



# SUNNICA ENERGY FARM

EN010106

8.85 Issues Paper: Public Rights of Way Experience Note

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and  
Procedure) Regulations 2009



Planning Act 2008

**The Infrastructure Planning  
(Applications: Prescribed Forms and  
Procedure) Regulations 2009**

**Sunnica Energy Farm**

**Issues paper: Public Rights of Way Experience Note**

<b>Planning Inspectorate Scheme Reference</b>	EN010106
<b>Application Document Reference</b>	EN010106/APP/8.85
<b>Author</b>	Sunnica Energy Farm Project Team

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Status of Version</b>
Rev 00	30/01/2023	Submitted at Deadline 6

# 1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This issues paper explains how people's journeys on existing public rights of way (PRoW) in the area will change as a result of the Scheme. It also describes the improvements arising from the proposed permissive paths and how these new routes will integrate with and enhance the existing PRoW network.
- 1.1.2 This paper covers the effects users of the PRoW during operation of the Scheme. The short-term, temporary effects related to construction and decommissioning are summarised in Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual [APP-042] with further detail and clarification provided in the following documents:
- 8.81 Public Rights of Way Closure Note submitted at Deadline 5 [REP5-068]
  - Figure 12-5 Public Rights of Way Affected by Construction [APP-241]
  - Article 11 (temporary stopping up of public rights of way).
- 1.1.3 **Figure 1** within Appendix A shows the location of existing PRoW, proposed permissive paths and representative viewpoints (VP) referred to in this issues paper.

# 2 The existing public rights of way network

- 2.1.1 The existing PRoW network across the study area is shown in Appendix B to the Applicant's responses to relevant representations submitted at Deadline 1 [REP1-016].
- 2.1.2 The PRoW network across the study area is generally sparse and fragmented, particularly in the southern part of the Scheme, and consists predominantly of footpaths and occasional bridleways. Most routes start at settlement edges, but do not generally connect well across the wider landscape.
- 2.1.3 There are no long-distance trails or other promoted routes shown on Ordnance Survey maps which cover the Scheme. Large tracts of land, particularly across the central part of the study area between Fordham, Isleham, Worlington and Freckenham have no designated PRoW and public access to these areas is limited to busy country lanes.
- 2.1.4 The Cambridgeshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP), 2016 and the Suffolk Green Access Strategy, 2020-2030 are overarching plans which form part of the councils' Local Transport Plans. They set out actions to manage, improve and promote the local PRoW network, including making the countryside more accessible, mapping existing routes, filling gaps in the network and managing and maintaining the network.

# 3 The visual experience of public rights of way users

- 3.1.1 Users of PRoW include walkers, cyclists and equestrians. Much of the area within and surrounding the Scheme is rural. There are few public bridleways

Technical note: Landscape and visual impacts on equestrian users

and byways in the area, limiting recreational equestrian access in the countryside mostly to rural lanes or private land.

- 3.1.2 The expectations and experiences of different users will vary but on the whole, due to the rural nature of the study area, the majority of users of PRoW are recreational users.
- 3.1.3 Views and visual amenity can be an important part of the experience of people using PRoW. In general, views across the study area are short, resulting from the flat or gently undulating landscape and the screening provided by hedgerows and other vegetation which often line PRoW. There are some places, for example in the east, where there are more open views to distant skylines, from elevated points or where existing vegetation is sparse.
- 3.1.4 Visual awareness is also important to people riding horses, for the safety of the rider, the horse and the public. Therefore, whilst people riding horses for recreation may enjoy views of the landscape as part of their experience, the attention of their views is likely to often be on the route and the immediate context in scanning for potential hazards.

## 4 Effects on users of the existing public rights of way network

- 4.1.1 No PRoW would be located within the Scheme and there would be no permanent alteration of any existing routes. A small number PRoW would be located in proximity to the Scheme, including adjacent to boundaries. These routes are described further below.
- 4.1.2 Effects on people's views of the landscape have been considered in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) summarised in Chapter 10 of the Environmental Statement [APP-042] and associated appendices. This includes an assessment of sequential views from existing PRoW, which have been assessed with reference to representative viewpoints to illustrate the nature of views for different visual receptors and how the effects of the Scheme would differ along such routes. Further detail on the likely effects on sequential views is provided in Appendix K of the Applicant's Response to the First Written Questions [REP2-038].
- 4.1.3 The LVIA concludes that, whilst there would be views of solar farm development from some routes, views will largely be screened or filtered by existing vegetation or proposed planting by year 15 of operation.
- 4.1.4 The management of existing vegetation and the establishment of proposed planting in line with the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [REP5-011] is predicted to reduce all visual effects for users of PRoW to not significant by year 15 of operation.

### Sunnica East Site A

- 4.1.5 Two PRoW are located in the vicinity of Sunnica East Site A, as set out below.

### **Freckenham to Beck Road**

4.1.6 This PRoW, which leads north from the settlement of Freckenham to Beck Road, is split into three sections:

- a) W-257/002/0 Mortimer Lane (restricted byway)
- b) W-257/002/X (bridleway)
- c) W-257/007/0 (bridleway)

4.1.7 The following viewpoints are representative of receptors using this PRoW.

- VP9: W-257/002/0 view north-west from Mortimer Lane (south) - Figure 10.29A and 10.29B [**APP-215**]
- VP9A: W-257/002/0 view north-west from Mortimer Lane (middle) - Figure 10.29C and 10.29D [**APP-215**]
- VP10: W-257/002/X view west - Figure 10.30A and 10.30B [**APP-215**]
- VP11: W-257/007/0 view west – Figure 10.91 [**APP-221**]

**Table 1: Visual effects relating to PRoW W-257/002/0, W-257/002/X and W-257/007/0 between Freckenham and Beck Road**

Public right of way	Representative viewpoint(s)	Operation Phase Year 1 (winter)	Operation Phase Year 15 (Summer)
W-257/002/0 Mortimer Lane	VP9, VP9A	VP9: Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP9A: Moderate adverse ( <b>significant</b> )	VP9: Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP9A: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )
W-257/002/X	VP10	Negligible adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )	Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )
W-257/007/0	VP11	Moderate adverse ( <b>significant</b> )	Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )

4.1.8 The route extends for approximately 1.3km from the northern edge of Freckenham to Beck Road, where it terminates approximately 170m south of Parcel E05 of Sunnica East Site A. There is no onward PRoW connection from the end of the route. Therefore, people wishing to continue have to travel 1.5km west to Isleham or to 3km east to Worlington along Beck Road.

4.1.9 No part of the route is adjacent to proposed solar farm development. However, W-257/002/X and W-257/007/0 would extend alongside the eastern edge of the Scheme, next to ECO2 for a distance of approximately 350m.

4.1.10 There are views of nearby fields, principally of ECO1 and ECO2 to varying degrees along the route. At the northern end of the route at Beck Road, views open out towards the southern part of E05 and north-west to the elevated ridgeline across the B1104 Beck Road, the Church of St Andrew, the Ark and Lee Farm, represented by VP11 [**APP-221**].

4.1.11 The LVIA concludes that people using W-257/002/0 would experience significant adverse effects in year 1 of operation due to their proximity to Sunnica East Site A. By year 15 of operation, these effects are predicted to

Technical note: Landscape and visual impacts on equestrian users

reduce to not significant due to the establishment of woodland planting proposed along the southern edge of E05.

- 4.1.12 The built elements of the Scheme would not be visible along most of the route, as represented by VP9. At points where gaps in existing vegetation allow more open views, such as VP9A, the upper parts of the BESS and substation (minimum distance of 800m) and upper parts of the panels would be visible to the northeast.
- 4.1.13 Proposed planting would reduce the visibility of the proposed structures over time as it establishes. Views of the proposed native grassland within ECO1 and ECO2 would improve the scenic quality of the views to the north west from W-257/002/X. From the northern end of the route at W-257/007/0 adjacent to Beck Road, proposed solar panels within E05 would be visible in Year 1, 170m to the north. As the proposed planting along the southern edge of E05 matures, this will screen the panels and will provide a more vegetated character to the view. The substantial setback of the solar panels within E05 of at least 100m from Beck Road has been designed to retain views of St Andrew's Church and the Ark Church, Isleham. This is clearly illustrated in Figure 10-91 of the Environmental Statement [**APP-221**].
- 4.1.14 The Scheme will provide a new permissive path which will complete the link between Freckenham and Isleham, via a route through the grassland proposed to the south of parcel E05, parallel with Beck Road, thereby creating an improved, safer situation than is currently the case.
- 4.1.15 The path would be set back from Beck Road to retain an open setting and views to Isleham and to minimise disturbance of the proposed stone curlew habitat in ECO1 to the south. As explained in OLEMP [**REP5-011**] the path, which would be surfaced with self-binding gravel allowing all weather use would be set within a mosaic of habitats which include scattered trees, scrub and rush pasture. A new formal space at gap in the proposed woodland to the south of E05 has been added to the Environmental Masterplan at Deadline 5 [**REP5-054**] where a memorial to the B50 crash site is proposed.
- 4.1.16 Connections to Sheldricks Road and an additional permissive route measuring 2km has been added around the perimeter of E05 [**REP5-054**] to provide opportunities for shorter circular routes. This circular route would be set within proposed woodland planting, with open views to the north towards the River Lark and east across Lee Brook. The Scheme will therefore be creating a much improved position for walkers in and around Freckenham and Isleham, whilst having minimal impacts on users of existing routes.

### ***The River Lark***

- 4.1.17 Footpath W-398/030/0 follows the northern bank of the River Lark, 250m north of Sunnica East Site A at its closest point.
- 4.1.18 The following viewpoints are representative of people using the footpath:

- VP1: view south-east from the footpath - Figure: 10-20A and 10-20B [**APP-215**]
- VP2A: view south-west from the footpath - Figure 10.21A and 10.21B [**APP-215**]

**Table 2: Visual effects relating to The River Lark footpath W-398/030/0**

Public right of way	Representative viewpoint(s)	Operation Phase Year 1 (winter)	Operation Phase Year 15 (Summer)
W-398/030/0	VP1, VP2A	VP1: Moderate adverse ( <b>significant</b> ) VP2A: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )	VP1: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP2A: Negligible adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )

- 4.1.19 From Isleham Marina in the west, to Mildenhall, the route is approximately 10km. To the east of Mildenhall, beyond the study area, it becomes the Lark Valley Path promoted route.
- 4.1.20 Much of the route within proximity to the Scheme is enclosed by dense vegetation or the flood banks along the river (VP2 and 2C).
- 4.1.21 There are a few locations where more open, oblique views towards the Scheme are possible (VP1), but these parts of the route are remote from settlement. From the centre of Isleham it is approximately 3.5km via Isleham Marina to VP1 or 1.5km from West Row. This viewpoint is one of the few opportunities along the route where there are more open views across the landscape to the south.
- 4.1.22 Significant effects in year 1 of operation would be limited to the part of the route west of Lee Brook, represented by VP1. From here, the rear side of the panel frames would be visible, as would the upper parts of the ancillary buildings and BESS in E33. Existing views beyond the site to the pine lines in the background of the view, would remain. Over time, the proposed woodland planting along the northern edge of E05 would increasingly screen views of the panels, and would also soften views of structures in E01 and E03. By year 15 of operation, effects on this receptor group would further reduce to not significant due to the establishment of new planting and existing vegetation in leaf.
- 4.1.23 From VP2A the upper parts of the BESS and substation would be visible 1km to the south west, with only the very upper parts of the back of the solar panel frames visible. Over time, the proposed tree planting along the eastern edge of E02, E04 and E33 would increasingly screen the BESS, substations and panels, changing the view to a more vegetated skyline and providing a visual connection with the tree belts to the east of Ferry Lane through to The Fens.
- 4.1.24 In summary, views of the Scheme would be limited to short sections of the footpath adjacent to the northern bank of the River Lark. The views along the river, which are the primary focus, would not change.

## Sunnica East Site B

- 4.1.25 Badlingham Road U6006 is an unclassified road marked on Ordnance Survey maps as an “other route with public access”. U6006 extends 2.3km north from Elms Road to Worlington, across the eastern part of Sunnica East Site B. U6006 forms part of the route linking Worlington to Badlingham. South of Elms Road the U6006 joins footpath W-257/010/0 to Badlingham.
- 4.1.26 W-257/003/0 forms the southern edge to Sunnica East Site B, to the south of E19 and E22 and integrates with the wider network connecting Freckenham to Red Lodge.
- 4.1.27 The following viewpoints are representative of people using U6006:
- VP15: view west from U6006 Figure 10.36A and 10.36B [**APP-216**]
  - VP15A: view south-west from U6006 - Figure 10-95 [**APP-225**]
  - VP15B: view south-east from U6006 – Figure 10.38A and 10.38B [**APP-216**]
  - VP16: view north-east from U6006 - Figure 10.39A and 10.39B [**APP-216**]
- 4.1.28 These viewpoints demonstrate how composition of views differs along the route. From many locations there are truncated views as a result of the mature vegetation adjacent to the route. From other locations where there are gaps in vegetation there are views to adjacent fields (e.g. parcel E12) and close range views across E14 and ECO3.

**Table 33: Visual effects relating to U6006**

Public right of way	Representative viewpoint(s)	Operation Phase Year 1 (winter)	Operation Phase Year 15 (Summer)
U6006	VP15, VP15A, VP15B, VP16	VP15: Negligible adverse ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP15A: Major adverse ( <b>significant</b> ) VP15B: Moderate adverse ( <b>significant</b> ) VP16: Moderate adverse ( <b>significant</b> )	VP15: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP15A: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP15B: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP16: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )

- 4.1.29 U6006 passes through the centre of Sunnica East Site B and is enclosed by dense vegetation, with a high proportion of evergreen trees and scrub on both sides through the section where solar panels are proposed within parcels E12 and E13, restricting views out to the surrounding landscape. It is technically a road, but it is narrow and unsurfaced and is predominantly used for recreation.
- 4.1.30 The northern part of the route is more open in character, passing through acid grasslands between Badlingham Lane, Worlington Heath and Joan’s Meadow County Wildlife Sites, as shown on the Environmental Masterplan [**REP5-054**]. Pine lines on field boundaries are characteristic of the skyline and a distinctive feature of views.



- 4.1.31 Significant effects are predicted in year 1 of operation for recreational users including horse riders on U6006 with sequential views of Sunnica East Site B. Mitigation integrated into the design includes provision of substantial offsets and additional planting, proposed in places along the route to reinforce habitat connectivity and visual screening. By year 15 of operation effects are predicted to reduce to not significant as existing vegetation would be in leaf and planting carried out as part of the Scheme would have established. The effectiveness of this mitigation is illustrated in the photomontage from viewpoint 15A in Figure 10.95 [APP-225].
- 4.1.32 Along the northern half of the route, views of the Scheme would be characterised by the proposed grassland within ECO 3, as shown by VP15. South of this, the proposed solar panels in parcels E12 and E13 would be visible in glimpsed oblique views where not screened by existing vegetation along the route, as shown by VP15A. Additional hedgerow planting along the eastern edge of E12 has been added to the Scheme to further enhance screening and enclosure of solar panel arrays in views when travelling south along the route, as shown on the Environmental Masterplan [REP5-054].
- 4.1.33 In the southern section of U6006, solar frames, the upper parts of solar stations and perimeter fencing in E14, E15 and E16 would be visible, although filtered by the retained vegetation adjacent to the route, as shown by VP15B and VP16. Views would continue to extend across to the panels to the fields beyond.
- 4.1.34 Additional planting is proposed along the western edge of parcels E14, E15 and E16, the northern and southern edges of E12 and the northern edge of E13 to screen views of panels from U6006 whilst retaining longer views towards the wooded skyline. Views to the distinctive pine pines would remain clearly legible on the skyline.
- 4.1.35 Over 1.5km of new permissive routes are proposed at the northern end of U6006, creating a new link to Golf Links Road to the north-east and providing a new, more direct link to Worlington to the north. The permissive route would go through proposed woodland planting north of E24, continuing along the north of parcels E26 and E27, set within a grassland buffer and alongside the existing woodland to the north. An additional permissive route is proposed to the north-west of U6006 crossing through the proposed ecological grassland south of Joan's Meadow. This will create a short, circular route through attractive, biodiverse acid grassland close to the edge of the village, utilising an existing track.
- 4.1.36 In summary, worst-case effects on views for users of U6006 would be in the vicinity of VP15A where the route is still currently more open in character and where the fields would contain proposed solar panels. However, as the proposed planting matures this would increasingly screen the Scheme from view, reducing effects to not significant. North of this, views would be of the ecological mitigation in the northern parcels, and south of this, the combination of existing and proposed planting would increasingly screen views of the Scheme over time, reducing to not significant by year 15.

### ***Freckenham to Red Lodge***

Technical note: Landscape and visual impacts on equestrian users

- 4.1.37 The following PRoW connect the settlements of Freckenham and Red Lodge:
- W-257/010/0 Elms Road (footpath)
  - W-257/010/0 River Kennet (footpath)
  - W-257/010/0 Badlingham Road (footpath)
  - W-257/003/0 (footpath)
  - W-585/005/0 (footpath)
- 4.1.38 The PRoW between Freckenham to Red Lodge total approximately 4.3km. They consist of separate sections of footpath: W-257/010/0, W-257/003/0 and W-585/005/0.
- 4.1.39 Footpath W-257/010/0 from Freckenham consists of three parts: the northern fork follows Elms Road to the U6006, the southern fork follows the River Kennett to Badlingham Road, and the eastern part follows Badlingham Road between the U6006 south of Elms Road and Badlingham.
- 4.1.40 W-257/003/0 continues east from Badlingham Road along the southern edge of Sunnica East Site B to Red Lodge via W-585/005/0 on the A11 overbridge.
- 4.1.41 The following viewpoints are representative of people using these PRoW:
- VP17: view north-east from 257/010/0 Elms Road – Figure 10.40A and 10.40B [**APP-216**]
  - VP20: view north from W-257/003/0 - Figure 10.43A and 10.43B [**APP-216**]
  - VP21: view east from 257/010/0 Badlingham Road - Figure 10.44A and 10.44B [**APP-217**]
  - VP28: view north from the A11 overbridge (W-585/005/0) - Figure 10.52A and 10.52B [**APP-217**]

**Table 44: Visual effects relating to W-257/010/0, W-257/003/0 and W-585/005/0 between Freckenham and Red Lodge**

Public right of way	Representative viewpoint(s)	Operation Phase Year 1 (winter)	Operation Phase Year 15 (Summer)
W-257/010/0	VP17, VP21	VP17: Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP21: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )	VP17: Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP21: Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> )
W-257/003/0	VP20	Moderate adverse ( <b>significant</b> )	Negligible adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )
W-585/005/0	VP28	Negligible adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )	Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> )

- 4.1.42 The extent and character of views vary along the route. From W-257/010/0 at the eastern end of Freckenham around VP17, the land within the Order limits is not visible due to intervening rising landform and vegetation. From Badlingham Road field boundary vegetation screens views of nearby parcels E19 to E22, as demonstrated by VP21. From W-257/003/0 there

are close range views of parcel E22 due to breaks in the hedgerows as demonstrated by VP20.

- 4.1.43 From the western end of the PRoW along Elms Road, the Scheme will not be visible due to intervening landform and vegetation, as shown by VP17. Further east and south along Badlingham Road, the upper parts of the perimeter fencing, solar panel frames and solar station in E19 would be visible above the intervening field boundaries
- 4.1.44 The depth of woodland planting adjacent to Elms Road has been increased to approximately 30m, as shown on the Environmental Masterplan submitted at Deadline 5 [REP5-054]. This means that the BESS and substation in E18 would be screened.
- 4.1.45 From the eastern end of the route, on the elevated A11 overbridge, the solar panels and upper parts of the solar stations within E21 would be visible, though largely filtered by tall roadside vegetation in winter, and fully screened by the vegetation in summer.
- 4.1.46 Over time, the proposed woodland around the perimeter of E19 would increasingly screen the features in E19 and E18 from view. The planting would reflect and reinforce existing vegetation patterns.
- 4.1.47 New permissive routes are proposed adjacent to Elms Road south of E16 and west of E19. These routes will provide valuable, off road connections between existing routes from Red Lodge and Badlingham with U6006, as shown on the Environmental Masterplan [REP5-011]. There would be views west across the paddocks of Brookside Stud and the rural landscape beyond.

***Mildenhall Road to Elms Road, Freckenham***

- 4.1.48 Bridleway W-257/001/0 extends for approximately 0.5km between Elms Road and Mildenhall Road B1102. It joins the W-257/010/0 on Elms Road at its southern end. The bridleway is approximately 800m from East Site B at its nearest point.
- 4.1.49 VP13A is representative of people using this PRoW - Figure 10.34C and 10.34D) [APP-216].

**Table 5: Visual effects relating to W-257/001/0 between Mildenhall Road to Elms Road, Freckenham**

Public right of way	Representative viewpoint(s)	Operation Phase Year 1 (winter)	Operation Phase Year 15 (Summer)
W-257/001/0	VP13A	Minor adverse (not significant)	Neutral (not significant)

- 4.1.50 Effects are predicted not to be significant due to the distance from the Scheme and the screening effect of intervening vegetation. The upper parts of solar panels in E12 would be visible but in the background of the view and at a distance of approximately 800m. Over time, the proposed planting around the perimeter of E12 would increasingly screen the built elements of

the Scheme and reflect the existing vegetation patterns of the surrounding context.

**W-128/001/0 (footpath south of Mildenhall/ west of Barton Mills)**

- 4.1.51 This footpath is approximately 800m long and links Mildenhall via Station Road with Newmarket Road to the south. It does not connect with any other PRoW at Newmarket Road. The route is approximately 400m from East Site B at its nearest point.
- 4.1.52 VP26A is representative of people using this PRoW – Figure 10.49A and 10.49B [APP-217].

**Table 6: Visual effects relating to W-128/001/0 south of Mildenhall/ west of Barton Mills**

Public right of way	Representative viewpoint(s)	Operation Phase Year 1 (winter)	Operation Phase Year 15 (Summer)
W-128/001/0	VP26A	Moderate adverse (significant)	Minor adverse (not significant)

- 4.1.53 The backs of the solar panels and upper parts of the solar stations within parcels E30, E31 and E32 would be visible due to their position on locally rising landform, particularly from the southern part of the PRoW to the Scheme. Views of the woodland across Chalk Hill would remain as the backdrop.
- 4.1.54 Over time, the proposed woodland in the north-east part of E31 and E32 and hedgerows adjacent to the remainder of Golf Links Road would increasingly screen views of the Scheme, in combination with existing roadside trees, which, in summer, would substantially screen the Scheme, reducing effects on views to not significant.

**Chippenham to Kennett (footpaths 49/6, 49/8, 49/7, 49/9 and 137/3)**

- 4.1.55 The route between Chippenham and Kennett is approximately 5.7km long. A small part of footpath 49/7 passes within approximately 500m of Sunnica East Site B to the north and Sunnica West Site A to the south (approximately 1.3km at the nearest point).
- 4.1.56 VP29 is representative of people using this PRoW - Figure 10.53A and 10.53B [APP-217].

**Table 7: Visual effects relating to PRoW between Chippenham and Kennett**

Public right of way	Representative viewpoint(s)	Operation Phase Year 1 (winter)	Operation Phase Year 15 (Summer)
49/7	VP29	Negligible adverse (not significant)	Neutral (not significant)

- 4.1.57 From around VP29 there are views across the adjacent fields, though views do not extend to the fields with proposed solar panels to the north (Sunnica East Site B) or south (Sunnica West Site A).

## Sunnica West Site A

4.1.58 Bridleway 204/5, follows the western boundary of Sunnica West Site A, and connects Snailwell to the north with Newmarket to the south over a distance of approximately 3.5km.

4.1.59 The following viewpoints are representative of people using this PRoW:

- VP39: view north-east from bridleway 204/5, The Avenue - Figure 10.63A and 10.63B [**APP-218**]
- VP40: view north-east from bridleway 204/5, crossing the A14 - Figure 10.66A and 10.66B [**APP-218**]
- VP41: view south-east from bridleway 204/5 – Figure 10-101 [**APP 231**]

**Table 8: Visual effects relating to bridleway 204/5 between Snailwell to Newmarket**

Public right of way	Representative viewpoint(s)	Operation Phase Year 1 (winter)	Operation Phase Year 15 (Summer)
204/5	VP41, VP40, VP39	VP41: Negligible adverse ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP40: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP39: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )	VP41: Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP40: Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> ) VP39: Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> )

4.1.60 The bridleway is open at the northern end close to Chippenham Road, but enclosed by dense woodland along the majority of its length. From the northern part of the bridleway around VP41, despite the elevated position, views across the wider landscape are truncated by the Foxburrow Plantation and the mature vegetation bordering the PRoW. The southern part of the bridleway follows The Avenue, a feature of Chippenham Park which lies to the north. Mature vegetation south of the A14 and along the railway screens views north of most of Sunnica West Site A, as demonstrated by VP39.

4.1.61 Effects on sequential views for users of bridleway 204/5 would not be significant in operation, due to the distance, limited extent of views and the short section of the routes affected.

4.1.62 From the northern part of the bridleway (VP41) panels in W03 would not be visible due to the fall in landform, with only the upper parts of the proposed perimeter fencing and weather stations visible. Over time, the proposed planting would increasingly screen these features, though it would also truncate longer distance views to the east.

4.1.63 There is a short section of bridleway 204/5 where there are more open views, where it crosses the busy A14 trunk road on an overbridge. these views are represented by VP40. From this isolated location, the solar panels and solar stations in W05, W07, W09 and W12 would be visible through the tall parapets of the bridge, due to the elevated position. The BESS and substation would be screened by Sounds Plantation. Existing roadside vegetation on the A14 would help to screen views of the solar panels in summer views, and combined with the effect of the proposed

Technical note: Landscape and visual impacts on equestrian users

planting around W05 and W07 would increasingly screen views as the new planting matures, focusing views along the A14.

- 4.1.64 From further south along The Avenue (VP39), solar panels and solar stations within W07 and W09 would be visible in the middle ground above the intervening vegetation along the railway, though seen at an oblique angle and comprising a small extent of the wider view. Over time the proposed woodland planting south of W09 would increasingly screen views of the Scheme such that by Year 15 it would be completely screened.
- 4.1.65 Additional planting is proposed on the northern edge of parcel W03 and the southern edge of W04 to reinforce the screening provided by existing woodland as shown on the Environmental Masterplan [REP5-011]. The amenity of this route and existing views across the Snailwell Gallops and north towards Chippenham Fen would be preserved.

### **Footpaths 204/1 and 49/2 (Snailwell to Chippenham)**

- 4.1.66 Footpath 204/1 connects Fordham Road on the northern edge of Snailwell, to Palace Lane, on the western edge of Chippenham. It also forms part of a wider network of PRoW, crossing footpath 49/2 which extends south-east to Chippenham Park and north-west to Fordham via footpaths 49/3 and 92/16.
- 4.1.67 Footpath 204/1 crosses cable route B north-east of Snailwell. The footpath extends for approximately 2.3km before joining Palace Lane west of Chippenham. The footpath is approximately 1km from West Site A at its nearest point.
- 4.1.68 The following viewpoints are representative of receptors using these PRoW:
- VP42A: view south-west from Park Farm and PRoW 49/2 - Figure 10.67C and 10.67D [APP-218]
  - VP45: view north-west from footpath 204/1 - Figure 10.70A and 10.70B [APP-219]

**Table 9: Visual effects relating to footpaths 204/1 and 49/2 between Snailwell to Chippenham**

Public right of way	Representative viewpoint(s)	Operation Phase Year 1 (winter)	Operation Phase Year 15 (Summer)
204/1	VP45	Minor adverse ( <b>not significant</b> )	Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> )
49/2	VP42A	Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> )	Neutral ( <b>not significant</b> )

- 4.1.69 From the majority of the footpath, as demonstrated by VP45 and VP42A, very little of the Scheme would be visible due to the distance and intervening field boundaries, with only the upper parts of the perimeter fencing visible in winter. In summer, the Scheme would be completely screened by vegetation.

## **5 Impact avoidance, mitigation and enhancement**

- 5.1.1 The Scheme has been designed to as far as possible avoid impacts on the existing PRoW network and on people’s enjoyment of these routes. This

Technical note: Landscape and visual impacts on equestrian users

has been achieved through careful siting of solar farm development within existing fields such that existing PRoW are located outside of the Order limits and behind existing vegetation.

5.1.2 General mitigation measures to address and minimise adverse effects on views of the landscape which cannot be avoided for users of PRoW include:

- retaining existing vegetation adjacent to public rights of way or reinstating vegetation that is required to be removed for construction;
- reinforcing green infrastructure through additional planting;
- provision of additional permissive routes to strengthen the existing PRoW network and enhance access to the countryside.

5.1.3 This means that, even where solar panel arrays are visible, they would generally be at a distance from the viewer and in the context of retained vegetation and proposed planting, minimising the scale of impacts. The generally flat or gently undulating nature of the landscape and the low height of solar panel arrays (2.5m) means that in most cases only small parts of the Scheme would be visible at once.

5.1.4 The Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan [**REP5-011**] describes the measures embedded into the design to mitigate landscape and visual effects. This includes setbacks from public rights of way and the maintenance which would be undertaken to successfully establish planting proposed for visual screening, which is shown on the Environmental Masterplan [**REP5-054**].

5.1.5 Temporary mitigation while planting establishes, such as fencing, is generally not considered appropriate as this would be likely to introduce other effects on the landscape and views. As described in Section 5.9 of the OLEMP, temporary screening fencing is proposed along the western edge of W04 adjacent to an open section of bridleway 204/5. This will remain in place until the proposed planting reaches 2.5m in height and will then be removed.

5.1.6 The Scheme would deliver the following benefits to the existing PRoW network:

- d) Enhance existing the age structure and species composition of vegetation to screen built elements of the Scheme, including from glint and glare effects.
- e) Provide new permissive routes which connect with the existing PRoW network and enhance access to the countryside with a choice of longer and shorter routes.
- f) Encourage use of existing PRoW and new permissive routes and discourage incursions into ECO areas through signage and fencing.
- g) Contribute to enhancement of the wider PRoW beyond the Scheme through s106 contributions.

## Proposed permissive paths

- 5.1.7 The Scheme proposes five new permissive routes, as illustrated in the Environmental Masterplan **[REP 5-011]**. These proposed permissive paths would enable increased public access across the landscape of the local area and respond positively to local green infrastructure strategies and local planning policies relating to rights of way. The proposed permissive routes are described below.
- a) Parcel E05: around the solar panels in parcel E05 and running parallel with Beck Road within Sunnica East Site A. This would provide increased connectivity between Isleham to the west and Freckenham to the south via bridleway W-257. It would also provide opportunities for shorter circular routes and would connect with a new space to the west of E05 where a memorial to the B50 crash site would be located.
  - b) along the southern edge of Sunnica East Site B and adjacent to Elms Road; to connect existing routes from Red Lodge with U6006.
  - c) along the northern part of Sunnica East Site B, providing access between U6006 and Golf Links Road.
- 5.1.8 The design principles that would be applied to the proposed permissive paths are set out in the OLEMP **[REP5-011]**.

## Additional contributions

- 5.1.9 The Applicant listened to the submissions made at the hearings in December seeking for it to contribute towards improvements to the PRoW network. It has responded positively to these submissions by commencing discussions with Cambridgeshire and Suffolk County Council about making a contribution towards the improvement of existing PRoW and/or the establishment of new PRoWs within the vicinity of the Scheme. It prepared and sent to the Councils Heads of Terms in respect of a proposed legal agreement in December 2022 and will further discussions over the coming weeks.

# 6 Summary

- 6.1.1 The PRoW network across the study area is generally sparse and fragmented, particularly in the southern part of the Scheme, and consists predominantly of footpaths and occasional bridleways. No PRoW would be located within the Scheme and there would be no permanent alteration of any existing routes. A small number PRoW would be located in proximity to the Scheme, including adjacent to boundaries.
- 6.1.2 The Scheme has been designed to as far as possible avoid impacts on the existing PRoW network and on people's enjoyment of these routes. This has been achieved through careful siting of solar farm development within



existing fields such that existing PRoW are located outside of the Order limits and behind existing vegetation.

- 6.1.3 There are five public rights of way for which significant effects at year 1 are predicted. The public rights of way for which there would be significant effects along part of the route at year 1 are:
- Small sections of W-257/002/0 Mortimer Lane between Freckenham and Beck Road
  - A small section of the River Lark footpath W-398/030/0
  - A small section of U6006
  - A small section of W-257/003/0 between Freckenham and Red Lodge
  - A small section of footpath W-128/001/0 south of Mildenhall/ west of Barton Mills.
- 6.1.4 However, these effects would only occur over small sections of the PRoWs and would gradually reduce over time as proposed planting matures and screens views of the Scheme.
- 6.1.5 Whilst there would be views of solar farm development from some routes, views will largely be screened or filtered by existing vegetation or proposed planting by year 15 of operation. The management of existing vegetation and the establishment of proposed planting in line with the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan **[REP5-011]** is predicted to reduce all visual effects for users of PRoW to not significant by year 15 of operation.
- 6.1.6 The Scheme also proposes five new permissive routes, as illustrated in the Environmental Masterplan **[REP5-011]**. These proposed permissive paths would enable increased public access across the landscape of the local area and respond positively to local green infrastructure strategies and local planning policies relating to PRoW.

## Appendix A: PRoW and permissive paths

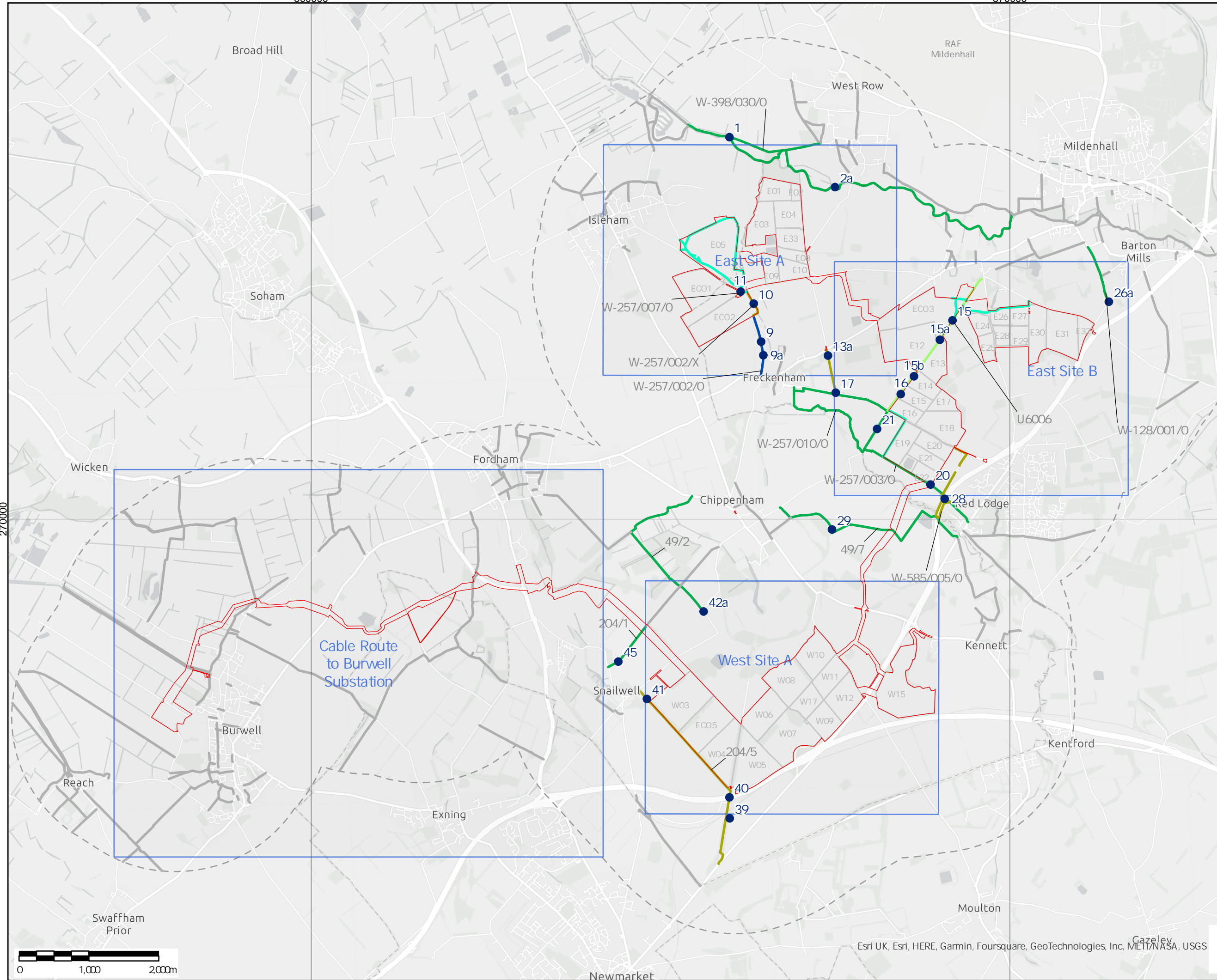
560000

570000

THIS DRAWING IS TO BE USED ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ISSUE THAT IT WAS ISSUED FOR AND IS SUBJECT TO AMENDMENT

LEGEND

- The Order Limits
- Representative viewpoint
- Proposed permissive route
- Public Right of Way (PRow)
- Type
- Bridleway
- Footpath
- Restricted Byway
- Other



Copyright  
 Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2018  
 Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0  
 NOTE:  
 Document Reference: EN010106APP/6.3  
 AFPP Regulation 5(2)(a)

Existing vegetation along the Cable Route alignment which is required to be removed during the construction phase would be replaced with the same species to recreate the vegetation cover

Purpose of Issue  
**FOR DCO EXAMINATION**

Client  
**SUNNICA LTD**



Drawing Title  
**PROW INTERACTIONS WITH THE SCHEME**

Drawn TZ	Checked KA	Approved JR	Date 26/01/2023
AECOM Internal Project No. 60589004		Scale @ A3 1:50,000	

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN PREPARED PURSUANT TO AND SUBJECT TO THE TERMS OF AECOM'S APPOINTMENT BY ITS CLIENT. AECOM ACCEPTS NO LIABILITY FOR ANY USE OF THIS DOCUMENT OTHER THAN BY ITS ORIGINAL CLIENT OR FOLLOWING AECOM'S EXPRESS AGREEMENT TO SUCH USE, AND ONLY FOR THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH IT WAS PREPARED AND PROVIDED.

AECOM  
 Unit 1, Wallbrook Court  
 Giron  
 Cambridge, CB3 0NA  
 United Kingdom  
 Telephone: (01223) 488000  
 www.aecom.com



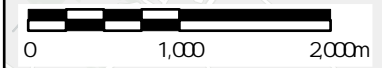
Drawing Number  
**FIGURE 1**

Rev  
**0**

File Name:

560000

570000



Esri UK, Esri, HERE, Garmin, Foursquare, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS