CLEVE HILL SOLAR PARK

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

VOLUME 1 - CHAPTERS

CHAPTER 7 - LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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7 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Introduction

1. This chapter of the ES provides a baseline report and landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) of the Development. It identifies and assesses the likely significant environmental effects, and sets out the approach that has been undertaken to the LVIA. The scope and extent of the assessment, along with the general approach to EIA as set out in Chapter 2: Environmental Impact Assessment, has been determined by a combination of professional judgement, the Scoping Opinion issued by The Planning Inspectorate, including consultation with Kent County Council (KCC), Swale Borough Council (SBC) and Canterbury City Council (CCC) and separate consultation with CCC's Landscape Officer.

2. This chapter is supported by the following figures provided in the ES Volume 2:

- Figure 7.1 Landscape and Visual Study Area;
- Figure 7.2 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) - Bare Earth;
- Figure 7.3 ZTV - Local Context;
- Figure 7.3A ZTV Panels only with Local Context;
- Figure 7.4 Topography;
- Figure 7.5 National Landscape Character Areas;
- Figure 7.6 Regional Landscape Character Areas;
- Figure 7.7 Local Landscape Character Areas;
- Figure 7.8 Landscape Designation Plan;
- Figure 7.9 Cumulative Sites and ZTV Local Context; and
- Figure 7.10 Viewpoint and Photomontage Locations.

3. Viewpoint photography (winter and summer) Figures 7.11 to 7.54 and photomontages (winter and summer) are provided in Figures 7.55 – 7.134 in Volume 3.

4. This chapter is also supported by the following Technical Appendices provided in Volume 4:

- Technical Appendix A7.1: ZTV, Photography and Photomontage Methodology;
- Technical Appendix A7.2: Assessment of Potential Landscape Effects;
- Technical Appendix A7.3: Assessment of Potential Visual Effects;
- Technical Appendix A7.4: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment; and
- Technical Appendix A7.5: Section 42 Consultation Comments (LUC Comments on behalf of KCC, SBC & CCC).

7.1.1 Development Parameters Assessed

5. The landscape and visual assessment have been based on the candidate design as shown in Figure 5.2 Site Layout, in Volume 2, and as set out in Chapter 5: Development Description.

6. The following design parameters, that are of particular relevance to this chapter of the ES, provide a worst-case scenario for assessment purposes are set out below:

- The Development extends 2.9 km across in an east to west direction and extends 1.7 km in a north to south direction;
- Construction, operation and decommissioning of solar panels with an east/west orientation, at overall heights ranging from approximately 3 m to 3.9 m in height;
- Construction, operation and decommissioning of a new electrical compound and associated equipment, contained within a bunded compound of total area 10 hectares (ha);
- Transformers of up to 3 m in height located within the solar panel areas; and

- Construction, operation, decommissioning of a new tarmac access road from the existing Cleve Hill Substation access road which could either run to the north or south of the existing substation to reach the electrical compound. For the purposes of this assessment the northern access road with a length of approximately 1 km. has been assessed as this constitutes a worst case scenario as this would create a greater length of new access road and would be potentially more visible. A stone central spine road of approximately 2.2 km running east to west would connect the electrical compound with the rest of the Development site.

7.1.2 Scoping Responses and Consultations

7. A Scoping Report was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2017, which included an outline of the proposed scope of the landscape and visual impact assessment and methodology. Comments received in the Scoping Opinion on landscape and visual issues are summarised in Table 7.1, together with the response in this assessment.

Table 7.1 Scoping Consultation Responses

Consultee	**Type and Date**	**Consultation Response**	**Applicant's Response**
Natural England	Scoping Opinion Report, January 2018	Designated Landscapes and Landscape Character <u>Nationally Designated Sites</u> – [Kent Downs AONB] Consideration should be given to the direct and indirect effects upon this designated landscape and in particular the effect upon its purpose for designation within the environmental impact assessment, as well as content of the relevant management plan for the Kent Downs AONB. NE notes no vantage points proposed from within the AONB. This may be because the AONB is outside of the ZTV for the proposal or that there are no publicly accessible viewpoints within the AONB that overlap with the ZTV. If this is not the case, NE requests appropriate viewpoints are chosen within the AONB.	Considered in the Chapter 7 LVIA in section 7.5. Consideration of this has been taken account of and viewpoint 21 has been included and assessed.
		<u>Landscape and Visual Impacts</u>- NE would like to see details of local landscape character areas mapped at a scale appropriate to the Development site as well as any relevant management plans or strategies pertaining to the area. The EIA should include assessments of visual effects on the surrounding area and landscape together with any physical effects of the development, such as changes in topography. The European Landscape Convention places a duty on LPA to consider the impacts of landscape when exercising their functions. EIA should include a full assessment of the potential impacts of the	Landscape Character areas are shown on Figures 7.5, 7.6 and 7.7 in Volume 2. Landscape character areas are considered and effects assessed within section 7.5.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		development on local landscape character. NE encourages new development to consider the character and distinctiveness of the area, with the siting and design of the proposed development reflecting local design characteristics and, wherever possible, using local materials. The EIA process should detail the measures to be taken to ensure the building design will be of a high standard, as well as detailed alternatives together with justification of the selected option in terms of landscape impact and benefit. Assessment should also include the cumulative effect of the development with other relevant existing or proposed developments in the area. In this context NE advises that the cumulative impact assessment should include other proposals currently in scoping stage. The assessment should refer to National Landscape Character Assessments. Access and Recreation <u>Rights of Way, Access Land, Coastal access and National Trails</u> – Consider potential impacts on access land, public open land, rights of way and coastal access routes in the vicinity of the development. Appropriate mitigation measures should be incorporated for any adverse impacts. Recommend reference to relevant Right of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIP) to identify public rights of way within or adjacent to the proposed site that should be maintained or enhanced. NE has a duty to provide coastal access on foot around the whole of the English coast and is aiming to complete by 2020. <u>Contribution to local environmental initiatives and priorities</u> - Development proposal is within North Kent Marshes Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Measures to meet the objectives of the BOA should be implemented wherever possible. This could include management of the grassland around	Details of site design and alternatives are set out in Chapter 4: Site Selection, Development Design and Consideration of Alternatives. Cumulative assessment is provided in Section 7.8. Landscape Character areas are shown on Figures 7.5, 7.6 and 7.7 in Volume 2. Landscape character areas are considered in Section 7.3.2 and effects assessed within Section 7.5. Receptors of visual effects are considered in Section 7.6. Mitigation proposals are provided in Section 7.7 and set out in detail in the Landscape and Management Biodiversity Plan and Figure A5.1 in Technical Appendix A5.2, Volume 4. An assessment of effects on the proposed England Coast Path is provided in Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use. Mitigation proposals are considered in detail in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan and Figure A5.2 in Volume 4, Technical Appendix A5.2.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		the array to benefit invertebrates, and management of drainage ditches to benefit water voles. Cumulative and in-combination effects – ES should include an impact assessment to identify, describe and evaluate the effects that are likely to result from the project in combination with other projects and activities that are being, have been or will be carried out. The following types of projects should be included in such an assessment (subject to available information):a.existing completed projects, b. approved but uncompleted projects, c. ongoing activities, d. plans or projects for which an application has been made and which are under consideration by the consenting authorities, e. plans and projects which are reasonably foreseeable, ie projects for which an application has not yet been submitted, but which are likely to progress before completion of the development and for which sufficient information is available to assess the likelihood of cumulative and in-combination effects.	Cumulative assessment is considered within Section 7.8.
Kent County Council	Scoping Opinion Report, January 2018	Heritage Conservation – Scoping report states that the setting of heritage assets within 1 km of the site boundary will be assessed. Whilst this is likley to be sufficient, the bounds of this assessment should be reviewed following the completion of the ZTV for the LVIA, as additional features may have a visual relationship. The impacts of the scheduled medieval salterns to the east, Conservation Areas in Faversham and Goodnestone, the heritage assets on the Isle of Sheppey were raised by KCC to be included in the assessment following a meeting with the applicant. KCC has agreed to review the impacts with the heritage consultants following the production of the ZTV. KCC supports the intention for the LVIA to be compared in conjunction with the Cultural Heritage Assessment, as stated in paragraph 197. It will be important for the study to include an explanation of the impacts on the historic landscape of the area.	Considered in Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage and Archaeology of the ES.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		Public Rights of Way Applicant will need to consider the potential effects of the development on the PRoW network and its users through the assessment of noise, air quality, drainage and visual impacts. In addition to the construction and operational phases of the proposal, KCC advises that consideration is given to the impacts on the PRoW network during the pre-construction/early design stage, as the process of collecting the data may cause disruption to PRoW users. The impact of the proposal on quiet rural lanes should be considered in conjunction with the PRoW network, as these roads provide important connections for equestrians and cyclists travelling within the PRoW network. Concerns over the potential to deter public use of the PRoW network if these road links are designated as haulage roads and if the vehicular traffic substantially increasesalong the lanes. Site access routes should avoid use of the PRoW network, but if this is unvoidable, efforts should be made to ensure the surface will be maintained and restored to a condition as good as, or better than, the current standard.	Effects on Public rights of way (PRoW)are considered within Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use. Considered in Chapter 7 LVIA and in Chapter 13: Socio-Economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-use. Considered in Chapter 7: LVIA, Chapter 13: Socio-Economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-use and Chapter 14: Access and Traffic.
		PRoW Network Development – The proposed development would provide an opportunity to improve the PRoW network and develop new links for active travel and recreation. Creation of new paths and upgrading of existing routes would be a positive outcome and would help to compensate and/or mitigate any distruption caused by the construction of the solar park and any potential negative effects on the PRoW network resulting from the delivery of the solar park. Awareness of KCC Rights of Way Improvment Plan (CCAIP) which aims to improve public access to the countryside and coast. The Cleve Hill Solar Park provides an opportunity to help enable delivery of this plan, as new off road routes could be created within the development site and surrounding area. KCC would like to work with the applicant to explore potential to create new walking, cycling	The Development includes provision of a new permissive path through the site, as set out in Chapter 5: Development Description and Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use. Alternatives that were considered are set out in Chapter 4: Site Selection, Development Design and Consideration of Alternatives.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		and equastrian paths that provide safe alternatives to existing on-road rotues.	
		Coastal Access – The County Council is currently working in partnership with Natural England to establish the England Coast Path in this region. This is a new national trail walking route that will eventually circumnavigate the entire English coastline. It is likely the coastal access rights will be in effect at some stage during this project and the applicant should therefore contact Natural England to consider the impacts of the Solar Park on the England Coast Path.	Consideration is given to this in Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use.
Canterbury City Council (CCC)	Scoping Opinion Report, January 2018	The City Council expects the LVIA to be undertaken in accordance with best practice and regonised methodology, and will expect to agree viewpoints as part of the LVIA process, particualry in longer views from higher land to the east of the site. The ES should fully assess the impact on heritage assets, particularly in longer views from the Canterbury district, including the historic setting of Whitstable.	The methodology used is in accordance with GVLIA, 3rd Edition Landscape Insitute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013 and is detailed within Section 7.2. A viewpoint (number 16) has been taken from Whitstable and is described in Section 7.3.6. Detail of the historic setting and heritage assets are considered in Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage and Archaeology.
Planning Inspectorate	Scoping Opinion Report, January 2018	Lighting – Impacts on visual amenity resulting from the introduction of lighting during the work stages of the project should be assessed in the ES. Assessment should cross refer to relevent aspect assessments and sensitive receptors such as ecology and ornithology.	Assessed within the work stages of the LVIA and effects assessed in Chapter 8: Ecology. Further details of lighting are considered in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, in Volume 4, Technical Appendix A5.2.
		Impacts – ES should assess the landscape and visual impacts of the energy storage facility based on the applicable design requirements in the DCO and (if necessary) the applicable worst case parameters.	Assessed in the sections 7.5 and 7.6. More detail on energy storage facility is found in Chapter 5: Development Description.
		Impacts- Construction – ES should assess impacts with the potential to result likely significant effects on landscape and visual amenity relating from the use of the construction compound/s, as well as any other temporary features required for construction (such as cranes)	This is assessed in sections 7.5 and 7.6. Refer to Chapter 5: Development Description for information on construction of the Development.
		Mitigation – Scoping report refer to Biodiversity and Landscape Management Plan and landscape	An Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan is provided in Volume 4 Technical

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		planting scheme respectively. Drafts of these should be provided with the ES. The applicant should discuss and make effort to agree the planting specification/species mix with the relevant local planning authorities. It should be clear how the proposed landscaping would mitigate the effects on landscape and visual receptors, and how these effects would change as the proposed planting matures. Interactions with other ES aspects should be explained.	Appendix A5.2 which illustrates planting areas and documents species mix, heights and management of the different planting areas. The landscape and visual effects of this are set out in section 7.4: Development Design Mitigation.
		Residential Visual Amentiy Assessment Paragraph 179 of the Scoping Report states that the Development may impact visual amenity up to 2 km for the application site. However paragraph 192 proposes an assessment of impacts on visual amenity for residential properties located within 1 km of the site. It should be clear in the ES how the study area for the Residential Visual Amenity has been defined to the ZTV and the extent of the likely significant effects on visual amenity should be assessed in the ES.	Residential properties and groups have been assessed within 1 km of the study area. The methodology and assesssment of this can be found in Volume 4 Technical Appendix A7.4 of the ES.
		Decommissioning - Any likely significant effects on landscape and visual receptors on decommissioning of the Proposed Development should be set out in the ES.	Assessed in sections 7.5 and 7.6 of this chapter.
		Study Area and ZTV – The ZTV (and subsequent refinements) should be based on the relevant worst case having regard to any parameters applicable to the Proposed Development, including all proposed structures such as the energy storage facility.	The ZTV reflects the design parameters of the scheme. ZTVs are shown on Figures 7.2 and 7.3 in Volume 2.
		Historic Landscapes – The ES should include a description and assessment of the potential impacts to historic landscapes which are likley to result in significant effects. Cross reference should be made to the Cultural Heritage chapter of the ES, as appropriate.	This is undertaken in Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage and Archaeology.
		Visual Receptors – Any impacts likely to result in significant effects on visual amenity of users of boats should be	Due to the height of the flood defence the effect on boat users is minimal even at high tide. This is

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		assessed in the ES.	considered in the baseline and assessment of Chapter 7. Figure 7.22 and 7.43 in Volume 3 is representative of elevated boat users. Representative viewpoints are shown on 7.10 in Volume 2.
		Viewpoints and Photomontages- Fifteen viewpoints are currently proposed, along with photomontages from eight of these locations. The inspectorate considers that both winter and summer views should be captured, in order to demonstrate any seasonal changes to the landscape character (for example when polytunnels also feature in the landscape). The Inspectorate advises that any long distance views (such as from the Kent Downs AONB and higher land to the east of the site) should also be identified and assessed where siginificant effects may occur. The selection of viewpoints should be justified with reference to a refined ZTV. Consultation with the local planning authorities to discuss and agree the final selection of representative viewpoints and photomontages for the inclusion in the ES.	A full set of winter and summer viewpoints and photomontages are presented in the ES. The winter viewpoint photography can be found on Figures 7.11 to 7.31. The summer viewpoint photography is found in Figures 7.32 to 7.54 in Volume 3. The photomontages can be found on Figures 7.55 to 7.90 for winter photomontages. Summer photomontages are shown on Figures 7.91 to to 7.134 in Volume 3. A viewpoint has been taken from within the Kent Downs AONB. This is shown on Figure 7.30 (winter) and Figure 7.51 (summer) in Volume 3 of the ES. The location of the viewpoint is shown on Figure 7.10 in Volume 2.
		Design- The ES should explain how the design of the proposed structures and the materials to be used have been selected with the aim of minimising impacts to the landscape and visual receptors.	Chapter 4: Site Selection, Development Design and Consideration of Alternatives sets out the design process and alternatives considered. Section 7.4 of this chapter sets out Development design mitigation. The Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, in Technical Appendix A5.2 in Volume 4, sets out measures built into the design to minimise landscape and visual effects.

7.1.3 Section 42 Consultation

8. The PEIR report was published in May 2018. This included a landscape and visual impact assessment which set out the methodologies and assessment. Comments received on landscape and visual issues following Section 42 consultation are summarised in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Section 42 Consultation Responses

Consultee	**Type and Date**	**Consultation Response**	**Applicant's Response**
Kent County Council (Reported back by LUC Report)	Letter by email dated 10th July 2018. Report undertaken by LUC on behalf on KCC, prepared June 2018.	KCC commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to review the LVIA and Canterbury City Council agree with the overall conclusions and recommendations of their report. The view that the assessment does not acknowledge the scale and extent of the project is considered to be a fundamental issue.	LUC comments have been addressed and ES texts reflects this where appropriate. A full response to LUC comments can be found in Technical Appendix A7.5.
Swale Borough Council (Reported back by LUC Report)	Letter by email dated 10th July 2018. Report undertaken by LUC on behalf on KCC, prepared June 2018.	The review of the PEIR is contained in the following paragraphs except where the landscape issues are dealt with in the report jointly commissioned by the Council, Kent County Council and Canterbury City Council from Land Use Consultants, and appended to the County Council's response to the PEIR. Concerns over Field Y and unnatural boundary planting as illustrated on Viewpoints 6, 7 and 8.	LUC comments have been addressed and ES text reflects this where appropriate. A full response to LUC comments can be found in the Technical Appendix A7.5. In response to consultation the Applicant has decided not to promote the development of energy infrastructure on Field Y. Updated visualisations are found in Volume 3 of the ES for both winter and summer views.
Canterbury City Council	Letter by email 13th July 2018.	KCC commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to review the LVIA and Canterbury City Council agree with the overall conclusions and recommendations of their report. The view that the assessment does not acknowledge the scale and extent of the project is considered to be a fundamental issue.	LUC comments have been addressed and ES text reflects this where appropriate. A full response to LUC comments can be found in the Technical Appendix A7.5.
Faversham Footpaths Group	Document response, 30th June 2018	2. Group is concerned only with the enjoyment, preservation and protection of public rights of way our comments are necessarily confined to the impact which the proposal would have on people using public footpaths in the area. But that encompasses not merely the ability to walk particular routes – which would not be directly affected by the proposed complex – but the nature of the experience	The LVIA considers views from public rights of way within and around the site and these are assessed in section 7.6. Chapter 13 Socioeconomics. Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use considers public rights of way and the user experience.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		that this provides. It is clear that this would be drastically changed for the worse if the solar complex were built as planned: to a degree that makes the proposal wholly unacceptable, in our view, whatever its other merits.	
		4. The Graveney marshes are a very special area, with a beauty that largely lies in the ability of the eye to take in, especially from the coast path, huge horizons, both out to sea and across the flat landscape. People do not generally walk these paths to get from A to B, as they might do in some other areas. They go there primarily to enjoy the wonderful views, the open, unspoilt nature of the land and the glimpses of its wildlife, including scarce raptors such as marsh harriers, short-eared owls and merlins and other rare species such as little terns. The special nature of this area is recognised by the various wildlife designations given to neighbouring sites and to the popularity of the coastal path from Seasalter round to Faversham, which already forms part of the Saxon Shore Way and which will soon become part of the England Coast Path.	The LVIA considers the existing open nature and characteristics of the site and the public rights of way within and around the site. The effect on views from these are assessed in section 7.6. Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use considers public rights of way and the user experience. Ecology and ornithological elements are assessed in Chapter 8: Ecology and Chapter 9: Ornithology.
		5. Any marring of this landscape would be regrettable but we consider that the extraordinary scale of the present proposal would cause unacceptable damage and loss of amenity. The fine views inland from the elevated coast path would be ruined, to be replaced by a vast sea of panels. The fact that the nearest panels will be set back some way from the coast path would make virtually no difference because of the open nature of the terrain. At 4 metres plus high, the nearest panels will be hugely intrusive and, behind them, 2 other panels will stretch almost as far as the eye can see. The visual impact will be exacerbated by the east-west configuration of the panels, and their proximity to each other, which will make them appear continuous when viewed from the coastal path. As others have pointed out, it will be akin to	The panel heights range from 3 m to 3.9 m high. The assessment of landscape and visual effects of the Development are provided in sections 7.5 and 7.6. Visualisations of the Development can be found in Volume 3.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		looking across a sea of industrial estate roofs.	
		6. It is important to stress that the visual impact will not just be apparent to those walking the coast path adjoining the development but from many miles around, including even from the high ground at Harty on the Isle of Sheppey. This is because the landscape is so flat and contains very few trees to provide any sort of mitigation of its impact. Indeed, the scale of the project and the fact that the solar complex would be in low-lying land would, in any case, almost entirely obviate any serious attempt to lessen its visual impact.	Consideration of views from the Isle of Harty is included in section 7.3.8. Mitigation and enhancement measures have been considered in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, in the ES Technical Appendix A5.2. Mitigation measures have considered the existing landscape characterisitics to ensure planting is in keeping with existing vegetation and current surroundings.
		7. As walkers who derive great enjoyment from seeing the area's distinctive flora and fauna, we are concerned about the prospective loss of important habitat, in particular for nesting marsh harriers and for other raptors.	Effects on flora and fauna are assessed in Chapter 8: Ecology and Chapter 9: Ornithology. Mitigation is set out in detail in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, Technical Appendix A5.2.
		8. We are aware that the developers have proposed some possible enhancement of the footpath network, including some permissive paths, but this does not afford any compensation in our view for the enormous loss which would be suffered as a result of the degradation of this landscape. It is worth adding that this would undoubtedly lead to fewer walkers using this section of the coast path than would otherwise be the case, with a loss of local tourism revenue.	The permissive path will provide a connection link to existing PRoW within the area. Visual effects are assessed in section 7.6, and tourism and recreation effects are assessed Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use.
Faversham Society	Document Response 16th July 2018	The proposed site was originally tidal saltings and is a Category 3a floodplain. Rising sea levels and more violent weather events both threaten the site. As a consequence, if construction were to go ahead, the developer has said the panels need to be 'around' 4 metres high, just short of the height of a double-decker bus.1 This would be a severe detriment to the amenity value of the	The panels range from heights of between 3 m and 3.9 m above ground level to allow for the varying potential extreme flood levels across the site. ES Chapter 5: Project Description contains more information on heights of the panels. Visual effects are assessed in section 7.6.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		marshes to all those local people and visitors who use them.	
		The industrial landscape created by the panels will also be completely visible from viewpoints such as Graveney Hill and Graveney Church, from Oare village, from the Isle of Sheppey and from all vantage points around Estuary View just to the south of Whitstable. On the lower ground, the Society questions the developer's assertion that the panels will not be visible above the flood defence. This hides the panels' effect on the amenity value of the Saxon Shore Way, shortly to become part of the Coastal Path, because this path runs atop the wall, not on the shoreline below. Even so, the panels will be visible above the seawall when walking towards Nagden Cottages from Faversham on the east side of the Creek and from Faversham to Hollow Shore on the west side of Faversham Creek - including the views from Oare Nature Reserve at Harty Ferry.	The height of the flood defence ranges from approximate heights of 5.5 m to 6.29 m AOD and therefore provides significant screening, reducing intervisibility in the wider landscape. Views from Isle of Harty and Oare are assessed in section 7.6. The Development is visible from several areas within the wider landscape and from along the Saxon Shore Way. Recreational amenity effects are assessed in Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use.
		The site forms part of a Kent Area of High Landscape Value and a Swale Area of High Landscape Value. The site is visible from long distances including Wraik Hill on the A299 at Whitstable, from Estuary View, from Boughton Hill on the A2 and from Oare village to the west of Faversham Creek – all which have extensive views encompassing the whole marsh, grazing land, fruit farms and orchards. It is an area of high amenity and economic value. However, the developer's intentions will completely change this view of open arable and wildlife marshland to a landscape with column after parallel column of dark panels stretching into the distance from almost every point of view.	The site falls within Kent Area of High Landscape Value as is reported in section 7.3. A range of viewpoints has been selected to represent a number of visual receptors and from varying distances from the site and these are reported and assessed in sections 7.5 and 7.6, along with the landscape effects associated with the Development. The viewpoint images and visualisations are located in Volume 3 of the ES.
		This extent of this change is hidden because of the photograph viewpoints that the developers been included in their promotional material for the public to assess the full impact of the proposal. Those	22 viewpoints have been selected following advice from local consultees as set out in section 7.2.13. These represent a range of visual receptors and cover a geographical spread of viewpoints

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		images chosen by the developers suggest that the panels will only be seen when people are close to them rather than showing the more important views of the middle and longer distance. We believe that a 3D computer model allowing the public to 'see' the site from all viewpoints would allow a more realistic assessment of impact.	with varying distances from site. The assessment of these is provided in section 7.6 and visualisations are provided in Volume 3.
		The size of the site and the multiple points from which the panels and other site infrastructure will be visible will change the character of what has been a huge, open area of grazing and arable marshland into a heavily industrialized and developed landscape. This will create a loss of inestimable value to visitors and to local people, not just in the immediate future but for generations.	Section 7.3 reports on the baseline of the site and the sections 7.5 and 7.6 assess the landscape and visual effects of the Development. Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use assesses recreational amenity effects.
		The solar farm will occupy a large area of land extending from Nagden eastwards past Warmhouse and Coney Bank towards the Seasalter Road and out to the mouth of Faversham Creek, then extending inside the seawall past Castle Coote towards the west end of Seasalter, with the grassed areas intending eastwards towards the Sportsman public house. This area forms part of a Kent Area of High Landscape Value and a Swale Area of High Landscape Value. The site is visible from long distances including Wraik Hill on the A299 at Whitstable and Boughton Hill on the A2 which have extensive views encompassing the whole marsh, fruit farms with their orchards and polytunnels, Sheppey Bridge, the Swale and the Isle of Sheppey, Victory Wood at Dargate, Harty Church on the Isle of Sheppey, Shellness on Sheppey and Whitstable Harbour. Other more local views can be obtained from Oare Marshes nature reserve, Hollow Shore, Faversham Creek after the sewage works and from the seawall near the Sportsman public house.	Visual effects of the Development are assessed in section 7.6 and supported by viewpoint visualisations in Volume 3.
		Some of the more distant viewpoints above together with	The panel tip heights range between 3 m to 3.9 m above

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		other more distant locations and at Nagden, Graveney Hill, Graveney Church and on the seawall between the mouth of Faversham Creek and Castle Coote are assessed using a set of before and after photographs. The developers say that the panels will not be visible above the seawall from close locations such as the Oare nature reserve at Harty Ferry, but since the panels are likely to be well over four metres high on the inside of the wall because this area is one of the most likely to flood and have the highest base level for the panels at 1.2 metres, this is unlikely.	ground level. Section 7.6 assesses the effects from Oare Marshes and Isle of Harty, supported by viewpoint visualisations Volume 3.
		Similarly, they are also likely to be visible over the flood defence when walking towards Nagden Cottages from Faversham and when walking from Faversham to HollowShore on the west side of Faversham Creek. The images show that at Nagden Cottages and Warmhouse, the panels will be dominant in the views of the site and cover most of the land. They will also be very prominent in views of the site all around the seawall from Nagden past Castle Coote, completely changing the character of the view from open arable marshland to an industrial style landscape of glass panels up to five metres at their apex in parallel columns stretching as far as the edge of the marsh. The panels will also be visible and change the character of the marsh from Graveney Hill and Graveney Church.	The panel tip heights range between 3 m to 3.9 m above ground level. Visual effects of the Development are assessed in section 7.6 and supported by viewpoint visualisations in Volume 3.
		From Seasalter Road and from the seawall near the Sportsman, the sub-station and battery storage compound will also be visible in front of the existing substation at Cleve Hill serving the London Array wind farm. The areas within 1 kilometre of the site are also likely to experience glint or glare from the panels on the site. These areas include the seawall around the site and where the panels can be seen above the seawall, from the surrounding areas of the coast path.	Section 7.6 assesses the visual effects of the Development from the visual receptors, which include the Saxon Shore Way and effects from Seasalter Road. Glint and glare effects are assessed in Chapter 17, Miscellaneous Issues and Technical Appendix A17.1.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		The Faversham Society considers that not enough photograph viewpoints have been included to assess the full impact of the proposal on the surrounding area and nearby sites including around Faversham Creek and that those chosen seek to show that the panels will only be seen in close views and not in any long-distance views that matter. The extent of the site and the areas from which the panels will be visible will entirely change the character of what has been a huge open area of grazing and arable marshland into a heavily industrialized and developed landscape.	22 viewpoints have been selected following advice from local consultees as set out in section 7.2.13. These represent a range of visual receptors and cover a geographical spread of viewpoints with varying distances from site. The assessment of these is provided in section 7.6 supported by visualisations in Volume 3.
		Point 9- Footpaths For the footpath through the site from Nagden Cottage to the seawall near Castle Coote, the entire path would run between lines of solar panels that are around 4 metres high so that a walker would not be able to see over them, only along the drainage ditches and when crossing the spine road. Any additional permissive paths provided as part of the development would have similar views. Concerns raised over the likely that for the first three years from 2021, the footpath across the site from Nagden to Castle Coote would be closed for construction works and the Saxon Shore Way would be a view of a building site.	The stages of the Development are set out in the Chapter 4: Site Selection, Development Design and Consideration of Alternatives. Chapter 14: Access and Traffic, and Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use inlcude information on potential effects on footpaths. It is the Applicant's intention not to close any footpaths during any phase of the Development for a significant period of time. However, short closures may be required on a day to day basis to allow construction vehicles to access. In practice this is likely to be controlled by banksmen and gated accesses.
Graveney with Goodnestone Parish Council	Document response13th July 2018	Most of the land of Swale Borough – including the CHSP site – is within the Greater Thames Estuary Natural Area	This area is included within the assessments provided in Chapter 7: LVIA.
		The CHSP site is identified as an "area of high landscape value" at the county-wide level and this is carried forward in protective local planning policies in the Swale Local Plan, particularly policy DM24.	Area of High Landscape Value and relevant Swale Local Plan policies are described in section 7.3.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		Notwithstanding the assessment of landscape and visual impact in chapter 7 of the PEIR, no amount of sophisticated methodology and analysis can avoid the simple fact that the CHSP will utterly transform the character and appearance of the landscape of Graveney Marshes.	Landscape and visual effects are assessed in sections 7.5 and 7.6.
		Over an area approximately 4 km by 2 km in extent, the CHSP proposals would obliterate the current open rural area of arable farm land and coastal grazing marsh with long horizons and big skies. The proposals will replace it with densely packed and orderly ranks of metal mounting structures with solar arrays (up to 3.9 metres above ground level), inverters, transformers and an – as yet unclear – large battery storage facility, all surrounded by a high wire fence and security cameras. Parishioners fear that such utilitarian development, on such a large scale, will "industrialise" the countryside.	The area of land within which the solar panels are situated includes 232 ha (approximately 2.3 square kilometres). The deer fencing proposed is 2 m high and security camera height is 3 m high. These are reported in Chapter 5: Project Description along with the dimensions of all equipment associated with the Development. Section 7.5 acknowledges that there is a loss of arable farm land and assesses the landscape effects associated with the Development.
		Our earlier comments about "method driving conclusions" apply especially to this chapter of the PEIR, which frequently asserts that landscape and visual impacts are "minor" or "negligible". We do not accept the conclusion in the PEIR non-technical summary that "the overall effects of the development on landscape and visual amenity are limited to a small geographical area and a small number of receptors". One of the features of the local landscape is that even modest elevations like Broom Street and Cleve Hill (or even the flood defence) open up very extensive vistas to long horizons.	The assessment in Chapter 7: LVIA has been undertaken using Guidelines for Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition. The methodology and approach is set out in section 7.2. The assessments are provided in sections 7.5 and 7.6 and supporting tables are found in Technical Appendices A7.2 and A7.3.
Graveney Rural Environment Action Team (GREAT)	Document response 16th July 2018.	The land proposed for development falls within the Greater Thames Estuary Natural Area. This forms part of the area that has been identified by Kent as an "area of high landscape value". This is also reflected in the protective local planning policies in the Swale Local Plan (DM24).	Area of High Landscape Value and Swale Local Plan policies are reported in section 7.3.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		The addition of the proposed development would obliterate the extensive open spaces and vast horizons that have been here for hundreds of years and it would transform the character and appearance of the landscape of the Graveney Marshes beyond recognition for this and future generations. The existing farmland would be replaced by solar panels that are arranged in a roof formation with batteries, a substation, bunt, transformers, inverters, fencing and security cameras scattered among the site --- and become an alien landscape.	The deer fencing proposed is 2 m high with security camera height at 3 m. These are reported in the Chapter 5: Development Description along with the demensions of all equipment associated with the Development. This LVIA acknowledges that there is a loss of arable farm land and assesses the landscape and visual effects associated with the Development.
		GREAT asks: What measures will the developers adopt to maintain and enhance the expansive, remote coastal landscape with its drowned estuaries, low islands, mudflats, and broad tracts of tidal salt marsh and reclaimed grazing marsh whilst maintaining internationally important habitats and their wildlife, and underlying geo-diversity, and at the same time addressing the impacts of coastal squeeze and climate change and considering dynamic coastal processes?	An area of c. 56 hectares in the northeastern part of the site is proposed to be managed to provide habitats for a number of bird species. The Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, in Technical Appendix A5.2, sets out measures and species that are to be built into the design to encourage new habitats.
		How will the developers work with the farmer to incorporate measures to improve biodiversity, geo-diversity, pollination, water quality, soil quality and climate adaptation to prevent soil erosion in this important food providing landscape, while maintaining its historic character?	The Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, in Technical Appendix A5.2, sets out measures and species that are to be built into the design to encourage new habitats. Hydrology effects are assessed in the Chapter 10: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Flood Risk and Ground Conditions, with mitigation of effects proposed as required.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		How will the developers ensure that the tranquil and remote character of the estuary is maintained by conserving and enhancing important coastal habitats and distinctive historic and geological features, while providing increased opportunities for recreation and enjoyment of the landscape?	Chapter 8: Ecology, sets out that biodiversity of the site is expected to increase as a result of the Development. As part of the scheme there are a number of grassland habitats that are being created, replacing the current arable farmland. These are documented in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, in Technical Appendix A5.2, which also sets out measures built into the design to encourage new habitats. An area of c. 56 hectares in the northeastern part of the site has not been developed which will continue as grazing marsh and provide habitats for a number of bird species. Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage and Archaeology, assesses effects on historical features and proposes mitigation as appropriate. All existing public rights of way which run through the site or close to the site will remain and remain open throughout all phases of the Development. There is a new permissive path proposed in the eastern part of the site, facilitating circular walks and increasing the opportunities for recreation.
		What strategies will the developers use to encourage a strategic approach to their development that is informed by, and makes a positive contribution to, the local character, incorporates green infrastructure - which provides ecosystem services where they are needed most - and promotes recreation and addresses climate change, while maintaining important open mosaic and coastal habitats, and historic and geological features?	Chapter 8: Ecology, sets out that biodiversity of the site is expected to increase as a result of the Development. As part of the scheme there are a number of grassland habitats that are being created, replacing the current arable farmland. These are documented in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, in Technical Appendix A5.2, which also sets out measures built into the design to encourage new habitats. An area of c. 56 hectares in the northeastern part of the site has not been developed which will continue as grazing marsh and provide habitats for a number of bird species. Chapter 11: Cultural Heritage and Archaeology, assesses effects on historical features and proposes mitigation as appropriate. All existing public

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
			rights of way which run through the site or close to the site will remain and remain open throughout all phases of the Development. There is a new permissive path which is created in the eastern part of the site, facilitating circular walks and increasing the opportunities for recreation.
		The chosen area is open and does not have hedges, trees, an orchard, security systems or fencing to screen this unique landscape. The use of screening cannot diminish against the visual pollution that the proposed solar power station would bring. Graveney does not have any industry and this proposal would turn 890 acres plus into an industrial zone. The assessments in the PEIR states that the landscape and visual impacts are "minor" or "negligible" - we regard this as a predetermined outcome of a formulaic approach which has been applied in a subjective manner to achieve a pre-determined outcome.	Mitigation proposals set out in Technical Appendix A5.2, Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, do not entirely screen the Development as mitigation planting needs to be in keeping with the surrounding landscape character. The assessment is based on Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment GLVIA3.
		How will the developers ensure that the health and wellbeing of the villagers is not adversely affected by the change of use of this vast area?	A health impact assessment is included within Chapter 17: Miscellaneous Issues. This refers to specific technical assessments and mitigation referenced elsewhere in the ES.
Helen Whately MP Member of Parliment for Faversham and Mid Kent	Letter response 10th July 2018	Concerns on views from the Saxon Shore Way- The panels are expected to reach 4 m in some places, and will stretch right up to the edge of the Saxon Shore Way. Ineffective screening – The plans to screen the panels with vegetation will take at least ten years to take hold and I am concerned that properties and footpaths nearest to the stie will	It is acknowledged in the assessment in sections 7.5 and 7.6 that there will be visual effects on users of the Saxon Shore way. The panels are set back approximately 75 m from the Saxon Shore Way. Refer to Chapter 5: Development Descripton provides more information on the design. Proposed mitigation screening needs to be consistent with local landscape character and is acknowledged that the planting will take time to mature which will affect recreational and residential users in the area. Setions 7.5 and 7.6 assess the visual effects on recreational and residential users. Technical Appendix A7.4 considers effects

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		still be impacted negatively.	on residential properties within 1 km of the Development site.
Ramblers	Document response 6th July 2018	Despite the fact that Natural England published their proposals in June 2017, you have failed to acknowledge in your report that the new "England Coast Path" will follow the line of the "Saxon Shore Way" along the northern and western perimeter. The solar park, if approved, would create a monotonous, industrial landscape for some 5 km of the new England Coast Path. It would take an hour to walk from one end to the other. The solar park would be the dominating feature of the landscape and spoil the enjoyment of this section of the England Coast Path.	Reference to Natural England proposals on the England Coast Path is made in Section 7.3 and Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use. It is acknowledged that there is a change in the landscape created by the solar panels. The design has allowed for the panels to be set back approximately 75 m from the Saxon Shore Way. Section 7.6 assesses effects from the Saxon Shore Way, and visualisations are provided in Volume 3.
Campaign to Protect Rural England	Letter by email 13th July 2018	CPRE's mapping of both dark skies and tranquillity reveals the application sites scores well on both counts. As tranquil landscapes and the enjoyment of dark skies are being continually eroded by the development pressures facing the south east, we believe that measures must be taken to maintain and enhance such highly valued features where they exist. This proposal will only detract from both. Indeed, Swale Borough Council has used CPRE's tranquillity mapping data to formulate policies which seek to ensure that the impacts of development (including renewable energy) on tranquillity are 'minimised and mitigated'.	This has been developed in the ES design stages, for example, in response to consultation the Applicant has decided not to promote the development of energy infrastructure on Fields Y and J. Consideration of lighting and where this is located and operation times. Lighting as part of the design has been kept to a minimum to minimise effects. Details of lighting and when lighting is proposed to be used is discussed in the Chapter 5: Development Description. It is reported in section 7.6 that the Development will have visual effects but through design of the panel layout and mitigation measures will assist in partial screening.
		The application site is an AHLV and is by any consideration a valued landscape. If permitted, this project would have a catastrophically negative landscape impact on the existing Saxon Shore Way and the proposed route of the Whitstable to Iwade section of Natural England's coast path, industrialising the route for a length of some three miles. This section of the coast path is one of the relatively few which will follow the top of the sea defences, affording the path's users extensive views both inland towards the	It is reported in section 7.3 that the site is within Graveney Marshes AHLV and section 7.6 concludes that there are visual effects on users of the Saxon Shore Way and other PRoWs. Recreational amenity effects are assessed in Chapter 13: Socio-economics, Tourism, Recreation and Land-Use.

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		Downs and out across the estuary	
		The solar installation would be a highly visible industrial intrusion in an otherwise open and natural landscape, and attempts at visual screening can only create an alternative incongruous element in that same landscape. To dismiss the visual impact of this development on this part of the Graveney Marshes as 'horizontal and low-lying'particularly in its proximity to the (very much smaller) existing sub-station is disingenuous given the significant extent of its zone of visual influence.	Mitigation screening has been developed to provide screening, where possible, that is in keeping with the existing landscape characterisitics and planting in that area. For example, not planting hedgerows or trees on the northern part of the Development site, along the Saxon Shore Way, has been reflected in planting grasses and scrub type habitats. Mitigation proposed is illustrated and reported within Technical Appendix A5.2.
Faversham Liberal Democrats	Document emailed 10th July	We consider the probable effect on the landscape character and visual amenity of the site and its surroundings for some distance to be severely negative and we do not agree that the landscaping mitigation which has been described would materially minimise the negative effect. The main public use of the land within the site plan is the raised Saxon Shore way next to it and the PRoW running through it. Given the low level of the land within the site plan and the proposed height of the solar panels (up to 4 m high), screening with vegetation and positioning of the panels (East – West orientation) will make little or no difference when travelling through it or around it. It is our view that this facility would fundamentally and detrimentally change the appearance of this locality from the moment its construction begins until it is fully decommissioned (approximately 25 years).	The landscape and visual effects are reported in sections 7.5 and 7.6. As set out in Chapter 4: Site Selection, Development Design and Consideration of Alternatives, the design and mitigation has considered the effect of recreational users along the Saxon Shore Way and PRoWs within and close to the Development site. Along the PRoW which runs through the site, solar PV modules are set back from the footpath by a minimum distance of c. 14 m and at its widest 67 m. Mitigation proposals are set out in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan, in Technical Appendix A5.2.
Faversham Town Council	Document emailed 13th July 2018	The Preliminary Environmental Information Pack (PEIR) does not give any indication of a visual representation of the site from high points to the south nor from the Isle of Sheppey. It will be extremely visible from these points and will impose a very harsh industrial aspect onto what is currently open marshland. It was felt that this could be detrimental to visitor numbers into what is	A range of viewpoints have been selected which represent a range of visual receptors from varying distances from the site. These are represented in Volume 3. Viewpoints 14, 15 and 17 are from the Isle of Sheppey and Kent Downs AONB. Due to the low lying nature of the Development and intervening features there is limited visibility

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		currently an inviting hinterland to the Town of Faversham, which itself relies heavily on tourism for much of its revenue. There is mention of mitigation planting softening the views of the site from local viewpoints but these would have absolutely no effect on the views from the higher points mentioned above.	from higher ground.
Swale Green Party and Canterbury Green Party	Document emailed 13th July 2018	A major concern is the size of the planned solar farm development. The development is out of scale with the local Kentish landscape and environment. Its size would be a considerable impact on the landscape, and would adversely affect the amenity value of the site which is popular with local people and other walkers using the Saxon Shore way. Permitting a development of this size on a green field site could open the gates for other very large solar farm developments.	Sections 7.5 and 7.6 acknowledge that there are effects on the landscape and effects on visual amenity, and assess these effects.
		· The solar farm will consist of panels oriented east-west installed back-to-back and inclined at just 9°. The site is 4 km across. In effect the whole site will become a huge industrial roof, more appropriate in an industrial park than in the rural English countryside. The east-west orientation and back-to-back installation will fit twice as many panels on the site than would be possible with a conventionally designed solar farm with south facing panels. The high density of panels will make a greater impact on the land and wildlife than would a south-facing solar farm. No solar farm of this design has been built in the UK. Therefore, no experience is available of the impact of this type of solar farm.	Section 7.5 considers the landscape effects based on the east - west orientation. Ecology elements are considered in Chapter 8, and Ornithology in Chapter 9. Glint and glare effects are considered in the Chapter 17: Miscellaneous Issues and Technical Appendix A17.1. The choice of panel design is considered in Chapter 4: Site Selection, Development Design and Consideration of Alternatives. The panels in the candidate design remain at 8° as presented and assessed at PEIR. The project team has experience of an east-west orientation solar farm through one of the co-developers, Wirsol, that has such a development in Holland. A member of the LVIA team visited this site to help understand the effects of such a development compared to conventional south facing panels. This has been used to inform the LVIA assessment through professional judgement.
		The site provides a much-loved amenity value for local people. The development would substantially change the character of views from	Sections 7.5 and 7.6 acknowledged that the Development will have effects on landscape character and effects

Consultee	Type and Date	Consultation Response	Applicant's Response
		Saxon Shore Way, a long-distance footpath that runs along the edge of the site. The panels will also be a huge visual impact to walkers in the area, and in this existing natural environment it would be very difficult to create alternative walking routes. The panels will be visible from several places around the site, e.g. from Cleve Hill, Graveney and Sheppey.	on views from the Saxon Shore Way.
		The Non-Technical Summary of the Provisional Environmental Information Report (PEIR) tries to give an impression that this proposed development will be very sympathetic to what is already there on these widespread "horizontal" coastal marshes. But the present landscape embodies almost totally natural features whereas the solar farm will be composed of vast swathes of rigid, man-made, uniform structures – it will be an industrial landscape.	The ES Non-Technical Summary has been amended to reflect changes in design during the ES stage of the project and acknowleges the effects of the Development.

7.2 Assessment Methodology

9. The following section reviews relevant policy and guidance, and sets out the methodology used for undertaking the assessment.

7.2.1 Relevant Guidelines and National Energy Policies

10. The LVIA has been undertaken in accordance with, or been informed by, the following sources of guidance:

- Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition;
- The Landscape Institute (2013), GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13[1];
- Landscape Institute (2011) Advice Note 01/11 Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment[2];
- SNH and The Countryside Agency (2002) Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for Scotland and England[3];
- Natural England, 2014, An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment;
- Landscape Institute Draft for Consultation Residential Visual Amenity Assessment Technical Guidance Note, 13th February 2018[4];

[1] The Landscape Institute (2015) GLVIA3 – Statements of Clarification [Online] Available at: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical-resource/glvia3-clarifications/ (Accessed 16/11/17)
[2] Landscape Institute (2011) Photography and photomontage in LVIA [Online] Available at: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/PDF/Contribute/LIPhotographyAdviceNote01-11.pdf (Accessed 16/11/17)
[3] SNH and The Countryside Agency (2002). Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for Scotland and England.
[4] Landscape Institutes Draft for Consultation Residential Visual Amenity Assessment Technical Guidance Note, 13th February 2018 [Online] Available at: https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/rvaa-tgn-consultation-draft.pdf (Accessed 28/2/18)

- National Policy Statement on Energy (EN-1) with particular reference to paragraphs 5.9.5,5.9.6 and 5.9.7[5];
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN-3), with particular reference to paragraphs 2.4.2. 2.5.33[6]; and
- National Policy Statement for Electrical Networks Infrastructure (EN-5), with particular reference to paragraphs 1.7.3, 1.7.5, 2.2.6, 2.6.1 and 2.8.2[7]).

11. The list above is not exhaustive and the LVIA has also been informed by aerial photography, maps and local publications.

12. The LVIA has also been informed by the following publications and information regarding landscape and visual resources of the area within which the Development is proposed:

- Natural England, 2013, National Character Area (NCA) Profile 81 Greater Thames Estuary[8];
- Natural England, 2012, NCA Profile 113 North Kent Basin[9];
- Natural England, 2013, NCA Profile 119 North Downs[10];
- Kent County Council, 2004, The Landscape Assessment of Kent[11];
- Kent County Council, Kent Landscape Information System, available online at http://www.kent.gov.uk/;
- Bearing Fruits 2031, Swale Borough Local Plan, Adopted July 2017[12];
- Swale Borough Council, 2011, Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)[13];
- Swale Borough Council, 2014, Renewable Energy Planning Guidance Note 2[14];
- Swale Borough Council, 2011, Planting on New Development: a Guide for Developers[15];
- Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Renewable Energy Position Statement[16];

[5] National Planning Policy Statement on Energy (EN-1). [Online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/47854/1938-overarching-nps-for-energy-en1.pdf
[6] National Planning Policy Statement on Energy (EN-3). [Online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/37048/1940-nps-renewable-energy-en3.pdf
[7] National Planning Policy Statement on Energy (EN-5). [Online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/37050/1942-national-policy-statement-electricity-networks.pdf
[8] Natural England, National Character Area 81 Greater Thames Estuary, September 2013. [Online] Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4531632073605120?category=587130
[9] Natural England, National Character Area 113 North Kent Plain, October 2012. [Online] Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/2900242?category=587130
[10] Natural England,
[11] Kent County Council, The Landscape Assessment of Kent, October 2004 [Online] Available at: https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/countryside-policies-and-reports/kents-landscape-assessment#
[12] Bearing Fruits 2031, The Swale Borough Local Plan, Adopted July 2017 [Online] Available at: http://services.swale.gov.uk/media/files/localplan/adoptedlocalplanfinalwebversion.pdf
[13] Swale Borough Council, Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal, Supplementary Planning Document, September 2011 [Online] Available at: http://www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Landscape-Character-Appraisal-Final-Sept-2011/Introduction-reduced-size.pdf
[14] Swale Borough Council, Renewable Energy Planning Guidance Note 2, May 2014. [Online] Available at: https://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/data/Local%20Development%20Framework%20Panel/20140623/Agenda/Annex%202%20for%20Item%206%20-%20FD6439007B1741238BF5A86F66448138.pdf
[15] Swale Borough Council, Planting on New Developments, A guide for Developers. [Online] Available at: https://www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-Forms-and-Leaflets/Planting-On-New-Developments-feb-2011.pdf
[16] Kent Downs AONB Renewable Energy Position Statement. [Online] Available at: https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/explore-kent-bucket/uploads/sites/7/2018/06/12160128/Renewable_EnergyPosition_Statement.pdf

- Swale Landscape Assessment Recommended Amendments to Landscape Designations[17]
- Chris Blandford Associates, 2005, Thames Gateway Historic Environment Characterisation Project; Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal – Draft (August 2012)[18]
- Canterbury City Council Local Plan, Adopted July 2017[19]
- SUSTRANS.org.uk;
- Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping at 1:25,000 scale; and
- Aerial photography.

13. The LVIA has been undertaken in accordance with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA 3)[20]. The two components of LVIA referred to throughout the report are based on the following definitions:

- Landscape
  - `**1. assessment of landscape effects**: assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right';[21]
- Visual
  - **`2. assessment of visual effects**: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.'[22]

14. LVIA considers through a defined and methodical approach the sensitivity of the landscape and visual resource, the magnitude of change on the resource as a result of the Development, and the significance of the effect based on a combination of sensitivity and magnitude of change. To do this the LVIA uses a structured methodology that combines both objective assessment and subjective assessment (or professional judgement).

15. LVIA enables an iterative design process to be undertaken, which allows for changes to be made to the layout; together with mitigation which ultimately results in any adverse effects of the Development on landscape and visual resources being removed, reduced or mitigated.

16. The methodology consists broadly of three stages: baseline appraisal (including field work), production of visualisations and assessment of effects including cumulative effects.

7.2.2 Study Areas

17. The LVIA focuses on aspects of the Development that have the potential to cause significant landscape and visual effects. The Development Site Boundary does not use all of the land defined within it for development, as set out in Chapter 5: Development Description. Thus, it would not be helpful to refer to distances from that boundary for the purposes of the LVIA chapter. Instead, for the purposes of this chapter, the area in

[17] Swale Borough Council, Swale Landscape Assessment, Recommended Amendments to Landscape Designations. [Online] Available at: http://www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Local-Plan-2013/Misc/Swale-Landscape-Designation-Review.pdf
[18]Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal. [Online] Available at: http://conservebridge.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CDLP-91-CanterburyLandscapeCharacterBiodiversityAppraisalDraft-Jacobs-August2012.pdf
[19] Canterbury City Council, Canterbury District Local Plan, Adopted July 2017 [Online]. Available at: https://www2.canterbury.gov.uk/media/1507001/Canterbury-District-Local-Plan-Adopted-July-2017.pdf
[20] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013, *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd Edition, Routledge, London.
[21] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013, *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd Edition, Routledge, London. Paragraph. 2.21, page 21.
[22] Ibid. 28.

which the panels, compound, inverters, construction activity and mitigation is proposed would be referred to as the "Core Landscape Study Area (CLS Area)" within this chapter. This is shown on Figure 7.1 in Volume 2 and is shown on the locator maps on all the visualisations in Volume 3.

18. There are a further two landscape and visual study areas referred to in this chapter, which are within a radius of 5 km and 2 km from the CLS Area. These study areas are illustrated on Figure 7.1, in Volume 2.

19. The 2 km Study Area is based on visibility of the Development which is limited to 2 km, due to the low height of components in the Development, the flood defence which surrounds a large section of the CLS Area, existing topography and intervening built form and vegetation. The assessment within the 2 km Study Area focuses in greater detail on the effects on local landscape designations and key visual receptors, as due to the proximity to the Development they are more likely to have views or experience significant effects. Within the text this study area has been referred to as the 2 km Study Area.

20. The 5 km Study Area is based on visibility of the Development and has been defined based on the likely effects on landscape and visual amenity within this 5 km radius of the CLS Area. A 5 km Study Area has been chosen as it is considered that beyond this distance, even with good visibility, the Development would be barely perceptible in the composite landscape due to the local landscape context and the nature of the low height of the components and limited vertical elements of the Development. Within the text this study area has been referred to as the 5 km Study Area.

7.2.3 Surveys/Site Visits

21. Following the desk-based assessment, fieldwork was undertaken at two key stages during the EIA and augmented by additional fieldwork where necessary. The two key stages were:

- During preparation of the baseline section of the LVIA chapter; and
- During the assessment of effects stage.

22. The fieldwork was undertaken on a worst-case basis, between October 2017 and April 2018 when there are no leaves on hedges and trees and the CLS Area will be more visible than in spring. A subsequent visit was undertaken in summer 2018 when there is greater vegetation cover. The key activities during baseline fieldwork were:

- To augment the published descriptions of landscape character with fieldwork observations;
- To undertake an assessment of the quality or condition of baseline landscape and visual resources;
- To identify any significant features and elements in the landscape such as woodland or hedges that will screen the Development and thereby verify or refine the ZTV;
- To visit each viewpoint location identified during the desk study and to microsite each viewpoint location in accordance with good practice guidance and obtain accurate coordinates using GPS;
- To undertake photography using a digital SLR camera at each viewpoint location;
- To identify landscape features and elements that may be altered or removed as a result of the Development; and
- To provide information to the design team that can be used to inform the design of the Development and to develop ideas for mitigation / enhancement.

23. The baseline fieldwork also allowed the study area to be refined and therefore the focus of the assessment stage of the LVIA.

24. Fieldwork during the assessment stage included an assessment of effects of the Development on the following receptors:

- Landscape resources including features and elements;
- Roads and National Cycle Network (NCN) routes;
- Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and Long Distance Trails (LDT), and the proposed England Coast path section between Whitstable and Iwade, by walking sections of each route;
- Viewpoints using draft visualisations of the Development for certain viewpoints; and
- Refinement of proposed mitigation by development of a landscape planting scheme.

25. In addition to the above, an assessment of effects on residential properties or groups of residential properties within 1 km of the CLS Area has also been undertaken. The study area has been defined through a combination of emerging guidance on Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) produced by the Landscape Institute[23] and an assessment of the local landscape, observations and professional judgement. Beyond 1 km the Development is likely to form such a small feature as to be a negligible part of any view and not reasonably likely to be affected by the Development when considering residential visual amenity. The process and findings of this work are reported separately from the LVIA in a standalone RVAA report, in Technical Appendix A7.4, Volume 4.

7.2.4 Zone of Theoretical Visibility

26. Following identification of the landscape components which define landscape character such as topography, vegetation, built form, infrastructure, landform and land use and help identify the landscape and visual receptors, the LVIA has been informed by a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) diagram. ZTVs are computer generated from a digital terrain model of the study area with a 3-dimensional model of the Development incorporated. They illustrate the theoretical visibility of the Development throughout the study area based on the average eye height (1.6 m) of an adult person.

27. ZTVs do have a couple of limitations which need to be considered when looking at the theoretical visibility illustrated. Firstly, they do not take account of screening elements such as buildings, vegetation and local landform which can substantially reduce visibility. Secondly, ZTVs do not take account of the decreasing size of the Development with increased distance as a proportion of the view, and the reduction in effect arising from this. Notwithstanding these limitations, ZTVs are currently the best tool for predicting the likely visibility of the Development and may be used to inform viewpoint selection and to refine the scope of the LVIA.

28. Arcus has developed additional methodology to supplement the "bare earth ZTV" which enables a more accurate representation of viewpoint assessment and a greater understanding of the visual baseline. Through this process the original ZTV is refined using the topographic survey of the site, LiDAR and DTM data, and stereo-photography modelling of trees, to enable a better understanding of the likely visual footprint of the Development. The original ZTV still represents a worst case scenario; however, this further process enables much more accurate visual representation enabling a detailed assessment of the areas likely to experience significant effects. This will still represent theoretical visibility and has been considered in line with further fieldwork to ground truth to represent the findings of both the bare earth and refined ZTV. A full methodology for production of the ZTVs presented in the assessment is found in Technical Appendix A7.1, Volume 4.

[23] Landscape institute Technical Guidance Note xx/2018 Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

7.2.5 Baseline

29. A landscape and visual baseline has been established by undertaking a detailed desk study, fieldwork, and analysis of findings. These items have been undertaken in line with GLVIA3 to create a detailed understanding of the existing landscape and visual context of both the site and surrounding landscape within the study areas.

30. Establishing the landscape baseline included gathering data on the landscape character and how this varies through the study area; together with its geographic extent; and how it is experienced and valued.

31. The visual baseline establishes the areas from where the new components of the Development can be seen, who can see them, the places where those who see them will be affected and the nature of views and visual amenity.

32. Together the established baseline provides an understanding of the components of the landscape and visual resource that may be affected by the Development, which includes the identification of key receptors and viewpoints which represent such receptors. The baseline is of sufficient detail to enable a well-informed assessment of the likely significant effects on the baseline conditions of the Development at key stages (construction, operation and decommissioning).

33. The desk-based assessment has involved the following key activities:

- Familiarisation with the landscape and visual resources of the area within which the Development will be located;
- Identification of landscape and visual resources likely to be significantly affected by the Development;
- Preparation of ZTV maps;
- Identification of the location of viewpoints, informed by the ZTV, that were used to inform the assessment of effects of both landscape and visual resources; and
- Identification of suitable study areas for the impact assessment stage of the LVIA.

34. The desk-based assessment began with a review of legislation, policy and guidance including published landscape character assessments of the area and its wider context. This developed an understanding of the baseline environment within which the 2 km Landscape Study Area is located and has formed the basis of LVIA fieldwork.

35. Viewpoints identified through consultation and during desk studies were ground-truthed through fieldwork and their positions fixed prior to photography being undertaken. Landscape character areas were reviewed during fieldwork and the descriptions contained in the published landscape character assessment were augmented where necessary. Landscape and visual receptors were also assessed to ensure they are accurately represented through desk-based assessment.

7.2.6 Assessment Criteria

36. The LVIA assesses the effects of the Development upon landscape receptors *i.e.*,:

> "*…the constituent elements of the landscape, its specific aesthetic or perceptual qualities and the character of the landscape*"[24],

37. and visual receptors *i.e.*,:

> "*…the people who will be affected by changes in views or visual amenity at different places.*" [25]

[24] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013, *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd Edition, Routledge, London. Paragraph. 3.21, page 36.
[25] Ibid.

38. To do this the LVIA uses a structured method that combines both objective assessment and subjective assessment (professional judgement). This methodology has been developed in line with and with reference to GLVIA 3[26] and through considerable experience of LVIA on other similar sites.

39. For each of the landscape and visual receptors assessed, an assessment has been made at the following years:

- Construction – During construction of the Development;
- Year 1 – The Development upon completion of all elements including mitigation planting;
- Year 5 – The Development at 5 years post-completion upon establishment of landscape mitigation planting;
- Year 10 – The Development at 10 years post-completion upon which landscape mitigation will have matured sufficiently to provide the full mitigation to which it was designed for; and
- Decommissioning – During decommissioning of the Development.

40. The assessment methodology is set out below (which has also been influenced by other sources of guidance and information identified in section 7.2.1) and illustrates a suite of summary tables and matrix tables to provide the initial assessment methodology which has been used to inform and support a narrative of professional judgement and assessment of both landscape and visual effects. In line with IEMA guidelines described in Box 3.1 of GLVIA 3, assessment is made based on linking judgements about the sensitivity of the receptor and about the magnitude of the effects to arrive at conclusions about the significance of the effects defined as follows:

- The nature of the receptor likely to be affected (sensitivity); and
- The nature of the effect likely to occur (magnitude).

41. Sensitivity is based on a combination of judgement about susceptibility to change arising from a specific proposal combined with judgements about the value attached to a receptor.

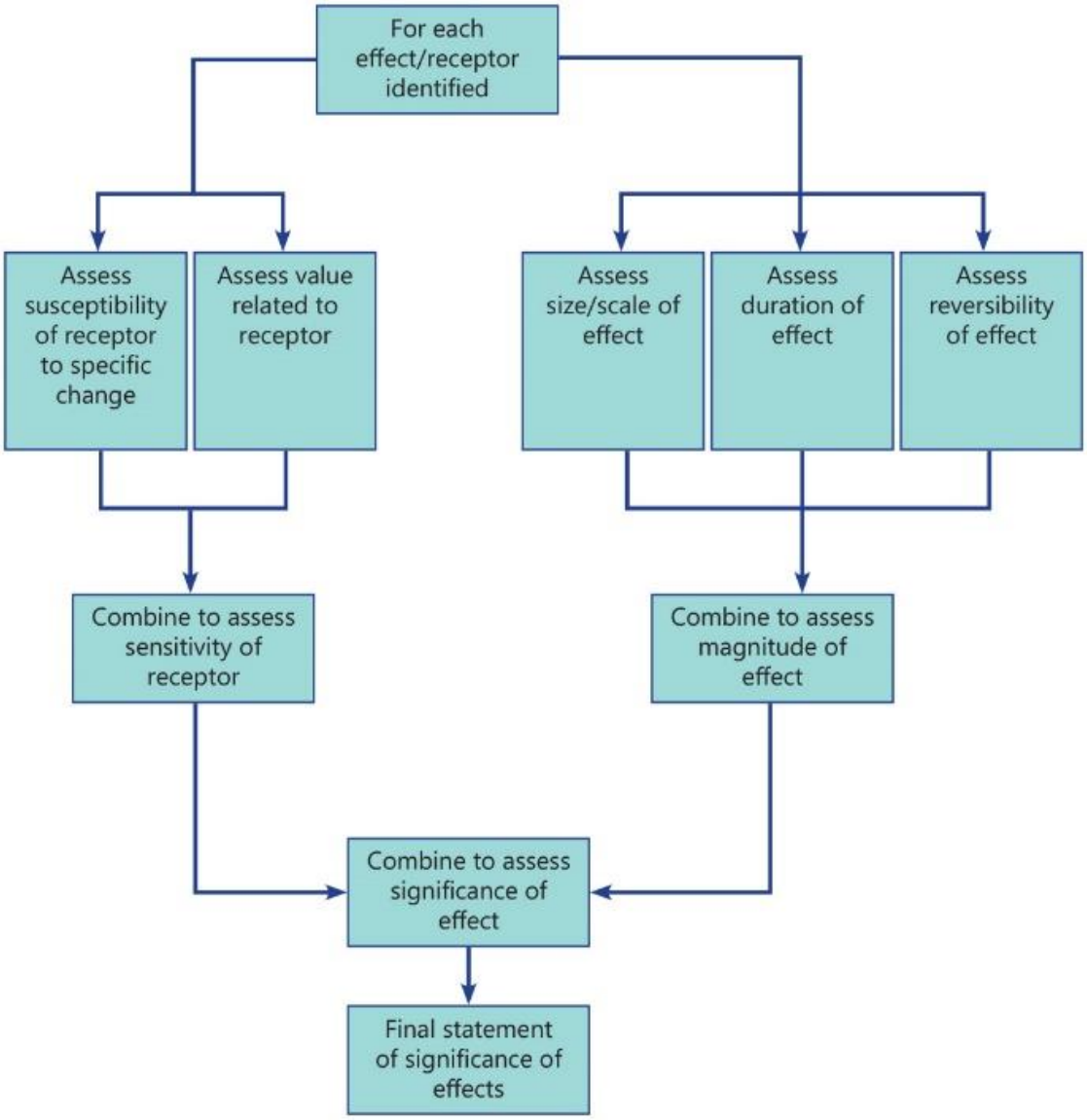
42. Magnitude is based on a combination of judgement on size and scale, duration and reversibility of effect.

43. The significance of effect is a combination of sensitivity and magnitude.

44. The assessment process adopted is based on Figure 3.5 contained within GLIVA3, provided in Plate 7.1.

[26] Ibid.

Plate 7.1: Process for assessing significance of effects



7.2.7 Landscape Effects

7.2.7.1 Sensitivity

45. The sensitivity of landscape receptors is assessed through consideration of their value and susceptibility to change. For landscape receptors, value concerns the importance of the landscape resource as evidenced by the presence of landscape designations and professional judgement. Susceptibility is concerned with the landscapes ability to absorb change brought about by the Development. The process for determining landscape sensitivity is set out below.

7.2.7.2 Susceptibility of the Landscape Receptors to Change

46. This means the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed

development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies[27].

47. Susceptibility of landscape receptors to change has been assessed using the criteria set out in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Landscape Receptor Susceptibility to Change

Susceptibility	**Criteria**
High	The landscape receptor is highly susceptible to the proposed development because the key characteristics of the landscape have no or very limited ability to accommodate it without undue adverse effects taking account of the existing character and quality of the landscape.
Medium	The landscape receptor is moderately susceptible to the proposed development because the relevant characteristics of the landscape have some ability to accommodate it without undue adverse effects, taking account of the existing character and quality of the landscape.
Low	The landscape receptor has low susceptibility to the proposed development because the relevant characteristics of the landscape are generally able to accommodate it without undue adverse effects, taking account of the existing character and quality of the landscape.

7.2.7.3 Landscape Value

48. Table 7.4 below illustrates how the value has been determined.

Table 7.4 Landscape Value Criteria

Value	**Landscape Designations**	**Description**
International	World Heritage Site	Internationally valued and designated landscapes.
National	National Park; AONBs; Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest; Ancient Woodland	Nationally valued and designated landscapes.
Local	Green Belt; Conservation Areas; Areas of High Landscape Value, Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)	Local authority landscape designations
Community	Undesignated Landscape	Landscapes which are not designated nationally or locally.

49. The European Landscape Convention promotes the need to take account of all landscapes, with less emphasis on the special and more recognition that ordinary landscapes, such as community landscapes also have their own value. The criteria used to assess undesignated (community value) landscapes are set out using Box 5.1 in GLVIA3[28], as per Table 7.5.

[27] Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, Paragraph 5.40, Page 88.
[28] Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, Box 5.1, Page 84.

Table 7.5 Factors for Assessing the Value of Undesignated Landscapes

Factor	Criteria
Landscape Quality (condition)	A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.
Scenic Quality	The term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses (primarily but not wholly the visual senses).
Rarity	The presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Type.
Representativeness	Whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important examples.
Conservation interests	The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of the landscape as well as having value in their own right.
Recreation value	Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.
Perceptual aspects	A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and/or tranquillity.
Associations	Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers, or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.

7.2.7.4 Landscape Sensitivity

50. Table 7.6 sets out the sensitivity rating and criteria to be used in the LVIA, which results from a combination of value and susceptibility.

51. As has been noted above, the sensitivity of landscape receptors is defined in terms of the relationship between value and susceptibility to change.

Table 7.6 Landscape sensitivity criteria

Landscape sensitivity criteria		**Value of Receptor**		
		International/ National	**Local**	**Community**
Susceptibility to change	**High**	High	High	Medium
	Medium	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Low	Low

7.2.8 Magnitude of Landscape Effects

52. The determination of the **magnitude of landscape and visual effects** combines an assessment of the **size or scale** of change likely to be experienced as a result of each effect[29], the **geographical extent** of the area likely to be influenced and the **duration** and **reversibility** of effects.

7.2.8.1 Size or Scale

53. Judgements are needed about the size or scale of change in the landscape that is likely to be experienced as a result of each effect. GLIVIA 3 states that 'judgements should, for example, take account of:

[29] Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (page 90)

- The extent of the existing landscape elements that will be lost, the proportion of the total extent that this represents and the contribution of that element to the character of the landscape – in some cases this may be quantified;
- The degree to which aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape are altered either for example, removal of existing components of the landscape or by addition of new ones – for example, removal of hedges may change a small scale, intimate landscape into a large-scale, open one, or introduction of new buildings or tall structures may alter open skylines; and
- Whether the effect changes the key characteristics of the landscape, which are critical to its distinctive character.

7.2.8.2 Geographical Extent

54. The geographical area over which the landscape effects will be felt is also considered. This is dependent upon the nature of the proposal and the scale of effects upon the receiving landscape; however, in general effects may have an influence at the following scales:

- At the **site** level, within the development site itself;
- At the level of the **immediate setting** of the site;
- At the scale of the **landscape type or character area** within which the proposal lies; or
- On a larger scale, influencing several landscape types or character areas.

7.2.8.3 Duration and Reversibility of the Landscape Effects

55. Duration and Reversibility are separate but linked considerations.

Duration

56. Duration can usually be simply judged on a scale such as:

- Short-term: 0-5 years;
- Medium-term: 5-10 years; and
- Long-term: 10-40 years.

57. Given the duration of the Development has not been determined, for the purposes of this assessment this Development has been assessed as long term.

Reversibility

58. Reversibility is a judgement about whether or not a development can be removed, and once removed can the landscape be fully restored. The following are examples of the type of land use and the respective assessment of reversibility defined in GLVIA 3:

- Permanent, is irreversible change to the landscape, for example housing development, as it not possible to remove the development and restore the land to the original state;
- Partially Reversible, change to the landscape, where the landscape can be restored to something similar to the landscape that was removed. For example, mineral developments, as it is possible to restore the land to something similar to the original state, but not the same state; and
- Reversible, change to the landscape where the landscape can be fully restored. For example, wind or solar development, as it is possible to remove/restore the land to the original state. This also includes construction activities which are of temporary nature, for example the use of a crane/concrete batching plant.

59. Tables 7.7 to 7.9 set out the criteria used to assess the magnitude of landscape effects. Not all aspects of a criterion need to be met for an evaluation to be given.

7.2.8.4 Size and Scale of Change

Table 7.7 Magnitude of Landscape Change: Size/Scale of Change

Category	Description
Large	A large extent of existing landscape elements will be lost, the proportion that this represents within the landscape is considerable and the resultant change to the landscape character resulting from such a loss is large. Large scale alteration of the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape such as the, removal of existing components of the landscape or by addition of new ones – for example, removal of hedges may change a small scale, intimate landscape into a large-scale, open one, or introduction of new buildings or tall structures may alter open skylines. The effect changes the key characteristics of the landscape, which are critical to its distinctive character.
Medium	A medium extent of existing landscape elements will be lost, the proportion that this represents within the landscape is medium and the resultant change to the landscape character resulting from such a loss is medium. Medium scale alteration of the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape such as the, removal of existing components of the landscape or by addition of new ones – for example, removal of hedges may change a small scale, intimate landscape into a large-scale, open one, or introduction of new buildings or medium sized structures may alter open skylines. The effect changes some of the key characteristics of the landscape, which are critical to its distinctive character.
Small	A small extent of existing landscape elements will be lost, the proportion that this represents within the landscape is low and the resultant change to the landscape character resulting from such a loss is low. Small scale alteration of the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape such as the, removal of existing components of the landscape or by addition of new ones – for example, removal of hedges may change a small scale, intimate landscape into a large-scale, open one, or introduction of new buildings or small structures may alter open skylines. The effect changes a small number of the key characteristics of the landscape, which are critical to its distinctive character.
Negligible	A barely perceptible extent of landscape features and elements of importance to the character of the baseline are lost. There is a barely discernible change to aesthetic and / or perceptual attributes of landscape character and such changes occurs across a very limited geographical area and / or proportion of the landscape receptor. The effect changes a barely discernible number of the key characteristics of the landscape, which are critical to its distinctive character.
Neutral	The proposals will not cause any change to the landscape character/ elements/features/characteristics.

7.2.8.5 Geographical Extent

Table 7.8 Magnitude of Landscape Change: Geographical Extent

Category	Description
Large	The change will affect all of the landscape receptors being assessed, as the development will occupy a large geographical extent, e.g., the change will be on a large scale, influencing several landscape types or character areas.
Medium	The change will affect a medium extent of the landscape receptors being assessed, as the development will occupy a moderate geographical extent, e.g., at the scale of the landscape type or character area within which the proposal lies.

Category	Description
Small	The change will affect a small part of the landscape receptors being assessed, as the development will occupy a small geographical extent, e.g., at the level of the immediate setting of the site.
Negligible	The change will affect only a negligible part of the landscape receptors being assessed, as the development will occupy a limited geographical extent, e.g., the site level, within the development site itself.

Table 7.9 Magnitude of Landscape Change: Reversibility

Category	Description
Permanent	Permanent, is irreversible change to the landscape, for example housing development, as it not possible to remove the development and restore the land to the original state.
Partially Reversible	Partially Reversible, change to the landscape, where the landscape can be restored to something similar to the landscape that was removed. For example, mineral developments, as it is possible to restore the land to something similar to the original state, but not the same state.
Reversible	Reversible, change to the landscape where the landscape can be fully restored. For example, wind or solar development, as it is possible to remove/restore the land to the original state. This also includes construction activities which are of temporary nature, for example the use of a crane/concrete batching plant.

7.2.8.6 Deciding on Overall Magnitude of Landscape Change

60. The overall magnitude combines size and scale, geographical extent, duration and reversibility as set out in Table 7.10.

Table 7.10: The Assessment of Overall Magnitude of Change

Category	Description
Substantial	A large extent of existing landscape elements will be lost, the proportion that this represents within the landscape is considerable and the resultant change to the landscape character resulting from such a loss is large. The effect changes the key characteristics of the landscape, which are critical to its distinctive character. Large scale alteration of the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and becomes a key additional aspect. The change will affect all of the landscape receptors been assessed as the development will occupy a large geographical extent. The effects are either of a long duration, permanent, or irreversible /reversible change to the landscape.
Moderate	A medium extent of existing landscape elements will be lost, the proportion that this represents within the landscape is medium and the resultant change to the landscape character resulting from such a loss is medium. The effect changes some of the key characteristics of the landscape, which are critical to its distinctive character. Medium scale alteration of the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape. The change will affect a medium extent of the landscape receptors been assessed as the development will occupy a moderate geographical extent. Partially Reversible, change to the landscape, where the landscape can be restored to something similar to the landscape that was removed. The effects are either of a long / or medium duration, permanent, or irreversible /reversible change to the landscape.

Category	Description
Slight	A small extent of existing landscape elements will be lost, the proportion that this represents within the landscape is low and the resultant change to the landscape character resulting from such a loss is low. The effect changes a small number of the key characteristics of the landscape, which are critical to its distinctive character. Small scale alteration of the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape such as the, removal of existing components of the landscape or by addition of new ones. The change will affect a small part of the landscape receptors been assessed as the development will occupy a small geographical extent. The effects are either of a Medium / or short duration and reversible change to the landscape.
Negligible	A barely perceptible extent of landscape features and elements of importance to the character of the baseline are lost. There is a barely discernible change to aesthetic and / or perceptual attributes of landscape character and such changes occurs across a very limited geographical area and / or proportion of the landscape receptor. The change will affect only a negligible part of the landscape receptors been assessed as the development will occupy. The effects are of short duration and reversible.

7.2.9 Visual Effects

61. GLVIA3 defines the assessment of visual effects as:

> *"…the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. The concern here is with assessing how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by changes in the context and character of views as a result of the change or loss of existing elements of the landscape and/or the introduction of new elements".*

62. Visual receptors are defined in GLVIA3 as:

> *"…people within the area who will be affected by the changes in views and visual amenity – usually referred to as 'visual receptors'. They may include people living in the area, people who work there, people passing through on road, rail or other forms of transport, people visiting promoted landscapes or attractions, and people engaged in recreation of different types".*

63. The viewpoints themselves are not visual receptors.

64. People have different responses to views which are dependent upon context such as the:

- Location;
- Time of day;
- Season; and
- Degree of exposure to views.

65. Responses to views are also dependent upon the purpose of people being in a particular place such as:

- Recreation;
- Residence;
- Employment; and
- Passing through on roads, rail or other forms of transport.

66. As people move through the landscape certain activities or locations may be specifically associated with the experience and enjoyment of the landscape, such as:

- The use of paths such as footpaths, bridleways, Byways open to all traffic (BOATs) and National Trails;
- National or local cycle routes; and
- Tourist or scenic routes, and associated viewpoints.

67. Each visual receptor, meaning the particular person or group of people likely to be affected at a specific viewpoint, should be assessed in terms of both the value attached to particular views and to their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity.

7.2.9.1 Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to Change

68. The susceptibility of visual receptors to changes in views depends upon:

- "*The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and*
- *The extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focussed on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations*." [30]

69. The criteria used to assess the susceptibility of a visual receptor are summarised in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11 Visual Receptor Susceptibility to Change

Susceptibility	Type of Receptor
High	Residents at home (Considered separately in the Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA); People whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including the use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views; Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience; Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area; and Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes along scenic routes, where the appreciation of the view contributes to the enjoyment and quality of the journey.
Medium	Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes. Users of public rights of way where the view is of moderate interest.
Low	People engaged in, outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; People at their place of work, whose attention may be focussed on their work or activity, not on their surroundings; and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life. Road users, where the view is fleeting and incidental to the journey.

7.2.9.2 Value of Views

70. The value attached to views should be made on judgements based on the following:

- Recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations; and
- Indicators of the value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearances in guidebooks or on tourist maps, provision of facilities for their enjoyment and references to them in literature or art.

[30] Ibid. 1. Paragraph 6.32

71. The criteria used to assess the value of views are summarised in Table 7.12.

Table 7.12 Value Attached to Views

Value	Criteria
High	Views from and within landscapes/viewpoints of national importance, highly popular visitor attractions where the view forms an important part of the experience, or heritage assets, or through planning designations such as conservation areas, listed buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, or with important cultural associations, or where the view is deemed by the assessor to be of a high value.
Medium	Views from landscapes/viewpoints of regional/district importance, or visitor attractions at regional or local levels where the view forms part of the experience, or local planning designations, or with local cultural associations, or where the view is deemed by the assessor to be of a medium value.
Low	Views from landscapes/viewpoints with no designations, and not particularly popular as a viewpoint, with minimal or no cultural associations, or where the view is deemed by the assessor to be of a low small value.

7.2.9.3 Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

72. The sensitivity of visual receptors is defined in terms of the relationship between the value of views and the susceptibility of the different viewers to the proposed change. Table 7.13 summarises the nature of the relationship but it is not formulaic and only indicates general categories of sensitivity. Professional judgements are made on the merit of the view based on the visual receptor, with Table 7.13 serving as a guide.

73. Table 7.13 sets out the general criteria used to evaluate sensitivity of visual receptors assessed in the LVIA with justification for each evaluation given.

Table 7.13 Visual sensitivity criteria

Visual sensitivity criteria		**Value of Receptor**		
		High	**Medium**	**Low**
Susceptibility to change	**High**	High	Medium	Medium
	Medium	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Low	Low

7.2.10 Magnitude of Visual Change

74. The magnitude of change to visual receptors is assessed in terms of the following:

- *"The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;*
- *The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture; and*
- *The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses."*

75. Tables 7.14 to 7.16 set out the criteria used to assess the magnitude of visual change. Not all aspects of a criterion need to be met for an evaluation to be given.

Table 7.14 Magnitude of Visual Change: Size /Scale

Criteria	Category
Large	The proposals will cause a complete or very large change in the view, resulting from the loss of important features in or the addition of significant new ones, to the extent that this will substantially alter the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views are often full or sequential.
Medium	The proposals will cause a clearly noticeable change in the view, resulting from the loss of features or the addition of new ones, to the extent that this will alter to a moderate degree the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views may be partial/intermittent.
Small	The proposals will cause a perceptible change in the view, resulting from the loss of features or the addition of new ones, to the extent that this will partially alter the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views may be partial only.
Negligible	The proposals will cause a barely perceptible change in the view, resulting from the loss of features or the addition of new ones, to the extent that this will barely alter the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views may be glimpsed only.
No change	The proposals will cause no change to the existing view.

7.2.10.1 Geographical Extent

76. The geographical extent of the visual change identified at viewpoints is assessed by reference to a combination of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and field work. The following factors are considered:

77. The geographical extent of a visual effect reflects:

- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development; and
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

Table 7.15 Magnitude of Visual change: Geographical Extent

Criteria	Description
Large	The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor is wide; The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development is close; and The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible is large.
Medium	The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor is moderate; The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development is moderate; and The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible is moderate.
Small	The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor is small; The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development is far; and The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible is small.
Negligible	The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor is negligible; The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development is distant; and The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible is barely perceptible.

7.2.10.2 Duration and Reversibility

Duration

78. The following terminology, which considers whether views will be permanent and irreversible or temporary and reversible, is used to describe the duration of the visual change at representative viewpoints:

- Short-term: 0-5 years;
- Medium-term: 5-10 years; and
- Long-term: 10 to 40 years (due to the lease of the Development).

79. Given the operational lifetime of the Development is not fixed, for the purposes of this assessment the Development has been assessed as long term due to the lease of the development.

Reversibility

80. Reversibility is a judgement about whether or not a development can be removed, and once removed can the view be fully restored. The following are examples of the type of land use and the respective assessment of reversibility defined in GLVIA 3.

- Permanent, is irreversible change to the landscape, for example housing development, as it not possible to remove the development and restore the land to the original state;
- Partially Reversible, change to the landscape, where the landscape can be restored to something similar to the landscape that was removed. For example, mineral developments, as it is possible to restore the land to something similar to the original state, but not the same state; and
- Reversible, change to the landscape where the landscape can be fully restored. For example, wind or solar development, as it is possible to remove/restore the land to the original state. This also includes construction activities which are of temporary nature, for example the use of a crane/concrete batching plant, or a wind turbine/solar farm.

7.2.10.3 Deciding on Overall Magnitude of Visual Change

81. The three factors that contribute to assessment of the magnitude of visual change are combined as shown in Table 7.16.

Table 7.16 Assessment of Magnitude of Visual Change

Magnitude evaluation	**Description of criterion**
Substantial	The proposals will cause a complete or very large change in the view, resulting from the loss of important features in or the addition of significant new ones, to the extent that this will substantially alter the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views are often full or sequential. The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor is wide. The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development is close. The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible is large. The duration is long-term. Permanent change to the view.
Moderate	The proposals will cause a clearly noticeable change in the view, resulting from the loss of features or the addition of new ones, to the extent that this will alter to a moderate degree the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views may be partial/intermittent. The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor is moderate. The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development is moderate The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible is moderate.

Magnitude evaluation	Description of criterion
	The duration is medium-term Partially reversible change to the view.
Slight	The proposals will cause a perceptible change in the view, resulting from the loss of features or the addition of new ones, to the extent that this will partially alter the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views may be partial only. The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor is slight. The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development is slight. The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible is slight. The duration is short-term. Reversible, change to the landscape where the landscape can be fully restored.
Negligible	The proposals will cause a barely perceptible change in the view, resulting from the loss of features or the addition of new ones, to the extent that this will barely alter the composition of the view and the visual amenity it offers. Views may be glimpsed only. The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor is negligible. The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development is distant. The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible is barely perceptible.

7.2.10.4 Night-time Visual Effects

82. The effects of new light sources associated with the development have been assessed in relation to existing light sources. This has been assessed for the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Development.

7.2.11 Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

83. The overall effect of the Development on a particular receptor is considered through a combination of the sensitivity and magnitude of change to that receptor and a judgement is made on whether or not the overall effect is significant. The matrix presented in Table 7.17 is used as a guide to significance of effects with assessment and conclusions drawn from the baseline and professional judgement.

84. By undertaking a robust and sequential approach to assessment, and using summary tables/matrices and professional judgement, a clear process can be demonstrated in determining the landscape and visual effects of the Development upon agreed receptors and the significance of such effects.

85. A significant effect on a particular receptor does not necessarily indicate that the overall effect of the Development is unacceptable.

Table 7.17 Landscape and Visual Significance of likely effects

Landscape and Visual Receptor Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change				
		Substantial	**Moderate**	**Slight**	**Negligible**
	High	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
	Medium	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
	Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Minor/ negligible

86. Where the landscape and visual effect has been classified as Major, Major/Moderate or Moderate this is considered to be equivalent to likely significant effects referred to in the EIA Regulations. Where such effects are predicted, professional judgement has been applied to ensure that the potential for significant effects arising has been thoroughly considered.

87. Once the significance of an effect is determined, the nature of effect is assessed. This is dependent on a number of criteria which vary between effects upon the landscape and effects on visual amenity. Effects are classified as positive, neutral or negative according to the following definitions:

- **Beneficial** effects contribute to the landscape and visual resource through the enhancement of desirable characteristics or the introduction of new, positive attributes. The removal of undesirable existing elements or characteristics can also be beneficial, as can their replacement with more appropriate components;
- **Neutral** effects occur where the Development neither contributes to nor detracts from the landscape and visual resource or where the effects are so limited that the change is hardly noticeable. A change to the landscape and visual resource is not considered to be adverse simply because it constitutes an alteration to the existing situation; and
- **Adverse** effects are those that detract from or weaken the landscape and visual resource through the introduction of elements that contrast in a detrimental way with the existing characteristics of the landscape and visual resource, or through the removal of elements that are key in its positive characterisation.

88. The LVIA describes the overall effects on receptors and explains the justification for each assessment. For each assessed effect, a conclusion has been drawn on whether the effect is significant or not and whether the effect is beneficial, neutral or adverse.

7.2.12 Cumulative Effects Methodology

89. The Cumulative LVIA (CLVIA) assesses the cumulative effects of the Development in combination with other development. In line with SHN guidance outlined in GLIVIA3, cumulative effects for the purpose of this assessment are based on the following definitions:

- Cumulative Effects are defined as the additional changes caused by a proposed developed in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effect of a set of developments, taken together (SNH, 2012:12);
- Cumulative Landscape Effects are defined as effects that '*can impact on either the physical fabric or character of the landscape or any special values attached to it*' (SNH, 2012:10);
- Cumulative visual effects are defined as effects that can be caused by combined visibility, which '*occurs where the observer is able to see two or more developments from one viewpoint*' and/or sequential effects which 'occur when the observer has to move to another viewpoint to see different developments' (SNH, 2012:11);

90. A search has been undertaken using publicly available online data sources and information on planning authority planning portals of all cumulative sites within a 10 km radius of the Development site in line with methodology defined for the ES, as reported in Chapter 2: Environmental Impact Assessment, and all developments likely to impact landscape and visual receptors has been considered. The search included:

- Development under construction;
- Consented but not yet constructed development;
- Development for which a valid planning/DCO application has been submitted; and
- Development which has been refused planning permission and which is subject of an appeal.

91. In order to ensure the LVIA assessment focuses on likely significant effects, the ZTV – Local Context was utilised and the study area limited to 5 km in line with section 7.2.2 'Study Areas' and section 7.21 (item 2) of GVLIA3. In line with paragraph 7.32 of GLVIA3, distance is also a determining factor in assessing the appropriate study area and professional judgement, knowledge of the study area and a review of the types of development beyond 5 km have also been applied to determine the extents of the likely significant cumulative effects. Chapter 2: Environmental Impact Assessment, provides a list and details of all cumulative sites, including both those included and excluded from this assessment.

92. The assessment of effects considered all development types within 5 km of the Development at various stages in the planning process as prescribed above. This is due to the relatively open nature of the CLS area and the elevated nature of many local cumulative sites.

93. An assessment of the combined effects of all cumulative developments was undertaken to understand the cumulative effects on landscape and visual receptors.

7.2.12.1 Cumulative Landscape Effects

94. Cumulative Landscape Effects are determined using the same methodology as prescribed in section 7.2.7 in line with paragraph 7.27 of GLVIA3.

7.2.12.2 Cumulative Visual Effects

95. Due to the nature of the Development in combination with cumulative sites as per paragraph 7.31 of GLVIA3, cumulative ZTVs have not been prepared as the effects can readily be assessed through professional judgement and assessment on site.

96. Cumulative visual effects are determined using the same methodology as prescribed in section 7.2.12 in line with paragraph 7.37 of GLVIA3. An assessment of whether the effects are combined (in combination/in succession, or sequential (frequently or occasionally) as per box 7.1 of GLVIA3 was used where such assessment was appropriate.

7.2.13 Viewpoints and Visualisations

97. Viewpoint selection followed good practice guidance and in particular paragraphs 6.18 to 6.20 of GLVIA3. The viewpoints chosen were used to aid the description of effects on both landscape and visual resources.

98. The selection of viewpoints was made on the basis of the following types of publicly accessible viewpoints, as follows:

- Representative viewpoints (for example, representing views of users of a particular footpath);
- Specific viewpoints (for example, a key view from a specific visitor attraction);
- Illustrative viewpoints (chosen to demonstrate a particular effect/specific issue);
- Any important sequential views, for example, along key transport routes; and
- Any additional viewpoints that have been requested by consultees at Scoping and PEIR.

99. For the purposes of the LVIA, all of the viewpoints where taken from publicly accessible land, apart from one private viewpoint from Mount Ephraim were assessed. However, for the purposes of the RVAA private properties were assessed as groups or as appropriate, from representative viewpoints, selected adjacent to the nearest publicly accessible locations to residential properties to provide an indication of the likely visual effects on residential receptors (as set out in Technical Appendix A7.4). Where potential Major, Major/Moderate and Moderate significance effects were identified, a

detailed assessment within the curtilage of those properties was undertaken where access was granted by the resident.

100. Baseline photographic panoramas have been produced for each viewpoint to illustrate the nature of existing views in the direction of the CLS Area. A baseline photographic survey has been undertaken using a digital SLR camera in accordance with current good practice guidance[31]. For each of the photographic panoramas both winter and summer views are shown.

101. For ten of the viewpoints, computer rendered images (photomontages) have been prepared. These show the Development superimposed on to the baseline photographic view to more accurately convey the appearance of the Development in the view. The photomontages show the Development in both summer and winter views at Years 1, 5, and 10 following construction. These photomontage locations have been selected as they provide views of key users for a number of different receptors and users which will have varying degrees of interest and which demonstrate a particular view from vantage points, and long distance footpaths, or sequential views.

102. The methodology for photography follows GLVIA3 and the Landscape Institute's Advice Note 01/11 entitled Photography and Photomontage in LVIA. A full methodology for photomontage preparation is included in Technical Appendix TA7.1**.**

103. Photographs were taken in RAW format using a Nikon D3 Digital SLR camera for winter viewpoint photography and visualisations. For the summer photography and visualisations photographs have been taken in RAW format using a Nikon D5 Digital SLR camera. Further details are found in Technical Appendix TA7.1. The time, date, altitude and grid coordinates for each frame were recorded from the dedicated Nikon GPS accessory.

7.3 Landscape and Visual Baseline

7.3.1 Landscape Planning Policy Context

104. Landscape Designations within the LVIA Study Area are shown on Figure 7.8 in Volume 2.

7.3.1.1 Landscape Designations

105. The CLS Area includes no international or national landscape designations.

106. The CLS Area falls within a local designation (non-statutory) 'Area of High Landscape Value - Kent Level'[32], as referred to within Policy DM24 of The Swale Borough Council Local Plan. There are two other areas of the Kent Level within the 5 km study area which are located to the south of the Faversham and to the northeast of the settlement of Boughton Street.

107. There are a number of other Areas of High Landscape Value within the 5 km Study Area, which include the Swale Level (referenced in policy DM24) which is located to the southeast and to the southwest of the CLS Area. There are a further two areas which are Blean Woods and North Kent Marshes Area of High Landscape Value which are referred to in Canterbury District Local Plan under Policy LB2. North Kent Marshes Area of High Landscape Value adjoins the Kent Level Area of High Landscape Value on its eastern boundary.

108. The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is located approximately 4 km to the south of the CLS Area.

[31]Landscape Institute, 2011, *Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment*.
[32] Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan, Full Council Item, 26th July 2017 and Technical Paper No.6

109. Kent Downs AONB is designated for its rich landscape which is made up of diverse special characteristics and qualities. There is dramatic landform and views which comprise of impressive south facing steep slopes of chalk and greensand; scalloped and hidden dry valleys, these features are especially valued where they have a downland character; expansive open plateaux; broad, steep-sided river valleys and the dramatic, iconic white cliffs and foreshore. Long distance panoramas are offered across open countryside, estuaries, towns and sea from the scarp, cliffs and plateaux; the dip slope dry valleys and river valleys provide more intimate and enclosed vistas. Overlying this landform are diverse natural and man-made features creating distinctiveness at a local level. Kent Downs AONB provides biodiverse rich habitats which provide a rich mosaic of habitats, where plant and animal communities of national and local importance are sustained, although they may be isolated or fragmented in a modern agricultural landscape. There is a long-established tradition of mixed farming which has helped create the characteristics beauty of the Kent Downs. There are expansive arable fields which are found generally on lower slopes, valley bottoms and plateau tops. Locally concentrated areas of orchards, cobnut plats (nut orchards), hop gardens and other horticultural production is also present.

110. The AONB is covered by 23 per cent of broadleaf and mixed woodland which frame the upper slopes of the scarp and dry valleys and plateaux tops. Many of the woodlands are small and fragmented, with some larger woodlands present. There is rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage within the AONB which been an inspiration to artists, scientists and leaders. Much of the AONB provides tranquil and remote countryside, which are much valued perceptual qualities of the AONB[33].

7.3.1.2 Undesignated Landscapes

111. Within the 5 km Study Area there are two country parks which are referenced on Swale Borough Council's website[34], these are listed below.

- The Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park lies approximately 1.95 km to the southwest of the CLS Area.
- Leysdown Coastal Park lies 4.8 km to the north of the CLS Area.

112. Victory Wood lies approximately 3.5 km to the southeast of the CLS Area and contains an elevated viewpoint looking towards the Development. Victory Wood provides an area of accessible land for recreation and offers a vantage viewpoint viewing area to the north towards the Isle of Sheppey.

7.3.1.3 National Planning Policy

113. National Planning Policy Energy (EN-1):

- States that the applicant should carry out a landscape and visual assessment and report in the ES. The assessment should include reference to any landscape character assessment and associated studies as a means of assessing landscape impacts relevant to the proposed project. It should take account of relevant policies based on these assessments in local development documents in England and local development plans in Wales, as set out in Paragraph 5.9.5.
- Paragraph 5.9.6 states that Applicant's assessment should include effects during construction of the projects and the effects of the completed development and its operation on landscape components and landscape character.
- Paragraph 5.9.7 states assessment should include the visibility and the conspicuousness of the project during construction and of the presence and

[33] Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-2019. [Online] Accessed: https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/explore-kent-bucket/uploads/sites/7/2018/01/19141340/1_-The_-Kent_-Downs_-AONB.pdf
[34]Woodlands and Country Parks [Online] Accessed: https://www.swale.gov.uk/woodlands-and-country-parks

operation of the project and potential impacts on views and visual amenity. This should include light pollution effects, including on local amenity, and nature conservation.

114. National Planning Policy Renewable Energy Infrastructure (EN- 3):

- Paragraph 2.4.2 states that proposals for renewable energy infrastructure should demonstrate good design in respect of landscape and visual amenity, and in the design of the project to mitigate impacts such as noise and effects on ecology.
- Paragraph 2.5.33 sites with nationally recognised designations (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserve, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Registered Parks and Gardens), consent for renewable energy projects should only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the objectives of designation of the area will not be compromised by the development, and any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by the environmental, social and economic benefits.

115. National Planning Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN- 5):

- Paragraph 1.7.3 states as required by the SEA Directive, Part 2 of the AoS-5 also includes an assessment of reasonable alternatives to the policies set out in EN-5 at a strategic level. The two alternatives assessed were:
    a. The government would take a strategic view on locations where it is best to develop electricity network infrastructure and limit consenting to those areas; and
    b. The adoption of a presumption that electricity lines should be put underground (generally, or in particular locations, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).
- Paragraph 2.2.6 states as well as having duties under section 9 of the Electricity Act 19.89, (in relation to developing and maintaining an economical and efficient network), developers will be influenced by Schedule 9 to the Electricity Act 1989, which places a duty on all transmission and distribution licence holders, in formulating proposals for new electricity networks infrastructure, to have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving flora and fauna, historic or archaeological interest, and do what they can to reasonably mitigate any effect which the proposals would have on the natural beauty of the countryside. Depending on the location of the proposed development, statutory duties under section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and section 11A of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 may be relevant.
- Paragraph 2.6.1, states Part 5 of EN-1 contains policy for the IPC when assessing potential impacts of energy infrastructure projects (generic impacts). It also contains information to assist the interpretation of the impact sections of all the energy NPSs. When considering impacts for electricity networks infrastructure, all of the generic impacts covered in EN-1 are likely to be relevant, even if they only apply during one phase of the development (such as construction) or only apply to one part of the development (such as a substation). This NPS sets out additional technology-specific considerations on the following generic impacts considered in EN-1: in relation to Landscape and Visual.
- Paragraph 2.8.2 states Government does not believe that development of overhead lines is generally incompatible in principle with developers' statutory duty under section 9 of the Electricity Act to have regard to amenity and to mitigate impacts (see paragraph 2.2.6 above). In practice new above ground electricity lines, whether supported by lattice steel towers/pylons or wooden poles, can give rise to adverse landscape and visual impacts, dependent upon their scale, siting, degree of screening and the nature of the landscape and local environment through which they are routed. For the most part these impacts can be mitigated, however at particularly sensitive locations the potential adverse landscape and visual impacts of

an overhead line proposal may make it unacceptable in planning terms, taking account of the specific local environment and context. New substations, sealing end compounds and other above ground installations that form connection, switching and voltage transformation points on the electricity networks can also give rise to landscape and visual impacts. Cumulative landscape and visual impacts can arise where new overhead lines are required along with other related developments such as substations, wind farms and/or other new sources of power generation.

116. Chapter 6: Legislative and Planning Policy Context, sets out the National and Local Planning Policy associated with this Development. An assessment of the Development in the context of legislation and planning policy is contained in the Planning Statement which accompanies the Application (DCO Document Reference 7.4).

7.3.2 Published Sources of Landscape Character

117. This section draws upon published landscape character assessments to describe the baseline landscape character at the CLS Area and the LVIA Study Area. While the 2 km Study Area extends to a 2 km radius in order to accurately reflect the potentially localised effects of the Development, the CLS Area must be considered in the context of the landscape character of the 5 km Study Area.

118. Landscape character within the 5 km Study Area has been mapped and described at national, regional and local or district level and is summarised in the following sections.

7.3.2.1 National Landscape Character.

119. Landscape character at the CLS Area is described at a national level in National Character Area (NCA) Profile 81 Greater Thames Estuary[35]. The Greater Thames Estuary NCA covers a very large area that fringes the River Thames Estuary extending from Herne Bay in the southeast to Central London in the west and Harwich in the northeast. The NCA 81 Profile describes the following key characteristics:

- *"Predominantly flat, low-lying coastal landscape where extensive open spaces are dominated by the sky, and the pervasive presence of water and numerous coastal estuaries extend the maritime influence far inland;*
- *Strong feelings of remoteness and wilderness persist on extensive salt marshes, mudflats and reclaimed farmed marshland;*
- *Some of the least settled parts of the English coast with numerous small villages and hamlets on higher ground and marsh edges reflecting medieval patterns and the coastal economy;*
- *Highly urbanised areas within London and on marsh edges subject to chaotic activity of various major developments including ports, waste disposal, marine dredging, housing regeneration, mineral extraction and prominent power stations plus numerous other industry related activities."*

120. The adjacent landscape character area which lies to the south of NCA 81 is NCA 113 North Kent Plain[36] which covers the strip of land between the Thames Estuary to the north and the chalk of the Kent Downs to the south. The NCA 113 Profile describes the following key characteristics:

- *"An open, low, gently undulating landscape, characterised by high-quality, fertile, loamy soils dominated by agricultural land uses;*
- *A diverse coastline (both in nature and orientation), made up of cliffs, intertidal sand and mud, salt marshes, sand dunes and shingle beaches. Much of the coastal*

[35] Natural England (2013). National Character Area Profile 81 Greater Thames Estuary. Available at http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4531632073605120 [accessed on 01/11/2018]
[36] Natural England (2012). National Landscape Character Area Profile 113 North Kent Plains. Available at http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/2900242 [accessed on 01/11/2018]

hinterland has been built on, and the coast itself has been modified through the construction of sea walls, harbours and piers;
- *Large arable, horticultural fields with regular patterns and rectangular shapes predominating, and a sparse hedgerow pattern;*
- *Orchards and horticultural crops characterise central and eastern areas, and are often enclosed by poplar or alder shelterbelts and scattered small woodlands;*
- *Woodland occurs on higher ground around Blean and in smaller blocks to the west, much of it ancient and of high nature conservation interest;*
- *The Stour and its tributaries are important features of the eastern part of the NCA, draining eastwards in to the North Sea, with associated wetland habitats including areas of grazing marsh, reedbeds, lagoons and gravel pits. The river Medway cuts through the NCA as it flows into the Thames Estuary;*
- *Large settlements and urban infrastructure (including lines of pylons) are often visually dominant in the landscape, with significant development around Greater London and the Medway Towns, as well as around towns further east and along the coast. Major rail and road links connect the towns with London."*

121. Both NCA 81 Greater Thames Estuary and NCA 113 North Kent Plain are shown on Figure 7.5, in ES Volume 2.

7.3.2.2 Regional Landscape Character

122. Landscape character is described at regional level in the Landscape Assessment of Kent (October 2004)[37]. Figure 7.6 in Volume 2, shows the landscape character areas relative to the CLS Area.

123. The CLS Area is located in the Eastern Swale Marshes Character Area[38] which is described as having the following characteristic features:

- *"Remote, wild and exposed;*
- *Broad skies. Pervasive influence of sea and sky. Creeks, diches, sea walls. Grazing marsh, wild birds and grazing animals;*
- *Creekside townscape and waterside buildings; and*
- *Poorly managed fences. Intrusion of power lines."*

124. Part of the CLS Area also lies within the Eastern Fruit Belt Character Area[39] (southwest and southeast of the CLS Area) which is described as having the following characteristic features:

- *"Rural character, sense of remoteness and privacy.*
- *Enclosed and diverse.*
- *Strong woodland blocks.*
- *Orchards and hops, shelterbelts. Large pockets of open farmland. Undulating landform."*

125. It is noted, however, that the areas within both the CLS Area and the Eastern Fruit Belt Character Area are either on the coastal plain or on the side of Cleve Hill, facing onto the coastal plain, and do not meet the description provided above; they are open, contain the Cleve Hill Substation and associated infrastructure, a public right of way and no trees, orchards or hops. Those parts of these areas on which Development is proposed are flat coastal plain, rather than undulating.

[37] KCC (2004). The Landscape Assessment of Kent. Available at: https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/countryside-policies-and-reports/kents-landscape-assessment [accessed 01/12/2017]
[38] SBC (2011) Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal SPD. Available at: http://www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Landscape-Character-Appraisal-Final-Sept-2011/Marshland-Landscape-Types-reduced-size.pdf [accessed 01/12/2017]
[39] Ibid.

126. Within the 5 km Study Area there are five other Regional Landscape Character Areas which are listed below and outlined in the following paragraphs along with their key characteristics:

- The Blean;
- Faversham Fruit Belt: Mid Kent Downs;
- Fruit Belt;
- Swale Marshes; and
- North Sheppey.

127. The Blean is described as having the following characteristic features:

- "*Densely wooded;*
- *Rounded hilltops with sparse nucleic settlements and few roads within the woodland;*
- *Flat coastal plain;*
- *Haphazard seaside and leisure development; and*
- *Neglected pasture near to the coast – a high proportion of unfarmed land.*"

128. Faversham Fruit Belt: Mid Kent Downs is described as having the following characteristic features:

- "*Gentle Slopes and undulating farmland;*
- *Hop gardens, orchards and tall shelterbelts;*
- *Rolling, open arable fields, little woodland; and*
- *Pine-clad feature of Perry Hill.*"

129. Fruit Belt is described as having the following characteristic features:

- "*Rural/agricultural landscape;*
- *Complex fruit, hops, pastoral and arable divided by small woodlands;*
- *Small scattered villages and farms;*
- *Rolling landscape with distinct valleys;*
- *Large pockets of flat, open farmland, especially in coastal areas; and*
- *The M2 and A2-ribbon development and urban features.*"

130. Swale Marshes is described as having the following characteristic features:

- "*Coastal marsh with isolated low hilly outcrops;*
- *Remote, wild and isolated;*
- *Fleet, creeks, marshland vegetation;*
- *Grazing animals and birds;*
- *Extensive areas of cultivated marsh, with few features;*
- *Intrusive buildings and industry; and*
- *Infilling of creeks and ditches.*"

131. North Sheppey is described as having the following characteristic features:

- "*Island situation, exposed, prominent hills and cliffs above alluvial marshes;*
- *Geologically significant;*
- *Scrub on hills, open, intensively farmed land on lower slopes;*
- *Denuded landscape;*
- *Remnant marshland creeks and ditches;*
- *Prominent development and industry; and*
- *Caravans and chalets.*"

7.3.2.3 District Landscape Character

7.3.2.4 Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Landscape Appraisal, Supplementary Planning Document September 2011

132. At a local level, landscape character is described in the Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal (SLCBA; Supplementary Planning Document September 2011). Figure 7.7 in Volume 2 shows the local landscape character areas relative to the CLS Area boundary. The SLCBA includes, for each LCA, guidelines for desirable future management of the LCA that would enhance it. These have been noted below, for LCAs that overlap with the CLS Area, or where the guidelines refer to the setting of an LCA or views from an LCA that could be affected by the Development.

133. The CLS Area is predominantly located in the Graveney Marshes Landscape Character Area 5[40], the key characteristics of which include:

- "*Large open area of alluvial marshland;*
- *Large scale arable fields divided by long straight drainage ditches;*
- *Typical features ditches, sea wall, estuarine saltmarsh, sand and mudflats; and*
- *Atmospheric and tranquil landscape with large open and often dramatic skies.*"

134. The SLCBA describes landscape condition within the seawall as being in poorer condition than that on the outside of the flood defence which is in good condition. The reason for its poor condition lies in the intensive agricultural land use that has produced a featureless monoculture extending over a large area. In addition, the high voltage transmission line on large lattice pylons that cross from east to west introduces large scale vertical structures into a landscape with a predominantly horizontal emphasis.

135. Inherent sensitivity of the landscape to development in general is considered to be moderate; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development. There are guidelines to:

- Conserve existing features of value and create traditional elements that have been lost;
- Consider the generic guidelines for marshland landscapes, conserve the undeveloped and distinctive character of the marshland, to maintain the integrity of the wider North Kent Marshes; and
- Seek opportunities to restore coastal grazing marsh, wetland and or/intertidal habitat where intensive arable production currently exists.

136. Part of the CLS Area also lies within two further Landscape Character areas: Graveney Arable Farmlands; and Graveney Grazing Lands.

137. The key characteristics of Graveney Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area 21 include:

- "*Gently undulating landscape, with localised higher ground;*
- *Complex geology of fertile well drained drift soils, heavy clay and brick earth;*
- *Mixed field pattern of large and small-scale;*
- *Open arable farmland with isolated mature orchards and soft fruit;*
- *Rural fringe activities such as horse pasture;*
- *Many internal field boundaries lost;*
- *Fragmented mature hedgerows along lanes supplemented with post and wire;*
- *Train line, B roads and narrow country lanes; and*
- *Views enclosed by vegetation and built development, but wide from within fields and where hedgerows are fragmented.*"

[40] SBC (2011) Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal SPD. Available at: http://www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Landscape-Character-Appraisal-Final-Sept-2011/Introduction-reduced-size.pdf [accessed 01/12/2017]

138. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "poor" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be moderate; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development. There are guidelines to:

- Restore and create, through consideration of the generic guidelines for the fruit belt landscapes, landmark buildings;
- Conserve the remaining landscape structure of trees, scrub, hedgerows and orchard and look for opportunities to restore and improve landscape structure through the establishment and maintenance of hedgerows along roadsides, the integration of new and existing development into the landscape using woodland blocks and hedgerows and the linking of existing isolated woodlands and hedgerows;
- Avoid proposals that would be unduly prominent on high or open ground and have particular regard to sensitive views from the marshes to the north; and
- Use local and vernacular materials appropriate to the location for the boundaries, which it describes in more detail about the colour brick and materials to use.

139. The key characteristics of Graveney Grazing Lands Landscape Character Area 4 include:

- "*Marine alluvial deposits of small raised outcrop of London Clay;*
- *Open expansive grazing marsh and intimate valleys, managed for grazing livestock;*
- *Vegetation limited to grass, reed filled ditches and scattered scrub. Isolated small-scale deciduous and coppice woodlands and wet pasture valley to the south;*
- *Transportation corridors includes railway A and B roads; and*
- *Atmospheric and tranquil landscape with large open and often dramatic skies.*"

140. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development. The only part of the CLS Area within this LCA is the already-metalled Cleve Hill Substation access road, and no further development will take place within this LCA.

141. Beyond the character areas that fall within the CLS Area there are number of Landscape Character Areas that fall directly adjacent to the CLS Area and fall within the 5 km Study Area, as shown on Figure 7.7 in Volume 2. The key characteristics of each character area are set out below.

142. The key characteristics of the Graveney Fruit Farms Landscape Character Area 22 include:

- "*Traditional Kentish landscape of orchards and enclosed fruit fields;*
- *An area of high ground, with mixed geology of fertile drift deposits and London Clay;*
- *Strong pattern of enclosure created by shelterbelts and mature hedgerows;*
- *Small isolated mixed deciduous woodland shaws;*
- *Narrow lanes with few passing places enclosed by windbreaks and hedgerows;*
- *Settlement is small-scale and limited to a small hamlet, scattered cottages and farmsteads; and*
- *Many well maintained traditional buildings in vernacular style.*"

143. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be moderate; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

144. The key characteristics of Ham Marshes Landscape Character Area 6 include:

- "*Flat alluvial marshland with sinuous reed filled ditches. Traditional gates and fences prevent livestock crossing into other fields;*
- *Large open landscape and dramatic skies;*

- *Rough grassland used for cattle and sheep grazing;*
- *Important wetland habitats;*
- *Boats in the Swale and creeks;*
- *Minor access lanes and footpaths; and*
- *Atmospheric and tranquil landscape with large open and often dramatic skies.*"

145. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

146. The key characteristics of Luddenham and Conyer Marshes Landscape Character Area 8 include:

- "*Flat alluvial marshland with sinuous reed filled ditches. Traditional gates and fences leading into ditches prevent cattle from crossing into other fields;*
- *Large open and often dramatic skies;*
- *Rough grassland largely used for cattle and sheep grazing;*
- *Important wetland habitats;*
- *Access routes limited to Harty Ferry approach and Conyer;*
- *Boats in the Swale and Creek;*
- *Large-scale landscape with little sense of enclosure; and*
- *Strong sense of place, remote and isolated.*"

147. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

148. The key characteristics of South Sheppey Saltmarshes and Mudflats Landscape Character Area 11 include:

- "*Vast, atmospheric and tranquil landscape with large, open and often dramatic skies, with extensive uninterrupted panoramic views;*
- *Alluvial soils on land, tidal mudflats and marine beaches in estuary;*
- *Sea walls form the only man-made element within the landscape;*
- *Unique flora and fauna specially adapted to harsh environmental conditions;*
- *Vegetation limited to coarse, hummocky groudcover in rusty browns, green and pink; and*
- *Largely unsettled with limited pedestrian access.*"

149. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

150. The key characteristics of Faversham and Ospringe Fruit Belt Landscape Character Area 20 include:

- "*Gently undulating landscape that steadily climbs southwards;*
- *Small to medium-scale orchards and large open arable fields;*
- *Woodland shaws and new plantation;*
- *Mature fragmented hedgerows supplemented with post and wire fencing;*
- *Many fine buildings in local vernacular style;*
- *Motorways, A and B roads, narrow winding lanes. Many lanes of historic interest including former drovers' routes and the A251, a former turnpike road.*"

151. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be moderate; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

152. The key characteristics of Goodnestone Grassland Landscape Character Area 3 include:

- "*Area of drained alluvial grazing marsh;*
- *Slightly elevated land to north and south containing more fertile soils;*
- *Natural meandering and straight man-made drainage ditches;*
- *Tranquil unspoilt landscape with limited access;*
- *High ecological value;*
- *Limited areas of mature woodland;*
- *Typical riparian vegetation of reed filled ditches and scattered groups of poplar and alder;*
- *Few buildings and no public highways;*
- *Railway embankments provide additional wildlife corridor; and*
- *Grade I and Grade II listed barns at Abbey Farm, which is also a Scheduled Monument.*"

153. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

154. The key characteristics of Blean Woods West Landscape Character Area 33 include:

- "*Gently to steeply sloping landscape supporting ancient woodland;*
- *Part of the most extensive semi-natural woodlands in the south east of England;*
- *Areas of woodland cleared for grazing, with extensive views;*
- *Fragmented mature hedgerows along lanes;*
- *A and B roads and narrow winding lanes with few passing places;*
- *Enclosed landscape;*
- *Occasional long views from higher ground of Whitstable, the sea and wind turbines;*
- *Linear village, scattered isolated cottages and farms;*
- *20th century residential dwellings, flint church. Victorian red brick cottages and farm buildings; and*
- *Sense of remoteness and quiet rural lanes.*"

155. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

156. The key characteristics of Stone Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area 17 include:

- "*Rolling landscape, gently rising south away from the marshland edge;*
- *Large number of boats at Oare Creek;*
- *A landscape generally enlarged as a result of agricultural intensification. Also isolated, smaller scale more traditionally managed landscapes;*
- *Flooded pools and gravel workings at Oare and Ham Farm;*
- *Fragmented mature hedgerows along narrow enclosed winding lanes; and*
- *Many traditional buildings dating from 17th and 18th century. Victorian cottages and 20th century housing.*"

157. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "poor" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be moderate; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

158. The key characteristics of Waterman Clay Farmlands Landscape Character Area 18 include:

- "*Distinctive domed hills set within an otherwise low-lying landscape;*
- *London clay geology with heavy soils;*
- *Ephemeral streams feed into the marshes;*
- *Clay Hill cleared of woodland in mid 20th century for cereal production;*

- *Woodland planting across Clay Hill to reinstate the landscape as part of Blean complex;*
- *Small areas of remnant woodland at field boundaries;*
- *Rising ground abuts marshland;*
- *Monkshill and Horsehill used for sheep grazing;*
- *Many hedgerows lost and fragmented. Field boundaries replaced with post and wire fencing;*
- *Isolated farmsteads and groups of cottages. Large industrial units;*
- *A and B roads; and*
- *Extensive views of Seasalter Levels and Graveney Marsh to coast and beyond.*"

159. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "poor" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be moderate; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

160. The key characteristics of Hernhill and Boughton Fruit Belt Landscape Character Area 23 include:

- "*Traditional rolling Kentish landscape of orchards, overshadowed by Blean Woods;*
- *Good quality, well drained, deep loam soils;*
- *Predominantly fruit production with occasional arable and hop gardens;*
- *Small to medium-scale field pattern, with strong network of shelterbelts, hedgerows and scattered woodlands;*
- *Well-managed landscape intensively farmed;*
- *Strongly Kentish form and character;*
- *Traditional vernacular buildings. Large oast houses. Large Country houses; and*
- *Mount Ephraim with its house and fine gardens.*"

161. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

162. The key characteristics of Doddington and Newnham Dry Valleys Landscape Character Area 36 include:

- "*Gently sloping landscape through which cut numerous dramatic dry chalk valleys;*
- *Upper slopes of enclosed rolling farmland;*
- *Extensive mature oak and ash woodlands also coppice sweet chestnut and hazel woodlands used for timber production;*
- *Mixed land use of small to medium-scale orchards and large-scale arable fields;*
- *Settlement is widespread and small-scale with many traditional vernacular building styles. Properties date from the 16th to 20th centuries; and*
- *Transportation routes include M2, A2, railway line and many narrow lanes; and*
- *Historic parklands, including archaeological interest at Syndale Park.*"

163. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

164. The SLCBA landscape character areas that are found on the Isle of Sheppey, north of the CLS Area are set out below.

165. The key characteristics of Leysdown and Eastchurch Marshes Landscape Character Area 7 include:

- "*Large open area of alluvial marshland;*
- *Large-scale fields divided by long straight drainage ditches and post and wire fencing;*
- *Typical features include creeks, ditches, contour and sea walls;*

- *Mixed agricultural land use;*
- *Limited settlement along coastline and scattered farmsteads;*
- *Atmospheric and tranquil landscape with large open and open dramatic skies; and*
- *Remote hamlet of Shellness overlooking a shell and shingle beach*."

166. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

167. The key characteristics of Spitend Marshes Landscape Character Area 12 include:

- "*Flat open marshland with long views to the north and south;*
- *Network of counterwalls, sea walls, fleets and ditches cross the reserve;*
- *Management practices used to diversify landscape for the promotion of biodiversity;*
- *Landscape enclosed by irregular pattern of ditches, evident by the straw coloured vegetation; and*
- *Atmospheric and tranquil landscape with large open and often dramatic skies.*"

168. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

169. The key characteristics of Isle of Harty Landscape Character Area 15 include:

- "*Former Island and high point formed of London clay contrasting with surrounding low-lying marshland;*
- *Strong history of settlement dating from 4th Century AD;*
- *Medium to large-scale irregular fields;*
- *Limited scattered mature vegetation;*
- *Panoramic views; and*
- *Isolated settlement, a number of buildings and features of historic interest, including St Thomas's Church*."

170. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "moderate" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be high; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

171. The key characteristics of Teynham Fruit Belt Landscape Character Area 31 include:

- "*Undulating, intimate, landscape composed of small hills and valleys;*
- *Complex geology of fertile drift deposits, head gravel and London clay;*
- *Small-scale well managed network of orchards and occasional hop fields. Elsewhere enlarged arable and grazing fields;*
- *Birthplace of commercial fruit growing at Osiers Farm;*
- *Narrow winding lanes enclosed by mature hedgerows and shelterbelts;*
- *Tracks, lanes and historic buildings raised above adjacent areas, which is indicative of the area's susceptibility to flooding;*
- *Mixed traditional historic houses and farms, 20th Century residential and commercial development;*
- *Main transport routes include the railway and the A2; and*
- *Important local landmark at Tonge Mill and pond.*"

172. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "moderate" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be "moderate"; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

173. The key characteristics of Lynsted Enclosed Farmlands Landscape Character Area 26 include:

- "*Gently undulating topography with steep sided dry chalk valley;*

- *Complex geology of fertile drift deposits, chalk and clay-with-flints;*
- *Small isolated historic villages and farmsteads, medieval houses, twentieth century infill housing;*
- *Characteristic development pattern "one building deep" alongside lanes and roads;*
- *Small to medium-scale irregular field pattern;*
- *Many well managed orchards, with strong shelterbelts and hedgerows;*
- *Open areas of sheep grazing and historic parkland;*
- *Narrow winding lanes and major roads; and*
- *Views generally enclosed with some long views to the north from high point opened up by sheep grazing.*"

174. The condition of the landscape is described in the SLCBA as "Good" and overall sensitivity to development in general is considered to be "moderate"; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

7.3.2.5 Draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal, August 2012

175. Within the 5 km Study Area to the east of the CLS Area are a number of landscape character types and areas that fall within the Draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal (CLCBA). The CLCBA includes, for each LCA, guidelines for desirable future management of the LCA that would enhance it. These have been noted below, for LCAs that overlap with the CLS Area, or where the guidelines refer to the setting of an LCA or views from an LCA that could be affected by the Development.

176. Directly to the east of the CLS Area is Landscape Character Type Marshland Landscapes which is further divided in to Landscape Character Area 5 Seasalter Marshes[41].

177. The key characteristics of Landscape Character Area 5 Seasalter Marshes include:

- "*Flat open grazing marsh and alluvial marshland;*
- *Transportation corridors include railway and Faversham Road;*
- *Atmospheric and tranquil landscape with large open and often dramatic skies;*
- *Open expansive marshlands managed for grazing livestock; and*
- *Vegetation consists of grass, wetland plants, reed filled ditches and scattered scrub.*"

178. The landscape is described in the CLCBA as in "good" condition and the overall sensitivity to development is highly sensitive in visual terms; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

179. To the south of Seasalter Marshes Landscape Character Area, lies Landscape Character Area 17 Yorkletts Farmlands. To the east of both of these landscape character areas is Landscape Character Type Urban Edge, which is then further divided into Landscape Character Area 16 Wraik Hill. The key characteristics of each of these character areas are set out below.

180. The key characteristics of Landscape Character Area 17 Yorkletts Farmlands include:

- "*London Clay with poorly drained soils gently rising inland;*
- *Grade 3 agricultural land with some large arable fields and some pasture. Small plots support rough pasture and horse paddocks; and*
- *Yorkletts is a linear settlement running parallel to the Thanet Way*."

181. The landscape is described in the CLCBA as in "poor" condition and the overall sensitivity to development is moderately sensitive landscape; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

[41] https://serco.canterbury.gov.uk/media/942095/CDLP-91-CanterburyLandscapeCharacterBiodiversityAppraisalDraft-Jacobs-August2012.pdf

182. The key characteristics of Landscape Character Area 16 Wraik Hill include:

- "*Outlying hill from Blean Ridge;*
- *Extensive views particularly to the west over Seasalter Marshes to coast;*
- *Scattered houses of mostly recent "20th Century) origin often sited to take advantages of views;*
- *Mosaic of fragmented woodland, scrub and pasture;*
- *Pasture contained by hedgerows on lower, less steep slopes. Smaller plots for horse grazing on less accessible slopes; and*
- *Woodland and scrub areas traditionally unfenced although housing and horse grazing have introduced a mixture of fencing styles.*"

183. The landscape is described in the CLCBA as in "poor" condition and the overall sensitivity to development is moderate; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

184. To the east of LCA 16 is LCA 11 Court Lees and Millstrood Farm. The key characteristics of the LCA 11 include:

- "*Mixed farming on Grade 3 agricultural land;*
- *Hedgerow network reasonably intact around pasture. Weak and fragmented in arable areas and along roads;*
- *Linear settlement along Pean Hill;*
- *Isolated farmsteads; and*
- *Large scale agricultural buildings.*"

185. The landscape is described in the CLCBA as in 'moderate' condition and the overall sensitivity to development is moderate; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

186. To the south of LCA 11, Landscape Character Area 20 "Blean Woods: Yorkletts" is situated. Blean Woods: Yorkletts are subdivided into six different landscape character areas. The key characteristics of LCA 20 include:

- "*Dense extensive ancient woodland;*
- *Scattered evergreen species providing seasonal continuity in places;*
- *Clearings provided by coppice woodland management;*
- *Network of paths through trees; and*
- *Few roads and lack of development.*"

187. The landscape is described in the CLCBA as in "very good" condition and the overall sensitivity to development is moderately sensitive landscape; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

188. To the south of LCA 20, Landscape Character Area 24 Clay Hill. The key characteristics of LCA 24 include:

- "*Ridgeline and domed topography continuous with The Blean;*
- *Cleared of woodland in mid 20th Century and managed intensively for cereals but now replanting of trees has been undertaken;*
- *Extensive views over Seasalter Levels to coast; and*
- *Key designations comprise a Site of Special Scientific Interest*."

189. The condition of the landscape is described in the CLCBA as in "moderate" condition and the overall sensitivity to development is moderately sensitive landscape; however, the SLCBA does not assess sensitivity of the landscape to ground mounted solar PV development.

7.3.3 Landscape and Visual Context

7.3.3.1 Overview

190. The CLS Area is located within the county of Kent (Kent County Council) and the district of Swale (Swale Borough Council). The CLS Area lies to the south of The Swale tidal channel opposite and to the south of the Isle of Sheppey (1.4 km to the north). The boundary of the district of Canterbury (Canterbury City Council) lies to the east. To the south the CLS Area lies predominantly farmland both open and enclosed by vegetation, polytunnels and farmland associated with the Eastern Fruit Belt Landscape Character Area, and west of the CLS Area is defined by Faversham Creek.

7.3.3.2 Landform/Physical Features

191. The CLS Area consists of agricultural land (reclaimed salt marsh) based on a geology of Alluvium surrounded by London Clay. The land is referred to as a series of three historic marshes: Nagden Marshes, Graveney Marshes and Cleve Marshes. These have been drained and now consist of a large open agricultural landscape. The topography is low-lying, ranging between 1-2 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), and generally level as shown in Figure 7.4, Volume 2. This low lying nature of the landform covers the majority of the CLS Area with the exception of: (a) Graveney Hill in the southeast which rises to a maximum height of 17.65 m AOD; and (b) the flood defence (comprising a wall, mounted on a vegetation covered earth bund which varies between heights ranging from approximately 5.5 m to 6.31 m AOD. A flood defence is illustrated at Viewpoints 2 and 4 on Figures 7.12, 7.14, 7.33 and 7.35 in Volume 3) located adjacent to the western and northern CLS Area boundaries which rises to approximately 5.5 m AOD. The land is subject to intensive agricultural use which exacerbates its flat uniform and open appearance.

192. The CLS Area is traversed by a network of linear watercourses running predominantly north to south in orientation. These man-made features have a natural appearance associated with similar features in the wider landscape and the remnants of marshland drainage creating an interesting pattern of field division. The largest of these features lies within the southwest of the CLS Area where it forms a triangular shaped area of reeds. A linear ditch also runs along the majority of the southern boundary collecting water from the various watercourses within the CLS Area.

193. The CLS Area also contains a series of agricultural farm tracks/access roads derived of hard-core. Where they run in a northerly direction they follow the drainage ditches and are slightly elevated in places. Where they run east to west along the northerly section of the CLS Area they follow the drainage courses along the northern boundary managed by Kent Wildlife Trust. These tracks are elevated above the surrounding agricultural fields by a range of approximately 0.25 m to 0.5 m to the west and over 2 m along a large track in the east.

194. The flood defence, described above, wraps around the perimeter of the CLS Area extending beyond the boundary to the west and north. The northern wall contains concrete reinforced abutments protruding from the top along the northern section of the wall. This forms a large linear elevated feature within the landscape.

195. The landscape is visually contained in part by distance of view and low elevation across the length of the CLS Area but also due to the presence of the large flood defence which contains views and creates a sense of enclosure, removing a visual relationship with The Swale immediately beyond.

196. The topography in the 5 km Study Area is generally low-lying with levels of 10-20 m AOD, to the east and south the land rises slightly to levels of 40-50 m AOD. To the southeast of the site, and east of the settlement of Boughton Street the land rises to between 60-110 m AOD. Further to the south and east the topography rises between

levels of 110-148 m AOD. The Isle of Sheppey to the north rises from sea level to a height of around 70 m AOD near Minster. Essentially the CLS Area is a large flat low lying coastal area with, to the south and east, land rising steadily to higher ground, which runs southwest to northeast towards Whitstable.

197. The seascape to the north of the CLS Area provides a low level water line and creates a level topography in essence enabling extensive views out to sea and an open landscape when viewed from the Saxon Shore Way on top of the flood defence.

7.3.3.3 Land Cover

198. The CLS Area is predominately given over to agricultural use and is predominately used for cereal production such as wheat and barley, which creates a flat, low level and uniform appearance within the landscape. The SLCBA describes the landscape as being in poor condition because of the intensive agricultural land use that has produced a featureless monoculture extending over a large area. The drainage ditches mentioned above are vegetated to just beyond the top of banks and form attractive features through the CLS Area containing a mixture of predominantly grasses and ruderal vegetation which is further described in Chapter 8: Ecology. The land is divided into predominantly large, open fields with field boundaries delineated by the ditches, providing the only vegetated (non-arable) visual relief within the CLS Area. The land cover varies between seasons and can range from brown ploughed fields to green immature crops to golden mature crops which cover the CLS Area.

199. Beyond the CLS Area and within the DCO application site boundary there are large swathes of grazing Marsh and further ditches and wider ponds and reed beds. This vegetation is associated with the Swale wildlife designations (Special Protection Area; SPA; and Site of Special Scientific Interest; SSSI) which surrounds the CLS Area. The northern, eastern and western boundaries are open with no or little vegetation cover. To the southeast there are areas of vegetation in the form of hedgerows and shelterbelts and small woodland copses. These elements are sparse and represent remnants of agricultural use. They vary from low level hedges to large lines of poplar and *Leylandii* forming a backdrop to the surrounding residential properties and farms. These are complemented by small copses and plantations on Cleve and Graveney Hill and characteristic of the Eastern Fruit Belt Landscape Character Area, and Graveney Arable Farmlands Landscape Character Area. There are a number of polytunnels to the south of the CLS Area. Outside the southern boundary lies a line of boundary vegetation which forms a marked contrast with the CLS Area. This vegetation for the Landscape Character Type. Within this southern landscape, fields are fenced off with either post and wire fencing or timber fencing and sparse hedgerows replace the drainage ditches of Graveney Fruit Farms the CLS Area. There are a number of metal field gates at entrances to and within the CLS Area. This lack of vegetation such as hedgerows or tree planting within the CLS Area other than that of the reed filled ditches and crops. The grassed extent of the flood defence and adjacent landscape and the contrast with the Graveney Arable Farmlands LCT and Graveney Fruit Farms LCT creates a distinctly defined landscape on site.

200. Within the 5 km Study Area the landscape is well treed with extensive areas associated with the surrounding fruit farms consisting of shelter belts and orchards, hedgerows and woodland copses. There are also large areas of woodland present within the landscape such as Victory Wood and Blean Wood to the southeast, and Perry Wood (outside the 5 km Study Area) within the AONB to the south. These represent the largest woodlands; however, there are a large number of smaller woodlands within the area too, all of which contribute to landscape character.

7.3.3.4 Buildings/Settlement Type

201. Within the majority of the CLS Area there are no buildings. The existing Cleve Hill Substation and associated plant and equipment are situated within the south eastern CLS Area boundary, just to the north of Cleve Hill. This is one of the largest areas of infrastructure within the surrounding landscape covering an area of approximately 10 ha. The buildings position is elevated above much of the CLS Area.

202. To the southwest of the existing Substation there are two large agricultural buildings which are situated on a large area of hardstanding and form part of a large modern farming operation adjacent to the CLS Area.

203. A water infrastructure structure (Nagden Sluice) is also located in between the flood defence and CLS Area to the northwest.

204. The local area is relatively sparsely populated; however, there are several properties in close proximity to the CLS area. These properties/groups of properties are listed below:

- Residential properties at Nagden approximately 19 m to south west;
- Warm House approximately 6.5 m to the south;
- Properties along Sandbanks Road approximately 575 m to the south;
- Residential properties at Broom Street approximately 176 m to the south;
- Properties along Seasalter Road, including All Saints Church, Graveney approximately 10 m to the south east;
- Properties on Graveney Hill/Cleve Hill approximately 245 m to the east;
- The Sportsman Inn approximately 26 m to the east;
- Properties off Ham Road including the Shipwright Arms approximately 90 m to the south west;
- Harty Ferry Cottages approximately 572 m to the west; and

205. Within the 5 km Study Area there are a number of towns, villages and hamlets. The towns of Whitstable and Faversham are the largest in the 5 km Study Area. Whitstable is located east of the CLS Area with the settlement edge located approximately 2.7 km away, and has a population of approximately 32,000 people. Faversham is located southwest of the CLS Area with the settlement edge located approximately 1.5 km away, and has a population of approximately 19,000 people.

206. Other settlements within the LVIA Study Area are listed below (relative to the CLS Area):

- The Hamlet of Shellness approximately 3.2 km to the north
- Seasalter approximately 1.5 km to the east;
- Yorkletts approximately 3.3 km to the east;
- Graveney approximately 0.5 km to the southeast;
- Dargate approximately 3.5 km to the southeast;
- Fostall approximately 2.2 km to the southeast;
- Hernhill approximately 2.8 km to the southeast;
- Boughton Under Blean approximately 4.5 km south-southeast;
- Goodnestone approximately 1.9 km to the south;
- Ospringe approximately 3.8 km to the southwest;
- Luddenham approximately 2.7 km to the southwest;
- Oare approximately 1.4 km to the southwest; and
- Uplees approximately 2.0 km to the west;
- Properties on the Isle of Harty 1.7 km to the north.

207. Outside of the above buildings and settlements the landscape is sparsely populated and dominated by natural low level marsh, fruit farm and wooded valley landscapes. There are a number of other properties including clusters of residential properties, farms, and

businesses within the 5 km Study Area. These buildings and small settlements are often well associated with local vernacular and geography such as properties along Faversham and Oare Creeks for instance and associated with agricultural land use.

208. One of the largest buildings outside the CLS Area is Waterham Storage Park which contains large steel clad buildings and is located approximately 1.9 km to the east of the CLS Area.

209. The 5 km Study Area also contains a large number of polytunnel structures. Although these are temporary elements, they have a defining effect within the wider landscape of the 5 km Study Area. Their presence in the landscape consists of domed linear structures of a light grey slightly reflective hue, they have a uniform arrangement within the landscape and are approximately 3.6 m high.

7.3.3.5 Communications and Infrastructure

210. The existing Cleve Hill Substation (London Array Onshore Substation) is situated along the eastern boundary of the CLS Area, just to the north of Cleve Hill. This is a large cluster of structures synonymous with a substation infrastructure. The CLS Area and the 2 km and 5 km Study Areas is traversed by a line of large 400 kV lattice pylons and overhead power lines which run in a relatively uniform east/west orientation. They pass to the north of the village of Yorkletts in the east linking to Cleve Hill substation within the CLS Area. They continue to travel west through the centre of the CLS Area travelling across its length from the existing substation and extend beyond the CLS Area over Faversham Creek heading west and extending to the south of the settlement of Uplees and into the wider landscape, beyond the 5 km Landscape Study Area. These structures form a prominent feature within the CLS Area and are the largest structures in the wider landscape until the eye meets Kingsferry bridge, the chimney of the Isle of Grain Power station and Kentish Flats offshore wind farm; London Array wind farm is visible in the distance beyond. They are prominent for both landscape and visual receptors defining an industrial presence within the open landscape of the CLS Area and 5 km Study Area.

211. To the south of the CLS Area and the 400 kV pylon corridor there is an 11 kV powerline. This runs from Nagden in the west of the CLS Area in a north-east direction toward Cleve Hill with a small spur running south towards Warm House.

212. Within the 5 km Study Area there are number of existing solar farms, which include Abbey Fields Solar Farm, located approximately 1.3 km to the south of the CLS Area. There is a further solar farm situated on the Isle of Sheppey off Leysdown Road; however, this is outside the 5 km Study Area.

213. There is a large offshore wind farm development to the north east at Kentish Flats (and another offshore wind farm, London Array sometimes visible beyond). Turbines from these developments are visible from the Saxon Shore Way on a clear day looking to the northeast across The Swale.

7.3.3.6 Public Rights of Way (PRoW), Cycle Routes, Roads and Rail

214. All PROWs within 1 km of the CLS Area are shown on Figure 13.1. There are two Public Rights of Way (PRoW) which cross the CLS Area.

215. PRoW (ZR485) is located between the Saxon Shore Way Long Distance Footpath ((LDF) ZR484) and Sandbanks Road. This is located in the west of the CLS Area and runs in a north to south direction. The first part of this route travels along a hard-core farm track and half way along the track it runs on a northeast direction through agricultural land. Where it meets one of the drainage ditches it follows the ditch in a northerly direction connecting with the Saxon Shore Way. This route can provide a circular loop from Nagden with the Saxon Shore Way.

216. PRoW (ZR488) is located in the south eastern part of the CLS Area and runs in a north easterly to south westerly direction. The PRoW follows a southwest course from where it crosses the existing Cleve Hill Substation access road; to the northeast of here a further path ZR692 runs parallel to Seasalter Road. From here the footpath runs southwest up Cleve Hill and onto Graveney Hill where it crosses Cleve Hill Road and runs through the CLS, diagonally across fields denoted as Y and Z, to the south of field W, as shown on Figure 5.2. It leaves the CLS and continues in a southwest direction east of field X where it terminates near The Old Vicarage near Broom Street, Graveney.

217. At The Old Vicarage, ZR488 provides access to a wider footpath network to the east and west. To the east footpath ZR488 footpath ZR488 links to footpath ZR489 to the edge of Graveney, and footpath ZR490 which runs in a southwest to northeast line between Sandbanks Road/Graveney Village Hall, northeast to All Saints Church, Graveney. To the west, footpath ZR488 links to footpath ZR486 which runs in an east-west orientation passing close to the southern boundary of the CLS Area towards the west. This footpath completes an almost circular PRoW link surrounding the CLS Area where it connects to the Saxon Shore Way LDF ZR484.

218. The Saxon Shore Way LDF ZR484 (CW55 within the Canterbury boundary and ZF32 and ZF1 on the opposite side of Faversham Creek) runs adjacent to the western and northern boundary of the CLS Area. The Saxon Shore Way runs along the top of the flood defence enabling visual receptors views across the CLS Area and the 5 km Study Area including views across the Swale. The route of the Saxon Shore Way is currently proposed by Natural England to become part of the "England Coast Path", which covers the stretch of coastline between Whitstable to Iwade. The Saxon Shore Way is 262 km in length, with 7 km of the path being adjacent to the CLS Area.

219. To the south, west and east of the CLS Area and in the 5 km Study Area there is an extensive network of PRoW.

220. National Cycle Route 1 runs along Faversham Road/Seasalter Road to the east of the CLS Area and then runs to the south of the CLS Area along Sandbanks Road where it diverts to the southwest towards Faversham Creek where it continues into Faversham.

221. There are a number of roads in proximity to the CLS Area and within the 5 km Study Area. Faversham Road/Seasalter Road is located to the east of the CLS Area, where the Cleve Hill Substation access road joins Seasalter Road. Monkshill Road runs east from Seasalter Road in Graveney, and Sandbanks Road runs west from Seasalter Road south of Graveney. The M2 leading to the A299 passes approximately 2 km to the south of the CLS Area in southwest to northeast direction. The A2 runs in a northwest to southeast direction approximately 2.8 km to the south of the CLS Area. The A251 runs perpendicular to the CLS Area approximately 3.1 km away. A network of minor roads run throughout the 5 km Study Area connecting hamlets and villages with Faversham and Whitstable and the surrounding highway network described above.

222. The Chatham Main railway line runs approximately 0.8 km to the southeast of the CLS Area running from Whitstable southwest to Faversham where it runs in a westerly direction towards London.

7.3.3.7 Boat Users

223. Along Oare Creek and Faversham Creek there are a number of boat yards and mooring facilities where boat users will use the Creeks to enter into The Swale, and the wider Thames Estuary or the North Sea.

7.3.3.8 Field Pattern

224. Within the western part of the CLS Area the field boundaries are large and linear in shape spanning the CLS Area north to south and bounded by drainage ditches. Fields in the eastern part of the CLS Area by comparison are smaller in nature with a greater

number of north/south ditches, and divided diagonally (generally southwest to northeast) by further drainage ditches.

225. Within the wider landscape of the 5 km Study Area to the east there is a similar pattern to fields divided by ditches although they are generally sub divided east to west by ditches becoming more irregular/natural towards Denley Hill and Seasalter levels. To the west the arrangement is less defined and interrupted by larger ponds and waterbodies and natural ditch arrangements.

226. Within the wider landscape, field patterns become more defined by vegetation such as hedgerows, shelter belts and woodlands with shelter belts and woodland becoming the dominant factor in field patterns the further east, south and west.

7.3.3.9 Aesthetic Factors

227. The CLS Area is relatively remote and windswept in character with open views across the site's length (east to west) and width (north to south) which is expansive and simplistic in nature with big skies. There is a relatively sparse population in the immediate surrounding area. The seascape to the north of the CLS Area provides a visual focal point in the landscape forming a strong character area between the CLS Area and the Isle of Sheppey; together with the distinct character of Faversham Creek.

228. The land is subject to intensive agricultural use which gives it a flat, uniform appearance at all times of year whether cropped, stubble or cultivated. The natural landform of Cleve and Graveney Hill to the east, and the distant surrounding landscape towards the Isle of Sheppey to the north, Whitstable in the east, Faversham to the south, Ternham to the west, and the wider landscape beyond the M2 and the A229 define the setting to the landscape on site.

229. The vegetated edges along the southern boundaries and the landscape associated with Graveney Fruit Farms creates a low level enclosure to the CLS Area. The site is traversed by a network of linear watercourses running predominantly north to south in orientation. These man-made features have a natural appearance associated with similar features in the wider landscape and the remnants of marshland drainage creating a pattern of field division within the CLS Area. These ditches are vegetated to just beyond the top of banks, (noting that the dynamic as the ditches are cleared periodically) and form linear features through the CLS Area, breaking up the open expanse visually. The largest of these features lies to the southwest of the CLS Area where it forms a triangular shaped area of reeds. The scale of the CLS Area is of a landscape scale as opposed to a human scale due to the size of the area at over 400 ha. It is for this reason that it becomes difficult to judge distance, in part due to the simplicity of features and in part because of the sheer scale of the landscape. It is the scale of this landscape that balances structures such as the existing substation and agricultural barns to the east; and to some degree the pylons.

230. The landscape is also contained visually in part by distance of view and low elevation across the length of the CLS Area but also due to the presence of the large flood defence which contains views and creates a sense of enclosure, removing a visual relationship with The Swale beyond. The CLS Area contains virtually no vegetation, only that limited to arable crops with the exception of trees/scrub associated with the triangular drainage feature to the southwest.

231. The aesthetic value of the landscape is its open nature defined by big skies and simple form; together with the distant backdrop of the surrounding landscapes.

232. The 2 km and 5 km Study Areas consists of many types of landscape character which cumulatively creates an attractive overall landscape. Landscape features such as the 400 kV powerlines are however detractors to this landscape as they interrupt the majority of views especially in proximity to the CLS Area.

7.3.4 Landscape Value of the CLS Area

233. In determining the landscape value of the CLS Area, a review of the Area of High Landscape Value - Kent Level (AHLV – Kent Level) was undertaken (Policy DM24 of The Swale Borough Local Plan). The latest assessment relating to landscape value for this designation was undertaken in Technical Paper 6: Interim Review of Local Landscape Designations and Important Countryside Gaps December 2014. This technical paper assesses the area entitled the 'Southern Section – Upchurch to Graveney'. The following extract describes the state of the landscape at the time of the assessment:

> *"Despite some distracting features, notably electricity pylons, the marshes along the southern coastline of The Swale are generally in good condition, being remote, inaccessible, or isolated, and therefore retaining their coherent visual unity and landscape quality. Graveney Marshes is of less favourable condition, due largely to modern agricultural practices and the presence of the substation at Cleve Hill, a recent distraction from the quality of the AHLV-Kent Level. This area should be considered further in a fuller landscape review of the designations. However, with the exception of Cleve Hill substation, there has been little change since 2003. At that time all of this area was considered suitable for inclusion within the SLA due to the continued visual integrity of the marshland and therefore, with the proviso that this area is reviewed in the future, it is considered appropriate to retain the boundary at this location as it stands until that full review"*[42].

234. This extract refers to the entire southern section of the AHLV – Kent Level; however, provides specific reference to the CLS Area and surrounding landscape. It describes Graveney Marshes as being in a less favourable position, 'due largely to modern agricultural practices and the presence of the substation at Cleve Hill, a recent distraction from the quality of the AHLV-Kent Level', and recommends a fuller landscape review. The technical appendix then assesses each LCA (as defined in the Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal, September 2011) within the AHLV – Kent Level designation based on an assessment of their: Condition; Sensitivity and provides brief guidelines for high level management. The three LCA's relating to the CLS Area include the following:

- Graveney Marshes;
- Graveney Grazing Lands; and
- Graveney Arable Farmlands.

235. Of the above, the following assessment was determined:

- Graveney Marshes: Moderate condition; Moderate sensitivity; Guideline: Conserve & Create;
- Graveney Grazing Lands: Good condition; High sensitivity; Guideline: Conserve; and
- Graveney Arable Farmlands: Poor condition; Moderate sensitivity; Guideline: Restore and Create.

236. Graveney Arable Farmlands were described as poor due to, '*Graveney Arable Farmlands where access, modern built form and changes in farming practice have degraded the landscape. Agricultural practice in this area has changed little since 2003, however, the Cleve Hill substation, in the adjacent character area is a dominant and detracting feature in the landscape. This is an area for a future, full, review to assess further*[43]'.

237. In the 'Review Conclusion' summary it recommends that the following be considered as part of a full landscape designation review, 'Consideration of boundary amendments, to reflect deterioration in landscape quality should be given in the full landscape

[42] Swale Borough Council Technical Paper 6: Interim Review of Local Landscape Designations and Important Countryside Gaps December 2014.
[434343] Ibid 55

designation review and should include a review of Graveney Marshes and Graveney Arable Farmlands'[44]. This review relates to the two main LCAs within the CLS Area the most notable of which is Graveney Marshes LCA 5 which covers the majority of the CLS Area.

238. In light of the above, further assessment has been undertaken to determine the landscape value of the CLS Area at the time of writing to understand its current value based on professional judgement.

239. The criteria used to assess landscape is undertaken in line with Box 5.1 in GLVIA3[45], as illustrated in Table 7.5. Table 7.18 below provides such assessment to determine the current landscape value of the CLS Area.

Table 7.18 Factors Considered in Assessing Landscape Value

Factor	Assessment of Value	Notes
Landscape Quality (Condition)	Local	The landscape within the CLS Area is considered to be a featureless landscape which is reinforced by the dominance of agricultural cereal production which creates a uniform land cover. Vegetation within the landscape is sparse and limited to sparse naturalising scrub. The 400 kV overhead power line corridor dominates the skyline east to west, and south. Cleve Hill Substation creates a detraction within the landscape due to its scale, form and elevated located at the base of Cleve Hill; however due to distance its overall effect is reduced. Large steel agricultural barns on the edge of the CLS Area are viewed cumulatively with Cleve Hill and therefore appear an extension to the substation albeit of an agricultural nature and Drainage ditches and vegetated banks, including reeds forms a positive elements within the landscape, albeit altered from their historical position in the landscape (which are periodically cleared and maintained). The landscape is open with big skies. The landscape to the north of the flood defence is intact and has a much higher quality than that within the CLS Area. Here the landscape represents a natural shoreline and expansive views to sea across the flood defence.
Scenic Quality	Local	The open nature of the site and agricultural land use enables the wider landscape to be seen for a long distance. Its proximity to other LCAs particularly Graveney Fruit Farms creates a start contrast to the landscape and is appreciated by local residents and recreational users of the Saxon Shore Way and other PROW users within the CLS Area and beyond. The CLS Area also has a sense of remoteness due to its open nature and quietness.
Rarity	Local	Similar scale, flat open landscapes are present in the surrounding LCAs within the AHLV – Kent Level.
Representativeness	Local	The scale and open nature; together with the presence of ditches are representative of the Graveney Grazing Marshes LCA. This also includes the presence of the 400 kV overhead power lines. Cleve Hill Substation and adjacent large agricultural barns are not representative of the qualities considered to define the AHLV – Kent Level.

[44] Ibid 55
[45] Landscape Institute Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, Box 5.1, Page 84.

Factor	Assessment of Value	Notes
Conservation Interests	Local	The site contains a number of recorded Historical Environmental Records (HER) within the site as per the Heritage Chapter. The CLS Area itself contains no ecological designations. The CLS Area adjoins a number of international and national ecological designations.
Recreation Value	Regional/ National	Saxon Shore Way Long Distance footpath runs to the north of the CLS Area. The experience of the landscape is an important component of its use and its proximity to the CLS Area is close. National Cycle Route 1 runs to the east and south of the CLS Area. The experience of the landscape is an important component of its use and its proximity to the CLS Area is dynamic ranging from close to distant. There are several PROW within and surrounding the CLS Area. The experience of the landscape is an important component of their use and their proximity to the CLS Area is close.
Perceptual aspects	Local	Openness of the landscape whilst enclosed by the flood defence; together with an absence of features in the landscape create an element of tranquillity across the site due to distance from roads and proximity to The Swale. This is particularly pronounced in respect of the Saxon Shore Way on top of the flood defence looking north where the character becomes exposed and the scent of the sea is present at the northern section.
Associations	Local	Ecological associations for bird watching and historical associations associated with WWII e.g., the battle of Graveney Marsh.

240. The CLS Area is similar in scale to the flat open landscape and grazing marshes which are present within the 2 km Study Area. The CLS Area contains a number of recorded Historical Environmental Records (HER), but no scheduled monuments or listed buildings. The CLS Area itself contains no ecological designations but does adjoin a number of international, national and local ecological designations such as The Swale RAMSAR site, SPA and SSSI, and South Bank of the Swale Local Nature Reserve.

241. The Saxon Shore Way Long Distance footpath runs to the north of the site and National Cycle Route 1 runs to the east and south of the CLS Area. There are other PRoWs within the CLS Area and in its vicinity.

242. The perceptual qualities provide openness and big skies which has value within the LCA for residents and recreational users from the Saxon Shore Way and other PRoWs. There is an element of tranquillity across the site due to distance from roads and proximity to The Swale and the coast beyond. There are ecological associations for bird watching and historical associations associated with the battle of Graveney Marsh.

243. The presence of large 400kV overhead pylons that dissect the centre of the site and the presence of the 400kV substation and a number of large metal agricultural sheds provide dominant features within the flat, open and low-lying nature of the site.

244. Considering the local authority designation present on site (AHLV – Kent Level) and along with the above assessment of landscape value for the site, overall the landscape value of the site is of Local value, albeit to the lower end of this value assessment due to the consideration of the CLS Area being a featureless landscape dominated by intensive agricultural use, and the presence of physical detractors.

7.3.5 Residential Receptors

245. There are a number of settlements within the 5 km Study Area.

246. The closest rural residential properties are at Nagden, immediately to the southwest of the CLS Area where there is a cluster of five properties. The property of Warm House sits directly outside the southern edge of the CLS Area. To the south of the CLS Area there a number of residential properties situated on Sandbanks Road and Broom Street, with the nearest situated 173 m south of the CLS Area. To the east of the CLS Area, Crown Cottages and properties along Cleve Hill (road) lie close to the CLS Area and south of the existing 400 kV Cleve Hill Substation. Graveney Hill Farm is situated 322 m to the east of the CLS Area. Adjoining the southern eastern boundary of the CLS Area there are a cluster of properties and farms, which are located off Seasalter Road towards Graveney.

247. To the west of the CLS Area and Faversham Creek lie Harty Ferry Cottages, situated 733 m from the CLS Area. On the edge of Oare Creek and Faversham Creek is the Shipwrights Arms public house and the residential property of Hollowshore House, which lie 212 m to the west of the CLS Area.

248. To the northeast of the CLS Area along the edge of The Swale there are a number of beach chalets; these are situated 483 m from the CLS Area.

249. Within the 5 km Study area there are a large number of isolated residential properties and farms.

250. Residential receptors are considered as part of the RVAA in Technical Appendix A7.4.

7.3.6 Viewpoints and Photomontages

251. There are a total of 22 no. viewpoint photographs from visual receptors likely to be affected by the Development, which are shown during summer and winter. The viewpoint locations are shown on Figure 7.10, in Volume 2. Viewpoint photography is shown in Figures 7.11 to 7.31 for winter photography and Figures 7.32 to 7.54 for the summer photography in Volume 3. Viewpoint 22 has no winter photography as this viewpoint was requested following Section 42 Consultation in June 2018.

252. Ten of these viewpoint locations are represented in summer and winter photomontages which provide illustrations of what the Development will look like once the Development is built at year 1, 5 and at year 10; together with planting mitigation. These photomontage locations are shown on Figure 7.10, in Volume 2 and photomontages are shown in Figures 7.55 to 7.134 in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 – 6.3.10). Viewpoint 22 has no winter photomontages as this viewpoint was requested during Section 42 Consultation in June 2018.

253. Table 7.19 lists out the viewpoint and photomontage locations and reason for selection.

Table 7.19 Viewpoint and Photomontage Locations

Viewpoint Number	Viewpoint Name	Distance and Direction from CLS Area	Reason for Selection of Viewpoint
1	Saxon Shore Way Long Distance Footpath close to Nagden Cottages	On boundary of the CLS Area	Recreational users along the Saxon Shore Way. Winter and Summer Photomontage to represent recreational users which are of higher sensitivity.
2	Saxon Shore Way in the north west corner of site	45 m to the north of the CLS Area.	Recreational users along the Saxon Shore Way. Winter and Summer Photomontage to

Viewpoint Number	Viewpoint Name	Distance and Direction from CLS Area	Reason for Selection of Viewpoint
			represent recreational users which are of higher sensitivity.
3	Saxon Shore Way at Junction of Public Right of Way (ZR485)	55 m to the north of the CLS Area.	Recreational users along the Saxon Shore Way. Winter and Summer Photomontage to represent recreational users which are of higher sensitivity.
4	Saxon Shore Way Long Distance Footpath north east corner of site	460 m to the east of the CLS Area.	Recreational users along the Saxon Shore Way. Winter and Summer Photomontage to represent recreational users which are of higher sensitivity.
5	National Cycle Route 1 along Faversham Road	456 m to the east of the CLS Area.	Recreational users and road users.
6	Public Right of Way (ZR488) on Graveney Hill	Within the CLS Area.	Recreational users of the PRoW. Winter and Summer Photomontage to represent recreational users.
7	Public Right of Way (ZR488) near southern boundary of site	51 m to the south of the CLS Area.	Recreational users of the PRoW. Winter and Summer Photomontage to represent recreational users.
8	Public Right of Way (ZR490) in proximity to All Saints Church	512 m to the south of the CLS Area.	Recreational users of the PRoW. Winter and Summer Photomontage to represent recreational users.
9	Victory Wood	4.4 km to the south east of the CLS Area.	Recreational users to vantage point on Victory Wood. Winter and Summer Photomontage to represent recreational users.
10	Public Right of Way (ZR486) near Warm House	241 m to the south of the CLS Area.	Recreational users of the PRoW.
11	Church Road, Oare	1.4 km to the south west of the CLS Area.	Residential and Road users.
12	Saxon Shore Way Long Distance Footpath at Shipwright Arms (ZF1)	200 m to the south west of the CLS Area.	Recreational users along the Saxon Shore Way. Winter and Summer Photomontage to represent recreational users.
13	Saxon Shore Way Long Distance Footpath at Oare Marshes Nature Reserve (ZR234)	420 m to the north west of the CLS Area.	Recreational users along the Saxon Shore Way.
14	The Church of St. Thomas the Apostle, Harty	1.8 km to the north of the CLS Area.	Users of the church
15	Public Right of Way (ZS40) at Swale National Nature Reserve	2.4 km to the north of the CLS Area.	Recreational users of PROW, and users of the Nature Reserve.

Viewpoint Number	Viewpoint Name	Distance and Direction from CLS Area	Reason for Selection of Viewpoint
16	Whitstable Harbour	5.5 km to the north east of the CLS Area.	Recreational users at Whitstable Harbour
17	Public Right of Way (ZS42 - Bridleway) near to Mocketts Farm	2.28 km to the north west of the CLS Area.	Recreational users of the PRoW.
18	Wraik Hill, Pilgrims Lane, Whitstable	3.8 km to the east of the CLS Area.	Residential properties and road users
19	Whitstable, Boorman Way	4.3 km to the east of the CLS Area.	Road and pedestrian users
20	Shepherds Hill, Kent Downs AONB	7.3 km to the south of the CLS Area.	Road and recreational users
21	Mount Ephraim, House Entrance	3.3 km to the south east of the CLS Area.	Visitors to Mount Ephraim House and Gardens
22 (North view)	Public Right of Way (ZR485) through Site (Looking north)	Within the CLS Area.	Recreational users of the PRoW. Summer Photomontage to represent recreational users.
22 (South View)	Public Right of Way (ZR485) through Site (Looking south)	Within the CLS Area.	Recreational users of the PRoW. Summer Photomontage to represent recreational users.

7.3.7 Future Baseline

254. Agricultural policy and land ownership and management will dictate how the land within the site is farmed. With such inherent uncertainties, an assessment of the effects of the Development under future climate change scenarios would yield results that are not meaningful. The assessment is therefore undertaken under the assumption that there will not be any substantive changes in the baseline during the Development, and/or that the effects of the Development will not change during the operational phase.

7.4 Development Design Mitigation

7.4.1 Introduction

255. A full description of measures to mitigate and enhance landscape and biodiversity are set out in Technical Appendix A5.2: *Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan*, with the key aspects and rationale summarised here.

256. The CLS Area is set within an open landscape with limited vegetation comprising of hedges or trees, other than that of the crops both within the CLS Area itself and to the north, east and western boundaries. Adjacent to the southern boundary of the CLS Area the boundary is well vegetated including hedgerows, individual trees and tree lined blocks/shelterbelts. Within the CLS Area there are tall reeds within the drainage ditches which dissect the fields and define their boundaries. Beyond the CLS Area there are small blocks of woodland and a network of hedgerows. The CLS Area will therefore benefit from hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting to assist in screening the Development whilst also trying to maintain the open views over the hedgerows towards

the flood defence and The Swale to the north, and from the Saxon Shore Way south across the CLS Area to the higher land beyond. The proposed planting will bring additional amenity and biodiversity value to the local area.

257. The landscape enhancement measures are designed to complement and enhance existing landscape character at the CLS Area and in the surrounding area. The landscape enhancement measures also aim to improve integration of the Development in to the landscape and to minimise visual effects by creating vegetated layers within the south eastern area of the CLS Area.

258. Below briefly summarises what has been included as mitigation. More detail of the landscape enhancements and biodiversity and the management for each of the types of mitigation can be found in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan. Where planting is proposed, the proposed species mix, number and height of plants can be found in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan.

7.4.2 Design Evolution of the Project

259. The design of the Development and its evolution is discussed in Chapter 4: Site Selection, Development Design and Consideration of Alternatives.

7.4.3 New Hedgerow and Hedgerow Tree Planting

260. New hedgerows will be planted on the south and south eastern part of the CLS Area and will include hedgerow trees. All species will be native and are characteristic of species found with the area. The hedgerows will consist of a double staggered row of bare root hedge plants planted at a density of five plants per linear metre.

7.4.4 Native Species Shelterbelt Planting

261. There are areas of native shrub and tree shelterbelt planting which are mainly concentrated around the southern and eastern areas of the CLS Area. These areas are intended to create structure to the landscape and assist in screening the panels from residential and PROW receptors. Taller trees will also be planted to provide some height matching areas of similar character between the Graveney Fruit Farms and Graveney Arable Farmlands LCA. The mix also includes species such as Poplar and Alder to provide additional structure and character.

7.4.5 Grassland Areas

262. A number of different grazing and management areas are proposed throughout the CLS Area. The majority of the CLS Area, from where the proposed compound is located in the east to the western part of the CLS Area, will form part of the grazing marsh where land will be grazed by sheep. On the south eastern part of the CLS Area an area of lowland meadow planting is proposed. This will be maintained mechanically twice per year as hay meadow. The area in the west and north of the security fence is an area of proposed grazing marsh which will be maintained mechanically one every year after September to provide habitat for nesting birds and to ensure a replenishment of the seedbank is provided each year. To the east of the site compound an area of c. 56 ha is proposed as habitat management area for over wintering birds.

7.4.6 Scrub Planting

263. Throughout the CLS Area there are areas of scrub planting proposed which are mainly concentrated on the edge adjacent to the Saxon Shore Way, and near ditches and boundaries. More scrub areas are located on the western and northern edge of the CLS Area. These areas will help to enrich the areas of grassland creating a simple habitat and a replication of existing natural scrub establishment around the perimeter of the CLS Area.

7.4.7 Bund Area and Proposed Planting

264. The electrical compound will be enclosed in a bund, for protection from potential flood risk.

265. On the northern, eastern, and western, edges of the bund there will be native species buffer planting. On the southern edge of the bund a native species shelterbelt will be planted which is taller in size to assist with the screening of the taller substation equipment in this part of the compound. The buffer planting consists of trees and shrubs which will create informal and natural landscape features.

7.4.8 Woodland Planting

266. An area of woodland planting is proposed in front of Warm House to the south of the CLS Area. This area of woodland is proposed following consultation with the resident to assist in screening the Development. The woodland planting provides an important habitat with the local area and contributes to the landscape character of Graveney Fruit Farms, linking hedgerows, shelterbelts and woodlands as part of the local green infrastructure. The role of the proposed woodland planting will be to create a visual screen along a section of the southern boundary of the Development site immediately adjacent to Warm House and north of the Graveney Fruit Farms Landscape Character Area. This will extend the influence of the landscape character area and provide a dense visual screen between Warm House and the Development.

7.5 Assessment of Landscape Effects

267. This section describes the likely effects at the construction, operation and decommissioning stages of the project on the landscape and visual amenity.

268. For the effects assessed below, a tabular representation of the application of the methodology set out in Section 7.2 for the assessment of landscape effects is provided in Technical Appendix A7.2.

7.5.1 Landscape Effects Arising from the Construction Phase

269. Construction traffic for the Development will use the existing Cleve Hill Substation entrance from Seasalter Road. There will be no earthworks associated with installation of the solar panels as the frames will be driven into the existing ground. However, there will be large scale earthworks associated with the creation of the electrical compound and earth bund and the main site access track / spine road. The movement of construction vehicles associated with this bund construction and deliveries with equipment will be visible, when viewed from the north and east across the CLS Area.

270. No existing trees or hedgerows will be removed during construction of the Development and potential effects on existing vegetation will be managed during construction by the implementation of suitable buffer areas which will be cordoned off with fencing in line with BS5837:2012 where applicable. A drainage ditch that currently runs through the proposed substation compound area is to be diverted around the northern boundary of the substation compound. There will be removal of existing reeds and vegetation within the ditch proposed for diversion. The construction process is proposed to be undertaken in two phases. Phase one of the Development is anticipated to last 24 months which will include site preparation and civil engineering works and solar PV array construction, testing and commissioning and landscaping/habitat creation. The second phase of Development includes the establishment of the energy storage facility and is expected to last up to 6 months either during or subsequent to phase one. The works during this phase will include installation of the cabling, foundation construction, installation of transformers and other associated equipment for the battery storage area. The main temporary construction compound will be established in the electrical

compound area. There will be temporary compounds in many of the fields, comprising small unsurfaced areas with welfare facilities and storage of tools and materials. These will be established adjacent to fields under construction. Lighting may be used during the construction phase but will be kept to a minimum and would be controlled by an operative during the working hours.

271. Further physical landscape resources would be lost during the construction phase of the Development for the creation of the access route to the north of the existing substation and the spine road which runs centrally through the CLS Area in an east to west axis. Through the creation of the spine road a number of new and upgraded culverts are proposed over ditches that are crossed by the creation of the spine road, and by the creation of access around the perimeter of the CLS Area where existing crossings are improved or ditches crossed and/or rationalised. These are specified in the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (Technical Appendix A5.4). There will be a loss of arable land and a loss of openness created by the introduction of solar panels, battery storage area and spine road. The removal of the 11 kV wooden pole line would remove a vertical feature present in the baseline situation. There would be ground disturbance during the installation of the 11 kV underground cable, but noting that such disturbance would be reinstated during the construction phase. The introduction of grassland habitats across the site will replace the loss of arable land, around and under the solar PV modules. During construction there may be requirement for temporary roadways depending on weather conditions, for example rubberised or plastic matting to avoid excessive soil disturbance or compaction.

272. Local landscape character area LCA 5 Graveney Marshes would undergo **Major/Moderate** effects which are significant. The majority of LCA 5 would be taken over by the Development, where the open nature of the land will be replaced with solar panels and grassland, the site compound and creation of access roads.

273. The Area of High Landscape Value (Kent Level), where it lies within the CLS Area, would have **Major/Moderate** landscape effects which are significant. There would be a loss of the overall landscape character and aesthetic qualities that this area has been designated for due to the introduction of the solar panels and associated infrastructure; however perceptual qualities of openness and big skies would be maintained due to the low height of the Development and low intensity of maintenance required. Elements of the AHLV Kent Level that lie outside the CLS Area would have **Moderate/Minor** effects that are not significant.

274. The landscape elements of the CLS Area itself will also be significantly affected, with **Major** effects on scenic value, recreational value and perceptual aspects, and **Major/Moderate** effects on landscape quality (condition), rarity, representativeness and associations (e.g., with bird watching). These effects are confined to the areas in which substantial construction activity is taking place, namely the electrical compound area, spine road and solar PV module areas.

275. The significant landscape effects are localised to the CLS Area. The landscape effects over the construction period will increase towards the level of operational effects as the number of installed panels increases and other associated infrastructure is erected. The construction phase effects would be short-term and reversible.

276. All the other landscape receptors that have been assessed would have Negligible, Minor or Moderate/Minor landscape effects which are not significant.

7.5.2 Landscape Effects Arising from the Operational Phase

277. The effects during the operational phase of the Development relate primarily to the change in land use from agricultural land to that of a solar PV and energy storage development including solar PV modules, battery storage, ancillary equipment and an

electrical compound. This will have a physical effect on landscape character in that the Development will occupy an area of land within the CLS Area. The Development will also affect aesthetic and perceptual aspects of landscape character where it is visible from the surrounding landscape.

278. The effects during the operational phase are assessed at year 1, 5 and year 10 when the landscape enhancement measures described in section 7.4 have been implemented. During years 5 to 10 where there is a noticeable reduction in effect compared to year 1 this is described in the assessment text. In Technical Appendix A7.2: *Assessment of Potential Landscape Effects*, completed assessment tables can be found showing how the overall sensitivity and magnitude led to significance of effects.

7.5.2.1 The Core Landscape Study Area

279. During the operational stage of the Development the agricultural land use will be changed to grassland with solar arrays. Solar PV modules are arranged on tables which are angled towards the east and west at a slope of 8 degrees from horizontal. The distance between each of these east/west tables is approximately 2.5 m. Where there are transformers between tables, the distance could be approximately 10 m. The introduction of grass seed mixes growing beneath and around the solar panels would change the current groundcover. Existing vegetation which is predominantly adjacent to the southern boundary of the CLS Area would remain intact and will be supplemented by the additional planting and enhancement measures described in section 7.4 and in the Outline Landscape and Biodiversity Management Plan in Technical Appendix A5.2. The Development will affect the open nature of the landscape within the CLS Area which will change the appearance of the current baseline. This effect will be experienced primarily when viewing the CLS Area from its boundaries (except from elevated locations) and from within the CLS Area itself. The CLS Area is contained by the elevated flood defence which runs to the north and west of the CLS Area.

280. The existing drainage ditches which divide the field pattern would remain the same with the panels been placed within the existing field pattern. There would be removal of a small number of fences and gates which are contained within the CLS Area to accommodate the Development. There will be an of 2 m high 'deer' fencing which contains the panel areas; these run around the periphery of the solar farm and either side of PRoW (ZR485) and the proposed permissive path, which run through the CLS Area.

281. The majority of the components of the Development are low to medium in height with solar panels ranging in heights from 3 m to 3.9 m high, with the tallest equipment limited to and associated with the proposed substation compound area and bund. This is in comparison to the existing operational existing Cleve Hill Substation, pylons, telegraph poles and large agricultural buildings, which are considerably taller structures already present within the CLS Area. The Development extends over a large geographical area, larger than that of the existing taller infrastructure already present on site. CCTV cameras of up to 3 m high will be noticeable around the site fencing. The electrical compound and construction of the access roads would increase the amount of hardstanding and equipment which is situated close the existing 400 kV Cleve Hill substation and two large agricultural buildings. The spine road would extend for the majority of length of the Development site, following the alignment of the existing 400 kV Overhead Line. However, this would be seen in context with larger, existing features present adjacent to the CLS Area as stated above. The removal of the 11 kV wooden pole line would remove a detracting feature present in the baseline where it crosses the CLS Area.

282. Both PRoWs which run through the CLS Area (ZR488 and ZR485) would remain in the same location and would follow existing grassed tracks through the CLS Area. There

would be changes in the perceptual and aesthetic qualities of the site such as remoteness and its simplistic nature. This is due to the addition of the uniform solar panels/ man-made structures which will reduce the sense of remoteness across the site.

283. The sensitivity of the CLS Area has been assessed as medium-high, due to its value and susceptibility to development, the open nature and simplicity of the landscape and recreational land uses which are present on site. While the Development will result in physical effects within the CLS Area, it will not result in the removal or alteration of features and elements contained within it. The effect of the Development is therefore primarily upon the open character and occupancy of arable farmland with solar panels. The magnitude of change at the CLS Area is therefore considered to be substantial due to the size and extent which the Development will occupy. The magnitude combined with a Medium sensitivity, results in a **Major** or **Major/Moderate** effect which is significant. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be negative. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

7.5.2.2 National Landscape Character Areas (NCA)

284. The CLS Area falls within NCA 81, Greater Thames Estuary, which is characterised as predominantly flat, low-lying coastal landscape where extensive open spaces are dominated by the sky and pervasive presence of water and numerous coastal estuaries. There is a strong feeling of remoteness and wilderness of marshes, mudflats and reclaimed farmed marshland. The overall sensitivity is defined as low. The magnitude of change would be Slight due to the extent of which the Development would occupy within the NCA. This would result in **Minor** effects which are not significant. These effects would be the same for Years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Other NCAs in the 5 km Study Area

285. All of the remaining national landscape character areas which fall within the 5 km Study Area are not considered further in the assessment due to distance from the CLS Area and the horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development, which would result in limited effects on these landscape character areas.

7.5.2.3 Regional Landscape Character Areas (RLCA)

286. The majority of the site falls within the Eastern Swale Marshes Regional Landscape Character Area which is characterised as remote, wild and exposed, with creeks, ditches, flood defences and grazing marsh. There is intrusion of power lines and pylons and the Cleve Hill substation. The overall sensitivity is defined as low. The magnitude of change would be Moderate due to the size and scale, and geographical extent of the Development in the Eastern Swale Marshes Regional Landscape Character area. This would result in **Moderate/Minor** effects which are not significant. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

287. The majority of the southern edge of the CLS Area lies within the Eastern Fruit Belt RLCA which is characterised as enclosed and diverse with strong woodland blocks. It is rural in character with a sense of remoteness and privacy. There are areas of orchards, hops and shelterbelts, with large pockets of open farmland with undulating landform. Due to the limited extent in which the Development would occupy the RLCA and the enclosure offered by woodland blocks, the sensitivity of the RLCA would be characterised as low based on a combined value and susceptibility. The magnitude of change would be Slight due to the enclosed nature and strong woodland blocks and the fact that only field 'W' would be located within this RLCA. Overall there would be **Minor** effects which are not significant. These effects would be the same for years 1,

5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Other RCAs in the 5 km Study Area

288. All of the remaining RLCAs which fall within the 5 km Study Area are not considered further in the assessment due to distance from the CLS Area and the horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development, which would result in limited effects on these RLCAs.

7.5.2.4 Local Landscape Character Areas

289. The CLS Area falls predominantly within LCA 5 Graveney Marshes but also falls within LCA 21 Graveney Arable Farmlands with the site entrance located within LCA 4 Graveney Grazing Lands of the Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal.

290. Each of these LCAs are assessed below.

Swale Landscape Character Areas (LCA) - LCA 5 Graveney Marshes

291. The Development would almost entirely fill LCA 5 but would be situated in an area defined as of poor landscape condition within the flood defence. The nature of the Development would be broad, expansive and low-lying in nature. The Development would sit within the existing arrangement of large scale arable fields which are divided by the drainage ditches. The sensitivity of LCA 5 would be Medium due to the combined Community value and high susceptibility of the landscape, resulting from the openness, lack of features and low-lying nature of the landform.

292. The Development will result in physical effects on the landscape of LCA 5 as the CLS Area would occupy the majority of the LCA. The Development would sit within the horizontal emphasis of the character area but there would be a loss of remoteness and openness by the Development due to the large geographical expanse the Development will occupy. The magnitude of change would be Substantial and combined with a High sensitivity there would be **Major/Moderate** effect which would be significant. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The effects would be adverse and direct. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible on decommissioning.

Swale LCA 21 Graveney Arable Farmlands

293. The eastern part of the CLS Area is situated within LCA 21 Graveney Arable Farmlands where the condition of the landscape is poor. LCA 21 is formed of gently undulating landscape with localised higher ground, with many internal field boundaries lost. There are fragmented mature hedgerows along lanes supplemented with post and wire fencing. Views are enclosed by vegetation and built development, but wide from within fields and where hedgerows are fragmented. The Development would only occupy a small proportion of the LCA and would sit within the lower lying areas. Sensitivity at the CLS Area and surrounding area is therefore assessed as low.

294. The Development will have limited effects on the overall LCA 21 due to the extent in which the Development will occupy and the horizontal nature of the scheme. The Development will be strengthened and enhanced with the introduction of hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting. Overall the magnitude of change would be Moderate and combined with a medium sensitivity would result in **Moderate/Minor** effects which are not significant. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Swale LCA 4 Graveney Grazing Lands

295. Within the eastern boundary of the CLS Area is LCA 4 Graveney Grazing Lands, which is an open expansive grazing marsh, managed for grazing livestock. Vegetation is limited to grass, reed filled ditches and scattered scrub, with isolated small scale deciduous and coppice woodlands and west pasture valley in the south of the LCA. There would be no direct effects, because the only element of the Development within this LCA is the existing, metalled Cleve Hill Substation access road, and no changes to this are proposed. Due to the horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development and distance there would be limited effects on the overall landscape character. Ecological enhancements for grassland and wintering birds would provide separation between any new built components of the Development and LCA 4 and would provide an extension to the characteristics of this LCA, which is positive in nature. The sensitivity of LCA 4 Graveney Grazing Land is defined as low.

296. Due to the horizontal, low-lying nature of the Development and distance from where the Development would start, the magnitude of change would be Slight which would result in **Minor** effects which are not significant. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

7.5.2.5 Landscape Character Areas near to the Core Landscape Study Area

Swale LCA 22 Graveney Fruit Farms

297. Directly to the south of the CLS Area is LCA 22 Graveney Fruit Farms where there is a strong pattern of enclosure created by shelterbelts and mature hedgerows. There are small isolated mixed deciduous woodland blocks. Settlements are small scale and limited to small hamlets, scattered cottages and farmsteads. There are narrow lanes with few passing places enclosed by windbreaks and hedgerows. There are a number of polytunnels which are present within LCA 22. The overall sensitivity is low.

298. The northern edge of LCA 22 would experience the greatest effects and would be the most sensitive to the Development particularly where there are gaps within the existing vegetation and when polytunnels are not in place to screen views. The Development will be strengthened and enhanced with the introduction of hedgerow and shelterbelt planting. The overall magnitude of change would be Slight in the northern part of the LCA 22 but in the southern part of LCA 22 the magnitude of effects will be Negligible due to the enclosure provided by woodland blocks, built form and distance. Overall there would be **Minor** effects which are not significant. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Swale LCA 6 Ham Marshes

299. Ham Marshes LCA 6, situated to the southwest of the CLS Area, is a large open landscape which is occupied by flat marshland with reed filled ditches. There are areas of rough grassland and important wetland habitats. Faversham Creek is situated in the northern part of LCA 6. The sensitivity is assessed as low. The most northern part of the LCA 6 would be the most sensitive to effects of the Development due to the open nature of the LCA and limited presence of vegetation. The southern part of the LCA would be less sensitive due to the separation distance from the nearest part of the Development. The horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development and presence of the flood defence would minimise effects on the LCA. The Development will be strengthened and enhanced through the introduction of hedgerow and shelterbelt planting in the south west of the CLS Area. The overall magnitude of change would be Slight, which would result in a **Minor** effect which would be not significant. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Swale LCA 8 Luddenham and Conyer Marshes

300. Luddenham and Conyer Marshes, situated to the west of the CLS Area, is flat marshland with reed filled ditches, with traditional gates and fences leading into ditches which prevent cattle from crossing into other fields. It is a large open landscape with areas of rough grassland largely used for cattle and sheep grazing. The landscape is large scale with limited sense of enclosure with boats visible in the swale and the creek. SLCBA describes the landscape condition as good. The sensitivity of the LCA is considered to be low to the Development. The eastern part of the LCA would be the most sensitive to effects of the Development due to the open landscape with limited enclosure. The existing flood defence would minimise effects on LCA 8. Therefore, the magnitude of change is considered to be Slight due to the horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development, which would result in a **Minor** effect which would not be significant. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Other Swale LCAs in the 5 km Study Area

301. All of the remaining landscape character areas which fall within the Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal, Supplementary Planning Document, September 2011 are not considered further in the assessment due to distance from the CLS Area and the horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development, which would result in limited or no effect effects on these landscape character areas.

Canterbury LCAs in the 5 km Study Area - LCA 5 Seasalter Marshes

302. Seasalter Marshes LCA 5 situated to the northeast of the CLS Area, which is a flat open grazing marsh and alluvial marshland. Vegetation consists of grass, wetland plants, reed filled ditches and scattered scrub. Overall the sensitivity is assessed as low to the Development. The western part of the LCA will be the most sensitive due to the openness of the LCA and the intervisibility with the adjoining LCA (in Swale – LCA 5) where the majority of the Development will be located. There is approximately 1 km between where the panels would start within the CLS Area and the LCA, and this factor; together with the horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development would minimise overall landscape effects on the LCA. There is potential for the higher equipment associated with the substation to be visible above the bund. Ecological enhancements for grassland and wintering birds would provide separation between the CLS Area and LCA 5. The magnitude of change would be Slight, which would result in **Minor** effects which are not significant. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but fully reversible.

Other Canterbury LCAs in the 5 km Study Area

303. All of the remaining landscape character areas which fall within the Draft Canterbury Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal, August 2012 are not considered further in the assessment due to distance from the Development and the horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development, which would result in limited effects on these landscape character areas.

7.5.2.6 Area of High Landscape Value – Kent Level (Policy DM24)

304. The CLS Area lies within the AHLV Kent Level (Policy DM24) in the Swale Borough Council Local Plan. It is designated for its local significance to Kent. There will be a loss of arable land use replaced by pastoral land use within the areas occupied by solar panels across a large area of approximately 232.27 ha, which will be replaced by uniform linear arrangements of solar panels mounted on metal alloy frames. The horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development would retain open views across the

AHLV Kent Level from anywhere outside of the CLS Area, including from the Saxon Shore Way. The Development would be seen in the context of the existing Cleve Hill substation already present in the CLS Area. The existing pylons and overhead lines are another prominent detractor within this Area of High Landscape Value. The sensitivity is assessed as high within the CLS Area, but low for the majority of the AHLV which is outside the CLS Area, as referenced in section 7.3.4 and in Technical Appendix A7.2.

305. Land cover beneath the solar panels will be changed from arable crops to native grassland used for grazing sheep following the introduction and establishment of grazing marsh grassland. All existing vegetation within the ditches would remain and the panels would be sited within the existing field patterns which are divided by the drainage ditches. Between the fields of panels, the ditch network will remain and will be enhanced by a grassed area either side of the ditches of between 8 and at 15 m, which will provide increased biodiversity relative to the baseline (see Chapter 8: Ecology) and a stronger definition of the main landscape features currently within the CLS Area. Additional planting and enhancement measures are being introduced to the scheme as part of the overall mitigation proposals. The Development will affect the openness and remoteness of the landscape; however, this effect is primarily within the CLS Area due to visual containment by the flood defence. The magnitude of change would be Moderate due to the extent to which the Development would occupy the Area of High Landscape Value. This would result in **Major/Moderate** effects, which are significant, within the CLS Area, and **Moderate/Minor** effects, which are not significant, outside the CLS Area. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but fully reversible.

7.5.2.7 Area of High Landscape Value – North Kent Marshes (Policy LB2)

306. North Kent Marshes Area of High Landscape Value (Policy LB2) in the Canterbury City Council Local Plan is situated to the east of the CLS Area. There would be limited landscape effects on this local plan designation due to the separation of the Area of High Landscape Value and the CLS Area, and the fact that it is situated 1 km from the compound area. The horizontal low-lying nature of the Development would minimise overall effects. The overall sensitivity is medium, which, with a Negligible magnitude of change would give **Minor** effects, which are not significant. These effects would be the same for years 1, 5 and 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but fully reversible.

Other Landscape Designations in the 5 km Study Area

307. All of the remaining AHLVs which fall within the 5 km Study Area are not considered further in the assessment due to distance from the Development and the horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development, which would result in limited or no effect (and not significant) effects on these designations.

308. The Kent Downs AONB is assessed in Technical Appendix A7.2, for completeness. As for the AHLVs and landscape character areas that are not in the immediate vicinity of the site, however, the distance from the Development and the horizontal and low-lying nature of the Development would result in effects on the AONB of Negligible magnitude, which are assessed as **Moderate/Minor**, and not significant.

7.5.3 Landscape Effects Arising from the Decommissioning Stage

309. Any predicted landscape effects arising from the decommissioning phase will be similar in nature, and no greater, than those predicted for the construction phase which are set out in section 7.5.1.

310. There will be limited disturbance from the removal of the solar panels and plant equipment associated with the decommissioning of the Development. At the end of the

lease of the Development it would be at the discretion of the landowner as to whether they want to keep or remove enhancement measures that have been implemented as part of the Development. For assessment purposes it is assumed that the planting and the bund around the compound and access roads will be removed, which would mean that the landscape would be consistent and return to what it was prior to Development being constructed. There will be a loss of mature planting which will have enhanced the landscape, provided screening for the existing substation in certain views and provided ecological habitats for wildlife which would have been in place for the operational phase of the Development.

311. The effects of decommissioning on landscape resources will see some loss of important landscape features through the removal of vegetation and grassland, assuming it returns to arable agriculture rather than pastoral in use, which will contribute to, and reinforce the landscape character of, the CLS Area and surrounding area. The removal of the bund, if not retained, would see the flat open low-lying natural landscape returning. There would be **Moderate/Minor** effects (which are not significant) on the LCA 5 Graveney Marshes. Effects on landscape elements of the CLS Area itself are assessed as being **Moderate**, and significant, for Scenic Quality, Recreational Value and Perceptual Aspects, and **Moderate/Minor** and not significant for other landscape elements. During the decommissioning stage these effects will become less as the equipment is dismantled and restored back to the baseline situation. The Area of High Landscape Value (Kent Level) would have **Moderate** effects, which are significant. All other landscape receptors assessed would have effects that are not significant. The nature of effect would be adverse but turning neutral over time as it would be restored back to its original landscape character following the removal of solar panels, associated equipment and mitigation enhancement measures implemented as part of the Development. Effects would be short-term and reversible.

7.6 Assessment of Visual Effects

312. This section describes the effects on visual amenity of the 2 km Study Area during the operational phase of the Development, where effects are assessed at year 1 and at years 5 to 10 when the landscape enhancement measures described in section 7.5 will have become established. In Technical Appendix A7.3: *Assessment of Potential Visual Effects*, completed assessment tables can be found showing how the overall sensitivity and magnitude led to significance of effects for each receptor.

7.6.1 Visual Amenity Effects Arising from the Construction Phase

313. The visual effects of construction will be limited to visibility of construction activities with such effects being of short duration and of a temporary nature. The Saxon Shore Way to the north and west of the CLS Area and the immediate PRoW ZR485 which runs through the site would have the greatest effects from the construction of the Development. Users of the Saxon Shore Way would experience open views towards the construction compound, the creation of the bund and vehicle movements, albeit at a distance of more than 2 km on average. Users of the Saxon Shore Way and PRoW directly within the site would have varying degrees of visibility of the use of temporary equipment such as the crane, noting that these would not be required for the entire duration of the construction period. The movement of vehicles and activities to install the mounting structures and erect the panels would be the main visible features, and these would operate in a phased approach across the site. Visual effects over the construction period will increase towards the level of operational effects as the number of installed panels increases and other associated infrastructure is erected.

314. ZR485 and ZR488 run through parts of the CLS Area and would be in proximity to construction activity. The Saxon Shore Way follows an elevated route along the sea defence wall and hence is afforded long-range views across the site. Visual effects on

the Saxon Shore Way, where it runs adjacent to the CLS Area, will be **Major**, on ZR485 will be **Major/Moderate** and on ZR488 will be **Moderate**, which are significant.

315. There would be effects on the NCN 1 cycle route which runs along Seasalter Road as construction traffic leaving and entering the site will use Seasalter Road for a short section of the NCN1 route before the national cycle route turns onto Sandbanks Road. There would be visibility of the main construction area in the distance and creation of the bund. The use of a crane and construction of the bund would be visible, as the views are open due to limited vegetation cover to provide screening. The visual effects over the construction period will increase towards the level of operational effects as the number of installed solar panels increases and other associated infrastructure is erected. During the construction phase, visual effects on cyclists using NCN 1 would have **Major/Moderate** effects, which are significant. These effects are short term, of a temporary nature and available only for a stretch of Faversham Road/Seasalter Road of c. 800 m, where there are open views towards the site. Views of the Development from the NCN 1 along Seasalter Road would be available due to the open nature of the landscape with limited vegetation cover, as shown on Viewpoint 5 on Figure 7.15 (winter view) and Figure 7.36 (summer view) in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 and 6.3.2), however the views are middle-distance views as the start of the Development components are set back from Seasalter Road by a minimum of c. 700 m and in most places over 1 km.

316. Residential properties nearest to the Development site would have visibility during the construction phase. Warm House and properties at Nagden would experience the greatest visual effects due to the open nature of the view. They will have limited distant views towards to the main construction compound but would have full views of the construction works associated with the erection of solar panels, fencing and cameras and temporary smaller construction areas in parts of the site closer to the viewers. There would be **Major** (and significant) visual effects from both Warm House and properties at Nagden. Properties at Harty Ferry Cottages to the west of the CLS Area would have **Major/Moderate** (and significant) visual effects. Properties on Broom Street to the south of the CLS Area would have **Moderate** effects which are significant). Property groups to the east of the CLS Area (All Saints View and Graveney Court Farm, properties along Seasalter Road, Graveney Hill, Crown Cottages and Hill View and Sportsman Public House and Property) would have **Major/Moderate** visual effects which are significant.

317. The beach chalets to the north east of the CLS Area would have distant views towards the temporary compound area and associated construction works including the bund and installation of the battery storage area, albeit partially screened by the sea defence bank and would have Moderate effects (and significant). Property groups which would have **Moderate** visual effects (and significant) are Shipwright Arms/Hollowshore (west of the CLS Area), properties to the east of the CLS Area which include Cedar Croft, holiday cabins and homes and Foreshore Chalets to the north east of the CLS Area. Residential properties in Broom Street and on Sandbanks Road will receive **Moderate** (and significant) visual effects during the construction phase, though other users of these roads would receive not significant effects. All other property groups would have Moderate/Minor visual effects which are not significant. The visual amenity effects on residents during the construction period are assessed in Technical Appendix A7.4: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment.

318. The visual effects are highly localised with those visual receptors within or directly adjacent to site that would experience the greatest effects, and only while construction activity is taking place in parts of the site that are close to the viewer.

7.6.1.1 Lighting (Construction Phase)

319. Given consultee and public comments regarding the area being important for dark skies, viewers of these would be regarded as being of high sensitivity.

320. Lighting may be used during the construction phase (dependent on the time of year) if required and will be minimised as far as possible, and where used will be directed into the works area, away from nearby properties. Careful consideration of the siting of lighting will be undertaken and lighting will be positioned to minimise the spread of light pollution, and ensure that only the task work area or compound is lit to avoid effects on properties during the construction phase. Lighting will either be controlled by operatives and will have PIR (Passive infra-red) motion sensor activated security and emergency lighting. Effects would be limited from the Saxon Shore Way and other PRoW within and close proximity to the CLS Area due to the time of day lighting would be used, as there would be limited people using the footpath during the hours of darkness and any light emitted would be minimal. Construction would take place in a phased approach across the site, so any lighting would be localised to one part of the site at any one time.

321. Given the infrequent and intermittent nature of the lighting and the short-term nature of the construction phase, combined with its isolation to particular locations where PIR motion sensors have been triggered, effects are assessed as Negligible magnitude and therefore **Moderate/Minor**, which is not significant.

7.6.2 Visual Amenity Effects Arising from the Operational Phase

7.6.2.1 Residential Areas

322. The effects on residential properties and areas lying within 1 km of the CLS Area are described in the Residential Visual Amenity Assessment, in Volume 4, Technical Appendix 7.4.

323. In summary, the assessment of effects on eighteen residential groups or individual properties within 1 km of the CLS Area identified that significant effects will occur on thirteen of these residential groups or individual properties duration the operational phase of the Development. After year 10, there will be significant effects on ten property groups or individual properties. There would be **Major** (and significant) effects from both properties at Nagden and Warm House. Warm House even following 10 years of operation once mitigation planting has been established, due to the planting successfully mitigating the majority of views of solar PV infrastructure, the change in view from the base line would be from open, long-distance views across fields to short-range views of trees, which is a fundamental change. Detail assessments of these are reported in Residential Visual Amenity Assessment, in Volume 4, Technical Appendix 7.4.

7.6.2.2 Roads, Recreational Routes and PRoW

324. This section describes the effects arising during the operational phase of the Development on motorists moving through the area on roads within the 2 km Landscape Study Area and users of recreational routes and PRoW. For each of these receptors the value, susceptibility, sensitivity, magnitude and significance of effects have been assessed in Table C1, C2 and C3 in Technical Appendix TA7.3 Assessment of Potential Landscape Effects. These are described below.

National Cycle Network 1 (NCN 1)

325. NCN 1 passes to the east of the CLS Area for approximately 1 km, along Faversham and Seasalter Road to the east of the CLS Area and then runs east-west, a few hundred metres south of the CLS Area along Sandbanks Road. Along the more northern parts of Seasalter Road and more western parts of Faversham Road, for c. 800 m in total, there

are open views towards the site. The overall sensitivity to the Development of cyclists using this route would be high. Views of the Development from the NCN 1 along Seasalter Road would be available due to the open nature of the landscape with limited vegetation cover, as shown on Viewpoint 5 on Figure 7.15 (winter view) and Figure 7.36 (summer view) in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 and 6.3.2), however the views are middle-distance views as the start of the Development components are set back from Seasalter Road by a minimum of c. 700 m and in most places over 1 km. The Development would still allow wide and long range expansive views beyond the Development. Views whilst travelling to the south of the Development along Sandbanks Road, cyclists would have limited visibility of the Development due to intervening vegetation and buildings which separate the road and the Development. For the winter views, the magnitude of change is Slight on completion and at year 5 and after 10 years this would reduce to Slight/Negligible due to screening effect of the substation. Overall, for the c. 800 m stretch, there would be **Moderate** (and significant) effects on completion and at year 5 which would be significant and at 10 years this would reduce to **Moderate/Minor** effect which would not be significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but fully reversible.

326. For the summer views, the magnitude of change will be Slight at year 1, which combined with a high sensitivity receptor would result in a **Moderate** effect which is significant. At year 5, the magnitude will reduce to Slight/Negligible, leading to **Moderate/Minor** effects which are not significant. At year 10 the magnitude of change would remain the same as year 5. The hedgerow and hedgerow trees will have screened the panels by year 10 from any perceptible views. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but fully reversible.

Saxon Shore Way Long Distance Footpath (ZR484)

327. The Saxon Shore Way Long Distance Footpath (locally registered as ZR484), which is also the route of the proposed England Coast Path, runs adjacent to the northern and western boundary of the CLS Area, along the flood defence with a separation between the path and solar PV modules ranging from predominantly 70-80 m with a small section in the south western corner at about 40 m, over a stretch of path of length c. 5 km, out of the total path length of 262 km. The Saxon Shore Way continues on the south western edge of the site running past properties at Nagden and following the eastern bank of Faversham Creek to the south towards Faversham. At Bridge Road, Faversham, the trail then follows the west side of Faversham Creek. The route then continues towards Oare Creek and runs on both sides of Oare Creek before continuing along the edge of The Swale via Conyer Creek. The overall sensitivity of walkers using the Saxon Shore Way would be high.

328. There are elevated clear and open views across the entire CLS Area from the Saxon Shore Way due to the elevated position on top of the flood defence and limited or no vegetation screening. Views of the CLS Area as the Saxon Shore Way continues to Faversham are limited, but as the Saxon Shore Way proceeds northwards towards The Swale, panels within part of the CLS Area would be visible. Effects on the Saxon Shore Way are at their most sensitive at the southern boundary of the CLS Area near properties at Nagden where the recreational user would be at the same level as the solar panels for part of the route, which would restrict open views across the CLS Area and beyond towards The Swale. From the western side of Oare Creek the tips of the solar panels would be visible over the seawall in southern aspects of the CLS Area. Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13 on Figures 7.11 - 7.14 and 7.22 - 7.23 (winter views) and Figures 7.32 - 7.35 and 7.43 - 7.44 (summer views) in Volume 3 (DCO Document

References 6.31 and 6.3.2) all represent views of the Saxon Shore Way at various locations across the long distance footpath.

329. There is limited existing vegetation cover other than that or arable crops which is temporary in nature across the CLS area. There is proposed mitigation planting in the form of native hedgerows and trees, and shelter belts which are located in the western and southern part of the site. There are areas of low density native species scrub which will link to existing areas of scrub adjacent to the CLS Area. The mitigation planting will assist in breaking views of the Development to the south whilst keeping open long distance views towards The Swale elsewhere, and keeping open views south, across the Development, to the higher ground beyond. Figures 7.55 - 7.58 and 7.63 show winter existing views, 7.64 - 7.67 and 7.72 show winter views in year 1, 7.73 - 7.76, 7.81 show winter views in year 5, and 7.82 - 7.85 and 7.90 show winter views in year 10; these are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.6). For the winter views, the magnitude of change is Substantial on completion and at year 5 and after 10 years it would be Substantial/Moderate due to scrub and grass planting reducing the visual effects of the panel frames and planting screening in the south western part of the CLS Area and planting on the bund. Overall there would be **Major** (and significant) effects on completion and at year 5. After 10 years there would be **Major/Moderate** effects, which are significant. The summer assessment is the same magnitude and level of effects due to the limited screening of the panels and substation due to planting on the bund and grass and scrub planting within the panels areas which will reduce the visibility of the panel frames. Shelterbelt planting in the south western part of the CLS Area will also assist. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible. Figures 7.91-7.94 and 7.99 (existing views), 7.102 – 7.105 and 7.110 (year 1), 7.113 - 7.116 and 7.121 (year 5), and 7.124 - 7.127 and 7.132 (year 10) represent summer views and are shown in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.7 - 6.3.10). These effects apply to only the 5 km of the Saxon Shore Way where it is adjacent to the solar PV modules. From other parts of the path, there will be less visibility, and for the vast majority of the Saxon Shore Way there will be no visibility of the Development at all.

PRoW ZR485

330. PRoW ZR485 crosses the western part of the CLS Area and runs in a north to south direction for approximately 1.4 km, connecting to the Saxon Shore Way long distance footpath to the north of the CLS Area along the seawall, and to the Saxon Shore Way to the south near to properties at Nagden where it runs adjacent to the south eastern boundary for approximately 105 m. The overall sensitivity of walkers using this footpath would be medium.

331. The panels which range between heights of 3 m and 3.9 m through which the PRoW runs through the CLS Area would restrict views across the site and beyond in parts. The panels and fencing which run alongside the PRoW would give a sense of enclosure to users of the footpath albeit at distances of between 14 to 98 m. There is limited vegetation screening proposed along this footpath which creates a more open aspect along the pylon corridor and between panels. There are areas of lower density native species scrub and reeds within the existing ditches; together with swathes of native grassland managed as hay meadow which will break up views and provide a uniform open corridor between the solar panels. The panels have been set back from the PRoW with distances of between 14 and 98 m to provide separation from walkers. Users of the PRoW will see panels either side of them and there will be a sense of containment and loss of openness created by the panel structures; albeit the grassland beneath and between the panels will be grazed by sheep. For both the winter and summer views, the magnitude of change is Substantial on completion and at 5 and 10 years afterwards. Throughout the operational phase there would be **Major/Moderate**

effects, which are significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

332. Viewpoint 3 on Figure 7.13 (winter view) and 7.34 (summer view), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 and 6.3.2) represents this footpath at the most northern part of the CLS Area where it connects with the Saxon Shore Way. Figures 7.57, 7.66, 7.75 and 7.84 illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 (winter) and Figures 7.93, 7.104, 7.115 and 7.126 illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 (summer) which are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10). Figures 7.53-7.54 (summer) represent views from the footpath through the Development Area. Viewpoint 22 is illustrated in Figures 7.100 - 7.101, 7.111 - 7.112, 7.122 - 7.123 and 7.133 - 7.134 illustrate the Development during the summer months at year 1, 5 and 10 and are shown in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.7 - 6.3.10).

PRoW ZR488

333. The footpath originates at Seasalter Road where it crosses agricultural land heading south west towards the CLS Area. PRoW ZR488 crosses the south eastern part of the CLS Area passing over Graveney Hill, although in an area with no development proposed, and runs along a distance of 360 m through the CLS Area and a further 230 m adjacent to the southwestern boundary of the CLS Area. The footpath continues south towards Broom Street. The overall sensitivity of walkers using this footpath is medium.

334. There are clear open long-range views across the CLS Area as shown in viewpoint 6 with the existing pylons and overhead power lines running across the view with views toward the Isle of Sheppey in the distance beyond. The section of the footpath which crosses the CLS Area in a northeast to southwest direction is on elevated ground (Graveney Hill) compared to the remainder to the PRoW which is on lower lying land. Existing vegetation at the southern boundary of the CLS Area is visible and provides some screening within the landscape although it is fragmented in parts. Views would be greatest when walking from a north east to a south west direction as recreational user would see a greater extent of the Development in view. Mitigation in the form of native hedgerows and trees will provide further screening and define the site whilst allowing open views across the CLS Area and retaining views towards The Isle of Sheppey. Viewpoint 6 on Figure 7.16 (winter) and 7.37 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2) represents this footpath with views towards the CLS Area. Figures 7.59, 7.68, 7.77 and 7.86 illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 during winter. Figures 7.95, 7.106, 7.117 and 7.128 illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 during the summer months, these are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

335. For the winter views, the magnitude of change would be Moderate at year 1, 5 and 10, albeit vegetation would have matured at year 10. Overall there would be **Moderate** (and significant) effects on completion and at years 5 and 10. For the summer views, the magnitude and assessment of visual effects would be the same as in winter. The nature of effect would be adverse but turning less adverse over time with the introduction of proposed mitigation measures which help to restore elements of lost landscape character. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

336. These effects apply for a c. 600 m stretch of path only, where the section of path is on the elevated ground of Graveney Hill.

Faversham Road/Seasalter Road

337. Faversham Road and Seasalter Road passes to the east of the CLS Area. The road passes through flat open landform with limited vegetation cover, with open views towards the CLS Area for a stretch of c. 800 m. The overall sensitivity of a road user to

the Development would be low due to the fleeting nature of the view due to the oblique angle of the Development to the road.

338. Views of the Development from Seasalter Road would be visible obliquely in the distance and when travelling in a south westerly direction, due to the open nature of the landscape with limited vegetation cover, as shown on Viewpoint 5 on Figure 7.15 (winter) and 7.36 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2). There is limited existing vegetation cover or mitigation planting to assist in screening due to the open nature of the existing landscape, other than that proposed on the bund around the compound area. The Development would still allow wide and long range expansive views beyond the Development. For the winter views, the magnitude of change is Slight on completion and at year 5. After 10 years would reduce to Slight/Negligible due to maturing planting around the compound area, which will assist in screening the taller substation equipment. Overall there would be **Minor** effects on completion and at year 5, this would reduce to **Minor/Negligible** effects after 10 years, which are not significant. The nature of effect would be adverse but turning less adverse over time with the maturing of mitigation measures. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

339. For the summer views, the magnitude of change will be Slight at year 1, which would result in a **Minor** effect which is not significant. At year 5, the magnitude will reduce to Slight/ Negligible which results in a **Minor/Negligible** effect which is not significant. At year 10 the magnitude of change would reduce to negligible and result in a **Minor/Negligible** effect which is not significant. The planting around the substation compound will have matured assisting in the screening of Development by year 10. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but fully reversible.

Sandbanks Road

340. Sandbanks Road passes to the south of the CLS Area. At its closest it runs along the boundary near Nagden, and at its furthest it is 0.74 km away, and runs in a northwest to southeast direction. The overall sensitivity of road users would be low. It is important to make note that these routes may be experienced by both recreational users and residents where both users would have more interest in the view. These receptors would have a medium sensitivity.

341. Views of the Development from Sandbanks Road are limited due to the distance from site and intervening vegetation and buildings. There would be no view of the Development from the majority of the road. There would be a small section of the road at Nagden where there would be views into the CLS Area following completion of the Development. As planting matures the Development will become fully screened. For both the winter and summer views, the magnitude of change is Slight on completion and at year 5. This would reduce to Negligible after 10 years as a result of maturing screening planting. For road users, there would be **Minor** (not significant) effects at year 1 and 5 which would reduce to **Minor/Negligible** at year 10, which are not significant. For recreational users there would be a **Moderate/Minor** (not significant) effect at years 1 and 5, and at year 10 this would reduce to a **Minor** effect, which is not significant. The nature of effect would be adverse but turning neutral over time with the maturing of mitigation measures. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Broom Street

342. Broom Street is situated to south of the site and accessed off Sandbanks Road. Broom Street provides access for a number of residential properties located approximately 0.35 km to the south of the CLS Area. The overall sensitivity of road users would be low. It is important to note that these routes may be experienced by both recreational

users and residents where both users would have more interest in the view. These receptors would have a medium sensitivity.

343. Views of the CLS Area from Broom Street are restricted by intervening vegetation and the majority of the properties views towards the Development are restricted. The views open up from the most eastern part of Broom Street, from where there is limited vegetation which allows short distance views towards the CLS Area. For the winter views, the magnitude of change is Slight on completion and at year 5, but would reduce to Negligible after 10 years due to the hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting having established. For road users, there would be **Minor** (not significant) effects at years 1 and 5 but this would reduce to **Minor/Negligible** (not significant) at year 10. For recreational users, there would be a **Moderate/Minor** (not significant) effect at years 1 and 5 and at year 10 this would reduce to **Minor** effects which are not significant.

344. The effects assessed for summer views are similar to winter views, but with screening in year 5 having the same effect as in year 10 in winter.

345. The nature of effect would be adverse but turning neutral over time with the maturing of mitigation measures. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Boat Users

346. Boat users along the waterways of Faversham Creek, Oare Creek and The Swale Channel could have restricted views of the solar park infrastructure (depending on the tide state and height of the boat) due to height of the flood defence and the containment it provides, which will limit views of boat users. There is potential for the tips of the highest panels to be seen over the flood defence. Boat users are considered to be of medium sensitivity and there would be, at worst, a Slight magnitude of change due to the geographical extent of which the Development could be seen from The Swale, Faversham Creek and Oare Creek. This would result in **Moderate/Minor** effects which are not significant. The magnitude and effects are the same at Year 1, 5 and 10 due to limited mitigation measures proposed. The winter and summer view experience have the same magnitude and level of effect.

7.6.2.3 Viewpoints

347. Figures 7.11 - 7.31 (winter views) and Figures 7.32 - 7.54 (summer views), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the viewpoint photograph locations. The viewpoints show the site and sufficient landscape context so that the composition of the view towards the site can be fully understood.

348. Figures 7.55 - 7.90 (winter montages) and Figures 7.91 - 7.134 (summer montages), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10) show photomontages for ten of the viewpoint locations. They show the existing viewpoint and also illustrate what the Development will look like at those locations at year 1 (with recent mitigation planting) and at year 5 and 10 (with maturing mitigation planting).

Viewpoint 1 – Saxon Shore Way and Nagden Cottages

349. Viewpoint 1 is located on the southern boundary of the site along the Saxon Shore Way and close to properties at Nagden. The viewpoint is representative of users of the Saxon Shore Way heading north and the residential properties at Nagden, which are of high sensitivity to the Development.

350. Figure 7.11 (winter) and Figure 7.32 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), shows the existing view which looks out across the agricultural fields within the CLS Area. The existing pylons and 400 kV overhead power lines and wooden telegraph poles create prominent vertical features across the site which are visible in the majority of the view. Faversham Creek is visible to the left of

the view. The Isle of Sheppey is visible in the distance. The vegetation to the right of the view provides screening of the Development from this part of the southern boundary. The Development will be visible in the view and for a large proportion of the view with panels situated approximately 151 m from the viewpoint location. Figures 7.55, 7.64, 7.73 and 7.82 (winter montages) and Figures 7.91, 7.102, 7.113 and 7.124 (summer montages) illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 and are shown in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

351. In winter views at years 1 and 5 of operation, the magnitude of change will be Moderate, which, combined with a high sensitivity receptor, results in a **Major/Moderate** effect which is significant. At year 10, hedges and the shelterbelt will have grown to a height which will screen the Development from this view. The Development will still be visible to some degree particularly from upper storey views from the properties at Nagden. At year 10, the magnitude of change will be Slight, which combined with a high sensitivity receptor, results in a **Moderate** effect which is significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

352. For the summer views, the magnitude of change will be Moderate at year 1, which combined with a high sensitivity receptor would result in a **Major/Moderate** effect which is significant. At years 5 and 10, the magnitude will reduce to Slight, leading to the effect being **Moderate**, which is significant. The mitigation planting along with the existing planting will have screened the panels within the view and the vegetation will appear to coincide with the character of the adjacent fruit farms.

Viewpoint 2 – Saxon Shore Way on the north western corner of the CLS Area

353. Viewpoint 2 is located in the north western part of the CLS Area close to where Faversham Creek and The Swale converge. The viewpoint is located on the elevated position of the flood defence and the Saxon Shore Way and represents recreational users using this long distance footpath, who are of high sensitivity to the Development.

354. Figure 7.12 (winter) and Figure 7.33 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the existing view which looks across the agricultural fields of the CLS Area. The existing pylons and 400 kV overhead power lines create prominent and vertical features within the landscape which contrasts with flat low-lying landform of the CLS Area. A swathe of reeds around the perimeter of the CLS Area provides land cover similar to those found within the drainage ditches within the CLS Area. To the right of the view there are self-seeded trees and brambles. In the distance the buildings and boat masts are visible where Faversham Creek and Oare Creek intersect. There are distant views towards the outline of the Kent Downs AONB and the surrounding landscape. The Development would be visible from this location at a distance of 76 m and there is little screening between the Saxon Shore Way and the Development due to the open nature of the landscape with limited vegetation. Due to the lower lying nature of the Development at this location views to both the local and wider landscape would not be obscured. The flat low-lying landform would mean that the Development is more prominent and visible in the foreground and becomes less prominent with distance. The flood defence contains the Development infrastructure to the north and west. Figures 7.56, 7.65, 7.74 and 7.83 (winter montages) and Figures 7.92, 7.103, 7.114 and 7.125 (summer) illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 and are shown in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

355. For both the winter and summer views, at year 1 and 5 of operation the magnitude of change will be substantial combined with a high sensitivity of receptor which results in a **Major** effect, which is significant. At year 10 grassland vegetation will assist in naturalising the outer perimeter of the Development with the security fence and through to the edge of the panels although this area within the security fence will be grazed so such effects will be reduced. This relatively minimal approach to mitigation

ensures that both the open nature, big skies and open views associated with the landscape character remain intact albeit with the influence of the Development in the short and middle distance views forming an elevated horizontal structure. Areas of scrub planting and grazing marsh will assist in breaking up the view of the Development to some small degree with the main objective of mitigation planting here to maximise the enhancement of the landscape character in the foreground outside of the Development parameters creating an enhanced setting within which the Development is located. This would result in a Substantial/Moderate magnitude. At year 10 there would be a **Major/Moderate** effect which would be significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 3 – Saxon Shore Way at Junction of PRoW ZR485

356. Viewpoint 3 is located just to north of the CLS Area at the junction where the Saxon Shore Way long distance footpath and PRoW ZR485 meet. The viewpoint represents recreational users of both of these footpaths, who are of high sensitivity to the Development.

357. Figure 7.13 (winter) and Figure 7.34 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.31 - 6.3.2), shows the existing view across the agricultural fields which form the CLS Area. The PRoW ZR485 is focused in the centre of the view and continues through to the CLS Area. The water in the reed filled ditches to the north of the CLS Area are apparent in the middle section of the view. An existing access track runs perpendicular to the ditch. The existing pylons and 400 kV overhead power lines form a prominent vertical feature across the CLS Area. Polytunnels are visible in the distance through the tree lined vegetation which separates the CLS Area from the surrounding fruit farms. To the left of the view the existing Cleve Hill Substation is visible, along with the large agricultural sheds. To the right of the view the boat shed is visible along the Oare and Faversham Creek. The Kent Downs AONB and wider landscape is visible in the distance. Existing vegetation associated with the fruit farms is visible in the centre of the view.

358. There are long range views across the CLS Area and the Development would be visible from the Saxon Shore Way and PRoW ZR485 at a distance of approximately 77 m in short and middle distance views across the CLS Area. Due to the low-lying nature of the Development views beyond the site and towards to the higher ground in the distance would still be visible with limited obstruction. To the left of the view there would be further massing and electrical infrastructure in distant views where the electrical compound would be viewed next to the existing 400 kV substation. Figures 7.57, 7.66, 7.75 and 7.84 (winter montages) and 7.93, 7.104, 7.115, and 7.126 (summer montages) illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 and are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

359. For both the winter and summer views, at years 1 and 5 of operation the magnitude of change would be Substantial combined with a high sensitivity would be result in a **Major** effect which is significant. At year 10, the planting will have provided the Development with some integration into the landscape, an improved baseline. Vegetation screening on the bunded area around the compound will also be maturing at this point, however vegetation cover is overall limited across the scheme in this view due to the open nature of this landscape and an objective to return the ground cover within the CLS Area to grazing marsh. At year 10, there would be a substantial/moderate change which would have a **Major/Moderate** effect which is significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 4 – Saxon Shore Way to the northeast of the CLS Area

360. Viewpoint 4 is located beyond the north eastern boundary of the CLS Area along the Saxon Shore Way, to the west of Faversham Road. The viewpoint represents recreational users of this footpath, who are of high sensitivity.

361. Figure 7.14 (winter) and Figure 7.35 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2) shows the existing view looking towards the site across to the existing substation. The existing pylons and 400 kV overhead power line create prominent vertical features within the view and are more prominent in the left part of the view. The view offers wide expansive views across the CLS Area across the agricultural fields and out towards The Swale in the right of the view and with the Isle of Sheppey beyond. The elevated grassed path in the right-hand side of the view is the Saxon Shore Way long distance footpath which runs in between the CLS Area and The Swale. To the left of the view is a private track providing access to the properties along the foreshore to the north, and leads onto the PRoW network of CW90, ZR962 and onto ZR488 which links to the CLS Area to the south. Directly to the left of this is a small polytunnel, part of the property curtilage of the Sportsman Inn, and there are wide long distance views towards the surrounding higher ground and to the AONB. Vegetation is concentrated in the left side of the view with several mature trees and scrubby bankside hedgerow planting alongside a vegetated ditch running parallel to the private track. There are tree and woodland blocks in the distance associated with Graveney and Cleve Hill but none are within the CLS Area itself. Large reeds are contained within a ditch in the lower part of the view. The Development would be seen at a distance of 1.2 km with the taller equipment of the substation visible above the bund. The panels create a horizontal band in the landscape which form a low artificial horizon within the long distance view. Figures 7.58, 7.67, 7.76 and 7.85 (winter montages) and 7.94, 7.105, 7.116 and 7.127 (summer montages) illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 and are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

362. For both the winter and summer views at year 1 and 5 of operation the magnitude of change would be Moderate and combined with a high sensitivity would result in **Major/Moderate** effect which is significant. With the planting on the bund around the substation maturing and increasing in height over time, this will offer screening to larger equipment associated with the compound. At year 10, the magnitude of change would be Slight which would result in **Moderate** effect which is significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 5 - National Cycle Network 1 (NCN 1)

363. Viewpoint 5 is located to the east of the CLS Area along PRoW CW90 just off Seasalter Road and National Cycle Network 1. The viewpoint represents both users of PRoW CW90, cyclists and road users on Seasalter Road and NCN 1 cycle route. Cyclists on the NCN 1 and PRoW CW90 would be of high sensitivity.

364. Figure 7.15 (winter) and Figure 7.36 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.31 - 6.3.2) shows the existing view towards the site looking across agricultural fields. The existing Cleve Hill substation is visible in the distance, along with the vertical structures of the existing pylons and wooden telegraph poles along the road. The beach chalets are visible in the far right of the view. There are distant views of the Isle of Sheppey. There is minimal vegetation cover other than fragmented hedgerows along the highway and trees and tree blocks beyond in the distance associated with Graveney and Cleve Hill. The Development would be set back from Seasalter Road by approximately 1.2 km at this point and would start just after the existing substation as seen in this view. The Development would be visible in the distance but would appear smaller in size due to the flat low-lying nature of the landform, such that views would be limited to the nearest row of tables. The taller

equipment in the compound would be visible above the bund but is seen in context of the existing substation, pylons and distant elevated landform.

365. For both the winter and summer views at years 1 and 5 of operation the magnitude of change would be of Slight and combined with a high sensitivity would result in a **Major/Moderate** (and significant) effect for cyclists using the NCN1 along Seasalter Road and users of the PRoW. At year 10, with planting on the bund around the substation maturing and increasing in height providing screening to the compound, the magnitude of change would be Slight/Negligible which would result in **Moderate/Minor** effects which are not significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 6 – PRoW ZR488 on Graveney Hill

366. Viewpoint 6 is located within the south eastern part of the CLS Area along PRoW ZR488 on the slightly elevated ground to the south of Graveney Hill. The viewpoint represents recreational users of the footpath for a stretch of c. 300 m when walking southwest, which would be of medium sensitivity.

367. Figure 7.16 (winter) and Figure 7.37 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2) shows the existing view towards the site across the agricultural fields. The majority of the view is on lower lying ground but in the right of the view the elevated ground is visible. The overhead line is visible in the right of the view and provides a prominent vertical feature which contrasts with the flat open low-lying landform. There are open long range views towards the Isle of Sheppey. The section of the footpath which crosses the CLS Area in a northeast to southwest direction is on elevated ground compared to the remainder of the PRoW which is on lower lying land. Existing vegetation at the southern boundary is visible and provides some screening although it is fragmented in parts. The Development will occupy a large proportion of the view and will be a new feature in the landscape on completion. Mitigation in the form of native hedgerows will provide further screening and define the site whilst allowing open views across the CLS Area and beyond towards the flood defence and the Isle of Sheppey.

368. For winter views at year 1 and 5 of operation the magnitude of change would be Moderate, and combined with a medium sensitivity, this would result in a **Moderate** effect which is significant for walkers using this public right of way. At year 10, although the planting is maturing and providing softening of the edges of the solar panel areas, the magnitude of change would remain Moderate which would result in a **Moderate** effect for walkers, which is significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible. Figures 7.59, 7.68, 7.77 and 7.86 (winter montages) and 7.95, 7.106, 7.117 and 7.128 (summer montages) illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 and are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

369. For the summer views, the magnitude of change will be Moderate at year 1, which combined with a medium sensitivity receptor would result in **Moderate** effect which is significant. At years 5 and 10, the magnitude will reduce to a degree but the magnitude will remain Moderate which results in a **Moderate** effect which is significant.

Viewpoint 7 – PRoW ZR488 on southern boundary of the CLS Area

370. Viewpoint 7 is located on PRoW ZR488 adjacent to the southern boundary of the CLS Area at the same elevation as the majority of the CLS Area. This viewpoint represents users of the footpath for a stretch of c. 300 m, who would be of medium sensitivity.

371. Figure 7.17 (winter) and Figure 7.38 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the existing view looking on to the eastern part of the

CLS Area, across agricultural fields. The reed filled drainage ditches are visible in the foreground. An existing tree belt wraps around the site, to the southern boundary which features to the left of the viewpoint. The two large agricultural sheds near Cleve Hill are a prominent feature within the view. There are glimpsed views of the existing substation through existing vegetation. The existing pylons and 400 kV overhead power line creates a prominent vertical feature through the landscape running across the view. There are long range distant views towards the Isle of Sheppey. Mitigation planting in the form of native hedgerows with trees, shelterbelts and grazing marsh and lowland meadow planting will assist in providing screening of the Development, and will restrict visibility of the Development over time.

372. For winter views at years 1 and 5 of operation the magnitude of change would be Moderate and, combined with a medium sensitivity, would result in a **Moderate** effect which is significant. With maturing hedgerow and hedgerow trees increasing in height at year 10, the magnitude of change would reduce to Slight which would result in a **Moderate/Minor** effect which is not significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible. Figures 7.60, 7.69, 7.78 and 7.87 (winter montages), and 7.96, 7.107, 7.118 and 7.129 (summer montages) illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 and are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

373. For the summer views, the magnitude of change will be Moderate at year 1, which combined with a medium sensitivity receptor would result in **Moderate** effect which is significant. At years 5 and 10, the magnitude will reduce to Slight which results in **Moderate/Minor** effects which area not significant.

Viewpoint 8 – All Saints Church and PRoW ZR490

374. Viewpoint 8 is located on PRoW ZR490 situated approximately 0.53 km from the south eastern edge of the CLS Area and to the southwest of the All Saints Church at Graveney. The viewpoint represents users of the footpath, who would be of medium sensitivity.

375. Figure 7.18 (winter) and Figure 7.39 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.31 - 6.3.2), show views towards the site across the agricultural fields. To the right of the view is Graveney Court Farm and grass paddocks used for grazing horses with associated timber stabling. The existing pylons are visible in the distance create prominent vertical features in the distance across the viewshed, with views of the Isle of Sheppey visible beyond. To the left of the view the properties concentrated around Broom Street are visible which are situated in between two large areas of mature vegetation. There is extensive vegetation planting to the left of the viewpoint, with tree planting to the right of the view associated with the church yard and farm. In the middle section of the view there is limited existing vegetation cover but mitigation proposals which include native hedgerow and tree planting and lowland meadow planting will further assist in screening and embedding the Development within the landscape which will minimise the effect on views of the Development. The Development sits within the lower lying landform and due to its low-lying horizontal nature retains the open views to the Isle of Sheppey.

376. For winter views at year 1 and 5 of operation the magnitude of change would be Moderate and, combined with a medium sensitivity for walkers using PRoW ZR490, would result in a **Moderate** effect, which is significant. At year 10, views of the Development would be restricted by existing hedgerow planting in the foreground and maturing vegetation of the hedgerows and trees, giving a magnitude of change of slight which would result in **Moderate/Minor** effects, which are not significant. The nature of the effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible. Figures 7.61, 7.70, 7.79 and 7.88 (winter montages) and Figures 7.97, 7.108, 7.119 and 7.130 (summer montages) illustrate the

Development at years 1, 5 and 10 and are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

377. For the summer views, the magnitude of change will be Moderate at year 1, which combined with a medium sensitivity receptor would result in **Moderate** effect which is significant. At year 5 and 10, the magnitude will reduce to Slight which results in a **Moderate/Minor** effect which is not significant.

Viewpoint 9 – Victory Wood

378. Viewpoint 9 is located at the vantage point at Victory Wood located approximately 4.43 km southeast of the CLS Area. The viewpoint is a specific viewpoint which represents recreational users of Victory Wood appreciating this defined view, who would be of high sensitivity to the Development.

379. Figure 7.19 (winter) and Figure 7.40 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the existing view from the high ground and vantage point from Victory Wood. There are wide expansive views towards The Swale and the Isle of Sheppey. In the centre of the views are industrial premises, polytunnels, the Isle of Sheppey and properties in the distant view. The existing pylon corridor is visible in the view which creates a prominent vertical feature through this landscape alongside stacks associated with industrial premises associated with the Isle of Grain. The Development would be visible but hard to discern within the landscape due to scale of the landscape and view shed, intervening structures, vegetation and distance the Development would not a be prominent new feature within the view. There are a number of detracting features within the foreground which dominate the view.

380. For both the winter and summer views the magnitude of change at year 1 on recreational users would be Negligible and combined with a high sensitivity would result in a **Moderate/Minor** effect that is significant. At years 5 and 10, to the Development, the magnitude would remain at Negligible, which would result in a **Moderate/Minor** effect which is not significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible. Figures 7.62, 7.71, 7.80 and 7.89 (winter montages) and Figures 7.98, 7.109, 7.120 and 7.131 (summer montages) illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 and are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

Viewpoint 10 – PRoW ZR486 near Warm House

381. Viewpoint 10 is located on PRoW ZR486, close to Warm House, which is situated approximately 0.28 km from the southern boundary of the CLS Area. The viewpoint represents recreational users of the PRoW, who would be of medium sensitivity to the Development.

382. Figure 7.20 (winter) and Figure 7.41 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2) show the existing views towards the site from PRoW ZR486 which looks across onto agricultural fields. Polytunnel frames are visible to the right of the view. There would be glimpsed views of the Development through gaps in the trees. The viewpoint shows no views of the site but the crop in the field is at a height that restricts views of the site.

383. For the winter views, the magnitude of change would be Slight at years 1 and 5, leading to **Moderate/Minor** effects which are not significant. At year 10, the magnitude of change is Negligible which results in a **Minor** effect which is not significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

384. For the summer views, the magnitude of change will be Slight at year 1, which combined with a medium sensitivity receptor would result in **Moderate/Minor** effect

which is not significant. At year 5 and 10, the magnitude will reduce to Negligible which results in **Minor** effects which are not significant.

Viewpoint 11 – Church Road, Oare, Faversham

385. Viewpoint 11 is located on Church Road in Oare which is situated approximately 1.47 km to the southwest of the CLS Area. The viewpoint represents residents, who would be of medium sensitivity, and road users, who would be of low sensitivity.

386. Figure 7.21 (winter) and Figure 7.42 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.31 - 6.3.2) show the existing views from Church Road in between residential properties. There are views across Oare Creek with the boat yard and boats prominent in the view. The higher ground towards Victory Wood is visible in the distance, with the settlement of Whitstable. The existing overhead line provides a prominent vertical element within the landscape. Along the bank of the Oare Creek is some mature tree planting which assists in reducing views towards the Development. Views of the Development would be barely discernible due to distance from this viewpoint and intervening features in the foreground.

387. For residents, for both the winter and summer views, at year 1 and 5, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and combined with medium sensitivity for residents there would be a **Minor** effect, which is not significant. At year 10, the effects would remain the same due to little vegetation planting proposed around the Development to alter effects.

388. For road users, for both the winter and summer views, at year 1, 5 and 10, the magnitude of change would be Negligible and combined with low sensitivity for road users there would be a **Minor/Negligible** effect, which is not significant.

389. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 12- Saxon Shore Way at Shipwright Arms

390. Viewpoint 12 is located approximately 0.22 km to the southwest of the CLS Area. The viewpoint represents recreational users along the Saxon Shore Way and residents; both will be of high sensitivity.

391. Figure 7.22 (winter) and Figure 7.43 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the existing view along the Saxon Shore Way close to the Shipwright Arms looking across Faversham Creek towards the CLS Area. The existing overhead line dominates the view, with the prominent vertical structures contrasting against the flat open low-lying landform. There is little or no vegetation cover in the view towards the CLS Area. There are distant views of the Isle of Sheppey, Victory Wood and the AONB. Cleve Hill substation and large agricultural sheds are visible in the distance. There is potential for the tips of the panels to be visible dependent on the location on this section of the Saxon Shore Way but this would not alter the open nature of the view at this location for a large proportion of the Development. The panels beneath the foot of Graveney Hill, would be visible in the distance. The taller infrastructure associated with the compound would be seen at a distance of approximately 2.7 km.

392. For both the winter and summer views, at year 1, there would be a Slight magnitude of change and combined with a high sensitivity there would be **Moderate** effects which would be significant. At years 5 and 10, there would be no change in the magnitude due to limited vegetation offering any screening. This result would result in a **Moderate** effect at years 1, 5 and 10 which would be significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible. Figures 7.63, 7.72, 7.81 and 7.90 (winter montages) and Figures 7.99,

7.110, 7.121 and 7.132 (summer montages) illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 and are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

Viewpoint 13 – Saxon Shore Way and Oare Marshes Nature Reserve

393. Viewpoint 13 is located approximately 0.45 km to the north west of the CLS Area. The viewpoint represents recreational users along the Saxon Shore Way and visitors to Oare Marshes nature reserve, who would be of high sensitivity.

394. Figure 7.23 (winter) and Figure 7.44 (summer) in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2) show the existing view from the Saxon Shore Way and Oare Marshes Nature Reserve looking towards the CLS Area across Faversham Creek and the mouth of The Swale channel. The Creeks and channel dominate the view with a large expanse of water. The overhead lines provide strong vertical contrasts to the open low-lying landform in which it traverses. The higher ground towards the AONB is visible in the wider distant views beyond the CLS Area. The agricultural sheds and existing substation in the eastern part of the site are visible in the distant view. The flood defence, which is located on the north of the Development, provides a dark edge around the site which contrasts with the more muted colours of the water and vegetation below. The Development would be barely perceptible from this location, with only the potential for the tips of the panels to be seen above the flood defence in the distance near Graveney Hill. The larger equipment associated with the compound would be visible but seen at a greater distance and would be seen in the context of the existing Cleve Hill Substation.

395. For both the winter views, at year 1, there would be a Negligible magnitude of change combined with a high sensitivity receptor would result in **Moderate/Minor** significant effects. At years 5 and 10, the same magnitude and **Moderate/Minor** effects remain due to limited vegetation screening on the northern section of the Development and containment by the flood defence. These effects are not significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 14 – The Church of St. Thomas the Apostle, Harty on the Isle of Sheppey

396. Viewpoint 14 is located approximately 1.87 km to the north of the CLS Area, across The Swale channel. The viewpoint represents visitors to the church, who would be of medium sensitivity.

397. Figure 7.24 (winter) and Figure 7.45 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the existing view from the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle towards the CLS Area across The Swale. There are open views towards the site with the higher ground of the AONB visible in the distance. The existing overhead line provides vertical features in the landscape which contrast with the flat low-lying landform in which is crosses. The settlement of Faversham is visible in the right of the view. Directly in the foreground there is existing vegetation which is gappy and allows views out towards and across The Swale towards to the Development. The Development would be visible in the distance and would be generally contained by the flood defence. Panels in the southern half of the CLS Area would be partially visible and seen over the flood defence at distance. The Development covers a large horizontal proportion of the view with a small vertical proportion of the view and it extends over a large geographical area.

398. For both the winter and summer views at year 1 there would be Slight magnitude of change which combined with a medium sensitivity results in **Moderate/Minor** effects that are not significant. At years 5 and 10, there is limited change with planting and grassland on the northern edge of the Development therefore the magnitude and **Moderate/Minor** effects remain the same and are not significant. The nature of

effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 15 – PRoW and Swale National Nature Reserve

399. Viewpoint 15 is located 2.5 km to the north of the CLS Area, across The Swale channel. The viewpoint represents users of the public right of way and visitors to Swale National Nature Reserve, who would be of high sensitivity.

400. Figure 7.25 (winter) and Figure 7.46 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), shows the existing view across marsh and The Swale to distant views of the CLS Area. The higher ground of the AONB is visible in the far distance. Whitstable is visible in the far left of the view. The existing pylons are visible but are not as prominent in the view as other viewpoint locations due to distance. There are long range open views, however the Development would not be discernible due to the distance and nature of the Development, with the exception of the site compound which would just be discernible in the foreground of Cleve Hill Substation. For both the winter and summer views, at year 1 the magnitude of change would be Negligible and combined with a high sensitivity there would be **Moderate/Minor** effects which are not significant**.** At years 5 and 10, the magnitude, and **Moderate/Minor** effect remain the same. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 16 – Whitstable Harbour

401. Viewpoint 16 is located approximately 5.2 km to the northeast of the CLS Area along the coastline at Whitstable Harbour. The viewpoint represents recreational users of the harbour, who would be of medium sensitivity.

402. Figure 7.26 (winter) and Figure 7.47 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the existing view across Whitstable Bay, with the settlement of Whitstable to the left of the view. There are distant views of the Isle of Sheppey and higher ground. The pylons are partially visible in the distance but are not prominent features within the landscape due to the expansive view and distance from the CLS Area; however, they do provide useful visual markers to the CLS Area. The Development would not be visible from this location due to distance from site and intervening built form and vegetation, and the low nature of development, so there would be no effect.

Viewpoint 17 – PRoW, near to Mocketts Farm Cottages, Harty, Isle of Sheppey

403. Viewpoint 17 is located approximately 2.27 km to the north of the CLS Area across The Swale channel, on the public right of Way (Bridleway-ZS42) close to Mocketts Farm Cottages. The viewpoint represents recreational users of the PRoW, who would be of Medium sensitivity.

404. Figure 7.27 (winter) and Figure 7.48 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), shows the existing view from the PRoW close to Mocketts Farm Cottages, which looks over The Swale, towards the CLS Area with long distant views of higher ground beyond. The existing pylons and 400 kV overhead lines which cross the site are visible in the distance. There are wooden pole lines which are visible to the left of the view. There is some vegetation which consists of hedgerows and isolated trees in the foreground. There would be distant views of the site across The Swale.

405. For both the winter and summer views, at year 1 there would be a Slight magnitude of change and combined with a medium sensitivity there would be **Moderate/Minor** effects that are not significant. Due to the limited effect of embedded mitigation to reduce effects, at year 5 and 10 the magnitude of change would be the same, with

Moderate/Minor effects that are not significant. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 18 – Wraik Hill, Pilgrims Lane

406. Viewpoint 18 is located approximately 3.62 km to the east of the CLS Area at Wraik Hill along Pilgrims Lane which is on elevated ground (approximately 50 m AOD). The viewpoint represents views from nearby residents and road users on Pilgrims Lane. The sensitivity of the receptors would be Medium for residents and Low for road users on Pilgrims Lane.

407. Figure 7.28 (winter) and Figure 7.49 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the existing view from Pilgrims Lane looking towards the site. In the immediate foreground is the A299 which is fairly well screened by mature tree belt planting. Beyond this the view is over the surrounding marshland with wider views of The Swale beyond. The existing pylons are visible in the view with other industrial buildings and polytunnels present in the view. The Development will be barely discernible from Wraik Hill due to the distance from site and intervening vegetation, built-form and infrastructure.

408. For both the winter and summer views, at years 1, 5 and 10 the magnitude would be Negligible for residents and road users. For residents this would result in **Minor** effects on residents and for road users **Minor/Negligible** effects. The nature of effect would be neutral. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 19 - Boorman Way, Whitstable

409. Viewpoint 19 is located approximately 3.86 km to the east of the CLS Area along Boorman Way and represents road users of Boorman Way, who would be of Low sensitivity.

410. Figure 7.29 (winter) and Figure 7.50 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the existing views towards the CLS Area. In the immediate view to the right is Whitstable, and in the left of the view is an office complex which is situated on the western edge of Whitstable. The views extend across marshland towards The Swale, with distant views of the Isle of Sheppey. The site will be barely discernible, when viewed from Boorman Way due to distance from the site, the nature of the Development and intervening features in the foreground.

411. For both the winter and summer views, at year 1 and 5 the magnitude of change would be Negligible therefore for users of Boorman Way this would result in **Minor/Negligible** effects which are not significant. At year 10 the magnitude would be reduce further, but remain Negligible, due to maturing vegetation on the bunded edge of the site compound, resulting in **Minor/Negligible** effects which are not significant effects. The nature of effect would be neutral. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 20 – Shepherds Hill, Kent Downs AONB

412. Viewpoint 20 is located approximately 7.6 km to the south of the CLS Area. The viewpoint represents the Kent Downs AONB. The receptor would be of high sensitivity.

413. Figure 7.30 (winter) and Figure 7.51 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the existing view from Grove Road on Shepherds Hill in Kent Downs AONB. In the foreground there is extensive tree and woodland planting. Where there is a gap in the vegetation there are long distance views towards the CLS Area and The Swale but due to the distance from the CLS Area and intervening features the Development will be barely discernible from this viewpoint.

414. For residents, for both the winter and summer views, years 1, 5 and 10 the magnitude of change would be Negligible and would result in **Moderate/Minor** effects which are not significant.

415. For road users, for both the winter and summer views, years 1, 5 and 10 the magnitude of change would be Negligible and would result in **Minor** effects which are not significant.

416. The nature of effect would be neutral. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 21 – Mount Ephraim House and Gardens

417. Viewpoint 21 is located approximately 3.58 km to the southeast of the CLS Area and represents users of Mount Ephraim House and Gardens. The receptor would be of high sensitivity.

418. Figure 7.31 (winter) and Figure 7.52 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.1 - 6.3.2), show the existing view from within the grounds of Mount Ephraim House and Gardens. There are extensive tree, hedgerow and woodland blocks in the foreground of the view and beyond. Other larger industry and infrastructure are visible on the horizon in the long distant views. Polytunnels are visible in the middle distant views from this viewpoint (winter only). The Development is barely discernible from this viewpoint due to the extensive vegetation, intervening features, distance from the CLS Area and the low-lying horizontal nature of the Development.

419. For both the winter and summer views, years 1, 5 and year 10 the magnitude of change would be Negligible and would result in **Moderate/Minor** effects which are not significant. The nature of effect would be neutral. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

Viewpoint 22 – PRoW ZR485 within the Development Site

420. Viewpoint 22 is located within the Development site on the PRoW which connects the Saxon Shore Way to the north with Sandbanks Road to the south. The receptor is of medium sensitivity.

421. Figures 7.53 - 7.54 (summer), in Volume 3 (DCO Document Reference 6.3.2), shows the existing view from PRoW ZR485. The PRoW would pass between solar panels with a height range of between 3.3 m and 3.9 m. The effect would be the presence of solar panels within a landscape that was previously open agricultural fields with open views. The introduction of solar panels would restrict views across the site and beyond. The higher panels are located to the north of the CLS Area with the lower panels located to the south. The panels and fencing which run alongside the PRoW would give a sense of enclosure to users to the footpath, though this would not be extreme, as it would if the panels were closer to the path. There is limited tall vegetation screening proposed along this footpath with the exception of the native hedgerow at the southern section, this is due to the recognition that the grazing marsh character area is generally absent of such vegetation. There are areas of lower density native species scrub and reeds within the existing ditches which will be supplemented by the establishment of a grazing marsh grassland under the panels which will be grazed by sheep, and further grazing marsh grassland either side of the PRoW which will be maintained as a hay crop and managed to naturalise the area. Sparse scrub planting will also be introduced through this area to replicate areas of natural regeneration adjacent to the flood defence. This will have a foreshortening effect on the panel sub structures due to the height of the grasses and reeds and these grassed areas will range in width between 29 m at the shortest point and up to 108 m at the widest point. This will break up views of the panel sub structure as above; however, views of the panels would still be visible in all views through the PRoW. The immediate landscape and land cover will be

improved above the baseline in line with guidance on landscape character for the CLS Area. The panels have been set back either side of the PRoW with distances of between 14 and 98 m to the centre of the PRoW to provide separation from users. Users of the PRoW will see panels either side of them and there will be a sense of containment and loss of openness and wider views along and across the CLS Area created by the panel structures. Figures 7.100 - 7.101, 7.111 - 7.112, 7.122 - 7.123, and 7.133 - 7.134 illustrate the Development at years 1, 5 and 10 (summer) which are shown Volume 3 (DCO Document References 6.3.3 - 6.3.10).

422. For summer views, years 1, 5 and 10 would have a Substantial magnitude which would result in **Major/Moderate** effects which would be significant. There is limited tall planting to screen the Development and the solar panels will create a sense of enclosure which will limit the open views within the CLS Area. The nature of effect would be adverse. The duration of the Development is long-term but effects are fully reversible.

7.6.2.4 Lighting (Operational Phase)

423. Given consultee and public comments regarding the area being important for dark skies, viewers of these would be regarded as being of high sensitivity.

424. Lighting will be used during the operational phase but will be kept to a minimum and is associated with the compound and transformer elements within the solar panel areas and will be controlled by operatives and will have PIR (Passive Infra-Red) motion sensor activated security and emergency lighting. The lighting will be fixed to the plant itself rather than standalone. The likely effect of this will be limited as there are no properties that would have a view of the compound. As planting matures the effects of distributed light during the very limited periods when active would reduce over time. Effects would be limited from the Saxon Shore Way and other PRoW within close proximity to the CLS Area; however due to the time of day lighting would be used, there are likely to be limited numbers of footpath users during the hours of darkness. Given the infrequent and intermittent nature of the lighting, combined with its isolation to particular locations where PIR motion sensors have been triggered, effects are assessed as Negligible magnitude and therefore **Moderate/Minor**, which is not significant.

7.6.3 Visual Amenity Effects Arising from the Decommissioning Stage

425. Any predicted visual effects arising from the decommissioning phase will be similar in nature, and no greater, than those predicted for the construction phase which are set out in section 7.6.1. An outline Decommissioning and Restoration Plan has been prepared which sets out the details of decommissioning across the CLS Area and is found in Technical Appendix A5.5.

426. There will be limited disturbance from the removal of the solar panels, electrical equipment and the electrical compound bund associated with the decommissioning of the Development. As the panels are removed, visibility and openness across the site will increase, affording longer views to other decommissioning activity. At the end of the lease of the Development site it would be at the discretion of the landowner as to whether enhancement measures implemented as part of the Development are retained or removed. For assessment purposes with the LVIA, it is assumed based on a worst case scenario that planting will be removed, which would mean that the landscape would be returned to its baseline condition. There would be a loss of mature planting which will have enhanced the landscape and provided ecological habitats for wildlife. The decommissioning period is expected to take between 6-12 months, which is short term and temporary in nature.

427. The visual effects of decommissioning will be limited to visibility of activities with such effects being of very short duration. The removal of vegetation implemented as part of the Development, such as the hedgerow, hedgerow trees, woodland, scrub, and shelterbelt planting that has matured and which has provided screening and landscape setting improvements through the Development could be removed which will open up views across the CLS Area. During the decommissioning there will be increased vehicle activity on site used to remove the panels and associated equipment. The nature of these effects is of a short duration and temporary in nature. The use of lighting during these stages will be limited and manually operated if needed.

428. The Saxon Shore Way to the north and west of the CLS and the PRoW ZR485 which run through the CLS Area would have the greatest visual effects during the decommissioning stages. There would be views associated with the removal of solar panels, cameras and fencing as well as activity associated with removal of planting and potentially bund material. Other PRoW including ZR488 will have varying degrees of visual change from the removal of panels and vegetation which create open views across the site. The level of effects ranges from **Major/Moderate** to **Moderate**, which are significant. The nature of these effects is of short duration and temporary in nature. The effects will be adverse but turning positive over time as the site will return to its existing baseline prior to the Development. The level of effect would decrease as more of the equipment and vegetation associated with the Development was removed.

429. The NCN 1 cycle route would have visual effects associated with the decommissioning stage. The NCN 1 cycle route runs along Seasalter Road, where vehicles required for decommissioning of the Development would be using to leave and enter the CLS Area. There would be increased traffic during this time removing equipment and materials from the Development. The visual effects during the decommissioning phase will decrease as more equipment and material is removed from site. The likely visual effects are **Major/Moderate** for users of the NCN 1, which are significant. For vehicle users travelling along Seasalter Road the effects would be **Moderate/Minor** effects which are not significant. The effects will be adverse but this would reduce over time as the site will return to its existing baseline prior to the Development.

430. Residential properties nearest to the CLS Area would have visibility during the decommissioning stage through the removal of panels, associated equipment and removal of planting implemented as part of the Development. Warm House would experience no change following decommissioning assuming that the woodland is removed at the end of the Development once all panels and associated equipment has been removed, the view would return to its original state, albeit without the existing wooden pole line in the middle-distance. There would be **Major/Moderate** effects which are significant from properties at Nagden and Crown Cottages and Hill view to the east and Sportsmans public house and property to the north east of the CLS Area. There would be **Moderate** effects which are significant on the following residential groups (Harty Ferry Cottages, All Saints View, Graveney Court Farm, Graveney Hill Farm and Foreshore Chalets). The beach chalets would have distant views towards activities removing material from the site compound. Properties to the north of Broom Street and Crown Cottages and along Seasalter Road will have varying degrees of visibility during the decommissioning stage of the Development. The vegetation would screen to some degree effects on removal of solar panels and associated infrastructure from the CLS Area. The removal of vegetation implemented as part of the embedded mitigation planting would open up views across the CLS Area. Residential properties in Broom Street and on Sandbanks Road will receive **Moderate/Minor** (not significant) visual effects during the decommissioning phase, though other users of these roads would receive not significant effects. The visual effects during this period are short term and of a temporary nature. The effects are negative but turning beneficial overtime as the site will return to its existing baseline prior to the Development. The

visual effects on residential properties are assessed fully in Technical Appendix A7.4: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment.

7.6.3.1 Lighting (Decommissioning Phase)

431. Given consultee and public comments regarding the area being important for dark skies, viewers of these would be regarded as being of high sensitivity.

432. Lighting may be used during the decommissioning phase (dependent on the time of year) if required and will be minimised as far as possible. Where its use is necessary it will be directed into the works area, away from nearby properties. Careful consideration of the siting of lighting would be required with lighting positioned to minimise the spread of light, and that only the task work area or compound is lit to avoid effects on receptors during the construction phase. Lighting will either be controlled by operatives and will have PIR (Passive infra-red) motion sensor activated security and emergency lighting. Effects would be limited from the Saxon Shore Way and other PRoW within and in close proximity to the CLS Area due to the time of day lighting would be used, as there would be limited people using the footpath during the hours of darkness.

433. The visual effects are highly localised with those visual receptors within or directly adjacent the CLS Area experiencing the greatest effects. Each visual receptor has been assessed in Appendix A7.3, refer to this for individual receptor assessments.

434. Given the infrequent and intermittent nature of the lighting and the short-term nature of the decommissioning phase, combined with its isolation to particular locations where PIR motion sensors have been triggered, effects are assessed as Negligible magnitude and therefore **Moderate/Minor**, which is not significant.

7.7 Mitigation Measures and Residual Effects

435. As part of the overall scheme design, embedded mitigation has been incorporated within the scheme design. Careful site design and mitigation proposals which are consistent or limit the effects on the surrounding landscape character have been proposed. Within the mitigation proposals to the north there is limited mitigation available to screen views of the Development along the Saxon Shore Way without changing the natural land cover and open landscape and visual characteristics of the area (for example, tree planting). Noting that there are adverse effects following the embedded mitigation, no further mitigation proposals are proposed as these would be more detrimental to the overall landscape and visual characteristics. Therefore, the embedded mitigation in these areas has focussed on improvements to the landscape and habitat above the baseline.

436. Residual effects are as assessed in sections 7.5 and 7.6, therefore.

7.8 Assessment of Cumulative Effects

7.8.1.1 Cumulative Baseline

437. In Chapter 2: Environmental Impact Assessment there is a list of potential cumulative developments within 10 km of the Development. Those within a distance of 5 km have been considered in this section.

438. Within the 5 km cumulative development area there are a number of residential, mixed use (residential and commercial), industrial and agricultural planning applications which range in size and height. Many of the cumulative developments are concentrated around areas of existing built form and are some distance away from the Development. Cumulative developments considered in this assessment are shown in in Figure 7.9, in Volume 2.

439. A series of assessment tables which support this text are located within Technical Appendix A7.2 Tables B4 and B5 for landscape cumulative effects and Technical Appendix A7.3 Tables C4 and C5 for visual cumulative effects.

7.8.1.2 Cumulative Landscape Effects

National Landscape Character

440. There are potential for landscape effects from the cumulative developments and the Development, on the Greater Thames Estuary NCA. The difference in effects between the addition of the Development to the current baseline, and the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline, is very small, with the cumulative sites occupying a very small additional proportion of the NCA. During the construction, operational and decommissioning stages the magnitude would be Negligible. This would result in **Minor/Negligible** effects during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Development, which are not significant. The effects on Development are long term but fully reversible.

Regional Landscape Character Areas (RLCA)

441. There is potential for some landscape effects from the cumulative developments and the Development on RLCA Eastern Swale Marshes. The difference in effects between the addition of the Development to the current baseline, and the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline is very small, because cumulative development occupies a very small additional proportion of this RLCA. The cumulative magnitude of change would be Negligible during the construction, operation and decommissioning stages of the project, this would result in **Minor/Negligible** (and not significant) effects during the three stages of the Development. The effects on Development are long term but fully reversible.

442. There is potential for some landscape effects from the cumulative developments and the Development on RLCA Eastern Fruit Belt. Whilst there is substantial cumulative development (mostly housing) proposed within this RLCA, the Development is mostly outside the RLCA. The difference in effects between the addition of the Development to the current baseline, and the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline is small, because the effects of the Development on the RLCA are Slight. The cumulative magnitude of change would be Slight during construction, operation and decommissioning stages of the project and would result in **Minor** (and not significant) effects during the three stages of the Development. The effects of the Development are long term but fully reversible.

Local Landscape Character

443. There would be no change to the overall landscape character or loss of individual elements within the surrounding landscape as part of the Development when seen with other consented cumulative development due to the nearest cumulative development being over 1 km away from the CLS Area. None of the other cumulative developments are situated within the same landscape character area as the CLS Area. This would be the same at construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Development.

Designations

444. There is potential for some landscape effects from the cumulative developments and the Development on AHLV Kent Level. The difference in effects between the addition of the Development to the current baseline, and the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline is very small, because cumulative development occupies a very small additional proportion of the AHLV. The cumulative magnitude of change during construction, operational and decommissioning is Negligible which results in **Minor/Negligible** (and not significant) effects outside the CLS Area, and

Moderate/Minor (and not significant) effects within the CLS Area, for all three stages of the Development. The effects of the Development are long term but fully reversible.

445. In the long-term the Development will be decommissioned and will be restored as agricultural land and the any cumulative effects of the Development would cease to occur.

446. No other cumulative effects on landscape are predicted.

7.8.1.3 Cumulative Visual Effects

Saxon Shore Way

447. From recreational users along the Saxon Shore Way there is potential for cumulative effects to occur where the Development is seen in conjunction with the cumulative sites (Sites 1, 2 and 3 identified in Chapter 2) depending on where along the Saxon Shore the user is located. There will be limited effects but users may have the greatest cumulative effects along the Saxon Shore Way to the west of the Development and where the Saxon Shore Way is close to the cumulative sites around Oare Creek. The difference in effects between the addition of the Development to the current baseline, and the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline is very small, because cumulative development close to the Saxon Shore Way is minimal within 2 km of the CLS Area. These views may be combined or sequential depending at the receptors location on the Saxon Shore Way. During the winter the magnitude at construction and at year 1 of operation would be Slight. The visual effects during all three phases of the Development would be **Moderate/Minor,** which are not significant.

National Cycle Network 1 (NCN 1)

448. From users along the NCN 1 cycle network there is potential for cumulative effects to arise from the CLS Area and cumulative sites (1, 2 and 3 identified in Chapter 2). The difference in effects between the addition of the Development to the current baseline, and the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline is very small, because cumulative development close to the NCN 1 is minimal, within 2 km of the CLS Area. During both winter and summer months the magnitude of effects during construction, operation (years 1, 5 and 10) and decommissioning would be Negligible. This would result in **Moderate/Minor** effects, which are not significant, for all three phases of the Development.

Sandbanks Road

449. For receptors along Sandbanks Road, the difference in effects between the addition of the Development to the current baseline, and the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline is minimal, because no cumulative development is proposed in proximity to Sandbanks Road. Effects, if any, would be of Negligible magnitude. This would result in **Moderate/Minor** effects, which are not significant, for residents, and lesser effects for walkers and road users.

Viewpoint 1 – Saxon Shore Way and Nagden Cottages

450. From Viewpoint 1 which represents users of the Saxon Shore Way and residential properties at Nagden, the difference in effects between the addition of the Development to the current baseline, and the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline is very small, because there would be minimal views of cumulative development from this viewpoint. Any effects would be of Negligible magnitude, which are **Moderate/Minor** and not significant.

Viewpoint 2 and 3– Saxon Shore Way (north of the CLS Area)

451. From Viewpoints 2 and 3 along the Saxon Shore Way on the northern boundary of the site has the potential for cumulative effects when seen in combination with the

Development cumulative sites (Sites 1, 2 and 3 identified in Chapter 2). The difference in effects between the addition of the Development to the current baseline, and the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline is very small, because there would be minimal views of cumulative development from these viewpoints. Any views would be distant and combined views when looking south across the CLS Area and towards the cumulative sites. This would lead to cumulative effects of Slight magnitude during construction and during year 1 of operation in winter, which result in **Moderate** effects, which are significant, for walkers and residents. For year 1 in summer, and years 5 and 10 in both summer and winter, and in the decommissioning phase, Negligible magnitude of cumulative change is expected, leading to **Moderate/Minor** effects, which are not significant.

Viewpoint 11- Church Road, Oare, North west of Faversham

452. Views from viewpoint 11 would have the greatest cumulative effects as the residents (rear properties) would see an expansive view which includes the CLS Area to the north east of the view and the cumulative sites to the east (Sites 1, 2 and 3 identified in Chapter 2). Land at Oare Gravel Works has planning approval for 330 dwellings and another development of 30 dwellings proposed with permitted development on land to the east of Ham Road, Faversham in the right of the view. The effect would be combined and in succession, although views of the Development from this location are minimal.

453. Whilst the cumulative developments on their own may have a significant effect, the addition of the Development would make little difference at this location. The magnitude of change would be Slight during construction and operation of the Development, which would result in **Moderate/Minor** effects for residents, which are not significant, and **Minor** effects for road users, which are not significant. During decommissioning of the Development, the cumulative developments will be in their operational phases, leading to cumulative change that is Negligible, and **Minor** effects for residents, **Minor/Negligible** effects for road users, both of which are not significant.

Viewpoint 12 - PROW at Shipwright Arms

454. From Viewpoint 12 at the Shipwright Arms, there is potential for cumulative effects to occur from the inter-visibility of developments, if the Land at Oare Gravel Works proposed for 330 dwellings and another development of 30 dwellings proposed with the permitted development of land to the east of Ham Road, Faversham were to be constructed at the same time as the Development. The difference in effects between the addition of the Development to the current baseline, and the addition of the Development to the cumulative baseline is very small, because there would be minimal views of cumulative development from this viewpoint. Whilst the cumulative developments on their own may have a significant effect, the addition of the Development would make little difference at this location. The cumulative developments when seen with the Development will be viewed sequentially. There is limited visibility of the Development within the CLS Area, with panels visible to the east and the tips of the substation in the far distance. The viewer would not see both developments in combination but would see the CLS Area and cumulative sites when moving along the Saxon Shore Way (but not from this viewpoint). Depending on the timing of construction and operation of the cumulative developments, there is potential for some cumulative effect.

455. For residents and walkers, the cumulative magnitude of change is assessed as Slight during construction and in year 1 of operation in winter and years 1 and 5 in summer, leading to a **Moderate** effect, which is significant.

456. During decommissioning, and in years 5 and 10 of operation in winter and year 10 in summer, the cumulative magnitude of change is assessed as Negligible, leading to a **Moderate/Minor** effect, which is not significant.

Residential Areas

457. For residents at Harty Ferry Cottages there would be **Moderate** effects where views across the CLS Area would likely be seen in context to the cumulative sites to the south east; however views are likely to be sequential and seen in context of intervening vegetation, landform buildings, and context and setting of Faversham. Properties at the Shipwright Arms and Hollowshore, Berth Holders, Ham Road, Nagden would be Moderate/Minor. The visual effects on residential properties are assessed fully in Technical Appendix A7.4: Residential Visual Amenity Assessment.

458. In the long-term the Development will be decommissioned with land restored to land use and the cumulative effects of the Development would cease to occur.

459. No other likely significant cumulative effects on visual amenity are predicted.

7.9 Summary of Effects

460. Tabular summaries of effects are provided for landscape receptors in Technical Appendix A7.2, Tables B3 and B5, and for visual receptors in Technical Appendix A7.3, Tables C3 and C5. A description of these is provided below.

7.9.1 Landscape

7.9.1.1 Construction

461. During the construction phase of the Development there will be no earthworks associated with the erection of the solar panels, however there will be earthworks associated with creation of the bund around the electrical compound and the main access spine road. There would be effects on the local road network and NCN 1 cycle route on Seasalter Road, which provides access to the site. No existing trees or hedgerows will be removed during the construction of the Development and potential effects on existing vegetation will be managed during construction by suitable buffer areas and fencing. There will be some ground disturbance during the installation of the 11 kV underground cable to the south of the Development and trenching of the cabling associated with the transformers to the substation. The Development will see a loss of arable land that will be replaced by panels, a compound area and associated equipment. As part of the mitigation enhancement measures arable land will be converted to grassland habitats.

462. During the construction phase the works compound will be contained within the Substation compound area during the first phase of the Development which is surrounded by a large earth bund. There may also be a requirement for temporary roadways depending on weather conditions.

7.9.1.2 Operation

463. During the operational phases the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment indicates that the Development would have the most influence on the landscape and visual amenity within a short distance of 1 km from the CLS Area. Long distance views of the Development are restricted by intervening built form, polytunnels and tall vertical infrastructure and limited by the low horizontal nature of the Development. The low-lying character of the Development restricts the overall visibility of the Development and its potential for wider landscape and visual effects. The Development is contained by the flood defence which runs to the north and west of the CLS Area. The enhancement measures proposed will enhance existing landscape structure along the

CLS Area boundaries to soften the appearance of the Development edges allowing integration with existing landscape context beyond the CLS Area.

464. The landscape character of the site, which is situated in LCA 5 Graveney Marshes, would be directly affected due to the extent that the CLS Area covers of LCA 5 and the loss of remoteness and openness from Development, there would be Major effects from the Development which are significant. There would be limited effects on LCA 21 Graveney Arable Farmlands due to the overall extent in which the Development is located within the LCA 21. LCA 4 Graveney Grazing Lands and Canterbury Draft LCA 5 Seasalter Marshes would have limited effects as the panels or substation are not within the LCA. The landscape enhancement measure will add and improve the condition of the landscape for these LCAs.

465. There would be Moderate effects which are significant on Kent Level Area of High Landscape Value. The Development will not give rise to any significant effects on any National Designations.

466. The significant effects of the Development arise primarily from the fact that the Development will change the appearance of the land at the CLS Area from agricultural land in cereal production, which has an open landscape, to that of solar panels and a substation compound within grazing marsh. The presence of the existing lattice pylons and an existing 400 kV substation give a modified character to the land within the CLS Area. The Development will be seen in the context of these large features within the landscape. During the summer months the existing planting and proposed mitigation during the stages of the Development illustrate that the Development will in time become screened, particularly from views from the south. Mitigation is more limited in the north to be consistent with the surrounding landscape of the area.

467. Cumulative landscape effects would not be significant due to the location of the other cumulative developments that fall within the nearby LCAs.

7.9.1.3 Decommissioning

468. During the decommissioning stage of the project there will be similar effects arising from this stage as those predicted for the construction phase. There is limited disturbance from the removal of the solar panels. The bund (and, it is assumed planting) will be removed. There will be some loss of mature planting following removal of planting implemented during the construction phase. It will begin to weaken the fruit belt character areas as the mitigation planting has strengthened these areas. As the decommissioning stage progresses the effects will reduce over time.

7.9.2 Visual Effects

469. Construction effects on visual amenity will be temporary in nature. The Saxon Shore Way to the north and west of the CLS Area and the immediate PRoW ZR485 which runs through the site would have the greatest effects from the construction phase. Users of the Saxon Shore Way would experience open views towards the construction compound through the creation of the bund and increased vehicle movements. Users of the Saxon Shore Way and PRoW directly in the site and adjacent PRoW would have varying degrees of visibility from the use of temporary equipment such as a crane and construction of the electrical compound bund. There would be visual effects on the NCN 1 cycle route which runs along Seasalter Road as construction traffic leaving and entering the site will use Seasalter Road for a short section of the NCN 1 route before the national cycle route heads down Sandbanks Road.

470. Residential properties nearest to the Development site would have visibility of the Development Site during construction. Warm House and properties at Nagden would experience the greatest visual effects due to the open nature of view from these properties. There will be limited distant views towards the construction compound but

there would be visibility of the construction works associated with the erection of the solar panels and equipment. The beach huts to the north east of the CLS Area would have distant views towards the temporary compound area and associated construction works with the bund and installation of the bund area. Properties at Broom Street and Cleve Hill and along Seasalter Road will have varying degrees of visibility during the construction phase. The visual effects are highly localised and the visual receptors within or directly adjacent to the site would experience the greatest effects.

471. Operational effects on visual amenity would be greatest closest to the CLS Area, particularly on users of the Saxon Shore Way and PRoWs within the site and immediately in the vicinity of the CLS Area. PRoW ZR485 which runs through the site would experience the most change due to the proximity of the panels, and loss of open views and a sense of enclosure created by the height and quantum of the panels.

472. From the Saxon Shore Way, panels would be visible due to the elevated position of the trail along the flood defence, which contains the site, but views would remain open across the CLS Area to the higher ground further inland, as they are in the baseline. The lower level grazing marsh planting will begin to integrate the Development but the panels would remain visible. From more eastern locations along the Saxon Shore Way, the taller substation equipment would be visible above the bund, but seen in context with the existing substation and two large agricultural buildings. Users of PRoW ZR488 will experience some degree of change due to the proximity of the Development to the PRoW and when seen from the elevated position in the landform on Graveney Hill. However, over time the mitigation planting will reduce the effects. Due to the low-lying horizontal nature of the Development and the low-lying landform, the Development does not restrict the wider distant views towards the AONB, Whitstable, Faversham, The Swale and beyond to the Isle of Sheppey, nor south from the Saxon Shore Way or across the Swale.

473. Cyclists on the section of NCN 1 along Faversham/Seasalter Road would have distant views across to the site. The section of NCN 1 along Sandbanks Road would have no views for the majority of the route. There is potential for distant views approaching properties at Nagden; however, this would reduce over time due to maturing planting, which would screen the Development. The views of road users of Faversham/Seasalter Road and Sandbanks Road would experience similar view as above. On the eastern part of Broom Street, the views towards the Development open up offering views towards the Development. Views are experienced behind large existing vegetation and trees creating filtered views. Over a period of five years views of the Development will be removed by mitigation planting whilst wider views towards Graveney Hill will be retained.

474. Some of the properties adjacent to the site will experience effects from the Development, the properties that will experience the most effect from the Development would be the properties at Nagden and Warm House. The properties are mostly affected due to the short distance between their curtilage and the Development where there are direct, uninterrupted views across the CLS Area. The mitigation measures proposed assist by mitigating views from lower storeys of the properties and from the property curtilages. Views will still be possible across the south western and southern areas of the Development. Views from Warm House will change from open views across large agricultural fields and grazing marsh to that of woodland after year 5. Upper storeys would still have views of the Development at year 5; however, at year 10 they would be replaced by woodland.

475. The low-lying and horizontal nature of the Development is mostly contained within the low-lying landform and the flood defence to the north and west of the CLS Area. Cumulative effects on visual amenity are restricted to receptors to the south, west and north of the CLS Area, mostly that of recreational users of the Saxon Shore Way, NCN 1

cycle route which is localised to the area to the south east of the CLS Area and properties at Nagden and Oare (which are represented by viewpoints 1 and 11 respectively). There are moderate effects mainly during construction and year 1 but during year 5 and 10 the effects are not significant over time for both winter and summer views on footpaths, roads and residential properties.

476. During the decommissioning phase there will be limited disturbance from the removal of the solar panels, electrical equipment and the electrical compound bund, which will be short term and temporary in nature. During the decommissioning there will be increased vehicle activity from the removal of the panels and associated equipment. The greatest effects will be from the Saxon Shore Way to the north and west of the CLS Area and PRoW ZR485 which runs the Development Site. Other PRoW to the south of the Development will be affected to varying degrees of visual change from the removal of panels. NCN 1 cycle route would have effects created by the increase in vehicle activity from removal of site equipment and earth removal associated with the bund on Seasalter Road where for a short section of the NCN 1 follows before turning into Sandbanks Road. Residential properties nearest to the Development Site would have visibility during the decommissioning stage through the removal of equipment associated with the Development.

477. The only potential identified for significant cumulative effects is west of the CLS Area, where cumulative development adjacent to Oare Creek could add to the effects from the Development. This would only occur should these developments all proceed to the construction and operation stage.

7.10 Statement of Significance

478. This chapter has assessed the significance of potential effects of the Development on landscape and visual resources. The Development has been assessed as having Major to Moderate effects which are significant, in terms of the EIA Regulations, during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases for some landscape and visual receptors across a limited geographical area. These effects are on recreational users of PRoW which run through the CLS Area and to the southeast of the CLS Area. There are Major visual effects on users of the Saxon Shore Way where it passes in close proximity to the CLS Area, where there is only limited screening with open views across the CLS Area. These effects are localised to c. 5 km out of the total path length of 262 km.

479. The properties concentrated at Nagden, 156 m south west and Warm House, adjacent to the CLS Area are likely to experience significant effects due to the proximity to the Development; however, those effects at Warm House can be mitigated, and at Nagden can be mitigated in part as part of the embedded mitigation.

480. While the large scale and extent of the Development are acknowledged, the overall effects of the Development on landscape and visual amenity are limited to a small geographical area and a small number of visual receptors. Proposed hedge/tree, woodland and shelterbelt planting will enhance the southern, south western and south eastern edges of the Development where the nearest residential properties and PRoWs are located. The introduction of grazing marsh grassland on a large scale will assist in the integration of the Development to the existing landscape character of the area, beyond the CLS Area. Within the CLS Area, on the northern, north western and south western boundaries, proposed vegetation is naturalistic with large swathes of grazing marsh grassland and areas low density scrub mixture to increase the open nature of the landscape character whilst maintaining distant views across the landscape above the Development.

481. The CLS Area is contained by the flood defence to the north and west, mature existing vegetation to the south and landform of Cleve and Graveney Hills to the east which limits the extent in which the Development will be seen in the wider landscape.

482. Whilst the Development introduces man-made structures across a large proportion of a large area of land the uniform arrangement of Development in what is assessed as an open and featureless landscape; together with the low profile of the majority of the Development introduces what has been assessed as a quantum and type of development this landscape can accommodate due to the low-lying horizontal and uniform nature of the Development; together with mitigation planting. The sense of openness, remoteness and tranquillity will remain in all locations except within the area where solar PV modules and the electrical compound are located.

483. The effects of the Development are highly localised, especially given the scale of the Development and have a limited geographical extent in which the Development will be seen or will affect the landscape, and are therefore it is considered acceptable from a landscape and visual perspective.