, also referred to as DUKES, is an essential source of energy information providing figures on the UK's overall energy performance, production and consumption. The digest is published annually and the latest edition was published in July 2019. The salient points of the report are: -

- In 2018, fossil fuel remained the dominant source of energy supply, accounting for 79.4 per cent. Use of fossil fuel increased in comparison to 2017.
- In terms of progress against the Renewable Energy Directive, in 2018, 11 per cent of total energy consumption came from renewable sources up from 9.2 per cent in 2016. The 2020 target is 15 per cent.
- In 2018, overall net imports accounted for 36 per cent of energy used in the UK.

2.47 In terms of the synopsis of the above, DUKES identify how 36% of the UK energy requirements is reliant on imports. This is a material consideration when balancing the security of energy supplies and the uncertainty over a no deal Brexit.

#### **Climate Change Action**

- 2.48 The scientific evidence on climate change is summarised in 'Climate Change Explained' first published on 23 October 2014 by the Department of Energy and Climate Change. To summarise, it states that there is clear evidence to show that climate change is happening. Measurements show that the average temperature at the Earth's surface has risen by about 0.8°C over the last century. 13 of the 14 warmest years on record have occurred in the 21st century and in the last 30 years each decade has been hotter than the previous one. This change in temperature hasn't been the same everywhere; the increase has been greater over land than over the oceans and has been particularly fast in the Arctic.
- 2.49 The UK is already affected by rising temperatures. The average temperature in Britain is now 1 Deg C higher than it was 100 years ago and 0.5 Deg C higher than it was in the 1970s.
- 2.50 Although it is clear that the climate is warming in the long-term, note that temperatures aren't expected to rise every single year. Natural fluctuations will still cause unusually cold years and seasons. Along with warming at the Earth's surface, many other changes in the climate are occurring:
- warming oceans;
  - melting polar ice and glaciers;
  - rising sea levels; and
  - more extreme weather events.
- 2.51 Rising levels of carbon dioxide and other gases, such as methane, in the atmosphere create a 'greenhouse effect', trapping the Sun's energy and causing the Earth, and in particular the oceans, to warm. Heating of the oceans accounts for over nine tenths of the trapped energy. Scientists have known about this greenhouse effect since the 19th Century.
- 2.52 The higher the amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the warmer the Earth becomes. Recent climate change is happening largely as a result of this warming, with smaller contributions from natural influences like variations in the Sun's output.
- 2.53 Carbon dioxide levels have increased by more than 40% since before the industrial revolution. Other greenhouse gases have increased by similarly large amounts. All

the evidence shows that this increase in greenhouse gases is almost entirely due to human activity. The main contribution to this is the burning of fossil fuels for energy.

2.54 About 43% of the carbon dioxide produced goes into the atmosphere, and the rest is absorbed by plants and the oceans. Deforestation reduces the number of trees absorbing carbon dioxide and releases the carbon contained in those trees.

2.55 The Government advise that if action is now taken to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there's a good chance that we can limit average global temperature rises to 2 Deg C. By taking action now we could: -

- Avoid burdening future generations with greater impacts and costs of climate change;
- Enable economies to cope better by mitigating environmental risks and improving energy efficiency there will be wider benefits to health, energy security and biodiversity; and
- Benefit economically because if we delay acting on emissions, it will only mean more radical intervention in the future at greater cost.

2.56 It is also recognised that taking action now can also help to achieve long-term, sustainable economic growth from a low-carbon economy.

### **European Directives**

2.57 At a European level, there is the agreed commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 20% by 2020, compared to 1990 levels. Following the Energy Review Report in 2006, the European Council agreed to a European strategy to further improve energy security and to reduce carbon emissions. In March 2007, it was agreed to commit to: (i) Saving 20% of EU's energy consumption by 2020 compared to current projections; and (ii) A binding target of reducing carbon emissions by 20% by 2020 and by 30% in the context of the international action.

2.58 The European Commission published the 20/20 by 2020 package in January 2008 and the EU Climate and Energy package was formally agreed in April 2009. This package commits the EU to the 20% reduction in its carbon emissions and to achieve a target of delivering 20% of the EU's final energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020.

- 2.59 More recently, 2009 European Directive 2009/28/EC on 'the promotion and use of energy from renewable sources' (the Renewable Energy Directive) has been revised in 2016 to ensure that the target of at least 27% renewables in the final energy consumption in the EU by 2030.
- 2.60 In Article 3 and Annex 1 (as amended), sets mandatory targets for the share of energy to be obtained from renewable sources for each European Member State. In order to achieve the overall EU renewable energy target of 27% the proposal includes individual targets for each Member State. The target for the UK is to equal or exceed 15% of gross final consumption of energy from renewable sources by 2020 (this compares to only 1.5% in 2005). The Article goes on to state that from 1 January 2021 onwards, the share of energy from renewable sources in each Member State's gross final consumption of energy shall not be lower than that shown in the third column of the table in part A of Annex I (i.e 15% for the UK)
- 2.61 Article 4 of the directive requires member states to produce national renewable action plans, setting out national targets for key sectors, including heating and cooling, transport and electricity, together with measures to achieve these targets.

## **INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT**

- 2.62 This section summarises the following relevant provisions: -
- 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
  - 1997 Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change;
  - 2009 Copenhagen Accord;
  - United Nations Climate Change Conference, Durban, 2011; and
  - Warsaw Conference of the Parties 19 (COP19).

### **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

- 2.63 This convention acknowledged the need to protect the global climate. It was opened for signature at the 'Earth Summit' that met in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, coming into force in March 1994. Recognising that human-induced changes to the atmosphere are affecting the climate, it set out to ensure that atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases are stabilised at a safe level.

### **The Kyoto Protocol**

2.64 The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (United Nations, 1997) was ratified by the UK in 2002. It sets obligatory targets for committed Annex I countries (including the UK) to take measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), by an average of 5 % against 1990 levels over the five year period 2008 - 2012. Under the Kyoto Protocol, the UK's commitment is for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 12.5 % from 1990 levels by 2012.

### **Copenhagen Accord**

2.65 The Copenhagen Accord, agreed by leaders representing 49 countries, marks a significant step forward, with countries agreeing to limit global temperature increases to no more than 2°C and making substantial commitments to support developing countries to take action. As a party to the Copenhagen Accord, the United Kingdom has agreed a range of proclamations and objectives, including that:

- climate change is 'one of the greatest challenges of our time', which must be combated 'urgently';
- the ultimate objective is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere 'at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system';
- any increase in global temperature should be 'below 2 degrees Celsius';
- 'deep cuts' in emissions are required;
- emissions should peak 'as soon as possible'; and
- lower emissions are 'indispensable to sustainable development'.

### **United Nations Climate Change Conference, Durban, 2011**

2.66 The Durban conference considered how to cut emissions to limit global temperature rise to below two degrees to avoid dangerous climate change. Over 120 countries formed a coalition behind the EU's proposal of a 'road map' to a global legally binding agreement, to be put in place by 2015, to curb emissions. The talks resulted in a decision to adopt the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. The

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conference also agreed to establish a green climate fund to assist poorer countries to make the transition to a low carbon economy.

### **Warsaw COP19**

2.67 At the UN Climate Change Conference in Warsaw 2013, governments took further essential decisions to stay on track towards securing a universal climate change agreement in 2015<sup>2</sup>. The objective of the 2015 agreement is twofold: Firstly, to bind nations together into an effective global effort to reduce emissions rapidly enough to chart humanity's longer-term path out of the danger zone of climate change, while building adaptation capacity; Secondly, to stimulate faster and broader action now.

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<sup>2</sup> At the forty second Climate Change Conference session to be held from 1- 11 June 2015 in Bonn, Germany.

### 3. SITE AND SURROUNDS

- 3.1 This section provides a description of the development site and its environs. Centred at OS grid reference ST6315 1072, the subject site comprises a collection of agricultural fields at Higher Stockbridge Farm, Longburton, Sherborne, DT9 6EP.
- 3.2 The development site is set within the open countryside located approximately 3 miles to the south of Sherborne and 5 miles to the south east of Yeovil. It is bounded to the north and west by agricultural land. The southern edge of the site runs parallel with Bailey Ridge Lane, beyond which are further agricultural fields. The eastern edge of the site is predominantly bounded by The Holme Bushes (dense woodland) beyond which is Bailey Ridge. Higher Stockbridge Farmstead is located near the northeast corner of the site and Holmebushes farmhouse is located near the south east corner. Areas to the north and west of the site are also occupied by woodland including Middle Wood and East Wood.
- 3.3 The site comprises of a number of irregular shape fields of mainly improved grassland boarded by mature hedgerows and ditches. Large mature trees are present within both the hedgerows and fields themselves.

#### **Topography, Land Form and Drainage**

- 3.4 The development site lies upon gently undulating land between approximately 55m AOD at its northern edge along the east-west alignment of an unnamed watercourse, and 70 to 75m AOD along its southern boundary formed by Bailey Ridge Lane. The surrounding landform rises gently to the east and southeast (Bailey Ridge lies between c. 75m and 97m AOD), and more sharply to the north and northwest to form the Knighton ridgeline (highest point 142m AOD about 1.6km to the northwest of the development site) and Leweston ridgeline (highest point 119m AOD about 900m to the north of the site).

#### **Land Use and Land Cover**

- 3.5 The site lies to the west of the Dyke Head/Bailey Ridge road between Longburton and Leigh in Dorset, and north of Bailey Ridge Lane. Access to Higher Stockbridge Farm is gained from Dyke Head/Bailey Ridge road.
- 3.6 The site encompasses mainly pastoral farmland with a few parcels in arable crop production to the west and south west of Higher Stockbridge Farm. The fields are

bordered by established hedgerows with frequent mature trees; isolated mature trees (English Oak) are retained within some of the fields where hedgerows have been historically removed.

- 3.7 A small copse, Alder Wood, lies within the site to the south of Higher Stockbridge Farm. The surrounding landscape is within managed agricultural uses, used mainly for pasture with some arable, and substantial blocks of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland in the vicinity of the site. Such woodland includes The Holm Bushes that in part abuts the eastern boundary of the site, East Wood/Middle Wood/West Wood and Alcroft Copse that lie to the west, and unnamed woodlands at Knighton Common and the Leweston Ridge to the northwest and north, respectively.

### **Built Form**

- 3.8 Higher Stockbridge Farm comprises the farm house, miscellaneous agricultural buildings, barns and dairy and a residential property known as 'Stepping Stones' immediately to the east of and associated with the farm. Built form within the wider landscape is limited to small settlements such as Lillington (1.3km to the north); Longburton (1.7km to the northwest); Leigh (1.4km to the south); Chetnole (2.4km to the southwest); and Yetminster (2.5km to the west). Isolated properties and hamlets occur within the intervening landscape including Lower Farm 600m to the north, Lower Stockbridge Farm and Drove Farm 300m and 310m to the east, respectively; Holmbushes Farm adjacent to the south-eastern edge of the development site; Willen Farm (130m to the southeast); Higher Bailey Ridge Farm, bungalows and cottages (120m to the south); Lower Bailey Ridge Farm (100m to the south); Whitfield Farm (820m to the west); and Higher Farm and houses along Higher Street, Lillington (1.4km to 1.75km to the north-northwest). St Antony's Leweston School lies on the Leweston ridge, 1km to the north of the development site.

### **Highways and Public Rights of Way**

- 3.9 The nearest principal road to the development site is the A352 about 1.85km to the east at its closest point. Dyke Head/Bailey Ridge and Bailey Ridge Lane are two-way single carriageways. Elsewhere the settlements and isolated properties are connected by narrow country lanes which are single-track in places, flanked by hedgerows. Historic droves criss-cross the landscape, including Stockbridge Drove

extending west from Higher Stockbridge Farm. In places the droves are designated Public Rights of Way (PROW) such as Cancer Drove to the east of Bailey Ridge.

- 3.10 One PROW, bridleway N20/24 traverses the lower third of the development site, extending west and northwest from Holmbushes Farm toward the southern edge of Middle Wood, where it connects to bridleway N20/20 south of Whitfield Farm/north of Bailey Ridge Lane. Stockbridge Drove is not identified as a PROW on the Dorset Definitive Map as it is on private land with no public access. Several other PROW criss-cross the landscape to the west in close proximity to the development site including footpaths N20/17, N20/19, N20/22 and bridleway N20/14, to the east a continuation of N20/24 (linking to Bailey Ridge) and footpath N20/25, and to the northeast as footpaths N19/3 and N19/4. Footpaths N20/26 and N20/18 connect Higher/Lower Bailey Ridge Farms and Bailey Ridge Lane with Leigh to the south. Cancer Drove to the east of Bailey Ridge is designated as bridleway N16/15. The promoted Macmillan Way long distance path follows footpath N20/11 to the northwest of the development site between Knighton and Lillington, and bridleway N20/1 leads up and over the Knighton ridgeline west of Lillington.

### **Infrastructure and Drainage**

- 3.11 A number of overhead power and telephone lines occur within the development site and surrounding landscape including a high voltage power line carried on steel lattice pylons which traverses the development site from south of Higher Stockbridge Farm west toward Knighton. Lower voltage lines etc. are carried east-west on wooden poles along the unnamed stream corridor to the north of the development site, and also south from Higher Stockbridge Farm towards Holmbushes Farm and then southwest toward Bailey Ridge Lane.
- 3.12 The planning application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy which describes the drainage context of the development site. It noted that to the north of the site is a valley with pond and wetland fed by a small stream flowing westward, which is a tributary of Wriggle Brook; south of the site is Bailey Ridge Lane with a minor watercourse in a wide shallow valley flowing westward through farmland; and, west of the site is farmland containing a narrow valley and minor watercourse with land rising beyond. Several minor watercourses (drainage ditches along field boundaries) are shown to flow through the site in very shallow, minor local 'valleys'.

## Designations

3.13 There are no sensitive sites as defined by the EIA Regulations located within or immediately adjacent to the site. The nearest designations surrounding the site include: -

- Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty located approximately 3.3km to the south of the site; and
- Holnest Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Conservation Area located approximately 2.7km to the east of the site.

3.14 Other designated assets include: -

- Sites of Nature Conservation Interests (SNCI) including: -
  - Leweston Wood, located approximately 240m to the north of the site;
  - Dyke Head plantation, located approximately 715m to the northeast of the site;
  - Bailey Ridge Wood located approximately 510m to the south of the site;
  - Whitfield Woods, located 240m to the west of the site;
- Scheduled monument 'fishponds' located approximately 1.2km to the north of the site;
- Ancient woodlands
  - Leweston Wood located approximately 240m to the north of the site;
  - Middle wood / east wood located approximately 150m to the west of the site;
  - Lewiston Manor Historic Park and Garden located approximately 240m to the north west of the site;
- Listed Buildings: -

- Lower Stockbridge Farmhouse (Grade II) located approximately 185m to the north east of the site;
- Barn at Lower Stockbridge Farm (Grade II\* listed) located approximately 225m to the north east of the site;
- Cluster of buildings and structure at St Antony's Leweston School located approximately 1km to the north of the site; and,
- Various milestone markers (Grade II) on Dyke Head/Bailey Ridge.

### **Hydrology & Land conditions**

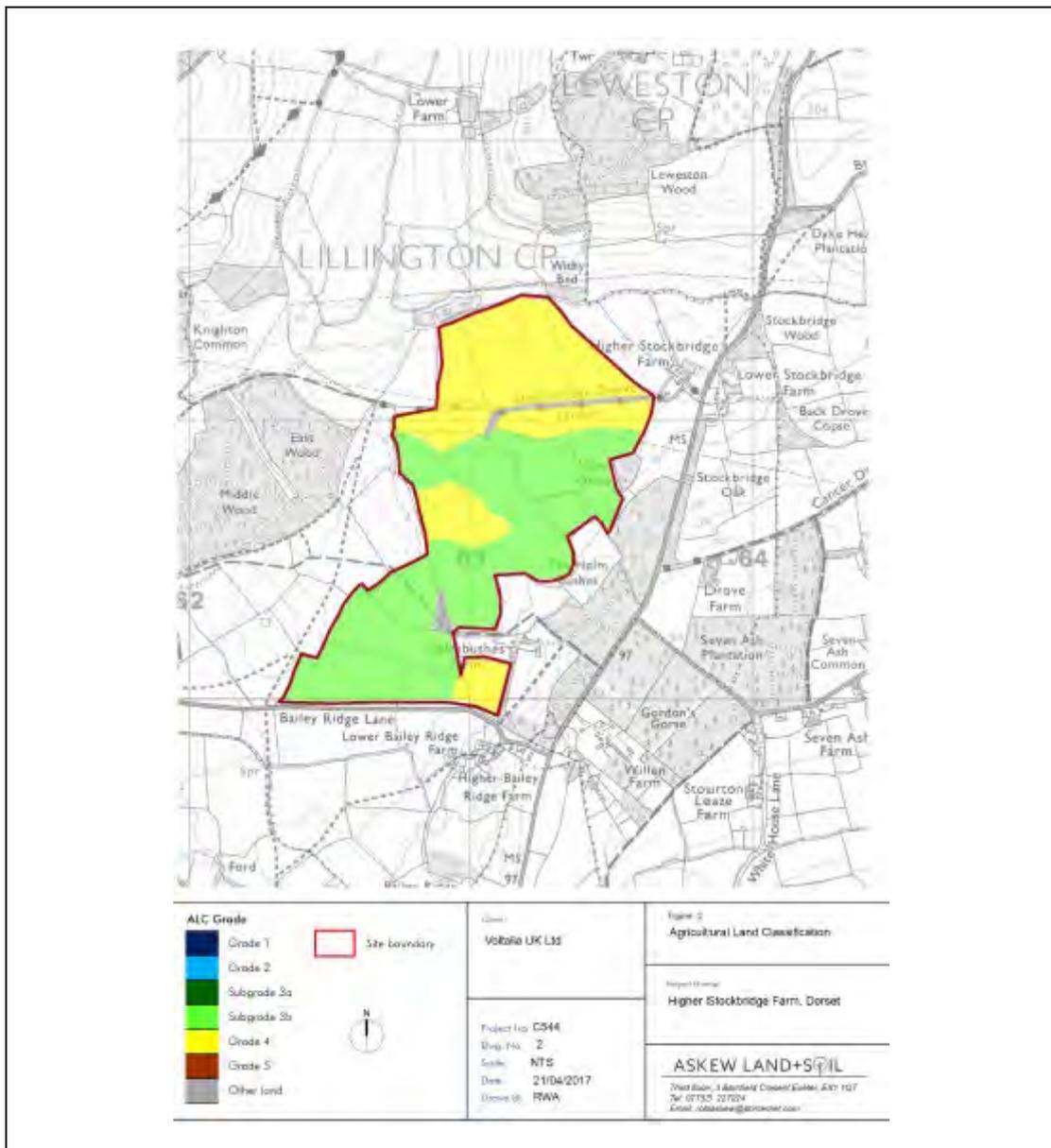
- 3.15 According to the British Geological Survey viewer, the centre and southwest of the site has superficial deposits of clay, silt sand and gravel and the bedrock for the whole site is Mudstone and Sandstone. The soil is recorded by the Cranfield University Landis Soil Viewer as loamy and clayey with slightly impeded drainage.
- 3.16 A detailed topographic survey has been undertaken and shows the site generally falling from the ridge in the east to two minor valleys leading out of the west of the site. The land falls from 75m AOD in the southeast and 70.0m AOD in the south to 57.00m AOD and 60m AOD in the west. The highest point is about 85m AOD in the mid-east of the site.
- 3.17 The topographic survey also indicates minor watercourses within the local valleys which are described later. The topographic survey contours suggest the watercourses are very shallow.
- 3.18 According to the Environment Agency (EA) Flood Map for Planning the entire site is in Flood Zone 1, at low risk of flooding. This is consistent with the site being on the side of a ridge with gentle falls. The nearest property at risk of flooding is some 6 miles downstream, which is a low-lying farm. The area would not therefore be described as sensitive in flood risk terms.
- 3.19 The watercourses within the site are very minor and shown to start locally within the site, with one starting from the Bailey Ridge road, about 175m east of the site.

### **Agricultural Land Classification**

- 3.20 A detailed ALC survey was undertaken at the site in April 2017 and determined that the quality of the soil is limited by soil wetness. Approximately 39% of the site is

deemed to be Grade 4 agricultural land and 61% of the site is deemed to be subgrade 3b agricultural land.

3.21 Accordingly, the site does not comprise best and most versatile agricultural land. The extract below is taken from the submitted Agricultural Land Classification report.



Extract form Agricultural Land Classification Report by Askew Land and Soil Ltd.

#### 4. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The application proposal relates to the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of a ground mounted solar park. Full details of the proposed layout is provided at Appendix 4.

##### APPENDIX 4: PLANNING APPLICATION DRAWINGS

- 4.2 The photovoltaic panels would be laid out in straight arrays set at an angle of c. 20 degrees from east to west across the field enclosures. The distance between the arrays would respond to topography but would typically be between 3.35 metres to 6 metres. The top north edges of the panels would be 2.75 metres above ground level and the lower edges of the panels would be approximately 0.9 metres above ground level. The arrays would be static.
- 4.3 The positioning of the arrays respond to existing physical features and separation distances are provided between such features, these include ditches, overshadowing, rights of way, existing infrastructure (overhead cables), biodiversity considerations and tree root protection areas. The separation distances have been guided by technical studies and consultation with relevant bodies. The arrays would be set within a 2.0m high security fence. The distance between the proposed fencing and existing hedges would vary across the site, at its minimum distance this would be circa 5m.
- 4.4 A single main substation compound will serve the development and this will be required for the duration of the development.
- 4.5 Transformer centres that include inverters and transformers will be located throughout the site. These are relatively low in height up to 2.4 metres, with the transformer element to be surrounded by individual deer proof fencing for safety. The inverters sit inside metal cabinets that will be finished in green.
- 4.6 The metal framework that houses the solar modules would be fixed into the ground by posts centred c. 6m apart. The posts will be driven into the turf to a depth of around 1.5 m. The cables linking all the arrays to the inverter / transformers and then the substation would be concealed in trenches up to 1m deep. The inverters / transformers and substation will be laid on slab / concrete foundations.
- 4.7 The security measures that will accompany the scheme include CCTV.

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## Biodiversity

- 4.1 The proposed solar farm is an example of a development which presents considerable opportunity for landscape and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement. The objectives for biodiversity are: -
- **Objective 1** - To create new grassland habitats through planting of locally appropriate native species and appropriate management.
  - **Objective 2** - To plant and manage hedgerows and trees to provide habitat for a range of species and ensure visual screening of the site
  - **Objective 3** - To provide sheltering features around the site for nearby populations of bats, birds and other notable faunal species
- 4.2 The areas within the array will be managed to create a diverse grassland habitat, which will benefit a wide range of wildlife. Within approximately one third of the site, grazing will be restricted during the summer months to allow plants to flower and set seed. The remaining fields on site will be used for grazing sheep beneath the solar panels during the summer months (and winter if required), to allow rotational grazing throughout the year. The grassland within the field margins (between the security fencing and field boundaries) will be managed as rough tussocky grassland that will benefit a range of species including birds, bats, small mammals, invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians.
- 4.3 A variety of native tree and hedgerow planting is proposed as part of the development to maintain the existing landscape structure of the area, maintain and enhance the level of visual screening of the site from the surrounding areas and help to improve and enhance biodiversity of the site. Native hedgerow planting is proposed as both new sections of hedgerow and to gap up the existing hedgerow stock on site. This will be maintained at a height of 3m to aid visual screening of the site and provide a more robust and continuous network of hedgerows to promote habitat for wildlife. A comprehensive planting scheme will support the proposal, and this includes the introduction of a new tree hedgerow set back from Bailey Ridge Lane. The new hedgerow is proposed as the existing trimmed hedgerow along Bailey Ridge Lane does not fall within the planning application boundary.

- 4.4 A variety of bird boxes will be installed on mature trees throughout the site for species such as barn owl, tawny owl, stock dove, starling, spotted flycatcher and redstart, as well as general nest boxes for a variety of other passerines.
- 4.5 Bat boxes will be installed onto mature trees within the site. These will include boxes within the grassland areas which would be particularly suitable for bat species (such as soprano pipistrelles and noctules) other boxes will be installed within/close to the woodland habitats which would be particularly suitable for woodland species (such as brown long-eared and Natterers bats).
- 4.6 Dormouse boxes will be installed in suitable habitat across the site to enhance the nesting habitat for this local priority species. Three partially buried hibernacula, as well as log and brash piles, will be installed around the site in order to provide habitat for invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles.

#### **Operational Lifespan**

- 4.7 The development would export renewable energy to the grid for a minimum of 35 years.

#### **Access**

- 4.8 All construction vehicles will access the site via the existing Higher Stockbridge farm access with the Bailey Ridge / Dyke Head. It is proposed to improve the access with some widening of the access radii to provide suitable turning for delivery and construction vehicles. There is sufficient space and capacity for construction vehicles to wait or pass within the site area.
- 4.9 It is also proposed to cut back the adjacent hedgerows to the north and south of the access to maintain a visibility splay of at least 2.4 x 210m to be achieved to the nearside kerb looking left and right out of the access in accordance with the existing national speed limit.
- 4.10 From the site access it is proposed to route all vehicles northwards along Dyke Head to the A352 junction. From here all vehicles can access the local highway network and strategic road network beyond.
- 4.11 Due to the nature of the site, there is sufficient space to allow the construction compound to remain in place throughout the entire construction phase. Therefore, there will be no requirement for external operation or storage of construction

materials, machinery or vehicles and as such vehicular operational activity will be contained within the site's boundary.

4.12 The solar farm layout will include permanent four metre wide access tracks throughout the site allowing for the movement of construction and maintenance vehicles.

4.13 It is proposed that these access tracks are completed during the initial stages of construction, so temporary haul routes are not necessary.

#### **Temporary Construction Compound**

4.14 During the construction phase, one main construction compound will serve the proposed development and this will be located off the main site entrance, thus reducing the distance delivery vehicles will need to travel after reaching the site's entrance. Construction phase is expected to take around 26 weeks. Construction activities will be carried out Monday to Friday 0800-1700 and between 0800 and 1330 on Saturdays.

4.15 Around 530 deliveries (1060 two-way movements) could be made by HGVs associated with the construction of the solar farm, at an average of around 4 deliveries, or 8 two-way movements per day.

4.16 The temporary compound will likely include: -

- Temporary portable buildings to be used for offices, welfare and toilet facilities;
- Containerised storage areas;
- Parking for construction vehicles and workers vehicles;
- Temporary hardstanding;
- Temporary gated compound; and,
- Wheel washing facilities.

4.17 If ground conditions dictate, wheel washing facilities will be provided at the contractor's compound, or the end of the access track leading onto the Bailey Ridge / Dyke Head. Wheel wash facilities will be provided in the form of a portable

automated high pressure washer with motion sensors to conserve water. All construction vehicles will therefore have to exit through the wheel wash area and as such will reduce the spread of mud and dirt onto the local highway network. A road sweeper will be deployed by the applicant, should this become necessary.

### **Statutory Undertakers**

- 4.18 The provision of easements for the existing services that traverse the site, such as overhead powerlines, are incorporated into the layout design. No arrays will be erected within the easement and thus unrestricted access will be available to the statutory undertakers at all times.

### **Surface water drainage**

- 4.19 Considering the February 2019 Climate Change Guidance for flooding allowances<sup>3</sup>, the impact during the lifetime of the solar farm (35 years) is negligible, and far more compensated by the consequent improved ground conditions.
- 4.20 The existing land use is partly for grazing, which compacts the soil and reduces the grass length, thus reducing natural infiltration and evapotranspiration. Other land is used for arable farming, which compacts the soil where machinery runs and leaves the fields bare in the autumn after harvesting. This is a high-risk period when important nutrients and silt are washed off into the receiving waters.
- 4.21 The change of use to solar farm will result in a flourishing vegetated area with longer native grasses which will rapidly improve the properties of the soil, such that its ability to manage rainfall will increase significantly.
- 4.22 The rainfall from the solar park will be managed by infiltration, evapotranspiration and evaporation, reducing the rate of runoff, frequency of runoff and volume of runoff.
- 4.23 The site will be prepared and seeded where affected by the works to allow a mixture of grasses to flourish, mimicking the natural pasture. The solar farm area would therefore be categorised as meadow, providing very good natural water management characteristics.
- 4.24 The proposal therefore represents a very robust solution, reducing surface water runoff from the site through natural virtues, improving water quality, encouraging

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessments-climate-change-allowances>

infiltration and resulting in more uniform flows offsite to enhance biodiversity on the land and in the receiving waters.

- 4.25 The existing ditches in the site will be retained as existing. Perimeter swales will be introduced mainly for management and control during the construction period and to aid management of runoff as the site settles down, although vegetated buffers will be retained during construction to manage silt and water runoff.
- 4.26 Swales will be formed by using a ridge and furrow technique, with a 300mm furrow and the soil turned to the downhill side, creating a 600mm deep barrier and potential attenuation. They will incorporate weirs to attenuate runoff and encourage infiltration, and discharge finally in to the natural channels.

### **Operation**

- 4.27 During the operational phase, the activities on site would amount to servicing of plant and equipment and vegetation management. The Landscape and Ecological Management Plan sets out how the land would be managed throughout the operational phase of development.

### **Decommissioning**

- 4.28 After a 35 year generation period the development would be decommissioned. All solar panels, transformer units, fencing, security measures will be removed. The likely element that will not be removed is the substation compound which would have been adopted by the District Network Operator.
- 4.29 The decommissioning of the proposal is expected to take 12 weeks and generating 80 vehicle movements per week.

### **Public Rights of Way**

- 4.30 The layout design will incorporate a c. 5m easement for the existing bridleway (N20/24) that traverses part of the application site.

## 5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 This section of the Planning Statement identifies the national and local planning policy and guidance pertinent to the application site and development proposal. The plan-led approach to development as enshrined by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires development proposals to accord with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 Importantly, the development plan must be understood as a whole. This approach to construing policy is endorsed in case law judgments; notably that of Sullivan J in Rochdale [R v Rochdale MBC ex parte Milne [2001] reported at 81 P&CR 365]. In this case, Sullivan J concluded that in assessing compliance with the development plan it is not necessary to comply with all policies; there will be some core or site specific policies that take precedence over others<sup>4</sup>. In other words, there will be dominant policies which guide the development proposal.
- 5.3 Government's Planning Practice Guidance on Determining Planning applications (last updated 1 September 2015) sets out what may be a material consideration. Paragraph 8 of the guidance states ***"A material planning consideration is one which is relevant to making the planning decision in question (e.g. whether to grant or refuse an application for planning permission). The scope of what can constitute a material consideration is very wide and so the courts often do not indicate what cannot be a material consideration. However, in general they have taken the view that planning is concerned with land use in the public interest, so that the protection of purely private interests such as the impact of a development on the value of a neighbouring property or loss of private rights to light could not be material considerations"***.

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<sup>4</sup> The proper approach in this regard is that articulated by **Sullivan J. in R v Rochdale MBC, ex p Milne [2000] Env. L.R. 1** . He said that "[i]t is not at all unusual for development plan policies to pull in different directions ... there may be no clear cut answer to the question: "is this proposal in accordance with the plan?". The local planning authority has to make a judgment bearing in mind such factors as the importance of the policies which are complied with or infringed, and the extent of compliance or breach ... For the purposes of section 54A it is enough that the proposal accords with the development plan considered as a whole. It does not have to accord with each and every policy therein." Accordingly, there will be some policies that take precedence over others.

5.4 The components of the Development Plan pertinent to the site and development proposal comprises: -

- The West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (adopted October 2015).

5.5 Material planning considerations include: -

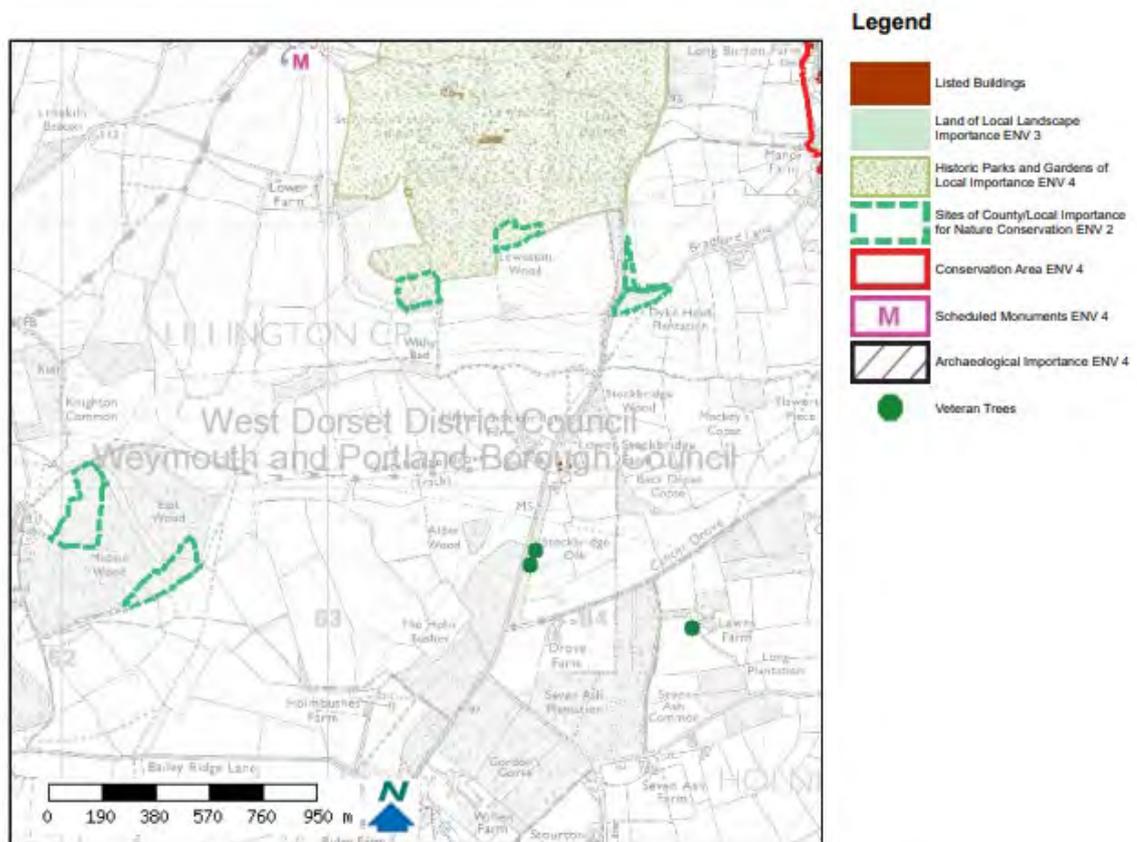
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Planning Practice Guidance.

### **Development Plan**

*The West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2011 – 2031*

5.6 Dorset Council inherited the local plans produced by the former district councils in Dorset. For the west Dorset area this was the Joint Local Plan adopted by West Dorset District Council in October 2015.

5.7 The Joint Local Plan sets out the local policy framework to deliver sustainable growth to within the area previously covered by the West Dorset District Council administration up to 203. The Local Plan Policies Map locates the site in open countryside and not allocated for a specific use. The relevant extract of the Local Plan Policies Map is set out below.



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Maps produced by [Lovell Johns Limited](http://www.lovejells.co.uk), Oxford, England.

5.8 The key policies pertinent to the development proposal are: -

- Policy SUS2 - Distribution of Development;
- Policy INT1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development;
- Policy COM11 - Renewable Energy Development;
- Policy ENV1 - Landscape, Seascape and Geological Interest;
- Policy ENV2 - Wildlife and Habitats;
- Policy ENV4 - Built Heritage and Archaeological Remains;
- Policy ENV5 - Flood Risk;
- Policy ENV8 - Agricultural Land and Farming Resilience;

- Policy ENV10 – Landscape;
- Policy ENV12 - Design and Positioning of Building; and
- Policy ENV16 – Amenity.

5.9 Each policy is identified in turn below.

5.10 **Policy SUS2** deals with the distribution of development. The policy states, amongst other things, that provision of renewable energy in the countryside is acceptable having particular regard to the need for the protection of the countryside and environmental constraints.

5.11 Through **Policy INT1** the *“councils will take a positive approach when determining planning applications which reflect the presumption in favour of development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The councils will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area”*<sup>5</sup>.

5.12 The Policy states: -

i) There will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Where there are no policies relevant to an application, or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, the following matters will be taken into account: • the extent to which the proposal positively contributes to the strategic objectives of the local plan; • whether specific policies in that National Planning Policy Framework indicate that development should be restricted; and • whether the adverse impacts of granting permission could significantly outweigh the benefits.

5.13 **Policy COM11** relates to renewables (other than wind) and states: -

Proposals for generating heat or electricity from renewable energy sources (other than wind energy) will be allowed wherever possible providing that the benefits of the development, such as the contribution towards renewable energy targets,

<sup>5</sup> Local Plan, paragraph 1.4.2

significantly outweigh any harm. In addition, permission will only be granted provided:

- any adverse impacts on the local landscape, townscape or areas of historical interest can be satisfactorily assimilated;
- the proposal minimises harm to residential amenity by virtue of noise, vibration, overshadowing, flicker, or other detrimental emissions, during construction, its operation and decommissioning;
- adverse impacts upon designated wildlife sites, nature conservation interests, and biodiversity are satisfactorily mitigated.

5.14 The pre-amble to the Policy, at **paragraph 6.6.6** of the Local Plan, states

*“The two councils fully support the need to generate more than 15% of all energy demand from renewable energy sources by 2020 to meet the national target. In practice, much of this will be from national renewable energy projects such as the offshore wind programme. Locally generated renewable energy projects will need to generate 7.5% of all energy demand, which in combination with the national scale projects across the country will meet the national target. It is therefore important that the opportunities are taken for generating renewable energy and low-carbon energy from new development, for example by co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers, wherever this would be acceptable, and supporting community led initiatives’.*

5.15 **Paragraph 6.6.7** of the local Plan goes on to acknowledge how (inter alia)

*‘There is considerable potential to generate renewable energy from within the plan area due to the wealth of accessible renewable energy resources, but to generate 7.5% of all energy demand will require some larger scale renewable energy projects being built in the area’.*

5.16 **Policy ENV10** deals with landscape and townscape setting and states: -

- i) All development proposals should contribute positively to the maintenance and enhancement of local identity and distinctiveness. Development should be informed by the character of the site and its surroundings.
- ii) Development will provide for the future retention and protection of trees and other features that contribute to an area’s distinctive character. Such features may not always be designated or otherwise formally recognised.

- iii) Development should only be permitted where it provides sufficient hard and soft landscaping to successfully integrate with the character of the site and its surrounding area.
- iv) Opportunities to incorporate features that would enhance local character, including public art, or that relate to the historical, ecological or geological interest of a site, should be taken where appropriate.

5.17 The pre-amble to the policy states

*'New development should make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness. Proposals should therefore be formulated with an appreciation of the built and natural context of the local area by recognising the features that collectively generate a sense of place. These can include landscape, townscape, street scene and routes through, views, the mix of uses, boundary treatments, locally recognised features etc'<sup>6</sup>.*

5.18 The preamble goes on to state (inter alia)

*'If the loss of trees is unavoidable, replacement trees of equivalent landscape, amenity and wildlife value should be planted and maintained. Where new planting is needed, native species that are indigenous to the locality are usually preferred, to be in keeping with the local landscape character and provide greater wildlife benefit'<sup>7</sup>.*

5.19 **Policy ENV1** deals with protecting and enhancing the natural environment and states: -

- i) The plan area's exceptional landscapes and seascapes and geological interest will be protected, taking into account the objectives of the Dorset AONB Management Plan and World Heritage Site Management Plan. Development which would harm the character, special qualities or natural beauty of the Dorset Area of Outstanding Beauty or Heritage Coast, including their characteristic landscape quality and diversity, uninterrupted panoramic views, individual landmarks, and sense of tranquillity and remoteness, will not be permitted. ii) Development should be located and designed so that it does not detract from

<sup>6</sup> Local Plan, paragraph 2.5.4

<sup>7</sup> Local Plan, paragraph 2.5.6

and, where reasonable, enhances the local landscape character. Proposals that conserve, enhance and restore locally distinctive landscape features will be encouraged. Where proposals relate to sites where existing development is of visually poor quality, opportunities should be taken to secure visual enhancements. Development that significantly adversely affects the character or visual quality of the local landscape or seascape will not be permitted. iii) Appropriate measures will be required to moderate the adverse effects of development on the landscape and seascape. iv) Development should maintain Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) for their scientific and educational value. Development that significantly adversely affects local geological features will not be permitted unless comparable sites can be identified or created elsewhere or the impact adequately mitigated through other measures.

5.20 **Policy ENV2** considers wildlife and habitats and states: -

- i) Internationally designated wildlife sites (including proposed sites and sites acquired for compensatory measures), will be safeguarded from development that could adversely affect them, unless there are reasons of overriding public interest why the development should proceed and there is no alternative acceptable solution.
- ii) Development that is likely to have an adverse effect upon the integrity of the Poole Harbour and Dorset Heaths International designations will only be permitted where there is provision to avoid, or secure effective mitigation of, the potential adverse effects in accordance with the strategy in Table 2.2.
- iii) Development that is likely to have an adverse effect upon nationally designated wildlife sites will not be permitted unless the benefits, in terms of other objectives, clearly outweigh the impacts on the special features of the site and broader nature conservation interests and there is no alternative acceptable solution.
- iv) In other locations, including locally identified wildlife sites and water-bodies, where significant harm to nature conservation interests cannot be avoided, it should be mitigated. Where it cannot be avoided or adequately mitigated, compensation will result in the maintenance or enhancement of

- biodiversity otherwise development will not be permitted. Features of nature conservation interest should be safeguarded by development.
- v) Proposals that would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodlands and veteran trees, will be refused unless the need for and public benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss.
  - vi) Proposals that conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported. Opportunities to incorporate and enhance biodiversity in and around developments will be encouraged. Development of major sites should take opportunities to help connect and improve the wider ecological networks.
  - vii) Development that is likely to have an adverse effect on internationally protected species will not be permitted unless there are reasons of overriding public interest why the development should proceed and there is no alternative acceptable solution. Development on sites supporting other protected species will only be permitted where adequate provision can be made for the retention of the species or their safe relocation.

5.21 Heritage is considered through **Policy ENV4** and states: -

- i) The impact of development on a designated or non-designated heritage asset and its setting must be thoroughly assessed against the significance of the asset. Development should conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance.
- ii) Applications affecting the significance of a heritage asset or its setting will be required to provide sufficient information to demonstrate how the proposals would positively contribute to the asset's conservation.
- iii) A thorough understanding of the significance of the asset and other appropriate evidence including conservation area character appraisals and management plans should be used to inform development proposals including potential conservation and enhancement measures.
- iv) Any harm to the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset must be justified. Applications will be weighed against the public

benefits of the proposal; if it has been demonstrated that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use, find new uses, or mitigate the extent of the harm to the significance of the asset, and; if the works proposed are the optimum required to secure the sustainable use of the asset.

- v) The desirability of putting heritage assets to an appropriate and viable use that is consistent with their conservation will be taken into account.
- vi) Where harm can be justified, appropriate provision will be required to capture and record features, followed by analysis and where appropriate making findings publically available.

5.22 Flood Risk is considered via **Policy ENV5** and states: -

- i) New development or the intensification of existing uses should be planned to avoid risk of flooding (from surface water run-off, groundwater, fluvial and coastal sources) where possible. The risk of flooding will be minimised by:
  - steering development towards the areas of lowest risk and avoiding inappropriate development in the higher flood risk zones;
  - ensuring development will not generate flooding through surface water runoff and/or exacerbate flooding elsewhere.
- ii) In assessing proposals for development in an area with a medium or higher risk of flooding, the council will need to be satisfied that:
  - there are no reasonably available alternative sites with a lower probability of flooding (where a site has been allocated this test will have been satisfied) adequate measures will be taken to mitigate the risk and ensure that potential occupants will be safe, including measures to ensure the development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant; and
  - safe access and escape routes are provided where required.
- iii) In the case of major development on unallocated sites, wider sustainability benefits should not remove the need to consider flood risk or surface water management, or the need to mitigate accordingly.
- iv) Development will not be permitted where it would adversely impact on the future maintenance, upgrading or replacement of a flood defence scheme.

5.23 Agricultural land and farming resilience is picked up by **Policy ENV8** and states: -

- i) Community schemes providing local food, or crops for local energy production, will be encouraged.
- ii) Where possible, the councils will steer built development towards areas of poorer quality agricultural land where this is available, except where this would be inconsistent with other policy and sustainability considerations.

5.24 The preamble to the policy, at **paragraph 2.4.18** of the Local Plan, states how *'Agricultural land is an important resource for current and future populations. The production of local food and energy crops can be supported through community initiatives such as allotments, community orchards and community woodland planting. Safeguarding farmland for future local food and energy crop production is an important consideration in planning. Where development of agricultural land is unavoidable, poorer quality land should be used in preference to higher quality land, except where this would be inconsistent with other policy and sustainability considerations. However it is recognised that many settlements would have located in the more productive agricultural areas, and as such options to expand these settlements to meet local needs may inevitably be on higher quality agricultural land'*.

5.25 **Policy ENV12** deals with the design and positioning of buildings and states: -

- i) Development will achieve a high quality of sustainable and inclusive design. It will only be permitted where it complies with national technical standards and where the siting, alignment, design, scale, mass, and materials used complements and respects the character of the surrounding area or would actively improve legibility or reinforce the sense of place. This means that:
  - The general design should be in harmony with the adjoining buildings and the area as a whole;
  - The position of the building on its site should relate positively to adjoining buildings, routes, open areas, rivers, streams and other features that contribute to the character of the area;

- The scale, mass and positioning of the building should reflect the purpose for which the building is proposed;
- The quality of the architecture is appropriate to the type of building with particular regard to its architectural elegance, symmetry and rhythm, and richness of detail;
- Materials are sympathetic to the natural and built surroundings and where practical sourced locally;
- Any alterations to or extensions of buildings should be well related to, and not overpower, the original building or neighbouring properties, unless they achieve significant visual enhancement to both the building and surrounding area;
- New housing should meet and where possible exceed appropriate minimum space standards.

The council will work with stakeholders and the local community to develop an approach for adaptable and accessible homes in accordance with the latest government guidance.

5.26 **Policy ENV15** states that *'development should optimise the potential of the site and make efficient use of land, subject to the limitations inherent on the site and impact on local character'*.

5.27 Amenity is considered through **Policy ENV16** and states: -

- i) Proposals for development should be designed to minimize their impact on the amenity and quiet enjoyment of both existing residents and future residents within the development and close to it. As such, development proposals will only be permitted provided:
- They do not have a significant adverse effect on the living conditions of occupiers of residential properties through loss of privacy;

- They do not have a significant adverse effect on the amenity of the occupiers of properties through inadequate daylight or excessive overshadowing, overbearing impact or flicker;
  - They do not generate a level of activity or noise that will detract significantly from the character and amenity of the area or the quiet enjoyment of residential properties; and
  - They do not generate unacceptable pollution, vibration or detrimental emissions unless it can be demonstrated that the effects on amenity and living conditions, health and the natural environment can be mitigated to the appropriate standard.
- ii) Development which is sensitive to noise or unpleasant odour emissions will not be permitted in close proximity to existing sources where it would adversely affect future occupants.
- iii) Proposals for external lighting schemes (including illuminated advertisement schemes) should be clearly justified and designed to minimize potential pollution from glare or spillage of light. The intensity of lighting should be the minimum necessary to achieve its purpose, and the benefits of the lighting scheme must be shown to outweigh any adverse effects.

## **MATERIAL CONSIDERATION**

### **National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)**

5.28 The revision to the Framework, which came into force on February 2019, has affected both its contents and structure whereby the document is now set into 17 topic-based chapters. Overall, for the NPPF 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, the over-arching presumption in favour of sustainable development remains. Material for this application is how Government has placed a greater emphasis on the delivery of infrastructure, including energy and how this is integral towards fulfilling the economic arm of achieving sustainable development<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> See NPPF 3<sup>rd</sup> edition paragraph 6 which introduces how the recommendations of the National Infrastructure Committee may be material when deciding applications, and Paragraph 8(a).

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- 5.29 The Framework is clear that planning decisions must be made in accordance with Planning Law. Paragraph 2 states that planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Local Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 2 continues that: -  
***“Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements”.***
- 5.30 The requirement to promote EU obligations and statutory requirements is particularly relevant in relation to the UK’s binding EU obligations as set out in legislation whereby the UK’s target is to generate 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020 and this cannot be achieved without appropriate development such as that proposed at Higher Stockbridge.
- 5.31 **Paragraph 8** of the Framework identifies how the planning system has three overarching objectives towards achieving sustainable development.
- 5.32 The revised NPPF stated how these objectives are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives. Paragraph 8(a) *‘an economic objective’* has been strengthened and the NPPF now makes it clearer how ***“identifying and coordinating provision of infrastructure”*** is integral towards fulfilling the economic arm of achieving sustainable development. The three overarching objectives are listed as: -
- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
  - b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and
  - c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising

waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

5.33 **Paragraph 9** advises how these overarching objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of policies in the Framework. **Paragraph 10** states *“So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**”*.

5.34 **Paragraph 15** of the Framework sets out how the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. It goes on to state how succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each and provide a framework for assessing the economic, social and environmental priorities. **Paragraph 16** sets out how plans should be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. **Paragraph 20** identifies how, in line with the presumption on favour of sustainable development, plans should make sufficient provision for the provision of infrastructure and energy.

5.35 The identification and delivery of energy schemes is therefore acknowledged by the NPPF 3<sup>rd</sup> edition as one of the strategic policies that contributes towards achieving the presumption on favour of sustainable development.

5.36 **Paragraph 80** confirms the Government’s commitment to supporting sustainable economic growth and states (inter alia)

*“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.*

*The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future”.*

The application proposal specifically counter and addresses the weakness in the security of electricity supply.

5.37 **Paragraph 83**, supporting a prosperous rural economy, is also pertinent as the Development Plan identifies the site as being located in open countryside, it states

how planning decisions should enable the sustainable growth of all types of businesses in the rural areas.

5.38 **Section 14** of the NPPF relates to meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. **Paragraph 150** of the NPPF sets out the planning policy perspective with regards to increasing the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy. Through the paragraph, Government requires the decision maker to: -

a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);

b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and

c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.

5.39 **Paragraph 154** sets out that in determining renewable energy applications local planning authorities should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable and that applicant should not be required to demonstrate the overall need for renewable projects.

5.40 Section 15 of the NPPF relates to conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. **Paragraph 170** highlights that new development should be prevented from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. It identifies how decisions should provide net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

5.41 Overall, the Framework confirms that the primary objective of development management is to foster the delivery of sustainable development, not to hinder or prevent it. Local Authorities should approach development management decisions

positively – looking for solutions rather than problems so that applications can be approved wherever it is practical to do so.

### **Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)**

5.42 Government's Planning Practice Guidance is a web-based resource providing that provides planning guidance on various planning policy and development management topics. The key topics relevant to this application proposal are:

- Renewable and Low Carbon Energy; and
- Climate Change;

### **Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (last updated 18 June 2015)**

5.43 This guidance reaffirms Government's commitment towards increasing the amount of renewable energy and low carbon technologies within the UK.

5.44 **Paragraph 007** of the guidance considers the role of criteria based policies in planning for renewable energy and states: -

Policies based on clear criteria can be useful when they are expressed positively (i.e. that proposals will be accepted where the impact is or can be made acceptable). In thinking about criteria the National Policy Statements published by the Department of Energy and Climate Change provide a useful starting point. These set out the impacts particular technologies can give rise to and how these should be addressed. In shaping local criteria for inclusion in Local Plans and considering planning applications in the meantime, it is important to be clear that: the need for renewable or low carbon energy does not automatically override environmental protections; cumulative impacts require particular attention, especially the increasing impact that wind turbines and large scale solar farms can have on landscape and local amenity as the number of turbines and solar arrays in an area increases; local topography is an important factor in assessing whether wind turbines and large scale solar farms could have a damaging effect on landscape and recognise that the impact can be as great in predominately flat landscapes as in hilly or mountainous areas; great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting; proposals in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty,

and in areas close to them where there could be an adverse impact on the protected area, will need careful consideration; protecting local amenity is an important consideration which should be given proper weight in planning decisions.

5.45 **Paragraph 013** of the guidance sets out the planning considerations that relate to large scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic farms. It states: -

The deployment of large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in undulating landscapes. However, the visual impact of a well-planned and well-screened solar farm can be properly addressed within the landscape if planned sensitively. Particular factors a local planning authority will need to consider include:

encouraging the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar farms on previously developed and non-agricultural land, provided that it is not of high environmental value;

where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (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. See also a speech by the Minister for Energy and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP, to the solar PV industry on 25 April 2013 and Written Ministerial Statement – Solar energy: protecting the local and global environment – made on 25 March 2015.

that solar farms are normally temporary structures and planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use;

the proposal's visual impact, the effect on landscape of glint and glare (see guidance on landscape assessment) and on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety;

the extent to which there may be additional impacts if solar arrays follow the daily movement of the sun;

the need for, and impact of, security measures such as lights and fencing;

great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting. As the significance of a heritage asset derives not only from its physical presence, but also from its setting, careful consideration should be given to the impact of large scale solar farms on such assets. Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm to the significance of the asset;

the potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges;

the energy generating potential, which can vary for a number of reasons including, latitude and aspect.

The approach to assessing cumulative landscape and visual impact of large scale solar farms is likely to be the same as assessing the impact of wind turbines. However, in the case of ground-mounted solar panels it should be noted that with effective screening and appropriate land topography the area of a zone of visual influence could be zero.

- 5.46 Importantly, the guidance acknowledges the appropriate use of agricultural land for renewable energy provided it allows for continued agricultural use and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays; and, the use of the agricultural land has been demonstrated as necessary. The guidance also identifies how ground mounted solar schemes are temporary structures whereby planning conditions can be used to ensure that the installations are removed when no longer in use and the land is restored to its previous use.

#### **Practical Guidance on Climate Change (last updated 27 March 2015)**

- 5.47 Government's Practical Guidance on Climate Change identifies how addressing climate change is one of the core land use planning principles which the National Planning Policy Framework expects to underpin in both plan-making and decision-taking. Paragraph 3 sets out examples of mitigating climate change by reducing emissions, these include (i) Providing renewable and low carbon energy

technologies and (ii) providing opportunities for decentralised energy. The proposal would achieve both.

- 5.48 Paragraph 5 of the guidance identifies how impacts of climate change needs to be taken into account in a realistic way. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should consider identifying no or low cost responses to climate change that also deliver other benefits. In this instance the proposals is landowner and developer led; and as such there is no financial costs associated with the delivery of this response to climate change for the Local Planning Authority. Furthermore, the development proposal would deliver other climate change benefits such as biodiversity and hydrological enhancements.

## 6. PLANNING APPRAISAL

6.1 This section of the Statement contains a detailed analysis of the application proposal against the relevant material and planning policy considerations. These considerations have been derived from an understanding of the site and its surrounds and the policy analysis of the previous section and the legislative background set out in the Section 2.

6.2 The key issues which are considered pertinent for this assessment are: -

- Need for Development
- Sustainable Development
- Principle of the Development;
- Site Selection;
- Restoration; and
- Higher Stockbridge Farm.

6.3 Each issue is discussed in turn below.

### **Need for Development**

6.4 There is a plethora of Government legislation, guidance and policy which support the transition to a low carbon future and the continued roll out of renewables and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

6.5 The Clean Growth Strategy, published in October 2017, provides the Government's latest position on solar parks and sets out a comprehensive set of policies and proposals that aim to accelerate the pace of "clean growth", i.e. deliver increased economic growth and decreased emissions. To achieve the clean growth, the Government identifies how the UK will need to nurture low carbon technologies, processes and systems that are as cheap as possible, this includes subsidy free ground mounted solar parks as achieved by this development proposal. The Government places significant emphasis on securing increased investment across the energy systems whilst minimising, as much as possible, the public costs for securing such investments and makes multiple references to how they are seeking

the delivery of solar without subsidy. The application proposal would contribute towards this requirement.

- 6.6 The impact of Brexit on UK energy and climate change policy is subject to the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. The possible consequences vary based on whether the outcome is a full Brexit deal, a sector-specific deal, or in the case of no Brexit deal.
- 6.7 The United Kingdom is currently a full member of the European Union Internal Energy Market (IEM). The IEM allows harmonised, tariff-free trading of gas and electricity across Europe (through interconnectors), leading to lower prices and greater security of supply. As wholesale gas and electricity prices in the UK are generally higher than elsewhere in Europe, interconnection has caused a reduction in wholesale prices, and hence consumer prices in the UK.
- 6.8 Leaving the IEM has the potential to impact the trade of energy through interconnectors. The Government's Briefing Paper on Energy, Climate Change and Brexit identifies how one potential impact of leaving the IEM is an increase in the cost of energy imports and this in turn would be passed on to UK's householders and businesses. In terms of energy security, it notes how the interest of the United Kingdom should be to **increase the flexibility and resilience of the grid, especially with increasing intermittent renewables**. The development proposal would contribute towards the objectives set out in the briefing note.

### **Sustainable Development**

- 6.9 Turning to sustainable development, paragraph 8 of the Framework confirms there are three dimensions to sustainable development, these are economic, social and environmental gains. Paragraph 8 advises that in order to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be pursued in mutually supportive ways through the planning system.
- 6.10 The development will provide employment and business opportunities for component suppliers / installers and those involved in grid connection, transport and logistics. Where possible, local businesses will be contracted for relevant parts of the scope of works over the period of construction (labour and materials such as hardcore etc), operation and maintenance. There will be additional induced impacts during the construction period with any incoming construction workers (engineers, project managers etc) spending their wages at a local level

(restaurants, retail stores etc) and using local accommodation. Research published in 2014 by the Centre for Economic & Business Research (Cebr) on solar powered growth in the UK<sup>9</sup> highlighted analysis by the Solar Trade Association on the cost of solar energy. The analysis estimated that by 2016, the capital investment cost of building one megawatt of solar power for a large-scale development would be around £800,000. Assuming this price is broadly similar in 2019, when applied to the Proposed Development this equates to a capital cost of £28 million. The development would also support long term jobs relating to site operation, site security and ongoing management and maintenance. The development therefore fulfils an important economic role.

- 6.11 Social gain would be provided through the generation of local electricity that will be connected directly to the local grid; the proposal would reduce reliance upon overseas energy sources. The energy production would help to meet the national and local need for energy and therefore the development would fulfil an important social role.
- 6.12 Turning to environmental gains these would be secured through carbon reduction and local biodiversity enhancements. The proposed development would help support the transition to a low carbon future and produce a significant amount of renewable energy. The introduction of seasonal sheep grazing together with appropriate management to facilitate the development of a diverse grassland beneath the array would benefit a range of native wildlife for a 35 year period, such as:- Invertebrates (butterflies, moths, beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, worms etc.); Small mammals (voles, shrews and mice); Larger mammals (brown hares and badgers); Amphibians; Birds (invertebrates and seeds within the wildflower meadow will benefit a range of foraging birds and the increase in small mammals will benefit hunting raptors); and Bats (the increase in invertebrates will provide enhanced foraging opportunities for bats and the solar panels may act as navigational structures for foraging bats). The proposal would therefore deliver on the environmental arm of sustainable development.
- 6.13 Reflecting on the above, the proposal duly delivers economic, social and environmental benefits and accords with the requirements of paragraph 8 of the Framework and is considered to constitute sustainable development.

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<sup>9</sup> *Solar powered growth in the UK – the macroeconomic benefits for the UK of investment in solar PV: Cebr (report for the Solar Trade Association), September 2014.*

6.14 In applying the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development, and the test at paragraph 11 in particular with regards to decision taking, it is clear that the application proposal should be approved without delay.

### **Principle of Development**

6.15 The applicant duly acknowledges that the development site is located in open countryside within the administrative area of Dorset Council. Policy SUS2 of the Development Plan identifies how the provision of renewable energy in the countryside is acceptable in principle.

6.16 Policy COM11 gives explicit support for renewable energy proposals whereby the benefits of the development significantly outweighs any harm and provide that:

- (i) any adverse visual impacts can be satisfactorily assimilated;
- (ii) the proposal minimises harm to residential amenity by virtue of noise, vibration, overshadowing, flicker or other detrimental emissions during construction or its operations; and,
- (iii) any adverse impacts upon designated wildlife sites, nature conservation interests and biodiversity are satisfactorily mitigated.

6.17 Furthermore, the Development Plan, at paragraph 6.6.7 identifies how large scale energy projects will be required within this plan area [area being defined as the former West Dorset District Council]. The application proposal contributes towards this requirement. The Development Plan goes on to identify that Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is likely to be required on large projects in particular assessing impacts on landscape character and rural amenity. This application is duly supported by a suitable Environmental Statement that includes chapters on landscape, ecology and heritage.

6.18 In terms of locational requirements, the scheme can only be accommodated in the open countryside as ground mounted solar arrays have specific land take requirements. The site is not located within any sensitive areas as defined by the EIA regulations. As directed by Policy ENV8, the application proposal is located on grade 4 and grade 3b agricultural land. The renewable energy scheme thus avoids the best and most versatile agricultural land.

6.19 The key policy requirements of COM11 are duly considered in turn.

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*Visual Impacts*

6.20 The landscape and visual considerations are fully addressed within Chapter 6 of the accompanying Environmental Statement. The salient points are summarised below.

- The application site lies within an area of undulating, predominantly pastoral landscape, interspersed with frequently occurring woodland blocks, mature trees and hedgerows. This vegetation and subtle changes in topography combine to limit or expose views towards parts of the application site from different directions, and effect which has been used to guide the extent and design of the Proposed Development.
- The application site does not lie within any designated landscape, with Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty forming the nearest designated landscape. The landscape and visual assessments have identified that there would be no significant adverse landscape effects upon the landscape character of Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or views from it; this conclusion is corroborated by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Team, Natural England and Local Planning Authority in their Screening Opinion responses which state that no significant landscape character and/or visual effects would arise from construction or operation of the development.
- Very limited significant residual effects would be experienced by two properties associate with the application site and proposed development, but these effects would be reversed upon decommissioning of the development. These significant residual effects would be offset and/or compensated for by the management and maintenance of landscape elements including mature trees and hedgerows and a new native woodland and hedgerow planting which would deliver significant beneficial effects over the lifetime of the development.
- On balance it is considered that solar development could be successfully accommodated within the application site and surrounding landscape without unacceptable temporary but long-term residual effects on landscape character or visual amenity as a whole.

*Residential Amenity*

- 6.21 The photovoltaic panels are made up of silicon based photovoltaic cells that are encased in a glass covering. Glass does not have a true specular reflection but does reflect a certain magnitude of light. Reflection of sunlight from photovoltaic panels is unwanted by the operator. This is because the greater the amount of light which can be captured at the photovoltaic cell, the greater the amount of electricity that can be produced. The manufacturers of the panels therefore use anti-reflective coating in the glass that changes the reflectivity from specular distribution to diffuse distribution and is sometimes referred to as 'stipple glass'.
- 6.22 Therefore, as light falls onto the photovoltaic panels, most of the sunlight is transmitted to the photovoltaic cell beneath the glass with only a small amount reflected back in a multiple of angles and magnitudes. The result is an object that is perceived to have very little glare. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Technical Guidance for Evaluation Selected Solar Technologies at Airports, November 2012 indicates that the reflective light can be as little as 2% of the incident sunlight: -

*"Once the amount of sunlight is known, reflectivity from solar projects will vary based on the type of solar power system and its materials and design. Solar PV employs glass panels that are designed to maximise absorption and minimise reflection to increase electricity production efficiency. To limit reflection, solar PV panels are constructed with dark, light-absorption materials and covered with anti-reflective coating. Today's panels reflect as little as 2% of the incoming sunlight depending on the angle of the sun and assuming use of anti-reflective coating."*

- 6.23 Once operational, the proposal will have no significant impacts in terms of noise, vibrations, overshadowing or any other emissions including air quality. Whilst the inverter and substation equipment may emit low frequency noise this is highly localised and would certainly not be audible at the boundaries of the wider site against the backdrop of existing activities surrounding site. No emissions are associated with the panels and therefore no impact will result.

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*Impact on Ecology and Biodiversity*

- 6.24 Ecological considerations are full considered within chapter 7 of the accompanying Environmental Statement.
- 6.25 The suite of ecological surveys undertaken identified a range of habitats on/immediately adjacent to the site; however, the majority of habitat within the construction zone (arable and improved grassland) was of low ecological value. The most valuable habitats were on the boundaries of the fields, including hedgerows, veteran trees and woodland. There were also several ponds identified within the site, a stream on the northern boundary and ditches (both wet and dry) throughout the site.
- 6.26 In terms of fauna, badgers were confirmed as being present within the site (including two setts) and signs of otter was identified within the stream on the northern boundary. A variety of bat species were recorded as using the site, with two confirmed roosts and hotspots of bat activity associated with boundary features. A large number of Myotis bat calls were recorded in the centre of fields during April, which are likely to be associated with the emergence of a prey species from the grassland. A number of notable bird species were recorded within the site; breeding and wintering birds in the boundary features and wintering birds in the open habitats were considered important ecological features.
- 6.27 Additionally, the site was considered to be important for hares, which were recorded frequently within the fields. Several notable invertebrate species have also been recorded within the site, including several moths, a butterfly species and a nationally scarce fly.
- 6.28 The cessation of intensive farming is often an inherent beneficial ecological impact of solar farm developments, resulting in more diverse grassland swards and associated invertebrates with their predatory species across a range of wildlife. The combined developments may therefore have landscape-scale cumulative beneficial effects for a wide range of species.
- 6.29 The main likely impacts on ecological and biodiversity features within the site would occur during the construction phase, few operational effects were likely. A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan has been prepared in order to outline how the site will be managed post construction in order to maximise its ecological value. This includes conservation management of grassland to increase its species

richness and ensure land is available for use by ground nesting birds, and management of hedgerows to maximise their value for wildlife. Other measures will include the retention and ongoing management of land for arable plants species. Bat and bird boxes will also be installed as well as hibernacula

- 6.30 The creation and management of these habitats can be developed in consultation with the Council's Ecologist. By adhering to the recommended avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures set out in the Environmental Statement, the development will be in line with relevant local and national planning policy, and the implementation of the recommended ecological enhancements would provide a positive, permanent contribution to biodiversity on the site.

#### *Historic Environment*

- 6.31 The likely effects of the application proposal upon any potential archaeological remains located within the application site and the setting of designated heritage assets located within the wider surrounds are assessed within Chapter 7 of the accompanying Environmental Statement. The salient points are discussed below.
- 6.32 There are no designated heritage assets located within the application site. Anticipated non-designated heritage assets located within the application site comprise the remains of a small mid-19th- century house and yard, and possible agricultural remains of medieval to modern date. Neither would be considered heritage assets of the highest significance, and neither would be anticipated to require preservation in situ.
- 6.33 The application site does not contribute to the setting or heritage significance of any heritage assets within its wider environs. This includes Grade II Listed Lower Stockbridge Farmhouse and its Grade II\* Listed barn, which are located c.300m to the north-east of the site.
- 6.34 No significant effects have been identified, either as a result of direct truncation of archaeological remains or indirectly as a result of changes to setting.
- 6.35 Given that no significant effects have been identified in relation to any heritage assets, either as a result of direct truncation or indirectly as a result of changes to setting, no mitigation measures would be anticipated to be required.

6.36 This assessment has not identified anything in respect of cultural heritage that would preclude development of the nature and on the scale proposed within the application site.

### Site Selection

6.37 One of the biggest constraints which has to be considered when developing renewable led energy scheme is gaining a viable point of access to the utilities network. Gaining grid connection is very difficult and problematic and for energy proposals sourcing a site with viable grid connection is a reasonable constraint to take into account. Increasingly, electrical connections are being forced back to substations and Bulk Supply Points as the amount of renewable generation connected within the electrical lines has grown. The proposed development will be served by an electrical connection to the existing section of overhead 132kV cables within the development site. Typically, the point of connection (POC) for a project of this size would be located outside the site boundary and in many instances would necessitate the laying of kilometres of underground cable at a substantial cost to connect to the electricity network and potentially rendering projects unviable.

6.38 The NPPF states that local planning authorities should provide a positive strategy for energy from renewable sources and consider identifying suitable areas for renewable energy in development plans. The NPPF goes on to state at **paragraph 154** that in determining renewable energy applications local planning authorities should approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable and that applicant should not be required to demonstrate the overall need for renewable projects.

6.39 The extant development plan does not identify any suitable areas for solar development or renewable; accordingly, site selection is guided by the development control considerations laid out through the general development control policies of West Dorset Borough Council Joint Development Plan; national planning policy guidance; and the operational needs and requirements of the development proposal.

6.40 Key considerations are summarised in the following bulleted list: -

- A suitable location to benefit from sunlight intensity levels – the site should be relatively flat (or south facing) and free of any buildings or landscape features that could cause overshadowing;

- A suitable location with access to the grid which has capacity;
- A suitable location which is served / can be served by appropriate highway infrastructure;
- Encouraging the effective use of land, where a proposal involves Greenfield land, the use of land has been shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land;
- A site with minimal environmental constraints;
- A suitable site of the right size, shape and orientation that can accommodate a 35MWp solar scheme; and,
- A suitable site which is available for the duration of the proposed scheme.

6.41 The SSE network section serving the locality of the development site is known as the Axminster to Yeovil 132kV overhead line circuit.

6.42 The applicant has accepted the grid offer from SSE and secured the 35MW export capacity required for a project of this size. The grid offer accepted can only be used for the Higher Stockbridge Solar Farm and cannot be transferred to any other site, as this would be deemed by the DNO as a significant alteration to the original application.

6.43 The connection secured at Higher Stockbridge forms part of Voltalia UK commitment to secure 100MW of subsidy free renewable energy for Dorset.

6.44 All of Voltalia UK sites will contribute towards addressing national and local electricity needs by generating an affordable and renewable source of clean energy.

6.45 The 100MW capacity which has been secured by the applicant, has taken the SSE electricity network to its maximum fault level. Therefore, no further distributed generation connections can be connected on to SSE's existing electricity network at this time without further significant reinforcement works to the electricity network. The chosen site meets the above criteria and, as set out more detail in this section and in the supporting Environmental Statement by virtue of its siting, the proposal has taken into account the need to protect the valuable landscape and ecological resources within the surrounding countryside, whilst providing for the

sensitive exportation of renewable energy sources in accordance with the policies set out in the NPPF.

- 6.46 The application proposal is considered to be acceptable within this location as it represents a diversification in the use of land for the generation of renewable energy.

### **Restoration**

- 6.47 The proposal is for a temporary structure with a modelled operational lifespan of up to 35 years. Following cessation of energy generation at the site, and as part of the contractual obligations with the landowner, all panels, security fence and inverters will be decommissioned and all plant and machinery will be removed from site.

### **Higher Stockbridge Farm**

- 6.48 The proposal site forms part of the landholding of Higher Stockbridge dairy farm which is located to the immediate north east of the development site.
- 6.49 The development proposal will secure a reliable income stream for the farmstead over a 35 year period. Accordingly, economic gain is secured through income diversification to the rural agricultural enterprise at Higher Stockbridge.
- 6.50 The proposal represents a sustainable diversification of the rural land based enterprise as supported through National guidance.
- 6.51 The development proposal will provide Higher Stockbridge Farm with a financial contribution that will be utilised to maintain its high standard of agricultural management and land stewardship that will, in turn, help conserve the landscape and biodiversity character of the local countryside.

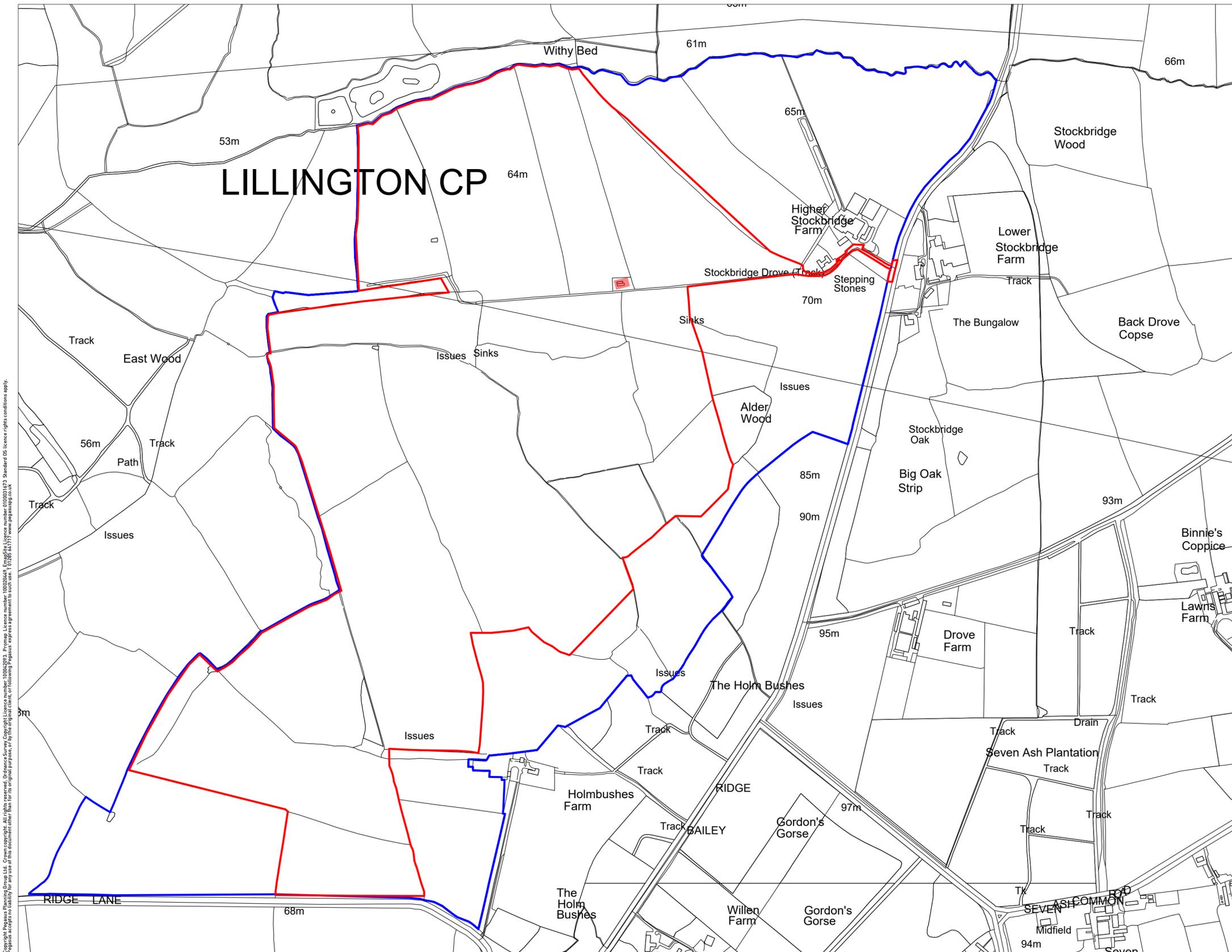
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## 7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 For the reasons outlined in this Planning Statement, it is considered that the application proposals are entirely consistent with the relevant planning policies and guidance at the local and national levels.
- 7.2 The selected site is appropriate in that it can accommodate the proposed solar park without significantly affecting the landscape character of the wider countryside or the amenities of residents in the vicinity. The temporary and reversible nature of the development, together with the measures that are to be taken to enhance and encourage the ecological diversity of the site, will ensure that in the long term the site can not only be restored to its current use, but will also have been improved. The wider environmental benefits and sustainability credentials associated with the increased production of energy from renewable sources represents a significant case in favour of the development proposals.
- 7.3 The cessation of intensive agricultural practices within the development site, which is partly located within the development boundary, will in turn allow the introduction of ecological enhancement that will benefit a range of native wildlife for the entire generation period of 35 years.
- 7.4 Overall, the proposals are entirely suitable to the site and its surrounds; consistent with Planning Policy and all relevant material planning considerations; and will achieve a high-quality design as envisaged by the applicant and as required by the Local Planning Authority.

## APPENDIX 1

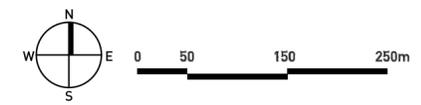
### SITE LOCATION PLAN



**KEY:**

- APPLICATION BOUNDARY
- LAND WITHIN APPLICANTS CONTROL
- AREA OUTSIDE THE PLANNING APPLICATION BOUNDARY

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## LAND AT HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE FARM - OPTION PLAN



## APPENDIX 2

### SCREENING OPINION



Oliver Rendle  
Environmental Assessment Officer  
Direct dial: 01305 251010 (x2557)  
Email: orendle@dorset.gov.uk

Bärbel Francis,  
Votalia UK Ltd,  
26-28 Hammersmith Grove,  
London,  
W6 7BA

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Dear Ms Francis,

**THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2011: EIA SCREENING OPINION.**

**1/D/17/001204: SOLAR FARM ON LAND AT HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE FARM, SHERBORNE**

Thank you for your letter dated 8<sup>th</sup> May 2017 which requests that the Council, as local planning authority, adopt an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion for the proposed development of a solar farm at land at Higher Stockbridge Farm, Sherborne. This response provides the EIA Screening Opinion adopted by the Council, and gives reasons for the decision in accordance with Regulation 4(7)(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Regulations) 2011 ('the EIA regulations').

The proposed solar farm falls within Paragraph 3(a) of the EIA regulations, as an industrial installation for the production of electricity. The threshold for paragraph 3(a) development to qualify as Schedule 2 development is 0.5ha. Since the proposed development would occupy an area of approximately 89ha, this threshold is exceeded and the proposal qualifies as Schedule 2 development.

Therefore, it is necessary at the EIA screening stage to consider whether or not the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. In coming to this judgement, Regulation 4(6) of the EIA Regulation requires the selection criteria for screening presented in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations to be taken into account, and includes:

1. Characteristics of development;
2. Location of development; and
3. Characteristics of the impact.

**1. Characteristics of development**

The proposed development occupies an area of approximately 89ha, and comprises:

- Ground mounted photovoltaic panels (in rows and orientated in a west to east direction, and at a maximum height of approximately 2.5m above ground level),
- Security fence (approximately 2m high),
- Transformer and inverter substations,
- Distribution Network Operator (DNO) sub-station,
- Control centre.

There is a requirement to consider the cumulative effects of the development in accordance with Paragraph 1b of Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations. The impacts of the proposed development will be considered in combination with the existing and approved development in the areas

surrounding the site, including the planning approval for the development of 89 dwellings at Folly Farm approximately 3.3km to the west of the site.

The development is considered unlikely to use significant amounts of natural resources, In fact, it is likely that the development will reduce the use of natural resources (such as fossil fuels) since it will generate electricity from renewable sources.

The development is also unlikely to generate significant amounts of waste despite the scale of the proposals, as the frames for the solar panels are driven into the soil, removing the need for piling or deep foundations which would result in the excavation of land and creations of waste materials. Furthermore, the solar panels are recyclable and therefore may become a future resource rather than a waste material.

The potential for nuisance from the proposed development is likely to be greatest during the construction phase of the development. However, development of this character also has the potential to generate noise during the operational phase, particularly from the substations, and cause glare from the reflection of light. The potential for nuisance impacts will be considered further during the assessment of impacts later in this letter.

The risk of accidents will be reduced by restricting public access to the site through the presence of 2m high security fencing surrounding the site.

## 2. Location of development

The site is largely occupied by grade 3 (good to moderate quality) agricultural land. A small pond and a small structure is marked towards the centre of the site. A public right of way, titled 'Stockbridge Drove', runs across the central area of the site generally in a west to east orientation.

The land immediately surrounding the site is largely occupied by agricultural land. In addition, there are a series of buildings largely associated with the farms in the immediate surroundings particularly to the east and south of the site (including Higher Stockbridge Farm, Lower Stockbridge Farm, Drove Farm, Holmbushes Farm, and Lower Bailey Ridge Farm). The areas to the west and north of the site are occupied by woodland, as Middle Wood and East Wood are located approximately 130m to the west of the site with Alcroft Copse located beyond to the west, and Leweston Wood approximately 240m to the north.

There are a number of environmental designations in the areas surrounding the site.

The 'sensitive areas', as defined by regulation 2(1) of the EIA regulations, near to the site include:

- Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) located approximately 3.3km to the south of the site;
- Holnest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) located approximately 2.7km to the east of the site;

Other environmental designations near to the site which are not defined as 'sensitive areas' but are nevertheless considered environmentally sensitive and relevant in determining whether EIA is required, include:

- High Risk Flood Zone located approximately 150m to the west of the site;
- Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) including:
  - 'Leweston Wood' located approximately 240m to the north of the site;
  - 'Dyke Head Plantation' located approximately 715m to the northeast of the site
  - 'Bailey Ridge Wood' located approximately 510m to the south of the site

- 'Whitfield Woods' located approximately 240m to the west of the site; and
- Scheduled Monument titled 'Fishpond' approximately 1.2km to the north of the site;
- Ancient Woodlands including:
  - 'Leweston Wood' located approximately 240m to the north of the site;
  - 'Middle Wood/East Wood' located approximately 150m to the west of the site;
- 'Leweston Manor' Historic Park and Garden located approximately 240m to the north of the site;
- Listed Buildings including:
  - 'Church of St Martin, including Churchyard Boundary Wall' (Grade I listed) located approximately 1.2km to the north of the site;
  - 'Chapel of the Holy Trinity' (Grade I listed) approximately 995m to the north of the site,
  - 'Saint Antony's Convent (Formerly Listed as Leweston Manor)' (Grade II\* listed) located approximately 925m to the north of the site, and a series of other listed buildings associated with the former Leweston Manor including 'Water Tower 260m West of St Antony's Convent, Leweston', 'Former Coach House, 200m North-West of Saint Anthony's Convent' and ;
  - 'Lower Stockbridge Farm House' (Grade II listed) located approximately 185m to the east of the site
  - 'Barn at Lower Stockbridge Farm 30m East of Lower Stockbridge Farm House' (Grade II\* listed) located approximately 225m to the east of the site;

### 3. Characteristics of the impact

The Planning Practice Guidance on Environmental Impact Assessment ('the guidance') gives an indication of the key issues to consider for industrial installations for the production of electricity and an indicative threshold which can be used to help determine whether EIA is necessary.

The guidance indicates that the key issues for development of this type are the level of emissions to air, arrangements for the transport of fuel and any visual impact. In terms of the indicative threshold, it is recommended that careful consideration is given for small stations using novel forms of energy generation.

Given the characteristics and location of the development, the greatest potential for significant impacts is likely to be upon landscape and visual receptors, heritage assets, ecology, transport, and nuisance. The following paragraphs consider the potential for significant impacts upon these receptors.

#### *Landscape and visual*

The Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which is a sensitive area according to the EIA regulations, is located approximately 3.3km to the south of the site.

The Dorset AONB Team were consulted on the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development. The Dorset AONB Team explained that the potential impacts of the proposal upon the Dorset AONB resulted from the views from the elevated ground within the Dorset AONB (particularly from Melbury Bubb, Batcombe Hill and Telegraph Hill), and toward the North Dorset Escarpment at Knighton Hill. Since the development would appear a considerable distance from the Dorset AONB, the Dorset AONB Team do not consider that the proposal would result in substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Dorset AONB. However, it is recommended that careful consideration was given to the potentially significant effects on the undesignated landscape, outside the Dorset AONB, in coming to a decision regarding the need for EIA.

Natural England, the Government's advisors on landscape impacts, concur with the view that the proposed development is unlikely to have a significant impact upon the Dorset AONB but

also recommend that local landscape impacts require full consideration in determining whether or not EIA is required.

The local landscape impacts of the proposed development were considered by the Council's Landscape Officers.

The local landscape consists of gently rolling clay hills and valleys between the higher limestone hills to the north and chalk ridge to the south. The landscape here contains historic field patterns bound by hedgerow, interspersed with areas of mature woodland and plantation. The site itself is in a shallow sided valley between Bailey Ridge to the east and Whitfield Woods.

The sensitive visual receptors are considered to be the residents of properties in Lillington, the scattered farmhouses in the area, the users of local public footpaths and bridleways, and the chalk ridge to the south.

The location of the proposed solar farm within a valley and the presence of mature hedgerow, woodland and plantation, is likely to screen the development to a degree. However, the proposed solar farm has the potential to result in significant visual impacts from the receptors in close proximity and from the higher ground to the south and compromise the landscape character of the area. On this basis, it is recommended that the proposals would constitute EIA development on landscape grounds. A full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment as part of an Environmental Statement will be required, carried out in line with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. 2013), with views to be assessed agreed with the local planning authority prior at the earliest stages.

#### *Heritage Assets*

There are a number of designated heritage assets in the areas surrounding the site. The designated assets to the north of the site include the Church of St Martin, Lillington (Grade I listed) and adjacent Fishpond (Scheduled Monument) approximately 1.2km to the north, and the Ancient Woodland, Historic Park and Garden and Listed Buildings (including the Grade I listed 'Chapel of the Holy Trinity') associated with former Leweston Manor estate at least approximately 240m to the north of the site. In addition, there are Listed Buildings associated with Stockbridge Farm approximately 185m to the east of the site.

Historic England, the Government's advisors on the potential impacts of development upon heritage assets, commented on the potential impacts of the proposal, explaining that these historic features of national importance make an important contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the area and its sense of place.

Historic England raised particular concerns about the impacts of the proposed development upon the setting of the heritage assets and designated landscape to the north of the site and the listed buildings at Stockbridge Farm to the east.

Whilst views of the proposed development are likely to be limited as a result of local vegetation and topography, it is likely that there will be views of the site from Lillington to the north.

Taking into account the scale of the proposed development, the importance of the surroundings from a heritage standpoint, in addition to views of the site from the north, it is considered likely that there is the potential for significant impacts upon heritage assets.

In terms of the archaeological implications of the proposal, the Dorset Historic Environmental Record does not indicate the presence of significant archaeological features at the site. In addition, since the proposals do not require extensive excavation, it is unlikely that any underlying features will be greatly disturbed. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that significant impacts upon archaeological features will result from the proposed development.

## *Ecology*

Whilst there are no wildlife designations at the site itself, the surrounding areas include the Holnest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) located approximately 2.7km to the east of the site. This site is defined as a 'sensitive' area in the EIA regulations and therefore must be given great weight in coming to a decision regarding the need for EIA. Natural England, the Government's advisors on ecological issues, have been consulted on the proposals and have not raised any issues regarding the impacts upon the Holnest wildlife sites from the proposed development.

There are also 'local' wildlife designations in the areas surrounding the site. These Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) include 'Leweston Wood' approximately 240m to the north, 'Dyke Head Plantation' approximately 715m to the northeast, 'Bailey Ridge Wood' approximately 510m to the south, and 'Whitfield Woods' approximately 240m to the west of the site. It is considered unlikely that the proposed development will result in significant environmental impacts upon these local wildlife designations in light of the characteristics of the proposed development and the distance of the site from these local wildlife sites.

Natural England recommended that the local planning authority investigates the potential for impacts upon significant populations of protected species. The information provided by the Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) indicates that there are no records of significant populations of protected species at the site, and therefore it is considered unlikely that significant adverse impacts upon the protected species will occur.

## *Nuisance (noise and glare)*

The potential for nuisance from the proposed development is likely to be greatest during the construction phase of the development, which will last approximately 4 to 5 months. In light of the sparsely populated nature of the surrounding areas, the requirements of the construction regulations, and the short term and reversible nature of the impact, it is considered unlikely that significant adverse impacts due to nuisance will result during the operational phase.

During the operational phase of the development, there is potential for noise from the transformer and inverter substations and glare from the solar panels. For the purposes of EIA, it is considered unlikely that the substations will be sufficiently close to residential buildings to cause nuisance from noise. The proposals are unlikely to result in nuisance from glare due to the sparsely populated nature of the surrounding areas and the design of the solar arrays, which are designed to absorb rather than reflect light.

## *Transport*

The greatest potential for impacts upon the transport network is likely to be during the construction phase of the development, through visits from construction vehicles during the four to five month construction phase. Access to the site will be via Higher Stockbridge Farm to the east of the site during this period. However, in light of the time taken to install the photovoltaic park, these impacts are likely to be short term, temporary, and reversible.

During the operational phase of the development, it is likely that infrequent trips will be made to the site mainly for maintenance purposes.

## Conclusion

Following consideration of the selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development presented in Schedule 3 of the EIA regulations, the Local Planning Authority conclude that the proposed development is likely to result in significant environmental effects. Therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred on it by regulation 5(5) of the EIA Regulations, the local

planning authority hereby adopts a screening opinion that the proposed development is 'EIA development'.

Should you have any questions about this, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Rendle  
Environmental Assessment Officer

## APPENDIX 3

### WEST DORSET PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

South Walks House  
South Walks Road  
Dorchester  
DT1 1UZ

Tel: (01305) 251010  
Website: [www.dorsetforyou.com](http://www.dorsetforyou.com)



Mr G Roberts  
Pegasus Group  
Equinox North,  
Great Park Road  
Almondsbury  
Bristol  
BS32 4QL

Head of Planning (Development Management and  
Building Control)  
Jean Marshall

Email: [proteam@dorset.gov.uk](mailto:proteam@dorset.gov.uk)

LILLINGTON

05 July 2018

Dear Mr Roberts

**Application No:** WD/D/18/000896

**Proposal:** Pre-application Consultation - Ground Mounted Solar Park

**Location:** LAND AT HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE FARM, LONGBURTON,  
SHERBORNE, DT9 6EP

I write in response to your pre-application enquiry and information provided by you, received on 02/05/2018 regarding the above proposal.

I must emphasise that the advice given below is officer opinion only and does not bind the District Council, as local planning authority, into making a particular decision on any future planning application. This advice is offered following a site visit on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2018, with the Case Officer and the Council's Specialist Services Manager who provided advice in respect of the potential Landscape and Historic Assets impacts. We subsequently discussed the proposal at a meeting at the Council's Offices on Thursday, 14 June, 2018, prior to which you had received a copy of the Council's draft comments regarding it.

## Assessment

### Site and proposal

The proposal comprises the installation of a ground mounted solar PV installation with a projected maximum export capacity of 35MWp (megawatts peak) output laid out over various enclosed fields at Higher Stockbridge Farm. The photovoltaic panel arrays would be set in rows between 3.5m and 6.0m apart reflective of the ground conditions and topography. The top edges of the panels would be approximately 3.0m above ground level with the lower edges at approximately 0.7m above ground level. We agreed at our meeting that a 25 year operating period for the development is acceptable to your clients. This ties-in with the operating time-limits for previously approved proposals for Solar PV Developments within the District. The modules will then be de-commissioned and removed from site with the land returned to agriculture.

The land at Higher Stockbridge Farm is outlined on the General Layout Plan – Drawing No. DV\_LV\_101\_02\_00. This shows an indicative site layout with positioning of Arrays, Pathways, Fencing, Control House, Transformer Centre; DNO/Delivery Centre; and, Client Substation. The PV plant area covers approximately 77.89ha.

The land is in agricultural production presently given over to fodder crops and grazing. It is

relatively level with a gentle fall from south to north. It is characterised by fields screened by mature hedges containing hedgerow trees. The fields are interspersed with retained trees in rows or stands, with the occasional isolated specimen. There are areas of woodland off-site, which further screen the site area from the surroundings particularly Whitfield Woods to the west and The Holm Bushes to the east. A further area of woodland to the north screens the site from St Anthony's, Leweston, School.

In planning terms, the site lies in the open countryside. It does not lie within the Dorset AONB.

### **Planning history**

There is no planning history of relevance affecting the site.

### **Environmental Impact Assessment**

The Council has assessed the proposed development in respect of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations given the area of land proposed to be developed amounts to approximately 77.89ha. The proposed new solar farm falls within Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, as an industrial installation for the production of electricity. Due to the location and extent of the area of the proposed development, which exceeds 0.5ha, it will qualify as Schedule 2 development. As such, the development proposed would need to be screened for Environmental Impact Assessment.

You advised at our 14 June, 2018, meeting that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was in the process of being prepared. The site has been the subject of a previous EIA Screening Opinion sought by Ref: WD/D/17/001204. The Council provided such an Opinion to you dated 16 June, 2017, in which it advised that EIA was required. This outlined the potential for significant impacts that would need consideration by way of an Environmental Statement. The issues discussed that should be scoped into the ES were landscape and Visual considerations, Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage. .

Notwithstanding the above, we agreed that any planning application must be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

### **The Development Plan**

#### **West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (adopted 2015)**

- ENV1 – Landscape, seascape and sites of geological interest
- ENV2 - Wildlife and Habitats
- ENV4 – Built heritage and archaeological remains
- ENV5 – Flood risk
- ENV8 - Agricultural Land and Farming Resilience
- ENV10 – The Landscape and Townscape Setting
- ENV12 – The design and positioning of buildings
- SUS2 - Distribution of Development
- ENV16 – Amenity
- COM7 - Creating a safe and efficient transport network
- COM11 - Renewable Energy Development

### **Supplementary planning documents**

#### **Design and Sustainable Development Planning Guidelines (adopted 2009).**

- Policy (a) Work in harmony with the site and its surroundings
- Policy (b) Involve the right people at the design stage
- Policy (h) Maintain and enhance local character

Policy (j) Achieve high standards of environmental performance

**Supplementary planning guidance  
West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment (2009)**

The site lies within the Blackmoor Vale Landscape Character Area as outlined in the above assessment.

**National Planning Policy Framework**

The following sections of the NPPF are relevant to the determination of this application:

- Section 1 - Building a strong, competitive economy
- Section 3 - Supporting a prosperous rural economy
- Section 7 – Design
- Section 10 – Meeting the challenges of climate change
- Section 11 – Natural Environment
- Section 12 - Historic Environment

Paragraphs 186 and 187 of the NPPF require that:

*186. Local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. The relationship between decision-taking and plan-making should be seamless, translating plans into high quality development on the ground.*

*187. Local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Local planning authorities should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.*

One of the core principles of the NPPF is that “*planning should ... encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy).*” Paragraph 93 reinforces this stance with the following comment:

*Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. This is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.*

Paragraph 97 sets out the Government’s expectations of the planning process in more detail:

*To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources. They should:*

- *have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources;*
- *design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts;*
- *consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources,*

*and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure the development of such sources;*

- *support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside such areas being taken forward through neighbourhood planning; and*
- *identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers*

And when determining planning applications, paragraph 98 states that local planning authorities should:

- *not require applicants for energy development to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy and also recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and*
- *approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable. Once suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy have been identified in plans, local planning authorities should also expect subsequent applications for commercial scale projects outside these areas to demonstrate that the proposed location meets the criteria used in identifying suitable areas.*

Paragraph 112 states:

*Local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.*

Paragraph 28 also recognises the need to support diversification of agricultural land that helps to sustain an agricultural enterprise.

Further guidance is provided in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG); and, DCLG Planning Practice Guidance for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (2013).

### **Summary of likely planning issues**

- Planning Policy
- Benefits of the scheme
- Impact on the Landscape Character
- Ecological Impact
- Impact on Heritage Assets
- Flood Risk
- Neighbour Amenity
- Impact on Highway Safety

### **Planning Policy**

The scheme provides a substantial facility for renewable energy. It is clear that to meet targets to reduce emissions and noting that the Government has recently backed proposals to halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2025, from 1990 levels, there will need to be significant investment in renewable energy. Added to this is an EU target of 15% of all the UK's energy to come from renewables by 2020, and the 2006 Energy Review has an aspiration that 20% of electricity is to be from renewable resources by 2020. Currently it is

understood the UK has one of the lowest proportions of renewable energy of the EU member states. In order to achieve these targets, renewable energy will need to come from numerous sources with a range of developments all adding usefully to the reduction in emissions.

The planning policies outlined above indicate that in principle, a solar PV development along the lines proposed may be acceptable to the District Council. Local Plan Policy COM11 which refers to proposals for generating electricity being permitted where the technology is suitable for the location and the scale, form, design and materials can be satisfactorily assimilated into the local landscape.

Paragraph 98 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable sources and they should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable energy and approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

In terms of the principle of this site, comprising previously undeveloped agricultural land, for development, regard has been given to the guidelines as set out in the BRE guidance document, which follows the advice of National Planning Policy. These guidelines are also echoed within the Local Plan. The document states the following:

*Ground Mounted Solar PV projects, over 50kWp, should ideally utilise previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land, industrial land or agricultural land preferably of classification 3b, 4, and 5 (avoiding the use of "Best and Most Versatile" cropland where possible).*

*Land selected should aim to avoid affecting the visual aspect of landscapes, maintain the natural beauty and should be predominantly flat, well screened by hedges, tree lines, etc and not cause undue impact to nearby domestic properties or roads.*

### **Benefits of the scheme**

Any application submitted should outline the benefits of the scheme in respect of the equivalent reduction in carbon emissions (tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>) over the 25 year life of the solar park; and, the number of households such a facility would effectively serve. In addition, the benefits to the local economy and to local facilities arising from the development that could be secured via a S.106 Agreement. An early pre-application consultation with local Parish Councils is advised.

### **Impact on the landscape character**

A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is required as part of any planning application submitted in order to allow the Council, consultees and neighbours to assess the potential visual impact of the development on the character of the site and the surrounding area. The potential for the development to impact on distant views from higher ground as outlined at the site visit should be included.

Policy ENV10 of the Local Plan states that development should provide for the retention and protection of existing trees and hedgerows. The proposed development should not significantly compromise the local distinctiveness of the area as a whole, and any landscaping scheme proposed should be sufficient to successfully integrate the solar farm with the character of the site and its surrounding area.

Any Public Rights of Way crossing the site would need to be adequately safeguarded and fenced, with sufficient space either side of the ROW to enable it to be maintained. I advise an early consultation with Dorset County Council's – Public Rights of Way Team in its Countryside Section to ascertain their requirements.

### **Cumulative impact**

When assessing applications under the Environmental Impact Regulations, the cumulative impact of development should be taken into consideration. In terms of existing development, a solar park already exists within the vicinity to the east of the A37 and immediately south of its junction with Lakegate Lane at Ryme Intrinseca. LPA Ref: 1/D/13/000242 - Caswell Farm, Common Lane, Ryme Intrinseca, Sherborne, DT9 6JP. In addition, your clients separate pre-application proposal for a Solar PV installation at Clifton Farm, Clifton Maybank, Yeovil – (land area 53.86ha) LPA Ref: WD/D/18/000897, will if it comes to an application being submitted, also need to be considered in this regard.

A further solar park was approved (contrary to Officer advice) by the Council's Planning Committee at its 14 January, 2016, Meeting, with the Decision Notice dated 18 January, 2016. The location approximately 7km to the south-east of the site and to the north of Leigh – Alton Mead Solar Park – see LPA Ref: WD/D/15/001841. For information, the proposed reasons for refusal were:

- “The proposed development would result in solar panels and associated infrastructure which would be utilitarian structures in this countryside location. The metal structures of the frames and the construction of the panels, along with their regular arrangement in long rows would be out of keeping with the rural character of the area. The man-made structures and associated infrastructure would be of a colour and texture that is not typical of this agricultural landscape and would consequently introduce a discordant element of significant scale into the local landscape. It is considered that there would be significant adverse effects on the landscape and visual amenity from the local area to the north, east and south and the elevated ground to the north on Knighton Hill when viewed from roads and public rights of way. As such it is considered that there would be significant and adverse effects upon the local character and visual quality of the area and that the proposed mitigation measures would not be effective in moderating these adverse effects. The development is therefore considered to be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and Policies COM11, SUS2, ENV1 and ENV10 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015).”
1. “In the absence of a satisfactory means to secure mitigation for the loss of sky lark plots at the application site the development would have a significant adverse impact on biodiversity contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and Policy ENV2 of the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan (2015).”

The Decision Notice approving this application contained 7 conditions and was dated 18 January, 2016.

### **Ecological impact**

#### **Protected Species**

I advise that any planning application for new development should be accompanied by a Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report” and a corresponding Biodiversity Mitigation Plan – both to be submitted with any planning application. The BMP should be certified approved by Dorset County Council's Natural Environment Team (DCC NET). This would assist in expediting the application as Natural England is generally receptive to BMP's that have been certified by the NET. The BMP and Phase 1 Survey Report should be produced by a competent

Professional Ecologist and/or Licensed Bat Specialist, and the Report and BMP should both be detailed and comprehensive, with the BMP proposing mitigation measures in respect of Protected Species that are both relevant and acceptable in line with current procedure and legislation.

I also advise that any BMP submitted includes mitigation for the loss of any Skylark plots given this was an issue resulting in a proposed reason for refusal on the nearby WD/D/15/001841 site – which amounted to 6.35ha – less than a 10<sup>th</sup> of the land area for your clients proposals.

Policy ENV2 (Wildlife Habitats) of the Local Plan is relevant in respect of ecological issues. This policy seeks to safeguard the natural environment. It seeks to avoid harm to biodiversity and sites of conservation interest except for where it is in the public interest and the need for the development outweighs the loss. Under these circumstances, it requires unavoidable harm to be mitigated against. It also requires developers to seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity where possible.

### **Impact on heritage assets**

Any application submitted should include an assessment of the impact of the development on acknowledged heritage assets such as Listed Buildings within 400m of the sites boundaries; its proximity and relationship to any statutory Conservation Areas; and, an archaeological assessment. An early consultation with the County Archaeologist – Steve Wallis – is advised to ascertain whether any archaeological assets are likely to be affected as a result of the development. The relevant Local Plan Policy is Policy ENV4 – Heritage assets. The advice contained Section 12 of the NPPF is also of relevance.

### **Flood risk and drainage**

The site lies in Flood Risk Zone 1 - lowest risk, which is outside any recognised floodplain or area subject to flooding from rivers, and the sea. However, the Environment Agency's (EA) website indicates that parts of the site in the areas where watercourses such as ditches, and drainage channels cross the land, there is, in certain areas, between a 'low', 'medium' and a 'high risk' of flooding from surface water run-off. Officers believe that the nature of the development means it is unlikely to result in significant additional run-off from hard surfaces. However, your client is advised to have an early discussion with both the Environment Agency and Dorset County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The development will have to meet the requirements of both bodies should any such issues be identified.

### **Neighbour amenity**

Local Plan Policy ENV16 refers to protecting the amenity and enjoyment of residents. This is reinforced by para 123 of the NPPF.

The nearest properties to the site are those situated to the south-east at Bailey Ridge Farm Cottages, and the farmhouse at Holmbushes Farm. All of these properties lie within 100 metres of the solar park boundary.

A critical issue to address in considering the impact on residential amenity is not whether there will be a change in the outlook from nearby dwellings, but whether the extent of that change and any activity associated with the proposed development is such that it is overtly harmful to neighbours' living conditions such that it would warrant refusal of an application. It is recognised that from residential properties near to the site, it may be possible to view parts of the solar farm through the vegetation, particularly during the winter months when there are less leaves on the trees. However, that would not automatically make it unacceptable. The panels would be orientated in a southerly direction and should be designed to absorb sunlight rather than reflect it to minimise any waste of solar energy. Any

proposed landscaping scheme should seek to enhance the existing vegetated boundaries at the site to further reduce the impact on neighbours' amenities. Separately, Officers are not aware of any planning refusals relating to glare from domestically installed solar panels which would be at much closer quarters to other dwellings although clearly on a far less significant scale.

### **Highway safety**

The existing farm access is proposed to be used from its junction with the public highway at Bailey Ridge, which is a 'C'- Class Road. This entrance is located to the east of the site area. Any additional vehicle movements are very likely to be Solar PV Farm related, which in the construction and de-commissioning phases would result in the most vehicle movements to and from the site using the public highway network. From experience of other Solar PV installations operating within the District, it is unlikely that day-to-day operational vehicle movements to and from the site will be significant.

Any development would, be required to be carried out in strict accordance with a Construction Traffic Management Plan, which should form part of the application.

### **Other material considerations**

#### **Community consultation**

We discussed the role and scope of community consultation which you have considered. We identified three measures. These are:

2. Leaflet Drop to households in the vicinity of the site and adjoining villages;
  - Public exhibition at a local village hall;
  - Consultation with Ward Members.

No other material considerations were identified at this stage, although other issues may arise through the course of the application process. These will be considered by the Council in the determination of any planning application.

### **Application fees**

I have looked into the question of application fee as raised at our meeting on 14 June, 2018.

The "Fees for planning applications – GOV.UK" website, provides advice at paragraph: 020 in respect of the fee for a solar or wind farm application. This is:

### **"How do I calculate the fee for a solar or wind farm application?"**

The calculation for a solar panel or wind farm application is treated differently. The calculation is based on the site area of the equipment only and any associated development such as ancillary buildings or access. It does not include any land in between the equipment unless the applicant wishes to have the flexibility to move the equipment within the site as a whole. Where the applicant wishes to have more flexibility on siting equipment the fee would be based on the area of land for the whole of the site.

Where the application is for a wind-turbine, the site area is based on the area of land within the sweep of the blades where the turbine rotates 360 degrees. The area is calculated by calculating the area of a circle where the radius is the length of the blade of the wind turbine. The area of all the turbines is added together with any associated development. Please note that some elements of the application may fall under different categories of

development and therefore the areas for each component would be calculated on the basis of [mixed category development](#).

Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 22-020-20141017

Revision date: 17 10 2014"

In the event of an application being submitted that provides a fee as outlined in the first paragraph of the above advice, any subsequent revisions to the application would be treated as a fresh application, and a further fee payable.

As advised above, in the event of the whole of the redline land area being the subject of the fee, any revisions sought to the application within the application period would be treated as an amendment to that application (unless significantly materially different – e.g. enlarged site area or increased numbers of solar panels) would be covered by the planning fee originally paid. It appears that the applicant has the choice in this matter, although, a fee payment based on the red-line area allows for flexibility, which given the size of the site area, may prove to be the more cost effective route to pursue in this regard.

### **Conclusion**

The development proposed by this pre-application submission may receive the support of Planning Officers for the reasons outlined above in that the layout of the site, landform and topography are favourable to the development proposed. The retention of existing trees and boundary hedging to existing fields is crucial in breaking up the mass of the development and its visual impact, particularly in relation to views from afar.

The Council will, however, need to consider the planning balance given the size of the site (77.89 ha) and nature of the development.

It will see as a result of any application what support, or objection, there is locally for the scheme. Weighing the planning balance in such a case requires the Council to consider whether the main benefits of the scheme, including (1) the production of electricity from a renewable source; and (2) the potential for job creation, outweigh any harmful impacts having particular regard to (a) the use of greenfield land (b) the impact on the natural and historic environment and (c) the loss of Grade 3 agricultural land.

The proposal should deliver wider environmental benefits by providing a considerable amount of clean, renewable and sustainable electricity, which would contribute to national and local targets for renewable energy. In addition, it is likely that the proposal would make a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emission and help combat climate change. These are important wider environmental benefits of the scheme that should be given significant weight in the overall planning balance.

Furthermore, there would be the creation of jobs as a result of the development which would weigh in favour of the proposal. Research published by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) in March 2016 estimated that ground mounted solar installations to date had on average an equivalent of 7 full-time equivalent jobs per MW of installed capacity. On that basis it could be expected such a proposal could deliver a significant number of FTE jobs – directly and indirectly.

### **Disclaimer**

This advice is officer opinion based on current legislation, planning policy and guidance available to the Planning Officer at the time of writing, and is given without prejudice to the determination of any future application that may be received by the District Council in accordance with the provisions of the Planning Acts.

As you may be aware, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 gives members of the public a general right of access to information held by us subject to any exemptions that might apply. Whilst your submission will not be made publicly available, it could become the subject of a future FOI request.

The Council provides planning guidance on its website regarding the validation requirements for applications submitted in West Dorset. The link below provides a set of validation checklists to assist you in providing the necessary information required for your application to be registered. Failure to provide the information and plans required will result in delays during the registration process. <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/planning/validation-checklist>

Please be aware that if any subsequent planning application proposes a dwelling or a dwelling with restricted holiday use then it may be liable for a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charge. Please visit [www.dorsetforyou.com/cil/west/weymouth](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/cil/west/weymouth) for more information and to find out what additional information you may need to provide.

These additional links below provide further planning application advice and information on how to apply:

[www.dorsetforyou.com/planning/west-dorset/pre-applications](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/planning/west-dorset/pre-applications)

[www.dorsetforyou.com/permitted-development/west-dorset](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/permitted-development/west-dorset)

[www.planningportal.co.uk/](http://www.planningportal.co.uk/)

The Council provides a Building Regulations service, and if your application relates to a listed building it is advised that you consult Building Control before submitting any subsequent application for Listed Building Consent. Details of our Building Regulations service can be found via the following link:

[www.dorsetforyou.com/building-control](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/building-control)

Please find below examples of the types of proposals that may require consultation with Building Control. Please note that this list is not exhaustive:

Conversions of any type - attics/barns/outbuildings etc

Extensions

Drainage works

DDA adaptations

Demolition

Internal alterations

Fire Damaged buildings

All retrospective applications

Any applications proposing emergency means of escape/energy saving measures (insulation)/ventilation/structural works.

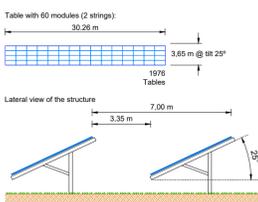
Please note that any subsequent response may be the subject of further pre-application charges.

Yours sincerely

Hamish Laird  
Senior Planning Officer

## APPENDIX 4

### PLANNING APPLICATION DRAWINGS



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS			
STRUCTURE	TYPE	TILT	
	Fixed	29°	
PV MODULES	TYPE	POWER	NUMBER
	Longi LR6-TOP2-360H	395 Wp	188 560
	PV MODULES PER STRING	NUMBER	
	30	3952	
INVERTERS	TYPE	POWER	NUMBER
	Power Electronics FE3223M	3500 kVA	10
TRANSFORMER CENTER	TYPE	POWER	NUMBER
	Power Electronics FE3223M	3500 kVA	10
GEOMETRIC DATA	AZIMUTH/PITCH (PV PLANT PERIMETER)	PV PLANT AREA	
	0° / 29°	80 487.94	
TOTAL PEAK POWER INSTALLED:	45 821 250	1592	
TOTAL NOMINAL POWER INSTALLED:	35 500 000	kVA	

**GENERAL NOTES**

Assumptions:  
 - Flat terrain;  
 - No nearshading objects on the field.

Layout subject to eventual changes that may be necessary due to:  
 - Topographical survey;  
 - Geotechnical survey;  
 - Hydrological study;  
 - Grid connection conditions;  
 - Requirements of Planning Authorities.

- Key:
- Tree
  - PV Module
  - Pathway (Internal)
  - Pathway (External)
  - CCTV Post
  - Overhead Line
  - Fence
  - PV Plant Entrance
  - Transformer Center
  - Control House

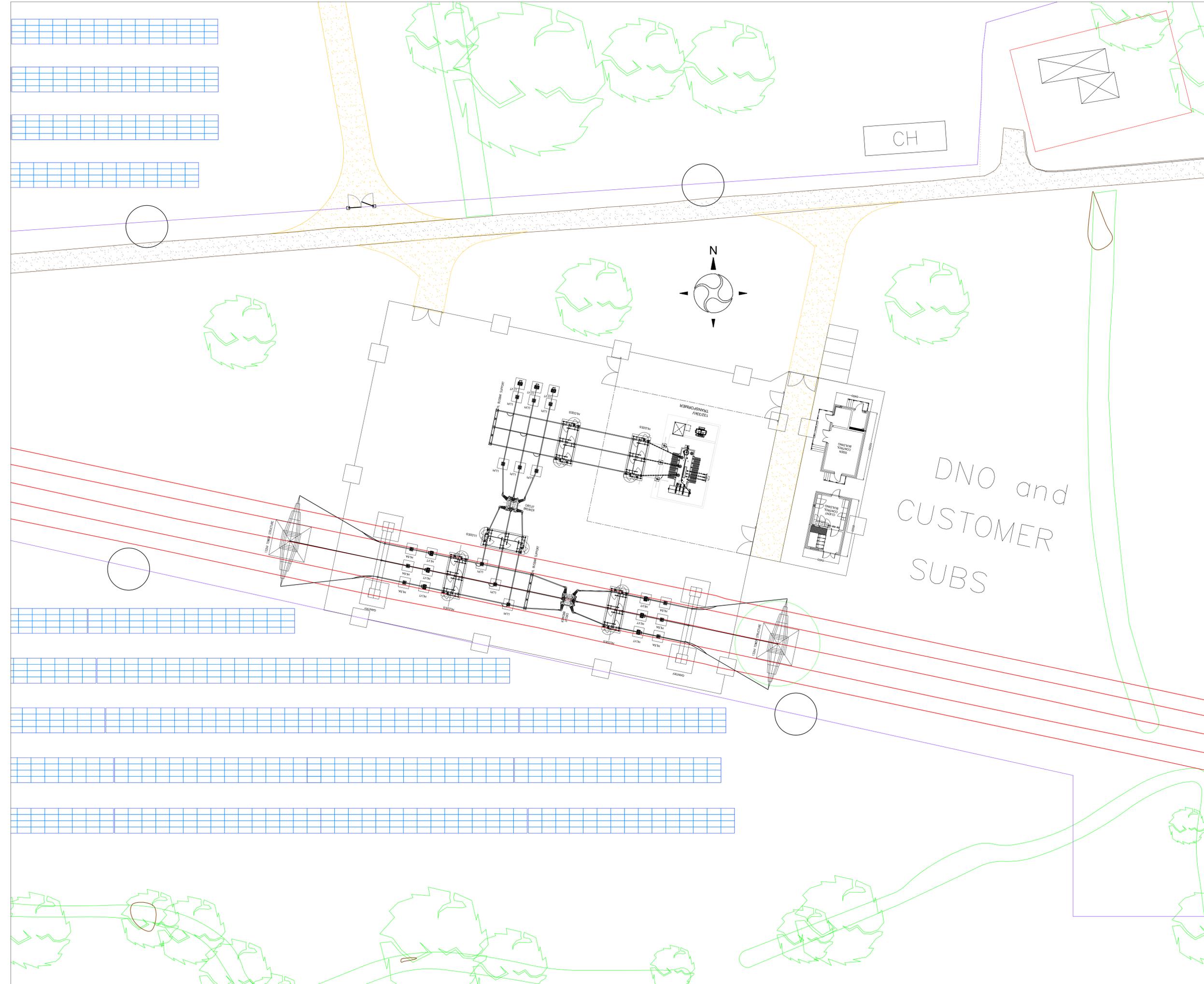
VERSION		PURPOSE		DRAWN	APPROVED	DATE
00		New solution with different fields and planning consultants inputs		George Fungis	George Fungis	03.12.2019
PROJECT: HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE			DRAWING DESIGNATION: General Implantation Plan			
SITE: Lillington, Shropshire, United Kingdom			ISSUED BY: GDF			
CLIENT: Voltalia			DRAWING CODE: LV_101_03			
PROJECT N°: GB18003	STAGE: Development	SERVICE: Electrical	SCALE: 1:3000	FORMAT: A1		



**Notes:**

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Do not scale from this drawing



Project Size:

Location co-ordinates:



Unit 9, Dunchideock Barton, Dunchideock,  
Exeter, Devon, EX2 9UA  
(t) 01726 218618  
www.ethical-power.com

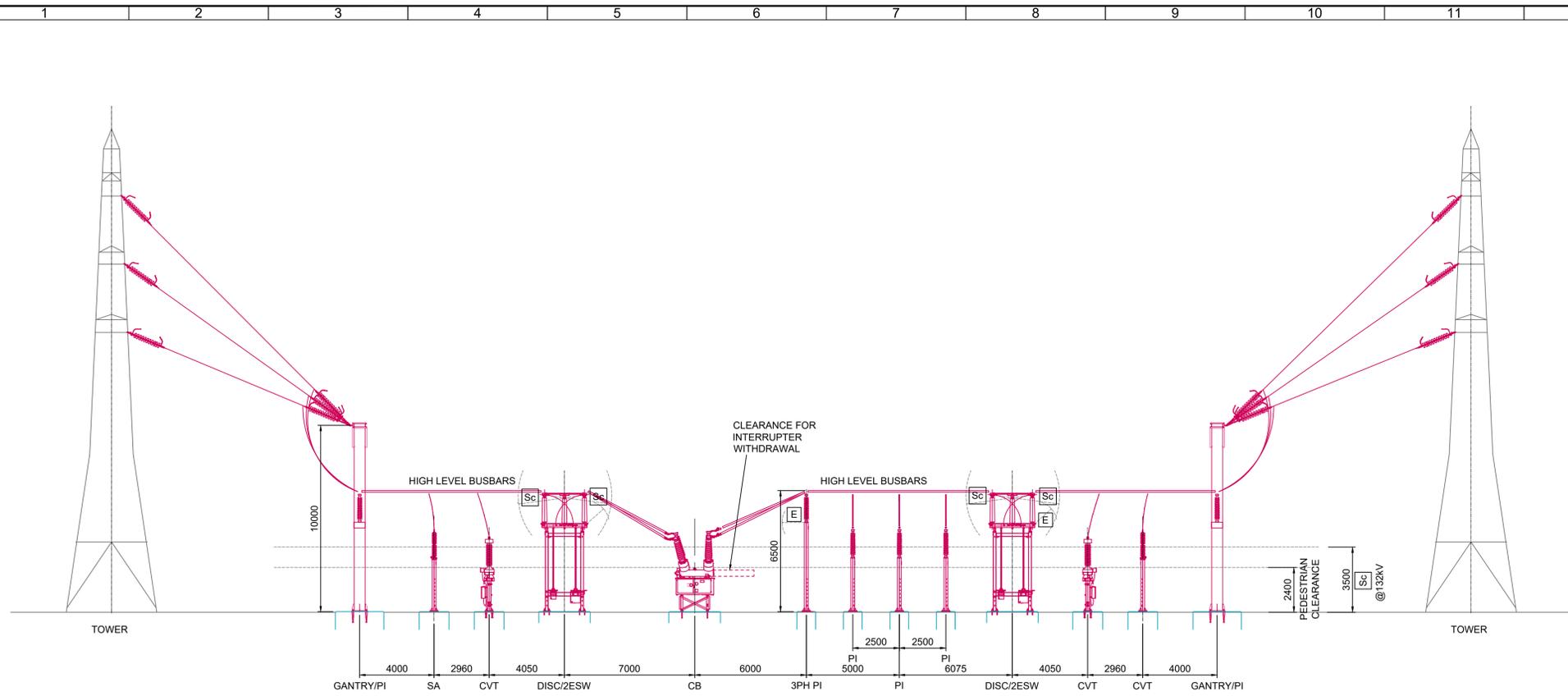
Project Title: Higher Stockbridge Solar Farm  
Site address: DT9 6EP  
LONGBUTON  
SHERBONE

Description: 132kV Substation

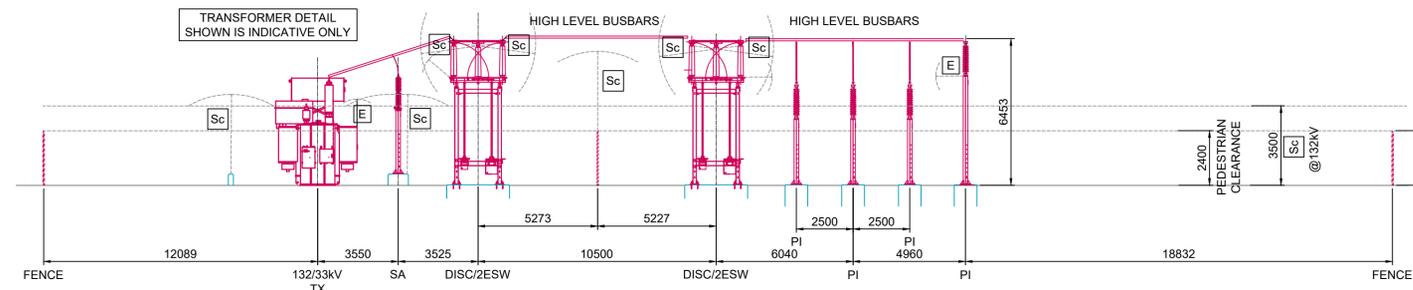
Date: 05/042019 Scale: NTS

Job No: 035 Checked by: A.F

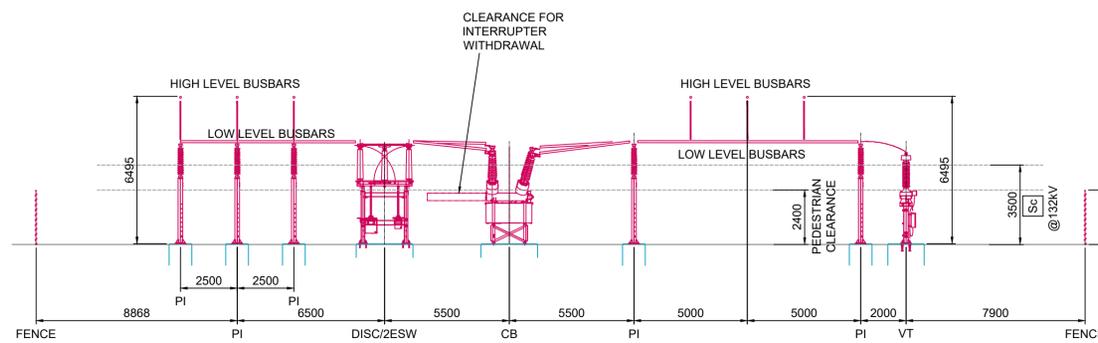
Drg No: EPC-035-E-SS-01 Drawn: J.A.



ELEVATION 'A-A'



ELEVATION 'B-B'



ELEVATION 'C-C'

NOTES

- THIS DRAWING TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL RELEVANT ENGINEERS AND SPECIALISTS DRAWINGS & SPECIFICATIONS.
- ANY DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THIS DRAWING AND ANY OTHER TO BE REPORTED TO THE ENGINEER IMMEDIATELY.
- ALL WORKS TO COMPLY WITH THE MOST CURRENT BRITISH STANDARDS.
- ALL DIMENSIONS IN MILLIMETERS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE. NO DIMENSIONS ARE TO BE SCALED OFF THE DRAWING. USE FIGURED DIMENSIONS ONLY.
- ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE  $\pm 3\text{mm}$  UNLESS SPECIFIED OTHERWISE.

LEGEND

- NEW EQUIPMENT
- NEW FOUNDATIONS / NEW TRENCH

ASSOCIATED DRAWINGS  
E18420/L001 - ELECTRICAL LAYOUT

REV	DATE	DRWN BY	CHKD BY	APPD BY	DESCRIPTION
STATUS					

FOR APPROVAL

**KELVIN**  
power consultants  
12 BARSHAW BUSINESS PARK,  
LEYCROFT ROAD,  
BEAUMONT LEYS,  
LEICESTER, LE4 1ET  
TELEPHONE : 0116 2323111  
FACSIMILE : 0116 2323110  
www.kelvin-power.co.uk

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CLIENT **ethical power**  
Ethical Power Group Ltd,  
Unit 9, Dunchideock Barton,  
Dunchideock,  
Exeter,  
EX2 9UA

PROJECT **HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE SOLAR PARK**

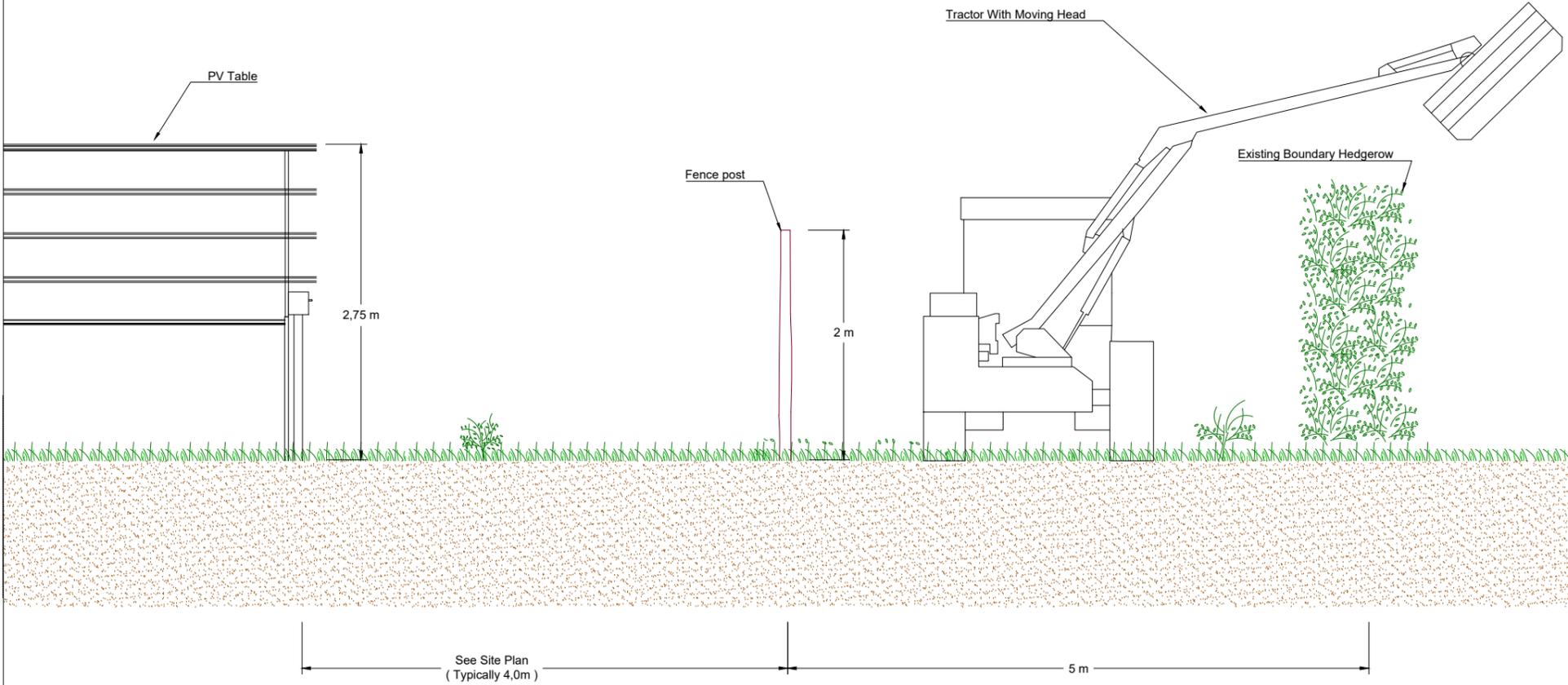
TITLE  
**132/33kV SUBSTATION  
OVERALL ELECTRICAL SITE LAYOUT -  
ELEVATIONS**

DRWN	GY	CHKD	JW	APPD	JB	SCALE (@ A1)	SHEET No.
08.03.19		08.03.19		08.03.19		1:150	1 of 1
DRAWING NUMBER							REVISION
<b>E18420/L002</b>							<b>A</b>

CLEARANCES FOR BUSBARS AND CONNECTIONS

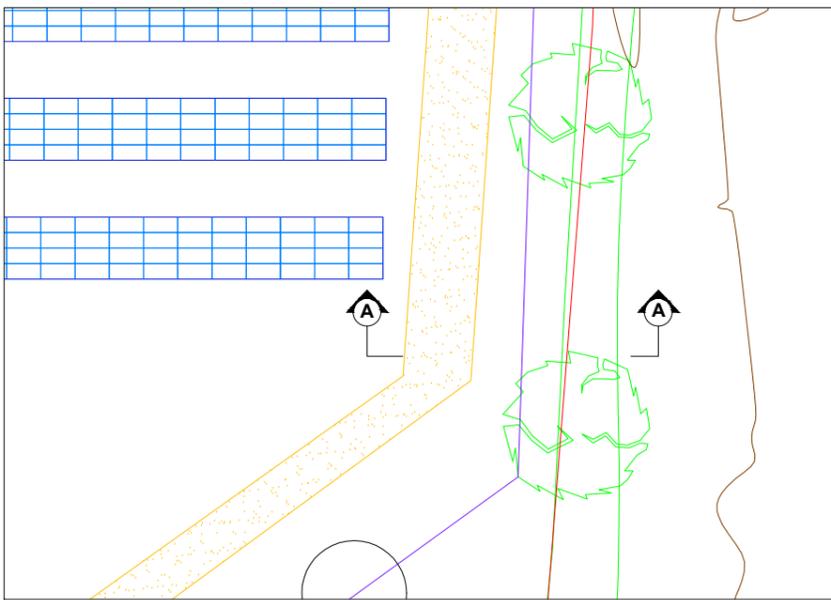
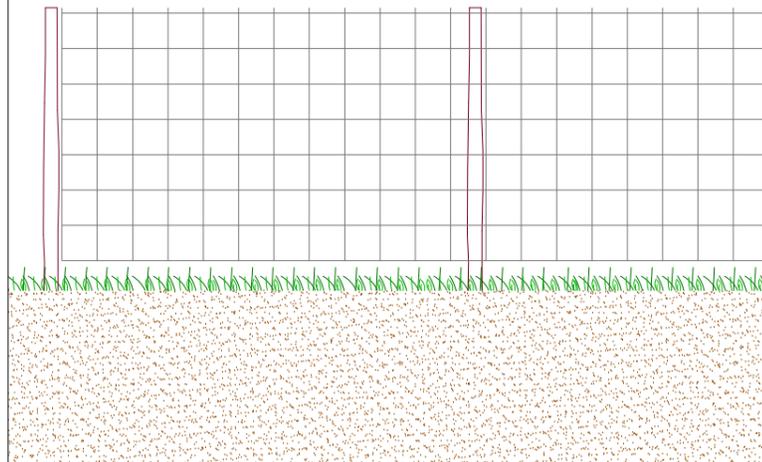
1	VOLTAGE BETWEEN PHASES	132kV
2	IMPULSE VOLTAGE WITHSTAND kV CREST 1/50 WAVE	650kV
3	MINIMUM CLEARANCE BETWEEN LIVE METAL AND EARTH [E]	1200mm
4	MINIMUM CLEARANCE BETWEEN LIVE METAL OF DIFFERENT PHASES [P]	1400mm
5	MINIMUM TOTAL AIR GAP BETWEEN TERMINALS OF THE SAME POLE OF ISOLATORS	1400mm
6	GAP BETWEEN LIVE AND EARTHED ARCING HORNS OR RINGS	990mm
7	MINIMUM SAFETY CLEARANCE BETWEEN LIVE METAL AND POSITIONS TO WHICH ACCESS IS PERMISSIBLE WITH OTHER EQUIPMENT ALIVE [Sc]	3500mm
8	MINIMUM CLEARANCE BETWEEN ANY SUBSTATION EQUIPMENT AND THE SUBSTATION FENCE	2000mm

**Fence e Maintenance Access**



**Section A-A**

**Fence Details ( Front Elevation )**



**Showing Direction and Location of Elevation**

01	Updated height of panel table	Giorgio Funghi	Giorgio Funghi	05.12.2019
00	Initial version	Carla Bastos	Gonçalo Oliveira	02.04.2019
<b>VERSION</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>DRAWN</b>	<b>VERIFIED</b>	<b>DATE</b>

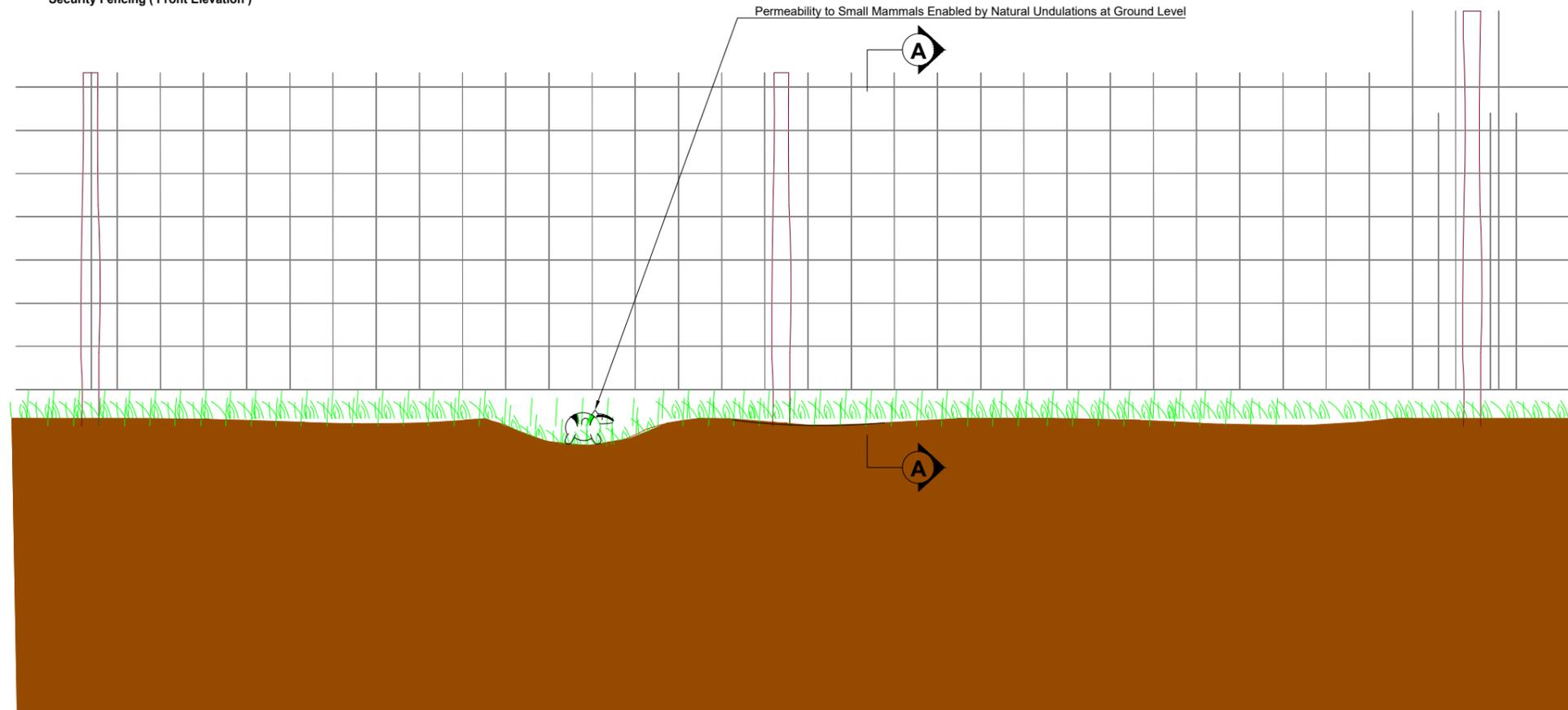
**CLIENT:** -  
**PROJECT:** HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE  
**SITE:** Lillington, Sherborne United Kingdom  
**DRAWING DESIGNATION:** Mounting Structure and Fence Detail



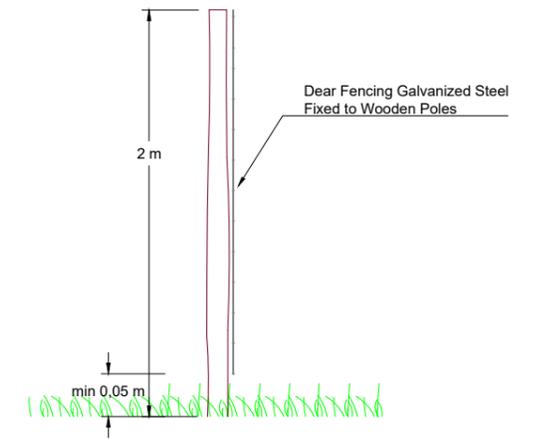
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<b>VERIFIED:</b>	Giorgio Funghi	<b>STAGE:</b>	Development
<b>DATE:</b>	05.12.2019	<b>RELEASED BY:</b>	GED
<b>SCALE:</b>	1:50	<b>VOLTALIA UK</b>	
<b>PROJECT N°:</b>	IS01	1 Lyric Square, Hammersmith	
<b>FORMAT:</b>	A3	W6 0NB London, United Kingdom	
<b>DRAWING N°:</b>	HIS01_DV_CS_102_01	Tel: +44 2039941094	

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Security Fencing ( Front Elevation )



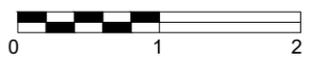
Security Fencing ( Section A A )



Security Fencing ( Sample Images )



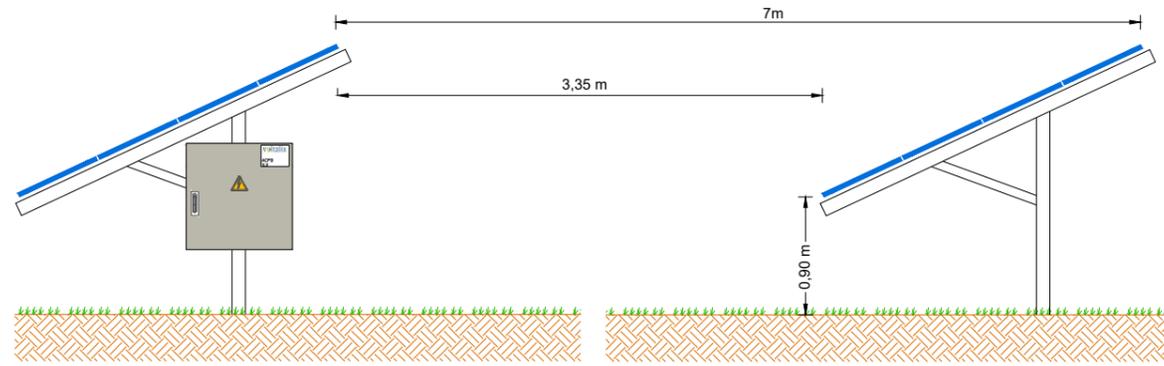
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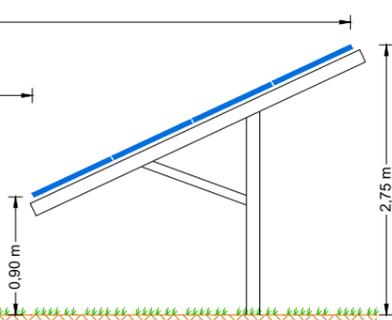
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<b>CLIENT:</b>	-	<b>DRAWN:</b>	Carla Bastos	<b>SERVICE:</b>	Electrical
<b>PROJECT:</b>	HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE	<b>VERIFIED:</b>	Gonçalo Oliveira	<b>STAGE:</b>	Development
<b>SITE:</b>	Lillington, Sherborne United Kingdom	<b>DATE:</b>	02.04.2019	<b>RELEASED BY:</b>	GED
<b>DRAWING DESIGNATION:</b>	Fence Details	<b>SCALE:</b>	1:50	<b>VOLTALIA</b>	
		<b>PROJECT N°:</b>	HIS01	84 boulevard de Sébastopol	
		<b>FORMAT:</b>	A3	75003 PARIS, France	
		<b>DRAWING N°:</b>	HIS01_DV_CS_103_00	Tel: +33 1 81 70 37 00	



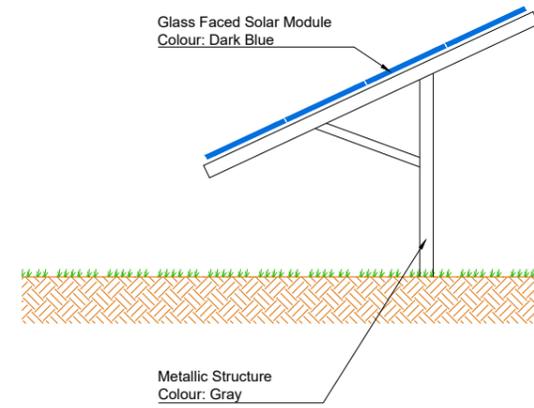
Sections ( Typical Table end With Collector Box )



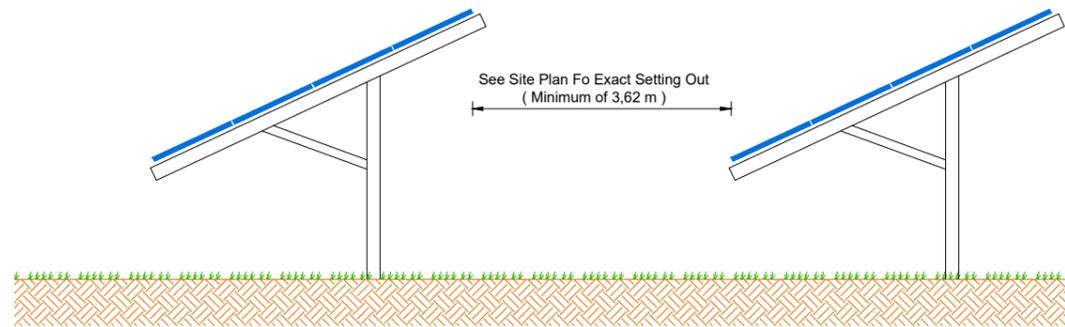
Sections ( Typical Intermediate Table )



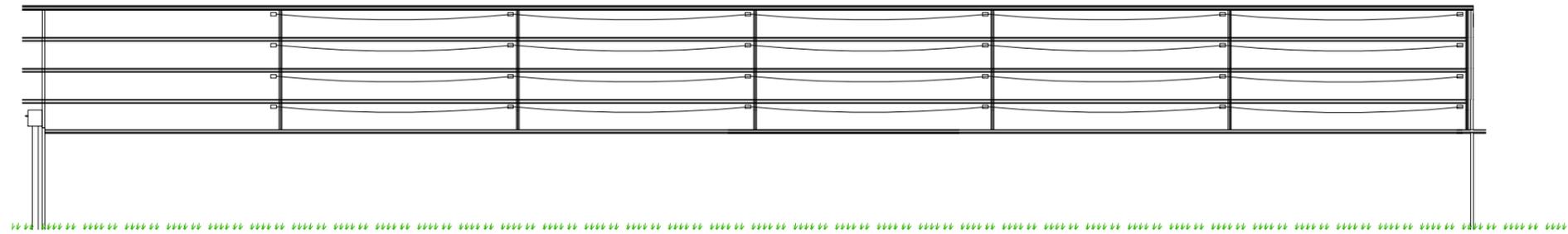
Sections ( Typical Table end Without Collector Box )



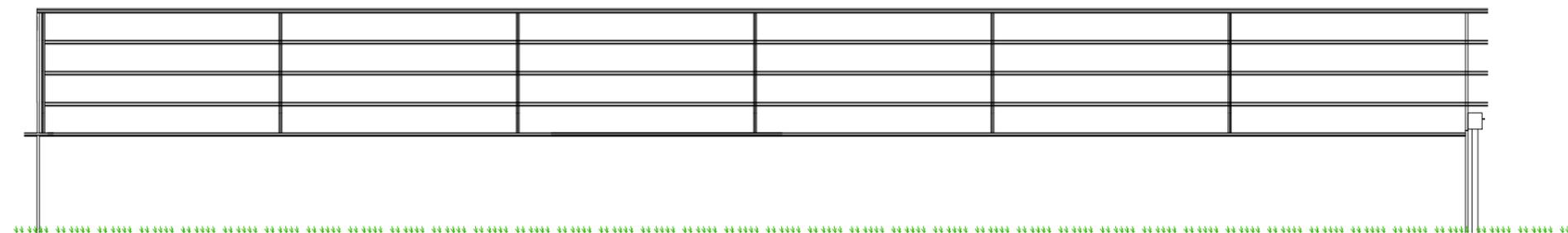
Typical Sections Out



Rear Elevation



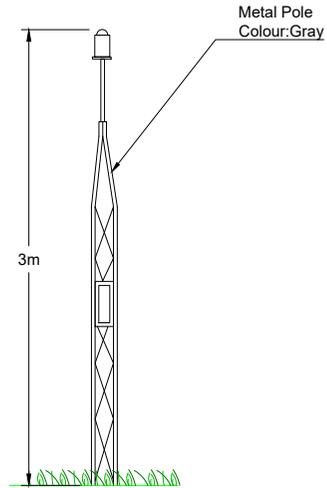
Front Elevation



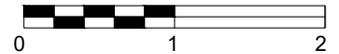
01	Changes to table height and gap between lowest panel and ground	Giorgio Funghi	Giorgio Funghi	05.12.2019
00	Initial version	Carla Bastos	Gonçalo Oliveira	02.04.2019
<b>VERSION</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>DRAWN</b>	<b>VERIFIED</b>	<b>DATE</b>

<b>CLIENT:</b>	-		<b>DRAWN:</b>	Giorgio Funghi	<b>SERVICE:</b>	Electrical
<b>PROJECT:</b>	HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE		<b>VERIFIED:</b>	Giorgio Funghi	<b>STAGE:</b>	Development
<b>SITE:</b>	Lillington, Sherborne United Kingdom		<b>DATE:</b>	05.12.2019	<b>RELEASED BY:</b>	GED
<b>DRAWING DESIGNATION:</b>	Mounting Structure		<b>SCALE:</b>	1:50	<b>VOLTALIA UK</b>	
		<b>PROJECT N°:</b>	SFT01	1 Lyric Square, Hammersmith		
		<b>FORMAT:</b>	A3	W6 0NB London, United Kingdom		
		<b>DRAWING N°:</b>	HIS01_DV_CS_604_01	Tel: +44 2039941094		

Meteo Station ( Elevation )



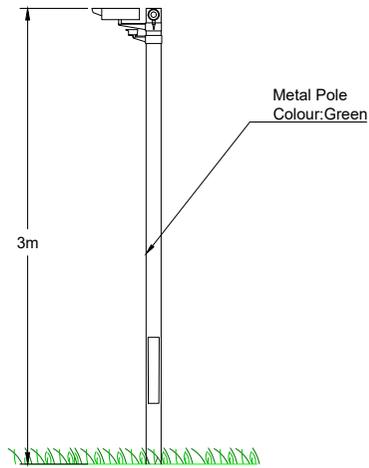
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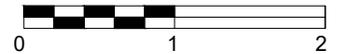
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<b>VERSION</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>DRAWN</b>	<b>VERIFIED</b>	<b>DATE</b>	
<b>CLIENT:</b>	-	<b>DRAWN:</b>	Carla Bastos	<b>SERVICE:</b>	Electrical
<b>PROJECT:</b>	HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE	<b>VERIFIED:</b>	Gonçalo Oliveira	<b>STAGE:</b>	Development
<b>SITE:</b>	Lillington, Sherborne United Kingdom	<b>DATE:</b>	02.04.2019	<b>RELEASED BY:</b>	GED
<b>DRAWING DESIGNATION:</b>	Weather Station Layout	<b>SCALE:</b>	1:50	<b>VOLTALIA</b>	
		<b>PROJECT N°:</b>	HIS01	84 boulevard de Sébastopol	
		<b>FORMAT:</b>	A4	75003 PARIS, France	
		<b>DRAWING N°:</b>	HIS01_DV_MON_401_00	Tel: +33 1 81 70 37 00	



CCTV Camara ( Elevation )



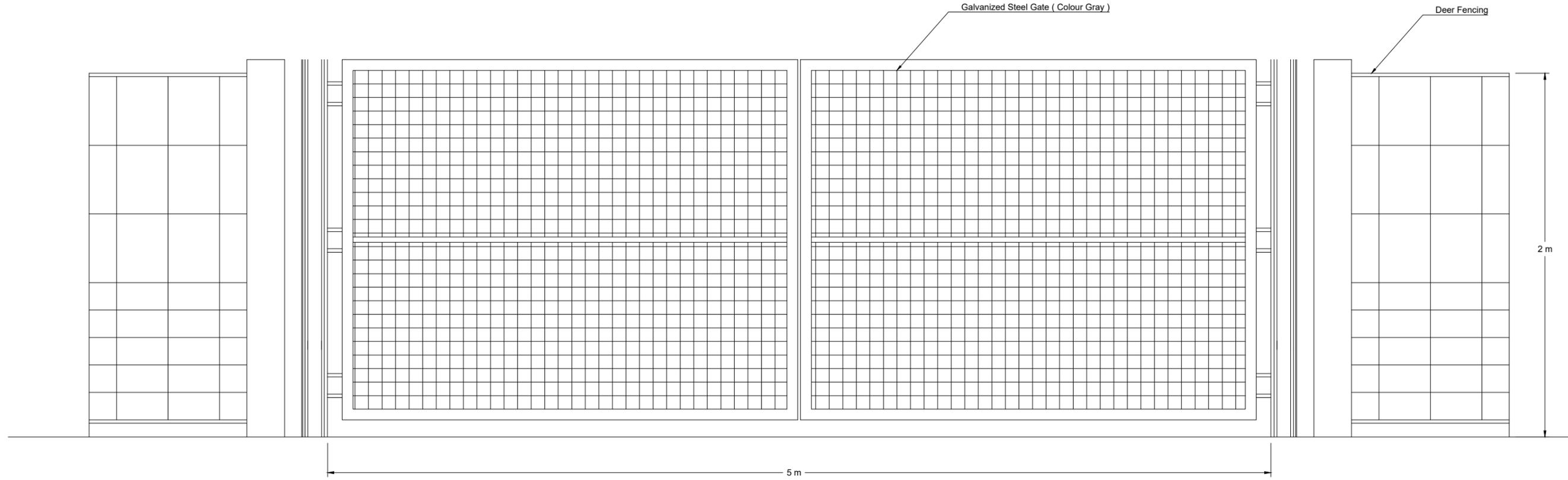
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<b>VERSION</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>DRAWN</b>	<b>VERIFIED</b>	<b>DATE</b>	
<b>CLIENT:</b>	-	<b>DRAWN:</b>	Carla Bastos	<b>SERVICE:</b>	Electrical
<b>PROJECT:</b>	HIGHER STOCKBRIDGE	<b>VERIFIED:</b>	Gonçalo Oliveira	<b>STAGE:</b>	Development
<b>SITE:</b>	Lillington, Sherborne United Kingdom	<b>DATE:</b>	12.04.2019	<b>RELEASED BY:</b>	GED
<b>DRAWING DESIGNATION:</b>	Security System Pole Layout	<b>SCALE:</b>	1:50	<b>VOLTALIA</b>	
		<b>PROJECT N°:</b>	HIS01	84 boulevard de Sébastopol	
		<b>FORMAT:</b>	A4	75003 PARIS, France	
		<b>DRAWING N°:</b>	HIS01_DV_SEC_410_00	Tel: +33 1 81 70 37 00	



PV Plant Entrance Gate  
Scale:1:50

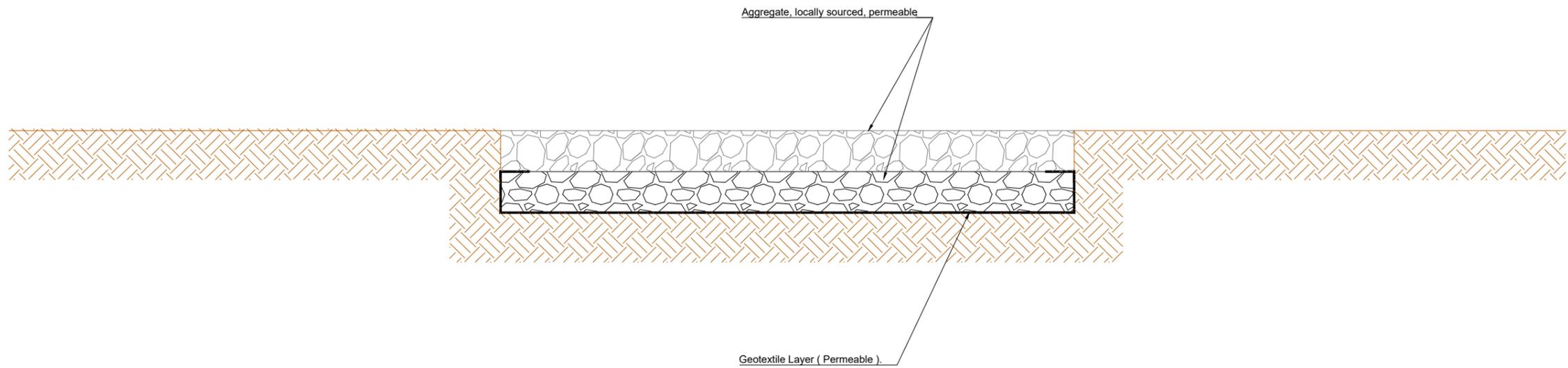


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00	Initial version	Carla Bastos	Gonçalo Oliveira	11.01.2019
VERSION	PURPOSE	DRAWN	VERIFIED	DATE
CLIENT: -		DRAWN: Carla Bastos	SERVICE: Electrical	
PROJECT: PV PLANT		VERIFIED: Gonçalo Oliveira	STAGE: Development	
SITE: Higher Stockbridge Farm, Longburton		DATE: 11.01.2019	RELEASED BY: GED	
DRAWING DESIGNATION: Gate Details		SCALE: 1:50	VOLTALIA	
		PROJECT N°: SFT01	84 boulevard de Sébastopol	
		FORMAT: A3	75003 PARIS, France	
		DRAWING N°: SFT01_DV_CS_105_00	Tel: +33 1 81 70 37 00	



Access Roads and Internal Roads



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00	Initial version	Carla Bastos	Gonçalo Oliveira	11.01.2019
VERSION	PURPOSE	DRAWN	VERIFIED	DATE
<b>CLIENT:</b> - <b>PROJECT:</b> PV PLANT <b>SITE:</b> Higher Stockbridge Farm, Longburton <b>DRAWING DESIGNATION:</b> Pathways Details				
<b>DRAWN:</b>	Carla Bastos	<b>SERVICE:</b>	Electrical	
<b>VERIFIED:</b>	Gonçalo Oliveira	<b>STAGE:</b>	Development	
<b>DATE:</b>	11.01.2019	<b>RELEASED BY:</b>	GED	
<b>SCALE:</b>	1:30	<b>VOLTALIA</b>		
<b>PROJECT N°:</b>	SFT01	84 boulevard de Sébastopol		
<b>FORMAT:</b>	A3	75003 PARIS, France		
<b>DRAWING N°:</b>	SFT01_DV_CS_205_00	Tel: +33 1 81 70 37 00		

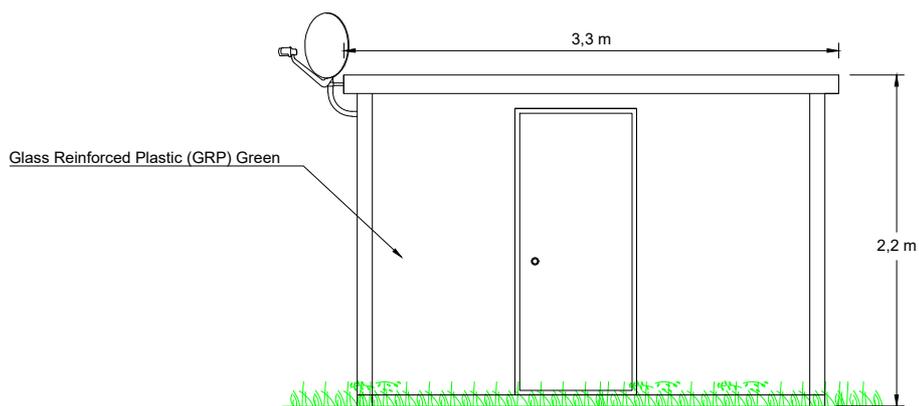
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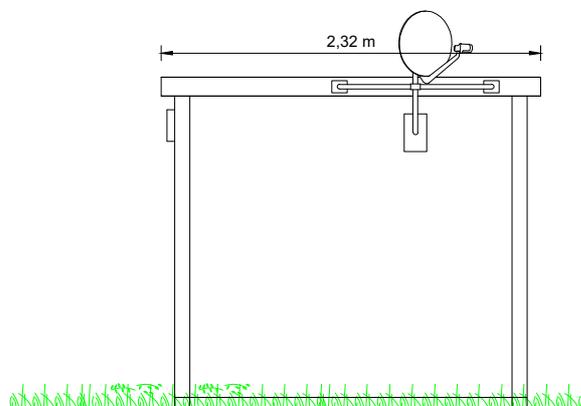
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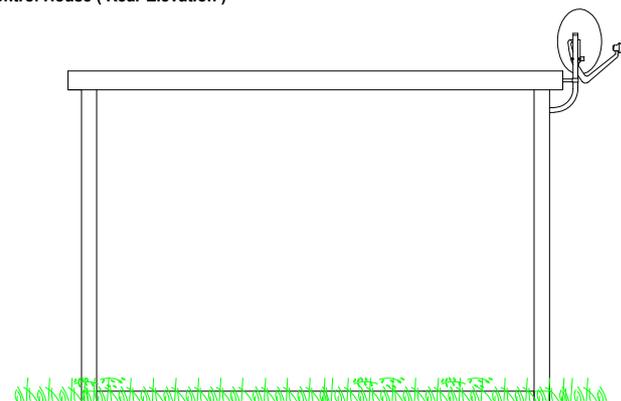
Control House ( Front Elevation )



Control House ( Side Elevation )



Control House ( Rear Elevation )



00

Initial version

Carla Bastos

Gonçalo Oliveira

11.01.2019

VERSION

PURPOSE

DRAWN

VERIFIED

DATE

CLIENT:

PROJECT:

PV PLANT

SITE:

Higher Stockbridge Farm, Longburton

DRAWING DESIGNATION:

Control House Details

DRAWN:

Carla Bastos

VERIFIED:

Gonçalo Oliveira

DATE:

11.01.2019

SCALE:

1:50

PROJECT N°:

SFT01

FORMAT:

A4

DRAWING N°:

SFT01\_DV\_CS\_603\_00

SERVICE:

Electrical

STAGE:

Development

RELEASED BY:

GED

VOLTALIA

84 boulevard de Sébastopol

75003 PARIS, France

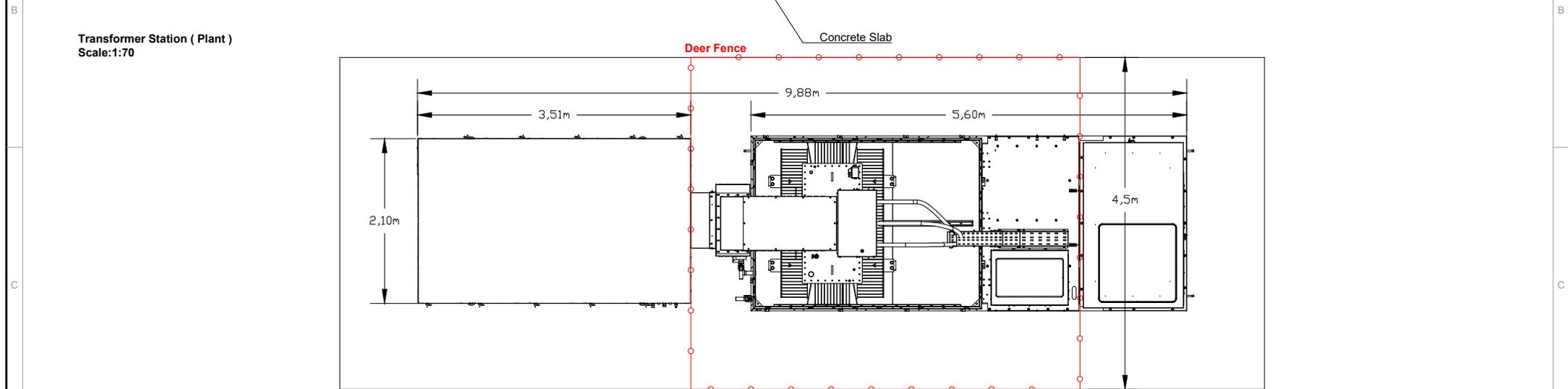
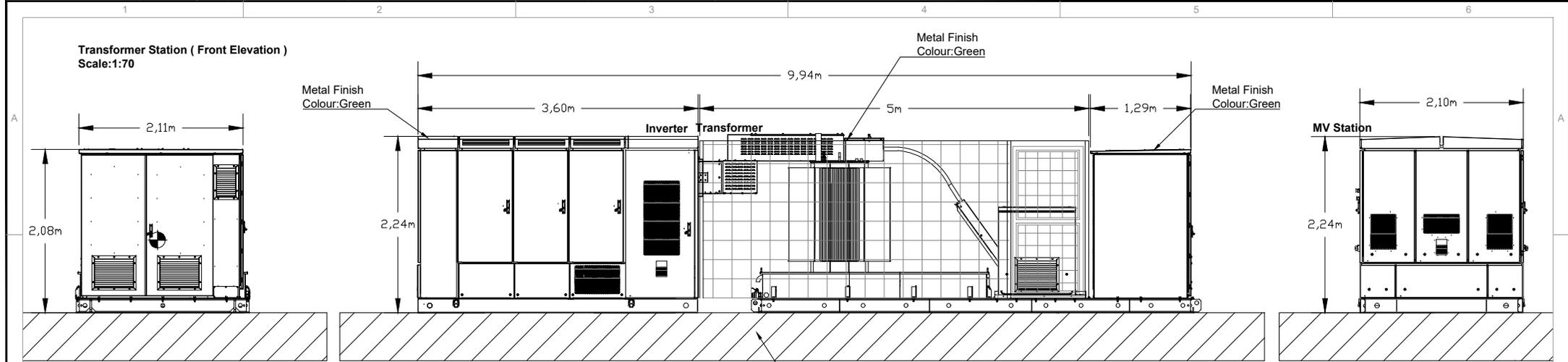
Tel: +33 1 81 70 37 00

1

2

3

4



00	Initial version	Carla Bastos	Gonçalo Oliveira	11.01.2019	
<b>VERSION</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>DRAWN</b>	<b>VERIFIED</b>	<b>DATE</b>	
<b>CLIENT:</b>	-	<b>DRAWN:</b>	Carla Bastos	<b>SERVICE:</b>	Electrical
<b>PROJECT:</b>	PV PLANT	<b>VERIFIED:</b>	Gonçalo Oliveira	<b>STAGE:</b>	Development
<b>SITE:</b>	Higher Stockbridge Farm, Longburton	<b>DATE:</b>	11.01.2019	<b>RELEASED BY:</b>	GED
<b>DRAWING DESIGNATION:</b>	Transformer Center Connection Details	<b>SCALE:</b>	1:70	<b>VOLTALIA</b>	
		<b>PROJECT N°:</b>	SFT01	84 boulevard de Sébastopol	
		<b>FORMAT:</b>	A4	75003 PARIS, France	
		<b>DRAWING N°:</b>	SFT01_DV_HV_120_00	Tel: +33 1 81 70 37 00	



v**o**ltalia

**Pegasus**  
Group 